

The BJA Executive Session on

Police Leadership

2013

The BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership was a multi-year endeavor (2010-2014) with a goal to develop 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

www.bjaexecutivesessiononpoliceleadership.org/ to learn more about this project and to access a broad array of interactive, multimedia resources.

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

Community Power and Police Leadership: The Community-Building Leadership Continuum

by
Gregory Saville

Summary

I am writing this paper based on exceptional work done by Principal members and Innovation Team members across the Community-building Team in the BJA Leadership Project. It is based also on my interpretation of survey data, analyses from project meetings, and my own experience in urban development, crime prevention, and community safety.

I begin with the idea that a continuum of community-building activities exists in police agencies across the country and that leadership qualities align with different areas of the continuum. One end of the continuum comprises community-building projects and programs more commonly associated with outreach, crime prevention, and public relations. In the middle of the continuum police agencies engage in activities associated with more comprehensive problem-solving, community-policing and problem-oriented policing. At the other end of the continuum police agencies take a secondary, but crucial, role in community revitalization. That

revitalization includes both physical building and social development.

The distance between these opposite ends, or categories, of the community-building continuum is measured by the direct, or indirect, power yielded by police leadership over the community-building process. At no point on the continuum are the police absent, but the role of police leaders is different at different ends. Thus, the kinds of police leaders we want in the 21st century depends on to what extent communities wish to realize a high degree of sustainable and collaborative action to build and sustain safe places where they live and work..

Premise of the Project

The basic premise of our work emerged from the initial meetings of Principals in Florida in late 2010. We concluded that it takes more than police to build a safe and healthy community and that police – with creative, collaborative leadership – can powerfully contribute in both old and new ways to support others who are working to strengthen the community. We called this premise the Community-building approach and we developed a survey to examine different dimensions of that premise (see survey in Appendix A).

The goal of our work was to investigate leaders in policing who seem to embody community-building principles and assess what repertoire of leadership characteristics should be applied in 21st century police organizations.

Our Method

The BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership included a Community-building Team (CBT) with seven Principal members who solicited the help of 19 Innovation Team (IT) members. All together the 26 participants conducted surveys on over 27 police agencies.

We divided our work among the 19 IT members. We created a set of standard survey questions about community-building and leadership qualities that encourage it. The IT members then submitted a list of agencies they thought fit this bill. We created a spreadsheet for tracking all the survey agencies and the IT members' progress during their interviews. We had conference calls to establish timelines and refine methods. The IT members then began soliciting interview respondents and collecting interview data.

This paper summarizes the results derived by the three IT members from whom I requested, and received, support: Chief Jim Burack, Sgt. Roger Buhlis, and Captain Wanda Townsend. I was especially interested in survey responses they gleaned from three different agencies, respectively the Longmont (Colorado) Police Department, the Anaheim (California) Police Department, and the Seattle (Washington) Police Department.

Tentative Findings: Leadership Qualities

I gleaned some conclusions from my initial discussions with Burack, Townsend, and Buhlis regarding community-building in both their survey agencies and also in their own agencies. Our discussions echoed findings of the other IT members from across the whole CBT.

These findings identified key leadership qualities needed for police leaders in the 21st century. Those qualities included:

1. creating authentic relationships
2. effective partnerships and community outreach
3. emotional intelligence skills including self awareness, excellent listening skills and political awareness
4. the willingness to take risks
5. the ability to forecast issues
6. the willingness to implement cutting edge programs and be flexible enough to use data to adjust accordingly
7. effective succession planning
8. optimism
9. intellectual courage
10. setting high standards and holding people accountable
11. engaging the community in community policing

Leadership qualities akin to these probably signal excellence in any profession. But they do raise an interesting point. What specifically do those leadership qualities produce for the community? Our CBT premise revolved around the concept that it takes more than police to build a safe and healthy community and that police should contribute to building a safe and healthy community by supporting others working to strengthening the community.

