

COMMUNITY POLICE

AND

THE CHALLENGE
OF DIVERSITY

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Robert Trojanowicz
Director

National Center for Community Policing

Bonnie Bucqueroux
Associate Director

National Center for Community Policing

**National Center for Community Policing
School of Criminal Justice
Michigan State University**

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INTRODUCTION

Demographic change

Affirmative action. Reverse discrimination. Quotas. Race norming. Equal opportunity. Civil rights. Bias/hate crimes. These emotionally charged words highlight the challenge inherent in promoting a colorblind society in an era of heightened race consciousness.

The United States in the 1990s is a society in flux, hurtling toward a future where whites of European descent will no longer dominate the culture by their sheer numbers as they have in the past. As white Baby Boomers begin to grow gray, we already see that the average age of all Americans is 32, while the average age of blacks is 27 and Hispanics 23.¹ By 2010, a majority of the children in California, Florida, Louisiana, New Mexico, New York, and Texas will be of color.² In less than 100 years, the growing number of blacks, Hispanics, and Asians will together comprise the new majority nationwide.³

In addition to disparities in birth rates among the indigenous races in the United States, the trend toward greater racial and ethnic diversity is also accelerated by the effects of legal and illegal immigration. Since 1980, only 12% of all legal immigrants have been of European descent. In contrast, almost half of all legal immigrants have been Asians, and the legal and illegal immigration of Hispanics currently makes them the second largest minority behind blacks.⁴

These changes are already challenging the image of the United States as the great melting pot, a country where people of all creeds and colors ultimately come to identify themselves as "American." While that view may have always been more myth than reality, the question today is whether assimilation is a viable or even a desirable goal, or whether appreciation of diversity provides a better model.

Optimists see diversity as the opportunity to create "a beautiful mosaic,"⁵ where disparate groups enrich the culture with their unique contributions, in a spirit of mutual tolerance and respect. Pessimists instead point to ethnic and racial clashes around the world as evidence of the danger in an ethos that dwells on differences rather than similarities.

The increasing diversity in American society adds new urgency to the debate concerning what it means to be an American. For most of our country's history, mainstream culture was epitomized by the image of the traditional, middle-class, white family, where Dad went to work, while Mom

stayed home with the kids. Now that such families are in the minority, how do we see ourselves?

In addition to raising questions about our national identity, increasing diversity also raises questions about how we define American "values" and "morality." Many strongly held traditional beliefs derive from Judeo-Christian traditions, blended with faith in the intrinsic virtues of family and the American dream of the United States as a meritocracy where those who are willing to work hard will succeed. Can this model encompass the experience of the growing number of Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists among us? Does it reflect sufficient sensitivity to the concerns of people of color, women, and gays? Which aspects of these traditions are essential to our national identity—and which instead reflect intentional or unintentional bias?

As Joseph Darden of Michigan State University explains, both race and gender inspire a greater degree of prejudice and discrimination than other kinds of differences, because they are perceived as differences in kind, not just differences in degree. As he points out, the difference between rich and poor is a simple matter of degree—the measure is money and the poor person can become rich by acquiring more. But the differences between men and women and between whites and people of color are perceived as fundamental and immutable.⁶

This helps to explain why the new Afro-centric movement, which focuses on the contributions that Africa has made to civilization, sparks such controversy. Proponents view Afro-centrist education as a way of redressing the past where history was filtered through European eyes and also as a means of instilling self-esteem in black youth. Yet many of those who agree with the Afro-centrists that schools, colleges, and universities often erred in stressing the contributions of white, Anglo-Saxons, while downplaying their abuse of others, argue that Afro-centrism is as narrow, misguided, and misleading now as Euro-centrism was then, and that two wrongs can never make a right.

Of concern as well is whether Afro-centrism fosters a "victim" mentality, by unduly stressing or exaggerating the sins of whites as the "oppressor." Some argue that even when discrimination ends, the pathological attractions of the victim mentality can prevent people from taking full advantage of new freedoms.

Now that the Afro-centrist movement has expanded beyond private academies into public schools in cities like Detroit and Milwaukee, it is likely to generate more comment and controversy. The bi-partisan effort to promote

increased choice in schools through voucher programs is also likely to encourage more schools near primarily black inner-city areas to adopt the Afrocentrist approach.

Economic change

The debate about diversity and multiculturalism goes beyond philosophic concerns; it also relates to the practical issues of power, class, and opportunity, since these startling demographic changes are taking place against a panorama of dramatic economic changes whose collective impact has not yet been fully understood. On the international front, the United States now finds itself competing in a global economy. Instead of dominating world markets as it has in the past, the U.S. must contend with the economic threat of technologically advanced economies such as those of Japan and West Germany, as well the ability of underdeveloped countries to lure away jobs by offering cheap labor.

On the domestic front, the United States is in the process of making a wrenching shift from a manufacturing and industrial economy to a service economy. One disturbing aspect of this change is that the new service jobs being created pay less than the manufacturing jobs that are being lost. The shift also contributes to the obvious decline of union strength and power. In addition, workers find that they now need more and better education to compete in the job market, and that even lower-paying jobs now demand superior skills.

