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Community Policing  
Transition to a New Style of Policing

A Policy Research Project  
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Richard Weldon Bench

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## **ABSTRACT**

The debate over community policing verses traditional policing as a more efficient means of obtaining law enforcement goals and citizen satisfaction has raged for many years and continues today. The purpose of this paper is to explore whether community policing is a viable law enforcement tool for the Greenville P.D.

Research has shown that the main stays of traditional policing, preventive patrol and rapid response, are not as effective as once thought, and that many Community Policing programs reduce crime or at least citizen's fear of crime. So, even though all policing philosophies have had strengths there are some segments of the law enforcement community that feel Community Policing is superior, mainly because it does three things. First, Community Policing tries to solve problems in the community before the problems escalate into a criminal matter or increase the citizens fear of criminal activity. Second, the community and police form partnerships to fight criminal activity that has occurred or is occurring in their area. And third, Community Policing programs instruct citizens on ways to protect themselves from crime or the fear of crime. There would be no substantial monetary increase for tax payers with Community Policing because it does not actually require additional personnel, it would just require management to use existing personnel more efficiently.

It is suggested that the Department continue its efforts in establishing Community Policing programs or in joining community groups with their programs. It is also suggested that the Department obtain additional training for the officers in the Community Policing philosophy and to change the current evaluation procedures to reflect the officers dedication to the Community Policing program.

**RESERVE**

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## Introduction

The Twentieth Century has brought about numerous technological advances that have improved the quality of life for all of us. Three major inventions that law enforcement has used are the automobile, the telephone, and the two-way radio. The telephone allows citizens to call the police immediately for assistance. The police dispatcher then dispatches the officers by two-way radio and the police respond quickly because they are already near by in a patrol car. There is some question as to whether this procedure helps to reduce crime and alleviate citizens fears.

Studies have shown that traditional policing has not worked well to reduce crime or to make citizens feel safer. Many agencies have now developed programs referred to as Community Policing. In this style of policing, agencies try to work with citizens and citizen groups to encourage collaboration of ideals to prevent crimes before they occur. Communities need to be proactive and solve problems before they get worse or become criminal offenses.

The purpose of this policy research project is to look at available information to see if Community Policing is a better policy, and whether it reduces crime and lowers the level of fear among citizens.

One problem is that some officers and departments are opposed to the new policing method. They prefer the old methods of policing where civilians did not interfere with police procedure. Another problem is that some citizens feel that policing is not their responsibility. That's why they have police.

The intended audience of this policy research paper is all citizens, whether they are

law enforcement officers, or civilians. All of us, police or civilian, are members of the community. All of our families work and play in the community so we have a obligation to help solve the communities problems.

The intended outcome of this project is to provide information on possible Community Policing programs to be implemented by our department. Then, once these programs are in place, to find ways to encourage both police officers and citizens to work together in a community partnership to make the programs work.

Different types of information will be used to research the topic of Community Policing. This information will be located in books, professional journals, magazines and by contacting people who have already started these programs in their communities. This information should show our Department if Community Policing is the way we should be going, or at least which parts of it we wish to incorporate into daily use to reduce crime and fear in our community.

## **Historical**

Experience is learning, even for professions like law enforcement, and police departments continue to look at the past to plan for the future. By looking at the past law enforcement can see, to an extent, what has worked and what hasn't worked in reducing crime and fear of crime in a community. This cannot be a exact science because no two communities are alike and no two departments are operated the same way (Kelling (e), 1988).

The political era of policing in the United States began in the 1840's and went into the early 1900's. It was called the political era because police departments were

controlled to the most part by politicians (Hartmann, 1988). The politicians appointed the officers and provided them with whatever they needed to do their jobs. This was a two way relationship because the police then took care of whatever the controlling politician needed done. The police might "encourage" people to vote for the politician who placed them in their job, or not vote for their opponent. The police were known to even help rig elections to keep their boss in power (Kelling (e), 1988). The larger cities were split up into precincts with each precinct being run by a precinct level manager. This manager, of course, was controlled by the ward boss or politician. The precinct manager ran his office as a independent department from the rest of the police agency. He could hire, fire, promote, or make assignments as he saw fit. Officers were assigned foot patrol in different sections or "beats", and that's where the officer stayed. The officers main duty was to control the area by maintaining order among the citizens. He mediated disputes among citizens, disciplined the neighborhood kids, enforced the illegal sale of alcohol, and enforced the laws against prostitution. Arrests were rare for any offense, even the most serious. If a officer needed to make an arrest he often waited for another officer to arrive and then they had to struggle with the arrested subject all the way to the station house where he was incarcerated. When technology improved the police got call boxes. When this happened the officer could arrest the subject and call the station for a "paddy wagon" to come pick up the arrested person. Because of the lack of communication and lack of supervision most officers were more or less independent agents who walked their beat and took care of whatever needed to be done (Kelling (a), 1988). Whenever the automobile became available to the police

departments they were used to carry the officers to their beats, but the officers continued to walk their beat and perform as usual. Political policing had strengths and weaknesses. Part of the strength was that the officers were part of the community they worked in. They knew the people and for the most part were supported by them. By working in the same area at all times the officer knew what was normal and when something or someone was suspicious (Kelling (e), 1988).

