The “Territorial Imperative” and Problem Solving Partnerships: LAPD Defines Community

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LAPD Chief Darryl Gates:

- Casual drug users “ought to be taken out and shot”
- “Blacks might be more likely to die from chokeholds because their arteries do not open as fast as they do on ‘normal people.’”
“Although community-based policing is not a panacea, the LAPD should carefully implement this model on a City-wide basis.... Above all, the Department must understand that it is accountable to all segments of the community.”

(Christopher Commission, 1991, p. xv)

“Community policing proponents believe that...a cooperative and mutually beneficial relationship will develop between the police and the community that will ensure police accountability to the community...”

(p. 101)
Envisioning Community
Envisioning Community

• The “Territorial Imperative”
  • Basic Car Areas (BCAs)
    • Senior Lead Officers as “mountain lions”
    • Community = 9A41
    • Merging nostalgia and control
  • Problem Solving Partnerships
    • CPABs
      • Community as resource
      • Community as students
Keller calls the territorial imperative a “sense of ownership” for a geographic area. When pushed out of their own territory by development, mountain lions would creep into public space because they knew they could not move into another lion’s territory—that sense of boundary was stronger than their fear of humans.

(Roussell & Gascón, phone interview, 8/27/10)
Territorial Imperative

The Basic Car Plan has been central to police services in Los Angeles since the early 1970’s. Originally conceived to establish a “territorial imperative”, the Basic Car Plan sought to maintain a consistent police presence in Los Angeles neighborhoods.

Territorial Imperative

“[T]he barriers between the community and the police have been longstanding....[P]olice officers [will] create a customer profile of their assigned Area, noting community wants and needs, and the social economic and other conditions confronting the community which creates a weakening of confidence in public safety and in the personnel who provide those services....”

“Mapping neighborhoods for community policing will be a process for building external bonds between the police and the community....In July, 1992, each geographic Area was provided with extensive demographic data on their community. This information...provides a solid beginning for this mapping process.”

-LAPD, Building Public Safety (1992)
Territorial Imperative

“The strategy we will employ is the problem-solving method, which assumes that a large measure of the grief is produced by fairly identifiable problems. Our search for the problems will no doubt lead us to neighborhood aggravations, visible drug use, graffiti and street prostitution. We will also analyze data such as our multiple-call location reports, and ask why we are constantly sending response cars to certain locations. Then we can begin solving the problems.”

-Deputy Chief Kroeker, commanding officer, South Bureau, LA Times editorial (1994)
Territorial Imperative

An analysis of the Basic Cars and geographic Areas was conducted using work load, demographics, natural boundaries, and the identified natural service communities...result[ing] in the creation of an additional 16 Basic Cars in 1995; and an additional 3 Basic Cars in 1996, Citywide; to meet community needs.

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Partnerships and Problem Solving

This proposal seeks to institute a ‘new beginning’ to build public safety confidence between the people of Los Angeles and their Police Department.

The community has a legitimate right to participate in the design, implementation and assessment of public safety services.

In this effort, the community and the police, as full partners, identify and prioritize crime and disorder problems and share responsibility for development and implementation of proactive problem-solving strategies.

Partnerships and Problem Solving

Community Focus Groups – Consistent with the notion of partnership, direct community input into the decision making process was critical. Community focus group meetings were conducted in each of the Department’s 18 geographic Areas, with each group identifying its top 15 expectations of the Los Angeles Police Department. The results of each group were immediately provided to the participants, Department command staff, and the employees participating in the internal ad hoc task forces.

Partnerships and Problem Solving

[T]he new organizational structure gives the Area commanding officer direct contact with the watch commanders who are immediately responsible for solving the problems identified through the community partnership process.

Chief Parks, Management paper: The state of community policing: On the new Los Angeles Police Department (1999)
Partnerships and Problem Solving

Having the community share responsibility for crime and solutions is a cornerstone of Community Policing. Through the use of Community-Police Advisory Boards at the Area command level, Neighborhood Watch [block clubs] at the local level, and the individual relationships established by SLOs and other officers, the community will be an active participant in the identification, prioritization and implementation of solutions to public safety problems.

Partnerships and Problem Solving

The role of Community-Police Advisory Boards is to advise and inform Area commanding officers of community problems and concerns...


The Department’s model of problem solving...uses the SARA approach (Scanning, Analysis, Response, Assessment) to examine characteristics of problems in the community and to develop appropriate strategies to reduce these community-identified crime and disorder issues.

-Chief Williams, *Community Policing* (1995)
Partnerships and Problem Solving

[M]any [Department supervisors] could not distinguish between information officers receive from concerned members of the community and that which is received from a criminal informant. They had even less knowledge about the difference between a reliable and unreliable informant. Their response to questions in these areas illustrated bewilderment and a failure to recognize and appreciate the legal, risk management, supervisory, training and management issues inherent in the use of informants.

Partnerships and Problem Solving

**Interviewer:** What are you empowering the community to do exactly?

**SLO Fernandez:** For them to actually share. It’s basically like the academy. We bring them in and educate them about a variety of subject matters. The application of the use of force in this department. The escalation of force. Internal affairs and treaties. How do we police ourselves as a department, and what avenues are there for the public to be assured that this organization is in fact—

**Interviewer:** So you’re educating the community on police functions, but how does that help build community with the neighborhoods?

**Fernandez:** I think it is an incredibly powerful tool because in fact they have a direct relationship with the police. They get the education and get to see the personalities. That is incredibly powerful.
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• Conclusion
  • Whither accountability to community?
Conclusion

Whither community accountability?

“[CPABs] were never perceived to be a citywide political force that can out-vote captains, the chief of police, the commission,” [Chief Parks] said. Those advisory panels “are one of thousands of inputs” the Police Department uses in relating with citizens. -LA Times, “Homeowners chide Chief over cuts in community policing plan” (1999)
Conclusion

Problem Solving – Problem solving challenges officers and community members to think creatively and supports the use of innovative, non-traditional methods of policing. It employs effective law enforcement tactics, yet also relies upon increased cooperation and commitment of the community and other governmental resources.

-Chief Williams, *Community Policing* (1995)
Special thanks to:
Interviewees
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Luis Daniel Gascón
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