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# POLICE SCIENCE

## THE NEGRO, PREJUDICE, AND THE POLICE

GRANVILLE J. CROSS

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Since the historic 1954 Supreme Court decision on school segregation, democracy as we know it have been shaken by periodic internal eruptions between Negroes and whites. This year, the centennial of the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation by President Lincoln, finds these disturbances increasing in intensity and violence. This state of affairs is incongruent with one of the basic ideas of democracy, that private and group differences can be tolerated and utilized for the general welfare of society. Therefore, in order to be consistent with its beliefs, this nation must make every effort to resolve its racial difficulties so that peace and tranquillity will replace the present trend towards violence.

It must be understood by all parties concerned with the solution of this problem that the only way any meaningful results can be obtained is by peaceful means and it is within this sphere of the problem that the role of the police becomes dominant. They are the first line of defense against violence and one of their primary objectives is to provide peace in the community. The very existence of an ordered social life is dependent upon the proper employment of effective means of mediation, force, communication, and resources by the police in these difficult and delicate situations.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, it is tantamount that they be capable of handling all racial disorders in an impartial and professional manner, displaying the utmost in cautious and sound judgment. Unless they can meet the challenge of handling racial disturbances our society will be in serious trouble.

<sup>1</sup> JOSEPH D. LOHMAN, *POLICE AND MINORITY GROUPS* (Chicago: Chicago Park District Press, 1947), pp. 5-7.

The police actually have a two-fold objective in the area of racial tensions. They must be able to understand the problem and its causes, and they must be capable of professional performance in putting down any disturbances that may arise.<sup>2</sup> This paper will concern itself more with an understanding of some of the police-Negro relationships and the need for professionalization of the police along these lines than with prejudice itself.

### FACTS ABOUT RACISM OR RACIAL PREJUDICE

We do not come into the world full of racial prejudice, we acquire it from our parents at home, and the social environment in which we grow up.<sup>3</sup> It is easier to find a scapegoat to satisfy our feelings of inadequacy than to try and understand the real reasons behind the situations. Consequently we seldom if ever direct our aggression at the true cause of our frustrations because (1) we might be severely punished; (2) we might have strong inhibitions against certain actions; and (3) lack of understanding of the true causes of our feelings.<sup>4</sup>

The main trouble with racial prejudice is that we have too many preconceived opinions concerning it. We do not realize that the great differences in the customs, traditions, and cultures of various races are not so much a matter of racial inheritance as they are a matter of simple accumulation of culture, wealth, and learning. The person acquires the language, customs, manners, and social practices of the society he grows up in, and the evidence shows that the members of any race can attain the

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7.

<sup>3</sup> GORDON W. ALLPORT, *THE NATURE OF PREJUDICE* (Cambridge: Addison, Wesley, 1954), pp. 101-103.

<sup>4</sup> LOHMAN, *POLICE AND MINORITY GROUPS* pp. 49-51.

achievements of any other race if they are given sufficient opportunity and stimulation to do so.<sup>5</sup>

The discriminations practiced against the Negro in the United States range all the way from covert and unofficial discriminations practiced in the north to the overt and official practices in the south. Whatever form used, the results on the Negro are just about the same. They are:

1. He is usually forced to live in small areas within the city, usually just outside the business districts, where he pays exceedingly high rent for housing which is wholly inadequate by any standard of decent housing. Any attempt by him to move out of these "ghettos" and obtain housing is met by either violence or payment of a higher price for housing.
2. His lower educational level usually results in lower economic power due to his inability to obtain skillful and professional employment. He is usually the last person hired and the first fired.
3. Living under the conditions of continuous aggravation and tensions which are the result of his skin coloration, the Negro is prone to severe mental disorders and breakdowns as well as violent outbursts to release the tension and frustrations inside him. At best he is usually very sensitive and defensive, and if he is to maintain some semblance of normalcy, he develops strong self-protective reactions which are either expressed as over-aggressiveness, over-shyness, or a mental block from which he refuses to acknowledge anything that is going on around him.
4. Because of his poor environment he generally has a higher mortality and crime rate than the white person.
5. He has a distrust and fear of the police because he feels they are always there to keep him in his place.

