



Seattle Office of
Inspector General

An Intergroup Perspective on Seattle's CHOP/CHAZ Occupation



Kelly Kline, *Black Lives Matter Protest, Seattle WA, 2020*. Licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

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Foreword from the Inspector General

OIG commissioned Dr. Edward R. Maguire, a Professor in the School of Criminology and Criminal Justice at Arizona State University and an expert in occupy movements, to provide an analysis of the CHOP. Dr. Maguire produced a white paper, *An Intergroup Perspective on Seattle's CHOP/CHAZ Occupation*. Dr. Maguire utilized 24 interviews and 8 testimonies from CHOP/CHAZ stakeholders. These stakeholders fall into four categories: protestors, neighborhood stakeholders, SPD employees, and other city agency employees. The aim of the paper is to understand people's attitudes, behaviors, and experiences of the CHOP. The findings include:

- Stakeholders had widely disparate perspectives on the CHOP;
- These differing perspectives and goals are largely reflected in the study of intergroup relations;
- The differences between the stakeholder groups resulted in tension, conflict, and sometimes violence;
- Despite experiencing stress and inconvenience, residents and businesses sought to accommodate and assist the protestors;
- The relationship between SPD and protestors and neighborhood stakeholders needs to be addressed to preserve police legitimacy and promote trust; and
- The importance for the City to take proactive steps to heal these deficits in police legitimacy and trust.

This document is part of an ongoing body of work conducted and commissioned by OIG to comprehensively examine the response of SPD to the protests against systemic racism and police violence that took place in Seattle in the summer of 2020. The various approaches OIG undertook to review the protests provide: analysis and technical expertise from OIG and consultants, innovative methods to engage community in the review of concerning events, and independent academic analysis for additional insight into best practices and validation of the analyses and recommendations by OIG. The collective work to date includes:

- Two reports published in the summer of 2020 concerning use of less lethal weapons, and recommendations for initial changes in response tactics;
- A community-centered Sentinel Event Review process involving a series of panel reviews of critical events occurring during discrete periods (or "waves"). This was commenced in late 2020 and is ongoing. So far, three reports covering the first three waves of protest activity have been published, providing detailed accounts of the first weeks of the protest and 114 actionable recommendations to SPD;
- An academic paper providing analysis through the lens of current best practices in the field of crowd psychology; and
- The attached white paper providing analysis on occupy style protests. This paper was also included in the appendix of the Wave 3 report.

Abstract

In the summer of 2020, following the death of George Floyd, protesters took over and occupied a six-block area in Seattle's Capitol Hill neighborhood. The occupation was known by various names, including the Capitol Hill Organized Protest (CHOP) and the Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone (CHAZ). The protesters set up barriers around the perimeter of the space, established their own security force, and according to some accounts regulated entry into the space. Many of the protesters stayed overnight in tents. The occupation lasted 23 days before Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan issued an executive order to vacate the space. Police began clearing the area on July 1, 2020. Based on qualitative analysis of 32 interviews with various stakeholders, this report examines people's perspectives on the CHOP/CHAZ occupation. The results reveal widely differing opinions about the CHOP/CHAZ that vary between – and in some cases within – the groups with which the stakeholders were affiliated. The report closes by reflecting on the findings as well as some options for preventing or reducing intergroup conflict in the future.

Introduction

George Floyd was murdered by Minneapolis police officer, Derek Chauvin on May 25, 2020. Video footage of Floyd's tragic slow-motion death underneath the knee of Officer Chauvin touched the hearts of people worldwide and led to massive protests throughout the United States and abroad. Seattle was no exception. Although located nearly 1,400 miles away from Minneapolis, Seattle was home to numerous protests associated with the death of George Floyd. These protests led to conflict between police and protesters in Seattle. In response to this conflict, the city decided to withdraw police personnel temporarily from the Seattle Police Department's East Precinct. The city's decision to have police leave the East precinct led the protesters to occupy an adjacent five-block area in the Capitol Hill neighborhood. The area was known by various names, including the Capitol Hill Occupied Protest (CHOP) and the Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone (CHAZ), among others. Drawing on interviews with a variety of key stakeholders, this report examines the genesis of CHOP/CHAZ and the perspectives of different stakeholders about the CHOP/CHAZ occupation. The results reveal widely differing opinions about the CHOP/CHAZ. The report closes by reflecting on the findings and considering some options for preventing or reducing intergroup conflict in the future.

