

The Neighborhood Police Officer and Social Service Agencies in Israel: A Working Model for Cooperation¹

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Abstract

This article presents the development of a model for cooperation between Neighborhood Police Officers and social workers in social service agencies in Israel which utilized guidelines suggested by Treger (1981). The uniqueness of the Israeli model is twofold: a) Neighborhood Police Officers are focusing more on "community" non-criminal matters and thus are involved in "uniformed social work" more than their peers elsewhere; b) a written contract between the two agencies was formulated to include operative steps for improving cooperation between the professionals in the respective agencies and an ethical clause to maintain exchange of information. The model emerged to accommodate the decision by the Israel police to deploy Neighborhood Police Officers to better reach the community and as a result of studies reporting the positive impact of this new role on the community and police officers. The author found that the university provided a natural background for materializing this cooperative model through serving as an intermediary between the two agencies. Initial assessments of the setting are very encouraging.

Introduction

The literature on police-community relations has underscored the positive aspects of police-community cooperation (e.g., Decker, 1981; Klyman and Kruckenberg, 1979; Trojanowicz, 1972, 1983). Specifically, cooperation is needed and sought out to facilitate the work of police, to provide necessary information, to report crime, to assist in the judicial process and the like. The better the cooperation the stronger

the support the police receive from the public and that is translated into enabling the police to perform more efficiently and effectively. The continuum of police community cooperation ranges in the literature from one end of no cooperation (O'Brien, 1978) through public relations or token cooperation (Evans, 1974; Norris, 1983) to the other end of grass-root cooperation (Cain, 1979; Voth, 1979).

The community is not just seen as a target for operation but as a resource for police activities. In some instances, the cooperation precipitates dynamics in which various agencies and organizations attempt to influence the power bases in the community and achieve desired changes (Janowitz and Suttles, 1980). Mostly, there are several factors which contribute to the level of community cooperation with the police such as the community's structure, organization and process (Kramer and Specht, 1983; Trojanowicz, 1972). Another factor which has a documented impact on cooperation is the image the police have in the community; here attitudes toward the police may reflect the amount of support they receive (Albrecht and Green, 1977; Scaglione and Condon, 1980). Typical strategies aimed at cooperation employed crisis intervention teams, police social work teams, community meetings, neighborhood watches, information units, follow-up on citizens calls to the police and more (Sweeney, 1982; Thibault and McBride, 1981; Treger, 1981). Perhaps one of the best typologies for cooperation was offered by Whitaker (1980) who distinguished among three types of "coproduction": 1) where citizens request assistance from public agencies; 2) where citizens provide assistance to

public agents; and 3) where citizens interact with agents to establish a common understanding and approach to problems and solutions.

Often, abstract goals such as "cooperation with the community" remain so "idealistic" or even "remote" because in the performance of daily tasks the police officer may not connect the practical aspects of the job and values which pertain not only to the police as an organization but to the larger community as well; moreover, for the performance of regular policing duties there are relatively clear-cut regulations and standards while "cooperation" is more left to the interpretation, good will and discretion of the officer. One opportunity to bridge this gap was provided out of a series of experimentation with various police community projects carried out by the Israel Police. After several projects, studies and conclusions, police authorities have adopted a new policy for a future police-community relations strategy, namely, that of the Neighborhood Police Officer (NPO). Once it exited the realm of experimentation and entered routine practice, the Israel police introduced to the street a new type of police officer with different tasks and mode of operation. This was not just an addition to or reinforcement of the police force; NPOs received a "mandate" to be "community oriented." Clearly, they were not expected to abandon their policing responsibilities or duties but their work was now focused on intensive interaction with citizens, neighborhood committees, volunteers and municipal officials in what is not essentially a criminal-related function. NPOs established a neighborhood "headquarters," usually a small office in a community center, school, or public building, equipped with transportation, communication and other necessary means and operated as a one person mobile police station. Due to their community orientation, NPOs were mostly doing uniformed social or community work creating a situation where NPOs and social services workers (SSWs) duplicated to some extent social service provision and this opened up possibilities for conflict, avoidance or cooperation. In light of these possibilities the author developed a model for cooperation between NPOs and SSWs to enhance the organizational environment of social service delivery. This article will first describe the background from

which the NPO emerged, followed by the description of the cooperative efforts including the concept and details of the model; finally some initial assessment of this cooperation will be provided.

