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Community Policing as Potemkin Village²

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For about ten years, the phrase "community policing" has paradoxically represented both the public face of police reform, and that of the police professionalism movement that supposedly was being reformed. For almost that long, doubters have been predicting that community policing would soon disappear, to be replaced by a newer, sexier fad. Though the label and the concept continue to dominate the national debate, both as a reflexive response to scandal³ and as a good-faith attempt to improve the quality of life in America's cities, the movement has stalled.

Unlike other police fads, community policing has not faded away quietly. It has endured despite the inability of scholars or practitioners to fashion a common definition for it. Its very intangibility preserves it: since no one can define it in

¹ In addition to the works cited, this paper draws heavily upon information and perspectives voiced by numerous friends and colleagues in many private conversations and informal discussions. I owe a great debt to (among many others) Stephen Mastrofski, Jack Greene, Gary Cordner, Deanna Wilkinson, Craig Uchida, David Hayeslip, John Eck, Lorraine Green, Joseph Ryan, Alvah "Bud" Emerson, Lynette Lee-Sammons, Susan Sadd, Randolph Grinc, Mary Ann Wycoff, Dennis Rosenbaum, Wes Skogan, Antony Pate, Jim Fyfe, Rob Worden, Bob Langworthy, Jim Frank, Steve Lab, Tim Bynum, George Kelling, Mark Moore, and many officers and commanders in the Minneapolis (MN), Chicago (IL), and Montgomery County (MD) Police Departments, as well as the many participants in NIJ's "Policing in the 21st Century" working groups. None of them made any conscious decision to contribute to this piece, and none should be held responsible for any distortions of their ideas which I may have made by incorporating their observations into my own.

² The term "Potemkin village" originated as a contemptuous slander against Prince Grigori Aleksandrovich Potemkin (1739-1791), a Russian field marshal under Catherine the Great, and the man responsible for the annexation of the Crimea into her empire. He is credited with founding several towns in the new territory, which probably gave rise to the apocryphal story that he erected mock villages of cardboard in order to give "a false impression of general prosperity" to Catherine and her guests during her "ceremonial tour... through the southern provinces" (Keep, 1974). Though largely discredited by historians, the "Potemkin village" has come to be synonymous with the "false front," a hastily-conceived construction intended to deceive, by allowing people to infer that it represents the whole.

³ A shift to "community policing" was the response of (among others) the Philadelphia Police in the wake of the MOVE confrontation, of the New Haven (CT) Police to a shooting incident, of the Milwaukee Police to the outcry over the mishandling of the Jeffrey Dahmer/Konerak Sinthasomphone episode, and of the Los Angeles Police after the Rodney King beating and its aftermath. See Ryan (1994).

operational terms, no one can say that one or another meager or copycat or renamed small program is not community policing. Therefore any agency can “have” or “do” community policing with a minimal expenditure of resources garnering the reflected glory of the profession for a modest investment.⁴ Community policing is protected by the symbolic promise contained in the title: for the first time, a police fad has been nourished—perhaps even expropriated—as much by the community’s expectations (and thus the politicians’) as by those of the police themselves. Nevertheless, with the question of definition unresolved, rumblings of dissent continue.

It is not inevitable that community policing will triumph. The police can continue to do traditional policing under the label of “community” policing, which is what many critics claim is all that is happening now. If true “community policing” (something demonstrably different from traditional police practices) is to supersede the “professional” crime-fighting model as the dominant paradigm of policing, the promise implied in the philosophy must materialize in operational terms.

THE CURRENT STATE OF COMMUNITY POLICING

Community policing promises four things in chief. First, closer contacts between the police and citizens in non-emergency, non-confrontational situations will break down the barriers of mistrust that have grown up between the two groups. Second, the police will take on responsibility for reducing disorder and previously-ignored “quality of life” issues that afflict particularly urban

⁴Once out of the rarefied atmosphere of the flagship departments and programs (which Jim Fyfe [1994] correctly reminds us are not necessarily representative of the American police establishment), it is worth considering whether we are closer to reality if we describe the do/don’t line as one of “police departments that use the phrase ‘community policing’” and those that do not.

neighborhoods.⁵ Third, the restoration of trust resulting from greater police attention to quality of life issues will increase community confidence in the police, leading to a greater flow of information about crime and criminals from the public to the police; that, in turn, will produce more effective law enforcement (the traditional police role). Finally, once the police have swept the vulgar from the streets, the community will be able to "take back the streets" and reestablish the network of informal controls that had been sundered by criminal invasion, thus reducing the overall need for police intervention in neighborhood affairs.

Community policing is promoted as a philosophy rather than a program, and in its proper interpretation it is exactly that. It constitutes an expansion of the perceptual and motivational understanding of police work, from "enforcement for enforcement's sake" to "enforcement as part of an integrated program to improve the community." The purpose of law enforcement changes from something pursued because it's easy to do, to one activity (out of many) that police employ because it accomplishes something positive or advances a larger plan.⁶

Unfortunately, proponents have no technology certain enough to create that expanded understanding. The current means of training or educating police officers in community policing are insufficient to convert the skeptical; neither can they change the enforcement-oriented expectations of the candidate pool of prospective police officers.

Community policing still suffers from the "What is it?" syndrome, the inability of proponents to define the philosophy in operational terms. Creating department-wide change in a philosophy takes a long time under the best of conditions, and

⁵ There remains a question of whether suburban, small-city, and town police agencies "need" to follow the lead of big-city departments and adopt community policing, or whether they have been "doing it all along" (as many claim) by virtue of their smaller workloads and more relaxed routine contacts.

⁶ Police traditionalists assert that enforcement removes predators from the community, and that itself is positive. Community policing supporters acknowledge that accomplishment, but note the inability of enforcement alone to halt the processes which replace each incapacitated predator with three or four more; they frame their argument in a broader and longer-term context that is communal in focus rather than individual.

department heads often need immediate “proof” of their promise to “do” community policing. There are no easy means to reify a philosophy. Police administrators do know how to mount programs, though, and programs constitute visible evidence of the commitment to better policing. Programs require only a deployment decision, which is well within management’s capacity regardless of whether the rank-and-file or middle managers “buy into” the philosophy. As a result, community policing in operational terms is most commonly a program, sometimes without a philosophy attached.⁷

True community policing requires a change in the nature of police work, which places officers on unfamiliar ground. It mandates a shift away from the three Cs of *coercion* which mark traditional policing—confront, command, and compel, through which the police force people either to do something they do not want to do, or to cease something they wish to do. The need for coercive force does not disappear under community policing; rather, it is supplemented by the uncertain practice of *persuasion*, trying to convince people to undertake tasks they do not want, or assume roles they feel unable to fulfill. As a rule, police agencies do not recruit for the three Ps of community policing—perception, promotion, and patience—and neither the formal nor the informal elements of the police establishment reward them on a consistent basis. (The police cannot compel community activism or self-help, which is often the source of great frustration to even the most dedicated officers.) There is

⁷ Though it is not documented in the academic literature, many police officers who work in community policing programs and units will publicly defend the “company line”—often in language that seems to be right out of the academic treatises and promotional brochures—but privately confess that they discern no difference between their “community policing” assignment and their former “traditional policing” activities. The sources of this observation are numerous personal communications on site visits to various cities and departments, and in meetings sponsored by police associations.

Community policing is not made up entirely of wolves in sheep’s clothing, though. In a fair number of cases, resistant officers who are assigned to community policing initiatives do experience a personal epiphany. With their encounter on the road to a secular Damascus comes a change in attitude: they adopt the philosophy, and change their working styles. The experiences of these converts encourage the promoters of community policing, but it is not yet clear that their experiences are inevitable, or even typical. One of the research tasks yet to be done may be to sift out those who truly have undergone a conversion experience from those who merely mouth the words as part of their “cover.”

as yet no training to help officers adjust to this role shift if they do not understand it intuitively.