The Genesis of CHOP/CHAZ

On May 29, 2020, the city of Seattle experienced the first protest over the death of George Floyd. The protests continued daily and, on several occasions, involved significant conflict between protesters and the police. The protests also resulted in significant looting and property damage. Many of the protests took place around the Seattle Police Department's East Precinct, which is located in the Capitol Hill neighborhood. On June 8, the eleventh day of the protests, the Seattle police withdrew from the East Precinct and reopened nearby streets. Mayor Jenny Durkan described the retreat as "an effort to proactively de-escalate interactions between protestors and law enforcement outside the East Precinct" (Durkan, 2020). Although it was a highly controversial decision, a later investigation by the Seattle Office of Police Accountability concluded that the decision to withdraw from the East Precinct was "a reasonable decision based on the information available... and the need to protect both the East Precinct and the physical safety of protesters and SPD officers" (Bettesworth, 2021; also see Myerberg, 2021).

After police withdrew from the East Precinct, protesters set up barricades around a six-block area near the precinct and the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) provided more permanent, cement barricades to protect the area from vehicle traffic. The area became known variously as Free Capitol Hill, the Capitol Hill Organized Protest or the Capitol Hill Occupied Protest (CHOP), and the Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone (CHAZ). Protesters established a security force, some members of which were armed with handguns. Protesters regulated access to the space in an effort to prevent people with ill intent from causing a disturbance or

harming people located within the barricades. The CHOP/CHAZ occupation was highly controversial and elicited disparate opinions both locally and nationally. For instance, President Donald Trump (2020) said:

Radical Left Governor @JayInslee and the Mayor of Seattle are being taunted and played at a level that our great Country has never seen before. Take back your city NOW. If you don't do it, I will. This is not a game. These ugly Anarchists must be stooped IMMEDIATELY. MOVE FAST!

Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan took a very different perspective, referring to the zone as a “block party atmosphere” and reassuring the community that “there is no threat right now to the public.”

Methodology

The primary sources of data used in this study are 32 typewritten transcripts and/or field notes resulting from 24 interviews of, and eight testimonies by, stakeholders involved in some facet of the CHOP/CHAZ occupation. These stakeholders fall into four general categories: protesters, neighborhood stakeholders,¹ Seattle Police Department employees (both sworn and civilian), and other city agency employees. I use thematic analysis to analyze the transcripts and field notes. Thematic analysis is a primarily inductive method for extracting themes from qualitative data (Braun & Clark, 2012). Consistent with my purpose here, Guest et al. (2012, p. 16) note that the focus of thematic analysis is on “presenting the stories and experiences voiced by study participants as accurately and comprehensively as possible.” I conducted separate thematic analyses – a process known as “segmenting” – for each of the four general stakeholder categories included in this study (Guest et al., 2012).

Results

This section presents the results of the qualitative analysis broken down into four sections: protesters, neighborhood stakeholders, Seattle Police Department employees, and other city agency employees.

1. Protesters

The thematic analysis of interview and testimony data from protesters revealed four primary themes. The first two themes focus on CHOP, including its goals and its racial composition. The next two themes focus on the police, including police use of force, and police non-responsiveness to requests for assistance.

The first primary theme that emerged, *Goals*, focuses on two issues: the movement’s stated goals, and protesters’ efforts to clarify external misconceptions about those goals. During the interviews, multiple protesters expressed CHOP’s goals using very specific, almost

¹ Neighborhood stakeholders include residents, business owners, property managers, and clergy.

identical language, suggesting that internal messaging about these goals has been successful at spreading the word. For example, one protester explained that CHOP's goals are to (1) defund and demilitarize the police, (2) invest in community-based public health and safety strategies, and (3) free the protesters who were arrested (File 19, p. 202).

