



Why reforms fail

Wesley G. Skogan

To cite this article: Wesley G. Skogan (2008) Why reforms fail, Policing & Society, 18:1, 23-34, DOI: [10.1080/10439460701718534](https://doi.org/10.1080/10439460701718534)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439460701718534>



Published online: 16 Jan 2008.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 1471



View related articles [↗](#)



Citing articles: 96 View citing articles [↗](#)

Why reforms fail

Wesley G. Skogan*

Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University, Evanston, USA

Police reform is risky and hard, and efforts to innovate in policing often fall short of expectations. This chapter examines sources of resistance to change in policing. Some are internal, including opposition to reform at virtually all levels of the organization and among special units. The position of unions vis-a-vis change is highly variable, particularly if proposals do not threaten working conditions and officer safety. Politicians and other potential opponents of change lurk in the vicinity of policing, and reformers need to bring them into the process as well. The public must understand how the investment they have in policing will be enhanced, and not threatened, by reform. If new strategies require the cooperation of other service agencies (as, for example, for problem-solving policing) the heads of those bureaucracies must understand they are partners in their city's program, not victims of empire building by the police. At the top, city leaders must match the commitment of chiefs and other police executives to change, if reforms are to survive leadership transition.

Keywords: Innovation; Reform; Resistance; Misconduct; Leadership

It is necessary to be clear-eyed about the difficulties of innovating in police organizations. Because of widespread enthusiasm for innovations, such as community and problem-oriented policing, third-party policing, 'lever-pulling' policing, and evidence-based policing among academics and the informed public, it could appear that reform comes easily.¹ In fact, it is hard, the political risks involved are considerable, and efforts to change the police often fall far short or fail.

This chapter outlines some sources of resistance to innovation in policing. It is not just focused on bottom-up reform, or the role of police unions. In fact, the article by Bayley in this issue concludes that most innovations in policing have come from the outside. Usually the plan has been crafted by academics or consultants, and often the proposed programs come with the support of politicians who are trying to deal with one or another public outrage over police affairs. I summarize what I have gleaned about obstacles to change in police organizations in 11 categories. Many of them reflect processes internal to police agencies. These I mostly attribute to the career and bureaucratic interests and managerial outlook of the parties involved. At the top, executives worry about keeping their jobs and the rank-and-file working hard and out of trouble. Sergeants may not want to stray from what they know how to do in order to keep out of trouble. Street officers do not want to be plagued by out-of-touch programs that add to their workload and give them tasks that lie outside their comfort zone. Elite units such as detectives frequently are able to avoid getting involved, while union leaders keep a careful eye on their strategic situation

*Corresponding author. Email: skogan@northwestern.edu

vis-a-vis management. Others obstacles are probably endemic to public sector organizations: these include problems of interagency coordination, the competing demands of differing constituencies, and the inability of the police to measure their success in the absence of a profit-and-loss statement. External to the police are community and political forces that can stymie change as well.

I do not know the relative frequency with which these obstacles loom large, but I have run across numerous examples of each of them without looking too exhaustively. I have learned about them in my own research on community-oriented and problem-solving projects, plus studies of narcotics operations. This article also incorporates what I have read and gleaned in conversations with police and researchers in hotel bars around the world. Any reform agenda will face formidable obstacles, for the length of the list—it is a long one—is testimony to the difficulty of managing change in police agencies.

Resistance by mid-level and top managers

Resistance does not just come from the bottom of police organizations; revolts by mid-level managers have defeated community-policing projects in several cities. Managers near the middle of the organizational hierarchy saw authority being taken from them and pushed to lower levels in the organization, as part of decentralization schemes. Opportunities for promotion for middle managers may be limited by shrinking management layers and the flattening of the formal rank structure that sometimes goes along with efforts to decentralize for neighborhood-oriented policing. When Chicago abolished its highest civil-service police rank—captain—a lieutenant (the next level below) told me that he felt as if he had been ‘kicked in the teeth.’ Police managers typically are command-and-control oriented and feel most comfortable when everything is done by the book. When it was broached that foot officers might carry cell phones rather than rely on their portable radios, so that they could remain in contact with citizen patrols, local merchants and others on their beat, Chicago’s chief of patrol killed the idea. ‘How will we know when they screw up?’ was his rhetorical question. Instead, he wanted all communications with officers in the field go through the 911 Center, when they were tape-recorded for future investigation.

