

University of Chicago

Department of Sociology

DEFUNDING THE (ALTERNATIVES TO) POLICE:

A CHICAGO VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM'S BARRIERS TO STATE FUNDING

by

Allegra Hatem

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Preceptor: Kailey White

Faculty Advisor: Dr. Robert Vargas

Abstract:

The 2020 Black Lives Matter protests placed significant pressure on local governments to fund nonenforcement alternatives to policing. One prominent example of such alternatives is the Cure Violence model. Cure Violence (formerly CeaseFire), a Chicago-based violence prevention organization, practices a model of violence prevention known as “violence interruption,” in which outreach workers, many of whom used to be gang-affiliated, leverage their local knowledge of the communities where they work to prevent gang violence. Despite this model’s growing popularity around the country and the world, however, the program is no longer in existence in Illinois, in part due to its having lost government funding on three occasions. These funding cuts were surprising given the organization’s popularity among legislators at the time, its continued success nationwide, and the state’s shifting role as a funder, rather than an executor, of public policy. Drawing from interview, archival, and newspaper data, I attempt to answer the question, “Why has Cure Violence struggled to retain long-term government funding from the city of Chicago and the state of Illinois?” I identify three challenges to long-term state funding faced by Cure Violence: (1) a tense relationship with police, (2) a fraught relationship with certain legislators, and (3) a loss of public trust resulting from several high-profile scandals the group was involved in. Although these findings are specific to Cure Violence’s Chicago operations and are therefore not generalizable to other cities, they raise areas for further exploration about the nature of state and nonprofit relationships that extend to other contexts.

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## Introduction

In the spring of 2020, the murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin launched a wave of Black Lives Matter protests against police brutality and structural racism that would last through the summer (Taylor 2021). Data on the protests suggest that they might represent the largest movement in U.S. history, with over half a million people turning out across the country for the protests' peak on June 6th (Buchanan, Bui, and Patel 2020). The protests also shed light on the police abolition movement, with many calling to “defund the police.” While public support for police abolition appears to have waned since 2020 (Parker and Hurst 2021), the protests brought police abolition into the national spotlight and launched a wave of policing reforms at the federal, state, and local levels (Ray 2021).

When police abolitionists use the phrase “defund the police,” normally they are not advocating only for city governments to reduce or eliminate funding to police departments. Rather, most abolitionists want to see this funding redistributed towards social services and nonviolent, nonenforcement alternatives to policing (Fernandez 2020; Ray 2020). One of these programs is the Cure Violence model of violence interruption (Karma 2020; Sherman 2020). Under this model, street workers, who are normally former gang members from the communities in which they work, try to mediate gang conflicts in order to prevent shootings in high-crime urban areas. The model is based on the theory that violence operates like a disease, the spread of which can be slowed by identifying those most at risk and preventing them from harming others (Cure Violence Global). The Cure Violence model has gained national attention in the last two decades, and continues to grow in popularity. Originally founded in Chicago in 1999 under the name “CeaseFire,” Cure Violence currently works with local partners to implement its programs in twenty cities around the U.S., including New York, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C.

(Cure Violence Global). The group has enjoyed national media attention, and in its 23-year history has been the subject of a piece in *New York Times Magazine* (Kolowitz 2008), a PBS documentary (Kolowitz and James 2012), a TED talk (Slutkin 2013), and segments on *The Colbert Report* (The Colbert Report 2012) and *The Daily Show with Trevor Noah* (The Daily Show 2017).

However, as Cure Violence's national presence has grown, its presence in its home state of Illinois has diminished. Although Cure Violence is headquartered in Chicago, it ceased operations in the city in 2021. Contributing to this shut down is that the group has faced significant challenges in securing government funding. On three separate occasions CeaseFire has lost funding unexpectedly: twice from the state of Illinois in 2007 and 2015, and once from the city of Chicago in 2013. Such loss of funding is surprising given the shifting nature of government over the last half century away from direct provision of social services and towards a model of funding third-party organizations which carry out such provisions. Although it is well-known within the field of violence prevention that massive programs like CeaseFire are difficult to sustain, these challenges are not well-documented within academic literature.

In this paper, I examine CeaseFire as a case study and both construct a history of the group and identify the challenges that the organization has faced at the local and state levels in Chicago, Illinois. To construct this history and identify these challenges, I utilize interviews both with former CeaseFire employees and with people who have studied and/or reported on the group; archival data such as emails, press releases, and government documents from the time of the funding cuts; and newspaper articles about the group dating its founding in 1999 to the present day. In better understanding the reasons that CeaseFire has struggled to obtain long-term government funding, I hope to contribute to the understanding of the relationship between the

state and nonprofits by bridging existing literature from organizational sociology, urban sociology, and power relations. I also hope to identify practical concerns about the funding of non-state violence prevention programs with state money that may become more pressing as cities around the country and the world continue adopting the Cure Violence model.

### **Theoretical Framework**

#### *Nonprofit Organizations & The Receding Welfare State*

Nonprofit organizations present a unique object of study for sociologists because they operate externally to the market and the state. Due to a corresponding rise in the number of nonprofits in the United States at the time, sociological examination of nonprofit organizations increased beginning in the 1970s and 1980s (DiMaggio and Anheier 1990). However, due to the diversity in size and scope of nonprofits existing in the U.S., the development of a unifying, sociological theory of nonprofits has proven difficult (DiMaggio and Anheier 1990). Perhaps the most salient shared characteristic among nonprofits is that they are constituted in opposition to the state (DiMaggio and Anheier 1990).

However, the dividing line between the state and nonprofit actors has become blurred over the last half century as sociologists, political scientists, and economists have observed the retrenchment of the welfare state and the decentralization of government (Wacquant 2008, Starke 2006). This decentralization has led to a “devolution” of contemporary governance to nonprofits and the emergence of nonprofits as an intermediary organization which implements policy; in other words, modern-day governments have shifted from providing services themselves to funding non-state actors (both for-profit and nonprofit) which carry out these services on behalf of the state (McQuarrie & Krumholz 2011; Mendel 2003). While some attribute this shift to Reagan-era policies (Berry & Arons 2003), others have argued this “third-party government”

structure dates as far back as the 1960s (Salamon 1981). Notably, 1975 was the first year in which the government, rather than private donors, became the largest source of nonprofit revenues nationwide (Salamon 1981).

