Advancing 21st Century Policing: Exploring the Phoenix Police Department's Best Practices for Building Community Engagement

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Bios

Dr. Cindy Scott holds the position of Associate Clinical Professor and Lead Faculty for the Justice and Intelligence Studies programs at Northern Arizona University (NAU). As the program leader, she is charged with developing undergraduate and graduate degree plans and building education/community partnerships that support practitioners in the criminal justice field. In this capacity, Dr. Scott launched NAU's Justice and Intelligence Studies programs by building a comprehensive development team, which was tasked with creating over 30 new undergraduate and graduate courses. Prior to joining the faculty at NAU, Dr. Scott worked as a detective with the Phoenix Police Department, specializing in undercover narcotics, media relations, and community-based policing. In addition to her work at NAU, Dr. Scott assists law enforcement's Women's Initiative Network (AZ WIN) with evaluation research, acts as a crime prevention specialist for Channel 15 news, and serves as the President of the Arizona Justice Educators Association. Cindy Scott holds a Doctorate degree in Educational Leadership, with an emphasis in Criminal Justice from NAU, as well as a Master's degree in Criminal Justice and a Bachelor's degree in Communications, both from Arizona State University.

Dr. William H. Crawford III serves as the Senior Vice President of Chandler-Gilbert Community College, one of the Maricopa Community Colleges. Dr. Crawford's experience in higher education also includes serving as Chair of Mesa Community College's Administration of Justice Studies Department, ten years as a residential (tenure track) faculty

member, and seven years as adjunct faculty. Additionally, Dr. Crawford currently serves as an adjunct professor with Northern Arizona University, where he teaches Justice Studies courses. Prior to serving the Maricopa Community College District, Dr. Crawford was employed by the Phoenix Police Department where he held numerous leadership positions and served with distinction for over 23 years as a career employee and 10 years in a volunteer capacity – totaling more than 33 years of sworn law enforcement service to the Phoenix community. During his many years of service, he was assigned to a variety of bureaus and departments, including: patrol, detectives, community relations, personnel, and training. William Crawford holds both Doctorate and Master of Education degrees from Northern Arizona University and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Justice Studies from Arizona State University.

Commander Joseph LeDuc has worked for the Scottsdale Police Department for over 25 years and currently commands one of his Department's four police districts. Early in his career, Commander LeDuc helped to spearhead the effort to bring Community Policing concepts to his organization and implemented one of the City's first neighborhood police offices. Commander LeDuc has worked as a Homicide Detective and Drug Enforcement Administration Task Force Officer; supervised the Special Victims Unit and Internet Crimes Against Children function; and commanded the Special Investigations Section, which included the Intelligence and Drug Enforcement Units. Commander LeDuc develops curriculum and teaches for Northern Arizona University in the Justice and Intelligence Studies programs. Commander LeDuc also presents for Not My Kid, a not-for-profit drug-education organization, and chairs the Arizona State Governor's Parent's Commission on Drug Education and Prevention. Commander LeDuc holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Business Management from the University of Phoenix and a Master of Education degree from Northern Arizona University.

Introduction

In light of recent conflicts between law enforcement and community members, particularly in communities plagued with a high crime rate and a large minority population, President Obama ordered the 21st Century Policing Task Force to identify strategies for promoting crime control while simultaneously building trust between law enforcement and the community (President's Task Force, 2015). Based on their findings, the Task Force outlined six main pillars that will foster a positive police and community relationship (i.e., advance 21st Century Policing).

While each of the six pillars focuses on an area vital to the successful implementation of 21st Century Policing, evidence suggests that pillars 1-4, which promote community engagement, form a vital foundation from which the other pillars can grow. The development of community engagement rests upon the trust and legitimacy a police department establishes with its community. As such, effective police departments must pay particular attention to community perceptions (i.e., how the community views its police department), for community members must *believe* the officers serving the community are doing so with legitimacy and honesty.

Following the recently publicized, nationwide police shootings involving African American community members, many police departments have experienced troubling community conflicts. However, the Phoenix Police Department (PPD), which serves a large diverse community (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010), has been able to maintain collaborative police-community dialogues and facilitate peaceful community protests, even when its officers engage in questionable activities. To assist police departments throughout the country build similar relationships with their respective communities, this White Paper will highlight some of the PPD's noteworthy community engagement strategies.

