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Enhancing Citizen Participation and Solving Serious Crime: A National Evaluation of Crime Stoppers Programs

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"Crime Stoppers" has emerged as one of the most rapidly expanding and highly visible crime control strategies in the Western world, yet research on this program is extremely limited. This article reports some of the major findings of a national evaluation funded by the National Institute of Justice. The evaluation adopted a variety of strategies and methodologies, including national surveys of media executives and Crime Stoppers program coordinators, case studies to understand program processes and effects, and a randomized experiment to examine the effects of varying reward sizes on callers' perceptions, attitudes, and behaviors. Crime Stoppers is a very popular program that features the mass media in a pivotal and uniquely cooperative role with law enforcement and the community. Despite some impressive program statistics on felony arrests, convictions, and recovery of property and drugs, the impact of these interventions on community crime levels remains unknown. Furthermore, Crime Stoppers has been criticized by journalists, civil libertarians, and members of the legal profession for offering cash rewards and anonymity to encourage more citizen participation in the criminal justice system.

Fear of crime and a widespread perception that the crime problem in the United States cannot be handled by the police alone has spurred a number of citizen-based programs to facilitate crime reporting and

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prevention (see DuBow, McCabe, and Kaplan, 1979; Feins, 1983; Lavrakas, 1985; McPherson and Siloway, 1980; Roehl and Cook, 1984; Rosenbaum, 1986, 1988). One of the most visible and popular crime control programs in the United States is "Crime Stoppers." Various known as "Crime Solvers," "Secret Witness," and "Crime Line," these self-sustaining programs utilize the mass media, the community, and law enforcement in an unprecedented way to involve private citizens in the fight against serious crime. Based on the premise that many individuals are unwilling to provide information to the police about criminal activity, either because of apathy or fear of retaliation (MacAleese and Tilly, 1983), Crime Stoppers provides *cash rewards* as an incentive (typically ranging from \$100 to \$1,000), and offers *anonymity* to persons who come forth with details that lead to the arrest and/or indictment of suspected criminals.

During nearly a full decade following their initial implementation, no empirical research had been done to describe these programs or to examine critically their usefulness or impact. This article summarizes the results of the first and only national evaluation of Crime Stoppers. The research employed several different methodologies to explore a series of basic questions relating to program operations and effects.

BACKGROUND

Crime Stoppers programs are designed to encourage citizen participation in the process of solving difficult felony crimes. Solving serious crimes is an onerous task that constantly challenges law enforcement. There are many factors that limit the effectiveness of police performance. Of paramount importance is the ability of witnesses and callers to provide reliable information about the identity of suspects. Without basic information from people who know about the crime incident, the probability of solving any particular offense is drastically reduced (Skogan and Antunes, 1979). Stated differently, only a small percentage of arrests can be attributed to police-initiated contacts, whereas most arrests are the result of citizen-initiated contacts. Clearance rates are low (about 1 in 5 felony crimes) because detectives usually do not have the necessary "leads" from the community. Researchers estimate that even doubling or tripling the number of detectives would have virtually no effect on clearance rates (Eck, 1982).

Indeed, a number of police studies demonstrate that traditional strategies of policing, which typically ignore the fundamental role of citizens in the prevention and control of crime, have been unsuccessful (Eck and Spelman, 1987; Kelling, 1988). Consequently, researchers, policymakers, and practitioners have called for increased citizen participation and responsibility in the fight against crime (see Lavrakas, 1985; Rosenbaum, 1986). The fundamental problem is that citizen participation in anticrime programs (or even participation in crime reporting activities) remains very low. Hence the search for innovative appeals to the citizenry has led to the development and marketing of Crime Stoppers programs throughout the country.

