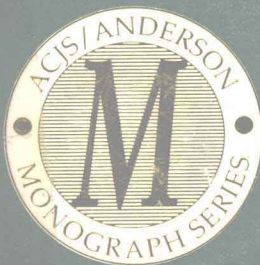
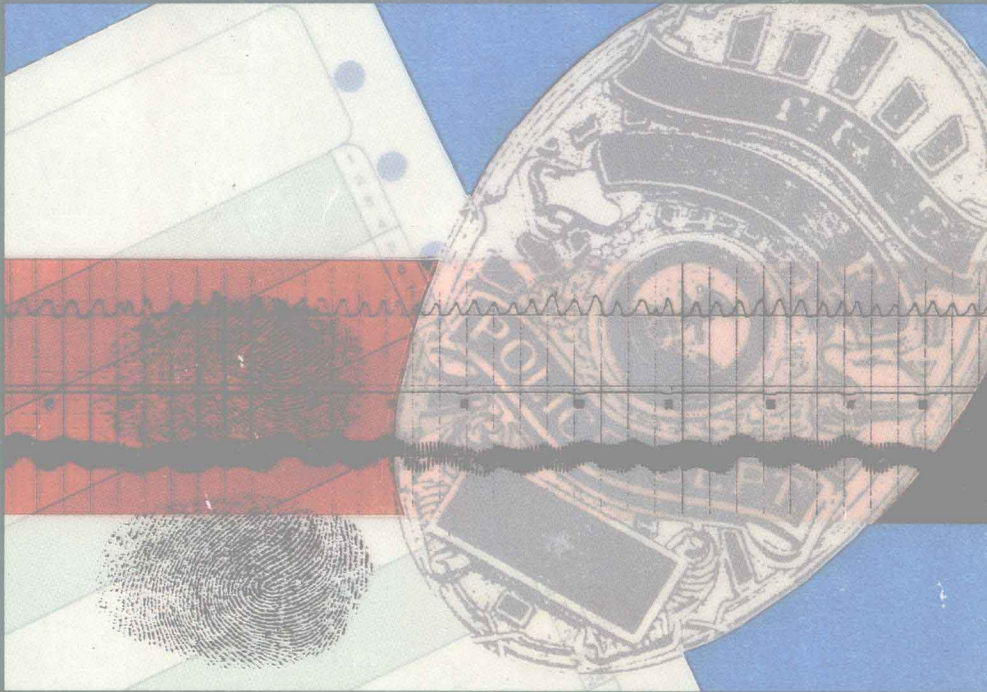


What Works in Policing?

Operations and Administration Examined

Edited by Gary W. Cordner and Donna C. Hale



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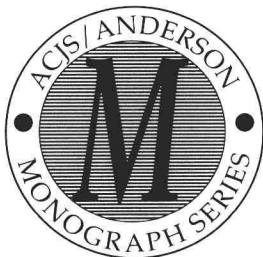
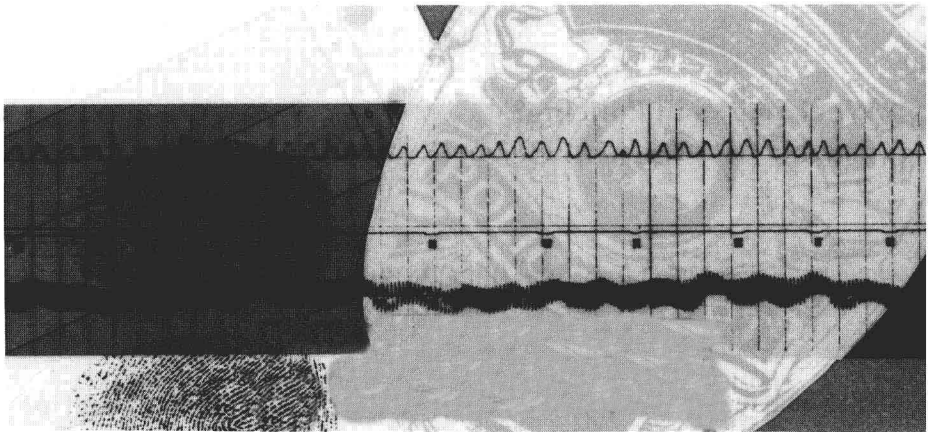
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able knowledge to draw from today than was available even a decade or two ago. For practical and philosophical reasons this knowledge cannot relieve the police administrator of the ultimate responsibility for choosing among various options, but it can provide considerable help.

