



Neighbourhood Policing

The Rise and Fall of a Policing Model

MARTIN INNES, COLIN ROBERTS,
TRUDY LOWE, AND HELEN INNES

Clarendon Studies in Criminology

NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING

CLARENDON STUDIES IN CRIMINOLOGY

Published under the auspices of the Institute of Criminology, University of Cambridge; the Mannheim Centre, London School of Economics; and the Centre for Criminology, University of Oxford.

General Editors: Loraine Gelsthorpe and Kyle Treiber

(University of Cambridge)

Editors: Alison Liebling

(University of Cambridge)

Tim Newburn, Jill Peay, Coretta Phillips, and Robert Reiner

(London School of Economics)

Mary Bosworth, Carolyn Hoyle, Ian Loader, and Lucia Zedner

(University of Oxford)

RECENT TITLES IN THIS SERIES:

Respectable Citizens—Shady Practices: The Economic Morality of the Middle Classes

Farrall and Karstedt

Respect and Criminal Justice

Watson

Advocates of Humanity: Human Rights NGOs in International Criminal Justice

Lohne

Intimate Crimes: Kidnapping, Gangs, and Trust in Mexico City

Ochoa

Police Community Support Officers: Cultures and Identities within Pluralized Policing

O'Neill

Last Chance for Life: Clemency in Southeast Asian Death Penalty Cases

Pascoe

Police Unlimited: Policing, Migrants, and the Values of Bureaucracy

Mutsaers

Neighbourhood Policing

The Rise and Fall of a Policing Model

MARTIN INNES

COLIN ROBERTS

TRUDY LOWE

HELEN INNES

of

*Universities' Police Science Institute & Crime and
Security Research Institute, Cardiff University*

OXFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP,
United Kingdom

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford.
It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship,
and education by publishing worldwide. Oxford is a registered trade mark of
Oxford University Press in the UK and in certain other countries

© Martin Innes, Colin Roberts, Trudy Lowe, and Helen Innes 2020

The moral rights of the authors have been asserted

First Edition published in 2020

Impression: 1

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in
a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, without the
prior permission in writing of Oxford University Press, or as expressly permitted
by law, by licence or under terms agreed with the appropriate reprographics
rights organization. Enquiries concerning reproduction outside the scope of the
above should be sent to the Rights Department, Oxford University Press, at the
address above

You must not circulate this work in any other form
and you must impose this same condition on any acquirer

Crown copyright material is reproduced under Class Licence
Number C01P0000148 with the permission of OPSI
and the Queen's Printer for Scotland

Published in the United States of America by Oxford University Press
198 Madison Avenue, New York, NY 10016, United States of America

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Library of Congress Control Number: 2019957836

ISBN 978-0-19-878321-3

Printed and bound by
CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

Links to third party websites are provided by Oxford in good faith and
for information only. Oxford disclaims any responsibility for the materials
contained in any third party website referenced in this work.

General Editors' Introduction

The *Clarendon Studies in Criminology series* aims to provide a forum for outstanding theoretical and empirical work in all aspects of criminology and criminal justice, broadly understood. The Editors welcome submissions from established scholars, as well as excellent PhD work. The Series was inaugurated in 1994, with Roger Hood as its first General Editor, following discussions between Oxford University Press and Oxford's Centre for Criminological Research. It is edited under the auspices of three centres: the Institute of Criminology at the University of Cambridge, the Mannheim Centre for Criminology at the London School of Economics, and the Centre for Criminological Research at the University of Oxford. Each supplies members of the Editorial Board and, in turn, the Series General Editor or Editors.

Neighbourhood Policing: The Story of the Rise and Fall of a Policing Model is perhaps unusual in that it reflects a ten year programme of research rather than a single empirical study on community or, as it is more commonly described, neighbourhood policing, but this adds to the importance of the book in its story of the development of neighbourhood policing. Publication of the book is timely both in the context of concerns about knife-crime, and in regard to calls for a return to neighbourhood policing following its more recent decline, notwithstanding an earlier success story. The book draws on new empirical material as well as different writings already published by the authors. Pulling a book together which includes multiple sources of information and which records the politics of policing as well as the empirical realities and the impact of new technologies on neighbourhood policing is not an easy task, but Martin Innes and colleagues have achieved this very effectively.

