The Bill Blackwood
Law Enforcement Institute of Texas

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A Persuasive Argument for Providing
Live Primary Radio Feed to Citizens
Via the Internet as an Extension of the
Community Policing Model at the
Pearland Police Department

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An Administrative Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for Graduation from
the Leadership Command College

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by
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August 2002

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to construct an argument to be presented to Pearland Police Department administration in favor of broadcasting the primary police radio channel on a department hosted web page. The purpose for the proposal is to increase community involvement in departmental affairs through the community policing model by engaging the interest of citizens who are reluctant, reticent, or apathetic to programs the department already has in place. The basis for the argument is that, although there has been some involvement by a section of Pearland's population, the large majority of citizens are not being reached.

The paper will cede that most officers are strongly against a proposal such as this based primarily on their belief that such broadcasting will create an officer safety issue. Through a survey, the officers will acknowledge that they believe criminals already listen to police radio. They will then be confronted with their view that, although criminals are already monitoring, somehow it will create an officer safety issue to allow the general public to do so as well. This will be the main point made to the officers in an attempt to sway their opinion.

If opinions can be changed to consider the idea, a stronger show of support can be presented to Pearland Police administration in favor of the proposal. The hope is that broadcasting real local police radio, over time, can begin to increase citizen cooperation and input by engaging their interest which is for the most part indifferent at the present time.

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Introduction

Community Policing has become the national standard for police agencies across the country after over a decade of transition from traditional policing. Much of the implementation has been performed reluctantly, but the Pearland Police Department made a relatively smooth conversion from old school traditional policing (us vs. them civilians) to community policing (us - police and citizens vs. them - criminals). In other words, Pearland may not have been at the forefront to change, but they weren't bringing up the rear either.

Now that community policing has become the expected norm in Pearland it is time to consider whether even more can be done to implement the well-known tenets of community policing envisioned by its founder, Dr. Trojanowicz, so many years ago. These include seeking increased community input, involvement, and cooperation to aid in and even dictate the actions of the police, fostering close bonds with residents and business persons in the area and paying closer attention to their needs as a matter of police response to problems.

Over the past eight years the Pearland Police Department has enacted many programs designed to meet these objectives and it is true that relationships with those most in need of the police *(i.e.,* citizens and business owners) have been built and are flourishing. Programs such as putting full-time police officers in the schools, organizing Citizen's Police Academies, dedicating officers to patrol districts, and assigning an entire unit to Community Services have helped the Pearland Police Department reach out to those from whom they seek assistance (and vice versa).

However, has the department really opened itself up to its constituency and fully abandoned the traditional model of policing? Or does secrecy and the desire for privacy from outside influences still serve to feed the underlying but unspoken belief of us versus them? If this is the case it must be said that every effort has been made by the department to extinguish the coals of the traditional fire. But these efforts have been made against a century of legend and an extensive collection of folktales and forewarnings told to young officers during breaks in the community policing curriculum. It is simply difficult to order hardened police officers to change their long held views. It may be time to force the issue.

Along with the changes in policing perspectives there have been changes in technology as well. It is arguable that technology is advancing at a pace lapping that of the police's willingness to embrace new trends. The primary development with which police agencies should be arming themselves is the Internet. Interactive agency web pages that allow two-way communication between the citizens and the police can bolster administrative efforts to reduce separatism. And perhaps the best and most immediate way to assist, if not force, the change in the perspectives of the police officers is to provide the citizens with real, live police action via the police radio feed on the web page.

The primary purpose of this paper is to provide a persuasive argument in favor of providing a live feed of primary radio traffic (note: only primary channel traffic) on an interactive web page hosted by the Pearland Police Department. The line of reasoning will seek to attack dissenting views as unwarranted and/or rooted in antiquated traditional theory. The opinion that "they" (civilians, be they criminal or not) don't need

to know what the police are doing is anticipated. The predicted rationale for this case is the contention that the proposal creates an unnecessary safety risk for officers.