Noting the changing role of nonprofits as implementers of public policy, Marwell (2004) constructs a model to describe community-based organizations (CBOs) in particular. This model identifies three types of CBO activity: service provision, community building, and electoral politics. Service provision, she notes, is often reciprocal. When CBOs provide services (such as childcare, housing, or direct monetary assistance) these services often come with a requirement that the recipient must take on some obligation, like attending classes or applying for jobs. Reciprocal service provision is often a source of tension within CBOs when they receive state funding: many CBOs take relationship-building to be a core part of their operations (and view reciprocal service provision as facilitating that relationship-building), but government funding of CBOs often stipulates that these services be offered to all constituents without obligation to the CBO, in order to follow governmental rules of equal access and nondiscrimination. CBOs, however, often adopt strategies to technically meet these governmental requirements while still favoring their own clients. For example, organizations which manage subsidized housing may be required to hold lotteries, open to the general public and overseen by government officials, in order to determine who is offered housing. Although these lotteries may be open to all, CBOs may offer classes on how to fill out lottery applications, which is a complicated process; the organization thus ensures that individuals who engage with the organizations are more likely to be selected in these lotteries, since all incomplete applications are excluded from the lottery.

It is not only housing CBOs which employ exclusionary tactics while slyly meeting the constraints of state funders. Vargas (2019) describes how violence prevention organizations in

the Little Village neighborhood of Chicago avoided advertising public meetings with legislators and excluded non-members from committees in order to better secure their own relationship with city officials. Although in this case organizations were not beholden to the same obligation to make their services available to everyone, it still exemplifies that CBOs act in ways that they believe will best ensure their continued financial support from the state. That said, both of these examples take as case studies organizations which were successful in maintaining their relationship with governments. It is more difficult to find examples in the literature of organizations which have been unsuccessful in continuing to receive state funding.

### *The Intersection of Organizational Sociology and Power Relations*

Another prevailing question that sociologists have tried to address is how certain social actors (individuals or organizations) acquire and maintain power. The power relations framework is rooted in Bourdieu's field theory, which suggests that fields are composed of social actors who compete and collaborate with one another to attain power (Bourdieu 1984; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). Absent from Bourdieu's field theory, however, is a discussion of the role of collective (rather than individual) actors and an account of how competition between actors shape the fields in which they reside. Fligstein and McAdam's (1997) notion of the strategic action field addresses these gaps in field theory, suggesting that social actors follow a particular set of rules, and that some actors attempting to acquire power ("challengers") from those already possess power ("incumbents") do so by leveraging "social skill."

Many sociologists have noted that a power relations approach has been absent in literature about inequality and urban environments, arguing that existing sociological literature about formal organizations obscures the ways that organizations are involved in the production and management of urban poverty (Marwell & Morrissey 2020, Wacquant 2002). They note that

literature critiquing organizations that operate in high-poverty urban areas often neglect to consider that these organizations receive funding and power from governments and charitable foundations, which operate outside of the geographic boundaries of such neighborhoods. A power relations approach has much potential for expanding sociological understanding of nonprofit organizations. McQuarrie & Krumholz (2011), for example, apply the concept of strategic action fields to explain how the Cleveland Housing Network, a “mediating” nonprofit organization enacts government housing policy, serves as an example of institutionalized social skill. Of the existing literature that does utilize a power relations approach to study inequality, most of it focuses on mediating organizations themselves, rather than on the state’s decision making process to fund or defund these mediating organizations (Marwell & Morrissey 2020).

#### *Urban Sociology & Theories of Violence Prevention*

Violence, and particularly urban gang violence, has been of interest to sociologists since the Chicago School’s focus on urban inequality. In contrast to state law enforcement responses to violence such as arrest and incarceration, criminologists have attempted to understand the underlying mechanisms that lead people to behave violently (Tita & Papachristos 2010). One particularly salient explanation of violence prevention discussed by sociologists is the notion of collective efficacy, pioneered by Sampson et al. (1997) and drawing on the Chicago School of sociology’s conceptualization of contextualism and social control. Defining collective efficacy as “social cohesion among neighbors combined with their willingness to intervene on behalf of the common good,” Sampson et al. (1997) find that high rates of collective efficacy are correlated with low rates of violence across Chicago. Other studies have replicated these results (Sampson 2012), suggesting that collective efficacy is in fact a form of social control which dissuades residents from committing acts of violence.



Critics of collective efficacy theory have questioned its exclusion of nonprofit organizations from its analysis, since these organizations can serve as drivers of collective efficacy (Wacquant 2002, Marwell 2009, Small 2009). In response to these critiques, Sampson has revised collective efficacy theory to include “institutional mechanisms” such as community-based nonprofit organizations (Sampson 2012). These organizations may foster collective efficacy by mobilizing residents to take collective social action. Sharkey et al. (2017) provide support for this revision of collective efficacy theory by studying the effect of community development organization density on crime rates, concluding that the two have an inverse relationship. More recent critiques of collective efficacy theory have drawn attention to the gap in the literature about power relations, noting that violence prevention organizations often receive blame for institutional failures of the state (Vargas 2016).

In the United States, policy has at times drawn on or deviated from insights provided by criminologists. Tita & Papachristos (2010) point out that even when policymakers are vocal that traditional law enforcement tactics are not enough to suppress gang violence, other major stakeholders are often reluctant to embrace alternatives. For example, a street-worker approach to gang violence (in which young people, normally men, from the community engage gang-affiliated youth in one-on-one interactions) gained traction in the 1940s and 1950s after the success of the Chicago Area Project. However, these programs lost effectiveness and public support as urban areas changed over in the middle of the 20th century, both racially, due to the Great Migration, and economically, due to de-industrialization (Tita & Papachristos 2010). As American cities changed over the 20th century, policymakers came to prefer street workers who were college students and social workers, rather than ex-gang members with a more intimate knowledge of the local community. The popularity of the street-worker model has waxed and

waned repeatedly since then, having made a resurgence at the time of publication (Tita & Papachristos 2010).

Such programs can fall into public favor as quickly as they can fall out. Papachristos (2011) laments that, because politicians and journalists produce results at a faster rate than criminologists, street-worker models of violence prevention like CeaseFire are heralded as a “success” before they undergo more rigorous academic scrutiny. Although Skogan’s (2009) evaluation of CeaseFire suggested that the program did in fact appear to be effective in reducing gun violence, other scholars remain skeptical of its efficacy (Aspholm 2020). Although these authors characterize CeaseFire as politically favorable, however, they neglect to discuss in depth (partly because of the year in which they were published) the challenges that CeaseFire has undergone in losing government support by way of funding.

#### *Combining Nonprofit Characteristics, Power Relations, and Violence Prevention*

There exist within sociology few comprehensive accounts of the challenges that a violence prevention organization might face in retaining state funding. In an essay that responds to an evaluation of the One Vision violence prevention program in Pittsburgh (which is modeled after CeaseFire), Klein (2011) identifies three “issues” that are absent from the literature on gang and violence programming, and six issues which are not absent from this literature. The challenges with the most relevance to state funding are: (1) that using former gang members in gang interventions is politically risky; (2) that it is difficult to assess the efficacy of these programs; and (3) that anything but definitely positive results about a large-scale intervention is more likely to lead to the program’s termination rather than to its being revised.

