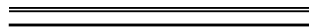**The Bill Blackwood**
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas

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Community Policing:
Re-Evaluating What Has Become A Program
Instead Of A Paradigm Shift

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A Leadership White Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Required for Graduation from the
Leadership Command College

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ABSTRACT

Community policing has been a part of the American policing landscape for a number of years now, and, as such, there has been an opportunity to evaluate its efficacy.   There is considerable research that indicates that community policing has not seen the organizational changes that are required for proper implementation. Community policing calls for a flattening of the command structure in agencies, but most agencies claiming to have implemented community policing still maintain the traditional bureaucratic model (Garland, 2001). This is a matter of concern considering the reported widespread acceptance that community policing is the predominate philosophy of a considerable portion of the American law enforcement community (Morabito, 2010). It is also a matter of concern that approximately $8.8 billion dollars have been appropriated by the federal government to support community policing (Morabito, 2010). If community policing has not been implemented as designed, then it stands to reason that it will likely be impossible to properly consider the effectiveness of community policing. Using peer-reviewed academic research and law enforcement periodicals, this paper examines why community policing has experienced difficulty being implemented as designed. Findings suggest that the solution may be a hybrid of the current model of community policing and computer statistics (COMPSTAT), given the resistance to change shown by the traditional bureaucratic model of police administration (Willis, Mastrofski, & Kochel, 2010). This should be considered in future police research.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Abstract

INTRODUCTION

As the name would imply, community policing is the pairing of the police with the community they serve. The police are public servants chosen and entrusted with the welfare, peace, and harmony of society. The concept of community policing recognizes that society's problems cannot be solved by the police alone. This means taking all that a community has in the way of resources and managing them in a way that makes the police and the community equal partners in community problem solving. This partnership creates greater solidarity and safety (Melekian, 2011).

Another advantage of community policing is the proactive stance it takes versus a reactive stance that is seen in the call driven traditional model. Community policing involves police officers becoming more in tune with the communities they serve in to better understand the make-up of the community and its specific problems. This enables the police to offer more creative solutions to those specific problems. In order to understand what is taking place today with community policing, it is important to know what structure existed before and is still in existence today alongside community policing. The traditional model existed before community policing and still operates today. It began with professional reforms implemented by Leonhard F. Fuld, August Vollmer, and Orlando W. Wilson (Uchida, 2004).

Fuld (1910) introduced concepts of organizational theory to law enforcement and penned the first American book on police administration intended for police executives (as cited in Kania, 2008). Vollmer and Wilson substantially altered the path of American law enforcement in the first half of the twentieth century. Some of Vollmer's innovations that are now take for granted are patrol cars, radio dispatch, MO files, and criminal

profiling. He also recruited and hired college-educated police officers at a time when this was far from the norm. Wilson was instrumental in applying managerial concepts to police agencies. Wilson wrote a book titled *Police Administration* that applied scientific management concepts to police practices. Wilson also went on to create the School of Criminology at U.C.-Berkeley in 1950 (as cited in Kania, 2008).

The reforms that took place during this time period moved police forward in serving the public more quickly and competently. Technological innovations clearly aided the police in this area, as did streamlining the organizations themselves (Uchida, 2004). Though these reforms moved the professional movement forward, there were problems to go along with the benefits. One of these problems was that the professional model created a subculture among police that distanced them from the communities they served. The second was that, as police were isolated, they began to turn inward and the hierarchy of police structure stifled creativity and the innovations individuals could bring to the profession. Uchida (2004) stated that "Rather than thinking for themselves (as professionals would) patrol officers followed orders given by sergeants, lieutenants, or other ranking officers. This led to morale problems and criticism of police administration by the rank and file" (p. 25).

These problems with the professional model and the social turmoil of the 1960's led to the widespread acceptance of community policing, the new organizational orthodoxy of policing. In 1994, the passage of the Crime Control Act appropriated $8.8 billion to promote innovative programs like community policing and the additional police officers it would require. The Community-Oriented Policing (COP) strategy proliferated in the mid 1990's and acceptance among American police agencies serving populations

of 25,000 or more reported adopting COP activities and strategies (as cited in Morabito, 2010). According to Morabito (2010), "This type of popularity could be described as a mandate for change in public safety. By the mid-1990s, COP appeared poised to permanently alter the landscape of American policing" (p. 565).