Support of the argument will be founded in the idea that it will promote a closer relationship with the public as a residual effect of reaching out via community policing thereby enlarging the number of police supporters (active and passive) at any given time. Evidence obtained via surveying the very officers expected to oppose the proposal is expected show that they believe criminals are already monitoring the police radios to which they will want to deny uncomplicated access. Officers will then be forced to reconcile their divergent view of acknowledging that criminals already monitor police radios with their belief that it will create an unnecessary safety risk by allowing the general public to do so as well. They may then see that allowing easier access to police activities for civilians can create more interested and involved citizens in the struggle against crime and criminals.

The idea of web based police scanning is relatively new and literature on the subject is sparse at best. Major metropolitan agencies have been broadcasting radio traffic on web pages for several years, but the writer does not believe the basis for their doing so is rooted in community policing principles so much as it is for entertainment purposes. A trend has developed in smaller agencies such as the Plano Texas Police Department, which is comparable in size to the Pearland Police Department, where radio traffic is provided on its agency web page.

Research will be conducted into the effects this trend is having on this agency in terms of increasing community involvement with the community policing model in mind. The method of research will be interviews with Plano PD members. Further research

will be conducted via surveys of members of various Texas police organizations and a random sampling of Pearland Police members in order to establish the expected resistance on their part to accepting the idea of broadcasting police radio traffic via the Internet.

Once the surveys reveal the expected outcome of reluctance on the part of a targeted group of Texas officers (LEMIT members) as well as a random group of Pearland officers, the persuasive argument can be put forth to initiate open discussion among Pearland Police administration.

Police agencies say they are truly in favor of more open two-way dialogue with their respective citizens. If they do believe in the community policing model, taking a major step such as voluntarily broadcasting primary radio traffic on interactive web pages can elicit more citizen interest and involvement in their communities to the benefit of outreach programs such as Citizen's Police Academies, Neighborhood Watch groups, etc. Additionally, listening to local police radio can serve to educate citizens of how to observe their surroundings and provide better information in the event they witness suspicious or criminal activity. What was once guarded in scrambled secrecy and coded speech could be found to be an effective tool for generating public attention, which could then lead to greater public input and assistance.

Review of Literature

There is very little actual literature on the subject of making police radio easily available on a police department's web page as an extension of the community policing model. However, literature on the subject of community policing is easily accessible. Therefore, the goal of the research is to sustain the idea of increasing the support and active or passive involvement of the ordinary citizen via the internet within the context of community policing principles.

The first step in strengthening the argument is to examine the idea of community policing and what it truly means. Then the idea of web based community scanning hosted by the agency should be applied within the framework of the community policing model. Support for this application should be found and cited as well as contrary views which should be rationally dismissed if possible. Finally, an attempt should be made to project results based on recent trends in innovative community policing strategies which could reasonably be compared to the focus of this research.

In order to understand the concept of community policing it is logical to assume that the best place to look would be the writings of its founder. According to Trojanowicz, "community policing is a new philosophy of policing, based on the concept that police officers and private citizens working together in creative ways can help solve contemporary problems related to crime, fear of crime, social and physical disorder, and neighborhood conditions." (Trojanowicz, Kappeler, Gaines, and Bucqueroux, 1998, p. 3). The entire pro-broadcasting position stems from the words "police officers and private citizens working together in creative ways."

"The concept of citizen participation in community crime prevention is certainly not a new answer to an old problem. Henry Fielding clearly defined the same principles in the sixteenth century. The two elements necessary for a crime-free society, according to Fielding, were: (1) a well-trained police force, and (2) an informed and cooperative citizenry, working together to maintain a safe society" (Fennelly, 1996, p. 513).

Much of the literature on the subject of community policing innovations revolves around several programs implemented in departments around the country. But the activity of the law enforcement community as a whole is lacking. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics Special Report (2001), in 1997 about 4% of all local police officers were serving as community policing officers. By 1999 21% of officers were engaged in community policing activities. Additionally, by 1999 only 4% to 25% of all local police departments in cities of 50,000 or more had at least half of their officers serving as community police officers.

These statistics don't seem to indicate law enforcement's support for Dr. Trojanowicz's definition of community policing where police and citizens work together to reduce fear of crime and problems related to crime. If the percentage of departments engaging in some form of community policing is low, the percentage of citizens unaffected by the community policing partnership is high.