Of particular concern as well is the apparent growing gap between rich and poor. An analysis of Congressional Budget Office data by Robert S. McIntyre of Citizens for Tax Justice shows that the average income of the poorest fifth in our society fell 13% since 1977 (adjusted for inflation)—at the same time the inflation-adjusted income for the top 1% more than doubled.⁷

The squeeze on the middle class is a particular concern. According to McIntyre's analysis, since 1980, the middle class finds itself paying more in taxes, while receiving fewer direct government services in exchange. Again using CBO figures, the middle class (the one fifth earning roughly \$32,000 a year) now spends \$280 more each year in taxes, while the poorest of the poor and the richest of the rich spend less in taxes than before.⁸

At the same time, the federal government now spends more only on defense and Social Security (when adjusted for inflation). Since 1980, spending for programs in criminal justice dropped 42%; welfare and

unemployment down 21%; education and training down 40%; roads and transportation down 32%. According to McIntyre, the typical family now receives \$1,260 less in benefits each year.⁹

"The combination of the tax and income shifts in favor of the wealthy caused the share of total after-tax income going to the richest 2% of Americans to jump from 7.3 to 13.4% of the total—an increase of 84%. Meanwhile, the share of after-tax income fell for every other groups except the best-off 5%."¹⁰

A new study released by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies also shows that the United States has done less during the past decade to narrow the gap between rich and poor when compared to other Western nations. The chart below shows the percentage of households classified as "very poor" (defined as those with incomes less than 40% of the national median).¹¹

	All families with children	All single-parent families w/children
United States	17.5%	44.9%
Canada	9.3%	29.4%
Britain	8.6%	7.7%
West Germany	3.1%	12.5%
Netherlands	3.9%	5.1%
France	5.3%	10.7%
Sweden	2.9%	3.6%

Since minorities are significantly overrepresented among the poor—and significantly underrepresented among the rich—this erosion of income among the lower socioeconomic classes has obvious racial implications. *Washington Post* reporter Thomas Edsall, co-author of *Chain Reaction*, explains that economics and race are often intertwined in ways that may not be evident at first glance. For example, Edsall notes that, by 1980, more than half of all blacks in managerial positions worked in federal, state, or local government, compared to only 27.5% of whites.¹² This disparity quite obviously raises concerns about the effectiveness of affirmative action in the private sector. But it also helps to explain why a politician's campaign promise to reduce the size of government may send a different message to blacks than it does to whites.

Possible correlations between race and poverty and crime are also subject to varying interpretations, and there is grave danger in mistaking correlation for cause and effect. No one disputes that discrimination remains an obvious

barrier that prevents blacks and other minorities from enjoying full participation in economic opportunities, but whites and minorities typically disagree about the amount and severity of discrimination that minorities face. Is this merely a situation where one group looks at the glass and calls it half empty, while the other sees it as half full? Or is misunderstanding between the races a virtually unbridgeable gap?

As this suggests, race is such a sensitive issue that many find it easier and safer not to comment, particularly if they are white. Many remember that Daniel Patrick Moynihan, a Nixon adviser and now a Democratic senator, was attacked for "blaming the victim" when he published a report on the black family that discussed various dynamics that Moynihan viewed as part of the reason that blacks tend to fare less well. Yet since then, noted black scholars such as William Julius Wilson and Shelby Steele have also identified self-defeating trends and ideas within the black community that they believe contribute to their collective disadvantage.

The difficulty lies in knowing how to interpret what we see. We see that education is increasingly the key to economic advancement, yet we also see that minorities have higher dropout rates than whites. On the surface that may seem like a clear-cut example of a dynamic that minorities themselves can control which could dramatically improve their opportunities to compete.

But what if high school graduates in the neighborhood fare no better than those who dropped out, simply because there are so few good jobs in the area? And what if the schools are so ill-funded and sub-standard that even those at the top of the class find themselves ill-prepared for college? Are the youngsters who choose to drop out making an ill-conceived choice, or are they reacting logically to the reality that they see around them?

We also know that there are more whites than blacks on the welfare rolls, but it is also true that blacks are overrepresented compared to their numbers in society—two of every five black children depend on welfare. Again, while this statistic can be viewed as *de facto* evidence of discrimination, it can also be viewed as an indictment of too-early parenting and unwed motherhood, both of which appear to be overrepresented among blacks in the lower socioeconomic classes.

Roughly a million teenage girls become pregnant each year, of which 400,000 give birth, and one of every four of those children is born to a black adolescent.¹³ Currently about half of all black infants are now born out of wedlock, and that figure approaches 90% in urban areas.¹⁴ Is that a reflection of cultural difference, a heritage that can be traced back to tribal traditions

in Africa? Or is it the realistic response of young women, who see no future in a career, opting to have a child who will love them?

Or is this also the result of misguided welfare policies that penalized women for having a male in the home? And does the historically high rate of black male unemployment simply persuade these young black women that marrying the fathers of their babies would be more of a liability than an asset?

