Community Policing in America

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Abstract

Community Policing dates to the 1950s as a new way of policing. Community policing is a key aspect to any police department, in fact it is essential and necessary for police to engage in their communities in a positive light, as to minimize the disassociation that a department can have with its community and vice versa. A community needs to and must be able to entrust its local police, many communities in rural and small towns across America do, however the same cannot be said for larger and urban environments such as cities. This paper will examine the crux of community policing, out-reach programs, partnering with local businesses, shared problem solving, etc. Police must interact with communities in order to upkeep the relationship, less militarization and more communication is key. The standard of community policing must be the same throughout the country in effect to keep the community safe. Police must undergo more training for things such as mental health and communication, things such as escalation tactics, no more shoot first and ask questions later. Mechanisms such as coupling and default to truth theory present in Gladwell's "Talking to Strangers", Mechanisms such as Police accountability and oversight is important as ever in the current state of policing.

Goals

The goals in this presentation are to shine a light on community policing and what it can do for a community in a way that can help both the citizens, and police better understand one another in a community. These ideals can also stop crime and or violence in certain situations, such as mental health issues, domestic situations, etc. Policing should be more proactive within a community, to better understand and to work with that specific community.

Other notes

Mechanisms from books like "Talking to Strangers" by Malcolm Gladwell mention important points. Mechanisms like coupling, which is the idea that behaviors are linked to a specific set of circumstances in a community. This subject to the fact that police view crime in a specific way, their job is to enforce that law or to help that community understand that law.

Studies

In Spokane, Washington a study was conducted involving "COPY kids" a policing program in 1992 with three goals in mind. The first was to detect a correlation between a community project and financial reward, the second was to give these kids an ideal role model, and finally to "broaden the socioeconomic horizons of youths." Many of the kids used in this program were from socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. The police initially wore street clothes so the kids would not feel intimidated. They would clean yards, remove graffiti, etc. The children would not find out they were police until later in the program. The results of the study showed an improvement of relationships between the kids and the officers, the kids also expressed interest in policing, and would attend the program again. Out of the 300 kids involved all said "yes" to recommending the program.

In 1994 the 1994 Violent Crime Act was passed to better increase community policing; this was created to further the betterment for both the community and its police. Though there has been no empirical research nationally to correlate the effectiveness of community policing and violent crime. This study was conducted to research 164 cities in the United States with populations of over 100,000. The study found that community policing had a positive effect on crime rates declining.

The "COPY Kids" resulted in a tighter knit community for the time, during a survey out of the 47 of the 50 parents that conducted the survey, 47 agreed it was a good experience for their child, and that they seemed to be harder workers, learned respect and would recommend this program to another family.

The study conducted in "COMMUNITY POLICING AND URBAN VIOLENCE" Found a correlation with more aggressive tactics of community policing in larger urban environments that a community in fact benefited from these methods. Quote "The results also confirm earlier research and note the importance of proactive policing as an effective law enforcement method of controlling violent crime." This means that community policing in a nutshell can be understood as proactive policing, interacting with the community to either enforce the law, or to educate those in that community about it.

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TABLE 3: Regression of Violence Measures on Police Department and City-Level Factors, 1993 to 1994 (unstandardized coefficients) ($N = 164$)

Variable	Robbery[a]		Homicide[a]	
Aggressive enforcement	−0.04**	(−3.22)	−0.04**	(−2.41)
Special units	0.01	(0.85)	0.01	(0.92)
Residency	−0.09	(−0.81)	−0.09	(−0.69)
College	0.02	(0.09)	−0.26	(−1.01)
Police per capita	0.00	(0.33)	−0.00	(−1.43)
Administrator to field officer ratio	−0.48	(−0.67)	−0.38	(−0.46)
Percentage of divorced males[a]	0.06	(0.31)	−0.04	(−0.17)
Percentage of female head of household[a]	1.81**	(9.53)	2.44**	(11.21)
Population[a]	0.15**	(2.66)	0.20**	(2.95)
Density[a]	0.08	(1.28)	−0.18**	(−2.54)
Percentage of 18- to 24-year-olds[a]	0.10	(0.48)	−0.25	(−1.03)
Gini	−1.10	(−1.00)	−0.74	(−0.59)
Intercept	−2.07***		−4.48**	
R^2	0.73		0.70	

NOTE: t values in parentheses.
a. Natural log transformation.
**$p < .05$. ***$p < .10$.

TABLE 4: Regression of Violence Measures on Police Department and City-Level Factors, 1997 to 1998 (unstandardized coefficients) ($N = 164$)

Variable	Robbery[a]		Homicide[a]	
Aggressive enforcement	−0.03**	(−1.95)	−0.02	(−1.32)
Special units	0.008	(0.67)	−0.01	(−1.08)
Community policing	0.19**	(2.46)	0.13	(1.48)
Community-oriented policing/ problem solving	0.002	(0.20)	0.01	(0.68)
Residency	−0.02	(−0.29)	−0.14	(−1.25)
College	0.04	(0.40)	−0.09	(−0.68)
Police per capita	.00	(1.00)	−0.00	(−0.64)
Administrator to field officer ratio	−0.49	(−0.74)	0.32	(0.40)
Percentage of divorced males[a]	0.21	(1.19)	0.39***	(1.81)
Percentage of female head of household[a]	1.60**	(9.65)	2.20**	(10.70)
Population[a]	0.09**	(1.97)	0.18**	(3.08)
Density[a]	.04	(0.77)	−0.22*	(−3.40)
Percentage of 18- to 24-year-old[a]	0.06	(0.34)	−0.21	(−0.93)
Gini	−0.30	(−0.31)	−0.46	(−0.38)
Intercept	−1.48		−4.86*	
R^2	0.74		0.70	

NOTE: t values in parentheses.
a. Natural log transformation.
**$p < .05$. ***$p < .10$.

Conclusion

The relationship between police and its community is extremely important. That cannot be understated, with current events and police shootings, the damage done to community policing is damaged. These articles shine a positive light on what community policing is capable of. From negating violent crime, to helping a community interact with its police in a public space like in "COPY Kids" the police are there to help and to work on bettering the community they work in, and to keep it safe.

References

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