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UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

COMMUNITY POLICING AS DEFINED BY OFFICERS

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

Benjamin Hesse

College of Humanities and Social Sciences  
Department of Criminology and  
Criminal Justice

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This Thesis by: Benjamin Hesse

Entitled: Community Policing as Defined by Officers

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Master of Arts in  
College of Humanities and Social Sciences in School of Criminology and Criminal  
Justice.

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## ABSTRACT

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Researchers have struggled to define community policing in a consistent manner for use in scientific study. This study attempts to rectify the disparity in definitions used for research by creating a cohesive definition for use in future research. This definition was created by conducting in depth interviews with officers as well as by doing a content analysis of police department websites. This research concluded that officers and departments define community policing slightly differently- officers emphasize respect and rapport with the community while departments focus on the specific programs they can implement. Due to these differences, the definition that was created as a result of this study is “Community policing is a philosophy that utilizes community outreach programs, citizen/officer partnerships, as well as a problem-solving and customer service oriented approach to build trust within the community to reduce crime, fear of crime, and increase citizen participation in criminal reporting.”

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## INTRODUCTION

The surge in popularity of community policing in the past 30 years has effectively changed the landscape of policing. Traditional policing strategies have been abandoned en masse for the trend of community outreach. With the sudden and massive adoption of community policing strategies, there has been substantial amount of studies done on the topic to determine the effectiveness of these policies. However, each department that has adopted community policing as its enforcement strategy did so in an almost entirely unique way.

Researchers have struggled with defining “community policing”. The current trend is that for each study performed, the author crafts their own definition that best suits them and the program they are analyzing. Comparing these studies is difficult because of the large variance in the definitions created by the authors. Each study’s definition focuses on the topic of the study itself, rather than a definition of community policing. This creates a body of literature that use definitions that are skewed towards the authors’ desired outcome for their study. For example, studies examining the community outreach aspect and the reduction of fear of crime due to community policing emphasize community relations in their definitions (Schnebly, 2008). The purpose of this study was to attempt to derive a definition of community policing through officer interviews.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **Theoretical Framework**

While definitions of COP in the current literature vary, the consensus is that a focus on foot patrol, community outreach, and decentralization of the command structure are integral to the identity of a COP program (Rosenbaum and Lurigio, 1994; Wilson and Bennett 1994; Skogan and Hartnett, 1997; Connell, Miggans, and McGloin, 2008). With these common features in mind, the existing literature has used several different theoretical models to frame their studies including: rational choice theory, Goudriaan's two-dimensional framework, and routine activity theory. These theories explain how a change in policing strategy affects variables such as crime rates, community perceived fear of crime and community perceptions of the police. Specifically, routine activities theory argues that the implementation of COP programs enables community members to become effective guardians of their own property via education and more effective interactions with the police. This education reduces the likelihood of a convergence of offenders and targets, thus reducing victimization. A routine activities framework is used to guide both the interview questions and the interpretation of the data gathered during the interviews for this study. Of the three theories, routine activities best describes the relationship between the community, the police, and crime.

Rational choice theory describes crime as a logical decision made by offenders on a situational basis. Offenders weigh the pros and cons of their decisions and commit crimes when the benefit garnered by committing the crime outweighs the potential risk of

getting caught and punished. Criminals who operate with opportunistic motive generally consider the likelihood of being observed, ease of access to the target, potential reward or benefit of committing the crime, and an evaluation of previous experiences in similar situations (Cohen and Felson, 1979).

Crime prevention tactics such as COP that use a framework of rational choice theory must operate on a situation-by-situation basis. Each individual scenario presented provides a different combination of targets, offenders, and guardians that need to be understood and accounted for in the policing strategy. Therefore, strategies framed by rational choice theory generally use a situational crime prevention background, as well. Because criminals are opportunistic and apply logic to all their decisions in this model, increasing the difficulty of the crime or the likelihood of getting caught will effectively deter criminals from committing criminal acts. COP programs with a rational choice framework attempt to change the calculations performed by the offenders to deter crime. Increased patrols, better surveillance, and methods of informing the offenders that they will be caught are archetypal of strategies employing a rational choice framework. However, this approach assumes that all choices are logical and therefore crime follows reason. This framework is not appropriate for identifying a definition of COP because human interactions are not based solely in reason and logic.

Goudriaan's two-dimensional framework consists first of "situational" and "contextual" factors of COP that determine crime reporting decisions (Goudriaan, 2004). Situational factors place the victim in direct contact with the offender, while contextual factors refer to social aspects and relationships the victim has with their community and police officials. The levels of collective efficacy in a community would influence an

individual on whether to call for help. The second dimension of the framework identifies “rational” and “normative” reporting decisions. Rational reporting is similar to the rational choice theory for offenders, while normative reporting decisions relate to each individual’s values and norms. COP programs framed by Goudriaan’s framework emphasize increasing factors that increase reporting behavior, such as improving community-police relations, as well as introducing norms of high levels of reporting into the community. Similar to rational choice theory, this theory relies on too many factors dependent on the reasoning of the community members involved without providing opportunity for community policing to make a difference.

As opposed to the two theories previously discussed, routine activities theory provides accurate descriptions of the likelihood of victimization as a combination of the lack of a suitable guardian, presence of a motivated offender, and the presence of a suitable target converging in the same time and place (Cohen and Felson, 1979). Suitable guardians are individuals who can effectively interfere with a motivated offender’s goal of victimizing a target. Some examples of suitable guardians are police, security guards, or guard dogs. Motivated offenders are any individual who, when in convergence in time and space with a suitable target, will engage in a criminal behavior. Routine Activity Theory assumes that motivation is a constant. This means that the opportunity to offend appears when the offender and targets converge in a location. Suitable targets can be any individual or location that does not have enough deterrents to dissuade motivated offenders from engaging in crime. Unlocked houses, lone individuals at night, or stores without proper security measures can all be suitable targets for a motivated offender.

While the police are the archetypal suitable guardians and having a public that is more willing to contact them increase calls for service (Schnebly, 2008). COP can help community members to become capable guardians of their own property by helping them to better understand how to protect it and identify potential targets for victimization. Along with the more cooperative relationship with the police that comes from having a community policing initiative, a more educated population reduces crime in several ways. These include allowing individuals to effectively protect their own property and by encouraging community members to take the initiative and call the police when emergency situations occur (Tuffin, Morris & Poole, 2006; Schnebly, 2008).

The primary assumption of routine activities theory is that if the three requirements do not converge in time and space, the likelihood of victimization decreases. These principles inform the interview questions of the current study. COP programs can theoretically implement consistent and effective goals using the guidelines of routine activities theory. The implementation of an effective COP program has the potential to re-educate the community on situational crime prevention. This study will elicit a better understanding of how an accurate COP definition reduces crime through effective implementation of COP tactics. Routine activities theory guides this study's interview questions about how officers in these communities perceive changes in their community members and define COP.

### **Domains**

The information gained from these interviews will be sorted into three domains; "Community Policing Definitions" (CPD), "Community Policing Programs" (CPP), and "Changes in the Community" (CIC). The CPD domain looks at how officers describe

COP and how the departments define COP. Responses to questions relevant to this domain will be used to compare the results to and fill gaps in the current literature's analysis of the definition of COP. The CPP domain reviews the different approaches to COP taken by the departments. Examples of these approaches include enhanced foot patrols and town hall meetings with community members to educate them, increased community awareness, and elimination of suitable targets. This domain focuses on the community outreach aspect COP, because by characterizing the strategies of the policy, a cohesive definition of COP can be formed. The CIC domain is focused on changes in the community's fear of crime, confidence in the police, or any other changes in how citizens interact with the police including increasing the suitable guardianship of the community. Observed changes in the community due to COP will help derive a definition that causes change. Each of these domains have been selected due to fitting the research purpose of this study in creating a cohesive definition of COP and filling the gaps in the current literature.

