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**Offenders and victims: accountability and fairness
in the justice process**

**Can Community Policing Prevent Youth Crime?
by Dr. Harold K. Becker (USA)**

Statements submitted by experts*

Note by the Secretariat

1. In its resolution 53/110 of 9 December 1998, the General Assembly emphasized the importance of the workshops to be held within the framework of the Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, and invited Member States, non-governmental organizations and other relevant entities to support financially, organizationally and technically the preparations for the workshops, including the preparation and circulation of relevant background material.
2. In its resolution 54/125 of 17 December 1999, the General Assembly encouraged Governments to make preparations for the Tenth Congress, including by establishing national preparatory committees, with a view to contributing to a focused and productive discussion of the topics and to participating actively in the organization of and follow-up to the workshops, the submission of national position papers on different agenda items and the encouragement of contributions from the academic community and relevant scientific institutions. In the same resolution, the Assembly called upon the specialized agencies and other relevant United Nations bodies and institutes and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to participate effectively in the Tenth Congress and to contribute to the formulation of regional and international measures aimed at preventing crime and ensuring justice.
3. Pursuant to rule 60 of the provisional rules of procedure for United Nations congresses on the prevention of crime and the treatment of offenders (A/CONF.187/2), written statements related to the work of the Congress submitted by the designated representatives, individual experts or observers are to be distributed by the secretariat to all delegations in the quantities and in the languages in which the statements are made available to the secretariat for distribution, provided that a statement submitted on behalf of a non-governmental organization is on a subject in which it has a special competence.

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Can Community Policing Prevent Youth Crime? (USA)

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Introduction

Juvenile sweeps and crackdowns reinforce the perception that police violence and aggressive actions are the only means available to control youth. Community policing offers a different approach, which in contrast to traditional policing, encourages neighborhoods and police to work together to solve community problems aggravated by youth criminal activity. Therefore, community policing has the *opportunity* to make a contribution to the control of juvenile crime.

Beginning in 1985, demonstration programs funded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) were conducted in Knoxville, Tennessee, and Tucson, Arizona where the police developed a problem oriented style of policing. These communities used a systems approach to crime and drug prevention and presented an early attempt to describe community policing. By 1990, the BJA awarded eight urban and suburban police department grants to establish community policing and drug demand reduction projects in Arizona, California, Kentucky, Maryland, New York, Oregon, Texas, and Virginia. In 1992, there were approximately 300 police departments nationwide having incorporated elements of community policing.

In 1988, Skolnick and Bayley reviewed the issues and practices of community policing in ten countries around the world, including the United States, and identified the following core elements to community policing programs: (1) organization of community crime prevention at the community level, (2) the reorientation of police patrols to include non-emergency activities, (3) increased police accountability to local communities, and (4) decentralization of the police organization and command structure. Trojanowicz (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990) expanded the concept of community policing at the neighborhood level by addressing citizens' fear of crime, environmental decay, and social and physical disorder.

Community policing encourages community partnerships to develop preventative and remedial activities. Together, police and citizen coalitions can identify crime prevention policies and target high-risk youth activities.

To a large degree, community policing is based on organizational theory and public policy analysis (Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990). With the focus on solving neighborhood problems, there will be regular contacts with community members and community based organizations, which will

¹ This study was funded by the California Wellness Foundation, 1997-98 and conducted with co-investigators Shauna Clark, Harry P. Pachon, and Camilo Cruz.

produce an exchange of information that will help the police and the community deal with crime without the need for aggressive juvenile sting operations. Where community partnerships exist, the police often generate intelligence about criminal activity beyond any other approach.

Problem oriented policing, sometimes called problem-solving policing, has become the mission of some police agencies. It has become a catchword among police administrators. The effect of community policing is still clouded by debates of definition and implementation. Basically, problem-oriented policing asks police officers to look beyond the immediate crime scene to underlying patterns, trends, and differences by using evaluative techniques and GIS (geographic information systems) for crime mapping. The emphasis is to identify areas where the police may make a broader and more positive impact than in merely trying to solve a crime (see Rosenbaum, ed., 1994).