To elaborate, the book blends a substantive criminological analysis of neighbourhood policing and its aims, methods and achievements, with an element of social history that seeks to situate this approach to policing in a particular social, economic and political context. This social historical and criminological approach is reflected in the organisation of the chapters. They are informed

by empirical data collected across several different projects, but they are connected together and integrated by virtue of attending to the principal components and processes associated with the neighbourhood policing model. The main chapters of the book attend to the key issues of criminological and sociological interest, seeking to distil the key insights about the policy development and delivery of this particular inflection of community policing. They are framed by the opening and concluding materials, which seek to locate these themes and issues within the overall trajectory of development of UK policing. By engaging with neighbourhood policing in this way, the book speaks to the significant place that this approach has achieved within the contemporary policing landscape, providing a rigorously evidenced assessment of both achievements and weaknesses. In so doing, it responds to a significant gap in the contemporary scholarly literature.

This book will be of particular interest to policing and community development scholars. As the authors indicate, viewed as a value proposition rather than as a set of practices, efforts to foster and sustain police–community connectivity over the years have been deeply influential in shaping visions and conceptions of what democratic policing should be and how it is to be delivered.

As General Editors, we warmly recommend this book; it makes significant contribution to the field of policing studies. We have no doubt that this will become an indispensable reference for research scholars and policing teachers and academics, and we hope that managers in various criminal justice contexts will read it too. The book also deserves wide readership amongst policy-makers. We are very pleased indeed to welcome **Neighbourhood Policing: The Story of the Rise and Fall of a Policing Model** into the *Clarendon Studies in Criminology series*.

Loraine Gelsthorpe and Kyle Treiber
Institute of Criminology,
University of Cambridge
March, 2020

Preface and Acknowledgements

This book tells the story of the design and delivery of Neighbourhood Policing, and how it has been edited and adapted in response to a range of influences. Framed in this way, the analysis ranges across its origins in managing rises in fear of crime, through the boom and bust years of the UK economy, its partial reconfiguration as part of a wider response to the emergence of new national security threats, and on to the present day.

When we first decided that we wanted to write a book about Neighbourhood Policing bringing together the large amounts of evidence we had collated, a key motivation was that the outlook for its future survival looked poor. Somewhat pessimistically, we were compelled to try and capture the deep learning that has been acquired, in case at some later time, or in some different place, others were tempted to revisit this mode of community policing. After all, public sector austerity measures had hit policing and the community safety sector hard, with all police forces reducing officer numbers and a general pattern of redirecting resources towards response and investigation functions. Accompanying this economic disinvestment was a perceived normative disinvestment also, with a number of politicians and some senior police leaders questioning the 'public value' of an intensive, preventative, and citizen-focused style of policing. The focus on the value of community intelligence and how to obtain it seemed to have been lost after only a relatively short period of time. But during the process of writing, some signs of a revitalization have begun to become apparent, such that after the rise and fall in popularity of this way of doing policing, it is potentially on the cusp of 'rising again'. If this is so, then we hope the publication of this volume will be timely and will serve to provide a strong evidence base on which to re-establish and maybe redefine how to better police communities.

A research programme lasting fifteen years inevitably incurs a large number of debts. We have been fortunate to have had the support of a significant number of policymakers and police officers, who have enabled and facilitated aspects of the research at

different moments and across a variety of locations. Our journey started with the National Reassurance Policing Programme (NRPP), led by Sir Denis O'Connor. Denis had the remarkable vision to invest considerable resources in academic research to build an evidence-based approach to policy and practice development, long before anyone else in the police service was really thinking about what has come to be known as 'evidence-based policing'. Denis has a particular skill for asking the question that defines the essence of a problem, and not being willing to settle for an imprecise or inadequate answer. In the years following the NRPP, he has continued to take a keen interest in Neighbourhood Policing and in research associated with it. Both we, and the UK police service, owe him much.

