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RESEARCH ARTICLE

An analysis of police responses to gangs in Chicago

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In response to Chicago's well-documented gang problem, the Chicago Police Department (CPD) established its first specialized gang unit in 1967. In the ensuing decades, the CPD reorganized its core gang unit several times and expanded its anti-gang response through numerous supporting restructuring efforts. The Chicago experience indicates that reorganization can positively and negatively influence the relative effectiveness of the police response to gangs. As such, the lessons for police departments are twofold: be careful when restructuring, particularly when adapting for reasons not tied to the actual gang problem; but reorganize whenever necessary to address rising gang violence.

Keywords: gangs; gang units; police reorganization; gang violence; violence reduction strategies

Introduction

The dubious nature of organizational restructuring has a very long history, and for many observers, such efforts can be explained by the often-quoted criticism of government, 'when in doubt, organize,' or perhaps more precisely, '... organize and then reorganize.' From this viewpoint, reorganization is an expedient means of diverting the focus away from complex issues. Often as media attention focuses on a particularly alarming gang-related crime or as the public senses that gang violence is rising, local politicians and the police 'rediscover' their community's old gang problem. Bensinger (1984) provided an historical perspective of the 'new-old' problem of gangs in Chicago and identified a correlation between increases in gang violence and the reorganization of anti-gang resources by the Chicago Police Department (CPD).

Bensinger (1984) concluded that the severity of Chicago's gang problem required the CPD to adopt more proactive anti-gang measures that went beyond short-term reactions to specific incidents. He added that '... what Chicago needs to fight gangs is a comprehensive social strategy rather than repeated gang-related police reorganizations' (p. 11). However, Bensinger left unanswered a key question; were the CPD's anti-gang resource restructuring efforts intended to simply create an illusion of progress or to actually improve the department's ability to effectively combat gang crime? In revisiting this new-old problem, the purpose of this study is to explore this basic question by examining the CPD's more recent reorganization efforts to combat an escalating problem of gang-related homicides.

The gang problem and Chicago

A wealth of research indicates that gangs are harmful to communities. Gang members are five times more likely than nongang members to commit crimes (Shelden, Tracy, & Brown, 2004). Compared to their nongang peers of the same socioeconomic background, gang-affiliated juveniles become involved in crime at a younger age, commit more serious crimes, and continue

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to engage in higher rates of criminal behavior (Lemmer & Johnston, 2004). Gang membership also significantly increases the likelihood that a juvenile will own and carry a firearm (Bjerregaard & Lizotte, 1995). From 2000 to 2004, while serious crime was generally decreasing, gang murders nationwide increased 25%. In response, the FBI shifted street gangs to its top criminal priority in 2004 and reclassified the nation's 'youth gangs' as 'criminal organizations and enterprises,' comparable to traditional organized crime (Butterfield, 2005).

While Chicago's gang history is long and well documented (Landesco, 1929), accurate gang-population estimates are always elusive. During the 1920s, Thrasher (1927) estimated that 25,000 gang members were active in Chicago. In 1984, Bensinger reported a comparable total of 20,000 members. However, by the 1990s the reported number of gang members in the city had risen significantly, ranging from 33,000 (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1997) to as many as 130,000 members (Risley, 1998). More recently, the CPD reported in 2004 that it was tracking 68 gangs in Chicago, subdivided into more than 500 factions, with a combined population of 60,000 active members. While the exact figure is unknown, there is no disputing that the city's gang population continues to be quite sizeable. Moreover, for many years, CPD officials have asserted that the often used term 'youth gang' is a misnomer when applied to Chicago's gangs, which they have described as highly organized groups, operated by adults with long criminal histories (Dart, 1992).

In general, gangs in the Midwest (of which Chicago's are the largest and most dangerous) are more organizationally sophisticated than their counterparts elsewhere in the country (Chandler, 2004). The central role played by Chicago's gangs in the city's illegal drug trade has fueled their development as highly organized criminal enterprises (Decker, Bynum, & Weisel, 1998; Huppke, 2004; Moore, 1991; Reiner, 1992; Shelden et al., 2004). Drug dealing accounts for the high profit potential that Chicago's major gangs have reached (Chandler, 2004), and Chicago's street-corner drug sales are inseparable from the city's larger gang problem (Fitzgerald, 2003). Additionally, while Howell and Gleason (1999) reported that extensive gang control over the street-level sale and distribution of narcotics is concentrated in a relatively small number of jurisdictions, Chicago is one of those jurisdictions. Simply put, the city's open-air drug markets are gang-controlled enterprises, as evinced by the steady stream of high-profile narcotics-dealing conspiracy cases, which over the past 25 years have involved all of the city's major gangs. In this respect, the gang problem in Chicago is more complicated than it is in other cities, especially in light of the significant correlation between gang control of street-level drug dealing and other criminal activities, such as robbery, extortion, weapons violations, and violent confrontations with other gangs (Howell & Gleason, 1999; Reiner, 1992).