Therefore it is worth asking whether police leadership today is doing that. The short answer from respondents is that some police leaders exhibit many of those qualities and successfully implement community-building strategies. Below are some examples. However, these qualities are not explicit in selecting or training new police executives, at least not in any consistent way across the country. Consequently, community-building is not a strategy richly understood or cultivated by all police leaders.

Community-Building in the 21st Century

To what extent does community-building represent a viable philosophy for 21st century police leadership? Most of the interview data I read suggested respondents agreed that community-building was a key to success in the future.

In fact, Chief Burack was adamant about this position:

“I think the entire focus of what local government does should be community-building. I think that should be the objective of local government, although in this fast-growth environment many see our role as town staff as facilitators of economic development. If you build community, you will achieve economic development. The entire cast of usual suspect community groups – schools, park district, fire protection district, Rotary, Lions, Chamber – all contribute to the socialization and networking that is at the heart of community-building.”

The interview data also revealed, however, they did not agree on what constituted “community-building.” In fact, there was considerable confusion over the concept.

It is not surprising respondents could not clarify what they meant by “community-building”; our CBT was also unable to construct a robust definition of community-building in the time we had together. Therefore, we did not create a clear set of metrics to measure it, instead preferring to construct an exploratory, action research survey in which the respondents provided their own definitions of community-building.

This approach was revealing. Some, such as respondents in Seattle, described traditional programs normally classified as crime prevention or community outreach: citizens’ academies, blockwatch programs, youth outreach, national Night Out campaigns, youth programs run by police, and advisory councils to “hear from the community.”

Others, such as respondents in Anaheim, described problem-solving initiatives: gang reduction intervention partnerships or anti-graffiti programs.

In Longmont Police Department (PD) and Estes Park PD in Colorado the restorative justice model has effectively transformed how police address many community problems. In both cases the community took a major role in developing the approach. Longmont Chief Mike Butler spent most of his interview time talking about the restorative justice system now implemented community-wide. He indicated they had “not eliminated the traditional justice model but created a hybrid. It is directed now by a broad-based community coalition in which the PD has been and is a key player. Recidivism is down and it’s working.”

Community-Building: A Definition

Why does community-building matter? Significant evidence indicates that a small number of physical locations in any city trigger a large number of the community crime and disorder problems. This is a common theme in cities across America. A recent study that reinforced this finding is “Addressing Crime and Disorder in Seattle’s Hot Spots: What Works?” (Braga and Weisburd, 2011).¹

This study found that physical and social disorder concentrate at hot spots – and that these “powerful few” hot spots are responsible for many of the disorder problems in Seattle. In this study, the unit of analysis was the census block. About 12 percent of the census blocks accounted for almost half of Seattle’s social disorder.

This is clear: Community-building is integral to reducing crime and creating vibrant places and then sustaining them over the long term. However, we recognized community-building was a messy and chaotic process and we wrote this into the preamble of the survey. As the preamble states this is especially the case “if the participants in a multi-organizational collaboration do not sufficiently define and accept their roles or if they don’t fulfill their respective obligations.”

¹ Braga, Anthony A., and David L. Weisburd. 2011. “Addressing Crime and Disorder in Seattle’s ‘Hot Spots’: What Works?” Seattle, WA: City of Seattle.

In order to help the IT members define community-building, we distributed three documents prior to administering the survey. These documents were case studies of community-building that cut crime, enhanced safety, and involved a wide variety of community stakeholders. Bill Geller provided copies of chapters in his recent book co-authored with Lisa Belsky: *Building Our Way Out of Crime: The Transformative Power of Police-Community Developer Partnerships*.

In their foreword to this book, police leader Bill Bratton and community development/urban policy leader Paul Grogan describe their rationale for effective, intentional partnerships to foster community-building:

“If, as the case studies in this valuable book demonstrate, so much can be accomplished to stabilize low-income communities when police (and prosecutors and other public safety practitioners) and locally credible developers work together in the same places at the same time, why leave these collaborations to chance as we do in most cities today? Why merely hope that targeted crime fighting and investments in community revitalization will, by luck, align in a manner, sequence, time frame and dosage that produce the greatest good and the best bang for the buck?”