During the NRPP years we also benefitted greatly from interactions with other senior members of the programme management team, Tim Godwin, Carl Crathern, and Gavin Stephens. At the time, we were a relatively inexperienced research team, who were given levels of support, guidance, and access that looking back, were truly remarkable. We gained immeasurably from the opportunities that you provided us.

As well as the central project team members, the local teams in the eight pilot forces provided significant amounts of help and hospitality, and we would like to record our thanks to the many staff who assisted us from: the Metropolitan Police Service; Surrey Police; Thames Valley Police; Leicestershire Police; West Midlands Police; Greater Manchester Police; Merseyside Police; and Lancashire Constabulary. From the latter force, we reserve particular thanks for Mike Alexander and Dave Aston who provided invaluable operational insights throughout their rigorous implementation of Reassurance Policing and beyond. Alongside our policing partners, Rachel Tuffin and Paul Quinton at the UK Home Office oversaw the official evaluation of the programme that ran alongside our fundamental research, and were a pleasure to work with.

As well as the practical support and guidance we received from UK policing, an intellectual debt is owed to Professor Nigel Fielding of the University of Surrey. Indeed, drawing upon his own extensive research into community policing, many of the initial concepts and instruments underpinning the NRPP approach originated in collaborative research between Nigel and Martin Innes. But as interest in the work picked up nationally, with

typical generosity, he allowed the research team to take the project on and run with it. From then on, in the quintessential model of a good academic mentor, he unfailingly offered insightful advice or input when asked, but never sought to impose his views. The contents of Chapter 4 were originally presented at a conference to celebrate Nigel's considerable scholarly achievements across the fields of policing and social research methodology, upon his retirement from the University of Surrey in 2018.

Not long after completion of the NRPP, the authors left Surrey and headed West. Our research in this field may well have concluded had it not been for the foresight and innovative practice of the then Chief Constable of South Wales, Barbara Wilding. She was another senior police leader who recognized the transformational potential of rigorous and robust research. The work she funded forms the basis of Chapter 6. Since arriving in Wales, we have enjoyed a special relationship with South Wales Police that has enabled our work to continue to explore many aspects of the Neighbourhood Policing function. Officers and staff for whose help along the way we are particularly grateful include Bob McAllister, Huw Cogbill, Andy Davies, Umar Hussain, Gareth Madge, Richard Mence, Richard Watkins, and subsequent Chief Constables Peter Vaughan and Matt Jukes. In respect of our work on Community Support Officers we are also indebted to Mike Harmer at the Welsh Government, who funded the original study and provided significant help and support throughout it. Similarly, we would also like to thank the staff of the Wales Extremism and Counter-Terrorism Unit, with whom we have enjoyed a close working relationship.

Beyond Wales, our various studies have been made possible by the enthusiastic involvement of many police forces and community safety teams around the United Kingdom. One long-running relationship of note has been with the Safer Sutton Partnership, who have provided remarkable assistance enabling the conduct of a unique longitudinal study of Neighbourhood Policing in action over an extended period. This work is reported in Chapter 7 and an earlier iteration of aspects of it appeared in Lowe and Innes (2012) published in the journal *Policing and Society*. We are indebted to the Sutton team, particularly Warren Shadbolt, Glenn Phillips, Dave Gare, Ian Kershaw, Chris Lyons, and Preeti Sidhar, as well as the numerous neighbourhood officers and PCSOs from the Metropolitan Police Service who have withstood the rigours of

conducting SENSOR fieldwork on top of their already demanding day-jobs. Similarly, our sincere thanks to Richard Horton of West Midlands Police, whose help with our work on the impact of Neighbourhood Policing on matters of national security was invaluable.

During our time at Cardiff University we have had the opportunity to talk about issues of Neighbourhood Policing and community safety with a number of excellent colleagues and students, including Patrick Carr, Trevor Jones, Mike Levi, Simon Moore, Alun Preece, Amanda Robinson, Jonathan Shepherd, and Marnix Eysinck Smeets. We would also like to thank our Editor at Oxford University Press, Peter Daniell for his support and forbearance as we missed multiple deadlines, owing to other commitments and pressures.

