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The Impact of Community Policing on Neighborhood Residents

A Cross-Site Analysis

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THIS CHAPTER EXAMINES one important aspect of community policing, its impact on neighborhood residents. 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. It is an organizational strategy that redefines the goals of policing (Goldstein, 1990; Moore, 1992). In general, community policing relies upon organizational decentralization and a reorientation of patrol in order to facilitate two-way communication between police and the public. It assumes a commitment to broadly focused, problem-oriented policing and requires that police are responsive to citizen demands when they decide what local problems are and set their priorities. It also implies a commitment to helping neighborhoods solve crime problems on their own, through community organizations and crime prevention programs.

These principles underlie a variety of policing programs. 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,

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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.

Can these programs live up to the expectations of their supporters? The answer to this is not clear, for there have been relatively few systematic evaluations of community policing programs. There is more hyperbole than solid evidence about the wisdom of community policing, and a great deal of "hype" behind many claims about new policing styles. Many researchers are professionally skeptical of claims about community policing, despite their general inclination toward it. A volume on policing edited by Jack Greene and Stephen Mastrofski (1988) included several chapters lamenting the dearth of good evidence on the effects of policing generally and community policing in particular. The contribution by Greene and Taylor (1988) criticized the implicit theories of community that lie behind the assumption that police can intervene in defense of neighborhoods by such tactics as foot patrol; David Bayley's (1988) contribution took a critical stance vis-à-vis the resurrection of traditional police order maintenance activity that it recommends.

This chapter describes several evaluations of community policing and summarizes some of their results. Most of the evaluations contrasted the impact of community policing programs with the effects of intensive enforcement programs, as well as against what happened in control areas representing "normal" styles of policing. Since the mid-1980s, these enforcement programs have had a special focus on drugs. The community policing evaluations examined here point to some significant successes, but illustrate that evidence that community policing can significantly reduce the crime rate remains elusive. They also point out many difficulties in actually implementing community policing.

Community Policing Experiments in Six Cities

Baltimore, Maryland

Two versions of community policing were tested in Baltimore. Each was implemented in two areas of the city, in white and African American neighborhoods of comparable income level and housing quality. *Foot patrols* were assigned to walk through the areas approximately 25 hours each week. They choose their own routes, concentrating on busy commercial areas and recognized trouble spots. They talked frequently with residents, business owners, and people on the street. In one area the officers put more stress on law enforcement and order maintenance; they spent much of their time dispersing groups of youths on street corners and looking for drug transactions and other legal infractions. The officer who conducted most of the foot patrols in the other area focused more on talking with residents and merchants. Surveys conducted after

one year indicated that about 15% of the residents of each area recalled seeing an officer walking on foot within the past week; the comparable figure among residents of a control area was only 2%.

In two other areas, *ombudsman police officers* were assigned to work with neighborhood residents to solve local problems. They walked foot patrol, attended community meetings, and spent a great deal of time talking to merchants and residents about local problems. They developed a questionnaire that measured what residents thought were the most serious problems in the area, what caused them, and what could be done to solve them. Officers were to record how they had reacted to each problem, and their handling of them was reviewed by their supervisors. The officer serving one area was aggressive in his approach to possible drug dealers, broke up groups loitering on the street, and gave many traffic tickets. He spent most of his time in busy commercial areas of the neighborhood. The officer in the other target area spent more time meeting with area residents, working to solve juvenile problems, conducting a neighborhood clean-up campaign, and organizing a block watch program. He also involved other municipal agencies in these efforts. He arranged for abandoned cars to be towed away, trees to be trimmed, and empty buildings to be sealed. He also worked closely with the department's traffic, vice, and narcotics units when out of public view. Surveys at the end of the evaluation period found that 64% of the residents of one area, and 75% in the other, recalled officers coming to their home; the officer who emphasized local service had been seen by 33% within the past week (see Pate & Annan, 1989).

