The conceptual ambiguity of community in community policing

Filtering the muddy waters

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**Abstract** Community policing, which appears to have captured the interest of many criminal justice professionals and scholars, places strong emphasis on police/community relations. To date, however, little attention has focused on the underlying theoretical foundation of this evolving policing strategy. This paper attempts to contribute to the ongoing discourse by examining the parallels between communitarianism and community policing, and by doing so, assist in refining the current definitional ambiguity surrounding the concept of community. In the end, the author works toward a moderating resolution to the inherent tensions of the rights-based and community-seeking presuppositions.

Well over 300 years ago, Thomas Hobbes (1963 [1651]) declared that the purpose of a civil government was to establish order. In contemporary America, order remains a salient social priority. In recent years, however, a somewhat paradoxical situation has arisen: public uneasiness concerning crime and disorder has increased steadily (Harris, 1993) while commonly used measures of crime (e.g. UCR and NCVS) indicate that the overall crime rate has been declining (Maguire and Pastore, 1998; Zawitz et al., 1993). This divergence between the actual and perceived threat of crime has created a precarious situation for government entities in general, and police agencies in particular.

One response to this condition is the broad-based shift in policing philosophy toward a community policing model that has attracted the attention of politicians, police executives, citizens, and academics alike. This police innovation is based on the philosophical foundation of communitarian thought[1], and the implications associated with this foundational shift are broad. For example, the core democratic principles of equity, effectiveness, accountability, and efficiency can no longer be fully satisfied by the conventional norms of police professionalism and the expansion of legal rights to individuals under the Constitution. Under the community policing model, these principles are derived more from the values and habitual practices within the context of community (Bayley, 1988; Kelling, 1987). Such redefinition represents only one of the many challenges facing the community policing movement.

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Despite the development of the community policing literature over the last 20 years, considerable ambiguity remains concerning “community,” and discussions focusing on the shift in guiding philosophies of policing are sparse[2]. This paper attempts to highlight some of the theoretical issues arising from community policing’s alignment with traditional communitarian thought as a conceptual guide to action in a historically liberal society. In so doing, an alternative conceptual model of “community” is set forth that is: consistent with our liberal-democratic constitutional tradition; and provides an integrated communitarian philosophical foundation for implementing the community policing model.

The conceptual foundation of community policing
In common parlance among criminal justice scholars and practitioners, community policing appears to be more of an umbrella term used for a variety of police practices and programs (e.g. foot patrol, crime prevention, problem-solving, and substations) (see Trojanowicz, 1983; Cordner, 1986; Goldstein, 1990; Reiss, 1992; Mastrofski, 1993; Kelling and Coles, 1996). Commonalities do, however, lie in the inherent differences between these reform activities and the more traditional policing role of crime fighting. Although skepticism over the level of commitment among police professionals to community policing has been expressed (see Greene and Mastrofski, 1988; Thurman, 1995), the continuing shift represents a major effort to restructure the role of police in America by replacing the traditional reactive, rule-bound, highly hierarchical organization with a more responsive, decentralized, proactive agency (Skolnick and Bayley, 1988).

An important feature of community policing is the purposeful redefinition of certain democratic principles (Eck and Rosenbaum, 1994). In terms of “effectiveness,” emphasis no longer is placed on crime control through reactive methods (e.g. the ability of the police to solve and clear crimes); instead, effectiveness concerns the identification and solution of community problems. “Equity,” which was previously defined as the equal treatment of citizens under the rule-of-law, now rests in the sharing of power with and the increased participation of community members. While traditional policing agencies base “accountability” solely on the rule-of-law, community policing agencies are inclined to emphasize accountability in the context of the community they serve. Last, for agencies practicing community policing, “efficiency” is defined as the police organization’s ability to utilize community (i.e. governmental and non-governmental) resources to assist in problem-solving activities. This contrasts sharply with the traditional law enforcement agency’s notion of efficiency: the achievement of rapid response times to citizen complaints and calls for service at minimal taxpayer expense.

