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Police Leadership: The Impossible Dream?

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The field explored in this chapter is the management of large, urban police departments. These jobs are "impossible" for all the usual reasons. Their mandated policy goals are far too broad, internally inconsistent, imperfectly measurable, and fickle. Their operating capabilities are not equal to the tasks set for them—partly because the organizations lack the necessary resources, partly because their current operating programs do not work as well as one might hope, and partly because much that determines their performance lies outside their direct control.

My hypothesis is that what allows some police managers to "succeed" despite these impossible circumstances is their ability to manage the terms by which they will be held accountable. The key to their success is either making their operations conform to public expectations of what they should be doing, or changing public conceptions to make them consistent with their own ambitions for their enterprise.¹

This assertion may seem tautological, or cynical, or both. The tautology lies in defining successful police managers as those who are perceived as being successful. The cynicism lies in suggesting that police managers should deal with public perceptions of success rather than concentrate on the material reality. However, I mean the statement to be neither tautological nor cynical. My argument is that successful police managers use the force of public expectations to guide the conduct of their organization. In some cases, they take existing concepts of policing and make their organizations conform to those expectations. In other cases, they propose an idea that commands public support and then use the support and the new conception to challenge their organization's current ways of doing business. In either case, what is important and interesting is that the successful police managers use the expectations and demands on their organizations not only to create perceptions of success but also to produce the reality.

WHY POLICING IS IMPOSSIBLE

Success in managing a public sector enterprise generally requires that the manager achieve mandated policy goals and objectives. In order for that to occur, two things must be true. First, the policy goals must be consistent and coherent rather than conflicting. If the goals are inconsistent, then at any given moment the organization is vulnerable. Even if the organization is maximizing its performance on one objective (say, crime control), it will be sacrificing performance on some other objective (such as the protection of civil liberties). This is not a problem if the public's attention remains focused on the first goal as the primary objective. But if the public suddenly elevates the secondary objective to first place, the organization will be perceived as failing. In this sense, inconsistent objectives, fitfully attended to, make it impossible to manage an organization successfully.

Second, the organization must have both sufficient resources and suitable operating programs to accomplish the desired results. If mandated purposes cannot be achieved, then the organization will have failed to produce the results that justify public backing. Support and legitimacy will wither; the organization will become "bankrupt."

Given that successful management requires coherent and operationally feasible policy mandates, a review of the mandates and capabilities of police departments will reveal why managing large urban police departments is, in principle, impossible.

INCONSISTENT POLICY OBJECTIVES

Impossibility begins with inconsistent objectives. Not every objective for which the police are held accountable can be maximized simultaneously.

The Tension between Cost and Output

Of course, every managerial job involves some conflict in objectives. For example, all managers are expected to deliver the maximum quantity and quality of services at the minimum cost. In principle, they cannot do this; something must give. Police managers confront this problem every time a city administration charges them to maintain response times to citizens' calls at current levels despite increasing demands and diminishing staff resources.

Ordinarily, this tension between maximizing performance and minimizing cost is resolved by holding managers accountable for maximizing the difference between costs and the value of the services they provide—what is measured by the private sector's "bottom line." In the public sector, it is usually called "efficiency" or "productivity." In effect, managers are held accountable for the net value of their organization's efforts.

"Net value maximization" provides a conceptual resolution of the intrinsic tension between maximizing output and minimizing cost in both private and public sectors. In the private sector, where the value of the organization's output can readily be measured, this conceptual solution has much practical bite. Unfortunately, it works less well in the public sector. The reason is simply that it is often hard even to define, much less measure, the value of public sector operations.² Indeed, managers find it difficult to calculate the quantity and quality of public sector activities, let alone the value of outcomes that occur much further down a chain of causation and that would serve ultimately to justify the public sector efforts. For example, the police can measure the speed of their response to calls for service but not the quality of the service rendered by the responding officer, and they have no way of knowing whether the fast responses succeed in controlling crime or stilling citizens' fears.

In the absence of good measurements of the value of organizational outputs, the efficiency of a public sector organization is often determined by performance standards or professionally agreed-upon rules about how an organization should be structured and operated. For example, a professional association might conclude that an excellent police department is one that can keep its response time under five minutes for priority-one calls; or, that an excellent police department is functionally organized, as a freestanding police academy and a forensic unit, and requires all its employees to have a college degree.³ Such standards set useful benchmarks, but they are always susceptible to both criticism and change. Consequently, public sector managers are nearly always vulnerable to assertions that they are "inefficient" in the production of a given service.

The Proper Use of Authority

Even if this fundamental tension between costs and the value of the output could be resolved, there is a deeper problem. In pursuing their objectives, the police use two different kinds of resources. As a recent study of the Philadelphia police force explained:

The police are entrusted with important public resources. The most obvious is money: \$230 million a year flows through the Philadelphia Police Department. Far more important, the public grants another resource—the use of force and authority. These are deployed when a citizen is arrested or handcuffed, when an officer fires his weapon at a citizen, and when an officer claims exclusive use of the streets with his siren. This use (or misuse) of a public resource also occurs when an officer fails to make an arrest due to fear of or favor toward a suspect.⁴

Many scholars view the police use of legitimate force as the defining characteristic of police departments.

In a free society, there is at least as much concern about the proper use of "public force" as there is about the proper use of public funds. Consequently, the police are held strictly accountable for their exercise of authority and force. Unfortunately, the guiding principles for the use of force are far more complex than those for the use of public money. In both cases, there is a general expectation that the use will be economized. Hence force should not be used "excessively." Shooting a youth who is running to avoid an arrest for marijuana possession is excessive, as are blaring one's siren and driving fast through city streets to catch a speeder or expressing peremptory commands and racial insults while managing pedestrian traffic at sporting events.

In addition, there are clear boundaries—marked out by the constitutional rights of citizens—that must never be crossed despite the possibility that doing so may accomplish police purposes. Some uses of force are not only unwise or wasteful but inherently wrong. They cannot be justified even if they would allow the police to achieve other ends more "efficiently" (when calculated in terms of money) or more "effectively" (when calculated in terms of the value of the objective).

Finally, there is the expectation that force will be employed fairly as well as efficiently. Fairness seems straightforward, especially in its most intuitive form: the idea that like cases should be treated alike. But there is also a second principle that identifies fairness with being able to recognize relevant differences among the cases and treating different cases in an appropriately dissimilar manner. And there is a third principle that views private settlements and agreements as preferable to publicly enforced adjudications, so that if the parties can agree to some solution distinct from what would be imposed by the state, that is the preferable solution.

What is problematic about these principles for police managers is that they require, or make a virtue of, inconsistency—that is, acting on the basis of different ideas of fairness, depending on particular circumstances. Consider the issue of fairness in the way that the police respond to juveniles on the street late at night.

In such a situation, the principle of like cases treated alike would require the police to consider only the issue of whether an offense had been committed: whether children had violated a curfew. They would be discouraged from looking too closely at the circumstances surrounding the offense to decide if it was grave enough to justify an arrest. And they would be discouraged from thinking about the existence of private or non-criminal-justice-based solutions to the issues presented by the case. To ensure simple justice, they would respond only to those features of the situation that legally defined the offense and only in terms of applying or not applying the law.

The principle of treating different cases differently would require the police to investigate the circumstances of the crime to determine whether the situation was really as it appeared. Perhaps the child had left the house because he or she had been beaten by a parent. To the extent that the investigation revealed new, differentiating features of the situation, the police response might be modified to fit the case. Individualized justice would substitute for simple justice as a guide to

police action. Also, the principle of preferring private settlements of disputes to public adjudications might influence the police response: If the parents of the child seemed capable of effective supervision, the police might simply return the child to the home.

In short, preferring one concept of "fairness" (or "justice") over another in the application of the law produces very different results in the handling of certain cases. These irregularities might well be inexplicable and therefore cast doubt on the fairness of the police operations, even though the police and many outside observers might agree that the police were being fair in a different sense than the crude notion of like cases treated alike.

To the extent that the principles governing the police use of force and authority are ambiguous and in conflict, and to the extent that the use of force has to be justified, the police mission is made "impossible." This conclusion is far more than a logical nicety. At their core, scandals focusing on police brutality and corruption reflect the public's concern that the police exercise the force and authority entrusted to them sparingly and fairly. More police departments and more police leaders have been skewered by such scandals than by concerns about their ability to handle public funds well. And police departments are often aggressively managed to ensure that corruption and brutality are minimized—frequently at the expense of other important police objectives such as controlling crime or keeping economic costs low.⁵

Uncertain Goals

A third inconsistency lies in the characterization of the police goals themselves. To most citizens, the purpose of the police department is axiomatic: to protect life and property from criminal attacks, and to enforce the criminal law.⁶ The substantive value of protection against crime is what galvanizes political support. The commitment to enforcing the law fairly and effectively not only gives the police their most potent instrument in controlling crime but also legitimates their efforts in the eyes of both their working partners (i.e., prosecutors and judges) and those citizens who are (intermittently) fastidious about the use of public authority.