From 1970 through 1990, Chicago's homicide rate was only tangentially related to gang violence. However, that began to change significantly in 1991, when for the first time, gang-motivated homicides constituted 21% of the year's murders.¹ Each year since then, gang-motivated homicides have accounted for one-fifth to one-half of the city's murder total. Moreover, since 1993, except for one year, fluctuations in the number of gang-motivated homicides and the city's murder totals have moved in tandem (see Figure 1).

The one exception to this pattern occurred in 2000, when, after five years of decline, gang-motivated murders rose (up 9% in the 1999–2000 year-to-year comparison), while the city's overall murder total was still headed slightly downward in the final year of a six-year decline (down 2% from the 1999 total). As will be discussed further in this study, this single variation in the trend followed the CPD's May 2000 disbanding of its centralized gang unit. In 2001, the increase in gang murders continued, and the overall murder total followed the trend upward as well. The changing trend appeared to be due to the rise in gang-motivated homicides, particularly since all nongang-motivated murders combined totaled 272 in 2001, which was 10 fewer than the 282 that occurred during 1999.

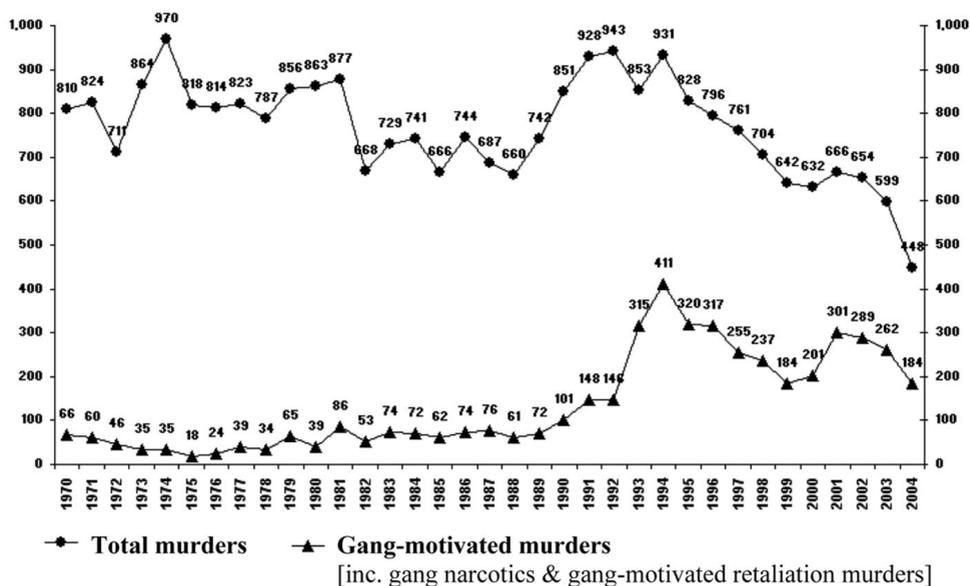


Figure 1. Chicago murders 1970–2004.

Core anti-gang reorganizations and supporting efforts

As first observed by Bensinger (1984), soon after the creation of the CPD's first gang unit in 1967, the department restructured its gang unit several times in the hope of reducing Chicago's gang problem. From 1967 to 1983, he noted seven such reorganizations. Since 1984, the CPD has both reorganized its core anti-gang resources and expanded those resources by redefining the mission of its patrol officers in the field and its sworn personnel in administrative units or assignments. From 1983 through 2003, this study has identified four core anti-gang resource reorganizations and 12 key supporting resource restructuring efforts (see Table 1).

The four core resource restructuring efforts identified in this study occurred in 1983, 1993, 2000, and 2003. The 12 identified supporting restructuring efforts occurred in 1991, 1993, 1994, 1999, 2002, and 2003. Six of these key supporting restructuring efforts occurred in 2003.

Core 1: Gang Crimes Section

In December 1983, the CPD dissolved the Bureau of Field Tactical Services and concentrated the department's anti-gang resources in the Special Functions Group of the Patrol Division (Bensinger, 1984). The section's tactical officers aggressively patrolled areas of gang activity in the city. The section's gang specialists were responsible for identifying pockets of emerging gang problems and apprehending participants in gang-related crimes. The section also provided information regarding criminal gang activity to other units in the department, including the Detective Division and units involved in 'preventive endeavors relative to gang crime' (Chicago Police Department [CPD], 1983).