There are many more characteristics which are the result of racism, but these are by far the most significant ones, and the ones which must be eliminated if the Negro is ever to achieve his goal of equality.

#### CRIME RATE, LEGALITY, AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AS RELATED TO THE NEGRO

*Crime and the Negro.* Historically there have always been tensions between man of some sort.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

Where originally it was more between various classes and caste systems, it now revolves around racial inequalities. The reason being that industrialization and modernization have eliminated much of the poverty of the world, but it has also reduced the dignity of the worker.

Scientists claim that basically there is no difference between human beings, that there exists one human being both anatomically and physiologically. The Negro is often thought to be an inferior person, prone to criminal activity, however, there is evidence that his low status and criminal activity are more the result of social and environmental conditions than inheritance.

It is not difficult to prove statistically that the Negro: (1) has a higher crime rate than white persons, (2) is admitted to prison more often than white persons, (3) is involved in more homicides by stabbing than any other race, (4) has a higher rate of juvenile delinquency in urban areas than the other races, and (5) is executed and sentenced to life imprisonment more often than the whites.<sup>6</sup> In fact, the one sure way to be executed is to be a Negro, charged with a felony murder, particularly rape, and defended by a court appointed lawyer in any section of the country. Race has been shown to be a positive selective factor of crime by the experts, as well as poverty, intelligence, and age.<sup>7</sup> It has also been proven by empirical methods that the Negro commits the greatest number of crimes involving weapons, aggravated assaults, narcotic violations, larcenies, homicides, and robberies.<sup>8</sup>

These statistics, and other empirical data would tend to paint the Negro as criminally inclined. However, we must remember that crime is a form of social maladjustment. It is often the result of a conflict between human want and social curtailment which in itself implies maladjustment to the demands of society. Sociologists believe that there are relations between race and crime, but that these relations are the result of complex and obscured factors which our society imposes upon the Negro ranging from his low status to his inability to be fully accepted in even the most optimum situations. In her book on *Intergroup Relations*, Charlotte Epstein points out that the Negro

<sup>6</sup> HANS VAN HENTZ, "The Criminality of the Negro", *JOURNAL OF CRIMINAL LAW, AND CRIMINOLOGY*, Vol. 30, pp. 662-668 (Jan-Feb 1940).

<sup>7</sup> VERNON L. FOX, "Intelligence, Race, and Age as Selective Factors in Crime," *JOURNAL OF CRIMINAL LAW, AND CRIMINOLOGY*, Vol. 37, pp 141-151 (July-Aug. 1946).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 149-152.

in his migration from south to north suffers extreme frustration between what he hopes to find and what he actually finds, and this in itself leads to a certain amount of aggressive behavior.<sup>9</sup> She feels, and this writer agrees, that crime is the result of degrading social and economic conditions, and the resultant fear, disappointments, and anger encountered between what the situation is and what the situation should be.

*Law and the Negro.* The 14th amendment to the Constitution as it applies to the Negro can be broken down into three sections.<sup>10</sup> First, it protects him from any legislation enacted for the control or special application to any particular group. Second, it gives the assurance of "due process of law" (everyone will have his day in court). Third, it makes unconstitutional any legislation which would restrict any person because of his race, color, or nationality. There are also two amendments of the United States Civil Rights Code which were passed in 1866 and 1870 when the states ratified the Civil War Amendments, and which are still constitutional. These deal with policemen who have committed crimes against minorities and with the right of the Negro to own and sell personal and real property.<sup>11</sup> These laws along with the Constitution, the school desegregation laws, and various public facilities and accommodation laws passed by Congress make it apparent that the Government and the Supreme Court, at least in theory, are in favor of every citizen of the United States having the legal tools to obtain equality. However, laws alien to what the majority really want are never sufficient in themselves. It is apparent to both Negro and white leaders that complete desegregation will take quite a few years, and complete integration may never happen. The real problem is that the Negro wants desegregation and integration at a faster pace than either the white moderate or segregationist is willing for it to happen.<sup>12</sup>