Much of the empirical data collection and its subsequent analysis would not have been possible without the help of a remarkable cast of dedicated researchers and fieldworkers with whom we worked on numerous project teams over the years. Our thanks go to Laurence Abbott, Bethan Davies, Kieran Evans, Sophie Garr, Daniel Grinnell, Sinead Hayden, Charlotte Leigh, Helen MacKenzie, Phil Murray, Lisa Twyman, and Nicola Weston.

And finally, our appreciation and thanks to all the community groups and passionate individuals who helped us conduct our fieldwork ‘on the ground’, as well as the hundreds of members of the British public who welcomed us into their homes, opened their hearts, and plied us with tea.

In writing Chapter 7, we were grateful to Taylor Francis Group for granting permission to draw upon and expand data previously published by them as: Lowe, T. and Innes, M. (2012) ‘Can We Speak in Confidence? Community Intelligence and Neighbourhood Policing v2.0’. *Policing and Society*, 22(3), 295–316.

Whilst the work reported in what follows has benefitted from the contributions made by all of those listed above, any errors or omissions remain the responsibility of the authors.

November 2019

Contents

<i>List of Figures</i>	xv
<i>List of Tables</i>	xvii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xix
1. The Public Understanding of Crime and Policing	1
Community policing: theme and variations	4
Problem-oriented policing	11
Broken windows	15
Intelligence-led policing	18
Police drama	20
Overview	24
The research programme	26
2. The Story of Reassurance Policing and How it Became Neighbourhood Policing	29
The policy arc	30
Programming reassurance	34
Reassurance policing theory and practice	36
Signal crimes and diagnostic community intelligence	39
Co-producing social control	45
What happened?	48
From reassurance to Neighbourhood Policing	51
Conclusion: Neighbourhood Policing as a ‘dirty concept’	54
3. Neighbourhood as a Policing Delivery Unit	56
The idea of neighbourhood	57
Neighbourhood public service delivery	59
Self-defined neighbourhoods	62
Method	63
Findings	64
A case study of policing tensions and cohesion	70
Conclusion	73

4. Policing Interactions	76
The craft and drama of Neighbourhood Policing	79
Controlling interactions	84
Confrontational interactions	89
Collective interactions: collaboration through public meetings	92
Back stage routes to activism	98
Conclusion: police performance or the performance of policing	101
5. Police Support versus Community Support	104
A case study of the craft of community support work	106
Background	108
From how to why	116
The balancing act	119
CSOs and the future of Neighbourhood Policing	120
Conclusion	124
6. The Cardiff Community Engagement Experiment	127
Cardiff: context and community	129
The experiment	130
‘SENSOR’ Neighbourhood Security Interviews	130
Citizen’s Panel Survey	132
PACT meeting analysis	133
Community intelligence insights	136
Perception ‘hotspots’ and recorded crime	137
Conclusion: a base for democratic policing	147
7. Policing and Changing Perceptions of Neighbourhood Security	150
The London Borough of Sutton: the place, its people, and its police	152
Neighbourhood security over time: the Sutton programme	153
Public perceptions of crime and disorder	154
What’s the problem?—changes in Sutton’s signal profile	155
Location, location, location	159
Perceptions of policing	163
Resisting engagement	167
Conclusion	169

8. From Neighbourhood to National Security	172
Countering violent extremism	173
Violent street gangs in London	182
Operation Michigan in Cardiff	187
Co-producing social control	191
Conclusion	193
9. Conclusions	196
Reprise	198
A story of rise and fall	202
Austerity bites	203
‘Restructuring’ recorded crime	204
Digital policing and online crime	206
Intellectual fashions in policing	208
A police science	209
Coda	216
<i>Appendix: Methodologies</i>	219
The National Reassurance Policing Programme	219
Neighbourhood Security Interviews	221
Neighbourhood sentinels	223
Data analysis	225
Community intelligence programmes in Cardiff and London Borough of Sutton	225
Police officer interviewer training	228
The role of (Police) Community Support Officers	229
Linking neighbourhoods to national security	230
Summary	231
<i>References</i>	233
<i>Index</i>	247