Proponents and critics alike can find support for their positions. While it can be a source of innovation and energy, community policing can also exist as a grab-bag of previously devised (and usually ineffectual) non-enforcement activities. Many officers dismiss it as "just Team Policing all over again," or "the old Public Relations stuff," with the implied conclusion that it is as ineffective as those predecessor initiatives and will share their fate.

Community policing draws a dedicated cadre of innovative officers who intuitively understand the philosophy, and provide the successes which sustain the entire movement. But the better hours and lighter workload offered by many of the special programs can also serve as a magnet for a motley crew of less-than-dedicated officers, many of whom do not enjoy the respect of their colleagues. Their presence in community policing initiatives "poisons the well" for many other officers, who evaluate the community policing on the basis of the people who do it.⁸

The literature of community policing is now in a special form of syndication: all "innovations" are merely copycat programs. As the concept spreads hopscotch across the map of local jurisdictions (frequently arriving with a new Chief of Police), the programmatic aspects of community policing are started in new agencies every month: singly or in combination, foot beats, mini-stations, community meetings, D.A.R.E. programs, bicycle patrols, trading cards with police officers' pictures, citizens' academies precinct advisory boards, and "crime prevention" programs of various stripe can be found in many American cities and towns.

⁸ A constant lament of police administrators and program supervisors is the difficulty of recruiting good officers to community policing initiatives. Few officers apply, and frequently the most sought-after decline to submit their names even after direct solicitation. The uncertainty about community policing which afflicted the early years of New York City's CPOP program (McElroy, Cosgrove, and Sadd, 1993) is not the issue in many departments: passive resistance persists despite overt messages from the police administration that officers should "get on board" with community policing if they expect advancement. Frequently, the presence of "the sick, lame, and lazy" in community policing programs is interpreted at the line level as one more demonstration of management's practice of rewarding incompetence rather than "good cops," and one more reason to despise community policing.

However, the resisting elements in police departments are encouraged by the upper-level game of “musical chiefs,” as the institution of limited term contracts for chiefs (designed to eliminate the abuses of lifetime tenure) undercuts the most serious of public statements that “community policing is here to stay.” Every election holds the promise of a new chief, or at least a new political administration unsympathetic to community policing, as the early weeks of the Giuliani administration in New York City demonstrated (Community policing under fire, 1994).

“Finally, community policing continues to suffer from its “soft” image. Because community policing has not moved beyond programmatic demonstrations, the resistance movement is able to define it as something which is done *instead of* “real police work.” When community policing is properly done—as the success stories demonstrate—it is done *in addition to* “real police work” (that is, enforcement and deterrence activities). The very people the community policing movement most needs to recruit are alienated by the false dichotomy which promotes community policing as something fundamentally different from the professional model that most serving police officers have internalized.

The Mistakes of the Community Policing Movement

If community policing dies, the autopsy may well identify the cause as a series of self-inflicted wounds committed by the community policing movement. Those mistakes include intellectual laziness; a special type of plagiarism in the attribution of credit; the inappropriate borrowing of private sector language and concepts; the creation of a “cult of the chief”; definitional slipperiness, which has led to the failure (or refusal) to grapple with the task of creating an effective evaluation process; and the failure to answer the one outstanding question (which almost all police officers ask) in terms that are meaningful to those who ask it.

1. Intellectual Laziness. The community policing movement has elevated hypothesized outcomes to the level of achievable goals. Beginning with the “Broken Windows” article (Wilson and Kelling, 1982) and continuing through the Reagan-era

shibboleth that "crime is the chief cause of poverty" (Stewart, 1986), the movement has consistently proposed simplistic cause-and-effect scenarios. Anecdotal evidence from short-term "success stories"—a form of proof promoters consistently refuse to honor when employed by proponents of rival hypotheses—is presented as exemplary, easily replicatable by following very broad topical steps.

The reigning paradigm of community action is a variation of the political conservatives' philosophy of self-help: "If disorganization is the root of the problem, organization is the solution" (Skogan, 1990). This viewpoint ignores the crucial difference between *social* disorganization (a series of interrelated conditions created outside of, and generally beyond the reach of, local communities) and *political* organizing, an activity with a history of forcing government to do its job.⁹

It is not out-and-out villainy which produces this condition, but confusion due to a melding of social science with social activism. The community policing movement is (in part) in the business of peddling hope, a sort of precursor ingredient for community reintegration.

Social science research noted a disparity between the rates of actual crime and self-reports of *fear of crime*, and properly concluded that the two must be separate phenomenon. At a different level, police officers and executives noted the corrosive effects of despair and feelings of helplessness upon segments of the population.

From the fusion of those observations came the hypothesis that reducing fear of crime must be necessary to reduce crime itself (a conclusion which can only be sustained if the Broken Windows hypothesis is unerringly accurate), and in any case is a desired outcome in its own right (a proper conclusion regardless of the accuracy of the first). As a result, the earlier "fear of crime" initiatives in Newark and Houston (Pate and Skogan, 1985; Pate, et. al. 1986) and the Baltimore County COPE effort (Cordner 1985) have been retroactively incorporated into the community policing canon.

⁹ This argument is addressed more fully in a prior publication (Buerger, 1994).

Reports from the field, however, continue to indicate that unpublished failures (and sometimes Pyhrric victories) outnumber the occasional short-term success story. Police officers continue to express frustration at the low levels of limited and qualified participation in the community projects they organize, and the corresponding lack of tangible, lasting results of their efforts. There are several possible explanations for the theory's "failure to thrive" at the street level, including (singly or in combination) the following:

- 1) The theory is wrong, and must be revised.
- 2) The theory is correct, but the conceptualization of how the process actually works is incorrect or incomplete, and need amending or further development.
- 3) The theory is correct and properly conceptualized, but the task of implementing it is in the hands of the wrong persons and so needs to be redirected to a more appropriate role-agency.
- 4) The theory is correct and properly conceptualized, but the task of implementing it is in the hands of people who have not received a sufficient set of instructions; those who understand the theory must do a better job of translating it for practitioners.
- 5) The theory is correct and properly conceptualized, and the task of implementing it has been assigned to the proper social roles, but the persons currently filling those roles are not up to the task; the role-agencies must be changed and the quality of their personnel raised.

Regardless of which of those possibilities is correct, it is not enough to simply devise "a philosophy": there is considerable work yet to be done in order to realize the philosophy in operational terms. Social change requires social engineering, including a knowledge of social mechanics and an awareness that not everyone charged with the task will be a skilled crafter intellectually attuned to the nuances of philosophy.

A second level of intellectual laziness is the easy resort to straw villains, against which community policing is the inevitable answer. The squad car was the first such villain, blamed for single-handedly isolating and alienating the police from the

public. Close on its heels came the 9-1-1 telephone system, which anthropomorphically wrenched control of police deployments away from beleaguered police executives. The newest villains are police "middle managers" (Lieutenants and Captains, and occasionally even Sergeants), whose saurian obstructionism is held to be the only reason that the self-revealing, self-implementing Truth of community policing has not succeeded in transforming the entire occupation. These simplistic explanations of how policing got to "the state it's in" ignore major contributing factors.

Although even CP-resistant officers will concede that the squad car is a barrier to friendly communication, the alienation of the police from the public—and more importantly of the public from the police—has much less to do with police officers' means of transportation than with their demeanor when they interact with citizens (Mastrofski, Worden, and Snipes, 1994).

The so-called "tyranny of the 9-1-1 system" is less a product of the technology *per se* than of the previous generation of police administrators, promising more/better/faster services to distract their constituencies from legitimate criticisms about officer conduct.

And the "failure" of middle management to adopt community policing is less the product of personal opposition to the concepts themselves, and more the failure of the community policing promoters to define the role change and new expectations of the middle-rank jobs.