Whatever the dynamics, the end result today is that many inner-city black households today are matriarchies, with three generations under 30. At the Governor's Conference on the Violent Young Offender co-hosted by the National Center for Community Policing, doctoral candidate Errol Henderson, a former *gangbanger* from the notoriously tough Brewster projects in Detroit, says that solving the crisis of such families, particularly in this era when many of those babies are born damaged by crack, requires more than just money. As Henderson notes, his own life stands as testimony to the fact that individuals can escape the limitations of their backgrounds—a shooting incident persuaded Henderson that there had to be a better way. Yet he also notes that not everyone in the inner-city should be expected to find a way to pursue a Ph.D.—and there would not be enough jobs for them if they did.

A far more common choice in such neighborhoods is between striving to find and hold a minimum-wage job in the legitimate economy or succumbing to the ever-present higher-paying opportunities afforded by dealing drugs or committing crimes. What will the future hold, when we see more and more of those entry-level service jobs moving to the suburbs?

In *Chain Reaction*, we also learn that cities where blacks already predominate continue to grow blacker, while the “overwhelmingly white suburbs grew from 40.8% of the nation's total population to 44.9%.”¹⁵ In addition, black-dominated cities continue to lose political clout, since they account for an ever-smaller percentage of the overall population:

“(T)he sharpest population declines over the past two decades have resulted from an exodus of whites from the most heavily black cities, including Detroit, Baltimore, New Orleans, Atlanta, Cleveland, Gary, Newark, and St. Louis. Conversely, many of the cities experiencing high growth have very small black populations, like Arlington, Texas, 2.9% black, 56% growth from 1970 to 1980; Glendale, Arizona, 1.9% black, 29.5% growth; and Modesto, California, 2.1% black, and 24.3% growth.”¹⁶

According to the Edsalls' analysis, 1992 will be the first year in American history when it will be the suburbs that elect the president.¹⁷ As this suggests,

the power of minorities, city dwellers, rural residents, and working-class urban whites will inevitably decline, since political parties need no longer court them as they have in the past.

An era of anxiety

Concerns about the implications of these demographic and economic changes continued to mount during the late 1980s. Does the United States have the clout to dictate a New World Order—or are we a nation in decline? Can succeeding generations hope to enjoy a standard of living equal to—or better than—that of their parents? Will today's roster of winners and losers remain the same? Can the United States overcome its history and find the key to racial harmony?

The uneasiness about the future expressed in such questions underscores why diversity has become so controversial, especially in schools and in the workplace. Race is an unusually divisive issue because of the difficulty in defining "fairness." The issue becomes even more complicated and incendiary in the case of blacks, because of the shameful history of slavery and its legacy of discrimination that constitute the black experience in the United States, as well as the failure of social policy to bring equality.

Yet the basic issue remains whether it is fair that blacks receive preferential treatment in college admissions and job hiring today as a mean of redressing the effects of past discrimination? Does race norming (where an individual's test scores are compared only to those of other members of the same race and/or gender) help to equalize opportunity? Or do such remedies threaten the credibility and self-esteem of those the efforts are designed to benefit?

What of the argument that affirmative action is inherently unfair to those of the majority who are displaced, especially since they were not personally responsible for the discrimination of the past? And is it fair to limit the maximum number of minorities, so that whites and others can be included, as can occur when Asian-Americans apply to certain programs in universities?

Would it make better sense to award preference on the basis of class? The existing college admissions system gives preference to an upper class black youth and not an indigent white youngster from Appalachia—is that fair? Also at issue is that the greatest number of students admitted as a result of preferential admissions appears to be the sons and daughters of alumni—how much does that perpetuate past bias?

Perceptions and facts

Important as well is that perceptions matter as much as facts. A few decades ago, the perception among whites in the "enlightened" North was that racial prejudice was almost exclusively a problem of the "backward" South, and the facts were rarely allowed to interfere with that bias.

A major difference in perceptions today concerns "The Plan," which argues that the epidemic of guns, drugs, and AIDS in the ghetto is evidence of a white government conspiracy to commit genocide against blacks. Many whites consider the mere suggestion ludicrous, while a surprising number of blacks are at least willing to consider the possibility.

At the same time, blacks wince when whites talk about the Underclass in ways that suggest the problem is somehow synonymous with being black. The "cycle of dependence," where each successive generation follows the previous one onto the welfare rolls, is indeed a pernicious problem. But it flowers most frequently wherever there are few jobs, whether that is in primarily black, inner-city Detroit or primarily white, rural Appalachia.

As this suggests, people of good conscience can differ—and there will always also be demagogues willing to exploit issues for their own purposes. Both Louisiana's David Duke and New York's Rev. Al Sharpton are skilled at playing the politics of racial resentment. Racial stereotyping allows those who play the "race card" to manipulate audiences by tapping the "hot button" issues based on bias.

PREPARING FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

The role of the police

The purpose of the lengthy introduction is to provide an overall context to explain why the police are such a lightning rod for the questions and controversies surrounding race in our society. Much of the reason is, of course, that the police are society's first-line defense in dealing with conflicts among people. But part of the reason is also the legacy of the historical misuse of the police against minorities.

