Officer Perspectives on Community Policing†

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A survey of Queensland police officers showed strong support for community policing. However, there was disagreement about its meaning, use and impact; and the concept tended to be interpreted in terms of police-public relations. Dissonance was evident between officers' perceptions of high levels of Queensland Police Service involvement in community policing and low levels of respondent involvement. Perceptions of improved relations between the Service and the community, and of greater community involvement in policing, were also at odds with low levels of officers' personal involvement with the community. This detachment appeared to be strongest in the middle ranks and respondents held firmly to traditional law enforcement responses to crime problems. Officers also felt there was a low level of formal organisational support for community policing. These problems of implementation have resulted in increased external pressure for more determined and systematic implementation of community policing.

Community policing

Community policing has been defined as 'an interactive process between the police and the community to mutually identify and resolve community problems' (Brown 1989:7). This approach is contrasted with a law enforcement model of policing, variously described as 'traditional', 'reactive', and 'punitive'. The British and North American literature on policing often terms the latter a 'professional' or 'bureaucratic' model (Seagrave 1996:34). It was exemplified by the FBI as it developed under J Edgar Hoover. American policing in the nineteenth century was plagued by corruption and the professional model was designed to create a highly trained and disciplined bureaucracy loyal to the law and independent of political influences. One of the unforeseen consequences was alienation from community concerns and community assistance, and the vigorous pursuit of a prosecutorial mission of extremely limited efficacy. The Australian Federal Police followed many of the outlines of the FBI model. State policing, where the bulk of public sector policing is undertaken in Australia, retained closer links with communities but also adopted some of the key traits of the 'professional/law enforcement' approach, including a strong offender orientation.

Since the 1970s, the law enforcement model has come increasingly under attack for its inability to make substantial reductions in crime, its secrecy and continued propensity towards corruption and misconduct, its neglect of victims of crime, and lack of consideration of local concerns. Police have come under sustained pressure to adopt alternative approaches either in terms of 'problem oriented policing' or 'community policing'. The two can overlap substantially and differ largely in terms of focus. Problem oriented policing (Goldstein 1990) emphasises the application of a scientific model of analysis of specific crime problems and rigorous evaluation of crime reduction strategies. Community policing emphasises the engagement of community resources and consultation with communities. Both are inclusive of the idea of officers being directly involved in problem solving at a 'local' level.

The landmark Fitzgerald Inquiry in Queensland in 1989 recommended that community policing should be adopted as a new organisational mission, and the Wood Commission interim report on the New South Wales Police in 1996 similarly emphasised enhanced community policing as an essential component of reform (Wood 1996). The Fitzgerald Report recommended that:

> Community policing be adopted as the primary policing strategy, with policing again becoming a neighbourhood affair. The Police Force must move away from the concept of policing based on reactive defence of the community and towards mobilising the community and its police to prevent crime, maintain order and deliver services dictated by the needs of the community. To this end:
>
> (a) preventive policing strategies are to be an integral part of the normal activities of every police officer
>
> (b) the community is to be involved with the police in preventing crime through establishment of community crime committees and community crime prevention programs based on the needs of individual communities (1989:381).

Transition from traditional to community policing

It could be argued that the relatively new concept of community policing is merely a revival of the original concept of preventative policing articulated by Rowan and Mayne for the 'New Police' introduced in London in 1829:

> The object to be attained is the prevention of crime. To this great end every effort of the police is to be directed. The security of person and property, the preservation of the public tranquillity, and all the other objects of a police establishment will thus be better effected than by the detection and punishment of the offender (in Reith 1975:156).

However, the extent to which these ideals have ever been pursued by public sector police is questionable, and modern community policing is characterised by a gap between police rhetoric regarding adoption of its principles and demonstrable implementation. The Queensland Police Service (QPS) exemplifies this problem and the contradiction is accentuated by the imperative for reform stemming from the corruption crisis of 1987–89. The current Commissioner recently stated that the QPS had put 'considerable time and effort into community policing and crime prevention projects. These recognise the shared partnership between police officers and the community to find mutually acceptable solutions to common social and crime problems' (QPS 1994:4–5). The Service created a Community Policing Support Branch, numerous consultative committees, and conducted beat policing and some other innovative programs. However, the 1996 Bingham Review charged the Service with failing to understand community policing or adopt it as an all-embracing strategic mission as prescribed by Fitzgerald (Bingham 1996).

The QPS provides a classic study of the problems encountered in attempting to revolutionise a large police department. A starting point for understanding the potential pitfalls is the confusion between community policing and 'police-community relations' (Trojanowicz 1990). The US experience has shown a strong tendency for police to invest in the latter, with the goal of improving public perceptions of police rather than making fundamental changes to operational practice. According to Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux (1992), agencies oriented towards improving police-community relations will create 'blue ribbon' committees at high levels in the organisation where civic leaders are allowed space to 'preach' to police or appear to be exercising accountability through oversight. A few innovative programs or specialist units, such as a crime prevention unit, are added on to traditional functions. Operational police interaction with citizens remains irregular and decisions about strategy remain the province of the centralised police organisation. Success is measured by traditional measures such as crime clear up rates and citizen satisfaction with police. Genuine community policing would, on the other hand, involve regular contact between police and citizens with significant community input in setting priorities in a 'bottom up' model of accountability. Community policing would be adopted as a department wide philosophy and internalised by operational police. Readily accessible officers in de-centralised units would assist communities to solve many of their own crime-related problems. Success would be measured in terms of reductions in crime and disorder, and improved perceptions of neighbourhood safety.

The concepts of police-community relations and community policing are not mutually exclusive. Improved relations with the community should be an outcome of community policing initiatives. Improved relations can also be a starting point toward genuine community policing and police agencies may operate in a transitional zone between the two.

The concept of 'community' and criticisms of community policing

The concept of 'community' is central to the concept of community policing. However, it is often grafted onto 'policing' in extremely simplistic terms. Critics argue that common and academic usage is often romantic and naive, conflating the complexities of crime causation and the capacities of police in the search for a quick and easy solution to crime (Hughes 1996; Holmes 1994). For example, the invocation of 'community' is usually wholistic, derived from the nostalgic concept of 'communitarianism' (Etzioni 1994), and ignores deep social divisions of class, gender, race and ethnicity. Police are not required to deal with 'a community', but with many communities which are often in entrenched conflict. Furthermore, advocates of communitarianism (such as Dennis 1993) tend to blame crime on moral failings rather than social structures. Hence, police who attempt to take a scientific approach to crime may end up in confrontation with powerful community groups demanding traditional punitive policing.

