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The Past Meets the Future and Has Not Separated

By

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"How Community Problem Oriented Policing and Geographic Information System Analysis Changed Policing in Charlotte, North Carolina"

I recently read an excellent article on the current use of data for crime fighting and social disorder reduction. The Manhattan Institute article (02/10/16), "What Big Data Means for Fighting Crime" - City Journal by Editor Brian C. Anderson and contributor David Black, discusses "predictive policing." For every article or documentary on advances in policing, many past efforts positioned the foundation and pointed the way to today's advances. It is human nature to look to the future. However, in doing so, we often fail to remember those that engaged in the hard work, dedication, research, and applications that led the way to today's standards. Especially in the case of predictive policing, the past is not ignored. As such, it is the primary reason for my commentary along with reflection on current efforts by police to address crime and disorder.

The Mid-1990s.

In the mid-1990s, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department (CMPD), under the leadership of Chief Dennis Nowicki, initiated a new and emerging path forward with the implementation of Community Problem Oriented Policing (CPOP). At that time, and as a result of CPOP, important changes were integrated into the base philosophy and practices of that department. Of significance, those changes led to building citizen collaboration across the Department's jurisdiction with the general goal to improve the quality-of-life for all citizens and stakeholders.

An important aspect of CPOP and the resultant changes was the decision to integrate Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Analysis as a core foundation of CPOP. The underlying tenets of CPOP were to support officers, supervisors, citizens and stakeholders in collaborative input on problem identification and then moving toward sound decision-making and sustainable solutions. Goldstein's, Problem Oriented Policing (1990), the S.A.R.A. model was used to guide in-depth examination, a critical component to successful outcomes.

Aspects of this process required comprehensive decision-making, which was more easily accomplished through database development and analysis, inherent in each ongoing problem-solving endeavor. This process also allowed for more accurate problem identification, analysis, and the use of spatial and temporal GIS mapping with an examination of the numerous variables relevant to the problem.

Outcomes.

The results of these efforts led to extensive and positive quality-of-life changes. Officers, working collaboratively with citizens and other stakeholders at the street level, neighborhood by neighborhood, engaged in social change efforts that reduced crime, improved community, and quality-of-life environments and created new and lasting partnerships among police and community leaders, neighborhood groups, and individuals. These changes substantially reduced conflict and separation and resulted in collaborative partnerships that were previously thought unattainable.

A grant from the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS), totaling more than \$3.2 million dollars over five years, advanced GIS development and applications in the community and within the community problem-solving model. The Carolinas Institute for Community Policing (CICP) was the formal platform for these endeavors. This work eventually moved Charlotte light years ahead in police and community collaboration. Additionally, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department and the University of North Carolina at Charlotte provided GIS training to police and sheriffs from across the United States. The CICP was extensively engaged across North and South Carolina, working with police and sheriffs and their respective communities to bring about sustainable and positive change, utilizing a strong partnership model among all parties.

Herman Goldstein, from the University of Wisconsin-Madison Law School, and the original architect of the problem-oriented policing model, and Dr. Ron Clarke, Rutgers University, came to Charlotte one week a month for 18 months and engaged with the police department and Charlotte neighborhoods and stakeholders in problem-solving endeavors. CMPD's GIS Analysts were central to this work and provided field-based support and professional development to police and sheriffs across North and South Carolina, as well as to the national training programs. The dedication and examination of what was known and what remained to be done expanded innovation and established many of the foundation principles on which advances were constructed. Examples of this work can be found in the records of the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing (<http://www.popcenter.org/>).

The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services funded the Carolinas Institute for Community Policing (CICP). Utilizing the CICP, Community Problem Oriented Policing, GIS analysis and mapping, and leadership development; training expanded across both North and South Carolina. CICP assisted police and sheriffs' to conduct a needs assessment and use the results to develop and evaluate programs and projects. They were similar to those at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, which were designed to improve police and community collaboration, reduce crime and disorder and improve the community's overall quality-of-life.

Pathways Forward.

Many research and scholarship articles emerged from this effort in Charlotte. One was the early concept of a full partnership between a university and a police department;

commencing with the placement of an Associate Professor at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Department of Criminal Justice, in CMPD to bridge academic and applied program development and evaluation within the CPOP and other models. It was and remains a life changing event for this writer.

The working relationships, the commitment to CPOP, the effort from patrol officers to Chief, from neighborhood leaders to elected officials, demonstrated a crime reduction and improved quality-of-life effort that was successful. It became the precursor to today's continued growth. Enough cannot be said for the men and women whose early engagement started, supported, and nurtured a national movement. I sincerely want to recognize those many individuals of that time, and their commitment to change efforts of that era. Many remain engaged in many diverse ways, a testament to the earlier work. Space concerns preclude listing all of the names of those engaged, but you are many, and I would wager that you all still carry these significant achievements to this day.

To the GIS Analysts, research, and planning staff, officers from administration to patrol officers and importantly the citizens, neighborhood leaders, and other engaged stakeholders, each of you deserve equal credit for these accomplishments. The mid-1990s was an exciting time when police and citizens met on a level playing field, supported by so many people who applied their skills and knowledge to change lives. It does not get any better than that! Many remain in their field of expertise, continuing to move science and practical applications forward in their present-day community of focus. To each of you, whose earlier contributions continue to enhance current efforts, it was, and remains, a job well done!