

# Chapter 4

## Promoting Enhanced Public Participation and Community Engagement in Policing



James F. Albrecht

### Introduction

Law enforcement agencies across the Americas and in many democratic nations have implemented a number of law enforcement strategies over the last five decades in an effort to reduce crime, violence, and the fear of crime. In North America, from the 1960s through the mid-1990s, these efforts had proven to be relatively ineffective as crime rates increased dramatically. However, the use of technology and a proactive enforcement-oriented approach during the late 1990s has resulted in notable decreases in crime and reported improvements in community quality of life across most of the United States (US), Canada, the United Kingdom (UK), and many other nations. By combining timely crime analysis with a ‘zero tolerance’ approach, and through effective leadership and management strategies that hold local police commanders accountable for crime control, many police departments have observed dramatic declines in serious and violent crime. As a result, the ‘get tough on crime’ mindset has rapidly replaced the neighborhood and public oriented approaches fostered by the traditional models of community policing. As such, many law enforcement agencies have shifted their deployment focus from one supporting the ‘left realism’ community focused theory of justice to one that has firmly grasped the ‘right realism’ crime and disorder control based ideology.

What has been most disturbing to government and police officials has been the significant decline in trust and confidence in law enforcement organizations, as sensationalized allegations of ethnic profiling and police brutality have become routine. This public scrutiny, often from members of the minority communities, has damaged the reputations of not only those directly involved, but of the law enforcement profession at large. A criminal justice philosophical paradigm shift, from a ‘right realism’ enforcement-oriented strategy to one advocating ‘left realism’ and the

---

J. F. Albrecht (✉)

Department of Criminal Justice and Homeland Security, Pace University,  
New York, NY, USA

© Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2019

J. F. Albrecht et al. (eds.), *Policing and Minority Communities*,  
[https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-19182-5\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-19182-5_4)

55

direct involvement and input of the community and the crime victim, may be in order. It is therefore recommended that any future criminal justice and police reform endeavors incorporate direct public engagement and the 'left realism' perspective into any prospective policy proposals. This transition aligns with the recent recommendations made within the report by the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015) in the United States, the emphasis on prioritizing community policing and enhanced citizen and engagement across the United Kingdom (City of London Police 2014; United Kingdom Home Office 2015), and the continuing shift toward public and victim involvement in policing, rule of law and crime prevention practices across Canada (Canada Department of Justice 2015)

## **Criminological Explanations for Increasing Crime Rates**

Once regional crime statistics began to be collected and recorded on a national level in the USA in the 1960s, it became easier for the public to take note of crime trends, and in particular, the generally increasing violence rates. At the same time, the movement for social justice had not only taken form, but was moving at full speed across America. In addition, through the 1970s, criminological explanations for crime had continued to emphasize the examination of the individual offender, e.g. rational choice theory (Becker 1968), routine activities theory (Cohen and Felson 1979), etc., in attempting to explain contributing and motivating factors behind deviant conduct and criminal actions. In the 1980s, new theoretical perspectives arose that again questioned the role of society itself as a principal influence in clarifying criminality. This new form of radical criminology resulted in a number of novel theories. Two interrelated paradigms include critical criminology and the 'left realism' theory of justice, both of which follow the leftist, socialist and neo-Marxist traditions (Tierney 1996).

## **Critical Criminology**

The critical criminological theory maintains a number of recurrent concepts, which include:

- a) Crime must be viewed in the context of capitalist society,
- b) Capitalism supports an atmosphere of class conflict,
- c) Social control and law are related to materialism,
- d) Effective societal change must involve a move away from capitalism to socialism, and
- e) Individualized explanations for criminal theory should be eliminated (Tierney 1996).

As such, individuals who are commonly called 'criminals' are actually considered 'victims' of capitalist society's tendency to maintain power, wealth and comfort

within the elitist class. And it is postulated that this upper class has created a mechanism called the criminal justice system, with its repressive laws, to preserve their monopoly on social control. Ultimately, the solution would be to create an egalitarian society where justice is applicable equally to all (Quinney 1974).

For a contemporary example of related criticism of the criminal justice process in the United States, Pontell et al. (2014) posit that the influence of major players in the American banking industry on government officials restrained the proper prosecution of apparent financial crimes that led to the greatest recession of the American stock exchanges and a dramatic decline in the national (and even global) economy, often without punitive repercussions. It could therefore be stated that the general public were the true victims, as many lost large amounts from their savings and pensions, while the elitist class involved in the financial industry were ultimately found again to be “above the law.”