Naive notions of community can result in 'community policing' that serves sectional interests. One study of community-based crime prevention initiatives in England (Crawford 1996) found that programs were dominated by persons who understood administrative and formal meeting procedures, particularly in relation to local government authority. These procedures tended to alienate other groups. Police-community initiatives began by trying to establish consensus, but the cost of unity was the excluding and silencing of nonconsensual participants. Similarly, Sampson et al (1988) argue that inclusion in community crime prevention committees is bound up with notions of the 'respected' and the 'respectable'. 'Troublesome' groups and individuals are marginalised, ignored or avoided. Suitability for inclusion in crime prevention programs is determined substantially by groups' or individuals' capacity to be 'organised'. Groups most likely to be excluded are

the young, the socially disadvantaged, the unemployed, the homeless, racial minorities, the lower classes and women.

Once a police-community group is formed, the 'partnership' is often one where the police are 'steering' (making policy) and the citizens are 'rowing' (performing service work) (Shearing 1995). Ericson (1994) argues that the police are always in a position of power because they have the ability to draw upon human and material resources at short notice, they have a gate keeping role in the criminal justice system, and they claim next to sole expertise in the field of crime detection and processing. Structural mechanisms need to be put in place to counteract any differences in power that may exist in police-community negotiations. Notions of representativeness in community policing committees may be salvageable if recognition of heterogeneity is built into open democratic process:

> A mutual recognition of difference represents a more preferable premise for inter-agency relations than either an assumed consensus or an ends-oriented 'quest for unity'. It is important that conflict is negotiated in an open and accountable manner which recognises and appropriately compensates for power differentials (Crawford 1996:20).

Community policing has also been criticised for generating effects counter to those intended. One is that closer contact between police and citizens may increase the opportunities for corruption or inappropriate influences on police behaviour. Community based officers could become more responsive to local concerns rather than legal constraints and principles of equality before the law. In the Australian context Sarre (1996) has warned that police responsiveness to localised 'law-and-order' lobbies may generate conflicting approaches to crime prevention. For instance:

> Police may be asked by influential members of the community to implement a policy (for example, a night curfew affecting young people) which acts counter to the aims of local crime prevention strategists appealing to young people to become involved with and trusted by their community's civic leaders (1996:39–40).

Police also may use community policing to further their own agendas, such as salary increases or more staff (Waring 1990). Waring also points to the possible confusion that can result if the relationship between the police and the community is assumed rather than being made clear. Five conflicting interpretations can arise if community policing is not clearly defined.

- The community is an extension of police surveillance and response capabilities (e.g., Neighbourhood Watch).

- The community is a consumer and/or client of police service.

- The community is a partner, co-producer of neighbourhood order and safety.

- The community is a source of authority, influence and control over neighbourhood police policy.

- The community is an alternative source of order, policing and law enforcement (1990:28).

Waring's critique of community policing initiatives in the QPS, as of 1990, was that officers interpreted community policing as establishing a visible presence in the community (for example, Blue Light Discos) as an add-on to the dominant traditional role of law enforcement. Waring argued that until community policing activities became compulsory, and measured to gauge an officer's performance, the work would continue to be marginalised.

Levels of community policing

Two broad transitional phases have been observed in community policing from individual programs to overall style. According to Brown (1989:2–7), traditional policing has the following characteristics:

- police are essentially reactive, responding to calls for service; with limited information about a community and with planning driven by centrally generated police data,

- planning is extremely narrow and centres on operations, procedures, rules and regulations; recruitment focuses on the spirit of adventure rather than a spirit of community service,

- patrol officers have a narrowly defined role; they are not encouraged or rewarded for creativity or innovation to solve problems,

- training is geared towards law enforcement even though police spend a small proportion of their time on such activities,

- management and supervision are authoritative and militaristic,

- performance measures are based on activities not outcomes, and

- police services operate as isolated bodies answering only to themselves; there is little collaboration with the community.

In contrast to traditional policing, community policing usually contains the following:

- problem solving by individual officers,

- accountability to the community,

- regionalisation and decentralisation,

- power sharing,

- permanent shift/beat assignments, not rotational,

- training of recruits in community organisational skills and problem solving,

- performance evaluation and indicators which measure officers' ability to solve problems, and

- management of calls for service organised to assist problem solving.

Phase One of community policing involves the implementation of individual programs that quite often support the existing police style. These programs are often isolated in the sense that they do not involve the entire police organisation or community. Phase Two involves much more extensive alterations. Individual programs are not enough; the entire service philosophy and style must be transformed. The Phase One experience is invaluable in preparation for the transformation to full implementation. It is of benefit as it introduces the concept of change, spreads the message about the benefits of community policing, creates a sense of policy ownership by police, serves as a pilot and creates training opportunities. However, the danger in this phase is that change will stall and the agency become locked into a bifurcated approach to crime.

Furthermore, it is not enough that community policing be restricted to operational police, it should be adopted as an overall management philosophy. Management should ensure programs are in place which generate productive interaction between police service units, police officers and their local community. Management must ensure that all initiatives have planned and measurable results. The potential benefits of community policing lie in a more scientific and cooperative approach to crime prevention, enhanced public scrutiny of

police work, greater customer service orientation, improved public support, improved job satisfaction, and support for innovation and experimentation. A recent review of community policing in Britain, Canada and the USA concluded that 'there has been little empirical evaluation ... community policing initiatives have been largely unsuccessful' (Seagrave 1996:36, 37; see also Palmiotto and Donahue 1995). However, there are studies showing reductions in crime and disorder as a result of police working closely with community groups on local problems (Clarke 1992; Grabosky and James 1995), although there are few such cases in Australia (Sarre 1996). In Queensland, despite the Fitzgerald directive for community policing, public opinion surveys over five years show police are 'still perceived as fairly isolated from the community' (CJC 1995c:12). Nonetheless, one community policy initiative, beat policing, has shown signs of significantly improved public perceptions of police/community interaction (CJC 1995a, 1995b, 1995c).

Research method

In 1994, the oversight body for the QPS — the Criminal Justice Commission — reported that the implementation of Fitzgerald's recommendations regarding community policing needed to be advanced (CJC 1994). In response to this, the QPS undertook a diagnostic survey of officers' attitudes on the subject with a view to finding ways of enhancing implementation. The survey was a project of the Research and Evaluation Section of the Commissioner's Inspectorate and was conducted in 1996. A questionnaire was developed to identify officers' understanding of, and attitudes toward, community policing, as well as ways of maximising potential benefits of a closer working relationship with the public. Questions sought officers' views on issues such as the level of QPS involvement in community policing, obstacles to effective implementation, and the usefulness of different police strategies. Scenario questions were also provided to gauge respondents' interpretations of, and commitment to, community policing in applied contexts.