As an example of this last issue, Klein cites Irving Spergel’s Little Village Gang Project, which operated in Chicago under the administration of the Chicago Police Department and the

University of Chicago from 1992 until 1997 (Spergel 2007). Despite achieving its stated goals of reducing violence in Little Village, the program was terminated by the Chicago Police Department. Spergel attributes this termination to a lack of political will for the program, writing that “Chicago was not ready [at the time] for a program to substantially reduce the gang problem that also did not meet other interests of the mayor and city’s leaders” (Spergel 2007:341). The lack of political will behind the Little Village Gang Project therefore raises the question: why would a program that *does* meet the interests of political leaders fall out of favor? Additionally, Spergel’s book, while informative, does not engage with sociological theory about the nature of state funding, presenting an opportunity for a more theoretical analysis of the loss of state funding.

#### *CeaseFire as the Empirical Case Study*

In this paper, I examine the reasons that Cure Violence (formerly CeaseFire—I use both names interchangeably) a Chicago-based gang violence prevention program, has struggled to retain government funding. CeaseFire serves as an excellent case study because, in the early 2000s, CeaseFire typified the shift towards “third-party governance”: during different times in the group’s more than twenty-year history, CeaseFire has received funding from state and local governments to improve public safety by reducing violent crime (a governmental obligation that is normally delegated to police departments). The group’s popularity in the media and amongst politicians led Papachristos (2010) to deem the group “too big to fail.” However, CeaseFire has lost public funding on three different occasions: first from the state of Illinois in 2007, then from the city of Chicago in 2013, and again from the state of Illinois in 2015. The initial public funding awarded to CeaseFire suggests willingness on the part of the state to support the street-worker model of violence prevention. However, its subsequent losses of funding would

suggest the opposite. The mutually exclusive nature of these two possibilities poses a conceptual problem about the nature of government funding.

Additionally, CeaseFire is a particularly relevant case study because the organization has “gone national” (and even global) since these funding cuts. Cure Violence operates CeaseFire-model programs in 20 American cities and 16 countries outside of the U.S. (Cure Violence Global). Most of these programs receive at least some funding from the state, and many are operated directly by state agencies. Since the “defund the police” protests of 2020, local governments have undergone significant pressure to fund alternatives to policing, and many cities with Cure Violence-model programs have increased their funding as a result. Yet, the program’s inability to take hold in Chicago suggests that there might be some incompatibility between the program’s model and the state’s approach to violence prevention. Identifying the reasons that CeaseFire has met insurmountable barriers to long-term success in Chicago is crucial from a policy perspective if local governments continue investing funds in the CeaseFire model with the goal of sustaining these programs for the long-term.

Moreover, this case study is worthwhile from a theoretical perspective because it addresses a gap in the literature about the unequal relationship between governments and mediating nonprofits. Although there is broad consensus that governments in the modern day turn more and more to nonprofit organizations to carry out policy, and although many sociologists recognize the importance of studying these organizations to better understand the mechanisms through which they produce inequality, there exists little scholarship documenting the particular challenges involved in maintaining this relationship between governments and the nonprofits they fund. Where there is such scholarship, it is often theoretical or focuses on fields other than violence prevention (such as housing or healthcare). Within the field of violence

prevention, there exists much research which documents the history of state-funded violence prevention initiatives and evaluates their efficacy, but this research is not often focused on the specific challenges that arise from their receipt of state funds. Additionally, while much research examines the reasons that governments rely on nonprofit organizations, little research has examined the reasons that governments terminate their relationships with nonprofit organizations. In using CeaseFire as a case study, I hope to fill a gap in the literature regarding an unsuccessful attempt to obtain funding and to better connect the power relations approach with urban sociology, specifically violence prevention.

### **Data & Methods**

Although CeaseFire has lost government funding on three occasions, I focus on the first two funding cuts: (1) CeaseFire's loss of state funding in 2007 and (2) CeaseFire's loss of city funding in 2013. Although CeaseFire lost funding from the state of Illinois again in 2015, I exclude this moment from my analysis because the funding cut was not unique to CeaseFire. Many other state social service programs lost funding during this protracted budget crisis, meaning CeaseFire's loss of funding at this point does not reveal much about the nuances of the organization's specific relationship to the state government. By focusing on the first two losses of government funding, I am able to identify specific challenges that arose in CeaseFire's attempts to secure long-term state funding.

I relied on three sources of data in order to identify the challenges that CeaseFire has faced in retaining government funding: interview data, archival data, and newspaper data.

I conducted four interviews in total: two with former employees of CeaseFire and two with researchers who had studied and written about the group. While doing background research about CeaseFire, I kept note of anyone who had written extensively about the group or had been

involved with the group during the time of the funding cut. Of these individuals, I reached out to as many as I could find contact information for and was put in contact with others through mutual acquaintances. These interviews were semi-structured and varied greatly in length. I aimed for each interview to last about 45 minutes, but depending on the time constraints (or lack thereof) of my interviewees, they ranged from 15 minutes to 1 hour and 15 minutes. All interviews took place over phone or video call and were recorded (with permission). Three of the interviewees were compensated \$15 for their time (one refused compensation). Although my interview guide varied depending on the specific person being interviewed, my questions focused primarily on the person's relationship to CeaseFire and how they observed the group's challenges in obtaining funding. I then transcribed the interviews using Otter.ai and coded them in MaxQDA, looking specifically for examples of CeaseFire's relationship with state actors (such as police or legislators).

<b>Name</b>	<b>Role with CeaseFire</b>	<b>Years of Involvement</b>
[Anonymous]	Various, incl. Former Director of U.S. Programs	2004 - 2011
Tio Hardiman	Former Executive Director of Illinois Programs	2005 - 2012
Dr. Andrew Papachristos	Evaluator	2005 - 2008
Dr. Wesley Skogan	Lead author of evaluation	2005 - 2008

One of my interviewees, Dr. Skogan, provided me with the bulk of my archival data, which included five email threads with CeaseFire employees, one copy of meeting notes, two press releases, and three budget documents from the time of the 2007 budget cut. (He had acquired these documents while writing his evaluation of CeaseFire). The rest of my archival data included six transcripts from Illinois House of Representatives meetings from the months

following the 2007 budget cut. These transcripts included testimony from CeaseFire staff discussing how the budget cut had affected their operations and debate between legislators over whether to restore funding to CeaseFire. Collectively, these primary sources (the emails, press releases, meeting notes, budget documents, and transcripts) provide insight into what the discussion around CeaseFire's state funding looked like at the time of the 2007 budget cut, from the perspective of CeaseFire staff, researchers, legislators, and the general public.

Lastly, I identified, read, and analyzed 168 Chicago Tribune newspaper articles that discuss CeaseFire. I utilized newspaper articles for two reasons: (1) they are perhaps the most popular method through which everyday Illinois residents have learned about the group and (2) they contain information, such as direct quotations from residents, that shed light on how the group has been perceived by both the general public and by public officials. I identified these articles using Proquest's database of Chicago Tribune articles, by searching for articles containing the word "CeaseFire." This search yielded approximately 925 results, which I narrowed to 417 by only selecting articles that were related to gun violence. I then eliminated duplicate articles that only made one mention of CeaseFire, which left 168 articles remaining. I chose to remove these articles from the data because I wanted to only analyze articles in which CeaseFire was a main focus, rather than a passing reference, as I felt that these would have the most impact on the public's perception of them. I did not restrict this search to any particular date, because I was interested in learning about the group over its entire 23-year history. The articles I analyzed varied in content, but could for the most part be loosely broken into four categories: (1) articles describing group's operations, often in response to the opening of a new cite, (2) articles discussing particular scandals from the group (discussed below), and (3) articles that discussed particular conferences or events in which the groups' leaders participated.

I developed a code sheet for these data sources by first reading over a few newspaper articles and looking specifically for information about or that would contribute to the group's public perception and their implicit or explicit approval or disapproval by public figures (such as politicians and police officers). From these initial articles, I developed a code sheet which I used to code all of the articles, archival data, and interview transcripts. To analyze public perception, I coded for both "positive perception"(any information which would lead a neutral person to think positively of the group, or any direct quotes from individuals praising the group) and "negative perception" (any information which would lead a neutral person to think negatively of the group, or any direct quotes from individuals criticizing the group). Within "positive perception," I coded specifically for "community relationships," "partner organizations," "effective," "local knowledge," "hard-working members," and "dangerous working conditions," and "jobs for formerly incarcerated people." Within "negative perception," I coded specifically for "sexual harrassment permitted," "keeping wrongdoers in power," "mistrust/loss of support," "hypocrisy," "gang affiliations," "conflict with law enforcement," "dislike of white leadership," "taxpayer burden," "lacking longterm relationships," "misuse of funds," and "questionable evidence/efficacy." I coded for "approval" and "disapproval" from public figures by noting any time a public figure was quoted speaking about the group or had been responsible for their funding (or lack thereof). I also wrote a brief summary of each article that I coded, noting if it took a strong laudatory or critical tone towards the group.

After coding these articles, I reviewed the codes to see which had appeared most frequently in the articles. For example, the most frequently mentioned cases of the group's positive perception were its efficacy. In contrast, CeaseFire's fraught relationship with law enforcement, its scandals relating to funding mismanagement and sexual assault, and its



members' affiliations with gangs were the most common cases of negative contributions to the group's perception. I then read again through each of the article excerpts I had tagged with the codes mentioned above.

## **Results**

From interviews conducted with former CeaseFire staff and researchers and analysis of archival sources and newspaper articles about CeaseFire, I have first constructed a timeline of the group focused on their experiences with government funding in Illinois and Chicago. I have also identified three challenges encountered by the group that might have contributed to the organization's inability to retain long-term state funding. These challenges include a tumultuous relationship with law enforcement, opposition from a handful of individual legislators, and a loss of public trust resulting from scandals that threatened the program's legitimacy.

### *Timeline*

#### *CeaseFire's Founding and Theory*

CeaseFire is a violence prevention nonprofit based in several cities across Illinois and founded in 1999 by infectious disease doctor and Chicago native Gary Slutkin. After working in various countries in Africa to curtail the spread of cholera and AIDs, Slutkin returned to Chicago in the mid-1990s, when a recent spree of murders of young children caught his attention. He theorized that the same principles of epidemiology could be applied to violence prevention: that, if victims of violence are most likely to commit violence against others, then violence prevention efforts ought to be directed towards those most likely to behave violently. CeaseFire was therefore founded with the goal of reducing violent crime in the most violent neighborhoods in Chicago.

CeaseFire was administered by the Chicago Project for Violence Prevention (CPVP), a part of the University of Illinois' School of Public Health. While CeaseFire was originally based in Chicago, in the mid-2000s the CPVP expanded the program into 25 program areas throughout Illinois (Skogan 2009). The program at first targeted school children, but in 2004 shifted its model to focus on the most high-risk youth (Skogan 2009). CeaseFire attempted to reduce violence in two ways: first, "violence interrupters" intervened in gang and interpersonal disputes that were likely to become violent by patrolling streets in the neighborhoods where they worked in order to learn if disputes had taken place recently. Crucially, the majority of interrupters were from the same neighborhoods where they operated, had former gang affiliations, and had been previously incarcerated. Thus, they were often successful in mediating disputes because they had an understanding of the issues affecting the youth they worked with. Second, individuals identified by violence interrupters as being high risk were referred to outreach workers, who helped clients find education and employment opportunities.

Crucially, CeaseFire was not anti-gang and did not always attempt to convince clients to leave gangs. In fact, their mediations often involved one gang member paying a fee to another in lieu of a physical altercation. Violence interrupters often told gang members that they should avoid shootings because it would be bad for drug dealing. Because most interrupters had former gang affiliations themselves, they often attempted to build a trust with clients by praising them for their loyalty to family and friends. Although this neutral policy towards gangs often resulted in opposition from law enforcement officers, it was crucial to CeaseFire's strategy.

#### *2007 State of Illinois Budget Cut*

From its inception, CeaseFire had a unique funding structure. While each satellite program's site (including the salaries of its leadership and outreach workers) was funded mostly

by the state of Illinois with money funneled from the Department of Corrections, the salaries of violence interrupters were funded by the Chicago Project for Violence Prevention (CPVP), which in turn received funding from federal and state grants. A typical annual CeaseFire site budget was about \$240,000, while the budget for violence interrupters was about \$189,000 (Skogan 2009).

Because CeaseFire's state funding had to be renewed on an annual basis, much of CeaseFire staff's time was consumed by lobbying their state representatives to ensure that the program would be included in the next fiscal year's budget. This process began in the spring every year and continued until June 30th, the end of Illinois's fiscal year. In years when the state legislature could not reach an agreement on the budget, funding stalled and site staff would work without pay for a few days, time which was then compensated retroactively once a budget agreement was reached (Skogan 2009).