## **Existing Literature**

### **Community Policing Definitions**

The existing literature contains a variety of different definitions of COP. These definitions contain some recurring themes, such as community outreach, decentralization, and problem-solving, but most definitions created by authors are custom-defined to better fit the goals of any individual study. The following examples are typical of studies examining COP. Connell et al. (2008) defined it as an approach focused on accountability, collaboration, decentralization, and problem-solving. More specifically, they argue that by increasing individual officer accountability and team collaboration, a

COP initiative in the community would have a higher likelihood of success. Eck and Weisburd (2004) emphasized COP as a method involving greater community involvement and utilizing the resources of the public. Rosenbaum and Lurigio (1994) used the framework of team policing, foot patrols, problem-solving strategies, community contact, and neighborhood ministrations (i.e. town hall meetings and strategy sessions). Skogan and Hartnett (1997) used the definition of decentralization, problem-solving, allowing the public to set policing priorities, and empowering communities.

While some of these descriptions of community policing may have overlapping themes, the authors of these studies failed to provide any of the quantifiable, exact definitions or measurements that they used in their studies. This practice limits the capability of future scholars to perform a content analysis of the existing data on community policing's effectiveness and influence in the neighborhoods where it is implemented. Without such guidance from the existing literature, content analysis of COP only reveals vague results without consistent data that can confirm or deny the effectiveness of specific outreach programs and COP initiatives.

Due to this trend, Crowl's (2017) review of the current literature required an extensive appendix detailing the various methods and definitions used by authors studying this topic. If the current literature all used a universal definition of COP, comparisons of the methodology and results of studies on the topic would be possible, potentially clarifying the debate on the effectiveness of COP as a policing tactic. These limitations justify the creation of the CPD domain which frames the interview questions for the current study regarding: department and officer-specific COP definitions, how community policing philosophy has translated into policies and procedures, whether

those have caused issues in the department or the community, and officer perception of civilian capacity for crime awareness and proper responses.

To better understand these limitations, a review of the existing literature regarding COP's effect on crime, job satisfaction, and community confidence in the next several sections of this paper will detail the existing literature on the topic. This review will be divided into sections based on the focus and findings of each respective study. The number of studies that proclaim the effectiveness of community policing is nearly identical to the amount that determined no effect, neither resulting in a decrease nor increase in crime. Studies that examined factors other than crime rate, such as job satisfaction and community confidence, will be included in their own section.

### **Studies That Found Negative Effects on Crime Rates**

Studies that conclude that COP has a negative impact on crime rates (e.g. crime rates are lowered in areas with community policing) tend to find that COP affects victim involved crimes (i.e. violent and property crimes) heavily, while drug crime only moderately. Studies that find a decrease in crime in areas affected by COP strategies also tend to find positive effects on perceptions of police and feelings of safety. Both this current section, as well as the following section will analyze the study designs and community policing definitions used in these studies.

Connell et al. (2008) implemented a community policing initiative in an unnamed city. The initiative involved the integration of officers into their specific location, with teams who volunteered to be part of the operation. The authors defined this COP program as a philosophy shift within the department that included elements of accountability, collaboration, decentralization, and problem-solving. Practices representative of these

elements include internal department meetings occurring weekly to track officer assessments, officers being expected to reach out to community members, and officers being removed from the traditional command structure. This experiment sought to determine the effect of COP on violent, property, and drug crimes by having an implementation site and a non-implementation site. The officers in the implementation site were volunteers who worked under this initiative for a determined but unlisted period of time, after which the officers were interviewed and crime statistics data were reviewed to determine the effectiveness of the initiative.

Their results showed that the intervention sites had a decrease in the amount of property and violent crime, while the comparison sites did not. There was also a decrease in drug crime, but a similar decrease occurred in the non-treatment sites. Success is attributed to three factors: the comprehensive approach of the program, the fact that officers were chosen based on their desire to be a part of a COP initiative (and were able to leave if they wished), and the fact that implementation of the initiative was limited to a single unit, allowing for a more cohesive strategy. The concise definition of COP used by Connell et al. (2008), leads to a clearly defined purpose of the COP program and therefore a more effective implementation. Alternatively, this study is limited because the well-defined COP program was a temporary intervention plan. The high level of intensity of treatment would not likely be part of a permanent change in policing strategy due to cost, further limiting the generalizability of the results of this study. By changing the definition of COP used to guide the implementation of the program, a longer lasting and department-wide initiative could be created.

Tuffin et al. (2006) used an evaluation of a National Reassurance Policing Program to determine perceptions of crime and the police in 6 sites. These 6 sites incorporated a COP strategy called Reassurance Policing that emphasizes 3 key elements: the presence of visible authority figures, community involvement when identifying priorities, and targeted policing activity/use of problem-solving. Implementation of the study resulted in a decrease in crime throughout the community, improved perception of police by the community and their confidence in the police and feelings of safety around officers. Additionally, the study found a decrease in the amount of crime in the sites implementing reassurance policing.

A study by Greene et al. (2002) evaluated a COPS AHEAD program based on its effects on crime rates, public perception of the police, and feelings of safety using a time-series analysis. Their results showed a decrease in property and drug crimes as a result of this program. The COPS AHEAD program defined its COP style as increased visibility of policing services, greater contact between officers and residents, improved understanding of community needs, reduced fear of crime, and increased police, as well as community pride. Also of note in the findings were increases in levels of job satisfaction among officers and feelings of safety among community members. Implementing a COP program that focuses on increased visibility and higher levels of contact with the community allowed for more positive interactions with the public. These interactions could be attributed to the increase in both job satisfaction and the feelings of safety in community members. Again, the definition of the policy shaped the outcome of the study.

In a study of the public's satisfaction with the police, the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) program assessed the quality of police services using a time-series analysis over 5 policing areas with 4 comparison sites (Skogan, Hartnett, & the Chicago Community Policing Evaluation Consortium. 1995). The CAPS program didn't use a definition of COP, but rather emphasized a reorganization of the policing structure. Officers were assigned to beats and expected to engage in helping with community problems as their implementation of COP. To assist with this, rapid response and tactical units began to respond to 911 calls for service. Over the course of the study they found higher levels of satisfaction with police services, and a decline in crime-related problems.

### **No Effect or Increase in Crime**

Much of the current literature has found less than promising results for the effectiveness of COP in reducing crime. This section details important studies that found no decrease in crime, or surprisingly, an increase in crime rates in areas utilizing a COP program. Implementation of a COP program could increase crime due to higher amounts of patrols finding more crime or increased public confidence in the police leading to more calls for service. This increase is correlated to the definition of COP used in the study- defining COP as community outreach and public interaction leads to higher levels of community involvement by officers. This higher level of involvement improves police/community relations and precedes the increased calls for service noted in some of these studies.

Eck and Weisburd (2004) studied the potential usefulness of COP and other policing innovations compared to the standard model of policing. The definition of COP used for this study was dependent on the criteria of greater community involvement, with

the intent of drawing on the resources of the public. They believed that the widespread implementation of COP lead to too many variations of the tactic to allow for appropriate scientific study. In their 2004 paper they say:

Over the past two decades, there has been a major investment on the part of the police and the public in community policing. Because community policing involves so many different tactics, its effect as a general strategy cannot be evaluated. Overall, the evidence does not provide strong support for the position that community policing approaches impact strongly on crime or disorder. Stronger support is found for the ability of community policing tactics to reduce fear of crime. (p. 52)

It is notable that while this experiment set out to estimate a correlation between COP and crime rates, they determined instead that there was a decrease in citizen fear. This supports the findings from earlier researchers indicating that COP generally improves the public's level of comfort and satisfaction with the police.

A study by Sozer and Merlo (2013) measured property and violent crime rates using 2000 census data and two waves of UCR data. While the authors didn't provide an exact definition of COP for their study, they used three factors in their analysis to represent COP: community contribution, training and problem-solving, and problem-solving partnership. They found that COP was associated with higher reports of property and violent crime rates in both large and small agencies. It was hypothesized that this result could be similar to that of Eck and Weisburd (2004), in that community outreach programs increased public confidence in the police, generating more calls for service and a seemingly higher amount of reported crime, while actual instances of crime remained constant.

