

## **Victim-Oriented Police Reform: A Comparative Perspective**

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## **Victim-Oriented Police Reform: A Comparative Perspective**

### **Introduction**

For most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the dominant mode of thinking about policing in western democracies has been that the police solve and resolve crime and disorder issues through a predominantly reactive approach. This discourse has now been partially displaced by a more proactive and preventive approach to policing which seeks to stop crime occurring in the first place and re-prioritizes the position of victims of crime in criminal justice responses. The twenty-first century has seen the continued development of victims' movements that emerged in the last quarter of the twentieth century and this has led to the language of victim-oriented policing seeping into political and public debate in democratic countries, although often without discussion about what this might look like in terms of police practice.

Police organizations are more likely to successfully tackle crime when policing strategies are based within and informed by those who experience crime and harm (Paterson and Best; Paterson and Williams). Such an approach creates a need for police to develop problem-oriented partnerships with other agencies (including probation, social work, education, housing and community-based organizations) to identify and address underlying causes of crime. The success of these community-oriented and partnership-based reforms is subject to much debate with repeated questions about the challenge of achieving sustainable and enduring change (McCold 1998) rather than the continuation of a law enforcement ethos that bolts community and problem-oriented policing reforms on to traditional reactive policing models (Skogan 2008).

The multifunctional nature of policing means that police work is subject to a range of tensions, including the different priorities of upper and middle management compared to those of frontline officers and a perception amongst frontline officers that their peacekeeping role (i.e. mediation, negotiation and pacification) is not always valued as ‘real’ police work (Moor *et al.* 2009). Reform movements thus wax and wane without changing the fundamental purpose of policing.

The growth of the global Black Lives Matter movement has shone a renewed spotlight on the universal experience of victimization in the form of under-protection and over-policing for marginalized black communities across the world. This paper uses this debate as an entry point for a discussion about what victim-oriented policing might look like and uses case study example from the United Kingdom, India, Argentina and Australia. These examples of victim-oriented policing have been selected to demonstrate the breadth of similar experiences across the globe as societies attempt to manage ever-changing experiences of crime and security while also seeking to enhance democratic engagement with policing and to empower the role of victims within the criminal justice system.

The first part of the paper reviews the existing literature on community, problem-oriented and victim-oriented police reform. Theoretical and policy-focused critiques are provided and then supported by case study examples. The second half of the paper situates these case studies in the context of contemporary policy responses and concludes with some theoretically informed commentary for those tasked with implementing sustainable victim-oriented reforms.

## **Victims of Crime, Vulnerability and Policing**

The expanding sub-discipline of victimology has had a significant influence upon criminal justice discourse and has led to paradigmatic policy changes upon approaches to crimes such as domestic abuse and sexual violence. The initial influence of feminist and critical race theorists over the emergence of victimology has been supplemented by the growth of intersectional perspectives which have influenced policing policy through a discourse that surrounds the concept of vulnerability (Bartkowiak-Theron and Asquith 2012; Paterson and Best 2016). This section of the paper reviews the influence of these academic and policy-level discussions and their impact upon policing studies, policy and practice before providing some case study examples of how these ideas have translated into operational policing.

There has been an undoubted shift towards incorporating victims' voices and associated support mechanisms into policing strategies and tactics across international jurisdictions (Bartkowiak-Theron and Asquith 2012; Paterson and Best 2016). Yet, there has been surprisingly little scholarly discussion about what victim-oriented policing, or, more specifically '*police*', should look like. This absence of debate is due, firstly, to the misplaced assumption that the evolution of community policing is, in its essence, victim-oriented, and, secondly, due to the offender-oriented analysis that dominates policing studies. As a consequence of this, victim-oriented support tends to be bolted on to existing community policing services as a supplement to the prevailing police mandate of law enforcement (Wilson and Kelling 1982), population governance (Foucault 1991; Bajpai 2013), crime prevention (Farrall 2001) and low level social control (Cohen 1985). The discourse of police chiefs and their political overseers thus captures the language of 'victims' but the translation of this discourse into practice is uneven and highly dependent upon the prevailing cultures of local police teams and partner agencies.