## The ‘Left Realism’ Theory of Justice

In contrast to the assertion by critical criminologists that America be transformed from a capitalist society into a Marxist ‘utopia’ (Quinney 1974), the ‘left realism’ theory of justice retained the socialist perspective, yet promoted that crime and crime prevention must be taken seriously, and that a practical approach had to be considered in an effort to correct the injustices imposed by society, and prevent the injuries and damages incurred through criminal victimization. In line with the perceptions of critical criminologists, while the elitist class is blamed for the definition of criminal acts, much of the crime is being committed by working class and impoverished males. But with each of these criminal infractions, there are the unfortunate victims, and the majority of the victims of property and predatory crime are mainly from the middle and more often from the lower classes. At the same time, the criminal justice system has shifted its emphasis to the offender and upon the general effect of crime on society at large. As such, the role and input of the victim has overwhelmingly been eliminated, and the attention granted to the individual victimization in the past has been reduced. On the other hand, criminologists who support the ‘left realism’ perspective believe that both the offender and the victim are significant concerns within the crime problem, and that any sociological analysis must incorporate both of those parties, and other factors, into the search for an effective resolution (Tierney 1996).

Those who promote the left realism theory of justice advocate that critical criminologists must also take crime and crime prevention seriously, at the same time as challenging the ‘right realism’ emphasis on stringent crime and disorder control. In summary, Tierney (1996) noted that the ‘left realism’ theory of justice makes an attempt to:

1. Build an accurate picture of crime and its impact on victims;
2. Develop causal explanations of criminality;
3. Trace the relationship between offenders, victims, and formal and informal controls; and

4. Develop 'progressive' yet realistic policies aimed at the reduction of victimization rates, especially among vulnerable, lower socio-economic groups.

Without a concerted effort from the 'left' (i.e. activists and politicians who are politically liberal) to stress the victimization of the working and impoverished classes, it has been proposed that the 'right' (i.e. those who are politically conservative) will control the issue in the public and political arenas, and the 'get tough on crime' approach, which reportedly has devastatingly targeted racial minorities and individual from the lower social classes, will continue to receive the enhanced attention of government and law enforcement administrators (Schwartz and DeKeseredy 2010).

The theory of left realism highlights the social interactions involved in crime control endeavors by portraying the complex relationships between the significant actors within the 'square of crime.' These four critical variables include the offender, the victim, the police (and the entire criminal justice mechanism), and the community (Young 1992). Within this theory of justice, there are four primary elements necessary for the development of criminality. On one side are the agents for social control and on the other side is the criminal act. Social control agents include the police, other criminal justice actors and the public/community. The criminal act, particularly as it relates to predatory crime, involves the offender(s) and the victim(s). Altogether, the offender must engage in deviant behavior that harms/hurts a victim and these actions would elicit a formal response by the criminal justice mechanism to enforce the law. And finally, the act itself must be acknowledged as a legal transgression by the informal contributor to the square of crime, the community. As such, all of the elements must be present and all must collectively interact to produce crime (Young 1992).

The critical actor within Young's 'square of crime' is the public. Since the victims belong to the community, the responses to crime should be undertaken at the local level (Matthews 1992). As such, advocates of left realism recommend some form of cooperative community network be implemented to counter crime, but at the least, there should be public input into the management and philosophical practices of the police. This mandate is apparently in line with the community policing practices that promote public involvement, engagement, and feedback. Other options proposed to enhance community input have included restorative justice practices, victim-offender mediation processes, target hardening, and youth, family and victim support mechanisms (Matthews 1992). Ultimately, primary crime prevention and rehabilitation should take priority over the contemporary emphasis placed on punishment and incarceration.

## The 'Right Realism' Theory of Justice

In contrast, the 'right realism' theory of justice, advocated most commonly by the politically conservative, is oriented toward crime prevention and punishment, with little energy and support granted toward seeking the root causes of crime and

deviance (Wilson 1975). The right realism perspective relies on a number of criminological theories, i.e. rational choice theory (Becker 1968), routine activities theory (Cohen and Felson 1979), among others, to stake the claim that offenders voluntarily engage in illegal conduct and as such, should face the appropriate penalty for their illicit actions. Retribution and incapacitation are viewed as the primary correctional options.

As a result, stringent crime control, proactive law enforcement, and incarceration are the preferred options to ensure a safe society. Strong efforts at preventing contact between an offender and a potential victim is viewed as a clear path to crime deterrence. For the supporters of the right realism theory, the arrest and high volume police-suspect engagement approaches commonly observed in proactive police agencies across the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom are the proposed and preferred tactics for effective crime prevention.

