COMMUNITY POLICING: BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

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ABSTRACT

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The Detroit Police Department for many years has maintained a strained relationship with the community it serves. The Detroit Police Department has not aggressively pursued a positive image within the community. Being a member of the Detroit Police Department for thirteen (13) years and being a resident of the City of Detroit all of my life, I have a good feel for how the community perceives the Detroit Police Department and it is a very negative perception. The community feels that the Police Department is out of touch with their needs and values. The community also feels that their respective neighborhoods are not safe and that the Police Department could do a better job of responding to Police Runs. Another community complaint is that the police department could do a better job of patrolling the communities.

My research paper will be on community policing and it will address the positive effects that aggressive community policing will have on the relationship between the community and the Detroit Police Department. The Detroit Police Department has a new Police Chief in Jerry A. Oliver Sr., who is very adamant about instilling a community policing mentality within the Detroit Police Department. My paper will also suggest different ways that the Detroit Police Department could utilize its manpower to be a more visible force within the community. My paper will also weigh the pros and cons of community policing vs. traditional policing and illustrate the different types of patrol that the Detroit Police Department could utilize in an effort to deter crime before crime is committed. This research paper will address the aspect of how important community policing is when aiding Police Officers in understanding the culture and values of the community it serves.
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INTRODUCTION

The concept of policing has been in existence for many years. For many of these years, the view of the police has remained pretty much the same. In countless books, movies, and television shows, the public has been presented with a view that romanticizes police officers as fearless crime fighters who think little of their own safety as they engage in daily shootouts with drug dealers, serial killers and organized crime hit men. But how close is this portrayal of crime fighter is “real life”?

Police officers are expected to deal with many calls for serviced each year. But the number of calls police officers receive that are directly related to enforcing the law is a small part of their day. According to Senna and Siegel, “studies of police work indicate that a significant portion of a police officer’s time is spent handling minor disturbances, service calls, and administrative duties. Studies conducted over the past two decades have found that social services and administrative tasks consume more than half of an officer’s time and account for more than half of the officer’s calls. In contrast crime related calls fall in a range, depending on the department, of between 5 and 20 percent of a police officer’s total activity”. (Pg. 261)

BACKGROUND

Crime fighting, no doubt, is truly a façade. The great bulk of police patrol is devoted to peacekeeping. Police may want to be proactive crime fighters, but the truth is
that most officers remain reactive, responding to citizens calls. The police are expected
to perform many civic duties that in earlier times were the responsibility of every citizen:
keeping the peace, performing emergency service, dealing with family problems, and
helping during civil emergencies. But now the police officer has become a “social
handyman” called in to solve these social problems citizens create. Due to this role
conflict, more departments are adopting new models of policing that reflect this changing
role.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many administrators now recognize that police officers are better equipped to be
civil problem solvers than effective crime fighters. Rather than ignore, deny, or fight this
reality, police departments are being reorganized to maximize their strengths and
minimize their weaknesses. What has emerged is the community policing movement, a
new concept of policing to bridge the gap between police agencies and the community
they serve.

Many police officers feel unappreciated by the people they serve, and for years
they have tried to gain the cooperation and respect of the community that they serve. The
realization that has happened is that the philosophy of reactive incident driven approach
must be changed to a more proactive problem solving style. This new approach requires
that police departments develop a new relationship with the law-abiding people in the
community, thus allowing them a greater voice in setting local police priorities and
involving them in efforts to improve the overall quality of life in their neighborhoods.

This concept shifts the focus of police work from handling random calls to solving community problems.

For many years, the majority of the public’s interest has focused on quality and effectiveness of their local police. Police administrators and interested citizens have been working for more than a decade to design and implement a form of policing that better meets the demands on the police in the 2000’s. The concept on community policing has been developed to hopefully satisfy these growing demands. Authors Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux have offered an expanded and concise definition to better define what community policing is. The expanded definition is as follows:

Community policing is a philosophy and an organizational strategy that promotes new partnership between people and police. It is based on the premise that both the police and the community must work together to identify, prioritize, and solve contemporary problems such as crime, drugs, fear of crime, social and physical disorder, and overall neighborhood decay, with the goal of improving the overall quality of life in the area.

