Title registration for a review proposal: Community-Oriented Policing to Reduce Crime, Disorder and Fear and Increase Legitimacy and Citizen Satisfaction in Neighborhoods

Submitted to the Coordinating Group of:
_X_ Crime and Justice
__ Education
__ Social Welfare
__ Other

Plans to co-register:
_X_ No
__ Yes ___ Cochrane ___ Other
__ Maybe

TITLE OF THE REVIEW

Community-Oriented Policing to Reduce Crime, Disorder, and Fear and Increase Legitimacy and Citizen Satisfaction in Neighborhoods

BACKGROUND

**Briefly describe and define the problem**

Community-oriented policing (COP) is a law enforcement philosophy that encompasses a range of policing strategies involving the community, such as community policing, neighborhood policing, and problem solving. COP is focused around the premise that the police are not limited to traditional law enforcement powers in carrying out their work, and in particular should draw on community involvement and input to define, control, and prevent crime problems. COP is one of several policing innovations that became widely adopted in the 1990s after several decades of dissatisfaction with ‘standard’ police practices.

Traditional police practices, also described as the ‘professional model of policing,’ in the United States have consisted of generic, reactive strategies to prevent or respond to crime (e.g., Weisburd & Eck, 2004). These strategies are largely focused on inputs and outputs (resource management and meeting targets) rather than longer term outcomes like effectiveness. Standard policing is also insular, relying heavily on traditional law enforcement powers with very little input from or collaboration with non-police institutions and the community.

During the 1970s, rising crime and challenges to the effectiveness of criminal justice practices (e.g., Martinson, 1974) led to criticisms of the standard model of policing. The criminal justice system more generally had been criticized as being out
of touch with and unsupported by the communities it served (see, e.g., the
recommendations of the President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal
Justice, 1967). Around the same time, several high profile research studies suggested
that two key elements of the standard model of policing, preventive patrol and rapid
response, had little impact on crime rates (Kelling et al., 1974; Spelman & Brown,
1984; see also Weisburd & Braga, 2006). By the 1990s, many scholars believed that
the police could do nothing to affect crime (e.g., Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990;
Goldstein, 1990; Bayley, 1994).

This “crisis” in American policing arguably provided the foundation for the
change and innovation that led to developments such as COP (Weisburd & Braga,
2006). Community policing recognized what scholars had begun to observe in
observational studies (e.g. see Reiss, 1971) - that much of the police task was not
crime fighting but rather involved order maintenance, service provision, reduction
of fear, and conflict resolution (Kelling & Moore, 1988; Skogan & Hartnett, 1997;
Committee to Review Research on Police Policy and Practice, 2004; Weisburd &
Braga, 2006). Community policing advocates brought to the fore aspects of policing
that had been deemphasized in the definition of police as crime fighters. They also
responded to the crisis in community support of policing by placing the community
as central to the police task. In the professional model of policing, the police were
seen as the “experts” on crime and public safety, and the community was relegated
to a peripheral role as victims and witnesses. In community policing the community
was seen as critical in defining the problems the police should address, and as co-
producers of public safety. Related to this is the second major element of COP:
changing the organizational structure to ‘flatten’ the traditional hierarchy. Frontline
police officers are the crucial players in COP because they engage directly with the
community.

COP may be introduced at the unit level, as a set of tactics employed by
individual police officers or in specific beat areas (e.g., Weisburd, McElroy, &
Hardyman, 1988); or at the departmental level, where the entire police agency takes
a more proactive approach to its work through operational and strategic changes.
While crime reduction is now a desired goal of COP, it was not a key reason for the
adoption of community policing as an innovative policing approach (Skogan, 2006).
Community policing identified a host of roles for the police beyond crime fighting,
including reducing fear and responding to social and physical disorder in the
community. Crime control as a key outcome measure of COP interventions most
likely arose from the growth of community policing in the 1990s, when the U.S.
Department of Justice’s COPS Office (Office of Community-Oriented Policing
Services) spurred the development of programs that treated crime as a key issue.
Skogan (2006) notes that government agencies are concerned with crime control
and want COP to be one tool for that purpose, but no agency likely adopted COP as a
primary means of reducing crime and disorder.

reports a major investment in COP by communities and police agencies in recent
years (see also Weisburd & Eck, 2004; Skogan, 2006). It has become so popular
that in a 1997 survey by the Police Foundation, all police departments in
municipalities with populations greater than 100,000 who responded reported that
they had adopted COP, with 85 percent of the total sample claiming that they had
adopted or planned to adopt it (Skogan, 2004). Similarly, in a later survey over 90
percent of police departments in large urban areas indicated that they employed
fully trained community policing officers (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2001). Much
of this popularity has been driven by the creation of the U.S. Department of Justice’s
COPS Office (Office of Community-Oriented Policing Services) in 1994, which has
provided significant funding to encourage agencies to use COP tactics.

