



POLICE-PROBATION PARTNERSHIPS: ENHANCING JUVENILE SUPERVISION

Partnerships have existed informally between individual police and probation officers for decades. Beginning in the early 1990s, however, a police-probation partnership in Boston began to revolutionize these individualized partnerships into something more formal, more structured, and in some cases better documented (Matz & Kim, 2013). The premise for such partnerships was straightforward, as police officers and probation officers realized they were often working with the same individuals (Corbett, 1998; Minor & Matz, 2012). By working together, it was reasoned, officers could improve community supervision of probationers and improve public safety. Reintegration of the probationer, however, appeared to be mostly an afterthought. This update discusses the genesis of such partnerships, how they function and their impact on juvenile crime.

ORIGINS, TYPOLOGIES, AND STRUCTURE OF PARTNERSHIPS

The increased formalized collaboration between police and probation can be attributed to, in part, the movement of community policing across the nation (Byrne & Hummer, 2004). It is plausible to assume the trend for police agencies to be more proactive and open to coordination with outside entities and the public, core tenets of community policing — created the prerequisite environment needed for formalized partnerships to form. However, mission distortion is a common concern (Murphy & Lutze, 2009). Partnerships with police tend to over-emphasize enforcement or deterrence and undermine the social service role of probation. Law enforcement has a tendency to dominate the collaborations they participate in.

The *East Bay Public Safety Corridor Partnership* is a prime example (Bureau of Justice Assistance [BJA], 1997). In this collaboration, police had already outlined the problem and its solution prior to engaging community partners. As a result, members of the collaborative were reluctant to get involved. Nonetheless, in the case of probation there is a shared goal of maintaining public safety which complements police-probation partnerships. A primary concern for probation officers is whether, as a result of the partnership, they ebb increasingly into a law enforcement orientation that minimizes their role as a social worker (i.e., “helper” to the probationer). If so, what implications will this pose and, if

left unchecked, can it be detrimental to the overall mission of public safety by failing to adequately meet the needs of probationers?

As was the case in Boston’s Operation Night Light and many formal partnerships since, these collaborations have primarily focused on high-risk gang members with lengthy criminal histories between the ages of 14-24 (Braga, 2008; Braga, McDevitt, & Pierce, 2006; Braga, Piehl, & Hureau, 2009; Braga, Pierce, McDevitt, Bond, & Cronin, 2008). In the case of Night Light, probation officers would select 10-15 gang-affiliated high-risk youth between ages 17-25. While there are a variety of partnership typologies highlighted in the literature (see Table 1) (Benekos & Merlo, 2006; Kim, Gerber, & Beto, 2010; Kim, Gerber, Beto, & Lambert, 2013; Matz & Kim, 2013; Parent & Snyder, 1999), the most pertinent concerns enhanced supervision partnerships. These partnerships involve police and probation officers conducting joint patrols and home visits; direct interactions between the probationer, police officers and the probation officer. While conducting such visits officers conduct searches to check for supervision compliance (e.g., no firearms, no drugs), but would also discuss substance abuse treatment and other services available in the community (Matz & Kim, 2013). In many cases the partnership typologies developed by Parent and Snyder (1999) are encompassed to varying degrees within a single partnership. For example,

Night Light existed within a larger *interagency problem solving* initiative known as Operation Ceasefire. In addition to enhanced supervision, the partnership also involved the sharing of information between police and probation officers. This information allowed police officers to serve as additional “eyes” on the street for probationers who may be violating curfew or other conditions of their supervision.

JUVENILE PROBATION PARTNERSHIPS AND THEIR IMPACT ON JUVENILE CRIME

There are believed to be well over 20 formalized police-probation/partnerships across the U.S. (Decker, 2008), however, few target juvenile probationers specifically or exclusively and there is little empirical evaluation research available for any of these partnerships. That said, the most rigorous study on the impact of partnership concerns a police-juvenile probation partnership in San Bernardino (Worrall & Gaines, 2006). San Bernardino’s enhanced supervision program, the *IMPACT/Nightlight juvenile crime prevention program*, was similar to Boston’s Night Light in including curfew enforcement, joint patrols, and school contacts (Matz & Kim, 2013). Funded by BJA in 2000, the formal program began January 2001 and ceased in July of 2003 due to a lack of funding (Worrall & Gaines, 2006).