Oakland, California

Two policing programs were evaluated in Oakland, both aimed at reducing levels of drug trafficking and related crime and fear. Each program was implemented in its own target area, and both were implemented together in a third area. A special *drug enforcement unit* conducted traditional police operations in its target neighborhoods. They went undercover to make buy-bust arrests, and they used informants to buy drugs and identify distributors. They also mounted an aggressive, high-visibility program of stopping and searching motor vehicles and conducting field interrogations of groups of men whenever they gathered in public places. The team was extremely active, made a large number of arrests, and apprehended a number of major drug traffickers in the target area.

This traditional policing program was contrasted to a program of *home visits*. Officers in the experimental community policing area and in the combined target areas went door to door, introducing themselves to residents. Their job was to inform people in the target neighborhoods of the department's new emphasis on drug enforcement, to give them pamphlets on crime and drug programs, and conduct brief interviews asking about neighborhood problems. Their goal was to make contacts that might lead to useful information, alert the community to

the drug problem, and perhaps deter potential offenders due to their presence and visibility in the community. These door-step interviews were conducted in about 60% of the households in the target areas, a high percentage. About 50% of those interviewed indicated that drugs were a major problem in their community. (In many places this kind of activity is known now as "directed patrol," because officers conducting this form of foot patrol have specific tasks to carry out as they walk through an area.) Unlike the enforcement program, however, it proved difficult to sustain the interest of Oakland officers in these home visits. It had little support from the district commander, who did not believe it could work. An energetic officer saw to it that many interviews were conducted, but there was no follow-up problem solving. None of the intended problem-solving policing was ever accomplished, and nothing was done with the information gathered in the door-step interviews (see Uchida, Forst, & Annan, 1990, 1992).

Birmingham, Alabama

Three programs were evaluated in Birmingham. As in Oakland, a special *drug enforcement unit* was formed to crack down on open drug dealing in dilapidated and cocaine. The team concentrated on undercover operations. They made a series of videotaped purchases from street dealers and then returned to the target area to make warrant arrests. Officers also posed as dealers and made videotaped drug sales to outsiders who were driving into the target area to make drug purchases. Throughout, they paid careful attention to the legality of their activities to ensure that their cases could be successfully prosecuted. Ten officers were involved in this program for a 6-month period, but although they made a number of arrests, it was unlikely that their efforts would be very visible in the community surveys.

In another area, officers were to make *home visits* in order to pass out crime and drug prevention pamphlets and conduct interviews with area residents. They developed a questionnaire that asked residents about neighborhood crime problems and the whereabouts of drug trafficking. They eventually completed interviews at 60% of the occupied housing units in their target area. Although they completed a large number of interviews, no effort was made to follow up on the information that was gathered. It was envisioned that they would do team-oriented problem solving with the information that they gathered, but events conspired to undermine the program. A rise in calls for service in their area of the city came at the same time that the Christmas holiday season left the district understaffed. Under pressure to respond to the resulting deterioration in police response to 911 calls, officers who were to conduct the community policing program were reassigned to traditional patrol.

The third Birmingham program was instituted in the evaluation's control area after 11 people were shot there in a short period, just after the beginning of the research project. In response to community demonstrations, a *police substation*

was opened, staffed 24 hours per day by eight police officers. They greatly increased the visibility of police in the community. The substation unit assisted in a cleanup of the public housing project that dominated the area. In follow-up interviews, 72% of residents thought the substation was effective in reducing drug-related crime (see Uchida et al., 1990, 1992).

Madison, Wisconsin

Madison attempted to develop a "customer orientation" in providing police services by radically restructuring the police department and the way in which it was managed. It began as a traditional, hierarchically organized department. To reform the organization, an *innovative management structure* was put in place that emphasized teamwork and employee participation in decision making, as well as peer supervision. Police were to work as teams to identify and solve problems, with their managers working for them to secure the outside assistance and resources that they required to carry out their plans. A *decentralized police substation* was opened to experiment with these ideas in a district that covered one sixth of the city. The team worked flexible hours and took responsibility for managing their own activity. They developed a plan for "value added policing" that called for spending more time on calls for service and follow-up contacts with victims. They responded to most of the calls for service that originated from the area and attempted to analyze them to identify community problems.