The first two are straw targets for counter-criticism as well. Police departments are not going to do away with motorized patrol, if only because municipal budgets will not support the critical mass of employees needed to return to a foot-beat model of deployment. Agencies will not give up the benefits of their E-911 systems simply because they make contact with the police easier; one of the understated successes of the maligned "professional model" has been that of diverting non-critical calls to various differential response mechanisms. If volume of calls remains a problem for

police agencies, it is largely because of the growing number of events for which people require police services, some of which must be dealt with (as Egon Bittner notes) right now, not when the Community Policing Officer comes on duty.

It is in the third area that there is work yet to be done. The large volume of words produced for and about the community policing phenomenon address the top of the organizational pyramid and the bottom, either the Chief's-eye-view or the street- and meeting-room interactions between patrol officers and citizens. Between those polar points is a large bureaucracy which was rationally organized to meet certain needs which support, but are not connected to, point-of-contact interactions. Though it may be encumbered by the legacies of the past,¹⁰ it still must function as a bureaucracy, providing the unchanged infrastructure support that make the street work possible. And part of that support is oversight, encouraging and enforcing compliance of a set of rules devised (howsoever imperfectly) to prevent abuses of the office.

No one is claiming that community policing should be unsupervised, but few are even attempting to grapple with the logical implications of a system which claims to promote personal initiative. "Being creative" has a long occupational history of skirting the externally-imposed rules (and their internally-generated counterparts, the bureaucratic regulations) which were designed to protect citizens against police abuses (Sutton; Klockars 1980, 1984). Relaxing the rules to accommodate "creativity" that is more benign will probably be accomplished on a case-by-case basis, as middle managers wait for external feedback and signals from higher authority about what non-rule conduct is permissible, and what is not. The training needs for officers beginning to work on the fringes of other legal codes are not well-defined, for instance, and the techniques for dealing with the inevitable complaints about officers' choices, balancing competing needs without a

¹⁰ Some of those legacies are not necessarily the direct result of its being a bureaucracy *per se*, but the product of the self-perpetuating culture of policing which flourished until subjected to major external pressures.

background of organizational rules, are unknown.

The work of defining community policing is not over until someone, be it the academic authors or the practitioners, can translate "creative failure" into a framework which rule-driven bureaucracies can cope with. The work is not complete until a comparable system of rationales for deviating from established rules can be devised, tested, and made accessible to all concerned. At present, "creative failure" and alternative possibilities are largely the products of personal capacity and charisma, and thus vulnerable to transfer, promotion, retirement, and changes in individual life situations. To close the circle, community policing advocates will have to radically redefine the bureaucracy, and must do so within the tectonic forces of other granite bureaucracies which bound it.

2. Plagiarism of Work. Without denying the successes which are due solely to community policing initiatives,¹¹ a number of community policing success stories have credited the "partners" (the fledgling citizens' groups) with accomplishments which actually stemmed from traditional crime-attack deployments of both patrol officers and special enforcement units such as Narcotics. The evidence of this is primarily anecdotal, since the publication industry is the more or less exclusive domain of those promoting community policing. However, glimpses can be seen even in the promotional literature if one reads for the perspective of "What actually was done here?"

This, too, is neither outright villainy nor dishonesty, but the inadvertent by-product of need. "Celebrate your small successes" is a catch-phrase of community organizing; it acknowledges the fundamental need to encourage and reward participation. Attributing to the community organization things which are essentially the suppression results of law enforcement crackdown is a sleight-of-

¹¹ The work of Mastrofski and his associates in Richmond, Virginia, is not yet available in publication, but their results point to fundamental and positive differences in the results which officers who self-identify as "community-oriented" achieve when dealing with citizens, compared with those with more traditional self-identification.

hand trick done with the best of intentions, pump-priming the mechanism of recruitment. By giving those who stepped forward to join the fight a reward, the organizers hope to retain the involvement and commitment of the members, and recruit others to the banner of success.

Unfortunately, the unintended result is the alienation of the line officers who did the actual work as "law enforcement," in accordance with a deployment decision made within the chain-of-command. To their eyes, the results were obtained without any reference to "community values" or community policing, and largely without any help from the handful of people who met once or twice at "crime prevention" meetings and talked about street lighting. The street officers, too, seek recognition for their work, and the failure of even their own administration to give them credit further reinforces their skepticism about the "partnership."

More critical to evaluation purposes is the failure of both community policing advocates and opponents to call a spade a spade around this issue. Most community policing initiatives constitute a *de facto* police crackdown, the sudden introduction of extra police resources into areas with previously low levels of police attention (Sherman, 1990). Determining whether the community input played a substantial or symbolic role in the outcome raises other questions: was "community policing" as it is envisioned really at work in this instance? If the crime- or disorder suppressing success of the initiative was due solely or primarily to the crackdown phase, could the same success have been achieved by the traditional "law enforcement" model? If it could, there are some clear repercussions centering on the issue of definition. The obvious rejoinder from the resistance movement will be that what is being called "community" policing is no more than "real" (i.e., traditional) policing with a better public relations effort.

The work will not be complete until a clear role can be defined for the community, and is filled by the community. The results of the community's work must be demonstrated to be unique to the community's input, and evaluated

separately from the benefits derived from crackdown enforcement. When that can be done, we will not longer have to “pay no attention to the men and women behind the curtain,”¹² and can acknowledge their contributions as well.

3. Inappropriate Borrowings. It is a relatively minor flaw, but the community policing movement reflects the police propensity for borrowing the trappings of other professions. Every several years, the exhortational seminar industry (the remora which accompanies the great white shark of capitalism) changes the vocabulary of the private sector, introducing new buzzwords like “objectives” or “quality.” In the best possible interpretation, the language shift occasions a needed reassessment of corporate practice, looking at goals and practices from a fresh perspective, and allowing for the winnowing of wheat (productive practices) and discarding of chaff (unproductive ones).

In actual practice, from most informal observations, substantive change rarely results: as cartoonist Scott Adams has noted, the word “quality” (which was formerly associated with the intrinsic value of an idea or product) has come to be a vehicle for the transfer of money from corporations to consultants.¹³ Suddenly conceptual icons like “empowerment,” “benchmarking,” “quality,” and “customer orientation”—as well as mission statements, vision statements, logos, slogans, and other baubles which can be printed in the annual report—proliferate in managerial speech like mushrooms after a rain.

Though iconography can produce positive, substantive changes, all too often the buzzwords are bandied about without any reference to actual practice. The programmatic hosts have their own resistance movements in the private sector, where the most common complaint is a variation of the glass ceiling: the exercises are foisted by upper management upon middle management and lower-rank employees on a “do as we say, not as we do” basis. What is billed as an organization-

¹² With apologies to Frank L. Baum.

¹³ From a *Dilbert* syndicated comic strip, date unremembered. The phrasing is a close paraphrase of Adams's published dialogue, recovered only from memory.

wide

endeavor becomes, in practice, a caste-based frenetic exercise in identifying (or creating) superficial problems to solve. In turn, that serves as a diversion, a way to avoid addressing more substantive issues, and occasionally creating new ones. The primary observable result is a cut-and-paste transport of the vocabulary into the work product, lengthening intradepartmental communications without improving their content: tales full of sound bites and earnestness, signifying nothing.

In the instant case, the language and (to a lesser degree) the conceptual vocabulary of private sector management has been adopted by police administrators under the banner of professionalism. That the concepts do not have a corresponding niche in public sector work is not considered seriously, as a rule. Police departments borrow from the corporate world the way they borrow from each other: take the bulk of someone else's already-developed program, make a few cosmetic changes to adapt it to local circumstances, and voila! The result is that police departments can spend a lot of time trying to wrangle the corporate language into descriptions of their own replicated programs, without going through the actual analysis and reflection which the exercise is supposed to promote. Though it is at worst a waste of staff time (usually of the one or two officers in the Research and Planning unit), it is time that could be employed more fruitfully if the spirit of the exercise were more fully understood.