The most important initial conceptual point to make here is that there is a need to separate the *police*, understood to be a publicly-funded body of state personnel, from *policing* in its broadest conceptual sense. The latter term includes the public police as well as the diverse panoply of social control roles, functions and agencies that ensure good social order. Clifford Shearing and colleagues have raised questions about who are the most legitimate sources of policing and authority for those impacted by the most harmful aspects of crime and disorder and how might these multiple nodes of policing and security be best organized and governed (Bayley and Shearing 2001; Shearing and Johnston 2003). Shearing bemoans the scholarly emphasis upon police ahead of policing and argues that this had led to insufficient analysis of new and still emerging governing mentalities, institutions and technologies that coalesce into networks of plural policing<sup>1</sup>.

Thus, while there is a body of literature that reviews and assesses the re-introduction of community-based policing and problem-oriented policing in the latter part of the twentieth century and the early years of the twenty-first century, the focus of the findings is on changes to policy and practice ahead of conceptualization. Unsurprisingly, there has been a consequent focus upon changing police discourse, policy and training, without sufficient consideration about how to operationalize a re-conceptualized purpose in the same policing context (Moor *et al.* 2009). Writing during the rebirth of community policing models, McCold (1998) suggests that police organizations were not yet ready for the changes that community policing and problem-oriented policing demanded. A decade later, Fleming and O'Reilly (2007) identify a similar position in Australia and describe community policing as a small-scale programmatic endeavor rather than the more ambitious re-conceptualization of

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<sup>1</sup> The University of Leeds, UK, has an ongoing project on Everyday Political Economies of Plural Policing for anyone interested in this literature - <https://essl.leeds.ac.uk/everyday-political-economy-plural-policing/doc/resources>

purpose that many had called for. This leaves us with the question of why fundamental police reform that engages citizens and empowers victims is such a challenging process.

The nineteenth century processes of industrialization and modernization changed policing from being a victim-oriented service delivered through informal plural networks to a state run offender-oriented process (Foucault, 1991; Bajpai, 2013). Prior to the rise of victims' movements, insufficient consideration was given to the extent to which this nineteenth century shift in philosophical assumptions drew criminal justice processes away from the victim and consideration of the harm caused to individuals and the wider community (Kirchengast, 2006; Bajpai, 2013). The late twentieth century models of community policing emerged as a solution to this technocratic gap between what the public wanted from policing services and what public police and state criminal justice processes offered. Across the landscape of Anglophone criminal justice, these changes have offered slow and piecemeal reform to those who experience the most significant victimisation and harms from crime.

The movement towards victim-oriented policing draws on community policing's aspirations to reduce boundaries between police and communities and the problem-oriented shift away from single crime incidents to a more comprehensive appreciation of what is needed to address crime problems and the harms they cause. Scholarly policing studies have had a historical tendency to situate critical discussion around either consensual administrative analysis of the police function or neo-Marxist conflict perspectives concerned with the purpose of state police, leaving little room for other perspectives. Manning concludes (2010) that it is this genesis of policing studies which limits one side of the discipline to reporting on the concerns of practitioners, the public and politicians while the other side engages in critique without practice application or influence. The following sections address this issue

by drawing in a range of different theoretical perspectives to the discussion about victim-oriented policing prior to their application in the case studies.

### **What is Victim-Oriented Policing?**

A victim-oriented approach to policing in democratic societies has the protection of life as its primary aim alongside recognition that crime, harm and victimization are experienced in very different ways by different people and communities. Therefore, victim-oriented policing is rights-based, in that it prioritizes the needs of those who have been victimized, and collaborative, in its recognition that state police agencies represent just one policing node amongst a network of agencies that perform policing functions to support the person who has been victimized. Victim-oriented policing is thus an aspirational goal rather than a systematic program that seeks to build collaborative aims for those tasked with informal and formal policing functions in democratic societies

There is recognition that much progress has been made in engaging communities with policing across jurisdictions but there is a general consensus that the rights and needs of victims are yet to become a core element of day-to-day policing which remains offender-oriented and process driven (Packard, 2008; Bajpai, 2013; Manning, 2016). This global challenge has been recognized by the United Nations which provides guidance on working with communities emerging out of conflict and the sensitivities required to work with those who have been victimized by states and conflict.