Supporting 1: Flying Squad

In May 1991, the Gang Crimes Section was expanded by 100 additional officers, and the section initiated a 40-officer unit, the Concentrated Community Gang Enforcement Program. The unit was informally known as the 'Flying Squad.' Under the supervision of three sergeants, the tactical officers of the Flying Squad conducted highly concentrated saturation patrol and suppression

Table 1. CPD anti-gang reorganizations and restructuring efforts, 1984–2003.

Core resource reorganizations		
Core 1	Gang Crimes Section created/Bureau of Field Tactical Services disbanded.	Dec. 1983
Core 2	Gang Crimes Section disbanded; Gang Investigations Section & District Gang Teams created.	Jan. 1993
Core 3	Gang Investigations Section disbanded following officer misconduct.	May 2000
Core 4	Gang Intelligence Unit created within an elevated Narcotics and Gang Investigations Section.	Nov. 2003
Supporting restructuring efforts		
Supporting 1	Flying Squad of 100 officers added to the Gang Crimes Section.	May 1991
Supporting 2	Prototype implementation of Chicago's community policing effort begins.	Apr. 1993
Supporting 3	Chicago Anti-Gun Enforcement program, a gun-tracing partnership with the US BATF, initiated.	Aug. 1994
Supporting 4	Distressed Neighborhoods Program targeting drug-dealing hot spots initiated.	Jan. 1999
Supporting 5	Office of Management Accountability, modeled on the NYPD's Compstat process, created.	Feb. 2000
Supporting 6	Project Safe Neighborhoods, a partnership with the US Attorney and US BATF, initiated.	May 2002
Supporting 7	Gang Strategy Teams formed with local and federal law enforcement and prosecutors.	Jun. 2003
Supporting 8	Deployment Operations Center (DOC), a violent crime analysis unit, created.	Jun. 2003
Supporting 9	Targeted Response Unit, a violence hot spots saturation patrol force, created.	Jun. 2003
Supporting 10	Gang Tactical Teams shifted from exclusive district-level operations to the area deputy chiefs.	Jun. 2003
Supporting 11	DOC moved to the new violence-focused Bureau of Crime Strategy and Accountability.	Nov. 2003
Supporting 12	Operation Closed Market, utilizing administrative officers on hot spot patrol, initiated.	Nov. 2003

missions in areas of the city with serious gang problems. To ensure the desired level of concentration, each night's missions were limited to only two adjacent geographic areas of approximately five square blocks (Dart, 1993). For nine years, the Gang Crimes Section remained a part of the Special Functions Group of the Patrol Division, and in 1992 the section's allotment of 462 gang officers and supervisors was proudly identified by its commander as comprising the largest gang unit in the country (Dart, 1992).

Core 2: Gang Investigations Section/District Teams

In January 1993, the resources of the former Gang Crimes Section were decentralized into three groups. The first group, consisting of the section's 73 gang specialists (a rank equivalent to a detective), was reassigned to a newly formed centralized unit in the Organized Crime Division named the Gang Investigations Section (Booze, Allen, & Hamilton, 1992). The mission of this newly formed investigative unit was to pursue long-term conspiracy cases against the leaders of Chicago's major street gangs with the intent of seeking the 'dissolution of the illegal enterprises of gangs.' The section also served as the department's central repository of gang intelligence information under what came to be known as the Gang Analytical Program (GAP). However,

determining the motivation in homicide cases was, and continues to be, the responsibility of the Detective Division.

The second group of former Gang Crimes Section personnel, consisting of 192 police officers, formed eight-officer Gang Tactical Teams in 24 of the city's 25 districts. These district-level gang teams placed a dedicated force of gang officers under the immediate control of the city's district commanders. The mission of these district gang officers was to engage in street-level gang suppression patrol activities. Creation of the decentralized District Gang Tactical Teams gave district commanders a resource to deal with district and even beat-level gang problems. Just as important, however, was that after these district-level gang teams were created, senior command personnel could hold district commanders directly accountable for combating gang problems and violence in their districts (CPD, 1993).

The third group, comprising the remaining 110 police officers from the former Gang Crimes Section, formed the Special Operations Section (SOS) in the Special Functions Group of the Patrol Division. This new section involved a mobile response force that could handle incidents that required the rapid deployment of additional police power, including disasters and civil disorders as well as hostage and barricaded suspect incidents that required a special weapons and tactics team (CPD, 1995). When they had no specialized assignments or details, the unit's officers focused on specific crimes, which were often gang-related.

