



QUESTIONS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT FORUM

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ISSUE

Questions for Police and Community Relations Forum

COMMUNITY POLICING

Community policing is "a collaborative effort between the police and the community that identifies problems of crime and disorder and involves all elements of the community in the search for solutions to these problems." It is based on the premise that police alone cannot control crime and disorder and promote residents' quality of life (*Community Policing Consortium, 1994*).

1. What are the goals of community policing?
2. What kinds of procedural and operational changes do police departments have to make to institute community policing?
3. What kinds of skills do police and community leaders need to have to make community policing work?
4. What are the essential elements of an effective community policing program?
5. What measures work best to promote a collaborative relationship between police departments and the communities they serve?
6. What are some of the barriers to good police-community relations, and what steps can be taken to eliminate them?

Last December, President Obama established the *Task Force on 21st Century Policing* to strengthen community policing and trust among law enforcement officers and the communities they serve. The task force will be seeking input from state and other officials (see <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/12/18/fact-sheet-task-force-21st-century-policing>).

1. What suggestions would you make to this task force?

2. What are the best strategies to strengthen the relationship between the police and minorities? Why do these work?
3. What are the most effective strategies police and the wider community can adopt to reduce crime while respecting people's rights to fair and impartial treatment?

RACIAL DIVERSITY IN THE POLICE FORCE

"Although workforce diversity alone may not resolve all issues related to the fairness and effectiveness of policing, achieving diversity in law enforcement agencies can increase trust between those agencies and the communities they serve. That basic trust can be an essential part of defusing tension, investigating and solving crimes, and creating a system where citizens believe that they can rely on their police departments and receive fair treatment. Indeed, victims and witnesses of crime may not approach or engage with law enforcement officials if they do not perceive them to be responsive to their experiences and concerns. A diverse police department is also less likely to be insular, and therefore can be more receptive to change" (*Diversity in Law Enforcement; A Literature Review*. U.S. Department of Justice, January 2015).

1. Do you think the racial makeup of a community's police department should be similar to the racial makeup of the community it serves, or is this unnecessary?
2. What do you think of a proposal before the state legislature that would require police departments to make a good faith effort to maintain a police force that reflects the gender and racial diversity of the population they serve? What would you consider a good faith effort?
3. What are the challenges in recruiting minority officers?
4. Has the media coverage of unrest in response to the Ferguson and New York police shootings of unarmed African American men affected minority recruitment? If so, how?

RACE RELATIONS

1. Some say the police killings of unarmed African American men in Ferguson, Missouri, and New York City are isolated incidents given traction by the media. Others say this is a sign of broader problems in the treatment of minorities by police?" What do you think?
2. In what ways, if any, have the grand jury decisions not to indict the police officers in these cases changed your perception of the legal system?

3. Do you think there are significant differences in the way police interact with minorities and non-minorities? If so, what accounts for them? Regarding the recent incidents in Ferguson and New York, did the police officers follow standard procedures?
4. Do you believe the incidents like the ones in Ferguson and New York are more likely to happen when young, relatively inexperienced officers are involved? To what extent does fear on the officer's part play a role in these situations?
5. Research has indicated that unconscious racial bias often impacts human behavior. What can law enforcement do in terms of training, educating, or cultivating an internal culture to combat the effect of unconscious racial bias so that it does not affect how police enforce the law?
6. What kind of demographic data do law enforcement agencies collect to determine whether minorities are disproportionately impacted by law enforcement policies and behavior?
7. Some research suggests that a police agency's decision to focus attention and resources on particular types of crimes, such as drug crimes, is likely to have a disproportionate impact on minorities? How can we address the problem to lessen the impact on minorities?
8. Should cultural competency training be a required component of police training? If yes, should this be mandated by the state or left to individual police departments?

A number of reports over the years have shown that disparities based on race and ethnicity exist at various stages of the criminal justice system. For example, minorities represent a higher proportion of those charged and imprisoned for crimes than they do of the state's population. A new report from the Council of State Government's Justice Center shows reduced disparities in Connecticut's prisons in recent years. (<http://www.ctnewsjunkie.com/upload/2015/03/JRI-Brief-March-2015.pdf>)

1. Do you think disparities exist? What reasons do you think explain any disparities that may exist? If they do exist, what do you think can be done to address them?