Numerous protesters expressed concerns about external messaging about their goals and their motives, particularly the inaccurate messaging coming from certain politicians and media outlets. Many acknowledge that some of this inaccurate messaging likely resulted from one of the early names given to the protest zone. One of the names used at the start of the movement was "Capitol Hill Autonomous Zone," which raised questions among some pundits about whether its members were looking to secede from the union or declare themselves outside the jurisdiction of the United States. The following quotations illustrate protesters' efforts to set the record straight.

- *The conservative media lies every day. How you gonna call me a terrorist and we're out here feeding poor people? We're out here taking care of the mentally ill. We're out here de-escalating violence in the city's jurisdiction. This ain't no autonomous zone. (File 27, p. 247).*
- *We're not a separatist movement. We are not Antifa. We're not terrorists. We're concerned members of the community that want to remain members of community. So, we've actually changed the acronym. We're no longer using CHAZ. We're using CHOP. CHOP means Capitol Hill Occupied Protest. It's still a protest. It's an Occupy movement. It's nothing else (File 21, p. 215).*
- *We're not trying to dismantle Western democracy or civilization in any way. I think we're just a little upset that our constables are acting with impunity (File 22, p. 219).*
- *It's an occupying protest. It's not, we're not, trying to secede from the country or separate ourselves from it (File 24, p. 228).*
- *We're all being manipulated by the boys in blue. You know, we're all being arrested by them, we're all being identified as threats by them. They called us domestic terrorists because we were out here defending our people's rights, you know? (File 33, p. 263)*

The goals of the movement, as expressed by its participants, are instead oriented toward social justice rather than secession, terrorism, or violence. As one protester explained, "what we're trying to start here is a second civil rights movement" (File 27, p. 250).

The second primary theme that emerged from the interviews with protesters involved issues associated with *Race*, specifically the racial composition of CHOP participants. Although the protests focused heavily on injustices experienced by people of color, most of the protesters were white. As shown in the sample quotes below, some of the protesters acknowledged this issue during their interviews.

- *Don't get me wrong, but the majority of the people there [CHOP] were white... once again, don't let me take away from the white brothers and sisters who did come out and stand up (File 7, p. 76).*
- *"This is somewhat controversial that, you know, a bunch of white people gather around and have fun when we're talking about police brutality, but it does help us occupy the space. So, you know... we're working on making sure that everyone is aware of what's happening, that we're here for Black Lives Matter, not just to have fun (File 23, p. 221).*

Serious questions about the racial composition of CHOP arose during the occupation. For instance, what is the proper role of white allies in a protest focused on injustices experienced by people of color? Do people of color feel comfortable coming together with white allies to protest against racial injustice issues?

While acknowledging the contributions made by white allies during CHOP, one participant noted that people of color may not feel safe or comfortable in such settings:

- *And that was my biggest thing coming out here as a Black woman is recognizing that, first of all, ninety percent of people out here don't even look like me. And I know that they're fighting for my Black life and the lives of my Black brothers and sisters and aunties and cousins, uncles, but my people don't feel like they can come down here. And for me, I want to be able to be with my people, especially if this movement is for us (File 25, p. 232).*
- *Based on the results of our survey from the CHOP protesters, our white allies are looking for Black leadership. And you know, in order to get Black leadership though, you have to first create an opportunity. And then try your best to make them feel safe because every day, as a Black person, you never know what's going to happen... We always feel like we're under attack. So, for me, it's important if I'm gonna bring Black folks together, that we do so in a way that makes everyone feel safe and comfortable" (File 25, p. 235).*

Other people of color within the movement emphasized the importance of people coming together across racial lines and welcoming all allies.

We need, once again, allies of every race, every gender, every religion, culture, however you want to frame it, we need people who believe in justice and human rights on our side. They don't need to be alienated. They need to be celebrated for stepping up and doing what's right (File 27, p. 241).

These are difficult and sensitive issues that led to some level of divisiveness within CHOP.