Community policing requires a department-wide commitment from every-one, civilian and sworn members, to the community policing philosophy. It also challenges all personnel to find ways to express this new philosophy in their jobs, thereby balancing the need to maintain an immediate and effective police response to individual crime incidents and emergencies with the goal of exploring new proactive initiatives aimed at solving problems before they occur or escalate.

Community policing also rests on establishing community policing officers as decentralized “mini chiefs” in permanent beats, where they enjoy the freedom and
autonomy to operate as community-based problem solvers who work directly with the community making their neighborhoods better and safer places in which to live and work. (Pg. 2)

Community Policing’s concise definition is referred to as, “The Nine P’s of Community Policing”. “Community policing is a **philosophy** of full service **personalized policing**, where the same officer **patrols** and works in the same area on a **permanent** basis, from a decentralized **place**, working in a **proactive partnership** with citizens to identify and solve **problems**”. (Pg. 3)

When examining each “P” of this definition, the first “P” refers to philosophy. The community policing philosophy is based on the belief that today’s society requires the police to provide full service policing, both proactive and reactive, that involves the community in solving its problems.

The next “P” stands for personalized. Providing the community with its own community policing officer helps citizens view the police as people, just like them, which in turn, breaks down the anonymity on both sides.

The third “P” refers to policing. Of course, officers will still be the “police”, maintaining a law enforcement focus, but the revised method will also focus on proactive, problem solving policing.
Patrols are the fourth “P” of this concise definition. The goal in this area is to make officers move visible, approachable, and accessible. This can be done by taking them out of the scout cars and placing them on foot patrol, bike patrol, and horse patrol.

The fifth “P” stands for permanent. This entails assigning community policing officers permanently to assigned beats and keeping them there. In order for a partnership to develop within the community, they have to be exposed to the same officer everyday. Having a different officer everyday would make it impossible for the citizens to familiarize themselves with an officer or to build any type of bond.

The sixth “P”; stands for place. All cities, when broken down, have distinct neighborhoods. Officers are given their own “place” to patrol, giving them a sense of responsibility to their area.

Proactive is the seventh “P” of this definition. Officers will have a proactive focus on preventing crime, as well as responding to crime as it occurs.

Partnership, the eighth “P”, encourages a bond between the police and the community, based on a foundation of respect, civility, and support.

The final “P”, for problem solving, revises the role of the officer. Instead of solving a problem with an arrest, ticket or other type of “punishment”, this concept
addresses the source of the problem, as a means to an end, instead of strict law enforcement as an end in itself.

**PROCEDURES**

Community policing also has a list of ten principles that should be used as a guide for its planning stages. The principals can often justify or explain the decisions made and/or actions taken by members utilizing this concept. Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux lists, defines and explains each of the following principles:

1. **Philosophy and Organizational Strategy.** Community policing is both a philosophy (a way of thinking) and an organizational strategy (a way to carry out the philosophy) that allows the police and the community to work closely together in new ways to solve the problems of crime…The philosophy rest on the belief that people deserve input into the police process, in exchange for their participation and support.

2. **Commitment to Community Empowerment.** Community policing’s organizational strategy first demands that everyone in the police department. . .investigate ways to translate the philosophy of power sharing into practice. . . Within the community, citizens must share in the rights and responsibilities implicit in identifying, prioritizing, and solving problems, as full fledged partners with the police.
3. **Decentralized and Personalized Policing.** As the department’s Community police officers (they) must be freed from the isolation of the patrol car and the demands of the police radio so that they can maintain daily, direct, face to face contact with the people they serve in a clearly defined area.

4. **Immediate and Long-Term Proactive Problem Solving.** As law enforcement officers, community policing officers respond to calls for service and make arrests, but they also go beyond this narrow focus to develop and monitor broad-based, long term initiatives that can involve all elements of the community in efforts to improve the overall quality of life.