*The Policeman and the Negro.* It can be safely said that most Negroes fear and hate the police, and in addition there is evidence to show they have good reason. After reviewing the practices of

the courts, jails, and policemen in the south; Charles Johnson, author of the book, *Patterns of Segregation*,<sup>13</sup> found that the police of the south generally come from the lower middle class in which racial attitudes are firmly fixed because of their low level of education and social and economic insecurity. They see it as their job to keep the status quo and protect "white womanhood" and "white supremacy." They call the Negroes "niggers," "darkies," and "boy." They will brutally beat or kill the Negro at the slightest provocation. The Commission on Civil Rights' report on Justice<sup>14</sup> points out eleven cases of police brutality that resulted in fatalities for the Negro. Some of these fatalities occurred in such northern cities as Chicago, Cleveland, and Philadelphia. The report also points out the harassment activities used by police against minorities in large cities.<sup>15</sup> These practices are not carried on by the majority of the policemen, but the acts of some policemen are so vicious that they leave a lasting imprint on the minds of everyone.

It is unfortunate that the Negro has this fear and distrust of the policeman because he usually carries it with him wherever he goes, especially when he comes north. He reacts with hostility at every action performed by the policeman even though the action may be perfectly legitimate, and this in turn causes the policeman to react with hostility, and we have a vicious circle evolved from which only more harm can come.

It takes moral character to treat all persons fairly when carrying out the law in the face of this hostility, but the policeman must remember that only by a calm, friendly, and courteous, but firm, approach can he ever win over the minority groups to the side of the law. He must be aware that the process takes time especially since new people are migrating to the area every day, each with his own powerful hate that must be subdued before it destroys the good relations already existing. He must also get away from the procedure of paternalizing.<sup>16</sup> That is, letting the Negro offender go without punishment because all the Negro can be expected to do is to commit crime. This is just as

<sup>9</sup> CHARLOTTE EPTSEIN, INTERGROUP RELATIONS FOR POLICE OFFICERS, (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1962) pp. 101-107.

<sup>10</sup> KING AND JESSE CURRY, RACE TENSION AND THE POLICE (Baltimore: Williams and Wilkins, 1961) pp. 13-23.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 15-17.

<sup>12</sup> Desegregation concerns legal rights. Integration concerns complete and total social acceptance.

<sup>13</sup> CHARLES S. JOHNSON, PATTERNS OF NEGRO SEGREGATION (New York, Harper and Brothers, 1943) pp. 26-29.

<sup>14</sup> UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS REPORT # 5 (Washington, Government Printing Office, 1961), pp. 5-28.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>16</sup> JOHNSON, PATTERNS OF NEGRO SEGREGATION, pp. 88-89.

bad as brutality, because it shows that the Negro is not considered as an equal, but as a child or freak of nature.

However, it must be pointed out that in many areas, particularly the large urban areas of the north and south, the police are getting better in their relations with the Negro, and the communication between them is more open than before. The police are beginning to understand the problems that confront the Negro in finding jobs, housing, and improving his lot; and responsible Negroes are anxious to follow the law when there is evidence that it will be impartial in its operation. But there are times when for lack of empathy, disregard for what is right, or breakdown in communication violence erupts between the whites and Negroes, and that is when the police must step in and stop it. But before they can accomplish this, they must be familiar with the development and remedy for race riots.

#### POLICE AND RACIAL VIOLENCE

*Points of Conflict Between the Races.* Perhaps the three major areas the police should be wary of for possible violent conflicts between the races are the competition for jobs, housing, and the use of recreational facilities.<sup>17</sup> There is no more crucial area of conflict than that which surrounds the keen competition for jobs. The Negro finds himself the first to be laid off and the last to be hired in many situations. The whites become very scared of losing their jobs when jobs become scarce, therefore they are willing to do anything to keep the Negro in an inferior position so that he cannot compete with them. By and large they have done a good job. The statistics show that 64 per cent of the 5.6 per cent of the labor force which is out of work are Negroes.<sup>18</sup> To make matters worse, the electrical workers, sheet metal workers, steam fitters, and plumbers unions absolutely refuse to let a Negro join.<sup>19</sup> In fact, the Locomotive Fireman Brotherhood have a clause in their original constitution which excludes Negroes, and it was not until just recently that this clause was changed.<sup>20</sup> To put it mildly the Negro is between a "rock and a hard place" where jobs are concerned. He is not allowed to join the unions, he

generally receives an inferior education which does not prepare him for skilled jobs, and he is subject to extreme violence if he tries to compete for jobs especially when jobs are scarce. Yet, if he does not get a job of some sort, his chances of survival in this new technological era are very slim. Therefore, he has to compete in some way to obtain jobs or face complete and lasting poverty.