Supporting 2: community policing

In response to the city's surge in violent crime during the early 1990s, in April 1993, the CPD embarked upon one of its most comprehensive restructuring efforts, Chicago's Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS). Key elected and police officials insisted that the CPD could respond to crime more effectively, if police officers enlisted community participation in problem-solving activities designed to combat beat-level chronic crime and disorder problems. While emphasizing community safety and stability in ways that recognize the varying needs of the city's diverse neighborhoods, CAPS actively coordinates the delivery of a considerable array of city services, from towing abandoned vehicles, to street lighting, garbage collection, graffiti removal, building inspections, street repair, social services, and beyond. Citywide CAPS implementation began in the fall of 1994, and 1995 was the first full year that the community policing effort was active on every beat (Hartnett & Skogan, 1999).

Under the CAPS aegis, the department expanded its resources targeting beat-level gang problems by directing its investigative and support units to respond to the various CAPS service requests, and directing each district to establish a second eight-officer District Gang Tactical Team (CPD, 1995). Additionally, several other initiatives harnessed the resources of the city's other agencies to assist the CPD in addressing priority neighborhood concerns, including the gang problem. In 1996, a multi-agency program, known as the Strategic Inspections Task Force (SITF), was initiated. The SITF teamed CPD district tactical and gang tactical personnel with representatives from the city's buildings, fire, health, revenue, and law departments. Through a coordinated enforcement approach, the buildings used by gang members for narcotics trafficking and other illegal activities were targeted for regulatory code enforcement. Under the program, police officers assist inspectors from other city agencies in holding landlords accountable for maintaining control over their properties.

Supporting 3: gun tracing

In 1994, the CPD established a gun-tracing partnership, between its Gang Investigations Section and the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF), known as the Chicago Anti-Gun

Enforcement program. The program is directed toward reducing the accessibility sought by gang members to illegally purchased or transferred firearms. By tracing the sales history of a firearm, from the manufacturer through its lawful dealers, individuals involved in gunrunning to gang members have been identified and arrested. In January 2004, the CPD doubled the number of officers working on this team (CPD, 2004b).

Supporting 4: Distressed Neighborhood Program

In January 1999, the CPD launched its Distressed Neighborhood Program, which targeted drug-dealing hot spots. Under the program, the narcotics, gang, and SOS officers of the CPD's city-wide units supplemented district resources. These combined police efforts were closely tied with those of residents, community organizations, city agencies, and prosecutors from the Cook County State's Attorney's Office. In the first of a three-stage process, the drug hot spots were 'reclaimed' through aggressive saturation patrol and enforcement activities, enhanced prosecution, and prioritized city service delivery. In the second stage, these locations were 'revitalized' through community development efforts that were augmented by a continued zero-tolerance anti-gang and anti-drug enforcement approach by the police. In the third stage, the improved quality of life at these locations was 'maintained' through continued community participation in anti-crime, anti-disorder, and problem-solving activities with beat officers (CPD, 1999; Shelden et al., 2004).

Supporting 5: management accountability

In February 2000, the CPD formed the Office of Management Accountability (OMA), which was modeled on the widely emulated Compstat process of the New York Police Department (Wilson, 2000). While far less antagonistic than Compstat, the accountability processes established by OMA provided the CPD's senior command staff with the first formal forums for regularly evaluating the performance of the department's units. In the sessions, unit commanders were pressed to focus their resources toward combating chronic crime and disorder problems, including gang activity (Chicago Community Policing Evaluation Consortium [CCPEC], 2004).

Core 3: Gang Investigations Section disbanded

Although the CPD's reorganizations of its core anti-gang resources between 1967 and 2004 generally occurred following spikes in gang violence, the reorganization of May 2000 came after the sixth consecutive year of declining murders and preceded a rise in both gang-motivated murders and the city's overall yearly murder total. Officially, the decentralization of the Gang Investigations Section was intended to enhance the department's community policing efforts by providing 'Gang Crime Specialists with the same level of operational activities and skills as the beat officers who interact with the public during the tour of duty' (CPD, 2000). However, this reorganization came in the wake of two significant police gang unit scandals in 1999 and 2000. The first involved the gang unit within the Rampart Division of the Los Angeles Police Department where dozens of officers were accused of widespread perjury, evidence planting, and excessive force (Wood, 2000). The second corruption case was much smaller in scope, but directly involved the CPD's own gang unit. A gang specialist assigned to the Gang Investigations Section was indicted on federal corruption and racketeering charges and later sentenced to life in prison for his role in running a Miami-to-Chicago cocaine ring with several gang members. Lighty and Mills (2000) directly linked the then-anticipated gang unit reorganization to this case and ominously added that the 'shake-up moves away from the department's long-standing gang-fighting structure ...' (p. 1).