By redefining core democratic principles, community policing entails new responsibilities for both the police and the community. In other words, the traditional law enforcement model and the community policing model hold different conceptions of the citizens’ role in the prevention and detection of
criminal behavior. While the former relies on citizens to report crimes and provide information to help make arrests, primary emphasis is placed on the rule-of-law. The community policing model, on the other hand, not only places priority on procedure, but also on community involvement in the problem-solving process (i.e. collective action). By doing so, it is reasoned that the police are able to strengthen a community’s social fabric (e.g. social responsibility) and assist citizens in building (or restoring) a “sense of community”[3] in their neighborhood; thereby providing the means for the co-production of order between police representatives and citizens[4]. Because of these and other derivations, some consider community policing to be the most significant change to occur in American police organizations since the 1930s (Moore and Kelling, 1983; Walker, 1980).

**Existing conceptual models of community**

When taking into consideration the attention the community policing movement has received, it is surprising that neither the advocates nor the critics have offered a conceptual model of “community” that is truly reflective of the community policing philosophy. The importance of the community context and the relationships it fosters have long been noted (Poplin, 1972; Rousseau, 1991). In fact, Scherer (1972) states that of “all the social relationships available to man in which he can pursue human objectives, community provides the richest context in which he can cooperate with others” (p. 37). Few criminal justice scholars, however, have paid much attention to this issue (see Buerger, 1994a, 1994b, p. 411-36; Grinc, 1994, p. 437-68); instead, one needs to look to other disciplines for clarity (e.g. sociology and community psychology). Such efforts are important not only in a theoretical context, but also if community policing programs and practices are to be effectively implemented.

In the field of sociology, two conceptualizations of community are widely recognized. The first pertains to the conveniently operationalized geographic notion of community (e.g. block, neighborhood, city) (Poplin, 1972; Scherer, 1972). This definition, however, has lost favor due to the increasing mobility of US citizens. Individual social ties are less constrained, and many interpersonal connections span neighborhoods, cities, and even national borders[5]. More specifically, increased communication and physical mobility make it difficult for police agencies to rely entirely on structural boundaries to define the democratic principles that guide their operations because they do not necessarily reflect the diversity that may exist within and across these bounded areas. Herein lies one of the fundamental challenges confronting the community policing movement: placing too much reliance on geographical boundaries may possibly result in a lack of appreciation for the pluralistic characteristics of individuals living within a defined area.

The second predominate conceptualization of community concerns the “networks of human interactions and social ties” (e.g. social fabric) (Gusfield, 1975, p. xvi; also see Fessler, 1976, p. 7). This approach encompasses the
organic qualities of community (e.g. mutual trust and shared values), while ignoring the geographic boundaries of community that are necessary for efficient policing operations. It has been suggested elsewhere that social capital (i.e. networks of shared norms and trust), is essential to a tightly woven social fabric; that is, higher levels of social capital, which is characterized by strong interpersonal connections and high levels of social trust, strengthens the social fabric (see Putnam, 1995a; Coleman, 1988).

Strong social fabric is also dependent upon the development of informal social networks and maintenance of a sense of community (Mathews, 1994; Yankelovich, 1994). Research has shown that a sense of community is the “glue” that bonds community members and helps provide a strong foundation for social fabric (Chavis and Wandersman, 1990). Accordingly, a strong sense of community and social capital are indicators of shared values, high levels of civic engagement, effective public dialogue, and increased social responsibility (McMillan and Chavis, 1986).

Within this context, informal networks of individuals provide for the development and maintenance of norms and values, allow for the development of social responsibility, the strengthened and more permanent connections among citizens and to the government, and lastly, the continued building of renewable sources of social capital and a sense of community (Etzioni, 1993; Walzer, 1991, 1994) – all of which are necessary for meaningful collective action. This model also assumes that the organic and pluralistic qualities of a community are easily identifiable and that the collective efforts of a nested population can be harnessed. If this is not the case, then this model can potentially result in more motivated citizens dominating the problem-solving process, leading to the increased likelihood of tyranny and inhumanity in the community (Scherer, 1972, p. xii).