The sample was representative of region, rank and gender but was skewed for duties in order to focus on the views of the 'coal face' general duties officers. The literature depicts general duties officers as the ones most affected by community policing requirements who have the potential to be most effective in facilitating or resisting implementation. Across all regions, a 10 per cent sample was sent out (n=621). The sample was calculated using the police service personnel profile in the QPS *Statistical Review* (QPS 1993).

Results

Sixty-two per cent of the questionnaires were returned (n=384). The sample was representative on most demographic variables except duties. Consistent with the intention, general duties officers made up 77 per cent of the sample obtained. Thirty per cent of respondents had between one and five years' service and 37 per cent had between six and 15 years' service. The majority (70 per cent) were aged 24 to 43. The sample slightly over-represented commissioned officers and slightly under-represented senior constables.

Respondents were asked if they felt the QPS was genuinely involved in community policing: 68 per cent chose 'Yes', 25 per cent chose 'No', while 7 per cent were undecided. No significant differences were found within the sample for sex, duties, age, upbringing, current location or region. Differences between sergeants and commissioned officers were significant at the 0.05 level. Sergeants under-estimated and commissioned officers over-estimated QPS involvement compared to the rest of the sample.

Respondents were then asked how many officers they thought were involved in community policing and how many officers should be involved. For the entire sample, the

mean opinion for the percentage of officers considered currently involved in community policing was 37 per cent. The mean opinion for the percentage of officers who 'should be involved' was 69 per cent. The estimation of current levels of involvement should have some validity in that respondents were also asked if they had personally been involved in the planning or implementation of a community policing initiative in the last 12 months: 39 per cent answered 'Yes'. For both questions there were no significant differences in answers by sex or region. However, for both questions there was significance at the 0.05 level for commissioned officers, who over-estimated the percentage who took part and the percentage who should take part compared to other ranks (Figure 1). Officers' current station was significant at the 0.05 level (Figure 2). Respondents who were currently stationed in country/rural areas highly over-estimated their answers to both questions in contrast to respondents stationed in a metropolitan area or provincial cities.

Respondents were also asked how long the QPS had been involved in community policing: 83 per cent thought the QPS had been involved in community policing for 10 years or less. The mean number of years was 16.75. However, the result was heavily weighted by the low number who chose 50 years and over. This influence is illustrated by the fact that the mean for the first three quartiles was 5.39, yet when the last quartile is added the mean triples. Just over 61 per cent stated the QPS had been involved in community policing for six years or less. This would suggest that in many respondents' minds community policing was linked to the Fitzgerald Report. Additionally, 28 respondents stated that the QPS had been involved in community policing since the QPS began (in the nineteenth century); yet only half of the 28 stated they had been involved in community policing in the last 12 months.

Respondents were also asked how effective the police were at solving community problems. The answers were scored on a six point scale from 'extremely effective' (1) to 'extremely ineffective' (6). For the entire sample the answers scored just on the positive side of the scale (Table 1).

Table 1 How effective has community policing been in improving services?

Alternatives	Number	Percentage
Extremely effective	11	2.96
Moderately effective	103	27.76
Somewhat effective	193	52.02
Somewhat ineffective	35	9.43
Moderately ineffective	15	4.04
Extremely ineffective	14	3.77

Figure 1 Opinions of the level of community policing by rank.
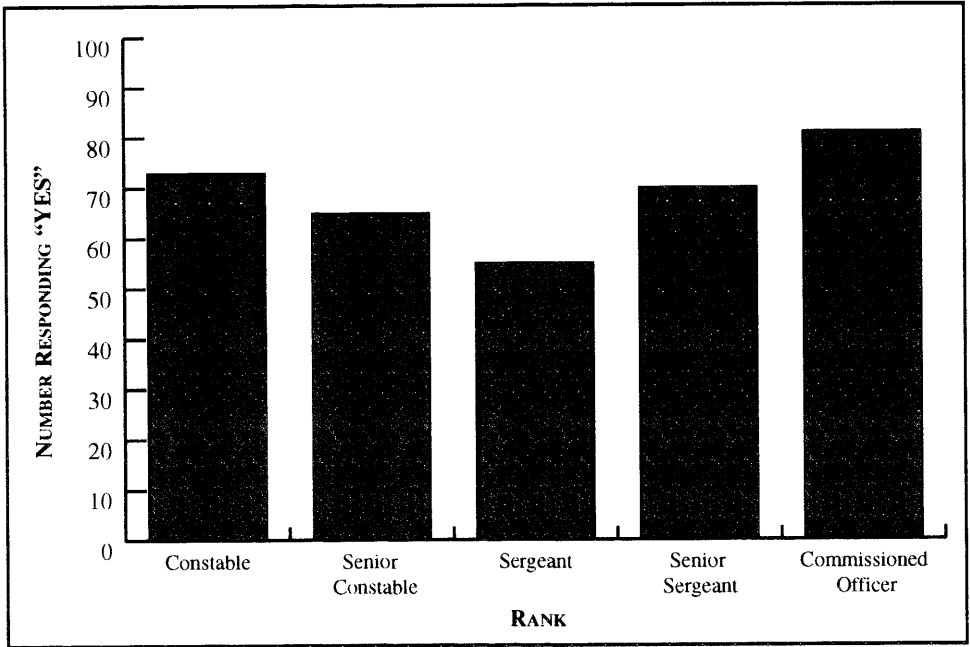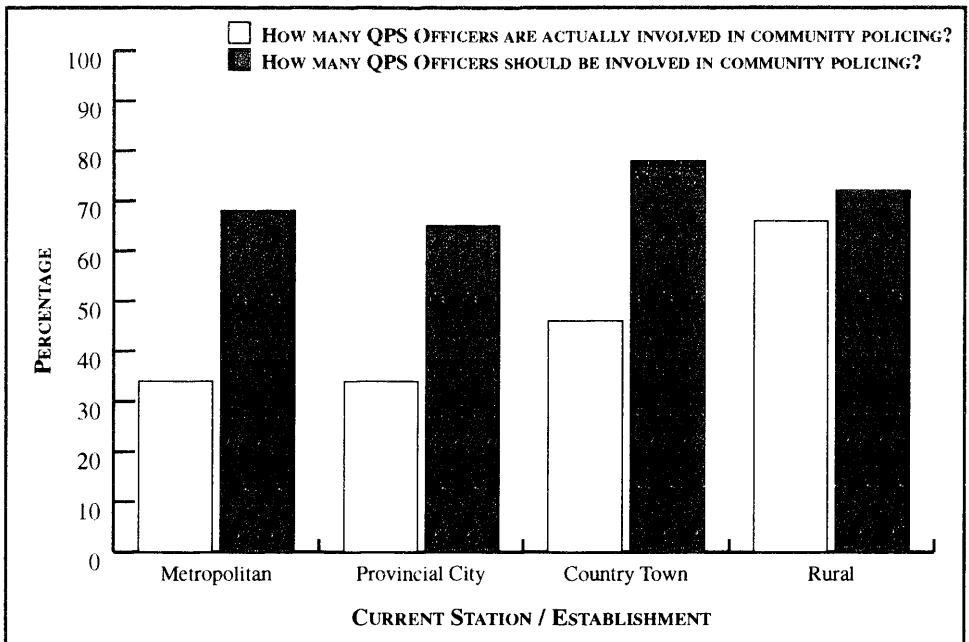Is the QPS really involved in community policing?

