

Neighborhood Policing: A Path to Safe, Respectful and Effective Policing

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Neighborhoods with higher rates of “street” crime tend to be impoverished, socially isolated and populated by residents with minimal access to quality education or legitimate employment. Nonetheless, a minority of such residents engage in serious crime. Identifying and controlling that minority while protecting, serving and respecting the constitutional rights of all (including the criminally involved) has become the biggest policing challenge in major cities.

Between 1991 and 2010, the city of San Diego, enjoyed substantial reductions in violent crime (see pages 4 and 5) and sustained those reductions without resorting to arrest-based policing like broken windows (BWP) or the aggressive use of stop and frisk (SQF). The crime decline in San Diego exceeded that of other major cities, including New York.ⁱ

For example, between 1991 and 1998, when NYC's homicide rate declined by 70.6 percent, the homicide rate in San Diego declined by 76.4 percent. When NYC's robbery rate declined by 60.1 percent, the robbery rate in San Diego declined by 62.6%. After the 1990s, crime continued to decline in San Diego, with overallⁱⁱ violent crime decreasing by 27% between 2002 and 2012 compared to a 19% reduction in NYC.ⁱⁱⁱ

By using “neighborhood policing” (NP), the San Diego police department (SDPD) managed to keep crime low without increasing the number of arrests^{iv}; without substantially increasing the number of sworn officers^v; and, without increasing the volume of citizen complaints.^{vi} What SDPD has identified as “neighborhood policing” is a form of “community policing”--“problem oriented policing” that allows police departments to tailor policing *service* and *enforcement techniques* to the unique needs of distinct neighborhoods. Its strength lies in utilizing the voices of neighborhood residences in both identifying crime problems and making decisions about how best to address such problems once they have been jointly identified.

NP acknowledges the role that community members can play in producing public safety and values the input that different neighborhood residents provide, not just those who are business owners, property owners, church-goers or the employed. Under NP, neighborhood residents

are co-producers of public safety within their community, not merely the recipients of decisions made by the police agency.^{vii}

NP involves the co-production of public safety through the following ideas, actions and activities:

- ▶ Shared responsibility between police and community for identifying and solving crime and disorder problems
- ▶ Creating police and community problem-solving partnerships
- ▶ Information sharing between police and community
- ▶ Police working with residents to address crime and disorder problems
- ▶ Collaborating with public and private agencies for solution resources
- ▶ Supporting neighborhood watch/citizen patrols as problem identifiers, reporters and crime preventers
- ▶ Use of civil remedies and building code enforcement abatement nuisances such as drug houses and other property used for illegal activity
- ▶ Collaboration with community organizations and local business groups to clean up, close down, or redesign specific locations/properties that repeatedly attract crime
- ▶ Recruitment and utilization of volunteers in varied crime prevention and victim assistance services
- ▶ Use of technology to keep patrol officers up to date on crime *and* calls for service data^{viii}

Unlike BWP, NP does not rely on arrests as its primary means to control or reduce crime. Unlike SQF, high levels of random coercive police/civilian contact are not required before crime reduction occurs. Because neighborhood policing is not wedded to beliefs about the crime-reduction capabilities of a particular policing tactic or technique, it leaves room for the utilization of different approaches to address different crime-related problems and the simultaneous utilization and crediting of multiple approaches.

Neighborhood Policing and Evidence-based Policing

San Diego's NP model includes some aspects of each of the following six policing approaches that have been identified as effective crime reduction strategies through evaluation research:

- ▶ Problem-oriented policing^{ix}
- ▶ Hot spots policing^x
- ▶ Focused deterrence^{xi}
- ▶ Street workers^{xii}
- ▶ Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED)^{xiii}
- ▶ Procedural Justice^{xiv}

Rather than being wedded to a particular tactic, NP mandates that police and community work together to determine which approaches might be implemented in ways most feasible and tolerable to both police and community. Tailoring policing and other modes of public safety production to fit the needs, capabilities and competencies of police-community collaboratives is extremely important, but may require a trial and error process. Approaches that are highly

thought of and which may demonstrate a high degree of success in one location may not be a good fit for another. Focused deterrence (also known as the Boston ceasefire model), for example, has been credited with significant reductions in gun violence, gang violence, domestic violence and drug crime in some locations but was not found to have much impact in Newark, New Jersey and could not garner enough participation in some communities in the United Kingdom. The use of street workers, a major component of the Chicago Ceasefire approach, has sometimes been criticized for inadequate training and supervision of the workers, but the practice has been successfully implemented in New York recently^{xv} and during the 1980s^{xvi}.