The History and Nature of Crime Stoppers

Recognizing the critical role of the private citizen in solving crime, Greg MacAleese, a police officer in Albuquerque, New Mexico, started the first Crime Stoppers program in 1976. Although the Albuquerque program was preceded by other similar programs in the early 1970s that used cash rewards and anonymity as their primary incentives (see Bickman et al., 1977), Officer MacAleese was the first to feature the media in a central role. Since 1976, Crime Stoppers programs have appeared rapidly across the United States and have been touted as one of the nation's most cost-effective anticrime measures. The concept has spread quickly to Canada, Puerto Rico, New Zealand, Australia, and Great Britain. The precipitous growth of Crime Stoppers in the past few years is revealed by program statistics. In 1978, there were only 5 Crime Stoppers programs in the United States. Today there are an estimated 700 operational programs accepting calls, and new programs are emerging on a continual basis (Crime Stoppers International, 1988).

The proper functioning of Crime Stoppers hinges upon the joint cooperation and concerted efforts of its various elements, which include representatives of the community, the media, and the police department. Each program's board of directors—reflecting the community's contribution through the formation of a nonprofit corporation—is responsible for setting policy, coordinating fund-raising activities aimed at public and private contributors, and formulating a system of reward allocation. The media play a major role in educating the public about the program's objectives, general operations, and achievements.

Moreover, they serve to publicize the details of unsolved offenses by presenting a reenactment or narrative description of a selected "Crime of the Week." Anyone with information about this crime is encouraged to call Crime Stoppers, and if a suspect is arrested as a direct result of the information, the caller is likely to receive a cash reward. Law enforcement personnel who staff the program process the crime information reported by anonymous callers and direct it to detectives for further investigation. The police coordinator also functions in a variety of other capacities, which include such tasks as selecting the "Crime of the Week," drafting press releases and radio feeds, consulting in the production of televised crime portrayals, keeping records and statistics on program performance, and serving as the liaison with the board of directors, the media, and the investigators.

The Scope of the National Evaluation

The National Institute of Justice, interested in the possibility that Crime Stoppers might be an effective new strategy for controlling crime and enhancing citizen participation, elected to fund a national evaluation of these programs in 1984. The primary impetus for funding the evaluation was the notion that if Crime Stoppers helps to solve crimes by involving citizens in crime-reporting activities, then communities should be encouraged to implement the program. In addition, it was believed that existing or prospective programs may benefit from information regarding the factors that enhance or limit program success.

Given that Crime Stoppers programs had never been formally evaluated or researched, there were many unanswered questions. Three basic questions were proposed as a guiding framework for the national evaluation: First, how does Crime Stoppers work in both theory and practice? Second, what are the advantages and disadvantages of Crime Stoppers programs to law enforcement agencies and the community? Specifically, is there any evidence of effectiveness in stimulating citizen participation, solving felony crimes, and/or lowering community crime rates? How important are monetary rewards in gaining citizen participation, and is the size of the reward a big factor in caller satisfaction? Also what are the legal and social ramifications of pursuing this type of crime control strategy? Third, what are the policy implications of this research for existing or new programs? What factors

limit or facilitate program productivity? The present article provides a summary of the major findings and conclusions in these areas.

RESEARCH METHODS

Three complementary methodologies were used in the national evaluation—telephone surveys, mail questionnaires, and case studies, with the latter involving different methodologies at particular sites. These methodologies are described below.

Telephone Screening Survey

Telephone interviews were conducted in February and March of 1984 with 602 locations to identify and characterize all known Crime Stoppers programs on a number of dimensions, including the size of the population served, type of program (e.g., citywide versus countrywide) and current status (e.g., planned, operational, or discontinued).

Police Coordinator Survey

Police coordinators from operational programs identified in the screening survey were mailed a 42-page questionnaire covering the law enforcement, media, and community aspects of the programs. Of the 443 known operational programs in the United States and Canada that were sent this survey, 203 coordinators (or 46%) completed and returned the questionnaire after two extensive follow-up efforts. The survey was designed to yield information about the coordinator's background and experience, program development and support, day-to-day operating procedures, program records and statistics, reward setting and distribution practices, and program relations with the media, law enforcement, and the board of directors.

Board of Directors Survey

A board of directors mail questionnaire was completed by 37% of the chairpersons representing 123 separate programs. This survey examined

all major aspects of the board's functions and responsibilities, including the composition and performance of the board, fund-raising strategies, and ratings of the program.