The role of the police is to enforce the law, not to question it. This means that the police have often been used to do society's racial dirty work—to return runaway slaves to their masters and to enforce segregation in the South. We have only to think of Southern sheriffs like "Bull" Connor to remind us of how the white power structure has fought to maintain its privileges.

However, it also pays to remember that it is always easier to admit the sins of the past than it is to identify those of today. Few people today would defend a sheriff like Connor, but while there is widespread agreement today that racism is a serious problem, that consensus dwindles when people are asked to confirm specific examples. People will admit to the problem in general, but balk at attributing racist motives to any example that cuts too close to home.

The police today must contend directly with a number of issues that carry a racial subtext both in fact and in perception: crime, drugs, disorder, civil unrest, and police brutality. While some can look at the same glass and call it half empty, while others call it half full, there is ample reason to suggest that even the most optimistic observers would agree that the police face a major challenge in this era of racial anxiety.

The purpose of this paper will be to explore the dynamics of the racially charged issues that the police must deal with. It will also explore how and why a nationwide shift to Community Policing is essential if law enforcement is to face the challenge of promoting greater racial harmony as we approach the 21st century. It will also contend that Community Policing helps ensure that the police are not misused again, as they have been in the past.

CRIME, DRUGS & DISORDER

Crime is an unusually sensitive issue for minorities, particularly blacks. Blacks constitute 12% of the total population, while Hispanics account for 6%. It is also true that blacks account for 47% of all arrests for violent crimes, while Hispanics account for 15%.¹⁸

One of every four black male young adults under 30 in the United States is now under some form of correctional custody or supervision. Homicide is the leading cause of death for young black males, and, at the same time, blacks males are overrepresented on death row.¹⁹

Blacks constitute a disproportionately high percentage of both victims and offenders,²⁰ and what that means is open to dispute and to interpretation. At a certain level, the issue is why we take the time to compile such statistics and what we think they tell us. Why no widely touted studies of "poor on poor crime" or "Protestant on Protestant" crime? What insights do we think we gain by studying crime in terms of race?

Yet the link between race and crime cannot be ignored, especially since the perception of cause and effect puts tremendous pressure on young black males growing up. As the figures show, poverty alone may not be the key

to black violence, since some studies indicate that blacks commit a disproportionately higher share of violent crimes compared to Hispanics, even when the Hispanics are poorer and less educated than the blacks.²¹

As author Charles Silberman points out in *Criminal Violence, Criminal Justice*, the mistake lies in thinking the answer to this riddle lies in the genes. Silberman notes that blacks in Africa do not commit violent crimes at rates anywhere near those in the United States. The problem with blacks in the United States therefore has nothing to do with their race except as that relates to the nature of the black experience in this country. No race is inherently "prone" to violent crime—and no race is "immune."²² Yet, sadly, a Willie Horton is held up as a racial symbol of violence in a way that a Ted Bundy is not.

As noted before, what is often overlooked is that the link may be between race and class and not race and crime. In other words, because blacks are overrepresented in lower socioeconomic classes, they are more likely to be overrepresented among those arrested with the kinds of crimes associated with that class—such as robbery, for which blacks constitute 60% of all arrestees.²³

In contrast, we can expect to see whites overrepresented among those who commit white-collar crimes, because whites are overrepresented among members of that class. No blacks or other minorities have so far been arrested for the swindles on Wall Street, but that may have far less to do with character than opportunity.

An Ivan Boesky need not pull a gun on the street to steal money, while the street criminal simply does not have access to opportunities to manipulate stocks. In fact, a number of black male celebrities and sports heroes report being stopped by police, purely because of the perception that the only young black males who have enough money to drive exotic cars must be drug dealers.

Also in question is where we concentrate our law enforcement resources and the criminal justice system's apparent refusal to sentence white-collar criminals to long terms behind bars. Even to detect the kinds of crimes that a shrewd computer analyst or investment banker may be able to commit is a challenge, since it typically requires making a substantial investment in expertise and in technology. How many crooks who looted the S&L's will escape arrest and prosecution? And how many who are convicted will receive relatively light sentences compared to street criminals who steal far less?

Yet the question becomes how much or whether racism contributes to the end result that we see. It is true that it is far more likely that a police officer

cruising in a squad car will come across a pimp or low-level drug runner and make an arrest than a corporate vice-president skillfully bilking the company's retirement fund. But are we less likely to pursue white-collar crime because the white establishment perceives the perpetrators as more like them and less dangerous to society? Realistically as well, of course, crimes that involve physical violence or the potential for such violence always receive the highest priority.

Indeed, even if company officials uncover the vice president's crime, it may never come to the attention of the police, if only so that the stockholders do not lose faith in their investment. The bottom line is that the bank robber who pulls off a daring daylight heist always makes headlines, whereas we may never hear about the embezzler inside the bank, even if the crime is uncovered.

