

## MODULE 3 – HOW DID WE GET HERE?

### LECTURE 12 – THE COMMUNITY POLICING ERA AND THE SURVEY

#### THE COMMUNITY POLICING ERA (1970s - PRESENT)

OK, enough with the feds. Let's move on to the **COMMUNITY POLICING Era** and see where that takes us. Community policing – you know, after all these years it still sounds a little “**tweakie**” to me. Not really **proper copper** stuff, you know? But, whatever.

In the 1960s, amid widespread civil unrest and rising crime rates in urban areas, the police came to be viewed by the public as having become “**too independent.**” The “professional” style of policing came under heavy criticism for having isolated the police from the communities in which they operated, and for not responding to the needs and demands of the public.

So first it seems that they're **too dependent** in the Political Era with all the corruption and stuff, and then they're **not dependent enough** with all the Reform Era professionalization **goings-on**. Having trouble making up our minds, **are we?**

As part of the “Great Society” movement of the time, President Johnson appointed a **Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice** in 1968. This was the first-ever comprehensive look at our CJ system and its problems.<sup>82</sup> Subsequently, the federal government funded a number of research programs in an effort to better understand and address these problems. Since then, policing in American society has undergone significant organizational, administrative and personnel changes.<sup>65, 69</sup>

In the 1970s and 1980s, the “**Era of COMMUNITY POLICING**” evolved out of much of that research. COMMUNITY POLICING has been described as a fundamental shift away from traditional reactive policing, and toward a broader, more comprehensive philosophy of **crime prevention**. Now don't get confused here – we're talking about **policing, not investigations**, OK? COMMUNITY POLICING is arguably the **dominant model** of policing in the US today, as about two-thirds of all local agencies practice some form of it.<sup>83</sup>

In general terms, the **primary emphasis** of COMMUNITY POLICING is to build close working **relationships with the community** and to use **problem-solving** methodologies with community partners to **prevent crime**. Sound Peelian yet? As part of the COMMUNITY POLICING philosophy, the public continues to be recognized as the primary provider of information to the police, and the role of some patrol officers becomes specialized

in the form of “**COMMUNITY POLICING Officers,**” who serve as the primary interface with the public regarding the prevention of crime and the resolution of community-identified crime-related problems.

The main focus of COMMUNITY POLICING is on **preventing crime** (by COMMUNITY POLICING Officers rather than by detectives) before criminal behavior occurs (that is, before the ACTION stage), rather than investigating it afterwards. But (and that’s a big but), it emphasizes **OVERT** and close working relationships with the public, rather than any of the sneakier clandestine or coercive investigative methods used by all those Government Spy, Secretive Rogue and Inquisitor detectives. <sup>84, 85</sup>

Now is that **cool, or what?** I mean, really. OVERT. **Huh!** But **where’s the fun in that?**

During at least the past three decades, various versions of COMMUNITY POLICING have been implemented in police agencies to one degree or another and, to be sure, not all of them have been proven to be effective for one reason or another. However, numerous studies in agencies of varying sizes across the country have examined different COMMUNITY POLICING approaches, and they have consistently shown **significant decreases in crime** where COMMUNITY POLICING is effectively practiced. <sup>86, 87, 88, 89, 90</sup>

So COMMUNITY POLICING is a **significant break away** from the traditionally covert Government Spy techniques to PREVENT crime. It embraces the public as a partner in proactively, but OVERTLY, working to prevent crime, and it uses a highly visible uniformed COMMUNITY POLICING Officer rather than a plainclothes detective working proactively and covertly to accomplish a similar end.

**Any complaints with that?** Hey, maybe we’re **on to something** here. **Whaddayathink?**

“**Lakewood Community Policing.**” This is only a 4-minute YouTube video, but it touches on the police-public relationship and the overt collection of crime information from people to deal with problems in the community. It’s worth watching because the officers themselves tell you **what they think about their jobs.** There’s many more videos like this. But remember, we’re dealing with more than 15,000 agencies, and effectively implementing COMMUNITY POLICING in a community can pose significant challenges to the community as well as the police.