Community policing should not focus on arrest as its primary objective but target young high-risk gang members with as many preventative means as possible to reduce the likelihood of their becoming involved in the juvenile or adult criminal justice system.

Study Methodology

Data collection was conducted during 1997-98. The study was of a non-experimental design, i.e., a nonrandom self-selection of respondents -- without attempting to alter or control their situation. Data was obtained by a series of surveys and personal interviews of police and community youth in gang and non-gang neighborhoods.

Surveys were sent to 133 law enforcement service areas (LESAs) in four California counties: Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and Ventura. Collectively, these counties represent almost one-half of the state's population. The LESAs were defined as: (1) individual police and sheriff's departments and (2) identifiable clusters of contract police agencies, with each cluster being counted as an individual service area. Eighty-one LESAs (60.9%) of all LESAs that were originally sent a survey -- self-selected to participate in the study by returning the survey and declaring that they were implementing some form of community policing.

A second survey was administered to the 81 LESAs and 45 police departments (55.6%) were selected for additional inquiry based on the following LESA profile:

- Community policing is something that the department is implementing,
- The police believe that community policing prevents juvenile crime,
- Special programs addressing juvenile delinquency are an integral part of the department's community policing effort, and
- Equal partnerships between the police and the residents have been established as a result of the department's community policing plan

Six of the LESAs, representing 13.3% of the 45 profiled police departments, surveyed 151 youth who were almost equally divided between males and females and represented 70% Latino, 8.2 % African American, 8.2% White, 5.9% Asian, and 7.6% self classified as Other. Ninety point one-tenth percent of the youth were 13 to 17 years of age and 9.9% were 11 to 12 years of age. The youth were statistically separated into gang and non-gang neighborhoods to help highlight LESA community policing and youth perceptions. Refer to Table 1 for a comparison of youth surveyed in gang and non-gang neighborhoods.

Table 1
A Sample of Youth Perceptions of Community Policing and
Crime in Gang and Non-gang Neighborhoods

	YOUTH	
	Living in Gang Neighborhood	Living in Non-gang Neighborhood
	N = 82 %	N = 69 %
Community policing is a highly effective means of providing police service		
Yes*	77.8	76.5
No	11.1	10.3
Don't know	11.1	13.2
Community policing prevents juvenile crime		
Yes*	30.0	31.3
No	31.3	26.9
Don't know	38.7	41.8
Friends criticize you for participating in community policing activities		
Yes	24.3	11.9
No	59.0	68.7
Don't know	16.7	19.4
Police are more aggressive with youth		
Yes	53.2	44.1
No	26.6	36.8
Don't know	20.2	19.1
Fear of crime has been reduced		
Yes**	58.2	61.5
No	29.1	26.1
Don't know	12.7	12.4
There is graffiti in neighborhood		
Yes	44.4	10.1
No	53.1	81.2
Don't know	2.5	8.7
A drug tip hotline is available in community		
Yes**	47.4	44.8
No	6.3	13.5
Don't know	46.3	41.7

*Policed answered this question 100% Yes

**Police answered this question 83.3% Yes

Conclusion

Perceptions of gang and non-gang neighborhood youth do not easily coincide. It appears that the targeted youth in this study have special needs consistent with their level of personal chaos, i.e., neighborhood crime, neighborhood decay, social and physical disorder (Trojanowicz, 1990; Baley, 1991). These needs may not be completely understood by community policing (LESAs) for the development of realistic prevention strategies.

Community policing perceptions miss the reality of the youth's experiences. This is very apparent when the 151 youth surveys were separated into two categories: (1) youth living in gang neighborhoods and (2) youth not living in gang neighborhoods. The youth living in gang neighborhoods have approximately two times the amount of alcohol and drug usage and are negatively influenced by aggressive police behavior, i.e., by being arrested; by gangs, i.e., gang membership, knowledge of gang sign language, tattoos and the wearing of gang attire; by fear of crime, i.e., the carrying of weapons for self protection; and by the potential for physical conflict between the youth and the police.

The simple answer to the question "Can Community Policing Prevent Youth Crime?" is no. If the police are going to be successful in preventing youth crime in the community, there must be greater positive interaction and understanding of youth problems correlated with increased non-aggressive police responses.

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