

**TIES THAT BIND: THE CHALLENGES OF POLICING/ COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN GUYANA****\*Philbert Wilburgh**

Department of Public Management, University of Guyana, Berbice Campus, Tain, Berbice, Guyana

**Received** 19<sup>th</sup> March 2024; **Accepted** 27<sup>th</sup> April 2024; **Published online** 30<sup>th</sup> May 2024

---

**Abstract**

The relationship between the police and the community they are meant to serve and protect has often been fraught with tensions fueled by suspicions on both sides of the divide. The community fear and resent the police, on the one hand; the police are frequently guilty of belligerence and seem to willingly succumb to monetary and other forms of bribe, on the other. These tensions are further exacerbated by class and ethnic tensions in Guyana. This paper offers up some remedial steps to ameliorate these potentially explosive tensions.

**Keywords:** Guyana Police Force, Community relations, Challenges of policing, Tensions.

---

**INTRODUCTION**

Community Policing is a concept that is not easily defined; however, it can be viewed as a holistic approach involving the interactions of police and citizens within a community to ensure the security of all persons within that community. It involves a comprehensive reform leading to a sound decision-making process and the creation of a new culture within the police system. Community policing has to do with the approach between the police and the community in the interest of security. Police should get involved with all within the community if they are to ensure or enable effective policing. They must be able to respond to the call by the community and understand what local problems may affect the community, and to advise such as priority under the umbrella of community policing. The police should also get involved in creating the underlying social programs such as, face the community, surveys on police performance, community satisfaction seminars, community watch groups, youth engagement, sports activities, drug awareness programs, and regular patrols. (Wesley, Skongan, Susan & Hartnett, 1999).

**Issues and Concerns**

Since policing and community relations in Guyana have been growing increasingly strained for many years, a restructuring of the system of operation is necessary. It must be noted that the approach and attitude of all ranks at each level must possess a special style of leadership that shows competence in the dispensation of their duties (Ortemeier & Mase111 (2009). The purpose of policing is standard and will not change. What is needed is a structural change in the *modus operandi*, culture, and practice of policing. In 1829 Sir Robert Peel, who is deemed the founder of modern policing, laid out nine principles to guide the relationship between police and the community. Peel stated that the reason for the existence of police is for the prevention and detection of crime and disorder and the legal punishment of lawbreakers. His second principle is their ability to perform their duties, which entails the public approval in acknowledging the existence of the police and this

depends on the police behaviors, their actions, and their ability to ensure the law of the land is maintained. Ortemeier & Mase111 (2009). His third principle emphasizes the ability of the police to build and maintain a relationship with the public. In his fourth principle, he states that the often-fraught relations between the police and the public dimension; misunderstanding can lead to a physical engagement and compulsion approach towards the public. The fifth principle addresses the issue in which police seek favors from the public. The police approach in seeking favors, without taking into consideration the opinion of the public and the constant perception of impartiality in the deliverance of service by the police, is important to justice. The police should be readily available to render individual service and build cordial relationships with law-abiding members of society regardless of their race, color, or social standing. Ortemeier & Mase111 (2009). There is also the need for courtesy, the creation of a friendly environment and good humor as well as the willingness to sacrifice oneself for the preservation and protection of life. In his sixth principle, he advocates for the use of physical force to an extent only necessary to combat the situation at the time in the interest of the maintenance of law and order and this should be done only when the exercise of persuasion, warning, and advice is found inadequate to achieve the objective. He also advocates and emphasizes the use of minimum force to achieve the objectives. Ortemeier & Mase111 (2009). The use of force is also of critical nature in policing. As the police seek to take control of the situation and with expectation that the citizen will comply and come to subjection, this is an objective of a win at the end by the police. Citizens on the other hand are not passive actors and engage with their objective in mind; however, the use of force should suggest that other means employed by the officer to defuse the situation have been exhausted, resulting in a physical altercation which is otherwise unacceptable. Rojek, Alpert, & Smith (2010). The seventh principle affirms that the police are the public and the public are the police; and at all times the police should maintain a firm, ethical relationship with the public. The police are paid full-time, and they are the only members of the public who are paid full-time to render services around the clock to the public. In his eighth principle, Peele addresses the exercise of power. The police should at all times be aware of their roles and responsibilities; they should

---

\*Corresponding Author: **Philbert Wilburgh**,

Department of Public Management, University of Guyana, Berbice Campus, Tain, Berbice, Guyana.

never usurp the roles of judge and the jury in order to punish the guilty. The last principle states that the measurement of the effect of policing is the absence of crime and disorder. A measurement of effective policing is not solving a crime and disorder; rather the measurement is the absence of crime and disorder. Ortemeier & Mase111 (2009). The police need to always have in mind their primary objectives, roles, functions, and responsibilities, and most important the recipient of the service rendered. The objective of the police executive should at all times take into consideration two vital goals. The first is the safety of all members of the force in the execution of their duties; and, secondly, the relationship with the police and the recipient of the service they are sworn to render, which is service to the public. In addressing these two concerns the culture of policing is pivotal. Dunham & Alpert (1989).

