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The Peoples' Shield:
The Diverging Strategies of Policing Violent Crime in Urban Settings

Recent clashes between citizens and the police meant to protect them have become more and more common in cities around the world. The distrust that many communities hold against their police departments has become more apparent. This distrust is exacerbated by and likely leads to further violent crime that persists in urban areas and police forces attempting to reign in the violence by changing strategies. The police, particularly in Western countries, are an important tool of state control over the populace. They are distinct from the militaries these states use for national defense and allow for a greater level of trust from the communities they police. Some cities, however, are allowing their police forces to mirror the militaries they are supposed to be separate from, while others have sought to use a different form of community policing.

This case study will explore the idea that many urban environments are witnessing a decline in violent crime as opposed to other communities due to the level of trust created with a community policing strategy. To answer the reason behind this and after defining the necessary terms, theories and literature that have presented differing strategies for policy makers and police forces to implement will be examined. There are several competing strategies that currently exist: the trend towards militarizing the police, the need to exert a zero tolerance approach to crime, and building of trust through community policing. This study will define these strategies in greater detail, explore the reasons why they have been developed, and prove that community policing is best strategy using the case of Washington, D.C. as evidence for this form of policing being the most succesful.

Relevant Definitions

Several definitions are needed in order to better understand the concepts at play when discussing urban policing. The main topic itself warrants an explanation. For purposes of this study, urban policing is defined as law enforcement and crime prevention within larger cities with a dense population. As in any form of policing, the goal is to reduce and deter crimes from being committed by the populace. More often than not, the success of policing is measured by the levels of violent crime. Typically, violent crime is defined as any crime that results in physical harm to any person. At the international level however, Stefan Harrendorf, Markku Heiskanen and Steven Malby of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) define violent crime as simply intentional murder as this data is more readily available in many countries (UNODC, 2010). The UNODC, in a 2010 statistical report, produced average intentional homicide rates per 100,000 people. In this report, Southern Africa seems to have the largest rate per population at above 30%, with the Caribbean region just under 30% and Central and Southern America both just under 20% (UNODC, 2010). Interestingly, Northern America is reported at about 8%, higher than its relative Western world counterparts (*i.e.,* Europe) which are all under 5% (UNODC, 2010).

There are many definition for a policing strategy, with the three primary options being discussed in this study. Many believe that police strategies rely heavily on the presence, and thus the fear, of police in order to prevent violent crime. The rates cited above are major causes of concern for politicians in any country, and the need to be “hard on crime” has become a commonplace political platform. The strengthening of police forces to better combat violent crime has led many jurisdictions to implement more military-style weapons, gear, vehicles, and

tactics. The militarization of the police is therefore defined in this way. This form of policing has also exacerbated the "hard-on-crime" approach with many police departments using a zero-tolerance strategies.

An opposing point of view that has become more popular in the modern era is the idea of community policing. In this paper, community policing is considered the idea that the police provide or sponsor numerous programs and strategies to engage the populace in their common protection, creating a higher level of trust that allows the police to quickly apprehend criminals and thwart crime with the community's support. This study will serve to compare the opposing strategies and use D.C. as a case study to prove that community policing creates a longer lasting and safer urban environment.

Militarization of Police

As briefly defined for purposes of this paper, the militarization of police takes on many forms in criminal justice and sociology literature. Peter Kraska, who has studied the changing role of police for several decades, has properly defined the militarization of police with several categories. He underscores the concept of militarism defined as the use of force and threat of violence as the best means to solve problems (Kraska, 2004). Militarization is therefore the implementing of this ideology and he categorizes the evidence of its occurrence in four ways: material, cultural, organizational, and operational (Kraska, 2004). Material is defined as the military-style weapons, equipment and technology used by police (Kraska, 2004). The martial language, styling of uniforms, and values form the culture of militarization (Kraska, 2004). Organizational is the idea that certain characteristics of deployment are similar to the military, such as the use of police command centers or the use of elite squads (*i.e.,* Special Weapons and

Tactics, or SWAT, teams) to patrol high crime areas as opposed to traditional officers (Kraska, 2004). Finally, operational is defined as patterns of activity modeled after the military in areas such as intelligence gathering, patrolling and suspect supervision (Kraska, 2004). While an excellent source of defining militarization, Kraska does not necessarily explain the impact of this militarization, but rather explains why there is a growth of in many countries. Additional literature provides evidence of the role of militarization but supporters of this form of policing require impact data in order to believe if the changes Kraska notes are worth it.