Media Executive Survey

A national mail survey of 235 news media executives was conducted to gather independent information about the media's perception of, and involvement in, Crime Stoppers. Two samples were drawn. The first was a representative sample of media organizations listed by Crime Stoppers Coordinators as participants in their programs. A total of 136 (25%) of the surveys were returned from newspapers, radio stations, and television stations. The second sample was drawn randomly from media outlets listed in the annual industry yearbook listing all operating media organizations in the United States. A total of 99 (13%) completed surveys were returned. The complete media survey findings are described in Lavrakas, Rosenbaum, and Lurigio (in press).

Case Studies

The day-to-day operations and processes of Crime Stoppers programs were examined firsthand through site visits of seven programs with diverse characteristics (e.g., urban versus suburban versus rural settings, single versus multijurisdictional coverage, high versus low productivity). The methodologies used included in-person interviews, observations, and reviews of program records and documents. In addition, two specialized case studies were conducted: An "Impact Study" in Indianapolis, Indiana, to measure the impact of a new Crime Stoppers program on residents, police officers, and businesspersons; and a "Reward Experiment" in Lake County, Illinois, to ascertain the effects of different reward amounts on callers' perceptions of the program and willingness to cooperate in the future. The methods and results of the Impact Study are reported in Lurigio and Rosenbaum (1989). The Reward Experiment is described here.

Lake County's program was selected for the Reward Experiment because (a) it was not yet operational and the board of directors was willing to permit an experimental intervention; (b) it represented a moderately large population (i.e., at least 300,000) and therefore was expected to receive enough calls to generate the data in a timely manner.

and (c) it was based in a community that is comparable to many American communities served by Crime Stoppers in terms of its crime rate, media coverage, and size of the service area. Our sample was restricted to "run of the mill" cases that varied in seriousness. Extremely unusual or serious cases were excluded (e.g., kidnappings, murder, rape, and large narcotics cases).

A randomized experimental design was employed, with cases randomly assigned to one of three reward conditions. Staff at the new program estimated an average reward size of \$250 per case, which was maintained by assigning cases to one of three reward sizes: low reward (\$100), medium (\$250), and moderately high reward (\$400). When an anonymous informant called the program coordinator and was told the amount of the reward, the coordinator asked the caller about his or her willingness to participate in a short caller satisfaction survey. Callers who consented to participate (100%) were then interviewed immediately by a trained interviewer who asked them about their satisfaction with the reward size, their perception of the fairness of the compensation, their beliefs about the effectiveness of Crime Stoppers, and their likelihood of calling the program again. The caller's anonymity was strictly maintained. A total of 44 interviews were completed.

MAJOR FINDINGS

Program Description

Standardization. Crime Stoppers is a highly standardized program. Although programs differ dramatically in their degree of success, virtually all Crime Stoppers programs are made up of the same key participants—a program coordinator (usually within the police department), detectives who investigate the cases, a board of directors representing the community, one or more media outlets, and citizen callers who provide tips. Furthermore, all programs offer rewards and anonymity to callers, even though the reward amounts and criteria for determining rewards vary from program to program.

Distinguishing features. Some of the most distinguishing features of Crime Stoppers programs are associated with the population density of the areas being served. The nature of any particular program is determined by the resources and needs of the surrounding community.

TABLE 1: Size of Population Served by Type of Media Participation in 1984

Size of Population	Type of Media								N ^a		
	Daily Newspaper		Weekly Newspaper		Radio		VHF/UHF Television			Cable Television	
	%	Ave.	%	Ave.	%	Ave.	%	Ave.		%	Ave.
	with #	#	with #	#	with #	#	with #	#		with #	#
Less than 50,000	51	.75	59	1.25	73	1.83	15	.22	35	.41	61
50,000 to 99,999	73	1.11	59	1.52	75	3.48	52	.86	23	.39	47
100,000 to 249,999	86	1.44	58	1.50	86	4.75	69	1.19	36	.44	38
250,000 or larger	75	3.34	61	3.18	80	7.50	89	2.68	36	.55	46

a. Average sample size.

