INTEGRATING SOCIOLOGICAL RESEARCH AND THEORY WITH COMMUNITY-ORIENTED POLICING: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN ACADEMICS AND PRACTICE

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ABSTRACT

Over 70% of police agencies indicate that they have put the community-oriented policing (COPS) philosophy into practice, but some critics claim that they are failing to do it well. In this paper, we examine three core components of community policing (community involvement, problem solving, and organizational decentralization) and employ lessons from the academic sociological literature on these topics to inform how to improve the fit between philosophy and practice. We argue that applying lessons from sociology will make the implementation and practice of community policing more successful in meeting community needs, including reducing crime and fear of crime.

Keywords: Community-oriented policing, problem solving, community involvement, organizational decentralization

An Overview of the COPS philosophy

Controversies over the promise and problems of community-oriented policing (or COPS) provide a rich opportunity to analyze how sociological knowledge can be applied both to the philosophy of COPS and to its derivative practices. This paper examines the fit of COPS with sociology. It proceeds in two parts. The first examines the orienting philosophy of COPS generally. The second focuses on three components of COPS more specifically to show where academic lessons from sociology can inform practice.

The authors have each had different experiences with COPS training. One author has done extensive participant observations of two different kinds of recruit academy training. Observations were made of academy training that was based on a traditional curriculum and compared with that premised on a reformulated curriculum that sought to integrate or “thread” COPS throughout the classroom instruction, the high liability areas, and the physical training. The other author was a participant observer and outside evaluator for the retraining program offered by a regional community-policing institute (RCPI) and eventually became an instructor in that institute.

By 1997, a majority of both police departments serving 100,000 or more people and sheriff’s offices serving 250,000 or more residents had personnel assigned to COPS [Local Police Departments, 1997 (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2000)]. Law enforcement agencies have, if nothing else, adopted the terminology of COPS. Initial evidence indicates that officers support COPS (Winfree, Barku, and Seibel 1996).

Respected commentators argue that COPS is built on a new philosophy of policing (see Greene and Mastrofski 1988; Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux 1989; Walker

1999; Cordner 2001) that holds promise for improving law enforcement. Oliver (1998: 51) defines community policing as:

> A systematic approach to policing with the paradigm of instilling and fostering a sense of community, within a geographical neighborhood, to improve the quality of life. It achieves this through the decentralization of the police and the implementation of a synthesis of three key components: (1) … the redistribution of traditional police resources; (2) … the interaction of police and all community members to reduce crime and the fear of crime through indigenous proactive programs; and (3)... a concerted effort to tackle the causes of crime problems rather than to put band-aids on the symptoms.

Although little consensus exists on the actual definition of community-oriented policing, several themes emerge that most definitions share: community involvement, problem-solving, and organizational decentralization (see Oliver 1998: 32-43).

Langworthy and Travis (2003: 393) argue that COPS has important strategic and programmatic dimensions in addition to the philosophical reorientation. The strategic focuses on geography (defining areas and assigning officers to those areas), prevention (solving the problems that routinely lead to calls for service), and substance (reducing crime and fear of crime). The programmatic focuses on reorienting practices to solve problems (rather than respond to individual incidents) and includes such activities as foot patrols, neighborhood watches, neighborhood cleanups, involvement with youth in athletic leagues and after-school programs, target hardening and environmental design improvements, codes enforcement and nuisance abatement.

Cordner (2001) also emphasizes the strategic and programmatic but adds an organizational dimension. He insists that COPS involves different structures (decentralization, “flattening” of the layers of hierarchy, less specialization, teamwork, and hiring civilian employees), changes in management (including coaching, mentoring,

empowerment of line officers, and selective discipline), and the collection and utilization of more information (including the use of performance appraisals, program evaluations, information systems, crime analysis, and geographic information systems).

On the other hand, Lab (2000) argues that COPS cannot be translated into practice and implemented well. Kennedy and Moore (2001) warn that evaluations of COPS must assess program and organizational success. Senna and Siegel (2002: 192-194) succinctly summarize and review challenges to the successful implementation of COPS: (1) defining community, (2) establishing the role of COPS officers, (3) changing the command structure of policing organizations and decentralizing decision-making, (4) reorienting police values toward the public service orientation required for community involvement, (5) revising training, and (6) reorienting recruitment.

