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The Dallas Police Department's Interactive Community Policing Program - 1995-1999:

193401

Executive Summary

The Study

The evaluation described in this report examined the implementation and impact of the Interactive Community Policing (ICP) program of the Dallas Police Department (DPD) from 1995 to 1999. In October 1995, at the request of the Dallas Police Department, and with funding provided by the National Institute of Justice, the Center for Research, Evaluation, and Technology at the University of Texas at Arlington initiated a longitudinal evaluation of Dallas Police Department's new Interactive Community Policing program. The project aimed to address three fundamental questions:

1. What activities encompass the ICP program in Dallas?
2. What barriers to implementation of the program were encountered in the implementation?
3. What were the effects of the ICP program?

Two major sources of data were four annual surveys of the citizens of Dallas and annual surveys of Dallas Police Officers. A total of 4325 Dallas residents completed telephone surveys, with 1367 completed in 1996, 1069 completed in 1997, 959 completed in 1998 and 930 completed in 1999

Written survey were annually administered to all ICP officers and to a randomly selected sample of officers ranked sergeant and below throughout the department. The officer surveys were administered in the summers of 1996 (n=607) and 1997 (n=594), and in the Fall of 1998 (n=698) and 1999 (n=518).

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Implementation Issues

Using both quantitative and qualitative methodologies in this project six distinct barriers and possible solutions to implementation of community policing in the Dallas Police Department were identified. These barriers included:

Issues concerning resources. Specific funds were dedicated to the purchase of vehicles for the ICP program in 1996. Vehicles were equipped with cell phones. A computerized reporting system was developed to aggregate data from each division into department wide reports. Regarding the lack of ICP manpower to address the needs of the entire division, specific ICP areas were designated in each division in 1997 in an effort to concentrate ICP activity.

Lack of acceptance by patrol. To better educate patrol officers about the ICP program, four divisions initiated a program where patrol officers rode with ICP officers for anywhere from one to ten days. This was designed to increase patrol awareness of ICP program capabilities and educate patrol about issues which could be effectively handled by ICP officers. Regarding patrol feelings that ICP solves few problems, ICP officers in three divisions have placed more effort in providing feedback to patrol regarding problems solved by ICP, as it is felt that patrol knows little about these problems solve. Finally, a 16 hour training program was conducted for approximately 400 officers to better inform them of the ICP program

Citizen issues. As ICP officers become more familiar with citizen issues, they have begun to focus their efforts in areas where citizens are able and willing to be involved. In one division, a high dosage neighborhood was eliminated due to lack of citizen participation, and a new neighborhood was located in an area where residents were more organized and active participants.

Coordinating city services. A new database was developed which is designed to track referrals made by citizens and by the police to other city services. Additionally, a team of representatives from various city departments was formed in each division and charged with streamlining the coordination of various city services. These teams, called Service Coordination Teams meet in an attempt to streamlining the impact and availability of city agencies. The city moved to a 311 system to separate true emergency, 911 calls, from non-emergency ones.

Citizens Perceptions of Crime, Safety, and Perceptions of Police

The results of four years of citizen surveys on their perception of social disorder, feelings of safety, fear of crime, and crime victimization found:

Social Disorder. The high ICP areas had a mixed set of results. Overall, in high ICP areas there were declines in seven of 18 neighborhood problems, increases in five and six remained substantially the same. On the other hand, in the low ICP areas there were declines in 13 of the 18 problems, small increases in only two and three remained virtually the same.

Neighborhood Improvement. In high ICP areas the belief that the neighborhood "has gotten worse" went up almost 5% in 1997 and another 3% in 1998, and leveled off in 1999 at 19.1%. In low ICP areas citizens' belief that their neighborhoods "has gotten worse" declined slightly from 1996 to 1997 (14.0% to 13.8%) and again from 1998 to 1999 (11.8% to 11.0%).

