
Unraveling the Concept of Volunteer Policing

The strength of a democracy is not in bureaucracy; it is in the people and their communities. In everything we do, let us unleash the potential of our most precious resource—our citizens.

PRESIDENT GEORGE H. W. BUSH, State of the Union Message, January 29, 1991

In the thirteenth century, Henry III mandated that all his male subjects (between the ages of fifteen and fifty) own a weapon other than a knife so that they could stand guard in order to preserve the peace of the realm: “In the event of a crime, every man had to join in the ‘hue and cry’—summoning aid and joining the pursuit of anyone who resisted arrest or escaped from custody” (Levy 1999, 136). Today, while most American states still require private citizens to come to the aid of a law enforcement officer if called upon, they are not asked to carry a weapon or routinely serve as a constable or member of the watch in either England or the United States. Nevertheless, tens of thousands of citizens in both nations currently routinely serve as volunteer police officers, and it is not uncommon for these volunteers to have paid for their own training, uniforms, and other equipment.

The use of generally uncompensated voluntary and involuntary police in the Western world dates back at least a thousand years or more. At that time, England was divided into ten family units called “tithings” and ten tithings called “hundreds.” All of the men over the age of fifteen in these units formed a *posse comitatus*, required upon being alerted to pursue any fleeing felons (Roberg, Crank, and Kuykendall 2000, 34). In the thirteenth century, town constables were empowered to draft citizens for a night watch (Travis 1995, 117), and in colonial America, local militia units and town watches composed of all free adult white males provided the most visible means for the maintenance of social control. Thus, in earlier times, or-

dinary citizens occupied the most conspicuous and responsible positions for order maintenance.

The History of Volunteer Police from Colonial Times to 1941

Although the most dramatic advances in volunteer policing have taken place in recent times, the beginnings of the journey no doubt predate the arrival of the first colonists to the New World. Native American societies, for example, maintained order through clearly defined customs “enforced by public opinion and religious sanctions” (Hagan 1966, 16). Nearly everyone knew and respected tribal customs and beliefs, such conformity made possible because the “tribes were homogeneous units—linguistically, religiously, economically, and politically” (Deloria and Lytle 1983, xi). By the time of the arrival of the European settlers, many tribes had founded numerous societies and cults to preserve order in camp and “to foster a military spirit among themselves and the rest of the tribe, since war was a matter of survival” (Mails 1973, 46). The Plains Indians instituted honorary military societies to police their annual reunion ceremonies and buffalo hunts. Similar societies were operated year-round by the Cheyenne and the Teton Sioux (Hagan 1966).

On the other hand, justice in the colonies, prior to America’s independence, was administered by lay judges, community residents, militia and watch members, foreign soldiers, clergymen, constables, various administrative officers (e.g., governors, sheriffs), and legislative assemblies. One of the earliest uses of an organized militia came in 1636 when companies were formed in the Massachusetts Bay Colony to protect against attacks by Native Americans: “Colonial militiamen defended the colonies and participated in expeditions against Indians and the French until the War of Independence” (Stentiford 2002, 6). During the Revolutionary War, “militia augmented Washington’s Continental Army, as well as enforced revolutionary discipline among the populace, clearly demonstrating the dual roles of militia during wartime of fighting the enemy and . . . stabilizing the home-front” (Stentiford 2002, 6).

Most eastern American port cities abandoned the informal system of “watch and ward” (a system involving separate organizations for evening and day patrols) during the two or three decades just prior to the Civil War.

A wave of urban riots took place in this period that caused many persons to fear that America's experiment with democratic institutions was threatened. While the establishment of the London Metropolitan Police Force in 1829 served as a convenient model for reform (S. S. Walker 1976), the organization of paid, unified, day and night police departments and the abandonment of the older model did not serve as a guarantee that democratic traditions and the rule of law would be respected, especially with regard to the protection of minority citizens and their rights. These new police forces, in fact, excluded minority-group members. Moreover, between 1882 and 1969, more than forty-seven hundred people, mostly black, were lynched in the United States (Perloff 2000). A Census Bureau study conducted in 1973 found that in America's five largest cities, "blacks were much more likely than whites to be the victims of robbery and burglary, in some cases by a ratio of nearly two to one" (Wilson 1975, 34). In the United States, the high point of this crisis was reached in the late 1960s when civil protests and riots erupted in over one hundred American cities (Travis 1995). Lawsuits were eventually filed in many regions of the country to spur integration in housing and the schools and to create public employment opportunities.