In July of 2007, however, Illinois entered what was at the time the worst budget crisis in the state's history. Six weeks passed before legislators could agree on the FY2008 budget. As part of a broader dispute with state legislators over funding priorities, then-Governor Rod Blagojevich used his constitutional amendatory power to strip all "special initiatives" from the state budget. Included in these "special initiatives" was funding for many different CeaseFire sites. Ultimately, \$6.2 million of funding was cut from the state of Illinois between 2006 and 2007 (Skogan 2009).

The budget cut came as a shock to CeaseFire sites, many of which were now in the awkward position of having to find funding to retroactively pay staff who had been working without pay in the six weeks since the budget cut. CeaseFire workers were again surprised, when the following day, the results of an audit on CeaseFire were released, which found that CeaseFire

had lost track of \$371,000 (Office of the Auditor General 2007). CeaseFire leadership responded to the audit, noting that the Auditor's office had not found any misuse of funds, only simple accounting mistakes. However, the damage to CeaseFire's reputation had taken a hit. A bill to not only restore, but double CeaseFire's funding passed in the Illinois House of Representatives but stalled in the Senate.

Although some CeaseFire sites throughout Illinois were forced to close or downsize as a result of the 2007 budget cut, many sites were able to find alternative sources of funding to stay in operation. In 2008, a federally funded three-year evaluation of CeaseFire was published and reported that there was statistical evidence to suggest that CeaseFire was responsible for a drop in violence, with some CeaseFire neighborhoods seeing a 40% drop in violent crime (Skogan 2009). Additionally, the funding cut and the publication of the evaluation prompted CeaseFire leadership to engage in a national publicity campaign. Op-eds were published in *The Atlantic* and *New York Times Magazine* lauding CeaseFire's novel approach to violence prevention and shaming the Illinois state legislature for cutting funding to the program (Kolowitz 2008). \$6.25 million of state funding was eventually restored to CeaseFire as part of the state's annual allocations budget in March of 2009, over a year and a half after the initial loss of funding in 2007. CeaseFire was able to slowly rebuild, and continued to receive funding (ranging from \$4.4 million to \$6.25 million) from the state on an annual basis for a period of several years. In 2011, a documentary entitled *The Interrupters* was released that profiled several CeaseFire violence interrupters. The film won multiple awards and was included in PBS's Frontline series.

#### *2013 City of Chicago Budget Cut*

While CeaseFire continued receiving state funds, city officials in Chicago had always kept the organization at some distance. All of this changed in the summer of 2012, during which

Chicago faced a sudden spike in gun violence. Under new pressure from the public to show that his administration was addressing the crime surge, then-Mayor Emmanuel announced that the city would be providing CeaseFire with a one-year grant of \$1.5 million. In addition to the grant, it was announced the CeaseFire would be working more closely with police to lower crime throughout the city. Around this time, CeaseFire also “went national,” establishing a parent organization called Cure Violence which began implementing violence interrupter programs across the country.

Publicly, CeaseFire leaders and city officials touted the new partnership with the city. As reported by the media, however, it was clear that tension existed between the CeaseFire and the Chicago Police Department. The two organizations had very different stances on gang activity and approaches to violence prevention. Additionally, CPD reported that they had received tips that some CeaseFire interrupters were still gang-affiliated. Making matters worse, the program’s Illinois Director Tio Hardiman was arrested and charged with domestic violence during the summer of 2013, though the charges were later dropped. In 2013, it was announced that the city’s yearlong grant would not be renewed. While this funding cut was perhaps less surprising than the state budget cut five years prior, the decision provoked confusion from the media. As in 2007, many op-eds were published criticizing the city’s decision not to continue funding CeaseFire.

#### *2015 State Budget Crisis to Present*

Since the restoration of its funding in 2009, CeaseFire continued to receive funding on an annual basis from the state of Illinois, ranging from \$4.4 to \$6.25 million. For fiscal year 2015 (which lasted from July 1, 2014 to June 30, 2015), CeaseFire had been allocated \$4.7 million, consistent with its funding in previous years. However, in 2015, the state had entered into another budget crisis. Governor Rauner, who had run for office with the promise of balancing the

state's budget and had taken office in January of 2015, froze funding to CeaseFire before the group had received all of the \$4.7 it was budgeted for that year (ultimately the group received \$4.6 from the state). As the budget crisis dragged on, CeaseFire (along with a host of other social services funded by the state) did not receive any funding for fiscal year 2016; although the group had been included in the budget passed by the state legislature, this budget was vetoed by Gov. Rauner. In June of 2016, \$4.4 million was awarded to CeaseFire as part of a six month spending plan, but once this plan expired in January 2017, CeaseFire was once again left without state funding. CeaseFire did not receive funding again until the budget crisis ended in the summer of 2017. CeaseFire was granted about \$6 million for fiscal year 2018 and fiscal year 2019.

This period of funding insecurity from 2015-2017 was very difficult for CeaseFire, which had to close 24 of its sites within 30 days as a result of the budget crisis. However, perhaps the nail in the coffin for CeaseFire Chicago came in 2018, when news broke about a sexual misconduct scandal. Former violence interrupter Ameena Matthews and several other women who used to work for the program pressed charges against former senior administrator Ricardo "Cobe" Williams, alleging that he had demanded oral sex, exposed himself, blocked the door of his office so they couldn't leave and touched them in sexual ways without their consent. (Both Matthews and Williams were profiled in *The Interrupters* documentary, drawing public interest in the scandal.) The allegations led many politicians to retract support from CeaseFire, or at least to take a more critical stance towards the program.

It was at this time that Cure Violence decided to shift its focus towards its national and global projects and away from Illinois. Fiscal year 2019 (which lasted from July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019) was the last time that CeaseFire received funding from the state of Illinois; in 2018, the organization decided that it would not seek to be included in the budget for fiscal year 2020.

Cure Violence de-affiliated with the University of Illinois Chicago's School of Public Health and acquired its own 501(c)(3) status in 2019. (The Center for Youth Violence Prevention (the UIC arm that ran Cure Violence) no longer exists.) A single Illinois Cure Violence site managed to remain open with philanthropic funding, but took a hit during the COVID-19 pandemic and closed officially in January of 2021.

Now, Cure Violence operates in 20 American cities (including New York, Baltimore, Philadelphia, San Francisco, and Washington, D.C.) and in 16 foreign countries. Although Cure Violence is headquartered in Chicago, it no longer operates any sites in Chicago or Illinois. Many high-profile former employees of Cure Violence still operate in Chicago. As of March 2022, both Tio Hardiman and Cobe Williams had started their own violence interruption programs, named "Violence Interrupters" and "Interrupt the Violence" respectively. However, although Cure Violence has had an undeniable impact on the violence sphere in Illinois, it would appear that the organization has no intention of resuming programming in Illinois.