For example, the amount and type of media participation in Crime Stoppers differs as a function of the size of the population being served. As shown in Table 1, programs serving small areas rely most heavily upon radio and weekly newspapers to publicize Crime Stoppers, whereas programs serving larger populations are most likely to utilize VHF/UHF television as their primary media outlet. The larger urban or countywide programs tend to capitalize on the full range of media available to them, including daily newspapers, weekly newspapers, radio, and cable television.

Networking. Program "networking" has developed at the local, state, regional, national, and international levels. In their initial stages of operation, two-thirds of the programs surveyed reported that they had received either "a lot of help" or "quite a bit of help" from existing programs. Moreover, there is a widespread practice of sharing services and resources among multijurisdictional programs. Nearly half (49%) reported that they share a phone line, coordinator, media outlet, and/or board of directors with another community (i.e., a separate law enforcement jurisdiction). An average of between 7 and 9 communities participated in each sharing group.

Rewards: Monetary rewards are utilized as a major incentive to encourage citizen participation in Crime Stoppers. Table 2 shows that reward amounts vary greatly depending on whether the incident is a "Crime of the Week," a personal crime, a narcotics crime, or a property crime. Larger programs tend to offer larger reward sizes for the same types of crime. Many criteria are used to determine reward size, but 9 out of 10 programs reported that the severity of the crime was the primary determinant. Many other factors were cited, but there was no agreement about their relative importance. Boards generally handled reward

TABLE 2: Average Reward Size (in dollars) by Type of Crime and Size of Population Served

Size of Population	Type of Crime			
	Personal ^a Crimes		Property ^b Crimes	
	Narcotics	Crime of Week	Property Crimes	Crime of Week
Less than 50,000	289	177	171	165
50,000 to 99,999	406	146	139	344
100,000 to 249,999	394	271	203	676
250,000 or larger	400	253	178	774
Overall Average	379	207	171	505
				192

a. Includes homicide, rape, robbery, and assault.

b. Includes burglary, theft, and auto theft.

c. Average sample size.

decisions on a case-by-case basis, and used a variety of standards that sometimes conflicted with one another. For example, the crime may be very serious, but the informant provided low-quality information, was marginally cooperative, and lacked credibility from previous incidents.

Perceptions and Attitudes About Crime Stoppers

Crime Stoppers was found to be highly visible and well received by a national random sample of media executives. In total, 90% of the media executives surveyed were aware of the program, even though a substantial majority was not participating in Crime Stoppers at the time of our study. Furthermore, nearly two-thirds of the respondents reported that their organization would be "very likely" to participate if a local program were to start. However, the results may not be representative of all media executives because of the relatively low response rate.

Those participating in Crime Stoppers held even more favorable attitudes about the program. The enthusiasm for the program was very strong among police coordinators, the board of directors, and participating media executives, and the vast majority of each group viewed the program as "quite successful."

Public sentiment about Crime Stoppers has been mixed. Although most interested parties have expressed favorable attitudes toward Crime

Stoppers, some journalists, defense attorneys, civil libertarians, and legal scholars have expressed misgivings about the programs (Rosenbaum and Lurigio, 1985). Our site visits and fieldwork produced a number of anecdotal observations regarding the legal and moral issues surrounding the program. Because of their overriding importance to the future of Crime Stoppers as an anticrime strategy, these public concerns are summarized below.

Legal and societal issues. Given the program's focus on the use of anonymous callers and sizable reward payments, a variety of concerns have been registered about its purpose, organizational arrangement, modus operandi vis-à-vis the courts, and long-term effects on society. Legal battles have captured the most attention and have focused on some important judicial questions: (a) Does pretrial media publicity (via Crime Stoppers reenactments and other coverage) prejudice the jury and entitle the defendant to a "change of venue"? (b) Can a witness's testimony be prejudiced by pretrial publicity about the facts of the case? (c) Should a witness's testimony be rendered credible (and therefore admissible) if he or she has been paid a sizable reward before (and sometimes after) giving testimony? (d) Should the Crime Stoppers program be forced to disclose the identity of a confidential informant? In addition, many of the legal and civil cases have focused on the alleged adverse effects of the program on the suspect (or sometimes the caller), including claims of false arrest and imprisonment, defamation of character, invasion of privacy and other civil rights, breach of contract (e.g., failure to pay the tipster), illegal fund-raising activities, and so on. Recent court cases have addressed many of these issues and, so far, Crime Stoppers has survived most of the tests.¹