Weisburd, Morris, and Ready (2008) analyzed a risk-focused policing program that by their definition qualifies as a COP program, however they do not cite or define

COP in their study. Using a randomized design of 13 census blocks, they found no effect on public perceptions of risk, public opinion of police legitimacy, or any increases in self-reported crime. Similarly, Kessler and Duncan (1996) studied the effect of COP on crime rates and calls for service in a time-series analysis. The neighborhoods that exemplified community policing in their study participated in neighborhood watches, community meetings, and neighborhood cleanups. They utilized four study sites- two control and two with a COP program in place. They found no significant impact on neighborhood crime rates or calls for service in the test sites compared to the control areas. These studies had unclear definitions for COP, as well as unclear findings. If these studies were to be replicated with a clear definition of effective COP, the results may be different.

Rosenbaum, Lewis, and Grant (1986) looked at the possibility of COP programs' capabilities at crime prevention and reducing fear of crime. They used Rosenbaum's previously cited definition of team policing, foot patrols, problem-solving strategies, community contact, and neighborhood assistance. To accomplish this, they evaluated a neighborhood watch that had the assistance of the local police department as part of a community outreach program. Their study concluded that there was no reduction in either fear of crime or crime rates in the study area. Note that this study used a generalized definition for COP, not one specifically generated for their research. This generalized definition doesn't allow for policing tactics that normally wouldn't be qualified as COP to skew the results of the study.

Studies that show mixed results include the work of Seagrave and Collins (2005) study analyzing fear of crime, community satisfaction with the police, police-community relations, suburb perceptions of crime and the police, and community problems. This

study ended with mixed results- the effect of only some variables was deemed significant. The authors recognize the lack of consensus about the definition of community policing, and state that community members working with police can solve community problems, such as fear of crime, social and physical disorder, and neighborhood decay. This is their working definition for COP as used in their study. Using a pre- and post-test design after the implementation of a community policing initiative; they found no reduction in crime rates or the community's perception of the police. However, they did find a significant reduction in fear of crime and increases in residents' perceptions of the suburb. The lack of significant results for the crime rate or community perception of police variables could be traced back to the lack of a study definition of COP. By remaining vague with their definition, their study could not have properly analyzed specific policing tactics or policies that may have influenced fear of crime or community perceptions of police.

Collins, Greene, Kane, Stokes, and Piquero (1999) had similar results. The authors used the vague definition of creating a dialogue between police and community members on topics regarding public safety. Evaluating a COP program with 5 treatment sites and one control location, they studied changes in perceived disorder and community problems, police job satisfaction, and crime rates. Their results show decreases in perceptions of disorder and community problems and higher levels of police job satisfaction, with no significant decreases in crime rates in any of the test areas. The definition of creating a dialogue doesn't allow for any specific police actions to be analyzed as a COP initiative, while also potentially allowing police actions that may not have been considered COP under a stricter definition to affect the results of their study.

## **Effects Other Than Crime**

Outside of effects on crime, community policing studies tend to look at police job satisfaction, community satisfaction with the police, and fear of crime. Much of the literature finds that community policing increases officer job satisfaction, improves community perceptions of police officers, and decreases fear of crime. The domains of CPP and CIC were created based on the importance of the following sections: the CPP domain focuses on the specifics of the program, while CIC domain is focused on community satisfaction with police and fear of crime. Both of these domains were created in response to the importance of these ideas in the existing literature. The following sections will detail each of these variables, as well as the definitions of COP used by the authors in their studies.

**Police job satisfaction.** Police job satisfaction regarding community policing showed a strong correlation to whether the officer volunteered to join the COP program or was ordered to do so. This may be because highly motivated officers have higher job satisfaction than their less motivated counterparts. Individuals who are forced into the more active role of a community policing officer don't tend to engage with the community or actively seek out relationships with community members (Schnebly, 2008). Kratcoski and Noonan (1995) studied this exact phenomenon with a survey on officer attitudes towards community policing with an emphasis on job satisfaction. They found that among departments that assigned officers to a COP approach, officers' job satisfaction suffered greatly, and the general attitude of the officers was diminished. Comparatively, officers who volunteer for such assignments reported higher levels of job satisfaction.

Further support for a correlation between COP and police job satisfaction comes from Yates and Pillai (1996) and Rosenbaum, Yeh, and Wilkinson (1994). Yates and Pillai (1996) emphasize youth involvement with the police via programs such as DARE and school resource officers, as well as identifying citizen interactions. Rosenbaum, Yeh, and Wilkinson used Rosenbaum et al.'s (1986) definition of team policing, foot patrols, problem-solving strategies, community contact, and neighborhood aides was used in their study. These studies used similar designs using surveys to identify police attitudes toward COP and job satisfaction. These studies found relationships between high amounts of positive attitudes towards COP and increased job satisfaction. The Yates and Pillai (1996) study also found that officers with positive attitudes towards COP had better citizen interactions than those who didn't prefer the COP policing method.

A study by Williams and Pate (1987) examined police job satisfaction in areas with COP policies, as well as community fear of personal and property crime. They defined COP as close and frequent contact with citizens. Using both a quasi-experimental and an experimental design, with sites using COP and control sites maintaining the traditional policing method, they found enhanced police job satisfaction in the test areas, as well decreased fear of property and personal crime. The increased job satisfaction of the officers can be correlated back to the definition used in the study of increased community contact. By defining COP in this way, the study focused its observations on citizen interactions with officers, as opposed to using a generalized COP definition. This choice limits the scope of their study.

**Fear of crime.** As shown in the previous sections, many studies analyzing COP in relation to crime rates or job satisfaction, tend to also analyze the public's perceptions

of crime and disorder in their neighborhood. This section details several studies that examine the ability of COP to temper fear of crime. General results indicate that while the ability of COP to actually reduce instances of crime in an area is still uncertain, public perception of crime and disorder is reduced when a COP program is implemented. This could be due to the COP definitions used by these studies having a focus on police visibility in the community.

One study that doesn't fit the general trend of reduced fear of crime is Pate, Wycoff, Skogan, and Sherman's (1986) study analyzing fear of victimization, worry about crime, evaluation of police, and perceptions of disorder. COP is measured by the implementation of police-community newsletters, contacts with residents, and a multi-service center where citizens can go to report crimes or hold meetings. Examinations of this approach identified non-significant results across variables when looking at 5 comparisons across 2 sites. This could be evidence of a lack of direction in the definition given in the study limiting the effects of the policies generated. As noted previously, studies that use a COP definition that is focused on their result variables have identified stronger effects of COP than studies that use a more generalized definition.

A study by Roh and Oliver (2005) analyzing fear of crime using secondary survey data found that a relationship between COP and fear of crime was mediated by perceptions of social disorder. They framed their analysis of the survey data with the hypothesis that community policing increased police and community cooperation aimed at improving the quality of life of citizens and reducing the fear of crime. That is, police presence in the community, as well as a community-based collective efficacy attempt to reduce disorder and crime (defined in the study as social disorder) allowed COP to

effectively reduce fear of crime. Areas with high social disorder weren't affected by COP as greatly as areas with high collective efficacy.

Studies by Wilson and Bennett (1994), Uchida, Forst, and Annan (1992), and Torres and Vogel (2001) had similar positive results. Torres and Vogel's (2001) community policing initiative was the introduction of a policing substation in an area with known criminal elements. Both Wilson and Bennett (1994), as well as Torres and Vogel (2001) used a survey design to test for fear of crime and perceptions of police. Wilson and Bennett (1994) use the definition of decentralization, commitment to problem-oriented policing, letting the public set police priorities, and empowering communities to solve their own crime problems. Torres and Vogel (2001) defined COP as foot patrols, creating working relationships with community members, and identifying problems and risk issues. Both studies show areas with a COP program result in reduced fear of crime, as well as increased satisfaction with police interactions and services. The focus on problem-oriented policing in these studies shows that common themes across studies with similar study designs can produce consistent results.

Uchida et al. (1992) used a quasi-experimental design (pre- and post-test) in 3 treatment areas. They looked at perceived fear for safety, perceptions of police services, and police visibility. The COP definition in their study was purely tactics-based: police went door-to-door surveying residents on problems in their areas. The police then identified common problems and created initiatives to resolve the issues. Their results show increased perceptions of safety, and more favorable attitudes towards the police (in both visibility and services). This indicates that door-to-door canvassing has the potential

to increase community confidence with the police, allowing for a more effective relationship between community members and officers.