Community-building in this instance included transformative physical revitalization of crime-generating places and linking police and community developers in strategic collaborations to physically “build out” crime. The book profiles in detail three cities where these collaboration worked very well.

The second document included the North Trail redevelopment project in Sarasota, Florida in the late 1990s by planner Sherry Carter and Police Captain Stan Carter. In that case, disorder, crime, prostitution and drugs plagued an entire section of north Sarasota. This is an example of community revitalization led by a team of city officials, specifically planners and police officers, who then collaborated with architects, educational leadership, business owners, and local residents.

The Carters described the complete transformation of the North Trail region of the city, as well as the city’s approach to developing their city in subsequent years.

The third example was a monograph provided by myself regarding a planning program called SafeGrowth, a program promoted nationwide by the New York based Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). The SafeGrowth model applies not only to new developments and redevelopments, but like problem-oriented policing, to any local neighborhood problems. But unlike problem-oriented policing, it is not led by police and demands the cultivation of a local capacity to carry out similar work in the future. The monograph reports:

“The partnership between SafeGrowth and LISC’s Community Safety Initiative has allowed for the design of a comprehensive program model for professionals in community development, urban planning and design, law enforcement and crime

prevention. SafeGrowth best occurs through strong and informed neighborhood governance groups. These groups are often led by grass roots community organizations that partner with city agencies and police departments. Sites across the country prove that strong partnerships lead to established programs – the basic goal of SafeGrowth – and they clearly lend themselves to this model.”

In all three examples above the police play an integral, but not lead, role. These examples show how agencies outside the police, such as developers, community groups, and planners, led significant changes that cut crime and resulted in more vibrant, safer communities. In all these cases community-building has lasted over a number of years, thus illustrating how to sustain efforts.

I will argue later in this paper that these examples represent a different quality of community-building requiring different qualities of leadership compared to other forms of “community-building.”

Continuum of Leadership

In crime prevention there now exists an evidence-based policing matrix in which successful and unsuccessful programs are appraised using evaluation criteria. That matrix allows practitioners to assess at what scope and size prevention has the most impact.²

I used a similar approach to assess community-building strategies and the kinds of police leadership qualities that might align with them. It’s unlikely that enough knowledge yet exists on leadership decision-making to construct a more complex matrix, therefore I constructed a linear continuum for this purpose.

The community-building leadership continuum has three general areas:

- Police-led
- Negotiated
- Community-led

Some activities overlap and others will evolve in one direction or another. That evolution will depend on, among other things, key decisions made by the police leadership; for example, the extent to which the police agency should commit itself to community programs.

Police-Led: Power Held by the Police

At the left end of this continuum there are general prevention and policing practices unfocused on any specific area or target. They may have been developed long ago as a specific response to a problem, such as crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED), however many are deployed across the community in an indiscriminate way.

They typically require the police to administer the programs, occasionally with community participation, but often without. They are generally housed in the police crime prevention section or at least that is where they are initiated.

² http://www.policefoundation.org/pdf/Ideas_Lum.pdf

The interview data included examples of these practices such as police-run citizens' academies, youth outreach and police advisory councils in which the role of the community is to inform, advise and support police, not to administer programs.

Note an interesting characteristic of these practices; at the left end there is almost no need for community control over any of the programs. In fact the police generally retain power over administration, scope and focus of the programs.

Even in cases where specialized neighborhood police officers are assigned to work with residents on problems and positive relations evolve, there is no guarantee residents will consider themselves a serious partner of the police organization. This was uncovered in Seattle interviews when discussion turned to their neighborhood policing programs:

“Community members will show deference, and in some cases affinity to department members with whom they have established a relationship, however those positive feelings do not transcend to SPD as a whole, and in fact it is very possible for community members to trust one person in the agency while at the same time feeling very distant from the agency as a whole.”

Negotiated Leadership: Power Shared by Police and Community

The center of the continuum aligns with activities that may be initially led by the police, but later become administered by groups or stakeholders in the community. The traditional example is Blockwatch, also known as Neighborhood Watch. This program is set up by police crime prevention officers in residential neighborhoods to tackle property crime such as burglary.³ Activities in this portion of the continuum are more geographically focused than in police-led activities.

