

Community Policing in the Age of Social Justice

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Project Overview

Independent Office of Law Enforcement Review and Outreach of Sonoma County (IOLERO)

Community Policing practices of Sonoma County Sheriff

Partnership with Redwood Consulting

Research Question #1

How is Community Policing Defined?

- U.S. Department of Justice Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) defines community policing as:
 - “Community policing is a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime” (COPS 2009)
- In English, what does this mean?

Research Question #1

How is Community Policing Defined?

- Vague understanding of how to define community policing and what it actually means can be attributed to historical discrepancies regarding policing as a whole
 - Community policing by nature is a loaded term - discussions around the topic influenced by ideological, political, philosophical, cultural, and occupational differences (Cordner 2014)
 - Results in a wide variety of policing strategies and methods being labeled as being community policing strategies

Research Question #1

How is Community Policing Defined?

- Community policing means different things to different people; law enforcement professionals, academics, everyday citizens have different expectations for community policing practices.
- Our research aims to identify and operationalize community policing through community surveys to gain a better understanding of how the general public defines community policing.
 - This will allow us to analyze the effectiveness of community policing practices through the lense of the community.

Research Question #2

Do Community Members Perceive Community Policing Differently Than Law Enforcement Officers Do?

Yes! So, What shapes citizens' perceptions of the police?

According to Shjarback, John A et. al.,

- Neighborhood conditions
 - a. concentrated disadvantages
 - i. Community members are less willing to cooperate w/the police.
 - ii. Poor communities lack of bonds w/officers and fear retaliation from helping the police.
 - iii. “Citizens residing in more structurally disadvantaged areas may be more concerned with the police effectively responding to crime, whereas citizens in more affluent areas might concern themselves more so with how the police treat people”
 - a. collective efficacy
 - i. Low levels of informal social control results in higher crime. When community members “are unable to exercise informal social control, the police must step in to fill in the void.” This results into the use of differential policing tactics and contribute to the way “officers are deployed across neighborhoods specifically, socially disorganized high crime vs. affluent, low crime.”

What contributes to the officers' perceptions of citizens?

According to Werthman & Piliavin (1967) ,

- **“Officers divide area of patrol into distinct categories which is a result of a process called “ecological contamination.”**

What is Ecological contamination?

- **“all people encountered in neighborhoods are perceived as ‘bad’ and are viewed by police as having little commitment to the moral order.”**

In other words, officers stereotype neighborhoods and create negative attributions about the community members before getting to interact with individuals because of their association of neighborhoods.

What does this result in?

According to Crawford (1973)

- **Officers tend to “overestimate the amount of anti police hostility among community members in disadvantage areas.”**

Shjarback, John A et al., found that..

- **“Officers working in districts w/ higher rates of violence tended to be more cynical of citizens.”**

They concluded that ...

- **Because police officers already have “low expectations of its members this may cause them to be less willing to offer their best police work.”**
- **“Officers who do not believe that residents will offer cooperation, may be less willing to provide the types of services the communities need.”**

What happens when there's a lack of cooperation, lack of trust and/or apathy from the community?

According to Shjarback, John A et al.,

- It can “potentially hinder officers’ self-legitimacy—partially blocking the confidence they have in their own authority”

According to Bradford et al.,

- Officers may be “less proactive, less willing to use procedural justice and more likely to render undesirable outcomes... less inclined to work w/ the community members to build mutual trust between police and the public”

How can we fix this?

According to Scheider, Matthew C et al.,

- In 1998, data was collected from 12 Cities Survey administered by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) & the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS)
- Established that partnerships between the agency and the community can increase citizens' feelings of efficacy, strengthen the bond among neighbors themselves, and involve citizens in order maintenance in their own neighborhood.
- Cities “encouraged citizen involvement in neighborhood watch groups, youth education, & cleanup programs which increased social cohesion among citizens, thereby helped decrease fear therefore, helped increase perceptions of safety.” They also, distributed newsletters in the community “to inform them about neighborhood crime levels, proper crime prevention techniques, and neighborhood police activities.” To improve community members satisfaction with the police, they worked together to “reduce the physical deterioration of neighborhoods.” Not only that but they also improved satisfaction with police by increasing residents’ familiarity with specific police procedures and developed personal relationships. This was demonstrated in the form of short-term face-to-face interactions: talking with residents/ business owners, attending community meetings, opening information kiosks and substations.