Despite the widespread acceptance and flexibility allowed for in COP, most agencies did not implement the structure needed for COP or its central elements. What happened instead was that agencies applied the COP label to routine activities and half-hearted implementation. Garland (2001) described the spread of COP as "an all-pervasive rhetoric" (p. 124) that lacked true substantial change, which resulted in working practices that look much the same as they did 30 years earlier. This failure to restructure can be attributed to chief executives buying into the concept but failing to understand the changes required within the organization. The failure of middle managers to implement the change could be attributed to the loss of control it may mean to them.

Despite the widespread acceptance of community policing, the reality is that community policing has been treated more as a program than a philosophy to be accepted across organizations implementing community policing. This is true because an examination of organizations that have claimed to embrace community policing will reveal that they typically still maintain the vertical hierarchy that existed before community policing and for which community policing states must be flattened (Vito, Walsh, & Kunselman, 2005).

The organizational change that must occur for community policing to be implemented correctly is not likely to occur because key decision makers in that process

have been unwilling to make those commitments to the change. This could be because the people in those positions are unwilling to embrace the change because of how it might affect them. This could be compared to politicians agreeing to term limits or voting for a salary decrease. It is contrary to their self-interest and therefore likely to fail.

Despite widespread acceptance of community policing, most agencies have failed to implement the organizational structure necessary for community policing to be administered as it was intended. The "police as professional" model is still pervasive. Law enforcement agencies should instead adapt COP to include Computer Statistics or the COMPSTAT model to better benefit law enforcement.

POSITION

Hunter and Barker (1993) identified weaknesses in the implementation of community policing and claimed that it purports to be, "all things to all people under the umbrella of community involvement" (Hunter & Barker, 1993, p. 157). The difficulty in recognizing community policing as a philosophy and not a program has hindered correct implementation for a true paradigm shift and may have weakened community trust through a focus on order maintenance (Hunter & Barker, 1993).

The concepts behind community policing are valid. It makes sense that in order to solve societies problems, society as a whole should be involved. This is not a task that should be left alone to the police. The police are capable of addressing problems as they arise but certainly there are other segments of the community (churches, health services, business leaders, and others) who can change communities in ways that stifle crime as well. According to Hunter and Barker (1993), "Community policing had been

usurped by many police administrators who desire to appear progressive and wish to

enhance community relations but who have neither the desire nor the intent to abandon

the traditional reactive model of delivering police services" (p. 161-163). Though

possibly a cynical view, this should not really surprise most as the position of police chief

or Sheriff is largely a political one and politicians often are willing to say what is

politically expedient for the sake of bolstering their public perceptions. If an organization

is commanded by this type of leader, basic service strategy will still "be based on

citizen-generated calls for service and pressure brought by civic and political leaders.   It

has also been noted that community policing is designed to serve areas in which a

sense of community already exists" (Vito et al., 2005, p. 495).

Decentralization is an important part of community policing strategy and will be

discussed later in this paper in greater detail. It is an essential element of community

policing, and, surprisingly, there has been little empirical research conducted into how

much of it has occurred in United States agencies. As just discussed, police executives

have played a role in the failure to restructure criminal justice agencies, but there is

another important layer in the bureaucracy that needs to be addressed and they are the

middle managers (Vito et al., 2005).

The road blocks now to the organizational change needed for community policing

are built into the system that was developed during the "police as professional" model.

The very people who are needed to implement the organizational change are the

captains and lieutenants. According to Hunter and Barker (1993), "The captains and

lieutenants gained control of the practice, knowledge, and skill base of the occupation

during the development of the professional model of policing" (as cited in Vito et al.,

2005, p. 493). Captains and lieutenants as middle managers have established "centralized control over police organization's internal environment and operations" (as cited in Vito et al., 2005, p. 493). This is why the change for COP is not likely to come. Captains and lieutenants are responsible for translating the "executive's vision and direction into operational strategies" (as cited in Vito et al., 2005, p. 493). Since COP calls for flattening hierarchy, middle managers will likely stand as a barrier between the top executives and the front line troops who could provide the top executives with the information on the community that they require (Sparrow, Moore, & Kennedy, 1990).

