THE APPLICABILITY OF COMMUNITY POLICING: TRADE-OFFS and THE USA CASE

Toplum Destekli Polisliğin Uygulanabilirliği: Kazanımlar-Kayıplar ve ABD Örneği

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═══════　─────── **Özet** ───────　═══════

Toplum destekli polislik (TDP) uygulamaları ülkemizde özellikle son dönemde popülerlik kazanmış bir yöntem biçimidir. Bununla beraber, ABD gibi kimi gelişmiş devletler de, içerisinde toplumun da olduğu polislik stratejileri yaklaşık olarak 30 yıldır denenmekte olup, bu konu çok çeşitli boyutlarıyla incelenmiştir. Bu makale, ABD polis birimlerinin bu alanda edinmiş olduğu deneyimleri artıları ve eksileri ile objektif olarak ortaya koyarak kanun uygulayıcı birimlerin istifadesine sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Toplum destekli polislik çalışmalarının böylesi bir birikimden maksimum fayda sağlaması temel hedeftir. Diğer taraftan, bu çalışma TDP'nin kanun uygulayıcılar tarafından uygulanıp uygulanmamasının tartışılması amacını gütmez. Bununla beraber, bulgular göstermektedir ki kurumlar, çalışanları ve toplum bireyleri TDP'yi bütüncül bir strateji olarak görmedikleri sürece beklenen sonuçları elde etmek pek mümkün görünmemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Toplum Destekli Polislik, ABD Deneyimleri, Kazanımlar-kayıplar.

Abstract

Community oriented policing has especially gained popularity in Turkey recently. However, in certain developed countries such as USA, policing strategies including community as a key determinant have been examined for almost 30 years with its various dimensions. This article objectively aims to present to the profit of law enforcement authorities the experiences of the police departments in USA in community policing area together with its advantages and disadvantages. Ensuring maximum benefit from such repertory for community policing activities is the principal

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goal. On the other hand, this study does not intend to argue whether community policing should be implemented by law enforcers. However, findings indicate that it is unlikely to get expected outcomes unless agencies, their personnel and individuals start to perceive community policing as an overall strategy.

Key Words: Community Policing, USA Experiences, Trade-offs.

Introduction

Proponents of community policing claim that traditional policing has simply failed to deliver the goods and that community policing is the evolutionary response (Brogden, 1999:172). In many respects, community policing came forward as a response to the "professional," scientific, reactive, and unsystematic patrol-based model (Manning, 1998:200).

However, police departments are either not fully convinced to apply its techniques to police work or they are not implementing it in a comprehensive and consistent manner. Actually, what you get at the end of the day in community policing is not satisfactory at all for many police departments.

This study aims to present the trade-offs of community-centered policing strategies -mainly community policing- in USA in order to come to a better understanding as to which part of such strategies fails and which parts comply with the day-to-day police work.

1. Trade-offs

Trade-off is usually defined as "an exchange of one thing in return for another; especially relinquishment of one benefit or advantage for another regarded as more desirable" or "an exchange process in which a decision maker gives up partly on some issues so as to gain on other issues" (dictionary.reference.com, 2009; iiasa.ac.at, 2009). So in broader terms, it is to imply the benefits we give up and profits we gain by exchanging traditional policing with community oriented policing. What do we give up, what do we gain with community policing? In specifics, literature in the field on the trade-offs of community policing leads us to the three aspects of this issue: police organization and management, police culture

and personnel and community. This study explores the ideas in details by integrating both the positive and the negative opinions.

1.1. Police Organization and Management

During the 1980s, police all over the developed democratic world have more and more questioned their role, operating strategies, organization, and management which are attributable to mounting doubts about the effectiveness of their traditional strategies in protecting the public from crime (Bayley & Shearing, 1996:588). Community-based policing in USA has come into sight as the expression of a police reform movement that addressed a central problem confronting police in that time period– the problem of legitimacy (Crank, 1994:325).