Clearly, the establishment of public police agencies did not do away with any existing threats to America's democratic institutions. The earliest of these public police agencies are only about 175 years old. In England, prior to 1829, law enforcement had slowly evolved from the basic concept of preserving the King's Peace by mutual responsibility (during the Anglo-Saxon era, from 550 to 1066) to the use of various constables and the keeping of a "watch and ward." The two latter developments were officially set forth in the Statute of Winchester of 1285 (Seth 1961). In the late 1600s, local justices of the peace were empowered to appoint additional or "special" parish constables (Critchley 1967; Leon 1991). Before the nineteenth century, citizens generally considered it their unpaid compulsory obligation to serve as tithingmen, constables, and members of the "watch and ward" (Prassel 1972).¹

In New England, during colonial times, "watch and ward committees" were also established, representing an early version of citizen patrols. The Dutch settlement of New Amsterdam, later New York, "created a burgher watch in 1643, one year after it was founded, but did not pay them until 1712" (Bayley 1985, 32). The governor of New Amsterdam, Peter Stuyvesant,

also created the first volunteer fire department in America in 1648. Eventually, constables (elected or appointed), marshals, and watches were established in every settlement in the colonies (Bayley 1985, 32). Initially, constable work was the communal responsibility of all adult males, and fines could be levied for refusing to assume this obligation (S. S. Walker 1998, 27). The South took community policing even further during the colonial and antebellum periods, adopting slave-patrol laws that led to the recruitment of militia members to maintain the institution of slavery. The western “posse,” on the other hand, was a somewhat later phenomenon (Garry 1980). Belonging to a posse was a form of “obligatory avocational policing” (Klockars 1985, 22): an individual was liable to be arrested for failure to serve when called upon. During the nineteenth century, some northeastern and midwestern states passed laws authorizing the establishment of various protective, detective, or anti-horse-thief associations. Today, most states still have laws that require the average citizen to come to the aid of a police officer when requested.

The existence of a militia is referred to in the U.S. Constitution (see Articles I and II and the Second Amendment), and the Militia Act of 1792 required most free white males between the ages of eighteen and forty-five to arm themselves and attend regular drills. However, “neither the federal government nor the states enforced the law, . . . [and] in the years following the War of 1812, the militia as an institution fell into disuse. Few Americans, including Congressmen, saw any need for citizens to waste time drilling when no danger threatened and more profitable pursuits beckoned” (Stentiford 2002, 7).² Still, the militia tradition developed over time into today’s well-known concept of the “citizen soldier,” who serves the nation in peacetime and in war as a volunteer member of the National Guard. Members of the New York Army National Guard, for example, were called to active duty after September 11, 2001, to provide security at airports, bridges, and train stations (Debnam 2003).

A new institution arose in 1806, supplanting the use of the militia during wartime, known simply as “the Volunteers”—usually companies and regiments recruited at the local level: “The men from each company elected their officers; the governor of the state appointed the regimental officers; and the regiment was then mustered into federal service for an agreed-upon period” (Stentiford 2002, 7–8). Significantly, such voluntary military

organizations existed throughout the nineteenth century, assisting state governments in strike breaking, riot control, and disaster relief, their existence obviating the need to enforce the Militia Act of 1792. In essence, they represented a body of self-selected men derived from the unorganized militia who “formed or joined companies out of patriotism, from fear of slave uprisings . . . or as a way of establishing social and political contacts, . . . not out of legal obligation” (Stentiford 2002, 8). Abraham Lincoln served in such a company during the Black Hawk War, and Theodore Roosevelt led his Volunteer “Rough Riders” during the Spanish-American War.

As early as the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville, the noted French aristocrat who visited the United States to study its people and institutions, discerned a trend in American society toward the establishment of a variety of such voluntary associations. Many of these were not solely of the amateur soldier variety but were concerned with the welfare of diverse immigrant groups: “In Philadelphia alone, in 1878, there were some 800 such groups of one kind or another in existence” (Trattner 1989, 85). The growth in their number created a need for the establishment of umbrella associations known as charity organization societies. These societies did not directly dispense relief but instead served as clearinghouses, registering, screening, and referring applicants in need of charity. The largest such organization existed in New York City. Initially, the New York Charity Organization Society relied on a corps of volunteer “friendly visitors” to perform home visits: “Friendly Visitors helped worthy families negotiate the maze of relief and social services and learn to make do with what they had” (M. B. Katz 1996, 165). In counseling families, however, these volunteers were also in a position to see that laws were obeyed. Other groups were mainly concerned with the morals of the tide of immigrants arriving daily from Europe during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth. The pioneer organization in this regard was the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice. The agents of this society identified and prosecuted vendors of pornography and birth control for more than forty years (Hovey 1998).