The surveys that were conducted after the program had been in operation for 2 years found almost 70% of the residents of the target area knew about the police substation. Compared to the rest of the city, the surveys indicated a modest improvement in perceptions of the police among residents of the target area. The perceived quality of police-initiated encounters improved in the special district and especially the perception that officers were helpful. There was also a mild increase in police visibility that could be linked to the program, and more residents of the experimental area reported they thought police were focusing their attention on preventing crime and on important community problems. Residents of the target area reported a decrease in neighborhood problems, while those elsewhere thought they got worse.

Most of the effects of the program seemed to be internal to the department. Interviews with all of the city's police officers were conducted at three points in time over the 2-year reorganization experiment. They revealed, compared to those assigned elsewhere, that officers in the experimental district saw themselves working as a team, that their efforts were being supported by their supervisors and the department, and that the department was really reforming itself. They were more satisfied with their job and more strongly committed to the organization. They were more customer oriented, believed more firmly in the principles of problem solving and community policing, and felt that they had a better relationship with the community. In addition, department records indicated

that disciplinary actions, absenteeism, tardiness, and days off sick went down more in the experimental area (see Wycoff & Skogan, 1993). These changes accord with Wycoff's (1988) summary of the results of interview studies of officers assigned to community policing. Compared to others, they have been found to think their work is more important, interesting, and rewarding and less frustrating. They feel they have more independence and control over their jobs, important determinants of job satisfaction. Finally, they tend to take a more benign and trusting view of the public.

Houston, Texas

Three programs were evaluated in Houston. The first was a neighborhood *police substation*. The program team located space in a small commercial building with good parking. The office provided a place for people to meet with police. Officers took crime reports and gave and received information from the public, and some community meetings were held there. Officers assigned to the station were freed from routine patrol for much of their daily shift. The office was their base of operations for getting acquainted with neighborhood residents and business people, identifying and helping solve local problems, seeking ways of delivering better service to the area, and developing programs to draw the police and community closer together. The staff quickly developed programs that extended into the immediate neighborhood, including a series of large community meetings in a nearby church. Station officers organized *special patrols* in area trouble spots, and they met regularly with local school administrators. Area churches and civic clubs were invited to select members to ride with officers patrolling in the neighborhood. Finally, on five occasions during the evaluation period the station staff distributed approximately 550 *newsletters* throughout the neighborhood. The newsletters advertised the station's programs and other community events, and printed articles about crime prevention. The station provided a direct test of several aspects of community policing. It provided the officers who ran it a great deal of management autonomy as well as flexibility in allocating their own time and effort. They responded by developing community-oriented programs that were virtually unheard of in Houston's police department, and they invented a variety of new ways in which police and citizens could meet and exchange information and discuss their priorities. Surveys conducted at the conclusion of the evaluation found that 65% of area residents knew about the substation (see Skogan, 1990; Wycoff & Skogan, 1987).

The *Community Organizing Response Team* (CORT) attempted to create a local crime prevention organization in a neighborhood where none existed. The team's immediate goal was to identify a group of residents who would work regularly with them to define and help solve neighborhood problems. Its long-term goal was to create a permanent organization in the community, one that would remain active after CORT left the area. To test the CORT concept, the task force first tried to become familiar with the area's problems. To do this they

conducted their own door-to-door survey of the neighborhood. CORT members questioned approximately 300 residents about problems that they felt merited police attention, and whether they might be willing to host meetings in their homes. The survey told them a great deal about the nature of area problems and resulted in invitations to hold such meetings. They then organized small meetings to introduce themselves to area residents. Thirteen neighborhood meetings were held, each attended by 20-60 people. At these meetings CORT members identified a group of leaders who met regularly with their commander to discuss community problems and devise solutions involving both the police and residents. The group eventually held elections and formed committees, and by the end of the evaluation period it had 60 official members. During the evaluation period special newsletters were mailed each month to all residents who had been contacted in the survey or who had participated in an activity. The CORT program tested the ability of police departments to assist in the development of community self-help organizations.