MacDonald's (2002) recent evaluation of COPS focuses on outcomes. He reports that COPS is failing to create a significant reduction in crime rates and fear of crime. The disappointing outcomes may reflect flaws in the underlying philosophy, failures in implementation, or some combination.

Most descriptions of COPS focus on community involvement. The involvement goes beyond mere public relations and focuses on developing partnerships between the police, the residents, and other service-providers. The community itself shares the responsibility for crime control and order maintenance. Members of the community must help identify problems and search for solutions—policing shifts from a top-down delivery mode contained within the agency to shared decision-making with residents and an integration of law enforcement with other service providers. Under COPS, residents are no longer merely potential victims, witnesses, or suspects. They are stake-holders,

community organizers, neighborhood guardians, informal social control agents, and problem-solvers.

Characterizations of COPS also emphasize a problem solving approach. COPS officers are expected to focus on solving the causes of problems rather than simply dealing with the symptoms. By definition, problems reflect recurring patterns of behavior rather than isolated incidents to which officers respond as single events. The COPS goals are to incorporate residents' views into problem solving and to enlist their active cooperation in maintaining order, reducing fear, and controlling crime. Public relations is a necessary but not sufficient condition of this shared problem-solving effort. COPS officers are proactive and can coordinate referrals in a multi-pronged effort to alleviate the problem and help locate a broad array of social or community resources. Arrests are merely one tool available to the officer. Often, however, an arrest does little to address the underlying causes, so the problem will not be alleviated.

A third tenet of COPS focuses on the organizational structure of police departments. Police departments have traditionally been characterized by hierarchical, top-down management and a rigid chain of command (i.e., paramilitary structure). The community involvement and problem-solving focus of COPS requires decentralization both in command structure and decision making. Officers in the field need sufficient autonomy so they can join with residents to define problems and develop possible solutions. COPS officers have to be able to make contacts with others, both inside and outside of law enforcement, to explore the feasibility of potential solutions. They must have sufficient authority to coordinate the various resources, many of which will be outside the control of the law enforcement agency itself, that can attack the problem. A

rigid quasi-military top-down command structure and policies that restrict the exercise of discretion will hamstring partnering with the community and solving problems.

Sociological theory and research can be applied to each of these themes of the COPS philosophy. We maintain that doing so will enhance the success of COPS in meeting community needs, including reducing crime and fear of crime.

Sociological Theory, Research, and COPS

A. Community Involvement

Involvement of citizens at the neighborhood level presumes the existence of organized communities. Sociologists have long known that neighborhoods are differentially organized and have related social organization to other phenomena, including crime. The theory and research analyzing a rapidly changing Chicago in the early 20th century continue to influence our thinking about social organization/ disorganization. Lessons from the Chicago School illustrate how sociology can inform the theory and practice of COPS. We will focus on two of those lessons: 1) how disorganization affects social control and 2) how disorganization affects community building.

Using Chicago, Park, Burgess, and McKenzie (1928) posited a theory of urbanization that focused on how the intersection of rapid population growth, heterogeneous populations, poverty, and transience combined to disrupt core social institutions (see also Park 1936). They studied concentric zones that reflected differential levels of social organization/disorganization. Shaw and McKay (1942/1969) looked at the relationship of these zones to crime. Some zones had much higher rates of crime. The types of crime also varied by zone. Deterioration of core social institutions led to

social disorganization, which ultimately led to higher rates of crime and delinquency. The most serious crimes most often occurred in "zones of transition," areas where the transience and change (disorganization) were greatest.

More recent social disorganization research (e.g., Sampson and Groves 1989) finds that some neighborhoods have more deep-seeded problems and present different challenges—they have less collective efficacy (see Sampson, Raudenbush and Earls 1997). One implication of the social disorganization research is that crime prevention has to be tailored to the neighborhoods, suggesting that top-down approaches instituted from the outside may not be the best way to proceed. Success will depend on understanding the dynamics of a neighborhood's problems.

Another offshoot of the Chicago School focused on how the culture conflict between groups in rapidly urbanizing areas led to different "definitions of the situation" (Thomas and Thomas 1928). Sutherland (1947) would eventually reformulate the notion of differential exposure to definitions and use it to explain crime causation (see Warr 2001). Sutherland married exposure to law-violating definitions with another offshoot from disorganization studies. He insisted that crime is more often learned when definitions emanate from closer, more intimate social sources (e.g., family, friends, school) than when they come down from more distant, less intimate actors or institutions (e.g., officers in patrol cars, courts, correctional agencies). The implication is twofold. Informal social control (that exerted by the citizens themselves) will be more effective than formal control efforts (like those instigated by law enforcement), and officers who do not have positive relationships with the citizens will be particularly ineffective.