Outside the courtroom, critics have voiced concern about the long-term impact of Crime Stoppers on society. The fundamental concerns are these: (a) Will large sums of money and anonymity encourage citizens to make false accusations, violate civil rights, and distrust their neighbors? Will Crime Stoppers encourage "snitching" and invasions of privacy rather than a building of community bonds? (b) Should society pay citizens to do something that is generally considered their civic duty, that is, to report criminal conduct to the police? In addition, will such payment undermine people's intrinsic motivation to participate in civic activities without monetary compensation? These are difficult questions and empirical research has been unable to provide any clear-cut answers (see Rosenbaum and Lurigio, 1985).

Finally, there is some concern among journalists about the intensive role of media organizations as coproducers and advocates of the Crime

Stoppers program. The most basic question is whether this level of involvement with law enforcement weakens the press's ability to function as the watchdog of governmental agencies and the police in particular. Although some of the top media outlets have chosen not to get involved, hundreds of media organizations see no problem with their participation.

Effectiveness of Crime Stoppers

"Hard" evidence of program effectiveness in controlling crime (i.e., evidence that allows us to make strong causal inferences because of a strong design) was not obtained in this project because of the national character of the evaluation. However, a number of empirical and anecdotal observations can be cited that pertain to the question of crime control.

Program records. To document their ability to "solve" crime, program staff have typically recorded several key statistics. As shown in Table 3, 570 programs have collectively solved more than 213,000 felony crimes, recovered more than \$1.3 billion in stolen property and narcotics, and convicted more than 43,000 criminals. Nevertheless, there is little reason to believe that Crime Stoppers programs will immediately or substantially reduce the overall crime rate in most communities. While numerous crimes are solved through these programs, these successes amount to only a small fraction of the total volume of serious crimes committed each year in most communities.

In budgeting terms, Crime Stoppers may be considered a cost-effective program by taxpayers. Funding for most programs is provided by private contributions. For every crime solved, Crime Stoppers recovers an average of \$6,593 in stolen property and narcotics. Nationally, a felony case was solved for every \$77 spent in caller reward money. This figure, however, is difficult to interpret without comparable data on alternative crime control strategies.

Solving dead-end cases. The available anecdotal evidence suggests that Crime Stoppers programs are able to solve certain felony cases that are unlikely to be solved through traditional criminal investigations or by devoting a "reasonable" amount of law enforcement resources. The program was developed specifically to handle "dead-end" cases, and indeed Crime Stoppers has repeatedly "cracked" cases that have remained unsolved after a significant investment of investigative time.

TABLE 3: International Crime Stoppers Statistics

Felony Crimes Solved	213,094
Stolen Property and Narcotics Recovered	\$1,330,998,871
Average Amount Recovered Per Case	\$6,246
Defendants Tried	45,262
Defendants Convicted	43,839
Conviction Rate	97%
Rewards Paid	\$17,023,467

SOURCE: Crime Stoppers International, 1989.

NOTE: Based on cumulative statistics reported by 570 programs through December 31, 1988.

Success in these cases is believed to be the result of widespread media coverage, the promise of anonymity, and/or opportunity for a sizable reward. Nonetheless, controlled research is needed to provide a more rigorous test of this hypothesis.

Stimulating Citizen Participation

Crime Stoppers is intended to stimulate citizen participation in the fight against crime, both in the private and public sectors. In addition to a regular commitment from media organizations, the program seeks to encourage citizen involvement as callers, contributors, and active members of the board of directors. Media spots that offer rewards and anonymity are considered critical for increasing citizen involvement. Some observations about the extent of community involvement and the success of the media are described below.