List of Figures

2.1	Eight NRPP Trial Sites	35
2.2	Rank Order of Top Signal Crimes by Site	43
3.1	Self-defined Neighbourhoods Showing Bright Line Boundaries for Cardiff West Electoral Ward, South Wales	66
5.1	Crime Rate for Wales and England, 2003/14 Showing Ratio of Crimes per Police Officer	112
5.2	The CSO Balancing Act	120
6.1	Signal Crime and Disorder and Recorded Crime Density	139
6.2	Signal and Crime Density Differential	141
6.3	Cowbridge Road East, All Signals	143
7.1	Perceptions of Crime and Disorder	154
7.2	Key Signal Expressions—Twelve-year Movement, 2007 to 2018	157
7.3	Changes in Confidence Drivers and Inhibitors, 2009 to 2017	165

List of Tables

2.1	Summary of NRPP Outcome Data	49
6.1	Signal Crimes and Disorders Ranking	136
6.2	Comparison of Top Signals and PACT Priorities	146
8.1	A Framework for Positioning Types of Co-produced Social Control	192

List of Abbreviations

ACPO	Association of Chief Police Officers
ASB	antisocial behaviour
BCS	British Crime Survey
CAPS	Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy
CPCG	Community Police Consultative Group
CSO	Community Support Officer
CSP	Community Safety Partnership
DAC	Deputy Assistant Commissioner
EBP	evidence-based policing
HMIC	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary
ILP	intelligence-led policing
IMD	Indices of Multiple Deprivation
LSOA	Lower Super Output Area
MFJ	Movement For Justice by Any Means Necessary
MPS	Metropolitan Police Service
NIM	National Intelligence Model
NMA	Neighbourhood Management Area
NRPP	National Reassurance Policing Programme
OA	Output Area
PACT	Police and Communities Together
PCSO	Police Community Support Officer
POP	problem-oriented policing
SNT	Safer Neighbourhoods Team
TPO	Test Purchase Officer

1

The Public Understanding of Crime and Policing

It is 2003, on a housing estate in the North of England. ‘Has there been another murder?’ Stepping out of the lift on the ground floor of the high-rise block of flats in the Queen’s Park estate,¹ to be confronted by a phalanx of uniformed police officers, the woman posing the question simply assumed that the presence of several police officers meant what it always did in this part of Blackpool—that yet another homicide investigation was underway. ‘You know,’ she continued, ‘some poor bastard was found lying outside the door of the block over the way there last month. People just stepped round him all day. It was twelve hours before anybody thought to check if he was alright, and it turns out he was dead. He was pushed or jumped out of the tenth floor or something. Twelve hours though he was lying there. Twelve hours!’

As we entered the lift, the pungent stench of urine was all too evident, and on the dulled metallic sheen of the walls of the lift were brown crusted arcs of some form of liquid. ‘Oh, that’s blood from where the druggies shoot up in here,’ said one of the police officers casually as he pressed the lift button to close the door, ‘the bloody CCTV has been knackered for months’ he added, gesturing to a discrete camera lens in the uppermost corner of the small cabin. One of the female researchers was later told by a resident that, when using the lifts in the block, she was safest ‘pressing the buttons with a pencil,’ as ‘some of the druggies stick their used “sharps” [needles] in the lift buttons and break them off’.

¹ The Queens Park estate has now been completely redeveloped as part of an area regeneration scheme by Blackpool Council: <<https://www.blackpool.gov.uk/Residents/Housing/New-housing-developments/Queens-Park-development.aspx>>.

2 The Public Understanding of Crime and Policing

The Queen's Park estate, located at that time in the Brunswick ward of Blackpool, Lancashire, had suffered from a range of overlapping and interconnected social problems that had been consistently evidenced by prominent levels of deprivation on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for England. As a composite empirical measure of the proportion of people living in a small area (the Lower Super Output Area or LSOA) who experience a lack of material resources relative to other LSOAs, the IMD continues to show that Blackpool has a sizeable proportion of its residents living in deprived neighbourhoods and is the most deprived larger seaside town in England (Humby, 2013).

Brunswick, home to around 7,000 people, has been in the top 10 per cent of most deprived wards in England in successive indices published by the Department for Community and Local Government every three years since it began in 2004. Census statistics show unemployment higher than the national average and 11 per cent of residents economically inactive due to permanent ill-health or disability. The number of lone parent families is nearly twice the national average at 23 per cent (ONS, 2012).