Which Crimes? The first problem with this characterization of police objectives arises in deciding which crimes should be controlled and which laws enforced. Police resources are not infinite; police skills are not entirely versatile. Thus, choices must be made about which crimes to tackle and what operational capabilities to develop. The police are currently organized to deal principally with what might be called "street crimes"—assaults, robberies, and burglaries that occur in public locations. That is the type of crime to which patrol operations, rapid response to calls for service, and retrospective investigations of crimes are particularly well suited.⁷

However, a great many other kinds of criminal activity are less suited to such operations. Organized crime, arson, terrorism, serial murderers, and electronic theft pose different kinds of challenges. To deal with these crimes, the police must

be prepared not only to patrol the streets and respond to calls but also to develop intelligence networks, analyze crime patterns, conduct undercover operations, and form partnerships with business entities. In short, there is an enormous variety within the basic mission of crime control and law enforcement, and that variety prescribes a need to decide what kinds of crimes pose the greatest threats to community welfare.

Setting priorities on which crimes to control and investing in the complete range of operational capabilities the police need seem to be "impossible" tasks. Analytical methods for estimating the relative seriousness of different crimes are in their infancy.⁸ Any implicit political agreement about which crimes to emphasize can come apart as a result of events in the world or changing political priorities. When such concurrence is not explicit, it can be disavowed, leaving the police vulnerable to anyone who believes their "favorite" crime is not being adequately addressed.

Law Enforcement or Peace-keeping? A second problem with the characterization of the police mission as crime control and law enforcement is a result of an important but subtle tension between the two concepts themselves. Most people, most of the time, see little incompatibility between these broad purposes: In their view, the best way to control crime is to enforce the criminal law. They are often right.

Sometimes, however, these different objectives come into conflict. For example, in riot situations, the police may often choose not to enforce the law in the interests of restoring order more quickly. They may allow some limited looting to occur, knowing that an aggressive, ill-considered response by the police might well inflame the crowd and lead to more widespread and destructive rioting. Or, the police may choose not to file charges against a teenager who is breaking school windows, turning the youth instead over to the justice meted out in the more intimate settings of family and school.

In these cases, the police face a conflict between enforcing the law or adjusting their response to one that they judge may be more effective in controlling future crime. They must decide which is their more fundamental purpose: law enforcement or order maintenance.⁹ Whatever decision they make, they will be vulnerable. If they stand back in the riot, they can be sued by the owner of a looted store. If they return the juvenile to his or her parents, they can be attacked for their lenient or unequal response to juvenile crimes. On the other hand, if they step into the riot situation, arrest the looters, and fan the anger of the mob, they may well be criticized by a subsequent commission for failing to show "sensitivity" to the community's mood or for making a foolish tactical judgment. Or, if they bring a vandalism case against the youth, they may be criticized for branding a child as a criminal or for wasting the criminal justice system's time with trivial cases. In short, there are principled and pragmatic justifications for both purposes.

Crime Control or Crime Prevention? A third tension arises when there are actions the police could take to control crime that are not, strictly speaking, law enforcement. For example, a great deal of domestic violence might be prevented if the police mobilize social service agencies to assist struggling marriages at their

first summons to noisy arguments—before the beating, stabbing, or shooting starts. Similarly, the police might help forestall burglaries by offering advice on security arrangements to residents and shop owners. Or, the police might be able to reduce juvenile delinquency by establishing after-hours recreational programs.

Although such activities are entirely consistent with their crime control responsibilities, they are inconsistent with an exclusive reliance on the enforcement of laws to accomplish police purposes. The activities fall into the domain of organizing or directly providing social services designed to prevent crime.

Reducing Victimization or Fear. A fourth difficulty for police priorities results from the fact that controlling crime is not quite the same as controlling fear. For many years, both police managers and those who reviewed their activities believed that the single most important problem to solve was actual criminal victimization. They judged fear to be a lesser concern, but they also assumed that the most direct, rational way to control fear was to reduce actual victimization.

However, recent research has shown that fear is a major problem in its own right.¹⁰ For victims, it is one of the worst consequences of crime. Long after the bruises have faded, the memories and the anxieties they trigger remain. Moreover, fear is far more widespread than actual criminal victimization, since many more people are afraid of being victimized than actually are. Their anxiety must be counted as a loss to society. Finally, in many areas, the combined fears of those who have been victimized and those who dread the possibility have prompted citizens to take defensive actions which may enhance their own protection but also weaken the social bonds that in ideal circumstances help protect everyone. They stay inside and buy guard dogs, stronger locks, and guns. Such reactions turn communities that once had safe public spaces into isolated armed camps.

Studies have also shown that fear is surprisingly unrelated to real levels of victimization.¹¹ People who have been victimized are not necessarily more afraid of crime than people as yet untouched. Neighborhoods that are heavily hit by crime are not automatically more fearful than areas that are struck less often. Perhaps most unexpectedly, fear turns out to be associated more strongly with instances of disorder than with real victimization. It is noisy youth, graffiti, vandalism, and general rowdiness that creates fear in communities much more than serious crime.

Finally, it is now established that fear can be alleviated without necessarily reducing real victimization. When the police ring doorbells, walk foot patrols, and know the names of citizens, it controls fear but does not guarantee control of victimization.¹² Thus, fear reduction and order maintenance emerge as new police functions that are different from either crime control or law enforcement. Where fear reduction should fit in the overall scheme of police priorities is still uncertain.

Crime Control or Emergency Services? A fifth problem emerges when there are useful things the police could do that seem unrelated to both crime control and law enforcement. For example, the police are often involved in emergency medical services because they are typically the first at the scene of an auto accident, heart attack, or drowning. They are also often the first to encounter social emergencies.

They find the inebriates and the homeless who are about to freeze to death in a back alley. They are called to the scene of an ugly quarrel between two brothers. They see the child sitting in the bus terminal at 4:00 A.M., hoping to escape an abusive parent before the parent wakes up.

These actions occur not because the police take these tasks as important purposes; rather, they are largely by-products of police omnipresence and accessibility—characteristics that are crucial to their crime control role. Their twenty-four-hour duties, their proximity to the streets, their responsiveness to telephone calls, and their general value to citizens in trouble mean that they will be contacted by citizens for many reasons other than actual victimization. As a result, the police find themselves involved in these matters even though they and the general populace do not necessarily think they should be.¹³ The issue is whether these activities should be considered valuable and thus incorporated into police operations, or whether they should be viewed as distractions from the basic police mission and their role in police operations minimized.

Summary

The police have a diverse and complicated mission that includes controlling street crime, equipping themselves to deal with sophisticated criminal organizations and special crime problems, deciding when crime control objectives are advanced more effectively by not enforcing the law, figuring out ways to prevent crime as well as control it, deciding whether and how to deal with the separate issue of fear in addition to criminal victimization, and judging whether their emergency service role is a valuable addition to or a distraction from their basic functions. In accomplishing these purposes, they are obligated to use the resources entrusted to them—money and authority—both economically and fairly.

On an analytic level, these different objectives need not be inconsistent. All the society has to do is write out an explicit function statement that defines the rates at which it is willing to grant money and authority to achieve the diverse objectives of controlling different kinds of crime, keeping the peace (rather than enforcing the law), preventing crime, reducing fear, and providing emergency medical and social services through police departments. As a practical matter, a coherent organization might be constructed that could produce fairly high levels of performance on all these different goals. In fact, most police departments do perform all these functions reasonably well.

Yet any political agreement that specifies the trade-offs among these competing objectives is by nature both general and fickle. As a result, for the most part, the police operate with diverse responsibilities whose relative importance is never clearly expressed. Moreover, an analytic solution does not abolish the sensation, keenly felt by those in the organization, that the police department is going in too many different directions. They experience the tension of unresolved priorities in at least three respects.

First, the different enterprises seem to vie for resources. When the police are

pursuing one set of goals, there is the perception that resources are unavailable for other purposes. Second, the various goals compete for the soul of the organization. An organization devoted to law enforcement against violent offenders has a much different culture than an organization devoted to preventing crime, reducing fear, or providing emergency medical and social services. The inconsistencies show up, not in operating shortfalls in one function or another, but in the orientation, training, and psychological commitment of officers.

Third, the key measures of performance and success depend on mission focus. Some organizations stand or fall on arrests and levels of reported crime. Others are judged by the levels of victimization and the quality of the relationship between the police and the community. The volume of community services supplied is yet another criterion. Although it might be desirable to measure all of these things, the need to avoid complexity narrows the organization's attention to a few measurements, and it is in choosing ways of measuring success that the different goals prove inconsistent.