In the United States, various types of vigilante organizations were also common in the nineteenth century. Vigilantism has been defined as “organized, extralegal movements, the members of which take the law into their own hands” (R. M. Brown 1975, 95–96). Vigilantes, of course, “don’t ‘take’ the law; they break the law. They don’t act in self-defense, which is legal; they

react aggressively, which is illegal” (Karmen 1990, 357). Two of the most infamous vigilante organizations arose after the Civil War—the Ku Klux Klan (KKK) and the White Caps. The KKK was founded to resist any efforts by southern blacks to achieve racial equality, while the White Caps were concerned with the control of morality (e.g., wife beating, prostitution, drunkards, poor providers, etc.). Members of both groups wore masks, but while the KKK was known for lynching, the White Caps relied on whipping to fulfill their goals (R. M. Brown 1971; Friedman 1993).

The advent of extralegal vigilante groups in many ways represents the antithesis of the role of modern-day volunteer police. Vigilante groups deviated from the traditional and contemporary democratic hallmarks of voluntary community service, going about their business without regard for individual rights and liberties. Furthermore, these groups lacked any statutory authority when they engaged in punitive activities. In contrast, the evolving role of volunteer policing appears to be deeply rooted in the democratic spirit of America, which is best characterized by its concern for free speech; religious tolerance; universal suffrage; and other egalitarian concepts, such as hiring and promotion based on merit.

On the other hand, the evolution of volunteer policing has also had its undemocratic side, especially when it has been linked to branches of government that have abused the rights of citizens. This occurred, of course, when slave patrols were used in the South and also later, during World War I, when the federal government condoned the use of thousands of volunteer citizen spies for the purpose of identifying draft evaders and suspected anarchists. These volunteer spies were part of a giant civic organization entitled the American Protective League (APL).

World War I also saw the beginning of the recruitment of the youth of America in a volunteer police role. In the second decade of the twentieth century, various articles about “junior police” appeared in such popular national periodicals as the *Literary Digest*, the *Survey*, and the *Outlook*. However, by the mid-1920s, some of these groups had been either transformed or replaced by school safety patrols. The growth of such patrols was triggered in the 1920s when the automobile’s newfound popularity led to a rise in traffic fatalities among children aged five to fourteen. In 1926, the city fathers of Newark, New Jersey, took stock of their nine-year-old safety patrol program, finding that no serious injuries had taken place since its im-

plementation (Rosseland 1926). The Honolulu sheriff swore in thirty-three members of the Boy Scouts of America as “junior traffic police officers” in 1923 (Honolulu Police Department 2000b). By 1932, there were approximately ten thousand safety patrol units involving two hundred thousand boys in eighteen hundred cities and towns (“Guarding Five Million Children” 1932; “Schoolboy Patrols Approved” 1933).

Volunteer Policing from 1941 to the Present

On December 7, 1941, the United States entered World War II with the bombing of Pearl Harbor. On the same day, the governor of the territory of Hawaii signed a proclamation turning the government of Hawaii over to the U.S. military, and the entire area was declared to be under martial law (Honolulu Police Department 2000a). Throughout World War II and during the Korean War, personnel shortages, coupled with the need for increased civil defense services, led to the growth of various types of auxiliary citizen police units and the reactivation of the state guard.

From the territory of Hawaii to the eastern seaboard, Americans volunteered to protect the home front by enlisting in volunteer police organizations. For example, a reserve police unit of 124 individuals had been appointed by the Honolulu police chief just five months prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) helping to screen each of the initial applicants. For the duration of the war, each volunteer police officer was issued the same seven-pointed star badge, with the word “emergency” stamped on top, as was worn by regular Honolulu police (Honolulu Police Department 2000b). In addition, citizens throughout Hawaii formed militia units. The city of Honolulu had several different militia units organized along ethnic lines: the Businessmen’s Military Training Corps, for example, contained white men and men of mixed white and Native Hawaiian ancestry, while the Hawaii Defense Volunteers included mostly men of Chinese descent but also Filipinos, Hawaiians, Puerto Ricans, Koreans, and whites. In addition, in October 1942, 1,500 men formed the Hawaii Air Depot Volunteer Corps to assist in any emergency at Hickam Field: “This was probably the only volunteer militia in the nation to get anti-aircraft machine guns in World War II” (Stentiford 2002, 150–51). Such groups, of course, did not form only in Hawaii. Less than one year after the

bombing of Pearl Harbor by a Japanese naval task force, in September 1942, 1,063 auxiliary police officers in Wichita, Kansas, were sworn in and given armbands (Wichita Police Department 2000). By the end of 1943 there were 4,499 New York City Patrol Corps volunteers guarding strategic locations in America's largest city (New York City Police Department 1943, 21).