Figure 2 Opinions of the level of community policing currently in the QPS, by location.

Respondents were asked to choose from a list of nine changes that may have occurred since the introduction of community policing as an explicit organisational goal: 57 per cent believed communication with the community had improved, 45 per cent believed co-operation between police and the community had increased, and 44 per cent believed ties between the police and the community were closer. According to respondents, a 'closer' relationship meant more calls for service (therefore higher official crime rates) and the public feeling more comfortable with making a complaint. The respondents did not feel that 'more effective problem solving' had occurred since the introduction of community policing (Figure 3).

Figure 3 What changes have you noticed since the introduction of community policing?
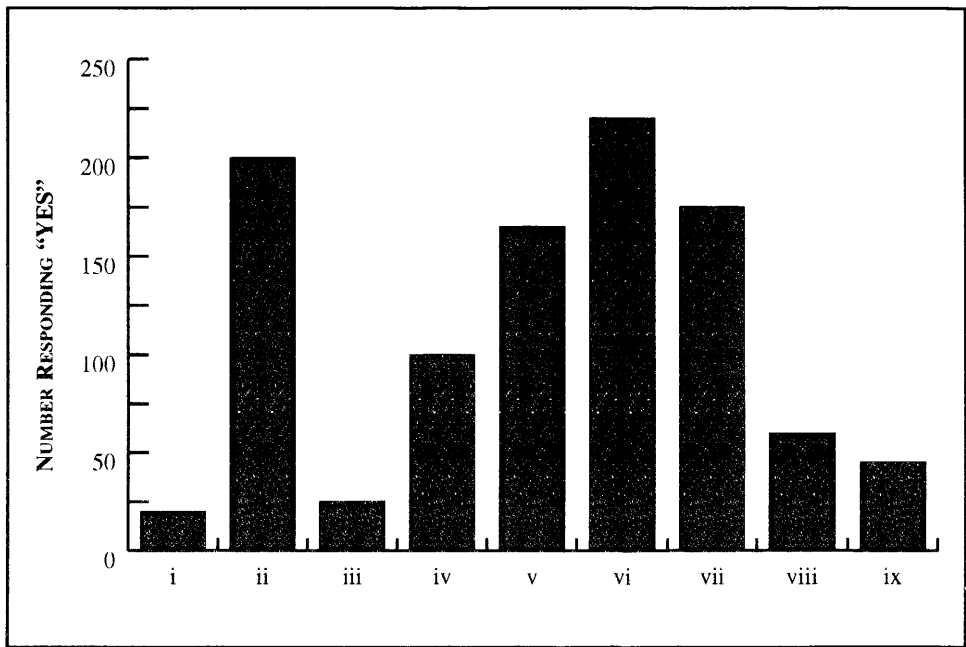
i	Fewer calls for service	vi	Improved communication with the community
ii	More calls for service	vii	Increased community cooperation
iii	Lower crime rates	viii	More effective problem solving
iv	Higher crime rates	ix	Fewer complaints about police
v	Closer ties with the community		

    Respondents were asked what changes they thought the public had noticed since the introduction of community policing. The ranking of similar alternatives was very close. Respondents believed the public had noticed similar changes but not to the same extent as police. The main areas of change were said to be in improved communication with the community, closer ties with the community, and increased community cooperation (Figure 4).

Figure 4 What changes do you think the community has noticed since the introduction of community policing?
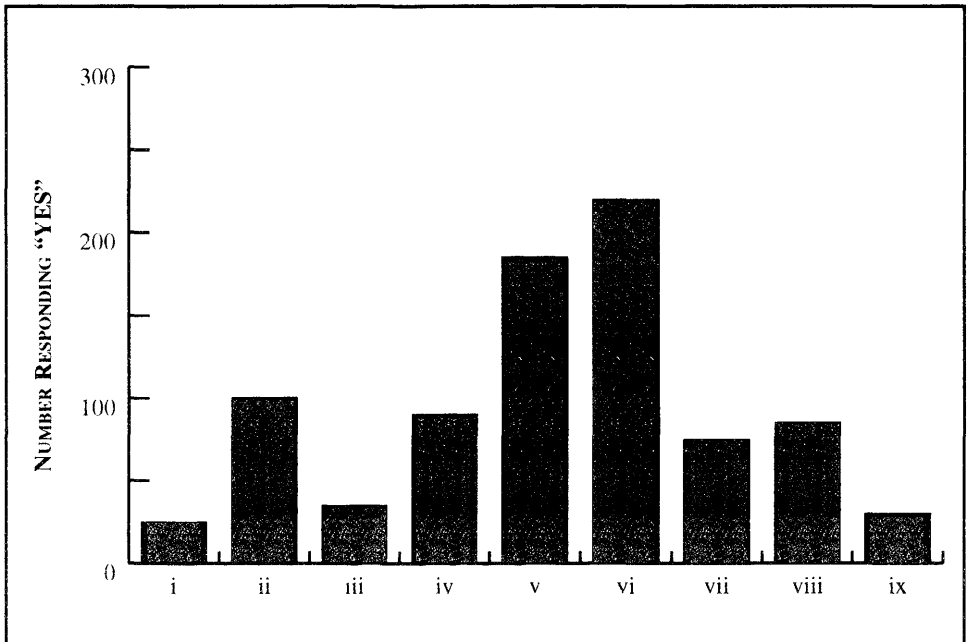

i	Fewer calls for service	vi	Improved communication with police
ii	More calls for service	vii	Increased police responsiveness
iii	Lower crime rates	viii	More effective problem solving
iv	Higher crime rates	ix	Fewer citizen complaints
v	Closer ties to the community		

Respondents were asked whether they felt closer to the community since community policing began. The majority (51 per cent) answered in the negative: 19 per cent were unsure. The distribution of responses by rank (Figure 5) revealed some differences. For two ranks (constable and commissioned officer) the majority responded in the affirmative.