Kraska also cites Anthony Giddens, a leading sociologist in structuralism, as theorizing that the distinction between police and militaries is a necessary feature of the modern state (Giddens, 1985). Further, a failure to demonstrate this difference is often considered an indicator of repression and a lack of democracy (Giddens, 1985). This idea, however, does not seem to deter many states from implementing militarized police forces. Derek Lutterbeck attemps to explain the dichotomy of the police and military, and how in many democratic, Western states the line described by Giddens has been blurred. He details that the expansion of international crimes and terrorism has made the police far more involved in national security than in the Pre-Cold War era, and that policing of traditional violent crime was co-opted into a national security agenda (Lutterbeck, 2004).

He further describes that this phenomenon is not isolated to the United States' use of SWAT teams, but rather many democratic states have employed the use of paramilitary police forces. He writes that the French Gendarmerie, the Italian Carabinieri, the Spanish Guardia Civil, the Austrian Bundesgendarmerie, and the German Bundesgrenzschutz are all military-styled police forces that have a primarily domestic role (Lutterbeck, 2004). Lutterbeck demonstrates

that even stalwarts of democracy have begun to employ more militarized police, but again the literature described does not explore the impact. It is clear that jurisdictions around the globe have begun to use this form of policing, and they are only becoming stronger with new technology.

The trend of police militarization is also evident in the idea that police forces continue to modernize in the same way as militaries. One clear example of this form of modernization is the use of drones. Drones have become an essential tool of militaries for many countries, typically for surveillance or precision strikes in foreign countries. Tyler Wall and Torin Monahan explore the use of surveillance drones in urban areas, particularly in the United States. They write that drones have been used in Houston and Las Vegas, as well as in Department of Homeland Security "fusion zones" that combine the abilities of local police and federal agents in the prevention of crime (Wall and Monahan, 2011). They write that the use of drones in domestic policing has allowed the militarization of police to expand, stating that the war on terrorism has simply protracted the war on crime (Wall and Monaham, 2011).

Impact of Militarization

While not their objective, each of the authors cited above provide some insight into the real impact of the militarization of police. Wall and Monaham use more a more theoretical approach to explain what the results of militarized police are that Lutterbeck and Kraska both hint at but do not fully articulate. Wall and Monahan write that even beyond the use of drones, the overall militarization of urban police allows for the expansion of unwarranted surveillance on citizens as well as intensifies the policing of cultural differences and political dissent that have made cities vibrant and democratic (Wall and Monaham, 2011). This is to say that when

the police consider everyone a suspect in a potential crime due to the density of an urban population, they are forced to seek out differences which typically fall along racial, ethnic, or political differences from the so-called norm. Militarism only allows for the exertion of force which leads to this blanket suspicion and the continuing cycle of building up forces in response. Giddens would suggest that this form of policing is inherently undemocratic and repressive.

Despite this theoretical reproach of militarized police, the trend continues in hundreds, if not thousands, of urban environments. In the United States, Kraska writes that nearly 90% of urban police forces have employed SWAT or similar special operations teams (Kraska, 2004). He estimates that there are 45,000 SWAT-like deployments annually (Kraska, 2004). This growth and use of militarized police suggest that there must be some noticeable impact. James Byrne and Gary Marx, however, surveyed several different impact studies that all concluded that new technologies and equipment used by police did not improve police performance and only a marginally positive impact on crime deterrence (Byrne and Marx, 2011). Further, Joshua Hinkle and David Weisburd conducted an empirical study that demonstrated there was no correlation between intense police presence and crime prevention (Hinkle and Weisburd, 2008). The real discovery in their study is discussed later in this paper.

These conclusions imply that militarization occurs simply because of the political value placed on strict crime prevention and expanded by an inherent militarist ideology in police strategy. The impact of such line of thought is policing based on political or cultural differences, the dilapidation of liberty, and the overall loss of trust between citizens and their police. The ideology behind this change in police departments allows for the constant need to improve, expand, and upgrade strategies and equipment that better instill fear in the citizens the police

are meant to protect. The continued militarization of the police is only made worse when politicians consider polices that call for greater police presence in order to better deter violent crime. The idea of increased enforcement allows these politicians and the police departments that implement them to rationalize the need for militarization.

Broken Windows Theory

In his assessment, Kraska points out that there were two diverging forms of community policing in response to the demand for reforms in policing strategy (Kraska, 2004). One, which he details to be a more successful strategy, is community policing that empowers; while the other is called broken windows theory, which looks more like militarization (Kraska, 2004). The former is discussed in the following section, as it relates to the theatrical approaches in policing policy. It also represents an interesting middle ground between the two polarized arguments in theories of criminal justice. While the whole of this field of study is well debated, this theory Generally, this theory allows for harder opinions on policing strategy guised by an emphasis on the reforms proposed.