Skogan (2006) indicates a diverse range of strategies that police departments
include under the auspices of COP, including problem-oriented policing (another
popular policing innovation that is sometimes related to COP but does not
necessarily involve a community element), foot patrol, newsletters, door to door
surveys, education programs in schools, neighborhood watch, and multi-agency
partnerships with municipal organizations and community members. The common components of COP have not remained static over time; for example, Weisburd and Eck (2004) report that foot patrol was seen as a key part of the COP culture in the 1980s, but less so in more recent times.

The empirical evidence on COP shows mixed results in terms of effectiveness. According to narrative reviews, community policing programs generally appear to influence community relations and fear of crime, but show little effectiveness in crime reduction. Specifically, Weisburd and Eck (2004) found in their prior review of this literature that community meetings, foot patrol, and providing information about crime to the public had little effect on crime, while door-to-door visits reduced crime and fear of crime, and general improvements in police-community interactions also reduced fear and concern about crime.

Community-oriented policing is in need of a systematic review to pull together research on the various approaches and attempt to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of the strategy as a whole. As Weisburd and Eck (2004) note, it is surprising that there has been so little systematic study of such a widely-implemented policy that has been popular enough to have an entire government agency created to provide it with resources. We propose a systematic review of research on policing programs that emphasize consultation and collaboration with the community in order to tackle neighborhood problems, with the ultimate goal of reducing crime, disorder, and fear in neighborhoods, and increasing police legitimacy and residents' satisfaction.

**Briefly describe and define the intervention**

As noted above, community policing interventions will vary widely, but all will focus on reducing crime and disorder, and/or increasing citizen satisfaction and engagement with the police in defined geographic areas, such as neighborhoods, police precincts or beat areas. We will consider any intervention that involves the implementation of policing strategies and/or organizational change (e.g., decentralization, streamlining of management, increased responsibility at the street level, training of officers in community-oriented policing principles, and recruitment policies), as long as the primary aim of the program is to put the local community at the center of efforts to define and tackle crime problems. These interventions will be compared to similarly-situated areas that received ‘policing as usual,’ which could encompass traditional policing, or innovative practices that are not explicitly community-focused (such as problem-oriented policing).

**Briefly describe and define the population**

We are interested in the broad impact of COP at places. Thus, the population may be defined on two levels: the places themselves, and the population of citizens or residents living within those places. Places may be defined as communities, neighborhoods, police precincts or beat areas, or street segments. Communities and neighborhoods are not always clearly bounded. We will follow the study authors’ definitions in these cases.

**Outcomes: What are the intended effects of the intervention?**

The primary outcomes of this review are crime and disorder measured at places subject to community policing interventions, as compared to crime and disorder in comparable areas that do not experience community policing; citizen engagement with police; legitimacy of the police as perceived by local residents; satisfaction with the police; and levels of fear of crime before and after the implementation of COP.

Data on crime and disorder outcomes will likely be aggregated at the level of a geographic area (for example, a neighborhood, police beat or precinct), and drawn from official police records, such as incident reports, calls for service, or arrest
records. Crime and disorder data may also be drawn from observations of physical and/or social disorder and victimization data. Information on citizen engagement, satisfaction, and fear of crime will be drawn from citizen surveys measured before and after the implementation of the COP program. COP policies were traditionally intended to reduce fear of crime and improve citizen engagement, satisfaction, and perceptions of police legitimacy; however, reductions in crime are also desirable results.

**OBJECTIVES**

The objective of this systematic review is to synthesize the extant empirical evidence (published and unpublished) on the effectiveness of the various strategies and policies collectively termed “community-oriented policing.” Specifically, this review seeks to answer the following questions:

1. To what extent do community-oriented policing strategies reduce crime, disorder, and residents’ fear of crime in the target neighborhoods?
2. To what extent do community-oriented policing strategies improve citizen engagement and satisfaction, perceived legitimacy of the police, and cooperation between neighborhood residents and the police?
3. Do the effects of community-oriented policing vary according to the particular strategy/combination of strategies used?
4. Do the effects of community-oriented policing vary by crime type or neighborhood characteristics?

**METHODOLOGY**

**Inclusion criteria:**

1. The main intervention must be a community policing program implemented at either the unit or larger level (including departmental implementation). This could encompass a broad range of policing tactics and structural changes, but in order to meet the definition of community policing, the intervention must involve a consultation or collaboration between the police and local citizens for the purpose of defining and/or dealing with local crime and disorder problems, such as a multi-agency partnership or some other interaction with community partners. In other words, we will consider programs that involve one or more of the following:
   a. Consultation between the police and public in defining the problem
   b. Consultation between the police and the public in determining methods of dealing with the problem
   c. Collaboration between the police and the public in tackling the problem.

Consultation with the public includes direct consultation with the public as a whole (all citizens within an area) or indirect consultation; for example, through a crime prevention partnership in which the public are represented by a selected or elected group of citizens.