The next policing style in America was called traditional policing which went from about the 1930's to the 1970's. Traditional policing was seen as an improvement over political policing because of the political control and widespread corruption that had been in law enforcement (Brown, 1989). In this new style of policing officers became more distant from the public or professionally neutral. They became impartial enforcers of the law (Kelling (e), 1988). In addition to having more automobiles, the police now had two way radios and telephones. This allowed more crimes to be reported and to be reported quickly where before people sometimes waited days, if ever, to tell the police something had happened. Now the citizens called the police department to report a crime and the dispatcher would dispatch an officer by radio to where he was needed. Pioneers in law enforcement like O.W. Wilson came up with police tactics like preventive patrol and rapid response to calls. Preventive patrol is where the officer drove around in his district watching for any criminal activity and waiting for dispatch to give him a call. When an officer received a call on the radio he would then get to the call location as quickly as possible (Kelling (c), 1988). As reform continued in the police profession, the occupation was reduced to law enforcement. The success of a police

department was measured by the number of arrests made and the number of cases cleared (Kelling (g), 1993).

Before the 1970's law enforcement was based mainly on tradition. Procedures were passed down and officers continued to do things the same as always. Then some future thinking progressive officers began to do research on new programs and to evaluate how things had been done in the past. This began to change the future of law enforcement (Kelling (c),1988). Whether it was called Community Policing, problem-oriented policing, or by any other name a new philosophy was being formed to better serve the community the officers worked in (Meese III,1993). Progressive managers felt that the traditional preventive patrol and rapid response were not working as well as once thought. Maybe the future of the police profession was solving the problems in the community that caused crime, forming partnerships with the citizens in the community to fight crime, and teaching the public safety tips, and ways to better protect themselves from crime (Moore (b), 1988).

### **Review of Literature or Practice**

Herman Goldstein, while working with the Chicago Police Department, noticed that there were repeated calls for service at certain locations (Strecher,1971). These calls may have been family violence type situations, loud music or parties, neighborhood disputes or whatever. No matter what the type of call the police still had to respond and this affected the department in having officers tied up on the same calls over and over. It also cost the citizens in extra monies spent and by not having the officers available to work on other problems that might affect the entire community.



Once Goldstein had identified this problem and felt that it was a significant problem for the community and the department, he developed a style of policing that became known as problem-oriented policing (Strecher, 1971).

Studies and statistics over the years have shown that Herman Goldstein was exactly right in his observation. We now know that over sixty percent of the police calls for service come from less than ten percent of the total call for service locations (Kelling (b), 1988). This information or data comes from reviewing departmental records of dispatch information. This information is usually a better way to identify the existence of crime or crime related areas since it doesn't just deal with arrests, or reported crimes (Weisburd, 1996). Another thing we learned from reviewing departmental records is that most officers usually spend less than twenty percent of their time on crime related calls even though most officers feel they are "fighting crime" most of their time (Kelling (c), 1988).

There have been several experiments or research programs done by law enforcement agencies to see both what works or what doesn't work as far as reducing crime or lowering the fear of crime in our communities. One of the first was done in Kansas City and took a look at the practice of preventive patrol. In this experiment the Kansas City Police increased their patrol activity in some areas, in some areas the patrol activity was decreased, and in others the patrol activity remained normal. At the end of the experiment the Kansas City Police learned that no matter what the level of patrol, some things did not change. Rates of victimization or reported crime, levels of citizen satisfaction, and citizens fear of crime did not differ in the three areas. Basically

the citizens in Kansas City did not know what the level of police activity was in their areas (Kelling ( c) 1988).

Another study done by the Kansas City Police took a look at rapid response to calls (Moore (a) 1988). The ideal is that officers in cars in a particular area could get to a reported offense quicker and maybe increase their chance of arresting the actor. This study showed that the response time of officers to a reported offense did not increase the probability of making an arrest. This makes sense because once the crime is committed the actor leaves. The victim or someone else has to call it in, dispatch must send an officer, and it takes the officer awhile, even if only a few minutes to get there. Other studies have shown that what is more important to whether a crime is solved is the information given to the police during the investigation by the victim and witnesses. Or in other words, information received from the citizens who live and work in the community (Moore (a) 1988).

