PART I

CRIME, INSECURITY, AND POLICING

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Introduction

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The story of community policing has important roots in Chicago. In 1993, responding to an unprecedented surge in crime, the city embarked on an ambitious experiment to transform how policing works. Violence associated with gang warfare and the crack cocaine epidemic was widespread, and citizens who feared for their safety expressed deep dissatisfaction with the performance of the police department. It was also clear that traditional policing approaches were falling short. Chicago had the second-largest police department in the United States with more than fifteen thousand officers. But despite a growing number of arrests, an overflowing jail population, and massive seizures of weapons, the police were unable to get the crime problem under control.

The central idea underlying the reform was relatively simple: Shift the police from a reactive mode, in which they respond to incidents as they occur, to a more proactive mode that focuses on the prevention or reduction of crime. In Chicago, this shift took the form of what they called "problem-solving." The goal of Chicago's Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) was to realign the entire police department around a commitment to more community-oriented policing (Skogan and Hartnett, 1997). Police and citizens would work jointly to identify a set of priority problems in the community, develop a shared analysis of the underlying causes, generate a variety of interventions, and evaluate progress together. Chicago's approach went beyond prior efforts to more deeply engage with residents through designated community engagement officers and public meetings. Problem-solving became everyone's job. Residents were involved in all aspects of the new approach. And the program focused on more than crime alone: City agencies were meant to work together to address a wide range of neighborhood concerns. To tackle the new challenges of policing in the 1990s, the city's leadership believed that a total overhaul in mindset and approach was necessary.

Recognizing the significance of this change in practice, Chicago implemented this approach in stages (Skogan and Hartnett, 1997). The police department began working in five of the city's twenty-five police districts, using these pilots as an opportunity to experiment and learn about the program's effects. During this initial phase, patrol officers were permanently assigned to fixed beats and trained in problem-solving strategies. The department formed citizen committees to advise district commanders and held regular neighborhood meetings. City agencies were also tasked to respond to needs identified through CAPS' community engagement. As the pilots were unfolding, the city organized the infrastructure for a broader rollout, training officers citywide in problem-solving, creating a coordinated system for delivering city services, and launching a civic education campaign. Within two years, CAPS was being implemented across the city.

This overhaul in Chicago's approach to policing coincided with a dramatic reduction in crime: Overall violent crime fell by 49 percent between 1991 and 2002. According to city officials, violent crime and property crime decreased in each of the city's twenty-five police districts. While the decline in crime began before Chicago launched CAPS (and mirrored reductions taking place elsewhere in the United States), the program's key stakeholders claimed that community policing helped this trend along. Moreover, an independent evaluation of the CAPS program concluded that the program had a significant impact on levels of crime and police–community relations during its first decade (Skogan and the Chicago Community Policing Evaluation Consortium, 2004). Even during the experimental period, some of the benefits of the new approach came quickly into view (Hartnett and Skogan, 1999). Citizens grew more optimistic about the areas in which they lived, reported greater satisfaction with police responsiveness to neighborhood problems, and perceived a reduction in police aggressiveness. Improvements in police–community relations were apparent not only among Whites but also among African Americans. As one resident of the tenth district said, "You have a sense of camaraderie and cooperation between beat officers and community residents; you lose that sense of fear." A senior command staff member shared a similar view: "I can't see policing in any other way. When I was growing up, there was a real separation between citizens and the police. Now there's a genuine trust that's come because they know us and they know we can effect change together."

Chicago wasn't the only city to experiment with a more community-based approach to policing. During the same period, Boston confronted an epidemic of youth violence with roots in street-level drug markets. Working with neighborhood leaders, researchers, and youth service providers through the Boston Gun Project, the police department identified the need to focus on "disrupting vendetta-like hostility among a small population of highly active criminal offenders" (Braga and Winship, 2005). They designed a police–community collaboration, Operation Ceasefire, that engaged law enforcement personnel, youth workers, advocacy groups, and local clergy in targeted efforts

to disrupt ongoing gang conflicts. These efforts, which they dubbed "pulling every lever," involved enforcement activities targeted at the gangs as well as community outreach and service provision designed to help gang members make the transition away from illegal activity.