5. **Ethics Legality, Responsibility, and Trust.** Community policing means that citizens will be asked to handle more of their minor concerns themselves, but, in exchange, this will free police to work with people developing immediate as well as long term solutions for community concerns in ways that encourage mutual accountability and respect.

6. **Expanding the Police Mandate.** As the only agency of social control open twenty four hours a day. . . the police must maintain the ability to respond immediately to crises and crime incidents, but community policing broadens the police role so that they can make a greater impact on making changes today that hold the promise of making communities safer and more attractive places to live tomorrow.
7. **Helping Those with Special Needs.** Community policing stresses exploring new ways to protect and enhance the lives of those who are most vulnerable.

8. **Grass-Roots Creativity and Support.** Community policing... rest on the belief that nothing surpasses what dedicated human beings, talking and working together can achieve.

9. **Internal Change.** Community policing must... bridge the gap between the police and people they serve.

10. **Building for the Future.** Community policing... recognizes that the police cannot pose order on the community from the outside, but that people must be encouraged to think of the police as a resource that they can use in helping to solve contemporary community concerns.(Pg. 5)

In order for this concept of community policing to work, there are certain identified groups that must work together to ensure that success of this concept. The groups are as follows: (1) The Police Department, (2) The Community, (3) Elected Civic Officials, (4) The Business Community, (5) Other Agencies, and (6) The Media.
The police department is no doubt, the primary ingredient in this concept. The full cooperation of the police officers is needed and by involving them in the planning process not only recognizes their contribution, but their support is essential.

The community’s input is very essential to the success of community policing. The entire concept is based upon a partnership within the community. The citizens must be aware and receptive of the available resources and learn the problem solving process in order to tackle many of their own problems.

Elected Civic Officials are important to the overall success of community policing. They give final approval of departmental plans, and finance much of the money that is needed to implement the plan.

The business community plays a very important role in the success of community policing. Many companies can donate financial support for many projects, or donate needed equipment. Some business may even hire citizens recommended by community policing officers. By the business community being a powerful constituency, ignoring their concerns could cause obstacles in the future during the implementation stages.

Other agencies can be of great assistance to the community policing approach. After school programs for juveniles can assist in the reduction of delinquency, as well as shelters and food banks can assist the homeless and the elderly. When other agencies
assist the police, it removes part of the strain the officers feel by trying to be all things to all people.

Media coverage on community policing helps give the concept more momentum. The media can help educate the public on what community policing is and what it can mean to their community. Informing citizens of meetings, changes anticipated from this approach, as well as how they can get involved, are some examples how the media can play a helpful and educational part.

A community policing strategy must be planned after the philosophy, definition, and principles are understood. A good place to start is to clarify the values the department stands for, as well as develop a mission statement that gives the strategy direction. Certain elements must be incorporated when planning a successful strategy. The elements are as follows:

Audit. A diagnosis or assessment of the current health of the organization.

Needs Assessment. Organizational needs identified by stakeholders, both internal and external to the organization.

Vision. Describes the “ideal” organization in future terms.
Values. Describes the organization’s beliefs and basis for action.

Mission. Describes the organization’s purpose.

General Goals. Broad performance targets essential for achieving the organization’s mission.

Strategic Alternatives. Describes the optional courses for reaching the respective general goals.

Operating Objectives. Describes specific and concrete targets. Selected to execute the selected strategies for each goal.

Implementation. Putting the plan into action.

Monitor. Evaluating the actual performance when measured against the planned performance. (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux Pg. 25)

Community policing planners must look internally to determine what they have, need, their goal, and what is required to reach them before they can begin to bring change externally.
When strategy has been formulated, a department wide commitment is needed to carry out the plan successfully. The College of Social Science at Michigan State University developed eight helpful suggestions planners/leaders should consider when implementing community policing. If taken into consideration, resistance (internal backlash) from members will be relatively low. They are as follows:

1. Train the entire department in the community policing philosophy from the beginning. This will serve to limit confusion and misunderstanding. Include both sworn and civilian employees.