INADEQUATE OPERATING CAPABILITIES

Even if the policy mandate could be made more coherent, it is by no means clear that the police mission would suddenly become possible. There are real doubts about the capacity of the police to perform adequately the basic functions assigned to them.

Surprisingly, the greatest weaknesses are in the domain of their most commonly assigned mission: crime fighting.¹⁴ The current dominant strategy of policing relies on three principal operational methods to control crime. The first is patrol (random or targeted), designed to deter crime and intercept criminal acts in progress. The second is rapid responses to calls for service. The third is retrospective investigation of criminal offenses. The first two functions are generally carried out by a uniformed patrol force that typically comprises 60 to 70 percent of a police department.¹⁵ The patrol force is linked to citizens through an elaborate network of telephones, dispatchers, and radios. The third function is usually performed by a detective bureau that comprises 10 to 15 percent of the force. The detectives are aided in the solution of crimes by their own extensive experience with criminal offenders, by elaborate files of previous cases and recidivists, by forensic laboratories, and by a variety of standard investigative methods.

Although this apparatus is extremely impressive in its operations, and although great progress has been made in deterring and solving crimes, there are reasons to believe that this strategy is not nearly as effective in controlling crime as once believed. Experiments have revealed that motorized patrol neither prevents crime nor reassures citizens.¹⁶ Varying the levels of patrol in communities by a factor of two results in no changes in levels of crime or in levels of fear.

Research has also cast doubt on the efficacy of rapid response to calls for service.¹⁷ The problem is not that offenders flee before the police can arrive at the

scene. In most cities, the police are about five minutes from any point in an emergency situation. However, victims and witnesses do not call the police while the crime is occurring, or even shortly after. Many offenses are not noticed by witnesses; many witnesses decide not to become involved. And after an attack, when the victim has the first opportunity to alert the police, his or her first call is usually to someone else—a relative, a friend, or an advisor. As a result, a fast response time is wasted. As the police often put it, they arrive in time to hold the hand of the victim—a task they resent since it keeps them from apprehending the victimizer.

Finally, studies of retrospective investigation of crimes reveal that most cases are solved, not by deduction, or physical evidence, or informants, but by very specific identifications of the offender by the victim or witnesses.¹⁸ This reflects the fact that many times criminal and victim know each other; it also leads to the sad conclusion that little is known about how to solve crimes that happen between strangers.

In sum, the principal techniques relied on by the police to deal with their primary objective seem surprisingly ineffective. Moreover, it is by no means clear that more resources would help. Additional money (in the form of more police on the street) or additional power to search do not obviously improve police performance. The far more valuable resource seems to be an effective partnership with the community to ensure that what the community knows will be available to the police.¹⁹ But the police cannot command that; they must earn it by working to create trust and confidence between themselves and the community. Their current techniques do not approach this goal. There may be some promising alternatives, but they are so far largely untested.

Police capabilities in other domains seem stronger. The police do seem able to still citizens' fears by being regularly available on a face-to-face basis. They do seem able to promote order by using their authority to regulate disorderly and disruptive conduct on the street. They do routinely provide emergency medical services because their training equips them for the task. In the area of crime prevention, the police are also beginning to make progress, but often at the expense of their traditional methods. One new approach is called "problem solving."²⁰ To illustrate, let us suppose the police discover that truant teenagers are behind a rash of daytime burglaries in a particular area. More effective enforcement of truancy laws ends the problem, but the department is accused of spending an inordinate amount of time on minor offenses like truancy.²¹

A far more difficult domain is emergency social services. The police have little patience for problems that cannot be solved by an arrest, and little training or knowledge that equips them to respond in some way other than through arrests. They do not want to become social workers. And even if their responsibilities are limited to emergencies and they are not required to sustain a relationship with the people or the situations that keep producing the emergencies, they still are not comfortable with this mission. The police are constantly drawn into these problems; they often contribute by resolving the dispute; and they could contribute

more through referrals. Yet this awareness does not budge them from their basic distrust of such services. It is true, of course, that the police alone cannot actually solve these problems. At best, they can provide "trauma care" and "referrals" to those who can treat the underlying troubles.

So, there is a mismatch between police operational inclinations and capabilities on the one hand and the police mission on the other. In areas that they and the society regard as essential, their capabilities are strikingly limited. In areas that are potentially important but underemphasized, their capabilities are stronger.

LIMITED MANAGERIAL CONTROL

Beyond their liability for inconsistent objectives and their reliance on inadequate capabilities, police leadership is further handicapped by a startling lack of operational control over officers. The department functions under a carefully constructed illusion of control created to satisfy citizen demands for accountability. There is a bulky manual setting out policies and procedures that detail what officers should do in performing their varied tasks. There is a well-defined chain of command separated by narrow spans of authority that seem to provide dense supervision. And there is extensive investment in training. It appears, then, that the conduct of officers is under tight administrative control.

The reality is quite different, however. For the most part, the police operate on their own.²² Although they must be responsive to dispatchers, they tell the dispatchers when they are available for service and where they are located. Their supervisors are often absorbed with other duties and cannot always find them. Supervisors respond to calls with the officers only on the most important occasions. These conditions establish an irreducible degree of discretion for police officers.²³ As a practical matter, although the written procedures and hierarchical structure create deterrents for misconduct, the officer controls most of the information about his or her whereabouts and activities, and that fact defeats the effectiveness of these control arrangements.

To complicate matters, police officers often have a substantial degree of power they can wield against their immediate and higher-level officers, some of it founded on mutual blackmail. Paradoxically, the dense framework of rules means that virtually all officers are guilty of some infraction some time in their careers. This is as true for supervisors as for officers. Knowledge of the infraction, sometimes even evidence, is often held by one's subordinate. In the worst cases, superior and subordinate have colluded to cover up some offense. In these situations, the supervisor's power to control the subordinate is checked by the implied threat to reveal the incriminating information. The practice is referred to as "dropping a dime," and its threat blunts a great deal of supervisory authority.

At a more positive level, most police managers recognize that they need the cooperation of their officers. Indeed, it is very unsettling to preside over an organization of several thousand officers who roam the streets carrying guns.

Every police manager is keenly aware of the fragility of his or her control—how easy it would be for the officers to cause a lot of trouble in a short period by either failing to do their jobs or doing them too zealously. To ensure the cooperation of the troops, they express deep concern about "maintaining morale." And when they make a decision that is unpopular with their troops, they are warned ominously that "morale will go down."

Although there are perfectly good reasons for worrying about esprit in an organization like a police department, the obsessive concern with morale often has a darker side. To some extent, the warning that morale will go down is a threat that if the police executive asks the officers to do something they do not want to do, they will begin behaving badly on the street. This possibility sometimes leads police executives to back off from demanding things from their officers that should be demanded on behalf of the public. In cases of police corruption and brutality, for example, the police routinely expect their leaders to "support" their troops against the charges. Sometimes these pressures are quite intense, and police executives yield to the expectations of their subordinates.

The effective independence of the police force from close managerial control is greatly reinforced by formal arrangements as well as working conditions and informal threats. The civil-service system establishes performance standards and protects people with those competences. The restrictions can be overcome only with the aid of enormous political and administrative effort. In addition, many departments now have police unions, with explicit contracts and official grievance procedures.²⁴ This factor adds to the complexity of making general or specific changes in organizational procedures of personnel policies. It also compounds the political difficulties, for police unions are often politically powerful. In many northeastern cities, police personnel and their many relatives vote reliably to ensure that their elected leaders are responsive to their desires. It is the public sector version of having employee stockholders. Police executives are thus quite cautious in challenging their own organizations—despite the illusion of power that comes from their gold braid, the chain of command, and their tough disciplinary procedures.

Ironically, this situation has worsened as a result of making the police independent of politics. Police departments were separated from mayoral control and accountability as a means of guarding against political corruption. But police leaders did not really become independent. They became dependent on, and responsive to, the aspirations of their own troops. They began to define their jobs in terms of supporting the profession of policing. Without a countervailing public pressure that would focus their attention on the performance of *public* duties, they were powerless to resist the demands and expectations of their own subordinates. As a result, the police have substantial informal powers over their own leaders, who find it particularly hard to stand against a police force that can mobilize its own political constituency against them.

An alternative approach to managing police organizations would be to shift from a "command and control" system to one built on "professional responsibility."

ity."²⁵ In this concept, the irreducible discretion of officers would be officially recognized. They would be trained to exercise this discretion wisely not only through instruction on the techniques of their profession (e.g., the skilled, disciplined use of force) but also through inculcation in the values that should guide their activities.²⁶ Moreover, control would be exerted through after-the-fact examinations of their conduct and performance, rather than before-the-fact establishment of rules followed by direct supervision to ensure compliance. They would be liable to citizens whose rights and interests they had violated in the performance of their duties.