Community policing envisages changing "ineffective, reactive, quasi-military bureaucracies" with up to date police departments receptive to not only the needs of their personnel but also the demands of the citizens they serve (Rosenbaum et. al., 1994:333). Community policing includes changing police organization, rewards, and assessment; their commands; how police and community are anticipated to communicate; and anticipations of the police (Manning, 1998:201). The movement to community policing asks for a fundamental change in the role and responsibilities of police departments and how they work (Morash & Ford, 2002:1, 126). Community policing highlight three principal elements regarding to organizational change: responding to public expectations, setting up of new preferences in police job, and establishing ties between activities and organizational priorities (Zhao et. al., 2003:703). With the appropriate structure and design, internal resistance to change may become non-problematic in the transition period (Williams, 2003:121).

Morash and Ford (2002:126) state that the role and responsibilities alter from a focus on regular patrol to more importance on direct communication with citizens, an importance on prevention rather than reaction to crime activity, and an environmental focus in which officers are more liable to a neighborhood rather than merely performing police duties. Community policing sustain police agencies the flexibility that will enable them to adjust their operations to the changing social conditions (Williams, 2003:128).

However, putting community policing into practice has many difficulties. Traditional roles of police organizations is a major obstacle to any new and different model of policing, and particularly, to the existing endeavor into community policing (Yates & Pillai, 1996:193). Some of the organizational obstacles to community policing are "lack of knowledge and skill in new functions, a police culture that is negative and resistant and change, and bureaucratic structures/policies that discourage both problem solving and the development of police-community partnerships" (Rosenbaum, Yeh, & Wilkinson, 1994:348-349). The drastic changes and the implementation of practices related with community policing usually bring in uncertainty and discomfort in police agencies (Brody et. al., 2002:181). "Police organizations are inherently reluctant to accept and try new ideas" (Allen, 2002:512).

"The core functional priorities of American policing remained largely in alignment with the dictates of the professional model" (Zhao et. al., 2003:715). "It is also arguable whether significant police resources should be invested to enforce local standards of conduct in this way" (Jesilow & Parsons, 2000:170). The failure rate of the shift to community policing, on the other hand, is pretty high. Community policing initiatives have been attempted without first constructing the organizational environment to maintain them on a consistent basis (Rosenbaum et. al., 1994:332). The most frequently mentioned cause is disregarding of the organization's culture which I will mention in details in subsequent paragraphs (Morash & Ford, 2002:7).

1.2. Police Culture and Personnel

"The transition from traditional to community policing involves major changes in the missions, policies, and practices of police departments, as well as in the behavior of police officers" (Rohe, 2001:80). "Community-based policing places officers in drastically new roles" and contrary to reactive traditional approaches, officers are encouraged to work with the public (Lord, 1996:504). Officers' interest and perceptions toward community oriented strategies are vital in accomplishing change from traditional to community policing (Rosenbaum & Lurigio, 1994:310; Yates & Pillai, 1996:205). Some police officers may adapt themselves to the ideas of community policing and the changing roles necessary for successful implementation whereas others may not familiarize themselves and may resist significantly and conflict with the ideas of community policing (Ford et. al., 2003:160; Rohe, 2001:80).

Most likely the major barrier facing anybody who would put into practice a new approach of policing is the complexity of changing the current culture of policing (Moore, 1992:150). As a result of working in an isolated environment, the police have a tendency to group together and reject strangers which ultimately makes the transition within police departments exceptionally complicated (Allen, 2002:511). Different orientations police officers develop toward their work as well as toward the people in their communities, i.e. distinctive police personality (Champion & Rush, 1997:121). Most police are as a matter of fact still not convinced it is required, and research so far is ambiguous about its accomplishment (Bayley & Shearing, 1996:604).

Many officers for instance are not especially interested in getting involved in problems not related with crime and are eager to do instead traditional side of their job which they call "real police work". This pattern encourages police to create an image of "us" –police officers- against "them" –the citizens in the community (Brunschot, 2003:216). "Police officials at the lower levels are likely to be antagonistic toward a style of policing that contrasts with their training and experience in authoritarian regimes" (Davis et. al., 2003:298). "Too many of them joined the force for the excitement of the job; they want to catch the bad guy and put him in jail" (Jesilow & Parsons, 2000:171). "Many years of working under a quasi-military, bureaucratic structure made officers unable to accept a more decentralized departmental structure" (Allen, 2002:514).