## **Examining Successful Endeavors to Strengthen Police-Public Engagement**

The left and right realism theories of justice can be better appreciated through a case study approach by examining and highlighting related practices observed in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. In addition, specific legislation and policies enacted to improve public engagement and victim participation into criminal justice procedures within these western democracies will be outlined, and relevant empirical findings will be highlighted. Finally, practical recommendations will be proposed that could potentially incorporate the left realism ideology into contemporary policing and criminal justice strategies.

## **The New York City Police Department**

First, an analysis of the policies and organizational strategies utilized by the New York City Police Department, as an example and consistent trend setter of American municipal law enforcement, may provide insight into the fluctuation in theoretical justice philosophies that have been incorporated into mainstream policing tactics and practices in the United States and other western nations over the last five decades.

The New York City Police Department (NYPD) is a municipal law enforcement agency tasked with serving the metropolitan area of New York City, which encompasses more than 350 square miles (i.e. 907 square kilometers) of terrain. With a residential population approaching nine million, and a cadre of NYPD enforcement personnel close to 36,000,<sup>1</sup> the primary functions of the NYPD emphasize public

---

<sup>1</sup>In 2019, the NYPD consisted of approximately 36, 000 police officers and an additional 9000 unarmed traffic enforcement and school safety officers.

safety and security. Over the last 50 years, the NYPD has continued to revise its crime control and public service models, with the ultimate goal of reducing serious and violent crime and deterring terrorism. Many of these measures have been incorporated into other large American municipalities.

## **Applying the ‘Left Realism’ and ‘Right Realism’ Philosophies to the NYPD**

The New York City Police Department has implemented a number of enforcement philosophies since 1960 in an effort to counter rising crime, street violence, and public fear (Albrecht 2012). The reactionary deployment of police resources in the 1960s and 1970s had proved to be ineffective. The randomized nature of vehicle patrol failed to deter crime or lead to increased arrest rates. The NYPD had no distinct (or effective) crime reduction policy in place until the early 1980s. One could conclude that the NYPD had implemented a ‘soft’ version of the right realism perspective in the 1960s and 1970s, which generally had incorporated the law and order mandate.

With drug related violence escalating in the 1980s, the NYPD initiated community policing as a proactive crime reduction, problem solving strategy. Initially limited to 10 police officers in each police station, this evolved into the agency wide deployment protocol in 1990. Noteworthy crime control results were limited before showing signs of nominal effectiveness in the mid-1990s. Of greater importance, the community policing concept permitted community residents (i.e. police station community council) to designate the priority problems to be addressed by the local police commander, and therefore had a direct impact on the deployment of local police station resources. These initiatives had commenced a transition toward a stronger left realism organizational ideology. As such, although NYPD investigative efforts into serious crime cases were not overwhelmingly affected, street level enforcement and deployment were in the control (albeit limited) of neighborhood representatives. In addition, it was the police station community council that gauged the effectiveness of the local NYPD performance each month. In addition, each community policing beat officer, deployed on neighborhood foot patrol, was directed to contact each person who filed a NYPD criminal complaint or incident report to determine if more information about the event could be discerned and to see if the victim wanted any further specific action taken. Both victim and community feedback and input (and the bases of the left realism concept) had become essential aspects of NYPD endeavors from the 1980s through the mid-1990s (Albrecht 2012).

However, a new development involved the ‘get tough on crime’ mandate, which commenced in 1994 as the result of the strong demand by New York City’s residents for the police to aggressively address community complaints involving ‘quality of life’ infractions.<sup>2</sup> The resulting ‘zero tolerance’ directive authorized the arrest of all offenders regardless of the seriousness of the crime or offence. This initially was the

---

<sup>2</sup>Quality of life issues included begging, public intoxication, loud noise, street level drug dealing and usage, graffiti, etc.

responsibility of community policing personnel, but with a significant and clear reduction in serious and violent crime by the end of 1994, all patrol and investigative personnel were directed to engage in increased enforcement activity (i.e. arrests and court and traffic summonses). The responsibility for coordinating long term problem solution to crime and disorder complaints moved from the front line police officer (under the traditional community policing approach) to the local police station commander.<sup>3</sup> Timely crime analysis permitted police resources to be mobilized to crime and disorder 'hot spots' (as highlighted on crime maps). At the same time, however, precinct level priorities were designated by the police station commander, and community participation became superficial at best. With steeply declining crime rates, this enforcement oriented ideology had become the organizational philosophical norm, which continues to the present date (Albrecht 2012). One could easily conclude that the NYPD has since 1994 undertaken an enforcement strategy that strongly grasps the right realism philosophy.