Background of the Problem

The nature of police work, including the constant human interaction with various populations, sometimes results in conflict, which may or may not be attributable to officer misbehavior or unsubstantiated claims of officer misconduct. Another way of thinking of this is that police practices are occasionally controversial, and law enforcement's failure to recognize cultural diversity may be a contributing factor. "Some of the most problematic encounters involving the police occur between white police officers and minority citizens. Encounters between the police and Blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, and Asians indicate that a good deal of hostility remains as a result of racist attitudes, historical distrust, and past discrimination" (McCamey, Scarmella, & Cox, 2003, p. 150). Law enforcement officers are policing ever increasing, diverse communities. The citizens of those communities expect their officers to, at a minimum, possess a base-level recognition and understanding of cultural differences to ensure justice and provide for the safety of the community.

The police are the primary agents of social control in our society, and they are charged with the responsibility to "serve and protect." Therefore, it is incumbent upon the police community to find a balance between controlling and preventing crime while preserving individual rights. Inherent in finding this balance is the recognition that community trust in the police plays a significant role (President's Task Force, 2015).

Best Practices

Similar to other metropolitan police departments, the PPD struggles with community divisions based on race and religion. In spite of rigorous hiring standards, it also employs officers who occasionally make poor decisions and engage in unethical actions. However, the PPD is unique in its ability to foster productive dialogues with all community groups, and to avoid violent community protests, even when faced with controversial actions by its officers.

The PPD's leadership, community policing detectives, community leaders, and media personnel all attribute the Department's success to its deep-rooted commitment to community engagement. To achieve this level of community collaboration, the PPD employs a multifaceted approach focused on developing a trusting relationship with the community.

Figure 1: PPD's Strategies for Promoting Community Engagement

Commitment to Community-Based Policing	Development of Collaborative Relationships with all Community Groups	Cultivation of a Trusting Police-Community Relationship through Transparency and Communication	Promotion of Positive Police Stories through Social Media

Commitment to Community-Based Policing

Development of positive police-community partnerships takes effective leadership and dedication, qualities that have been embedded in the culture of the PPD for decades. Beginning with the adoption of community-based policing in the 1980s, Phoenix communities were served by a more collegial police officer. As opposed to acting as the sole guardians of law and order, PPD leadership focused on training officers to work collaboratively with community members to address issues identified *by the community*, not solely law enforcement (M. Kurtenbach, personal communication, August 11, 2016). This new policing strategy helped build community trust in police officers, a sentiment that was deeply shaken following the violent police-community confrontations of the previous decades (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 1994).

Like most police departments, the PPD started community policing with the proverbial "walking-beat officer." However, unlike other police departments, the PPD's commitment to serving the community through police-community

collaboration never waivered; conversely, it evolved and expanded. Even during the recent years of budgetary austerity in Phoenix, PPD's Assistant Chief Kurtenbach, who serves as the Department's leader over community programs, ensured the Department maintained its commitment to cultivating police-community relationships, arguing that these programs are essential to the Department's ability to effectively protect and serve the community (personal communication, M. Kurtenbach, August 11, 2016). The PPD currently supports more than twenty different programs (e.g., School Resource Officers, Abatement, Citizen Police Academy, Getting Arizona Involved in Neighborhoods (G.A.I.N.), Safe Business Network), each designed to foster a positive police-community relationship ("Community Relations Bureau," 2016).

Developing Collaborative Community Relationships

PPD Assistant Chief Kurtenbach suggests that community engagement begins by cultivating relationships with community leaders. He personally fosters these relationships by meeting with community leaders, formally and informally. Even during times of police-community discord, when community leaders favor division over collaboration, he takes the time to extend an "olive branch" by meeting community leaders for dinner or coffee—anything that opens the dialogue. Kurtenbach stresses that these interactions demonstrate to the community the PPD's genuine commitment to a collaborative partnership (M. Kurtenbach, personal communication, August 11, 2016).

For Kurtenbach, collaboration does not denote pandering. He suggests that the development of a positive police-community relationship is dependent upon the leadership's willingness to listen to the community and create open dialogue, but not to pander or concede to all of the community's demands. Violence, in his experience, is not diffused by giving-in, it is reduced by communities and law enforcement working together to solve problems *the community* views as important (M. Kurtenbach, personal communication, August 11, 2016).

