

The BJA Executive Session on

Police Leadership

2013

The BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership is a multi-year endeavor started in 2010 with the goal of developing innovative thinking that would help create police leaders uniquely qualified to meet the challenges of a changing public safety landscape.

In support of an integrated approach to creating safe and viable communities across America, the project directors recruited 20+ principals from a range of disciplines. The principals, in turn, led national field teams of practitioners focused on the work of policing and the organization of the future.

To gain new insights on leadership, the *BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership* engaged police chiefs in documenting their own paths and invited leaders to participate in various audio and video forums to tell their stories and discuss the future of policing and police leadership.

Please visit our website, <http://bjaleader.org>, to learn more about this project and to access a broad array of interactive, multimedia resources.

The principals are supported in their work by a team that includes project co-directors Darrel W. Stephens and Bill Geller, project strategist Nancy McKeon, and BJA Senior Policy Advisor Steve Edwards.

Five Police Departments Building Trust and Collaboration

Innovations in Policing Clinic
Yale Law School
Executive Summary

by

Professor James Foreman, Jr.



Executive Summary

In this opening document we seek to explain the background to our project as well as to identify leadership themes that cut across the case studies in this report.

Leadership Themes In Brief:

- *Coalition building and identifying unlikely allies*
 - Departments worked with various stakeholders and former adversaries to hear multiple perspectives on issues.
- *Increasing transparency and giving community members a voice*
 - Departments prioritized open discussion of their practices and created formal methods for community feedback.
- *Transmitting departmental values through the ranks*
 - Police leaders conveyed the importance of trust and collaboration to officers through training and promotion policies.
- *Empowering individual officers to implement changes*
 - Leaders gave responsibility to officers to build community engagement and encouraged them to undergo leadership training.

Introduction

The Bureau of Justice Assistance’s Executive Session on Police Leadership is composed of law enforcement leaders, researchers and other stakeholders who have chosen to address issues of importance related to police leadership in the 21st century. One team is devoted to trust and collaboration between police departments and the communities in which they work — in particular, disadvantaged communities where historic mistrust may hinder collective efforts at security. This is an issue of great importance to police leaders and community leaders alike, because developing safe and healthy communities requires significant investment in open communication between police and residents.

As part of this task, the Yale Law School’s Innovations in Policing Clinic has spent the past year looking for examples of innovation within police departments in the areas of trust and collaboration. We aimed to learn from departments that have successfully developed practices designed to foster productive relationships between law enforcement and communities, and we sought to highlight these practices as potential models for future development.

What follows are reports from five different police departments that the members of the Innovations in Policing Clinic believe represent examples of innovation in police leadership. We are grateful to all those who helped to make these reports possible by lending

their time, experience and knowledge to their development. Many of them are quoted in this report; a few are not. Without all of them, this project could not have been possible.

Approach to the Project

Between September 2011 and May 2012, the Innovations in Policing Clinic met weekly under the direction of Professor James Forman, Jr. to discuss approaches to community policing, trust-building, and specific challenges faced by police departments. Professor Kristin Henning, of the Georgetown University School of Law, and New Haven's Chief of Police, Dean Esserman, also led the clinic. In order to develop a preliminary list of police departments undertaking trust-building approaches, clinic members called police leaders and researchers across the country, described our project and asked whether they knew of particular law enforcement agencies that were undertaking innovative practices. We kept a running list of police leaders and cities, and narrowed this list by reaching out to individual police leaders and community members and determining which departments were willing to host us in our research. We sought to include a broad spectrum of departments in our study. In deciding to focus on these five cities — Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Seattle, Washington; High Point, North Carolina; Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina; and Philadelphia, Pennsylvania — we attempted to include a variety of city sizes, a wide geographical scope, and a range of different models of innovation and implementation.