Line officers regard it contemptuously, considering it an exercise in public relations advertising, words rather than substance. Senior officers generally dismiss the new exercise by referring to older, failed promotions which were foisted upon them in similar fashion: from the top down, with a cavernous gap between what the vocabulary promotes (employee input and ideas) and what their agency administration actually expects or accepts (employee compliance and recitation of the buzzwords).

However, since policing has been rife with buzzword fads of its own, it is inured

from the usual traumas associated with vocabulary changes. Because the borrowings are almost completely disconnected from operations (and so are easily adopted or ignored, depending upon individual preference), they remain no more than a minor irritant, one that reinforces the low opinion line officers ("street cop culture" in Reuss-Ianni's [1982] phrase) have of police administrators ("management cops") generally.

4. The Cult of The Chief. More serious is the failure of the community policing movement to acknowledge the enormous difficulties of organizational change. The public face of community policing credits the movement to the vision and dedication of a handful of progressive chiefs.¹⁴ Though certainly no change is possible without the chief's commitment, not every agency is fortunate enough to have a chief with the same charismatic attributes as the standard-bearers. Neither do many competent chiefs have the favorable political climates that would help foster success in this area. Pretending that community policing can result from a chief's commitment alone is unrealistic, unfair, and shortsighted.

This viewpoint persists in the community policing literature despite the commonly recognized difficulty of imposing any change from above, particularly positive ones (Guyot's notion of "bending granite" [1979] is still instructive). It does not persist, or even appear, in most gatherings of police chiefs; a common theme sounded by chiefs of police in the "Policing in the 21st Century" advisory groups of the National Institute of Justice has been the hard work and difficulties of preparing police organizations for change.

Although the legendary ability of the line officers to thwart administrative innovation is well-known to most police scholars, community policing promoters continue to vest almost supernatural powers in the person of the chief. In part, this is a product of the perspective of one school of community policing advocates, whose

¹⁴ See, e.g., the dust jacket, the *Introduction*, and *passim* Beyond 911: A New Era For Policing by Sparrow, Moore, and Kennedy, and the products of the Executive Session on Policing of the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard, especially the NIJ *Perspectives on Policing* series of publications.

data-gathering technique (hosting meetings of police chiefs) focuses almost exclusively on the leadership. The "followership" is represented only indirectly, and through the special filter of the chiefs' point of view. When only chiefs are consulted, their viewpoints will prevail; when only theoretical situations are examined, success is always a possible outcome. And where field projects are accessible only through the descriptions of those intimately associated with their development, "success" is usually the outcome.

Nevertheless, there are sources of information beyond those of social science research reports. While the community policing movement was still promoting one of the early programs as a model of community policing, informal communication routes among practitioners carried the news that the program there was essentially bankrupt, buoyed only by federal money and a prolific publicity mill.¹⁵ One of the casualties of such a dichotomy is the further loss of credibility of social science and academic research (never held in high esteem in practitioner ranks at the best of times). More serious is the loss of internal credibility, and the hardening of the line officers' resistance to community policing.

The cult of the chief—and the blinders of a Chief's-office-eye view—requires no further "think-work" from the academic promoters of community policing. The Enlightened Chief has everything in hand, and molds her or his department with charisma, insight, and will. Having overstated the abilities of even the best chiefs, academic promoters of community policing return to the ivory tower, leaving behind a silver rhetoric: training by exhortation. In doing so, they leave the middle ranks and line supervisors in the lurch. Enlightened Chief or no, the task of operationalizing the philosophy falls to those who do not understand it, or (if by chance they do understand the concept) do not believe in it.

Because community policing is a reform movement, and because reform

¹⁵ Personal communication from a senior command-level police official who has not granted permission to be publicly identified.

movements are inherently accusatory, the adoption of community policing by upper management is inevitably regarded as an indictment by the lower ranks. Police officers do not believe they have been doing anything wrong, and they demand an explanation of the intermediary "change agents" (most of whom are draftees, "the Chief's designee," in the language of police interorganizational communications) who also do not believe that what they've been doing their entire careers was or is wrong. As a result, the great sea change (Sparrow, Moore and Kennedy, 1991) is almost instantly watered down to "It's what good cops have always done; don't worry about it, it's just good police work..." or in other words, "exactly what we've been doing all along." That is an organizational signal of "no change" which neutralizes the most lofty vision statement of The Enlightened Chief, and eviscerates the potential for organizational change through community policing.¹⁶

Though "imagining the future" can be a powerful tool, creating the imagined future is a difficult task requiring many tools, and many dirty hands. I can "image" an entire big-city department of community-oriented police officers. I also can "image" a unicorn, a world free of hatred and prejudice, and the Cubs winning the World Series in four straight games. The image is not enough; the image is in fact perilously close to a Potemkin village. The work will not be complete until we have accurate blueprints, sufficient resources, and the proper tools to build what has been "imaged" in any city in the land. Having a progressive chief of police is but the first step of many necessary ones.

¹⁶Change may still occur through community policing, as noted above, but it is change at the individual level. When good cops adopt community policing—as distinct from "the sick, the lame, and the lazy" finding themselves a days-only, weekends-off "retirement job"—their decision may be respected, but they do not necessarily become role models. The successes they may produce are more likely to be attributed to their own personal skills than to "community policing." Though community policing advocates will correctly protest that CP put the individual in a position to use his or her talents in that way, the success still rests on qualities inherent in the officer, not in the still-to-be-defined "technologies" of community policing.

The quotation marks in the preceding sentences indicated paraphrasing, not exact quotes... although "it's what good cops have always done" closely resembles remarks heard in many training and roll call sessions, as well as in the informal bull sessions where line officers give their "off-camera" view of community policing.

5. The Cult-like Properties of Community Policing. The community policing movement attempts to win converts in much the same fashion as does a cult or a religion. It requires an almost religious conversion—at the very least, the front-end adoption of a special vocabulary—after which all the benefits of the conversion will be immediately obvious.¹⁷

Though it is a process problem, which may be resolved once the more substantive questions are answered, much of the resistance to community policing may stem from the dominant form of information transmission and “training”: exhortation (a.k.a. “preaching”). Both the promise and the technology of community policing are enshrined in a canon of homilies, case studies which are endlessly repeated in so-called training sessions across the country. These stories are formulaic in the same way that a sermon is in Christian churches: they describe the problem, expound upon the failures of “the old way of policing” as a precursor to describing the community policing philosophy, and then describe the results achieved in the formerly blighted area once community policing was implemented.¹⁸

The specifics of what the officers did, however, are usually missing. Some broad, retrospective description will be given in a summary version—“obtained the cooperation of the Flubberama Department”—which makes it appear a milk run... and gives the neophyte officer absolutely no clue as to how to do it himself. It gives her no grounding in what to do as a “Plan B,” when the expected cooperation does not materialize in her jurisdiction. The vital nuts-and-bolts of how to obtain that cooperation—of how to get past the gatekeeping devices and the entrenched bureaucratic priorities which helped to create the problem the officer is working on—are almost never explained.

The result is that what is billed as “community policing training” is less a

¹⁷ That the benefits remain somehow invisible to the heathen eyes of traditionalist officers, and cannot be explained without the buy-in, strike the author as a modern-day secular form of Gnosticism.

¹⁸ Community policing by whatever description; the descriptions vary according to the programmatic aspects, which are site-specific.

transfer of skills and techniques than a series of moral tales, a collection of "Ragged Neighborhood" equivalents of Horatio Alger's "Ragged Dick" stories. Their impact is more inspirational than instructional.

The work ^{will} not be complete until police training—that is, the transfer of actual skills and/or procedures from the knowledgeable to the neophyte—encompasses more than success stories and a "what other municipal agencies do" curriculum. A wide band of personal skills related to motivating and sustaining the persons who must be engaged in the community side of the process are one need; negotiation skills to allow officers to deal with obstacles in both the private and public sectors are another, and others are sure to be identified from the field.