One of the most critical intellectual insights on these debates comes from abolitionist and victimological scholars such as Nils Christie (1977; 1986) who provide an extensive critique

of the state ownership of crime that emerges out of state legal process and the marginalization of victims of crime that emanates out of this model (see also Walklate 2011). Community policing is not, in its essence, victim-oriented and the limitations of community policing endeavors arise because models of policing were not fundamentally reconfigured to deliver new aspirations (Paterson 2011; Cox 2012). As such, the historical purposes of state police prevailed with their focus upon social control, law enforcement, crime prevention and the protection of the interests of the state. Community policing was subsumed into these ways of thinking about the work of the police rather than presenting a challenge to existing ways of thinking about policing. A model of policing that has citizens and victims at its core requires a much more radical reconfiguration than this.

One potential mechanism for the realization of more victim-oriented approaches is to find ways of addressing 'primary or secondary victimization and reduce the effects of victimization on the community' (Clark 2005: 650). Where appropriate, this should include engaging communities in the reform process through radical forms of governance (for examples see, Patten 1999; Vitale 2017). Victim-oriented policing thus requires organizations tasked with the delivery of policing to form collaborations that include those communities who are most at-risk of harm and to think about how they collectively conceptualize policing needs (Paterson and Best 2016; Paterson and Williams 2018). In practical terms, this should include the social, political, legal and ideological alignment of structure, governance, partnership, roles, functions, training and education to this conceptualization of policing (Williams and Paterson 2019).

The limitations that the common law model of justice poses for the development of victim-oriented policing are rarely explored. Bajpai's (2013) victimological critique of common law

criminal process provides one rare example from India with most western studies addressing the challenge of victim-oriented developments through critiques of community policing (for an overview see Skogan, 2008). Manning (2005; 2010) argues that this conceptual challenge arises because western policing studies have developed in a largely atheoretical manner that rarely engages with underlying assumptions about policing or that questions its common law offender-orientation.

Policing scholars recognize the importance of separating the institution and functions of the police from the looser concept of policing which reflects wider processes of social control. This conceptualization has been stretched further to focus upon networks of 'security' (Bayley and Shearing, 1996; Johnston and Shearing, 2003; Shearing and Wood, 2003<sup>2</sup>) and has led to debate about the extent to which the public police retain a privileged position in security provision (Loader and Mulcahy, 2003; Stenson, 2005). Yet, despite their value in understanding the governance of policing networks, these debates take policing scholarship towards political science realms in discussing structures, accountability and governance and do not resolve normative debates about who should police and how.

This perspective opens up potential links with the theoretical literature on 'collective efficacy', its focus upon social disorganization and the source of solutions to crime problems existing in the relationship between communities and crime (Sampson and Groves 1989). Important to this perspective is the potential for victim-oriented policing to de-individualize responses to harm and, instead, address the collective problems and social justice issues that offenders, victims and communities face (Christie 1977). This cultural re-configuration can mean that police organizations do not see it as part of their role and function to engage with

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<sup>2</sup> There is a large body of literature that analyses nodal network theory within the context of policing and security and I have only touched the surface of it here.

victims, particularly where law enforcement or other quasi-militaristic policing philosophies are prevalent. Even where this is not the case, it can be difficult for the public police to engage those communities that are also often the target of coercive law enforcement. Because of this, many police organizations utilize non-uniformed personnel and non-coercive partners to engage with the public and victims of crime.

A key question that manifests itself here is where do the police fit into victim-oriented policing? Particularly, where there are longstanding historical tensions between communities that feel victimized by the state and police and police organizations that view communities through the lens of order maintenance and crime control. There is an extensive literature on the under-policing and protection of specific types of victims of crime that these approaches produce (see Manning 2010 for an overview). Added to this, the over-policing of specific societal groups and their subsequent victimization by police in the same communities where there is an absence of security leads to a significant justice and security deficit (Mastrofski, Reisig and McCluskey 2002; Wisler and Onwudiwe 2007). This latter issue has gained global attention since the death of George Floyd in the United States and the growth of the Black Lives Matter movement but attention could also be drawn to the unjust policing of minority groups in a multitude of other countries. It is this core point about the unjustness of policing and the neglect of the least advantaged that runs through Manning's 2010 book *Democratic Policing in a Changing World*.

In democratic societies, policing requires trust between citizens and institutions to function justly and effectively. There is a strong international evidence base available that demonstrates that trust, confidence and legitimacy are enhanced when there are co-operative arrangements which support the interests of all stakeholders (Tyler 1990). *Democratic*

citizens have a right to equal justice and public agencies are required to support this. Thus, any activity that furthers inequality should be avoided where possible and activities should be promoted where they are of greatest benefit to the least advantaged members of society. Rawls refers to this latter aspect as 'the difference principle' (Rawls 1971; 1993) which Manning draws on as a key potential measure of policing success.