In addition, within months of American entry into World War II, forty thousand volunteers had been recruited for a new organization known as the Civil Air Patrol (CAP). CAP was officially born on December 1, 1941, just days before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. The program was "conceived in the late 1930s by legendary New Jersey aviation advocate Gill Robb Wilson, who foresaw aviation's role in war and general aviation's potential to supplement America's unprepared military" ("Civil Air Patrol Story" 2003). Like other stateside groups, CAP actively recruited women; by war's end, women made up about 20 percent of its membership.

Throughout World War II, concern about the shortage of police personnel also led to the recruitment of junior police. For example, in November 1941, a Boys' Police Force was established in Blacksburg, Virginia, consisting of eighteen high school students who were assigned to patrol public gatherings on school grounds, patrol school buildings, and direct traffic at the school (Blacksburg Police Department 1949). In Hawaii, after Pearl Harbor, the territorial governor organized a territorial guard that included many high school boys from the local Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) program. Initially, they were posted at strategic locations to guard against sabotage after dark (Stentiford 2002, 147–48).

As a consequence of the Korean conflict, in New York City, former police commissioner Arthur Wallender was appointed to head the civil defense effort. His plans called for the organization of an auxiliary police corps consisting of forty thousand men and women, twice the size of the city's regular police force. The mass media was called upon to aid in recruitment to the force, which would be patterned after the regular police system, although members would have military titles. Although only about twenty thousand auxiliaries were actually recruited, the number substantially declining in later years, this initial cadre was later drawn upon for the establishment of routine street crime patrols. The current structure of auxiliary police precinct units within New York City, in fact, is directly traceable to the Korean War-era approach of these civil defense auxiliary police.

In the late 1950s and throughout the turbulent 1960s, many cities revamped their old-style civil defense volunteers in order to cope with urban unrest and the need for increased and visible police strength (Garry 1980). Columbus, Ohio, for example, originally created an auxiliary police organization in 1951 for civil defense purposes, but by 1955 these police had been assigned on an emergency basis to assist regular police engaged in anti-crime patrols and had been authorized to make arrests (Columbus Police Reserve 2000).

In the 1970s, following a decade of civil protests over the second-class status of African Americans and the nation's involvement in the war in Vietnam, calls for reform resulted in new efforts to bridge the gap between the people and the police. New federal crime control initiatives were undertaken. For example, in order to help restore public confidence in the police, significant projects for organizing community residents through start-up grants were funded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, a division of the U.S. Department of Justice. Citizens in hundreds of cities were organized to patrol their own neighborhoods, keep watch on neighbors' homes, report suspicious activities, and learn how to strengthen the security of their homes and businesses. Increased concern about the care of the elderly also led to the establishment of a volunteer nursing home ombudsman program. A widespread understanding grew, within police departments and other agencies concerned with the administration of justice, that the available professional resources marshaled on behalf of social control were inadequate. In truth, municipal treasuries were limited in their ability to meet growing demands for more police. Such cities as New York and Detroit were compelled to lay off hundreds of police and other public servants in order to maintain fiscal integrity.

By the 1980s, it was estimated that as many as two hundred thousand adult auxiliary and reserve police officers were working as part-time volunteers in local law enforcement agencies in the United States (Burden 1988).³ In Denver, Colorado, for example, members of the police reserve must perform a five-hour shift each week and work for eight hours every third weekend (Gill and Mawby 1990, 67). Some volunteer police regularly perform peacekeeping patrols in urban neighborhoods, while others are only called upon to assist in traffic control at special events. In recent years, a rather special group of experienced volunteer deputies has been active in Precinct

6 of Houston, Texas. Their commitment to law-enforcement work has resulted in the arrest of over two thousand parole violators. Houston's volunteer deputies also help reduce truancy rates by initiating family visits (Clairborne 1994). There are, of course, volunteer police units in many other cities and in nations around the world (Berkley 1969).

Other new initiatives in the field of community policing have not only spurred the growth of many new citizen-police projects but have led to the implementation of expanded opportunities for youth. In 2002, for example, the American Automobile Association (AAA) reported that nationwide there were more than one half million school safety patrol members serving in fifty thousand schools in every state (Melton 2002). There were over four thousand safety patrollers from 128 schools just in the city and county of Honolulu in the year 2000 (Honolulu Police Department 2000b).

The Boy Scouts of America (BSA) has also been active in engaging youth in such community activities. The BSA undertook the establishment of various career-exploration posts in the 1970s, perhaps as a way of integrating young women into their programs. Currently thousands of young people between the ages of fourteen and twenty are enrolled in law-enforcement-sponsored "Explorer" posts. Innovations like this benefit not only youth but the community as a whole: "Law Enforcement Exploring has two primary benefits: it provides personnel in community support areas that would otherwise go begging, and helps develop police/youth relationships while building awareness of law enforcement tasks and an understanding of the related problems and objectives" (Runyon and Falzarano 1983, 18). One of the most interesting features of these programs is the opportunity they provide for permitting Explorers to accompany police officers on patrol ("ride-along programs"). In 1979, a national certification program for ride-along participation was designed jointly by the National Law Enforcement Exploring Committee and the International Association of Chiefs of Police (Runyon and Falzarano 1983).