**Community confidence.** As evidenced in the previous sections, community confidence in the police increases when COP is perceived to be effective. This section looks at several studies that employ community perceptions of police as the dependent variable. Trends seem to indicate that increased police visibility and interactions with the public as a result of COP increase community confidence in the police, regardless of changes in crime rates, fear of crime, or social disorder. Community confidence represents citizens' relationships with local police, confidence in the capabilities of the police to reduce crime, to be fair and impartial, and perform the job tasks of an officer without harming any relationships forged with community members. Interestingly, high community confidence in police reduced fear of crime regardless of the actual levels of crime in an area (Wilson and Bennett, 1994; Torres and Vogel, 2001).

Schnebly (2008) found in a study on crime reporting behavior that increased amounts of community policing led to more crime being reported, as well as more incidents being reported to non-policing officials. Schnebly defined COP as the building of a strong sense of trust between the community and the police; to solve existing and potential crime problems cooperatively. Schnebly notes that the increased confidence in police, as well as the increased knowledge of non-policing resources leads to the increase of total call volume and calls to non-policing resources which the community may not have known about prior to the implementation of COP.

In addition to the previously noted studies, Rosenbaum and Lurigio (1994) also attempted to define COP and determine its effects on crime rates, as well as community

confidence by analyzing other studies on the topic. The definition that they used was a well-cited combination of team policing, problem solving strategies, community contact, and neighborhood assistance. Their analysis showed no definitive effect on crime rates; however, they did find that COP routinely increases community confidence in the police. This is another example of defining COP as community outreach leading to practices that improve the public's perception of the police force. In this study however, the increased confidence from the community did not correlate to a change in arrest or crime rates.

### **Current Study**

Previous works on studying the effects of community-oriented policing (COP) have utilized a variety of tactics to study the policy while also using differing definitions of COP in the studies. This limits the ability of future researchers to perform meta-analysis or a cross-comparison of existing work. These studies have focused on several different aspects of COP, including effects on crime rate, community perceptions of police, perceptions of safety, perceptions of the community, and police job satisfaction, with little consistency in the findings. Studies have found both negative and positive impacts on all these variables. This could be due to; a) the lack of consistency in experimental design among the current literature, b) the differences in scope, or c) the definitions of COP used.

The current study was focused on the definition of COP because a consistent definition in future research will allow for more reliable study designs. In-depth interviews with police officers from two different departments will be used to identify commonalities in how departments and officers define COP. This approach allows for the creation of a definition of COP that is both internally and externally valid for use in

future research. Internal validity looks for consistency in each officer's description of their approach to COP and consistency with their department's definition of COP.

External validity refers to the generalizability of the definition of COP used by both departments and officers.

In summary, the current literature on COP has definitions ranging from specific tactics and initiatives to generalized departmental philosophies. Studies that use specially crafted definitions that focus on the topic of the study tend to find better results than the studies that use more generalized COP definitions. This discrepancy in the literature is one of the reasons that determining if COP is effective is difficult. If future research used the same definition of COP across studies, the effectiveness of the policy would be more apparent.

## METHODS

This study addressed the gaps in current literature by identifying an effective definition of COP to assist in the analysis of COP as a policing strategy. This study used in-depth interviews with officers from two different departments to identify a universal definition for COP. To accomplish this, four research questions were asked:

- Q1 How do officers define community policing?
- Q2 Are COP and outreach programs perceived by officers to improve the community in terms of: a) crime rate, b) interactions with the police, and c) competency of community members in reducing victimization?
- Q3 How does the definition of community policing used by police officers compare to that used by the department?
- Q4 What are the common themes between community policing definitions across departments?

To answer Q1, officers' answers to questions about their personal definition of COP and what their daily job tasks usually look like were used. Job tasks were used as an answer for this question as some items may fall under what one officer views as community policing, but another does not- including job tasks in the definition used by officers decreases the likelihood of a false or incomplete definition as the daily activities that officers partake in could potentially be a part of their personal community policing strategy.

Question 2 was answered by directly questioning the officers on their interpretations of citizen competency in emergency situations as a result of community outreach projects, such as citizen's police academies and seminars on crime.

Additionally, perceptions of how the community views the police were included in the answer to this question.

Question 3 compared the COP definition created in Q1 to the department definition created in Q4 to determine if officers and departments have similar ideas as to how community policing should be defined. If there were a discrepancy between the two definitions, it could indicate a lack of communication between the two parties, and be a symptom of why COP has not been properly defined in the literature.

Smallburg Police Department did not have an official definition of community policing, either known by the officers or found on their website. To compensate for this, a separate content analysis of 43 police department websites was conducted to answer Q4. A random sample of all 171 departments in Colorado was created. Then, from each department's official website, their definition for community policing was found by a manual search of each page of their website. If a definition could not be found, their mission statement or value statement was used as a reference for the department's attitude towards community policing.

The lens of routine activities theory informed the interview questions to accomplish the purpose of the current study. The definitions of COP used by the departments likely influence the officer's perceptions of COP. If the officers defined COP in a different way than outlined by the department, it could potentially indicate a disparity between the department and the street-level patrol that hasn't been recognized by leadership. Due to the unique relationships between officers and community members through COP, asking such questions allows the identification of potential issues in that

area. Different departments could potentially have vastly differing interactions with their respective communities based solely on the character of those communities.

### **Population/Sample**

The population of this study were the police departments in Colorado. The sample for this population is eight officers from two departments. This study includes perceptions of police from a small department (Smallburg Police Department) and a large department (Luxtown Metro Police Department). Four officers of varying rank from Smallburg Police Department and Luxtown Metro Police Department are this sample. The sample is generated via purposive and judgement sampling of gatekeepers and police chiefs to find an initial contact, with snowball sampling used to find additional departments.

Purposive and judgement-based sampling methods are used when the perceptions of the researcher are used to choose the sample instead of a random selection. Snowball sampling is defined as initial contact with participants who then give the names of a fixed number of other individuals who are then asked to participate in the study. These individuals then provide the name of the same number of fixed contacts, and so on until the required sample size is achieved (Heckathorn, 1997). The first contact reached out to other willing departments and a list was generated of potential departments to be used in the study. These departments were chosen to be interviewed as the final sample based on availability

This approach is beneficial to the secondary purpose of this study to determine differences across departments in terms of community policing definitions. Use of snowball sampling limits the potential sample for this study to departments within the

contact network of the first contact, meaning other potential candidates are unavailable due to the choice of initial contact. Previous studies, such as Petersen and Valdez's (2005) on gang-affiliations in adolescents and Reilly, Didcott, Swfit, and Hall's (1998) on long-term cannabis use both used snowball sampling methods to gain access to limited or hidden populations. While police departments are not as hidden as gangs or cannabis users are, accessibility to the population is still difficult, requiring the use of snowball sampling after an initial purposive and judgement-based sampling frame was created.

### **Data Collection**

In-depth interviews were conducted with four officers from Smallburg Police Department, and four officers from Luxtown Metro Police Department. The interviews followed an interview guide that contains questions pertaining to the domains CPD, CPP, and CIC. Due to scheduling conflicts with one of the departments, two officers were interviewed at a time. This resulted in six total interviews, four at Smallburg Police Department, and two at Luxtown Metro Police Department. Information relevant to the CPD domain will be gathered from questions such as "How do you define community policing?", and "How does your department define community policing?" The CPP domain will use questions such as "How many community outreach/community engagement programs does your department have?" and "In your department, how has the community policing philosophy translated into policies and procedures?" The final domain, CIC, used questions such as "In your experience, have these [community outreach] programs increased civilian capacity for crime awareness and proper responses to crime situations?", and "Have the community policing policies changed the way you think the community perceives law enforcement?" See the Appendix A for the complete

interview protocol. Prior to the interviews, the appropriate steps to follow the University of Northern Colorado's Institutional Review Board procedures for interviewing subjects were followed.