Recently, **two new studies** were conducted that provide some insight into the future role of community policing and investigators in the US. The first one was a survey of police agencies regarding the current status of the police criminal investigation process, and the second one used the survey data of the first study to

explore whether COMMUNITY POLICING helped to solve crime, in addition to preventing it. The studies are briefly reviewed next because of their impact on the next module of the course.

### **THE FIRST EVER NATIONALLY REPRESENTATIVE SURVEY**

In 2001, at the beginning of the new millennium, the **first-ever nationally representative survey** of police agencies regarding the police criminal investigation process was published.<sup>91</sup> This is the largest, most comprehensive and most current investigations-related data that we have about state, county and municipal agencies of all sizes. Of the 3,123 agencies polled, 1,746 (or 56%) provided usable responses. The respondents employed more than 50% (over 350,000) of the sworn officers in the US, and 16% (over 50,000) of them were investigators. The questionnaire used in the survey included 87 base questions organized around six major issue areas. They are (1) Organizational Matters; (2) Patrol Officers; (3) Investigators; (4) Investigation Management; (5) Investigative Support; and (6) Investigative Effectiveness. The agency responses to these questions were compiled into more than 700 variables for analysis.

These **details are provided** to you, PERCEPTIVE TRAVELER, because by this point in the course you have become a more informed and knowledgeable student of the criminal investigation process (feels good, eh?). And it is becoming more important for you to gain a better understanding of how and where researchers get some of the information being provided to you. Much of that information, as you can see, is essentially a summary of agency responses to a survey, so the agencies themselves are trying to tell us about their job. That sounds great – straight **from the copper’s mouth**, so to speak.

But just imagine for a moment that you come in to work one day all **smiley-faced** and everything, determined to dive once again into that **massive overdue workload** that your boss has been **ragging** on you about for weeks. Then somebody walks up and hands you a 26-page survey questionnaire booklet in small print and says to fill it out in your “spare time,” but to have it done by noon tomorrow for the Captain to sign it. Ah, **shi—ucks! Golly gee willikers**, you say. Do you think this kind of situation affects the accuracy and completeness of the answers to the survey questionnaire?

I am sure that you will come to appreciate that survey research is not perfect or all-encompassing, and that there’s always room for improvement. Nevertheless, even considering deadlines and other collection problems, and all those **gee willikers**, it is **the best stuff we’ve got**. And it comes straight from the cops (and maybe even the detectives) themselves in 1,746 agencies of all sizes across the US.

So to continue, the **survey found that**, as in the past, patrol officers generally did not carry out a wide range of investigative tasks. The percentage of investigators in agencies (16%) remained basically the same over the past three decades. **Fewer than half** of the agencies said investigators received any formal **training** regarding investigations. Most agencies continued to closely **supervise** and monitor investigators, and most identified **heavy workloads** as one of their biggest problems. Less than one-fourth of the agencies reported investigators routinely **worked with patrol officers** on investigation-related activities. There was a growing emphasis to improve their **technology** capabilities; however, the majority of agencies did not employ **evidence technicians**. And they reported problems regarding gaining access to **laboratories** and receiving timely service from them.

For the purpose of this course, there are **six significant survey findings** that I want to emphasize.

- First, most investigative activities remained **isolated** from the public, yet 80% of agencies complained that a variety of investigative tasks are routinely misrepresented in the media. Gosh, I wonder why. They don't tell anybody what they're doing, and then they moan about being misunderstood. This is **old news**.

- Second, most agencies reported **no significant issues** with prosecutors or legal issues in their investigations with regard to any investigative techniques. Now this is **new news**, as there had been many big problems in the past (see the Reform Era and the US Supreme Court decisions for some of them). I guess being a Bureaucrat Detective does have its advantages – for detectives.

- Third, most agencies had **not attempted to integrate their COMMUNITY POLICING** practices and investigation functions. This is **not good news**.

