

Critical review criminal justice

Policing strategies have adapted throughout history, across nations in response to the crime rates, to ensure the most effective strategies are used to tackle crime. The policing style that is adopted more is the community-orientated policing, where police and cooperate in a symbiotic relationship. Although community policing and the efforts surrounding it may look different in each country, there are many examples of community policing strategies at work that show the three key components of organisational transformation, community partnerships, and shared problem-solving. It can make the police more accountable to the community, and tackle the root causes of neighbourhood crime in a manner that builds trust in the community. However this approach has proved ineffective at tackling high volumes of more serious and violent crimes in larger cities. This led to the evolution of a new approach to policing in the 1990s in New York. The police commissioner Bratton and Mayor Guiliani brought in 'zero-tolerance' policing, referring to punishing every individual who breaks the law indiscriminately (Oxford Dictionary, 1989), in the hope that by punishing people for even the most petty crimes would reduce cases of serious crimes. The 'broken windows theory' of crime is a criminological theory that states that visible signs of crime, anti-social behavior, and civil disorder create an urban environment that encourages subsequent crime and disorder, increasing in severity. Little evidence supports the claimed effectiveness of zero-tolerance policies and the long-term effects are unknown. It can work well in densely populated areas with high policing levels and large amounts of petty crime, and has been further adopted in other departments, including the London Metropolitan Police. But where the population is scattered or the crime rate is low, it may have little effect. And in areas of high racial tension, the policy can leave locals feeling victimised and discriminated against (Cox, 1998).

This journal investigates the influence of a political shift in 60 developing countries from the 1970s onwards; away from authoritarian, to more liberal and democratic styles of governance. In turn, this paper outlines the subsequent changes in policing strategies and preferences, and writes of the methodology, procedures, findings and conclusions of a pilot study of 315 police supervisors from 22 developing nations, at different stages of this political transition. The study measured their preferences towards either community-oriented policing style, or conversely a more assertive zero-tolerance approach.

Firstly, Lum characterises “political transition” by a shift in ideology to a more progressive form of governance, in support of the principles of democracy, and is marked by historical events such as the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, or the deconstruction of the Berlin Wall in 1989. This transition could have led to simultaneous alterations in the practices of justice bureaucracy, with the introduction of new laws, adaptations of trends in crime and thereby policing practices. The wave of ‘democratisation’ in the 1970s therefore begged the question of whether a transition in policing these nations could also be observed.

Lum goes on to define the notion of “democratic consolidation” as how institutions in society and government develop over time in accordance with democratic values, not only as a result of a revolution or notable event, but is measured by the extent to which the process of democratisation is reflected by observed realities that have taken root in social and political institutions. This consolidation can act as a valuable framework for research into the relationship between policing society and the state. Lum notes Weber’s notion of the government, as characterised by its “monopoly of the use of legitimate force”, as directly implicating the relationship between the police and the state, and therefore between political transition and law enforcement. This indicates that changes in law enforcement, as a result of democratic transitioning, affects police action strategies, which is supported by the fact that the police is an empirical reality of contemporary society. Lum goes on to describe that in more traditional, authoritarian regimes, the police may have facilitated oppression, brutality and discrimination towards individuals, and that their approach would be subject to harsh scrutiny and protest, leading to their strategies being upheld to much higher standards during democratic consolidation.

As a result, Lum outlines the tendency towards more, liberal and democratic policing, analogous to ‘community-orientated’ policing, in line with the values of liberal democracies. The author explains this as a more “citizen-consensus” strategy, not restrictively focused on crime-reduction, but rather to increase legitimacy and accountability within law enforcement departments. The philosophy of this style is to directly involve the community in crime control, and prioritise their interests in policing practices. These can be implemented using strategies such as neighbourhood watch, community liaison meetings, and so on. This style is categorised as a consent policing style, another indication that the police operate in line with democratic ideals, and don’t impose their power on citizens in an exploitative manner, and rather serve the purpose of keeping them safe.

On the contrary, Lum defines ‘zero-tolerance’ policing as an “arrest-based, crime control approach”, also referred to as ‘broken windows’ policing. Its use has been justified in the US and UK in areas of high crime rates in an effort to reduce crime, to increase national security in areas affected, by encouraging officers to indiscriminately make arrests no matter the nature of

the crime. Both styles are adopted simultaneously in these countries too, and Lum reiterates that it may be inaccurate to assume that community orientated approaches are a default of democratically developed nations, because this method represents the ideals of democracy, and is not always effective in practice.

The dependent variable in this study was the police supervisors' preference towards either community oriented or zero-tolerance policing, measured using one to five Likert scales in surveys. This was measured against the independent variable, which was the extent of the countries' "democratic consolidation", measured using Freedom House, POLITY IV scores and GDP per capita, relating to the measures of governmental and civil liberties. They also used country-level figures involving levels of socioeconomic development, relating to consolidation, aid and population. This study conducted found that countries that measured more democratically consolidated, showed greater preference towards community-oriented policing, with a strong positive correlation.

Lum discusses the regional differences observed between South American and Central Asian commanders. Central Asian, and Eastern European commanders showed less favourable attitudes towards community-oriented policing, and suggested this may be a legacy of the pre-transitional communism involved with the Soviet Union, whereas, South American officers showed greater preference towards community policing. Lum discusses the possibility of the reason for the emphasised importance of positive public relations with documented abuses of police in some Latin American countries, not in the interests of the community, alluding to possible corruption in the forces and potential remaining relations with drug cartels and gangs. However, the author writes that the correlation between democratically consolidated countries and community-oriented policing shouldn't be overstated, because this correlation may have a co-varying relationship; whereby democratic policing may contribute to the overall democratisation of the country as a whole, rather than vice versa. She also highlights the likelihood that due to the fact that the political transition in Eastern Europe occurred much later (between the late 1980s and mid 1990s) compared to that of South America (from the early to mid-1980s), Eastern European forces may have lacked democratically experienced personnel due to the recent disband of the Soviet Union, leading to a lingering authoritarian nature in policing.

