This book is dedicated to the memory of

Robert C. Trojanowicz

who touched all of our lives with his vision of community policing and his deeply appreciated assistance to police and service agencies around the world

THE
CHALLENGE OF
COMMUNITY POLICING

Testing the Promises

Dennis P. Rosenbaum
Editor

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Research Synthesis and Policy Implications

MARK H. MOORE

SOMETHING IS CLEARLY AFOOT in the field of policing. Throughout the country (even the world), police executives are committing their organizations to something called “community” or “problem-solving” policing (Kelling, 1988). Indeed, popular enthusiasm for these ideas is so great that in a few cases in which police executives have been slow to embrace them, communities have forced the ideas upon them.

Predictably, rhetorical commitments to these ideas have outpaced the concrete achievements. Still, as one looks across the country, one finds many examples of departments that have introduced important new operational programs and administrative systems that are consistent with the spirit of the wider reforms (and are often the important first steps in changing the operational philosophy of an entire department). As Eck and Rosenbaum observe, “Community policing has become the new orthodoxy for cops”; and “community policing is the only form of policing available for anyone who seeks to improve police operations, management, or relations with the public” (Chapter 1, this volume).

The Community Policing Movement

It is not hard to understand the attraction of the new ideas about policing. They seem to recognize and respond to what have come to be seen as the limitations of the “reform model” of policing: its predominantly reactive stance toward crime control; its nearly exclusive reliance on arrests as a means of reducing crime and controlling disorder; its inability to develop and sustain close working relationships...
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The Challenge to Police Researchers

Obviously, this situation presents a golden opportunity for police researchers. Society needs to know whether the new directions in which police agencies are now moving are valuable or not. In principle, police researchers are well positioned to provide the answers.

Yet the situation holds a dangerous temptation for police researchers as well as an important opportunity. The temptation is that the researchers will try too early to give a definitive answer to the key question of whether community policing "works." Alternatively, researchers might try to "rationalize" the untidy developments now occurring in the field, and bring them under some form of central control designed to ensure that the one best form of community policing is tested and implemented. In doing so, there is a real risk that the search for better ways to police America's communities might be aborted or crippled.

As the chapters of this book indicate, the concept of community policing is a complex one. At the moment, it is more a set of challenging, general ideas pointing to new frontiers to explore than it is an operational and administrative blueprint for a newly designed police department. Yet these general ideas seem to be challenging and inspiring the field. As a result, the field is experimenting (more or less formally) with a wide variety of particular operational and administrative ideas that might fill the void between the big, abstract, rhetorical ideas on one hand and the concrete operations of police departments and the street-level behavior of individual officers on the other.

Arguably, it is important both to society and to the police field that the current binge of innovation be allowed to go forward without too much regulation. Such an approach would ensure both the most intensive use of the field's own imagination and experience, and the widest possible search for interesting operational and administrative ideas. It would also ensure that the police field would continue to "own" and feel responsible for the developments that are now occurring.

The danger associated with too heavy-handed a research intervention is that by trying to learn too quickly and too systematically, society could actually shrink its capacity to learn what works. In trying to answer the question of whether community policing works before society and the field have had ample opportunity to explore the possibilities of the complex idea, we might unwittingly stop the prospecting just before we found gold. Similarly, in trying to channel the natural experiments now occurring into a few, well-structured experiments designed to test a small number of specific operational programs or administrative systems that are arbitrarily defined as the "essence" of community policing, the prospecting might be limited to areas where the real gold cannot be found. In short, by trying to act as the arbiter of the reform movement, the research community might end up killing it altogether.

The alternative, as Weisburd (Chapter 18, this volume) suggests, is for the police research community to play a quite different role: to play the role of commentator rather than arbiter. In this role, their job would not be to reach an
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Inevitably, by reading these chapters one’s judgment about whether the big bet that is now being made on community policing is justified or not is influenced. Like an investor reading an analyst’s reports, one gains more or less confidence in the enterprise in which one has invested. Somewhat unexpectedly, I came away from reading these chapters a little more optimistic than I was before I read them.