Theory and research on disorganization influenced by the Chicago School also holds implications for community building and COPS. Neighborhood involvement in identifying problems, solving problems, and exerting informal social control presumes that a sense of community exists or can be forged so that a consensus can emerge about what needs to be done and how to do it. Where social disorganization is severe (e.g., the zones of transition), a sense of community will be absent. Even worse, the residents may adopt a kind of "siege" or "fortress" mentality. As individuals withdraw from neighborhoods because of property deterioration, signs of incivility (e.g., public drunkenness), and fear of crime, "the community enters an upward spiral of increased crime, fear, and loss of community" (Lab 2000: 44). COPS officers can hardly be expected to grow community where none exists even if they can overcome the suspicion or overt hostility of many of the people who live there. Moreover, even if community could be imposed top-down, to try to do so would violate the COPS philosophy.

In other words, some "neighborhoods" are not good candidates for community-oriented policing. Sociological theory and research could be used to identify those neighborhoods that would most likely benefit. If we are correct, urban law enforcement agencies that endeavor to re-fashion their entire operations along COPS lines will likely find COPS to fail in some areas (and have officers and citizens in those areas disgruntled with the attempt). We think this would be less a failure of COPS than a failure to understand its limitations—limitations that sociological theory and research identify.

The lessons from the Chicago School can be extended. For example, some lower class neighborhoods are organized around unconventional values rather than the middle class values held by most police officers and endorsed by their agencies. The

neighborhood organization may involve criminal enterprise. Illicit gambling, drug markets, prostitution rings, and other forms of vice may be an inherent part of some neighborhoods' organization. The challenge for community-oriented policing would be how to work within such differentially organized neighborhoods and defer to the citizens' perception of what is problematic. If citizens think that speeders who put their children at risk is the biggest problem, COPS officers should shift their priorities to that problem and tolerate other issues to which a top-down approach would attend. Neither the police nor academics should substitute their priorities for those generated by the community.

The identification of priorities, however, can be complicated and some level of expertise can be useful. Residents concerned primarily with burglary may not have the luxury of ignoring vice crimes and so-called victimless crimes that send crime-promoting signals and attract additional criminality. Failing to attend to the constellation of factors can make it more difficult to solve a particular crime manifestation. COPS officers may need to educate residents and forge a new consensus—something that will not occur overnight and will entail considerable effort. Even after consensus is reached about the problem, agreement will have to be built about how to solve it. That will involve sorting through competing values and ideas while knowing what is feasible and workable in that context. Some neighborhoods will have less sophisticated residents to help design and pursue solutions, leaving the officers to carry more of the load. COPS officers will need skills in leadership, communications, interpersonal relations, diversity awareness, and a variety of other areas to do the job well. Not all officers will have the skills that are needed most by a neighborhood, and different neighborhoods will need different skills for its COPS officers. This holds implications for recruitment, training, and the

assignment of COPS officers. In addition, the contributions of police psychologists are now recognized (Bartol 2001). To pursue COPS, sociologists may be at least as useful.

We are mindful of the dilemmas officers will face as they implement the COPS philosophy in neighborhoods. When is there enough consensus to move forward? How do officers make that determination? What happens when there isn't a broad enough consensus? Without adequate consensus, will problem-solving take on a political dimension so that one group's views are favored over another? Will COPS officers become instruments for waging social conflict? Will the effort detract from community rather than build it? Again, academic expertise can help analyze the situations and devise strategies to overcome them.

One dilemma highlighted in the sociology literature limits the promise of the COPS philosophy. Our knowledge about social disorganization suggests that community-oriented policing may be implemented best in communities that need it least. For example, rural communities should be able to build consensus due to less heterogeneity, less transience, less population growth, and less crime. Similarly, suburban communities that are more homogenous, less impoverished, and more stable should also be able to forge the consensus necessary for community-oriented policing to be successful. Inner city neighborhoods pose different challenges. COPS can be no panacea but it can be targeted to areas where it is most likely to succeed.

