

COMMUNITY **POLICING**

A Contemporary Perspective

Victor E. Kappeler / Larry K. Gaines



Sixth Edition

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Victor E. **KAPPELER**

Eastern Kentucky University

Larry K. **GAINES**

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COMMUNITY POLICING

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The legitimate object of government is to do for a community of people whatever they need to have done, but cannot do at all, or cannot so well do for themselves, in their separate and individual capacities.

—Abraham Lincoln

CHAPTER 1 The Idea of Community Policing

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading the chapter, you should be able to:

1. Discuss the ways in which the community impacts the police mandate when a department has implemented community policing.
2. Describe why community policing encourages decentralized police service and changes in patrol.
3. Discuss the sources of confusion surrounding the implementation of community policing.
4. List and describe the four major facets of community policing.
5. Understand why community policing is an overarching philosophy, not a technique.
6. Discuss how community policing entails the use of discretion and working with other agencies to find other means of dealing with problematic situations.
7. List and discuss what community policing does NOT constitute.
8. Discuss how community policing is sometimes used as a cover for aggressive police tactics.
9. Describe how community policing affects officer activity.

The Community Policing Revolution

Community policing is the first substantive reform in the American police institution since it embraced the professional model nearly a century ago. It is a dramatic change in the philosophy that determines the way police agencies engage the public. It incorporates a philosophy that broadens the police mission from a narrow focus on crime and law enforcement to a mandate encouraging the exploration of creative solutions for a host of community concerns—including crime, fear of crime, perceptions of disorder, quality of life, and neighborhood

conditions. Community policing, in its ideal form, not only addresses community concerns, but it is a philosophy that turns traditional policing on its head by empowering the community rather than dictating to the community. In this sense, policing derives its role and agenda from the community rather than dictating to the community. Community policing rests on the belief that only by working together with people will the police be able to improve quality of life. This implies that the police must assume new roles and go about their business in a very different way. In addition to being law enforcers, they must also serve as advisors, facilitators, supporters, and leaders of new community-based initiatives. The police must begin to see themselves as part of the community rather than separate from the community. In its ideal form, community policing is a grassroots form of participation, rather than a representative top-down approach to addressing contemporary community life. In this sense, police become active participants in a process that changes power configurations in communities. It empowers the police to bring real-life problems of communities to those governmental authorities with the capacity to develop meaningful public policy and provide needed services to their communities (see Reisig & Parks, 2004).

Community policing consists of two primary components: community partnerships and problem solving. It is a partnership or enhanced relationship between the police and the community they serve. It is a partnership in that the police must assist people with a multitude of problems and social conditions including crime, and it is a partnership because the police must solicit support and active participation in dealing with these problems (Wood & Bradley, 2009). It is an enhanced relationship, since the police must deal with substantive issues. They must go beyond merely responding to crime and calls for service. They must recognize and treat the causes of these problems so that they are resolved. When problems are resolved, there is a higher level of civility and tranquility in a community. Thus, the two primary components of community policing are community partnerships and problem solving. **Community partnerships** are the engagement by the police with the community to cooperatively resolve community problems. On the other hand, **problem solving** is where community policing officers (CPOs) attempt to deal with the conditions that cause crime and negatively affect the quality of life in a community. Problem solving is an important part of community policing.