The third primary theme that emerged from the analysis of protester interviews is *Police Use of Force*. The excessive use of force against George Floyd in Minneapolis is what first triggered the protests in Seattle. When protesters began encountering excessive force by Seattle police, it fueled the growth of the protest movement and led to the development of CHOP. Several protesters raised these issues during their interviews, as illustrated by the sample quotes below:

- *The police officers are out here right now treating us like it's the military... and bombing us. It looks like Iraq out here (File 20, p. 210).*
- *Well, we have had a lot of local police violence. We've had to deal with an escalation of force, an escalation of resources. And a great deal of our community's budget is sent to the Seattle Police Department unchallenged and that's been an issue for many years. And so, it's really a response to police violence. It's a response to violence in our Black community. And that's why there are so many people out here to support the movement (File 23, p. 226).*

Police use of force in the United States was widespread during the George Floyd protests in the summer of 2020, and Seattle was no exception (Seattle OIG, 2021).

The final primary theme that emerged during the analysis of data from protesters was *Police Non-Responsiveness* to calls for service. Protesters provided numerous examples of this phenomenon. For example, during a shooting in the early morning on June 20, witnesses called the police to report an active shooter. CHOP security and medics responded to the incident. CHOP medics tried to keep the victim alive while waiting for an ambulance. However, the ambulance could not go in because they were not allowed to respond to a scene with a possible active shooter. Protesters took the victim to Harborview Medical Center. The police did not arrive until later. Protesters were angry that SPD responded so late (File 18, p. 199). In another incident, an individual in the protest zone walked around naked during a mental health crisis and police would not respond (File 18, p. 199). Another protester was trying to arrange help for a mentally ill woman with a child, but police refused to come. He had to walk five blocks at 2 a.m. to deliver her to police (File 27, p. 243). When questioned about why police were refusing to respond to calls for service in and around the CHOP zone, city officials responded by saying they did not feel it was a safe place for police to enter (File 18, p. 199).

2. Neighborhood Stakeholders

The thematic analysis of data from neighborhood stakeholders revealed four primary themes. The first theme focuses on the composition of, and changes that occurred within, the CHOP community during the occupation. The remaining three themes focus on the SPD, including concerns about police aggression, communication, and nonresponse to requests for assistance.

The first primary theme, *CHOP Composition and Change*, focuses on the characteristics of CHOP participants as well as changes that occurred in CHOP as the occupation evolved. One key characteristic of the CHOP community was that it was heterogeneous in a variety of ways. As one Capitol Hill resident noted, there were “many different groups and many different beliefs” among CHOP participants, and “there were different protest groups against each other” (File 3, p. 23). Moreover, as another resident noted, “there was churn on a regular basis among CHOP participants. Some people were consistently present, but “it was generally pretty few” (File 5, p. 55). This inconsistency in who was present in CHOP, especially when combined

with the fact that it was a leaderless movement, often made it challenging for neighborhood stakeholders to coordinate with CHOP members.

The CHOP movement itself also began to change as the occupation continued. In the beginning, CHOP was often described as having a festive atmosphere and resembling a block party. However, as time went on, several key changes occurred in CHOP. For example, neighborhood stakeholders noted that the movement became more violent and unruly, particularly at night. One Capitol Hill resident explained that the movement was “changing from hour to hour, from day to day” (File 3, p. 19). Another resident said “there was a change from the beginning to when it became more violent” (File 10, p. 109). An area business owner who sympathized with the protesters in the beginning grew less tolerant when the movement “started leading to people getting killed” (File 9, p. 102). Several residents emphasized that the movement “became more violent as the sun went down” (File 10, p. 109; also see File 5, p. 46).

In addition to the perceptions of increasing levels of violence, several neighborhood stakeholders also emphasized the extent to which CHOP became a magnet for social problems such as homelessness, mental illness, and drug use. One resident felt that the homeless had taken over the park, and that it was no longer safe to bring their children there. During the occupation, “there were a lot more homeless people camping in the park, so much so that we couldn’t even use it anymore. They’re defecating, urinating, their needles everywhere... it was disgusting. The whole thing was disgusting” (File 10, p. 109). Another noted that “once the place got full of houseless people, like, you could hear screams at night (File 3, p. 19). Another said that “across the street when the homeless were camping, there was a lot of drug activity... People injecting drugs. It just made me sick” (File 8, p. 85).