The second tension area the police must be wary of is when the Negro tries to move out of the rat-infested, high rent, dilapidated slum areas into the suburbs or expensive apartment buildings. The alleged fact that a Negro moving into an area will reduce the property value leads white people to violent reactions. But these violent reactions are not going to stop the Negro from moving out of the slums if he has the money. He will fight the inflated prices; the hardships of getting a loan or mortgage; the taunts, bombs, and jeers; or anything else thrown in his way because he is tired of living like an animal in the "ghettos" when for the same monthly payments he can live in better housing regardless of the consequences.

Another major point of conflict is the use of recreational facilities particularly on weekends during the summer months. This area of tension offers the greatest chance for loss of human lives and for widespread disorder. The race riot in Detroit in 1943 started in just such a situation with a fight between Negroes and policemen on Belle Isle.<sup>21</sup> Before peace could be restored over two hundred people were seriously injured or dead, and the city was literally destroyed by the vandalism and destructiveness of the people. When people are relaxing they are more prone to gossip or to finding some activity for their idle hands, and they become easy prey for joining in a mob to vent their frustrations and energy.

Each of these tension areas could touch off a serious riot, therefore, the police should be constantly aware of them, as well as prepared for any eventuality should these areas get out of hand. One of the most important projects for averting a major riot is to have an emergency plan set up where the entire force can be quickly mobilized in order to make a sufficient show of force at the focal point of the riot. This show of force in itself will be sufficient to nip many riots in their inception.

*Mob Psychology.* It is interesting to note that

<sup>21</sup> ALFRED M. LEE AND NORMAN D. HUMPHREY, *RACE RIOT* (New York, Dryden Press, 1943) pp. 1-30.

<sup>17</sup> LOHMAN, *POLICE AND MINORITY GROUPS*, pp. 40-45.

<sup>18</sup> United States Labor Department's Bureau of Statistics for 1962, 1963.

<sup>19</sup> "What the New Turn in the Negro Drive Means" U.S. NEWS AND WORLD REPORT, Vol. LIV, No. 24, (1963), pp. 41-46.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 44.

racial incidents decrease as communities become more integrated in character.<sup>22</sup> The whites have no reason to fear the Negroes because they are familiar with them and their problems. They know that basically the Negro is just like any other human being. Another interesting point is that Negroes seldom initiate mob violence,<sup>23</sup> chances are they are the victims in most cases and not the agitators.

If the preceding is true then why do we have mobs and riots? Perhaps it is because many people have deep frustrations over lack of achievement of their life's goals, worries about finances, status, and tension over the threat of nuclear war. Another source of frustration is that the world has stripped the worker of his dignity and prestige and he will jump at the chance to hold power in his hands for a little while, even if it is in the form of mob violence.<sup>24</sup> This is one of the reasons why people are so susceptible to joining race riots, they want to vent their frustrations on someone who cannot strike back and feel power and superiority over others, even if it is only for a few minutes.

The development of a mob or riot usually is initiated by an excitable offense which takes place before a group of people. They begin congregating at the scene of the event to talk to each other and pretty soon tension develops and each individual loses his identity and becomes swayed by the moods and sentiments of the crowd. Then agitators or excitable people begin organizing the crowd for violence. Pretty soon bystanders looking to see what is going on become moved by the atmosphere of the crowd, and we have a tension packed mob developing. Eventually, they get tired of milling around and will take action of some form unless they are split up and removed from the scene immediately.<sup>25</sup>

*Police Tactics for Handling Riots.*<sup>26</sup> Of course the best way to handle any riot is to prevent it from occurring. This can best be accomplished by having open communications between the supporters of demonstrations and the police and will be discussed in more detail in the following section. If this is not possible, then informants should

<sup>22</sup> ERNEST A. GRAY, JR., "Race Riots Can be Prevented" HARPERS (December, 1945) pp. 1-2.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>24</sup> This is one of Karl Marx's basic tenets in the rise of the proletariat in his COMMUNIST MANIFESTO.