Policing is full of inconsistencies and irregularities determined by practice on the one hand and beliefs on the other. Many decisions ("discretion") are given by current knowledge that is the framework for preference or praxis (Manning, 1998:201). "Community policing in its various incarnations embraces the decentralization of command and celebrates the discretion of street-level officers, especially when they deal with community-nominated problems" (Meares, 2002:1600). However, discretion may increase "possibility of police corruption and the unnecessary intrusion of law enforcement officers into the lives of community residents" (Adams et. al., 2002:400). "Increases in the discretionary power of field officers may also result in increases in abuses of citizens" (Kessler, 1999:334).

Many officers were not especially interested in getting involved in problems not related with crime and stuck instead to traditional view of their job. To them, it did not look much like "real police work" (Novak

et. al., 2003:59). The idea that police should adapt to the community creates confusion and anger, and most unexpectedly is resisted by patrolmen (Manning, 1998:201; Novak et. al., 2003:60). Currently present factors leading stress, such as "role conflict, role ambiguity, and responsibility for people" may increase for the officers working at community-based policing and supplementary stress may also occur between these officers and those employed at the traditional roles of law enforcement (Lord, 1996:504).

Likewise, many officers believed they were misinterpreted by the community and mistrusted in poor and minority areas. In their observation, cooperation with the community may work in districts where inhabitants already got along with the police, but not where they were needed most (Skogan et. al., 1999:120). It is also mentioned by police officers that community policing is being implemented inconsistently across department divisions (Maguire et. al., 1997:370; Glenn et al., 2003:101).

Community policing, on the other hand, differs from traditional law enforcement because it allow police officers the independence to enlarge the extent of their jobs. Similarly, community policing calls for police officers to learn a multitude of new skills (Birzer, 2003:19; Cardozo, 2004:13). Several studies have revealed positive effects of community policing on job satisfaction among officers deployed with these activities by increasing their positive contacts with citizens (Wilson & Bennett, 1994:365; Brody et. al., 2002:198; Pelfrey, 2004:597). Studies also revealed that "officers working in areas where community policing had been implemented received significantly fewer complaints than officers working in other areas" (Kessler, 1999:333).

1.3. Community

Applications of community policing are usually accepted by citizens. Results indicate that people who see police efforts in community policing state higher safety and vice versa (Reisig & Parks, 2004:155; Schafer et. al., 2003:459). Thurman and Reisig's (1996:582) study reveals that "the community is highly supportive of the concept but waiting for the police department to take a leadership role in its delivery". Voluntary contacts of the citizens with the police seem to boost confidence in the police (Hawdon & Ryan, 2003:65; Ren et. al., 2005:62). Three crucial features separating community policing from traditional or professional policing

are prevention, increased officer discretion, and shared responsibility (Adams et. al., 2002:401-402). One of the themes of community policing is that the police have to be accountable to the community in addition to the current police hierarchy (Weisheit et. al., 1994:549-550).

Community policing gives neighborhood residents the chance to convey their concerns, needs, and complaints against police whereas it gives police the opportunity to inform citizens about local crime problems (Forman, 2004:7-8). "The results suggest that models of community policing that focus on creating community partnerships have the potential to reduce tension between the police and the public" (Kessler, 1999:333). It also gives the citizens the moral and emotional commitments to obey the law by using techniques which foster trust and promote reciprocal cooperation (Kahan, 2002:1539). However, "most residents fail to get involved in such programs because they do not want closer interactions with the police or the responsibility for maintaining social control" (Grinc, 1994:437).

> The reasons for this include high levels of fear, skepticism that community policing will be anything but another short-lived police program, the heterogeneous populations and disorganization that often characterize communities, intragroup conflict among community leaders and residents, and the poor relationship between the police and residents in poor, minority communities that historically have borne the brunt of police abuses (Grinc, 1994:465).

Community policing is communications policing. In this respect, community policing is extremely interfering and signifies infiltration using communications technology and the mobilization of others (Punch, 1999:104). "Police and community priorities and demands can conflict in significant and damaging ways" (Thacher, 2001:768). There is always probability that interactions with the police can also damage police image (Hawdon & Ryan, 2003:65). "The problem is how to decide just what good relations consist of" (Lynes, 1996:496). "Another hurdle for implementation of the community policing stems from the public's belief that police should do something about crime" (Jesilow & Parsons, 2000:171).

