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A Holistic Approach to Law Enforcement Theories

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ABSTRACT

Law enforcement agencies across the United States have long looked for effective ways to address the crime and disorder within their communities. Managers within these agencies have begun to realize the ineffectiveness of traditional policing methods. These methods are largely reactive in nature and do little to reduce crime or prevent it from occurring. As law enforcement began to realize the ineffectiveness of the traditional policing model in sustainably reducing crime, they started researching better solutions. Research led to ideas and theories that became known as community policing, problem oriented policing, compstat, and intelligence-led policing, to name a few. Each model has the ability to either gather or direct data and intelligence. Intelligence-led policing is a police managerial philosophy that aims to reduce and prevent crime and disrupt criminal activity. It is a top-down management approach that uses crime intelligence to direct police activity. Based upon collected data and analysis, police resources are directed to targets and disrupt serious and prolific offenders (Ratcliff, 2011). It is the assertion of this paper to examine the inter-compatibility of each of the modern policing models and develop a holistic approach, using the intelligence-led policing model as a foundation.

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INTRODUCTION

Law enforcement agencies across the United States are looking for effective ways to address crime and disorder within their communities. Traditionally, law enforcement has been reactive in the way they respond to crime. Typically, a citizen would report a criminal incident, thereby eliciting a response from law enforcement. An officer would usually generate a report which would then be referred for investigative follow up. These follow-up investigations would usually be conducted by specialized units, such as burglary, robbery, homicide, narcotics, and vice. The specialized units conducting the investigations usually shared very little if any information between the units. This "incident-driven" method of policing, still widely used in American law enforcement today, does very little to address the concerns of the citizens (Eck & Spelman, 1987). According to Ratcliffe (2011), this reactive investigative model led to the assumption that should offenders be detected and arrested, crime rates would drop. Unfortunately, arrest rates do not make this assumption a reality. As law enforcement began to realize the ineffectiveness of the traditional policing model in sustainably reducing crime, they began researching better solutions. Research led to ideas and theories that became known as community policing, problem oriented policing, compstat, and intelligence-led policing, to name a few.

Community policing has many different meanings across the law enforcement community, but perhaps was best defined by Gill, Weisburd, Telep, Vitter, and Bennett (2014) as a "philosophy of policing that emphasizes community involvement in crime prevention efforts, in contrast to the focus of traditional policing on law enforcement and order maintenance" (p. 2). Increasing the interaction between the police and the

community allows for the identification and prioritization of problems and concerns. Solving problems becomes a combined effort between police and the community (Ratcliffe, 2011).

Problem oriented policing attempts to identify problems within a community by the compilation of statistical data. Data is collected through wide variety of sources, such as calls for service, informant interviews, and police reports. Once problems are identified, resources are directed to addressing them before they have a harmful effect. According to Phillips (2012), "this method consists of four components- accurate and timely intelligence, rapid deployment, effective tactics, and relentless follow-up" (p.14).

Compstat was developed in New York City in the early 1990s to address the rising crime rate in the subway system. Compstat has also been described as crime specific policing (Hoover, 2004). According to Hoover (2004), compstat is "targeted enforcement aimed at specific offenses committed by specific offenders at specific times and at specific places" (para.4).

Intelligence-led policing is a police managerial philosophy that aims to reduce and prevent crime and disrupt criminal activity. It is a top-down management approach that uses crime intelligence to direct police activity. Based upon collected data and analysis of same, police resources are directed to targets to disrupt serious and prolific offenders (Ratcliff, 2011).

Within the framework of each of these policing strategies is the foundation for addressing the problems facing law enforcement today. As such, law enforcement should adopt a holistic view by using the intelligence-led policing model as a foundation

and incorporate aspects of community oriented policing, problem oriented policing, and compstat in order to develop a successful policing philosophy.

POSITION

Before deciding on a specific policing strategy, it is important to know what types of crimes are being reported. Studies conducted in both the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (US) in 2006 and 2007 examined the rate at which crimes were reported (Ratcliffe, 2011). The surveys discussed by Ratcliffe (2011) indicated that in both the US and UK, only 41% of all crimes are reported to law enforcement. The surveys detailed a variety of reasons why crimes are not reported, with primary causes being the belief that police either could not or would not do anything. This study is stark reminder of society's lack of confidence in law enforcement's ability to address the problem of crime and disorder.

By implementing a holistic philosophy, plans and strategies can be drafted and implemented to target specific offenders or problem areas. Managers can begin collecting data, intelligence, and community feedback to isolate and target the cause of crime affecting their area of responsibility. Using the intelligence-led policing (ILP) model as a foundation, agencies can identify tenets from other policing strategies that work best for their particular mission. The goal of which is to detect and disrupt criminal activity before it occurs.