In summary, each of the existing models presents obstacles for the successful implementation of community policing. What is needed, then, is a model that takes into account structural constraints (i.e. geographical and Constitutional), and also incorporates networks of mutual trust and social obligations (Buerger, 1994b, p. 430). Such an approach would recognize the development of organic connections between citizens and the “community.” Recognition of both the structural and contextual elements are essential to successfully stimulate collective action efforts (e.g. the co-production of order and problem-solving activity) among community members. The problem, however, comes in attempting to integrate a new philosophy – communitarianism – into a predominantly non-communitarian society.

The conceptual paradox: communitarianism in a liberal society
From a broad theoretical perspective, the community policing movement signifies a shift away from liberal theory and toward traditional communitarian thought. Each of these philosophical frameworks possesses different underlying presuppositions that, upon examination, offer important insight into the feasibility of community policing reforms.
Liberalism places importance on the concept of individualism, and advocates a limited role for government (Gray, 1995). This role not only respects an individual’s property and liberty, but also provides protection from the capricious and arbitrary use of authority while allowing citizens to pursue their individual conception of the good life unencumbered by social ties. Further, particularly for rights-based theorists, individuals are viewed as detached, independent, and fully capable of free choice (Buchanan, 1989). Equality is achieved through the establishment of legal and institutional safeguards that provide for the protection of individual rights. Additionally, fundamental distinctions are made between the private and public roles of the individual (Wallach 1987), and morality and justice are defined abstractly and in a manner that transcends individual communities, as well as nation states (Rawls, 1971).

Of late, however, liberal theorists have been the recipients of increased criticism. Traditional communitarians argue that liberalism has resulted in a society that is more concerned with individual rights than the well being of the community (Sandel, 1982; MacIntyre, 1981). Many communitarians hold that liberal thought neglects the historical contexts and shared traditions of the community (Bell, 1993; Gutmann, 1985), leads to the over-protection of individual rights which has manifested itself into a state of “hyperindividualism,” and has led to a more adversarial approach for addressing perceived social ills (Glendon, 1991). In order to alleviate societal strain, traditional communitarians argue that social practices, historical relations, and shared experiences within communities should be the basis for organization – not the development and over-protection of individual rights (Sandel, 1984).

Some social reformers argue that the current overemphasis on individualism is partly responsible for the present era of polarized and zero-sum politics (Etzioni, 1995; Kemmis, 1995). In fact, one can point to numerous results of hyperindividualism in the 1980s and 1990s (e.g. the increased economic gap between the lower- and upper-class). These reformers argue that American society’s self-interest has, in essence, allowed Adam Smith’s (1776) “invisible hand” to guide our social agenda instead of the community’s moral convictions. This has resulted in the lackluster development of social capital and civic virtues (e.g. justice, honesty, and trust) (Kemmis, 1990). In general, the communitarian goal is to bring about greater attention to community cohesion; thus traditional communitarianism assumes that individuals are social beings who are deeply bound in the web of the social world.

In contrast to the objective truth of justice advocated by liberalism, communitarians argue that such a concept is largely contingent upon the traditions and practices of individual community members embedded in the community (Sandel, 1984). Personal characteristics, values, and the prevailing morality of citizens are critical in determining appropriate social control mechanisms. This is not to suggest that the rule-of-law is disregarded in
communitarian thought, but only to indicate the relative importance placed on values that may play a role in defining informal control mechanisms not directly covered by the rule-of-law.