Background

Facing major budget strains and declining human resources (officers resigning from the force and insufficient number of new recruits) in recent years, the centralized Israeli police force has been constantly confronting a relative and absolute rise in violent and property crimes; this was coupled with "losing touch" with the community due mainly to the deployment of car patrols as the major policing strategy, which was largely reactive and impersonal in character. In the first half of the '80s, the Israel police experimented with different ways of regaining the lost foothold in the community by utilizing three policing philosophies or approaches to the community: 1) a limited-time intensive police presence; 2) a reinforced foot-patrol unit; and 3) the NPO.

The limited intensive police presence has literally brought the police back to the neighborhoods; it typically lasted two months with one police officer coordinating various activities such as providing information on securing property, patrolling the neighborhood with increased presence of officers on foot and car, community meetings with senior police officers, supervising traffic near school intersections, provision of property protective devices, exhibition of police equipment (including a dog show, the police band) and recruiting volunteers for such activities as neighborhood watches (local civil guard units). This project was successful by police standards and a study showed it was well received by citizens (Friedmann & Sherer, 1983). Still it proved to be inefficient: organizing such efforts on a nationwide scale could at best implement the project in one or two communities at a time, overburdening the police with additional tasks. Moreover, it was ineffective: it had to take many years to revolve such a project and visit most communities around the country with no assessment as to its long-range effect, thus precluding its utilization as a practical alternative standard police operation.³

The reinforced foot patrol unit (also known as "section officers") was developed along

similar lines and was assigned to a high crime neighborhood plagued by drug traffic, violence, and property crimes. The few policemen in the precinct were reinforced by 17 police officers working in three shifts around the clock. Unlike past practice of police responding to calls or car patrolling neighborhoods via central dispatching, here the police were on the scene with constant presence and immediate deterring effect. This experiment lasted 6 months and was also successful by an in-house police study evaluating the performance of the policemen and by an external study evaluating the officers' reactions as well as that of the citizens' attitudes toward the police (Friedmann & Sherer, 1984). Here also the problem of effectiveness (in terms of achieving entree to the community as well as coping with crime) seems to have been addressed in an innovative approach but the problem of efficiency still remained as station chiefs or district chiefs were unable to allocate reinforced units on a permanent non-experimental basis, thereby precluding its practicality as a routine standard strategy.

Thus the police were facing a dilemma: two different types of experiments yielded positive results and showed some promise for improved police community relations but at the same time they proved impractical for routine alternative standard deployment to complement other strategies. A solution was sought to synthesize the positive components of the two experiments with the understanding that the difference in strategy was not only between car and foot patrol but between reactive and proactive policing and with the need to adjust to budget and human resource considerations. In other words, the police wanted to capitalize on their greater acceptance by the community without having to resort to deploying a large number of officers. The result was the Israel police introduction of the NPO. 17 sergeant majors were assigned, one to each of the 17 problem-area neighborhoods of a large metropolitan area in Israel. These were all "old-time" highly experienced men who performed car-patrol duties for the last 10-15 years, most with commanding experience as team heads.⁴ The NPO "solution" employed one police officer in a designated neighborhood (in sizes ranging for 5,000 to 30,000 residents) operating as the police representative for

citizens and organizations alike. The NPOs were expected to operate for one year, after which several aspects of the project's effectiveness and efficiency would have been assessed. One of the underlying themes of the NPO's role was to divert non-criminal events from the overloaded justice system.⁵ The project has been declared successful on both effectiveness and efficiency accounts; studies reported a positive change in attitudes of citizens and in perception of occupation and self-esteem of NPOs (Friedmann, 1986; Sherer and Friedmann, 1984); as the 17 experimental NPOs will be joined by some 65 more NPOs to be deployed around the country in the coming five years, this became then the new routinized community approach taken by the police in Israel.