The program involved the partnering of juvenile probation officers with police officers in five teams (consisting of one probation officer and one police officer) to provide heightened supervision of juvenile probationers. Specifically, this included a joint home visit to each new probationer that involved an explanation of the terms of their supervision, a search of their residence for illegal paraphernalia and continued follow-up visits. In addition to these direct interactions of the enhanced supervision teams, police officers would also contact probation officers when they encountered a juvenile probationer during the course of their routine patrols. Given the police officers’ knowledge of probationers, and working in conjunction with probation, they were able to collectively take greater action in terms of investigating and punishing probationers who violated curfew and other supervision restrictions (e.g., “do not associate” conditions). Case law generated in California and in the U.S. Supreme Court have historically been supportive of law enforcement’s involvement in the search of probationers/parolees, though within specific legal limits (Adelman, 2007; 2002; Worrall & Gaines, 2006) and not without some controversy (Murphy & Worrall, 2007).

San Bernardino’s program targeted medium- and high-risk juvenile probationers. It was reasoned the program could provide these youth with

a clean slate and more effectively deter involvement in further criminality with the additional authority, supervision and presence of police officers (Worrall & Gaines, 2006). The primary motivation for the program was rooted in a concern over probation officers' increasingly excessive caseloads. To examine the impact of the program on juvenile crime Worrall & Gaines (2006) utilized interrupted time series and displacement/ diffusion analyses of subsequent juvenile arrest rates on felonies, misdemeanors and curfew violations (i.e., a status offense). Results revealed a significant reduction in certain felony offenses (burglary, assault, and theft) and no impact on misdemeanors or status offenses. The authors also examined nearby cities

(Colton, Highland, and Rialto) for potential crime reductions and found, with the exception to burglary in Highland, little evidence of diffusion or displacement. Therefore, there may be some general deterrent effect but its overall impact is unclear.

Another study by Jones and Sigler (2002) evaluated the impact of police officers assigned to juveniles placed on a curfew check program in Palm Bay, Florida. Legislative changes from 1998 made it permissible for police officers to enforce court-ordered curfew checks, a duty previously performed solely by probation officers. Like San Bernardino, this partnership was predicated largely on the understanding that probation officer

TABLE 1: PARTNERSHIP TYPOLOGIES*

PARTNERSHIP TYPE	DEFINITION
Enhanced Supervision	Partnership in which police and correctional agencies perform joint supervision or other joint functions (such as neighborhood patrols) for persons on probation.
Fugitive Apprehension	Partnership in which police and correctional agencies collaborate to locate and apprehend persons who have absconded from probation supervision.
Information Sharing	Partnership in which corrections and law enforcement agencies institute procedures to exchange information related to probationers.
Specialized enforcement	Partnership in which police and correctional agencies, as well as community organizations, collaborate to rid communities of particular problems.
Interagency Problem Solving	Partnership in which law enforcement and correctional agencies confer to identify problems of mutual concern and to identify and implement solutions to them.

* Definitions from Parent & Snyder (1999, pp. 6-7), see also Kim et al. (2010).

caseloads had become excessive and they were unable to adequately supervise their probationers. Using agency records, questionnaires and interviews the authors found some support for the reduction of juvenile crime, specifically a one-third reduction in nonviolent crimes, during the partnership. The reduction did not hold true for burglaries, as it did in San Bernardino, however. They also reported positive feedback from both officers and the parents of youth under supervision.

CONCLUSION

There is some evidence to suggest that police-probation partnerships can be very effective in reducing juvenile crime-- though few evaluation studies exist. Although there are certain problems to be aware of (mission distortion, mission creep, stalking horse incidents, turfism, increased offender monitoring), overall anecdotal and empirical accounts to date clearly justify these enhanced supervision partnerships as quite *promising* as classified by the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention. That said, the notion that police officers must pick up the slack due to the under-funded, under-resourced probation departments is a problematic development. As Durlauf and Nagin (2011) would likely agree, in addition to further evaluation research on partnerships, there needs to be a greater allocation of resources provided to struggling juvenile probation departments.

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ENDNOTES

¹ The PSN Update is supported by Cooperative Agreement Number 2011-GP-BX-K032 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance under the Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN) anti-gun/gang initiative. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crime. Points of view in this document and related materials are those of the authors and do not represent the official policies or positions of the United States Department of Justice. For more information on PSN please visit APPA's PSN project page and dedicated website at <http://www.appa-net.org/psn/>.

² Special thanks to Dr. Alida V. Merlo of Indiana University of Pennsylvania's (IUP) Department of Criminology for comments and suggestions on an earlier draft of the manuscript.

³ 1000-1500 word submissions (otherwise follow Perspectives' submission guidelines) for consideration in the PSN Update are welcome and encouraged. To be considered papers must be relevant to community corrections (probation/parole) and concern interagency collaboration (e.g., police-probation/parole partnerships), Project Safe Neighborhoods (PSN), gangs, and/or gun violence. Please direct PSN Update manuscripts to amatz@csg.org. ▷▷▲

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