Community policing has been successfully implemented to some extent in the districts where the general pattern of the social structure was homogenous and informal controls were strong (Hawdon & Ryan, 2003:58). Supporters of community policing usually stress the

development in police-community relations and reductions in crime and residents' fear of crime as key benefits of community policing (Wilson & Bennett, 1994:354). Community policing emphasizes the significance of the public's support in police efforts so "the police need to maximize positive voluntary contacts with the public and minimize negative interactions" (Schafer et. al., 2003:461).

"Community policing's emphasis on the new role of the community as partner and co-producer of neighborhood safety is a key element distinguishing it from traditional or professional policing" (Grinc, 1994:441). However, there is always the risk that community policing strategies will merely reflect the interests of the more influential and eloquent groups in a neighborhood (Fyfe, 1995:763).

Consequently, "community policing seems much less practiced in disadvantaged neighborhoods" (Reisig & Parks, 2004:163). Communities such as poor or minority neighborhoods and disorganized communities that mistrust the police may be hesitant to cooperate with police departments (Jesilow & Parsons, 2000:166; Hawdon & Ryan, 2003:56). In these disorganized communities, "the informal networks of social control are lacking thereby forcing the police to use more traditional styles of policing" (Hawdon & Ryan, 2003:57).

Community policing may actually mislead us from addressing inherent social inequalities which are at the heart of tension between the police and minority communities (Perrott, 1999:351). "Police departments must work harder at gaining public satisfaction among African Americans and Hispanics and work toward increasing public feelings of safety in order to improve citizen satisfaction with the police" (Garcia & Cao, 2005:191).

Conclusion and Recommendations

In order for a better understanding, this section shall be grouped into 3 major areas: police organization and management, police culture and personnel, and community.

In terms of police organization and management, one thing police departments should do is to make clear their expectations before attempting to authorize employees to start programs within their communities since police chiefs cannot expect their human resources to build them externally without establishing partnership relationships

internally (Hafner, 2003:6). The research suggests "the importance of a department examining the attitudes and feelings of staff before implementing community policing" (Lurigio & Skogan, 1994:329). Second, informed communities can learn what services their police departments offer to meet public safety requirements and wants while the law enforcement agency gets more positive contacts and collaboration from the community in return for providing these services (Fazzini, 2003:6). Third, "openness to change is a critical factor in an organization's attempt to do things differently, contrary to tradition and its historical past" (Lumb & Breazeale, 2003:97). One other thing is that "police administrators are more likely to have an influence over officers' behavior by training and encouraging their supervisors to effectively communicate their priorities for problem solving and community policing" (Engel & Worden, 2003:160).

In terms of police culture and personnel, one of the main arguments is that community policing will not be successful without acceptance of the employees (Lumb & Breazeale, 2003:103). Therefore, it is often stated that such initiatives must be consistent with the current organizational culture (Lurigio & Skogan, 1994:329). Once this coherence is achieved, police officers' support for change can be influenced through more effective training programs (Lumb & Breazeale, 2003:102). "Police-training is an important tool in the process of facilitating change within police organizations. With the further implementation of community policing strategies in US police agencies, training becomes a critical centerpiece" (Birzer, 2003:29). Traditionally, the police training curriculum has dedicated minimum interest to communication skills (Birzer, 1999:17).

One of the major purposes of future police training should be to make better communicators of the public servants responsible for maintaining order (Cox, 1996:236). "More than 90% of basic academy training is spent on task-oriented training that instructs police recruits in the basic repetitive skills and conditioned responses associated with the reactive nature of the traditional model of policing" (Haarr, 2001:405). The total time spent on relations with the community is not more than 10% in any of the training academies, while the huge amount of a police officer's time is filled with tasks requiring skills in these areas (Cox, 1996:125).

