

INFLUENCES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY POLICING

The civil rights movement for racial equality came to public attention in the late 1950s and 1960s. Originally marked by nonviolent protests (in the face of violence by white mobs and the police), the more violent protests and rhetoric and the urban riots of 1965–1968 dominated the public consciousness. News footage documented police violence against peaceful protestors to break up demonstrations. Police inaction and occasional collusion in crimes committed against blacks and civil rights workers was publicly known or suspected. Police actions precipitated many of the urban riots in the mid-1960s: in the Watts district of Los Angeles in August 1965; in July 1965 in Newark, New Jersey; in July 1965 in Detroit. Federal law enforcement was often in opposition to local police during this era. For example, U.S. Marshals protected African-American children who were integrating local schools and the FBI investigated crimes against the black community.

The antiwar movement protesting U.S. military involvement in Vietnam began with draft-eligible college students, who were initially marginalized as cowards, traitors, and communist sympathizers. After the Tet Offensive in January 1968, however, opposition to the war grew rapidly. The actions of the Chicago Police against demonstrators at the August 1968 Democratic National Convention were heavily covered by the media and showcased police brutality to a nationwide television audience.

The 1967 President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice report contained a recommendation that there be three levels of police employment. *Community service officers* would be in uniform but unarmed and would be responsible for many of the “routine” activities now done by patrol officers: taking “cold” reports of crime, which constitute

the bulk of the crime reported to the police; performing the community service functions; and carrying out some other limited duties. *Police officers* would be freed up to respond to in-progress calls for crime and disorder and would handle basic criminal investigations in which leads could be followed. *Police agents* would be investigative specialists and handle complex cases, much like detectives do now. It was assumed that employees would move from one level to the other with experience and demonstrated skill. Those recommendations were generally ignored at the time because of strong union pressure and a lack of clear paths to making the changes.

The ultimate goal of community policing is a safer community. That goal is also sought by professional-model policing, but community-policing proponents seek to build and maintain a community capacity to self-regulate the conduct of residents and visitors without resorting to the enforcement arm of the police except in extreme, and hopefully rare, cases.

Community policing gained a political push during the Clinton presidency. The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services more familiarly known as “the COPS Office”) was charged with putting “100,000 cops on the street,” to fulfill one of the president’s campaign promises. In order to be eligible for funds for new hires, cities and towns had to demonstrate a commitment to community policing (current or future) and to sustaining the positions beyond the three-year period of federal support. Grants for upgrading equipment and programs were also available, if the purchases freed up officer time for street patrol or investigations. A complementary program known as Troops to Cops attempted to reintegrate soldiers demobilizing from the Gulf War by hiring them as police officers.

Whether the program actually increased the number of police officers on the street, and for how long, has been a topic of political contention. The COPS grants came at the end of the 20-

year career cycle of the large numbers of police hired in response to the civil unrest of the 1960s and early 1970s. Critics charge that COPS grants helped cities stabilize their numbers from attrition but did not substantially increase the number of officers on patrol.

In 2009, the office of Justice Programs began a new round of hiring and retention grants as part of President Obama's economic stimulus bill. Those initiatives are more overtly tied to the creation and preservation of jobs in the face of severe economic decline, but they also demand the improvement of criminal justice system functions as a result of the hiring.