This means that minorities may be overrepresented in jails and prisons in part because the primarily white upper classes get a better break each step of the way. Not only are the crimes of the middle and upper classes harder to detect, there is also good reason to question whether society allocates sufficient law enforcement resources to the task. Again, there is the question whether the crime will ever come to the attention of police. Even if the perpetrator goes to trial, he can typically afford better counsel, and research shows that white-collar criminals tend to receive relatively light sentences.

Assessing whether such bias relates to race or class is not an easy call. In New York City, narcotics officers are regularly assigned to the Port Authority, where they routinely confront bus patrons and ask to search their bags for drugs (and the U.S. Supreme Court recently upheld their right to do so). But why do the police target bus passengers (who tend to come from lower socioeconomic classes where minorities are overrepresented) rather than passengers waiting for flights in airport lounges (who tend to come from the middle and upper classes where whites are overrepresented)?

Indeed the resulting arrest statistics will confirm that minorities constitute an unusually large percentage of those arrested for drugs—and this can contribute to a "scientific" profile of the drug dealer as a minority male. This kind of circular logic merely confirms the initial bias, since no resources are devoted to searching all those upper-class white patrons on their way to the airplanes. For all we know, those relatively upscale airplane passers may be even more likely to deal drugs, perhaps in larger quantities, but you do not find what you do not look for.

Another obvious factor in the racial disparity in prisons and jails are the non-criminal options available to the middle and upper classes to deal with economic problems that are simply not available to the poor. Consider the different remedies available to the white professional and the black car wash attendant of the same age who both lose their jobs. If both run through their savings and their unemployment benefits end, the white professional can use credit cards to stay afloat, including using them to secure cash advances. With luck, he can pay off the debt once he lands a new job. If not, he can go bankrupt.

But what of our black car wash attendant whose job isn't good enough to qualify for a credit card? If he uses "paper" (bad checks) instead of upscale "plastic," he may well go to jail if he cannot make good on the "debt." Why does this lower-class "crime" require putting the offender behind bars while filing bankruptcy carries a stigma but no threat of jail time?

Again, an argument can be made that such distinctions reflect institutional bias, and that race is more likely to inspire discrimination than class. Yet perhaps it becomes difficult to draw distinctions between the effects of race and class when so many dynamics contribute to the overrepresentation of minorities in the lower socioeconomic classes, which means that the effects of race and class often multiply and compound.

The image of drugs

Indeed, studies show that whites constitute the majority of drug abusers, yet the defining image of drug abuse in our culture is a black inner-city resident toking on a crack pipe. Part of the reason is obviously that when TV networks want to illustrate stories on drugs, it is far easier to find places to film dealers and addicts on the street in poor neighborhoods (where blacks are overrepresented) than the discreet drug dealing and drug use among the upper classes (where whites are overrepresented).

Yet perhaps part of the reason the media does not make the extra effort to provide a more balanced portrait is that reporters and editors are more squeamish about branding people with whom they could more easily identify as "addicts"—which again may well have far more to do with class than race. It is the same dynamic that may make judges and juries think twice about meting out harsh sentences to white-collar felons—there but for the grace of God go I.

Teasing out the "meaning" behind such statistics is not easy. The only compelling reason to dwell on studies of the "link" between race and crime is to focus attention on the need for creative solutions.

COMMUNITY POLICING'S CONTRIBUTION

Community Policing contributes to improving the overall racial climate in both obvious and subtle ways. A comparison of traditional policing and Community Policing shows that Community Policing changes the fundamental nature of the relationship between people and their police to one of mutual respect and trust.

Traditional policing focuses on reducing crime by arresting the bad guys. Not only does this approach risk demonizing everyone who lives in high-crime neighborhoods, it requires relying on rapid response which makes it virtually impossible for the police to avoid being strangers to the community. This model also suffers from reducing the role of the law-abiding citizens in the community primarily to that of passive by-stander.

Traditional policing must also, of course, deal with disorder. Yet it is clearly a lower priority than so-called "serious" crime, as evidenced by the fact that the fast track for promotions requires making high-visibility arrests. Bicycle thefts, domestic disputes, and low-level drug dealing, gambling, and prostitution are not the stuff of which top-flight careers are made.

Community Policing takes a different approach to crime, drugs, and disorder, one that can augment and enhance traditional tactics such as rapid response and undercover operations. One of the most obvious differences is that Community Policing involves average citizens directly in the police process. Traditional policing patronizes the community by setting up the police as the experts who have all the answers. In contrast, Community Policing empowers average citizens by enlisting them as partners with the police in efforts to make their communities better and safer places in which to live and work.

Research conducted on the Flint foot patrol experiment of the late 1970s, a precursor of today's Community Policing, showed a dramatic improvement in race relations between foot patrol officers and minorities. Yet the difference between Community Policing and well-meaning but limited efforts such as Police/Community Relations programs lies in their relative scope and intent. Police/Community Relations efforts primarily focused on formal meetings with community leaders, whereas Community Policing produces improved relations between people and their police as a welcome by-product of delivering high-quality decentralized and personalized police service to the community at the grass-roots level.