Later, during the 1970's two agencies, Newark, New Jersey and Flint, Michigan both did studies on the use of foot patrol by police officers. The two studies showed basically the same results. With foot patrol in an area the citizens fear of crime was reduced. When the foot patrol was removed the citizens fear of crime went back up. The foot patrol gave officers an opportunity to actually meet people in the area they patrolled. The departments found that officers on foot patrol had better morale and increased job satisfaction than officers who patrolled in cars. Another benefit that Flint reported was a forty percent reduction in crime, even though Newark reported no reduction in crime (Kelling (a), 1988).

The studies by the Kansas City police showed that neither preventive patrol or rapid response were as important as once thought, even though they were two of the main parts of our current policing philosophy. After these findings a lot of police in different agencies began thinking and trying to figure out what, if anything, might work better than what they were doing to reduce crime and the fear of crime in their communities. Over the years several programs were developed and implemented by different agencies and with these programs came a different set of problems.

Many chiefs directed their departments to begin community policing (Sparrow, 1988). The chiefs did not give their officers training on what Community Policing is, or what they wanted done. This action, or lack of action, by the chief executive officer of a department would cause considerable confusion for all employees (Sparrow, 1988). Another problem that some chiefs had was not including their middle management in planning and decision making when trying to implement a Community Policing program. Instead of using the ideals and creativity of ranking officers, and acknowledging their interests, the chief fostered resentment and in some cases mid management actively tried to sabotage the chiefs plans (Kelling (g), 1993).

Once a chief does adopt the philosophy of Community Policing the rules change for everyone. The officer must learn to identify problems in his patrol district. He must then be creative and imaginative to find different ways to solve those problems. This is a new style of policing for most officers who have always been instructed by policy and procedure on what to do and how to do it when responding to their calls (Meese III, 1993). Police officers have found that the best source of information to learn about

problems in the community is by meeting and talking with the people in the area (Kelling (f), 1988). This includes everyone since neighborhoods are not just made up of residents of a certain geographical location, but include anyone who might work there are just come to that area to shop, or just hang out on the street like the homeless. The citizens contacted often have creative ideas on how to improve conditions or solve crime problems, and the citizens are going to be either the support of or the antagonist of the department (Kelling (f), 1988).

All the divisions in a department, including the detective division must adapt to this new style of policing and work more closely with patrol officers in the field in an attempt to solve the communities problems (Sparrow, 1988). All officers in all divisions should be educated in the Community Policing philosophy because research has shown that police officers who are better educated tend to be more creative in solving problems because they tend to be less rigid than other officers (Lysakowski, 1998).

When officers, both patrol and other divisions, began working together on Community Policing they should be kept informed of anything that will assist them in the community. This might be information about resources they could use to solve problems, municipal governments changes in ordinances, information on health concerns, education opportunities, or anything else that would be beneficial to them (Meese III, 1993).

Some evidence suggests that door-to-door surveys by police officers are enough by themselves to reduce crime and fear and enhance citizen attitudes toward police, independent of any information they gain or what police do with it (LaVigne,

1993). When citizens are asked about the things that frighten them, there is little talk about real crimes such as robbery, rape, and murder. More often there is talk about other signs of physical decay and social disorganization such as junk and trash in vacant lots, boarded-up buildings, stripped and abandoned cars, bands of teenagers congregating on street corners, street prostitution, panhandling, public drinking, verbal harassment of women, open gambling and drug use, and other incivilities (Moore (a), 1988).

Studies were done on the fear of crime and it was found that the people who are the most fearful of crime, elderly women, are the least victimized while the ones who are least fearful, young males, are the most victimized. It has also been found that people who have heard the horror stories of crime are almost as fearful of crime as those who have been the victim of a crime (Moore (a), 1988).

Because neighborhoods vary in the nature of their problems and in their capacity for self-help (their ecology of self-defense), police tactics must be tailored to specific neighborhoods (Kelling (d), 1989). An approach to making neighborhoods safe and residents less fearful is a environmental approach. Examples include redesigning street to make them one way or to turn them into cul-de-sacs, adding street lights, or designing buildings in ways that make it possible for residents to keep an eye on the neighborhood (Sherman, 1988). With community policing, shift and beat assignments for the officers can be on a more permanent, rather than a rotating, basis. This allows the beat officer to become and integral part of the community that he has been assigned to protect (Brown, 1989).

Community Policing programs can also be incorporated into the schools. When this has been done there have been very positive reactions from school staff, teachers, students, and parents with respect to having officers in the schools in such programs as DARE or just as Student Services Officers (Carter, 1998).

Community Policing must also address alcohol and drug abuse when dealing with crime and fear of crime since statistics show that many crimes are related to the use of alcohol or drugs. Research shows that many crimes are committed by abusers of alcohol or drugs, or the actor has used alcohol or drugs just before he committed his crime. It is also fairly common for the victim of a crime to be intoxicated, either on alcohol or drugs, which makes him a good victim (Moore (b), 1988). Police and citizens involved in Community Policing should work with any group that works to educate and rehabilitate persons with drug or alcohol problems (Sadd, 1996).