Consistent with evidence from protesters, several neighborhood stakeholders also raised concerns about the racial composition of CHOP participants. As one respondent noted, “CHOP was like this experiment. It was supposed to be a no cop zone where Black lives mattered, and then in the period of one month of this experiment happening,” it ended up being largely composed of white people (File 3, p. 21). A local business owner also observed that the movement involved “a lot of white faces” (File 9, p. 101).

The second primary theme emerging from the analysis of the neighborhood stakeholder data was *Police Aggression*. Within this theme, there were three specific subthemes: hostile behavior, escalation, and the use of chemical agents. A property manager described one example of hostile behavior, noting that police officers on bicycles acted like gangs. Groups of officers would go “riding down the street like hooting and hollering. A bunch of frat bros or something...they were very angry and aggressive” (File 2, p. 14). A resident described an incident in which an elderly resident in his building went outside to dump his trash and the police would not let him back into his own building. “They started questioning him and harassing him...They're like fourteen-year-old little boys who are trying to get away with something. They don't act in a mature manner” (File 10, p. 112). Other neighborhood

stakeholders described more egregious incidents, such as an officer using a police vehicle as a battering ram against a crowd (File 5, p. 47), and an officer knocking somebody off a bicycle for no apparent reason (File 9, p. 98).

Neighborhood stakeholders also described several incidents in which police escalated tensions and conflict rather than engaging in de-escalation practices. For example, one resident observed that the police use of barricades during the protests seemed to make things worse. “By creating that barrier, it actually attracted a very, very, large crowd and the crowd got bigger” (File 3, p. 18). Another resident said the violence was the fault of the police because they escalated matters. “I think that by way of their actions, they [the police] really created this unsafe situation” (File 5, p. 63).

Several residents also raised specific concerns about the police use of chemical agents (such as tear gas and pepper spray) near buildings where they lived and worked. For example, one property manager tried to seal up air conditioners, doors, and windows to keep the tear gas out of the building (File 2, p. 11-12). “The degree of caution they used for the residential neighborhood, it didn't seem to ever cross their minds” (File 2, p. 13). Another resident said that when police chased protesters past his house, they released chemical agents that came through his windows and led him to cough (File 3, p. 18). Some residents also raised specific concerns about the effect of chemical agents on vulnerable people in their homes, such as children and people with chronic health problems (File 2, p. 13).

The third primary theme that emerged from the analysis of neighborhood stakeholders is *Police Communication*. The principal concerns here focused on either an outright lack of communication by police, or poor communication skills. In terms of the former, a property manager was trying to locate information about the health risks associated with tear gas after a resident with chronic health issues was exposed. They were unable to obtain this information from the police. They assembled their own hodgepodge of information “because [they] weren't getting any responses from the people actually responsible for it” (File 2, p. 15). Because police did not communicate with them about what was happening, neighborhood residents felt like they were “the forgotten group” in this saga (File 5, p. 46). As one resident said, “it was kind of negligent, frankly, that there wasn't more communication” (File 5, p. 52). A local business owner also noted that “there was a lack of clear communication between the various city departments, which led to numerous gaps in the quality of services provided by these agencies (File 9, p. 104). One resident expressed particular concerns about the 911 call center. This resident dialed 911 several times during the occupation. “They gave me a very good idea of what to expect, which was absolutely nothing. They were cold, lacking heart, zero regard” (File 10, p. 108).

The final primary theme that emerged from the analysis of the neighborhood stakeholder interviews is *Police Nonresponse*. For example, one resident heard gunshots outside and someone screaming for help. When they called 911, the call taker said the police

could not come because it was the CHOP zone (File 3, p. 20). Another resident said that after numerous experiences with the SPD, “I now have a very low opinion of the police force. They are not here for us” (File 10, p. 111). Shortly before SPD withdrew from the East precinct, one officer told a neighborhood building manager “we will not be able to provide for your safety. You should get out” (File 5, p. 51). According to a local clergy member, when the police left the precinct, there were many unanswered questions. “What’s gonna happen?” “Are we gonna be cared for?” Furthermore, police would not go into the park when called there. The respondent noted that for a couple incidents, “we had to go meet them somewhere else” (File 8, p. 86). One resident said that when he called 911, “they let me know flat out, no one’s coming” (File 10, p. 108). As I will demonstrate shortly, these concerns about the police not responding to calls for service are inconsistent with information provided by the 911 call center.