2. Develop a management style and organizational structure which embraces input from all members of the department.

3. Constantly stress to both the department and the community that the agency will always perform traditional police duties.

4. Go slowly! Community policing is a philosophy, not a program. In most cases it will take ten to twenty years to change our current incident driven responses to a community oriented partnership.

5. Stay focused on fundamentals. Review and implement hiring procedures which complement the selection of community oriented police officers.
6. Involve community and political leaders throughout the process. Let them benefit from the positive, and they may support you when you need them the most.

7. Don’t take it personally when members of the department demonstrate backlash. Work through the tough critical times with them.

8. Most importantly, role model what you expect to see. Chiefs and managers have to literally walk to beat.

Cooperation is needed externally, as well as internally, to get this approach underway. Motivating citizens and gaining their acceptance and participation is the next task in the implementation process. Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux have noted eight steps necessary to initiate community action. They are as follows: (1) Information gathering, (2) Analysis of the community, (3) Relevant Group Identification, (4) The identification of leadership, (5) Bringing leaders of relevant groups together, (6) The identification area of agreement and disagreement, (7) Implementation and (8) Quality control and continuous development.

The first step, information gathering, involves surveying the community. The approach will highlight many of the problems that exist within the community. The crime of Unlawfully Driving Away Auto, for example, can be analyzed to determine a possible explanation and solution to the problem. Are the
doors being left unlocked? Is the car being parked in a dark area? Can the car be parked in the garage, instead of being left on the street? The solution to some types of crime can be found within the answers to these sorts of questions.

The second step of action calls for analyzing the community. Factors such as the history of the neighborhood, its conflicts, problems, and current politics, often influence the attitudes of citizens. Being aware of these factors just might assist in the task of building a rapport and relationship with the community, thus solving their problems a little quicker and easier.

Step three, relevant group identification, addresses members of the Big Six previously identified. All relevant groups should be involved so they can advocate the community policing effort. A city-wide meeting should be held to educate the public on the new approach, report the findings of the assessments, get any feedback the community offers, and formulate a plan of action emphasizing how the community can make a difference. Members of the Big Six such as the media announcing the meeting time and location, as well as businesses offering space and equipment is where their support can be demonstrated and appreciated.

The identification of leadership is the fourth step of action. People willing to get the process started must be identified. People with an overall interest in their neighborhood, and who reflect the views of their fellow neighbors, are no
doubt, the best individuals that can stimulate and perpetuate the support from others. This type of person may already be a block club president or a victim ready for positive change. Whoever is ready to take the first step toward a new beginning should be recognized, identified, and supported.

Bringing leaders of relevant groups together is the fifth step of action. During this process, leaders from different groups can express their feelings and concerns, as well as exchange information and ideas. It is important that the communication process be focused on the group’s objectives with regard to problems, and problem solving approaches.

Step six of the action plan is the identification of areas of agreement and disagreement. When the views of the various groups are identified, a comparison can be made of these agreements and disagreements. The perception that the police have their role, for example, could be a vast contradiction as to how many citizens perceive them. Police Officers may see themselves as empathetic and compassionate when citizens view them as authoritative and brash.

Implementation is the seventh step of action. After the areas of agreement and disagreement are identified, steps can be made toward agreeing in more areas. Groups will not necessarily agree in all areas, but when the number agreements outweigh the numbers of disagreements, compromise can be realized.
Step eight, the final step, refers to the quality and continuous development and updating. Improvements should always be sought. Becoming complacent will only exhaust potential developments and improvements. Groups should continue to strive toward making their communities a better and safer place.

If community policing is to become a department-wide commitment, all officers must become involved. All officers on patrol, not just community policing officers, must exit their scout cars and interact daily with the citizens. Officers must demonstrate this way of policing to new officers so it will be viewed as the “normal” way to patrol. The entire department should eventually be trained, and this can be achieved three ways. Firstly, academy training will train new recruits on this type of approach. Since these officers have not been conditioned any other way, this will be most effective. Secondly, field training shows officers already on patrol, how to become more effective as problem solvers. The third method of training is an ongoing in-service training which constantly updates and improves current practices.