The theory was proposed by social scientists James Wilson and George Kelling in a March 1982 *Atlantic* article but would later be popularized by several police departments and expanded by theorists in sociology. Further, the authors have expanded their theories in serval other books, but the initial development of the theory in the *Atlantic* is assessed in this paper. The theory suggests that visible signs of violence, crime, and civil disorder create a cycle of crime and violence in urban environments (Kelling and Wilson, 1982). In short, crimes of any kind, both petty and serious such as murder, encourage further crime in dense population areas (Kelling and Wilson, 1982). The theory suggests that policing methods should target small

crimes such as vandalism to create a sense of order which prevents more serious crimes from developing (Kelling and Wilson, 1982).

The name of the theory is derived from an example given in the text of the article. Kelling and Wilson Write that when a building has windows broken and the crime is not punished, then vandals will continue to break windows, eventually break in, and finally steal or set fires (Kelling and Wilson, 1982). In defense of their strategy, the authors write that successful application of their theory requires a relationship with the community to maintain order, allowing it to be considered a form of community policing. The theory relies on the idea that fear of further crimes forces citizens to leave the environment to become safer, which depletes the social controls that prevent violent crimes emanating from pettier crimes (Kelling and Wilson, 1982). This creates two forms of civil disorder that leads to crime: physical disorder, such as observable vandalism, and social disorder, such as aggressive begging or noise (Kelling and Wilson, 1982).

C. R. Sridhar further explores the concepts behind Kelling and Wilson's theory for *Economic and Political Weekly*. He writes that in the attempt to ensure that small crimes do not lead to more serious crimes, police must enforce the idea of zero-tolerance (Sridhar, 2006). The two concepts have since been blurred as more people begin to believe in the broken windows theory and see the solution to it as having a zero-tolerance policy. In order to prevent the broken windows cycle, Sridhar writes that police deployments are shifted away from major crimes investigations towards traditional order maintenance, particularly in higher crime neighborhoods of urban environments (Sridhar, 2006). Policing in this form can then be defined

as zero-tolerance policing or even broken-windows policing, as each strategy of viewing crime are nearly the same.

Kraska writes that this form of zero tolerance led to police departments instigating tactics such as street sweeps, increases of drug raids, and "stop-and-frisk" policies that enforce community order, rather than the law (Kraska, 2004). Indeed, Sridhar details the proliferation of "stop-and-frisk" in New York City, which adopted zero tolerance measures in 1994 under Mayor Rudy Giuliani. He writes that the mayor and his police commissioner based their policies on the broken windows theory, as the New York Police Department focused on arresting individuals for petty crimes such as fare evasion, jaywalking, and noise violations (Sridhar, 2006). Given recent debate over many of the policies that New York City implemented during this time, it is clear that the role of zero-tolerance policing is controversial and the impact of it can be analyzed at length.

Impact of Zero-Tolerance

To test the success of this theory, Hinkle and Weisburd created a model of fear, which they state Wilson and Kelling based their theory on, detailing that a fear of further crime being committed forces citizens to leave the environment allowing further crime to be committed (Hinkle and Weisburd, 2008). They conducted a large survey of neighborhoods before police began using zero tolerance measures to prevent the broken window theory and after to gauge the level of fear (Hinkle and Weisburd, 2008). They write that the perception of civil disorder and observed physical disorder do create a sense of fear in community members, confirming the fear-based hypothesis of broken windows theory (Hinkle and Weisburd, 2008). However, they also contend that the increased presence of police, often becoming more militarized, also

added to the fear of citizens (Hinkle and Weisburd, 2008). This therefore contradicts the zero-tolerance policy that many believe to be a remedy for the broken windows theory.

An earlier empirical study of the impact of zero-tolerance strategies to prevent the broken windows cycle suggest that the theory and its solutions have little place in the practice of policing. Bernard Harcourt & Jens Ludwig examined crime data from 1989 to 1998 in New York City, shortly after the broken windows theory was proposed and during the Giuliani implantation of zero-tolerance as a solution (Harcourt and Ludwig, 2006). They compared these results with programs in five cities, including New York, that grant low income families vouchers to help them move from public housing in high-crime areas to new, safer housing areas (Harcourt and Ludwig, 2006). Using several different regressions that analyze the effects of both sets of data, the authors come to an interesting conclusion. They write that taken together, the crime data and five-city moving programs provide no support for a zero tolerance and order-first policing approach (Harcourt and Ludwig, 2006). They further contend that a broken windows policing strategy is not an effective or efficient use of the police personnel and equipment simply to deter petty crime (Harcourt and Ludwig, 2006).

Broken windows theory provides an avenue for many politicians to state that they are hard on crime. Sridhar writes that Giuliani's method of zero-tolerance as a form of broken windows policing was praised by many and implemented in jurisdictions around the United States and the world (Sridhar, 2006). Kelling and Wilson believe that their theory is form of community policing because it is attempting to make the community feel safer in urban areas. It is clear from the evidence presented that while fear may be a factor in the increase of violent

crime as citizens withdraw from urban areas, it has been shown that the mere presence of the police is a cause of that fear.