In the early 2000s, policing the Queens Park estate was challenging. As our researchers got to know the area and its residents better, a number of stories were forthcoming that illuminated the issues from different perspectives. For example, the local police explained how a significant number of the problems they were called upon to deal with could be traced back to the local council's policy to use the area to house increasing numbers of Blackpool's drug addicts. They also reported how they mounted repeated drug raids in the area, but with little success. Sometime later, one of the residents living in the tower blocks explained why the police found it so hard.

He told how there was one individual living in a flat in one of the grey tower blocks who was well known to be the main drug supplier in the area. The window of his flat gave him a clear view of the main road into and out of the estate. As a consequence, he was able to see the police cars and vans approach whenever a raid was imminent. His solution to this was to have his partner sitting in a car below another window. The respondent described an almost comedic scene of the police entering the main door of the block of flats, very shortly after which a package was lowered out of the window to the car below, which would then drive off.

Consequently, by the time the police actually made it up the stairs to the flat there were no drugs on the premises.

Fear of crime and insecurity on the estate was high, as were levels of physical disorder. In part this related to architectural design, as in November, when the research team first arrived, a bitterly cold wind came in from the sea, capturing rubbish in the corners and passages of the estate. But there were other forms of disorder too, in the form of pervasive graffiti and vandalism. The aesthetic of the large swathes of concrete used to build the estate was not improved by the frequent material traces of criminal conduct evident in many areas. Police crime figures for the ward in 2002/3 and 2003/4 show dramatically worsening levels of recorded crime and disorder, particularly for violent crime (+300 per cent) and criminal damage (+116 per cent).²

When researchers talked to residents, they referenced a range of crime and disorder issues.³ For instance, one interviewee talked about how:

... there is a lot of problems with drugs and crime, someone got their head beat in a few days ago, and it's going on all the time, but I can't say in the main it might be local people I don't know but there is a lot of druggies that hang around round here. (Brun_P1_085)

Another focused upon the unsettling and insecurity inducing anti-social behaviour of some young people:

It's a nervous place to be honest. For example, this Saturday afternoon there's about 5 or 6 boys ranging from 10 up to 13 or 14 and they were on the car park out here just running across people's cars, just running and jumping on them! This went on for an hour and we went out saying 'get down!' and you get a load of abuse and then it starts getting more than abuse and you tend to pull back and go in then. (Brun_p1_92)

The activities of these young people included significant criminal acts leaving material traces that contributed to an overall

² Number of ward-level police recorded incidents 2002/3 to 2003/4: Violence against the Person: 94 to 385; Criminal damage 181 to 391. Data courtesy of Lancashire Constabulary.

³ Throughout this volume, we draw upon raw qualitative data extracts from respondents involved in a number of studies conducted during a fifteen-year long research programme. Each study employed different conventions for identifying individual respondents, so where verbatim quotations are utilized, the respondent identifier cited directly after the quotation is that used for the original study and no attempt has been made to standardize.

4 The Public Understanding of Crime and Policing

impression of a disordered environment. For example, two teenage boys had recently been convicted of arson on the local school which had been severely damaged in the resulting fire. Visible from the windows of most of the flats on the estate, the burnt-out hulk of the school building was a potent symbol of the problems in the area. A second visual symbol was ongoing vandalism of the only local phone box, sited near the main entrance to the estate. For residents, the ongoing cycle of vandalism and repair was a potent signifier signalling the impotence of the authorities in providing basic security on the estate. The insecurity felt and routinely reported by residents was a product of a combination of crime, social disorder, and physical disorder.

Responding to, and tackling, these kinds of issues is the principal focus of the community policing tradition. At the time when these interviews were being conducted, the police in the area, along with officers in seven other forces, were preparing to participate in a programme of work designed to test the extent to which a particular formulation of community policing could impact upon these kinds of challenges.