Base of support. Thousands of calls received from anonymous callers and millions of dollars in paid rewards are clear indicators of community support and citizen participation in Crime Stoppers. Nevertheless, as with many crime control programs, the base of community involvement appears to be concentrated in certain subgroups of the population who have the needed resources (see Rosenbaum, 1987). Specifically, financial support comes primarily from the business community (although telethons and other broad community appeals are being used increasingly as fund-raising techniques). In addition, the majority of anonymous tips—especially those that are perceived as useful—come from either the criminals themselves or “fringe players” (i.e., persons who associate with the criminal element). Program coordinators in our national sample estimated that 41% of the callers are

“fringe players,” 25% are “criminals,” and only 35% are “good citizens.” Fringe players were seen as providing the best leads for solving crimes.

Reward effects. As noted earlier, a randomized experiment in Lake County, Illinois, was conducted to explore how callers would respond to different reward sizes, which were randomly determined. A one-way analysis of variance was performed to test the effects of reward size on informants’ reactions. The results were consistent across all dependent variables: Reward size had no effect on informants. That is, callers in the low, moderate, and moderately high reward conditions did not differ in their satisfaction with the reward, the perceived fairness of the reward, their belief in the effectiveness of Crime Stoppers, their intentions to use the program again, and other related measures. The results are shown in Table 4. With a few rare exceptions, even callers in the low-reward group (who receive only \$100) reported that they were “very satisfied” with the amount of compensation.

We also tested the hypothesis that persons who had a low income or criminal history, or who directly attributed their participation to money (rather than anonymity), would be more disappointed by smaller rewards. To examine the hypothesis that rewards would have a differential effect depending on the informant’s motive for calling the program, interaction terms were created and tested in a multiple regression framework. The results indicated that reward size did not interact with the informants’ motives or their financial status to determine reactions to the reward payments. In summary, this experiment suggests that reward size is not a strong determinant of informant satisfaction or willingness to utilize the program for typical Crime Stopper cases.

Factors Associated with Program Productivity

Accurately assessing the performance of Crime Stoppers is currently a difficult task because of measurement problems. There were several identifiable limitations of record-keeping practices among programs. For example, most Crime Stoppers programs did not maintain a full range of basic statistics on productivity and effectiveness, and there was limited standardization of measurement across programs because of definitional problems. Also the commonly employed measures of “cases solved” and “property recovered” were biased in favor of large programs (i.e., those serving populations of 250,000 or more) and programs with a high volume of narcotics cases. There was a shortage of valid and

TABLE 4: Caller Responses as a Function of Reward Size: A Randomized Experiment (Means with Standard Deviations in parentheses)

Reward Size	Satisfaction with Reward	Perceived Fairness of Compensation	Perceived Effectiveness of Crime Stoppers	Likely to Call Crime Stoppers Again	N
Low (\$100)	6.75 (3.39)	.75 (.45)	3.83 (.39)	3.67 (.89)	12
Moderate (\$250)	7.35 (2.87)	.82 (.39)	3.62 (.50)	3.65 (.79)	17
Moderately High (\$400)	7.93 (2.79)	.71 (.47)	3.73 (.46)	3.60 (.83)	15
Between-groups F value	0.52	0.25	0.72	0.02	

reliable measures of program activities and effects at the time of our study.

Program coordinators were asked to supply data on program productivity, and several of these measures were judged acceptable for use in the evaluation after they were adjusted for local crime rates and/or population size. Specifically, program productivity was measured by the number of calls received (per 100,000 population), the quality of calls (as indicated by the number of cases forwarded to investigators), the number of suspects arrested (per 1,000 Part I crimes), and the number of cases cleared or solved (per 1,000 Part I crimes). The productivity results are summarized below. Separate multiple regression analyses were performed for each component of the program. Where relationships between variables are cited the reader can assume that the standardized regression coefficients are significant at the .05 level or less. Field observations are also included in this summary.