Discussions of policing reform also often feature modern management terms, such as ‘employee empowerment.’ This also makes senior managers very nervous. They worry about laziness, corruption, racial profiling, and excessive force, and they do not trust rank-and-file officers on any of those dimensions. Departments struggle to keep control of their field force. Most police officers work alone or with a partner, and the top brass know little about what they do out there except what they report on pieces of paper that they sometimes fill out to document their activities. Police routinely encounter opportunities to engage in a laundry list of problematic activities, and the usual way that executives respond is to tighten the management screws to rein in officer discretion. However, the reforms of choice today—including problem solving and community policing—celebrate the exercise of discretion, administrative decentralization, reducing hierarchy, granting officers more independence, and trusting in their professionalism. At the same time, it is revelations of misconduct, not rising crime rates, that are likely to cost police executives their jobs, so they remain risk averse.

Resistance by managers and even other top executives often results in innovative policing units being run from the chief's office. Or, to avoid the entrenched bureaucracy, they may be housed in a special new bureau. In one large city, a new chief who was brought from out of town to initiate community policing found that he was unable to get the uniformed patrol division of the department to do anything about it, from the top down. They were there before he came, and they expected to be there when he left. Hence, he created an entirely new chain of command in the department. A special community-policing bureau was set up with a parallel hierarchy. It controlled teams of neighborhood officers, who worked outside the supervision of the rest of the department. It was headed by a director he recruited from another city, so that she would be free of the entrenched politics of the department.

Forming separate units, often staffed by volunteers, may be an attractive change strategy because reforms can be put into the field quickly, seemingly without the necessity of confronting resistance by established units. A risk of this strategy is that officers who serve in these units may not be seen as 'real police.' Officers with community assignments can easily appear to have easy lives. They are frequently interviewed on television, and they are invited to attend conferences in other cities. Sometimes they are free to choose their own work hours, and too often they decide that they are really needed on their beat 9–5, Mondays through Fridays. This was the shift time of choice for New York City's C-POP officers (e.g., McElroy et al. 1993). What they do gets labeled 'social work' by other officers. They become known as 'empty holster guys.' Morale flounders, and some of the best officers will try to transfer out. Where I was doing field work in Texas, community officers had flexible shift schedules, they were given a cell phone, and they took a patrol car home with them every night. When I quizzed a community officer what the rest of the department thought of them, she replied, 'They really hate us.'

Resistance by front-line supervisors

In the first experimental year, when the program was still fragile, I often overheard Chicago's community policing manager warn his team, 'We're not going to let the sergeants kill this!' Sergeants have direct control over what street officers do on a day-to-day basis. One observer identified sergeants as most officers' 'real employer' (Muir 1977). Herman Goldstein (1990: 57) notes, 'However strongly the head of an agency may elicit a different style of policing, the quality of an officer's daily life is heavily dependent on how well the officer satisfies the expectations and demands of his or her immediate supervisor.' Sergeants interpret the operational meaning of official policies at the street level, so when roles and rules are up for grabs, they have to have a clear vision they can support if change is really going to occur there.

Sergeants present problems. First, when programs are new, sergeants are new to it as well. They do not know from their own experience how the job should be done, or what works. Like others in the department, they have to learn skills and new roles from the ground up. Because they are the 'transmission belt' that translates the policies of higher-ups into action, it is important that they represent organizational policies. If they actually believe in them that would help too. This matters even in traditional command-and-control organizations, but many contemporary innovations in policing call for significant decentralization, pushing both authority and

responsibility for decision making deeper into the organization. There, sergeants are the facilitating management layer. What Chicago's change manager sensed was what our survey data revealed: at that layer of management, support for community policing was very thin. On questions gauging their support for collaborating with the public and engaging in problem solving, sergeants scored very close to the rank-and-file, and both groups were largely convinced that it could never work (Skogan and Hartnett 1997).