The results were dramatic. In a study sponsored by the US Department of Justice, a team of scholars found that Operation Ceasefire was associated with a 63 percent decrease in the number of monthly youth homicides, a 32 percent decrease in calls to the police for shots fired, and a 25 percent decrease in the monthly number of gun assaults (Braga et al., 2001). In the four years after the program was implemented, youth homicides in the city dropped by almost two-thirds. Moreover, many prominent critics of Boston's police force were enlisted as partners in solving the significant challenges the city faced. This helped to rebuild trust with community members, especially in those communities that had lost confidence in the police. While cities across the country were experiencing falling crime during the same period, key stakeholders were quick to celebrate the success of Boston's new approach to police–community collaboration, and research made the case that Operation Ceasefire played an important role.

These cases, among others, were emblematic of a dramatic transformation in policing that took place throughout the 1990s. While standard models of policing oriented officers to respond to the occurrence of a crime, new innovations were pushing the police to be proactive agents of crime prevention. These innovations took many forms, but community policing was one of the most prominent. This meant moving beyond the obligations and responsibilities traditionally associated with being a police officer (e.g., response, investigation, arrest) in order to identify and address the concerns about which residents cared most. It also often required deliberate and intensive engagement with community members and local leaders.

Highly visible experiments by change-oriented police chiefs, as in Boston and Chicago, contributed to this wholesale shift in practices. At the same time, changes in the social, political, and economic environment around policing also played a critical role. In particular, police departments were coming under enormous pressure to address a growing fear of crime, the increasing sense of social disorder in urban neighborhoods, the growth of gangs and drugs, and persistent perceptions of bias and discrimination in police behavior. Community groups often led the way in raising concerns about crime and public safety locally, and they increasingly demanded a seat at the table in shaping cities' responses. Many community activists were skeptical of the traditional policing model. They were willing to work with the police only if collaboration was accompanied by a transformation in policing practices.

Within a decade, community policing patterned on ideas from Boston and Chicago had spread like wildfire (Hickman and Reaves, 2006). By 1999, almost two-thirds of local police departments in the United States reported that they had officers serving in full-time community policing roles. About half of officers

worked for agencies attempting to do problem-solving in a systematic way. Most Americans lived in places where police had formalized problem-solving partnerships with community groups, and virtually everyone lived in places where the police reported meeting regularly with neighborhood residents. The federal government contributed to the adoption of these new practices with the passage of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act in 1994, which included an allotment of US$9 billion to hire a hundred thousand new police officers. The act specified that one of the roles of these new officers should be "to provide additional and more effective training to law enforcement officers to enhance their problem solving, service, and other skills needed in interacting with members of the community." The legislation also created the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services to coordinate the spending of the new federal funds. Given these investments, it's no surprise that by 2012, more than 90 percent of police departments in the United States reported using strategies of community-oriented policing and that nearly all departments serving above fifty thousand residents had embedded community policing in their mission statements (Weisburd and Majmundar, 2018).

Community policing is not without its detractors, however, and their voices gained some prominence after the murder of George Floyd by police in Minneapolis. One line of criticism focuses on the fact that it is the police who select which community members participate in town hall meetings and whom they approach on patrol (Schenwar and Law, 2020), and this power can be used to manipulate community involvement to favor police or forefront the opinions of "virtuous citizens" to the exclusion of others (Lyons, 2002; González and Mayka, 2022). Scholars have raised questions about the effectiveness of town hall meetings, finding in a major US city that police responded to three-quarters of citizen comments over seven years with *silence* (Cheng, 2020). Another scholar called community policing a "safety valve" used by police to divide activists demanding reform (González, 2019b).