Houston's *Home Visit* program was to help patrol officers to become more familiar with the residents of their areas and to learn about neighborhood problems. Officers in one target area were freed from routine patrol assignments for part of each daily shift. During this time they visited households in the area. Typically, officers in the program would visit an apartment building or a group of homes, introduce themselves to whomever answered, explain the purpose of the visit, and inquire about neighborhood problems. They recorded these on a small "citizen contact card," along with the name and address of the person they interviewed. The officers left personal business cards, indicating that if there were further problems they should be contacted directly. A record of these visits was kept at the district police station to guide further contacts. It also served as a mailing list for a newsletter tailored for the area, which was distributed each month to those who had been contacted. During the 10 months of the program, team officers talked to approximately 14% of the adult residents of the area. Visits also were made to commercial establishments in the area, and after 10 months about 45% of the merchants had been contacted. About 60% of the people who were interviewed had something to complain about. Conventional crimes were most frequently mentioned, but about one quarter of the residents mentioned a problem that might fall into the disorder category, including disputes among neighbors, environmental problems, abandoned cars, and vandalism. The officers took numerous actions in response to problems they identified during these visits (see Skogan, 1990).

Newark, New Jersey

Two programs were evaluated in Newark. In one area police attempted to suppress crime and street disorder using traditional *intensive enforcement* tactics. They conducted extensive "street sweeps" to reduce loitering and public

drinking, drug sales, purse snatching, and street harassment by groups of men who routinely gathered along commercial streets in residential areas of the city. Congregating groups were broken up by police warnings and large-scale arrests. Foot patrol officers walked the areas in the evening; they were to become familiar with local problems, establish relationships with local merchants, disperse unruly groups, and ticket illegally parked cars. Special efforts were made to enforce traffic regulations in the area using radar units and by making frequent traffic stops to check for alcohol use. Random roadblocks were set up to check drivers' credentials, check for drunken driving, recover stolen vehicles, and arrest drivers with outstanding tickets and arrest warrants. There was also an attempt to clean up area parks and vacant lots and to deliver better city services. This program tested the ability of the police to reassert their faltering authority, demonstrate that they controlled the streets of Newark, and crack down on forms of disorder thought to lead to serious crime.

In another area of Newark the police implemented a variety of *community policing* projects at the same time. The test area for the community policing project was in the most densely populated and crime-ridden part of Newark. The evaluation tested the ability of an ambitious multi-intervention program to affect crime and fear of crime in an extremely difficult area. Police opened a *substation* that took crime reports, distributed crime prevention information, gathered complaints about city services for referral to other municipal agencies, and answered questions. Local groups held meetings in the station during the evening, and about 300 people used the substation each month. At the end of the evaluation period, 90% of the residents of the area knew about the substation. As in Houston, police also conducted *home visits* in the area. Officers visited homes and filled out brief questionnaires concerning neighborhood problems. The teams also distributed crime prevention information, told residents about block watch programs, and advertised the substation. During the course of the evaluation they questioned residents of 50% of the homes in the area, and in the evaluation surveys 40% of area residents recalled being interviewed. The sergeant supervising the team reviewed the questionnaires, and either his team dealt with the problems that residents identified or he passed them on to the special enforcement squad for their attention. The team also organized a *neighborhood clean-up program* and distributed a *police newsletter*; 43% of area residents recalled receiving one when they were later surveyed. As in the enforcement area, a special squad targeted street disorder in the area (see Skogan, 1990; Skolnick & Bayley, 1986).

Evaluation Findings

Each of the programs described here was evaluated using a systematic research design. The programs were conducted in test areas, while another matched area was designated as a control area where no new policing programs were begun.