The Office of Homeland Security, as cited in Scheider, Chapman, and Schapiro (2009), describes ILP as the collection, analysis, and review of data to be used as a guide for the distribution of manpower and other resources to affect a variety of criminal offenses. It is further described as "a collaborative approach based on improved

intelligence operations and community oriented policing and problems solving"
(Scheider et al., 2009, p. 709).

Ratcliffe (2011) suggests that intelligence-led policing is a top-down
management philosophy that aims to reduce and prevent crime and to disrupt offender
activity. This approach is achieved by the computation and analysis of crime data. The
data is then used to "direct police resources and activities on prolific and serious
offenders" (Ratcliffe, 2011, p. 87). The adoption of an intelligence-led policing model
within an agency does not require a significant culture change in as far as it relates to
offender based crime fighting. It does, however, require an evaluation of how an
agency handles information management and a shift toward intelligence-driven
enforcement (Ratcliffe & Guidetti, 2008).

The strength of community policing lies within its ties to the community and its
ability to identify problems. According to the Bureau of Justice (1994), community
policing has two basic components: community partnership and problem solving. By
developing partnerships within the community, law enforcement and relevant
stakeholders can identify problems and develop solutions. Through close collaboration
with the community stakeholders, law enforcement can develop a shared understanding
of their primary mission and goals (Scheider et al., 2009). The benefits of such close
collaboration are an increased legitimacy of governance and improved community
satisfaction with policing services (Ratcliffe, 2011). In short, community policing helps
build trust and goodwill between the police and the community they serve. With that
trust and collaboration, comes an open line of communication useful in the gathering of

intelligence. The primary barometer of community policing's success is the satisfaction of the community.

Much of the problem oriented policing philosophy evolved out of the community policing model. They share an emphasis on a systematic problem solving approach to crime and disorder (Scheider et al., 2009). Problem oriented policing requires police to dig deeper into the causes of crime and disorder within their community. Through the examination of information and data, police can focus on the underlying cause of the problem. By targeting the underlying cause, law enforcement can hope to establish long term solutions to the plagues of that particular area (Ratcliffe, 2011). The problem oriented policing method uses four basic strategies to address problem solving: scanning, analysis, response, and assessment (SARA). *Scanning* is used to identify recurring problems that affect the community (Ratcliffe, 2011). It is also meant to scrutinize the problem closely in order to better define it. An example described by Eck and Spelman (1987) indicated "an incident that typically would be classified as 'robbery' might be seen as a part of a pattern of prostitution-related robberies" (p. 2). This type of analysis can be applied throughout the hierarchy of the policing agency. *Analysis* is the collecting and analysis of all data and information related to the problem. The object of the analysis is to identify the underlying cause of the problem and identify options for its resolution (Eck & Spelman, 1987; Ratcliffe, 2011). The *response* portion of the strategy is designed to identify a range of options to address the problem once it has been identified. The response should be tailored toward the root cause of the problem. The problem solution may require law enforcement to seek the assistance of community agencies and originations not related to criminal justice (Eck & Spelman, 1987; Ratcliffe,

2011). Once the *scanning, analysis,* and *response*, have been implemented, an

assessment should be conducted to evaluate the impact of the efforts on the problem.

If the strategy was not successful, it should be re-evaluated and another approach

sought. The criteria for success of problem oriented policing are its ability to identify

and solve the community's crime problem.

Compstat has been defined as a police managerial mechanism. In this model

of policing, mid-level commanders are held accountable to the executive level staff

within their agency for the crime in the area of their responsibility. The use of detailed

crime intelligence is used to determine an appropriate crime reduction strategy

(Ratcliffe, 2011). Compstat uses a vigorous, targeted enforcement strategy to address

specific crimes, committed by specific offenders, at a specific location. These targets

are chosen based up-to-the-minute evaluation of crime data and crime mapping. In

New York City during the 1990s, compstat was credited with a 65% decrease in the

reported robberies in the subway system (Hoover, 2004).

An examination of the previously mentioned policing theories and models

indicates that law enforcement should adapt a holistic approach to policing. By

integrating the best of these policing strategies, a number of distinct benefits could be

realized. For example, each of the policing models would do well to focus on the needs

of the community and work closely within those partnerships to develop the actionable

intelligence that drives intelligence-led policing. The accountability structures of

compstat could be implemented across the board to enhance effectiveness and ensure

goals are met. The narrow focus of compstat could be extended to address a wide

array of problems and citizens' concerns (Scheider et al., 2009). Problem-oriented

policing can benefit from the intelligence gathering strategies of intelligence-led policing to focus on repeat offenders and problem areas within their community. In short, a holistic approach to policing can be a more efficient use of limited resources.