For example, as noted in Lowi’s (1969) influential work *The End of Liberalism*, many public agencies, including police organizations, are too firmly rooted in the formal liberal tradition. Lowi (1969, p. x) argues that these agencies appear to be “Casey at the Bat, power with purpose but without definition, finesse, discrimination, ending in disappointment.” This critique of liberalism then goes on to advocate the moral validity “restoring faith in regional governments” and the utility of reaffirming the value of local political authority (p. 305). Such restoration and reaffirmation of local political bodies is not, by definition, a rejection of basic constitutional principles; rather, it is an indication of a desire to reduce our dependence on the centralized, rule-bound, inflexible, and bureaucratic organizational structure that has dominated the public service since the late 1920s (see also Knott and Miller, 1987).

Communitarianism and the liberal critique

Communitarian thought is not without its critics, however. It has been suggested that traditional communitarians promote the status quo, ignore the importance of critical reflection upon community values and shared traditions, and therefore fail to provide an objective method to critique their own system (Wallach, 1987; Bell, 1993). After all, such critics maintain, if historical and social practices help to define the morality of the community, objective standards are insufficient for critical assessment (Buchanan, 1989). In short, the good of the community may reflect majoritarianism and lead to the subjugation of certain community members (i.e. ethnic and/or political minorities) who do not have the ability to appeal to a larger entity for relief (Gutmann, 1985).

Some liberals also contend that communitarians suffer from the inability to justify both values and shared understandings (Dworkin, 1977). More specifically, values and shared understandings can be embedded in historical institutions, individual psychology, or consciously endorsed beliefs. Each of these structures can lead to very different end states. Put another way, traditionally held values and shared understandings may be viewed as unjust when compared to those understandings and values that are more recent (e.g. racism and discrimination) and/or less popular (e.g. same sex marriages). It is likely that these different levels of understandings may create conflict when such justifications are inconsistent with one another.

Overall, the current shift away from liberalism, which stresses the importance of rights, freedom, and liberty, toward traditional communitarianism (e.g. the common good) in US policing requires a fundamental reorientation concerning the role of the individual and the police in society (i.e. relationships with one another and with governmental institutions). Community policing reformers, however, are currently undertaking this shift with what appears to be little consideration as to the problematic features embedded in traditional communitarian thought.
Community policing and communitarian thought: the conceptual link?

When taken to an extreme it is possible to envision the adoption of traditional communitarian principles resulting in enclaves of privately walled communities located throughout the USA. Such communities may be selected by potential residents for the ability to keep outsiders away while attending to their needs and desires. Although this intellectual exercise may appear far-fetched, the steady increase in gated communities throughout the USA provides a real life example of such a phenomenon[6]. Primarily concentrated in the larger metropolitan areas (e.g. Los Angeles, Miami, New York, and Chicago), the number of private communities in recent years has increased exponentially. Currently, experts estimate that there are nearly 30,000 gated communities in America, housing approximately 4 million residents (Boaz, 1996; Egan, 1995)[7].

Many gated communities provide 24-hour private security to keep undesirables out; however, they sometimes enforce rules and regulations that would be deemed unconstitutional if imposed by the government (e.g. house color, shrubbery height, clothes line placement) (Egan, 1995). Critics have charged that such developments may result in the loosening of mutual responsibility to the community outside of the walls (i.e. lower sense of community), a lack of interest in larger community problems (e.g. crime, disorder, and poverty), and a significant reduction in the community’s tax base in instances where gated communities seek municipal incorporation. Each of these potential outcomes may prove detrimental to the building of a sense of community and decreased levels of social capital, and may instead serve to balkanize residential neighborhoods furthering the “segmentation and separation by income, race and economic opportunity” of US communities (Blakely and Snyder, 1995, p. 3).

Other problems arise in using traditional communitarian thought as a conceptual guide for community policing. In particular, defining the role and authority of police through community morals and shared experiences may result in the suppression of certain distinct groups, while elevating others to become the “moral guardians” of the community (Manning, 1988). While individual behaviors remain bound by the Constitution, marginal behaviors may become defined as contrary to community mores, and may result in the acceptance of illegal activity to suppress such behavior. Therefore, emphasis upon the good of the community may allow for increased levels of tolerance concerning the intrusion of individual privacy. This may not provide problems for the majority of individuals within the community; however, US society is characterized by amorphous relations and a transitory citizenry less confined by their spatial community.