In accordance with this perspective, policing requires a distributive approach to justice that recognizes existing social, material and political inequalities and seeks to address these. This presents a challenge to hot spot and intelligence-led policing and surveillance strategies which traditionally target the most coercive methods towards the most disadvantaged members of society and thus further entrench inequality (Manning 2010; Kapoor 2013; Vitale 2017).

Marxist, feminist, critical race and post-colonial theoretical perspectives all raise important questions about the extent to which genuine democratic engagement and an orientation around victim's needs is possible with policing structures that emerged during colonial, authoritarian or conflict environments where their ideological priority was the establishment of a specific political order. The following section puts theory into practice and reviews victim-oriented case studies using some of the theoretical ideas presented in the previous sections. These case studies do not provide a comprehensive picture of victim-oriented reforms but they have been selected for the purpose of an appreciative analytical approach that illustrates positive opportunities for future reform. The case studies are drawn from England and Wales, Australia, India and Argentina.

## **Victim-Oriented Police Reform in England and Wales**

The potential of victim-oriented policing strategies for increasing public confidence in the police has been well documented (Farrell 2001; Clark 2005; Packard 2008; Paterson and Williams 2018). Influenced by feminist, critical race and intersectional critiques, policy trajectories across criminal justice agencies continue to attempt embed victims' interests into the criminal justice process. This policy shift has led to the development of policies that emphasize the psychological and democratic benefits of situating victims at the heart of any police response (Ibarra and Erez 2005; Taylor 2012). It is therefore possible to re-configure the social relations through which police–community relations emerge, to increase public confidence in police action and to deliver more efficient and effective policing services (Clamp and Paterson 2016). The potential implications for police legitimacy, effectiveness and efficiency are significant. Community policing philosophies and problem-oriented policing strategies have infused contemporary policing with a renewed victim focus. Despite this, they have not achieved the paradigmatic change that their advocates hoped for due to challenges presented by, amongst other things, the offender-orientation of criminal justice processes, police organizational structures, and prevailing law enforcement philosophies (Skogan 2008; Clamp and Paterson 2016).

A victim-oriented perspective should thus be an enabler for those who wish to implement community or problem-oriented models. Recognition that repeat victims generate disproportionate demands on police organizations makes this a mechanism for crime prevention and the generation of efficiencies in service delivery (Farrell, 2001; Stanko, 2008). Addressing repeat victimization extends the crime prevention function using available intelligence and data to inform proactive policing strategies. Much of the initial repeat victimization work in England and Wales from the 1990s focused upon property crimes, in

particular burglary, where simple target-hardening prevention activities had a significant impact upon rates of repeat victimization (Laycock, 2001). Police forces in England and Wales developed their own individualized responses to repeat victimization with burglaries and this led to dramatic reductions in crime rates although often without a full understanding of which preventive measures had been most effective (Farrall, 2001). Crime rates in England and Wales continued to fall until 2015 but the police unexpectedly found that public confidence in their activities fell at the same time as they were introducing these preventive strategies. This decline in confidence was partly due to an absence of focus upon how police did policing (i.e. how they engaged with citizens and victims) and their subsequent individual and organizational legitimacy in the eyes of the public (Bradford et al., 2009; Tyler, 2017). The challenge to police legitimacy also emerged because the focus upon repeat victimization encouraged police organizations to focus upon crimes that were easy to solve rather than the complex social problems that had the most harmful impact upon peoples' lives (Eterno and Silverman, 2012).

In the later 1990s efforts to reduce repeat victimization in England and Wales started to incorporate gender violence. In part, this was due to public concerns about violent crimes but, more significantly, it was due to the enhanced public profile given to the vulnerability of victims of gender violence by non-governmental organizations (Hanmer et al., 1989). The key driver here was recognition that domestically located violence in early life led to further violence and harm in later life and that this violence became increasingly severe, with one in three murders across England and Wales following on from previous abuse (Stanko, 2008). Similar insights from the United States led to the introduction of mandatory arrest policies in many states whereas in England and Wales a range of different tools became available to police agencies to support and protect repeat victims. Collectively, these policy initiatives led

to the development of databases that detail patterns of contact with the police (victimization and offending) and which have the potential to be used by police organizations and partners from the statutory and NGO sectors to better understand the needs of vulnerable people as well as how and where to deploy resources in response to this.