Figure 5 Distribution of respondents who stated 'No, I do not feel closer to the community since community policing began', by rank.
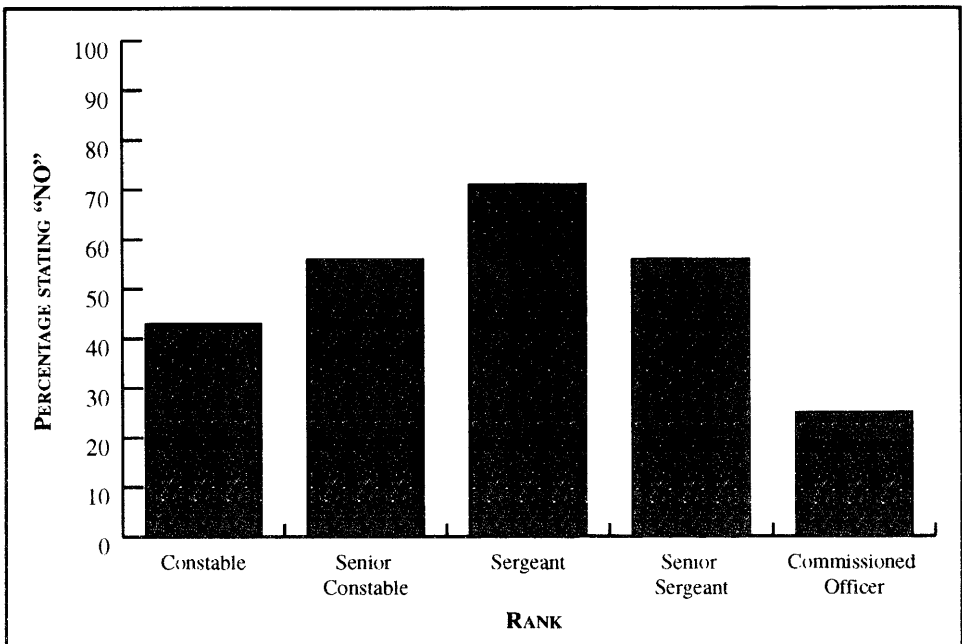
In response to a question about the permanency of the community policing philosophy, the majority of respondents (68 per cent) indicated they did not think it was just a passing 'fad'. More respondents were unsure (20 per cent) of their answer than the percentage of respondents who thought community policing was a 'fad' (12 per cent). Senior constable was the only rank that was over-represented on this issue. Of the respondents who answered 'Yes' (regarding community policing being a fad), 42.5 per cent were senior constables, who made up 26.6 per cent of the sample. No commissioned officer answered 'Yes'. There was a difference by sex: 95.7 per cent of respondents who answered 'Yes' were males, when they comprised 85.3 per cent of the sample. Only 4.26 per cent of respondents who answered 'Yes' were female, when they comprised 14.6 per cent of the sample. Eighty-nine per cent of respondents gave a positive answer to the question, 'Do you personally believe in the community policing philosophy?': 33 per cent 'totally' and 56 per cent 'somewhat'. There were no differences by rank.

Thirty-nine per cent of officers stated they had been involved in community policing in the last 12 months. Of the group of respondents who answered 'totally' to the previous question (N=124), 65 had been involved in community policing in the last 12 months, while the remaining 59 had not. Of the 148 who had been involved in community policing in the last 12 months, their spread for personal belief was 65 'totally', 77 'somewhat' and three 'not really'. Sixteen per cent of respondents stated that there was no organisational support in their region/area for community policing. Of those who stated that some support existed in their region/area, 41 per cent identified the Crime Prevention Unit (Figure 6).

Figure 6 What types of support for community policing exist in your region/area?
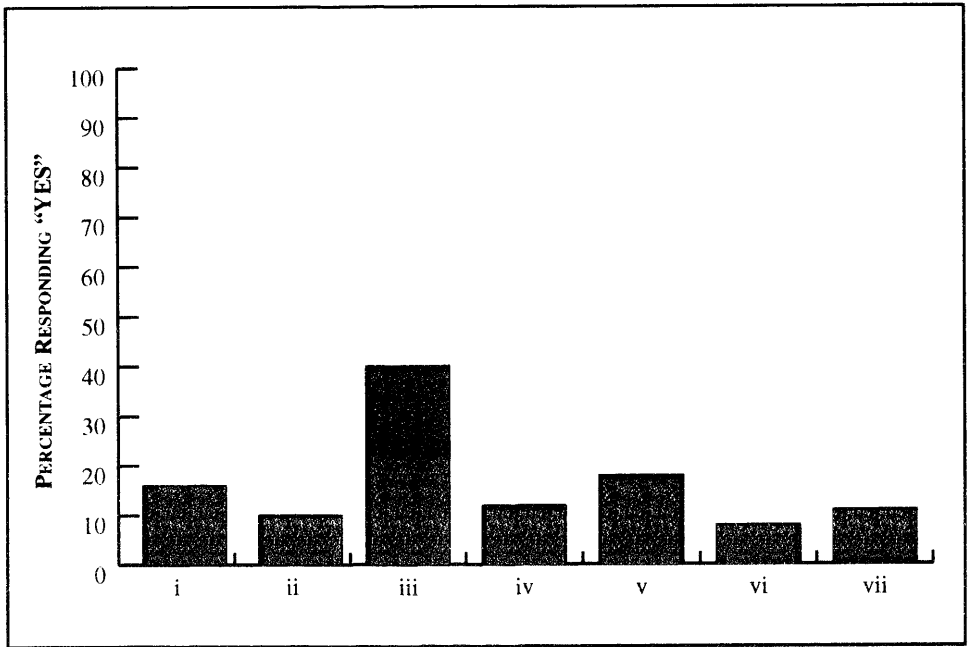
i	Training	v	Informal support
ii	Decentralised decision making	vi	Commendations
iii	Support programs, eg, Crime Prevention Unit	vii	Promotions
iv	Performance programs		

Respondents were asked to choose from a list of benefits that community policing could provide: 18 per cent stated they believed community policing could reduce calls for service and 4.6 per cent stated community policing had resulted in fewer calls for service. The majority believed that community policing does not have the potential to reduce calls for service, crime rates or complaints about police. However, the majority believed community policing had the potential to facilitate more effective problem solving, create closer ties with the community, and improve communication between police and public. Even by their own low ratings (Figure 7), the respondents believed that community policing had not reached its potential in regard to any of the six alternatives. No significant differences were found between the demographic samples for these questions or the following ones.