- Fourth, most agencies did not identify any problems regarding their relatively **low clearance rates**. So are consistently low clearance rates good news or bad news? **Whaddaya think? Doink! Doink!** This is a real head-banger for me. So the public and the CJ system don't care about low clearance rates? And VICTIMS don't count, I guess. This is **upsetting news**.

- Fifth, most agencies "reported **no major problems with the public** in general. **Wow! Really new news**, even with low clearance rates! But what about "**them that turn to us for help**" – the VICTIMS? <sup>96</sup> Well, we didn't ask them, did we?

- Sixth, most agencies indicated they **had not implemented any innovative changes** in investigations over recent years, and most were not contemplating any major investigative changes in the near future. **Double wow! Depressing news.** But why should they change, especially when there was so much seeming contentment with the current situation?

Overall, the survey findings revealed that, in many fundamental respects, while the police have undergone considerable change, the police criminal investigation process seems to have been **relatively uninfluenced by significant changes** in crime problems, policing and technological advances made over the prior 30 years.

Incredible, but seemingly true – at least according to the cops. Although some promising developments were becoming evident, particularly with regard to COMMUNITY POLICING and technology, the **bureaucrat approach** to investigations that was developed over 50 years earlier remained predominant. And despite the demonstrated relative ineffectiveness of this approach and its narrow focus on Visible crimes, agencies had **no significant plans** to change in the future.

But ya just gotta wonder – isn't there any impact or connection between COMMUNITY POLICING and investigations? Can detectives really be that isolated from what's going on in their community? Wouldn't you think that COMMUNITY POLICING could help detectives solve crime, even a little **eensy weensy** bit? Well, read on **McGruff**, all will be revealed in the next lecture.

WELL-INFORMED TRAVELERS will no doubt, I'm sure recognize that the reference to McGruff, spelled M-C-G-R-U-F-F, relates to McGruff, the Crime Dog cartoon figure that was popularized by the National Crime Prevention Council in 1980, in order to increase crime awareness among children.<sup>134</sup> Eensy weensy relates to a spider or something, I just got a little off track there.

The police generally control the amount and extent of training provided to their personnel. I mentioned earlier in this lecture that the 2001 survey found that **fewer than half** of the agencies said investigators received any formal **training** regarding investigations. Fewer than half. However, at the same time they identified investigations training as one of the three primary factors (along with more personnel and technology) that **affected clearance rates**. This seems a little confusing – if training affects clearance rates, and if clearance rates are low, then why don't the police do more investigations training for patrol officers and investigators in order to improve clearance rates? And especially for patrol officers, as they seem to have the most influence on clearance rates, according to the research. So does the minimal training suggest that

training really does not improve clearance rates, or are the police just missing the boat here? Another great imponderable.

### **A RECENT SURVEY ON INVESTIGATION TRAINING**

As training in general is growing in importance in our increasingly complex investigations environment, I want to mention another survey that was conducted in 2013 regarding police investigations training.<sup>135</sup> The largest local, sheriff and state police agency in each of the 50 states (a total of 146 agencies) was sent a survey questionnaire asking whether any formal investigations training was required for their investigators and patrol officers. Only 29 (or 20%) of the agencies responded; however, 20 (or 69%) of those respondents indicated that it was required for investigators, and six (or 37%) reported it was required for patrol officers. So in over a decade since the 2001 survey, at least the majority of these large agency respondents are now requiring training for investigators.

Interestingly, 16 of the 20 agencies requiring such training had also previously participated in the 2001 survey. Back then, only nine of them had required training for investigators, so there was quite an improvement since then. However, the number of agencies requiring investigations training for patrol officers was five in 2001, and had increased by only one more agency in the new study. So if a case should actually make it past the preliminary investigation of the patrol officer who has the greater influence on clearance rates, but who is less well-trained in investigations, then detectives in the majority of agencies in the 2013 survey were better trained to handle it. That's progress, right? Actually, though, on-the-job training of patrol officers needs to be considered here, also.

So what do you think? Would it help anything if we actually trained our investigators and patrol officers in criminal investigations? Well, the police told us what they think.