As a term, community means “community unity” common goals meeting common needs, but such a definition seems out of place in most urban settings.

Group interests and values are varied and complicated and have a direct impact on the working environment of the police officer.

There is little argument today that citizen participation in the justice process is crucial to its effectiveness.

Never before in this country has each individual citizen been so aware of crime and its personal costs.

Citizens are also more aware that they must participate in their own protection and be responsible for their own actions.
The Concept of Community Participation

- The term, community participation, is generally defined to suit the purposes of a specific analysis, and depends to a large extent on what subject is being investigated.
- Definitions range from the community’s absolute control over an organization to the ability of a community to exercise some degree of input into the organization.

The Major Characteristics of the Community

- Group interaction that may be deliberate or unintentional, positive or negative, ranging from conflict to cooperation.
- Shared boundaries that may be largely geographical, common interests, or common history, values, goals, needs, or some combination of these.

The justice community is described as systems within systems interacting with one another within legal boundaries.

- One of the key problems of community relations is that all of these communities are part of the relationship and their common needs must be defined and addressed.
What is Participation?

- Participation is used in the context of providing an equilibrium and a measure of accountability.
- Participation emphasizes the ability to interact with people.

What is Community Participation?

- It is a continuum of citizen participation.
- It is multifaceted, ever changing, and encompasses a wide range of citizen involvement.

- The degree of participation varies with community characteristics and community goals.
- The continuum of citizen participation includes a wide range of activities pursued at various levels of the criminal justice system.
Development of Community Participation

- Today, more and more citizens are demanding a greater voice in the decisions that affect them.
- Citizens feel that government has become too far removed from their needs and from public accountability.

The demand for increased participation by various communities comes from an apparent realization on the part of citizens that they have a stake in making the components of the criminal justice system operate at a level responsive to their needs.

- When the community is dissatisfied, pressure to improve the performance is generated from the community to the relevant administrator or elected officials.
- The pressure is sometimes direct in the form of filing numerous complaints against a specific agency.

Citizens and community involvement in the justice system is not viewed as merely desirable: it is a necessity.

- Community participation in the justice system is not a new or radical concept.
- Many feel that responsibility and accountability for planning, decision making, and action regarding criminal justice should be returned to the community.
Systems and Community Values

- The police occupy a strategic position in any society because they are charged with enforcing the norms of society.
- They must interact with the members of society.
- The importance of this interaction and cooperation varies with the nature of the total society.

Problems of Community Participation

- The recognition of the usefulness of citizen involvement or community participation is not universally accepted by either the average citizen or by the professionals employed in the criminal justice system.
- Community control is reactive.
- It is only when conditions become unacceptable that citizens are aroused from apathy and are motivated to devote time, imagination, and energy to a particular cause.

Communities react when the services provided are no longer acceptable to them.
- Even then, it is not the entire community that responds, but rather only the energetic and sufficiently aroused citizen.
- Advocates for increased citizen participation point out the need to instill a willingness on the part of the police, courts, and corrections to use available citizen input effectively.
Many studies indicate that the three components of the justice system are reluctant to involve citizens in their operations. There is a natural suspicion of outsiders on the part of any organization. The organizations members often prefer to maintain the status quo despite public demands for change.

Two Types of Community Participation

According to the role assigned to citizens, community participation can take two general forms:

- Regulatory community participation
- Supportive community participation

Regulatory Participation

- Members of the community regulate operations of the components of the criminal justice system.
- Directed primarily at the police.
- When the police make an arrest they are making a formal determination of whether or not the potential arrestee should be processed into the criminal justice system.
• What happens at the police level determines to a greater degree what the rest of the criminal justice system is capable of doing.
• The initial and most expansive sorting out of “criminals” from “average citizens” is done by the police.
• There are major developments in the area of regulatory participation.

• The attempt of regulatory participation of the police
  • The creation of civilian oversight agencies
  • The attempt to create an ombudsman to review citizen complaints against the police
  • The attempt to decentralize the police politically and administratively
  • The attempt to ride patrol on the police in the community
  • The attempt to affect the establishment of enforcement priorities

• Supportive Participation
  • The community supplements and complements operations of the criminal justice system.
  • There are four key roles that are central to community participation:
    • Volunteers
    • Social persuaders
    • Gatekeepers of opportunities
    • Intimates
Police-Community Relations in the New Millennium

- Police-community relations has always depended on the process of developing and maintaining meaningful, two-way communication among the agency, its service area, and specific populations served.

- Policing a community involves the police and the community in partnerships and consultations that create a sense of safety, problem solving, and quality living through crime prevention and control, emergency responses during crisis situations.
- The relationship between the police and their communities must be one of cooperation, not conflict.

- Their must be meaningful feedback.
- The relationship must be real and not rhetorical.
- These partnerships will always be evolving partnerships, altered and changed by persons and events occurring outside the local community.
- The Impact of World and National events on Communities
  - We have always known that national and world events affect all of us and our communities.
    - Globalization of crime and criminal groups
    - Globalization of protest issues and protest groups

- The War on Terror and Impacts of Homeland Security
  - September 11, 2001
  - The threat of additional terrorist attacks has increased the need for national and community security
    - “War on Terror”

- Warring Against Foreign Terrorists
  - Al-quaida
  - Iraq
  - Imprisoning “foreign combatants”
  - Homeland security
  - Increased security efforts
  - Domestic eavesdropping
Improving Police-Community Relations in the New Millennium

- Crime prevention and control
  - August Vollmer
  - Crime prevention and law enforcement will always be major objectives of the police
  - They will always be involved in proactive and reactive strategies to prevent and control crime

- Emergency Responders to Crisis Situations
  - The police are the only 24/7, 365 days-a-year public agency.
  - They are called to aid the sick, the injured, the missing, the insane, and the feeble-minded.
  - They are also involved in peacekeeping, order maintenance, and conflict resolution duties.

- Community Problem Solvers
  - The police have and have always had a problem-solving role in the community.
  - However, those problems usually have been crime or delinquency-related problems, and the police have traditionally chosen what community problems should be solved.
Choosing Community-Specific Strategies

- Police-community relations are complicated and constantly changing.
- There is no one community with whom the police interact.
- There is a consortium of internal and external communities.

- There can be no one strategy that fits all problems.
- Problem-solving and community policing as alternative organizational strategies define general approaches to policing rather than a definitive set of activities.
- Any particular program that reflects these organizational strategies might differ in particular localities.

- This does not mean that problem-solving policing or community policing should not be embraced as organizational strategies, or guiding philosophies, by police agencies.
- Both recognize the importance of community partnerships and exchange and feedback from the police’s internal and external communities.
United States policing is a fragmented system composed of numerous agencies of various sizes.

Our system of federalism, which ensures a distribution of powers between the federal government and the states dictates a fragmented system.

The community problem to be solved may be a crime prevention or control problem or a crisis situation.

It may be a quality-of-life issue unrelated to crime or crisis issues.

It may be discovered in consultation with the community.

Its resolution may be evaluated by feedback from the community.

Police-community relations is the process of developing and maintaining meaningful, two-way communication between the agency, its service area, and specific populations served.