Program coordinator role. With regard to the law enforcement component, the best predictors of program productivity at the national level were the program coordinator's level of effort and job satisfaction. Coordinators who work more hours, make more public speaking engagements, and report more job satisfaction were involved in more productive Crime Stoppers programs than those reporting less activity and satisfaction. However, if a causal relationship exists, it is unclear whether the coordinator's effort or perceptions affect program productivity, or the whether the influence operates in the reverse direction.

Field observations suggest that the job of program coordinator is very complex and demanding. It requires knowledge of public relations,

criminal investigations, mass media, and program management, as well as other special skills (e.g., public speaking). These observations are consistent with the widely held belief that failure to select the right person for this job will greatly limit the success of the program.

Working with detectives. Field observations indicated that the forwarding of *quality* (i.e., workable) information from Crime Stoppers to detectives is the key to arrest and also determines the credibility of the program among detectives. Some Crime Stoppers programs suffer from the problem of "underscreening" cases, whereby the staff pass along to detectives any little piece of information that they receive from the caller without making a judgment about its quality. This information often has little or no investigative value. Other programs suffer from "overscreening" cases, whereby the staff not only eliminate useless "tips," but take on the role of investigator and do everything except make the arrest.

The location of a Crime Stoppers program within the police department affects the program's relationship with investigators. Programs that are not located within the criminal investigations bureau are more likely to experience an uphill struggle for acceptance. Some operational and attitudinal problems can be attributed to inadequate training regarding program procedures and strategies for all police personnel from civilian volunteers to the police chief.

Media outlets. The number of media outlets that participate in a Crime Stoppers program did not affect the level of program performance. However, programs that received more special coverage (e.g., front page or news-hour coverage) and those who reported more cooperative relationships with the media enjoyed greater success. The importance of establishing a consistently cooperative relationship with the media in the early phases of program development was emphasized by program coordinators as a means to prevent problems and maximize success.

Media competition for exclusive handling of Crime Stoppers is a problem in several cities. While 29% of the programs surveyed reported exclusive arrangements with the media, fierce competition for the program often occurs in larger urban areas with network television markets.

Board of directors. The level of effort exhibited by the board of directors was the predominant factor in determining its level of success. The more time and energy invested by board members, the more success the program experienced with its critical task of fund-raising.

TABLE 5: Program Productivity as a Function of Overall Success Ratings for Each Program Component (standardized regression coefficients)

Program Component Being Rated	Productivity Measures (Dependent Variables)				
	Calls Received ^a	Calls Investigated ^a	Suspects Arrested ^a	Crimes Cleared ^a	Funds Raised ^b
Police Coordinator ^c	.19	.13	.25*	.17	.20
Board of Directors ^d	-.28*	-.13	-.01	.04	.20
Media Outlets ^e	.34**	.27*	.27*	.23*	.05
Overall Program ^f	.32**	.35**	.37**	.43***	-.04
Proportion of Variance Explained (R ²)	.29	.26	.41	.41	.07

a. Per 1,000 Part 1 crimes reported to the police.

b. Total funds in the corporation's bank account per 100,000 population.

c. Overall coordinator performance rating by board of director's chairperson.

d. Combined board performance rating by coordinator and board chairperson.

e. Combined media cooperativeness rating by coordinator and board chairperson (averaging separate ratings of each media type).

f. Overall program success rating by coordinator.

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.

TABLE 6: Program Productivity as a Function of Size and Type of Population Served

Size of Population	Productivity Measures				
	Calls Received ^a	Calls Investigated ^a	Suspects Arrested ^a	Crimes Cleared ^a	Funds Raised ^b
Less than 50,000	118	122	39	63	\$37838
50,000 to 99,999	382	247	53	50	\$11012
100,000 to 249,999	616	280	128	173	\$ 9519
250,000 or larger	234	136	20	49	\$ 547
Type of Population					
Mostly Urban Residents	350	151	62	67	\$13811
Mostly Suburban Residents	244	166	32	36	\$12102
Mostly Rural Residents	273	69	68	52	\$ 7754
Mixed	355	223	66	114	\$24514
					97

a. Per 1,000 Part 1 crimes reported to the police.

b. Total funds in the corporation's bank account per 100,000 population.

c. Average sample size.