In-depth interviews have been used in studies of police perceptions in much of the existing criminal justice literature, such as Coates and Miller's (1974) study on police perception of drug addicts, Ratcliffe and McCullagh's (2001) study on police perceptions of patrol in high crime areas, and Gronfor's (1981) study on Finnish police officer perceptions of the Gypsy population and their relationships to crime. Additionally, in-depth interviews have been used in other criminal justice contexts, such as Eastwood's (2003) article discussing victims of child sexual abuse in the criminal justice system. These previous studies have set a precedent for using in-depth interviews when studying how a population perceives a topic.

For the current study, in-depth interviews with officers revealed how officers perceive, define, and implement COP in ways that surveys or observations cannot. Having specific interactions with the public and personal interpretations of COP detailed from a primary source lends a significant advantage to in-depth interviews over other data gathering methods. For example, the use of in-depth interviews allows for follow-up and clarification questions not possible with survey or observation data collection. Officers could potentially reference subjects that would not have been in a survey, leading to a more complete dataset. In-depth interviews allow for personal perceptions to be included in the data. Unfortunately, this means that conflicting opinions may arise within the data set due to individual officer's perceptions of COP.

### **Content Analysis**

To assist with answering Q4 content analysis of the participating department's websites was used. The content analysis searched the websites of departments one and two for mission statements, philosophies, or direct definitions of COP for each department. These definitions then be compared to officer responses to questions regarding their department's official definition of COP to verify each department's working definition.

The search method used for Q4's content analysis was as such: the complete list of departments in Colorado was found using the list on the Colorado Bureau of Investigations website. Once the random sample was generated, a Google search for the department's website was conducted. Once on the department's official webpage, references to a community policing initiative, community policing department, or a community policing definition was completed visually, due to the lack of a search engine on some websites and the need for consistency. If there was no mention of community policing on the website, then the mission or value statement given by the department was used instead.

### **Data Analysis**

The in-depth interviews were transcribed, and a subsequent content analysis was performed. Nvivo was used to group trends into predetermined domains. Nvivo is qualitative data analysis software that allows researchers to analyze multimedia sources such as text and audio. The software allows for the researcher to create their own domains or to search for emergent themes hidden in the data. A strong precedent for content analysis exists in criminal justice studies. Oliver's (2009) analysis of violence

portrayed in reality-policing shows, Tunnell's (2006) study on the number of political crimes documented in introductory criminal justice texts, and Gerstenfeld, Grant, and Chiang's (2003) analysis of extremist websites on the internet. These studies set the precedent for using data analysis to find results from verbal, written, and online data sources.

Using a deductive data analysis method to group the data into the predetermined domains provides the best route to creating the optimal definition of COP. These groupings will be based on a sentence unit of measure- each sentence will be analyzed by Nvivo for repeated or key phrases and appropriately grouped into the domains. The sentence unit of measure was selected due to the likelihood of emergent themes and the necessity of understanding context that is unavailable when using a smaller unit of measure. Larger units of measure, such as paragraphs, would potentially fit into multiple domains and make the data analysis rely more on interpretation.

Based on the existing literature, the required elements of an effective definition are apparent and are what will guide the decision to create the domains. Understanding how the officers and departments currently define COP, how that definition is translated to policy, and how that policy affects the public are the requirements of an effective COP definition. If an inductive method were to be used- attempting to create domains as the data is analyzed- critical information may be skipped over and a concise and relevant definition may be difficult to identify.

To perform the deductive content analysis, Nvivo software was utilized to organize the data by key terms in each domain and identify themes. Deductive content analysis is the process by which the research is informed by a theory. In this study, the

definition of COP is deduced by analyzing the responses of officers to the interview questions which are informed by routine activities theory. Each research question addresses certain phrases or terms that may appear during the interview.

Q1 How do officers define community policing?

The terms to be identified in context for each sentence for the first research question are the generalized items from previous literature such as foot patrol, community outreach, and decentralization. Officers may have different opinions of how to define community policing due to different police academy experiences or different on-the-job training while employed at the department. Therefore, relevant terms for how officers define community policing would also include items such as academy, training, and “first learned” or “first heard”.

Q2 Is there a perception of community improvement in terms of crime rate, interactions with the police, and competency of community members when dealing with crime situations due to community policing and outreach programs?

Terms related to community confidence, interactions, and perceptions of crime rate will be identified in context in each sentence to form an answer to Q2.

Q3 How does the definition of community policing used by police officers compare to that used by the department?

Terms to be identified in context for each sentence for the fourth research question are the same items from Q1- foot patrol, community outreach, and decentralization. Comparison of answers from the questions directed at the officer to the questions about department policy, in addition to the department definitions determined via website content analysis will produce the results for Q3.

Q4 What are the common themes between community policing definitions across departments?

Question 4 is a separate content analysis using data from police department websites. However, similar to Q1, generalized definition terms were identified in the context of each sentence and compared, but instead of comparing between officer and department, department to department commonalities were found. After answering Q4, a concise definition for each department was made by combining the most common definition terms used by both officers and the department policy.

An inter-rater reliability method was used to create consistency when coding the transcriptions of the data. Inter-rater reliability is a strategy used in content analysis to ensure consistent coding throughout the entirety of the data set. Consistent coding is when the nodes and variables are defined in such a way that different raters will code the same items in the same way. A peer is given a sample of the data and is tasked with coding it with the same codes as the primary researcher. Then the two samples of data are compared to the dataset coded by the primary researcher, and it is determined whether the coding is consistent. If consistent coding is found, analysis of the data may begin. If there are discrepancies between the sample and the main dataset, a re-coding of the data should be initiated.

The equation used to calculate the Kappa Coefficient is

$$k \equiv \frac{p_o - p_e}{1 - p_e} = 1 - \frac{1 - p_o}{1 - p_e}$$

where  $p_o$  is the relative observed agreement between the raters, and  $p_e$  is the hypothetical probability of chance of agreement due to randomness. If the two raters agree completely on every coded item, then  $k= 1$ . If there is no agreement between the raters other than what could reasonably be attributed to chance ( $p_e$ ), then  $k = 0$ .

## RESULTS

Interviews were conducted with one officer at a time in Smallburg Police Department, and two officers at once at Luxtown Metro Police Department, this resulted in six total interviews, four at the small department and two at the large department. Within the six interviews, 396 total items were coded within the domains of Changes in the Community (CIC), Community Policing Definitions (CPD), and Community Policing Programs (CPP). Due to the large number of coded items, each domain was divided into subsections. CIC was divided into Attitude Towards Police and Crime Awareness. CPD was divided into Department Definitions, Personal Definitions and Job Tasks. CPP was divided into Outreach, Policies, and Training. If a coded item would not fit within a sub-domain but was still relevant to the main domain, it was coded under the main domain. Table 1 shows the amount of coded items for each department in each domain and sub-domain.

Table 1 shows that both departments talked about department definitions, policies and procedures, changes in the community, and crime awareness a similar amount. However, Smallburg Police Department spoke about outreach significantly more, while Luxtown Metro Police Department had an emphasis on personal definitions, job tasks, training, and attitude towards the police. This illustrates the differences between the departments in what questions they cared to elaborate on, as well as what each department thought was an important topic. Using this information to frame the answers

to the research questions is important as it shows that there are different amounts of coded data for each department, limiting the comparability of some answers.

Table 1

*Coded Items by Domain and Sub-Domain*

	Number of Coded	
	Items	
	Per Subdomain	
	Dept 1	Dept 2
Community Policing Definitions	0	3
Personal Definitions	12	30
Job Tasks	26	32
Department Definitions	15	11
Community Policing Programs	0	2
Outreach	59	38
Policies/Procedures	20	21
Training	13	19
Changes in the Community	9	13
Attitude Towards Police	18	32
Crime Awareness	13	10

The inter-rater reliability testing found a Kappa Coefficient of .40, which is a fair-to-medium score according to the Nvivo data analysis software. This Kappa Coefficient, while quoted as fair-to-medium by Nvivo, is not high enough to indicate good agreement

between the researcher and the secondary rater. This could be due to the way in which the codes were described to the secondary rater, the amount of the interviews coded by the secondary rater, or overall poor coding quality (McHugh, 2012). The nodes were described to the secondary rater as such: prioritize coding items to the sub-nodes- such as coding into the “personal definition”, “department definition” or “job tasks” sub nodes instead of coding an item into the “definitions” major node; as that provides more specificity to answer the research questions. If an item seems relevant to a node, but does not fit within a sub-node, code it at the major node. This method of informing the secondary rater how to code the items could have led to the low Kappa Coefficient, and is a limitation of this study.