When defining these community-police officers, departments generally ascribe the title to those few officers who are tapped to serve in full or part time assignments performing crime prevention presentations to neighborhood groups or civic clubs. Some departments have put officers on bike patrols and neighborhood watch teams,

while other departments have citizen volunteer programs or host citizens to weekly crime information meetings for their given cities. "Hundreds of police and sheriffs' departments have developed community policing models, each with a different twist, but the common thread in the fabric has been this partnership that is so essential to our success" (Adams, 2001, p. 66). But declaring success and being successful may be two different things. Creating community police officers is wholly insufficient. The goal should be to create community police departments.

It is further believed that the problem which slows the transition from traditional policing to community policing is two fold. First, police officers don't want to be community police officers. The idea doesn't fit the mold from which they want to be cast. Many, if not most, police recruits were inspired by something at some point to enter the field. It is not likely that any significant number were stimulated to do so by attending a crime prevention seminar or citizen's patrol rally when they were young. When they get in the field they aren't likely to want to get into these programs instead of patrol or CID like they've seen glamorized in the media. Under their breath, many police officers have names for community policing squads such as "the kiss and hug club" and "lollicops."

The second problem slowing the movement is that average citizens don't want to be around "boring" cop lectures or programs. Average citizens are not likely to be stimulated by anything less than what they've seen glamorized in the media, too. And the fact is that most citizens are average citizens not civic minded community leaders. "One must be mindful that initiatives must come from the community itself and not just

from police or elites that desire to impose their vision of community onto a neighborhood" (Trojanowicz, p. 75).

If policing were a money making venture changes in implementation strategies would have occurred a long time ago or the business would have miserably failed. A police agency must sell itself to the largest people market out there: the ordinary, apathetic public. It is only then that previously uninterested people will become involved to some degree and the likelihood is that they may begin to view the "boring" programs already in place as something worthwhile.

So how does a police department go about getting the attention of average citizens who comprise the majority of any given place, and at the same time motivate its own officers to want to interact with them in order to form a meaningful partnership? An answer lies in existing technology which can reach nearly every citizen in said given place: the Internet. "As community policing grew, so too did computer technology. The latter part of the 1990's has experienced a dramatic growth in the number of computer users, more specifically, users of the Internet…This vast and largely untapped resource provides fertile ground for agencies practicing community policing to increase ties and accountability to the local community through the information superhighway" (Giblin, 2002, pg. 1).

If police agencies want the involvement (active or passive) of the citizens it serves, it must make itself available to those average citizens in a way that will peak their interest and make them want to get involved in the programs that have been somewhat targeted to the few civic minded people who have always comprised the

audience. Many of the efforts (programs) enacted thus far have amounted to trying to lead the horse to the water. Now it is time to make the horse thirsty.

The proposal being put forth in order to accomplish this goal is seen as somewhat radical by most police officers. The idea of making police radio traffic easily available to anyone who wants to listen, monitor, snoop, or spy on the activities of the police makes most officers cringe. But officers need to change their point of view and understand that the more interested the people become, the more support they can expect as a rule of thumb. Any citizen who wishes to listen, monitor, snoop, or spy on the police via scanner already can do so at will. And the fact of the matter is that they do, but the ones doing it are exactly the ones from which the police have always tried to hide. "In late 1999 and early 2000, scanners simply stopped working-and police and other radio broadcasts effectively disappeared from the airways...Police departments and other law enforcement agencies found that their communications systems were being used for the benefit of the criminal element. Since the position of police personnel could be tracked, this information allowed the criminal element to operate with some impunity" (Williams, 2002, pg 1).

For example, in Austin, Texas a web site called Austin Police Watch (http://snow.icestorm.com/policewatch/monitoring.html) encourages users to videotape any actions by police officers and collect the officers names and badge numbers. The site gives tips to users such as carrying around portable scanners and two way radios in order to be in the place where police activity is occurring and even gives meaning to police jargon. The intent of the site is to collect information on police misconduct, real

or perceived. Other sites devoted to reporting police misconduct, including naming officers, are cropping up in other cities such as Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

On February 3, 2001 Omaha, Nebraska police officers were negotiating with a male threatening to jump from a freeway overpass when a hacker broke into their radios and began playing "might as well jump...go ahead jump" from the Van Halen song (http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/DailyNews/policeradio010203.html).