B. Problem Solving

Virtually every definition of community-oriented policing links it to problem solving. Although community-oriented policing is not the only model of policing that

emphasizes problem solving (e.g., problem-oriented policing), it is the only one that ties problem solving to the community. COPS advocates often advance Eck and Spelman's (1987) SARA model which breaks problem solving into four component parts, each denoted by one of the letters of the acronym. Each component invites the use of sociological methods or knowledge.

The S signifies Scanning. Scanning involves identifying the problem(s) from the perspective of the community. What do the residents want the police to attend to? The academic approach might entail a needs assessment. Even if COPS officers adopt a much less formal and demanding approach, they will still need to gather information that is reliable, valid, and relevant.

The first A stands for Analysis. Analysis entails a more systematic study of the problem(s) identified. The effective COPS officer needs to gather information from the community and other sources to get a comprehensive understanding of the crime patterns that exist and the dynamics that maintain those patterns. Recall that problem solving focuses on trends and patterns rather than isolated calls for service. Therefore statistical data from dispatch, crime-mapping tools, community surveys, and focus group meetings can be important sources of information at this stage of problem solving. Statistical analysis of calls for service and dispatch would benefit from the use of statistical controls. Community surveys can be designed to get more useful and better quality information that is more representative of neighborhoods. Focus groups would benefit from training in good qualitative interviewing and information-gathering techniques. The level of sophistication that would be required for community-oriented policing officers to

do analysis well would require that the officer have an understanding of some of these techniques.

The R stands for Response. In many ways, this is where academic knowledge can contribute the most to community-oriented policing. The response involves theorizing about the problem so that a feasible and workable solution can be identified and implemented. Theories of crime, community, race relations, organizations, and organizational behavior can all come into play. We will return to this component shortly and use one line of theorizing to illustrate the significance of bridging from sociology to COPS.

Finally, the last A stands for Assessment. One of the unique features of the SARA model is the feedback loop. It explicitly calls for an evaluation of the effectiveness of the solution. Rather than seeing evaluation as potentially threatening, SARA incorporates feedback as a way to refine police services to the community. It affords the opportunity to see what is working well, what can be improved, and what has not worked and still needs attention. Assessment, however, also requires a more sophisticated officer. It requires systematic collection of information and a neutral interpretation of that data. Lessons from research methods would enhance the ability of COPS officers to assess outcomes and refine practice.

We think that the COPS training materials that we have seen on problem solving could be improved if they would deal more directly with sociological and social science theory. Many discussions of the development of community policing link it to the broken windows model—a simplistic approach penned more for popular media than to be a comprehensive theory (Wilson and Kelling 1982). According to broken windows,

neighborhood disorder creates fear. Disorganized neighborhoods give off crime-promoting signals (e.g. deteriorated housing, disrepair, untended disorderly behavior) and these incivilities increase crime. Law-abiding citizens in these areas increasingly live in fear and disengage from their community. If citizens disengage, informal social control (the most effective form of social control) is further compromised and so the cycle goes.

The model itself has some important parallels with Newman's (1972) notions of defensible space—in particular, his notions of "image," "territoriality," and "natural surveillance." Neighborhoods that project an image of order are less vulnerable to crime. Neighbors who have a sense of territoriality take a stake in their own protection. A peaceful, civil neighborhood is one that is open and visually integrated, not one that is divided by tall fences, guard dogs, and bars on the windows. The image of peace and order not only evokes invulnerability, but it also allows the residents to see what's going on (surveillance), and help monitor day-to-day activities. All of this contributes to informal social control. One sociologist (Lab 2000) links defensible space lessons to Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED), and explicitly recognizes the importance of building a sense of community (see Lab 2000).

Broken windows/defensible space/CPTED ideas suggest possible problem solving responses that can be tailored to different neighborhoods by those who have a deeper understanding of communities, social disorganization, and theories of crime causation and prevention. Police can crack down on drinking in public, pursue noise ordinance violations, and break-up loitering and congregating at "hang-outs." To attack run-down buildings and vacant "dump sites," police can foster neighborhood cleanups; they can enlist volunteers and secure contributions to make repairs; they can instigate stepped-up

codes enforcement against dilapidated structures that are substandard and attract criminal activity. Officers can help secure better lighting, push for altered traffic patterns, organize citizen groups, educate in crime prevention and precautions through neighborhood groups, and conduct security audits of businesses and residences. In COPS, the officer plays a fluid role—ranging from a law enforcer to a community referral agent—that changes depending on community needs. Even if a particular response does not have a direct impact on crime or fear of crime, the effort can improve police-community relations and reinforce community involvement generally.