NPOs and the social service context

The introduction of the community-oriented NPOs had several implications within and outside the police.⁶ 1) NPOs were not just a quantitative increase of the police force but rather a new form of social service to the community; 2) social service agencies were already providing some of the services that NPOs started to carve out for themselves such as youth work, help to senior citizens, and referral to other services, and they found duplication and/or threat to their operation; 3) NPOs had much experience and intuition but lacked professional skills needed in their new role such as community organization, youth work, community assessment and more; 4) as NPOs became an "established fact" in the community the question was how to achieve a positive resolution to the new organizational environment in which the NPOs and SSWs operate without letting each avoid the other, or without developing constant conflict over professional or organizational boundaries ("turf") which in the final analysis will only hurt the needy public.

Evidently, the initiative for all the police community-oriented projects was taken by the Israel Police. It is striking that no social services in Israel have taken upon themselves the call to improve police services to the community,⁷ particularly so in a period of increase in the crime rate. The situation was different in the U.S. where social workers sought and initiated cooperation with the police⁸ (Michaels and Treger, 1973; Roberts, 1978; Treger, 1981);

in Israel NPOs were added to the field because the police considered it beneficial for furthering police objectives in the first place. However, once the NPOs are out there in the community then Whitaker's (1980) third type of coproduction becomes relevant in that agencies and citizens interact to improve the climate of problem definition and solution. It is of great importance to re-emphasize that the normative mode of operation adopted by the NPOs was one in which they filled the role and interpreted it as they saw it. So, while they have focused their attention on different activities they all curtailed handling "traditional" police duties (such as ticketing, arrest), and concentrated on non-criminal events.⁹

Several developments started to crystallize around the role of the NPO: 1) the police (through the project's steering committee and relevant authorities at police headquarters) is serious in encouraging and promoting this role with mostly full acceptance of the more "community" less "police" orientation,¹⁰ 2) this exposed NPOs to demands and skill-needs not required or emphasized in traditional policing patrol duties, and 3) it created a situation with potential for professional territorial friction. The author saw this situation as providing a unique opportunity (and need) for "community" police officers and social workers to cooperate for the improvement of their organizational environment to better enhance service provision. The organizational aspect of these two social services could be viewed as having some distinct or mutually exclusive domains with an area of overlap, duplication or mutual interest and activities in the provision of social services. Ideally, police officers have "pure"

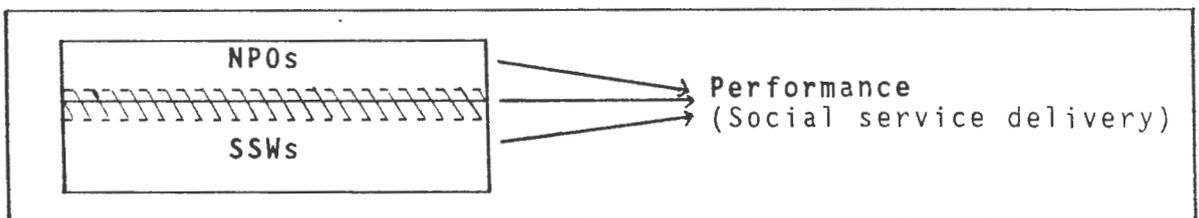
policing functions related to direct law enforcement and social workers have "pure" functions of personal treatment (from psychiatric to welfare) and community organization. However, there is an area in which NPOs and SSWs have common grounds: 1) much of the non-criminal police work (not to say much of all the police work) is "social work" in nature as it deals with mediating disputes, crisis intervention, referral to services, providing information and the like; but also 2) NPOs added to the person-oriented social work a dimension of community work or community organizing. These domains are illustrated in figure #1:

The delineation of areas of mutual interest with the clarification and definition of distinct boundaries served as the foundation for the development of a cooperative model between NPOs and SSWs.

Procedure

Given the centralized structure of Israeli police (and Israeli society) any such undertaking for cooperation between agencies had to first be met with the approval of police headquarters, which enthusiastically endorsed it. Then, it was presented to the division of social services of the city of Haifa and with their approval the author acted as an intermediary among the police, the division of social services and the school of social work at the university of Haifa. This proved to be extremely important because initially the enthusiasm for cooperation on the side of the police was not equaled by social service agencies. Thus the author suggested that teams of social workers, social work students and NPOs work together to enhance greater areas of skills and promote mutual support.