In addition, the BSA has also established junior police academies and special "youth courts." In Edinburg, Texas, for example, a coeducational Explorer program was established by the local school district to provide young adults (ages fourteen through twenty-one) with the opportunity to engage in community service and receive training in the field of law enforcement (Edinburg C.I.S.D. Police Department 2000). In Boston, the police depart-

ment conducts a junior police academy during the summer months for children ages nine to twelve who may be at risk of dropping out of school (Boston Police Department 2004).

Older Americans are also very much involved in volunteer programs. One such program involves seniors serving as nursing home ombudsmen to resolve resident-facility disputes and help ensure the safety and well-being of residents. Begun in 1972 as a demonstration program and run by the Administration on Aging (AoA), a division of the Department of Health and Human Services, it is now established in all fifty states and has a staff that includes fourteen thousand volunteers and one thousand paid employees who investigate over 260,000 complaints each year (“Elder Rights” 2004).

The routine use of volunteer police personnel has not been without controversy, however. Volunteer police may appear to challenge the idea of policing as a “profession” and undermine the political clout of police unions. In both the United States and the United Kingdom, the most vocal critics of volunteer police maintain that policing requires the services of full-time, professionally trained personnel. Various police union members have even categorized volunteers as scabs, social misfits, or misguided do-gooders (Garry 1980). Police union leaders are in fact unlikely to support any type of policing strategy that empowers citizens to act in their place. Even “the practice of using retired cops as volunteers may be viewed by the police union as ‘scab labor’: uncompensated labor that would otherwise be performed by regular hires” (Champion and Rush 1997, 363–64). In September 1987, the *New York Times* reported that the auxiliary police unit in Quincy, Massachusetts, had ceased to patrol as a result of pressure exerted by regular police officers who felt that their jobs were in peril. Overall, however, “most primary and secondary sources at our disposal imply that reserves have managed to gain acceptance in police departments, even if some police officers remained skeptical” (Gill and Mawby 1990, 73).

Definitions of Volunteer Police

In America, the history of citizen participation in policing has been long and varied. This history, however, has been relatively unstudied and thus has lacked any generally accepted definition or typology. Clearly the topic is broad and needs to be narrowed for the sake of better understanding.

What might be a good working definition of the term *volunteer police*? The variety of current and past community policing initiatives has blurred the meaning of the concept, while the lack of any history that traces the origins of direct citizen participation in policing has doubtless contributed to this confusion and imprecision in terminology. A working definition would enable more consistent and meaningful work by future researchers, students, and policy makers and give the general population a better idea of whether this kind of public service is worthy of support. Although the subject has become more widely known since September 11, 2001, the title “Volunteers in Police Service” (VIPS), officially sanctioned by the U.S. government, can be confusing.

A variety of agencies in fact exist that have law enforcement responsibilities (e.g., the U.S. Coast Guard, the U. S. Customs Service) but are not typically thought of as police agencies, and it is not uncommon for such organizations to rely on volunteer personnel to help implement their missions. The U.S. Coast Guard, for example, supervises and trains thousands of volunteers in its auxiliary branch. In addition, there also exist various private groups and individuals engaged in certain aspects of policing or law enforcement (e.g., private detectives and security guards, community watches). Thus, to enable an effective study and concrete statements about volunteer police, the words *volunteer* and *police* need, in combination, to be defined.

Police agencies have been defined as “those agencies that stand ready to employ force upon the citizenry on the basis of situationally determined exigencies” (Manning 1977, 40). Similarly, police themselves have been defined as “people authorized by a group to regulate interpersonal relations within the group through the application of physical force” (Bayley 1985, 7). Police, according to this definition, “are not self-created; they are tied to the social units from which they derive authority” (8). This conceptualization of police has been generally adopted throughout this book with some key adjustments: police are here defined as “people authorized by a group to regulate interpersonal *or intragroup* relations through the application of physical *and/or moral* persuasion.” Linking *volunteer* to *police*, of course, adds a further dimension. The word *volunteer*, broadly used, encompasses both participation that is freely given and participation that is considered involuntary, given as a requirement of the law (e.g., militia or juror duty). It is

sometimes hard to distinguish the latter from the former, since some persons “volunteer” before they are called for duty. In addition, some civic obligations may have compensatory features, as well as penalties for nonperformance.

