**History and Eras of Policing**

Scholars speak of three eras of American policing. The first was the **Political Era** of the 19th century, when American cities were run by “machine” politics and police were generally poorly trained and often corrupt. Public dissatisfaction with corrupt government at all levels gave rise to the **Professional Era** of the first half of the 20th century, which set out to improve hiring and training standards and incorporate scientific methods into criminal investigation. Our discussion begins with the crisis in public confidence in the police that arose during the socially turbulent decade of the 1960s, undermining the claims of the police professional movement and giving rise to the **Community Policing Era** of the late 20th and early 21st centuries (Kelling and Moore 1988).

**The 1960s: Crisis and Response**

Four major social trends converged during the 1960s and early 1970s, and the police played important roles in many of them. Social individualism was asserted in many ways, such as challenges to mandatory school prayer; the free speech movement; the rock and roll, folk-song protest, and “free love” mentality of the hippies; and the emergence of the women’s and gay rights movements. This individualism challenged reigning social mores. Most police were socially and politically conservative, viewing these developments with distaste and alarm, and often used extralegal tactics to suppress them.

At the same time the police were being criticized for a rising crime rate, a series of landmark cases ruled upon during the 1960s reasserted the rights of accused individuals and curtailed the powers of the police. The Mapp v. Ohio Fourth Amendment search-and-seizure case extended the **exclusionary rule** to state courts in 1961. The Supreme Court extended to all police agencies the rule that “evidence illegally gathered must be excluded from trial.” Miranda v. Arizona in 1966 required the police to inform criminal suspects in custodial interrogation of their Fifth Amendment rights against self-incrimination.

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 were 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; and 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.

Police ineffectiveness at curbing crime, insensitivity to civil rights, and isolation from the community produced a crisis of public confidence in the police. Presidential commissions examined the causes of the urban riots and the widespread criticism of the police. The 1967 report of the **President**’**s Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice** found the police were poorly educated, poorly trained, poorly equipped, and poorly led. The federal government embarked on an improvement program under the 1968 Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act. Through the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, the government spent millions of dollars to improve police equipment and training. The Law Enforcement Education Program financed college education for both serving officers and prospective officers.

The 1967 President’s Commission 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.

Others began to examine the realities of police procedures and operations during the same time, and a body of literature on police practice began to emerge. Scholars and police alike began to push aside the facades of high-profile events and self-promoting imagery (on both sides) to examine what the police actually did. Some, like Westley (1970) and Stark (1975), focused on the darker side of police behavior, lending support to those who blamed the problems of policing on the personalities of those who chose the role. Others sought explanations for the problematic aspects of policing in more structural conditions, such as Reiss (1971), Niederhoffer (1967), McNamara (1967), Kelling (1987), and others. From their work arose a conceptual vocabulary that dominated the next few years: “policeman’s working personality,” symbolic assailant, cynicism, and reality shock.

During the 1970s, some police agencies undertook research into their operations, hoping that scientific validation would improve their resources, but the early results were a shock. The **Kansas City Preventive Patrol Experiment** suggested that routine police patrol had almost no impact on crime, fear of crime, citizen awareness of the police, or citizen confidence (Kelling, Pate, Dieckman, and Brown 1974). Rapid response was found to have little impact on crime except for the rare instances when a crime was reported in progress (Kansas City Police Department 1978; Spelman and Brown 1981). Contrary to the image projected in television shows and movies, a multicity study of detective work revealed that most crimes were solved by, or on the basis of work done by, uniformed patrol officers; detectives mostly did the paperwork for court (Greenwood, Petersilia, and Chaiken 1977).

New approaches to policing emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Herman Goldstein criticized the police for being concerned with the means of policing over the ends that policing accomplishes and proposed that the police focus instead on problem-oriented policing approaches. Building upon the experiences of the **Flint (Michigan) Neighborhood Foot Patrol Program**, others began asserting the need for community-oriented policing that emphasized greater contact between police and citizens than was possible in motorized patrol (Trojanowicz et al. 1982). The **Minneapolis Domestic Violence Experiment** provided evidence that arrests had a greater deterrent effect on subsequent marital violence than police believed, forging a new police response to a widespread social problem (Sherman and Berk 1984; Sherman and Cohn 1986).

**Community Policing Era**

Today, the community policing model is a resurgent professional model that includes zero-tolerance policing and CompStat models of administration (discussed below). Each of the models looks to the so-called **Broken Windows** theory for legitimacy and to problem solving for tactics.

“Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety” was the title of a 1982 article by Wilson and Kelling. Its central metaphor was the broken window that goes unrepaired, signaling that “no one cares” about an abandoned property and inviting further vandalism. Extending the metaphor to disorder such as public drug sales, drunkenness, and prostitution, the authors argued that the police should be more attentive to conditions that signal that an area is ripe for criminal plunder. The article advocated “order-maintenance policing,” a focus on the “small things” that the police had traditionally overlooked because they were not serious felony crimes. Arguing that the police would be more effective in deterring serious crime if they focused on lower-level disorder offenses, “Broken Windows” became the foundation for two distinct but complementary changes in police practice: problem-oriented and community-oriented policing.