Nodes were defined as such: department-specific definitions, personal definitions, or anything that describes a job task (or something that the officer does while on duty) should be coded under the relevant node. Programs by the department that involve the community should be coded in outreach. Programs that are internal, relevant to the officers, or policies that mentioned by the department should be coded as policies/procedures. References to how aware the community seems to be of crime or how aware specific citizens seem to be of crime should be coded as crime awareness. How the community treats the officer or what the officer seems to perceive the community’s attitude towards the police should be coded as attitude towards police. Any item that refers to a change in the community but doesn’t fall under attitude towards police or crime awareness can be coded under the major node of changes in the community.

### **Research Question One**

Q1 How do officers define community policing?

How officers define community policing is derived from both their personal definitions of the philosophy, as well as their self-described community policing job tasks. Across both departments, there was a total of 42 coded items for personal definitions of community policing- 30 in Smallburg Police Department and 12 in Luxtown Metro Police Department; along with 58 total coded items for job tasks- 26 in Smallburg Police Department and 32 in Luxtown Metro Police Department (Table 1). Even with the discrepancy in the number of coded items between the departments, several running themes were mentioned in all or most of the interviews. These themes include “respect”, “partnership”, and “customer service”. Each of these themes have several items that are synonyms for the main theme, such as mentions of “rapport” would be filed under the “respect” theme.

#### **Respect**

All-officers interviewed mentioned respect in some capacity. For some, respect was defined as gaining the respect of the community, others emphasized the importance of mutual respect between community members and police. Interestingly, respect was mentioned more in reference to job tasks than as part of the officer’s personal definition of community policing. References to “humanizing”, “rapport”, “relationships” and “two-way communication” were coded under the Respect theme as well. These references were encompassed by sentences, as the unit of analysis for this study was sentences. Additionally, sentences that could be inferred to be about respect without direct reference to the word or words listed above were also coded in this node. Officers

cited that they define community policing as "...establishing some type of rapport or some type of a relationship with that community..." (Smallburg Police Department, Interview Two), "...building rapport, building respect..." (Smallburg Police Department, Interview One), "You want the community to see you as a person.", (Smallburg Police Department, Interview Two) "Approaching people as if they're human beings" (Smallburg Police Department Interview Three). The fact that respect was more referred to as a job task could be due to officers seeing building rapport and respect as more of a day-to-day task, rather than an overarching definition of community policing. The officers believe that they are more effective at working with community members when both parties have a mutual respect for each other. This mindset could influence their definition of community policing away from emphasizing respect, while simultaneously encouraging pro-community policing behavior in the officers.

An emphasis on building relationships and respect is summarized best by an officer from Smallburg Police Department: "You get a little bit of respect there and that guy is going to remember that respect, you know, and down the line, you know, who knows? He may give you a call, give you a tip." By using community policing to build a respectful relationship with the community, citizens may be more likely to call in tips and inform the police of what is happening in their area. This respectful relationship ties into the next theme found in the officer's definitions of community policing, Partnership.

### **Partnership**

When analyzing the "Personal Definitions" domain, Partnership was the most mentioned item, with 15 individual references to having or forming a partnership, working relationship, or engaging in outreach with the community. The officers

emphasized having a working relationship with the community and enabling the community members to both assist in notifying the police of crime by acting as the “eyes and ears” of the police, as well as attempting to police themselves. Several of the officers specifically mentioned a self-policing community, but there was no mention of how the citizens should go about doing this.

Most mentions of community self-policing were variations of “...getting the community involved... getting them to be an active part of solving [their] own problems.” (Smallburg Police Department, Interview One) It could be inferred that what the officers are referring to is a higher level of engagement with the police and more calls for service, but that is never explicitly mentioned. Other benefits of partnership that were mentioned include working with business owners and apartment complex managers to engage in problem-oriented policing: creating a long-term strategy after a problem has been identified-to reduce that type of crime in that area.

The best example of a partnership resulting in a problem-oriented approach comes from one of the officers of Department 2. The officer describes a street that houses several known drug dealers where crack addicts and the homeless go to purchase drugs, as well as out-of-towners go to participate in drive-by purchases (also known as dry buys). After being notified by local citizens, the police created a plan to close the street to vehicles and increase patrol. The officer says,

You know some of the things that were done before. We were here where they, where they plugged up a couple of streets that were infected with crack and drive by, so they just blocked them. I blocked them off, completely dry. If you're homeless, if you do an analysis there today, you can say that. Definitely no more dry buys in that area. (Luxtown Metro Police Department, Interview Two)

By forming a partnership with the community, the citizens were more comfortable giving relevant information to the police that allowed them to intervene and reduce crime in the area. Long-term partnerships with community members could help identify crime trends, implement more effective solutions (such as blocking off the streets in the above example), and decrease response times due to more effective resource management. These observations by the officers accurately reflect Connell et al.'s 2008 findings on crime reduction tactics with a COP focus reducing crime in the impacted area.

### **Customer Service**

The final major element of community policing mentioned by officers was their emphasis on customer service. All officers describe going above and beyond just taking the report and moving on to the next call. Similar to the "Respect" theme above, creating rapport with citizens is easier with a humanizing and respectful approach. Officers describe returning to previous calls when time allows to follow up and "make sure everyone at the scene is still okay". Additionally, the officers refer to using non-traditional problem-solving strategies to better solve issues when traditional policing strategies would not have provided a solution.

An officer from Smallburg Police Department described it as such, "community policing is... that going that extra step, not just handling the law and order aspect of it. But handling the customer service side, the human side of it, and understanding that there's more to the picture." Another officer from Smallburg Police Department also talked about the resurgence of policing as social work, and how that changes the dynamic with the community. Officers alluded to time periods where more traditional enforcement-oriented policing is dominant, the community is much more responsive and

cooperative in areas with an emphasis on customer service, social work, and community policing.

### **Research Question Two**

- Q2 Is there a perception of community improvement in terms of: a) crime rate, b) interactions with the police, and c) competency of community members when dealing with crime situations due to community policing and outreach programs?

This research question can be broken into three subsections: Crime Rate, Police Interactions, and Citizen Competency. Some consensus between the officers in regards to Police Interactions, however the other two subsections resulted in mixed results, even between officers in the same department. Interactions with the public are perceived by the officers to have had become more positive over time, but crime rate changes have some disagreement on whether there is just more reporting or an actual increase or decrease in crime. Some officers think that citizens are more capable at reporting relevant information to the police, but others think that the outreach programs have not affected citizen competency at all.

#### **Crime Rate**

The diversity in opinion on how community policing has affected crime rate is quite large. Officers in both departments have differing opinions, ranging from large impacts on crime, to no changes at all, to the community policing initiative causing a displacement effect. For example, an officer in Luxtown Metro Police Department said, “They’re letting us know. I mean, it’s perfect. That’s a perfect way- I want to say that’s a perfect strategy to reduce crime... I think community policing itself, I think it helps reduce crime greatly.” While another officer in Luxtown Metro Police Department believes that “We wrote like 15-20 speeding tickets to this location, this problem, a spot

at such a time. And usually it baits the problem, a lot of stuff isn't long term... but like traffic incidents, it's like you have to be on and all the time it may stop for a short period of time." Conversely, one of the officers in Smallburg Police Department said, "I think reporting of crime has been affected... I don't think we're deterring crime by any means. We're just getting [more reporting] done."