### *Challenges to Longterm State Funding*

I have also identified three challenges encountered by the group that might have contributed to the organization's inability to retain long-term state funding. These challenges include a tumultuous relationship with law enforcement, opposition from a handful of individual legislators, and a loss of public trust resulting from scandals that threatened the program's legitimacy.

### *Information Sharing & Tense Relationship with Police*

One recurring challenge faced by CeaseFire has been its tense relationship with the Chicago Police Department, which has at times been critical of the group's makeup and methods. Central to CeaseFire's violence interruption strategy is that, if a client is part of or is affiliated

with a gang, interrupters do not condemn this affiliation or attempt to persuade the client to leave the gang. To the contrary, current or former gang involvement is often something shared between interrupters and clients, and is leveraged to build trust between them. CeaseFire's primary objective was to prevent acts of violence, and their concern was violent retaliation between gangs rather than gang affiliation itself.

As such, there was hesitance among interrupters to work with police to identify, arrest, and prosecute people whom the organization knew to be involved in gang activity. Such collaboration could jeopardize the relationships that interrupters and outreach workers from CeaseFire had built up with their clients. As Tio Hardiman stated during our interview:

“The police were mad at CeaseFire, because we did not provide them with information. We did not want to serve in a capacity as an informant agency, okay? Because there's no way I would allow that based on the fact that it would mess up our credibility out there, you know, being able to actually stop killings on the front end or, you know, do our best to mediate conflicts. We could not be seen as a police agency.”

This stance on gang involvement was often in direct conflict with the law enforcement goals of the Chicago Police Department, which views gang involvement as a crime in and of itself. As such, individuals within CPD often perceived CeaseFire as undermining CPD's own violence prevention efforts and the department's relationship with community members. Superintendent Garry McCarthy in particular was very vocal about his disdain for CeaseFire and criticized the group publicly multiple times during his tenure. For example, the Tribune reported:

Earlier this month [June 2012], referring to CeaseFire in a speech at the Union League Club of Chicago, McCarthy said: "When an event occurs when people are trying to do damage and somebody comes in and tries to interrupt that particular dynamic, and they tell people, 'Well, don't talk to the police. We understand you can't trust the police. But look at us. You can trust us,' they're undercutting that legitimacy that we're trying to create with the community.

While serving as Director of CeaseFire, Tio Hardiman did try to publicly assuage fears that CeaseFire was undermining CPD, telling a Tribune reporter in April 2013 that CeaseFire



workers were “not going to stand in the way of a police relationship with residents.” However, McCarthy’s opinion of CeaseFire seemed to be shared by other members of the CPD. The Tribune reported in June 2012 that several CPD officers had complained about the department’s forced partnership with CeaseFire on an “unofficial police blog.” In addition to CeaseFire’s hesitancy in working with police, officers also expressed resentment that they would be forced to work with the former gang members who made up a large portion of CeaseFire workers--in their minds, the very people whom they were trying to protect residents against.

This tension between police and CeaseFire came to head in spring of 2012, when then-Mayor Rahm Emanuel, facing a spike in the city’s homicide rates, oversaw the administration of an unprecedented \$1.5 million grant to CeaseFire. The grant was allotted for one year and was overseen by the Chicago Department of Health. Under the terms of CeaseFire’s contract with the city, CeaseFire used the funding to hire 40 new violence interruption workers in two Chicago Police districts (Ogden and Grand Crossing) that had overseen the largest increases in violence. One source reported that Mayor Emmanuel had called a meeting in May between CeaseFire and the CPD in order to make them come to some agreement about what their relationship would be.

The contract was supposed to be finalized in September 2012 but did not come to fruition until December of the same year. New outlets reported that one issue responsible for this delay was a disagreement between CeaseFire and CPD about to what extent violence interrupters would be required to act as informants to police. Although these tensions were in place before the grant was administered, they became magnified once CeaseFire was receiving a substantial amount of its funding from the city and was therefore forced to work more closely with CPD as part of the Emmanuel administration's broader violence prevention strategy.

CeaseFire had run into issues in working with the police before, but these issues did not pose an existential threat to the group. Although CPD officials might have resented CeaseFire for their unwillingness to work with police, CPD had very little power to interfere with the group's work. However, once CeaseFire received funding from the City of Chicago, the organization was forced by the Emanuel administration to work with police, to some extent, in order for the administration to present a cohesive response to gun violence. This forced cooperation magnified the inherent (and perhaps irreconcilable) differences between the groups. While CPD, the long-established arm of local government, took law enforcement as its primary goal, CeaseFire took (only) violence prevention as its primary goal.

CeaseFire's tumultuous relationship with the CPD highlights the challenges of bringing a previously autonomous social program under the control of government. Although CeaseFire's unwillingness to share information with police became public knowledge in 2012, this issue appeared as early as 2007, before the first funding cut. Dr. Papachristos remembers that CeaseFire staff were resistant to supplying data to the state while he was observing the program as an evaluator in 2007:

"CeaseFire refused to collect data and provide any accountability to the state. So essentially, the state said, 'if you're going to get this money, you have to provide us information.' I do not know what they asked, I know what the state asks of outreach now: "How many participants did you serve? Were they in the highest risk category? How many interventions?" So they weren't asking, as far as I know, to collect--to give away, you know, names, dates, birth, social security numbers. And basically Cure [Violence] said "no." And so my recollection at the time, you know, being in some of these rooms...was—you know, they were a favorite of funders, private funders. And, you know, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation was one of their big funders...MacArthur, I mean you name it, everybody gave to Cure Violence. But to get state money, there's accountability involved. And, you know, they really pushed back quite a bit on that, at least in Illinois, and at least in Chicago."

Dr. Papachristos recalls that this issue did not appear until 2007 because it was not until then that CeaseFire received an increase in funding from the State of Illinois. This tension highlights a

specific challenge unique to receiving state funding: that the receipt of state funding obligates an organization to be more transparent with the state than it would otherwise. When an organization fails to meet this obligation, its access to state resources becomes threatened.