Some of the programs used by communities to fight crime don't cost anything more than thought by the citizens or officers. Since Community Policing is an operating style and not a new program, no additional officers are needed (Brown, 1989). The federal government however has passed legislation referred to as COPS and then COPS II. These initiatives help communities who might not be able to otherwise afford to hire and train additional officers to work in their communities (Voegtlin, 1999).

Something else departments can do to free up officer time is use alternative reporting procedures. On most calls, of a non-emergency nature, citizens are just as happy with an alternate response to the call, such as reporting it on the phone, or a

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delayed response by the police, if the alternative and the need for it or explained to them (Kelling (c), 1988).

### **Discussion of Relevant Issues**

Research has shown that Community Policing normally comes about in two parts. The first part is when the police and community form partnerships to start programs they hope will reduce crime or the fear of crime. The second part is when the police department changes its mission statement and operational philosophy to include Community Policing as its predominant style by all officers and divisions in the department (Brown, 1989).

The Department must do several things which may present difficulties for some officers, especially those who have been in law enforcement for many years and are programed in the way they do things now. The Chief must work with his management staff to work out and implement the program. When the Chief issues the policy implementing Community Policing it must be clearly understood by all officers. Each officer in the Department must understand how the new procedure affects him and what his new responsibilities to the public are. Each officer, no matter which division he is in, must be able to begin working on identifying and solving the problems that affect the community as he sees fit. When the officer is empowered with this type of authority the Department must ensure that officers are accountable for their actions. There are people who feel that giving officers too much freedom could lead to the type of corruption that was common during the political era of policing (Kelling (f), 1988).



Supervisors must be able to let the officers work with little supervision to be creative and make their own decisions as to what works best, or what won't work . By letting the officers fail, they can learn. Then by having the officers communicate with each other everyone can learn without making the same mistakes. The departmental evaluations will need to be reworked to include sections relating to problem solving and community issues instead of depending as much on enforcement issues.

The officers in the Department will also have to start finding time in their work day to spend talking with citizens in the community in an attempt to discover and solve the problems that the people in their district are facing. The officers will have to learn what resources are available to work with, which agencies they can call to get certain things done, and which business, civic, or community groups they can count on for support.

The Department must continue to work with the community programs that have been started and try to find a way to get and keep citizens interested so they will remain involved. The Department should attempt to get the people in the different groups to work together, since they are all trying to accomplish the same goal of reducing crime or the fear of crime in the community. One way this could be accomplished is to form a central committee which is comprised of a member from each program. This committee would meet and discuss problems identified by their group and learn, from others in the committee, alternative ways those problems might be solved. By forming this committee a dialog may be started that might later lead to cooperation and a working relation between groups.



The cost of implementing a Community Policing philosophy is minimal when compared to the benefits returned in community cooperation and trust. Interaction between departmental officers and the public is necessary in reducing crime and the fear of crime in the community. Any additional officer training can be accomplished without much or any increase to the training budget.

### **Conclusion/Recommendations**

The Greenville Police Department has been in the forefront of change and improvement for years. The Department has implemented and continues to sustain several programs that are geared towards the Community Policing philosophy. Some of these programs were started by the Department and others were community programs that the Department joined. It appears they are working fairly well and there is cooperation between everyone involved, both police and civilians, in the individual programs. What is needed now is a concerted effort get citizens in the different programs to work together. When we have ten to twenty groups working independently it lowers the efficiency of the projects. Everyone is or should be working towards the same goal of reducing crime, the fear of crime, and making the community a safer place to live and work.

The Department conducts more training than is required by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Standards and Education. This is beneficial to the individual officer in performing his job, for the Department which retains better employees, and an asset for the community that receives the best service it can for the cost it provides. What is proposed is to continue the training of each officer in the

Department towards the Community Policing philosophy. We must overcome the notion that Community Policing is a "feel good" program that stresses programs over enforcement. There will always be enforcement of our laws and there is some information that shows the programs discussed reduce crime, there is also other information that shows no reduction in crime. Either way the dominant feeling is it does reduce the fear of crime and that may be as important to our citizens as actually reducing crime itself.

It is recommended that the Department continue building on the positive results it has obtained from the Community Policing programs, and to continue working with the community in other creative ways. These programs are positive in that they encourage citizens to participate with police in solving problems. By solving problems in the community there may be a reduction in crime, or a reduction in the fear of crime among citizens who live and work there. It is also recommended that officers continued to be trained in the Community Policing philosophy. Officers should be encouraged, with community help, to identify problems in their district and then use whatever resources available to solve those problems. The final, and most important, thing is the Chief must provide strong leadership to show that the Department is committed to Community Policing.

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