The academic research also gives guidance about what not to do. Problem solving responses will not be successful without community involvement and support. Where incivilities and disorganization set in and residents disengage, interventions stand a low likelihood of long-term success. Interventions may harden targets but do so at the expense of the community. For example, barred windows may secure the house but project an image of vulnerability to crime in the neighborhood generally. High fences with barbed wire may protect the particular enclosure but may project an image of being under siege. Thus, careful theorizing about interventions is important. Those that harden targets and build community are called for—interventions like removing fences and shrubbery so that houses are connected and open to each other will help integrate the image of the neighborhoods, enhance visibility, and increase guardianship. Criminal and problem behavior will be constrained when the community is tended to and encourage the residents to be out and about and therefore able to notice strangers and other potential offenders (even if only inadvertently).

A related social theory of crime that holds promise for problem solving is routine activities theory. Cohen and Felson (1979) argue that crime occurs only when there is a convergence in time and place of a motivated offender, a suitable target, and a lack of guardianship. Because law enforcement staffing levels and employment patterns will never be sufficient to provide capable guardianship of all places at all times, we stand a better chance of reducing crime by structuring our routine activities in ways that decrease the likelihood of that convergence. One of the advantages of routine activities theory for community-oriented policing is that altering any one of the three components is enough to disrupt crime. Therefore, the community does not have to eliminate the motivated offenders; it has other means of responding to prevent crime (i.e., increase guardianship and decrease suitability of targets). It also has the ability to protect itself from crime that is generated from within or from outside the community. Steps can be taken, even if courts and corrections are revolving doors through which motivated offenders come and go.

One line of research in particular helps illustrate the promise of using routine activities theory to prevent crime. "Hot" spots analysis uses systematic information to analyze where problems are. Crime analysis that identifies "hot spots" will show where motivated offenders, suitable targets, and lack of guardianship are likely to converge. Various solutions can be devised to break up the convergence of the three variables. For example, in the original hot spots analysis (Sherman, Garten, and Buerger 1989), a high number of calls for service came from one geographic location surrounding an intersection with a bar, a liquor store, and a park. Arguably, intoxicated people were going in and out of the bar and guardianship was down. A solution could include closing

access from the park and tightening liquor regulations in that area. Significantly, Sherman et al. (1989) insist that solutions do not result in much displacement—one of the concerns about neighborhood-specific interventions. According to routine activities theory, crime will not displace to another area unless motivated offenders, suitable targets, and lack of guardians again converge. Many times neighborhoods will not have other locales where all the factors converge to the same degree.

C. Organizational Decentralization

Police organizations have gone through three transitions since their inception in the 19th Century (Kelling and Moore 1988). During the Political Era, which lasted until the early 1900s, police forces were closely tied to and were often the instruments of local political powers. A military command structure was adopted in the first modern policing force by Sir Robert Peele in London, and that became the model for police organizations. Although quasi-military in formal organization, the early police departments were more decentralized in practice. Early policing relied on foot patrols with officers assigned to neighborhood beats. This kind of patrol (coupled with primitive technology, communication, and transportation) meant that officers enjoyed broad discretion on most matters. Largely unbridled discretion among street officers, difficulties in supervising officers on the beat, inattention to training, favoritism in recruitment and selection, and disregard for diversity invited corruption, discrimination, and abuse of power.

To rectify the corruption and related problems that plagued agencies in the early 20th century, agencies began reform campaigns. The Reform Era spanned from approximately the 1930s until the late 1970s. The reforms included highly centralized hierarchical bureaucracies to increase accountability and fight corruption. Departments of

this era fit the Weberian ideal type bureaucracy (Weber 1968) with its emphasis on formal rules, supervision and graded sanctions, disinterested performance of duties, and specialization. Officers should become highly skilled in particular duties, thus increasing efficiency. Officers should not reside in the communities in which they worked so they could perform their duties in an even-handed and dispassionate way. In fact, officers should rotate through assignments to prevent officers and citizens from developing intimate relationships. The role of the citizen was redefined to be that of a passive witness to crime, rather than an active voice in defining and solving problems.