As the earlier section noted, there are many other statutory, civil and informal bodies that perform policing functions and that contribute to order through a disparate range of social processes. It is these non-state bodies that drove initial change in policing in England and Wales from below and helped to facilitate a victim-orientation at the policy level. It was also clear from evidence emerging out of Australia and England and Wales that while non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other statutory partners were key drivers of reform the public continued to expect the police to undertake a leadership role within new initiatives (Taylor, 2012; Clamp and Paterson, 2016). This demonstrates that even where there are calls for reform there remains continued demand for police leadership in the community to demonstrate the presence of professional and disciplinary authority on behalf of the state alongside the capability to perform coercive functions where necessary. Therefore, change is most likely to be enacted when it has the active support of police leaders and is driven through a partnership model that prioritizes the protection of vulnerable people and is able to risk assess and triage appropriate responses (Stanko, 2008; Paterson and Best, 2016).

Despite progress in responding to the needs of victims, policy developments in England and Wales face continued criticism related to their top-down and administrative response to victimization (Walklate, 2011; Duggan and Heap, 2014). It has been argued that this approach has been undertaken to the detriment of community-based programs that seek to empower victims via advocacy and support and address the underpinning causes of (often)

male violence (Buzawa and Buzawa, 2003; Hester, 2013). Comparative analysis provides an opportunity to gain insight into alternative approaches to developing victim-oriented policy that is responsive to both the needs of individuals and the underlying social conditions that produce harm and victimization. The following sections analyze case studies from Argentina, India and Australia to provide three further perspectives on the evolution of victim-oriented police reform.

### **Victim-Oriented Police Reform in Argentina**

As state-centred and offender-oriented criminal justice systems have an embedded historical tendency to circumvent victims' interests, victim-oriented innovations often emerge outside of states' structures and from within civil society. Tankebe's (2013) account of police reform in Ghana illustrates the problems this can create as attempts to implement community and victim-oriented reforms led to a rise in police violence and extra-judicial killings. Mani (2000:10) identified similar police reform challenges in countries experiencing conflict, or in post-conflict transition, which retain close links to the military or other post-colonial legacies (Cole, 1999; Kapoor, 2013).

The following case study from Argentina provides a more positive account of how civil society can help drive victim-oriented reform and identifies the role of non-governmental organisations as key agencies in the re-conceptualisation of policing responses. Top-down police reform requires a sufficient degree of social order and governmental support to be successful. Reforms must also be attuned to local context and their associated networks of power in order to be implemented effectively. The Buenos Aires Metropolitan Police was established in 2010 due to concerns about the Argentine Federal Police's ability to address

violent crime and low public confidence in policing resulting from years of military rule and corruption. Concerns about citizen security, police ineffectiveness and public mistrust led to the development of a new communications infrastructure for the Buenos Aires police and the opportunity to embed a victim-oriented police response.

In this example communications centre personnel were tasked with monitoring panic button calls from individuals who were at high risk of violence. This victim-oriented policing program emerged out of localized concerns about safety and security and, in particular, significant rises in violence against women that were given a high public profile by NGOs and activists (Solano, 2012; Sibilla, 2012).

As was the case in England and Wales, initial policy awareness was driven outside of state structures which created the space for technological innovation and a victim-oriented policing response. Critically, in this case study, the individual at risk of re-victimization is the active decision-maker who initiates the police response and is not passively responding to the process-oriented goals of criminal justice professionals. This victim-oriented approach situates the police as the first responder to vulnerable people via pre-emptive alerts that are sent directly to a repeat victimization communication suite which locates the person at-risk, an appropriate response unit and a support worker. The victim-oriented approach utilises the technology as just one strand within a package of social and psychological support that emphasizes victim protection and facilitates the smarter use of scarce police resources.