The following typology of volunteer police (table 1) is designed to help clarify both the various types of volunteer organizations encountered throughout American history and their impact on democratic institutions.⁴ Through this typology’s use, for example, one can readily discern the extent to which volunteer police units have either contributed to or detracted from the rule of law and other democratic values (e.g., interpersonal trust, concern for human rights).

It will be useful to briefly examine here the basic features of the typology in some detail. Type I volunteer police units perform a variety of policing functions and are defensive in nature, seldom undertaking overt or aggressive actions. Since World War I, most auxiliary/reserve units have fallen into this category, their members contributing countless hours of public service and thereby helping to preserve American institutions. Type II units also perform a variety of policing tasks but are more aggressive or proactive in their crime prevention activities. This kind of volunteer policing is more prevalent in the western parts of the United States. Reserve police units are most closely identified with this category, receiving better training and screening than their Type I counterparts. Their more rigorous qualifications often in fact equal those of the regular police. Thus, while their services may be more useful in citizen protection, they also entail more risk for both the volunteers and the persons whom they encounter. Type III organizations have only one or two specific functions and carry them out with restraint. Examples of such organizations include charity agents such as the “friendly visitors,” anti-horse-thief and detective societies, and various junior police groups. Their work directly involves specific activities (e.g., the prevention and recovery of stolen property, financial aid, traffic safety). While such services can sometimes be rendered inappropriately, they contribute to the overall welfare of society and play an important role in the maintenance of stable communities. Type IV organizations also exist for specific purposes but are aggressive in their approach. Slave patrollers, special agents of the New York Society for the Prevention of Vice, APL operatives, and detectives and attorneys of the Anti-Saloon League (ASL) readily fall into this category.

Type IV organizations clearly had the most adverse consequences for America's democratic institutions and the cause of personal freedom. Their legacy is a reminder of the inherent dangers of overzealous police and civic conduct. On the other hand, some Type IV organizations provided their members with lessons in democracy. For example, the militia companies from which the earliest slave patrols were drawn "demanded the right to elect their officers and insisted on the enfranchisement of all soldiers, whether or not they met age and property qualifications" (Foner 1998, 17). Members of the ASL learned how to effectively lobby in a representative democracy.

All these types of volunteer police, however, share some common characteristics that, taken together, lead to the following working definition: volunteer police are members of a permanent organization (or one established during wartime mobilization) authorized by either governmental or societal action for the purpose of performing one or more functions of policing in an overt manner (i.e., functions that go beyond surveillance or communications work) for minimal or no salary. This initial, general definition is sufficiently robust to include or account for the varieties of community policing organizations encountered throughout American history: the Native American military societies, the colonial militias, the night watch, constables, slave patrollers, posses, anti-horse-thief and detective societies, charity workers, and so on.⁵

Until now, attempts to arrive at a working definition of *volunteer police* have made no mention of early Native American, colonial, nineteenth-, or early twentieth-century groups, primarily centering instead on post-1950 organizations. The National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice

Table 1 A Typology of Volunteer Police

	Reactive	Proactive
General purpose	I	II
Special purpose	III	IV

Standards and Goals (1973), for example, researched just two modern varieties of volunteer police in the United States, auxiliary and reserve, concluding that “auxiliary police” are unpaid, wear police uniforms, do not possess peace officer powers, and usually are assigned to perform routine civil defense activities. “Reserve officers,” on the other hand, may be salaried, wear police uniforms, carry firearms, possess full peace officer powers, and are assigned to a wide range of regular police duties. Reserve units, according to a different definition, are “under statutory provision, operate within the police station, involve officers wearing uniforms similar to those of regulars, and place volunteers under police control” (Gill and Mawby 1990, 73). The Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, however, points out that unfortunately the words *auxiliary* and *reserve* are often used interchangeably, thus causing the distinctions enumerated above to be applied unevenly in some jurisdictions. In other words, a particular program may be officially called an “auxiliary police program” even though it resembles a “reserve unit,” or vice versa. Nevertheless, in either case, such units are authorized to perform their services in the name of the community, an essential element in any definition of *police* (Bayley 1985). Moreover, members of all varieties of volunteer police programs are deployed on a part-time basis.