Because of the complexity of society and the plethora of values, customs, ideals, and the constant struggle between the dictates of culture and the attraction of individualism in US society, exclusive subscription to either traditional communitarianism or liberalism is problematic, and neither provide adequate support for community policing. For example, in terms of social
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Given the inability of liberal theory and traditional communitarian thought to provide high levels of social responsibility, civic engagement and public dialogue, levels of social capital and maintaining a sense of community remain dangerously low; consequently, mobilizing citizens to effective collective action appears diminished. Police reformers and community policing advocates, however, continue the call for the fundamental restructuring of America’s communities without taking into careful consideration the undesirable potential end states outlined above. To say the least, “America, almost uniquely in the developed world, [with its emphasis on liberty and individual rights] seems to lack the underpinning needed for effective collective action” (Lipset and Pool, 1996, p. 46). Further, the inherent features of traditional communitarian theory may present challenging and perhaps insurmountable obstacles to the implementation and potential outcomes of community policing.

Balancing the pendulum

Is it possible to find a balance between liberal self-interest and the communitarian emphasis on community which may allow for more effective development and implementation of community policing? The answer is a qualified “yes,” but it requires the meaningful collaboration among citizens in co-operation with social institutions to help develop and maintain the co-production of order mechanisms. Overall, attempts must be made to better incorporate the pluralistic nature of American communities than either liberalism or traditional communitarianism can offer.

Appealing to an alternative philosophical foundation that respects the legitimacy of certain individual rights, but also recognizes the value and utility of variation in community norms and traditions, yields a conceptual model of “community” that is still consistent with the dynamics of a liberal society (Rawls, 1993). Specifically, through balancing individualism and the public good, rights and responsibilities, communities should be encouraged to develop distinct identities, cultures, and values as long as they coincide with the overarching values encompassed in the Constitution (Walzer, 1983). In other words, individuals and communities may pursue particular conceptions of the good life and create the necessary social arrangements to do so, which includes policing practices, insofar as both recognize the legitimacy of the broad constitutional constraints on their behavior (e.g. recognizing the civil liberties of others). Integrating the “we” into the “I” of social belief systems and public policy can allow individuals to become more actively engaged in community
affairs (e.g. community policing programs) (Etzioni, 1988). This position reduces the likelihood of the continued wave of hyperindividualism or the extreme urban balkanization (i.e. gated communities) threatening communities, and instead fosters a more welcoming social environment.

This position also satisfies the requirements set forth by community policing’s redefinition of effectiveness, equity, efficiency and accountability, which lead to stronger collective activities. The development of strong social ties and the recoupling of rights with social responsibilities provide the communal framework necessary to meet the needs of the expansive redefinition of the democratic principles. Specifically, this position provides a strong foundation for informal social networks, which increases citizen engagement and enables community resources (i.e. citizens, governmental and non-governmental organizations) to collaborate and work toward identifying and solving communal problems. Second, the stronger social ties created between individuals and the government allow for the development of a deeper sense of social responsibility, more willingness to engage in public dialogue and collective problem-solving, and, perhaps, longer lasting participation in community policing programs. Last, while remaining bound by the rule-of-law, police agencies become more accountable to the citizens within the community[8]. In sum, this balancing position seeks a new theoretical blend “that treasures liberal values and institutions, but also takes seriously the promise of community and the perils of ignoring the need for community” (Selznick, 1994, p.28), and may provide a better environment in which community policing can foster and become effective in mobilizing citizens to solve complex community problems.