After officers have been trained, they will be equipped with the knowledge that will improve their overall effectiveness. They will be responsible for performing certain duties and activities which Trojanowicz and Buqueroux have noted. The are as follows:
**Law Enforcement.** The community policing officer performs general common to all police patrol assignments.

**Directed Patrol.** The main reason for removing the community policing officer from the patrol car is to allow the officer the time and opportunity to work behind the scenes, involving the community in efforts to make the beat a better and safer place in which to live and work.

**Conflict Resolution.** The community policing officer mediates, negotiates, and resolves conflicts formally and informally.

**Referrals.** The community policing officer refers problems to appropriate agencies.

**Visiting.** The community policing officer makes home and business visits to acquaint individuals in the beat with community policing, to enlist their help, and to educate them about crime prevention.

**Identifying and Prioritizing Problems.** The community police work with community residents to identify and prioritize problems.

**Reporting.** The community police officer shares information. . .with officers who are apart of the team and also with the rest of the department.
**Problem Solving.** Because of the knowledge that the community policing officer has of the neighborhood and the people that live there, he or she can be the catalyst to develop creative solutions to problems. . .

**Community Involvement.** The community policing officer attempts to build an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust, so that the average citizens and community leaders form a partnership with the police.

**Organizing.** The community policing officer. . .(organizes) a number of community based initiatives and activities aimed at specific problems.

**Communicating.** The community policing officer gives formal and informal talks to individuals and groups to educate people about crime prevention techniques and to discuss problems in the beat.

**Recruiting and Supervising Volunteers.** The community policing officer must solicit, train, and supervise paid and/or unpaid community volunteers, ranging from individuals who assist with clerical duties to people who are working with juveniles in the neighborhood. . .(Pg. 77)
**Proactive Projects.** The community policing officer works with the community on short term and long term efforts to prevent problems and enhance the quality of life.

**Networking with Non-Profit Agencies.** The community policing officer acts as both liaison and facilitator with non-profit agencies.

**Administrative/Professional Duties.** The community policing officer participates in training, roll call, and officer duties.

**Targeting Disorder.** The community policing officer’s mandate includes emphasis on developing solutions to problems of social and physical disorder and neighborhood decay.

**Networking with the Private Sector.** The community policing officer contacts and solicits the active participation of business, ranging from donations of goods from small business to broad corporate support for new initiatives.

This information describes the general duties and provides a basic picture of what community policing officers do and what is expected of them.
RESULTS

The community policing philosophy is being supported across the nation. In 1994, President Bill Clinton pledged an additional 100,000 community policing officers to reduce violence and prevent crime in America’s neighborhoods. Attorney General Janet Reno created the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) following the passage of the Crime Act later that year.

The United States Department of Justice, Officer of Community Oriented Policing Services, published a report noting the progress being achieved by this approach around the country. Six states were profiled, (TX, IL, OH, MA, TX) and chiefs and sheriffs alike, stated how these type of officers had a powerful effect on their community, and credited community policing for the downward trend of crime in their cities.

DISCUSSION

The Community policing concept is making a tremendous difference in fighting crime in cities across the United States. The most recent annual Uniform Crime Reports showed a fifth straight decline in serious reported crime. Crime data suggest that those agencies most committed to community policing and those practicing it for a number of years are the ones that continue to experience larger decreases in crime.
RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering the research done for this paper, I feel that community policing is the best way to reduce crime and to mend relationships between the police and the community. It will take a tremendous commitment between the department executives and the remaining members of the Detroit Police Department, which includes sworn and civilian employees. I believe that the citizens of the City of Detroit would embrace this concept of community policing and would do their part to make this effort succeed. Police Chief Jerry A. Oliver Sr., has started the process of aggressively implementing the community police concept and I believe that will be very beneficial for the Detroit Police Department and the citizens of the City of Detroit. I recommend that this police department continue to put an emphasis on community policing and that the police officers diligently work at making this concept a reality to ensure the positive results that are mentioned in this paper.
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