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What Works in Policing? Operations and Administration Examined

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—Gary W. Cordner
Donna C. Hale

Introduction

This book presents the latest evidence and a variety of viewpoints on the effectiveness of some of the most important elements of police operations and police administration. Each chapter focuses on one aspect of the police business and asks several questions:

- What is current practice?
- What works?
- What do we know?
- What don't we know?

Taken together, these chapters go a long way toward summarizing what we know about *What Works in Policing*. However, it is quite important to recognize that the question, “What works?” is much more complex and much deeper than it may seem at first glance. Ultimately, it is a question that goes to the core of a number of issues related to the role of the police in a free society. We point out some of these issues below to prevent anyone from incorrectly thinking that the determination of efficient and effective methods of policing can be a simple and straightforward exercise.

MULTIPLE OBJECTIVES

If policing had a single overarching objective, as businesses have with “maximizing profit” or “maximizing profit share,” determining what works would be much easier. For example, if “maximizing citizen satisfaction with police services” was the single objective of a police department, then, through research and trial and error, those techniques that contributed most to citizen satisfaction could be discovered and implemented. It would take effort and ingenuity to discover such methods, and refinements would certainly have to be made over time as circumstances and peoples’ preferences changed, but efficiency and effectiveness could reasonably be assured.

Of course, the police actually have multiple objectives. References to the twin objectives “protect and serve” are not uncommon; another well-known pair is “law enforcement” and “order maintenance;” a popular triad is “protect life, protect property, and maintain order.” A more detailed listing has been identified by Goldstein (1977:35):

1. To prevent and control conduct widely recognized as threatening to life and property (serious crime).
2. To aid individuals who are in danger of physical harm, such as the victim of a criminal attack.
3. To protect constitutional guarantees, such as the right of free speech and assembly.
4. To facilitate the movement of people and vehicles.
5. To assist those who cannot care for themselves: the intoxicated, the addicted, the mentally ill, the physically disabled, the old and the young.
6. To resolve conflict, whether it be between individuals, groups of individuals, or individuals and their government.
7. To identify problems that have the potential for becoming more serious problems for the individual citizen, for the police or for government.
8. To create and maintain a feeling of security in the community.

These multiple objectives greatly complicate the “What works?” question in policing. Which is better, for example, patrol tactic A that gets a good score for controlling serious crime, a fair score for maintaining order, and a poor score for protecting constitutional rights, or patrol tactic B that gets a good score for protecting constitutional rights, a fair score for controlling serious crime, and a poor score for maintaining order? The mere existence of these multiple objectives, and the lack of a single clear “bottom line” criterion such as profit, almost guarantees that competing strategies, programs and policies will have mixed effects that are difficult to compare and evaluate.

CONFLICTING OBJECTIVES

The multiple objectives of policing complicate the matter even further because, in some ways, they inevitably conflict with each other. To maximize orderliness in society, police would undoubtedly have to adopt methods that would endanger public satisfaction. To accomplish the greatest degree of control over serious crime, police would almost certainly have to transgress constitutional liberties. Once the pursuit of one objective detracts from the attainment of another, it is all the more difficult to derive a clear and unambiguous answer to the question, “What works?”

VAGUE OBJECTIVES

Efforts to ascertain what works in policing are also hampered by the vague character of most police objectives. Even the objective “controlling serious crime” is terribly unspecific, because “crime” includes such a vast array of illegal behaviors, many of which are regarded as serious by some segments of society. The term “serious crime” may conjure up images of violent street crime for most citizens, but some would argue for the inclusion of price-fixing, industrial pollution, and tax evasion as well. This becomes important when trying to establish “What works,” for specifying the objective is a logical prerequisite to determining which practices help attain objectives and which do not.

The vagueness of police objectives also interferes with the technical tasks of measuring the state of current affairs and determining whether things are getting better or worse. Consider the objective of maintaining order in society: because it is vague, we are largely unable to measure its condition. Measuring exactly how orderly society is today seems almost impossible. How then can we know whether strategy A, that we tried last year, or strategy B, that we tried this year, “Worked better” at maintaining order? Without much opportunity to directly and reliably measure the attainment of such a vague objective, we are often left to our hunches and opinions about “what works.”