6. Definitionally Ambiguous and Evaluation-Resistant. In any single encounter or situation under the traditional policing model, an officer can resort to one of several competing obligations as her primary justification for a decision or action, thus thwarting the claims of the others. Service to an individual complainant, the protection of the constitutional rights of the accused, preservation of an amorphous "public peace," or service-determined responsibilities (such as remaining available to handle calls or to back up an officer if a dangerous situation materializes) exist simultaneously in most police assignments. They constitute an arsenal of situational exigencies which can be manipulated by the officer to "make it come out right" in the officer's view.

Community policing carries with it a similar arsenal, though one of definition rather than obligation. At the basic level, community-based policing is "policing done in the community," usually little more than an agency-defined deployment scheme. The higher functions of positive citizen interactions and community-building are not necessary. A line-officer variation on this theme comes in the form of, "Everything we do is for the community," thus bathing traditional practices (that is, "lock 'em up" law enforcement) in the reflected glory of a reformist philosophy. This is an attenuated version of community policing (and "employee

empowerment") which results when the cooperative philosophy is spread by traditional command-and-control mechanisms in an agency. At "the point of the spear," the reform which began with such clarity in the office of the chief ultimately peters out as a monotone reading in roll call of the executive order establishing the community policing philosophy, followed by "it's just good police work, like we've always been doing; don't worry about it."

Community-oriented policing implies more than deployment, but after that the definitional ground is wide open. Though billed as a department-wide philosophy (because The Enlightened Chief decreed it would be so), the operational face of community-oriented policing may be enshrined in one or more boundary-spanning techniques:

- in dog-and-pony public relations shows by recruiting-poster Officer Friendlys;
- in monthly "precinct advisory committees" endured by the precinct captain and a sergeant or two, in which "the community" is allowed to speak but is not necessarily listened to (though this critique should not be interpreted as disparaging the many good-faith efforts that also exist in the same format);
- in renewed emphasis on the target-hardening technologies which are euphemistically called "crime prevention";
- and in other special projects (including mini-stations and special deployments) which are the province and responsibility of a small number of officers whose work represents the department.

The community is the focus or the audience for these initiatives, but not necessarily a partner except perhaps in the political sense.

There are also numerous instances of individual officers bridging the gap between the "traditional" attitude and the new expectations of community policing. At the individual level, these officers personify the personalized, responsive attitude of community policing without giving up the hard-nosed approach to dealing with

street predators. Some of these officers take full advantage of their community policing deployment, providing both traditional police enforcement and the more advanced community-promoting services which the reform movement envisions. These officers are community policing's "poster children," providing the success stories which bedeck the promotional materials.

One of the difficulties faced by the reformists, however, is the existence of other officers who continue to work in the same fashion, and achieve similar citizen-oriented results, from "the isolation of the squad car and the incessant demands of the police radio" (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990:5). These officers are the poster children of the resistance, "proof" that community policing is "just good police work," as though every patrol officer worked at the level of the best.

To the public, there is no discernible difference; the community's interest is in having a responsive police department and responsive police officers, and the style of deployment is largely irrelevant. Community policing *programs* are supported by the community because they are the most assured way of obtaining responsive police *officers*.

To police administrators, the difference is not between the good cops in community policing assignments and those in traditional deployment. It is between the good officers (many of whom find their way into community policing by personal choice or by administrative request) and those whose overall performance does not match that of the poster children: the cowboys, the whiners, and the malefactors at the low end of the scale, and the competent but "just do enough to not get noticed" middle.

(Indeed, if all police officers had the attitude and skills of the 20-year beat cop who likes the work, likes the community, and retains his or her enthusiasm through the various legal and political changes, there would be no need for a community policing movement. Community policing, like professionalism before it, exists as a reform movement because the poster children do not represent the entirety of the

American police establishment. The competing paradigm is personified in the Law Enforcer "thump 'em and dump 'em," there-are-no-innocent-bystanders attitude whose subscribers regale themselves with twice-told tales of how they're just the collectors of human garbage, and how working their beats is like policing the Third World cities they've never seen. But many cops subscribe to neither approach.)

Finally, there is community policing on a department-wide scale, such as is being undertaken in diverse locales including Portland, Oregon; Chicago, Illinois; and Montgomery County, Maryland. While all have special demonstration projects, the police administrations are attempting to make a change in the working style of each officer. Operationalizing the concept remains exceedingly difficult, and the agencies' approaches vary according to local demands and resources: Chicago is implementing a "split force" assignment (neighborhood beat officers, supported by [and supporting] sector-wide rapid response units) but also emphasizes interchangeable responsibilities. Montgomery County has adopted a workload analysis scheme to free 35% of each officer's patrol time to work on community problem-solving, and is looking at ways to expand the concept through other ranks and assignments, including civilian employees. Portland deploys Neighborhood Liaison Officers and has Neighborhood Teams which can provide focused additional resources in the short term, but otherwise is committed to effecting a change of philosophy throughout the entire department.

The small programs rest primarily on the enthusiasm and self-motivation of a small number of officers who comprehend and identify with the community policing philosophy. Their work represents the department to the public, but is not necessarily representative of the department as a whole. Sadd and Grinc (1993) among other investigators have noted the phenomenon wherein community residents adore "their" community police officer, but still hold deep reservations

about the rest of the force.¹⁹ To overcome this, departments assert that their goal is to make everyone in the department “community-oriented.” But all attempts to expand community policing beyond the self-selected invariably founder on the shoals of the question asked by all unconverted officers.

7. Not Answering THE Question. The most damaging failure of the movement has been its inability to answer the question which all skeptical patrol officers ask about community policing. When all is said and done—when it has been fully explained that “it’s a philosophy, not a program,” and when the entire range of anecdotal success stories has been recited—the patrol officer still wants to know one thing, and one thing only: “When I go out there and turn the key in the ignition of my squad car, what is it that you want me to do that I haven’t already been doing?”

The deafening silence which follows this question—or worse, the broken-record repetition of the “it’s a philosophy” mantra—merely confirms the opinion which the officers had already formed of the concept: smoke and mirrors, just P.R., not real police work, bogus. There are, or can be, answers to that question, but all the potential responses require a heavy investment in program development and training which has not yet materialized. Police “training” in community policing consists in large part of two things: a recitation of the exhortational success stories, and a description of the structural and operational changes which the agency is implementing to demonstrate that it is now “doing” community policing.²⁰

One of the most effective tools of community policing training is assigning beat officers to the small community policing programs. By “freeing... patrol officers from the isolation of the squad car and the incessant demands of the police radio” (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990:5), police administrators create the opportunity for officers to discover the benefits of community policing for themselves: the

¹⁹ Mastrofski and his associates found a police variation of this in Richmond, where some officers make a point of excluding from their beat any officers whose work ethic or attitude to citizens they do not like (**need cite**).

²⁰ A more detailed examination of this phenomenon is in preparation by the author.

realization that the decent members of the community do appreciate and support the police; the ability to see events as problems, and work on them until resolution; the opportunity to have a lasting impact on a problem rather than impose an unrealistic and temporary band-aid solution.

Special assignment, as a training tool faces obvious limits, however. Most police departments are staffed well below what they consider optimum strength levels (even if they are staffed to authorized levels), and any assignment to community policing initiatives requires "robbing" another unit; indeed, the line culture's most frequent complaint about the programs is that they "take bodies out of the precincts" and thus compromise officer safety. Only a small number of officers can be deployed in this fashion at any given time, and the idea of doing a "specialty FTO period" for community policing creates hard choices for administrators. At the same time, the programs are the public face of the department's (read: "administration's") commitment to a different style of policing. Assigning "cowboys" or the "attitude problems" to those posts without some mentoring or quality control oversight could be a formula for disaster. No police chief can afford to have Roscoe Rules as the department's spokesperson.