Surveys of area residents were conducted in the target and control areas before the programs began, and again after they had been in operation for 10 months. Between 80 and 330 people were reinterviewed in each area. A variety of other kinds of data were collected as well, and the actual implementation of the program was monitored in all the cities. In Birmingham, this research design broke down; the control area was the subject of a wave of random violence and shootings shortly after the evaluation began and community pressure forced the opening of a police substation in the area to serve as the operations center for a new police team. In some other cities the evaluations indicate that community policing programs were only partly implemented, reducing our expectations regarding their impact.

Table 9.1 presents a summary of some of the findings of the evaluations. Each project had a number of goals, but this analysis focuses only on the results of the surveys, and not on aspects of the programs that were evaluated using other procedures. Table 9.1 also confines its attention to program outcomes that were common across the cities, to facilitate this cross-site analysis. The evaluations all shared common questionnaire measures of four outcomes. *Fear of crime* was measured by questions about worry and concern about personal and property crime in the neighborhood. The impact of the programs on *disorder* was assessed by questions concerning loitering, public drinking, begging, street harassment, truancy, and gang activity. These disorders did not all involve illegal activity, but they are closely linked to fear of crime and neighborhood decline. Between them, the fear and disorder questions assessed the extent to which residents felt they lived in a secure environment. The prevalence of *victimization* was measured by questions about respondents' experiences with burglary, robbery, and assault. These survey measures provide a better estimate of the extent of crime than official statistics, especially when police programs are being evaluated. *Police performance* was measured by questions about how good a job police did at a variety of tasks (preventing crime, helping victims, and keeping order), and how fair, helpful, and polite they were. The *availability of drugs* was measured by questions about the extent of drug trafficking in their neighborhood (questions about drug availability were not included in the Houston and Newark evaluations). In every case, responses to these questions were combined to form multiple-item scales for statistical analysis.

Except in Birmingham, the effects of each program were assessed by comparing changes in these measures in the target areas to comparable shifts in control areas, using multivariate statistical analyses that took into account many other factors. Because the survey respondents were interviewed twice, one important control factor was what they saw or felt before the programs began. Judgments about Birmingham are based on before-after changes in what became the three program areas, after the emergency implementation of a program in the intended control area. In Table 9.1, an "up" entry indicates a statistically significant increase in an outcome that probably was due to the program, and a "down" entry indicates a statistically significant decrease in an outcome that probably was due to the program. An "OK" entry for assessments of policing indicates that the outcome measures were *not* affected by enforcement programs that *could* have actually heightened tensions

TABLE 9.1 Summary of Community Policing Evaluation Findings

	Fear of Crime	Disorder	Victim- ization	Police Service	Drug Availability
Oakland					
enforcement	down	—	—	OK	down
home visits	down	—	down	up	down
enforcement and home visits	down	—	—	OK	down
Birmingham					
enforcement	—	—	—	OK	—
home visits	—	—	down	up	—
substation	down	—	—	up	—
Baltimore					
foot patrol	—	—	—	—	—
ombudsman	down	down	—	up	—
Madison					
substation	—	—	—	up	—
Houston					
home visits	—	down	down	up	n/a
substation	down	down	—	up	n/a
organizing	—	down	—	up	n/a
Newark					
enforcement	—	down	—	OK	n/a
multiple community policing	down	down	—	up	n/a

NOTE: "up" and "down" indicate significant program effects. "OK" indicates that possible negative program effects were avoided. "n/a" indicates there was no outcome measure for that evaluation. No entry indicates there was no significant program effect.

between the police and the community; in this case, the absence of a negative shift in opinion was also a positive outcome.