Following the disbanding of the gang unit in May 2000, the gang specialists were sent either to the Detective Division, to work essentially as regular detectives, or placed among the citywide narcotics enforcement teams of the Narcotics Section. The Narcotics Section was then simply renamed the Narcotics and Gang Investigation Section (NAGIS). Overall, the May 2000 gang unit reorganization dispersed most of the department's remaining gang specialists across the NAGIS, a unit that continued to focus primarily on general narcotics enforcement. As such, the department's centralized gang intelligence capacity was substantially diminished and gang information in the department became increasingly fragmented. Consequently, given the connection between Chicago's gang problem and the city's murder rate, the most significant effect of the gang specialist scandal was the disruption of the CPD's anti-gang efforts.

Driven by the increase in gang-motivated murders during 2001, the number of homicides in Chicago climbed to 666, up 5% from 2000. The percentage of Chicago's murders determined to be gang-motivated went from 32.9% in 2000, to 46.3% in 2001, and then to 46.6% in 2002. Furthermore, Chicago's 2001 murder total was 24 higher than the total in New York. This fact generated considerable media attention, which dubbed Chicago the nation's 'murder capital,' and spurred key elected officials to exert significant pressure on the CPD to enhance its anti-violence efforts. While Chicago's murder total dropped to 654 in 2002, and Los Angeles, with 658 murders, replaced Chicago as the nation's murder capital, Chicago's murder total in 2002 was still higher than New York's 580 total (Associated Press, 2003; Garza & Kandel, 2003; Heinzmann, 2003).

Supporting 6: Project Safe Neighborhoods

In May 2002, the CPD and ATF expanded their partnership through a US Attorney's Office initiative called Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN). A core element of PSN is the aggressive enforcement of strict federal gun statutes dealing with the possession and use of firearms in the four CPD districts with the highest levels of drug dealing and gang violence. Both the Illinois Department of Corrections and the Cook County Adult Probation Department assisted in the partnership by notifying felony parolees and probationers that the US Attorney's Office would review, for potential federal prosecution, any firearms-related arrests of convicted felons in the PSN districts. As part of the PSN initiative, the federal government provided financial support to man a two-officer team focusing on gun crimes in each of the CPD districts where the program was in operation (Fitzgerald, 2003).

Intensified restructuring efforts: June–November 2003

From January through May 2003 Chicago's murder total was again headed higher and in the first five months already totaled 236 murders, which was up 24 (or 11%) from the same period in 2002. In response to this increased violence, from June through November 2003, the CPD implemented several key restructuring initiatives that were specifically intended to reduce violence, particularly gang violence.

Supporting 7: Gang Strategy Teams

On 5 June 2003, the CPD announced the formation of a major multi-agency collaborative effort with its creation of five Gang Strategy Teams, one for each of the department's five patrol areas. The teams consisted of police officers, prosecutors, and federal agents from the CPD, Federal Bureau of Investigation, Drug Enforcement Administration, ATF, High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area program, US Attorney's Office, and the Cook County State's Attorney's Office. These

teams were instructed to meet weekly to share gang-related intelligence on current or potential gang conflicts, as well as the identities of gang members who were actively under investigation, targeted for enforcement action, or wanted on outstanding warrants. The teams were granted full access to the CPD's expanding and acclaimed computer information system, which contains the department's incident, arrest, gang intelligence, and other key datasets (CPD, 2003a).

Supporting 8: Deployment Operations Center

In June 2003, the CPD announced the creation of a new analytical unit, the Deployment Operations Center (DOC), which was charged with making deployment recommendations. For several decades, the CPD's anti-gang response has sought to quickly 'cool' violence hot spots. The DOC is intended to refine the CPD's hot-spot patrol efforts by continually identifying those locations where enhanced patrol would provide the greatest opportunities to interrupt the cycle of retaliatory gang violence. Crime incident data, particularly those related to firearms and narcotics dealing, and gang intelligence information on active gang rivalries are analyzed by the DOC on a daily basis. Armed with the DOC's deployment recommendations, the CPD's senior command personnel conduct weekly meetings with the heads of all department units relative to the prior week's violence and gang activity. At these meetings, the zone with the greatest risk of escalating violence is identified in each of the CPD's six Patrol Division district groupings. Beyond the assignment of the regular district resources corresponding to where the six zones are located, saturation enforcement missions are conducted by the CPD's area-based and citywide field units. The CPD's superintendent described the DOC as providing the 'backbone' of the department's response to emerging hot spots (Cline, 2004a).