### Foundation of Policing

The culture of the police force reflects the pattern of recruiting and selection process, practices, procedures, level of training, growth, and the action of ranks rendering their service. It can also have an impact on the use of force by the police. When the use of force is abnormal, it draws the attention of the administration. It is said that the action of the police reflects the culture of the organization. The use of force is one of the major concerns when engaging the public and any abnormal action by the police will likely be viewed as unlawful; therefore, there is absolute need for the police to focus on accomplishing their goals without the abuse of power and violations of human rights. They also need to ensure that there are cogent rules and standing operational procedures to guide the use of force and to ensure strict adherence by all members. The culture of the department is important. If there is no system of checks and balances and no system to investigate non-compliance, the officers will view the use of force as the acceptable way of conflict resolution. Dunham & Alpert (1989). The culture of the police is important as it affects the attitude of the police and the citizenry. The question of fact is not only about the general culture of the police but the content and range of that culture. A police culture that is professionally weak or deficient tends to idealize a harsh approach to law enforcement and causes biases in the investigation of corruption and unprofessionalism in the policing system. Paoline iii, Myer, Worden (2000).

The fact of efficiency is also a cause for concern. Effectively taking into consideration hiring, training, performance measurement, the organization's structure, use of technology integrity, morals, policies, procedure, and mood of policing. The time requirements such as effectiveness, equality, and effectiveness are imperative and should be distinguished. Failure to do so could result in making it more complicated to accomplish meaningful development. On the other hand, it would make it easier for the administration of police to ensure disguised generic reforms. Any confusion with elements of effectiveness, equity, and efficiency may cause more difficulty or challenges to the accurate evaluation regarding the success of community policing. Dennis & Rosenbaum (1994). It must be borne in mind that the public will question the action or inaction of the police, and it is the duty of the police to determine what their purposes are. Discussion on community policing and problem-oriented policies are issues that should have the attention of the police. Another major concern that the public may have with the police is equality. This is another critical concern the police should at all time ensure: that

matters are being addressed in ways that are clearly unbiased and fair. The police need to be effective in their service and in the process, care must be taken in achieving its goals at a minimal cost. Dennis & Rosenbaum (1994). According to Brogden and Nijhar, the initiative of the two emerging philosophies of community-oriented policing and problem-solving policing have been advocated by Dennis and Rosenbaum and also by several other police executives (Brogden & Nijnar (2013). What we need to understand is that community policing is not like the military and is bureaucratic in nature. This system is not autonomous of the approval of the public and is accountable. It is not a system that wants measurement by its service rendered in the interest of professionalism; it is not like regular policing but is based on strategizing and creating tactics that are community-acceptable. Brogden & Nijnar (2013).

The principles of procedural justice is an important element in building a foundation for police and citizen interaction. This system seeks to address the interactions of the police when they encounter citizens. This experiment was conducted by ranks on duty who will have a card with a checklist to guide the procedure of interaction and such will be supervised by a senior rank to ensure compliance (Mazerolle & Terril (2018). For the police to garner the trust and respect of the public, it is imperative for the existence of fairness and sound decision-making in policing. This principle must be actively employed in the execution of their duties. It has given rise to the theoretical and empirical framework of procedural justice. The active and consistent use of this system has been shown to strengthen the bond between the police and the citizens they are sworn to serve and protect. With this approach, people feel that the police are in authority and there is an absolute need for compliance. It is about the police approach and their natural repeat to the people (Jackson, Stanko & Hohl, 2013). What the system needs to be cognitive of is the role the police play in society. The police are much more inclined to a social issue, and the description of duty is most socially inclined. For example, police are being summoned to respond to social issues such as domestic violence, noise nuisance, child maltreatment, drug abuse, youth programs, counseling, and other social issues. The provision of social services rendered by the police to the community has been fulfilled by many policing services. Lamin & Teboh (2016).