Neighborhood Satisfaction. The percentage of citizens in high ICP areas who were very satisfied with their neighborhood increased from 33.5% in 1996 to 43.3% in 1999. Citizens in low ICP areas had a higher level of satisfaction than the high ICP areas and also showed increases over time, but at a much lower rate than the high ICP areas, going from 47.8% to 51.9% over the four years.

Fear of Crime. In high ICP areas there was overall reduction in fear of crime on all five of the fear questions, ranging from 11.2% fear of home vandalism to 3.9% for the general statement about being fearful. In the low ICP areas fear of crime was substantially lower than in the high ICP areas. However the trends over time were similar with results showing an overall reduction in fear. However, the citizens in low ICP areas had a larger reduction in general fear and a slight increase in their fear of home vandalism.

Security Measures. In the high ICP areas there was an overall decline in the use of security measures. Only in the use of Police Department identification stickers and engraving ID's on valuables was there an increase. There was also a slight increase in the participation in neighborhood watch. In the more aggressive approaches to security, such as in the use of weapons, burglar alarms or dogs, there was a decline in use. The low ICP areas had almost identical results with increased use of police identification, engraving of valuables and participation in neighborhood watch and declines or no change in the use of the other measures.

Crime Victimization. In comparing high ICP areas with low ICP areas, victimization was quite similar both in terms of trends over time and in order of magnitude. In high ICP areas crime victimization increased slightly in five of the eight crime areas, home burglary, auto theft, stolen property, physical threats, and physical attacks. In low ICP areas crime victimization also went up slightly on the same five crimes as the high ICP areas.

Knowledge of the ICP Program. Recognition of the ICP program remained relatively low. In both the high ICP and low ICP areas about one-fifth of the respondents had heard of the ICP program. While recognition was low it increased over time, from 16.7% in 1996 to 21.9% in 1999 in the high ICP areas and from 15.1% to 18.9% in the low ICP areas. Significant increases from 1996 to 1999 were observed in both high and low ICP areas on questions on whether there

were community meetings in their neighborhoods and if they had attended them and also if they had seen or heard about cleanup campaigns in their neighborhood. These changes were especially noted in the high ICP areas.

Perceptions of Police Activity. In high ICP areas the kinds of activities observed most frequently were driving through the neighborhood, ticketing someone for traffic violations in the neighborhood, and walking on patrol in the nearest shopping area. Police were seldom seen patrolling the neighborhood on foot, patrolling in alleys and buildings, frisking, breaking up groups or arresting individuals, and chatting or engaging in friendly conversations with people in the neighborhood. In high ICP areas the percentage of citizens who saw officers engaging in police activities "frequently", increased in three of the seven areas from 1996 to 1999. Results in low ICP areas were very similar.

Perceptions of Police Performance. Citizens were asked to provide a letter grade for police performance. They were asked how polite the police were, how well they solved neighborhood problems, how good a job police were doing in stopping crime and the use of drugs in the community, how good their relationship was with members of the community, and a general question about how good a job police were doing overall. Converting the grades into a "grade point average" (GPA) it was found that the GPA ranged from 2.3 to 3.0 on a 4 point scale, a B- to B average. There was virtually no change over the four years and the differences between the high and low ICP areas were minor.

Perceptions of Police Availability. . Results regarding how available, how seriously the police would take their concern for a problem in their neighborhood, and how long they thought it would take them to respond, showed an increase from 1996 to 1997, followed by a leveling off and then a decline in 1999. This was found in both the high and low ICP areas.

Relatively few felt that the police were never available, wouldn't take their concern seriously, or wouldn't respond to their call for help.

Officer Perceptions of the ICP Program and Citizens

The key findings from the four years of surveys of ICP and non-ICP officers concerning their perception of the ICP program and officer perceptions of citizens in relation to their involvement with the police are summarized below.