Another example of activities in this portion of the continuum is gang intervention programs which may, or may not, be focused on a specific geographical area. But they are focused on a very specific kind of problem – gang related crime. Activities are almost exclusively run by police agencies, at least initially. Activities at this portion of the continuum seem to shift easily towards the community-led portion of the continuum depending on, among other factors, leadership decisions.

The Anaheim interviews regarding their Gang Reduction Intervention Partnership provide a description of this. This is a police-led program that evolved to include a large number of partners. Describing interview results, Sgt. Buhlis says:

“They conducted gang interventions with the parents, school, police, District Attorney, Probation and anyone else needed. They can refer the child to needed programs (anger management) or the parents (parenting classes). They began getting parents together for once monthly meetings and have had up to 100 parents involved in exchanging ideas for gang intervention at all grade levels.”

³ There are now many varieties of this program such as Apartment Watch, Farm Watch, and in summer vacation areas, Cottage Watch.

What leadership qualities contributed to this shift from a police-led strategy to a negotiated-leadership style? In Anaheim's case Chief John Welter explained he believes in the importance of incorporating data to support various agencies' assertions that they are successful. Being aware of the latest information about policing and being open to new ideas were his catch-words.

It seems the ability to forecast issues, implement cutting edge programs and use data to adjust strategies are traits of negotiated leadership more so than the police-led end of the continuum.

In some cases, such as with a 2006 Goldstein Award finalist – the High Point, NC Eliminating Drug Markets program – the program was administered by police. However, as in Anaheim, it too grew to include power-sharing with numerous community groups, churches, and other service providers.⁴

Community-Led

The community-led end of the community-building continuum represents activities in which groups, stakeholders, and other agencies take the lead role in instituting and running community-building.

In the case of physical development, or redevelopment, there will be no police involvement in any form without the investment of private or public developers. By necessity, it is the city and the developer who carry initiatives forward. Too often the police are absent completely from this process even though, as Geller and Belsky demonstrate, they do have a leadership role to play.

Another example from survey data is the restorative justice work done by two Colorado police departments. In Longmont, CO, members of the community actually brought the restorative method to their attention. The police had no expertise in how to run the program and collaborated with experts and community participants to craft the program to fit Longmont.

Interestingly, interview comments in Longmont did make the case for some police leadership at this end of the continuum. The powerful role of police departments in organizing change activities can be the deciding factor for successful implementation. Longmont's Chief Butler acknowledged as much during initial implementation of the restorative justice model in his city. The police department was not expert in the program.

“It was some key folks in the community who thought the idea in the mid-90s had merit. But without the organizational strength of the police department and its ability to influence the community, restorative justice would not have gained the level of acceptance that it has.”

⁴ <http://www.popcenter.org/library/awards/goldstein.cfm?browse=abstracts&year=2006>

As for police leadership qualities that led to these successes, Chief Butler is a believer in long-term commitment by leaders:

“Brilliance can happen anywhere but it typically requires leadership and vision to make it work...a department with a revolving door chief or even one who had been there for a respectable five years would likely not have been successful with a long-term culture change like restorative justice.”

These comments suggest leadership qualities in this category include the willingness to take risks, the ability to forecast issues, and effective succession planning.

The following graphic and table summarize our findings:

Community-Building Leadership Continuum



| Community-Building Leadership Continuum | | |
|---|---|---|
| Police-Led | Negotiated | Community-Led |
| creating authentic relationships | creating authentic relationships | creating authentic relationships |
| effective partnerships and community outreach | effective partnerships and community outreach | effective partnerships and community outreach |
| emotional intelligence skills including self-awareness, excellent listening skills, and political awareness | emotional intelligence skills including self-awareness, excellent listening skills, and political awareness | emotional intelligence skills including self-awareness, excellent listening skills, and political awareness |
| Optimism | Optimism | optimism |
| setting high standards and holding people accountable | setting high standards and holding people accountable | setting high standards and holding people accountable |
| engaging the community in community policing | engaging the community in community policing | engaging the community in community policing |
| | ability to forecast issues | ability to forecast issues |
| | ability to implement cutting edge programs and use data to adjust strategies | ability to implement cutting edge programs and use data to adjust strategies |
| | | willingness to take risks |
| | | intellectual courage |
| | | effective succession planning |

Apparent alignments emerge between community-building activities and leadership qualities in each of them. This does not exhaust the list of all leadership qualities; it merely illustrates how some qualities seem to produce one result over another. The clusters of leadership qualities associated with certain categories of activity deserve more detailed exploration in future inquires.