**Problem-oriented policing** emphasizes analysis of crimes and situations, looking for patterns that may cross categorical lines. It seeks specific causes that may give rise to multiple events and fashions solutions to the causes, not the symptoms. Unlike order-maintenance policing, problem-oriented policing extends beyond police service, integrating appropriate roles from other criminal justice, social service, and private agencies, as indicated by the problem analysis.

**Community-oriented policing** distinguishes itself from the older professional model in several ways. First, it recognizes that the police have responsibilities for a wide variety of noncrime conditions, some of which may be criminogenic (crime-producing) and some merely annoying. Abandoned buildings, trash-strewn lots, and barking dogs are not considered “real police work,” but they remain matters of great concern to neighbors because they diminish the quality of life for community residents. The Broken Windows rationale linked quality-of-life issues to the potential for criminal incidents, making them legitimate police concerns. The police have been a powerful catalyst, organizing communities to act on their own behalf and effectively mobilizing other resources such as health and housing inspectors, public works, nonprofit agencies, and many more to help abate problem conditions in communities.

Second, community policing includes community representatives in the decision-making processes of the police department. Formal advisory boards at the agency and precinct levels help to establish priorities for action. Police participation in neighborhood meetings provides two-way communication of information and concerns.

The 1982 Flint (Michigan) Neighborhood Foot Patrol Program demonstrated a marked improvement in citizen satisfaction with police who patrolled their neighborhoods on foot, even though the actual crime rate changed little. Similar results were found in foot patrol and fear-reduction projects in Houston, Texas, and Newark, New Jersey. With the success of early problem-solving initiatives in Newport News, Virginia, those initiatives coalesced into a community policing movement that looked for more than simple law enforcement.

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’s capacity to self-regulate the conduct of its residents and visitors without resorting to the enforcement arm of the police except in extreme and rare cases.

As a philosophical umbrella, community-oriented policing stresses routine, nonemergency interactions between police officers and the communities they serve. By breaking down barriers of mistrust, this approach provides a sound foundation for mutual problem-solving efforts, helps develop critical information about individuals and conditions in neighborhoods, and ultimately leads to greater citizen participation in law compliance and crime prevention. In practice, community policing initiatives have ranged from half-hearted failures to innovative and highly effective programs. Community-oriented policing has become a new label for old programs such as crime prevention, community relations, and even enhanced patrol. It has also been a vehicle for an entirely new approach to policing: including the community as an active partner in public safety. The wide range and mixed effectiveness of these local initiatives have led critics to question whether the claims of community policing are merely rhetoric or a new reality. Nevertheless, the Clinton administration made a major commitment to advancing community policing during the 1990s, and the term continues to be a descriptive term used to this day.

Resurgent professionalism emerged as the police culture resisted some of the changes demanded by community policing. Many officers, supervisors, and agencies still consider law enforcement to be their primary mission—deterring criminals through aggressive patrol and arresting those who are not deterred. While a few rejected community policing precepts outright as “not police work,” many recognized the inherent value of the activities but concluded that they are too labor-intensive and time-consuming in the face of overwhelming demands for police service and shrinking resources.

Professionally oriented police take their inspiration from New York City’s dramatic crime decrease in the mid-1990s under Commissioner William Bratton. The NYPD mounted an aggressive campaign against low-level law violations that had previously been ignored—sidewalk drug sales, loitering, turnstile-jumping in the subways, loud music, public drinking, and so forth. Police culture christened this approach **zero tolerance** after an earlier U.S. Customs drug interdiction program, under the catchphrase “If you take care of the little things [disorder], the big things [crime] will take care of themselves.”

At a practical level, the zero-tolerance version of order-maintenance policing translates into “arrest as many people as possible for as many things as possible.” It allows the police to focus on the arrest—law enforcement—as the primary crime-fighting tool, to the exclusion of the “softer” community-building duties of community policing. As originally conceived, however, order-maintenance policing has a much broader mandate than just “arrest ‘em all and let the courts sort it out”: the Broken Windows prescription looked at arrest as a last resort. Setting and enforcing local rules of civility and conduct were more important elements of true order-maintenance policing. A zero-tolerance campaign may help restore order in hard-pressed areas, but it is not necessarily a long-term strategy that will restore community competence.

CompStat was the other major factor of the NYPD experience. Briefly put, **CompStat** was the use of weekly statistics as a basis for police operations, rather than simply responding to 911 calls. Police administrators were held to account for the conditions in their precincts, and that accountability in turn drove the targeted police actions on the street. CompStat (short for “Comparative Statistics”) was promoted as a rational basis for police decision making and resource allocation (Henry 2002; Silverman 1999). Despite some dissent, CompStat opened the door to more sophisticated use of information, a trend now known as intelligence-led policing.