Following the tragic World Trade Center events of September 11, 2001, the NYPD developed similar proactive tactics to counter the threat of future terrorist attack. Intelligence gathering efforts that targeted members of the Muslim community throughout the New York City tri-state area<sup>4</sup> were quickly commenced and had since been enhanced. Once again, the counter-terrorism deployment protocol did not seek input from Muslim, Middle Eastern or other community representatives. As a direct result, the right realism approach continues to be the predominant ideology in the terrorism fighting initiatives and crime control efforts of the NYPD and most American state and local law enforcement organizations.

## **Transitioning to Direct Public and Victim Engagement**

Most American metropolitan police departments over the last 50 years have transitioned from a soft version of right realism with the (clearly ineffective) law and order reactive deployment strategy observed in the 1960s and 1970s; then slowly but dramatically had transformed into an impressive public participation model, involving community policing, that incorporated aspects of the left realism perspective, in the 1980s and first half of the 1990s; and finally have resorted to and have generally maintained a proactive, enforcement-oriented approach involving their crime control and counter-terrorism endeavors since 1994 and continuing to contemporary times. With minimal community input or feedback and little interaction with victims (other than

---

<sup>3</sup>It was noted that front line patrol and community police officers had difficulty in developing lasting solutions to reported problems and crime trends due to their general levels of police inexperience. In addition, it was clearly much easier for the tenured police station commander to re-deploy resources and develop long term strategies than it was for a new police officer to develop effective problem-solving strategies for local crime and disorder complaints.

<sup>4</sup>The tri-state area includes New York City and the New York, New Jersey and Connecticut commuter regions.

recording police incident reports), most contemporary American police departments remain deeply entrenched in the right realism perspective of justice. And, given the reported successes of the ‘get tough on crime’ approach as it relates to crime control in the USA, the United Kingdom, and other nations, it is unlikely that the philosophical ‘realism’ pendulum will dramatically swing in the ‘left’ direction unless there is dramatic public demand to move in that direction. However, given the frequent criticism placed on policing practices in many urban American, British and Canadian municipalities, specifically from underrepresented minority groups, the time for a philosophical paradigm shift that will incorporate the input of all factions of society into policing and criminal justice policy and practices, in line with the left realism theory of justice, may be at hand. These options also align with the final recommendations noted within the Final Report of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing (2015), which closely examined contemporary affairs in law enforcement practices across the United States. In an effort to increase public trust in the police, this critical report specifically highlighted the need for enhanced citizen-police engagement:

“Law enforcement agencies should, therefore, work with community residents to identify problems and collaborate on implementing solutions that produce meaningful results for the community. Specifically, law enforcement agencies should develop and adopt policies and strategies that reinforce the importance of community engagement in managing public safety. Law enforcement agencies should also engage in multidisciplinary, community team approaches for planning, implementing, and responding to crisis situations with complex causal factors” (President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing 2015, p. 3).

The report additionally highlights the relevance of social media and the internet to keep the public informed in real time of relevant incidents, crime trends and community events. Clearly this transition is in line with the basic tenets of the left realism perspective.

## **Examining Community Policing and Citizen-Police Engagement in Practice**

After this introduction, a number of examples of community policing and citizen and crime victim engagement options and legislation from the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada should enhance understanding and provide direction for potential policy recommendations aimed at incorporating the left realism theory of justice into current criminal justice practices.

## **Examining Community Policing in the US, the UK, and Canada**

The American federal government viewed the potential for the community policing concept so highly that in 1994 it created the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services to provide guidance and funding to US police departments with the goal of

incorporating community policing practices into all law enforcement agencies across the country. Specific expenditures were initially approved to support the hiring of an additional 100,000 community policing foot patrol officers nationally to counter the expanding street crime and violence rates that had been plaguing America's largest cities. Over the last two decades, the US Department of Justice COPS Office has funded the hiring of more than 125,000 community policing officers in more than 13,000 local, state and tribal police departments across the US (US Department of Justice COPS Office 2015).

Around the same time, government leaders in the United Kingdom, faced not only with increasing crime rates, but with repeated allegations of racially discriminating policing practices, ushered in the Community Safety Act of 1998. The highlight of this new law enforcement philosophy involved the 'neighborhood policing model,' which involved using career and volunteer police resources to address crime and disorder priorities identified by the local community and to reduce fear of crime. The neighborhood policing teams routinely relied on a 'zero tolerance' enforcement strategy with a 'problem-oriented policing' approach (McLaughlin 2007).