Figure 1: Organizational environment for interagency service delivery within the community



The initial framework called for teams of NPOs and social work students doing their field work to join together in such tasks of better understanding the work of the police on one hand and better assessing community problems, needs and solutions on the other. Eventually because of the structure of the social service agency and their team approach to social work it had to be revised to a more truly organizational effort. Following Treger's (1981) and Zimring's¹¹ guidelines for interagency cooperation, careful attention was given to the following points:

- 1) Recognizing and defining realistic, achievable, mutual goals, with specific emphasis on benefits for agencies (the police and social services) and workers.
- 2) Defining the role of each agency, with particular emphasis on their differences and similarities.
- 3) Working toward mutual commitment to achieve positive attitudes, dispel myths and establish goodwill.
- 4) Identifying and working toward resolution of critical areas such as communication, coordination and decision-making.
- 5) Understanding and coping with the process of social change in two respects: a) disequilibrium in the community and b) disequilibrium in the organizations.

An additional point guided this process: attention was given to the pace of the project; patience was exercised not to rush, force or prematurely impose cooperation. The cooperative effort was seen as a long-term desired feature which would be better achieved by following the proper timing and letting the relevant stages develop naturally with the partners. Accordingly, the *first step* was to hold separate meetings with NPOs and SSWs as well as senior police officers, heads of social service agencies, a university field placement officer (and students in field placements), community workers team heads and social workers. After a tedious and lengthy process in which the goals of the cooperation were delineated and the organizational potential for support and conflict was clarified, the *second step* included several joint meetings in which in addition to the delineation of the model, special concern was given to 1) jointly defining

areas of mutual interest and potential cooperation (to allay apprehensions and promote optimism), 2) the definition of professional boundaries (to mark professional and organizational domains which are mutually exclusive and those that are common), 3) introducing and dispelling of myths (such as the belief that NPOs are incapable of showing sensitivity to citizens or that social workers are not quick enough to respond to emergency situations), 4) construct an agenda for action in terms of coordination, communication, and performance (this to define in operative terms who is expected to do what, when and under what circumstances), and 5) attempt to foresee some possible problems and frictions (in particular pay attention to the possibilities that cooperative efforts may not work or that if some problems could be anticipated they might be better handled).

The model

When the general framework had been agreed upon, *two further steps* were taken: 1) establish a steering oversight committee, 2) prepare a written document of a cooperation agreement or contract. The committee was established to include key personnel from the police, division of social services, and the university who will act in a dual function: a) as a steering or guiding committee, b) supervising, overseeing or mediating interagency misunderstandings or conflicts. The written document was sought to serve as a guideline for the project and as a "constitutional" document embodying the "spirit" of the project to which necessary details would be added in the future. The document was drafted following a final verbal understanding; it was then circulated to all NPOs and SSWs as well as to professionals, experts, planners, and public officials who were asked to appraise it and provide further comments and suggestions. These were then incorporated and a document was written up to include 1) the guidelines and objectives of NPOs, 2) principle of community work (for SSWs), 3) cooperation principles such as ethics, and getting acquainted, 4) an agenda for communication and contact in routine cases and emergency cases, 5) division of labor and 6) the function of the steering-oversight committee (see figure #2). The process from the start of the

Figure 2: The contract for cooperation between the police (NPOs and social services (SSWs)

University of Haifa School of Social Work	Israel Police NPOs	City of Haifa Social Services
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A Framework for Cooperation Between NPOs and SSWs

Introduction

NPOs Goals:

- 1) Help relieve citizens' distress criminal or other.
- 2) Increase citizens' sense of security in the community.
- 3) Strengthen police-community relations.
- 4) Improve the image of the police in the public eye.
- 5) Increase police officers' awareness and sensitivity to the needs and problems of the community they serve.
- 6) Decrease the crime rate.