Due to these and many other examples, trunking radio systems began to surface across the country. These systems made it nearly impossible for off the shelf radio scanners to intercept the broadcasts (Williams, 2002).

However, the more police guard their radio traffic with coded speech and hidden frequencies, the more they incite a certain group to decode the signals which has the net effect of creating more clever criminals. And handheld receiver units from Uniden, programmable to any particular geographic region to intercept trunked systems, are now being sold for under $1000.00 (Williams, 2002).

Therefore, the only people being isolated from police activity are the very people community policing says they should be involving in partnerships, the apathetic public, who simply don't have the money, interest, or motivation to listen to police activity in their respective locales because they've never before been invited to do so. In fact, every effort has been made to prevent this from happening. The apathetic public possesses an enormous wealth of usable information on a daily basis which goes untapped due to the division which exists between citizen and cop.

As for the officers who resist close relationships with the public they serve, it is believed that feedback from citizens will be a sort of ego boost to those officers when

they realize people are listening and possibly admiring them. The presumption is that interaction between the two previously divided groups will begin to increase. As interaction increases, information and, it is presumed, cooperation will increase as an intended consequence.

There are examples of how scanning can connect the police and the ordinary citizen. Consider Rick Prelinger who monitors San Francisco, California PD's radio and wrote,

> "Most of us may live our entire lives without ever getting an insider's view of police culture and procedure, but it is pretty simple to witness police activity through two-way police radio broadcasts. Doing so offers a privileged glimpse not only into the veiled world of police procedure but also into the background of our own civilian environment. Listening may tell us more than we may want to know about the structures of power and enforcement that bring peace and safety to some of us and chaos and uncertainty to others" (Prelinger, 2000, p.1) "Keeping an ear to police activities renders fuzzier the territorial boundaries between cops and civilians, and removes at least some of the mystery surrounding the parallel universe police inhabit" (Prelinger, 2000, p. 6).

It is believed that by making police radio easily available to the citizens of Pearland via departmental internet home page, and encouraging their listenership, feedback, input, and information the department will experience greater cooperation and assistance from the as yet untapped wealth of knowledge they have always possessed. Assuming that the population is comprised of 2% police and active police supporters, 2% true criminals, and 96% uninvolved citizens, community policing holds as its fundamental core that the police should be openly recruiting information from this 96% majority and working with them to solve the problems that the 2% true criminal element creates.

If only a fraction of the silent majority of average citizens became actively or passively concerned and involved with the efforts of the police, there would naturally be an advantage against the criminals. Providing the radio feed to the general public via an easily accessible medium could be the spark that generates that interest the police are seeking.

The Chicago, Illinois police department has one of the most interactive of all police web sites with features that allow anonymous tips to be submitted, a bicycle registry, gang information, digital crime mapping, and posting pictures of wanted persons. Chicago's web site director Michelle Damico said, "The Internet was set up as a great global village, but the irony is it is now used to connect citizens with their local police" (Laporte, 1997, p. 20).

Community policing as a concept calls for the redefinition of old ideas. Equity once meant equal treatment for all under the rule of law. Equity under the community policing umbrella calls for the sharing of power between the police and the citizen in solving community problems (Correia, 2000). A good way to begin seeking public input is to open up to the public what we've always hidden from them. If the previously disinterested find the radio traffic enlightening or entertaining then the likelihood of them finding more of the programs already in place interesting increases.

Projections of the success or failure of the program are not readily or realistically available. The idea is conceptual and is one which can only be surmised. But the idea is one which is not as radical as some may first believe. The radio traffic is already available for those who want it badly enough. The problem has always been that, for the most part, those who have gone to the lengths necessary to receive it are exactly

the ones who the police have always tried to prevent from doing so. Their input is not

what the police need. It is the input of those who know who they are the police are

seeking.