3. Seattle Police Department Employees

I examined transcripts from interviews with seven Seattle Police Department (SPD) employees, including four sworn police officers and three nonsworn employees. The principal theme emerging from my analysis of the interviews with sworn SPD personnel was the perception of high rates of crime and violence in the CHOP zone. For example, in a publicly available interview, Seattle police chief Carmen Best said that CHOP had “too much crime, too much violence, we had to do something. It was time to act. It has gone on far too long. We have two young African-American men not even to the age of 20, both teenagers that are dead, and many others are injured, raped, robbery, assault. It was time for us to get in and do what we needed to do to clear out the area and start restoring public safety to the area” (File 29, p. 253). Another police officer said, “there were guns in there and I think CHOP was a horrible failure as far as a social experiment or whatever. We had two murders in there. We had a young woman get sexually assaulted... we had people openly carrying semi-automatic rifles” (File 4, p. 36).

Another police officer emphasized not only the presence of crime and violence in the CHOP zone, but the difficulty in conducting thorough, timely criminal investigations of those incidents. “There have been assaults, rapes, batteries, burglaries, that have gone completely uninvestigated because they cannot get law enforcement in there to start an investigation. The shootings that happened the other weekend down here, detectives still have not been able to get in. The other problem is, because so much time has passed, the chance of conviction goes down astronomically, and that’s the problem” (File 28, p. 252).

Another police officer emphasized the difference in crime and violence between the daytime and nighttime hours. “So, during the daytime, one of the things for CHAZ and CHOP that they’ve done, is they’ve had a really great PR campaign up until the shootings. Which was during daylight hours, it was a hippie fest. It was the summer of love. Families could come in with kids, everybody’s happy, happy, joy, joy. The sun goes down and the AR-15s come out, and it becomes a totalitarian regime where, without arrest, without due process, without anything,

you could be assaulted, beat up, and/or excommunicated and thrown out of CHAZ and CHOP (File 28, pp. 251-252).

While crime and violence issues were raised by all of the officers who were interviewed, other issues were only raised by individual officers. For example, Chief Best noted that police were seeking to balance people's constitutional rights with the need for public order and public safety. "It was very important for people to be able to peacefully demonstrate and express their First Amendment free speech rights, but there has to be order and peace in the city" (File 29, p. 253). Another officer noted that "...one of the big things that has happened since they've set up the CHAZ and CHOP area up in Capitol Hill is you see a lot more just overly aggressive behavior by individuals going, well, 'you're in uniform, you have no power over me. I can do whatever I want.' They've bought into that Marxist/socialist ideology where if you are any symbol of authority or power, you're evil... Where you would normally see people as I'm walking around who would sit there and smile and wave and all of that. They now look at you with complete disdain" (File 29, p. 251).

Another SPD officer took issue with two aspects of the police response: the use of tear gas, and the decision to place barricades around the East precinct. With regard to tear gas, the officer said, "I personally do not believe that tear gas is ever a good thing to use in an urban environment, but it was a tool that we used" (File 4, p. 32). With regard to barricades, the officer said, "If we have to put up big huge concrete blocks to protect our house, how can we assure the public that we can protect them? I said we have to open up this precinct. We have to make it accessible and we have to work with our community... forming relationships, fostering trust between each other is the only way we're going to move forward from what happened from last year" (File 4, p. 33).

No dominant theme emerged from our analysis of interviews with civilian SPD employees. Instead, the issues they raised appeared to be unique to their specific vantage point within the agency. For example, one civilian employee noted that some protesters were looking to connect with someone in the police department. According to this employee, an SPD official should have communicated with these protesters but didn't. There was "a total lack of communication" with protesters (File 1, p. 4). There was also insufficient communication with the community, including the residents who lived near the CHOP/CHAZ zone. The SPD did not have a "plan or strategy to reach out to the community during the protest..." (File 1, p. 5).

For a member of the 911 call center, the principal issue was that call center employees were scared. The following three quotes illustrate this concern.