The reform movement occurred simultaneously with important technological innovations that were supposed to increase efficiency and rapid response (e.g., two-way radios, motorized vehicles for patrol). The technology and new emphasis fit well with the quasi-military formal structure—the bureaucratic model meant top-down management and communication, a rigid chain of command, and unity of control. Street officers lost much of their discretion and were removed from the community, spending more of their time in cars patrolling from a distance.

Although the reform model may have helped reduce corruption, it led to other problems. The bureaucratic model prevented officers from creating and maintaining community ties that are important to maintain order, to collect information, to build knowledge, and to solve problems. Perhaps, most critically, the bureaucratic approach did not seem to work well to combat crime. The increase in official crime beginning in the 1960s sowed the seeds for change.

We are now well into the COPS era. The COPS philosophy requires the decentralization of police organizations so that line officers have more autonomy to act.

Law enforcement organizations need to alter the top-down decision-making and vertical communication structure. In some ways, this has already occurred with the introduction of mini-stations, neighborhood, and sub-stations. However, decision-making authority is still housed in central headquarters, so even though agencies are branching out geographically, officers still must go through the chain of command to do their jobs.

Although police commentators agree that agencies must decentralize to implement COPS (Cordner 2001; Oliver 1998; Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux 1989), they are less clear about what comes next. What does it mean to decentralize? And most importantly, how do you do it? It is easy to identify what police organizations need to move away from to do COPS, but it is more difficult to say what departments need to move toward. Any such discussion needs to be tempered by an appreciation of resistance to change that is found in most organizations.

Literature from the sociology of organizations helps us to think about and analyze these issues (see Scott 1998). What types of innovative organizational arrangements have been used in other types of organizations? How can we move away from a rigid bureaucracy in order to increase decision-making power of line personnel without risking the corruption problems that plagued police departments in the early 1900s? How can we strike a balance between achieving accountability while granting police officers the freedom and flexibility that they need to solve problems in their neighborhoods? How can we anticipate and combat resistance to change?

The COPS philosophy implies an open hybrid system. We have learned something about those systems in other kinds of organizations. Some hospitals, for example, have adopted what is called a matrix organization (Blau and Alba 1982).

Although at first glance hospitals appear to have little in common with law enforcement, a deeper look suggests parallels and offers lessons.

Matrix organizations have been described by Mee (1964) as a "web of relationships." (Such an orientation captures what needs to happen if policing is focused on community problem solving.) The matrix organization is sometimes referred to as team management, grid structure, multidimensional structure, and global matrix (Kolodny 1979). (The COPS officer will have to integrate the resources and existing programs that can address problems identified by the community, put together a team to attack the problems, and coordinate the attack.) Matrix organizations center on particular sources, projects, or divisions, which means that lines of authority converge at a lower level in the hierarchy than in traditional organizations (Daft 1992; Hall 1996). (The problem solving focus and community input in COPS also require decentralization.) Matrix organizations combine "the principle of specialized departments" with that of "self-sufficient, more or less autonomous units or divisions" (Khandwalla 1977: 495). (For community problem solving to work, some combination of expertise and autonomy will need to be brought together.) Matrix organizations have dual reporting relationships (i.e. two bosses); an employee may have to answer to a quality manager and a financial manager (Blau and Alba 1982; Hall 1996: 186). (COPS teams will have to be accountable both to their neighborhoods and to their law enforcement agencies.)

Matrix organizations are a way of behaving, rather than simply a new physical structure. They emphasize flexibility and adaptability to ever-changing conditions. They help personnel learn problem solving, conflict management and communication skills. Employees must value a diversity of opinions and learn how to move from reactive to

proactive behavior. A quick summary would describe matrix organizations as efficient, flexible, adaptable, balanced, proactive, and motivating to employees. We contend that these characteristics mirror the COPS philosophy.

To illustrate the value of thinking theoretically about organizations, we will close this section by showing how several lessons from matrix organizations apply to COPS. One of Kolodny's (1979) insights is that matrix managers must establish new evaluation principles. This challenge confronts COPS too. Whereas traditional policing was measured by arrests, tickets issued, and crime rates, COPS calls for evaluation based on community satisfaction, alleviation of problems, and improvement in quality of life (Alpert, Flynn, and Piquero 2001). The SARA model explicitly adopts a feedback loop (assessment) so that information about problem-solving is incorporated. That information can be used for performance appraisals, although care must be taken about how it is used. If SARA assessments become primarily a performance appraisal, police may avoid getting feedback from the neighborhoods for fear that it will be negative, even if that feedback could help refine a problem-solving effort. A more sophisticated approach to evaluation is required—one that looks at how feedback information is used as process and not only how it measures outcome.