Resistant officers may convince themselves there's no difference between community policing and what they do as enforcers, but the public is extremely sensitive to the difference in attitude. Community policing includes a hard-nosed, lock='em-up approach to criminal predation, but that is but one small part of the operational agenda. Both researchers and chiefs of police have observed a dichotomous outlook on the part of the public: citizens love their community police officers, but continue to despise the attitude of the 9-1-1 based patrol officers with whom they have contact. The type of service afforded by "someone who knows me" is much preferred over the treatment doled out by a complete stranger... which ironically enough is an exact mirror of the way line cops talk about citizens' reactions to them.

The *promise* of community policing points us back in the direction of Sir Robert Peel's original premise that the absence of crime is the test of police efficiency—not the obvious signs of police efforts to combat crime (the latter which are essentially the hallmark of arrest-driven “traditional” “law enforcement” policing). The end result may very well require a new orientation of policing at both the individual and community levels, one which emphasizes fostering law compliance more than closing the barn door by arrest after the law has been broken.

Transferring (or perhaps better “creating”) a responsibility for the broader mandates of community-building and fostering law compliance may require police policy-makers to go into satellite fields (including that of the despised Social Work) for not only trainers but evaluators. To bring the self-perpetuating crime-fighting/law-enforcement culture back to its roots may require radical changes in the nature of police supervision and evaluation of officer performance, and ultimately in the nature of police recruitment. Given that police recruits are not *tabula rasa*, but present themselves for employment with an already-ingrained image of what “real police work is” (partly from media sources, but partly from “legacy” status in police families [Kilborn, 1994]), that change will be measured in generations.

THE CURRENT FORM OF COMMUNITY POLICING

The localized scandals and the police faddishness which currently support community policing have not generated the tectonic forces needed to bend the granite of police culture. In the interim, it will be more useful to tone down the rhetoric, and consider community policing as a four-fold endeavor: 1) Deployment, what the police agency does internally; 2) Coalition, what the police agency does in conjunction with other public and private entities; 3) Working Style, what individual police officers do both structurally and tactically; and 4) Partnership,

what the police do in conjunction with the affected communities.²¹

Community Policing as Deployment

Most of what is promoted as community policing is in fact just organizational restructuring. Changing the organization by creating special units or programs, establishing geographical beat integrity, creating citizen advisory councils, hosting or participating in community events, and the like are all deployment decisions—requiring little more than the assignment of personnel—which rest fully within the control of the agency's administrative staff. Community policing of this nature is inevitably top-down, though it may be (and often is) undertaken as a participative management exercise.

In some cases the programs are simply boundary-spanning devices which deflect certain criticisms and protect the core functions of the agency. If community advisory councils are simply a way to coopt the citizen input—a forum for letting community representatives speak, before telling them about police limitations which make it impossible to comply with their requests—then the line officers' dismissal of community policing as “just the old Public Relations come back to life” has some validity.

In other instances—notably the assignment of individual officers to specific tasks, such as handling abandoned car complaints in Philadelphia (Ryan, 1994)—the move is completely consistent with the standard bureaucratic practice of increased specialization as a response to increased pressure or demand. In such a case, the practice represents “community” policing by virtue of the fact that the department responded to a community-identified problem rather than a police-identified one. The community managed to get the removal of abandoned vehicles moved up several levels on the agency's priority list.

²¹ Unfortunately, this four-fold scheme must go upstream against the prevailing rhetorical currents. Many police agencies include joint actions with other agencies—what is here called “Coalition”—in their public definition of “Partnership,” following the lead of the Clinton Administration and others.

In the more progressive departments, police administrators recognize that the changes desired at the individual level usually do not happen as a result of hearing exhortational stories or because of department change strategies. Savvy administrators understand that organizational (and sometimes cultural) barriers must be removed, and the organizational climate changed, before the "creative risk-taking" rhetoric of community policing will have any meaning for line personnel.

Veteran officers are skeptical and withhold commitment to the new program/philosophy: many have already been through at least one boom-bust cycle of reform, where glowing visions of the future were introduced with flourish and rhetoric of change, only to disappear quietly soon after the media left. Line officers look to the administration for resolution of long-standing grievances as a concrete sign that things truly have changed, before they will invest any effort in the new project.

As a consequence, community policing provides the vehicle for internal reform as well. This is the area where the borrowings from other fields are most prevalent, because there is a well-developed "change industry" attached to the private sector. A police agency looking for help in how to go about changing the organization has immediate access to a ready-made arsenal of techniques for "setting the stage." From the early efforts in Dallas (Wycoff and Kelling, 1978) through Madison, Wisconsin's "quality from the inside out" (Couper and Lobitz, 1991; Wycoff and Skogan, 1993), organizational change has been seen as a vital precondition for effecting change in line officers' point-of-contact behaviors. In this context, when they are done well, internal surveys of employee satisfaction serve both to identify areas of concern and to establish benchmarks for the future.

Community Policing as Deployment is primarily an agency's way of responding quickly to the community's dissatisfaction (where it exists) and stated needs. In some cases, it "buys time" for a police department to overcome scandal, and in most cases, the symbolic promise has been enough to accomplish that end. More broadly, it

creates an internal mechanism for experiential learning by small groups of officers, mostly self-selected at first,²² to try the new style, work through the role-change glitches, and discover the new techniques and benefits that result.

Over the long term, hopefully, these lessons and revelations will be transmitted to the other officers on the force both formally (through in-service training) and informally (through the window-to-window and squad room exchanges that constitute the communications system of policing's oral culture), and through acculturation of incoming generations of rookie officers.

Community Policing as Deployment is an organizational capacity, and should be evaluated on that basis alone. It can exist independently of—and indeed, often exists without—community policing as a working style of most patrol officers. The great philosophical shift of community policing does not constitute an exception to Manning's (1977, 1980) observations that success in policing is often defined in terms of *having* a special kind of unit (such as a narcotics unit, or bicycle patrols), without any reference to what such a unit actually accomplishes in any objective sense: success is conveyed symbolically rather than statistically.²³

Community Policing as Coalition

One of the most notable successes of community policing has been the ability of the police to mobilize other public sector agencies, and some private sector ones, to work on problems of common concern. By getting city government to work better, the police department steals a march on the community organizers, whose tactics are basically a pale derivative of the confrontational tactics of the Alinsky-style civic organizations whose target was City Hall (Buerger, 1994). Most of the "successes" are defined in terms of small geographic localities, one-time efforts which require

²² Though admittedly, some self-select for the wrong reasons, as discussed above.

²³ Paradoxically, of course, this is a means-based rather than an ends-based definition of success, the direct opposite of what Goldstein proposes under the heading of Problem-Oriented Policing, which in cartoon form is a mainstay of local community policing tactical efforts.

minimal deviations from the normal operations of the other agencies: cleanups of vacant lots or garbage collections, building parks on abandoned land, closing and boarding up crack houses and shooting galleries, and the like.

These are worthwhile activities in their own right, and at one level deserve positive evaluation for what they accomplish, regardless of how limited. What has been missing from the equation so far is the recognition that these are interim successes, designed to be a stepping-stone to something else. That "something else" has been identified as the empowerment and reintegration of the community, and there is scant evidence that it is being produced.

There is a growing level of discontent among community-oriented and community-based police officers that the "success" of small programs and one-shot activities does not lead to citizen empowerment, but rather to greater citizen expectations that the police will take care of an ever-widening field of problems for them. We also have little information on "time to failure," or participation-decay on the part of the other agencies, in large part because of the short-term focus of evaluations dictated by external funding sources.