The Solicitor General of Canada, as early as 1990, had advocated community policing as the "most appropriate police response to crime and disorder problems in modern Canadian society" (Normandeau and Leighton 1990, p. iv). Police personnel were instructed to engage in proactive, problem solving to address community crime and disorder concerns, while deployed on neighborhood foot patrol and in local police mini-stations (Normandeau and Leighton 1990). However, in contrast to the United States and the United Kingdom, Canada maintained a rather decentralized approach, and permitted the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and local law enforcement agencies to individually and independently coordinate specific community policing practices.

It is not hard to conclude that in the 1990s, community policing practices were in place in most western democracies.

## Common Community Policing Practices

Engaging the public in providing input into law enforcement policies and practices can take many forms. Examining tactics that have been proven to enhance the police-community dynamic in the past may be the best method for developing contemporary strategies. One does not have to go further than the variety of community policing tactics in the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada that have been viewed as being successful in improving public involvement in safety and security measures, and in providing options for community input into local policing priorities. Some of the most common community policing practices, as observed in western democracies, have included:

1. Strengthening police-community partnerships;
2. Police collaboration with neighborhood residents and other public and private agencies;

3. Media outreach and cooperation;
4. Proactive problem solving;
5. Geographic assignment of police personnel to fixed beats or areas;
6. Crime prevention approach;
7. Addressing disorder and improving neighborhood quality of life;
8. Distribution of traffic safety and crime prevention material;
9. Improving school safety;
10. Distribution of real time crime data to police personnel and community members;
11. Development of a protocol to permit two way communication between the police and community via community meetings, the internet, and social media;
12. Use of community volunteers;
13. Establishment of a neighborhood watch and / or community patrol program;
14. Citizen police academies; and
15. Use of citizen surveys to measure fear of crime and trust in police as alternate measures of police organizational effectiveness.

Ultimately the consideration of any of these options into contemporary law enforcement protocols and endeavors must also acknowledge the roles that technology and social media play in modern society.

## **Public Perceptions of Community Policing Practices**

Two criminologists, Goldstein (1990) and Trojanowicz (1988), independently conducted the initial research on community policing pilot programs in the United States. Their findings about these law enforcement strategic deployment options, which eventually were generally referred to as community policing, appeared to improve citizen satisfaction in police and the job satisfaction of patrol officers, and promoted a problem-solving approach which advocated the development of long-term solutions to crime trends. Forced to make ideological changes due to the increasing crime rates across the United States in the 1980s and 1990s, police executives in large cities across America, e.g. San Diego, New York City, and Chicago among others, implemented small community policing pilot programs (Albrecht 2012), which later expanded to more complex agency-wide strategies within most police departments across the United States. During the 1990s, a number of research studies that evaluated the implementation of community policing in American police agencies noted significant results, the most notable being increased confidence and trust in the police (Scott and Goldstein 2005 and Lord et al. 2009). Since the 1990s, the community policing concept quickly became a global phenomenon and was expanded to the United Kingdom (Quinton and Morris 2008), Canada (Friedman 1992), and elsewhere (Albrecht 2012).

## Victim Involvement in the Criminal Justice Process

While the primary goal of this paper is to highlight options for increased public involvement and participation in policing practice, the second consideration would involve efforts to re-integrate the victim back into the criminal justice process. This is another tier advocated by the left realism philosophy. Generally speaking, other than the initial police report and interview, and an occasional related court appearance, crime victims are rarely involved directly in the various steps of the criminal justice mechanism. Victim input and restitution continue to be rare in both policy and practice, although laws have repeatedly been created to enhance protections for the crime victim.

The direct involvement of a crime victim in criminal justice processes is critical to reducing the resultant frustrations routinely encountered by victims of crime. A victim's sense of justice directly impacts their perception of procedural legitimacy (Reisig and Lloyd 2008; Sunshine and Tyler 2003). It is therefore imperative that victims be granted the opportunity to regain their sense of security and that their status as victim be acknowledged by criminal justice actors (Orth 2003). As a result of these sentiments, efforts have been made to initiate the enhanced involvement and input of crime victims throughout the criminal justice processes through the implementation of related legislation and government regulation.

One of the more significant pieces of federal legislation created by the United States Congress was the 'Justice for All' Act of 2004 (H.R. 5107 – Public Law 108-405 2004). Part of this law modified the federal criminal code to grant crime victims specific rights which include:

1. The right to be reasonably protected from the accused;
2. The right to reasonable, accurate, and timely notice of any public court proceeding or any parole proceeding involving the crime, or of any release or escape of the accused;
3. The right not to be excluded from any such public court proceeding, unless the court, after receiving clear and convincing evidence, determines that testimony by the victim would be materially altered if the victim heard other testimony at that proceeding;
4. The right to be reasonably heard at any public proceeding in the district court involving release, plea, sentencing, or any parole proceeding;
5. The reasonable right to confer with the attorney for the Government in the case;
6. The right to full and timely restitution as provided in law;
7. The right to proceedings free from unreasonable delay; and
8. The right to be treated with fairness and with respect for the victim's dignity and privacy.