At least one contemporary definition of *volunteer police* is available. In New York State, a definition of *auxiliary police officer* may be found in the *Auxiliary Police Guidance Manual* (New York State Disaster Preparedness Commission 1991). Today, many local New York State volunteer police officers are currently designated “auxiliary police officers,” fitting a definition derived by the commission from the relevant sections of the New York State Defense Emergency Act. This law was enacted in 1951, establishing state and local civil defense offices and delineating specific roles for volunteers recruited by these offices. Sections 22 and 23D of the act require counties and cities to recruit and train civil-defense volunteers, including auxiliary police. The act’s definition states:

Auxiliary Police Officer: Originally authorized under the *Defense Emergency Act* to maintain order and control traffic and to perform such other police and emergency civil defense functions as required. Auxiliary police are volunteers and may be utilized for civil defense or Article 2-B emergen-

cies or during official drills authorized by the local emergency management office. They have limited peace officer powers during drills which consist of those powers needed to direct and control traffic. (Their peace officer powers during Article 2B and National Defense Emergencies are not limited.) Section 2.20 of the *New York State Criminal Procedure Law* reveals that the peace officer powers connected with directing and controlling traffic will probably only relate to the issuance of appearance tickets. Auxiliary police are commonly used for traffic control during parades or other routine community events such as athletic events and fairs. They also can perform a variety of other non-essential police functions, while also being the “eyes and ears” of the police in the community.

The need for a better understanding of the phenomenon of volunteer police is especially important in view of the recent emergence of new varieties of volunteer self-defense groups, from various self-styled underground “militia” groups to the more visible activities of the Guardian Angels. A recent review of U.S. volunteer groups divides volunteer police efforts into the categories of (1) self-defense and (2) organized auxiliary (Garry 1980). Groups of the former variety, like the Guardian Angels, involve citizens who are dissatisfied with governmental police services and undertake relatively independent activities (e.g., training, patrols). Groups of the other variety, “organized auxiliary,” exemplify the 1973 National Advisory Commission descriptions of both uniformed auxiliary and reserve volunteer police. A key distinction between the two varieties appears to be the nature of the organization’s association with the regular police. The closer the association is, the more likely the group is to be characterized as an “organized auxiliary” of either the peace officer (reserve) or non-peace officer (auxiliary) variety. In the United States, the importance of peace officer status may be somewhat overrated: at least one big-city volunteer police organization has been advised to resist making arrests unless absolutely necessary (M. A. Greenberg 1984). Furthermore, even without “peace officer” authority, volunteer police may make a citizen’s arrest as provided by statute in most states.

Currently, not only do state statutes specifically provide their citizens the power to make such arrests, but under the principles of common law, all persons still possess wide authority to protect themselves, their family, “and

to some degree the general peace of the land” (Prassel 1972, 126). Thus, the line between peace officer and private citizen is a relative and rather thin one: “while the concept is today increasingly ignored, every citizen is a policeman” (Prassel 1972, 126).

In recent decades, new types of nonregular and volunteer police personnel have arisen: part-time police officers, seasonal police officers, special police officers, Police Explorers, police interns, and police cadets. Until the practice was ended in 2003, some agencies in various rural parts of New York State temporarily deputized individuals for the sole purpose of attending a regionally approved academy. This practice was terminated when Governor George E. Pataki approved a provision to permit preservice basic-training programs at local colleges. The often fine distinctions among all these categories require any discussion of community-based policing to provide an explicit definition of the kind of volunteer or nonregular police being studied—a definition like the one given here, based on lengthy research into the practices of numerous organizations.

The Need for a Citizen Role in Community Safety

The Gulf War, at the start of the 1990s, braced the United States and Europe for acts of terrorism. Security forces at government offices, airports, airline offices, and train and bus stations were strengthened. On the U.S. home front, many municipal and county police departments had their ranks thinned as more and more military and naval reservists were called into active duty. The events of September 11, 2001, further underscored the importance of having qualified and trained volunteer police during a period of national emergency. Later, the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq also thinned the ranks of the National Guard and the reserve branches of the armed forces. These events all raise an essential question. What types of volunteer police, if any, are needed to protect and police the home front? Recent events have left Americans feeling susceptible, and “research suggests that the vivid nature of these events is likely to add to people’s sense of vulnerability. Clearly, the vast on-going media coverage of terrorism-related events makes it exceedingly easy for all of us to imagine scenarios in which we are the victims of terrorism” (Pyszczynski, Solomon, and Greenberg 2003, 113). We can all feel a little less vulnerable, however, by learning what

to do in an emergency, and we can gain confidence in our skills by becoming members of official volunteer police organizations.⁶

The trade-off between public “professional” protection and part-time citizen “volunteer” protection is, of course, a topic of contemporary importance, especially given the economic dimensions of security. In any society where essential public service functions are in high demand but short supply (e.g., police), there exists an ongoing need for officials to make informed public policy decisions about the use of available resources.