Methodology

The primary focus of this paper is to construct a persuasive argument in favor of having the Pearland Police Department voluntarily provide its primary dispatch radio channel to any listener via departmental web page. The intent in doing so is to convince Pearland PD administration, as well as departmental members, that providing the radio channel to citizens is likely to increase their participation in departmental activities under the community policing model.

In order to make a convincing argument it was necessary to gauge the opinions of member police officers who would be affected by the proposal. The writer, being a departmental member, had the opinion that departmental members would largely oppose the proposal citing an unnecessary officer safety risk. It is believed that surveying the officers for the anticipated answer, then revealing to the officers a contradiction in their thinking, would be the most effective way to force them to reconsider their opinions. Once this is accomplished, a larger contingent of support could then be used to promote the idea to Pearland PD administrators.

In addition to surveying Pearland PD patrol officers, a group of police administrators from various law enforcement agencies across the state (June 2002 LEMIT Module I attendees) was also surveyed for comparison. It was anticipated that the survey outcome of the LEMIT group would be against the proposal to a higher degree than the Pearl and group of patrol officers. It was further assumed the opposing LEMIT group would be more difficult to sway to accepting the idea due to the cumulative experience and exposure to police culture possessed by these administrators as opposed to less experienced first level officers of a younger generation.

The survey instrument for the LEMIT group was identical to the survey used with the Pearland group. The survey consisted of ten questions each answered either yes or no on a one to four scale. One and two were no and somewhat no. Three and four were somewhat yes and yes.

The survey intentionally began with the answerer acknowledging a departmental belief and acceptance of community policing. It was assumed that the meaning of community policing was known. It was further anticipated a large majority of both groups would positively answer the first series of questions.

The survey then asked a series of questions regarding public monitoring or scanning of police radio and specifically asked if the subject believed anyone scans his/her agency's radio traffic. Affirmative answers were anticipated. The survey then asked who is thought to be scanning the agency's radio and offered only three options: (1) hobbyists, (2) concerned citizens, and (3) criminals, with each option having the yes no scale. Note: The option concerned citizens as opposed to citizens (or ordinary citizens) was intentional.

It was believed that the answers hobbyists and concerned citizens would be answered along the middle of the scale on either side of yes and no. It was further assumed that the option criminals would be heavily weighted to the high end, or yes end, of the scale.

The survey then asked if the respondent believed the proposal of making their primary dispatch radio traffic easily available was a good idea in terms of the community policing model. It was assumed that by this point the respondent would have

acknowledged a belief in community policing and that people, primarily criminals, were already monitoring his/her agency's radio traffic.

The respondent was then asked if he/she believed that the proposal is inherently unsafe for officers on the streets. The predicted response was an overwhelming yes. The survey concluded by putting the respondent in the position of accepting or rejecting the proposal for his/her own agency. The expectancy was a majority against the proposal.

In addition to the survey instrument a personal visit was made to the Piano Police Department which does have a web page and does provide its radio traffic to site visitors. Interviews with a patrol Sergeant and the Public Information Officer were conducted on site and followed up by phone in July 2002 regarding the department's experience with the web site radio broadcast. The interview specifically sought to either verify or reject the expected primary resistance to the broadcasting by departmental members based on the issue of officer safety. In addition, attention was paid to support or reject the idea that citizen involvement would increase if the proposal was eventually initiated at the Pearland Police department.

The response rate to the LEMIT survey was 100% at twenty eight (28) surveys. Thirty two (32) surveys were issued to Pearland Police patrol officers and some first line patrol supervisors. The response rate was also 100%.

Findings

The expected outcome of survey information was that the group of LEMIT members, who are comprised of experienced police administrators, would be more reluctant to accepting the proposal than a group of patrol officers and first line supervisors. It was believed their stronger bond with traditional policing theory along with an apprehension toward any idea that they felt could put them in a position of liability would cause them to be more hardened against the proposal.

The results of the surveys proved the prediction wrong. Although as a group the LEMIT members were against the idea, it was the group of Pearland patrol officers and first line supervisors who were more strongly opposed to the proposal.