Allocation of Department Resources. Both ICP and non-ICP officers agreed that assisting people in emergencies, responding to calls for service, and helping settle family disputes, remain important functions for use of department resources. The groups differed on how they would allocate resources for working with citizens, other agencies and the importance of checking buildings. ICP officers felt resources were more important for coordinating with other agencies to improve the quality of life and for working with citizen groups, while Non-ICP officers felt resources would better be used to check buildings and residences.

Likely Changes with the Implementation of ICP. ICP officers felt the ICP program was likely to reduce crime, improve relationships with citizens, improve police presence, and improve citizen perceptions. While Non-ICP officers agree that community policing is likely to improve citizen perceptions and help with police relationships with the community, this group felt ICP would have little effect upon crime, responses to calls, relations with minorities or citizen complaints. They felt ICP would detract from the presence of officers on the street.

Officer Responsibilities. When asked about what types of responsibilities police officers should have, both ICP and Non-ICP officers agreed that assisting citizens and working with citizens to solve problems in their beats are important responsibilities of police officers. Officers also agreed that police are so focused on responding to calls for service that they will never find

time to address other concerns. The officers felt disagreed upon the role police should play in solving non-crime problems, with a majority of ICP officers agreeing that this is important and a majority of Non-ICP officers feeling this should not be the responsibility of the police.

Officer Decision-Making Autonomy. ICP officers feel much more autonomy to make suggestions and provide input to supervisors than Non-ICP officers. While responses decreased over time, ICP officers continued to express much more agreement with these issues than Non-ICP officers. ICP officers also expressed having much more independence than Non-ICP officers, and ICP officers enjoyed their jobs more than Non-ICP officers with the exception of 1998 when Non-ICP officers responded more favorably to this question than ICP officers. Overall, ICP officers express more autonomy and decision-making ability than Non-ICP officers.

Trust between Officers and Citizens. Both ICP and Non-ICP officers feel that police and citizens will trust each other enough to work effectively together. ICP officers feel more strongly that citizens do respect the police. ICP officers also feel more positively than Non-ICP officers about police being open to the opinions of citizens and citizens being more open to the opinions of the police. Both groups feel that citizens do not understand the problems of the police although more Non-ICP officers feel this way than ICP officers. The most dramatic difference between the groups involves the officers' perceptions of the relationship between police and citizens in Dallas. ICP officers are much more likely to agree that the relationship between officers and citizens is very good, while most Non-ICP officers do not agree.

Citizen Roles and Contributions. Nearly all officers, both ICP and Non-ICP, feel that prevention of crime is a joint responsibility of the community and the police. Both groups also recognized the importance of citizen cooperation in solving crimes. Compared to Non-ICP officers, ICP officers saw citizens as more knowledgeable about what goes on in their

neighborhoods, more able to prevent crimes, and more willing to attend crime watch meetings. ICP officers' opinions of the importance of citizen roles generally decreased over time, yet the ICP officers remained more positive than Non-ICP officers about citizen roles with the police.

Effects of Community Policing on Citizen Evaluations of Police Performance

Citizens living in low ICP neighborhoods graded police higher when considering issues of police visibility and knowing officers. Those from low ICP areas graded the police 1.6 times higher than those from high ICP areas if they had seen police driving or walking in their neighborhoods, giving traffic tickets or arresting individuals, patrolling alleys, or talking with neighbors than citizens in high ICP areas. Similarly, knowing officers led to grades 2.1 times higher among low ICP citizens compared to citizens from high ICP areas. Merely hearing about the ICP program had little effect on assessing the police from either area.

Both Hispanics and African Americans graded the police higher in high ICP neighborhoods than in low ICP neighborhoods. More specifically, Hispanics graded the police over three times higher in the high ICP neighborhoods than those in the low ICP areas. In fact, Hispanics in the high ICP neighborhoods graded police higher than did Caucasians or African Americans. Hispanics in low ICP neighborhoods graded police lower than Caucasians. Among African Americans, those living in high ICP neighborhoods graded police 2.5 times higher than those in low ICP neighborhoods, although Caucasians in both neighborhoods graded the police better than African Americans.

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