This book tells the story of what happened next. In doing so, it has three principal aims. First, it seeks to provide a documentary record of how Neighbourhood Policing, as a particular formulation of the community policing tradition, can be and has been delivered to date. It focuses in particular on highlighting some of the more innovative aspects that have been brought forward under this model. Second, the book seeks to make some broader theoretical points about the careers of policing models more generally, including the significance of situating them in their historical and social contexts. Third, it attends to the 'craft' of policing neighbourhoods, based on the assertion that how policing is performed is as important as what it does. In respect of Neighbourhood Policing, the way police perform their interactions and encounters with citizens, each other, and partner organizations shapes both objective and subjective perceptions of crime and disorder.

Community policing: theme and variations

Community policing has been described and understood in different ways. Some commentators have sought to identify a set of core practices that define how policing activities and services are delivered (Fielding, 1995). Others have preferred to cast it

more as a philosophy, constituted by a particular set of ideas and values (see Ferreira, 1996), that can be situationally operationalized according to the requirements of the setting. Its origins in the United Kingdom and United States were, in part, a counterpoint to modes of reactive policing dominant in the latter parts of the twentieth century. Whilst prioritizing a swift police response to emergency calls and the apprehension of criminals, reactive policing isolated the police from public as local patrols shifted from foot to motor vehicles and police stations closed. Evidence also suggested that this approach did not have a significant reductive impact on crime levels, whilst high profile incidents of public order policing during the miners' strikes of the Thatcher-era did huge reputational damage to the police and public confidence in them (Waddington, 1991).

A broader formulation of the goals of policing, one that sought to widen its community base and input to help tackle and prevent crime, began to gather momentum. Police could not be expected to shoulder sole responsibility for preventing crime, so beginning with the Ditching circular (211/78) and culminating in the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act, crime prevention became a duty shared by chief police officers and the local authority (Newburn, 2008), and discourse shifted to talk of 'community safety' and multi-agency cooperation at a local level (Crawford, 1998). Significantly, it was communities who demanded more visible police action against a range of regular, but not necessarily criminal, 'incivilities' occurring in their local areas. The New Labour government brought to the fore the management of low-level environmental, physical, and social disorders under the banner 'antisocial behaviour' (ASB) and made it a central part of their five-year crime reduction plan between 2004 and 2008 (Home Office, 2004). This widening of the range of local problems and solutions to be policed and enforced at a local level coincided with the extension of the 'police family' to include a new tranche of unwarranted, uniformed officers called Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs). These officers, formally introduced under the 1992 Police Reform Act (Home Office, 2001), first appeared on the streets of London in 2002 and thereafter were rapidly recruited across England and Wales to engage in visible foot patrol and focus on antisocial behaviour.

Cutting across different perspectives on the relationship between policing and communities are a series of themes and

6 The Public Understanding of Crime and Policing

defining traits that can be identified with all those policing approaches that have been labelled under the rubric of 'community policing'. These include: strategic and tactical attempts to reduce the distance between police and 'policed'; a recognition that community views should be afforded an influence in delineating police priorities; and a sense that the fundamental police mission is not purely 'crime control' or law enforcement. As surmised by John Alderson, a senior police officer and early champion of the community policing movement, it encompasses 'social as opposed to legal action' (1979: 239).

Iterations of community policing theory and practice, although shaded in subtly different hues, have all tended to share a fundamental premise—that there are significant benefits to be accrued by connecting police with communities (Wycoff, 1988; Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990). Engaging with local communities is, amongst other things, suggested as a mechanism for increasing confidence and trust in the police with the added potential of enhancing a community intelligence 'feed' (Fielding, 1995). In the UK context, the publication of the Scarman report following street riots in Brixton in 1981 was particularly influential, highlighting fundamental failures in policing associated with the use of oppressive powers over and above communication and responsiveness to local communities, notably those of colour (Scarman, 1982). Fundamental issues of police competence were revisited just over a decade later in the formal inquiry into the death of Stephen Lawrence, and coexisted alongside charges of institutional racism and leadership failure within the force (MacPherson, 1999).