Given the theoretical framework outlined above, there may be a risk that, while “interesting,” philosophical discussions are not easily translated into practical policy prescriptions. Indeed, Harding (1997, p. 21) has recently referred to such endeavors as merely an “intellectual indulgence,” and that such deliberations “blinker from the realities which exist on the ground may be self-sustaining and may well comfort its adherents; but it does not take debates about [public] policy in any useful direction.” In an attempt to avoid this theoretical “trap,” the following section discusses how the realities of community policing could “fit in” with the philosophical tenets of the balance between liberalism and communitarianism.

From theory to practice: managing community policing strategies
To this point, our analysis has primarily focused on identifying some of the theoretical shortcomings latent in traditional communitarian and liberal thought that may inhibit community policing implementation efforts. As previously stated, effective community policing requires, among other things, significant changes in police/community relations (e.g. increased communication), the role of the citizen (e.g. enhanced collective action efforts), and the redefining of democratic principles. However, current trends in police management issues may enhance or impede such change efforts.
For community policing to be effective, it is necessary for policing agencies to continually monitor the changing norms, values and attitudes of the community they serve. This can be achieved, to a large degree, through increasing public dialogue between police professionals and citizens. For example, focus group interviews with community leaders and citizen surveys can help to assess citizen values and beliefs and help to identify important areas of consideration for future policing priorities. These techniques also increase positive interactions between the community and the police, which promote the development of shared perspectives and outlooks and may help to neutralize negative perceptions held by both groups.

Differences among and within US communities require that government agencies (including the police) take into account cultural diversity. Since the late 1960s, minority representation in governmental agencies has increased, however, women and ethnic minorities are still largely under-represented in local police agencies. Recent data suggest that while women and minorities account for 51 per cent and 20 per cent of the total population, respectively, their representation in policing agencies is limited to about 9 per cent and 17 per cent of full time sworn personnel (Reaves, 1996, p. 4). Not surprisingly, the percentage of minorities increases with the size of the department. While many of these increases have occurred through the implementation of formal affirmative action programs (Warner et al., 1989), recent action by the Supreme Court, conservative activists and strained social relations jeopardize continued progress in this area (Stokes and Scott, 1996).

While the need to strengthen connections between communities and police (as well as all government institutions) is paramount, community forums, focus group interviews and citizen surveys only provide information. Police administrators must find ways in which to utilize the information to improve their policing efforts and enhance their relationship with the community. Unfortunately, the under-representation of minorities in policing agencies, especially in administrative positions, may inhibit a full understanding and use of the available information. The importance of cultural representation may reduce misunderstandings and prejudices, while enhancing the partnership effort between the police and the community (Shusta et al., 1995). Through the incorporation of community values and norms, coupled with necessary organizational structural modifications and changes in police culture (see Bayley, 1994, pp. 143-61), policing agencies not only make it possible to develop a more complete understanding of the community, but are also more likely to use the information in ways that promote the democratic principles.

The conception of community outlined here potentially allows policing agencies to conform to the strict limitations outlined by the Constitution, and encourages them to build and maintain formal and informal networks with their citizens, furthering their ability to adequately reflect the potentially diverse value structures for which they are responsible to serve and protect. Through adequate reflection of values and norms, as well as increasing the avenues of communication between the agency and the citizens, policing
professionals may become valued members of the community; thus contributing to the overall development and maintenance of a sense of community, social capital, and co-production of order mechanisms. In addition, the likelihood of effective implementation of community policing programs is enhanced by the renewed commitment to social responsibility, civic engagement, and public dialogue (that is, problems that have plagued community policing programs in the past), which can result in higher levels of collective action among citizens.

Clarity is also provided that allows for more effective evaluation of policing agencies and their efforts. Policing agencies are evaluated in terms of their ability to meet the needs of a potentially diverse population (i.e. reflection of community values), and appropriately defining the democratic principles; in sum, responding to the changing cultural environment. This is made more achievable through consistent positive interactions with community members and through the incorporation of communal values into the organization.

As with all public organizations, the larger economic, political and social pressures can present serious obstacles to such changes; making redefinition troublesome. The facilitation of community development on behalf of police is highly questionable under these circumstances; particularly if they do not view such activities as important.