The first difficulty with shifting to this style of organizational control is that it is not certain it would succeed. Other barriers are no less considerable: The public is unwilling to grant police officers the status and pay associated with professionalism; neither the community nor the police executives who represent the community are clear on what purposes and values should guide officers; and the officers themselves prefer the protection of the organization, its rules, and its informal understandings to the vagaries of consumer satisfaction and liability judgments. Indeed, some police unions have opposed requirements that officers wear identifying name plates or badge numbers, to escape direct accountability to citizens.

In sum, it is not clear that police managers *can* direct their own troops even if they know what they should do and have suitable technologies for accomplishing their purposes. The mechanisms of command and control are unreliable in the face of discretion and countervailing power. The potential for professionalism in the field is limited by the reluctance of the public to rely on and pay for this alternative means of control, as well as by the desire of the police themselves to assume the prerogatives of professionalism but escape the responsibilities.

SUMMARY

Perhaps I have exaggerated the difficulty of leading a police organization. If one sets high enough standards and concentrates exclusively on the drawbacks of an enterprise, anything can be made to seem impossible. But there are two pieces of objective evidence I would offer to buttress the analytic case made above that leading a police organization successfully is very difficult, if not impossible.

First, there is the nagging sense throughout the country and within the police profession that something is not right in policing. Certainly many communities and departments seem to be well satisfied with one another; there the police are confident in their operation. However, there are numerous other places where the claims of success seem more like desperate bravado than quiet confidence, and quite a few departments—including some of the largest—where disappointment, sullenness, and defensiveness seem dominant. Indeed, it may be one measure of public confidence in police and public perception of their success that the private security sector is growing much faster than the police industry.²⁷

A second piece of evidence is the vulnerability of police executives. It is not unusual for them to stay in their jobs for less than three years.²⁸ While brevity may indicate insufficient training or competence in the job, it may also reflect community uncertainty about what it wants from its police department and its leader. In the latter reasoning, police executives become scapegoats for unresolved conflicts within the community about the purposes, methods, and operations of the police department.

APPROACHES TO THE JOB

Despite the difficulty or impossibility of the job, some police executives have succeeded. They have earned reputations as successful managers. They have stayed on the job. And they have improved the performance of their organizations. To suggest how successful police executives cope, the strategies of three such leaders of three organizations are examined: Darryl Gates, chief of police in Los Angeles; Lee Brown, chief of police in Houston; and Kevin Tucker, police commissioner of the Philadelphia Police Department.²⁹

DARRYL GATES: PROFESSIONAL POLICING

Darryl Gates became the chief of police for the City of Los Angeles in 1978.³⁰ His distinguished predecessors included William Parker, who served as police chief from 1950 to 1966, and Ed Davis, who was chief from 1969 to 1978. Such long terms are not the norm in American policing. They are common in Los Angeles because there the position is protected by civil-service restrictions. The job is filled through an independent police commission established for the express purpose of appointing a chief. The members base their decision on tests and interviews of candidates. The person who is selected cannot be removed except for cause. The position pays \$80,000 per year, making the chief of police in Los Angeles one of the highest paid civil servants in the country.

Since he became chief, Darryl Gates has given no cause for dismissal. Indeed, he distinguished himself as the very model of a modern police executive: cool, tough, exacting, self-disciplined, and purposeful. He was sufficiently popular with the citizens of Los Angeles to be considered a plausible candidate for mayor—perhaps even governor. He had enough respect from his troops that his was one of the few big-city departments that has not yet unionized. And he had great standing within his professional community: In a confrontation with the redoubtable Federal Bureau of Investigation over who would assume primary responsibility for guaranteeing security for the 1984 Olympics held in Los Angeles, Gates prevailed.

His department had an enviable reputation for integrity, professionalism, and efficiency. He took office just after Proposition 13 passed in California. The effect

was to shrink the police force from about seventy-five hundred officers in 1975 to about sixty-six hundred in 1980. Meanwhile, the population and calls for service increased dramatically. Moreover, the city's neighborhoods were becoming more heterogeneous and often poorer. Fueled by the easy access to supplies of heroin, cocaine, and marijuana from nearby Mexico, drug use continued to increase. Despite these circumstances, crime rates did not rise, clearance rates (i.e., the fraction of reported crimes that are solved with an arrest) remained steady, no major corruption or brutality scandals were uncovered, and the neighborhoods remained calm throughout the hot summers. The question thus arises: How was Gates able to do the impossible job?

The simple answer is that Gates was able to represent the performance of his organization to the citizens of Los Angeles, the broader police profession, and his own troops in terms that were consistent with the traditions and ideals of his department. The values that he articulated, and the performance he demanded from his organization, were right at the center of both previous traditions and current expectations. Values and performance conformed to public, professional, and subordinate hopes and expectations for the department. To comprehend Gates's success, we must understand how he fit into the historical context of policing in Los Angeles.

The foundation for Gates's success was laid by William B. Parker. Parker built the political constituency for a professional, crime-fighting police force by identifying three important values that could command public enthusiasm and support: first, an urgent public desire to curb crime and disorder; second, public hope that professionals and experts could solve problems; third, a determination to keep police departments free from the potential corruption of political influence. The image of nonpartisan, incorruptible, well-trained crime-fighters was the perfect expression of these enduring public aspirations. In this respect, the concept of independent, professionalized policing was one of the best political ideas ever invented by a police executive: It gave the police broad community support, high standing, and wide autonomy.

Parker also established the administrative structures to support this style of policing. To emphasize crime fighting, Parker (1) stressed crime statistics and clearance measures as the key indicators of organizational and individual performance; (2) shifted his patrol force from foot beats to patrol cars that could respond quickly to calls for service; (3) centralized and strengthened his detective division; and (4) eventually established the nation's first Special Weapons and Tactical Teams (SWAT) to deal with particularly dangerous and violent criminals. To guard against corruption, Parker (1) produced and distributed elaborate manuals detailing policies and procedures; (2) created a centralized internal affairs division; (3) replaced old division boundaries corresponding to political or sociological groupings by boundaries corresponding to census tracts; and (4) routinely dispatched and transferred officers from one division to another.

To ensure the professionalism and expertise of the department, selection stan-

dards were made more stringent, training was expanded and improved, a planning and research division was established, a statistical method for deploying patrol officers was designed and used, and performance statistics on crimes, arrests, citations written, and response times began to be tabulated. Over Parker's sixteen-year term, these efforts created a highly professionalized, autonomous police force committed to crime control through efficient and fair law enforcement—the epitome of what most people thought a police department should be.

The outstanding reputation of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) survived until 1965. On August 11, the Watts riot exploded. The LAPD could not meet the challenge. As one veteran of that era recalls: "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 all our black and liaison officers; that didn't work."³¹ After a week of rioting, thirty-one civilians were dead, and much of Watts had been burned to the ground. Order was restored only with the assistance of fourteen thousand National Guardsmen.

What the riot revealed to those inside and outside the department was that the police force had become increasingly isolated from the community. No one had any sense of the deep anger and resentment that had been building in Watts. No credible capacity existed for controlling the trouble once it began. Police liaison efforts had focused on clergy and business groups and thus had failed to provide information to the police about emerging problems. Nor could these weak links bestow legitimacy on police operations designed to quell the riot. The police lacked standing in important parts of the city.

To respond to this problem, the LAPD established a Community Relations Program. The program consisted of a group of lieutenants assigned exclusively to community liaison work in areas where the department's community ties seem to have eroded. Their job was to arrange meetings between the police captains responsible for given areas and representatives of local citizen groups; to organize youth groups; and to set up "phone trees" to be used for rumor control. Since the department was committed to effective crime control, these measures were understood within the department principally as intelligence-gathering efforts.

In 1969 Ed Davis became the chief. In personal style, he was more flamboyant and outspoken than Parker, but he stood for many of the same values. He affirmed his commitment to crime control by suggesting that skyjackers should be hanged at airports "after a fair trial." He insisted that the LAPD did not discriminate, because it shot more whites than blacks in the course of its operations. Such views aroused antagonism from civil libertarians and minority representatives in Los Angeles and nationally and suggested a degree of recklessness that was out of keeping with disciplined professionalism. However, Davis's opinions were not entirely unsuited to a conception of police as expert crime-fighters. And there were many in Los Angeles and elsewhere who wanted that kind of police force. Indeed, in the polarized mood of that period, the enmity of civil liberties and minority

groups might have enhanced Davis's popularity. Independence and crime fighting remained good politics.

But Davis had another idea as well. The lesson of the Watts riot had not escaped him. He became convinced that policing could be strengthened if officers could be made to feel responsible for the territory they policed and if they could mobilize the local communities to assist them. Consequently, he changed the organization of the LAPD to emphasize geographic responsibility.

At that time, the management of the LAPD patrol force was accomplished by having a certain number of sectors, each covered by a patrol car. The department was organized in three shifts. It was the responsibility of the watch commanders in each sector to ensure that the patrol cars were staffed. The patrol cars were then sent out to the streets to keep watch and to respond to calls for service that came from a central dispatching unit. Because the police were divided into three shifts with minimal communication across the shifts and were centrally dispatched without much regard for their "home beats," they developed little sense of responsibility for a given territory and little connection with the people who lived there.