LACK OF CONSENSUS

Another complication arising from the multiple objectives of policing results from the lack of consensus among citizens concerning the relative importance of each objective. Some citizens would rank the importance of “protecting constitutional rights” very near the bottom of the list of police objectives, while other citizens would rank it very near the top. Some would consider “helping those who cannot help themselves” a low-priority police objective, while others would consider it a high-priority objective. Consequently, a police strategy might “work” in the eyes of some citizens, because it contributes to the accomplishment of objectives they consider important, while other citizens would consider it an ineffective strategy, because it does not lead to the attainment of their preferred objectives.

A related lack-of-consensus problem emanates from differing standards and expectations among citizens. For example, two citizens might agree on the relative importance of the order maintenance objective, but not agree on what constitutes orderly and disorderly behavior (Wilson, 1968). One might not be bothered by a noisy party across the street, while the other might report it to the police. One might not be offended by a nearby adult book-

store while the other might be offended. Both citizens want order maintained, but they have differing views about what threatens order.

Yet another complication derives from citizens' differing views about the appropriateness of methods for accomplishing various police objectives. For example, two citizens may agree on the importance of the objective to "facilitate the safe and orderly movement of traffic" and also agree on what constitutes good and bad traffic conditions—yet they may disagree over whether police should use roadblocks and sobriety checkpoints to combat drunk driving, or radar to enforce speed limits. Similarly, citizens often disagree over whether, or at least when, police techniques such as interrogation, wiretapping, sting operations, drug courier profiling and no-knock search entries are acceptable.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Underlying many of these difficulties associated with lack of consensus and with multiple, conflicting and vague objectives is the simple but important fact that different individuals and groups in our society have different and competing interests. Ours is a *pluralistic* society in which we compete with each other for wealth, status, power and other desirable commodities. Needless to say, some individuals and groups have more advantages and more influence in this competition than do others.

Where do the police fit in this scheme? The police are one part of the system that determines the distribution of desirable commodities. When the police provide services or protection or enforce the law, they are providing advantages to some people and disadvantages to others. Now, the police can be seen as neutral ministerial agents of the criminal justice, legal, political or social service systems, as the protectors of economic elites, or as semi-autonomous agents acting with a considerable degree of freedom and discretion (Marenin, 1982). But whoever calls the shots, whoever actually controls the police and decides what strategies are employed, and which laws are given highest priority, it should be understood that police actions invariably benefit some citizens and impose costs on others.

The significance of recognizing that policing is part of our social and political system for dealing with competing interests is this—that whatever the police do supports some interests and not others. The "What works?" question, then, must to some extent be rephrased as, "What works for whom?" Consider, for example, the practice of aggressive police patrol. Evidence is presented in the first chapter of this book that aggressive patrol, including the extensive use of field interrogations and car stops, works in deterring certain kinds of serious crime. But what does it mean to say that it works? In part, it means that some people, including those who see them-

selves as potential victims of street muggings and thefts from autos, and those who generally favor safer streets, have their interests protected. Others, including young people, minorities and those who drive unconventional or dilapidated vehicles, will see their interests threatened by the police. Such people will be subjected to closer police surveillance and will be stopped and detained more frequently as a result of the aggressive patrol tactic. Does it “work” for them?

As another example, consider the police personnel practice of affirmative action. This practice may “work” in several respects—it may satisfy the courts that the department is doing all it can to correct past discriminatory practices, it may succeed in increasing the numbers of minorities and women in the department, and it may improve the department’s reputation in some parts of the community. But at the same time, affirmative action threatens other interests, including the employment and career prospects of white males. Does affirmative action “work” for them?

The point is that the question, “What works in policing?” ultimately can be answered only within the context of an identified set of objectives and assumptions. Given that, at a particular time in a particular jurisdiction, the protection of victims against street muggings supersedes the rights of young people to walk and drive the streets unimpeded by police authority, then we can say that aggressive patrol, within the constraints established by the Constitution, works. Given that, in a particular situation, the need to correct past discrimination supersedes the interests of individual employees or applicants, we can say that affirmative action works. “What works in policing?” can be answered only in this sort of relative, contextual way, not because our knowledge about the effects of different police practices is limited (though it is), but because of the multiple, competing interests affected by the practices of the police.