Compound this with the expanding militarization of the police and the result is the same fear that citizens have in war zones. Broken windows theory pushed policies that demand order of the community and causes police to not enforce the law, but to enforce order. This can be perceived as a form of militarism, thus allowing those who support zero-tolerance to also support the increase militarization of the police. A cyclical problem, the combination of the two can only lead to a growing distrust between the community and its police. The need for this trust is the idea behind a different form of community policing that empowers the citizens to support the police and likely the only truly successful strategy of preventing violent crime in urban areas.

Empowered Community Policing

Given the significant drawbacks of the previous two strategies mentioned above, it is clear that there must be some form of policing that provides safety and maintains a trusting environment that does not limit the liberty of the citizens within the jurisdiction. Indeed, it is the level of trust that may be significant variable in a successful policing strategy. Community policing is the strategy that places value on the police department's ability to earn and maintain a trusting and working relationship with the community members with whom they are charged to protect and police. Towing this fine line is what Giddens would define as necessary for a successful police force in a modern nation-state, ensuring that liberty is protected and the law enforced. To accomplish this, the community must feel empowered in the assistance of

policing, feeling as though their contributions are necessary to the safety of their own community and that they can trust the police.

Robert Trojanowicz is considered a leading police reformist, and began promoting the idea of community policing in the 1990s. He writes that the police face significantly different challenges than they have before such as racial subtexts, increasing drug related crimes, civil unrest, and police brutality (Trojanowic and Bucqueroux, 1990). He emphasizes that racial divisions have created significant distrust between diverse, urban environments and the police meant to enforce the law in the jurisdiction (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990). In a comparison of countries, Trojanowicz notes that the U.S. incarcerates a larger percentage of citizens and has a higher murder rate per capita than Canada, Japan, and (at the time) Western Germany, all of which used some form of community policing (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990). He emphasizes the role of compassion and discretion on the police's part, far different from a militarized or zero-tolerance strategy. His examples of community policing tactics also differ greatly, including cultivating constructive relationship with minority communities and the leaders, ensuring that the whole community felt empowered to support the police, and establishing partnerships and programs with community involvement (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990). He summarizes his point by saying that community policing is a proactive strategy, as opposed to other forms which are reactive to changes in crime (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990). It is for this reason that community policing is more successful than traditional policing such as zero-tolerance, and that it allows for a fundamentally different relationship between the police and the community that emphasizes mutual trust and respect

(Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990). The end goal of this strategy is that the community will help to police itself.

The idea of self-policing is discussed at length as a part of David Fearon and David Laitin's work on inter ethnic cooperation. While the study itself is simplistic in the number of involved communities, it does provide an interesting insight into the workings of a diverse community like an urban environment. Further, it allows an exploration of what community policing looks like beyond the role of the police as discussed above. They use a social matching game model to explain interethnic group cooperation, which can be seen as potentially working in urban areas which are often separated into different ethnic or social groups, in two ways. The first they call the spiral equilibria which suggests that a fear of disputes spiraling out of control induces the communities to cooperate (Fearon and Laitin, 1996). This may explain some cooperation of rival gangs in cities, which does support the primary police objective of keeping the community safe, but the fear basis its set on would likely contribute more to a fear of police involvement in the disputes. Their second finding is the in-group policing equilibria, and is far more relevant to a community policing strategy. Fearon and Laitin suggest that a transgression against one community will be handled by the culprit's own community, trusting that the reputation of the latter group will maintain ensure justice is demonstrated (Fearon and Laitin, 1996). While different in a more urban setting, this theory could suggest that a police force employing community policing has an objective to build a trusting relations with all the various communities and ensure that a transgression is fairly handled. The trusting relationship between the police and the community will allow the community to sort out the

injustice and support the police in the apprehension of a culprit, rather than the police blaming the entire community in a zero-tolerance model.

The trusting relationship between the police and the urban communities is an essential part of a successful community policing strategy. The importance of building trust with a community is even more critical in a newly secured environment in a formerly war-torn area. Robert Blair explores how this building of trust through a community policing strategy was successful in Liberia, where trusting a police force was a new concept for many citizens. Using data from the Ministry of Justice, the Liberian National Police, and surveys he conducted, Blair finds that the strategy had a statistically significant effect on increasing the sense of security, increased knowledge of the police and their role, reduced incidents of crime, and encouraged citizens to use the police for violent and serious crime (Blair, Karim, and Morse, 2016). It is clear from this small case study that building trust through community policing has a significant impact on the reduction of crime.

The reduction of crime is also a finding made by Yili Xu, Mora Fiedler, and Karl Flaming.

Case Study: Washington, D.C.

Conclusions

Sources:

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