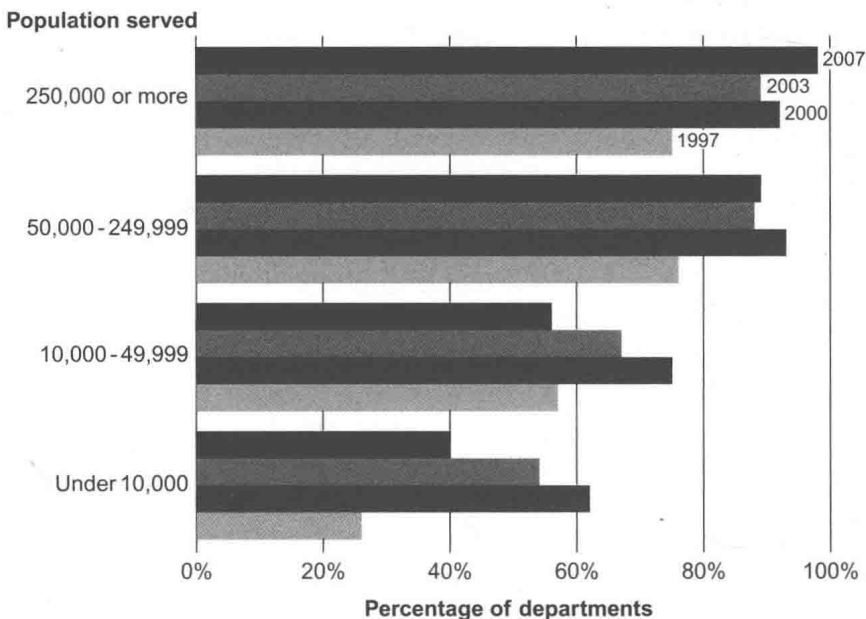
Community policing also embodies an **organizational strategy** that allows police departments to decentralize service and reorient patrol (Skogan & Hartnett, 1997). The focus is on the police officer who works closely with people and their problems. This CPO has responsibility for a specific beat or geographical area, and works as a generalist who considers making arrests as only one of many viable tools, if only temporarily, to address community problems. As the

community's conduit for positive change, the CPO enlists people in the process of policing and improving the quality of life in a community. The CPO serves as the community's ombudsman to other public and private agencies that can offer help. If police officers are given stable assignments to geographical areas, they are able not only to focus on current problems, but also to become directly involved in strategies that may forestall long-range problems. Also, by giving people the power to set local police agendas, community policing challenges both police officers and community members to cooperate in finding new and creative ways to accurately identify and solve problems in their communities.

What started as an experiment using foot patrols (Trojanowicz, 1982) and problem solving in a few departments (Goldstein, 1990) exploded into a national mandate. As a result of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 and its provision to fund 100,000 more CPOs, most police departments in the United States now say they ascribe to community policing. In the 1990s, community policing became an institutionalized and publicly understood form of policing (Morabito, 2010; NIJ, 1997; Gallup, 1996). In 2010, Reaves (2010) reported that 53 percent of police departments have community policing as part of their mission statements. As shown in Table 1.1,

Table 1.1

Local Police Departments Using Full-Time Community Policing Officers, by Size of Population Served, 1997–2007



community policing has become an important part of policing in all but the smallest police departments.

Even the media presented a limited but very positive depiction of community policing (Mastrofski & Ritti, 1999; Chermak & Weiss, 2006). "Community policing, or variations of it, has become the national mantra of American policing. Throughout the United States, the language, symbolism, and programs of community policing have sprung up in urban, suburban, and even rural police departments" (Greene, 2000:301). Additionally, community policing became a standard in many other countries. Police departments all over the world embraced the language of community policing. It has become ingrained throughout departments as managers attempt to develop strategies and tactics to deal with day-to-day issues and community problems.

Despite this impressive progress, many people, both inside and outside police departments, do not know precisely what "community policing" is and what it can do (Chappell, 2009). Although most everyone has heard of community policing, and most police departments say that they have adopted the philosophy, few actually understand how it works and the possibilities it has for police agencies and communities. Indeed, it is viewed from a number of different perspectives. Is community policing simply a new name for police-community relations? Is it foot patrol? Is it crime prevention? Is it problem solving? Is it a political gimmick, a fad, or a promising trend, or is it a successful new way of policing? Perhaps David Bayley (1988:225) best summarized the confusion about community policing:

Despite the benefits claimed for community policing, programmatic implementation of it has been very uneven. Although widely, almost universally, said to be important, it means different things to different people—public relations campaigns, shop fronts, and mini-stations, re-scaled patrol beats, liaisons with ethnic groups, permission for rank-and-file to speak to the press, Neighborhood Watch, foot patrols, patrol-detective teams, and door-to-door visits by police officers. Community policing on the ground often seems less a program than a set of aspirations wrapped in a slogan.

There is substantial confusion surrounding community policing (Colvin & Goh, 2006). It stems from a variety of factors that, if not attended to, can undermine a department's efforts to successfully implement community policing. The sources of confusion are: