

Community Policing

Contemporary Readings

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Problem Solving and Community Policing

Mark H. Moore

Recently, much fuss has been made about “problem-solving policing” and “community policing.” Proponents herald them as important new concepts that bid to replace “professional law enforcement” as the dominant paradigm of modern policing (Kelling 1988). Critics are more skeptical (Greene and Mastrofski 1988). To some, the ideas are nothing but empty slogans—the most recent public relations gimmicks in policing, devoid of substantive content, and lacking in operational utility (Klockars 1988). Others find attractive content to the ideas but judge them utopian—their popularity rooted in nostalgia. Still others see these new conceptions as distractions from the most urgent challenges now facing policing; against the urgent need to control a rising tide of violence, the interest in problem solving and community relations seems a dangerous avoidance of the real business at hand (Bayley 1988).

This article explores what is known or might reasonably be surmised about the value of problem-solving and community policing. It is necessary, first, to understand what these concepts mean and how they intend to change the practice of policing. These concepts are best understood not as new programmatic ideas or administrative arrangements but as ideas that seek to redefine the overall goals and methods of policing. In the literature on business management, these concepts would be characterized as “organizational strategies” (Andrews 1971). As such, the strengths and weaknesses of the concepts must be considered not only in achieving the traditional operational objectives of police forces such as reducing crime but also

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in guiding the future development of police departments and enhancing their public support and legitimacy.

My basic claim is that these ideas usefully challenge police departments by focusing departmental attention on different purposes to be achieved by them and different values to be realized through police operations. These ideas also encourage police to be more imaginative about the operational methods that might be used to achieve police department goals and the administrative arrangements through which these departments are guided and controlled. More particularly, the ideas emphasize the utility of widening police perception of their goals beyond the objectives of crime fighting and professional law enforcement to include the objectives of crime prevention, fear reduction, and improved responses to the variety of human emergencies that mark modern urban life. They also suggest the importance of bringing careful analysis and creative thought to bear on the problems citizens nominate for police attention and to find the solutions to those problems, not only in police-initiated arrests, but instead in a variety of responses by police, communities, and other municipal agencies. They suggest the wisdom of shifting from very centralized command-and-control bureaucracies to decentralized professional organizations.

This article examines the promise of problem-solving and community policing as a means to reduce and prevent crime, to protect and enhance the quality of life in urban America, to secure and strengthen police acceptance of legal and constitutional values, and to achieve heightened accountability of the police to the communities they serve. Section I introduces problem-solving and community policing by describing and distinguishing them, by contrasting them with "professional law enforcement," and by discussing well-documented efforts of individual police departments to adopt them as organizational strategies.

Section II presents the findings of evaluations of early applications of problem-solving and community policing approaches. Of the former, only a handful of evaluations are available. A sizable number of evaluations of recent innovations are pertinent to community policing; these include work on team policing, community relations units, community crime-prevention programs, and various patrol and fear-reduction experiments.

Section III introduces and assesses a variety of objections that have been raised to adoption of these new organizational strategies for policing. These include claims that new policing strategies will unwarrantedly distract police from the core responsibilities of crime prevention and law enforcement, that weakened central authority threatens to politicize the police in bringing them into closer contact with partisan and community political pressures, and that the police will become too powerful and intrusive, to the detriment of both their commitment to constitutional values and their accountability to the public.

Section IV examines problems of implementation. These include problems of limited financial resources, the inherent uncertainties and potential lack of support that discourage innovation, and the police culture's resistance to change. Section V, the conclusion, argues that the promise of these new strategies is bright,

even with respect to seemingly intransigent crime problems such as drug dealing and related widespread violence.

I. Defining Problem-Solving and Community Policing

Scholars approach new ideas about policing from three different perspectives. The oldest tradition and, in many ways, the richest, tries to explain why the police behave as they do (Wilson 1968; Bittner 1970; Reiss 1971; Rubenstein 1973; Black 1980). These studies seek to give as accurate and general an account of police behavior as is practically possible and then to lay bare the historical, social, political, and organizational factors that give shape to that behavior.

A second, more recent, tradition relies on scientific methods to assess the impact of police operations on particular objectives—usually reduced crime (Skogan 1977). Some of the most important of these studies have looked generally at the effectiveness of such widely used police methods as random patrol (Kelling et al. 1974), directed patrol (Pate, Bowers, and Parks 1976), rapid response to calls for service (Spelman and Brown 1984), and retrospective investigation (Greenwood, Chaiken, and Petersilia 1977; Eck 1983). Others have looked more narrowly at programs devised to deal with particular problems the police encountered such as domestic assaults (Sherman and Berk 1984), armed robberies (Wycoff, Brown, and Peterson 1980), or burglaries (Clarke 1983).

A third tradition has sought to offer advice to police executives and leaders about how police departments ought to be organized and administered (Wilson 1950; Goldstein 1979; Geller 1985). The goal of such studies has been to define the functions of the police and to recommend particular administrative arrangements for ensuring that the police perform their mandated functions efficiently and effectively.

How problem-solving and community policing are evaluated depends a little on the intellectual tradition within which evaluation is attempted. Scholars from the first tradition might imagine that these concepts were intended as descriptions of how police now behave and measure their worth in terms of the accuracy of that portrayal. Scholars from the second tradition might think of these concepts as new operational programs whose worth could be assessed by gauging their impact on crime or rates of apprehension. Scholars from the third tradition might view these concepts as new ideas about how to manage police forces whose value could be weighed by considering whether the implied structures and managerial processes could be relied on to produce a professional, law-abiding, and law-enforcing organization.

The problem is that the concepts of problem-solving and community policing do not fit neatly into any of these traditions. They are certainly not offered as descriptions of how the police now behave. Indeed, no police departments in the United States can today be accurately characterized as community policing or problem-oriented policing departments.

These ideas could be considered more plausibly as ideas in the second tradition: that is, as new operational approaches to the tasks of policing that may be

evaluated in terms of their operational results. This seems reasonable because particular operational programs have been closely identified with community or problem-oriented policing.

For example, foot patrol and the establishment of neighborhood ministrations have been linked closely to the concept of community policing, while directed patrol operations, dispute resolution, and the use of other agencies of city government to help eliminate conditions that give rise to crime have sometimes been associated with problem-solving policing. These operational programs become “signature programs” of community or problem-solving policing because they reflect the particular influence of some of the important ideas that are contained in these concepts.

Still, the ways that proponents talk about community and problem-solving policing and the ways that practitioners put them into action do not suggest that the concepts are fully captured by any particular operations program. The ideas suggest a more general approach to policing than can be captured by reference to any particular operational program.

Perhaps the concepts come closest to being managerial ideas that seek to instruct police executives about the best ways to define their purposes or structure their organizations. They are, after all, offered as advice to executives. Moreover, they seem to entail some important organizational and administrative changes in police departments. For example, community policing seems closely associated with shifts by police organization from centralized, functional, organizational structures to decentralized geographic structures that encourage closer ties with local communities (Moore and Stephens 1991). Problem-solving policing is associated with the decentralization of responsibility to the lowest possible level in the organization, with the encouragement of lateral rather than vertical communications, not only across the department, but also outside the department to other agencies of government (Eck and Spelman 1987).

But, again, these ideas seem quite different from the usual kinds of managerial practices that are studied by police researchers partly because they seem large and fundamental and partly because they do not entirely exhaust the set of managerial practices that could be associated with problem-solving or community policing.

Community and Problem-Solving Policing as “Organizational Strategies”

The concepts of community and problem-solving policing are not accounts of police behavior or tests of operational programs or managerial recommendations to police executives, what are they? The answer is that they are best understood as new organizational strategies that seek to redefine the mission, the principal operating methods, and the key administrative arrangements of police departments. In this respect, they are ideas more akin to ideas that have emerged from the private-sector

management literature than to any of the traditions of police scholarship outlined above.

An important part of that literature is concerned with defining (and redefining) an organization’s goals and developing suitable organizational capabilities in the light of environmental demands and opportunities (Andrews 1971). The completion of that task is signaled by the development of something called an “organizational strategy.”

An organizational strategy is a declaration of goals to be achieved by a given organization along with detailed plans for achieving them. It is also an account of the principal values that animate the organization’s efforts and that regulate the organization’s internal administrative relationships and external client relationships. The strategy is justified as a whole by explaining why the particular course of action chosen is a beneficial and feasible one in the light of current environmental challenges and opportunities.

Sometimes the concept is used retrospectively and descriptively to give a coherent account of a past set of actions taken by an organization. For example, the concept might be used to explore the past behavior of an organization and to discover that the organization had an *implicit* strategy that guided its operations and determined its success even if that strategy was never fully articulated by its leaders. Often these historical analyses of the implicit strategies of organizations resemble sociological analyses of the factors that shape the development of particular social institutions.

More often, though, the concept is used prospectively and prescriptively as a device that leaders of organizations might use as an instrument of leadership and organizational development. An organizational strategy is offered as a vision of what the leader of the organization would like the organization to achieve or become. The visions contained in organizational strategies are often cast in terms of “new” purposes that the organization is asked to achieve, or “new” values that the organization is asked to express. For example, a police department might be challenged to assume responsibility for the quality of its responses to calls for service as well as its crime-fighting effectiveness or to embrace the values of promoting tolerance and protecting individual rights as well as ensuring that those who commit crimes are brought to justice.

Commonly, as the example suggests, the new purposes or values being advanced are not really new. They have long been part of the organization’s conception of its purposes and goals or an important constraint on its performance. What is new is usually the weight or significance that the old values are given in the new regime. In this respect, the value statements contained in organizational strategies are usually declarations of the direction in which the organization’s values should now begin to change *at the margin*. They are not necessarily complete accounts of the whole set of values being advanced by the organization. As statements about how the values should change at the margin, the descriptions of organizational strategies can often be understood only against the backdrop of the orga-

organization's past history. Without that perspective, it is difficult to understand in what directions the organization is being encouraged to adjust.

It should be clear by now that there is nearly always some discrepancy between the rhetoric that leaders use to explain and justify their organization's performance and the performance of the organization, but the discrepancy can be viewed in two different lights. Sometimes these discrepancies exist because the leader is using the rhetoric of his organizational strategy cynically to deceive and mystify those whose task it is to oversee the organization's performance. He thereby preserves some continuing scope for the organization to misbehave without penalty and allows a subculture of deceit to arise in the organization. This use of rhetoric is hardly foreign to police departments and leaders.

At other times, leaders use the rhetoric of an organizational strategy to challenge and guide their organization toward new purposes. The rhetoric that goes into defining an organizational strategy is potentially useful in this endeavor because it can expose organizations to increased accountability by openly defining the terms by which the organization is prepared to be held accountable. In this view, a leader's rhetoric about organizational purposes and values establishes an implicit contract with the organization's overseers, clients, and employees to which the organization can be held accountable.

What use leaders make of the rhetoric associated with a particular organizational strategy can ultimately be discovered only by observing the extent to which they establish their accountability to overseers, clients, and employees in terms that are consistent with their avowed aims and by whether they use their administrative tools to nudge the organization toward the purposes and kinds of performances envisioned in their strategy.

Obviously, leaders of organizations can be more or less bold in defining their organizational strategies. A conservative approach defines an organizational strategy in terms of familiar purposes and values that the organization is already organized and trained to achieve. A more radical approach defines a strategy in terms of some new and unfamiliar values and purposes that the organization does not now know how to achieve. This is radical because it exposes the leader to criticism from within and outside the organization and to the possibility of operational failure (Moore 1990).

In principle, even the most radical organizational strategy must encompass an explanation not only of its value but also of its feasibility; otherwise it is disqualified as an appropriate organizational strategy. Indeed, that is what is required of the analyses that go into developing an organizational strategy. A strategy is developed by searching for and finding a "fit" between the organization's capabilities and its environmental opportunities. That, in turn, depends on a simultaneous analysis of two key factors: the challenges and opportunities that are present in the firm's market environment and an assessment of the firm's distinctive capabilities for producing particular products or services that can be used to establish its market niche and identity.

The concept of organizational strategy needs to be modified to some degree to be of use to public sector executives. The environment that concerns them is not only the task environment they encounter (e.g., the level and nature of crime in the society) but also the political and legal environment that supplies them with money and resources to accomplish their goals (e.g., the willingness of budget authorities to provide increased automobiles and equipment and the tolerance of the courts for particular police tactics). Moreover, the "value" they create is not profits to be distributed among shareholders, but the achievement of a set of collectively valued purposes, such as reduced victimization or enhanced security, that justify the public investment in their activities.

The challenge of developing an organizational strategy in the public sector, then, is to find some characterization of the organization's overall mission that will be more or less enthusiastically supported by the political and legal authorizing environment; that, if accomplished, is plausibly of value to the community; and that can be accomplished by the organization's existing (or properly enhanced) operational capabilities.

The concepts of community and problem-solving policing are best understood as proposed new organizational strategies of policing because they seek to redefine the overall purposes of policing, to alter the principal operating programs and technologies on which the police have relied, and to found the legitimacy and popularity of policing on new grounds (Andrews 1971; Moore and Stephens 1991). They aim to do this not only in the minds of police leaders and executives but also in the minds and actions of police officers on the street and in the expectations and evaluations of political leaders and the broader citizenry.

B. The Current Strategy of Policing: Professional Law Enforcement

There is great variety in American policing (Wilson 1968). With 17,000 individual departments, each with different histories, operational challenges, and leadership, a great deal of variation is inevitable (Bayley, 1992). Yet, the surprising fact is that, despite these conditions that favor variety, the basic strategy of policing is remarkably similar from one city to the next. Viewed at a sufficiently high level of abstraction, many things that are significantly different can be made to appear similar. There is, however, a way to describe modern American policing that is sufficiently general to capture much of what currently occurs and yet sufficiently particular to reveal choices not taken in organizing and using police departments. And it is against the backdrop of what has been the dominant strategy of modern American policing—the concept of "professional law enforcement"—that the claims of these new concepts of problem-solving and community policing can be most easily seen, understood, and evaluated.

The essential uniformity of American policing is most immediately obvious in organizational structures. Typically, American police departments are divided into a patrol force that constitutes 60 to 70 percent of the department's personnel,

and a detective bureau that makes up another 8 to 15 percent (Farmer 1978). Police departments also often have special squads devoted to specialized activities such as narcotics investigations, juvenile offenses, traffic, and special weapons and tactics. An administrative bureau is responsible for ensuring that the organization is supplied with automobiles, police stations, operational funds, and manpower and accounts for the use of such resources to municipal authorities.

The administrative style of the organization is formally hierarchical, and quasi-military (Bittner 1970). Each officer has a rank and is obliged to take orders from those who outrank him. Elaborate policies and procedures are encoded as standing orders and regulate the conduct of officers. One of the most important jobs of superior officers is to see to it that junior officers' conduct accords with the standing orders. Policies typically flow from the top down, and obedience is expected. The person in command is the person who is responsible for the performance of the unit.

This formal structure guides activity in a working environment quite different from the military organizations and classic production lines for which it was originally created (Wilson 1989). Actual working conditions involve one or two officers working alone without close supervision (Rubinstein 1973). The situations they encounter fall into patterns but it is difficult to describe them as routine. Unusual aspects of the situations that arise often require initiative and invention. In short, the work more closely resembles a hospital emergency room than a military organization at war or a manufacturing production line.

What really determines how police departments operate is not the formal organizational structure or chain of command but the principal operational tactics or programs on which the police rely (Wilson 1989). There are essentially three such tactics: patrol (both random and directed), rapid response to calls for service, and retrospective investigation of crimes. By and large, the patrol division is responsible for the first two, the detectives for the third. Patrol units may differ in how much of their time is committed to directed patrol operations and in what they do when they are not responding to calls for service, but all are connected to the citizenry through telephones, radios, and automobiles that allow police to reach a serious crime call from anywhere in the jurisdiction in under five minutes. Similarly, detective bureaus may differ in their degree of reliance on informants, intelligence files, undercover operatives, and other active methods of investigation, but for the most part, they go to work after a crime has been committed and reported. Their job is to identify the likely culprit and develop evidence to be used at trial.

In most departments, it is taken for granted that the most important responsibility of the police is to control crime and that the most powerful instrument for achieving that objective is to make arrests under the criminal law. Police believe in the power of deterrence and incapacitation to control criminal offenders and keep crime rates low. They also believe strongly in the justice of holding criminal offenders to account for their crimes. They understand that they will be called on by citizens to perform other duties, but the heart of their enterprise is simply "putting

bad guys in jail." That is what counts when promotions are handed out and in the locker rooms where "high fives" are given for achievements.

The police also understand that they are creatures of municipal governments, and are, to some degree, accountable to them and through them to the citizenry at large. But police cling to a strong sense of their own independence. They know from their past history that close political ties risk corruption (Fogelson 1977). Moreover, they feel strongly a need for aloofness and authority to do their job. They resist close oversight of their conduct both in individual cases and overall (Geller 1985). They establish popular support in the communities they police by stressing the importance of crime control as an important social objective and by claiming a substantial and distinctive professional competence in achieving that objective. They maintain their legitimacy to use force and the authority of the state by rooting their actions in the obligations of the law.

This can be described as a coherent organizational strategy because it does successfully find a fit between the organization's purposes, its operational capabilities, and its external support. The objective is the successful control of serious crime. Its principal operational capabilities consist of patrol, rapid response, and retrospective investigation. And it finds its support and legitimacy in the popularity of crime control as a purpose and in its commitment to lawfulness in arrests and investigations.

Of course, among police there has always been a certain ambivalence about the role of the law and of legal (as opposed to instrumental) values in controlling the operations of police departments. That ambivalence is reflected to some degree in the distinction between "professional law enforcement" and "crime fighting." When the police take the high road in search of professional autonomy and status, they tend to talk in terms of professional law enforcement rather than crime-fighting, thereby rooting police legitimacy in the law rather than in its instrumental purposes or in politics. Consistency requires that this strategy commit the police to enforcing not only the criminal laws but also those laws that protect citizens from arbitrary action by government agencies—including the police.

At other times, when the police pursue political popularity, they are more apt to talk about themselves as crime fighters, which implies subtly different values that guide the legitimate police departments. The instrumental value of controlling crime and punishing offenders is emphasized; the importance of the law as a constraint on police operations is diminished. The professionalism the police claim changes from a professionalism rooted in legal values and knowledge to one rooted in the technical skills and values associated with putting bad guys in jail.

Police ambivalence about these matters has long been sustained by a similar ambivalence among citizens about the kind of police force they want. The Philadelphia Police Study Task Force (1987) discovered that the citizens of Philadelphia approved strongly of their police force despite believing that officers slept on the job, were rude to citizens, took bribes, and physically abused defendants. One interpretation of these puzzling findings is that the citizens of Philadelphia agreed with the attitude expressed by one police officer who explained: "Look, if we're going

to do the hard work of shoveling society's shit and keeping the good folks safe from the bad guys, we ought to be indulged a little bit."

In many American cities, two different deals may have been struck between police departments and their political and legal communities: the public deal—the one that is discussed at Rotary Club meetings—is the commitment to professional law enforcement. The subterranean, implicit deal—the one that is discussed informally and covertly—is the commitment to crime fighting. Insofar as that is true, the distinction between professional law enforcement and crime fighting signals the incompleteness of the reform project that sought to internalize legal norms within police departments as important values to be pursued in their operations rather than as constraints on crime-fighting operations. These values remain largely outside the culture of the police.

Still, with the exception of this continuing contradiction, professional law enforcement has been embraced and developed as a coherent strategy of policing. It is often hard for those within and outside the profession to imagine any other style of policing. If, however, one stands back from this dominant strategy of policing, important limitations become apparent—even when evaluated against the announced objectives of controlling serious crime (Neustadt and May 1986; Kelling and Moore 1988). The strategy seems even more limited when one asks the broader question of how municipal police departments might best be used to enhance the quality of life in today's cities. That necessarily involves dealing effectively with crime and violence. But it also means finding ways to deal with drugs, fear, and the unraveling of family and community networks of obligation. Such purposes may not now be defined as police business. They are close enough to current police objectives, however, and the capabilities of the police are sufficiently valuable in addressing them, to make it valuable for the police to redefine their operations to create a greater contribution to their solution.

C. The Limitations of Professional Law Enforcement

An assessment of professional law enforcement as a strategy of policing should begin by observing that it has not so far had a great record in controlling crime. That observation has often been made, and (quite properly) seems to the police to be a cheap shot. They argue that they have done their part well but that they have been let down by the rest of the criminal justice system that has been unable or unwilling to prosecute, convict, and jail those whom police have convincingly accused of crimes. Some, in policing and elsewhere, also argue that adverse changes in society—increasing poverty and unemployment, continuing racism, an increase in the size of crime-prone age groups, the collapse of families, the decay of moral values—tend to increase levels of crime, and that the police and the criminal justice system have done well to keep crime at current levels.

Such finger pointing may well be appropriate and accurate. But if the police are but one factor (and apparently not a very important one) in controlling crime,

then that should undermine claims by police that their funding and authority should be increased when crime increases. It should also suggest to police executives the wisdom of founding the popularity and legitimacy of their institutions on some grounds other than effective crime control. Yet these implications have not been widely accepted in policing. The police would like to have it both ways: to be thought to be important, even fundamental, in the nation's attack on crime, and yet not to be held accountable for increasing crime rates.

1. Weakness in Operational Methods. But there is worse news for the strategy of professional law enforcement. Two decades of research have cast doubt on the operational effectiveness of the principal tactics on which the police now rely. We can no longer be confident that patrol deters crime (Kelling et al. 1974), that detectives, working only from evidence at the scene of the crime, can often solve crimes (Greenwood, Chaiken, and Petersilia 1977), or that rapid response results in the apprehension of offenders (Kansas City Police Department 1977–79; Scott 1981; Spelman and Brown 1984; for an alternative view, see Larson and Cahn 1985). Nor can we be sure that arrests, even when followed by successful prosecutions, convictions, and jail terms, produce general deterrence, specific deterrence, or rehabilitation (Blumstein, Cohen, and Nagin 1978). We can still rely on incapacitation to control some crimes by some offenders (Cohen 1978; Greenwood with Abrahamse 1982). And it is certainly too much to claim that these tactics have no effect on levels of crime. Nonetheless, the confidence we had a decade ago in the professional strategy of policing as a set of operational crime-controlling programs has now eroded.

2. The Limits of Reactiveness. Strategists now recognize that the reactive nature of current police strategy sharply limits its crime control potential. Reliance on patrol, rapid response to calls for service, and retrospective investigation virtually guarantees that police efforts to control crime will be largely reactive. Police on patrol cannot see enough to intervene very often in the life of the community. If they wait to be called, they are, by definition, waiting until an offense has occurred. That is particularly true if they view the calls as discrete incidents to be examined for serious law breaking rather than as signs of an underlying problem that has a past and a future (Goldstein 1979).

Being largely reactive has some important virtues. It insures that the police operate at the surface of social life and do not intrude too deeply; vast spaces of privacy are maintained. When the police do intrude, they have clear reason to do so and at least one citizen who supports their intervention—the person who called. In these respects a reactive strategy of policing protects privacy and liberty and economizes on the use of state authority by keeping the state's agents at a distance.

The vices of the reactive strategy have been more apparent than its virtues. To many, it is simply common sense that preventing crimes is better than waiting for them to occur. What this position ignores, however, is that, in waiting, privacy and liberty are protected; and further, that insofar as specific deterrence and inca-

pacitation discourage current offenders from committing future crimes, the current strategy produces future crime prevention. But there are two better arguments about the weakness of the reactive approach than the argument that it is not sufficiently preventive.

First, the reactive strategy is systematically unable to deal with crimes that do not produce victims and witnesses. This has long been obvious in trying to deal with so-called victimless crimes such as prostitution, gambling, and drug dealing. It has recently become clear, however, that many other crimes do not produce victims and witnesses ready to come forward (Moore 1983a). Sometimes people have been victimized and know it but are reluctant to come forward because they are afraid or they are closely related to the offender and reluctant to see him or her arrested, or some combination of the two. It is hard for the reactive strategy to reach systematic extortion or wife battering or child abuse, for the victims do not give the alarm. It may even be hard to get at robbery in housing projects where the victims and witnesses fear retaliation.

It is also difficult for the reactive strategy to reach criminal offenses that produce victims who do not know they have been victimized. Many white-collar crimes ranging from insurance frauds to dumping of toxic waste fall into this category of producing delayed harms. Because such offenses are essentially invisible to a strategy that depends on victims or witnesses raising alarms, such crimes cannot be handled well by a purely reactive strategy.

Second, the reactive strategy weakens the sense of police presence in a community and makes citizens unsure that they can rely on the police to come when they call or to handle the situations that bother them with any kind of responsiveness to their objectives and concerns. Police operating reactively rarely have time to visit victims and witnesses in the days or weeks following their involvement in criminal offenses. Detectives may show up to obtain statements, and prosecutors may call to notify of court appearances, but patrol officers will seldom call again to offer comfort and reassurance.

Similarly, the police for the most part will not get out of their cars to talk to citizens (Sherman 1986, p. 356). And, if called, police will often cut short the encounter if there is no legal action to be taken. Indeed, George Kelling has pointed to the irony that the abrupt end of many encounters with citizens is justified by the desire of the officers to get back "in service"—in service to a dispatcher who may need a car to be dispatched (Moore and Kelling 1983). Finally, the police know little about the people or situations they encounter. In Sherman's words, reactive policing becomes historical, and without a context (1986, p. 356). Taken together, this means that the police feel distant from a neighborhood's citizens: being distant, they seem both unreliable and uncontrollable. The price is that citizens, and particularly those who are afraid, do not call the police and, instead, absorb their losses and live with their fears.

Insufficient Preventiveness. Closely related to the charge that professional law enforcement is too reactive is the claim that the current strategy is not sufficiently

preventive. Indeed, to some critics, and particularly those who emphasize the failure of the reactive strategy to prevent the crime to which the reactive strategy reacts, the criticisms are identical (Brown 1989). But the argument goes beyond the simple claim that police must wait until a crime occurs before swinging into action to arrest the offender. It emphasizes that there may be factors other than offenders' evil intentions that occasion crimes and that these might be the focus of police interventions. Some commodities (such as guns, alcohol, and drugs) may be criminogenic (Moore 1983b). Some situations (such as festering domestic disputes or dark exits from subway stations or crowded streets with many check-cashing facilities) may facilitate the commission of crimes (Clarke 1983). Perhaps the police could more effectively control crime by reducing the availability of criminogenic commodities or by ameliorating criminogenic conditions than by waiting to apprehend criminals when crimes occur.

A focus on preventive action eventually leads to a concern that police pursuing the strategy of professional law enforcement ignore the potential contributions of many individuals and organizations outside the police department who could contribute to crime-prevention and control objectives. This has long been obvious to police chiefs who urged citizens to support their local police by calling, and many departments have made an effort to enlist citizens in efforts to prevent burglaries through devices such as property marking and security surveys. But the critics argue that the police do not think often enough or carefully enough about how to mobilize individual and collective efforts of citizens or the capabilities of other government agencies such as schools, licensing boards, and recreation departments to take actions that would eliminate some criminogenic conditions (Goldstein 1979).

4. Citizens' Demands for Police Services. Note that these criticisms of professional law enforcement are made within a conception of policing that establishes crime control as the most important, perhaps the only, objective of policing. In essence, these criticisms seek more effective and more far-reaching methods of controlling crime. But other criticisms of the current strategy of policing begin to break out of this frame (Moore and Trojanowicz 1988). They are rooted in observations of what actually happens in police departments and raise troubling questions about whether the police *should* be single-mindedly focused on reacting to serious crimes.

Most calls for police service do not report serious crimes; even fewer report serious crimes in progress (Wycoff 1982). Instead, they request a variety of services. A large portion of them involve emergencies that could deteriorate rapidly and lead to bad consequences unless someone responds quickly with help. But these are rarely crime emergencies. More often, they are social emergencies such as domestic disputes that have not yet become knife fights or children on the street alone at night or the sudden fears of an elderly woman who hears noises or health emergencies like drug overdoses or miscarriages.

To a great degree, a police department pursuing the strategy of professional crime fighting is inclined to see these calls as "garbage calls" that waste their resources and special capabilities and distract them from the main job of being ready

to deal with serious crime whenever and wherever it occurs. The only reason the police get these calls is that they work twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and are linked to citizens through phones and radios. They must work that way to be able to deal with crime. But police who are committed to professional law enforcement believe it is wrong for them to waste much time with these nonmission-related calls.

There is a different way to look at such calls. Some might be harbingers of future crimes and, if taken seriously now, would prevent a crime later. That is certainly true for domestic assault cases (Wilt et al. 1977). Alternatively, responses to such calls might be important ways for the police to establish a trustworthy presence in the community. That, in turn, might lead to an enhanced flow of information from the community and greater crime deterrence (Skogan and Antunes 1979). In both respects, an improved response to garbage calls might actually improve police crime-control capabilities.

An even more radical way to view such calls is to see them as appropriate claims on the police, and as clues to how *citizens* (as opposed to the police themselves) think the police might best be used. Perhaps the garbage calls should be regarded as falling well within the police mission. If citizens call because they are afraid or because they need help dealing with health and social emergencies, perhaps the police should think of such calls as central to their mission rather than peripheral.

The point becomes sharper when police arrange meetings with citizens to mobilize their assistance; police often discover that citizens are less interested in talking about robbery and burglary than the police expected (Sparrow, Moore, and Kennedy 1990). Instead, they seem to focus on "quality of life" problems such as noisy kids, visible drug dealing, graffiti, and dangerous-looking, rotted-out buildings. In short, citizens keep nominating problems for police attention different from those the police have taken for themselves as their principal purposes. This raises questions about the continuing viability and value of a strategy that assigns these citizens' concerns to the periphery of police consciousness and operational attention.

5. Incomplete Professionalization. The existing strategy of policing has also disappointed citizens and police by failing to establish the legitimacy of the police or to elevate its professional status. Policing continues to be rocked by intermittent scandals and is the continuing object of mistrust and suspicion. While pay has increased and educational standards have been raised, policing remains largely a blue-collar occupation. This is disappointing because enhanced legitimacy and professional status were among the principal objectives of the recent wave of police reform that sustained professional law enforcement as a concept of policing. In retrospect, two factors seem to have thwarted the reformers' purposes.

One is the continuing inability of the police to establish appropriate mechanisms of accountability linking them to the overall structure of city governance and the citizens. A central idea in professional law enforcement is that the police

should be independent of political influence and should take their guidance strictly from the law and the standards of their profession. As noted above, their commitment to the law as a basis of legitimacy has been undermined to some degree by their continued criticism of constitutional restrictions and by the evidence of ongoing (but diminishing) corruption and brutality. They have preferred to base their legitimacy on their own professional standards—hence the popularity of higher educational standards, more training, even the movement to accredit law enforcement agencies (Williams 1989).

The effort to base police legitimacy on their own professionalism (rather than on lawfulness or political responsiveness or a combination of all three) was intrinsically problematic. It makes the police responsible only to themselves and to no one else—always a suspect position in democratic governance. But the police compounded that strategic error by invoking the principle of professional autonomy and independence to defeat all mechanisms of external control, even in situations where strong evidence indicated that the police had failed in their professional duties. Civilian review boards were, for the most part, defeated and probably for good reason (*Civilian Review of the Police* 1980). They were flawed mechanisms of accountability since they focused far too much attention on individual incidents of brutality or corruption, gave far too much power to individual complainants against the police, and failed to hold police departments accountable for improvements in their overall performance. But having defeated these initiatives, the police offered no satisfactory alternatives.

The absence of continuing external accountability may have seemed a real advantage to the police since it spared them the daily pressures of responding to the oversight and criticism of outsiders. It also made them feel in control of their own destiny. But the reality was that, over time, the absence of ongoing accountability weakened police departments. Without any continuing, formal dialogue between the police, their political overseers, and the community about the overall goals and performance of the police, the police lacked any way of advancing their status. They could avoid criticism, but it was hard for them to win praise. As a result, their standing tended to stagnate.

Without ongoing aggregate measurements of their performance, police became extremely vulnerable to the damaging effect of individual incidents that became the focus of intensive news coverage. A shooting or instance of negligence loomed large in the public mind when the public lacked a larger context in which to understand and evaluate an individual incident.

The police gradually became cut off from the aspirations, desires, and concerns of citizens. Increasingly, the important work to be done was defined by the police rather than by the taxpayers who paid their salaries and bought them their equipment. True, the police remained responsive to the citizenry by responding to their calls for service. But in each case, whether a call was important was subjected to police judgments about its urgency. By tying themselves operationally to citizens only through 911 systems, police could neither see nor hear from citizens about problems that were not embodied in particular incidents. Since there were many

uch problems, the police were increasingly seen as irrelevant to the concerns of citizens.

Finally, from the vantage point of police executives and leaders, insulation from external accountability made it harder for them to challenge their own organizations to perform. In the traditional imagery of professional independence and strong leadership, the insulation of a police chief from political pressures was supposed to enhance his stature and control over the department and to give him the freedom to chart the organization's future. In reality, however, the effect was to make him more vulnerable to the demands of his own troops. That was particularly true in a world in which many chiefs came from inside their departments, already tied in ongoing obligations to departmental friends, and in which police leaders felt obligated to support their own troops, lest morale decline. These powerful formal influences often made chiefs defenders of their own organizations and personnel rather than managers of the organization for the benefit of the public at large. Stronger external accountability would, it seems, have strengthened their ties vis-à-vis their own organizations and made it more likely that the values pursued through the organization's operations actually reflected the values that citizens would have liked to see reflected.

The second major impediment to legitimacy and enhanced professional standing for policing was that the police never seemed fully to embrace the constitutional values that were the only sure path for accomplishing these goals. In society's hierarchy of values, crime fighting is important, but it is less important than the rule of law. As long as the police embraced the former as their principal raison d'être, some avenues of advancement were cut off. Constitutional values were lawyers' values, not police values. As long as the police failed to embrace them (and sometimes even when they did), prosecutors and judges viewed police as suspect. They were also suspect in the eyes of reporters who covered their operations. And they were vulnerable to outside attacks whenever an incident occurred in which legal values seemed to have been sacrificed to crime-control expediency to individual officer's desires for money or revenge. In short, even with the reform strategy, the police were standing for the wrong values.

The absence of effective accountability mechanisms and police reluctance to embrace constitutional values undermined the efforts of the reform strategy to enhance the legitimacy and professional stature of the police. Attempts to base legitimacy on educational standards and professional accreditation have not filled the void. As a result, the foundations of policing seem shaky, individual organizations are vulnerable to scandal, and police leaders vulnerable to scapegoating.

The Growth of Private Self-Defense. A last criticism of the professional strategy of policing is that it has not allowed public police departments to hold onto their share of the market for security services. There has been a dramatic growth in private security that has occurred over the last two decades (Shearing and Stenning 1991; Cunningham and Taylor 1985; Shearing, 1992). Increasingly, American citizens rely on mechanisms other than public policing to protect them from

criminal victimization, and allay their fears (Lavrakas and Lewis 1980; Lavrakas et al. 1981; Skogan and Maxfield 1981; Lavrakas and Skogan 1984). They buy locks, guns, and dogs in increasing quantities. They patrol their own neighborhoods in increasing numbers. And they band together to buy private security services from commercial firms—sometimes even from public agencies (Reiss 1985).

This has occurred even as the overall popularity of public policing has remained high and even risen. Although Americans seem to like public police forces, they apparently find them increasingly irrelevant to their security concerns. Insofar as one of the important tests of a corporate strategy is its ability to maintain a competitive advantage for an enterprise, professional law enforcement has not performed well.

The eroding position of public policing can be evaluated from two quite different perspectives. Viewed from the perspective of those in public policing, the loss of competitive position is unfortunate because it means less money, status, and opportunity for them and their colleagues. That may be important to police, but it is less important to the general citizenry, particularly if citizens are benefiting from lower taxes and the opportunity to buy security more neatly tailored to their individual desires.

But the decline of public policing can also be viewed from the vantage point of citizens who are interested in the overall quality of justice delivered by the society. Viewed from that perspective, the demise of public policing and the growth in private security portends several significant problems: a more unequal distribution of security; less respect for the rights of defendants; less professional competence overall to be drawn on in times of trouble (Reiss 1988). Thus the decline of public policing is a problem for society at large, not just for those who make careers in public policing.

These weaknesses in the current strategy of policing do not necessarily mean that it is wrong. It may be the best strategy available or the proper one for this stage of the development of policing in American society. Nor do the weaknesses necessarily mean that the strategy will quickly change to something else. Many forces operate to sustain commitment to any orthodoxy—including its familiarity and wide acceptance. What the weaknesses do mean is that there might be room to consider alternatives.

It is in that fertile ground that the ideas of community and problem-oriented policing have taken root. They give different answers to the questions, how might police departments best be used to confront crime, fear, drugs, and urban decay, by redefining the purposes of police departments, their principal operational methods, and even their bases of legitimacy. They have also sought to redefine the working relationships among the police, the community, and the other agencies of local government.

D. Problem-Solving and Community Policing as Alternative Organizational Strategies

To see problem-solving and community policing as alternatives to the current strategy of policing requires that they be seen as more abstract than any particular program or set of organizational arrangements. They define general approaches to policing rather than a definitive set of activities. Moreover, the particular programs that reflect a problem-solving or community-oriented style of policing in a particular locality might well differ. The problem-solving approach to domestic assault in Kansas City might be quite different than in San Francisco or Seattle. The community approach to drug dealing in Detroit might be quite different than in Phoenix (Police Executive Research Forum 1989).

Indeed, one common idea across these concepts is that there may be no one best way to deal with each of the problems facing policing. The best response will often depend on local circumstances. Thus the mark of an effective police department will not be how successful it is in implementing the most recent national model of a successful program but instead in how thoughtfully it crafts a local solution to a local problem, taking into account the local character of the problem and the local means of dealing with it.

What makes these concepts distinctive, then, is neither that they embody a particular set of activities nor that they give particular guidance to operations. Instead, they orient the thoughts and actions of police officers and managers in ways that differ characteristically from traditional ways of thinking about police work and, to a certain degree, from one another.

1. Problem-Solving Policing. Fundamental to the idea of problem solving, for example, is the activity of thought and analysis to understand the problem that lies behind the incidents to which the police are summoned (Goldstein 1979; Eck and Spelman 1987; Sparrow, Moore, and Kennedy 1990). This is not the same as seeking out the root causes of the crime problem in general. It is a much shallower, more situational approach. It takes seriously the notion that situations might be criminogenic and that crime can be prevented by changing the situations that seem to be producing calls for service (Clarke 1983). The problem-solving challenge is to imagine and design a plausibly effective response to solve the underlying problem. That can and often does include arresting troublemakers or assigning officers to patrol in certain places and times (Eck and Spelman 1987, pp. 43–44). But the important point is that the response is not necessarily limited to these traditional police responses. The challenge is to use mechanisms other than arrests to reduce resolutions and to look outside the department as well as within for usable operational capacity.

Some concrete examples taken from Eck and Spelman's pioneering work will make these abstract points clearer (Eck and Spelman 1987; Spelman and Eck 1989):

In 1984, thefts from vehicles parked near the Newport News Shipyards constituted about 10 percent of all index crimes reported in Newport News. An officer assigned to analyzing and resolving this crime problem discovered that most of the crimes occurred in a few parking areas. By interviewing patrol officers, detectives, and officers from the Shipyards' private security force, and those already caught and convicted of thefts in the area, the officer was able to identify a small number of suspects for the ongoing crimes. This information was given to patrol officers patrolling the area who became more aggressive in interviewing suspects when they were seen in the area, and succeeded in making on-view arrests. In addition, the officer gained valuable information from the convicted offenders about what made the autos attractive targets. That information is being used by the workers and the private security force to develop and implement a theft prevention strategy. Thefts have decreased by 55 percent (from 51 per month to 23 per month) since the field interrogations and arrests of repeat offenders began. [Eck and Spelman 1987, pp. 73–77]

The solution to this problem rested on traditional police methods, and relied principally on departmental sources of information. What was unique was the sustained effort made by the officer assigned the responsibility to deal with the problem as a whole to tap and collate previously untapped information and use that information to give coherence and impetus to what otherwise would have been a fragmented effort.

Here is a second example:

In the spring of 1985, Gainesville, Florida, was hit by a rash of convenience store robberies. The police thought the robberies were the work of one or two repeat offenders. A review of suspect descriptions proved otherwise: many different offenders were suddenly knocking over convenience stores. Officers assigned to analyze this problem observed that the convenience stores that were being robbed differed from the others in that their interiors (and particularly their cash registers) were less visible from the street, tended to hold more cash in their registers, and were staffed by only one person during the late night hours. They then interviewed offenders who had been convicted of convenience store robberies and learned that robbers always avoided convenience stores staffed by more than one clerk.

These findings were presented to an association of local merchants that had been formed to help deal with the problem. The police were surprised by the fact that the merchants rejected the police requests to change their practices to make their stores less vulnerable. Undeterred, the police designed a local ordinance requiring the owners to remove window advertising that blocked the view of the store's interior from the street, to place cash registers in full view of the street, to install security cameras in the store and outside lighting in the parking lot, to limit the amount of cash in the registers, and to staff the stores in late night hours with two employees trained in crime prevention techniques. Despite continuing opposition from the merchants, the City Commission approved the ordinance. Following the implementation of the ordi-

nance, robberies fell 65 percent overall, and 75 percent at night. [Eck and Spelman 1987, pp. 5–6]

Exactly what caused the robbery rates to fall remains controversial. Some claim that the arrests of a small number of offenders who were committing these crimes was the principal explanation (Sherman 1990). From the point of view of those interested in problem solving, however, what is important is that it remains plausible that the particular features of the situation that became the focus of interventions were important causes of the robberies and that the police force was able to persuade the city government to shift some of the burden of dealing with the problem from the police to the merchants through the force of their analysis. But for that, the police would still be responding to robbery calls and explaining to everyone else in the city why they could not supply more police services for them.

2. Community Policing. The fundamental idea behind community policing, by contrast, is that effective working partnerships between the police and the community can play an important role in reducing crime and promoting security (Skolnick and Bayley 1986; Sparrow, Moore, and Kennedy 1990). Community policing emphasizes that the citizens themselves are the first line of defense in the fight against crime. Consequently, much thought must be given to how those efforts might best be mobilized. One important technique is for the police to open themselves up to community-nominated problems.

Opening the department to community-nominated problems often affects the police understanding of their ends as well as their purposes, for the communities do not always nominate serious crime problems as their most important concerns. In expressing their concerns, citizens' fears become as important as their actual victimization. The factors that trigger fears often turn out to be things other than serious crime (Skogan 1986). Thus community policing changes one's vision of the ends of policing as well as its means.

The concept of community policing also changes thinking about the bases of police legitimacy. In community policing, the justification for policing is not only its capacity to reduce crime and violence at a low cost while preserving constitutionally guaranteed rights but also its ability to meet the needs and desires of the community. Community satisfaction and harmony become important bases of legitimacy along with crime fighting competence and compliance with the law. Politics, in the sense of community responsiveness and accountability, reemerges as a virtue and an explicit basis of police legitimacy.

Thus community policing sees the community not only as a means for accomplishing crime control objectives but also as an end to be pursued. Indeed, as an overall strategy, community policing tends to view effective crime fighting as a means for allowing community institutions to flourish and do their work rather than the other way around (Stewart 1986; Tumin 1986). Community policing also seeks to make policing more responsive to neighborhood concerns.

None of this is intended to make the police entirely subservient to communities and their desires. The police must continue to stand for a set of values that communities will not always honor. For example, the police must defend the importance of fairness in the treatment of offenders and the protection of their constitutional rights against the vengeance of an angry community. The police must stand for and seek to produce fairness in the allocation of publicly financed protective services across the population of a city rather than cater to the most powerful neighborhoods. And police executives must retain control over such things as the assignment of particular personnel and the establishment of department-wide policies and procedures, lest the enterprise cease to operate as a citywide institution and become instead a mere compilation of several independent departments. Under a strategy of community policing, police departments should become more responsive and accountable to the demands of citizens.

An example of community policing in action may usefully illustrate these abstract ideas (Vera Institute of Justice 1988):

In New York in April 1987, a representative of a tenants' association called a Community Patrol Officer with specific information about drug dealers and locations in the housing project in which he lived. The informant complained that the building was inundated with dealers and purchasers who occupied apartments and loitered in the halls making deals. The building's residents were frightened and frustrated, as were other members of the community. . . . The officer's first move was to call a meeting with the tenants' association. There was a good turnout of the residents, and the officer initiated a discussion in which conditions in the building were described clearly. He insisted that no specific details be given or accusations made, however, since some of the building's drug dealers were attending in order to observe and intimidate the others. . . . The meeting showed clearly that most of the building's residents shared a common attitude toward the problem, but that, because drug dealing is illegal, it is the responsibility of the police department to eliminate it. Their demand was clear; they wanted the police to clean up the building by more frequent patrolling and evictions or arrests of the drug dealers.

The officer believed it essential that he convince the tenants they could not wait passively for the problem to be solved for them, but had to become active participants in the solution. He argued that the police could not possibly devote to one building as much time and attention as these tenants were requesting. He explained that the building's residents needed to act not only as reporters of the problem, but also to take some responsibility for eliminating it. The officer suggested the formation of a tenants' patrol . . . to supplement police activity and promised his support of the patrol. The tenants came around; they formed their own patrol unit.

Within two weeks the tenants' association had been transformed from a rather limited and fragmented organization to a far more cohesive and powerful group. The association established an around-the-clock patrol of the building which monitored and recorded the presence of every person who entered it. . . . The officer conducted vertical patrols of the building five or six times

a day . . . and regularly informed special narcotics units in the Police Department about the situation. In addition, he met with representatives of the Department of Housing Preservation and Development, the local City Councilman, the Bureau of Family Services . . . these different resources collaborated in providing information to the tenants, worked on renovating apartments, and assisted in responsibly choosing future tenants in order to assure that the problem would not simply begin again with new faces when the present dealers were evicted. [Pp. 11–12]

Police Strategies Compared. When the concrete examples offered above are compared and contrasted in light of the abstract characterizations of police strategies, several important observations emerge. The differences between good professional policing, on the one hand, and problem-solving and community policing, on the other, seem less sharp. As one participant in a management-program class claimed when these illustrations were offered, “But we’ve always done things like that! That is not professional policing, or problem-solving policing, or community policing, that is simply *good* policing.”¹

Other members of the class pointed out, however, that while actions that were presented as problem-solving and community policing had always occurred in police departments, they were seldom acknowledged by supervisors or the managerial systems of the organization as effective policing. They remained covert and unacknowledged. Therefore they were rarer than they could or should have been.

Even though these methods and techniques had long been part of a resource-patrol officer’s operational repertoire, they were different from the standard, acknowledged methods of the organization. The scope of the problems addressed was unusual. They were larger than incidents to which the police were summoned and smaller than citywide crime problems for which the police were held accountable. The way data were used to define problems and analyze possible solutions, while not unheard of, are, nonetheless, rare in police circles. The extent to which the community and other governmental agencies were involved in identifying and solving problems was also unusual. In these respects, then, the concrete examples reveal a different approach to policing that is characteristic of problem-solving community policing.

To a great extent, problem-solving and community policing are overlapping concepts (Moore and Trojanowicz 1988). A commitment to problem solving leads naturally to the invention of solutions that involve the broader community. Moreover, while problem solving often begins with police-nominated problems, many of the departments that have committed themselves to problem solving have developed mechanisms to consult with local communities to discover what the problems are. If both occur as a routine matter, then problem-solving policing becomes virtually indistinguishable from community policing. Community policing is designed to let the community nominate problems and focuses on what police can do in partnership with the community to deal with the nominated

problems. That generally requires thought and imagination and is therefore often indistinguishable from problem-solving policing.

Despite the overlaps, each concept has its own distinctive thrust (Moore and Trojanowicz 1988). Problem solving emphasizes thoughtfulness and analysis over community cooperation. Community policing seeks to rivet the attention of the organization not on its own internal operations but instead on how its cooperation with the community seems to be developing. As a matter of emphasis, a problem-solving police department could err by becoming too focused on problems that the police thought were important and by not being responsive enough to community-nominated problems. A community-oriented department might become so focused on maintaining its relationships with the community that it forgot that it was supposed to mount operations that reduced crime, victimization, and fear.

So at abstract and strategic levels and at a concrete operational level, the concepts of problem-solving and community policing seem to differ both from professional law enforcement as an operational philosophy and from one another. While the concrete examples are here presented as a way of revealing the differences in approach, they also remind us that, in the end, these abstract and strategic levels are important not simply as abstractions but as devices that can be used to influence the conduct of police officers in the field.

The most important ways in which these new strategies are supposed to influence police conduct is by authorizing individual officers to gather data about the situations that lie behind incidents so that their underlying causes might be understood; to be thoughtful about the design of police operations to deal with the problem; to construct measures to determine whether one has been successful; to acknowledge the important role of the community in nominating problems for solution, in designing effective solutions and in executing the solutions; to see that the goal of crime fighting might best be pursued by establishing more trusting relations with the communities that are policed; and to acknowledge that the police have broader opportunities to prevent and control crime and to promote security and ease some of the danger and pain and frustration of living in today’s cities than is acknowledged in the conception of professional law enforcement.

To accomplish these things, however—to make these abstract ideas work to provide useful guidance to operational officers—requires important changes in the ways that police departments are structured and managed as well as in the ways that their purposes and operating philosophy are understood. It is not enough to have the general idea. It is not enough even to have the general idea translated into operational realities on an intermittent basis. The organizations must be structured and operated to produce that result day in and day out. That is an organizational and managerial task as well as a conceptual task. It is in this complicated sense that problem-oriented and community policing must be evaluated as organizational or corporate strategies rather than as operational programs or even as discrete activities undertaken by officers.

II. Evaluating Problem-Solving and Community Policing

If problem-solving and community policing are viewed as strategic concepts seeking to redefine the overall mission of policing, how might they be evaluated? This question becomes urgent as more and more police departments consider changing their basic strategies. After all, there is far more at stake in changing the overall strategy of policing than in changing particular programs or administrative arrangements. A much larger fraction of the organization's resources is involved. And changes, once initiated, may be quite expensive to reverse.

Unfortunately, it is far more difficult to evaluate strategic ideas than programmatic ones. Because changes in the basic strategy of policing take years, even decades, to implement successfully, it is difficult to say at what moment the new strategy became operative. This makes pre- and postevaluations that compare performance before and after implementation of innovations difficult to conduct.

Even worse, because a change in strategy often involves a redefinition of purposes as well as means, it is by no means clear what criteria should be used to evaluate success. Obviously, it is important to know whether the new strategy is more or less successful than the old in controlling crime. But the issue is whether, in changing the basic strategy of policing, new criteria such as reducing fear or restoring the quality of life also become important, and if so, how they might be measured. It may also be important to evaluate a strategy in terms of its long-run institutional consequences as well as its operational effectiveness: for example, whether the police become more or less law-abiding over time; whether they become more or less important relative to private security in supplying security services in the nation's cities; and whether the occupational status of policing rises or falls.

Finally, no police department in the United States has as yet fully made the transition to these new styles of policing and operated long enough to produce a convincing record of performance. Consequently, there is little experience to rely on in estimating the value of these new strategies, let alone their long-run institutional consequences.

This leaves an evaluator in an awkward position. The most important claim is that these new styles of policing represent an important shift in the overall strategy of policing. But the available evidence is not really up to assessing this claim. What we can do is more modest. First, lay out the principal arguments that supporters of these styles of policing make for the value of their approach and examine empirical evidence on the success of particular "signature programs" associated with the different ideas. Then, because this evidence is too thin to allow a complete evaluation (and because the empirical evidence would, in any case, be insufficient for a proper normative assessment of the long-run institutional consequences of a fundamental shift in strategy), turn to a close consideration of the principal criticisms of these new strategies of policing.

A. The Effectiveness of Problem-Solving Policing: Empirical Evidence

The theoretical justification for problem-solving policing was set out by Herman Goldstein in a pioneering article in 1979. The fundamental notion was that much of the real knowledge about what worked in policing lay in the operating experience of police officers. Goldstein emphasized the importance of representing problems in much more specific, hence local, terms (1979, pp. 244–45). For example, arson was not a single category of offense; it included fires set by "firebugs," pranks by juvenile delinquents, and efforts to defraud insurance companies. Each element of the arson problem demands a separate solution. Similarly, in seeking out information about how problems are actually handled, it is not enough to learn the policies and procedures of the department, one had to observe how resourceful and experienced police officers dealt with individual cases. Only then would the "rich resource" represented by individual officers' practices be well used (Goldstein 1979, pp. 248–49).

The value of problem solving in practice has now been demonstrated anecdotally in operations carried out by police departments in such places as Newport News, Virginia; Santa Ana, California; Baltimore County, Maryland; and New York City, New York. The stories presented above are similar to scores of others from around the nation. Such stories are satisfying mostly because they describe a set of concrete activities that seem to produce attractive concrete results. In this, they have the persuasive power of anecdotes.

But there are at least three risks in relying on anecdotes as evidence for the success of problem solving as an overall strategy. First, the anecdotes may not be accurate descriptions of what occurred. Without outside auditing, there is no way to be sure that the successes are real or that they resulted from police operations rather than from some other factor. For example, debates continue about the real causes of the reduced number of convenience store robberies in Gainesville, Florida, described above (e.g., see Wilson 1990).

Second, the anecdotes may not be significant enough to count for much, even if they are accurate. The worst fear is that the problems are not really solved but are simply displaced to new locations. Even if that were not true, the solution of one or two small problems could hardly justify the operations of an entire police department.

Third, the success of one or two operations is not enough to demonstrate that the department as a whole can engage in this kind of activity repeatedly across the range of problems the police face. If the police cannot do this, then the claim that problem-solving efforts are doing something more than displacing local problems to new areas, or that they are producing something more valuable than what the police are now doing is substantially weakened.

The most sustained and rigorous test of problem solving as a strategy for policing a city is contained in an evaluation of the Newport News police department (Eck and Spelman 1987). The investigators identified precisely these two issues as

being important to resolve: first, whether the problem-solving efforts eliminated or abated the problems attacked; and, second, whether the department was capable of carrying on such activities on a widespread, continuing basis—that is, as a routine way of operating (Eck and Spelman 1987, p. 65).

To answer the first question, the researchers examined three of eighteen problems that the organization defined as problems to be solved. One began as a police operation to reduce residential burglaries in a housing project but gradually became a multi-agency effort to improve living conditions in the project. The second was the previously described effort to reduce thefts from automobiles in the Newport News shipyards. The third was an effort to reduce prostitution and associated robberies on a particular street.

Many of these problem-solving efforts began essentially as directed patrol operations designed to identify patterns of offending or known offenders and to deploy police to catch the offenders. All gradually evolved into quite different efforts that involved activities other than arrests and agencies other than the police. The attack on burglaries in the housing project involved surveying tenants, cleaning the projects, creating a multi-agency task force to deal with particular problems in the housing project, and organizing the tenants not only to undertake block watches but also to make demands on city agencies. The attack on thefts from cars eventually involved the inclusion of police officers in the design of new parking lots to make them less vulnerable to theft. The attack on prostitution and robbery involved enhanced code enforcement against hotels and bars that provided the meeting places for prostitutes and their customers as well as decoy operations against the prostitutes.

The investigators concluded that these problem-solving efforts largely succeeded in achieving their objectives: burglaries in the housing project dropped by about 35 percent and there was no evidence of displacement (Eck and Spelman 1987, p. 72); the number of thefts from automobiles in the shipyards declined by more than 50 percent (p. 76); the number of prostitutes working the particular street dropped from twenty-eight to six, and the number of personal robberies committed in the downtown area of which this street was a part declined by 43 percent (p. 80).

With respect to the second question, the investigators looked at the overall volume and pattern of problem-solving efforts that the department had launched. There were eighteen such problems in the research period. Some were short-lived, local problems; others were local but more durable; still others had citywide significance. It would be nice to know how much of the department's overall efforts over the research period was committed to problem solving as opposed to reactive approaches to crime, what fraction of the department's personnel was engaged in such efforts, and what fraction of the city's overall crime problem came within the scope of problem-solving efforts. Unfortunately those data are not supplied. What the authors conclude, however, is that "police officers can solve problems as part of their daily routine; they enjoy problem solving; and their efforts are often successful" (Eck and Spelman 1987, p. xxv).

The evaluators also observed an important relationship between the depth of the analysis that went into the design of a problem-solving approach and the sort of response that was selected. The more extensively a problem was analyzed, the more likely it was to lead to an approach that did not rely exclusively on police resources or police methods. Changing police officers' views of the sources of the problem changed the nature of the response that seemed appropriate.

B. Evaluating Community Policing

In many respects, the concept of community policing is as old as policing itself. Indeed, many think it is redundant to add the word community to policing since policing, by definition, assumes the existence of a political community with shared norms codified in laws and enforced with day-to-day support from citizens (Cain 1973, pp. 21–25).

To others, adding the word "community" to policing serves to remind the police that the community is an important resource to tap in pursuing the goals of crime reduction and that the cultivation of community support must be an operational goal of policing, influencing decisions about the priority given to certain kinds of activities and about the overall structure of the organization.

To still others, adding the word "community" to policing redefines the ends as well as the means of policing. In this view, the goal of policing is not just to reduce crime but also to reduce fears, restore civility in public spaces, and guarantee the rights of democratic citizens; in short, it is to create secure and tolerant democratic communities. In both these latter cases, advocates of community policing think it is important to add the word to the enterprise of policing because it focuses the attention of police departments on their relationship to the communities they police, and that is an important corrective to the style of policing that had emerged under the professional model of policing.

1. Team Policing. The urgency of maintaining a close connection between the police and the community was brought home to professionally oriented police departments toward the end of the 1960s when they confronted large-scale urban unrest. Disciplined, competent, professionalized police forces found themselves unable to deal with this problem. One despairing member of the Los Angeles Police Department now recalls the experience of the Watts riot: "Everything we believed would be effective didn't work. We withdrew officers; that didn't work. We put more officers in; that didn't work. We used our black and liaison officers; that didn't work" (Kennedy 1986, p. x). On review, the Los Angeles Police Department concluded that it had failed because it had lost touch with the communities it policed, and with that, it had lost a crucial capacity to enforce the laws of the state.

Why the police had lost touch was not hard to understand. Like most professional police departments, the Los Angeles Police Department had shifted away from an organizational structure based on local neighborhoods. Geographically

based precincts had given way to functional or programmatic units. And while the patrol division retained a geographical structure, centralized dispatching systems had made all the patrol cars available for dispatching throughout the city. The focus of the department had become citywide rather than local.

The solution to this problem, initiated by Chief Edward Davis in 1970, was to reestablish a sense of territorial responsibility in the basic structure of the police department's operations (Kennedy 1986). Davis divided his patrol force into two different kinds of patrol unit. One unit (called the "X car") was available to be dispatched throughout the city as needed. The other unit (called the "basic car") was to be kept in a given geographical area. The dispatchers were instructed to give the "basic car" the first crack at calls within its own service delivery area, and to refrain from dispatching it to other parts of the city except in dire emergencies. In addition, Davis established the position of "senior lead officer" to be assigned to the basic car. In return for greater rank and higher pay, this officer assumed a broader set of responsibilities for establishing and maintaining liaison with local communities.

Davis went further several years later. In 1973, he committed his organization to a concept called "team policing" to give the organization an even stronger sense of geographic accountability. The city was divided into seventy geographic units, each consisting of three to five basic patrol cars. A lieutenant was placed in charge of each area. In an important innovation, the lieutenant commanded not only patrol units but also detectives and representatives of specialist units such as traffic, narcotics, and juveniles, depending on the area's problems. In effect, the lieutenants became minichiefs of small territories. They were told that they were accountable for only one thing: "Whether conditions improved in their areas of responsibility or did not deteriorate." Here was the first modern model of what is becoming community policing.

At this stage, by the mid-1970s, many departments were experimenting with team policing. What evaluations were completed showed generally positive results: when the programs were fielded and sustained, they seemed to enjoy popularity with citizens and police and to produce some improvements in neighborhood conditions, including reductions in crime (Sherman, Milton, and Kelly 1973; Koenig, Lahna, and Petrick 1979).

Other studies, however, documented the enormous difficulty of introducing and sustaining team policing in police departments committed to professional crime fighting. In Dallas, a skilled police executive, supported by substantial outside resources, was unable to implement a reform program (Kelling and Wycoff 1978). In many other cities, successful team-policing programs were unaccountably abandoned despite their apparent success (Sherman, Milton, and Kelly 1973). Even Los Angeles eliminated team policing in 1979 (Kennedy 1986, p. 8).

Why team policing seemed to disappear despite its apparent successes remains obscure. Some blame declining police resources and the dramatic increase in calls for service that made it impossible for large city police departments to sustain the commitment to maintain geographic responsibility. Others see the culprit in the determined opposition of midlevel managers who resented the increas-

ing independence and autonomy of the sergeants and patrol officers who worked on the teams (Sherman 1986, p. 365). Still others think that the schemes fell to the power of the police culture, which preferred professional isolation to close engagement with the community. Whatever the exact reason, it gradually became clear that team policing could not be introduced and sustained within organizations whose dominant purpose was something else and whose culture would not support it. As long as the organization's most important task was getting to calls on time, and as long as the organization remained a steep hierarchy of commanders, it would be hard to fit team policing into existing police organizations.

2. Community Relations Units. A different effort to restore strong working relationships between the police and the community lay in the creation of community relations units. These units have had a long but checkered history (Geary 1975; Walker 1980).

Some were created in the mid-fifties as part of a concerted program undertaken by chiefs to develop public support for policing and overcome "the attitudes of contempt that middle-class citizens held toward the police" (Geary 1975, pp. 373-74). These units arranged for police officers to visit schools and speak at meetings of civic associations in order to communicate the police perspective.

Other community relations units, created in response to riots in the 1940s and 1960s, were designed to help the police shore up relations with minority communities and to help prevent riots. Goldstein (1990) has described the activities and significance of these units: "The units sponsored Officer Friendly programs, maintained contacts with civil rights activists, monitored demonstrations, attended meetings of militant groups, and advised command staff on rising tensions. . . . The value of these units . . . was, in my view, a major factor alerting police chiefs to the potential of what has now emerged as community policing."

Still other community relations units sought to enlist direct citizen participation in specific crime-control efforts (Bickman et al. 1976). At first, they concentrated on encouraging citizens to call the police when suspected crimes were occurring. Later, they emphasized crime prevention. They helped citizens analyze their own vulnerabilities through security surveys. They encouraged citizens to mark their property to make it easier for the police to identify property as stolen in investigations and to facilitate its return. They sought to form citizen block watches in which citizens agreed to watch one another's homes.

Unfortunately, these latter efforts were not successfully evaluated. The exact nature and scale of police efforts in this area remains obscure, as are their effects on levels of crime and attitudes toward the police. Consequently, we do not really know whether these police initiatives reduced crime or calmed fears.

What these varied uses of community relations units reveal, however, is how confused the police are about the functions that improved community relations are supposed to serve, and how the units should organize to secure whatever benefits are associated with performing this function well. Many police continue to think that the most important purpose of improved community relations is to build

support for policing: community relations units should be megaphones for the department and its purposes rather than antennae tuned into neighborhood concerns. Many police remain skeptical about the operational utility of mobilizing citizens to help them prevent and control crime—particularly when those citizens seem to have little respect or affection for the police.

Even worse, they succumb to the common police tendency to deal with particular problems by forming special squads. (As a saying in the London Metropolitan Police puts it, “When in doubt, form a squad and rush about” [Sparrow, Moore, and Kennedy 1990].) Four adverse consequences flow from concentrating the responsibility for effective community relations in a special squad.

First, by isolating the function in a specialized unit, it becomes vulnerable to organizational ridicule. This often occurred. The community relations units became known as the “grin and wave” or “rubber gun” squads.

Second, once a special squad is formed, everyone else in the department is seemingly relieved of responsibility for enhancing the quality of community relations. That has become the responsibility of the community relations unit.

Third, if the community relations unit should obtain important information about community concerns or ways in which the community might be able to help the department, it is difficult to make those observations heard inside the police department—particularly if what they have to report is bad news or imposes unwelcome demands on the rest of the organization. Goldstein (1990) described the dilemma for officers charged with maintaining liaison with racial minorities: “Officers were often caught in a double-bind, expected by department personnel to tamp out any sign of unrest and expected by minority communities to achieve changes in police practices affecting them.”

Fourth, the organization no longer looks for other ways to improve community relations. It does not consider the possibility that the right way to improve community relations is to make every patrol officer a community relations officer, or to make special efforts to ensure that its organizations are representative of the best from the neighborhoods it polices.

In short, while the establishment of community relations units reveals the continuing vitality of the important idea that the police must stay close to the communities they police, it also indicates how difficult it is for that idea to begin to influence the operations of the entire department. The units operate to insulate most of the department from the continuing challenge of sustaining links to the community that can serve not only as a basis of support for policing but also as a conduit for community demands on police agencies and an opportunity to enlist community groups in operational efforts to control crime and improve the quality of life.

Community Crime Prevention Programs. Team policing and community relations units were largely police-initiated responses to the sense that there was an untapped potential in the community for dealing more effectively with crime problems. At the same time that the police were experimenting with these approaches, a series of field experiments was undertaken to test crime prevention

programs initiated by communities themselves—sometimes in alliance with the police. In many respects, these programs resembled the activities that were being carried out by police departments through their community relations units. As one commentator described them: “The fundamental philosophy of community crime prevention is embodied in the notion that the most effective means of combating crime must involve residents in the proactive interventions and participatory projects aimed at reducing or precluding the opportunity for crime to occur in their neighborhoods. In practice, this involvement translates into a wide range of activities including resident patrols, citizen crime reporting systems, block watch programs, home security surveys, property marking projects, police community councils, and a variety of plans for changing the physical environment” (Rosenbaum 1986, p. 19). The most important difference was that these programs were usually designed, executed, and evaluated outside of police departments.

Rosenbaum (1986) summarized four significant experiments in community-based crime prevention efforts: the Seattle Community Crime Prevention Program conducted in the early 1970s; the Portland Burglary Prevention Program;² the Hartford Community Crime Prevention Program; and the Urban Crime Prevention Program in Chicago. These particular programs were selected because the methodology for evaluation was particularly strong; the program designs and execution apparently were also strong.

The two programs directed at burglary (the Seattle and Portland programs) seemed to achieve reductions in burglary in the impact areas. The Hartford program, which relied on community mobilization and physical arrangements, also seemed to produce short-run effects on robbery and burglary and citizens’ sense of personal security. Moreover, the effort and its effects might have been extended, had the police not stopped supporting the effort. The only effort that seems to have failed is the broad community organization effort that was undertaken in Chicago. Thus these studies suggest that narrowly targeted, well-designed and executed programs that seek to mobilize citizens to produce crime preventive effects can reduce the incidence of important crimes such as robbery and burglary.

4. Fear Reduction and Foot Patrol. Beginning in the early 1980s, the concept of community policing began once again to gather momentum within the world of policing. This time, however, both the ends and the means of policing were redefined.

The initial spark came from the findings of experiments with foot patrol in Newark, New Jersey, and Flint, Michigan. These experiments concluded that added foot patrols did not reduce property and violent crime but that, unlike the use of motorized patrol, the efforts were noticed by citizens and succeeded in reducing citizens’ fears (Police Foundation 1981; Trojanowicz 1982). The Flint experiment was sufficiently popular to lead to passage of a special tax to support the program; the total number of calls to central dispatching stations for service declined (Trojanowicz 1982).

In the usual course of things, these findings would have fallen on deaf ears because they did not report any significant impact on crime. But in the mid-eighties, when these reports were published, attention was shifting from preoccupation with crime to a growing concern over fear about crime as a problem in its own right. Fear began to claim this status partly because its costs were increasingly being recognized as a major, if not the single largest, component of the overall social costs of crime (Cohen, Miller, and Rossman 1990, pp. 64–79), and partly because it was becoming clearer that fear of crime was curiously disconnected from objective levels of victimization (Skogan 1987). Once fear was recognized as a problem in its own right, the foot patrol experiments became much more important because they suggested that the fear-reducing effect of foot patrol was potentially quite valuable.

This line of thought was boosted when Wilson and Kelling (1982) published "Broken Windows" in the *Atlantic Monthly*, which argued that fear was not only a problem in its own right but also a cause of both crime and neighborhood degradation. They argued that the minor events and incivilities that frightened people, far from being a distraction for police departments, should be identified as key targets of police action. The ongoing disorder, if left unattended, would lead to still more disorder, crime, and neighborhood degradation. More recently, these arguments have been supported with some empirical evidence (Skogan 1990).

Impressed by these arguments, police agencies began altering their operations to see if they could influence levels of fear in the community and, in turn, halt cycles of more fear, crime, and decline. The Los Angeles Police Department conducted fear-reducing efforts in the Wilshire District (Sparrow, Moore, and Kennedy 1990). The Baltimore County Police Department decided to respond to some frightening murders not with more police patrols but with more sustained efforts to discover and alleviate the sources of fear (Taft 1986; Kennedy 1990). The National Institute of Justice sponsored two major experiments in Houston, Texas, and Newark, New Jersey, to determine whether the police could reduce levels of fear by such activities as increasing foot patrol, establishing neighborhood ministations, publishing newsletters, or cracking down on disorderly conditions in public transportation (Pate et al. 1986).

The conclusions of the fear reduction experiments were basically encouraging—at least with respect to the police capacity to still fears. James Q. Wilson summarized the results of the two experiments: "In Houston . . . opening a neighborhood police station, contacting the citizens about their problems, and stimulating the formation of neighborhood organizations where none had existed can help reduce fear of crime and even reduce the actual level of victimization" (1989, p. ii). As the more complex question of whether fear reductions will stimulate neighborhood responses that reduce crime and prevent urban decline, the jury is still out (Greene and Taylor 1988).

III. Criticisms and Cautions

The basic logic of problem-solving and community policing, the anecdotal successes, and the positive evaluations of operational programs offer reasons to believe that problem-solving and community policing can be effective in dealing with crime and enhancing security in the general population. But even if the empirical evidence were more complete, the case for adopting these new strategies of policing would still be insufficient, for, in evaluating an overall strategy, other, broader considerations come into play.

To evaluate an organizational strategy in the public sector, one must consider whether the new strategy is well founded as well as effective. A well-founded strategy should honor historical experience, operate in accord with important public values, and be properly accountable to the public. Also of concern are long-run institutional effects of the change in strategy on such things as the future lawfulness of policing, its standing vis-à-vis other public agencies, and its importance relative to private security. In this domain, problem-solving and community policing encounter sharp criticisms (Greene and Mastrofski 1988).

Bayley (1988) identifies a dozen serious threats to the quality of policing that could result from a shift in strategy toward problem-solving and community policing:

- 1) reduced crime-control effectiveness;
- 2) deteriorating will to maintain order in the face of violence;
- 3) an unseemly escape from accountability for crime control;
- 4) increased grass-roots political power for police departments and their leaders that threatens to distort the proper political processes of cities;
- 5) increased bureaucratic power for police departments and their leaders that threatens to distort proper governmental processes;
- 6) increased police/governmental involvement in community affairs and private lives to the disadvantage of liberty and privacy;
- 7) increased risks that the law will be enforced in discriminatory, unequal ways that vary from one neighborhood to another;
- 8) erosion of constitutional rights through the encouragement of street-level justice and the encouragement of vigilantism by citizens;
- 9) increased unfairness in the allocation of police services across neighborhoods, with wealthier, more powerful communities claiming more than their fair share;
- 10) losses in effective managerial control as a consequence of decentralization;
- 11) loss of citywide accountability and control as a consequence of decentralization; and
- 12) diminished professionalism among officers.

. The Power of the Values of Professional Law Enforcement

taken individually and as a whole, this list is a serious indictment of the foundations of problem-solving and community policing. To help in addressing these objectives, however, it is worth noting that much of their power derives from the belief that any relaxation of the commitment to the fundamental values and beliefs that have guided police reformers over the past generation threatens to lead the police astray. In effect, the criticisms assume that the past strategy of policing, including the values and assumptions that guided it, was the appropriate one, and any deviation from the orthodoxy must be suspect. To see the grip that the image of professional law enforcement has on our imagination and orientations to policing, consider Bayley's particular criticisms at one higher level of abstraction than the one in which they are presented.

The first three criticisms (loss of crime-control effectiveness, loss of will to maintain order, and escape from accountability for crime control) express the continuing conviction that crime control is the primary—even exclusive—focus of the police. Given this perspective, one would quite naturally be concerned that any broadening of police responsibilities to include fear, urban disorder, and the variety of emergencies that prompt citizens' calls will weaken policing by diluting its focus on serious predatory crime.

Points 4–6 (increased political power, increased bureaucratic power, and increased governmental influence over private affairs) reflect the continuing concern of a liberal democratic society that the police might become too powerful and too intrusive a governmental institution. They help to remind us that one of the reasons the sharp focus on serious crime seemed so appropriate in the strategy of professional law enforcement was not only to help the police become successful in their enterprise but also to keep them out of many other social affairs narrowly focused on that task. Since any growth in police power could be viewed as a long-term threat to freedom, it was important to keep the police narrowly focused on serious crime, and reliant primarily on reactive methods of patrol and investigation.

Points 7–9 (discriminatory enforcement, erosion of civil liberties, and unequal distribution of police resources) focus on the possibility that the determined efforts of the last generation of reformers to make the police conform to important moral values such as fairness, impartiality, and respect for the constitutional rights of suspected criminals will be undermined by bringing the police into contact once again with politics—the old enemy of these values. Politics threatens these values because the unequal distribution of private power and privilege is believed to work through politics to shape the enforcement of the law (Black 1980). To the extent that the police are once again brought into a close embrace with communities, some of the most important successes of past reforms are threatened.

The last triad of criticisms (loss of managerial control, loss of citywide accountability and control, and loss of professionalism) reflects the conviction that, at one time, centralized control was the only way to ensure that the police performed competently in their jobs and complied with the important legal values that should guide

them. Since problem-solving and community policing encourage decentralization, both control and efficient citywide allocations are threatened by any shift in this direction.

The fears that we have about community and problem-solving policing are the natural fears associated with moving away from a powerful set of beliefs and assumptions that have guided us in the past. Arguably, such fears are characteristic of any “revolutionary” period in which powerful values and beliefs that have long highlighted the path toward improvement are challenged by new ideas. To say that the criticisms are psychologically powerful because they are closely aligned with our prior beliefs and assumptions, however, is not to disparage their substantive content. Indeed, there *are* enduring social values embedded in the strategy of professional law enforcement that *do* continue to define important virtues of police organizations. It is simply to remind us that it is sometimes difficult to be fully objective about new possibilities when the grip of past commitments holds us so tightly that we can hardly find the room to imagine how things could be different.

So, to defend problem-solving or community policing against these powerful criticisms it is necessary to consider once again the arguments that are made for community and problem-solving policing in terms of the values that were so important to the strategy of professional law enforcement: namely the sharp focus on crime control as the predominant objective of the police; the interest in limiting the power of the police; the promotion of legal values such as fairness, nonintrusiveness, and constitutionalism; and the reliance on centralized control to achieve these objectives.

B. Emphasizing Crime Fighting

Initially, the sharp focus on crime fighting as the dominant objective of the police is justified on practical grounds. It is an urgent public problem. The police are uniquely qualified to meet the challenge. It makes sense that crime should be the primary focus of police attention. But, as noted above, the focus on crime fighting is also linked to concerns about keeping the police from becoming too powerful and too intrusive in society. If the police were to use all of their capabilities to help society deal with its problems, they might become too powerful a force in the community and stunt the development of other less coercive social institutions. Or if the police were to intrude in areas where the law offered little guidance or control over their activities, they might well behave badly. Thus, the concern about keeping the sharp focus on crime fighting is closely tied to concerns about controlling the police as well as using them effectively.

I consider below whether community and problem-solving policing threaten to increase the power of the police and weaken their commitment to legal values. At this stage, it is worth addressing the narrower question of whether crime control, *particularly as it is now performed*, is the most important or only valuable use of police resources.

Initially, it seems that there is a great deal of weight behind the critics' concerns that crime-control effectiveness might be diluted. After all, it is impossible to argue that crime is not now an urgent problem for urban communities. And it seems difficult to argue that effectiveness in combating crime would not be diluted if the police were asked to shoulder additional responsibilities.

What advocates of problem-solving and community policing argue, however, is not that crime control should be deemphasized. They agree that crime-control effectiveness must remain the principal touchstone against which police strategies should be evaluated. Instead, they argue that there may be better ways of controlling crime than the techniques common to professional law enforcement. In particular, they are interested in techniques that focus less on reacting to crimes and more on prevention and that rely less on the police themselves and more on the capacities of communities and other public agencies.

They also argue that many activities that do not look like direct crime-control activities may, nonetheless, help build relations with communities that will increase crime-control effectiveness in the future and are, in any case, valuable in reducing fears and improving the quality of neighborhood life. For example, dealing with instances of minor disorder may not only still fears in the community and enhance the neighborhood's morale but also increase the likelihood that citizens will help the police solve crimes (Wilson and Kelling 1982; Skogan 1990).

Thus the real target of those who advocate problem-solving and community policing is not the central focus on crime control as the dominant purpose of the police; it is, instead, the equation of an *exclusive* focus on crime control pursued through a *particular set of operational tactics* with effective crime control. In their view, a somewhat more indirect approach may hold more potential for controlling crime than the direct methods of professional law enforcement, and may, in addition, achieve other valuable benefits such as reducing fears and enhancing citizens' confidence in the police.

C. Limiting the Power of the Police as an Institution

As the police become more responsive to community concerns and more skilled in using crime-prevention and problem-solving techniques, there is the risk that they will become politically and bureaucratically more powerful, and that they will intrude more deeply into the affairs of citizens and other government agencies. As noted above, this conflicts with the desire to keep the police from becoming too powerful an institution in the society.

The desire to limit the power of the police is a patently important objective in a liberal society. Yet, advocates of community and problem-solving policing would argue that slavish adherence to this principle would prevent the police from making important contributions to the solutions of today's urban problems. Most current analyses of conditions in cities indicate a significant breakdown in the important mechanisms of informal social control including responsibilities to

family and community. The collapse of these intermediate institutions allow disorder, crime, and fear to flourish.

In this situation, several scenarios are possible. If formal controls are not increased (e.g., if the police remain indifferent to drugs and violence on city streets), the quality of life may continue to deteriorate for many living in the distressed communities. If formal controls are expanded to fill the void (e.g., if police establish curfews and street sweeps), then conditions may improve, but only at the expense of further weakening informal control mechanisms and increasing the dependence and vulnerability of the local communities to state control.

Better than either of these approaches would be one in which the formal social controls were used in ways that were designed to strengthen informal social control (e.g., if the police were to engage in joint problem-solving efforts with those elements of the community that were concerned about alleviating the problems). It is precisely this latter approach that is recommended by problem-solving and community policing. So while these approaches may use the police more intensively in dealing with social problems than would be ideal, they may be appropriate in the relatively desperate circumstance in which we now find ourselves.

There is one additional reason to be interested in increasing rather than holding constant or diminishing the overall strength of policing as a community institution. That reason has to do with the ominous growth of private policing and private security efforts. The reason these are growing is that citizens are losing confidence in the police. The consequence of that growth is potentially disastrous since private policing, even more than politicized public policing, will be sure to be marked by both unfairness and contempt for the rights of the accused.

Indeed, this point reminds us that one of the main reasons public police forces were initially established was not only to increase the overall level of social control but also to produce an alternative to private vengeance and enhance the overall fairness of control efforts. In this respect, the police are a bastion of democratic values rather than a threat to them, and their enhanced standing in the community could become a celebration of these values rather than an attack.

D. Promoting Fairness, Restraint, and Other Legal Values

Critics are also right to focus attention on the possibility that important legal values might be sacrificed by shifting away from the strategy of professional law enforcement to a strategy of community or problem-solving policing. Once policing is cut loose from an obsessive focus with enforcing law and brought back in touch with community concerns, it is entirely possible that the corruption, discrimination, and brutality that once shamed policing will return with new vigor or become an even more exaggerated feature of policing than it is now.

If this were likely, it would be an important reason in itself to resist pressures to change the strategy, for no one would quarrel with the importance of promoting compliance with the legal values of fairness, impartiality, and respect for individual

rights. Surely one of the proudest accomplishments of the last generation of policing has been the wider embrace of these values as defining characteristics of quality policing. The strategy of professional law enforcement had a great deal to do with this.

How the commitment to these values would be affected by a shift to problem-solving or community policing, however, remains unclear. To critics, a serious danger appears to be that both strategies seek to establish closer, more intimate connections with those being policed. Such intimacy threatens police fairness and impartiality. In individual incidents, the police might be tempted to side with those whom they have come to know well or those who are locally influential. In deploying forces across a city, the police may be tempted to provide better service to those with whom they identify or those who are politically powerful. Such fears seem particularly apt for departments that never embraced the legal values in the first place. Hence, there are reasons to be concerned.

In assessing the magnitude of the risks associated with the change, however, several things are worth noting. At best, the achievement of professional law enforcement in promoting legal values within police departments has been incomplete. In many departments, legal values are still seen as burdensome constraints rather than as important goals to be expressed in, and protected by, police operations.

Part of the reason may be that these values have been imposed from the outside rather than championed from the inside. It seems significant, then, that many of the chiefs who have committed their departments to problem-solving or community policing have spent time developing explicit value statements to guide the operations of their departments, and that the protection of constitutional values figures far more prominently in these statements than it has in the explicit statements of many other police departments (Wasserman and Moore 1988). Of course, words on paper are not the same as cultural commitment, but it is one of the ways that a culture supporting these values is created.

It may also be important that police departments that engage in problem-solving and community policing will frequently find themselves in situations in which they will be pressured to take actions by some groups that abridge the rights of others or asked to resolve disputes among citizens each of whom has reasonable claims. In dealing professionally with such situations, the police may discover for themselves the reasons why they cannot behave illegally. They may also end up communicating to citizens why they, too, must develop tolerance for the rights of others. In short, in the experience of negotiating solutions to problems among several interested parties, the police will learn to rely on legal principles. That, in turn, may encourage them to become "street-corner judges" as well as "street-corner politicians" (Muir 1977). They might also rediscover why it was once considered plausible that they should be part of the judicial branch of government rather than the executive and might thereby discover a commitment to legal values that has so far eluded them.

It would be wrong to be too optimistic about these possibilities. And it is right to be concerned about the threat that district and neighborhood politics pose for the fairness of police operations. But it can reasonably be argued that a relentless police focus on crime-control effectiveness encourages the police to view legal values as constraints rather than as goals. If police were more responsible for ordering relationships in the community, they would more often find legal values a useful guide to proper conduct than they now do.

In any case, the concerns about legal values remind us that problem-solving and community policing must be seen as strategies that build on the past successes of professional law enforcement rather than on abandonment of these principles in favor of a return to the "good old days." The accomplishments of several decades of reform efforts in creating legal culture in the police departments should be preserved and enhanced rather than overturned.

E. Maintaining Central Control

The view that centralized control is essential for making the police law abiding and competent also now seems more suspect than it once did. It has long been apparent that centralized control cannot reliably control police conduct since some amount of irreducible discretion always remained to officers (Elmore 1978). Yet police continued to develop these methods since no other ways to control discretion seemed available.

More recently, other control mechanisms have become more apparent. The threat of civil liability, for example, may be doing more to control misconduct than any amount of effective supervision (McCoy 1985). Some police departments are looking to administrative methods used by industry that rely on the promotion of organizational values, worker participation, and mutual responsibility to promote quality in products and operations rather than continuing to rely on close supervision and "defect finding" (Hatry and Greiner 1986). Others are looking to peer review and other methods of accountability common in professional organizations such as hospitals and law firms for new models of assuring responsible professionalism (Couper and Lobitz 1991). While it is not clear whether these methods will work in policing, they have helped expand current thinking about other kinds of administrative arrangements that can assure quality and integrity in police operations at least as well as even closer supervision.

F. Summary

An advocate of problem-solving and community policing could make a response to the principal criticisms of skeptics. Whether skeptics or advocates will ultimately be proven right remains unclear.

The criticisms do, however, make three key points. First, problem-solving and community policing must be seen and managed as an advance, not as a retreat.

Crime-control effectiveness remains an important goal. Lawful arrests remain an important operational tool. Commitment to the law and professionalism remain important bases of professionalism. None of these hard-won goals of the reform era should be abandoned.

Second, the important reform project of integrating the commitment to the law and to constitutional rights into the ideology and operations of the police department remains incomplete. Under community or problem-solving policing, with their emphases on officer and local discretion, the need to embrace these values fully increases rather than decreases. Exactly how to encourage police commitment to legal values remains unclear, but it may be advanced by articulating those values from inside police departments rather than by imposing them from the outside and by asking the police to undertake tasks where legal principles will help them rather than restrain them.

Third, the mechanisms of external and internal accountability need a great deal of work to ensure that the police are pursuing appropriate goals using appropriate means. One of the key ideas of both problem-solving and community policing is that external accountability to the community and to the agencies of municipal government should increase rather than decrease. Both strategies call for experiments with new methods for promoting internal and external accountability including after-the-fact peer evaluations of performance.

Fourth, standards for recruiting and training officers are both raised and changed under problem-solving and community policing. These new strategies are much more dependent on the initiative and resourcefulness of individual officers than is the current strategy that treats all patrol officers as employees who must be continuously supervised. The strategies' effectiveness depends on the officer's knowledge of his local community and government. It is not so much that commitment to professionalism is ending as that it is changing its focus and accelerating. Much more will be expected of officers in the future than was true in the past.

Nobody wants to be too Pollyannaish about the ease with which these ongoing problems of policing may be overcome. But there are so many attractive trends occurring that it is hard to resist encouraging them a little—particularly if we recall both the virtues and the shortcomings of the reform era of policing. Even David Bayley agrees that it would be advisable to continue experimenting with these new concepts, as long as we remain alert to the hazards.

IV. Problems in Implementation

For a new policing strategy to be attractive, it must be feasible for police departments to shift from their current strategy to a new one. It is not enough that there be evidence that the strategy could successfully control crime and promote security. Nor is it enough that the concept withstand skepticism about its value.

It is not easy to change the overall strategy of an organization (Sparrow 1988; Brown 1989). That no police organizations in the United States have successfully made this change is powerful evidence of how hard it is. Many police executives have begun this process, however, revealing that the foreseeable obstacles are not entirely insurmountable and providing clues to what particular methods might be useful in overcoming the problems (Sparrow, Moore, and Kennedy 1990).

A. Limited Resources

The most common practical objection is that there are simply not enough resources available in the department to meet simultaneously the demands of responding rapidly to calls for service, interrupting and solving crimes, and engaging in the crime-preventive, fear-reducing activities associated with problem-solving and community policing. Something has to give. In a world in which both citizens and police look to rapid responses to calls for service as a mark of quality police services, proactive policing methods will always be the thing to give. If this is true, problem-solving and community policing will be consigned to the status of attractive luxuries.

Such observations seem to doom prospects even for *programs* in problem-solving and community policing, let alone entire shifts in organizational strategy. Skilled police executives are discovering, however, that there are ways out of this apparently unresolvable dilemma.

First, the new strategies of policing—first introduced as add-on programs—may prove sufficiently popular to justify additional resources for police departments. It is one thing for citizens and mayors to pour money into police departments pursuing the traditional strategy of policing; it is quite another for them to pay for a strategy of policing that seems more responsive to their concerns. Citizens of Flint, Michigan, an economically distressed community, were opposed to general tax increases but were, nonetheless, willing to support a tax increase to expand foot patrols (Trojanowicz 1982). Similarly, in New York City, the Community Patrol Officers Program has been sufficiently popular to have, to some degree, insulated the police department from absorbing the full share of budget cuts that they would otherwise have been expected to take.

Second, even if resources are not available from the outside, aggressive managers can often free up additional resources inside the organization. Using civilian personnel for some functions and reorganizing shifts to fit manpower more to demands for work beckon as potential sources of additional resources. So does the elimination of special squads that have emerged as a consequence of the tendency to create new squads to solve new problems (Kennedy 1987). Dissolving such squads has the additional virtue of spreading the accumulated expertise of the special unit more widely through the force. Other reallocation possibilities include reducing the number of layers of management and thinning ranks of headquarters

personnel (Philadelphia Police Study Task Force 1987). These are radical and difficult steps, but some managers have taken them.

Third, proven technologies can alleviate pressures that come from unmanaged calls for service (Farmer 1981). Calls can be ranked in order of priority, thereby eliminating a large fraction of the need for an emergency response to incoming calls. Citizens can be educated to accept a certain delay in the police response. They can be asked to fill out the reports that officers would complete if they arrived on the scene and to deliver reports to a police station. These innovations reduce pressure for emergency responses and restore some opportunities to the police for proactive methods of policing.

Fourth, strategies are available for addressing needs before incidents occur that lead to calls. There is a structure to the calls for service received by a police department (Pierce, Spaar, and Briggs 1984; Sherman et al. 1987; Spelman and Eck 1989). A small fraction of locations and people account for a very large proportion of calls. It is possible, then, that overall calls for service might go down if the police designed effective responses to the problems underlying the repeat incidents. At a minimum, the proactive police might intercept calls from citizens that would otherwise reach police dispatchers.

It is by no means clear, then, that police executives are without resources for implementing community policing. Some are finding ways to do it.

3. Uncertainty and Accountability

A second difficulty is that there will be turmoil and confusion in the process of transition. Moreover, at the end, there is no guarantee that things will be better. To many police executives, it seems irresponsible and dangerous to plunge into this process of change with uncertain payoff. Indeed, as one chief explained when asked about how he felt when he committed his organization to a strategy of community policing, "I felt like I had just jumped off a cliff" (Sparrow, Moore, and Kennedy 1990). They fear, quite reasonably, that they will be held accountable to standards and images from the past and that their performance in running the organization will look bad.

That is certainly a problem, but it has a solution. It consists of creating an outside constituency for change that will hold the commissioner and the police department accountable to new standards, not the old ones (Moore 1990). Kevin Tucker did this in beginning to turn the Philadelphia Police Department around, and that has been what has allowed Sir Kenneth Newman in London, England, and John Avery in New South Wales, Australia, to advance as far as they have in shifting the course of their organizations (Sparrow, Moore, and Kennedy 1990). Mobilizing an outside constituency for change is also consistent with the goal of attracting additional outside resources, for the outside constituency is often a route to new resources.

C. Changing the Culture of Policing

Probably the biggest obstacle facing anyone who would implement a new strategy of policing is the difficulty of changing the ongoing culture of policing (Sparrow, Moore, and Kennedy 1990). That culture is deeply entrenched in the minds and souls of people now doing the work (Manning, 1992). It is sustained by current administrative arrangements.

Three approaches are available for changing the culture. First, the organizations should be opened to many more external pressures than they now feel. This means embracing openness as a value and changing the organizational structure so that everyone in the organization is exposed to much more contact with relevant communities than they now are (Sparrow, Moore, and Kennedy 1990). This requires that police executives take steps to get officers out from behind the wheels of their cars and midlevel managers out from behind their desks and reports. Close contact with communities must be made at these levels as well as at the chief's level.

Second, the dominant values of the organization must be articulated (Wasserman and Moore 1988). Such a step is critical for establishing terms of accountability and inviting a partnership with outside groups. It is also critical for announcing to those inside the police department what is expected and what important values they must serve. It is especially critical in police organizations in which direct supervision cannot control behavior because much of the work takes place beyond the eyes of the supervisors.

Third, aspects of existing administrative systems that are inconsistent with new values must be changed. This includes changing from centralized, functional organizations to decentralized, geographic organizations. It means attracting personnel moved by the spirit of service rather than the spirit of adventure and rewarding them for maintaining peace on their beats rather than making numbers of arrests. It means changing performance evaluations from those that emphasize levels of crime, volumes of arrests, and speed of response, to those that measure victimization and fear and community satisfaction with the quality of police service. Unless these systems are lined up to communicate a message to individual officers and managers that is consistent with the overall strategy of problem-solving or community policing, the strategy will not be successfully implemented.

V. Conclusions

Problem-solving and community policing represent interesting new concepts in policing. Evaluated as alternative strategies of policing, they show both promise and hazards. These hazards, though daunting, must be compared not with some ideal but with the current operational reality of policing as it now occurs. Against that standard, the benefits begin to look a little greater and the hazards a little smaller.

Key to the successful implementation of either of these ideas as an overall strategy of policing are efforts to build an outside constituency, and broaden the terms of police accountability. Key to that is articulating a set of values that can serve as a basic contract to guide the working partnership of the police and the community as they seek together to define and resolve the problems of crime and fear.

There is one further point worth making as one thinks about community and problem-solving policing as possible future strategies of policing. That has to do with the question of how the current drug crisis and the looming threat of more widespread violence will affect the potential success of these strategies. To many, the urgency of these problems constitutes an important reason to stand with the tried and true and resist any experimentation.

I tend to think the opposite. If there are any areas in which the strategies of problem-solving and community policing are likely to be most needed, it is in dealing with these particular problems. Surely, an important part of dealing with drugs is learning how to mobilize communities to resist drug dealing. Surely, an important part of dealing with random violence is dealing with rational and irrational fears. Surely, an important part of controlling riots is having networks of relationships that reach deeply into ethnic communities. If anything, then, these problems give impetus to further developments in problem-solving and community policing. It is an interesting time to be a student or manager in policing.

Notes

¹ Comment made to author during Senior Managers in Policing Program sponsored by the Police Executive Research Forum. Andover, Mass.

² This was managed by the Portland Police Department Community Relations Unit, but the unit was staffed by civilians.

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