Resistance by rank-and-file officers

Efforts to implement policing reforms have sometimes failed in the face of resistance by ordinary officers as well. Enthusiasm by public officials and community activists for innovations in policing encourages its detractors within the force to dismiss reforms as 'just politics.' They see them as passing fads, something dreamed up by civilians for the police to do. Police are skeptical about programs invented by civilians. This is partly a matter of police culture. American policing is dominated by a 'we versus they,' or 'insider versus outsider' orientation that assumes that the academics, politicians, and community activists who plan policing programs cannot possibly understand their job. Police are particularly hostile to programs that threaten to involve civilians in defining their work or evaluating their performance. They do not like civilians influencing their operational priorities, or deciding if they are effective. Police on the street grouse about 'loud mouths' in the community who are active because they want police to provide them personal service, and groups and organizations that want police to support or defend their economic and social interests. Outsiders must be 'gimmie guys,' for why else would they be taking such an interest?

There is also resistance to change when—and because—it requires that officers do many of their old jobs in new ways, and that they take on tasks that they never imagined would come their way. Reforms of the day ask them to identify and solve a broad range of problems, reach out to elements of the community that were previously outside their orbit, and put their careers at risk by taking on unfamiliar and challenging responsibilities. A difficulty with these expectations is that they frequently lie outside the traditional roles for which they were selected and trained, which they have honed through years of practical experience. Police would prefer 'to do what they signed up for'—usually a combination of crime fighting and emergency service. As Thacher indicates in this issue, police claims to professionalism are based on their experience and judgment rather than to the abstract and technical skills of many occupational groups, and as a result they are loath to enter uncharted waters. Street cops also rightly fear being assigned additional duties and paperwork while still being held responsible for handling their old workload.

In my experience, translating the 'fundamental principles' of initiatives like problem solving and community policing into actual practice is another difficulty. Abstract concepts must be turned into lists of practical, day-to-day activities and then enshrined in enforceable orders to which officers in the field can fairly be held accountable. To a degree many outsiders find hard to fathom, little is supposed to happen in police departments without General Orders detailing how it is to be done. Of course, the troops have actually to go along with those orders, and the emphasis should always be on the 'para' in these 'paramilitary' organizations. As Hans Toch

points out in his contribution to this issue, the view that police departments are efficiently hierarchical and bureaucratic does not reflect how the daily work gets done. This is why sergeants are so important. From their perspective, officers typically hear about new programs when they are announced at city hall press conferences, and they feel that most initiatives are adopted without their input. They are resentful when 'the community' is consulted about internal police business and they are not. Officers who have survived previous policing reforms often derisively recall the acronyms that designated those projects and can recount the forces that inevitably led to their failure.

Voluntary overtime programs are obviously attractive in this environment. For years, many departments paid volunteer officers some extra money for conducting community-oriented projects. They were to do community policing *after* their day of 'real' police work is done. No one had to do it, but there was extra money in it. However, not only may officers be tired by the end of the day, but it seems unlikely that they would really do things differently during that extra two or three hours. I once studied a narcotics team paid to do 'community-oriented narcotics policing' for an extra three hours, four days each week. There was a great deal of federal money for the program, but I found that the officers did not have the slightest idea how to do 'community-oriented narcotics policing.' It was not just that they received no training. They all worked undercover out of a secret office, dressed in rough clothing, and believed they could not reveal themselves to the community. The whole program was a good example of a bad idea dreamed up by civilians, in this case from Washington, DC (Skogan and Annan 1993).

Resistance by special units

Specialized units such as detectives are often threatened by department-wide programs that require them to change their ways. For example, detectives may be required actually to exchange information with uniformed officers, and not just suck it into their 'black hole,' and they might find debate opening about their effectiveness. I often describe Chicago's detectives as 'the biggest, toughest and best-armed gang in town,' although in truth there are several bigger and better-armed street gangs. Often special units have special relationships with politicians that protect them. It can take political connections as well as the active support of friends and relatives on the force to become a detective, and politicians will move to protect them if they are threatened with unwanted change. What the politicians get in return goes unstated.

