

Process Evaluation of an Anti-Gang Initiative

As part of its Project Safe Neighborhoods, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) provided funding to 12 relatively large cities to develop and implement a comprehensive anti-gang initiative (CAGI) intended to prevent and reduce gang violence. CAGI was comprised of several strategies to achieve these goals through suppression (i.e., arrests and surveillance), social intervention (i.e., emergency responses to acts of violence), organizational change (i.e., creating broad consensus about gang problems), community mobilization (i.e., mobilizing community resources to address factors related to gangs), and social opportunities provision (i.e., expansion of job-end educational opportunities). Edmund McGarrell and his colleagues (2013) conducted both a process and impact evaluation of the CAGI initiative. To evaluate whether the initiative was implemented as planned, the process evaluation component of the project surveyed CAGI project coordinators in all sites along with site visits and interviews with federal partners coordinating with CAGI.

To measure the degree to which various components of CAGI were implemented, the survey asked site coordinators if their program implemented various dimensions of the program, including the rigor of *research* (i.e., if there was a research partner gathering data for the project), the commitment of *law enforcement* strategies (i.e., the different policing strategies that were employed), and the diversity and range of *prevention* strategies that were adopted by the site. In addition to subscales that measured each of these domains of research, law enforcement, and prevention, McGarrell et al. (2013) created a standardized scale that measured the degree of implementation across sites that ranged from a low of 3 to a high of 13. Control cities in the analysis that did not have CAGI implemented in their city were given a value of 0 for the index. Exhibit 10.2 provides a list of the survey questions that asked about the possible prevention strategies that were implemented by sites.

The average implementation scale score for all cities was 1.22. This is relatively low, considering the possible high score was equal to 9, indicating that many of the strategies that could have been implemented across the CAGI sites were not. Still, when this implementation scale was used to predict gun homicide rates across cities, it was found to reduce gun homicides by about 12%. When McGarrell and his colleagues (2013) examined the type of programs that had the most effect on gun homicides, law enforcement strategies appeared to have the largest effect. These law enforcement strategies included comprehensive police partnerships and proactive enforcement strategies such as