Principles of community work which guide social services in providing services to the community:

- 1) To recognize individual needs and plight; to define goals, priorities and find resources. To improve the individual's skills in the community; to facilitate social adjustment.
- 2) To recognize community needs, identify distress, define goals, priorities and find resources; to facilitate adjustment.
- 3) To enable and encourage cooperation and coordination among individuals, groups, institutions, organizations and operating in the community.
- 4) To influence decision and policy making in community welfare.
- 5) To develop new services and improve existing ones.
- 6) Ensure significant citizen participation and representation in all levels of service provision (policy, planning, performance and evaluation).
- 7) Discover and develop local leadership.
- 8) Recruit, train and activate citizens to volunteer.
- 9) Develop a framework for citizenship and community activities for adults and juveniles.

This document is intended to establish the cooperation between the police and social service agencies upon clear principles and to present operative objectives to facilitate the relations between the two organizations.

Operation principles

1) *Ethics*

Each party commits itself to preserve the secrecy of information provided by the other party. SSWs and NPOs will not further transfer any information they receive from each other. All information obtained will remain their property and will not be transferred to other organizations or the public.

2) *Cooperation*

- a) Work of mutual interest will be cooperated on in an established form between NPOs and SSWs. Special meetings/sessions will be coordinated in advance. Teams will exchange addresses, phone numbers, and work schedules.
- b) The contact between NPOs and SSWs will be direct and will build on mutual recognition.
- c) NPOs will learn about the range of community services and particularly those ac-

tivated by the neighborhood SSW teams, work routines and work domains of SSWs. It is recommended that NPOs will map out social services.

d) SSWs will learn NPO's goals, places of visits and patrol, modes of operation and means of contact.

3) *Communication*

There will be three levels of communications:

a) Establishing contact in emergency cases.

b) Periodical routine meetings to exchange and update information will be held between NPOs and SSWs about once a month.

c) In-service training and seminars on matters of mutual interest will be held for NPOs, SSWs and other police officers and social work teams.

4) *Nature of communication*

When an NPO deals with an individual or community matter, NPO will first collect information from SSW but not in the presence of the concerned individual(s). NPO will later update SSW of action taken or information received. When SSW is involved in a matter of concern to police work, SSW will contact NPO to update as necessary.

5) *Division of labor*

Decisions making will be done in a team cooperation which will then determine who will continue the treatment or intervention and be responsible for it (NPO, SSW, or both). It is desirable that the neighborhood team will make such recommendations.

To discuss misunderstandings, disputes, lack of agreement and any problems which may arise a small body will serve as a steering/oversight committee. It will consist of the ranking police officer, social service manager and social work university faculty.

cooperative efforts to the final written agreement lasted one year.

Some initial assessment

Using intensive interviews with NPOs, SSWs, police and social service officials, an attempt was made to arrive at some initial assessment of this cooperation. The following dimensions were explored in the interviews: 1) how successful is the cooperative effort (and by what standards)? 2) how is police work improved by it? 3) how is social service provision improved by it? 4) does it have a felt impact on citizens? and 5) how was the "formula" for developing such a program reacted to by the relevant partners?

After the pattern for cooperation has been "molded," then typically SSWs demonstrated to NPOs proper intervention methods, community assessment skills, referral, information-gathering and distributing and similar skills; NPOs helped SSWs by providing relevant information, helping with city officials, facilitating youth or elderly work and the like. In such inter-agency cooperation there may be several criteria to assess the outcome, but the one which seems to stand out is to what extent

the concerned parties will want to continue and maintain and/or develop such efforts. In the Israeli case, the result of the first year of this cooperation seems to be highly positive despite initial doubts (mostly expressed by SSWs). It seems that NPOs are highly satisfied with their roles and the challenges they face. Their relations with agency professionals are a positive one but they seem to be leaving it to the SSWs to initiate and administer contacts with them. NPOs feel that they have contributed to agencies but also they received professional aid in their new role. NPOs perceive the written document as a precipitating factor for a cooperative relationship and as portraying the spirit of the necessity and benefits of such cooperation. While NPOs reported a gradual build-up of a community base for their operation they have also noticed that in addition citizens increased calls for help directing those at NPOs not the stations. A concern expressed by NPOs was the growing gap between them and fellow officers who see them as not doing "pure" police work. NPOs were unanimous about their belief that they performed better by cooperating with SSWs and that as a result, citizens receive better services.