In my experience, detectives have used their elite status in the organization to avoid getting involved in programs like community policing. In Chicago, a succession of chief detectives has pursued the same avoidance strategy, which is to smile warmly at the mention of community policing and suggest that detectives are planning to get involved soon. There are many other nooks and niches in the organization where police who did not like the city's program could also hide out and get ahead, including the organized crime division, the narcotics unit, and various roving squads of plainclothes tactical officers. Their anonymity and disconnection from any community contact helped them 'take heads' and 'kick ass' with relative impunity, in the name of good, aggressive policing. Because the ultimate measures of good police work remains making arrests and seizing guns and drugs (see 'Measuring What

Matters' below), those are the jobs that everyone wants. Vacant positions in the department are always in the uniformed patrol division, where community policing has been effectively sequestered.

Resistance by police unions

The extent to which resistance by police unions is an issue varies highly from city to city in the United States. The states vary in the extent to which police can be represented by unions and can effectively threaten job action, but in many big cities they are a force to be reckoned with. In Chicago, the major police union endorsed community policing, and stayed focused on wages, benefits, working conditions, and officer safety. In the mid-1990s, the union even formed a community-policing committee whose members started showing up national conferences. However, in other places unions decided to attack the program. In a West Coast city the union protested strongly against the idea. They charged that it was just 'social work,' and that the planned training program was intended to instill 'political correctness' in police officers. They threatened to keep officers from appearing at community-policing training. As a compromise, they agreed to tolerate one day of training, in place of the three-day training sessions that had been planned. At the time they were hoping to move to a four-day workweek, which they later achieved. In the East, the head of one police union stormed into a meeting of police commanders to announce that a new policing experiment they were about to launch would 'never happen.' Having national level unionization might not help. In one European country, the chief of the second largest city told me there would never be anything like 'community policing' anywhere, because the national union simply would not allow it.

A crucial issue can be the match between the demands of a new program and rules stipulated in the contract between the union and the city. These contracts bind the parties to work rules, performance standards, and personnel policies that can run counter to organizational change. Almost everywhere contracts between cities and police unions affect the ability of department managers to make decisions about staffing. Frequently they grant officers the right to choose assignments based on seniority. This can limit the ability of department managers to determine which—and even how many—officers work in a district, what shift they will be assigned to, and perhaps their specific job assignments. For example, in Chicago officer's district assignments are decided almost completely by seniority. It can be impossible to put them where managers want them (based on their ability to speak an immigrant language, for example) or to keep officers assigned to a beat if they want to work somewhere else.

Along with their many friends and family members, organized police groups can also be a formidable force in local electoral politics. This inhibits politicians from pushing them too hard in directions they do not choose to go. In Chicago, all officers are required to live in the city itself, where their political strength and cohesion have neutralized the local prosecutor, county sheriff, and others who might delve independently into their affairs. Their families, friends and fund-raising efforts have also captured the support of several state legislators from suburbs that are close in but outside the mayor's sphere of influence. State senators and representatives can be counted on to make an end run around city legislation and administrative actions

at the capital. There, downstate legislators who care little about the details of Chicago government and its budgetary problems are happy to go along with efforts to negate the city's attempts to control staffing and spending.

Competing demands and expectations

Police managers and city executives also have to find the officers required to staff new programs. Community policing is particularly labor intensive, and may require more officers. Finding the money to hire more officers is hard, so departments may try to scavenge them from existing units. This can bring conflict with other powerful police executives and politicians who support the current arrangement. Police also face 'the 911 problem,' for their commitment to respond to calls as quickly as possible dominates the resources of most departments. Chicago, for example, receives more than five million 911 calls each year, and sends a patrol car in response to 3.1 million of them. In some cities, community policing encountered heavy political resistance when the perception arose (encouraged by its opponents) that officers previously devoted to responding to 911 calls were being diverted to this social experiment, leaving (it was claimed) the community at risk. Houston's first attempt to do community policing was defeated by this claim (Skogan and Hartnett 1997).