According to the survey, both groups followed the anticipated trend of acknowledging an acceptance of community policing and confirmed that their departments have implemented it to some degree. It should be noted that a small segment of the LEMIT members were comprised of agents from a state agency (Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission) that does not perform a patrol function where community policing could be implemented and this is reflected in the first series of questions regarding community policing. However, their standing in this state agency does not render their input unusable for the second part of the survey.

A noticeable variation began to emerge when the survey moved into questions regarding departmental recruiting of citizen involvement and agency use of departmental web sites. The LEMIT group's responses indicated a moderate level of recruitment of citizen involvement through an agency web site. The Pearland group responded strongly that citizen recruitment is ongoing but acknowledged that the

department does not use the internet for this purpose. It appears that other departments are following the trend of utilizing departmental home pages whereas Pearland is lagging behind.

Both groups strongly indicated that they believe people are already scanning their agency's radio traffic. And both groups responded as expected that they believe criminals are among those monitoring. In fact, both groups recorded 70% or higher agreement that criminals scan police radio in their areas. Additionally, both groups acknowledged that concerned citizens monitor their police radio at 60% agreement or higher. The respondent was purposely not asked if he/she believed average citizens monitored the radio traffic because this is the essence of the argument: how to make average citizens into concerned citizens. The survey included a response for hobbyists which was essentially a placebo not intended to be analyzed.

Most interesting responses were submitted to the final segment of questions regarding the respondents opinions directly related to the proposal. When asked if the respondent felt it was a good idea in terms of community policing to put agency radio traffic on a departmental home page, the LEMIT group seemed to begin to recognize where the survey was leading. Although only 40% answered yes or somewhat yes, there did seem to be some promise that minds could be changed when contradictions in traditional beliefs are pointed out. The Pearland group's opposition was still significant at over 80%.

The survey then asked the question expected to be weighing most heavily on the minds of the respondents: the officer safety question. The LEMIT group debunked the predicted notion that this would be the strongest discord to the proposal. Nearly half of

LEMIT responses indicated that the proposal does not increase the work hazards of police officers. On the other hand, the Pearland officers strongly answered yes or somewhat yes that the issue constituted an officer safety hazard at over 70%.

Finally, the LEMIT group was split as to whether they would allow the proposal to be implemented at their departments if in the position to make such a decision. The Pearland group answered at over 80% to reject the proposal.

It is believed that the Pearland group could be swayed to accepting the proposal based on feedback received from the LEMIT respondents. After the survey was issued and returned, a short presentation was made by the writer as to the survey results and the essential contradiction in the belief that an officer safety situation would be created by allowing ordinary citizens to monitor what criminals always have been monitoring. Several unsolicited comments were received from LEMIT members who said their minds had been changed. However, the degree of disagreement among the Pearland group does seem to indicated that much convincing is in order.

Unfortunately, the interviews with Plano PO members did not reveal any usable information in terms of strengthening the proposal. It was learned that Plano PD did not begin to broadcast its radio traffic with the community policing model in mind, but rather to follow the trend of larger metropolitan agencies and broadcast for entertainment purposes.

However, it was learned that initial resistance to the broadcasting did exist among Plano PD first line members under the officer safety umbrella. The agency's Public Information Officer said that no incident has occurred which gives any credibility

to this largely held view. Additionally, he knew of no incident in which the broadcasting

proved any benefit to the department's ability to utilize citizen involvement or input.

Discussion/Conclusion

Community policing holds at its core the idea that the police are the people and the people are the police. The idea is not new. It dates back to the earliest forms of policing yet is being touted as a new wave in law enforcement. As a result, there does seem to be resistance on the part of law enforcement to dive head first into the concept although it is fashionable for them to say they embrace it.

Many departments initiated programs to involve the public, but it is believed the programs are only capable of reaching a very small percentage consisting of those who are unusually community minded. The vast majority of people are apathetic to the activities of the police as long as it doesn't concern them.

The internet has become a commonly used form of communication for many, if not most, people. The idea of bringing police business into the everyday lives of people in such a convenient way that it doesn't require anything more than their simple curiosity seems to be a logical way to increase the level of interest of those who are apathetic to crime issues in their own locales. It is possible that the best way to do so is to entice the citizen with a real taste of what goes on in their own city: the police radio.