Ratings of program components. When program components were compared using multiple regression analysis, ratings of media cooperativeness were consistently more important for predicting program success than were ratings of the police coordinator or the board of directors (see Table 5). This finding does not necessarily

suggest that media cooperation is the key to success, but only that program participants with successful programs gave higher ratings to their media component than participants with less successful programs.

Community context. Productivity was the highest in communities with the lowest crime rates and areas with medium-sized populations (i.e., 100,000 to 250,000 people) (see Table 6). Perhaps communities of this size have sufficient resources to implement a well-staffed program and/or have a concerned, vigilant citizenry.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Crime Stoppers is a very popular and rapidly growing program for combating crime. Although this strategy has been adopted internationally over a relatively short period, its future in the United States appears to depend on two uncertain factors: its ability to survive the onslaught of legal challenges over the next few years and its ability to garner continued support and cooperation from the mass media.

With respect to their effectiveness in solving crimes, Crime Stoppers programs can cite impressive cumulative statistics, including the number of felony arrests, the number of persons convicted, and the amount of stolen property and narcotics recovered. Nevertheless, these data are not likely to reflect communitywide reductions in crime, unless one posits a general deterrent effect due to mass media coverage. To date, this type of evaluation has not been performed.

Single dramatic cases of successful arrests and convictions are often more compelling to the public than dry aggregate statistics. Crime Stoppers is a highly visible program with a special appeal to the media, law enforcement, and community leaders. Furthermore, from strictly a crime-control perspective, this strategy may be effective at solving specific types of "dead-end" cases where additional citizen input is essential and at reaching segments of the population that are not attracted to traditional community crime prevention programs that encourage uncompensated overt participation. That is, Crime Stoppers is likely to appeal to persons who prefer to remain private, who are fearful of retaliation, who prefer/need monetary compensation, or who have other motives for not serving as a public witness. In neighborhoods characterized by drug wars and gang activity, the Crime Stoppers tip line may become a useful vehicle for citizens to "fight back" in an

environment of extreme fear and limited options. On the other hand, critics fear that such programs will undermine the social fabric of our society by encouraging distrust among neighbors and discouraging participation in civic responsibilities without monetary compensation (see Rosenbaum and Lurigio, 1985).

Our randomized experiment on rewards suggests that reward size may not be as important to callers as most people believe. The results suggest that the usual advice of "when in doubt, pay more" may not be appropriate or necessary. Even \$100 appears sufficient to keep most callers satisfied, regardless of the circumstances of the case.

Future Research

This national study is, to our knowledge, the first and only social scientific inquiry directed at Crime Stoppers programs. Although the present research constitutes an important first step toward understanding the nature and effects of this program, our knowledge is still very limited. Many of the observations and conclusions reached here are tentative and require further substantiation through controlled research. At this point, we do not know the independent and combined effects of monetary rewards and promises of anonymity on social behavior (see Rosenbaum and Lurigio, 1985). These are basic psychological incentives for citizen participation that deserve more careful study because they can have both prosocial and antisocial implications. Because Crime Stoppers offers an unprecedented role for the mass media in the area of crime control, the factors that constrain and facilitate this relationship should be closely examined, along with the effects of media coverage over extended periods of time. The legal implications of Crime Stoppers also deserve more careful scrutiny by legal and criminal justice scholars. Some of these issues will receive adequate attention in the courtroom, but often a more detached scholarly analysis, supplemented by research data, can help to identify the most appropriate course of legal action for our society.

Finally, the national character of this evaluation precluded the possibility of measuring the effects of the program on crime clearances. A controlled experiment would be necessary to determine whether Crime Stoppers is more cost-effective than conventional investigative techniques for solving particular types of crime. Researchers will need to examine the number of cases solved under each strategy, the average amount of time required to solve these cases, and the level of resources needed to achieve these results.

NOTE

1. Judge Richard W. Carter of the Arlington, Texas, Municipal Court is the General Counsel for Crime Stoppers International, Inc. and is an excellent source of information on court cases in this general topic area.

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