Hence, police executives try to look for ways to implement new programs more cheaply. One important organizational function that often gets shortchanged is training. Training is expensive and officers have to be removed from duty—or paid overtime—to attend. During the early 1980s, one Western city tried to run a neighborhood-oriented program with no training at all; they hoped that officers (who were doing it as an overtime assignment) would guess what to do from the name of the project. More recently, officers in another large city received one day of training; in another major agency it was two days of training. This for a project that is supposed to revolutionize policing.

Inability to 'measure what matters'

One problem facing both community and problem-solving policing is that it is hard to document what officers are doing or if they are being effective. The problem-solving component of community policing shifts the unit of work from individual incidents to clusters of problems, and those are harder to count. It is also hard to evaluate whether problem solving is effective, and to determine whether individual officers are doing a good or a bad job at it. The public often wants action on things that department information systems do not count at all. As a result, both individual and unit performance is hard to measure and to reward. However, the thrust of New York City's CompStat and other new 'accountability processes' in police departments is that measured activities get attention and unmeasured accomplishments do not get much attention, even if the unmeasured activities matter very much. Top-down management and their relentless focus on recorded crime statistics almost inevitably reinforces the most traditional conceptions of policing (Weisburd et al. 2003). CompStat may be the most important obstacle to reform in contemporary policing.

Like many American cities, Chicago has adopted a CompStat system of its own. In a new book I call this 'CompStat, Chicago Style' (Skogan 2006). As in New York, the process focuses on traditional measures: the number of crimes, arrests, guns seized, and calls for service answered. The focus on reducing crime inevitably presses the organization toward reliance on those numbers. Away from police headquarters, managers think that the accountability process undervalues the 'intangibles' that are community policing's hallmark, including community satisfaction, public involvement in crime prevention projects, and the formation of police-community partnerships. They lament that the city's CompStat system forces them to stray from community policing. One told me, 'When [community policing] started, it wasn't supposed to be this numbers thing, and now it's totally a numbers thing.' Another critic noted, 'This is mission-oriented policing, more traditional . . . This is top-down management, stats driven.' At the public meetings held every month all over the city, residents complain about teen loitering, graffiti, noise, and loose garbage in the alleys (Skogan 2006: Table 4.3), but action on these is not prized in accountability sessions. In Chicago, as elsewhere, important things that are not being measured elude the accountability process, which is driven principally by objectives that can be measured by the department's information systems. Over time, organizations almost inevitably shift their attention to what they can measure, and this pressures them to revert to traditional policing practices.

Failure of interagency cooperation

Adopting community and problem-solving policing inevitably means accepting an expanded definition of police responsibilities. When the public becomes involved in setting priorities, a new set of issues that previously fell outside the police mandate will be high on their list. In Chicago, the public is concerned about burglary and robbery, to be sure. However, at the meetings described above they also express a great deal of concern about abandoned cars, rats running loose in the alleyways, dilapidated buildings, homeless people sleeping in the parks, missing street signs, burned-out street lights, and runaway youths squatting in abandoned buildings. Although police can note that abandoned cars are a high-priority problem, they have to turn to other city agencies to get them towed away.

However, for a long list of familiar bureaucratic and political reasons other municipal agencies usually think that community policing is the police department's program, and not theirs. They resist altering their own professional and budget-constrained priorities, and their five-year master plans. Making inter-organizational cooperation work can be one of the most difficult problems facing innovative departments. When a chief of police in Boston was new, he assured me that he could handle change in his department. His biggest fear was that his mayor might not deliver the city's other agencies, and that they would not provide the kind of support that community policing requires. In my experience, if community policing is the police department's program, important parts of it will fail. Community policing must be the entire city's program.

To make this work, bureaucratic obstacles must be overcome by police headquarters and the city administration. Problem solving takes sustained, government-wide commitment to the program, and many American cities do not succeed in developing this commitment. In some cities, officers assigned to community work

develop lists of individual contacts in other city service agencies whom they feel they can call on if they really need help. A neighborhood officer I interviewed in Texas relied on his brother-in-law, who worked for the appropriate city agency, to get cars towed in his zone. There and elsewhere, newcomers to the job have difficulty getting anything done. To make a formal request in some places requires the police chief to write a memo to another agency head. Before Chicago's program began, police officers predicted that the coordination of city services with their problem-solving efforts would not work. Based on bitter experience, they expected that other agencies would continue to be as unresponsive as in the past, and they complained about it loudly. But soon the mayor made his expectations about the new program forcefully clear to his agency heads; if they did not cooperate, they would lose their jobs. City hall staff members developed a computerized management system for coordinating responses to beat officers' service requests and monitoring how responsive the service agencies were. Service delivery turned out to be one of the most successful components of the program during its early years, but it was not easy (cf. Skogan et al. 1999).