Kolodny (1979) also asserts that an organization that moves toward the matrix model should start small by assigning a few teams/geographical areas to a matrix form before overhauling the entire organization. Matrix organizations that start "smaller" have a higher likelihood of succeeding. COPS should not ignore the lesson. Strategic selection of where to begin is important for several reasons. COPS programs need to select both areas that can best support COPS and problems that are most likely to be

resolved. Nothing will enhance the involvement of the community or the acceptance by officers and agencies like proven success. Furthermore, we have already raised the caveat derived from social disorganization considerations that COPS may not work in all neighborhoods and thus may not be something that can be adopted department-wide.

Matrix organizations also grapple with problems of accountability as they decentralize around a specific task. A project manager (or a senior COPS officer) is given responsibility. She or he has autonomy but must report back to supervisors (or a sergeant) about progress. Activities can be monitored at various levels. The project manager (or ranking COPS officer) plans, organizes tasks, and takes responsibility, as well as reporting to higher-ups. She or he resolves conflicts that are inevitable given the team framework. Ultimately, the goal is to organize cohesive, well-planned responses to the demands of the particular assignment (like a COPS neighborhood). We think lessons from matrix organizations can help COPS. Law enforcement agencies do not have to sacrifice accountability even as they increase the decision-making power of line personnel, limit the span of control of supervisors (so that officers can work together in self-directed teams with the communities with which they are most familiar), and help residents resolve their unique challenges.

Discussion and Conclusion

We have shown how an important paradigm shift in law enforcement opens new opportunities for academic sociology to bridge with practice. The COPS philosophy is premised on ideas and processes that lie at the heart of sociology. COPS entails the devolution of policing from a highly centralized bureaucratic enterprise emphasizing formal social control to community-based problem-solving cooperative efforts that

enhance informal social control. Law enforcement that is rooted in the communities and neighborhoods requires a level of understanding about communities, social organization, consensus-building, and community involvement. Sociology possesses the tools to analyze systematic data on these community issues, as well as the tools for gathering additional information and the theories to make sense of it all. The theories and methods of sociology and the experience with theorizing about social phenomena are directly relevant to the problem-solving emphasis in COPS. Sociological knowledge about complex organizations can be put to good use if law enforcement organizations are going to be reconstituted in ways that enhance the likelihood for COPS to realize its promise.

A full-blown analysis of the myriad ways in which sociology applies to COPS is beyond the scope of this paper. We have applied social organization/ disorganization lessons in ways that illustrate the relevance of sociology for community issues. The community literature offers many more possibilities for informing COPS practices. Similarly, we trust that readers will appreciate that defensible space and routine activities theories are only examples of the ways in which extant frameworks hold relevance for problem solving. We want to reiterate our view that sociological research methods (both quantitative and qualitative) build bridges to COPS problem solving via approaches like SARA. Systematic collection and analysis of social data are necessary for successful COPS implementation. Finally, we hope that readers will see ways in which sociological knowledge about complex organizations applies to the challenges law enforcement agencies confront as they try to incorporate the COPS philosophy.

We wish to close by issuing a challenge to sociology and to law enforcement. We think the ethos of COPS provides fertile common ground for more institutionalized

cooperation. Just as the specialization and efficiency concerns of policing in the Reform Era gave rise to police psychologists to attend to screening and recruitment issues, stress management, and counseling needs, we contend that the foundational concerns of COPS invite sociologists to come on board (and for law enforcement to seek out sociology).

The ethos of COPS provides the opportunity to reconsider traditional obstacles between town and gown. Problem-solving emphasizes pragmatics—practitioner and ivory tower orientations that may be at odds can give way to the particular dynamics and demands of the problems as they are presented in the neighborhoods themselves. The emphasis on community involvement means that both academics and police have to set aside their preferences and values and incorporate those of the community in ways that are workable. The need in COPS for an open organizational structure reflects the critical role that partnering plays in solving problems. A change in organizational structure opens new doors for academics and practitioners to cooperate to address challenges in building community, assessing needs, formulating interventions, evaluating outcomes, or dealing with organizational constraints. The potential for law enforcement to implement COPS better and for academics to disseminate knowledge and to study complex social life should be motivation enough. The prospect of serving communities should be the clincher.

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