- *Our building was the site of several demonstrations, including demonstrations where the building was hit with explosive devices, where there was fire safety issues. There were very significant protests at the West Precinct during this time while all of the attention was on the East precinct. There was still significant protests here at the West Precinct and the employees at the time were very*

concerned. Hey, we see that you've left the East Precinct, are you going to do that here at the West Precinct? And if you do, you have 100 civilian employees on the second floor? What about us? What happens when the group comes here? Are the police just going to leave us here? Are they going to abandon us? (File 12, p. 124).

- *Our employees were answering 911 calls and dispatching emergency calls. They had to take 911 calls as the building shook with sounds of explosive devices going off. This left our employees feeling that their safety was at risk and the city was not taking their safety seriously. Even today, our employees continue to express concern that their safety was not accounted for during this time period (File 12, p. 124).*
- *"The most concerning thing for me is the safety of our employees. And the city's response to violent actions that were taken against the city's facilities where employees are working was not adequate in my opinion. I felt the city's response and the actions taken to protect its own employees were lacking and put our employees' safety at risk" (File 12, p. 129).*

Civilian employees also noted that dealing with the protests, including the closure of the East precinct, was demoralizing. For example, one civilian employee said that the day the East precinct was evacuated was "the worst day of my career. Everybody was crying" (File 13, p. 160). A member of the 911 call center noted an increase in the number of people calling and "cussing out our call takers." The call center received "many, many calls in which people were telling our call takers that they were murderers, that they should commit suicide" (File 1, p. 148). These anecdotes reinforce the importance of carefully monitoring employee wellness during these types of events.

As I have already discussed, the qualitative data paint an inconsistent picture about the extent to which the SPD was responding to calls for service in and around the CHOP zone. According to a 911 call center employee:

- *The 911 center's strategy was to continue operating by policy and procedures and not to deviate. For instance, it was publicized that the police department and the fire department were not responding to incidents within the CHOP zone. This was not communicated to the 911 center and we did not provide that instruction to our call takers and dispatchers. Our strategy was to ensure that our call takers and dispatchers continued answering and processing calls consistent with our existing standard operating policies and procedures (File 12, p. 129).*
- *Sometimes stuff gets out there into the world and I know as, like, a community member, I would see on the news where somebody would call 911 and they would say on the news 911 is not responding to the CHOP zone. That was not my experience. My experience was that we were taking every call, we were*

processing every call, and we were doing our best to handle every call according to our existing policies and procedures (File 12, p. 142).

At the same time, another civilian employee said that “during this time, 911 response had to be approved by a supervisor. It must be a significant event to deploy.” All calls to the East precinct were considered unsafe due to officer safety concerns” (File 13, p. 160). As reported earlier, there was a widespread perception among protestors and other stakeholders in the Capitol Hill area that police were not responding to calls for service in the area.

4. Other City Agency Employees

I analyzed transcripts or field notes from interviews with representatives of four different entities: the Seattle Emergency Operations Center (EOC), the Seattle Fire Department (SFD), the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT), and Seattle Public Utilities (SPU). The EOC interview revealed that it was only open for the first three or four days of the CHOP occupation. Given the widespread concerns about interagency communication and coordination issues during the occupation, it is worthwhile to reconsider the wisdom of that choice. In either case, the EOC interview does not provide much information of direct relevance for this report. Thus, the analysis focuses on interview data from the other three other city agencies. The analysis revealed two primary themes: concerns about employee safety and the importance of dialogue and relationship-building.

The first primary theme focuses on *Employee Safety*. All three agencies raised concerns about this issue. For example, a representative of the SFD said, “the balancing act for us, or the challenge that we had to navigate, is how do we keep our firefighters safe when we’ve got people with open carry long guns and things like that walking around within this area?” (File 14, p. 162). A representative of the SDOT raised similar concerns. Employees were concerned about being in the area without a police presence. Some were verbally abused by people while onsite. Some said “we are not going there if the police are not there” (File 15, p. 189). A representative of SPU noted that there were shootings very close to where they had people working (File 17, p. 196). In another instance, SPU contractors had rocks and bottles thrown at them by protesters (File 17, p. 194). SPD’s decision to withdraw from the East precinct had major implications for the work of all three of these agencies.