Public unresponsiveness

Ironically, sustaining public involvement in policing matters is difficult. The two groups may not have a history of getting along. Especially in disadvantaged neighborhoods, police may be perceived as arrogant and brutal rather than as potential partners. Residents may fear that more personal attention from the police could result in harassment and indiscriminate searches. Nothing in the past has prepared the public for new approaches to policing, and they are unlikely to understand the goals or tactics associated with new modes of policing. When they do hear about it, there may be no reason for residents to believe it. In poor neighborhoods the past is too often strewn with broken promises. Residents are accustomed to seeing programs come and go in response to political and budgetary cycles that are out of their control, and they can rightly be skeptical that community policing or any other promised reform will be any different. Organizations representing the interests of community members may not have a tradition of cooperating with police. Because their constituents often fear the police, groups representing low-income and minority areas may be more interested in monitoring police misconduct and pressing for greater police accountability to civilians than in becoming closely identified with them.

Civic participation is also generally difficult to sustain in worse-off places. Poor and high-crime areas are often not well endowed with an infrastructure of organizations ready to get involved in civic projects. Crime and fear stimulate withdrawal from community life. Residents easily view each other with suspicion rather than with neighborliness, and this undermines their capacity to forge collective responses to local problems. Because they fear retaliation by drug dealers and neighborhood gangs, programs requiring public meetings or organized cooperation may be less successful (Skogan 1988). In Chicago, there was discussion of potential retaliation for cooperating with police or attending beat meetings at 22 per cent of the meetings we observed (Skogan 2006). As a result, areas that need the most help usually find it hardest to get people involved.

In the case of community policing, police executives have learned that if the public is going to take a significant role they will need educating. Civilians will not know what they can newly expect from the police, nor what they themselves can contribute to solving neighborhood problems. Like police themselves, uninformed citizens are likely to define their expectations of policing in traditional terms, expecting more patrols, fast response times, and arrests to solve their problems for them. It will be their instinct to demand more of the same in response to almost every issue. At Chicago's community meetings, the most common complaint lodged against the police (at 31 per cent of meetings) concerned the speed with which they answered calls, and the second (21 per cent) was that there were not enough of them on patrol (Skogan 2006: Table 45.3). Sophisticated concepts and a new set of jargon are involved, so police reform requires aggressive marketing before many voters and taxpayers will understand what is being accomplished.

Nasty misconduct diverting public and leadership attention

Investments that police make in innovation are always at risk. In the United States, community policing is a legitimacy building strategy. Everyone is aware of the deep division in the country around policing issues. Whites are highly satisfied while African-Americans are dissatisfied, and the gap between the races has not changed much over the past 40 years. There is evidence that the seemingly endless recurrence of highly publicized acts of police violence affects public attitudes, reversing occasionally improvements in public opinion. Community policing promises that police will accommodate the public and not just the other way around. However, when use of excessive force or killings by police becomes a public issue, years of progress in police-community relations can disappear. The same is true of revelations of widespread or deep police corruption.

Nasty misconduct can also undermine reform efforts because department and city leaders lose their focus on managing innovation. The mayor of Chicago once remarked to me that he has to think about his police department every day. He hates that, because he has many other things to worry about. However, he knows that managing change in large organizations requires his focused attention. Nasty misconduct causes city and department leaders to lose their focus, and it diverts the attention of the media from the unnewsworthy aspects of police reform.

Reform may not survive leadership transition

Police everywhere spend a great deal of time (a lot of it on-the-job time) debating what the tea leaves tell them is going on amid the shifting power alliances downtown. How long is the chief going to hang on? Who are the heirs apparent, and do their views differ from the incumbent's? Whose stock is rising and falling, and whose views must to be attended to or can safely be ignored? The difficulty is that divisions downtown are almost inevitable in transitioning organizations. This slows everything down, as uncertainty over the future course of the department will be read by many as a rationale for cautious inaction until the situation is clarified.