Viewed as a value proposition rather than a set of practices, efforts to foster police–community connectivity also resonate deeply with the so called 'Peelian Principles' (Cox and Fitzgerald, 1992). These nine normative statements of 'good policing' that are, at least in the popular and police imaginations, attributed to Sir Robert Peel when founding the Metropolitan Police around 1829, set out a series of doctrinal statements including that 'the police are the public and the public are the police'. Notwithstanding that it is now widely agreed that these 'principles' are simply part of the 'foundation myth' of the institution of policing, they have nevertheless been influential in shaping visions and conceptions of what democratic policing should be and how it is to be delivered. Community policing, in terms of its underpinning concepts and

orientation, has a deep affinity with these key 'philosophical' tenets of the UK policing tradition. Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux (1990: 2–3), for example, defined community policing as '9 Ps': 'a philosophy of full service personalized policing, where the same officer patrols and works in the same area on a permanent basis, from a decentralized place, working in a proactive partnership with citizens to identify and solve problems'.

Definitions notwithstanding, it is equally important not to overstate the significance of these defining traits. It is precisely because community policing has remained relatively loosely defined that it has 'travelled' so well. Not being overly directive at a conceptual level allows people to read into it different interpretations. Similarly, but in a more practical register, a certain degree of pragmatic flexibility and adaptability has helped community policing move across different situations and contexts.

This conceptual looseness has, however, also provided opportunities for critique of community policing as little more than a public relations gimmick. For example, Weatheritt (1988) asserted that much of what was cast as community policing was little more than rhetorical 'window dressing' as opposed to constituting 'real' change to what police do. Redolent concerns have also been made more recently by Manning (2003) who argues that community policing in the United Kingdom and United States is little more than an add-on to the core function of response policing.

An alternative way of identifying the essential qualities and boundaries of something that is relatively loosely configured is to define it in terms of what it is not. Adopting such an approach is especially insightful in respect of community policing, given how its initial formation was in reaction to the failings and limitations attributed to what, in the American context, Sparrow, Moore, and Kennedy (1990) dubbed 'the professional model' of policing. New directives for police officers were introduced to enhance their reputation as an independent, competent, and law-abiding workforce. Amongst these were rules restricting officers from living in the places where they policed and the edict that 'police officers shall not make any unnecessary conversation with the public' which remained on record in some parts of the United Kingdom until well into the 1980s. With their actions rooted in law, the core of the police mission was understood as being about responding to crime and emergency calls from the public.

8 The Public Understanding of Crime and Policing

Intriguingly, whilst the directives given to officers at that time seem wide of the mark today, the latter vision of what Reiner (2012) dubbed ‘fire-brigade policing’ continues to exhibit a recurrent powerful allure over the police imagination. This is evidenced by how community policing has been subject to serial reinventions and reintroductions, where it is presented as an innovative ‘solution’ to issues inhering in crime control focused policing strategies (Sparrow, 2016).

In the United Kingdom, a position statement on community policing was first articulated by John Alderson in 1979. In particular, he lamented how the still relatively recent shift from police foot patrols to patrolling in cars, in conjunction with a much-increased reliance upon telephone reporting of crime through the new 999 system, was distancing police from routine co-present interactions with members of the public. Alderson’s statement was important because, whilst these kinds of concern had been circulating prior to this time, he was an ‘insider’. To have a Chief Constable acknowledge and validate elements of the critique of the dominant policing approach was transformative for the fortunes of the nascent community policing model. As we shall see this is part of a recurrent pattern, whereby ‘auto-critique’ mounted by senior leaders from within policing plays an important role in terms of why, over time, certain ideas and models come into the ascendant (and also experience decline).

Since Alderson’s time of course, more sophisticated and nuanced conceptualizations of community policing have been brought forward, oftentimes reflecting how its fortunes have waxed and waned. In this respect, there is a subtle but important distinction between those studies and accounts that have proposed establishing a particular configuration, and those where the accent is more upon assessing and evaluating the impacts and consequences of established models. Indeed, one of the principal reasons why support for community policing has fluctuated over time is attributable to the struggle to establish reliable evidence about what it delivers.

In an important contribution based upon fieldwork in Seattle, Herbert (2006) concludes that a principal reason community policing programmes fail to realize their benefits is that typically the ‘weight of expectation’ it places upon communities to engage with police and participate in social control work is simply too ‘heavy’ for most communities to bear given the constraints upon their