It is not possible to sufficiently serve the society without initial understanding the community's needs and demands. This objective can only be achieved by means of comprehensive, integrated training in

community policing (Glenn et al., 2003:116). One of the most important aims of future police training should become to make much better communicators of the police officers in charge of sustaining order (Cox, 1996:236). For the success of community policing, police officers must be independent; when they find out a problem, they must resolve it working with members of the community (Birzer, 1999:18).

Police officers of the future will be active problem-solving members, especially when given the necessary discretion, support, and chances by their supervisors. If the expectations of police departments need officers to become proactive problem solvers and communicators, they must encourage and maintain this at the recruit and in-service level (Birzer, 1999:17). There will be a demand to raise skills in police officers' training (Feltes, 2003:131). Community policing is different from traditional law enforcement because it allow police officers the independence to enlarge the extent of their jobs. Similarly, as stated earlier in community policing police officers need to learn a multitude of new skills (Birzer, 2003:19).

There have been extensive efforts lately made by police managers, police training experts, and criminal justice academics to develop police training programs around community policing (Haarr, 2001:403). Standards for recruiting and training police officers are mutually increased and changed in community policing. Community policing is much more reliant on the incentive and creativity of individual officers than is the recent strategy that presumes all patrol officers as employees who must be constantly supervised. The strategies' success depends on the officer's awareness of his local community (Moore, 1992:147). Effective community policing requires training for both police personnel and community members (Glenn et. al., 2003:103). Several initiatives for training the community members as in the example of "citizen police academies" are good examples. What is being taught in these academies? Almost everything that will help them become aware of the daily activities of a police department (Weiss & Davis, 2004:62; Cohn, 1996:265). To Weiss and Davis (2004:62), another vital benefit thorough these activities is that it humanizes officers.

In terms of community issue, on the other hand, the main problem seems to be the social integration. Lack of social integration creates an increased sense of danger among residents in the community. Poor integration, along with other indicators of disorganization often diseasing communities in which people feel unsafe, serves to increase perception of

danger by delineating the disorganized state of neighborhood (Rountree and Land, 1996:1372). It seems clear to me that a strong and coherent relationship between community and police cannot be achieved without balancing the values and norms of societies, and without a dynamic and well-defined structure of neighborhoods.

Scott (2002:161) argues that police can help in establishing the collective action in urban neighborhoods and have the capacity to create cohesion, trust, and efficiency within neighborhoods by making themselves available to community, finding ways of communication, and taking vigorous steps to be more responsive to neighborhood problems.

Communication is the foundation for cooperation, coordination, collaboration and change. Yet, the individuals have to evaluate the social values and get to know each other making them unite under a community for the re-establishment of balanced community. They should quit being free riders and commence doing things as the active partners of the criminal justice system. Police, on the other hand, must concern themselves more directly with the end product of their efforts. "Meeting this need requires that the police develop a more systematic process for examining and addressing the problems that the public expects them to handle" (Goldstein, 1979:236). The total conscious available within communities may allow us for an expanded focus on crime and fear-prevention activities. All elements of society must gather to deal effectively with the intolerable level of crime. Building bridges and the ultimate dialogue between police officers and persons may start with this initiative.

Against all these optimistic ideas, "community policing faces substantial obstacles and will not be easy to achieve" (Bayley & Shearing, 1996:604). "Critics have argued that community policing represents a slogan without action, style without substance, and rhetoric without reality" (Maguire & Katz, 2002:504). In spite of the current demand for community policing, there are several issues which need to be answered. Will these efforts, even though successful, cause to decrease in crime and enhancement in the quality of life? (Cox, 1996:233) It is too early for community policing. So often there is a discrepancy between the purpose and the departments' perceptions. "Despite a wealth of ringing endorsement, community policing leaves unanswered many basic questions about its structure and impact" (Rosenbaum & Lurigio, 1994:299). Research on community policing lacks sufficient theoretical framework and consistent results (Yates & Pillai, 1996:194). Community

policing is an overall policing strategy which is bigger than the sum of all its components. Community policing is still in the prior phase of progress and most police organizations apply it on a trial-and-error base (Williams, 2003:123). It is not argued here whether community policing should be implemented by police agencies or not. It is too early to say that. However, it seems that it will be possible to get expected results from community policing only when police departments, with the support of the personnel and members of society, start to perceive community policing as an overall strategy.

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