Community Policing As Working Style

Ideally, the philosophy of community policing will come to imbue the everyday approach of all working police officers. When this happens, we will see very little overt change in what actually occurs at the level of the individual encounter: the police will remain the State's instrument for distributing non-negotiable coercive force (Bittner, 1980 [1991:48]), and the police will continue to be responsible for dealing with situationally aberrant behaviors, both criminal and disorderly.

What we should look for is twofold: evidence of some change in the "tone of voice" of the police in situational encounters (Mastrofski, Supina, and Snipes, 1995), and of a vision which integrates both individual events and the overall purpose of non-dispatched work time ("proactive," in the commonly misused sense). At

present, police culture tends to treat an arrest as an ethical good in its own right. Under a fully-realized community policing orientation, arrest should serve both the short-term protective function for the community, and contribute to a long-term protection based upon some rehabilitative (or at least behavior-modifying) process which serves the interest of the arrestee, who will ultimately return to the community.²⁴

The reintegrating function is currently despised by the police as a "social work" function, and officers who identify themselves as "law enforcers"²⁵ resist the suggestion that they should be "social workers with guns." It is true that part of police work constitutes individual-level support and encouragement which outsiders would recognize as good social work as well. However, that is done on a case-by-case basis, and is under the control of the individual officer's assessment of both his or her abilities (and preferences) and the characteristics of the individual "client." In effect, the officers get to pick cases they think they can win.

Officers intuitively recognize that expanding beyond individual screening of eligible cases to an official expectation that they will deal with all cases in similar fashion invites failure. In part, this occurs because cops see the results of the broad-based, serve-all-who-apply approach in the social service agencies as broad-based failure, not success, and thus more work for the cops. In part, too, they intuitively recognize that success in such an endeavor owes as much to personality factors as it does to technique.

²⁴ In part, the short-term focus is a defensive reaction to the disappointments which arise out of the inability of police officers to control the decisions made about "their" case as it makes its way through the criminal justice system. In part, however, it stands as a surrogate punishment which subtly informs much of the police self-identified role (see, e.g., Westley, 1970; also Sykes, 1986 [1995]).

²⁵ Clinging to the police culture's mythic image of protecting society by removing predators from its midst (in defiance of all evidence to the contrary). Not all officers subscribe to that view, however; many now question the efficacy of arrest and rearrest, and are looking for other answers.

Community Policing As Partnership

The weakest area of community policing is the other half of the partnership, the community participation. In part, the reason for this may be structural: the police are targeting their community policing programs and resources at the most resistant, least promising targets. Wilson and Kelling (1982) explicitly state that police efforts should be targeted in "neighborhoods at the tipping point," communities which are in decline but which still retain an identifiable social infrastructure, persons who have a vested interest in the neighborhood. In the Broken Windows hypothesis, the worst neighborhoods (already abandoned) are not seen as fertile ground for the rule-setting which Wilson and Kelling espouse.

Police administrators, however, are constrained by political realities. They can no more ignore the devastated neighborhoods than they can publicly identify the neighborhoods "at the tipping point" (Buerger, 1994). Many community policing programs are mounted in the worst areas of the city, where crime and disorder (and not coincidentally the police workload, and the levels of dissatisfaction with prior police-community relations) are greatest.

These are the areas where human capital is at its lowest ebb, where far more effort must go to daily survival. If the "welfare dependency culture" actually exists, these are the areas where it would be found. That residents of these areas should look to the police to "solve all their problems" is not surprising.

These are the places where the existing technologies of the program-based community policing have the least purchase—both the "buy more locks and engrave your property" gimmicks of Community Crime Prevention and the "come to a meeting once a month and scare the criminals away" gimmicks of Community Organizing.

It is here that community policing is most at risk. It risks program failure and officer burnout if unrealistic goals and timelines are set, and if institutional support systems are not in place or functioning. But the symbolic aura of the police remains

powerful even in the areas where it has been most eroded, and as some of the demonstration projects have illustrated, it can be revived almost instantly if the right person wears the uniform.

Where departments have found success of that nature, however, the success rests upon the work of officers who have discarded the "We're the police, and you're not" attitude, shaping their requests, orders, expectations, and explanations in terms that are as meaningful to their clients and audience as to the police. It is that conversion which is the core of community policing as a working style, and it is only that which can be expected to bring about results within the populace itself.

Right now, the community policing movement derives its success stories from the skills and personal strengths of a relative handful of self-selected officers who either brought those qualities to the job, or developed them on the job without reference to, or help from, any formal police training or skills-development program. Developing the institutional capacities to instill those qualities and abilities in personnel who hired on for vastly different reasons represents a large portion of the work yet to be done.

THE WORK YET TO BE DONE

Community policing has much in common with the apocryphal villages of Marshal Potemkin. It can be created overnight, by decree and deployment, from available resources. It can provide an impressive backdrop for a tough anti-crime statement for the community, a promise of better municipal government, or a Presidential visit. It can shelter those immediately in its lee, but cannot protect all.

As long as it needs the adjective to describe it, "community policing" will be something distinct and different from "real" policing. Though each individual program may be substantial enough in its own way, community policing does not reflect the way most policing is done. Ultimately, it is only a representation of an idealized way that proponents wish policing were done.

The main work to be done is nothing less than the transformation of the American police establishment to the point where all officers display the talents and the attitudes of the best. That agenda is no less ambitious than that of the professionalism reform movement which community policing seeks to replace. In many ways, the ability to accomplish the community policing change rests on the ability of the police establishment to complete the unfinished agenda of professionalism.

Goldstein is correct: a sole focus on means without regards to the ends those means are designed to accomplish is fallacious. At some point or another, someone has to link community policing to police success in combating crime. So far, with only a few exceptions, the evaluation side of the enterprise has been dithering around with employee satisfaction surveys, with community satisfaction surveys, and with promoting the short-term effects of crackdowns. Everyone avoids the crime question like the plague, reciting the mantra of "it's a philosophy" to ward off the evil eye of scrutiny and claiming it is "too soon" (and the community policing tactics too uncertain) to make such a link. As long as this condition persists, the unconverted among the ranks and files will be able to dismiss community policing as "just P.R.," and unworthy of adoption as a working style.

Police officers will accept community policing as a policing style—the desired outcome of the alleged "sea change"—under one of three conditions: if they are brought in and indoctrinated with its precepts from the first; if they see it as an improvement in their workday existence; or if they consider it to be a more effective way to fulfill their self-perceived enforcement/protector role.

The first requires not only changing the entire training/socialization process of persons entering policing, but probably also changing the expectations of the candidate pool as well. This is the area least in control of the police administration, which does attempt to do the indoctrination, but must compete with the "Listen, kid, forget all that [stuff] you learned at the academy" model of the field training and

socialization process.

The second condition occurs only on an individual basis, hardly a solid foundation upon which to base policy making.²⁶ Rotating officers through the programs (as discussed above) is a potential solution, but it can be done only at a considerable and risky cost to other operations, and even then a positive outcome is not assured.

The third holds the most immediate promise, but the current proclivity to claim success on the basis of soft methodology will not convince the skeptical.

The primary reason that everyone dances around the crime problem is that we all know that no single project, no single agency has enough resources to have a fighting chance at controlling crime (Jack Greene's lovely phrase "the veneer of capacity" [1994] rings true here). And many suspect that if an equal quantum of additional resources existed under the traditional/professional model, the results might be comparable. The worst-case scenario, of course, is that a fully-supported, fully-implemented community policing effort will either have no impact at all, or will actually lose ground against the deteriorating social conditions.

A Prescription For Where To Start

At the present time, the community policing movement is caught up in its own Groundhog Day movie, a repeating cycle of "innovations" which are merely the same thin program-based representations transplanted to a new jurisdiction. The wide scope of programs (and the broad spectrum of substance behind them) are linked only by John Eck's (1994) observation that they are the means through which local departments gain additional resources to work on local problems. If there is to be any tangible evidence of success beyond anecdote, any meaningful improvement in policing as a social force, the movement must leave the specialist ghetto of small

²⁶ It is a process which can be manipulated, though. One of the benefits of the community policing programs as a means to the end of creating a community policing working style is that they provide an opportunity for officers to experience the benefits of the new relationship with the community. But it is not an automatic process, and the desired conversion is not inevitable.

programs, push beyond the roll-call sergeant's assurances that "It's just what we've always done," and demonstrate some appreciable changes in outcome. There are several steps which can begin the process.