Yet in spite of these criticisms, community policing remains a popular policy in the United States. Amid Chicago's most recent crime wave, former mayor Rahm Emanuel sought to revitalize the city's famed community policing program. President Biden championed community policing in response to the demands for institutional reform that followed the murder of George Floyd, mentioning it on the campaign trail, as a key plank of his justice reform platform, and in his first State of the Union address. Moreover, the popularity of community policing is now a global phenomenon. It is advanced as a solution to the mistrust that characterizes citizen–police relations in many countries in the Global South and has become one of the United States' most frequently exported policing practices (Braga et al., 2019). Police agencies have implemented community policing on six continents; the policy is promoted locally by police forces and externally by donors (Government Accountability Office, 2012; International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2015; European Crime Prevention Network, 2018; United Nations Department of Peacekeeping

Operations, 2018). The International Association of Chiefs of Police encourages police agencies to adopt community policing as "the key operational philosophy in mission statements, strategic plans, and leadership development programs" (International Association of Chiefs of Police, 2015).

Despite this extraordinary momentum to adopt community policing, we have little hard evidence of its beneficial effects. A 2017 review by a panel of the National Academy of Sciences emphasized how difficult it is to generalize about the possible effects of community policing, given that it means different things in different contexts. Our own systematic review of the evidence identified forty-three randomized trials of community policing – the "gold standard" in research design – most of which study either police presence (e.g., foot patrols) or problem-oriented policing (a set of strategies for identifying, prioritizing, and addressing crime problems). While the weight of the evidence suggests that these interventions reduce crime, several studies have mixed or null results. There is also little evidence on how these interventions impact perceptions of insecurity or the frequency of police abuse. Perhaps most notably, the existing studies are mainly from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia. A very small number come from the Global South. There is a real danger that community policing continues to spread not because of its beneficial impact but because it sounds good or is so popular that "no one wants to be seen as out of step with the times" (Skogan and Roth, 2004).

It is this gulf between the enthusiasm for community policing and the empirical evidence of its impacts that motivates this book. This is a special concern considering that community policing is celebrated as a best practice and exported around the world, including into new contexts with different histories, institutional models, and local capacities. Can community policing reduce crime in the Global South? Do these practices help to build trust between citizens and the police? And if they do, under what conditions can community policing be more or less effective?

WHAT IS COMMUNITY POLICING?

While policymakers and practitioners have embraced community policing, it remains challenging to pin down conceptually. Broadly, it has been described as "both a philosophy of policing and an organizational strategy in which police agencies embrace a vision of their function that is larger than just reacting to and processing crime," and which "generally entails the inclusion by police agencies of community groups and citizens in coproducing safety, crime prevention, and solutions to local concerns" (Weisburd and Majmundar, 2018). It involves departing from traditional policing by including "average citizens directly in the police process" to build channels of dialogue and improve police–citizen collaboration (Greene and Mastrofski, 1988).

The idea behind community policing is that greater engagement will change how citizens think about the costs and benefits of cooperating with the

police to coproduce security. Many theories hold that citizens are important sources of information that help police allocate their effort and time to reduce crime effectively. As a result, shifting the cost–benefit calculus of citizens to cooperate is important. Community policing aims to foster greater cooperation by increasing the visibility and accessibility of officers, creating an environment in which collaboration is a norm, and changing perceptions about both the intentions and capacity of the police. Community policing can also directly impact police behavior by changing the attitudes of rank-and-file officers and introducing some accountability to the community for police behavior. By expanding opportunities for communication and engagement, community policing is designed to improve trust in the police, generate greater cooperation by citizens with the police, and reduce the crime rate.

But moving from the concept to actual practice is difficult. Skogan and Roth (2004) capture the challenge nicely: "Abstract concepts need to be turned into lists of practical, day-to-day activities and then enshrined in enforceable orders for officers in the field. The troops out there have to actually go along with those orders … It can also be surprisingly difficult to get the community involved … and to get other city bureaucracies to take ownership of problems raised in police-community meetings."

