

Is community policing effective?



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AN ANALYSIS OF COMMUNITY POLICING: IS COMMUNITY POLICING AN EFFECTIVE PRACTICE?

ABSTRACT

Community Policing is a relatively new policing practice that focuses on reducing the crime rate in an area by creating cooperation and trust between citizens and police. The question that comes into play regarding this is whether or not community policing is an effective practice. To answer this question, a study will be conducted where community policing is implemented in a big city for a span of 2 years. All of the citizens and police officers of all ages and both sex's will be the research participants. Data will be collected by comparing the crime rates from the beginning of the study to the end of the study, along with comparison between the data every 2 months as well. The results will be analyzed by looking at whether or not there were any changes in the crime rates as well as the amount of cooperation by citizens. If there was a decrease in the crime rate then that will determine that community policing is in fact an effective community policing practice that is worth its extra cost.

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INTRODUCTION

The criminal Justice field is currently in a time where new and innovative policing practices are being used in police departments across America. One of these practices being implemented nationwide is community policing. Community policing spans a broad range of programs from neighborhood newsletters and neighborhood substations to foot patrol and neighborhood watch (Welsburd, Lum, 2013). Community Policing's main focus is to create stronger alliances between police and the community. The goals of community policing are to help reduce citizen fear of crime, improve police-community relations, facilitate more effective responses to community problems, and lower the overall amount of crimes committed (" Community Policing," n. d., para. 1). When evaluating the community policing practices there is always the question of whether or not the practice is effective and should continue to be implemented in police departments.

Community Policing is an effective practice that is supported by different studies and statistics that have been conducted and released regarding this police practice. (Telep, Weisburd, 2011) The effectiveness of community policing is measured by examining a collection of strategies that are implemented in the practice. (Owusu-Bempah, 2010) Community Policing practices has had great results in cities such as Chicago where the practice has been implemented in several neighborhoods (Eig, 2002). By determining the effectiveness of community policing it determines whether or not this

practice is worth being implemented by police departments throughout America.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Welsburd and Lum (2013) describe how Charlotte Gill and colleagues conducted a study on the impact of community policing. The study showed how community policing led to significant positive benefits for citizen satisfaction, perceived disorder, and police legitimacy. In the end of the article Bennett and colleagues looked at the effectiveness of neighborhood watch programs, which is related to community policing. They found that a neighborhood watch program does in fact lead to a substantial “ crime reduction.” (Para. 10) These authors focus more on the positive aspects of community policing and do not describe much in the way of negatives regarding this policing practice.

Community policing involves strengthening the relationship between police officers and citizens in the community. “ Community Policing” (n. d) describes how Goldstein describes that officers working closely with members in the community have greater independence with making decisions, have positive feelings toward citizens, and have greater job satisfaction. One survey conducted on patrol officers showed 98 percent of officers agreed that “ assisting citizens” is just as essential as “ enforcing law.” (Para. 6) The authors focused on describing officer opinion on community policing and positive affects it has had.

Community Service is an essential aspect of community policing that strengthens Citizens Corporation and trust. “ The Bureau of Justice Statistics”

(n. d) describes how Offering youth education and coordinating community outreach efforts are effective methods in community policing that have been utilized. The study focused on implementing a greater use of foot and bicycle patrols and frequent meetings with community groups. The LEMAS survey conducted in 2003 revealed 58% of all departments, employing 82% of officers, and utilized full-time community policing officers during 2003. All Together, there were about 54, 800 local police officers assigned as community police officers. These authors provide data on how community policing is becoming a more widespread policing practice due to its effectiveness.

Community Policing has proved to be effective in communities throughout America such as Chicago. Jonathon Eig (2002) describes the community policing practice in Chicago which focuses on more than just foot patrols. Citizens form a positive relationship with police officers which make them believe they have a role in solving the neighborhoods problems. The study describes how in Chicago when a suspect resisted arrest and began punching the officer, neighborhood gang members rushed to her defense and helped subdue the man. (2002) after the implementation of community policing Chicago communities have experienced falling crime rates and a growing sense of safety in many neighborhoods.

Fayetteville Minneapolis implemented a community policing strategy to reduce violent crime plaguing the city. Greg Barnes (2014) describes that violent crime among juveniles has fallen dramatically after using community policing. The study showed from 2006 to 2012 gun crimes involving youth dropped by 57 percent and gun crimes dropped by 67 percent. Youths were

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39 percent less likely to be shot and 60 percent less likely to be murdered. Fayetteville Police departments hired more police officers to patrol streets and the department upgraded crime-fighting-technology. The study stated that in 2013 there were about 600 fewer home breaks ins. Fayetteville shows how community policing is effective at reducing crime and violence in the community.

Community policing is implemented to help curb the rise in violence throughout communities. Akwasi Owusu-Bempah (2010) describes how officers must be actively engaged in efforts to enhance the community safety themselves while using assistance from citizens. Through knowledge-sharing with members of the community, patrol officers become most knowledgeable about the needs and strengths of their communities. The study showed during the six years after the project began (from 1995 through 2000) the number of homicides in Atlanta decreased by 27 per cent. The author describes the positives of community policing and the data that supports this.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Authors have stated that Community Policing is a relatively new practice in law enforcement that involves a variety of programs which can vary depending on the police department. (Telep, Weisburd, 2011; “Community Policing,” n. d., para. 1; Welsburd, Lum, 2013; Owusu-Bempah, 2010) However there is a limited amount of data that determine if community policing practice is worth for departments to utilize. This means it is unclear whether community policing is an effective practice in regards to reducing crime.