Research Question #3

What Are Community Policing Training Protocols?

- Community-oriented policing services (COPS) is a co-production between law enforcement and the community. (Bennett et al., 2017)
- The goal?
 - Crime Prevention
- Protocols allow officers being trained for COPS in their academies. (Cheurprakobkit, 2002)
 - Training can be done during academy training or POST trainings.
 - Can vary from certain hour period to weeks period.

Research Question #3

What Are Community Policing Training Protocols?

- Protocols can call for:
 - More citizen input through community surveys or meetings. (Cordner 2014)
 - Building stronger, more positive bonds with communities and neighborhoods. (Cordner 2014)
 - Preventative measures on every officer rather than using one resource. (Cordner 2014)
 - (Ex: crime prevention)
 - Integration of problem solving, officer safety and community policing in training programs. (Chappell & Lanza 2010)
 - Scenario building for more practical and applicable skills. (Chappell & Lanza 2010)
 - Debriefings where officers can look at individual mistakes and fix them for future situations. (Chappell & Lanza 2010)

Research Question #3

What Are Community Policing Training Protocols?

- Implementing COPS training can be troublesome:
(Cheurprakobkit, 2002)
 - It differs from traditional police training, which focuses on law
 - COPS training require specific needs
 - “Components of COP training take into account specific community needs and the likelihood of success in meeting those needs, therefore requiring updated public input...”
 - Requires officers to be more versatile and human-oriented
 - There can be a disconnect between the community and police.

Research Question #4

How Does Law Enforcement Measure the Effectiveness of Community Policing?

- There is no consistent measure by police to measure the effectiveness of community policing
 - Traditionally police measured their performance by number of arrests, # of calls, avg. response time, etc
 - No clear correlation between this measure of productivity to reduction of crime or public safety (O'Brien 1996)
 - Traditional policing is good at catching criminals but not at reducing crime or improving people's lives (Alper/Moore (1993))

Research Question #4

How Does Law Enforcement Measure the Effectiveness of Community Policing?

- Community police officers are encouraged to make their own measures in cooperation with community leaders & members
- It is up to criminologists and third parties to investigate and create scientific methods to measure police effectiveness in community policing
 - A study used three methods to determine effectiveness of community policing(Dufee 2006)
 - Pen and paper survey of individuals about community policing in a certain community
 - Survey of neighborhood leaders about community policing in an ongoing basis
 - Most in depth but time consuming is having officers attend community meetings and other events to where police and citizens can interact to record and plan improvements

Research Question #4

How Does Law Enforcement Measure the Effectiveness of Community Policing?

- To improve relations between police and community positive interactions are needed and departments need to promote programs that improve interactions
 - A recent study found that a single positive interaction can improve perception of police (Peyton 2019)
 - The study used surveys via mail to get responses on police interactions
 - The questions in the study focused on several dimensions
 - “legitimacy, perceived effectiveness, cooperation, and compliance and respondents’ judgements about “the police” as a group (e.g., whether police officers are “compassionate” or “cold hearted”), an index of questions about respondents’ confidence in the police (e.g., “The police make me feel safer in my neighborhood”), and support for specific policies (e.g., a funding increase to hire more patrol officers).”(Peyton 2019)

Next Steps

Sheriff and community input on research questions

Operationalization of research questions and theoretical framework

Focus groups

Survey administration

Target groups

- Specialized Police Services (businesses/schools)

- COP Interventions(elderly, economically disadvantaged)

- Historically poor relationship (youth, students, minorities)