> *We need to get to know each other. It is all about the relationship and meeting in the middle to solve community problems.*
> *~Assistant Chief Kurtenbach, Phoenix Police Department*

PPD's Community Relations Bureau (CRB) Lieutenant, Dennis Orender, shares Assistant Chief Kurtenbach's views on the power of community relationships. He suggests that the Department is able to diffuse emotionally charged police-community conflicts, because of its heartfelt commitment to developing relationships with *all* of the City's community groups. In his Bureau, these relationships develop as a result of CRB's commitment to continuously working with leaders of every community group (e.g., African American community, Muslim community, Jewish community, Hispanic community).

The community leader is able to call the [CRB] detective at any time. They share information back and forth. Just because we are cops and we have been around for 20 years, we don't know everything. I sit down with a lot of community members and listen to their suggestions. It makes the community members feel like they have a voice, and I listen.

~Lieutenant Dennis Orender, Phoenix Police Department, Community Relations Bureau

Comments from Phoenix's African American, Faith-Based Community

Pastor Warren Stewart Jr., who serves as a community leader in Phoenix's African American, faith-based community, believes the collegial relationship he shares with the PPD's leadership fosters collaborative problem solving, which leads to peaceful protests. Of particular significance is the PPD leadership's history of engaging in open communication with community leaders following questionable police actions. For example, in 2014, after a PPD officer shot an unarmed African American man, the Department's leadership reached out to Pastor Warren so they could collaborate on a plan for addressing the needs of Phoenix's African American community. When this same type of incident occurs in other cities, violent protests and riots often occur. PPD achieved a different result, because its established community relationship allowed a productive dialogue to take place (W. Stewart, personal communication, September 16, 2016).

Chief Yahner is for the community. He takes a lot of time to listen to the community. During protests, they [police officers] come out and protect us. People can be as mad as they want, but the police are there to protect us. Chief Kurtenbach [Assistant Chief of Community Services] and Marchelle Franklin [Director of Police Community Affairs] go to the people. They are humble enough to help. Chief Yahner walked in a protest. I've never seen another chief in the nation walking in the protest. I can get with them, if they are going to do that, to be so humble.

~Pastor Warren Stewart Jr, African American Community, Faith-Based Leader

Cooperative Relationships

Lieutenant Orender suggests that the PPD avoids violent protests, because CRB detectives have relationships established with community groups long before a contentious incident occurs. As such, when an emotionally charged police action takes place, the respective CRB detective can reach out to the community group leader, analogous to a friend talking to another friend during a time of crisis. These two "leaders," one from the community and one from the police department, are then able to work together to facilitate a peaceful outcome. And, as with any good friend, the police representative listens to the concerns of the community and works diligently to ameliorate the situation, to facilitate peace (D. Orender, personal communication, September 16, 2016).

The Phoenix Police Department is successful in avoiding violent protests, because we have relationships in place long before something bad happens. We have liaisons established with protest groups, community groups, [etc.]. And when they want to protest, we work together to help facilitate a peaceful protest. We close [traffic] lanes and we march in plain clothes along with them.

When an unofficial Black Lives Matter group, with 1200 protestors, marched through Phoenix, we helped them organize. We did everything possible to accommodate their requests. Then the leader decided to take the protest to the freeway. We told

them repeatedly we could not allow the protestors on the freeway. So, when they turned to go on the freeway, we had to act

and there was a clash; we had to keep them off the freeway. We did not end up like Ferguson, because we had those

relationships established. The protestors saw how accommodating we were, so when the clash took place, the community

understood why.

~Lieutenant Dennis Orender, Phoenix Police Department, Community Relations Bureau

Cultivating a Trusting Police-Community Relationship

Interactive Department Website

The PPD's Public Affairs Bureau (PAB) Lieutenant, Paul Taylor, believes that, through honesty and transparency, the PPD develops a trusting police-community relationship. One of the tools the Department uses to promote transparency is its interactive website. On the site, the Department lists important contact information, creates an easily accessible process for submitting citizen complaints, provides community outreach information, and shares updates on positive initiates occurring within the Department. The goal of the website is to create a forum for the community to learn about and communicate with their police department. In true collaborative fashion, the PPD's leadership listens to feedback from the community, evaluates the comments, and implements needed changes (P. Taylor, personal communication, September 15, 2016).