The middle managers model the values for their subordinates regarding what is acceptable and not acceptable. Vito et al. (2005) stated that "Under community policing the policy manual needs to be a source of knowledge, guidance, and inspiration for patrol officers, not the means to justify command control and discipline" (p. 494). COP subscribes to empowering the frontline officer. According to Vito et al. (2005), "principally it is middle managers that have routinely quashed new ideas; especially those that they believe challenge their authority" (p. 494).

The last paradigm shift that law enforcement went through at the turn of the 20th century was essential. The police as professional model was developed to end the corruption that existed in policing, and this was a banner that could easily be flocked to by all. Whereas community policing as a paradigm shift does not enjoy such universal support. There are those in policing and those in academic circles who are still divided on the need (Chappell, 2009). Those divisions are defined by those who have problems with community policing in theory and those who have problems with community policing in practice.

A problem with community policing in theory is that it assumes that all communities want to be involved with police to solve problems. Many communities pay taxes and expect the police to be responsible for solving crime. In communities where police have led the charge for community policing, often they have found it difficult to convince other government services to join in. The police may not always be the best mechanism for change in communities. Then there still is a lack of empirical data to support community policing's efficacy. This could be because there are so many variables that require study.

In practice, community policing faces huge challenges in overcoming the organizational changes necessary, and the reasons for these difficulties have been discussed. Seemingly, if community policing were really the way to go, it should have been correctly put into practice by now since it has been considered an acceptable model for several decades now (Magers, 2004). The practice of placing police into the communities again has also raised the fear of a return to the corruption that the "police as professional" model worked to overcome. It will be increasingly difficult for community policing to ever receive the organizational change needed for its proper implementation given the obstacles before it and the trending of new ideas, such as Compstat (Schafer, 2001).

Compstat takes what is effective in the traditional bureaucratic model and combines it with the problem-solving elements found in community policing. This is not an indictment of community policing but instead an illustration that the two models are already coexisting together. The important idea of this new marriage between Compstat and community policing is that it recognizes the strengths of both paradigms

without having to reject one for the other. Community policing calls for placing more responsibility on front line officers in identifying community crime and disorder problems. Compstat overcomes the naïve notion that community policing has regarding this and states that responsibility belongs to the commanders, who, after all, have the experience to handle this task. Compstat further recognizes that the police as experts on crime will have more answers than the community to solve serious crime. Community policing tactics could then be employed to deal with minor crime and nuisance issues and perhaps be more effective (Magers, 2004).

COUNTER POSITION

As previously noted, there is widespread acceptance of the concept of community policing, but the implementation of COP principles has been limited because underneath the façade of adoption of community policing lays a framework that still belongs to the traditional paramilitary model of policing. The literature on successful implementation of community policing calls for focusing on community needs, crime prevention, flattening of the tall bureaucratic structures in law enforcement, and problem solving. According to Chappell (2007), "In a nutshell, the community policing officer is supposed to be more of a community resource officer than simply a law enforcer (p. 498-499).

The failure of many organizations to implement community policing correctly can sometimes be attributed to implementing COP as a program and not a department-wide philosophy. Departments will often assign officers to be community police officers and remove their responsibilities to take calls for service and segregate them from the rest of the department that is still operating under that traditional model. Those that

advocate for community policing as an organizational change state that the traditional model must be abandoned and COP must become a department-wide philosophy that everyone takes part in not just specialized units. From the top to the bottom of the organization, the philosophy of COP must be adopted if it is to succeed (Vito et al., 2005).