Davis proposed two changes that would give a territorial overlay to this basic pattern of deployment. One change was called "the basic car plan," in which areas were divided into sectors that could be covered by a single patrol car. That car (and the nine or so officers that were required to man it twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week) would be more or less permanently assigned to a given area. To the extent that additional cars were needed to respond to calls for service, they would be supplied and designated as X cars. The watch commander thus had the responsibility for staffing the "basic cars" and the "X cars." The number of basic cars remained stable; the number of X cars varied according to fluctuations in the demands for service. Basic cars always had first priority in responding to calls in their areas; X cars served in a back-up capacity. The expectation was that the officers who staffed the basic cars would become more familiar with their areas.

The second change involved the designation of one officer among those assigned to a basic car as the senior lead officer. His or her job was to ensure the effective, round-the-clock management of the basic car and to meet with neighborhood groups to learn what crime problems concerned them. In effect, the lead officer planned the activities of the car and its officers to make the maximum contribution to the crime problems the community singled out for police department attention. His or her plans could be overridden by centrally dispatched calls for service. But in the periods in which the car was not responding to calls for service, it was supposed to work on the issues identified by the senior lead officer.

The changes did not receive wide publicity, since, in keeping with the portrayal of professionalized competence, these arrangements were considered matters of internal organization and efficiency. But they brought into the LAPD a new way of relating to the community.

In 1971 Davis went one step further. He tasked his senior lead officers with the responsibility for creating neighborhood watch groups to assist the police in their

crime control efforts. In the process, the police discovered an important fact: What actually concerned citizens was rarely what the police thought concerned them. They heard relatively few complaints about serious crime, and many more about vagrants, rowdy teenagers, abandoned cars, and vandalism.

This created a dilemma for the police. If they were going to show good faith in forming partnerships with the community, they would have to take these concerns seriously. On the other hand, responding to such minor problems did not match their image of a professionalized, crime-fighting police force. It seemed to detract from their capacity to deal with violent crime. In addition, the amount of time spent in meetings was trying the patience of watch commanders, who continued to be responsible for deploying the patrol force and keeping response times low.

Consequently, a crack appeared in the organization of the LAPD. On one side were the senior lead officers who were committed to close collaboration with the community and who sought to direct the attention of officers to the problems the community nominated. On the other side were the watch commanders, most of the patrol force, and even some senior lead officers who thought that the job of the police was to respond to calls for service and deal with serious crime and who sought to have as many officers ready for dispatching as possible so that when the crime calls came, the LAPD would be ready.

By 1973 Davis was ready for the next move toward establishing geographic responsibility. He introduced into the LAPD a concept known as "team policing." The city was divided into seventy units, each unit comprising three to five basic cars. In addition, the various functional groups that had previously been centralized (e.g., detectives, narcotics, juvenile offenders, and traffic) were distributed across these new units. A lieutenant was placed in charge of each unit and was expected to operate like a "mini-chief" for his or her area. Essentially, this change reversed the trend toward centralization that Parker had begun, making it possible for local neighborhoods to provide more effective guidance to the police department than ever before.

These changes were not unanimously supported. There remained an undercurrent in the LAPD throughout this period that wanted the department to continue as the powerful crime-fighting organization it had been in the late fifties and early sixties. Several factors kept this spirit alive in the department, perhaps the most important of which was simply the desires and expectations of the officers themselves. They had joined to patrol the streets, solve crimes, and lock up criminals. Their training continued to emphasize the skills associated with law enforcement and crime fighting. The detectives were still a high-prestige unit, and promotion to detective was based partly on the production of felony arrests. Hence the principal performance measures remained measures of enforcement activity such as arrests and citations.

Moreover, the mid-level managers in the department were somewhat ambivalent about "community relations" and "team policing." They too wanted to be crime-fighters more than politicians, and they were still being evaluated on reported levels of crime and response times. Neither the chief nor the public

seemed terribly excited about the changes that had been made in the department. What the police continued to be admired for was their courage and competence as crime-fighters.

Many of the underlying tensions in the LAPD—between centralization versus decentralization, autonomy versus community partnerships, rapid responses to calls for service versus community meetings, serious crime fighting versus dealing with neighborhood complaints—came to a head about the time that Darryl Gates became the chief. One catalyst was the ambivalence within the police department itself. It was hard to claim the mantle of an independent, professional crime-fighter while responding increasingly to minor community complaints. As one senior officer remarked:

I was in the locker room working out, and I heard two guys who were senior leads. One was talking to the other about how he needed cookies for his meeting, and he was really concerned about "dammit, I can't find the cookies." And the other one needed a movie projector, and I looked at these two kids, good looking and good cops, and I thought, oh my God, what have we done with our finest.³²

In addition, however, resource constraints were beginning to bind. Davis had committed the organization to "team policing" on the assumption that the LAPD would receive up to one thousand additional officers. Those hopes were dampened in 1973 when Thomas Bradley—a political opponent of Davis—was elected mayor and chose not to increase the budget of the department. They were dashed in 1978 with the passage of Proposition 13. Consequently, just at the time Gates took office, the pressures on the police department had risen to the boiling point.

Gates's response was swift and decisive. He abolished team policing in 1979. Patrol officers and detectives were put back under separate commands, and specialists were recentralized under headquarters commands. The operational objective was to maintain the organization's capacity to respond to calls for service in the face of declining resources. The connections to the communities were supposed to be maintained by captains who once again assumed the public liaison responsibility and by the senior lead officers who remained in charge of the basic cars.

In reality, however, the functions that had been developed under Parker atrophied as the department retrenched. Many captains were uninterested in community relations. There was no one at headquarters who kept track of how well captains and senior lead officers were performing their community liaison duties. And there was a general air of resentment against the community that had failed to support the LAPD with the resources it thought it deserved. As a result, the senior lead officers "went into a drift."

In the 1980s Gates attempted to revive community relations functions as the department worked through the effects of Proposition 13. Starting in 1984, two areas designed and began to operate Community Mobilization Projects, which

relied heavily on senior lead officers and which gave them and their projects priority in calls for service. In 1986 a high-level policy paper issued by the powerful Office of Operations recommended an organization-wide commitment to the senior lead officers and the community liaison/mobilization effort. Pressure once again began to be exerted from the top for the restoration of this function. The interesting result was that many senior lead officers who had enjoyed the rank but not the special duties began transferring out of these jobs, and those who liked both the rank and the function began transferring in.

These initiatives did not conclusively resolve the conflict between geographically-based, community-oriented policing on the one hand and centralized crime-fighting policing on the other. Indeed, the tension remained sharp. And when administrative concerns about crime and response times periodically reassured themselves, the department would again shift away—at least temporarily—from the community relations functions.

In fact, just such a surge of administrative concern damaged a promising Community Mobilization Project in the Wilshire Division. There, a two-year project focused on street people, prostitution, and graffiti and based in a locally established police station had succeeded in cleaning up the area, thus earning the gratitude of local citizens. On the other hand, its response-time statistics had decreased to become the worst in the city. Under pressure from police headquarters to improve its response time, the local commander reassigned some key senior lead officers to regular patrol functions. Both the lead officers and the neighborhood were unhappy. But in the eyes of Darryl Gates, acting for the citizens of Los Angeles, the requirements of professionalized policing had to be met. In the end, that was what successful policing in Los Angeles demanded.

LEE BROWN: COMMUNITY POLICING

Lee Brown became the police commissioner for the Houston Police Department in 1982.³³ He was the seventh chief in eight years.

Those eight years had been stormy ones. The department seemed to oscillate between tight (some would say arbitrary) discipline and broad indulgence. Herman Short, the police chief from the mid-sixties to 1973, had been an autocrat who stood for tough crime fighting but who also brooked no errors of judgment or discipline in his department. In 1973 a liberal coalition elected Fred Hoffheinz mayor, and Herman Short resigned. He was replaced by Carroll Lynn, an executive within the department. Lynn's regime was marked by little more than internal power struggles. He resigned within two years, after being indicted, and was replaced by Pappy Bond—a "policeman's policeman" in the eyes of his numerous supporters in the department. Bond's principal objective seemed to be to reassure the police officers of Houston that they were valued and supported. Discipline slackened.

During the mid-seventies, the Houston Police Department earned a national reputation as a "cowboy" department. In a period of rapid expansion, the depart-

ment had advertised nationally for police officers who "wanted to be close to the action." Lenient dress codes and regulations, introduced by Pappy Bond, had resulted in police officers wearing cowboy hats and boots to work and equipping themselves with weapons of their own choice—such as pearl-handled automatics. To round out the image, during the mid-seventies, the Houston Police Department held the record for shooting more people in the course of its duties than any other department. In the first three months of 1977, thirteen people were killed in three months. Then, in 1977 the Joe Campo Torres case erupted.

Torres, a Mexican-American, had been taken from a bar by five Houston police officers, beaten badly, and then thrown in a swamp. As an officer involved later testified, Torres had been thrown in the swamp because one of the other officers had "always wanted to see a wetback swim." Torres drowned, and when his body surfaced two days later, an investigation disclosed the involvement of the Houston police officers.

The Torres case subjected the Houston Police Department to a great deal of outside pressure. The United States Attorney's office assumed responsibility for the Torres case and began to watch the Houston Police Department's activities much more closely. The Texas State Legislature passed a civil rights statute making it a felony for a police officer to injure or kill a prisoner in his or her custody. The Harris County District Attorney's office created its own Civil Rights Division. And an Internal Affairs Division was set up within the Houston Police Department and became active in investigating incidents of police misconduct.

In this milieu, Harry Caldwell became the chief. Caldwell, like his predecessors, was an insider. Indeed, he was described by many as the brains behind the previous succession of "good old boy" chiefs. Now at the helm himself, Caldwell finally had the opportunity to mold the Houston Police Department into his vision of a modern, effective department. He viewed his primary mission as "establishing accountability." He built up the Internal Affairs Division and used it to investigate all police shootings. He wrote new policies and procedures about the use of force—prohibiting officers from shooting at fleeing felons, moving cars, and burglary suspects. He required officers to register all firearms they carried to facilitate investigations in shooting incidents. And he eliminated cowboy hats and boots.

Caldwell's efforts began to reestablish the legitimacy and credibility of the Houston Police Department within the city and the criminal justice system, but they severely antagonized the officers who were accustomed to more supportive regimes in which they could wield more influence over their chiefs. Early in Caldwell's term, the Houston Police Officer's Association (HPOA) invited Caldwell to a meeting to discuss policies and procedures. Over three hundred officers attended. Caldwell clarified his position: "I'm a goddamn dictator, and if you don't like it, you can hit the fucking door."

A little later, in an apparent effort to reopen communications, Caldwell commissioned a study of officer morale by the union. When the report was presented, however, Caldwell tore it up, threw it in a wastebasket, and once again explained:

"This is not a popularity contest. We're going to run it the way I say, and if you don't like it, you can get the fuck out." In response, the HPOA voted never to meet with Caldwell again. They also decided that since they were "going to have to be a bear, they might as well be a grizzly."

In the end, Caldwell got tired. His vision of a professionalized Houston Police Department did not seem to connect powerfully enough with either outside or inside constituents. There was enthusiasm externally for his stance on deadly force, but it was outweighed by internal anger—the result of his allowing little opportunity for the officers to express their point of view or have their fears and worries addressed. Caldwell also sought to increase the force's sensitivity to the community by training officers in Spanish, but he regarded federal demands for affirmative action in hiring as undermining his drive for high professional standards.

Perhaps most important, Caldwell seemed to believe he had to do everything himself. He gave three hundred speeches a year. Even though he had opportunities to fill key positions within his own department, he was forced to reach way down into the ranks of the sergeants to find anyone who seemed to share his purposes. Caldwell could simply not roll the stone up the hill, and he resigned after about two years to take a rest.

Caldwell was replaced by B. K. Johnson—a choice that won the approval of Pappy Bond. As he explained to reporters, "What Houston needs is a chief like Johnson who will concentrate on protecting the city from criminals." The minority groups were concerned that Johnson would allow the police to run amok again. They were not reassured when Johnson was overheard reciting parts of *Little Black Sambo* to test a microphone at a luncheon speech; nor when he dispatched tactical squads of foot patrols to round up "vagrants" in poor areas; nor when, in response to requests from the Hispanic community for improved police action in dealing with homicides, large numbers of police cars began crisscrossing their neighborhoods. From the community's perspective, Johnson seemed insensitive and heavy-handed.

Surprisingly, the union was not particularly happy with Johnson either. Over the years, the Houston Police Department had changed. It included more women and minorities, it was better educated, and it had learned and repented from the disgrace of the Torres case. The union had begun representing the police officer's interests in more constructive forms than simply lobbying for more license to roust people on the street. Bob Thomas, the president of the growing Houston Police Patrolman's Union, proposed innovations gleaned from other departments to improve working conditions: discipline policies from Los Angeles, the four-day workweek from Kansas City, mandatory physical fitness, and participatory management. Johnson responded by telling Thomas, "I intend to stay here forever, and nothing is going to change."

As it turned out, Johnson was wrong. In November 1981 Kathy Whitmire was elected mayor of Houston. She consulted with Bob Thomas to get his views on what should be done with the department. Johnson resigned, accusing Whitmire

of "being in the pocket of the union." Whitmire appointed Assistant Chief John Bales as acting chief and began a national search for a new chief. In April 1982 she chose Lee P. Brown, then commissioner of public safety in Atlanta, to be Houston's police chief.

Brown began with many strikes against him. He was the first outsider ever appointed to the job of chief. He was also the first black. And he held a Ph.D. The union vigorously opposed his nomination, claiming that he was unqualified. The only ones who seemed to support Brown were Whitmire and the minority community of Houston—not a group that had previously been important in setting police policy.

Four years later, Brown had raised the department from national disgrace to incipient acclaim. Moreover, in the mayoral election of 1985, both candidates pledged to keep Lee Brown as chief if elected. Whitmire won again, but as one city editor observed, this time her victory was on Lee Brown's coattails. The issue, of course, is how this feat was accomplished.

Brown's success seems to have been built on several pillars. First, from the outset, his approach to the job was nonconfrontational and forward-looking. He was not interested in the past or in the question of who had failed in leading the Houston Police Department. He deflected all such discussions and instead repeated his ambition to make the Houston Police Department the best in the country. No doubt the fact that two previous chiefs remained in high positions within the department made such a stance necessary as well as wise. But the point is that he was uniformly constructive. He focused attention on future performance rather than past blame.

Consistent with this approach, Brown labored hard to develop a specific plan for moving the Houston Police Department into the future. He commissioned the internal staff to analyze the current state of the organization and its performance. When that plan failed to meet his exacting standards, he sought help from an outside consultant named Robert Wasserman. Over six months, Wasserman and Brown undertook to diagnose the current strengths and weaknesses of the department and to develop a strategy that exploited its strengths and shored up its weaknesses. That plan was presented to the principal managers of the department in a private, day-long internal meeting. None of the department's "dirty laundry" was paraded for public view.

While working within the organization, Brown was simultaneously working externally in the same constructive vein. He published a set of "values" that would guide the organization under his stewardship (see Table 5.1). In addition, once his assessment and plan had been reviewed inside the department, they were published for outside discussion and comment. Through the general values, the assessment of the department, and the plan for the future, Brown made himself externally accountable to the community of Houston. If his behavior was not consistent with his published values, if there were not improvements in the directions indicated by his plan, he would be exposed to failure. Such accountability revealed to his subordinates the general course he planned to take. Moreover,

since Brown himself was staked to these objectives, they knew that he would remain constant in pursuit of them. Finally, since these plans won widespread outside support, they created some urgency within the department. They became a reality to which the organization had to adapt rather than mere suggestions offered by a short-term chief.

In addition, Brown was able to use two significant new projects to both symbolize and give material substance to his plans. One project was the opening of a new police substation, which demonstrated his commitment to decentralizing police operations and moving them closer to the community. The second involved managing an "anti-fear experiment" funded by the National Institute of Justice. This project engaged the police in activities such as directed contacts with citizens, community newsletters, and visits to victims of crime, all designed to bring the police into close contact with the community and alleviate citizens' fears.

Finally, and most significantly, Brown began building an administrative framework that would accomplish the operational goals of bringing the police closer to the community and allowing them to work on the problems that the community nominated for their attention rather than the problems the police thought were important. He called his plan Directed Area Response Teams (DART). Brown organized the city into discrete areas and assigned groups of police officers to be responsible for peace and order within those areas. Their job was to establish and consult with local citizen groups representing these areas and

Table 5.1 Values of the Houston Police Department

The Houston Police Department will involve the community in all policing activities which directly impact the quality of community life.

The Houston Police Department believes that while crime prevention is its primary goal, it should vigorously pursue those who commit serious crimes.

The Houston Police Department believes that policing strategies used must preserve and advance democratic values.

The Houston Police Department believes that it must structure service delivery in a way that will reinforce the strength of the city's neighborhoods.

The Houston Police Department believes that the public should have input into the development of policies which directly impact the quality of neighborhood life.

The Houston Police Department is committed to managing its resources in a careful and effective manner.

The Houston Police Department will seek the input of employees into matters which impact employee job satisfaction and effectiveness.

The Houston Police Department will maintain the highest levels of integrity and professionalism in all its actions.

The Houston Police Department will seek to provide stability, continuity and consistency in all of its operations.

to handle as best they could the problems confronting the communities. Many specialized police resources that had previously been centralized were decentralized so that they would be available to the local areas. The police were held accountable not so much for staffing patrol cars, keeping response times low, and producing arrests as for creating a sense of security, order, and responsiveness in the minds of the citizens whom they served.

These actions built a substantial base of support for Lee Brown and the Houston Police Department. Their articulated values connected with the values of the city. The attention given to allaying fear and consulting with the community reassured the community that the police would be responsive to their concerns and available to them when needed. The political strength generated by these successes meant that the police themselves would have to accommodate to this new regime, since it was clear that Brown would be around for a while and it was hard to attack the values he represented and the constituency he had built.

This reality may have reconciled many police officers to Brown's vision. But it is also true, and somewhat unexpected, that the police officers themselves found that they liked Brown's style of policing. One hard-boiled patrol officer who had been a hero in the old days of cowboy policing explained why the new regime of community policing was better:

In the old days when we were mostly locking up bad guys and responding to crime calls, I got the feeling that everyone was a jerk. Now that we're dealing with citizens who are interested in making their communities better, I see a whole lot of good people in the society.

With broad support from outside and within the department, and with an organization that is innovating in community relations, fear reduction, and crime prevention, Brown is succeeding in doing an impossible job.

KEVIN TUCKER: THE NEW DAWN

In 1986 Kevin Tucker was named commissioner of the Philadelphia Police Department.³⁴ His appointment came in the wake of two major scandals: the disastrous MOVE operation in which the Philadelphia Police Department accidentally caused a fire that destroyed several blocks of low-income housing when they unwisely tried to flush a militant black group out of a fortified house with a smoke bomb; and a far-ranging corruption investigation which had resulted in the indictment of high-level officials in the department.

Such events were not entirely out of line with the department's prior reputation. In the late 1960s their leader Frank Rizzo had earned a national reputation by carrying a revolver and a nightstick everywhere—even to formal occasions. He then became mayor because of the popularity of his uncompromising stand against rioters and hoodlums.

With a former police commissioner as mayor, it would be logical to assume that the police department would benefit, and to a degree, it did. Rizzo's legacy to the department seems to have been increased manpower (but with no corresponding increases in facilities or equipment), improved pensions, looser disability rules for retiring from the police force, and indiscriminating support for officers on the street. The net effect of this boon on the department was to create an organization that was self-indulgent and undisciplined. It was not surprising, then, that events such as MOVE and the corruption scandal occurred.

Tucker's appointment signaled a change in the orientation of the city and the police department. Tucker was the first outsider to become commissioner of the Philadelphia Police Department. He was the choice of the business community of Philadelphia, who admired his federal enforcement experience and the image of integrity and professionalism that he projected. He was also supported by a small group of progressive police professionals who had long been embarrassed by the Rizzo regime and frustrated by the parochialism of the nation's fifth-largest department.

To be successful, Tucker had to capitalize on these slender assets. His "coping devices" included the following. First, he had an exceedingly good personal touch and rapport with his officers. He went to retirement dinners, funerals, and baptisms. The officers liked him and believed that he would try to better conditions for the cop on the street. Consistent with this general stance, he was able to form a good working relationship with the head of the union.

Second, he commissioned a "study task force" to review the organization of the department and compose a "management blueprint" for improving its performance. This task force was funded by contributions from city foundations and businesses. Members of the task force included prominent Philadelphians and nationally recognized experts in law enforcement and policing.

Originally, the goal of the task force was to produce a detailed management plan under the assumption that a substantial mandate for change existed in Philadelphia—a mandate that would empower Tucker to implement the proposed changes. Gradually it became apparent, however, that the mandate for reform was weak and fickle. Consequently, the task force had to create and sustain a constituency that supported change as well as define the particular ways in which the department would be changed. This altered the conception of the task force report from a management blueprint to a more thematic political document addressed to the general Philadelphia community and the police department, which outlined both a broad vision of policing in Philadelphia and a detailed plan for effecting it.

The published report attracted widespread local and national attention. The task force found that the department was "unfocused, unmanaged, and unaccountable," and it committed the department to a new strategy of community-based, problem-solving policing. This document gave Tucker a foundation from which he could command and deploy additional funds from a tight-fisted city administration.

Third, Tucker decided to invest heavily in management training for his mid-

level officers. With some increased resources in hand, Tucker contracted with the Police Executive Research Forum to teach a version of their three-week executive training program designed specifically for Philadelphia. An important theme in that program was the role of mid-level management in an organization that was undergoing a basic change in its overall strategy.

Fourth, Tucker continued but revamped the study task force. All of the non-Philadelphians who had served on the task force were thanked for their services and dismissed. A new group was established, composed entirely of Philadelphians, some of whom had served on the initial task force and some who had not. Renamed the Implementation Committee, this group provided continuing oversight of the police department, lobbying the mayor on key issues and maintaining the pressure for reform by issuing a nine-month "Progress Report." Eventually, the group modified its name and its function and became the Commissioner's Advisory Committee, while still serving as a constructive political force for change.

These coping mechanisms generated a great deal of ferment within the police department, which in turn opened significant opportunities for change. Reform was nowhere near completed, however, when a mayoral election intervened. The future of the police department became particularly uncertain when it turned out that the major challenger to incumbent Wilson Goode was none other than former mayor and commissioner Frank Rizzo. While the election hung in the balance, the reforms ceased within the department.

Interestingly, no direct attacks were made by Rizzo on the changes that Tucker had initiated. They were popular enough to withstand challenge during the campaign, but there was little doubt in anyone's mind that if Rizzo were to win the election, much of what Tucker had begun would be halted. Fortunately, and perhaps somewhat to the credit of Kevin Tucker, Goode won the election by a narrow margin and soon reappointed Tucker. He also raised Tucker's annual salary from \$55,000 (which was less than his principal assistants were making as civil servants) to \$80,000. When Tucker left in 1988, he was able to pass the baton to Deputy Commissioner Willie Williams, who pledged to continue the reforms within the Philadelphia Police Department.

DOING IMPOSSIBLE JOBS

What these stories have in common is the success of individual police commissioners in building a favorable reputation for themselves and their departments in a world where it is in principle impossible to succeed at that job. What they also have in common is the fact that the managers worked very hard to make themselves accountable to the public by defining their purposes in broad terms and then by trying to keep their own actions, and the actions of their organizations, consistent with those broad purposes. In short, they fit themselves and their organizations to public expectations of their performance.

There are two fundamental differences in these stories, however. One is the extent to which the managers strived to shape the public expectations and mandates within which they then operated. Gates, in Los Angeles, inherited a tradition and stayed within it. This was quite natural since his organization was perceived to be working well. Brown and Tucker, on the other hand, had the obligation and the chance to reshape their mandates, for their organizations were seen to be in crisis. They seized the opportunity by proposing a new contract between them and the communities they policed: Brown through his values and management plan; Tucker through his study task force and advisory committee.

A second key difference is in the substantive nature of the police strategies pursued. Darryl Gates continued the strategy of professionalized crime fighting, which consisted of emphasizing crime control, relying on rapid responses to calls for service, and centralizing command. Eventually, he adjusted his department's operations to make room for crime prevention, order maintenance, and community consultations, but professionalized crime fighting remained the dominant theme of the department. Whenever response times and professional independence came into conflict with order maintenance and community consultation, response times and professional independence won.

Lee Brown and Kevin Tucker pursued a different strategy of policing—one that allowed for crime prevention, fear reduction, order maintenance, and emergency services as well as rapid response to incidents of crime. Their strategy also called for close consultation with local communities rather than professional distance. To a degree, this program of policing represented a tactical innovation because it was a shift away from the orthodox ideas that had dominated the profession. As such, it carried substantial operational and political risks. It was by no means clear that this strategy would be better in controlling crime, reducing fear, and serving the people than traditional professionalized crime fighting. But both Brown and Tucker thought it was worth trying and had the liberty to do so precisely because their organizations' previous methods had been so discredited. So far, they have been successful in persuading others that this strategy is superior to the old one.

It is also worth noting that Brown and Tucker relied on different managerial tactics to alter the strategies of their departments. Tucker turned to a formally established outside commission to develop a new mandate for the police department. Brown relied principally on internal discussions and analyses to set the stage for his reforms (though these discussions occurred against the backdrop of a dismal past record, Brown's articulated values, and with the assistance of an outside consultant). Tucker used management training as the principal device for transforming the department. Brown took advantage of an experiment in fear reduction, a new station house, and the detailed specification of a new program (DART) to instruct his organization about what he wanted. Tucker spent a lot of time with his troops and stayed close to the union. Brown was more aloof and distant.