> *I attribute our community success to transparency. We stay engaged and get involved with the community.*
> *~Lieutenant Paul Taylor, Phoenix Police Department, Public Affairs Bureau*

On-Body Cameras

The Department's community involvement led to the realization that the police-community discord in other cities caused its own community members to lose trust in the PPD. To reinforce the police-community relationship, the community needed more than just internal and external police oversight. In response, the PPD initiated a pilot-test to determine the feasibility of an on-body camera program. Their findings revealed that, for body cameras to truly promote community trust, the Department must be willing to share the good videos with the bad, a finding the PPD was prepared to accommodate. In light of the results, the PPD made the decision to implement a 3-year plan to equip all officers with on-body cameras (P. Taylor, personal communication, September 15, 2016).

> *[For body cameras] to build trust, true transparency must exist. You cannot just highlight those incidents that showcase positive police-community interactions. You have to release the good [video] with the bad.*
> *~Lieutenant Paul Taylor, Phoenix Police Department, Public Affairs Bureau*

Effective Communication with the Media

To further promote transparency, the PPD expeditiously responds to media requests and releases as much information as possible. According to Lieutenant Taylor, the Department's leadership believes successful community engagement is dependent upon community trust, and community trust is dependent upon transparency. As such, transparency is the building block from which community engagement can develop. As opposed to hiding from negative stories, the Department brings the information to the community's attention as quickly as possible, through the mainstream media (P. Taylor, personal communication, September 15, 2016).

Figure 2: Transparency as the Building Block of Community Engagement

Transparency	→	Community Trust	→	Community Engagement

Lieutenant Taylor notes that the PPD followed its transparent, honest, and upfront strategy when it advised the media, in 2016, that three officers were accused of forcing a man to eat marijuana in lieu of going to jail. The PPD's response focused on proactively releasing the truth, as opposed to hiding from such an explosive story (P. Taylor, personal communication, September 22, 2016). The Department immediately shared information with the media, summarized the accusations, advised the community through the media that these actions were not reflective of nor supported by the PPD, and promised the community that swift justice would prevail. In a true example of honesty and transparency, the Department expedited the investigation, the accusations were confirmed, and the officers involved elected to resign in lieu of termination (Frank, 2016).

Comments from the Media

To collaborate the strategies the PPD purports to use, this White Paper also includes comments from individuals, outside the Department, who have experience with the PPD's honest and transparent communication. In addition to corroborating the PPD's comments with Pastor Stewart, Jr., interviews were conducted with two reporters: Andrew Blankstein (NBC News) and Mike Broomhead (KFYI Radio).

NBC News Reporter

Blankstein, who has over 25 years of media experience, notes that effective police departments in the current environment quickly comment on issues. Before the era of social media, a police department could take hours if not days to comment on a contentious story. In today's world, departments are not afforded that time; to control the dialogue, they must offer as much information as possible to the community, as quickly as possible, or risk the community creating a story on its own (M. Blankstein, personal communication, September 20, 2016).

To effectively release information to the media in the current environment, Blankstein offers the following suggestions:

➢ Identify stories that will draw press attention (e.g., officer involved shootings, multiple shooter cases/serial shooter, celebrity cases)

➢ Quickly decide what information can be released, facts that will not compromise a case. It is a mistake to withhold basic facts.

➢ Quickly release basic facts.

➢ Avoid holding information from the onset; it leads to the media wondering what you are hiding.

Blankstein agrees with Lieutenant Taylor's assertion that the PPD quickly and transparently releases information to the media. He points to the Department's release of information related to the 2016 Maryvale serial shooter case. In response to these crimes, the PPD promptly shared as much information as possible with the media. He believes the Department employed strategies that preserved the integrity of the investigation while simultaneously sharing enough information with the community to negate a need for social media to create an independent story (M. Blankstein, personal communication, September 20, 2016).

KFYI Radio Reporter

Mike Broomhead, from Phoenix's KFYI radio, offers similar comments regarding PPD's transparency. He believes that PPD's commitment to getting out in front of negative stories helps to promote trust and transparency. Moreover, the professionalism displayed by the PPD's public information officers enables him to quickly learn the facts on stories, allowing him to go on air in a timely manner and report the facts (M. Broomhead, personal communication, September 20, 2016).