1. Eliminate the Language Barrier

The artificial distinction between "community" policing and "traditional" policing should be discarded. The endless proselytizing to get skeptical officers to buy into the reformist language is like trying to teach a pig to sing,²⁷ and worships the symbolic to the detriment of the substantive. If officers are affronted by the soft image of community policing, it should not be crammed down their throats. We should be concerned with how they interact with the citizenry (Mastrofski, Supina, and Snipes, 1995) and with what they accomplish, and we have a better chance to achieve that by promoting the behavioral changes we desire simply as good policing. The "community" label has served to identify the themes for the next stage of police reform, and done a valuable service thereby. Nevertheless, many of its canons are now alive and well in in progressive echelons of the police establishment ("Community Policing as Deployment"); if the label does not serve to advance the cause of the changes in the lower ranks, it should be discarded in favor of an approach that will serve that end.

2. Identify and Promote the Skills Necessary to the Mission

Rhetorical exhortations need to be bolstered by specific sets of skills (analytical or behavioral) that help officers discharge their new and expanded roles (Buerger, Petrosino, and Petrosino, 1994). We need to identify skills which the new mode demands of its police officers, and identify sources for the development and transmission of them. Some of the analytical skills may lie in the social services area, which deals with common clientele. Though street officers will undoubtedly continue to resist "doing social work," giving officers the clinical skills to

²⁷ "It wastes your time, and annoys the pig." The pun is unintended, although I do not that expect any reader s will find that disclaimer believable.

understand what they are facing is not the same as requiring them to adopt a support-service delivery style. The ability to better analyze behaviors helps officers resolve difficult situations with less danger to the officer, and can help make a smoother hand-off to the real social service delivery agents. (In this vein, the Denver [CO] Police Department is experimenting with a "hands-on" training approach using police psychologists' input; see Scrivner, 1994).

The "better service" promise of the community policing reform can be achieved within the framework of traditional policing: it represents an attitude which arises from a meld of promulgated values, recruitment practices, and departmental reinforcement through training, supervision, and evaluation (see, e.g., Mastrofski 1994).

That part of community policing which engages the police in the newer area of community *building* is not a logical outgrowth of traditional police skills, attitudes, or training. Adding persuasion and supportive roles to the police mission, beyond the current incident-based context, requires at a minimum a new set of skills for dealing with people. Ultimately, it may also demand changes in police recruiting practices, as well as supervision and evaluation. Each of those changes will have ripple effects throughout the organizations that attempt them.

Merely identifying the skills is not enough: both realistic delivery systems and viable integration of those skills into department expectations are necessary. Delivery systems must incorporate skills training into police training programs on something other than a lecture/exhortation basis. As we learned from domestic violence "training" and multiculturalism and cultural diversity "training," if the lessons are not presented in terms meaningful to the officers, the exercise is at best a waste of time, and at worst merely provides the recalcitrant with more ammunition to defend what they know is "right."

The common police practice of equating the message with the messenger creates a particular burden for program development. Not only must the curriculum

by useful, it must be presented by someone who either has credibility with street officers, or can establish it in a "cold contact" first-meeting situation.²⁸

Nor should we expect that new skills will have instant applicability outside their original venue. Clinical skills that are valuable in a contained medical environment may not be immediately applicable on the street. Before "training" is established by transplanting lessons unchanged from one context into another, the lessons should be thoroughly reviewed and discussed by competent, interested personnel from both environments. Modifications in the training regimen should be documented (along with their rationale), and evaluated in field tests first with the "best and brightest" officers thought most likely to both use the new skills well, and provide constructive feedback on their applicability to field situations.

3. Create Organizational Readiness

New skills for line officers will have a ripple effect on supervision and management, and should stimulate the development of better support systems within police agencies. The most obvious problem is the "generalist supervision" of the line sergeants, whose experience with the new techniques will be as new and untested as the patrol officers they attended the training session with. Departments may need to augment regular supervision with "specialist supervision," clinicians who do direct observation of officers' use of the new technologies. The clinicians would provide feedback both to the officers and to the supervisors, helping develop workable supervisory guidelines in the field setting.

It is now a commonplace to blame the demise of Team Policing on managerial resistance, combined with lack of sufficient planning to be able to incorporate the new deployments into the existing organizational structure. A current variation is the jeremiad against the so-called "dinosaurs" of middle management. Departments must look at the needs and expectations of the organization with specific reference

²⁸ A more elaborate development of this material, and the supervisory implications discussed immediately below, is being developed by the author in a separate paper.

to those ranks, and divine how they must adapt to the changes at line level.

The answer will not lie in more training sessions in which the language and management philosophies of the private sector are presented with superficial reference to police operations. "Filling in the middle" requires a realistic look at issues of performance evaluation (both individual and "comparative worth" variations) and at handling complaints against officers as they learn the ropes of the new expectations.

Departments need to develop the means to broadcast the "new rules/new skills expectation" to the applicant pool as well as to members of the department. This is an uphill battle against generational legacies (Kilborn, 1994) and the informal preservice instruction and orientation created by the so-called "reality-based" media shows. Current practices seek (or passively accept) persons who already have their own image of what police work is or should be like, and then try to teach them skills and attitudes they don't see as useful or appropriate within their personal framework. To break the gunslinger image may eventually require drastic changes in hiring practices, such as aggressively recruiting psychology and social work for the interpersonal skills (rather than criminal justice majors with a general understanding of the justice system), then training them in "law enforcement" techniques.²⁹

4. Establish An Active Role For The Community

The traditional role of the community has been "to be the 'eyes and ears' of the police." For the most part, that has been the only role identified for the community in the so-called "partnership," especially after the concept has been passed down from the leading thinkers to willing-but-perplexed worker-bees at the line level. Meaningful roles for the community—activities and expectations scaled in

²⁹ Some would probably drop out soon after realizing the confrontational nature of street work, but more and more police supervisors and commanders are reporting a similar dropout phenomenon (treating police work as just one more McJob option rather than as a lifetime career) associated with the mythical Generation X.

accordance with the capacity of a given community—are largely hypothetical. There is an expectation that “the community” will assume the governance of its own affairs and control the actions of members and visitors alike, but that remains more a desired goal than a realized one. Between the current state of affairs and the hoped-for outcome are no tangible steps that can be implemented with any assurances that increased social control will result.

This is an appropriate task to set to academicians, but it will require more than the traditional analyses of databases collected for other purposes. Relationships and associations and theory-testing—the staple of most sociological and criminal justice research—has not and will not tell anyone what to do. New approaches are needed, and new methods of analysis.

5. Developing A Realistic Evaluation Capacity

An array of meaningful evaluation tools that can look at community policing programs in the light of reasonable expectations is an essential next step. At the moment, every small brick of a community policing program is examined as though it were the completed structure, responsible for reducing crime, reintegrating the community, and finding cures for cancer and the common cold. And the gap between the hype and the actual accomplishments is both staggering and obvious.

What is needed are evaluation methods which can build incremental knowledge of how skills and approaches relate to outcomes, and analyze both success and failure in terms that can be manipulated by policy.³⁰ The ability to create such tools depends in turn on an ability to settle the definitional questions which plague police reform, and brings us full circle to the attendant questions of capacity and interdependence. But it is that work which constitutes the next step in either the reform of the police through community policing, or the completion of the professionalization of the police (according to one’s philosophical preference). It is that work which is yet to be done.

³⁰ A separate paper on this subject is in preparation by the author.

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