Supporting 9: Targeted Response Unit

Since June 2003, a central component of the CPD's hot-spot patrol effort has been the Targeted Response Unit. Initially, the unit was staffed by 100 police officers who were reassigned from general patrol duties, particularly from districts that had lower levels of violence. By early 2004, the unit was headed by a commander and expanded to 240 officers, divided into three 80-officer teams, with each team supervised by a lieutenant and eight sergeants. Like the former Gang Crimes Section, the unit's mission has been proactive, concentrated, high-visibility, hot-spot patrol intended to suppress street-corner gang activity before it escalates into violence (Casillas, Heinzmann, Huppke, Janega, & Sadovi, 2004).

Supporting 10: Gang Tactical Teams

Since January 1993, the CPD's district Gang Tactical Teams (GTTs) had been used nearly exclusively as district-level resources. However, in June 2003, these teams were grouped at the Patrol Division's area level and made more directly available for deployment by the area deputy chiefs. The Patrol Division's area deputy chiefs had long been officially responsible for directing the deployment of the Patrol Division's resources within their chain of command. However, even under CAPS, before the reassignment of the GTTs, the area deputy chiefs had few resources that they could easily deploy across districts (Chicago Police Department, 2003b).

By grouping the GTTs at the area level, geographic accountability for district and beat-level gang problems remained firmly in the hands of the district commanders, but also increasingly with the area deputy chiefs. Area deputy chiefs now had the immediate authority to quickly allocate resources whenever and wherever gang hot spots appeared. Although district commanders, particularly those in districts with limited gang problems, no longer had the exclusive use of

their GTTs, they still directed the activities of the three other tactical teams within their districts, as well as the remaining and most sizeable anti-gang resource – the department’s beat and rapid response officers. Given the refocused attention on specific hot spots of gang violence and drug dealing, geographic accountability for addressing the gang problem continued to be fixed squarely on the 384 gang tactical officers and 48 sergeants in the 48 teams. Coupled with the five Gang Strategy Teams, created in June 2003, the Patrol Division’s areas have become new centers of activity in the CPD’s anti-gang response.

Core 4: Narcotics and Gang Investigation Section (NAGIS)

In November 2003, the NAGIS underwent significant reorganization. First, the superintendent elevated the unit by appointing a deputy chief to lead the section. Second, a veteran gang specialist was appointed as the commander of a reestablished Gang Intelligence Unit (GIU) within NAGIS. The new GIU conducts investigations into the criminal activities of Chicago’s major gangs, collects gang intelligence at the Patrol Division area level, and works with the Cook County Sheriff in gathering intelligence from gang members confined in the nation’s single largest jail facility, housing approximately 11,000 inmates. Additionally, the unit maintains and operates the CPD’s intelligence-gathering technical capacities, including those related to eavesdropping and image enhancement. By rebuilding the CPD’s centralized gang intelligence-gathering capacity, the GIU has enhanced the CPD’s ability to intervene in gang conflict – before retaliation occurs – which is an essential component of the CPD’s anti-gang strategy. As of January 2005, the GIU had a total strength of 139 officers, gang specialists, and supervisors (CPD, 2003c).

As part of the November 2003 NAGIS reorganization, the gun-tracing team was also moved under the GIU. The CPD’s centralized narcotics enforcement capacity remained in the larger unit of NAGIS. However, given the link between Chicago’s gangs and street-level drug sales, NAGIS has begun to pay greater attention to developing conspiracy cases that target the street-corner drug operations of the city’s major gangs. During 2004, NAGIS targeted approximately 40 open-air drug operations and leveled criminal charges against more than 700 individuals (CPD, 2004c). The NAGIS also has five Area Narcotics Enforcement Teams (ANET) comprised of eight narcotics officers and one gang specialist who work with the Patrol Division’s area deputy chiefs. Taking a buy–bust enforcement approach, ANET activities expand the CPD’s efforts to target emerging hot spots. These efforts are further strengthened by the money laundering and asset forfeiture capacities of NAGIS, since seizing the profits from drug dealers is a critical anti-gang effort. Finally, the GAP unit was moved to the DOC in order to consolidate the gang data analysis function with the deployment zone recommendation process.