CORRECTIONS

“While the impact of incarceration on individuals can be quantified to a certain extent, the wide-ranging effects of the race to incarcerate on African American communities in particular is a phenomenon that is only beginning to be investigated. What does it mean to a community, for example, to know that three out of ten boys growing up will spend time in prison? What does it do to the fabric of the family and community to have such a substantial proportion of its young men enmeshed in the criminal justice system? What images and values are communicated to young people who see the prisoner as the most prominent pervasive role model in the community?” (*Race to Incarcerate*. 2nd Ed. New York: The New Press, Mauer, M. (2006). p. 13).

1. Some people contend that the increasing use of jails and prisons has taken place without persuasive evidence that incarceration is the only, or even the most effective, approach to controlling crime. Do you think crime would be more effectively prevented, or justice more effectively served, if convicted criminals are punished or rehabilitated? Is punishment v. rehabilitation a legal or political issue? When do you think alternatives to incarceration are appropriate?
2. How should one measure the effectiveness of a correction system?
3. Is there a demographic pattern to recidivism?

CRIME AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

To be effective, law enforcement agencies must constantly adapt to the changing nature of crime and criminal behavior.

1. What is the best way to prevent crime—educational programs, more police officers, stiffer prison sentences, youth diversion programs, the death penalty? All of the above? Some of the above? None of the above?
2. How would you respond to those who say recreational drugs should be legalized to reduce drug-related crimes?
3. How is the media influencing our perception of crime?
4. What would you say is the most significant factor driving crime? Poverty? Drugs? Other?
5. To be effective, law enforcement agencies must constantly adapt to the changing nature of crime and the way criminals behave. In your opinion, what is the biggest issue facing law enforcement today?

6. What changes have you seen in the nature of crimes being committed over the last 10 or so years? What aspects of our culture do you think are feeding these crimes?

POLICE OVERSIGHT

1. Under what circumstances would you support the creation of an independent oversight body to monitor and review police departments' policies and practices? What should be the limits of its power?

MISCELLANEOUS

Technology and Law Enforcement

Drones. Although most often associated with military operations, drones have numerous law enforcement and civilian applications, including reconnaissance and land surveillance, wildlife tracking, search and rescue operations, disaster response, border patrol, and firefighting. The proliferation of civilian drones and their potential uses have raised safety, privacy, legal, and policy concerns. The pace of regulation has lagged behind the technology.

1. What are the public policy and moral implications of launching civilian drones? How do we weigh the risks versus the benefits of this technology?
2. What limitations are reasonable and appropriate on where, when, and for what purposes drones are used?
3. What special problems, if any, do you anticipate the increase in the use of civilian drones will present for law enforcement?
4. Where do we draw the line in balancing freedom of information with a citizen's right to be protected from an invasion of privacy?
5. Where should we draw the line regarding the use of drones by government agencies?

Police Body Cameras. Some researchers and law enforcement officials predict that in the next decade, body cameras will become a normal part of law enforcement officers' equipment. Last year, the Obama administration proposed a three-year \$263 million package on community policing, including a 50 percent

match for state and local police departments that purchase body cameras, for a total of \$75 million to buy 50,000 cameras (see <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/12/01/fact-sheet-strengthening-community-policing>).

1. Research and anecdotal evidence suggest that the law enforcement community has not universally embraced this technology. What are the reservations?
2. What are the biggest concerns for officers regarding body cameras?
3. What do you think an effective body camera program should look like? Should the legislature mandate the cameras for police departments or should this be left up to individual departments?

Police Behavior. The Michael Brown and Eric Garner tragedies have brought the issue of fatal use of force by police into the national spotlight. According to the [Hartford Courant](#), there have been 18 incidents in the past decade in which unarmed people died after violent confrontations with Connecticut police.

1. What safeguards can Connecticut put in place to ensure that police use the appropriate level of force and provide objective evidence in situations where police use deadly force?
2. Many believe that the police cannot function effectively without community relationships, trust, cooperation, and a shared sense of responsibility for public safety. What more can be done to eliminate racial profiling and promote the public's trust in police?
3. Is there a known, accessible, and credible complaint mechanism available for citizens who wish to register a grievance regarding police behavior? Is the agency able to monitor complaints so as to identify patterns that may reflect disproportionate racial impacts associated with particular strategies, tactics, organizational units, or neighborhoods?

Other. Through the acquisition of military equipment, local and state police are more militarized.

1. Does the public have a right to know why their local police need military equipment and how they will use it?
2. What can Connecticut do to achieve greater transparency and accountability regarding local and state police acquisition of military equipment and use of SWAT teams?

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