Leadership qualities are not mutually exclusive. The qualities that exist in police-led activities apply to those in other categories. However, I suspect the qualities in the negotiated category are less useful in the police-led category. Put another way, a police agency where police-led initiatives predominate might, in a few cases, end up creating restorative justice practices. However, the leadership continuum suggests that is less likely to occur than in an agency where leadership decisions align with the community-led category.

Thus, each leadership quality applies to categories to the right in the continuum, but less so in the other direction. Again, these are not mutually exclusive – to be sure, cases of leadership *risk-taking* exist in police-led activities. But they have far less demand in that category since activities in that category are already well-established practices requiring less actual “risk.” Similarly, the *use of data to adjust strategies* might be a leadership quality existing in a police-led activity. However, in my experience I rarely find data-driven strategy changes in activities I associate with that category.

Finally, does the community-building leadership continuum lead to the conclusion that one category is superior to another?

In truth, each community must provide its own answer. In some cases that answer will be political. Some communities may not demand much from their police. They may not have a concern with safety related issues.

Ultimately, research will lead the way. Social and criminological research into collective efficacy and community capacity-building already offers a clue. It suggests a well-organized, neighborhood-driven community will remain healthier and more crime resistant compared to communities that are disorganized, do not participate in neighborhood life, and expect police to solve their crime problems.

Ultimately, the Community-Building Leadership Continuum suggests the quality of police leadership decisions will influence the sustainability and effectiveness of community safety in the 21st century. The choices we make now in preparing and selecting executives with certain leadership qualities will determine what our future looks like.

Appendix A: Survey Instrument

BJA Police Leadership Survey – Community Building

Premise

The basic premise of this research is our belief that it takes more than police to build a safe and healthy community and that police – with creative, collaborative leadership – can powerfully contribute in both old and new ways to support others who are working to strengthen the community.

We recognize that community-building to reduce crime and create vibrant places can be a messy and chaotic process. This may be especially true if the participants in a multi-organizational collaboration do not sufficiently define and accept their roles or if they don't fulfill their respective obligations.

The main reason we are asking you to look at these questions is because we are seeking your best critical thinking about the kinds of leadership qualities that police leaders will need in the years to come to enhance the community-building process by police departments and other organizations.

If you have any further questions, please contact your Principal for details. We do appreciate that you are all busy people and this is extra work. We want to thank you in advance for your commitment to your profession and to 21st century police leadership.

Survey

The survey has two parts.

Part 1 is for you to administer to a small group of police leaders in your selected agencies. Part 2 is for your own assessment and answers.

You should create a separate answer sheet for each respondent for the questions below. You may record their answers to each question in bullet form. However this survey will require you to interview your respondent in person (rather than have them fill it out and mail back to you) in case clarification is needed. It may help to send them a copy of the questions ahead of time so they can carefully think through their responses before you sit down to conduct the interview. Please do the interview in person.

You should speak to a few executive leaders (Police Chief, Deputy Chief, etc) in each of your selected organizations. Therefore, three selected agencies will create a total of 6 to 9 completed surveys.