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METHODOLOGY AND ANALYSIS

The methodology is broken down into separate main focuses, the research participants, research design, and the procedure. The research that will be conducted is study of how a community policing program is an effective policing practice. The study will involve implementing a community policing program in a high crime city and seeing what effect it has over a 2 year span.

The study's participants will be split up into two separate groups. The first group will be composed of any citizen living in the city that has implemented a community policing policy. The city for this study is in New Haven Connecticut, which means everyone living in the city limits of New Haven will be the research participants. Their demographic will involve citizens of all ages and both male and females. The second group is composed of all the New Haven police officers assigned to areas throughout New Haven where they will utilize a community policing strategy. Their demographic will involve police officers of all ages and both male and female officers.

My design/procedure involves experimentation which will show if community policing is an effective practice. The experiment will involve implementing a community policing practice in New Haven for 2 years. The city will need to hire more officers to actively patrol one specific neighborhood their entire shift. To determine if the practice was successful it will be measured by, whether or not the crime rate decreased with a community policing practice in place. The initial crime rate will be determined by the numbers of various major crimes committed the year before community policing was implemented such as murders, homicides, robbery's, larceny's, assaults, and <https://assignbuster.com/is-community-policing-effective/>

grand theft auto. Next the study will involve increasing the number of cops on patrol and their interaction with citizens in the specific areas they are assigned too. Things that will be measured are whether or not cooperation between police and citizens of the city has gone up. Another aspect measured is the rise in annual police department costs since the community policing practice was put into place. Lastly to measure the practices success during the 2 year span you compare the number of crimes committed every 2 months throughout the duration of the study. Then once the two years is finally done compare the number of crimes that occurred before the start of the study to the number of crimes that occurred at the end of the study to see if the policing practice was in fact effective. For community policing to be deemed effective the data compared will show a drop in the crime rate. Lastly effectiveness will also be based on the cost of the practice compared to the results of the implementation of community policing.

DISCUSSION

Law enforcement agencies throughout the country are always looking for a solution to lower the rise in number of crimes committed. In the past law enforcement typically involved a disconnect between citizen's and police officers. However with new policing practices like community policing the disconnect is able to be reduced by police advocating cooperation between citizens and police. Citizens are given the opportunity to be directly involved with keeping their own neighborhood safe by working with police by providing information such as witness statements and possible leads. This also leads to police getting to know people in the community on a personal level and for citizens to view a cop as more than just a person with a badge

and a gun. What this means is that community policing provides reasons for citizens to speak with police which will help deter criminals from committing crimes due to knowing that witnesses will cooperate.

The importance of the study conducted is that it allows for other police departments to determine whether community policing might work well in their city. There is also a chance for departments already implementing the practice to determine whether they should continue or discontinue community policing. Implementing community policing comes at a rather high cost due to an increase in officers on patrol at once. By the study only being two years long it allows for a city to see first-hand results of the policing practice which will help determine if the effect on the crime rate outweighs the extra costs.

Similar studies to this one have shown results that provide support for community policing being an effective policing practice. Chicago is a city that has already implemented community policing in their neighborhoods. One major is that the Chicago study involves community policing in specific neighborhoods with the most crime and poverty which is different from how the New Haven study involves the entire city. In the Chicago study neighborhoods saw a decrease in crimes especially those involved with drugs and gang violence. There was also increased police and citizen cooperation which led to citizens sharing a lot more valuable information to the police, due to how the police showed citizens they were in the community to help them keep the neighborhoods they live in safer. The Chicago study is able to provide support of how community policing will be able to help with reducing the similar issues of gang violence and drug

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related violence in New Haven which has in recent years seen a major rise in these issues.

Even though the study in New Haven shows effective results there are limitations and problems that could possibly occur. A limitation is that realistically not all officers will be able to get citizens in their patrol area to cooperate with them. If this is the case the question that arises is whether it's worth the extra costs to continue with community policing in the neighborhood for the full duration of the study. Also with a study over a 2 year span a lot can change, if an officer assigned to a neighborhood has to leave midway through the study, could lead to citizens no longer cooperating with the newly assigned officer in the same way they did with the prior officer. In order for the experiment to have validity it would require that every neighborhood has the same officer patrolling it the entire 2 yearlong study which is unrealistic in a large city like New Haven. The last possible problem is that community policing involves a variety of programs which means programs that led to successful a community policing outcome in one city might not have the same results in another city.

CONCLUSION

Community policing is one of the most recent law enforcement innovations with recent research suggesting that close to 100 percent of larger police agencies have implemented this practice. (Welsburd, Lum, 2013) The problem regarding community policing is determining whether or not it can be called an effective policing practice. The overall goals associated with this practice are fear reduction, increased citizen satisfaction with police, and the development of techniques which address the issues in the community.

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Community Policing's overall concern is to create stronger alliances between police and the community which are a major factor in seeing crime rates in an area decrease. ("Community Policing," n. d., para. 1). (Quire, 1993) While community policing has its benefits there are also some issues with it such as the rise in police spending and an increased need for more officers on patrol at the same time. In the end the New Haven community policing study is just one of the many studies that provide support that it is in fact an effective policing practice.

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