In the final segment, Lum discusses the influence of domestic conflict, or civil wars, on the policing style by drawing examples from the troubles in Northern-Ireland, leading to police reform in the form of adopting a more community-oriented approach. Finally, she concludes by urging other researchers to conduct more empirical research into this area, as the literature on this topic is vastly scarce, especially with regard to empirical and statistical findings.

One strength of this article that deserves mention would be that they used a large sample from various different countries across the world, which is worth commending as a lot of research studies focus on westernised, democratic countries. This study used participants from nations at different stages of democratization, therefore it is more representative and holds more population validity. Therefore, it can be generalised to more countries globally, because it isn't restrictive, and is less biased as a result. Despite this, weaknesses in the sample can be highlighted also, in the form of gender bias; ninety two percent of the respondents were male, meaning that their findings were vastly androcentric, and lacked a lot of female representation. This is significant, because females often approach scenarios with more empathy and sensitivity in comparison to males, which may have influenced the findings significantly. The sample took police supervisors from the US State Department's International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA-R) who had been chosen by their respective police departments, compromising the representativeness of the police departments, through using opportunity style sampling, rather than more objective probability sampling technique. Furthermore, there was a lack of representation of lower rank police officers, as those who were chosen were at a higher rank. Consequently, the opinions of those officers who enforce the strategies on a day to day basis were ignored, which may have been a valuable contribution to the study. However, it is understandable that this sampling technique was used, as explained by Lum in the methodology, as it would have been near to impossible to randomly sample police department from across the globe, and this study still holds a lot of integrity and value to this area of research, because it was the first of its time (Marshall, 1999).

Another commendation to be made would be that they produced both qualitative and quantitative findings. The quantitative findings were presented in the form of descriptive statistics such as tables and scatter graphs, thus enabling interpretations to be made about the relationship between preferred policing style and levels of democratization. The scatter graphs enable easier identification of a positive correlation between variables, however, the indicators of democratic consolidation may be outdated as statistics from Freedom House scores, from 2003; ratings developed by scholars scoring thirty nine measures of political and civil freedoms associated with liberal democracy. Similarly, national statistics from 2002 were used from each country, relating to poverty, crime rates and other socio economic indicators. This compromises the validity of findings because the ratings were six years outdated compared to when the study was conducted, for example during that time the country could have made vast progress in

becoming more liberal and democratic consolidation. There is an argument of a fourth wave of democratization which could have affected the police attitudes in that six year time frame, due to more progress being made that wouldn't have been accounted for in the study (Zedner, 2015).

Another strength of this journal would be that the researcher ensured that each participant fully understood what was meant by the key terms and concepts that they were being surveyed on, including of course, community-orientated policing, and zero-tolerance policing. This was ensured by initially assessing the officers understanding of the terms in each participants own official language, and they found that ninety-four percent of officers had previously heard of community-oriented policing, with no explanation, and sixty-six percent had heard of zero-tolerance policing. To ensure clarity, with the aim of standardising the definition and understanding of each term, researchers explained what they meant by each in pre and post-survey discussions. This is a strength in the research because it meant that it minimised subjectivity and interpretation biases that may have crept into the study, and compromised the validity and reliability. It meant that each participant had a clear understanding of what they were being questioned on and that they could provide answers which accurately represented their opinions.

Despite the strong preference for a community policing strategy across almost all of the countries observed, this finding can be misleading for the reader, as it can be interpreted that this strategy is therefore the most effective, however, this may not be the case. A study conducted by Rukus et al. (2018) surveyed over 1300 cities and countries and found no effect of a community-oriented approach and public perception of safety. Equally, research from Zimring (2011) exhibits a fall in crime rates in New York city, where 'zero-tolerance' policing was first introduced in 1990. For example, from 1990 and 2009, homicide rates dropped by eighty-two percent (Bowling 1999; Kelling and Sousa 2001). Furthermore, zero-tolerance was implemented in Liverpool, and following its introduction in 2005, the overall crime rate declined by twenty-six per cent in 2008, it fell by a further thirty-eight percent (ONS, 2008). These statistics contradict the trend of responses given by police supervisors in Lum's study, which questions the reliability of her findings in the context of the wider literature. However, despite the proven effectiveness of a zero-tolerance approach in short sharp bursts in inner cities with very high crime rates, its effectiveness has not been shown to have longevity on a wider scale, nation-wide, therefore Lum's findings may still ring true for the majority of areas, that are suburban and rural rather than urban.

To conclude, this study holds a lot of value and is very useful in the field of political and criminological research. It provides an interesting insight into the relationship between the democratisation of a nation and their attitudes towards more totalitarian control rather than consent based policing. The primary benefit that this piece of research has is that it was the first of its kind; drawing participants from countries across the world, rather than only based in

Western countries. However, its exclusion of Western examples may be detrimental as zero-tolerance policing is mostly used in Western cities struggling with high crime. It demonstrates the potential causation for these trends also, specifically the lasting influence of Soviet Union communism on countries' approach to governance and social control. Therefore, on the whole, Lum's work proves to be a useful contribution to research into policing and criminal justice.

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