Taken to its fullest, albeit unlikely, potential the Pearland Police Department could recruit thousands of supporters, witnesses, and crime fighting partners. A web page with police radio could also contain digital crime mapping, pictures of wanted persons, sex offender registries, crime prevention tips, etc. It could be an electronic citizen's police academy for those who can't or won't be so involved as to make a weekly meeting.

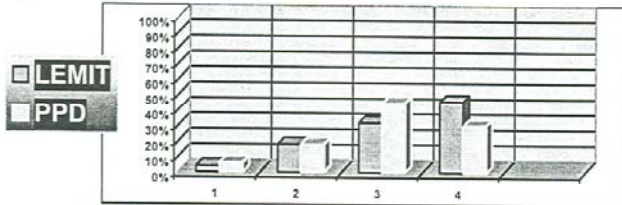# Graphs of survey results

In terms of survey results, the results of each question are as follows:

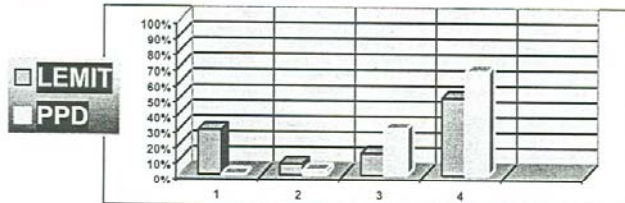Survey scale: 1=No   2=Somewhat no   3= Somewhat yes   4=Yes

Has your department (or agency) adopted the community policing model as its stated operating procedure?
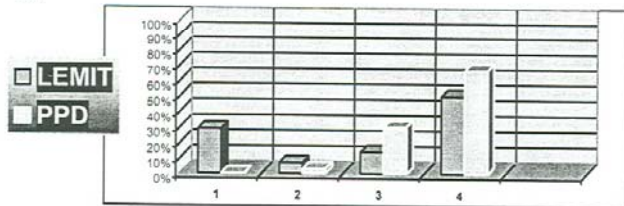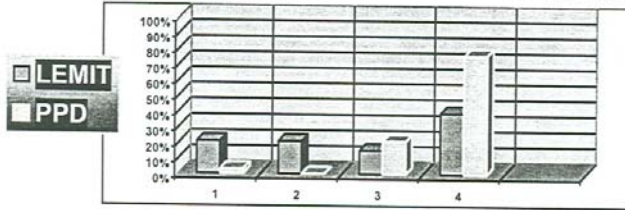

Are officers in your department (or agency) openly receptive to Community Policing in actual practice?
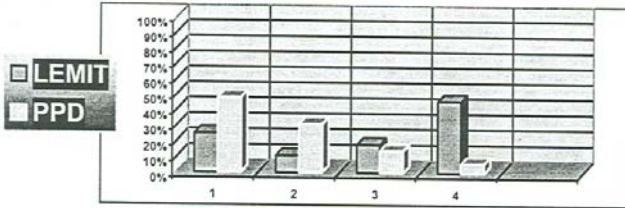

Has your department begun any programs designed as implementation of Community Policing?

Does your department recruit citizens for active involvement in departmental functions?
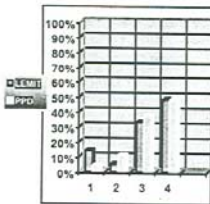

Does your department utilize the internet in terms of a web page for the sole purpose of engaging citizen interest in departmental activity?
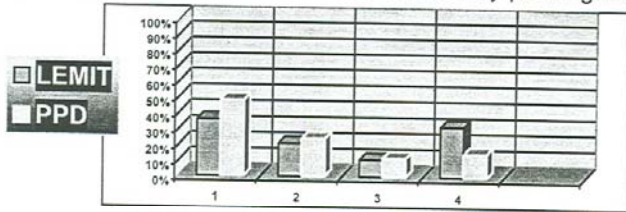