In sum, the key to success in the impossible job of managing large urban police departments seems to be fitting the strategy of the department to the historical

context, to the current expectations of the community, and to the capabilities of the organization. There may be many styles of policing that can "succeed" in a given city. What is important, then, is for the manager to find not only a strategy that guarantees his or her individual success, but also one that creates values and secures substantial public benefits for the resources expended.

Some value-creating strategies are riskier to pursue than others because they are new. The public has not yet demanded them, nor have the organizations produced them. Brown and Tucker distinguished themselves not only because they discovered a successful strategy of policing but also because they chose a riskier, more innovative path. That risk was "financed" by their hard work with the citizens to "capitalize" their venture. Gates followed a more conservative course. Still, both innovative and traditional strategies produced successes for managers, and it remains unclear which type holds greater value for the citizens over the long run.

NOTES

1. I am following a line of analysis first developed in Philip Selznick, *Leadership in Administration* (New York: Harper and Row, 1957). For a more "nuts and bolts" discussion of how to succeed as a police executive, see Michael S. Scott, *Managing for Success: A Police Chief's Survival Guide* (Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum, 1986).
2. Basically, there are three approaches to measuring the value of public sector activities. The most ambitious is "benefit cost analysis." For a basic treatment, see Harley H. Henrich and Graeme Taylor, *Program Budgeting Cost Analysis: Cases, Texts and Reading* (Pacific Palisades, Calif.: Goodyear, 1969). A second approach is "program evaluation." For a comprehensive treatment of this subject, see Carol H. Weiss, *Evaluating Action Programs* (Boston, Mass.: Allyn and Bacon, 1972). A third approach is measuring the quantity and quality of activities produced. See, for example, Paul K. Brace, Robert Elkin, Daniel D. Robinson, and Harold I. Shinberg, *Reporting of Service Efforts and Accomplishments* (Stamford, Conn.: Financial Accounting Standards Board, 1980).
3. See, for example, Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, *Standards for Law Enforcement Agencies* (Fairfax, Va.: Commission on Accreditation, 1988).
4. Philadelphia Police Study Task Force, *Philadelphia and its Police: Toward a New Partnership* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Police Study Task Force, 1987).
5. For the techniques of controlling police corruption, see Allen N. Kornblum, *The Moral Hazards: Police Strategies for Honesty and Ethical Behavior* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1976).
6. For a wider view of police functions, see Herman Goldstein, *Policing a Free Society* (Cambridge, Mass.: Ballinger Press, 1977).
7. Mark H. Moore and Robert J. Trojanowicz, *The Police and Crime*, Perspectives on Policing (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice, 1988).
8. Patsy Klaus and Carol Kalish, *The Severity of Crime*, Bureau of Justice Statistics Bulletin, January 1984 (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Department of Justice, 1984).
9. For a theoretical discussion of this issue, see Egon Bittner, "The Police on Skid-row: A Study of Peace-keeping," *American Sociological Review* 32 (October 1967): 699-715. For a recent example of how this can become an important political issue, see David Kennedy, *Neighborhood Policing: The London Metropolitan Police Force*, Kennedy

- School of Government Case #C15-87-770 (Cambridge, Mass.: Kennedy School of Government, 1986).
10. Mark H. Moore and Robert J. Trojanowicz, *Fear and the Police*, Perspectives on Policing (Washington, D. C.: National Institute of Justice, 1988).
11. Wesley Skogan, "Fear of Crime and Neighborhood Change," in *Communities and Crime*, ed. Albert J. Reiss and Michael Tonry, vol. 8 of *Crime and Justice: A Review of Research* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1986), p. 222.
12. Anthony M. Pate, Mary Ann Wycoff, Wesley G. Skogan, and Lawrence W. Sherman, *Reducing Fear of Crime in Houston and Newark* (Washington, D.C.: Police Foundation, 1986).
13. Mary Ann Wycoff, *The Role of Municipal Police: Research as a Prelude to Changing It: Executive Summary* (Washington, D.C.: Police Foundation, 1982).
14. Moore and Trojanowicz, *The Police and Crime*.
15. Michael T. Farmer, ed., *Survey of Police Operational and Administrative Practices* (Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum, 1978).
16. George L. Kelling, Tony Pate, Duane Dieckman, Charles E. Brown, *The Kansas City Preventive Patrol Experiment: A Summary Report* (Washington, D.C.: Police Foundation, 1974).
17. *Response Time Analysis* (Kansas City, Mo.: Kansas City Police Department, 1977).
18. Peter W. Greenwood, Jan M. Chaiken, and Joan Petersilia, *The Criminal Investigation Process* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1977); John Eck, *Managing Case Assignments: Burglary Investigation Decision Model Replication* (Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum, 1979).
19. Wesley Skogan and George E. Antunes, "Information, Apprehension and Deterrence: Exploring the Limits of Police Productivity," *Journal of Criminal Justice* 7 (1979): 217-41.
20. For the theory of "problem-solving," see Herman Goldstein, "Improving Policing: A Problem Oriented Approach," *Crime and Delinquency* 25 (1979): 236-58. For practical applications, see John Eck and William Spelman, *Solving Problems: Problem Oriented Policing in Newport News* (Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum, 1987).
21. This example was discussed by Chief Darryl Gates of the Los Angeles Police Department during the discussions of the Harvard/NIJ Executive Session on Policing, 6 November 1987.
22. James Q. Wilson, *Varieties of Police Behavior* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), chapter 4. For a more anecdotal account, see Jonathan Rubinstein, *City Police* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1973).
23. The concept is borrowed from Richard Elmore. See Richard Elmore, "Organizational Models of Program Implementation," *Public Policy* (Spring 1978): 187-228.
24. Steven A. Rynecki, Douglas A. Cairns, Donald J. Cairns, *Police Collective Bargaining Agreements* (Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum, 1978).
25. George L. Kelling, Robert Wasserman, and Hubert Williams, *Police Accountability and Community Policing*, Perspectives on Policing (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice, 1988).
26. Robert Wasserman and Mark H. Moore, *Values in Policing*, Perspectives on Policing (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice, 1988).
27. William C. Cunningham and Todd H. Taylor, *Private Security and Police in America* (Portland, Oreg.: Chancellor Press, 1985), pp. 105-16.
28. Donald C. Withan, *The American Law Enforcement Chief Executive: A Management Profile* (Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum, 1984).
29. The data on the "coping" strategies of these three police executives come from three different sources: case studies of the organizations; personal interviews and discussions with the executives; and personal participation in the activities.

30. The story of Darryl Gates and Los Angeles is based primarily on David Kennedy, *Neighborhood Policing in Los Angeles*, Kennedy School of Government Case #C16-87-717 (Cambridge, Mass.: Kennedy School of Government, 1987). It is supplemented by informal discussions with Chief Gates in meetings of Harvard's Executive Session on Community Policing.

31. Ibid., p. 2.

32. Ibid. p. 5.

33. This story is based principally on Zachary Tumin, *Lee Brown and the Houston Police Department* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Program in Criminal Justice, 1989). It is supplemented by many discussions with Chief Brown in meetings of Harvard's Executive Session on Community Policing and by visits to the Houston Police Department.

34. The Philadelphia story is based on my personal participation in the Police Study Task Force and on sustained professional assistance to Commissioner Tucker.

6

A State Mental Health Commissioner and the Politics of Mental Illness

Gary E. Miller and Ira Iscoe

Most people avoid thinking about mental illness until they are forced to do so by virtue of its unwelcome appearance in oneself or a family member. For people with means or a good insurance policy, mental illness entails office visits to a private psychiatrist or psychologist or perhaps a short stay in a private mental hospital or psychiatric unit of a general hospital. But for the large number of people with limited resources and more disabling mental illnesses, the only place to turn for help is the public mental health system. The institutions and community-based programs that comprise the public mental health system are nominally under the direction of an official whose title varies from state to state but whom we shall here refer to as the "state mental health commissioner."

Mental illness is one of the most serious public health problems in the United States. Approximately 19 percent of the population suffers from some form of mental disorder ranging from phobias, to personality problems and stress-related conditions, to major illnesses like schizophrenia and manic depressive disease.¹

Although diagnostic classifications, causal theories, and treatment methods have changed over the centuries, mental illness seems to have been a constant feature of humankind's presence on earth. Society no longer considers psychotic people to be possessed by demons or able to endure torture without feeling pain; nor does it condone lifelong incarceration of people with mental illness in human warehouses. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to conclude as the final decade of the twentieth century opens that society has discovered the most effective way of caring for its mentally ill citizens or that the stigma attached to mental illness has been eliminated. The confusion and controversy that surround mental illness treatment (whose accepted euphemism is "mental health services"), together with society's failure to agree on the role that government should play in caring for mentally ill people, are among the leading contributors to the impossibility of the task of the state mental health commissioner. The commissioner has to achieve the unachievable and meet demands that cannot be met. The impossibility of the job arises not only from the nature of mental illness and limits in treatment tech-