The Community Policing philosophy rests on the organizational strategy of deploying line officers permanently in beat areas, where they can operate as generalists, as permanent, community-based problem-solvers. By providing these Community Officers the opportunity to interact with the same people on a face-to-face basis each day, this approach allows average citizens formal and informal input. People have the chance to help set local police priorities and to develop creative solutions to community problems.

The police often assume that people worry most about the serious Index crimes of murder, rape, and robbery, only to find that people in the community care more about a totally different list of concerns. It is not that people fail to grasp the horror of serious crime. Rather it is that they recognize that their individual risk of falling victim to those crimes is relatively small compared to the problems of disorder and low-level crime—the noisy parties, open prostitution, and low-level drug dealing that do pose an immediate and direct threat to them and their children.

Different as well is that Community Policing takes a proactive approach to crime and disorder, while traditional policing is reactive. Studies confirm that what people really want is crime prevention—to be spared from becoming a victim. Community Policing focuses on solving the problem, and arrest is obviously one of the most potent tool that Community Officers can use. Yet all too often with the traditional approach, making arrests drives the agenda, regardless of whether or not the problem on the street it solved.

Particularly with open drug dealing, the relative impotence of mass arrests to solve the problem quickly becomes apparent—the police swoop down and haul people away, but then in a few days, it's back to business as usual. A Community Policing approach instead relies on that Community Officer stationed in the area to develop a comprehensive short- and long-term strategy to reduce open dealing.

North Miami Beach Community Officer Don Reynolds approached each suspected dealer on his beat, offering the carrot or the stick: Keep dealing and I'll bust you, but if you want to find another job, I'll help. To live up to his promise, Reynolds compiled lists of jobs available, and he organized an annual Job Fair with seminars on how to find and hold a job.

There are no statistics that show how many people Community Policing diverts from the formal system, but it may be part of the answer in reducing the number of people that we lock up. The United States now incarcerates more of its citizens than any other nation on earth, yet we continue to suffer

rates of serious crime far beyond what other industrialized Western nations endure. The U.S. murder rate alone is four times that of Canada, eight times the rate in West Germany, and 10 times the rate in Japan.²⁴

This is not to suggest that the motivation for encouraging Community Officers to use tools others than arrest stems from any urge to "coddle" criminals. There are simply no other good answers other than incarceration for repeat violent felons and other hardened criminals. Yet a study done in Virginia (a state with an offender-based tracking system) showed that even a third-time felony rapist on average serves roughly only seven years.²⁵

We must begin to think of jail and prison space as a precious resource that we cannot squander. We cannot allow a flood of criminals coming into the system to impel the early release of those who have demonstrated that they will seriously harm us, given the chance. We must find community-based alternatives to incarceration for those who commit property crimes and lesser drug offenses (many of whom are minority). All too often as well, time behind bars often seems to accomplish little more than turning the petty criminal into a more serious felon after release.

In Windsor, Ontario, Canada, for example, first-time juvenile offenders who are offered diversion are automatically turned over to the Community Officers in their neighborhoods. The officers supervise these youngsters in community-based efforts to improve the physical appearance of the neighborhood—trash removal, painting, planting flowers. According to the officers involved, everyone wins. The youngsters learn the special satisfaction that comes from a job well done and of doing something to benefit the community. The youngsters also learn that the police are human and that they care for them.

In return, because the police have the opportunity to interact with the youngsters, individually and as a group, the officers can see which kids need a helping hand and which to keep an eye on. The interaction also robs the youngsters of the anonymity that they may have relied upon to perpetrate their crimes. Indeed, in contrast, a renowned Community Officer in Lansing, Michigan, a two-hour drive east of Windsor, complains that it is currently impossible for the bureaucracy to warn him when convicted felons are returned to his neighborhood.

Community Policing can also contribute to avoiding bottlenecks elsewhere in the criminal justice system by allowing officers to be more creative in developing alternate solutions. Instead of a sweep or crackdown of open drug dealing that may do little more than clog the courts, a

Community Officer might, for example, work with citizens on efforts to drive dealers indoors.

It can be argued, of course, that such solutions do not completely solve the problem, since the drug sales still occur. But what we must remember is that arrest doesn't solve the problem either, particularly since, all too often, low-level dealers are merely back on the street the next day, working even harder to make up for lost time.

Yet driving dealing indoors has the obvious benefit of making it harder for casual and first-time drug users to find the supply that might contribute to making them a hard-core abuser. In addition, driving dealers indoors removes them from the street where they serve as odious role models for the young. Indeed, when the police appear to be unable to shut down open dealing, this contributes to contempt for the law, and the obvious lack of sanctions makes it easier for dealers to recruit the young into their business.

By extension as well, Community Policing's judicious use of discretion may contribute to reducing the racial disparity in prison and jail populations, or, more likely, it will at least contribute to undoing the widespread perception in minority neighborhoods that the police are looking for any excuse to make an arrest.