Effective Use of Social Media

The PPD was one of the first police departments in the nation to devote resources to promoting a positive image of the department to the community, through the mainstream media (e.g., TV, radio, newspapers). Through the creation of a "good news public information officer (PIO)," the PPD became committed to sharing stories that showcased the great community work routinely preformed by its police officers. The Department's focus on promoting "good news" stems from the theory that mainstream media acts as the "watchdog" of government, and thus, primarily focuses on investigating and sharing negative police stories. As such, unless a police department actively shares the positive work by its officers, positive police stories will largely go unnoticed by the greater community.

The PPD continues to share positive police stories with the community, however, it is no longer reliant on the mainstream media to "pick up" stories. Instead, the Department uses social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and NextDoor, to directly engage the community. Lieutenant Taylor suggests that social media is most effective when the Department uses it to share positive news stories or positive police-community events. He refrains from posting negative or controversial stories on social media, because they tend to spark pro-police versus anti-police debates, as opposed to facilitating positive police-community exchanges (P. Taylor, personal communication, September 22, 2016).

Lieutenant Taylor notes that social media alone will not create a positive image of a police department to the community. Instead, social media must be part of a larger strategy. For the PPD, this approach includes using multiple forums for creating collaboration with the community, employing effective training that produces professional officers, and executive and line leaders who emulate positive community engagement (i.e., adopt community policing strategies, promote trust and transparency).

Community Engagement Training and Hands-On Leadership

In addition to the community engagement strategies previously highlighted, the PPD also promotes the development of positive police-community relationships by training new officers on the importance of positive police-community interactions, and ensuring supervisors mentor and mirror the Department's focus on building a respectable relationship with the community. Assistant Chief Kurtenbach personally speaks to all new officers and shares stories to showcase the importance of maintaining professionalism and embracing a positive relationship with the community. Moreover, the PPD's Executive Staff purposefully exemplifies community engagement at every opportunity and devotes resources to ensuring its organizational leaders support the Department's positive police-community organizational goals (M. Kurtenbach, personal communication, August 11, 2016).

The PPD's focus on using effective training and hands-on leadership to promote ethical officers is in line with the scholarly research. According to White and Escobar (2008), effective officer training is paramount to the successful implementation of progressive policing strategies, such as community-oriented policing. However, officer training alone will fail if it is not supported and mentored by leaders and administrators. As such, the entire organization needs to foster a culture that promotes positive and collaborate police-community interactions. Ashcroft, Daniels and Hart (2003) argue that, for supervision to effectively promote organizational goals, such as community-oriented policing strategies, administrators must encourage field supervisors to actively observe their officers' interactions and model the organizational goals.

Recommendations

To advance 21st Century Policing, police departments can look to the PPD's community engagement strategies for guidance. The PPD's multifaceted approach produces positive results for the Department and the community, and its strategies can be adapted to the cultures of other police agencies. However, it is important to note that the PPD cultivated positive and trusting police-community relationships over several years; therefore, to achieve similar results, agencies should expect a long-term commitment.

To promote community engagement, police agencies should consider the following:

1. Commitment to community-based policing through the adoption of police-community partnerships and programs.
2. Development of collaborate relationships with all community groups.
3. Promotion of honesty and transparency through open police-community communication, effective use of technology, and responsiveness to the mainstream media requests.
4. Sharing of positive police-community stories through social media.

Conclusion

For a police department, the development of trust and legitimacy does not rest solely on the implementation of internal rules, policies, and oversight. Instead, it develops when rules, polices, and oversight are coupled with transparency, honesty, and positive police-community relationships. The PPD's long-lasting dedication to community engagement, as well as evolving policies, community-based programs, and the promotion of positive news stories through social media, has allowed the PPD to develop and maintain these necessary community traits. The effectiveness of its strategies has been demonstrated through its positive police-community relationships in this era of police-community discord, as well as feedback from members of the community and the media. As such, police departments throughout the nation, which are committed to advancing 21st Century Policing, can gain considerable insight by examining the PPD's community engagement strategies (pillars 1-4 of 21st Century Policing).

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