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Summary of Major Findings and Implications for  
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**Meeting the Needs of Racine Citizens:  
Evaluation of a Community Policing Program**

**Summary of Major Findings and Implications for Criminal Justice Operations**

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## **Summary of Major Findings and Implications for Criminal Justice Operations**

Community policing, as a concept, has very different meanings across the United States and its implementation varies with city size, philosophy of police department, and perceived community needs, as well as other factors. This research highlights the fact that within each city, service providers and recipients have various needs from community policing as well, and these needs may juxtapose or conflict with each other. Thus, community policing to citizens and community leaders in Racine, WI means something very different from what it means to police officers. In addition, the services provided by Building and Health Department are now dependent upon their relationship with the Racine Police Department (RPD), and thus their perception of community policing takes on a special meaning. Finally, while crime has declined markedly in the areas of Racine which are part of the community policing effort, there are many concurrent social and crime prevention programs, such that crime reduction cannot be solely attributed to community policing. Thus, successes for the city must be viewed in terms of the many programs available to its citizens, one of which is community policing. With this caveat in mind, the following discussion will summarize major findings from each aspect of this study and then examine outcomes on the basis of community needs and implications for criminal justice operations.

### Citizen Perspectives on Community Policing over Four Years

Overall, it can be said that citizens see stabilization in their neighborhoods and that more feel safe in their areas than they did when community policing was initiated in 1993. People's perceptions of declining neighborhoods have been replaced by more citizens who feel their neighborhoods have remained the same since the initiation of community policing. This is evidenced by the fact that there has been little change in the number of people who report gang presence and drug use and sales as big problems in their neighborhoods. Moreover, there has been a decrease in the number of people who report that youth hanging out in the streets is a big problem. On the other hand, 10% more people in 1997 than in 1994 report that garbage in the streets is a big problem. One of the most encouraging findings from this research is that more people than ever report feeling safe going out at night.

Questions regarding police/citizen encounters added to the 1997 citizen survey indicate that about 25% of the sample had some contact with a police officer. Among those citizens, two-thirds report dissatisfaction with the encounter, presumably because most encounters between police and citizens were violation based. Despite this, most citizens still view police as respectful, helpful, and fair, although about half assess the abilities of police to fight crime and keep order as fair or poor.

A comparison between the opinions of citizens in a control neighborhood and citizens in the community policed areas indicates a greater sense of unity and more communication among residents in the control neighborhood. Moreover, crime in this area is low and citizen participation at community meetings is higher than it is for people in the community policed areas.

It is clear that residents of Racine want to clean up their streets and control gangs and drugs. Currently, the RPD is advised through the fire and police commission, aldermen, and representatives from Neighborhood Watch and meetings with police occur on a monthly basis. Yet citizen activism in community policed areas is lower when compared to activism in the control area. The questions remain as to how community power can be created among citizens and how cooperation can be facilitated between citizens and police.

### Acceptance of Community Policing among Police Officers

Part of the difficulty in changing neighborhoods is the lack-luster response of many police officers toward community policing. While there is support for community policing among high ranking officers, there is less support among patrol officers and detectives. Moreover, these attitudes did not change over the 19-month study period except for detectives' attitudes. In this case, detectives were moved to field offices where they had greater exposure to officers involved in the community policing unit. This suggests that separating officers by units may create rifts between officers' perceptions of the various roles others play in the Department. Interaction with various types of officers may foster greater understanding among them. In addition, the RPD has trained all officers in the community policing philosophy.

While it is clear that citizens see more officers at community meetings than ever before, citizens continue to see police officers in their traditional roles in the neighborhoods. This is evidenced by the fact that most officers are seen in squad cars and that most police/citizen encounters are violation based. These findings, coupled with police attitudes about community policing concepts, place doubt in the commitment that lower ranking officers have with regard to their community policing roles. On the other hand, high ranking officers were least amenable to changing the hierarchical order of the department. Thus, officers involved with community policing may be faced with the task of conducting a community policing program without the structural support that would allow them the authority to make decisions on their own.