Figure 7 Distribution of opinions on the possible benefits versus actual benefits of community policing.
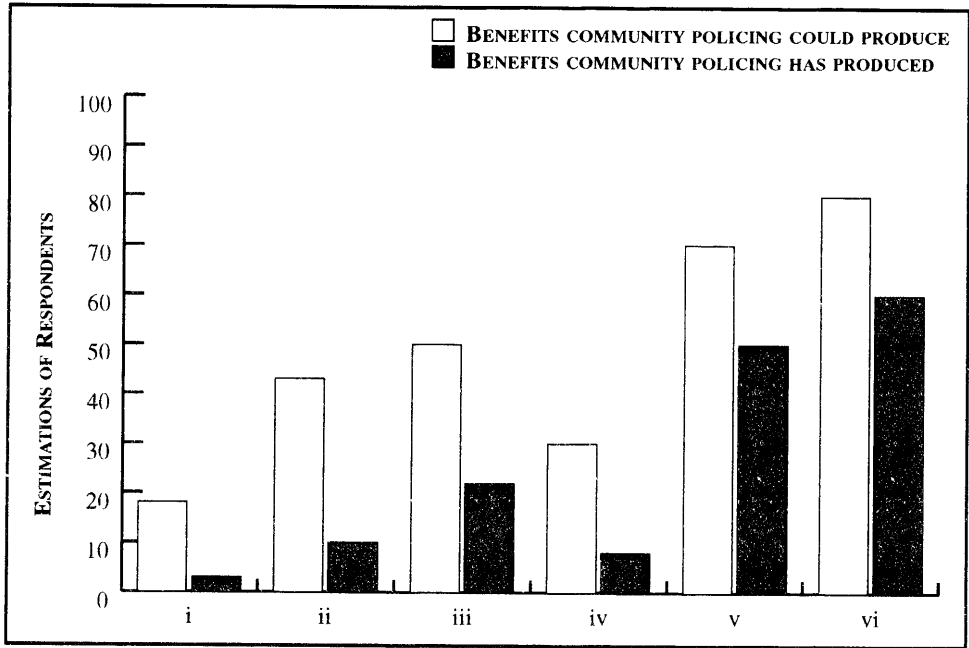

i	Fewer calls for service	iv	Fewer complaints about police
ii	Lower crime rate	v	Closer ties with the community
iii	More effective problem solving	vi	Improved communication

Respondents were asked to nominate the possible problems they believed were associated with community policing (Figure 8). The most common problem — 'it is just a public relations exercise' — was selected by 28.6 per cent. The next four alternatives were chosen by a slightly lower number. A check showed that this was not the result of a core of critical respondents choosing numerous responses (171 respondents chose only one of the nine alternatives, 80 respondents chose two alternatives, 31 respondents chose three alternatives, and the remaining 181 choices were made by 32 respondents).

Figure 8 What do you see as the possible problems with community policing?
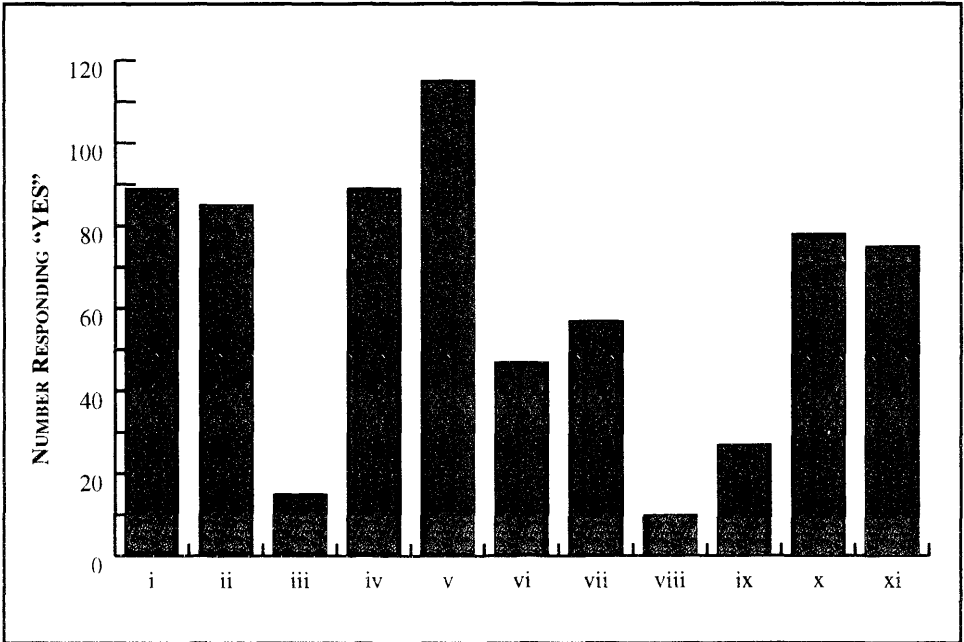
i	Not effective against crime	vii	It is soft policing
ii	Misleads the public	viii	Can lead to corruption
iii	It is a waste of time	ix	It is not real policing
iv	No one really knows what it is	x	It wastes resources and personnel
v	It is just a public relations exercise	xi	None
vi	Causes tremendous organisational problems		

Respondents rated 15 policing tasks on how important they were (Figure 9). Of the 15 alternatives there were five traditional policing duties, 10 community policing duties and there was one duty involving interaction with community leaders. Four of the top six alternatives chosen were traditional policing duties.

Figure 9 Ratings of the importance of 15 police duties.
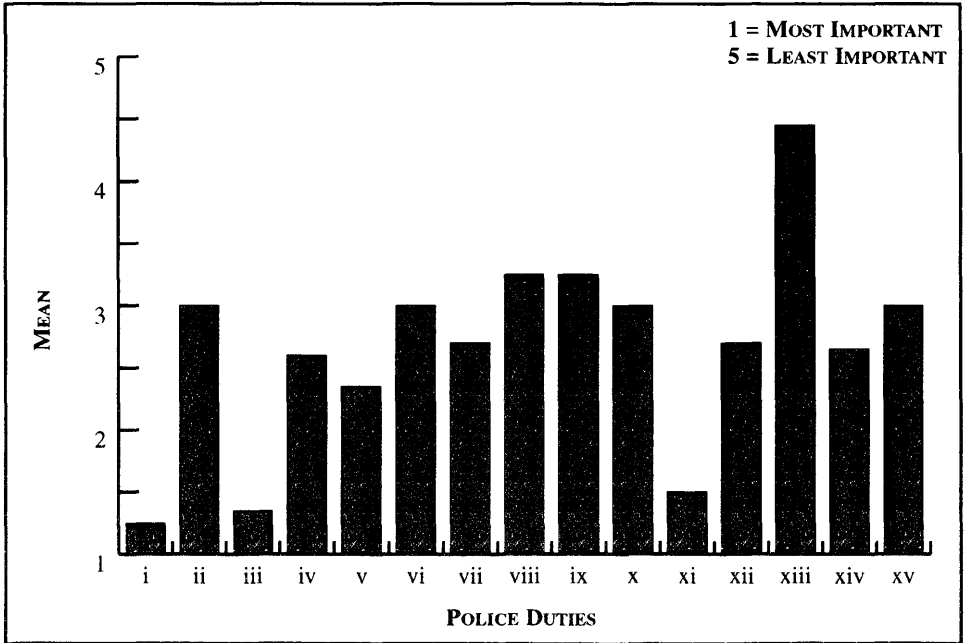
i   Responding to emergency calls
ii   Responding to non-emergency calls
iii   Investigating serious crime
iv   Traffic enforcement
v   Car patrols
vi   Foot or bicycle patrols
vii   Working with the community to solve problems
viii   Attending community meetings and activities
ix   Establishing community based police stations
x   Implementing crime prevention programs (eg, neighbourhood watch)
xi   Preventing crime
xii   Reducing calls for police service
xiii   Meeting the needs of elected government officials
xiv   Building better relationships with the community
xv   Addressing racial or ethnic issues