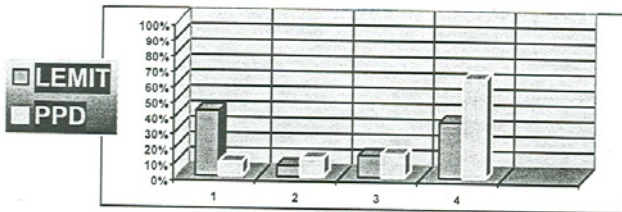Do people scan your agency's radio traffic (to the best of your knowledge)?
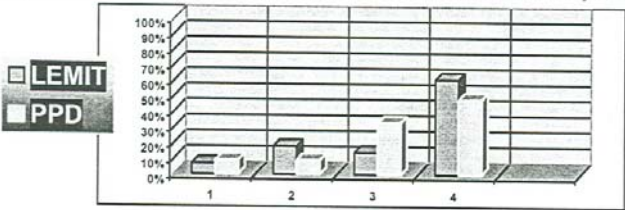
If you answered yes to #6, who do you feel is likely scanning your radio traffic?

| HOBBYISTS?	CONCERNED CITIZENS?	CRIMINALS?
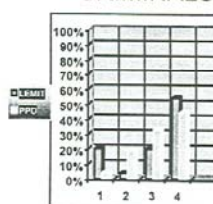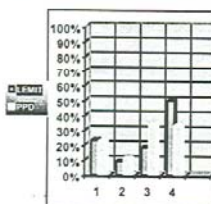
Do you feel putting your department's (or agency's) radio traffic on your department's web site is a good idea in terms of the community policing model?

Do you believe making your department's (or agency's) radio traffic "on air" via the internet is inherently unsafe for officers on the streets?

If the decision to put your department's (or agency's) radio traffic on your web site for unlimited access by anyone rested on you, would you allow the proposed broadcasting?
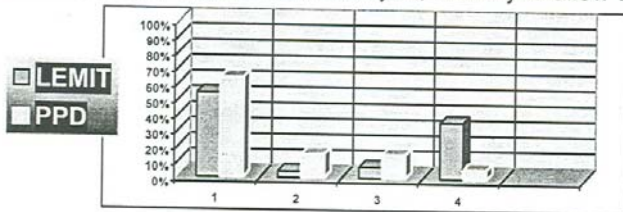
This is a very large majority of the people in any city and this proposal is a way to reach them in a positive and inviting way. But, it should be done in such a way as to make the audience want to return beyond an initial tour through the web site. Live police radio is ever-changing and always holds the potential for excitement.

The predictable resistance on the part of the officers most likely to be heard is something which requires a response. The fear on the officers part is that a safety hazard will be created by allowing the citizens to hear what they are doing. Although most people support the police, those who distrust the police may do so because of personal experience.

Officers should be mindful that they interact with thousands of people in a year's time. The ordinary citizen interacts with a police officer two or three times in a lifetime. If these interactions are not positive for the citizen, and most police encounters are not, the citizen will remember that incident forever while the officer will have long since forgotten it. However, if the ordinary citizen is invited to monitor the police radio in a sort of interactive way, and their input is actively sought, the image of a police officer is more familiar in the citizen's mind and understanding and cooperation is inevitable. This eventuality does not lend itself to a safety hazard.

The intent of this paper is to formulate an argument in favor of the proposal to be offered to Pearland Police Department decision makers. Although many officers are strongly (yet silently) opposed to community policing principles at the onset, once convinced of the folly in rejecting the idea of community involvement, they will hold the new view more strongly. This was the reason for surveying the officers in such a way

as to reveal to them their contradictory thinking. The more they recognize this, the more they will accept the opposing outlook.

In conclusion, this plan is somewhat subjective and every attempt has been made to maintain an objective posture in researching the idea. And no evidence has been found which would confirm or contradict the idea of increasing citizen awareness and involvement in the affairs of the Pearland Police Department should this proposal be exercised. But the internet is a medium which can potentially reach the majority of households in the Pearland area, and the police radio is the attraction which could draw notice from the majority: the disinterested. After all, those who are interested in police activity are already listening.

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Additional resources:
http://abcnews.go.com/sections/us/DailyNews/policeradio010203.html
http://snow.icestorm.com/policewatch/tips.html