<sup>25</sup> LOHMAN, POLICE AND MINORITY GROUPS, pp. 75-85.

<sup>26</sup> Much of this section is based on readings in STERLING WOOD, RIOT CONTROL (Harrisburg, Military Service Pub. Co. 1952) pp. 150-172; CURRY AND KING, RACE TENSION AND THE POLICE pp. 97-137.

be used. Any method that will warn the police of an impending riot will be useful because the police can suppress the riot before it starts or if it has started take immediate and effective steps in putting it down. Other actions that might help prevent a riot were pointed out in the Chicago riots of 1919 and the Detroit riot of 1943. These riots indicated the weaknesses of (1) having an extreme amount of tension in the area over other matters, (2) not having sufficient police to quell the riots in their beginning, and (3) a severe lack of training which was evident from the methods used by the police who did arrive at the scene.

Once the riot has started you must quickly separate the excitable or passionate agitators from the rest of the crowd in a business like professional manner. You must also make a show of force sufficient to make the people realize that they will be fighting a losing battle should they attempt any disturbance. Then it is necessary to divide and redivide the crowd. By doing this the other people have a chance to disperse while you contain the most dangerous people, and you give them a choice between going to jail or peacefully leaving the area after the others have left to avoid starting the agitation all over again.

Of all the rules and suggestions read by this writer for handling mobs, riots, and disturbances, none were as direct, appealing, and comprehensive as those offered in Curry and Kings, *Race Tensions and the Police*, which are as follows.

1. Know the facts.
2. Act quickly once the true facts are known.
3. Be impartial.
4. Eliminate the emotional agitators immediately.
5. Avoid mass arrests if possible, but divide and redivide the crowd where necessary into separate groups.
6. Have an organized disaster plan and riot control policy to insure proper recall and use of personnel.
7. Use only as much force as needed.
8. Keep the press from exaggerating the facts.
9. Use the influence of the minority group leaders where possible.
10. Be quick to call for aid from other agencies when needed.
11. Use riot guns, dogs, chemicals, or batons only when needed, but when needed use them, do not hesitate.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>27</sup> CURRY AND KING, RACE TENSION AND THE POLICE, pp. 127-137.

*Theories of Prevention of Racial Riots by the Police.*<sup>28</sup> Since the end of World War II there has been an abundance of written material concerning police programs in intergroup relations. Many of the plans formulated are concerned with tactics and the efficient mobilization of the police force. However, recent disturbances have led to a new concept of prevention of disorders rather than their suppression once started.<sup>29</sup> This has resulted in three approaches to the problem based on a preventive outlook that attempts to improve the attitude and efficiency of the police.

The first approach concerns itself with changing the attitudes of the individual policeman. Since most policemen come into the career field with certain prejudices and attitudes based on the socio-economic group they come from, the primary job of the police is then to reeducate the policeman by utilizing all the methods of current-day education such as lectures, workshops, and visual and audio-visual aids. These programs attempt to show the cultural and background differences between races, to convince the policeman that there are no differences in intelligence and innate ability and to point out the damage done to our public relations overseas by the publicizing of discriminatory treatment of minority groups.

The second approach emphasizes the need for professionalization of the police by either raising the educational standards or giving the policeman a choice between carrying out the laws or being fired. Both of these approaches to professionalism assume that prejudice is very difficult to change in an individual. If it were something that the person learned by reason, then it could be reasoned out, but prejudice is something that is ingrained in the make-up of the personality right from the time the person starts to talk. Therefore, it is almost impossible to reason a person out of his attitude towards minority groups. Professionalization, in the first instance, then refers to the hiring of policemen who have a so-called "enlightened" viewpoint. Basically, an equation of higher education meaning lower prejudice is implicit.<sup>30</sup> Of

<sup>28</sup> ALLEN D. GRIMSHAW, "Police Agencies and the Prevention of Racial Violence" *JOURNAL OF CRIMINAL LAW, AND CRIMINOLOGY AND POLICE SCIENCE*, Vol. 50, pp. 110-113 (May-June, 1959).