PART 1 SURVEY QUESTIONS (for your respondent)

1. Describe specific examples of successful and effective police/community partnerships where organizations and individuals on the community “side” of the collaboration were very active participants. Who was involved? What were the problems the partnerships were established to address? When and where did the partnerships take place (use examples from the past year if possible)?
2. How were the targeted problems solved? How did you determine whether you were effective? (If there was a specific evaluation, please include it if possible).
3. Did your organization change how it organized its activities in order to conduct community-building activities? If so, how? For example, did you assign extra personnel? Was it more a matter of assigning the *right* personnel? If so, what qualities made them the right people for these tasks?
4. Did you educate your own personnel for the roles they needed to play in these partnerships? If so, how? Did you educate the community? If so, how?
5. How do you collaborate with non-police, community organizations in general? What role does the police leader play in enhancing community collaboration?
6. What specific skills does a competent police leader require to be effective in leading robust, innovative and effective collaboration with community-based organizations and other institutions working to build communities?
7. What are some examples of non-police organizations that regularly contribute to community-building? Do you have a formal relationship with these organizations? If so, describe that relationship and the role of police leaders in establishing it.
8. How can police leaders help support the success of such community organizations in pursuit of the police mission?
9. What specific capacities and resources within your organization were absent, or not sufficiently present, in order to work with other organizations on community-

- building activities? One example is expertise in areas outside policing. What were some crucial resources outside your organization without which the activities could not occur?
10. How did your department and its partners obtain those capacities or resources? Where did they come from? Did police leaders leverage resources? If so, how?
 11. What might you have done differently to enhance community-building initiatives? What recommendations can you offer for improvement?
 12. What are the useful roles for police leaders of the future to play in creating community-building initiatives? Possibilities might include developing a vision, commitment and realistic game plan inside and outside the department for community building to produce safer, healthier neighborhoods.
 13. During the community-building activities, were there roles that applied to the entire community? Were there roles that applied only to the police organization? Were there roles that applied only to other organizations? Why?
 14. Do you think there are roles in which police leaders should lead the entire community in community-building? If yes, when and why?
 15. In your view, will the community-building initiatives in your agency survive into the next generation of police leaders? Why? What do you think might be done to enhance this?

PART 2

Part 2 is for you. It will comprise your analysis of the survey answers and your own creative thinking about what could be and should be done in the next several decades to lead police departments in their support of community building.

When answering, do not dismiss a promising vision of 21st century police leadership for community-building just because we may not be sure at the moment how to achieve that vision. Feel free to outline what that vision might look like and the kinds of leadership roles and qualities you think are necessary. In the months ahead, we can struggle together with questions of feasibility and implementation. But we'll have nothing worthwhile to struggle over if we don't inspire one another at the outset with compelling visions of new and powerful roles police leaders could play in support of building safer, healthier communities.

Also, when answering think about other disciplines, communities, power centers, organizations beside the police who are also stakeholders and who could be enlisted to help devise future innovations in building safer communities.

PART 2 SURVEY QUESTIONS (for you)

1. How does your own police organization (if you are a police employee), or the police organization in the community where you live, collaborate with non-police community organizations in general? What role does the leader of that department play in enhancing community collaboration?
2. Are there examples of non-police organizations where you live that regularly contribute to community-building? Describe them.
3. How can police leaders help support the success of non-police community organizations in pursuit of community-building?
4. Consider how communities are currently challenged (shrinking budgets that deplete educational, health, recreational, vocational and other services; lack of civic engagement by residents having to work extra jobs or longer hours to make ends meet; etc.). What are some possible future leadership roles for police leaders to help address such challenges in order to fortify community safety?

Think beyond the specific projects described in each agency. Instead, describe the kinds of leadership competencies or structural changes you feel may be necessary to stimulate and strengthen more engaged community-building activities. What would that police organization, and police leader, look like in the years ahead?

This paper was developed by the “Organization of the Future” initiative of the BJA Executive Session on Police Leadership. The initiative was led by principals of the Executive Session: Ken Miller (Chief, Greensboro, North Carolina, Police Department) (Initiative Leader), Susan Manheimer (Chief, San Mateo, California, Police Department), Robert O’Neill (Executive Director, International City-County Management Association), ,
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The author is Gregory Saville; an urban planner, criminologist and former police officer. He runs AlterNation LLC, an international consulting firm specializing in SafeGrowth planning. He is also adjunct associate professor at the faculty of environmental design, University of Calgary.

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