### Conclusion

Problem-Oriented policing method is a system that assists law enforcement officers in doing a comprehensive assessment within a community, fostering good relationships, and creating crime-fighting strategies. This approach would enable officers to do an analysis of the shortcomings and deficiencies of police engagement and relations with the community. Police should focus heavily on community engagement to reach every corner of the community, and to engage with every hard-to-reach group if they are serious about building community relations, and law enforcement partnership in the prevention and detection of crime. There are two basic steps to engaging the hard-to-reach group in a community. First, they should identify the group or groups which are deemed hard to reach. The second is to negotiate the method of engagement. These steps are important because it is suggested that the police and community communication mechanism is different. Once a workable communication mechanism is established the police and the community will be able to express their concerns and

address issues in a holistic approach, thus strengthening their relations. Jones & Newburn, (2001). Community policing is an essential approach to crime prevention and the sustainable development of a safe community. What is important to note and bear in mind is that crimes are being committed in the community and the people are the eyes and ears of that community, and through the people, information is shared. The engagement of the community will encourage participation, education sharing, and flexibility. (Yero *et al.*, 2012).

## REFERENCES

1. Skogan. W, Susan M. Hartnett. (1999). Community Policing Chicago Style [https://books.google.gy/books?hl=en&lr=&id=\\_BTrVy\\_OFkMC&oi=fnd&pg=PA3&dq=1.+Skogan.+W,+Susan+M.+Hartnett.+\(1999\).+Community+Policing+Chicago+Style&ots=7PY826Zi8O&sig=OxIyD7zLgUDvsvdqN5JWL09TSYw&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=1.%20Skogan.%20W%2C%20Susan%20M.%20Hartnett.%20\(1999\).%20Community%20Policing%20Chicago%20Style&f=false](https://books.google.gy/books?hl=en&lr=&id=_BTrVy_OFkMC&oi=fnd&pg=PA3&dq=1.+Skogan.+W,+Susan+M.+Hartnett.+(1999).+Community+Policing+Chicago+Style&ots=7PY826Zi8O&sig=OxIyD7zLgUDvsvdqN5JWL09TSYw&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=1.%20Skogan.%20W%2C%20Susan%20M.%20Hartnett.%20(1999).%20Community%20Policing%20Chicago%20Style&f=false)
2. Dunham.R. Geoffrey P., &Albert. (1989). *Critical Issues in Policing*.
3. Dennis P. & Rosenbaum (1994). *The Challenge of Community Policing: Testing the Promises*.
4. Brogden. M. & Nijhar. P (2013). *Theory of community policing Nation and International Model and Approach*. [https://books.google.gy/books?id=aKRQLBqnxvwC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs\\_ge\\_summary\\_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.gy/books?id=aKRQLBqnxvwC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false)
5. Eugene A. Paoline 111. Stephanie M. Myer. Robert E & Worden. (2000). *Police culture individualism and community policing from two police Departments*. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233234619\\_Police\\_Culture\\_Individualism\\_and\\_Community\\_Policing\\_Evidence\\_from\\_Two\\_Police\\_Departments](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233234619_Police_Culture_Individualism_and_Community_Policing_Evidence_from_Two_Police_Departments)
6. Rojek. J. Geoffrey P. Alpert, and Hayden. P. &. Smith. R. (2010). *Crimes & Delinquency* [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254080817\\_Examining\\_Officer\\_and\\_Citizen\\_Accounts\\_of\\_Police\\_Use-of-Force\\_Incidents](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/254080817_Examining_Officer_and_Citizen_Accounts_of_Police_Use-of-Force_Incidents)
7. Mazerolle. L. &Terrill. W. (2018). *Making every police-citizen interaction count the challenge of building a better cop*. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322833992\\_Making\\_Every\\_Police-Citizen\\_Interaction\\_Count\\_The\\_Challenges\\_of\\_Building\\_a\\_Better\\_Cop](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/322833992_Making_Every_Police-Citizen_Interaction_Count_The_Challenges_of_Building_a_Better_Cop)
8. Jackson. J. Bradford. B. Stanko. B. & Hohl. K. (2013). *Just Authority? Trust in the police in England and Wales*. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233765824\\_Just\\_Authority\\_Trust\\_in\\_the\\_Police\\_in\\_England\\_and\\_Wales](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233765824_Just_Authority_Trust_in_the_Police_in_England_and_Wales)
9. Lamin. S. &Teboh. C. (2016). *Police social work and community policing*. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23311886.2016.1212636>
10. Ortmeier & Mase.E.111. (2009). *Leadership, ethics, and policing*.
11. *Community-oriented policing and problem-oriented policing*, n.d. <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/model-programs-guide/literature-reviews/community-oriented-problem-oriented-policing#4>
12. Jones. T, & Newburn. T, (2001). *Widening access: Improving police relations with hard-to-reach groups*. <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=9c55e4c10388b1011467af2e78dc655b989eacc1>
13. Yero, J. et al. (2012). *Revisiting concepts and theories of community policing*. Vol.4. No.4. July, 2012. <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Aliyu-Yero/publication/255960287>

\*\*\*\*\*