COUNTER POSITION

When addressing problems associated with intelligence-led policing, Ratcliffe (2011) states, "Some the perceived problems with intelligence led policing lie with the name. Some people have the tendency to associate the word intelligence with negative connotations, suggesting activity that is secretive, subversive and possibly illegal" (p. 7). While the name alone may lead one to envision cold war tactics, intelligence-led policing actually bases its success on actionable intelligence. Carter, Phillips, and Gayadeen (2014) described intelligence-led policing as, "having been built on the best practices of community policing" (p. 434). These practices use information and evidence to help guide strategic decisions. The foundation of intelligence-led policing is the collection of raw intelligence which enables law enforcement managers to have a more enhances view of crime trends and threat before they become crime epidemics (Dannels & Smith, 2012).

Community policing, problem oriented policing, compstat, and intelligence-led policing models have been referred to as targeted or hot spot enforcement. They are often criticized due to the public's perception that increased police presence in their neighborhoods would an adverse overall effect on those living there (Weisburd, Hinkle, Famega, & Ready, 2011). Others might argue they are being targeted simply because of race or other ethnic reasons. While much has been written to support the benefits of a community policing philosophy, some may argue that this method is not without its

detractors. Because community policing is so broadly defined and often developed without clear aims or objectives, it often fails (Ratcliffe, 2011). Jenkins (2016) indicates "little evidence supports the crime prevention benefits of community policing…" (p. 222).

It has been noted when examining the short-comings of problem oriented policing, it often neglects the wants and desires of the community. In general, this policing method does not devote much emphasis on developing partnerships outside law enforcement (Scheider et al., 2009). Compstat's approach to problem solving has been criticized because it does not endeavor to enhance the understanding between the police and local residence (Willis, 2011). Hoover (2004) explains that while compstat proponents do not reject community policing, if given a "choice between quality of life and crime, crime comes first" (p. 3).

However, an examination of the policing models and theories discussed reveals that "targets" are identified or selected based upon the collection of information and intelligence. By implementing the combined tenets of compstat, problem oriented policing and intelligence-led policing, all of whom rely on the collection and application of data, "targets" are fairly and equitably selected without bias. According to Ratcliff (2011), "targeting offenders may be the best way to use our scarce police resources in the most effective way" (p. 63). Given that 6% of the population is responsible for 60% of the crime, it is only natural that these prolific offenders be "targeted" (Ratcliffe, 2011).

RECOMMENDATION

In an attempt to address crime and disorder within their communities, law enforcement should review all of the available policing theories and adopt a holistic philosophy that best fits their needs. These policing philosophies are not, however, a

"one size fits all" solution. Police commanders should examine the strengths and weaknesses of each policing model and integrate the best from each to address the needs of their community. This holistic or unified approach gives the police commander flexible options to disrupt and prevent crime within their area of responsibility.

Much of the service law enforcement provides its citizenry will always be reactive in nature. Traditional models of policing that include routine patrol and reactive response to reported crimes will continue to be a part of any policing model for the foreseeable future. Given that modern research reveals that only 41% of all crimes committed in the United States are reported to law enforcement, police should develop strategies geared toward crime prevention and reduction (Ratcliffe, 2011). With crime prevention and reduction as an emphasis, law enforcement managers should be aware of Ratcliffe's (2011) research that indicates 60% of all crimes are committed by 6% of the population. Armed with that knowledge, and having a defined set of priorities, law enforcement commanders can begin developing strategies.

Using the intelligence-led policing model as a foundation, prolific and persistent offenders can be identified and targeted. This can be accomplished by developing partnerships within the community to help establish intelligence sharing and identifying problems areas. These community partnerships can be established through the use of traditional community policing methods that may also include the use of social medial (Facebook, Twitter, email, tip lines, etc.) to distribute and receive crime related information. Officers conducting routine patrol activities often arrest offenders for minor offenses. These offenders should be interviewed to gather as much intelligence as possible. The intelligence and information gathered from the community and offensives

should be well documented and funneled through a central repository. Ideally, the intelligence and information would be directed to a designated criminal analyst who can then develop actionable intelligence and data. Crime mapping and intelligence can provide law enforcement commanders with the data needed to identify emerging crime trends and problems affecting the community. Once a problem area is identified, commanders can then dedicate resources needed to identify and interrupt that 6% of the population causing 60% of the crime.

While critics may bemoan the targeting of prolific offenders, Ratcliffe (2011) described this strategy as "objective targeting and offender self-selection" (pp.120-121). These criminals are targeted for police attention solely based on intelligence data. While this strategy may be seen as "targeted" or "hotspot" policing by some within the community, by implementing a holistic approach, "targets" are selected without bias. Also while some may argue that intelligence-led policing has a negative connotation, it is based on the collection of information to help guide strategic decisions. Law enforcement should view these policing strategies for their inter-compatibility rather than differences. They should concentrate their resources and efforts towards an intelligence and data driven model of policing that is proactive and preventive by design.

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