Supporting 11: crime strategy and accountability

Simultaneous to the November 2003 reorganization of NAGIS, the DOC was moved to the newly formed Bureau of Crime Strategy and Accountability (BCSA). The BCSA was formally created on 1 January 2004 and charged with managing CAPS implementation and oversight, coordinating the CPD’s management accountability sessions, identifying emerging crime patterns, and recommending resource deployment strategies. The new bureau also included a new evening-hours field commander to monitor the department’s enforcement activities in the designated DOC zones, as well as the department’s procedural auditors and inspectors (CPD, 2004a). In July 2003, the CPD’s management accountability processes had already become more directly focused on fostering results-based responses to gang activity with the introduction of Violence Initiative Strategy and Evaluation (VISE) meetings (CCPEC, 2004). At VISE sessions, the command

personnel from the Patrol and Detective Divisions for one CPD area are jointly reviewed with respect to the response by their units to street violence, particularly gang-motivated violence.

Supporting 12: Operation Closed Market

In November 2003, the CPD initiated yet another deployment effort targeting the city's gang-narcotics hot spots. Known as Operation Closed Market, this unconventional restructuring effort enlisted the officers assigned to the CPD's administrative functions directly into the anti-gang field response. Under this initiative, approximately 1000 police officers and sergeants, who are normally assigned to administrative tasks, are redirected to spend 20% of their working hours patrolling the 100 most active drug-dealing locations in the city. By placing uniformed officers in marked vehicles at these locations for hours at a time, the operation is intended to prevent drug sales and thereby reduce the gang violence that often accompanies the illegal drug trade (CPD, 2003d, 2003e).

Discussion

Over the past 20 years, Chicago has experienced one of the nation's most serious gang problems. The city's residents have consistently cited gang activity as a major concern; the city's major gangs have been involved in extensive street-corner drug dealing; and since 1993, gang violence has been responsible for the yearly fluctuations in the city's murder total. In focusing on the reduction of violent crime, particularly homicide, the CPD has also had to attack the deeper roots of Chicago's gang problem, especially the nexus between gangs and the city's drug trade. In addressing these issues, without question, the CPD's efforts to restructure its resources have been substantial. From 1983 through 2003, the CPD instituted four major reorganizations of its core anti-gang units: creating the Gang Crimes Section in December 1983; replacing that section with a centralized Gang Investigations Section and decentralized District Gang Tactical Teams in January 1993; disbanding the Gang Investigations Section in May 2000, transferring its personnel to the department's detective and narcotics units; and creating a new GIU in November 2003. Even beyond these four core anti-gang resource reorganizations, an additional 12 restructuring activities have supported or expanded the CPD's overall anti-gang effort. These supporting efforts have included: adding more officers to its core gang units; creating new hot-spot response units; fixing a long-term responsibility on beat officers across the city to identify and engage in problem solving with community residents relative to gang activity; expanding and improving the department's gang intelligence-gathering and analysis capabilities; entering into partnerships with other law enforcement agencies and prosecutors at both the local and federal level; utilizing support and administrative personnel in its anti-gang response; and implementing a regular system of management accountability measures that maintain the department's riveted focus on gang-violence hot spots. In October 2004, CPD Superintendent Cline hosted a gang summit of criminal justice practitioners, and his statements to the participants showed that these restructuring efforts will remain a key element of the CPD's anti-gang response (Cline, 2004b).

This analysis of the CPD's anti-gang efforts since 1983 also supports the contention that the department's willingness to reorganize has been a central element of its anti-gang strategy. Charged by the city's elected officials and residents to drive down the city's murder total, since June 2003, the CPD has been even more committed to restructuring its anti-gang resources. Furthermore, these efforts appear to have had at least some favorable impact. Specifically, the CPD's anti-gang restructuring efforts have contributed to reductions in the number of gang-motivated murders, particularly in 2004, and enhanced the department's overall effectiveness in combating gang activity. Clearly, the CPD's reorganization efforts that began in June 2003 were

intended to reduce the homicide rate. Despite a slight downturn in murders during 2002 from the spike in 2001, during the first five months of 2003, the year-to-date murder total was again up 24 (or 11%) from the same period in 2002. However, by the end of July 2003, the year-to-date comparison showed that the 236 murders at that point in 2003 were up only 10 (or 3%) from 2002. Additionally, in July 2003 there were just 25 murders (see Figure 2). This monthly total was less than half the 51 murders that occurred in June 2003. It also bears noting that from July 2003 through June 2004, the one-year period after the CPD initiated its aggressive 2003 reorganization effort, each month the monthly murder total showed a significant reduction from the same month in the prior year. These comparisons strongly suggest that the CPD was immediately gaining ground in its drive to reduce the number of murders in the city. By the end of August, the year-to-date comparisons showed that the 2003 murder total was 403, a decrease of 19 murders or 4%. Ultimately, Chicago's 2003 murder total was down 8.4% from 2002, and by the end of 2004, murders were down 31.5% from the 2002 total.