Though policing agencies may be limited in their abilities to affect larger societal change, or help to instill a sense of community, recent administrative efforts have shown promise in the development of policing agencies which are more reflective and understanding of the communities they serve (e.g. affirmative action programs, community surveys, neighborhood and school based officers), and should not be discounted.

Conclusion
The shift from the traditional law enforcement model of policing toward community policing represents a fundamental redefining of community in America. In a broader perspective, this shift represents the symbolic adoption of communitarian principles in the development and maintenance of communities, the building of social capital, and the stimulation of collective action activities. As noted, traditional communitarian thought is not without its faults, many of which may serve to undermine the ultimate effectiveness of community policing.

Consequently, what is needed is a position that represents a healthy balance between liberal and traditional communitarian philosophy, provides for a conception of community that recognizes both structural constraints as well as the vast networks of shared interests, and respects the pluralistic nature of American society.

Our position brings to the fore those qualities necessary for effective development and implementation of community policing. Further, the proposed alternative conceptual model of “community” allows the democratic principles of equity, effectiveness, accountability, and efficiency to retain their
integrity, while accommodating variation in community characteristics. Essentially, this framework weaves community policing and community qualities into a strong partnership allowing for the possible renewing of a sense of community and social capital, as well as strengthening the damaged social fabric and the establishment of “community” in America, thus helping to provide clarity in the conceptual muddy waters of community policing.

Notes

1. It should be noted that we are not arguing that police reformers are consciously using communitarian philosophy as a guide to implementing community policing programs and practices. We acknowledge that consensus on this point has been reached; community policing in the USA has emerged as a pragmatic response to the culmination of numerous factors (e.g. negative aspects of the police professionalism movement, police-community relations programs, and the general social unrest of the 1960s) (Trojanowicz et al., 1998). What we are arguing, however, is that numerous similarities exist between the underlying logic of community policing and communitarian philosophy. Perhaps the most notable similarity is the emphasis community policing places on citizen involvement in the alleviation of community problems (see Peak and Glensor, 1999).

2. There are, however, several works that have focused specifically on defining community policing (Seagrave, 1996) as well as developing a firmer understanding of the theoretical and philosophical underpinnings (Oliver and Bartgis, 1998).

3. The phrase “sense of community” has been defined as “a feeling that [neighborhood] members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together” (McMillan and Chavis, 1986, p. 9).

4. “Social fabric” has been defined as the horizontal and vertical relationships developed among individuals (Putnam, 1993). Important features of this concept include social responsibility, civic engagement, and public dialogue.

5. Putnam (1995a) has suggested that technological advances may make it easier to develop social networks beyond an individual’s immediate neighborhood. This seems particularly relevant with the increased usage of computers, especially the Internet and electronic mail. Also see Putnam (1993, 1995b) for an in-depth analysis of factors affecting social capital in the USA.

6. It should be noted that although gated communities are generally associated with higher standards of living, many of the slums (favelas) of Rio de Janeiro have guarded entry gates (Perlman, 1980).

7. To better conceptualize the potential danger of gated communities, please see Wolf’s (1969) analysis of the dangers of military exclusion in foreign lands. Overall, she contends that the seclusion encourages group isolation and the development of a separate disparate community.

8. Similarities exist between this position and the community psychologists’ sense of community concept. First, these scholars highlight the importance of developing horizontal and vertical relationships built on shared values, engagement in voluntary associations and constant interactions among citizens. Second, organic connectedness parallels community psychologists’ conceptualization of sense of community – the strength (or weakness) of which can determine the health of the larger political, social, and economic arenas. In addition to their conceptual work, community psychologists have developed numerous operational definitions to measure sense of community, including the strength of neighborliness, volunteerism, membership in organizations, community ties, and the level of community incivilities (i.e. physical conditions of the streets and housing, and criminal activity).
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