In reality, the list of activities that constitute community policing is diverse and varies across contexts. Community policing programs often involve more frequent beat patrols, decentralized decision-making, community engagement programs such as town halls, and problem-oriented policing programs to act on information from citizens to prevent crime (Skogan, 2004). But they don't always include all of these elements or deliver them in the same way. This has led some to describe the concept as "plastic," since it allows for a large and evolving range and complexity of programmatic models (Eck and Rosenbaum, 1994). Yet existing models appear to have three common elements: a strategy for community involvement, a problem-solving orientation, and a commitment to devolving authority and responsibility farther down the organizational hierarchy.

Advocates of community policing happily embrace this diversity of practice, arguing that "the approach leaves setting priorities and the activities that are needed to achieve them largely to residents and the police who serve in their neighborhoods." Indeed, they argue that "how it looks in practice *should* vary considerably from place to place, in response to unique local situations and circumstances" (Skogan, 2019). In this sense, the localization of community policing to each context is a critical feature of the strategy rather than a design flaw or failure of implementation.

But this diversity of practice also introduces some challenges when we think about how to effectively assess the impact of this innovative approach to policing. The first challenge is one of comparison: How can we ensure that the community policing programs we evaluate are similar enough to be treated as comparable? The second relates to outcomes. That is, if community programs

vary fundamentally in their design, how should we approach the measurement of outcomes? Are different outcomes needed to reflect the distinct theories of change that underlie approaches adopted in different contexts? These questions have bedeviled efforts "to come to an overall assessment regarding whether or not community policing works in the United States" (Skogan 2019). One goal of this book is to demonstrate how, with a prospective research design, we can make progress toward answering this question more confidently for the Global South.

HOW DOES CONTEXT MATTER?

The fact that community policing varies so much in practice also raises some deeper questions about the role of context. Because community policing programs are not simply a list of best practices to be adopted, they reflect important and essential features of the local context in which they are implemented.

The design of any given community policing program is a function of the choices of the police leadership, which says something about their personal commitments and their sense of what is and isn't possible with their rank-and-file officers. It will also be shaped by the realities of prior and present engagement between the police agency and its surrounding community. A history of mistrust, failed efforts at engagement, or patterns of corruption and abuse might sharply constrain the forms of community outreach that are possible. On the other hand, a history of openness, prior outreach, and mutual trust could make possible all kinds of programmatic interventions that would not be otherwise available. Finally, the form that a community policing program takes will undoubtedly reflect something important about the political and institutional environment in which it is adopted. How much flexibility does the police leadership have to innovate? How much pressure do they face from the community to act?

In many ways, these contextual features are inseparable from any community policing program itself. We observe them jointly, and context is doing a lot of important work in shaping where community policing programs are adopted, what form they take, and how seriously they are pursued. This is just as likely to be true in the Global South as community policing is adapted to countries with different policing models, political contexts, and prior relationships between police and citizens, and in a context in which the decision to adopt community policing is influenced by donor agencies that are willing to foot the bill.

Yet because our goal in this book is to understand whether community policing works on average, we will set aside this background context at first. Our design strives for as much comparability as possible in the implementation of community policing across contexts and in the measurement of outcomes. This approach enables us to ask and answer questions about the high-level strategy of community policing and its likely impacts across contexts. Only

then, after observing these results, do we return to underlying contextual differences in an effort to understand how they condition the interventions we actually observe and the outcomes that are realized.

This isn't to deny that context matters. It does. But our approach reflects the overriding ambition of this project: to help policymakers and practitioners understand the likely impact of the current approach to promoting community policing and to begin exploring the conditions under which this organizational strategy can be effective in the Global South.

ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITY POLICING

Investigating the effects of community policing means asking how police departments operationalize these concepts in different contexts and whether their localized applications have comparable effects. In this book, we tackle the challenge of assessing the context-specific effects of community policing through a coordinated, multisite randomized trial in six contexts across the Global South.

We partnered with police departments in Santa Catarina State in Brazil; the city of Medellín in Colombia; Liberia's capital city, Monrovia; Sorsogon Province in the Philippines; rural areas throughout Uganda; and two districts in Punjab Province in Pakistan. At each site, we collaborated with the relevant local or national policy agency to identify concrete, locally appropriate ways to make a meaningful increase in community policing, informed by global best practices. Our interventions focused on increasing the frequency of beat patrols, community meetings, reporting hotlines, and problem-oriented policing. In some contexts, this meant building on existing approaches, whereas in others a community orientation was largely new. The result is a set of interventions with core features in common and complementary elements that differ across contexts.

In addition, the research teams coordinated on an experimental design and common outcome measures of crime, insecurity, and trust in the police, all of which we preregistered. Across the coordinated studies, we investigated whether implementing these community policing practices generated changes in the level of trust in the police, increased citizen cooperation with the police, and lowered the crime rate, among other outcomes. We measured these outcomes with harmonized surveys of citizens and police officers and using administrative crime data from the police. With this research design, we interpret our effects as being estimates of what happens when a police agency decides to increase its commitment to community policing, tailored on the basis of its existing police practices and local context.

Such an approach to coordinated, multisite randomized trials is not new, but this study marks the first time it has been applied to policing. This approach is called a "metaketa" – the Basque word for accumulation. In designing a study of this form, we are responding to three broader impediments to cumulative

learning in the social sciences (Dunning et al., 2019). The first is that of study sparsity: Researchers are rewarded for innovative, high-impact studies, and there are few returns to replication. This leaves policymakers and practitioners often reliant on a single study in reaching decisions about how to intervene in the world. A second challenge is study heterogeneity. Even when there are multiple studies, it's difficult to draw firm conclusions about the effects of an intervention because neither the intervention nor the measurement strategy is harmonized. A final impediment is selective reporting, especially the tendency to report the most positive results and the failure to publish null findings. These patterns of scientific practice – common in every field – make it difficult to comprehensively assess the evidence and to learn about which policies do and do not work. A metaketa seeks to solve these problems through a coordinated set of field experiments designed to answer a shared question, with common interventions and harmonized outcome measure, as well as shared standards of preregistration, transparency, and replication intended to guard against selective reporting and publication bias. Three prior metaketas have been completed focusing on information and accountability, taxation, and natural resource governance.

This approach enables us to address four limitations of the existing evidence base on community policing. First, we report a harmonized and comprehensive set of outcomes including crime rates, citizen perceptions of and cooperation with the police, and police abuse. We need evidence on all of these outcomes in order to determine whether community policing impacts both crime and police–community relations, as well as whether one outcome can be improved without (positive) changes in another. Second, we examine local efforts that strive to adopt multiple practices advanced by community policing advocates, including police–community forums, increased police presence in communities, and problem-oriented policing. By studying these diverse practices together – in a common intervention – we can capture the interactive and cumulative effects of these components, rather than treating them in isolation. Third, as a metaketa, we designed the studies jointly, preregistered them, and implemented them during the same period, thus increasing our confidence in the comparability of the results and avoiding the challenge of selective reporting. We know that the lack of comparability among interventions and measurement strategies has stood in the way of cumulative assessments of the impacts of community policing. Finally, with cases drawn from six sites across three continents, we expand the scope of evidence on community policing to the Global South, where the reforms are increasingly deployed, and where there is considerable momentum to address high levels of crime, police abuse, and mistrust.

WHAT DOES THE EVIDENCE SAY?

Our findings are clear, robust, and credible. Despite the genuine commitment of local police agencies to change their practices, we find that the community