The next generation

Community Policing also provides the police an opportunity to work directly with the young before their problems escalate to the point where arrest and incarceration are inevitable. As Bruce Benson, director of Public Safety at Michigan State University, says, our society has no good answers for the hardened 30-year-old career criminal. Yet all too often, traditional police priorities prevent officers from spending much time on the "petty" crimes that youngsters commit.²⁶

Why send the message to a 12-year-old who steals a bike that the police—and therefore society—simply don't care? Why wait until that youngster escalates to committing more serious offenses before we intervene? Why not instead invest in Community Officers who can mobilize the community to provide worthwhile alternatives for that youngster. Community Officers themselves also provide positive role models for youngsters, many of whom come from single-parent families.

Community Officers also have the time and the mandate to involve the community in efforts to improve the social and physical environment. Studies confirm that neighborhoods in decline act like a magnet for crime and

drugs,²⁷ so Community Policing has the potential to make an immediate improvement in the overall quality of life by mobilizing efforts to reverse neighborhood decay. But perhaps even more important is the potential to make a positive impact on the young.

Imagine how difficult it must be to grow up straight in a neighborhood where you have to run a gauntlet of drug dealers, panhandlers, and prostitutes on the way home from school, to grow up surrounded by graffiti and trash, rather than flowers and trees. Consider the values our society transmits when the only people in the neighborhood who make enough money to buy nice clothes and fancy cars are drug dealers, pimps, and thieves.

Viewed in that light, the question becomes why there is any resistance to Community Policing reform. Part of the reluctance to make the shift to Community Policing stems from a basic resistance to change. Yet resistance also stems from the fact that Community Policing is people-intensive, and high-touch is often more expensive than high-tech. But while a new computer may make police more efficient, when it comes to helping young people grow up to live within the law, nothing can beat the human touch.

Competence as well as compassion

The other major areas of resistance to Community Policing reform comes from those who see the importance of the human touch, but who argue that this should be the job of social workers, not the police. Yet can traditional police—who do not know the community—be expected to do a good job?

Consider, for example, the high-profile case of confessed serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer, with its undercurrent of race and class. Controversy continues to swirl around the night when three Milwaukee police officers responded to a call that a naked and bleeding boy was attempting to escape Dahmer's clutches. Dahmer apparently persuaded the officers that the young Laotian boy, Konerak Sinthasomphone, was his adult homosexual lover with whom he had quarreled. As tapes of telephone conversations with concerned neighbors later confirmed, the officers put more credence in Dahmer's explanation, the explanation of the white middle-class male, than in the concerns expressed by the lower-class minority females who called wanting to know if the Asian boy was all right.

A Community Officer in Dahmer's neighborhood would at least have given the police department a better chance at uncovering his crimes sooner. Allowing Community Officers the time to know the people on their beat, so

that they can sort out who is trustworthy and who is not, can help to prevent bias from tainting decisions. Providing police officers the opportunity to know people as individuals helps reduce negative stereotyping.

The Dahmer case also highlights the importance of allowing the police to become enmeshed in the life of the community. A Community Officer at least stands a chance of connecting all the dots—talk about the smells coming from Dahmer's apartment, the gossip about the buzzing of an electric saw at night, his parole for a serious sexual offense, and the disappearance of the victim's brother.

The traditional system simply cannot compete with Community Policing in gathering and assessing the complete picture. For one thing, the gossip about the sounds and smells would typically be considered too trivial to justify a call to the police, or the several different officers responding would never piece together the total picture, but a Community Officer might well do so. The traditional system is also at a disadvantage because there is no way for motor patrol officers to gain all the information that would be helpful. Community Officers cannot respond to all the calls in their beat areas either—but they hear about them later and can fit the information into the matrix of what they already know.

As this shows, Community Policing has as much to do with "competence" as with "compassion." Gathering information firsthand and learning about the dynamics of the community allow the police to do a better job overall.

Elements of Community Policing's proactive focus admittedly does blend aspects of social work with police work. But how can the police leave the job to the social workers when they, too, have been pulled out of the community, just as we removed the old-fashioned beat cops from the streets? The police remain the only social service agency open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Indeed, the Dahmer case also showed that in many cases, even probation and parole officers no longer make house calls.

Perhaps the optimal future is embodied in the Neighborhood Network Center concept, where Community Officers serve as the vanguard for a return to the community by other public service providers, such as social workers, probation and parole officers, public health nurses, and mental health professionals. Until that day, however, it is naive to suggest that the police can afford to leave the personalized aspects of the job to others. Not only have these other professionals disappeared from the community, but police officers need information beyond what motor patrol officers can hope to elicit on their calls.

High-profile cases

If we look at other recent high-profile cases with a racial component, we can see all the other ways in which Community Policing provides benefits beyond the traditional approach. In the case of both the Central Park Jogger and the Yusuf Hawkins murder in Bensonhurst, for example, it seems clear that a Community Officer would have had better odds of preventing such crimes than a traditional motor patrol officer.

It would seem that our society would want to invest in a Community Officer in that neighborhood in Harlem where those young boys talked about going "wilding." Imagine as well if there had been a Community Officer in Bensonhurst to hear the story on the street that some boys in the neighborhood were so angered that a local girl had invited black boys to her birthday party that they were gathering baseball bats and a gun for an attack.