Yet the far more important contribution of the chapters in this book is that they inform society and the field of policing about what is now known or suspected and what important questions we should be asking about the developing concept of community policing. It is in this way that these chapters help light the way forward—not necessarily to the effective implementation of a particular concept called community policing, but to better ideas about how to police our cities, which were initially suggested by the concept of community policing.

Let me set out in more detail what I think these studies and essays tell us about: (a) the concept of community policing; (b) the effectiveness of community policing; and (c) the feasibility of community policing. I will also take the liberty of concluding with some observations on what might usefully be done simultaneously to accelerate the development of community policing, learn from the accumulating experience what works and what does not, and determine the role that police researchers could usefully play in that effort.

Developing the Concept of Community Policing

A theme that runs through these essays and reports is continuing frustration with the problem of how to define community policing. On one hand, the writers seem frustrated—even a bit indignant—that the idea cannot be encapsulated in a few, well-defined operational programs or administrative systems. The concept seems to encompass a wide variety of programs and managerial systems, with no particular priority given to the individual elements.

On the other hand, the authors are also able to define community policing in terms of a small number of fairly abstract ideas that differ importantly from the way that policing is now being done. Bayley (Chapter 19, this volume), for example, defines community policing in terms of four elements: consultation, adaptation, mobilization, and problem solving.

The Utility of Ambiguity

So, it’s clear that there is something to the concept. Yet it is also true that the concept is susceptible to multiple interpretations. This may be frustrating to those who want to work with simple concepts. But it is not at all clear that the
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Ambiguity of the concept is preventing it from doing useful work in stimulating important innovations in the field of policing. Indeed, as Skogan (Chapter 9, this volume) observes:

Community policing is not a clear-cut concept, for it involves reforming decision-making processes and creating new cultures within police departments rather than being a specific tactical plan. ... Under the rubric of community policing, American departments are opening small neighborhood substations, conducting surveys to identify local problems, organizing meetings and crime prevention seminars, publishing newsletters, helping form neighborhood watch groups, establishing advisory panels to inform police commanders, organizing youth activities, conducting drug education projects and media campaigns, patrolling on horses and bicycles, and working with municipal agencies to enforce health and safety regulations.

In short, it is partly the ambiguity of the concept that is stimulating the wider array of experimentation we are observing. In this sense, it is important that the concept mean something, but not something too specific. The ambiguity is a virtue.

Operational Program, Management Style, or Overall Philosophy?

A second key issue in defining community policing is whether the concept refers to: (a) a particular kind or set of operational programs; (b) a particular ind or set of administrative reforms in the police department; or (c) an overall philosophy, or strategy, or style of policing that is meant to change the entire department's operations.

Of course, there is an important relationship among these different elements. Community policing may have begun as a set of new operational programs: for instance, the increased use of foot patrols, the development of mini police stations, surveys of citizens to find out what problems concerned them, increased attention to victims of crime, and so forth. Yet, to launch these efforts it was often necessary to make important administrative changes in the department: Special units were created, patrol schedules were rearranged, and personnel systems were adjusted to reflect the priority that was now being given to the new programs. Moreover, these operational and administrative innovations often suggested the possibility of wider strategic changes in the overall operations of the experimenting department.

Yet, both to clarify the concept and to keep accurate track of what we are learning about community policing, it is probably important to continue to distinguish among these different ideas and to understand the relationships among them. Ideally, community policing is meant to be an overall philosophy of policing that redefines the overall mission of policing as well as its operational methods and administrative form. In short, it is intended to be a strategic innovation.

In practice, no department has yet fully implemented community policing as an overall philosophy. The closest we have come is probably a small number of experiments with police districts or precincts that have incorporated many important aspects of community policing (e.g., the 72nd Precinct in New York, or the Experimental Police District in Madison) (Couper & Lobitz, 1991: Vera Institute of Justice, 1991). This is one of the reasons we are still a long way from knowing about whether community policing, understood as an overall strategy of policing, works or not. We cannot know this until a whole department tries it (Moore, 1992).