After selecting these five cities as the subjects of our research, individual members of the clinic were assigned to each police department and undertook a broad review of that department's history and practices. We consulted academic literature and current and historic media accounts to develop background understandings of these cities and departments, and we spoke with police and community leaders to develop contact lists within each city.

Clinic members traveled to their respective cities for 3-5 day visits to interview, observe, and report on departmental practices. To the extent that multiple visits were not possible, we arranged telephone conferences with participants. During site visits, we conducted individual interviews with police leaders and officers, community members, city managers, and researchers to develop an understanding of what works — what goals departments have established; the training, tactics, and organizations they have put in place to get there; and where there is room for improvement. As far as was possible, we observed departmental meetings, community forums, and took part in ride-alongs and trainings with police leaders and officers. We sought to interview not only police leaders and heads of community organizations, but line officers and community members who could speak to the effectiveness of policies on the ground.

Because our focus was on a qualitative evaluation of existing innovations in police leadership, the clinic did not seek to replicate statistical data or present quantitative measures of police effectiveness. Our reports are the product of personal interviews and observations, which we believe is an appropriate method for a study of trust and collaboration — objectives that are more difficult to quantify than levels of crime or arrest rates.

The reports that follow represent the outcome of these numerous conversations, meetings and visits by members of the Innovations in Policing Clinic, input by the departments described in the reports, and collaboration with other Clinic members and guests. We circulated draft reports to all participants and interviewees, many of whom offered feedback. We also had the opportunity to present four of these case studies to the command staff of the New Haven Police Department. These sessions provoked lively and rewarding conversations and improved these documents considerably. Any errors are ours alone.

Before turning to the themes that unite these case studies, we would like to offer an additional caution: we do not intend to hold up the cities or departments as perfect or as models for the nation. We are not vouching for any particular department or leader. To the contrary, we offer these case studies with the following cautions, which Dean Esserman frequently invoked in our meetings:

- Nobody gets everything right.
- Those who get some things right also make mistakes.
- Success is fragile, and exceedingly hard to sustain over time.

Unifying Themes

Although each department and city that we studied was distinctive, we observed several common themes related to law enforcement leadership that ran through the case studies. Police departments that were successful in building trust and collaboration with disadvantaged communities were able to build coalitions, increase transparency, and give community members a voice in police practices, convey a culture that values trust and collaboration to the rank and file, and empower individual officers to implement changes in practice.

Coalition building and identifying unlikely allies

Effective police leadership is difficult; the very nature of policing means that chiefs, officers, and entire departments come under routine criticism. A natural response is to turn inward, hunker down, and resist outsiders, especially critics. And yet, our research suggests that today's police leaders must do just the opposite. Nearly every police department that we studied made it a practice to reach out to traditional critics and adversaries, or was willing to be part of a coalition or committee on which law enforcement was just one of many perspectives. In many instances, the impetus for bringing together such a coalition was frustration on the part of both police leaders and community members, arising out of either specific confrontations or a general sense that current practices weren't working. We saw that collaborative efforts build credibility and legitimacy among all participants, and that such coalitions set the stage for future goal-setting.

Seattle's Law Enforcement-Assisted Diversion program for example, grew out of an unlikely partnership between the Defender Association's Racial Disparity Project, the Seattle Police Department, and the King County Prosecutor's office. The Seattle Police Department's willingness to partner with former adversaries (several of whom had recently sued the police department) gave voice to new perspectives and allowed for an untried diversion initiative that has proved promising. The department took an influential part in

the building of Law Enforcement-Assisted Diversion, but it also recognized that other stakeholders could have an important implementation and oversight role.

Philadelphia’s Minority Youth/Law Enforcement Forums grew out of a similarly improbable alliance between the juvenile prosecutor, juvenile defender’s office and municipal leaders; while the Philadelphia Police Department did not propose these forums, it was receptive to the idea and is now a major partner in broadening the reach of the youth/law enforcement forums from schools and youth facilities to community centers. By participating in regular meetings with city officials and actors in the juvenile justice system, the Philadelphia Police Department has been able to draw on a number of different perspectives in its youth policing, and build relationships that have been useful in other arenas.