Uncertainty is multiplied when a new chief or even mayor arrives, for they may have even more new ideas. When leaders come to office, they want to do new things. They want to make their own mark, and can have little interest in picking up the

unfinished projects of the people they replaced. The old police chief in one mid-sized city I know struggled for more than a decade to build a new community policing program. However, when he retired, his replacement (who came from another city) had no interest in it at all, and the program was disbanded virtually overnight. Another city elected a new mayor in 1999, one who ran on a tough 'law and order' platform. His predecessor had committed the city to community policing, and had selected a new police chief from out of town to inaugurate the program. The new mayor fired the chief at their first meeting. A deputy chief who was present at the meeting stood and promised to push a 'zero tolerance' strategy that the mayor found more appealing. The mayor promoted him to chief of police on the spot. He also instituted a 'New York style' management system in every city agency, to drive progress against the measures that mattered to him.

If reforms are to persist, the astute change manager has to ensure that they are the department's and even the city's project, not just their own. If they can build public and political support for reform, its budget may survive when money is tight and resources are hard to come by. Political support, and deep support from the community, is also a tool for beating back dissidents within the department when necessary. If it is the city's and the community's program, perhaps their potential successors will also think reform is a good idea, or at least one that candidates must promise to support in order to get the job.

This was the situation in Chicago in late 2006, after 14 years of community policing. In 2003, the city's major newspaper created a crime scare during a period when the mayor was choosing a new chief of police. Politically, the cheapest and most immediate response he could make was to anoint a candidate from the detective squad committed to tough enforcement. The new chief in turn reorganized and refocused the department on guns, gangs, and homicides. Soon commitment to the department's community policing program withered. Most districts lost their community-policing managers, lieutenants who were instead put in charge of flying squads. All of the department's slack resources were rounded up to staff them. Police hoping to get ahead organizationally gravitated toward crackdown units, for they are the focus of the top brass. Headquarters accountability reviews, which used to include community-policing activities and goals, were scaled back dramatically to make time for discussion of homicide patterns. Activities that better fit a recentralized management structure driven by recorded crime have become what matters. The only thing that protects the shell of the program that remains is that it was politically infeasible to shut it down, so deeply are the beat-oriented parts of community policing woven into the political and organizational life of the city's neighborhoods. There it lurks, waiting perhaps to be resurrected when a crisis of legitimacy again haunts the police, and they have to rediscover community policing in order to rebuild again their credibility with the community.

Note

1. For a discussion of the potential and pitfalls in these and other recent innovations in policing, see the chapters in Weisburd and Braga (2006).

References

- Goldstein, H., 1990. *Problem-oriented Policing*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- McElroy, J.E., Cosgrove, C.A., and Sadd, S., 1993. *Community Policing: The CPOP in New York*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Muir, W.K., 1977. *Police: Streetcorner Politicians*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Skogan, W.G., 1988. "Community organizations and crime". In: M. Tonry and N. Morris, eds. *Crime and Justice: An Annual Review*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 39–78.
- Skogan, W.G., 2006. *Police and Community in Chicago: A Tale of Three Cities*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Skogan, W.G. and Annan, S., 1993. "Drug enforcement in public housing". In: R. Davis, A. Lurigio and D. Rosenbaum, eds. *Drugs and the Community*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas, 162–174.
- Skogan, W.G. and Hartnett, S.M., 1997. *Community Policing, Chicago Style*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Skogan, W.G., Hartnett, S.M., DuBois, J., Comey, J.T., Kaiser, M., and Lovig, J.H., 1999. *On the Beat: Police and Community Problem Solving*. Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Weisburd, D. and Braga, A., 2006. *Police Innovation: Contrasting Perspectives*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Weisburd, D., Mastrofski, S., McNally, A.M., Greenspan, R., and Willis, J., 2003. "Reforming to preserve: Compstat and strategic problem solving in American policing". *Criminology & Public Policy*, 2, 421–456.