Figures 10 and 11 present responses to two hypothetical problems: one concerning traffic accidents, the other concerning a spate of break and enters. Each problem was followed by three possible responses: a routine 'traditional' policing response, an aggressive 'traditional' policing response, and a community policing response. Respondents ranked the three from most to least desirable. For both problems the aggressive 'traditional' policing response received the most support.

Figure 10 Answers to three potential responses to a policing problem (traffic).
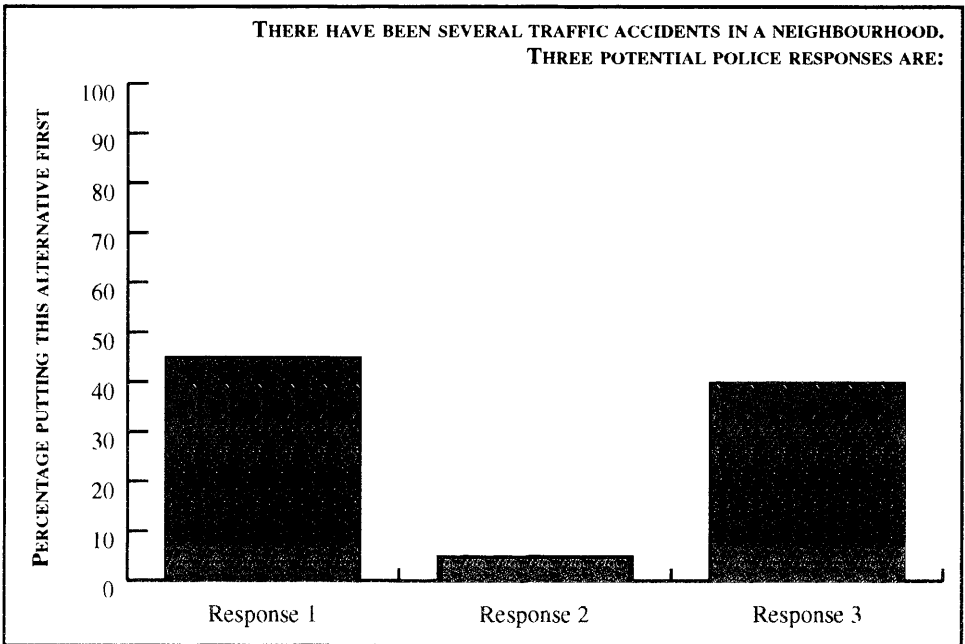
Response 1   Specialised traffic officers are assigned to the neighbourhood to write tickets.
Response 2   Routine patrol officers attend only in the case of an accident to write up reports.
Response 3   Police officers are assigned to work with the town planning department and community members to come up with a plan for reducing accidents. This effort takes up a lot of police time.

Figure 11 Answers to three potential responses to a policing problem (break and enter).
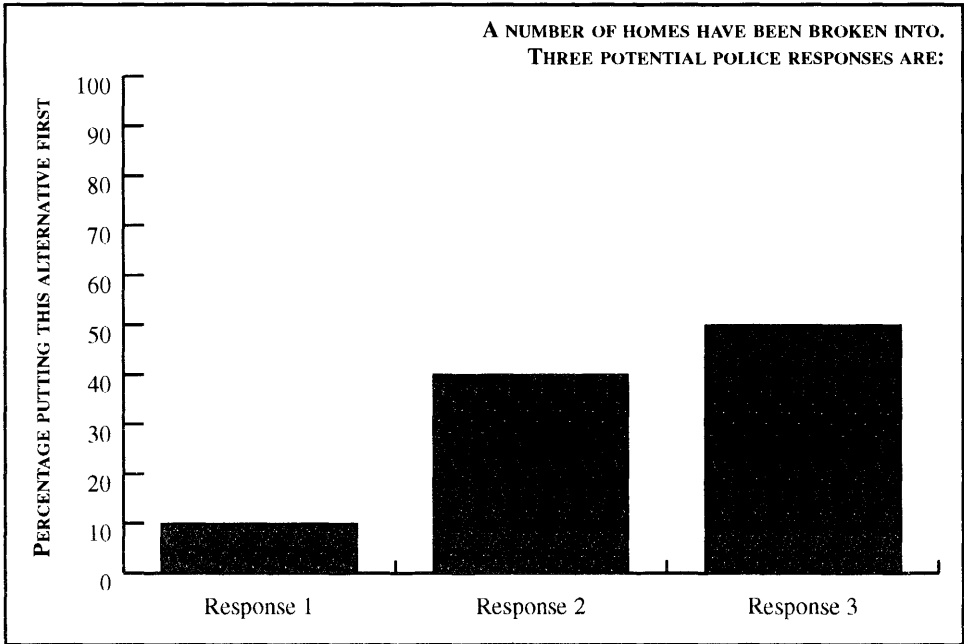
Response 1   A police officer attends, examines the scenes, and completes reports about break-ins. The victims are given the necessary details to make an insurance claim.

Response 2   Police officers try to prevent more break-ins. They work with the community to set up programs to try and get to the root of the problem. Because this requires police resources, it could mean longer response times for other calls.

Response 3   The police set up special surveillance in an effort to catch the offenders who are committing the break-ins.

Respondents were asked to rank 10 factors that could measure police performance from most to least important on a scale of 1–10. Table 2 displays the alternatives ranked by mean and the number of times each alternative was given a number one rank (or 'first') by respondents. 'Preventing crime' stands out dramatically against the other alternatives.

Table 2   Distribution of rankings of the most to least important factors to evaluate a police officer's performance

Factor	Mean	Rank by number of 'firsts'	Number of 'firsts'
Preventing crime	3.264	1	107
Use of intelligence	3.496	2	67
Skills (report writing etc)	3.871	3	51
Use of problem solving tactics	4.801	5	34
Number of tickets, arrests, etc	5.565	4	43
Effectiveness in solving community problems	5.753	6	26
Number of criminal convictions	5.967	7	20
Community involvement	6.116	9	11
Appearance	6.675	8	14
Lack of citizen complaints	8.178	10	11

The final question related to issues of power and communication in community polic-
ing, and presented respondents with five definitions of 'police/community partnership'.
The five alternative definitions of partnership ranged from the public having a totally sub-
servient role to an equal role to an authoritative role over police. Respondents were asked to
choose one alternative as their preferred model. In response, 55.6 per cent felt the commu-
nity should have a subservient role, 36.3 per cent thought the partnership should be equal,
while 8.1 per cent thought the police should be subordinate to the public (Figure 12).