The second primary theme focuses on the importance of *Dialogue and Relationship-Building*. Representatives from all three agencies described engaging in significant efforts to coordinate with CHOP residents. For example, the following two quotes from a representative of the SFD acknowledge the importance of genuine dialogue for effective service delivery:

- *I’m trying to, you know, maintain rapport with the community members there and how we can best support them and their concerns. So, it was more of a listen. You know, listen to the concerns and then see what we can do to address some of those concerns (File 14, pp. 162-163).*

- *I went down there with [Chief Scoggins] a few times and we wanted to ensure that we had dialogue. You know, try to establish some sort of dialogue with the folks that were in there...We were trying to work through these challenges daily, you know?” (File 14, p. 167).*

Representatives from all three agencies also emphasized the importance of de-escalation for calming tensions and preventing conflict when engaging with the protesters at CHOP. At the same time, all three acknowledged the ongoing challenges of engaging in dialogue and negotiations with a leaderless movement.

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings presented here reveal that the stakeholders examined in this study have widely differing perspectives on the protests that occurred in Seattle following the death of George Floyd. When discussing their perspectives on CHOP/CHAZ, *protesters* focused heavily on the goals and racial composition of CHOP/CHAZ, as well as their concerns about police use of force and police non-response to requests for assistance. *Neighborhood stakeholders* focused heavily on the composition of CHOP/CHAZ and the changes that occurred within the movement as it evolved. They also focused on the SPD, including concerns about police aggression, communication, and nonresponse to requests for assistance. *SPD employees* focused primarily on the crime and violence that occurred in and around the CHOP/CHAZ zone. The other issues that they discussed, such as the fear experienced by 911 call takers, were associated with their specific role in the agency. Finally, other city agency employees focused primarily on two issues: employee safety, and the importance of dialogue and relationship-building.

The differing perspectives presented here are reminiscent of a large body of scholarship from the study of intergroup relations in social psychology (Tajfel, 1982, 2010). This scholarship teaches us that people from different groups often have very different social identities, worldviews, attitudes, and values. These key differences often result in tension and conflict – and in some cases violence – when different groups come into contact with one another. During the protests in Seattle following the death of George Floyd, both positive and negative intergroup dynamics were omnipresent. For example, though CHOP/CHAZ led to considerable levels of stress and inconvenience for local residents and businesses, many of these stakeholders sought to accommodate and assist protesters. Similarly, several city agencies, particularly the “three amigos” (SDOT, SFD, and SPU) engaged in an ongoing campaign of dialogue and de-escalation in their efforts to serve the needs of both protesters and neighborhood stakeholders. Put differently, there were many acts of intergroup kindness during the occupation. At the same time, there were also many instances in which intergroup dynamics were negative and conflictual. The two most obvious examples emerging from this study were the profoundly disturbing relations between the SPD and protesters and between the SPD and neighborhood stakeholders.

Consistently negative intergroup relations are often characterized by prejudiced or biased perspectives on the other group. For instance, one of the protesters in this study said “all cops are bastards,” and one of the police officers referred to protesters as socialists and Marxists. Both statements are based on dubious assumptions about the other group. But this tendency to view outgroups as homogeneous and uniformly negative is common in the study of intergroup relations, particularly among groups in conflict. Fortunately, there is a large body of research evidence from the study of intergroup contact and communication which shows that it is possible to overcome bias and prejudice and heal intergroup relations using structured dialogue-based interventions (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Research shows that these interventions are effective, even under extremely challenging circumstances such as longstanding ethnic and religious conflict (Ditlmann & Samii, 2016; Lemmer & Wagner, 2015). Research on the effects of these interventions for improving police-community relations is slim, but recent research has shown promising results (Hill, et al., 2021). More generally, community policing interventions have repeatedly been found to improve public satisfaction with police and public perceptions of police legitimacy (Gill et al., 2014; Peyton et al., 2019). The research evidence presented in this report provides community leaders with useful information about potential points of intervention for improving intergroup relations in Seattle.

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