*Fraught Relationships with Legislators*

Because decisions about government funding are made by legislators, it is crucial for state funded-organizations to maintain positive relationships with individual legislators if they wish to continue receiving state funding. While CeaseFire was ardently supported by several state legislators in the Illinois House of Representatives in 2007, it did not enjoy as much popularity in the state Senate. These dynamics became very apparent in the months following the 2007 budget cut, when a bill that would have not only restored, but doubled CeaseFire funding from the state of Illinois passed in the House of Representatives but was never brought to a vote in the Senate. In particular, CeaseFire faced opposition from many senators in the Black Caucus, who reportedly took issue with the fact that CeaseFire, which operated mostly in majority-Black neighborhoods, was headed by Gary Slutkin, who is White. This notion that the Black Caucus was responsible for CeaseFire's unpopularity in the state senate was repeated to me by interviewees and came up in notes from a CeaseFire staff meeting following the 2007 budget cut. Although these senators never confirmed this publicly, Dr. Skogan explained to me:

“Gary's problem was that the very powerful state senator named Donne Trotter, who oversaw this part of the budget [inaudible] didn't want--well, his position was very simple: ‘organizations that are active in Black neighborhoods have to have Black leaders. And Gary Slutkin's not a Black leader, and so we're not going to give him any money.’ Now, Donne Trotter didn't say this to me. This was told to me by two different informants who may have told each other for all I know, but it certainly was in accord with Donnie Trotter.”

CeaseFire staff were aware of both this resistance to the organization from within the state senate and the necessity of restoring this relationship if they were to continue to receive state funds.

However, attempts to win over the Black Caucus were unsuccessful. One interviewee told me:

“We did try to have a breakfast with the Black Caucus. And it was downtown I want to say, and, you know, like with all of those things, you call and you call and you confirm and you confirm, and they didn't show up. Really, maybe one of them showed up. And it was basically to say that nobody else was going to show up...And so, like, when you have a moment like that? Yeah, the Black Caucus was never on board.”

This quote speaks to the precarious and unequal nature of the relationship between legislators and nonprofit organizations. Although the state relies on nonprofit organizations broadly to carry out services like public safety, there is no one organization in particular that the state is dependent on. In the case of CeaseFire, it is apparent that legislators like Donne Trotter needed the support of CeaseFire much less than CeaseFire needed the support of such legislators. Even when CeaseFire staff worked to repair these relationships, legislators who had made their mind up about CeaseFire had very little political incentive to respond in kind.

When the attempt to restore funding to CeaseFire failed in the Senate, it became clear that CeaseFire would not be able to win back the support of the state senate while Gary Slutkin was still the face of the organization locally. It was at this point that Slutkin began to focus on expanding the program outside of Illinois, and Tio Hardiman was promoted to Executive

Director of Illinois Programs:

“That's when I became more prominent with the organization Dr. Slutkin had turned over the reins for me to run all of Illinois, and he began to do more work, you know, outside of Illinois, per se. So when we lost the funding, what Slutkin did, he turned it over to me. And I fought to, you know, get the funding back, secure funding once again.”

Hardiman remained the public face of the program until 2012, when he left the organization.

CeaseFire staff did try to find allies in the Illinois State senate apart from those in the Black Caucus. In a meeting following the funding cut, during which CeaseFire staff strategized

about how to regain funding, a political advisor to the group said that finding senators to support CeaseFire would be crucial to regaining funding, and urged individual host sites to call their senators to try and find a political ally. However, this attempt was unsuccessful in regaining state funding as quickly as CeaseFire staff had hoped. While state funding was eventually restored to the group in 2009 as part of the state's annual budget, the fact that the initial bill to restore funding failed in the Senate indicates that the state senators opposed to CeaseFire carried a lot of political power. When I asked Dr. Skogan about how it is possible that it takes only a few inimical legislators to ruin an organization's political favor, he explained:

“My guess, my political science assessment would be that many of the people...who [had] been approving the funding of CeaseFire in the budget, didn't care that much about it. Every member of the legislature had in a sense a little budget they could spend on what they wanted. And if you spend it on CeaseFire, you're not spending it on something else, like, who knows, ...better traffic lights, or--there's all kinds of practical things. And so spending it on CeaseFire is to use your political capital and not get funding for something else. And so my guess is by then, by 2007...many of the people who'd been getting it in the budget didn't care enough to push back.”

Dr. Skogan highlights an element of state funding that is counterintuitive: although one might expect that governments, operating democratically, would be less susceptible to influence by a few legislators, this case study demonstrates that it is in fact possible for a program to be defunded without necessarily losing the support of most of a legislature. This example highlights the precarious situation that state-funded nonprofits face: it is absolutely crucial that they maintain broad political support, as having even a couple political opponents can make a big impact in that organization's long-term success.

#### *Loss of Public Trust (Scandals)*

One challenge that seems to have contributed to the downfall of CeaseFire is that the organization has been the focus of several scandals, including a reported mismanagement of funding and allegations of sexual assault against its members. The fact that these scandals were

widely reported indicates both that they were public enough for journalists to learn about and that journalists deemed them significant enough to be shared with the public.

In August of 2007, the Illinois Auditor's office released a critical report of CeaseFire explaining their findings from a recent audit. The report revealed that CeaseFire had lost track of hundreds of thousands of dollars, most of which were provided by the state of Illinois. Notably, the report was published the day after CeaseFire after Governor Blagojevich cut funding to CeaseFire and all other "special projects" in the state budget. In Dr. Skogan's 2008 evaluation of CeaseFire, he writes:

"The audit had been initiated by longtime critic of CeaseFire, a powerful state senator representing the city's South Side and a prominent leader of the Illinois Legislative Black Caucus... Many observers wondered whether the audit was unbiased, and certainly the exquisite timing of its release was quite damaging to CeaseFire: the media focused as much on the audit as the budget cut."

CeaseFire and the University of Illinois Chicago, which administered the program were quick to explain to the media that the mismanagement of funds were simply administrative oversights rather than intentional, egregious misuse of funding. Gary Slutkin was quoted in several articles at the time defending the group by saying "[t]here's nothing illegal. There's no misspending. There's no trips to the Bahamas, no \$50,000 toilet." The organization also adopted most of the state's recommendations for better tracking their funding.

However, the audit did enough damage to CeaseFire's reputation that its budget was still raised as a concern by lawmakers in the weeks after the report was released. In January 2008, during discussion in the Illinois House of Representatives about a bill that would have restored CeaseFire's recently-cut funding, Rep. Fritchey argued that restoring funding to the group would be unwise on the grounds that "they [CeaseFire] acknowledged themselves that they have several hundred thousand dollars that they could not account for." Having gained a reputation among

some law-makers as financially irresponsible, CeaseFire was not able to regain state funding as easily as the organization had hoped

The second scandal came in November of 2018, when four women who had all worked for CeaseFire in some capacity, came forward with allegations that Ricardo “Cobe” Williams, a senior administrator of CeaseFire, had sexually harrassed and assaulted them. A lawsuit brought on behalf of one of the women also named Gary Slutkin, the program’s founder, and the University of Illinois Chicago, which was administering the program, as defendants. The women claimed that Ricardo had “demanded oral sex, exposed himself, blocked the door of his office so they couldn't leave and touched them in sexual ways without their consent.” Beyond the incidents of sexual assault described, the women complained that their past complaints to Slutkin and to UIC had gone unanswered, resulting in the lawsuit.