Consequently, what the field is now experimenting with is not the ideal of community policing as an overall philosophy, but instead a series of programmatic or administrative innovations that are thought to be consistent with the overall spirit of community policing, or important elements of the larger concept. And there are lots of examples of these. We now have pretty good information about the effects of foot patrol (Police Foundation, 1981; Trojanowicz, 1982) and some important examples of what problem-solving methods can do (New York City Police Department, 1993; Spelman & Eck, 1987) and how communities can be engaged effectively in the fight against street-level drug dealing (Kennedy, 1993; Weingart et al., 1992). We also have some important information about the effects of decentralizing operational decisions and empowering officers (Couper & Lobitz, 1991). This is important because this is thought to be a necessary if not sufficient administrative change to support community problem-solving policing.

What is perhaps most important, however, is that we now know enough to distinguish these different ideas of community policing. It is important to understand that administrative changes must be made in order to make changes in both institutionalizing and widening the effects of the new operational programs associated with community policing. Indeed, the key distinction between a department that is experimenting with operational programs and one that is committed to a strategy of community policing is the extent to which its administrative and operational systems have been adapted to accommodate the ideas of community policing (Brown, 1989): that is, the extent to which the department relies on differential police response to ensure that patrol resources are adequate to maintain "beat integrity" in dispatching calls and the extent to which the organization's personnel systems have been adapted to recruit, train, and reward officers for the kinds of behavior consistent with community policing. This represents an advance in our analytic thought about the concept of community policing, and allows us to see more clearly what is now known about community policing and what the challenges of implementing it will be.

The Role of Rhetoric

The field is also making progress in understanding what role the rhetoric about community policing might play in the implementation of community policing. It is fair to say that, at the outset, the academic community was quite skeptical about the rhetoric of community policing. They thought it was being used cynically to build the reputations of chiefs and departments and to obscure the
tual operations being carried out by the department. No doubt, in many cases, the cynicism was justified.

Yet it was also clear that, if important changes in policing were to be made along the lines suggested by the concept of community policing, some leadership would be necessary, and that one of the important tools of that leadership would be rhetoric. As Skogan (Chapter 9, this volume) observes:

Critics of community policing have been quick to claim that in reality it is just rhetoric. It is certainly true that it involves rhetoric, for community policing... [provides] a new vision of where departments should be heading. This calls for rhetoric, one of the tools of leadership. Community policing also calls for rhetoric because departments do not exist in a vacuum. They are dependent on the communities that serve for financial support, so they must have public and political support for whatever direction they are going. Rhetoric about community policing informs the community about a set of goals they are being asked to pay for.

In short, as I have argued elsewhere, the rhetoric of community policing helps establish the department's external terms of accountability, and in so doing imulates community expectations that can actually help a chief successfully implement the reforms that are to be undertaken (Moore, 1990).

Evaluating Community Policing

Given that we now understand that a certain amount of ambiguity about the concept of community policing might be helpful to the field, and that it is important to distinguish programs and administrative systems that are consistent with the philosophy of community policing from the overall philosophy of community policing, and that the rhetoric of community policing might be an important tool in helping to implement community policing, one still wants to know what is known about whether community policing in any of its guises works. This turns out to be an important conceptual as well as empirical question, for one of the important issues about community policing is that it seeks to redefine the ends of policing as well as the means. Insofar as it does so, and insofar as the public embraces the definition of the ends, the standards for evaluating community policing must change from the way that policing has been evaluated in the past.

redefining the Ends of Policing

In the past, it was relatively clear how operational innovations in policing could be evaluated: All one had to do was check to see whether or not they succeeded in reducing crime (as measured by UCR reports or by victimization surveys). That was because there was widespread agreement that the overall objective of the police was to reduce crime.