In High Point, the department’s close working relationship with the High Point Community Against Violence arose out of intense community criticism of police response to violence in the 1990s. Today, its partnership with the department lends the High Point Police Department credibility in its community-based efforts to deter violent crime; and gives the department an opportunity during monthly meetings to ask for community in resisting open-air drug markets and violence.

Charlotte’s “community-problem oriented policing,” method, like community partnership ventures in High Point, Milwaukee, Seattle, and Philadelphia, arose from a period of open frustration between police and community members. The model aims to utilize community resources to address particular crime trends, and actively fold public discussion into police decision-making. Charlotte, in particular, demonstrates the importance of making trust and collaboration part of the department’s day-to-day goals. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department measures community satisfaction through informal assessments and surveys at regular intervals, and tasks individual officers with working with community groups.

Importantly, many of these important alliances are between individuals, not just between organizations. Finding one devoted community leader or public official — as with High Point Community Against Violence’s founders, or the relationships between the juvenile prosecutor and juvenile defender in Philadelphia — can open the door to sustained relationships beyond the department.

Increasing transparency and giving community members a voice

Many of the departments that we studied maintained an institutionalized venue where community members can raise concerns, and where police leaders are able to turn for feedback on new policies and programs: Milwaukee’s Commission on Police Community Relations serves such a role, as do Charlotte’s Community Relations Committee, and Philadelphia’s Minority Youth/Law Enforcement Forums.

Formal citizen oversight bodies have a particular role to play in increasing department’s legitimacy among community members: in Milwaukee, for example, the Fire and Police Commission sits as a citizen oversight body whose responsibilities include “hearing appeals by members of either department who have been disciplined by their Chief, independently investigating and monitoring citizen complaints and disciplining employees for

misconduct.” A formal citizen oversight body like the Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission is often the result of active police-community negotiations. Departments that are genuinely invested in hearing citizen concerns will make airing concerns a simple and accessible process. The Milwaukee Fire and Police Commission, for example, is designed to receive community complaints through a decentralized series of avenues from phone and e-mail to forms available at community centers citywide. Equally important are the Chief’s personal interactions with community leaders in Milwaukee.

We saw in Charlotte how transparency has transformed the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department through small actions like creating a monthly newsletter to keep community members informed of crime trends and local events; making sure the Internal Affairs Division shares assessments with the public when police misconduct is suspected; and working with the Community Relations Committee to guide citizens through the complaint process. Focus groups are another potential feedback model: in Seattle, the Law Enforcement-Assisted Diversion program has held a number of facilitated focus groups with residents and line officers to learn about concerns and misconceptions about the project.

In High Point and Philadelphia, transparency is built into the department’s programs and strategies themselves. Institutionalized community and youth forums in Philadelphia provided a venue for young people to speak to police officers in a neutral setting, and gave community members to opportunity to air frustrations and offer suggestions. In High Point, the police department used “focused deterrence” as a strategy in which law enforcement publicly announced its policing strategies, explaining openly who they were targeting and why. Such an approach helps to limit the perception that police were broadly targeting groups of citizens for discriminatory reasons. When there is an uptick in crime, the department shares data and asks community partners for help in addressing it.

Transmitting departmental values through the ranks

We found that individual leadership is especially important to obtaining the support of line officers and in establishing a departmental culture that values trust and collaboration. Milwaukee Chief of Police Ed Flynn considers it a major part of his duties to create a “value-based culture” within the Milwaukee Police Department. Officers are responsible for adhering to the department’s core values — competence, courage, integrity, leadership, respect, and restraint — and errors that do not arise from a willful violation of these values are frequently addressed through additional training rather than punishment.