<sup>29</sup> JOSEPH E. WECKLER AND THEODORE E. HALL, *POLICE AND MINORITY GROUPS*, (Chicago: Chicago Park District Press, 1944) pp. 10-13.

<sup>30</sup> Laurence W. Fultz and Jesse E. Curry; Papers presented at the Eighth Annual National Institute on Police and Community Relations, (East Lansing: MSU Press, 1962).

course the problem of whether education really prepares one for a more liberal outlook is dubious, and the possibility of getting even a small amount of well educated people to work for the police is even more difficult. The second view of professionalization makes a sharp distinction between private attitudes of the policeman and his professional role obligations. He either does his job according to the book or he gets fired. So far this is the best remedy because there is some proof that this method really works. For instance, the creditable job performed by the military at Little Rock (1951) and Mississippi (1962). A prejudiced police officer can, when threatened with his job, behave in the manner prescribed by law.<sup>31</sup>

The third approach emphasizes what is called preventive policing. This has been discussed in the previous section (*Police Tactics for Handling Riots*). It means listening and watching for signs of danger, and the immediate applications of controls once danger is observed. Common to this approach is watching the areas of conflict; preventing the spread of rumor; the tactics to be used in crowd controls; and organizational plans to permit immediate mobilization of sufficient personnel to prevent any violence, if possible. The former sheriff of Cook County, Illinois, Joseph Lohman is one of the chief exponents of this concept.

These three approaches are not used exclusively by any one police organization. Most northern police departments, and some southern departments incorporate some of the principles into their daily operating procedures. Some of them adhere to the principles of one approach, and others adhere to some of the principles of all three approaches. Whatever approach if any is used, will depend a great deal on what the community and the police chief deem advisable in the area of race relations. However, it must be remembered that this is only a very small part of police operations, and in many departments devoting any time to race relations is a strain and is difficult to justify,<sup>32</sup> even though most police chiefs will admit it's a crucial problem. Police departments are understaffed, recruitment is a difficult problem, and the training system is already burdened with too much to teach in too little time. However, the

<sup>31</sup> GRIMSHAW, *loc. cit.*, note 28, p. 111.

<sup>32</sup> WILLIAM M. KAPHART, *RACIAL FACTORS AND URBAN LAW ENFORCEMENT* (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1957) pp. 43-46.

following of some form of procedure by the police is necessary to insure at least an attempt to impartial enforcement and protection of the parties involved in the race riots.

#### CONCLUSION

In conclusion it should be realized by parties concerned that there is no easy solution to the racial problem. The Negro realizes that unless he achieves equality now, he will be left out of the new technological age. In order to accomplish his goals he must overcome his feelings of frustration and tension caused by his present socio-economic status. He must channel his self-assertiveness and aggressive behavior into constructive outlets and not into self destructive practices of crime, narcotics, and mental abnormalities. Within this area of racial conflict, the police face an almost insurmountable task. They must keep the peace between two races who are determined to achieve separate goals. They will serve their purpose best if they handle all racial situations in a completely impartial and objective manner. The main difficulty in achieving this impartiality is obtaining morally responsible people to serve in police work.

No one really knows the answer of how to recruit the right type of policeman. Perhaps Dr. Brennan, Professor of Crime Prevention at Michigan State University, is right when he says the home is the answer. Unless a person obtains the proper moral outlook and values in the home, as well as in the school and church, all the training in the world is not going to change him. Perhaps, a more practical answer lies in giving the policeman a choice of either abiding by the law in his enforcement duties or being fired, because there is evidence that a person will perform his job in the proper manner if his livelihood is at stake. Whatever the solution, the task will be easier stated than done.

Lastly, it would be nice if the police and the Negro could find some mutual ground for cooperation, because they are two minorities who suffer a great deal from majority abuses. They both have "high visibility" one wears a uniform, the other a dark skin. They both are ridiculed for being stupid and crime-ridden and so on down the line. If they could unite in a mutual bond of respect, cooperating with each other it would not be long before both would no longer be disliked minorities, but respected members of the community.