In other words, community involvement is the key distinguishing characteristic between COP and non-COP programs. We recognize that COP often overlaps considerably with other policing innovations like problem-oriented or hot spots policing, which have been the subject of Campbell systematic reviews in their own right, so the community element is the crucial dimension along which we distinguish the present review. Problem-
oriented and hot spots policing can be implemented with or without a community orientation.

2. The intervention must be implemented at a geographic unit, such as crime ‘hot spots,’ street blocks, police beats, neighborhoods, or police precincts. Community policing may be implemented at smaller areas, often in conjunction with problem-oriented or hot spots tactics, or as a common set of services for the whole jurisdiction (Weisburd & Eck, 2004).

3. The intervention must be assessed using at least one outcome related to crime or disorder (e.g., arrests, calls for service, and victimization for all types of crime and disorder, or specific types such as drugs, violence, neighborhood problems); citizen engagement or satisfaction with the policy; fear of crime; or legitimacy (all of which could be measured through citizen surveys).

4. We will include randomized experiments or quasi-experiments with pre-post designs and a comparison group of similarly-situated areas that do not receive community policing strategies. We recognize that such designs will be rare and that most studies will examine pre-post changes in outcomes in the area that received the community policing intervention. Such studies are highly vulnerable to historical bias, particularly if crime is measured at only one time point before and after the implementation of the policy. Any observed change in outcomes in the post-period cannot be solely attributable to the effectiveness of the policy. For example, a reduction in crime following COP implementation could simply represent regression to the mean after a spike in crime in the pre-period, and could be confounded with the policy if community policing is implemented in response to such a spike. Due to these concerns we will not include these studies in our main meta-analysis, but we plan to collect them and report on their outcomes.

**Exclusion criteria:**

We will exclude qualitative studies or descriptive studies of community policing that do not include any of the quantitative outcome measures described above. For example, reports that simply describe a policy and speculate or present anecdotal evidence of its effectiveness will be ineligible. However, we will catalog any studies of this type that are relevant to the background and discussion sections of our final report. We will also exclude quantitative studies of policing strategies that do not contain an element of community engagement, such as ‘pure’ problem-oriented policing strategies that focus on proactive police responses to identified issues that are organized and implemented within the police department rather than through collaboration with local citizens.

We will not exclude studies on the basis of language or geographical location. Limited resources do not allow us to search in languages other than English, but we will obtain and translate non-English language studies with English abstracts or keywords that are identified in our search.

**Your method of synthesis:**

We will use meta-analytic techniques (Lipsey & Wilson, 2001) for combining effect sizes when the number of studies and their composition allow. Because community-oriented policing encompasses a diverse range of strategies, the eligible studies may be too heterogeneous to justify a meta-analysis. We will also include a narrative review of eligible studies.
SOURCES OF SUPPORT

External funding:

This project has received support from the National Policing Improvement Agency in the United Kingdom as part of a grant to George Mason University to fund Campbell Collaboration systematic reviews on policing topics.

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Several members of the review team have been involved in primary research or systematic reviews on community-oriented policing or related topics. The entire team is committed to a neutral, evidence-based approach to crime policy evaluations and to identifying what research can say about the effectiveness of community policing in general.

David Weisburd has conducted studies on community-oriented policing topics and has received research funding from the U.S. Department of Justice’s Office of Community-Oriented Policing Services. He was a member of the Committee to Review Research on Police Policy and Practices (National Research Council of the National Academies), which examined community policing among other strategies and is cited in this proposal. He is the author of several articles about community policing in the United States and Israel, and has authored a Campbell Systematic Review on problem-oriented policing.

Trevor Bennett has written extensively on policing, crime prevention, community programs, and drugs and crime.

Cody Telep has co-authored a Campbell Systematic Review on problem-oriented policing.

Charlotte Gill has not conducted any prior studies involving community-oriented policing.

REQUEST SUPPORT

The review team has both substantive knowledge of community-oriented policing and extensive experience in conducting systematic reviews and meta-analyses. David Weisburd is the co-chair of the Campbell Crime and Justice Group (CCJG) and has been involved in conducting several systematic reviews in policing. Trevor Bennett completed a systematic review on the effectiveness of Neighborhood Watch for the CCJG. Charlotte Gill is the managing editor of the CCJG and has been involved in conducting several systematic reviews. Cody Telep has been involved in conducting several systematic reviews for the CCJG.

AUTHOR(S) REVIEW TEAM

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ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Content and methodological expertise within the review team:

- Content: David Weisburd, Trevor Bennett
- Systematic review methods: David Weisburd, Charlotte Gill, and Cody Telep
- Statistical analysis: David Weisburd and Charlotte Gill
Information retrieval: Cody Telep, with supervision by Charlotte Gill and consultation from information specialist at the outset of the review

**PRELIMINARY TIMEFRAME**

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<th>Activity</th>
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<tr>
<td>Submission of protocol</td>
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<tr>
<td>Revision and approval of protocol</td>
<td>April 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Search for published and unpublished studies</td>
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<td>Relevance assessments and coding</td>
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**REFERENCES**