### Community Leaders' Attitudes about Community Policing

Community leaders were overwhelmingly supportive of community policing. All were concerned with the safety of their constituents, be they students at school, employees of major companies, visitors to the community, or people in the neighborhoods. It was clear that business leaders wanted to reduce crime so that business could thrive and that educational leaders wanted to reduce crime so they could provide good teaching environments for the students in their schools. In addition, leaders applauded the role of police officers in helping raise funds for community programs, providing safe houses for students after school, and promoting citizen awareness of community needs. They wanted to see more involvement of the police department with the community, extension of hours that police patrolled neighborhoods, and greater

presence of officers in the schools. In addition, leaders wanted to see more African-American officers hired in primarily African-American constituencies.

### Changes in Crime across Selected Areas of Racine

The three community policed areas experienced a 23.7% decrease in Part One crimes from 1993 to 1997, while the control neighborhood had a drop in crime of 40% for this time period. While crime has declined in these areas, it has remained stable over the 4-year study period in the rest of the city of Racine. In sum, Racine can be proud of the decreases in crime in the community policed and control areas. In the community policed areas, numbers of crimes were very high in 1993 and declined markedly. In the control neighborhood, absolute crimes were much lower than in the community policed areas and continued to decline over time.

While the percentage of Part One crimes has decreased in Racine, it has increased about 5% throughout the State of Wisconsin. Nationally, Part One crimes have decreased by 15%.

### Calls for Service to the Building and Health Departments as Part of Community Policing

A partnership between the RPD and the Racine Building Department (RBD) and Health Department (RHD) began as part of the community policing program in 1993. Before this time, inspectors from both departments were fearful of traveling in areas where they felt unsafe and thus, did not cite buildings for health and building code violations. In 1993, a "sweeps" program was initiated whereby health and building inspectors, accompanied by a community policing officer would target neighborhoods in Census tracts 1-5, some of which were part of the community policing program and some of which were not. The partnership between the RPD and the Building and Health Departments was established with the purpose of reducing citizen calls for service to the police department, while empowering health and building department inspectors to perform their duties. Overall, outcomes of calls for service to the Health and Building Departments indicate that this program has been successful.

For both Building and Health Departments complaints based on the "sweeps" program have increased markedly over the study period. For the Building Department, complaints from private citizens have increased, as well. From 1992 to 1993, more complaints were filed from community policing areas than non-community policing areas for the Building Department. Since 1994, the year after community policing was implemented, complaints from non-community policing areas have increased. This suggests that services provided in community policed areas by the Building Department are controlling the number of complaints that emanate from these areas.

While the City Assessor initially made the most complaints to the Building Department, this gradually changed and complaints resulting from the Sweeps program significantly increased, accounting for the most complaints issued in 1995 and 1996. In addition, citizen complaints increased sharply in 1994 and stabilized in 1995 and 1996.

The data show that complaints to both the Building and Health Departments have increased over time and that most complaints today derive from the Sweeps Program and from private citizens. From this perspective, community policing has succeeded in partnering with the Building and Health Departments to take over responsibility for documenting building and health code violations. These data support Eig's assertion that trash and the appearance of houses are becoming increasingly important to citizens, regardless of whether they are part of a community policing initiative or not.

One of the goals of community policing is not only to create institutional partnerships, but also to empower citizens to become problem solvers on their own. While citizen complaints to the Building Department have increased over time, citizen complaints to the Health Department have not. We know that the Sweeps program, in its proactive role, has taken over part of the citizen role in addressing code violations in the city. But, it is unclear from our findings whether citizens themselves have become empowered to act in their neighborhoods.

### Conclusions

Specific group interests drive people's perceptions of community policing. From the perspective of community leaders, there has been improvement in conditions in the city that has promoted cooperative programs on the part of businesses, schools, community organizations and the RPD. Today, citizens feel safer in their neighborhoods than before the advent of community policing. Moreover, inspectors from the Building and Health Departments are working with the community policing unit to clean up neighborhoods and act upon building and health code violations. Crime has steadily declined since 1993, the beginning of the community policing initiative.

While attitudes of police toward community policing are neutral at best, their behaviors are changing so that citizens see more police officers at community meetings than before. Yet for the most part, police continue to patrol neighborhoods in squad cars and most citizens who have encounters with police report dissatisfaction with the experience.

In order to meet the needs of Racine citizens, we must recognize the diversity of interests across sectors of the community. Police must be responsive to a variety of needs. Yet, community leaders and citizens must recognize that crime reduction is a unified effort. It is both disturbing and telling that citizen attendance at community meetings is higher in the control group area than in the community policing neighborhoods.

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