As with community policing, the US government provided funding to ensure that the relevant sections of this legislation were properly enacted and effectively operational. Federal grants to state, tribal, and local prosecutors' offices, law enforcement agencies, courts, jails, and correctional institutions, and to qualified public and

private entities were made available to develop, establish, and maintain programs for the enforcement of crime victims' rights. In addition, budgeting was set aside for the improvement of the Victim Notification System, which enables federal law enforcement to make sure that crime victims receive timely notification of all court proceedings, parole and probation hearings, and any release hearings. The primary shortcoming of this Congressional Act was that it applied these rights only to those crime victims whose cases were being processed through the American federal courts (US Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime 2006).

Many American states have developed their own protocols for assisting and supporting victims of crime. New York State, for example, has implemented the Office for Victims Services to ensure that certain key rights are provided to crime victims (New York State Crime Victims Board 2007). This legislation specifically stipulated that crime victims have the "right to be involved in certain stages of the criminal justice process" and the "right to make a statement at the time of the defendant's sentencing, if you are the victim of a felony," among other mandates. Generally similar guidelines are in place in all American states and territories.

In line with these American guidelines, the Ministry of Justice in the United Kingdom has enacted the 'Code of Practice for Victims of Crime' (UK Ministry of Justice 2015), which provides extensive rights to victims of crime, which include such options as "(r)eferral to organizations supporting victims of crime; (u)pdates about the police investigation," and "the right to make a Victim Personal Statement (VPS) to explain how the crime affected the victim," in addition to other provisions. It is obvious that government officials in the United Kingdom, through the enactment of this important law, have strongly considered the concerns of the crime victim. The relative novelty of this legislation, however, makes it difficult to assess the impact and direct effects since the law's implementation.

The Canadian government has also recently enacted the Canadian 'Victims Bill of Rights' (2015) that granted the following rights and protections to crime victims, including the "right to information about the status of the investigation and the criminal proceedings," the "right to convey their views about decisions to be made by authorities in the criminal justice system that affect the victim's rights," and the "right to present a victim impact statement and to have it considered," along with other stipulations that enhance victim understanding and participation in the criminal justice and restorative processes. Once again, given the law's temporal immaturity, it is presently challenging to identify the benefits and costs of these provisions at this time.

It is evident that many western democracies, as noted above, have strongly considered and addressed the relevance of the victim within the criminal justice system. However, each of these impressive legislations has overlooked a very critical element as it relates to one of the more commonly applied practices observed in the criminal justice process, particularly in the United States. The vast majority of criminal cases are rather quickly adjudicated through the application of a plea bargain (i.e. a defendant is granted the opportunity to plead guilty to a lesser offense in return for a shorter incarceration or other less punitive sentence). It is not very clear in any of the victim's rights statutes noted above, whether a crime victim has input into this commonly occurring and crucial decision making stage. In practice, this

appears unlikely, and any notice of the defendant's punishment would likely provide little consolation to the victim of a criminal incident. As such, the benefits of these comprehensive legal acts may often be viewed as being moot, rather than helpful, to those who have unfortunately been impacted by a criminal offense.

## **Practical Recommendations for Enhanced Public and Victim Engagement**

As the result of this thorough evaluation of policies and legislation related to community policing and the enhanced participation of the public and crime victims into the criminal justice practices, a number of policy recommendations can be proposed.

Given the frequent calls from certain factions of the media and the community-at-large for criminal justice reform, the challenge for both policy maker and administrator involves the development of proposals that would maintain the crime control perspective, while considering options for enhanced public and victim engagement throughout the criminal justice processes. It is likely that the left realism theoretical philosophy may provide insight and guidance into potentially effective strategies for accomplishing these objectives. As such, a number of practical recommendations can be proposed.

In order to avoid the main criticism of the advocates of the conflict theory, i.e. that elitists develop criminal statutes in an effort to maintain control over the lower social classes, it may be appropriate for all newly proposed criminal legislation to undergo community debate and public approval. Many states, including California, provide the option for public referendums to be voted upon by the voting eligible population, normally at the time of annually scheduled political elections, to decide on the implementation of new legislation. This option could be considered for all newly proposed criminal law in an effort to allow for public input into this critical stage of the criminal justice process.