Because neighborhood residents are at the center of police work under the NP model, police legitimacy, transparency and accountability are an embedded part of the relationship. In addition to San Diego, neighborhood policing models have been used in Seattle, Green Bay and Burbank and some departments in Illinois, Massachusetts and Washington State.

Recommendation

Mandate the piloting of neighborhood policing in urban police departments:

NP can be piloted in one or more of precincts/districts, evaluated, adjusted and expanded. Most jurisdictions have some structures in place, such as community liaison's and periodic community meetings that should facilitate the implementation process.

The implementation of NP will require the police department to share its power with the public. This collaboration should reduce the possible collateral consequences associated with policing strategies as the community will have its own best interest in mind and knows the nuances and complexities of residential life in ways that the police may not. NP requires abandoning paternalistic one-size-fits all approaches and tailoring police service to the self-identified needs of those who live in the neighborhoods.

A neighborhood policing approach offers the best way forward to maintain public safety, provide constitutional policing and heal the current divide between police departments and neighborhoods that need policing services most.

Homicide and robbery rates between 1991 and 1998:

	Homicide	Robbery
New York City	-70.6 percent	-60.1 percent
San Diego	-76.4 percent	-62.6 percent
Boston	-69.3 percent	-50.2 percent
Los Angeles	-59.3 percent	-60.9 percent
Houston	-61.3 percent	-48.5 percent

Source: Bernard Harcourt, "Policing Disorder," *Boston Review*, April/May 2002 (available here: <http://bostonreview.net/BR27.2/harcourt.html>)

Homicide and robbery rates between 1999 and 2010:

	Homicide	Robbery
New York City	-37 percent	-50 percent
San Diego	-52 percent	-14 percent
Boston	+110 percent	-29 percent
Los Angeles	-33 percent	-27 percent
Houston	-3 percent	-2.5 percent

Analysis of data from the *Uniform Crime Reports* 1999-2010 by Kevin Moran, doctoral candidate, Graduate Center, City University of New York.

ⁱ Prior to current investigations, SDPD was an award-winning department for police community relations under three consecutive chiefs--Burgreen, Sanders and Lansdowne.

ⁱⁱ Homicides, robberies, forcible rapes and aggravated assaults

ⁱⁱⁱ FBI Uniform Crime Reports 2009-2012.

^{iv} between 1993 and 1996, arrests fell by 15 percent in San Diego while increasing by 23 percent in NYC (Judy Greene, 1999., *Zero Tolerance: A Case Study in Police Policies and Practices in New York City. Crime and Delinquency* Vol. 45 (183, 184),

^v Between 1993 and 1996, New York experienced an overall 37.4 percent reduction in Crime and increased the number of sworn officers by 39.5 percent. San Diego experienced a comparable reduction in crime (36.8%) but increased its police force by only 6.2% (Judy Greene, 1999.) After 2000, San Diego continued to have roughly three times fewer police officers than NYC (1.6 per 1,000 residents versus 4.6).

^{vi} Ibid, Greene, 1999, 184. This was not the case for NYC were civil suits became the largest City pay out for governmental departments.

^{vii} Under its neighborhood policing strategy, SDPD made substantial use of citizen volunteers, training roughly 1,000 residents who performed an array of crime-prevention and victim-assistance services.

^{viii} Ibid Greene, 1999, 182-183.

^{ix} David Weisburd, Cody W. Telep, Joshua C. Hinkle & John E. Eck: The Effects of Problem-Oriented Policing on Crime and Disorder. A Campbell Collaboration systematic review 2008.

^x Anthony Braga, Andrew Papachristos, and David Hureau: The Effects of Hot Spots Policing on Crime. A Campbell Collaboration systematic review 2012.

^{xi} Anthony Braga and David Weisburd: The Effects of "Pulling Levers" Focused Deterrence Strategies on Crime. A Campbell Collaboration systematic review 2012.

^{xii} Wesley Skogan, Susan Hartnett, Natalie Bump, and Jill Dubois: Evaluation of Chicago Ceasefire. U.S. Department of Justice, National Institute of Justice, 2009.

^{xiii} Paul Michael Cozens, Greg Saville, David Hillier, (2005) "Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED): a review and modern bibliography", Property Management, Vol. 23 Iss: 5, pp.328 – 356.

^{xiv} Lorraine Mazerolle, Sarah Bennett, Jacqueline Davis, Elise Sargeant, and Matthew Manning: Legitimacy in Policing: A Systematic Review. A Campbell Collaboration systematic review 2013.

^{xv} See Jim Dwyer's NYT's article ['No Shootings or Killings for 363 Days, but the Fight Is Far From Over'](#)

^{xvi} See Judith Greene and Kevin Pranis's Justice Policy Institute [paper](#).