Social service workers reported having learned to appreciate the work of the NPOs. They assist workers in various community projects either by information, exchange of data or citizen referral. Workers report that the framework for cooperation is not fully utilized. It is clear, however, that NPOs and SSWs were very pleased by the fact that the framework was not prematurely imposed and that they were asked for their input and it was accepted allowing sufficient time for the relationship to emerge. It seems that the operative framework for cooperation is working out. NPOs and SSWs meet regularly ("territory" and "facility" are not yet issues) and gradually gain better appreciation for each others. Both expressed the hope for a long-lasting cooperation and stated it will only improve the services they provide to the community. From interviews with public officials and active volunteers the appreciation for the NPOs was evident.

Conclusions

Two key elements contributed to the emergence of a seemingly successful cooperative effort on an interagency level between the police and social services: 1) the definition of realistic, achievable goals not only in a nominal but also in operative terms, 2) the definition of mutual concerns and professional boundaries, and 3) the sufficient time and patience exemplified by all relevant parties. Also noticeable was the effort to have input and to consider maximum viewpoints. The division of labor in the police social work cooperation in the U.S. (Michaels and Treger, 1973; Treger, 1981) epitomized police officers continuing to do police work and social workers doing social work each benefiting from the other's help; in Israel the division of labor is between NPOs who started doing social and community work and SSWs who did it all along. It now remains to be seen whether the cooperative efforts will polarize the two (e.g., social workers reclaiming "their territory" letting police officers do "police work") or not. Any developments of this unique cooperation deserve further studies with the criteria suggested earlier.

Notes

¹ This is a substantially revised version of a paper presented at the 37th Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology, San Diego, CA, November 13-17, 1985.

¹ The author wishes to express gratitude and appreciation for the support and enthusiasm shown by two organizations: the Israel Police and the Haifa district social service agency. The Haifa Neighborhood Police Officers and the district social workers were very instrumental in the construction of this model and in materializing it from concept to practice. Mr. Yitzhaki (NPO), Mr. Ben-Dror (Haifa Police), Mrs. Mick (Director, district social service agency) and Mrs. Arkin (field supervisor, School of Social Work, University of Haifa) deserve special thanks.

² The police are still operating these "community months" once in a while essentially for public relations effects.

³ NPOs — drafted to this role as sergeant-majors — were promised to rank of senior sergeant major assigned to NPOs only to emphasize the importance the police attribute to this role.

⁴ The importance of the diversionary function of non-criminal police encounters is well discussed by Michaels and Treger, 1973.

⁵ Internal police ramifications are not the focus of this paper.

⁶ The one institutionalized aspect of police-related social work has to do with the role of probation officers and prison social workers.

⁷ Even if this was done to look for new fields to utilize social work skills.

⁸ This changed somewhat at later stages as NPOs looked for the "golden path" between the "community" and "police" orientations. The message headquarters tried to filter down to NPOs was to combine a posture of "courtesy" with "assertiveness" and while focusing on "community" not to avoid law-enforcement functions when they were called for.

⁹ Towards the end of the one year experiment, the police held a full day symposium on the topic with all the supreme command in attendance. Rarely any project receives such a full staff presence.

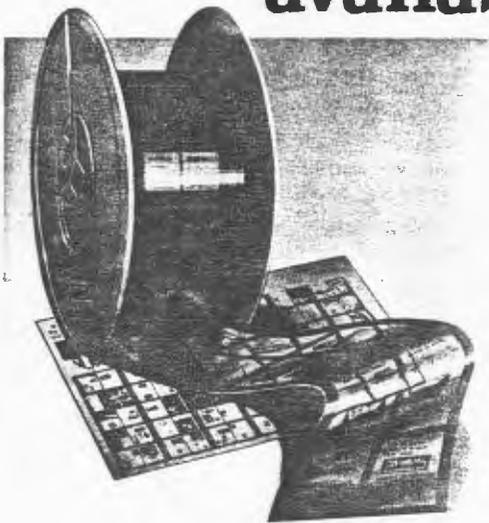
¹⁰ Quoted in Treger, 1981, p. 427.

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