During the 1980s, town, city, county, state, and federal agency heads were all told to accomplish more with fewer resources. Such downsizing became common nationwide. The improved economy during the 1990s, however, along with an aggressive national agenda to increase the number of police officers by one hundred thousand, substantially increased police numbers. While it might thus be argued that the need for volunteer police has been substantially diminished, the costs of adding more police have been high. The increased presence and better deployment of police have led to more arrests, which have increased the need for more prisons and courtrooms and more staff to run them. The added monetary demands have often been met by cutting expenditures in other public programs such as education and delinquency prevention. Such a policy approach seems to favor the idea that it is better to have personnel ready to arrest troubled youth and incarcerate them than to invest in programs designed to keep them out of trouble in the first place (Fisher 1999). Volunteer police programs could be particularly helpful in the prevention of juvenile delinquency and substance abuse, therefore decreasing the need for cash-starved communities to engage in a triage approach with respect to the services of municipal human service workers.

The recruitment and deployment of volunteers may also help address real needs that have received little attention from government agencies. For many years, for example, the field of criminal justice has been subjected to criticism for failing to meet the needs of crime victims. Currently, much of the credit for present laws regarding the control of intoxicated drivers is owed to the citizen-based organization Mothers against Drunk Driving (MADD) (Weed 1987). Volunteers, in fact, have many potential roles to play in delinquency prevention, narcotics control, and other types of crime control.

The need for a citizen role in community safety can also be illustrated by considering less tangible matters. The public's contribution to a civic enterprise, for example, can be of value for its own sake: active citizen participation in community affairs is one of the hallmarks of a stable democracy. In addition, citizens who become involved in public affairs often gain a better sense of purpose in life, as well as the opportunity to develop new competencies. Volunteer police learn not only about street survival in their training but also about how the various branches of government serve to check each other and how the existence of law is dependent on the consent of the governed. Near the close of the twentieth century, there was a general need for higher levels of civic engagement by Americans. The period from 1973 to 1994, for example, saw a 40 percent decline in the ranks of those who had served as an officer or committee member of any local club or organization (Putnam 2000, 42). Fortunately, this trend may soon be reversed, since "young Americans in the 1990s displayed a commitment to volunteerism without parallel among their immediate predecessors" (Putnam 2000, 133). This spirit of volunteerism, however, must persist into adulthood and "expand beyond individual care giving to broader engagement with social and political issues" (Putnam 2000, 133).

Volunteer policing is also relevant to the problem of race relations in America. After the Civil War and the passage of the Civil Rights Amendments to the Constitution, the U.S. Army, during Reconstruction, helped protect the rights of former slaves living in the South. Reconstruction, however, came to an abrupt end when federal troops were withdrawn toward the end of the 1870s. By 1890, racial injustice in the form of "Jim Crow" laws (the poll tax, segregated public accommodations, etc.) had become part of the fabric of American life, especially in the South. Even by the time of World War II, racism was still in full force in America. In 1940, for example, African Americans were permitted to serve only in segregated army units, and all blacks were barred from the army's air corps and the marines (Abrahamson 1983, 163). By the end of the twentieth century, observers in the field of American justice had learned about a new form of racial injustice: racial profiling. As police patrols searched for drug traffickers, it became standard practice to include a subject's race as part of his or her profile in order to decide which persons and cars to stop on the nation's highways ("Sweeping Ruling Cites" 1999). In fact, according to a recent survey con-

ducted by the Siena College Research Institute, most blacks and Hispanics believe that the American justice system is flawed. In particular, 74 percent of blacks and 85 percent of Hispanics believe that police actively use racial profiling (Siena Research Institute 2000). Moreover, while the percentage of minorities in local police departments has risen steadily since 1987, there is still room for improvement (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1999). Efforts to recruit minorities directly into the ranks of the regular police, however, have not always met with success. Perhaps the recruitment of more minority volunteer police could lead to a solution: the number of full-time minority police could be increased after volunteers have served for awhile and had a chance to become familiar with police work. In recent years, indeed, this trend has emerged in general, certain volunteer police becoming regular police. Thus, an increase in the number of minorities serving in volunteer police units might very well lead to a corresponding increase in the number of regular minority police officers.⁷

In the United States, as well as in many other parts of the world, there exists an ongoing need for emergency public services, in large part because paid professional human resources have not always been affordable or available. Many communities have opted to meet their needs through the recruitment and training of volunteers. While the activities of volunteer firemen, ambulance squads, and hospital volunteers are fairly well-known, volunteer policing remains a mystery to many Americans, its contributions only recently publicized.

In the late 1980s, President George H. W. Bush announced a national campaign to recruit volunteers for social work and other similar occupations, stating, "Just imagine an America where service to others is a fact of life, part of everyone's everyday thinking" (Bush 1989). Yet we still "know practically nothing about the ecology of neighborhood or city self-defense" (Kelling and Stewart 1989, 5). Research into the history, organization, and activities of volunteer police should ultimately help shed some new light on the citizen's role in public safety and homeland security.