Training cadets in departmental values of trust and collaboration was particularly important: in Charlotte, departmental training includes techniques that teach problem-solving and require trainees to present proposed community interventions, and officers are rewarded with promotions specifically for collaborating with the public and building community contacts. Philadelphia’s team of stakeholders has created a training curriculum for cadets that has been used in five cadet classes. The curriculum includes dialogue with young people and discussion of youth culture, brain development, and strategies for building trust with teenagers. In High Point, training also involves an emphasis on community engagement and focused deterrence. Seattle’s Law Enforcement-Assisted Diver-

sion trainings involve instruction in harm reduction and social services, which assist officers in understanding the diversion model that they will be carrying out. By incorporating specific skills like dialogue and problem-solving into training periods, departments are able to convey the importance of trust and collaboration at a point when cadets are most receptive to new ideas and new information.

Convincing officers to trust a new approach has been a long-standing challenge for community policing initiatives, and our case studies were no exception: in High Point, for example, we observed that the majority of line officers don't completely understand or believe in the "focused deterrence" model, and this limits the potential for departmental change to carry through to police-community interactions on a daily basis.

Empowering individual officers to implement changes

Where the departments that we studied were successful in implementing effective trust and collaboration-building strategies on the ground, they were able to give individual officers the power and the discretion to carry out departmental priorities. Milwaukee's Chief Flynn summed it up this way: "at some level coppers treat the community the way they're treated by their management. To the extent officers feel their work is respected and they're treated fairly has an impact on how they engage with the community." The Milwaukee Police Department operates with a focus on "dispersed leadership," encouraging all officers to undergo leadership training. Empowering a wider range of officers within the department to see themselves as accountable decision-makers seems to facilitate strong relationships with community partners.

We observed a department giving street level officers the responsibility to implement change in Seattle, too. There, designated officers were given great leeway to put law enforcement-assisted diversion into practice. In this program, it is up to the discretion of the officer to determine whether an individual is suitable for participation in the program — meaning the line officers decide whether to arrest the person or whether to target them for social service intervention. This model gives great responsibility to line officers, allowing those who are familiar with the community through their beats to determine who is in need of drug treatment.

Bringing individual officers into community-building efforts took a number of different forms. In Seattle, designated officers are empowered to decide whether someone should be arrested or diverted to treatment. In Charlotte, officers are required to attend every neighborhood meeting alongside neighborhood leadership groups, and two officers are assigned as community coordinators for each response area. In Milwaukee, officers are encouraged through training to be accountable for departmental goals. All of these approaches, give line officers increased responsibility and increased discretion, but ensure that they have guidance by carefully outlining departmental rules and values.

Conclusion

The five cities that we studied exemplify how police leadership can institutionalize an emphasis on trust and collaboration within their departments. Although they used a variety of strategies and programs, each department built on similar underlying themes: they were open to coalition-building with former adversaries; they worked to build mechanisms for transparency and community input; they took seriously the idea of leading by example and transmitting departmental culture through the ranks; and they gave line officers responsibility and, in turn, accountability for building and maintaining community relationships. Not all of them were successful on all of these fronts, but each undertook concrete changes in department regulations, practices and measurement systems that reinforced their commitment to trust and collaboration.

Though it would be impossible to exhaustively research every department working toward an emphasis on community legitimacy and trust, we hope that a close look at these five departments who have progressed some way down that road will generate discussion and provide ideas and tools to build on.

The Yale Law School Innovations in Policing Clinic is made up of Rebecca Buckwalter-Poza, Kyle Delbyck, Jamil Jivani (lead author for Milwaukee case study), Jeremy Kaplan-Lyman (lead author for Seattle case study), Jessica So, Trevor Stutz (lead author for High Point case study), Carolyn Van Zile (lead author for Charlotte-Mecklenburg case study), and Alyssa Work (lead author for Philadelphia case study).

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The principals on our team include John Crombach, Gail Christopher, Darrel Stephens and James Forman, Jr.

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