Figure 12 Opinion on the structure of the partnership between the police and the community.
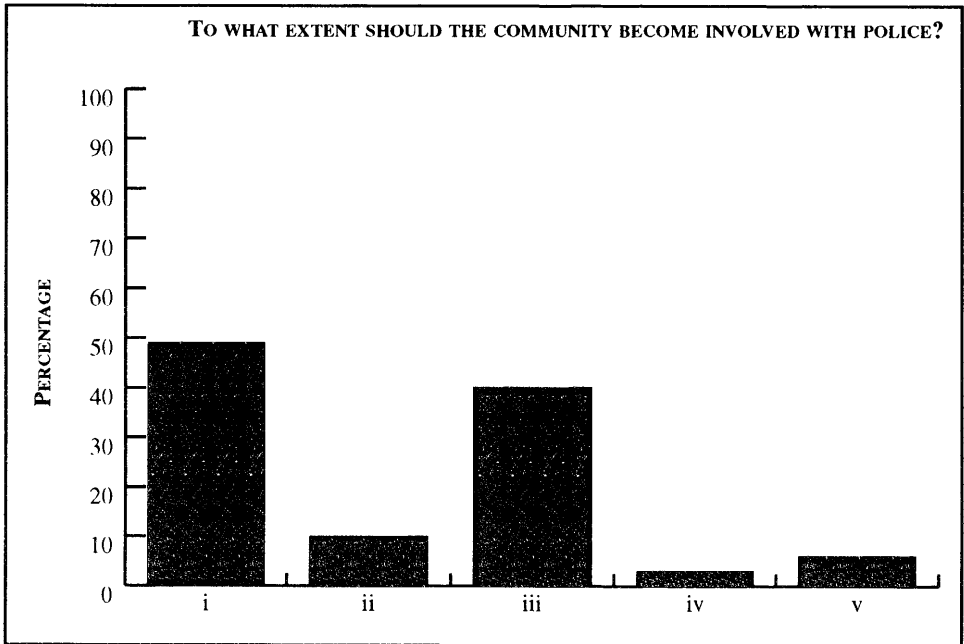
i   The community is an extension of police surveillance and response capabilities (eg, neigh-
      bourhood watch, operation identification, etc).
ii   The community is a consumer and/or client of police service.
iii   The community is a partner, coproducer of neighbourhood order and safety.
iv   The community is a source of authority, influence and control over neighbourhood police policy.
v   The community is an alternative source of order, policing and law enforcement.

Discussion

The results of this questionnaire show that there was strong support for community polic-ing across the ranks of the QPS; although there was disagreement about its meaning, use and impact. Respondents tended to define community policing in the limited terms de-scribed by Trojanowicz as police-community relations. Due to the confusion concerning definitions, the use and impact of community policing was interpreted primarily in relation to public relations issues. Dissonance was also evident in officers' perceptions of QPS in-volvement in community policing: 68 per cent of respondents stated that the QPS was 're-ally involved'. However, respondents also considered the proportion of officers involved in community policing was 37 per cent, and the proportion who should be involved was rated at 69 per cent.

Police officers' views identifying significant changes since the introduction of commu-nity policing appeared inconsistent with their estimation that only 37 per cent of officers was currently involved. The majority stated that the QPS was involved in community po-licing, but only one third stated they had been personally involved in community policing in the last 12 months. Respondents seemed to be suggesting that the QPS appeared to be substantially involved in community policing but the respondents themselves were not in-volved.

Perceptions of improved relations between the QPS and the community, and of greater community involvement in policing, were also at odds with the negative answer regarding personally feeling closer to the community. There are three possible explanations for this apparent disharmony in responses:

• the respondents felt extremely close to the community before community policing be-gan, so for themselves they felt they could not get any closer no matter what new strategies the QPS developed;

• the respondents heard or were informed that the QPS, as a group, were closer to the community, but they did not feel any closer themselves; or

• the respondents gave the 'expected' QPS response but when asked for their personal opinion gave a more negative response.

The distribution of responses by rank and station revealed some differences over feel-ing closer to the community. Officers in country stations were more positive and this can be regarded as a 'natural' product of the greater community cohesion in rural areas (Sea-grave 1996). For two ranks (constable and commissioned officer) the majority responded in the affirmative. In light of this, it is worth examining explanation two in a little more detail. The QPS has in recent years put effort into developing community policing. There are many examples of this at a corporate policy level. The officers 'on the ground' with some rank and supervisory responsibility may have felt the community policing push was occurring at the upper management level only. It may be that the benefits of the concept were never properly 'sold' to this group when it became a corporate goal. This communi-cation gap may have left officers feeling the community policing push did not have much to do with them. However, commitment by senior constables, sergeants and senior ser-geants is as important as that of constables and senior management.

Officers felt there was a low level of formal organisational support for community policing and it would appear that community policing has not been embraced in full in an applied sense by officers in the QPS. This is borne out where officers preferred to solve problems by traditional policing responses. The majority held to answers locked into a conservative and unproductive approach, with a narrowly defined vision of problem solving and crime

prevention. They rated crime prevention highly as a goal for the QPS, but could not separate themselves from the idea that crime prevention is related to crime clear up rates (see Brown 1989).

Responses to questions regarding community partnership were also dominated by conservative concepts of police expertise. There was substantial support for the idea of the community as 'co-producers', with police, of neighbourhood safety. However, the majority saw the community either as 'consumers of police services' or, most significantly, as an extension of police controlled surveillance and rapid response strategies through simplistic programs such as Neighbourhood Watch (see Waring 1990).

The findings of this survey were incorporated into the 1996 'Bingham Review' of strategic management and accountability in the QPS. The review recommended a range of strategies to substantially expand the application of community policing principles, including integrating problem-solving skills into training and into promotion criteria, and experimenting with alternative patrol strategies. It also recommended the QPS set up more community policing crime prevention demonstration projects, such as beat policing, and that it create key 'patrol tactician' positions to focus on intervening in repeat victimisation and comprehensively expanding the evaluation of strategies. Enhanced engagement with community organisations was also recommended in the development of preventive strategies (Bingham 1996). The recommendations provide a coherent and practical recipe for making a reality of the 1989 Fitzgerald vision for community policing. The question now is whether there is the managerial will and understanding to put policy into practice.

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