The police in many jurisdictions, as the result of crime analysis and the streamlined collection of criminal intelligence, have become quite effective in their crime prevention and crime control endeavors. The challenge, then, will be to propose steps to enhance public involvement in crime control and to provide greater support to crime victims. The lessons learned from the community policing experiences in western democracies, as noted above, should provide guidance into which strategic aspects would prove to be the most effective in ensuring public input and insight into local policing efforts. A neighborhood police-community council, jurisdictionally aligned within police station boundaries, and elected, not appointed, by public vote, could be tasked with identifying the priorities to be addressed by regional law enforcement personnel. Monthly police-community council meetings should be announced and posted, through social and traditional media, and open to all local residents and business persons. The attendance of local police command staff, fully prepared to discuss contemporary crime and disorder concerns, should be made mandatory.

Citizen exposure to police practices, through citizen police academies, public ride-alongs, and the use of trained community volunteers to supplement full-time personnel, should be strongly considered as a means to promote cooperation and transparency. In addition to the official police agency website, popular social media options should be utilized to provide public access to crime statistics; distribute crime prevention material and crime trend information; outline the concerns raised during police-community council meetings; and afford the means for supplying feedback and input to local and regional police command staff.

In addition to sharing information about local and regional crime rates, the public should be regularly surveyed by an independent professional entity to assess local perceptions of: public trust in the police, fear of crime, police effectiveness, neighborhood quality of life, and other relevant factors. The results of this survey should be reported to local, regional, and national police authorities; local and regional government officials; interested media; and prominently posted on the police department's official website.

In an effort to address the concerns of the crime victim at the earliest phase of the criminal justice process, the local police agency should be obligated to provide each victim with a copy of the official police incident report (with necessary redactions) in a timely fashion. Mandatory notice of developments at all later stages of the investigation, prosecution and court processes should be provided to every crime victim; and ample steps should be made to ensure the safety of crime victims and witnesses at all times, including at the completion of any judicial or correctional measures. In addition, any requests for restitution should be coordinated by the local criminal and civil courts on behalf of the crime victims concerned.

The above proposals would permit law enforcement executives to continue with effective crime control and prevention endeavors, while allowing for local community insight and input into policing practices and priorities. Police commanders should be measured not only on their ability to reduce crime rates, but also on the public perceptions of organizational transparency and legitimacy and fear of crime.

## **Transforming Contemporary Policing**

There have been many calls for criminal justice reform in Canada, the United Kingdom and globally over the last decade, and even more so across the United States of America within the last few years, predominantly from advocates for ethnic and racial minority groups in populated metropolitan centers. Many of the calls for the transformation of policing practices have demanded enhanced community engagement and even direct involvement of the public into the development of revised policing strategies and policies. The time for change may be at hand, and the 'left realism' philosophy may provide critical substance to these reform initiatives.

As a reminder, government officials and police department administrators should never forget that, at the conception of the police profession in 1829, Sir Robert Peel (Lee 1901) made it clear within the first two of his critical principles of law enforcement that all police agencies are obligated to “*recognize always that the power of the police to fulfill their functions and duties is **dependent on public approval of their existence, actions and behavior, and on their ability to secure and maintain public respect,***” and to “*recognize always that to secure and maintain the respect and approval of the public means also the **securing of the willing co-operation of the public** in the task of securing observance of laws.*” It is obvious, particularly in the contemporary era when so much public scrutiny has been placed on policing practices, that police administrators must strongly consider incorporating the direct involvement and engagement of the public into the development of local law enforcement and public safety priorities and practices.

## Conclusion

It is imperative that the public-at-large maintain considerable input and insight into criminal justice and law enforcement practices in any democracy. Certain aspects of the ‘left realism’ ideology of justice administration may provide the inspiration for the requested reforms apparent in contemporary policing, many of which should enhance the levels of transparency and legitimacy that the public demands from the law enforcement and criminal justice officials serving their respective communities. Mandating that the public provide direct input into identifying police priorities and in judging the overall effectiveness of the police agency serving their jurisdiction, and directing that the role of the crime victim be enhanced within each segment of the criminal justice process would take big steps in that direction.

In order to assess the value of these proposed recommendations and the efficacy of the outlined policies and legislation already created for the distinct reason of empowering the public and crime victims in criminal justice practice (in the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom), there is the obvious need for specific research to measure and evaluate these endeavors. There unfortunately has been limited contemporary assessment of these measures and therefore there is the need for substantial research to analyze the potential for left realism in modern rule of law practices.

In conclusion, the ‘left realism’ perspective clearly can play a major role in contemporary policy reform measures being considered by government and criminal justice leaders interested in matching public demands with rule of law reorganization. There is a variety of policy and legislative options already in place in established democracies that could provide substance and consideration for countries and jurisdictions that are considering the left realism philosophy as the foundation for enhancing practical and perceived enhancements to police and criminal justice performance and transparency, and to increase public trust and confidence in those processes. After all, public service should imply that government workers serve the public (and not the respective agency’s and employees self interests).