To some degree, however, community policing seeks to redefine the overall purposes and ends of policing. As Eck and Rosenbaum (Chapter 1, this volume) observe, community policing increases the emphasis given to such goals as responding to emergencies, reducing fear, mobilizing communities to take their part in controlling crime, and enhancing security.

What remains somewhat unclear, however, is whether these new goals are to be understood and evaluated as new ends of policing, important to achieve in and of themselves, or whether they should be viewed as important new means to the traditional end of crime control, important only insofar as they are also shown to be effective methods for improving police performance in controlling crime or apprehending offenders.

The reason this ambiguity exists is that one can make reasonable arguments for both positions. One can make the argument that it has always been a mistake to evaluate police departments solely in terms of their crime control effectiveness. It has long been a part of the police mission to "serve" as well as "protect," and it is plausible to imagine that the value of such activities is going up in today's cities. Moreover, reducing fear has long been associated with the goal of enhancing security, and that has long been seen as a valuable purpose of the police. So, it is clear that one can make an argument for the independent value of these "new" police activities.

Yet one can also make an argument for the value of these activities as the means of achieving more effective crime control. The argument is that it has long been apparent that most crime control is done informally by communities. It has also become clear that the traditional methods of policing (rapid response to calls for service and retrospective investigation of crimes) depend for their effectiveness on close relationships with local communities. Consequently, to the extent that activities undertaken by the police to reduce fears, or to provide emergency services to citizens, or to help organize a community's defenses are successful in building informal community control and effective crime control partnerships with the police, these activities could be justified as important means to the ends of reducing crime in the community.

The distinction matters in evaluating community policing initiatives because it determines how far one has to go in establishing the value of community policing efforts. If one views service provision, fear reduction, and community mobilization as important ends in themselves, one need go no further in evaluating community policing efforts than to show that these effects occurred. If, however, one sees these only as important means to the traditional end of crime control, one must go further and show that these activities actually work in the way they are theorized to do in producing these results. That is a far more difficult and longer term evaluation task.

At the moment, it seems that the research community remains somewhat divided on this important value question. The broader society and the individuals who call the police, however, seem much clearer about the point. They seem to
ue police departments that produce services and fear reduction even when they are not particularly effective in reducing criminal victimization. This may be because they are confused about these effects. If so, it may be important for the research community to point out the difference between them. But for now, it seems clear that the terms in which it is proper to evaluate police programs have been widened by the concept of community policing.

**Even Better**

Almost nothing is certain about the effects of community policing programs. Programs are so varied that it will be a long time before we can say anything definitive about the whole set of programs, the individual elements of the set, and the particular features of particular programs. And it will probably be a long time before we can say anything definitive about the strategy of community policing as opposed to the organizational programs (Moore, 1992).

Still, there are some trends that seem to be relatively robust—at least for the short term. It seems clear, for example, that citizens like community policing programs. As Skogan (Chapter 9, this volume) reports:

> There is evidence in many evaluations that a public hungry for attention has a great deal to tell police. When they see more police walking on foot or working out of a local station, they feel less fearful.

Bennett (Chapter 13, this volume) also reports community policing programs are popular among citizens.

There is slightly less strong evidence indicating that the programs can be successful in reducing the fear of crime. For example, in reviewing the evidence of community policing programs in six sites, Skogan finds that the rate of crime is reduced in five of the six sites. Bennett, however, reports that the effect is found less consistently in Britain.

There is even weaker evidence indicating that community policing programs are successful in mobilizing communities to deal with problems of crime and disorder. Tien and Rich (Chapter 11, this volume) report on the basis of a program they observed in Hartford, Connecticut, that:

> Weedling success [in disrupting street level drug markets] spawns community support and participation in the ensuing seeding [community development] efforts. Visible and active community involvement, in turn, increases the effectiveness of weeding tactics, and is critical for long-term success in weeding.

Yet, Sadd and Grinc (Chapter 2, this volume) seem to report opposite conclusions in their study of eight "Innovative Policing" sites. They observe that:

> [The] forays into community policing... produced only minimal... effects on drug-trafficking, drug-related crime, and fear of crime.