This lack of consensus on the perceived effect community policing has on crime is no surprise. In the literature surrounding community-oriented policing, still no strong evidence suggesting that the policing philosophy has an effect on crime rates (Collins et al., 1999; Eck & Weisburd, 2004; Rosenbaum et al., 1986; Sozer & Merlo, 2013). According to these studies, the main effect of community policing is a decrease in fear of crime, with a secondary effect of an increase in crime reporting. The officers seem to agree with these studies- even the officers that disagree on the effect on actual crime rate agree that the community seems more cooperative. The main surprise comes from the lack of consensus within the departments. The initial hypothesis was different departments would view the effect on crime rates differently, while officers from the same department would experience similar effects in regards to crime. Of the four officers in Smallburg Police Department, three different views on crime rate. In Luxtown Metro Police Department, both officers in each interview agreed with each other, but the two interviews had differing views.

This discrepancy could be explained by which area of the jurisdiction the officer works, their shift, or their attitude towards community policing. Alternatively, this could be an effect of the interview format. Due to Luxtown Metro Police Department having two officers in each interview, the officers tended to agree with each other when

discussing any particular topic. Additionally, the two officers in the first interview were both detectives, and as such had a very different view of the community than the officers in the second interview, who were both community resource officers.

### **Police Interactions**

All officers agreed that citizen/police interactions were generally positive, and most agreed that it could be attributed to community policing. The best example was given by an officer in Smallburg Police Department. They say,

We have the Burmese are the Pacific islanders and then we have the Hispanics and the Somalis and the Pacific islanders are pretty close knit community. They're Muslim... they have a different cultural perspective. They tend to... come from areas that have a distrust for government and law enforcement. So we're kind of fighting that to begin with. And so they don't report a lot of crimes. But with our interaction with the community and with the programs that [Community Outreach Officer] does and interactions in the schools, the kids build that trust with us, which translates to their parents and they're probably more likely to call us now than they may have been if we hadn't done those programs and hadn't had that interaction. (Smallburg Police Department, Interview Four)

Due to outreach and community policing practices, the officers were able to build a relationship with a population that has a natural distrust of police and government officials. Schnebly's 2008 study found similar results to the officer's perceptions. They found that community policing initiatives increased calls for service, indicating a higher level of trust in the police.

Another officer from Smallburg Police Department has a similar idea that explains how important community policing initiatives are to a good relationship with the community. Comparing their department to other departments out east (such as St. Louis or Minneapolis) they say:

We're dealing with the homelessness that they're dealing with out there or dealing with domestic violence and sex crimes and poverty just like they are out there. But why do we have such better luck whereas they don't think of us and the, that's

always their complaint. You watch the news, you hear the news, and their complaint is the division in the community. You don't have that out here... And a lot of that I attribute to community programs and our rapport with and community and how our officers treat the people that they're dealing with. (Smallburg Police Department, Interview Three)

Officers in Luxtown Metro Police Department share a similar philosophy. Three of the four officers mentioned pro-police mentality, positive interactions, and working with communities that used to be difficult to interact with. An officer from Luxtown Metro Police Department stated that, "I would say that the surprises you encountered is actually the communities who responds to you. I just think that they're, they're just a lot more, you see a lot more pro-police things of what, what you would imagine given today's climate." (Luxtown Metro Police Department, Interview One)

All officers agree that there has been an increase in positivity towards police, pro-police interactions, and more cooperation from citizens; all of the officers attribute this trend to community policing and the partnerships and respect that the outreach programs have provided. This provides strong evidence that community policing does affect community relationships with the police. One of the officers in Smallburg Police Department talked about how there is animosity towards the police in areas such as Atlanta and St. Louis, but they believe that this lack of animosity in their community is due to their outreach.

### **Citizen Competency**

The ability of community outreach programs and community policing to increase citizen competency in emergency or criminal situations was not supported by the officers. However, some officers do believe that outreach programs and community policing initiatives have increased the criminal reports called in by community members. The

original research question, “Is there a perception of community improvement in terms of competency of community members when dealing with crime situations due to community policing and outreach programs” was answered by all officers with a no. This research question was directly quoted in the interviews for the officers to get the most accurate representation of their beliefs on the topic. None of the officers stated that citizen’s police academies, outreach programs, or community policing has had a noticeable impact on citizens’ responses in emergency situations.

However, some of the officers (2 officers from Smallburg Police Department and 3 officers from Luxtown Metro Police Department) believe that the community outreach programs are the reason for the increase in crime reports. An officer from Smallburg Police Department believed that it was due to the programs “[not being] necessarily geared towards... having the citizens... know what to do in an emergency situation” (Smallburg Police Department, Interview Two). The officer does state that “it’s for the community has to open their eyes and be able to want to educate themselves as to what we do on their end.” This shows that the citizen’s police academy is more of a partnership building endeavor than a course to prepare someone to react in emergency situations.

### **Research Question Three**

Q3     How does the definition of community policing used by police officers compare to that used by the department?

To answer this research question, each officer’s answers were compared to their department’s official definition. Additionally, the officers were asked if they knew their department’s community policing definition. The officers’ definitions of community policing were taken from their answers for research question one. Officers from

Smallburg Police Department did not have any written procedure or official definition to give to the researcher, so the mission/value statement on the department's website was used for comparison. Officers from Luxtown Metro Police Department gave the written procedures and definitions for community policing to be used for the comparison.

### **Smallburg Police Department**

Of the four officers interviewed in Smallburg Police Department, all four either did not know the official department definition or were sure that the department did not have an official definition. When prompted for what the department definition would be if there was one, the officers supplied different answers. One officer cited Broken Windows theory (Smallburg Police Department, Interview Three), two officers stated that it would focus on respect and forming relationships with community members (Smallburg Police Department, Interviews One and Two), and the last officer did not (attempt to) give an answer (Smallburg Police Department, Interview Four).

To further answer this question, the website for Smallburg Police Department was searched for items related to community policing. On the homepage for the department, the mission statement and values of the department are listed. For the purpose of this research question, portions of the values will be used. Specifically,

Community Outreach programs provide officers with the opportunity to educate diverse cross sections of our community. Officers provide crime prevention and safety education for our residents through a Citizens Police Academy, Neighborhood Watch, and other interactive opportunities. (Smallburg Police Department, 2019)

This value statement does not specifically mention community oriented policing, however, it does cover outreach and education. When comparing this value statement to the definitions given by officers for research question one, the only overlap could be

considered the partnership aspect of the officers' definitions. By having outreach programs intended to work with the public on crime prevention and education, the partnership between the department and the community becomes stronger and can potentially lead to a better working relationship. All officers in Smallburg Police Department referred to the excellent work done by their community resource officer, and how that work has helped them work more closely with populations that previously were non-cooperative with police efforts (such as the Burmese and Pacific Islanders).

However, a lack of a formal definition from Smallburg Police Department means that it limits the ability to directly compare the officer's definitions and the department's definition. The value statement provides some context for how the department perceives community policing should be implemented, but it is not a direct comparison between the definitions.

### **Luxtown Metro Police Department**

One of the two officers in each interview with Luxtown Metro Police Department presented the researcher with the page from the directives manual defining community policing, community policing training, as well as programs and strategies. Luxtown Metro Police Department's definition of community policing is taken from Robert Trojanowicz and David Carter's *The Philosophy and Role of Community Policing* (1988). The direct quote that is used as a definition is

Community Policing- A philosophy and not a specific tactic, community policing is a proactive, decentralized approach designed to reduce crime, disorder, and by extension, fear of crime, by intensely involving the same officer in the same community on a long term basis, so that residents will develop a trust to cooperate with the police by providing information and assistance to achieve those three crucial goals. Community Policing employs a variety of tactics, ranging from park and walk to foot patrol, to immerse the officer in the community, to encourage a two-way information flow so that the residents become the officer's eyes and ears on the streets helping to set departmental priorities and policies... improved police community relations is a welcomed by-product of this approach, not its primary goal. (Luxtown Metro Police Department, 2019)

This definition can be compared to the three primary aspects of community policing defined by the officers, Respect, Partnership, and Customer Service.

