

COMMUNITY POLICING

Every Criminologist, scholar, police officer would like to know the best approach to policing and ways that policing can work in an “us versus them” society. Unfortunately, the reality is that there will be many approaches to policing a society because of the many changes in our world. Every generation, whether it is social changes or technological changes, there will always be new approaches to policing. My goal here is to not fight for one side and argue who’s right or wrong, but to talk about an approach where the public and police can come together and meet in the middle to fight crime. The main mission that police officers try to accomplish is: preserving law and order, enforcing the laws, and protecting and serving all citizens. This seems like a heavy burden for officers to portray while protecting the people but at the same time might ruin someone’s day for giving them a speeding ticket. The United States lives in a society where they have fought for their freedom and so the citizens will not let anyone take their human rights away again. Police officers have to figure out ways to build trust in the community and bring crime down, without having the public scrutinize them for their proactive approach. And the only way the police organization can accomplish that is: Community Policing.

William Bratton was a Police Commission in New York City, in the 1990s and he believed that Broken Windows Theory was an approach that would be the best practice to conduct in New York. With crime on the rise, he stepped in to implement this theory and potentially reduce crime. James Q. Wilson and George came up with the Broken Window Theory. Their theory states that signs of disorder will lead to more disorder. Areas where communities are broken down are then more vulnerable to criminal invasion. Therefore, the only way to enforce it is that police officers would have to crack down on “quality of life” crimes such as public intoxication, aggressive panhandling, and prostitution. This was

Bratton's idea of policing and his notion of making the citizens feel safer and would discourage more serious crime. Even though crime has decreased in New York City, scholars have argued that it does not work and have not found any correlation with the practice of the theory to crime reduction. Scholars have argued that discrimination plays a big role into it, affecting the relationship between the community and the police. They have also argued that this theory focuses on disorder. It is a good approach to policing but without the public's help and trust, policing will be seen as a tactic against the people, instead of being on their side. It is problematic because by "linking disorder and crime can also change the way officers perceive residents, by creating the assumption that those committing minor offenses may do something worse if they're not sanctioned" (Sarah Childress). For the higher ranks to train officers that way is a complete mistake. We need police officers that are optimistic about their job and have confidence in people, working with them to their best ability, and verbally communicating with them on what they can do better to serve the public.

The most important aspect when it comes to policing is that we should not only see police officers as warriors or crime fighters, but also social workers and people that we can look up to, to keep the community safe. Having a connection with the people in the community, you can figure out people's issues, and what they consider the police should do to fight crime. Any tips or information that the people have that can make the community safe and grow stronger bonds with the police officers. That being said, I will now present few approaches that can build on community policing while at the same time fighting crime.

One of the biggest issues in the United States is gangs. They are scattered all over the U.S and they bring drugs and violence to the streets. One of the biggest reasons why it's hard to bring these gangs down is because there is no close relationship with the community and the police. The community either does not trust the police, or they are scared that they will be retaliated.

My first approach when it comes to community policing is to have weekly briefings with the community. The people are the foundation of a community. They are the ones that hold it together, whether it's economically or socially. So it's very important to have weekly briefings at the town hall, with the public, to discuss on any crime that's occurring, and discuss on any crime prevention ideas that can make the community safer. One idea that can help crime prevention is foot patrols. This strategy is to communicate with people and get to know the area. Now the idea is not to intimidate, but find a connection with people in that community. Police officers should be there for every individual, regardless of their color, ethnic identity, or the individual's history.

Since violence is such a big issue in the United States, another strategic way is by running a campaign in high crime areas that would get guns off the street. Police officers can have tents up and accept any weapons without being asked questions and without being penalized. There is a big issue with guns being sold and being handed down from one criminal to the next. By getting rid of those weapons, criminals will have a less chance of getting their hands on one. Even one gun off a street can save many lives. The objective here is to show involvement by restricting access to guns and keeping the community safe.

I also think the most important service that the police needs to provide is assistance and involvement in getting kids to be active. They are the next generation and we must provide the most support if we want to see crime decrease. If police set up after school programs, it will only benefit them by bonding with the community and potentially may see a decrease in crime. Children need role models that can teach them about life. If you keep children occupied with after school programs, teach them values they need to succeed in life, then this world might change for the better.

Another approach I would like to add is changing the landscaping/architecture in the neighborhood and local businesses. Instead of being proactive and arresting people for

‘quality of life’ crimes, police and the community should get together and change the landscape of its neighborhoods. Requesting volunteers from the community that go out and clean up trash or repaint any graffiti can have a positive outlook. Also, local businesses should not close off their windows with pictures or posters so there can be a clear view from the outside. Community members can see through the windows and contact the police right away if a robbery or any other crime is occurring. The objective is to have open landscaping and clean streets to keep criminals away. It is a preventative tool where the community can also be involved and have closer ties with the police.

Police need to show the communities appreciation for their involvement of preventing crime. Police organizations can set up monthly picnics or barbeques to show its appreciation and commitment to those that help the police fight crime. It gives people an opportunity to speak with their local officers and get to know them better. Community policing should be a strategy constantly used to potentially reduce crime and have a better relationship. Police relationships with the community need to be looked at closer, especially with children that are raised in gang activity, for they are the ones that will be running the world. Without trust, things will only get worse. Without integrity, lives will be lost.

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