Latin American policing reforms need to be understood within the context of historically troubled police-citizen relations that, in Argentina, remain characterized by low levels of trust in government and concerns about police corruption and effectiveness (Eaton, 2008). These

concerns about citizen security, gender violence police corruption and civil liberties created the space for an innovation that re-configured policing responses. The driving force behind the panic button program's objectives came from women's NGOs and ensured a victim-oriented approach that continued to be owned by local actors as well as state agencies. This context facilitated the establishment of a victim-oriented inter-agency response within a new communications infrastructure that reflected the needs of the most vulnerable people in society. Policing reforms that are driven by the needs and vulnerabilities of communities unsurprisingly demonstrate a better appreciation of the spaces where victimisation takes place (Amin, 2004) and what might be a proportionate and effective response. These bottom-up reforms therefore allow communities and vulnerable citizens to integrate their own interpretations of crime and disorder into policy developments via sustainable collaborations with more powerful institutions. In this case study from Buenos Aires it was specific challenges to police legitimacy that drove a re-conceptualisation of policing around community needs. This prioritisation of the voice and interests of vulnerable people has been captured once again in the Black Lives Matter movement and its recognition that poorly governed police agencies can enhance the threat of victimisation to specific communities rather than providing security.

### **Victim-Oriented Police Reform in India**

Little attention has so far been given to the proliferation of victim-oriented approaches to policing which utilize twenty-first century information and communication technological infrastructures to address repeat victimization (Paterson, 2015). In 2015 Delhi Police launched the Himmat app in response to concerns about the public safety of women after the high profile rape of a young lady on a bus in 2012. Although use of the technology was not high, with around 31,000 registered users by 2017, the app provided a policing response that

was initiated by a shake of a smart phone linking a vulnerable individual to a police communications center and a nearby response vehicle with, where possible, the appropriate skillset to respond to this crime (Mason et al., 2015). A similar technology is also being used in Punjab, Stree Samman, where it has been downloaded 51,000 times since its introduction in 2015.

These technological developments have been driven by concerns about citizen security, mobilized through NGOs and community action groups to force innovation and change. India had become the focus of global media due to high profile murder and sexual violence cases, not least the 2012 Delhi bus rape that led to sustained public protests organized by women's groups. While the global attention was drawn by specific cases, the rising profile of victims in India goes back much further than 2012. The victims' movement grew throughout the 1990s through a combination of judicial, academic and NGO activism which led to a human rights inspired victims' movement.

This activism led to recognition that traditional criminal justice processes and procedures excluded victims (Chockalingam 1995; 2005; Bajpai 2011) and led to a range of legislative and policy innovations that slowly began to impact upon policing. These victim-oriented developments emerged out of community-based programs as a response to inadequate social policy and uneven formal criminal justice responses (de Guzman and Kumar, 2010). This challenge was particularly significant in the rural systems which had historically relied upon village courts (panchayats) to administer justice but were facing increased pressure from police and government to reform (Vincentnathan and Vincentnathan, 2007).

There are enormous challenges in translating new policy discourse into practice across India, with police violence still prevalent in many areas (Verma, 2005). Jauregui's (2013:126) anthropology of Uttar Pradesh Police illustrates this point by identifying the continued problem of physical coercion alongside a culture of 'neglect, abuse, excuse and retreat into hyper-proceduralism'. Formulating a victim-orientation in contexts where state and federal police are in competition with other informal modes of policing remains a significant challenge and highlights the point that all police reform needs to be context-specific (Paterson and Williams 2018). It is commonplace for states experiencing political transitions and significant economic development to have pluralized forms of policing that incorporate non-state actors who perform community-centric policing functions. Lessons learned from the development of professional policing in Anglophone countries point to the importance of retaining these community linkages as centralized state policing capability grows (Grabosky 2009; Hills 2014; Williams and Paterson 2019) to ensure that the voices of communities and those most at risk of crime are not lost.

There are multiple examples of victim-oriented policy innovations in India which include the development of all women police stations for female victims and mandatory crime recording policies although these reforms have had a tendency to conceptualize female police officers as the solution to the problem of gender violence. One again, this discourse is not wholly unproblematic as it demonstrates poorly evidenced assumptions about unity amongst women of all ethnicities, religions, classes and castes. The next section moves on to analysis of victim-oriented approaches in Australia and a case study from Queensland.

### **Victim-Oriented Police Reform in Australia**

One of the key mechanisms for victim-oriented reforms has been an increased focus upon understanding the impact of policing through the lens of vulnerability. The language of vulnerability draws upon academic discourse in the fields of ethics and human rights law as part of its attempt to re-orient police thinking around the vulnerability that is encountered by police officers and other agencies. Bartkowiak-Théron & Asquith (2017) describe this approach to policing as requiring a universal precautions model that recognizes encompassing all forms of vulnerability and requires policing actors to identify and respond to the individual, social, and institutional contexts of vulnerability that they encounter.