This definition emphasizes "...involving the same officer in the same community... so that residents will develop a trust..." This segment of the definition relates directly to the officers' interpretations of building a respect or rapport with the community to encourage them to engage more with the police. Additionally, the department definition uses the phrase "eyes and ears", which was mentioned by four different officers (one in Smallburg Police Department, and three in Luxtown Metro Police Department) six total times.

In summary, the department definition given by Luxtown Metro Police Department emphasizes crime and fear of crime reduction, with a secondary focus on partnership and respect. The definitions given by officers focus less on the crime statistics aspect, with more attention on the interactions with the public, the relationships they form, and performing customer service roles.

Between both departments, the primary overlap between the department definition/value statement and the officer's definition is the emphasis on partnership and trust. The departments seem to focus more on specific programs and crime statistics, while the officers refer more frequently to customer service roles, working relationships, and respect. This could be due to the differing goals of the parties. Departments need to have actionable goals- outreach programs, decreases in crime, reporting statistics- while the officers focus more on their daily routine and how community policing can help them make their relationship with the community better- forming partnerships, having mutual respect, and using customer service tactics.

### Research Question Four

Q4 What are the common themes between community policing definitions across departments?

Due to Smallburg Police Department lacking an official definition to compare to Luxtown Metro Police Department, this research question had to be altered to focus on the definitions listed on the websites from different departments across the state of Colorado. Of the 43 randomly selected police departments in Colorado, 19 have either a specific definition for community policing listed or have a mission/vision statement that mentions community policing. Table 2 lists the keywords and definitions mentioned by these departments' websites by frequency. The total of the frequency tally in Table 2 is greater than 19 due to some departments mentioning multiple items in their mission/vision statements.

Of the 43 total departments searched, the 24 other departments that did not mention community policing on their website either did not have a functioning website, did not mention any mission statements or values, or had a mission statement/value section listing other qualities not related to community policing such as integrity, professionalism, high standards, or efficiency. Items that were considered relevant to this search were those mentioned by the officers in Q1- respect, partnership, and customer service (as well as any synonyms such as trust)- as well as any items that were directly referred to as community-focused within the mission/value statement. Examples of the latter include problem-solving, data driven, and adaptability.

The top four items mentioned by departments were Partnership, Trust, Problem Solving, and Respect, with 74% (14 departments), 26% (5 departments), 21% (4 departments), and 11% (2 departments) of the 19 departments mentioning those items

respectively. Based on the grouping of trust in the “Respect” group for research question one, those items can be combined here as well, for a total representation of 37% of departments mentioning respect or trust.

Table 2

*Police Department Definitions for Community Policing*

	Frequency of Items Mentioned	% of Items Mentioned
Partnership	14	74
Trust	5	26
Problem Solving	4	21
Respect	2	11
Data-Driven	2	11
Adaptability	2	11
Customer Service	1	5
Total	30	

Interestingly, only two department websites had community policing defined. The 17 other departments in the sample listed relevant items in their mission statements or values, but did not provide a distinct definition for community policing on their website. This provides the impression that these departments do have a procedure or directive that defines community policing similar to Luxtown Metro Police Department, but it is not available to the public. This hypothesis is strengthened by visiting Luxtown Metro Police Department’s website (which was not in the randomized sample for this research

question), which does not list a direct definition, but only generalized items in the mission statement.

## DISCUSSION

This study aimed to understand how officers in different departments define COP, and compare those definitions to those used by departments to create a definition that can be used for any department. Officers emphasize building relationships and trust with the community by using a customer-service based approach. Departments tend to focus on specific programs and outreach to increase citizen involvement in reporting crime. These two ideas can be synthesized into this definition for community policing based on the results from this study: “Community policing is a philosophy that utilizes community outreach programs, citizen/officer partnerships, as well as a problem-solving and customer service oriented approach to build trust within the community to reduce crime, fear of crime, and increase citizen participation in criminal reporting.” This definition would need to be refined based on future studies similar to this one- engaging in qualitative research geared towards understanding how officers and departments engage in community policing. Of the four research questions, only two were able to be answered in their original form due to the lack of an official definition from Smallburg Police Department. Research questions 2 and 4 still provided some insight into the relationship between officers’ and departments’ definitions of community policing. The main difference between officer and department definitions being that officers emphasize customer service while departments prioritize problem-solving strategies. As mentioned in the results of Q4, this is mostly likely due to the differing goals of departments and officers. Officers use customer service strategies to form better relationships with

community members that they interact with on a daily basis, while the department works to have specific programs and strategies to reduce crime.

The lack of agreement between officers of both departments on the effects of community policing mirror the results of many studies on the topic done in the past. As shown in the literature review, four studies show a decrease in crime, and five show no effect. These previous studies use a multitude of different definitions for community policing, making it difficult to compare their results. This further strengthens the need for a comprehensive definition of the philosophy for use in future research.

Limitations present in this study include having two officers present per interview for Luxtown Metro Police Department (increasing the likelihood that the officers influence each other's answers), the lack of a procedural/organizational definition for Smallburg Police Department to compare to Luxtown Metro Police Department, a small sample size of two departments and eight officers, and a low inter-rater reliability score. This low inter-rater reliability score could be rectified in future studies by having multiple raters or having the rater code more than one document. Ensuring that the secondary rater has an adequate understanding of the method that the primary researcher used to code the items is also important. If the secondary rater defines the nodes differently than the primary researcher, even if they agree with the primary on the subject matter the coding would be completed in a different manner leading to a low Kappa Coefficient.

Future projects need to be aware of the limitations of this study and work to avoid them. Future projects could work closely with multiple departments to gain access to the official department definition of COP or the policy/ procedure that outlines the

framework that the department works from. It can be hypothesized that many departments have such a definition, similar to Luxtown Metro Police Department.

Luxtown Metro Police Department does not have an official definition listed on their website, however, they were able to provide one for this study. Other possible studies include examining how officers' answers to interview questions change based on solo or group interview environments (as seen in the comparisons between Smallburg Police Department and Luxtown Metro Police Department), and engaging in a similar study to this one with a much larger sample.

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**APPENDIX A**

**INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

1. How do you define community policing?
  - a. What does community policing mean to you in terms of job tasks and how you approach your job?
2. How does your department define community policing?
3. In your department, how has the community policing philosophy translated into policies and procedures?
  - a. How do you think these policies and procedures have affected your relationship with the community?
  - b. Do you think crime been affected by these policies?
  - c. Do the community-oriented policies and procedures cause any issues in the department or the community?
  - d. What's your opinion of the community policing strategy that your department has implemented?
  - e. What changes would you make to the community policing policies to better serve your community?
4. Do you think community policing is important?
  - a. If so, why?
5. What kind of training is your department using to introduce these community-oriented policies and procedures to the officers?
  - a. Is this training effective?

6. How many community outreach/ community engagement programs does your department have?
  - a. Which of these community outreach activities do you participate in?
  - b. How often to you engage in community outreach activities?
  - c. In your experience, have these programs increased civilian capacity for crime awareness and proper responses to emergency situations?
7. Have the community policing policies changed the way you think the community perceives law enforcement?
8. How does community policing in practice compare to your expectations before you were hired as an officer? What surprises have you encountered?

**APPENDIX B**

**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL**



*Institutional Review Board*

DATE: January 9, 2019

TO: Ben Hesse  
FROM: University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB

PROJECT TITLE: [1346558-2] Drafting a Definition of Community Oriented Policing Based on  
Police Perceptions

SUBMISSION TYPE: Revision

ACTION: APPROVAL/VERIFICATION OF EXEMPT STATUS

DECISION DATE: January 9, 2019

EXPIRATION DATE: January 9, 2023

Thank you for your submission of Revision materials for this project. The University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB approves this project and verifies its status as EXEMPT according to federal IRB regulations.

We will retain a copy of this correspondence within our records for a duration of 4 years.

If you have any questions, please contact Nicole Morse at 970-351-1910 or [nicole.morse@unco.edu](mailto:nicole.morse@unco.edu). Please include your project title and reference number in all correspondence with this committee.

This letter has been electronically signed in accordance with all applicable regulations, and a copy is retained within University of Northern Colorado (UNCO) IRB's records.