The overall picture presented by Table 9.1 is mixed. Discounting the five areas for which there were no data on drug availability, Table 9.1 reports the results of 65 before-after changes that could have been affected by community policing or intensive enforcement programs. There were significant positive changes that probably were the effects of the programs in 28 of 65 comparisons, and 4 other instances in which potentially negative effects were avoided. It is apparent that these programs had the most consistent effect on attitudes toward the quality of police service. In the 14 project areas, significant positive changes in views of the police were recorded in 9 instances, and in an additional 4 enforcement areas (one mixed with home visits) there were no negative shifts in opinion; this is a respectable 93% success rate. Fear of crime was down in 7 of 14 areas (50%), and perceptions that neighborhoods were disorderly were down in only 6 of 14 (43%). Drug availability went down only in Oakland (3 of 9 cases), and victimization was down only in 3 of 14 instances (interestingly, these were all home visit programs).

Table 9.1 indicates that enforcement programs did not do quite as well as community policing at meeting their goals; they were successful in only 6 of 14

opportunities (43%), whereas the community policing programs succeeded in 27 of 51 opportunities (53%). Relative to how many of them there were, the combination of home visits and community organizing (which must have looked like very similar programs to most neighborhood residents) was the most successful. This was followed closely by interventions combining intensive enforcement and community policing tactics. Next came neighborhood stations, followed by the combination of foot patrols and ombudsmen officers.

Challenges to Community Policing

Implementation

The first challenge to community policing is amply illustrated by the evaluations described above. Implementation problems plagued even these closely monitored projects. They were defeated by at least three challenges: Some were disbanded in the face of a rise in 911 calls, in order to restore traditional service levels; others were discredited by mid-level managers who resented their loss of authority to lower ranking personnel; and some failed to endure because they did not succeed in changing the organizational culture of the department.

In particular, successful community policing programs must not ignore the "911 problem." Since the volume of telephone calls to big-city departments skyrocketed in the mid-1970s, police commitment to respond to these calls as quickly as possible has absorbed the resources of many departments. In effect, many departments are being managed by the thousands of citizens who call the police, not by their commanders. In the home visit area of Birmingham, pressure to respond quickly to calls for service at a time when the police district was understaffed led to the abandonment of the problem-solving aspects of the program. The district commander responsible for devising the program was punished with an undesirable assignment for letting responses to calls for service slacken because of his commitment to the community policing experiment. At about the same time, Houston's citywide community policing effort was halted following charges that police had allowed responses to calls for service to deteriorate, because (it was charged) officers were being freed from this responsibility in order to carry out the program. The program had powerful enemies among lieutenants and other mid-level supervisors in the department; the Chief of Police was soon fired and little remains of her program.

In other cities, community policing has floundered in the face of the crime-fighting culture of traditional departments. In Oakland there was little enthusiasm for community policing among officers assigned to the program. Although a few hardworking officers carried out the most easily monitored tasks—making home visits and conducting interviews—they did nothing to follow up on the information that they gathered. Their immediate supervisor dismissed the effort

as "social work" and did nothing to ensure that the community policing program developed in the Chief's office actually was implemented in the field. One officer conducting home visits actually quit his job because he was so frustrated by the lack of support for his efforts. In Baltimore, officers pulled from routine assignments to replace the foot patrol officers while they were on vacation were unenthusiastic about the assignment. One of the ombudsman police officers preferred giving out traffic tickets to interviewing citizens and attending meetings.

Effectiveness

As the evaluations described above also indicate, proponents of community policing must develop better answers to the question, "Does it work?" As already indicated, the evidence is mixed. The most consistent finding of evaluations to date is that community policing improves popular assessments of police performance. This is certainly an accomplishment, especially in the African American and Hispanic neighborhoods in which many of these projects took place. However, it is vulnerable to the charge that this is merely a triumph of public relations, for rarely is there good evidence that crime has been reduced. As depicted above, the evaluations indicate that assessments of policing improved in 13 of 15 opportunities, but victimization was down significantly in only 3 of 15 cases. I do not know of an evaluation of foot patrol that can point to reduced levels of conventional crime. If more of the projects had demonstrated reductions in crime, critics could also have pointed to the possibility that it was simply displaced to somewhere else rather than actually prevented, for none of these evaluations was designed to address that possibility.

