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Evaluating the Impact of Team Policing in Las Vegas, Nevada

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Evaluating the Impact of Team Policing in Las Vegas, Nevada

Natalie N. Martinez
Department of Criminal Justice

Introduction

Team policing involves the continuous geographical assignment of both patrol officers and investigators to the same, defined area which allows them to become familiar with area residents and knowledgeable about community concerns. Team policing also gives the officers assigned to an area the authority to develop and implement individualized solutions to the neighborhood problems that can lead to crime and disorder. However, because much of the literature on past team policing interventions is limited to descriptions of their planning and development phases, little is known about the impact of team policing as a crime control strategy.

Team Policing in Las Vegas, Nevada

On March 27, 2012, the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department began a team policing intervention in the Palos Verdes neighborhood (Figure 1, in green).

Using a combination of community outreach and problem-focused policing strategies, the intervention is designed to improve police-community relations and reduce the amount of crime and disorder in the area.

Research Questions

1. What impact does team policing have on violent crime, property crime, and disorder?
2. Does team policing cause crime displacement or a diffusion of crime control benefits to adjacent areas?

Methodology

This study evaluates the impact of team policing using violent crime, property crime, and disorder calls for service data provided by the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department.

Three non-equivalent control areas were selected in consultation with the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department and are similar to the Palos Verdes neighborhood in terms of their size, demographics, and number of calls for service in 2011.

The catchment area is outlined in blue in Figure 1. Though this area has also been the location of numerous crime and disorder incidents, it did not receive the team policing intervention. Calls for service data from the catchment area were analyzed to determine if crime displacement or a diffusion of crime control benefits occurred as a result of the team policing intervention.

Results

This study focuses on the impact of team policing during the first nine complete months of the intervention (April–December 2012). Figure 2 shows that the weekly numbers of calls for service in the Palos Verdes neighborhood increased during the intervention period as compared to the nine-month period prior to the intervention (July 2011–March 2012).

Table 1 shows the results of the independent samples t-tests used to compare the mean weekly calls for service from the intervention period to those from the nine-month period immediately prior to the intervention.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Violent</th>
<th>Property</th>
<th>Disorder</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Palos Verdes</td>
<td>21 (1.41)</td>
<td>21 (1.41)</td>
<td>25 (1.60)</td>
<td>67 (2.01)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Area 1</td>
<td>18 (1.30)</td>
<td>18 (1.30)</td>
<td>20 (1.50)</td>
<td>58 (1.90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Area 2</td>
<td>17 (1.20)</td>
<td>17 (1.20)</td>
<td>18 (1.40)</td>
<td>52 (1.70)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Control Area 3</td>
<td>15 (1.10)</td>
<td>15 (1.10)</td>
<td>16 (1.30)</td>
<td>46 (1.60)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 shows the results of the paired samples t-tests used to compare the mean weekly calls for service from the intervention period to those from the same nine-month period in the previous year (April–December 2011).

<table>
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As shown in Table 2, the mean calls for service in the Palos Verdes neighborhood increased in all categories during the intervention period as compared to the same period in 2011 and again, both the mean violent and total calls increased significantly. As with the pre-intervention comparison, the catchment area adjacent to the Palos Verdes neighborhood did not experience significant changes in any of the call categories. Unlike the previous comparison, neither Control Areas 1 nor 2 experienced significant changes in any of the call categories as compared to the same period in 2011, which is evidence of a seasonal effect. Similar to the pre-intervention comparison, Control Area 3 experienced decreases in all call categories with significant decreases in the mean property, disorder, and total calls per week.

Conclusions

First, the results of the analyses indicate that team policing does have an impact on crime and disorder, though it was not in the anticipated direction. However, the calls for service increases in the Palos Verdes neighborhood may be indicative of improved police-community relations rather than an increasing crime rate. Second, there was no evidence of crime displacement or a diffusion of crime control benefits as a result of the intervention.

Finally, it was later determined that the calls for service decreases in Control Area 3 were related to new management strategies at multiple rental properties in the area.

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