The type of organizational structure change that is being called for in community policing is significant. One way to deal with this organizational change is to begin with new members of the organization. This starts with recruiting individuals who are better suited to the community policing model. According to Chappell (2007), some academies are starting to train recruits, "but most agencies still use the San Jose FTO model, which was developed before contemporary community policing existed. Because field training is such an important part of police socialization, it must teach recruits the skills of community policing" (p. 498). The San Jose model does allow for modification, which would allow agencies to add criteria that could be used in the evaluation of community policing skills. There is still formal overemphasis on rules, regulations, and formality in field training though that is seen as an impediment to the creative problems solving that is required in community policing. The structure in place does seem to impede decentralization and other key aspects of community policing but as officers who have been brought into law enforcement being taught the principles of community policing promote up the ranks, they may yet find a way to change the subculture to one that is more supportive of community policing (Chappell, 2007).

These assertions that community policing will eventually achieve the organizational changes needed for successful implementation fail to take into account

how long those changes have been resisted and how successfully they have been resisted. It is not politically correct to denounce community policing as a philosophy. Fortunately, for most agency heads, it is not necessary either. This assertion that organizational change can occur through recruitment, training, and time is speculative (Schafer, 2001).

Compstat struggles with the same problems of inflexibility found in current law enforcement hierarchies, similar to the obstacles that community policing has with those hierarchies. Compstat programs, in dealing with this inflexibility, have been unable or unwilling to change constraints that determine work schedules and allocation of personnel. Then there is the argument that Compstat fails to deal with the root causes of crime. Compstat is responsive to hot spots but fails at analyzing the root cause of the problem, similar to a game of "Whack-a-Mole," where the goal is to jump on the problem quickly before it disappears instead of dealing with the source of the problem. There are assertions that the pressure for results leads to parochial decision making. Critics claim that Compstat puts great pressure on leaders for solutions. This creates tension because the faith in accountability runs against the need to take risks in crime fighting innovations. Seldom will leaders be willing to take a risk on a new idea when they are so strictly held accountable for those decisions (Willis, Mastrofski, & Weisburd, 2003).

This supports the notion asserted in this paper that Compstat and community policing can be adapted to support each other's objectives to better support law enforcement. Additionally, Compstat has provided a forum for collaboration between stakeholders in solving community problems. The first assertion that Compstat struggles with the same hierarchy problems is refuted by those who conclude that

policing, at its core of values, is much more capable of identifying with the rational-legal model found in Compstat (Walsh & Vito, 2004). The assertion that Compstat fails to reach the root causes of crime could just as easily be asserted against community policing as the empirical research on community policing's success is still inconclusive (Schafer, 2001). The assertions about parochial decision-making, while valid, may simply come down to a question of the type of leaders chosen. Weak leaders placed in either model are likely to fail to lead well if they are incapable of taking risks and are prone to making parochial decisions.

CONCLUSION

Community policing was developed because society's problems as related to crime and quality of life are not the problem of the police alone. The police typically are best suited to target crime and deal with it when it occurs, and the police can have some impact on crime prevention. Community policing recognizes that it takes other government services to change communities in ways that get at the root of crime.

The traditional bureaucratic model helped professionalize police, but it also distanced the police from the communities they served and helped foster an "us vs. them" mentality. Social turmoil in the 1960's triggered the need for bringing the police and communities closer together. This was widely accepted from the 1980's and onward.

The problem encountered was that law enforcement agencies, while widely accepting the positive public perceptions and federal funds that community policing brought, were too deeply bound to the traditional bureaucratic model. The paramilitary model is too deeply linked to law enforcement core values (Walsh & Vito, 2004).

Proponents of community policing profess strong arguments for why it should be adopted as an organizational philosophy. The problem with these theories is that they have not transitioned well into practice. Law enforcement is now looking for other options such as Compstat to provide accountability and be results oriented.

Opponents of Compstat point out that it is still a reactive model that does not reach the roots of crime and stifles innovation. Those opponents are countered by some of the research that recognizes that many agencies have been in practice using a combination of community policing and Compstat for some time and successfully. This should be an area for increased research given the stubborn resistance of law enforcement to change their organizations to the structures called for in community policing (Willis, et al., 2010).

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