The universal precautions model draws on the longstanding recognition that encountering vulnerability has always been a core element of the policing experience (Westley 1970; Banton 1964; Skolnick 1966; Bittner 1967). Collectively, these authors created the sociology of policing through their identification and analysis of policing being primarily concerned more with the management of social welfare and order rather than that of crime. Despite this empirical reality, modern policing continued to operate on the premise that police officers needed to just learn the law and how to administer this. There are significant changes taking place in police reforms as the recognition of vulnerability and the rights of those who experience policing has been moved to the core of how some governments and police agencies think about their work. The universal precautions model recognises the critical role that police officers undertake as gate keepers to the criminal justice process in environments where distinctions between offenders and victims are often unclear.

In response to these challenges, the Queensland Police Service has developed a universalist approach to vulnerability that makes all police officers responsible for “...improving service delivery to vulnerable people in line with the ambition of this policy” (Queensland Police

Service 2020). This shift in approach recognizes that there are specific forms of vulnerability that policing agents need to identify (e.g. age) but incorporates these specific needs within a framework that acknowledges that vulnerability is universal and potentially present in all situations that police encounter. It is therefore essential that policing agents have the requisite skills to identify and respond to each set of circumstances to intervene with legal tools where necessary and to bring in support from other agencies where appropriate. This approach is underpinned by insights from Tom Tyler on the value of procedural justice in maintaining order as more just forms of policing are likely to generate and maintain sustainable forms of social order and to avoid the social unrest that is intermittently experienced by all of the countries included in this article.

In practical terms, this approach recognizes that the police have always delivered a combination of legal and social welfare functions but that the latter function has been downplayed in police recruitment, training and culture. Recognition that social welfare issues such as supporting the homeless, child safeguarding and mental health crises are core police functions (as they have always been) is long overdue. Similar recognition is required of the need for effective collaboration to address these issues as police officers are not trained to respond to these problems but need to be cognizant of how to access and mobilize other available resources. This approach puts both the vulnerable person (whether they are understood as an offender, victim or witness) and the need for a rights-based response to situate the needs of the person at risk of harm at the heart of the policing response.

Bartkowiak-Théron and Asquith (2017) note that these policing responses require multi-agency governing bodies that can address the multiple layering of complex social needs in individuals and communities. This demand leads to a re-conceptualization in responses and

draws on the benefits of collective intelligence and the need for collaborative, multi-disciplinary action that incorporates shared policies, data access and knowledge exchange. In the Queensland Police approach there is an identifiable attempt by the organization to encourage police to "contextualize the individuals with whom they interact" in a manner that would be recognized elsewhere in the public health landscape where approaches grounded in vulnerability have a longer history.

### **Situating Victims and Vulnerability at the heart of Victim-Oriented Police Reform**

The global policy drift towards community policing and an enhanced philosophical and practical orientation towards victims of crime has been slow but incrementally impactful across several jurisdictions. The next step towards victim-oriented policing will recognize this policy development as requiring a rights-based shift throughout police organizations and their policing partners towards agreed collaborative goals. Successful victim-oriented policing requires a more concerted political effort to articulate a clear conceptual understanding of victim-oriented policing as an enabler of police reform. To achieve this, there is a theoretical need to both broaden and lengthen the conceptual lens through which police and policing are understood in order to generate a victim-orientation that is not just bolted on to concerns with crime prevention, law enforcement and public protection (Clamp and Paterson, 2016).

This requires changes that are driven from the bottom-upwards to make collaborations work while also benefiting from the support of senior leadership. There are plenty of negative and skeptical accounts about community-oriented policing reforms but these structurally focused analyses often underplay the importance of street-level professionals in driving change. The

case studies in this article provide powerful accounts about what can be achieved. Renewed intellectual emphasis upon the dynamic nature of bottom-up reforms that emerge out of collaborations built within communities situates those who experience and deliver policing as drivers of this process (Wood *et al.* 2008).

Successful victim-oriented policing thus requires new underpinning assumptions and a workforce that has been recruited, trained and embedded in a culture that embraces shared goals. All policing actors need to develop practice and cognitive skills that align with statutory requirements to prioritize a duty of care. These are examples of how this can be delivered in this article via a universal precautions model that is developed through a collaborative rather than siloed approach to victim-oriented policing. It is essential to stop tinkering around the edges of reform and to embrace a re-conceptualization of policing that can deliver effective security for the twenty-first century.

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