And there is almost no evidence yet indicating that community policing programs can be successful in preventing or reducing crime and criminal victimization. The strongest evidence on potentially important preventive effects used to be the evidence indicating that the introduction of community and problem-solving techniques could reduce calls for service in the areas in which they are tried (Trojanowicz & Bucquicoux, 1989). But that finding, too, is now being challenged with some studies showing that calls for service are reduced and others showing that they are not. The only evidence that community policing programs can be successful in reducing actual criminal victimization is presented by Wycoff and Skogan (Chapter 4, this volume), who find some evidence from their evaluation of Madison’s experimental police district.

So, the jury is still out on the size and character of effects that community policing programs can have on citizen perceptions of the quality of police service, on fear, and on crime. It seems relatively clear that the programs are popular and can reduce fear, but much less obvious that they can prevent or reduce crime.

**The Feasibility of Community Policing**

An important part of the reason for the difficulties in producing consistent operational successes may have less to do with the correctness of the theory of community and problem-solving policing and much more to do with the difficulty of implementing those theories correctly. Indeed, the authors in this book who evaluated operational programs report universally that there were substantial difficulties in implementing the community policing programs in the ways that they were supposed to be done. Sadd and Grinc (Chapter 2, this volume), for example, report that the eight INOP sites they examined “experienced common implementation problems that hampered their ability to have the desired impacts.” Cordner (Chapter 10, this volume) reports that the particular foot patrol experiment he evaluated “more resembled traditional policing and crackdowns than community policing or problem-oriented policing.” Capowich and Roehl (Chapter 7, this volume) reported that two of the three problem-solving efforts they evaluated in San Diego were based largely on traditional methods of police work, and that these were largely ineffective.

The authors in this volume were particularly critical of the efforts that were made to involve community participants either in the design or the actual execution of the programs that were developed to deal with particular problems. Sadd and Grinc (Chapter 2, this volume) observed that:
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In all eight sites, the police administrators were the initiators and formulators of the community policing programs. The involvement of police officers, city agencies, and community residents in program design was generally minimal.

The education and training of community residents in their roles in community policing is almost nonexistent. Without meaningful involvement of patrol officers in the planning process, participation by all city agencies, and true community involvement, community policing will fail to realize its potential.

Suerger (Chapter 17, this volume) expressed the same concerns on the basis of his clinical experience.

For all the rhetoric about empowering the community, ... when it comes down to cases the police establishment assigns to the community a role that simply enhances the police response to crime and disorder.

It is important to remember that these implementation problems are experienced even when leading-edge departments are trying to implement community policing programs. It should come as no surprise, then, that ordinary police departments are having difficulty implementing community policing as an overall philosophy. As Leighton (Chapter 12, this volume) candidly reports in his up developments in Canada:

There is a growing number of police agencies that have implemented at least some of the core tactics, such as foot patrol in zones or beats, storefronts or mini-stations, and community consultative committees. Nonetheless ... one of the main issues facing Canadian police executives at this time is how to implement community policing in a systematic way and on a department-wide basis.

So, questions about effective implementation of both programs and philosophy remain important. What is clear from reading the chapters is that this is a major issue in efforts to further develop community policing. If we cannot ifably implement community policing programs, we cannot find out whether it works, and we know in advance that any grander plans are likely to be inborn. If we cannot learn how to move from programs to an overall philosophy through the redesign of the department's culture and administrative systems, we cannot get the full benefits theoretically available from community policing.

The principal work that has been done so far on the questions of implementation centers the potential for decentralization of operational initiative in the police department to street-level officers. That is thought to be important in the creation of an organization that is capable of undertaking community problem-solving initiatives. It is also thought to be important for enhancing the morale of officers generally and engaging their commitment to the changed strategy of policing.