To be fair, victimization is also very difficult to measure accurately. The evaluation surveys described here could not devote sufficient questionnaire space to measure it properly. Surveys are known to undercount certain kinds of crime (such as assault and domestic violence), and are of limited utility for others (drug trafficking, nonresidential vandalism). Neighborhood crime rates are quite sensitive to the level of repeat multiple victimization, something that surveys are not good at measuring under the best of circumstances. In this light, the fact that 6 of 11 community policing (or mixed) programs pointed to significant declines in measures of fear or worry about crime is hopeful evidence that these interventions are having effects on crime as well. (But alternately, it may be that the programs reduced fear by reassuring people, for in 5 of those 6 cases assessments of the quality of police service improved significantly as well.)

Equitable Policing

Community policing also threatens to become politicized. The evaluation of community policing in Houston reviewed above found that the way in which several of the programs were run favored the interests of racially dominant

groups and established interests in the community. Houston's community station relied on existing community organizations to attract people to the station's programs. The groups chose who would ride along with the police and who would attend meetings with the local police district commander. The groups also helped organize community meetings that brought major figures such as the Chief of Police to speak to area residents. This approach worked well for members of those groups, but less affluent area residents did not hear about the programs and did not participate in them. The community organizing team held a number of small meetings to identify area leaders and begin their organizing efforts; almost all of them were held in the parts of the target area dominated by white residents owning single-family homes. The largely black residents of large rental buildings in the area were quickly identified as the source of problems in the community and became the targets of their activities. All of this was reflected in the findings of the evaluation, for the positive effects of the programs in both areas were confined to whites and home owners. The reasons for this were subtle, but important. Working on their own initiative, the officers in both areas focused their efforts in areas where they were well received. The community organizing team could hold meetings only where they were welcome, and the team working out of the neighborhood substation found that working through established groups made their task of quickly mobilizing community support much easier.

The Houston experience illustrates that policing by consent can be difficult in places where the community is fragmented by race, class, and lifestyle. If, instead of trying to find common interests in this diversity, the police deal mainly with elements of their own choosing, they will appear to be taking sides. It is very easy for them to focus "community policing" on supporting those with whom they get along best and share their outlook. As a result, the "local priorities" that they represent will be those of some in the community, but not all. Critics of community policing are concerned that it can extend the familiarity of police and citizens past the point where their aloofness, professionalism, and commitment to the rule of law can control their behavior. To act fairly and constitutionally and to protect minority rights, the police must sometimes act contrary to the opinion of the majority. As Stephen Mastrofski points out (1988, p. 65), community policing must develop a process by which officers can be given sufficient autonomy to do good without increasing their likelihood of doing evil.

Conclusion

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 is an organizational strategy for redefining the goals of policing and providing 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 they 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 that they are being asked to pay for.

The question is, is it *more* than rhetoric? The evidence reviewed in this chapter suggests that community policing is proceeding at a halting pace. There are ample examples of failed experiments and cities where the concept has gone awry. On the other hand, there is evidence in many evaluations that a public hungry for attention have a great deal to tell police and are grateful for the opportunity to do so. When they see more police walking on foot or working out of a local substation they feel less fearful. Where officers have developed sustained cooperation with community groups and fostered self-help, the public has witnessed declining levels of social disorder and physical decay.

This chapter also has not examined the full range of outcomes that might be attributed to community policing, including—for example—changes in officer attitudes and changes in how victims are treated. Many of these programs featured elements that could at best have had indirect and long-term impacts of community opinion (e.g., supervision changes in Madison's experimental police station), however important they might have been within the departments. Other intended outcomes (e.g., to alter departmental cultures) often prove difficult for evaluators to capture. The extensive combined enforcement and community policing experiment in Newark was conducted in one of the worst parts of the city, and the follow-up evaluation was probably conducted too quickly (after only 11 months) to let its full force be felt. Better evaluations and a more subtle and extensive set of outcome measures could reveal more about the intended benefits of community policing.

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