## References

- Albrecht, J. F. (2012). Analyzing the implementation and evolution of community policing in the United States and Scandinavia. In M. De Guzman, A. M. Das, & D. K. Das (Eds.), *Strategic responses to crime: Thinking globally, acting locally*. Boca Raton: CRC Press.
- Becker, G. (1968). Crime and punishment. *Journal of Political Economy*, 76(2), 196–217.
- Canada Department of Justice. (2015). *Police discretion with young offenders*. Ottawa: Canada Department of Justice.
- Canadian Victims Bill of Rights, S.C. (2015). c. 13, s. 2. Ottawa: Parliament of Canada.
- City of London Police. (2014). *Community policing*. London: City of London Police.
- Cohen, L., & Felson, M. (1979). Social change and crime rate trends: A routine activity approach. *American Sociological Review*, 44(4), 588–608.
- Friedman, R. R. (1992). *Community policing*. New York: Springer Publishers.
- Goldstein, H. (1990). *Problem-oriented policing*. New York: McGraw Hill Publishers.
- H.R. 5107 – Public Law 108-405. (2004). *The justice for all act of 2004*. Washington, D.C.: US Congress.
- Lee, W. L. M. (1901). *A history of police in England*. London: Methuan and Company.
- Lord, V. B., Kuhns, J. B., & Friday, P. C. (2009). Small city community policing and citizen satisfaction. *Policing*, 32(4), 574–594.
- Matthews, R. (1992). Replacing ‘broken windows’: Crime, incivilities and urban change. In R. Matthews & J. Young (Eds.), *Issues in realist criminology*. London: Sage Publications.
- McLaughlin, E. (2007). *The new policing*. London: Sage Publications.
- New York State Crime Victims Board. (2007). *A guide to crime victims compensation in New York state*. Albany/New York: New York State Crime Victims Board.
- Normandeau, A., & Leighton, B. (1990). *A vision of the future of policing in Canada: Police challenge 2000*. Ottawa: Solicitor General of Canada.
- Orth, U. (2003). Punishment goals of crime victims. *Law and Human Behavior*, 27(2), 173–186.
- Pontell, H. N., Black, W. K., & Geis, G. (2014). Too big to fail, too powerful to jail? On the absence of criminal prosecutions after the 2008 financial meltdown. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 61(1), 1–13.
- President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing. (2015). *Final report of the President’s task force on 21st century policing*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services.
- Quinney, R. (1974). *Crime and justice in America: A critical understanding*. London: Little, Brown and Company.
- Quinton, P., & Morris, J. (2008). *Neighborhood policing: The impact of piloting and early national implementation*. London: Home Office.
- Reisig, M. D., & Lloyd, C. (2008). Procedural justice, police legitimacy, and helping the police fight crime: Results from a survey of Jamaican adolescents. *Police Quarterly*, 12(1), 42–62.
- Schwartz, M. D., & DeKeseredy, W. S. (2010). The current health of left realist theory. *Crime, Law and Sociological Change*, 54, 107–110.
- Scott, M., & Goldstein, H. (2005). *Shifting and sharing responsibility for Public safety problems*. Washington, DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, US Department of Justice.
- Sunshine, J., & Tyler, T. R. (2003). The role of procedural justice and legitimacy in shaping public support for policing. *Law and Society Review*, 37(3), 513–547.
- Tierney, J. (1996). *Criminology: Theory and context*. Hertfordshire: Prentice Hall Publishers.
- Trojanowicz, R. C. (1988). *The meaning of community in community policing*. East Lansing: National Neighborhood Foot Patrol Center, School of Criminal Justice, Michigan State University.
- UK Home Office. (2015). *2010–2015 Government policy: Policing*. London: United Kingdom Home Office.
- UK Ministry of Justice. (2015). *Code of practice for victims of crime*. London: UK Ministry of Justice.

- US Department of Justice COPS Office. (2015). *COPS fact sheet: 2015 COPS hiring program*. Washington, D.C.: US Department of Justice.
- US Department of Justice Office for Victims of Crime. (2006). *OVC fact sheet: The justice for all act*. Washington, D.C.: US Department of Justice.
- Wilson, J. Q. (1975). *Thinking about crime*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Young, J. (1992). Realist research as a basis for local criminal justice policy. In J. Lowman & B. MacLean (Eds.), *Realist criminology: Crime control and policing in the 1990s*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.