This lawsuit was particularly damaging to CeaseFire’s public reputation and its support among elected officials. When news of the sexual assault allegations was made public, the Tribune reported that:

State Rep. Kelly Cassidy... express[ed] disgust over the allegations. Cassidy said she has been a frequent advocate for the organization and has fought for program funding in the state budget but is now withholding support as she waits to see how it handles the allegations. "They need to restore that faith, and they need to do it now," she said.

This quote demonstrates the direct link between CeaseFire’s reputation and their ability to obtain government funding and the speed at which favor against the organization can turn. Elected officials have little to gain and much to lose by backing an organization linked to scandals like the ones mentioned above. Even one scandal might therefore damage the reputation of the organization enough that securing future state funding becomes impossible. Although this scandal broke after CeaseFire had lost both its funding from the state of Illinois in 2008 and its

funding from the city of Chicago in 2013, it very likely contributed to the organization's decision not to continue seeking state funding after 2018.

Importantly, the sexual assault scandal did not simply paint CeaseFire in a bad light; it called into question the organization's commitment to its own mission. Allegations of sexual assault would be damaging to any organization's reputation, but were particularly damaging in this case given that the organization in question claims to be devoted to preventing violence. Ameena Matthews, a former violence interrupter for CeaseFire and one of the women who brought allegations against the group pointed this out directly, stating in a Tribune article: "I thought CeaseFire meant what they said, that they are violence preventers... They did not practice what they preach." This quote highlights the damage that certain scandals can have to the program's legitimacy.

## **Conclusion**

With this project, I have identified challenges faced by the violence prevention organization CeaseFire / Cure Violence in retaining government funding. Drawing from interviews, archival data, and newspaper data, I have examined two specific instances when CeaseFire lost government funding: once from the state of Illinois in 2007 and again from the city of Chicago in 2013. These funding cuts were surprising given the organization's popularity among legislators at the time, its continued success nationwide, and the state's shifting role as a funder, rather than an executor, of public policy. In identifying these challenges, I have filled a gap in the literature about governmental decisions to terminate funding of "mediating" nonprofit organizations, particularly in the field of violence prevention.

Much of the literature about the trajectory of state funding has rested on the assumption that the privatization of the welfare state has led to diminished social services (Wacquant 2008;



Starke 2006). A primary contribution of this research has been to demonstrate that, despite misconceptions to the contrary, state and local governments control considerable amounts of funding and therefore hold the power to either sustain an organization for the long-term or to effectively terminate it. Additionally, an examination of CeaseFire's relationship history with public funding has highlighted the factors that play into legislators' decisions to fund nonprofits. Namely, it is the reputation of the organization, rather than its efficacy or financial costs, that is paramount in determining whether legislators will allocate public funding towards it.

This importance of reputation to an organization's longevity represents a key characteristic of nonprofits, in contrast to state agencies. When, for example, the Chicago Police Department has endured scandals ranging from , the question is not *if* the CPD will continue to receive funding, but *how* the organization will continue to operate (Morell and Smith 2020). Legislators simply do not face the same political pressure to hold state agencies to the stringent standards applied to mediating organizations. This finding highlights Klein's observation that "equivocal or negative results of large-scale intervention programs...more commonly lead to withdrawal of financial support, discouragement and apathy, and a search for 'better ways' to spend our money and expend our energy" (Klein 2011). It is also reminiscent of Ray's (2019) theory of racialized organization, which suggests that "[w]hile White organizations are seen as normative and neutral, non-White organizations are seen as deviations from the norm and often stigmatized." Given the reality of this political situation, it is apparent, as evidenced by CeaseFire, that the longevity of an organization depends on its ability to weather criticism. The primary finding of this project is demonstrating the importance of a nonprofit's ability to maintain a positive reputation (in contrast to state organizations) in order to receive state long-term government funding.

Another key finding of this research is that state funding of violence prevention programs necessitates an explicit decision about to what degree such programs will be required to work with police. At the most basic level, nonprofit organizations “are constituted in opposition to the state” (DiMaggio & Anheier 1990). I would argue that CeaseFire, a violence prevention nonprofit, is therefore constituted in opposition to police. CeaseFire is a prime example of this principle, as many violence interrupters leverage their distinctness from police in order to gain legitimacy from clients. If state actors wish to bring police and nonstate actors together under a unified violence prevention strategy, it is crucial that the nuances of this relationship and obligations of each party be made explicit before funding is allotted.

A final key contribution of this research is to highlight the vast amount of power that individual legislators have to strip funding from nonprofit organizations. Had Governor Blagojevich left CeaseFire in the budget, or had CeaseFire identified a fierce ally in the state senate in 2007, it is possible the organization would still be receiving funding from the state of Illinois today. Recent literature about urban sociology has advocated for greater recognition of organizations as producers of inequality (Marwell & Morrissey 2020). While such integration of organizational sociology is undoubtedly important, it is easy to forget that institutions, like the state, are made up of individuals who have more power to influence policy than one might imagine. CeaseFire’s at-times fraught relationship with a few legislators underscores the importance of remembering, as Fligstein and McAdams summarize: “the state is definitely *not* a unified actor” (Fligstein & McAdams 2012: 74).

I chose to focus my analysis on Chicago and Illinois in order to explore these challenges in greater depth. However, one possibility for further research would be to compare the challenges faced by Cure Violence in Chicago to other Cure Violence organizations around the

country and the world. I imagine that each satellite program using the Cure Violence model has faced its own unique set of challenges in interactions with the state. Identifying which challenges are unique to Chicago and which are common among Cure Violence sites would be beneficial for understanding how generalizable these findings are. To this end, it would also be worthwhile to identify challenges encountered by violence prevention organizations other than Cure Violence. Such research could select different historical time periods or geographic areas to contribute to the literature about these challenges. Lastly, a major limitation of my research is that I did not interview legislators, or any state actors, about the decisions to cut funding from CeaseFire. Hearing the justification for defunding decisions directly from the people responsible for them is absolutely essential to building a more coherent theory of state decision making.

If the last two years are any indication of the future, we are likely to see more and more public demand to “defund the police” and to redistribute funding towards programs such as, and including, Cure Violence. However, the last century contains no shortage of examples of violence prevention programs which have been adopted by the government only to fall out of favor a few years later; Cure Violence is just one example of many. In order to make any real impact on rates of violence nationwide, it is crucial that effective violence prevention programs receive the long-term institutional support that only comes with state funding. In better understanding why it is that governments do *not* fund these programs, we move one step closer towards effective violence prevention policy.

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