Civil unrest

In addition to "routine" violent crime, the police also deal with civil disorders in which race plays a role, and again, Community Policing provides fresh answers, especially considering the role that police actions often play in triggering riots. Even going back to the days of the Kerner Commission in the 1960s, research showed that a majority of "race riots" occur after some action by the police, even if the action in question might seem relatively benign.

A recent example occurred in the Crown Heights section of New York when a Hasidic Jew lost control of his car and accidentally injured two young black children, one of whom, Gavin Cato, later died. The rumor quickly spread that the police loaded the driver and his companions into the private Jewish ambulance that arrived on the scene, leaving the black children bleeding in the street. Apparently, the police did indeed urge the driver to spirit the driver and his friends away from the scene out of concern for their safety. The children were already being loaded into another ambulance at the time, but the rumor fueled days of rioting by blacks, including the murder of Yankel Rosenbaum by a member of a mob of young blacks who allegedly kept shouting, "Kill the Jew."²⁸

As this suggests, riots often have less to do with the immediate police action than with longstanding frictions among minorities and between various groups and the police. In the so-called Super Bowl riot in Miami two years ago and the riot in the Mt. Pleasant district of Washington, D.C., this

year, it was a police shooting that sparked the violence. Shootings are certainly not trivial incidents, but in both cases, it may well be that perceptions were again as important as facts.

In Miami, the smoldering resentments among minorities no doubt played a role. In Washington, it is interesting to note that the shooting occurred when police officers tried to stop Hispanic males from drinking in the park, a cultural practice common in their homeland. As an article in *The New Republic* noted as well, a Community Officer had previously had remarkable success in dealing with open drinking, but the officer had been pulled from duty in the area months before and was never replaced.²⁹

Excessive force

Community Policing is not a panacea, but it can also help reduce the risk of riots by reducing the likelihood that police abuse their power. Perhaps the incident that most starkly highlights the importance of doing more to promote mutual trust and respect between people and their police is the ugly beating of black motorist Rodney King by white police officers of the Los Angeles Police Department.

The sad fact is that police brutality tarnishes the reputation of the vast majority of brave and decent police officers nationwide who found that the King incident made their tough job even tougher. Yet some good can come from that tragedy if police departments heed the message of the Christopher Commission report on the problems within the LAPD that allowed such incidents to occur. As the report says, undoing the 'us against them' mentality that fosters police brutality requires embracing Community Policing reform. Traditional policing encourages police to associate primarily with each other, while Community Policing encourages police officers to identify with the people they are sworn to serve.

My father was an old-fashioned beat cop in the tough, blue-collar town of Bay City, Michigan, and he once used what many onlookers felt was undue force in subduing an unruly bar patron. For days afterward, wherever he went, my Dad found himself being confronted by local residents who wanted to talk to him about their concerns.

Being in the same neighborhood every day also allowed my father the opportunity to dispel rumors and to offer both an explanation and an apology for his behavior. And because the people on his beat knew and trusted him, they accepted him at his word, knowing that they would also be able to tell if he crossed the line again.

It is this kind of immediate, direct, and informal accountability to the people in the community, the true consumers of police service, that Community Policing provides. The personal interaction between people and police that Community Policing inspires not only robs the predators of the anonymity that they rely on to cloak their crimes, but it also means that the police cannot rely on anonymity to cloak their actions if they misbehave.

We cannot tolerate the alternative, such as the incidents where police officers cover their badges with tape before wading in to roust the homeless, so that no one will know who they are if they use excessive force. Gays as well complain that some police all too often single them out for anonymous abuse. If Community Policing is adopted as a department-wide commitment, as it should be, then officers should never be asked to—and able to—hide behind their badges.

The challenge is to ensure that Community Policing is not treated as an add-on or a special program. Community Officers must never be perceived as the “good cops,” as opposed to the “bad cops” in the rest of the department. Everyone in the department, civilian and sworn, must be encouraged to find ways to express the Community Policing philosophy in all interactions with people in the community.

There are, of course, no guarantees that Community Policing can prevent civil disorders. But by reducing opportunities for police brutality and encouraging better relations between people and their police, Community Policing can reduce the threat.

Obviously, Community Policing cannot solve all the underlying economic and social problems that poor neighborhoods face. Community Officers also cannot close the income gap between whites and minorities, nor do they come to their beats bearing lists of high-paying jobs for unskilled workers. Community Officers also cannot undo the effects of past childhood abuse and neglect. They cannot singlehandedly eradicate the scourge of substance abuse, domestic violence, illiteracy, and poverty, though they may be able to do far more than their motor patrol counterparts. Yet even the most dedicated Community Officers cannot play both Mother and Father for all the children whose parents simply do not care.

It is also true that Community Policing cannot by itself hope to end racism, ethnocentrism, elitism, classism, and prejudice. But as the foregoing suggests, it is a good place to start, and it offers the police new opportunities to become the catalyst for positive social change.

Footnotes

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