Conclusions

The sudden and sharp reductions in Chicago's murder rate from mid-2003 through 2004 followed the CPD's most recent and extensive restructuring efforts that specifically targeted the city's murder, gang violence, and drug trafficking problems. However, a crucial precursor to the CPD's success in blunting the city's most recent spikes in gang violence was its earlier establishment of an organizational culture that embraced longer-term problem solving over more traditional measures of assessing effectiveness. As evidenced by the CPD's successful implementation of its renowned approach to community policing, by 2003 the CPD had already demonstrated an ability to effectively undertake substantial organizational change. Although the CPD cannot receive sole credit for Chicago's recent and dramatic downturn in violence, several factors suggest that the department's efforts were instrumental in reducing homicides. These include: the nexus between the level of gang violence and the city's yearly murder rate; the anti-gang focus of the CPD's restructuring efforts; the timing of the 2003 downturn in the city's murder total; the extent of the violence reduction; and the fact that none of the social issues typically associated with fluctuations in crime are known to have shifted dramatically in Chicago during June through November 2003. Taken together, these factors suggest a strong correlation between the city's violence reduction and the CPD's organizational changes.

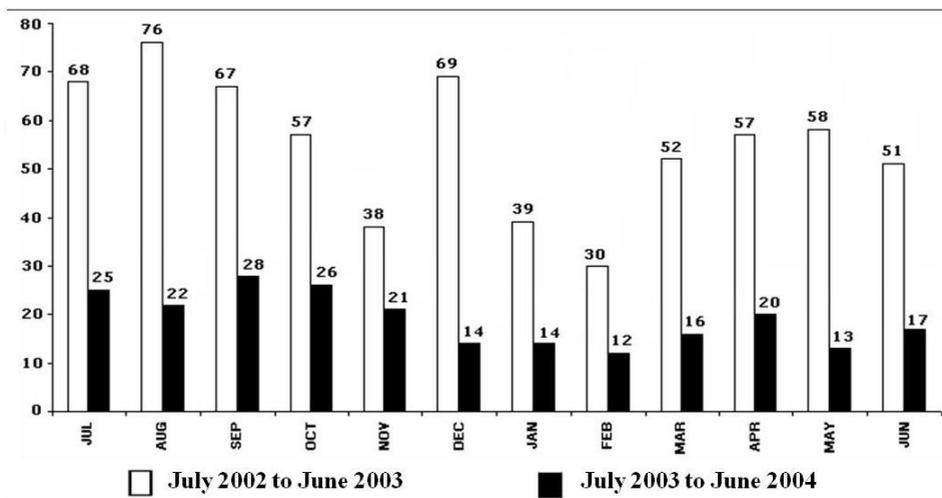


Figure 2. Chicago murders month-to-month comparison: July 2002–June 2003 and July 2003–June 2004.

During the October 2006 International Association of Police Chiefs conference in Boston, US Attorney General Alberto Gonzalez lauded the violence reductions that were sustained in Chicago during 2005, following the 2003 and 2004 reductions. As violent crime was rising nationally, Gonzalez identified the CPD as a model for other cities to follow (Sneed, 2006). Under more traditional policing approaches, police executives were comfortable in merely measuring success in terms of arrests. However, in Chicago, proactive gang suppression that prevents violence before it occurs, as well as specific initiatives that help create community environments that are more resistant to crime and gangs have become the focus. The seriousness, persistence, and sophistication of Chicago's gang problem and its association to the city's high levels of crime and disorder, particularly the murder rate, necessitated a sustained commitment to curtailing gang violence and drug trafficking. Undoubtedly residents would agree that reductions in crime and violence are the more relevant measurement of police effectiveness. Relative to gang violence in Chicago, the CPD has deliberately and successfully changed its organizational structure on several occasions. In so doing, the CPD answered Bensinger's call (1984) for a comprehensive approach to the gang problem, 'rather than repeated gang-related police reorganizations,' through reorganization. As such, the new challenge to police departments is this: when faced with rising gang violence, adapt always; be careful when reorganizing, but do so whenever necessary to effectively combat the problem.

Note

1. Block and Block (1993) are often referenced relative to the hot-spot character of street gang violence in Chicago and the connection between gang violence and drug trafficking. It should be noted that the referenced analysis by Block and Block examined Chicago homicides from 1987 to 1990 and as such predates the changing pattern of gang violence in Chicago that occurred in 1991. While the hot-spot character of gang violence has continued in Chicago, the involvement of the city's gangs in drug dealing intensified dramatically after 1990.

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