What the evidence shows on these matters is that it is both important and possible to decentralize initiative in a police department and that the effects of doing so on officer morale are largely positive. Wilkinson and Rosenbaum (Chapter 6, this volume) report on the basis of observations of community policing initiatives in Joliet and Aurora that:

[A] police organization that is heavily invested in the professional model of policing—with a centralized, hierarchical and bureaucratized command structure—will have difficulty creating an environment that is conducive to community policing strategies and that encourages creative problem solving.

Given this finding, it is important that Wycoff and Skogan (Chapter 4, this volume) conclude on the basis of an examination of an experiment in decentralization carried out in Madison that:

It is possible to change a traditional, control-oriented police organization into one in which employees become members of work teams and participants in decision-making processes.

They would also be the first to point out, however, that this change takes a great deal of sustained effort.

There is also evidence from both the Wycoff and Skogan studies and from the Lurigio and Rosenbaum work that such efforts do enhance the satisfaction of officers who are involved—once they become intensely involved. Lurigio and Rosenbaum (Chapter 8, this volume) report, for example, that:

On balance, these studies have shown that community policing has exerted a positive impact on the police and on citizens' views of the police. From the police perspective, investigators have reported increases in job satisfaction and motivation, a broadening of the police role, improvements in relationships with co-workers and citizens, and greater expectations regarding community participation in crime prevention efforts. (1994, 27).

This is all very encouraging, but as Leighton (Chapter 12, this volume) puts it, the challenge still remains to find means to "sustain the approach through a changed reward system, training, and other avenues." As to efforts to implement an organization-wide shift to community policing rather than simply achieve this result for some particular programs or in one particular district, Chapter 5 in this volume, by Greene, Bergman, and McLaughlin, offers a cautionary tale. Their description of a major top-down effort to implement community policing as a philosophy against entrenched, high-level opposition suggests that although progress can be made in such situations and, indeed, can accelerate, it is a very slow process.

In many respects, the question of how to implement community policing programs, and how to move from programs to an overall philosophy, and what the administrative systems of a mature community policing organization might look like, represents one of the important frontiers of research in this domain.
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s raises the question of how we are likely to learn about such things. Importantly, Weisel and Eck (Chapter 3, this volume) offer a suggestion. They urge that the field adopt:

A bias for action ... [T]he most important activity in implementing change may be simply to move forward and avoid laboriously concentrating on process variables. Indeed, the single most important activity for changing the police agency and institutionalizing community policing may be simply to move ahead and get new people on board.

Toward the Future of Policing

It is in that spirit that I offer the following ideas about what should be done with the powerful movement that is now occurring within the field of policing. I commend that it be allowed to proceed apace. There are enough theoretical statements about the potential utility of the approach, and enough empirical evidence about the accuracy of the judgments (to say nothing of enough evidence to discredit our current methods) that the widespread search for proved methods of policing along the lines suggested by community policing is warranted.

There are two principal problems with the way things are now developing. One is the fact that the field as a whole is not yet accumulating enough experiences. The rate of programmatic and administrative innovation should be higher in it now is if the movement is not to slacken and is to provide the basis for knowing what works. The rhetorical commitment must be matched by the rational commitment. The second is that police researchers are not well turned enough now to maximize the learning that can come from the experience.

One way to solve both problems simultaneously would be for the federal government to use its current commitment to increasing police presence on the scene to encourage a change in the style of policing and to support efforts to do so as efficiently as we can from the field’s accumulating experience. This could involve three things: (a) an ongoing survey of the field of policing to determine to what extent community policing is moving from rhetorical to rational levels throughout the country; (b) the establishment of a small number of police departments that could become the nation’s laboratories and serve as centers in which many of the operational and administrative problems associated with implementing community policing as an overall philosophy could be worked out for the benefit of the field as a whole; and (c) the creation of a national award process that would give a cash award to any police department that developed an important operational or administrative innovation consistent with the principles and spirit of community policing. Police re-

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searchers should be closely involved in these activities so that they can reliably fulfill the role of commentator that is suggested by the publication of this book. Through these devices, we can not only get on with the implementation of community policing, but discover what we ought to mean by the concept.

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