CONCLUSION

As you read this book, please remember that policing and police administration often resemble a balancing act. Whether the topic is criminal investigation, domestic violence or training, we may have to ask, “Given these multiple objectives, and these competing interests, what are the most efficient and effective methods available?”

While this sounds like a much more complex and perhaps less satisfying question than simply, “What works?” one should not be overly discouraged. There has been a tremendous explosion in police research over the last 20 years, so that we do know a lot more than we used to about the effects of different police practices. In any particular decision-making or policy-making situation, a police administrator has a great deal more reli-

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Section I

POLICE OPERATIONS

Operations are those aspects of policing that involve delivery of services to the public. They include the practices that most directly affect whether the police attain their objectives or not, and the practices that most directly affect the community. Police operations are at the heart of policing.

In the opening chapter, Gary Cordner and Bob Trojanowicz discuss police patrol and general police field operations. Patrol has traditionally been the central component of police operations—it is frequently referred to as the “backbone” of policing. After describing the conventional practice of preventive patrol, the authors highlight the influential Kansas City Preventive Patrol Experiment, as well as some forms of patrol that gained popularity after the Kansas City study, such as directed patrol and foot patrol. They explain the significance of the “discovery” of fear of crime as an important police concern, especially for the resurgence of foot patrol and the growth of community policing. They also discuss the increasingly popular approach known as problem-oriented policing, pointing out both its similarities to community policing and its unique features. The authors admit their enthusiasm for community policing and problem-oriented policing, while also identifying some limitations of these promising new strategies and some unanswered questions.

The chapter on criminal investigation concentrates on reactive burglary and robbery investigations rather than on the proactive or police-initiated investigations common to vice and drug enforcement. John Eck provides an overview of the investigative process and discusses whether traditional investigative techniques help detectives solve crimes. After reviewing the important RAND study of criminal investigation which rejected the effort-result hypothesis in favor of a circumstance-result hypothesis, Eck offers an alternative triage hypothesis that rescues the police detective from the brink of extinction. This chapter summarizes and extends Eck’s important *Solving Crimes* study.

In their chapter on local-level drug enforcement, Dave Hayeslip and Deborah Weisel begin with a discussion of the traditional retrospective and

prospective strategies of police narcotics enforcement. Historically—due to constitutional restraints on search and seizure, corruption concerns and other factors—the role of routine patrol in drug enforcement was quite limited. However, the recent popularity of crack cocaine and its distribution through street sales has reintroduced the use of patrol saturation and sweeps for drug enforcement. Other tactics increasing in popularity include property seizure, asset forfeiture and the use of various civil remedies, such as building codes enforcement. The authors also indicate that community policing and problem-oriented policing have considerable promise for improving drug enforcement effectiveness.

In “Domestic Violence,” Betsy Stanko discusses traditional and contemporary police practices for handling instances of family violence. Although in recent years many police agencies have adopted pro-arrest policies, Stanko points out that it is not at all clear whether actual police handling of domestic violence is much changed or more successful. She emphasizes the important role that police play in family violence situations, while cautioning against relying too heavily on the police to solve deep-seated personal and social problems. She suggests that while police training in handling domestic violence can still stand improvement, police departments also need to systematically reward those officers who act correctly and punish those who do not. She also advocates closer police cooperation with other agencies that address family violence, such as shelters, child protection agencies and legal aid societies.

In the final chapter in this section, Knowlton Johnson and Stephen Merker examine the effectiveness of citizen self-help measures for reducing victimization and fear of crime. Drawing on two major studies of Kentucky citizens, they conclude that self-help prevention measures are insufficient solutions to problems of fear of crime and victimization. While this research does *not* repudiate the value of such currently popular crime prevention measures as target hardening and operation identification, it does strongly suggest that police agencies should not rely exclusively or even primarily on such citizen self-help approaches to reducing crime and fear of crime.

1

Patrol

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INTRODUCTION

Since the formation of modern police forces, patrolling has been consistently recognized as the “backbone” of policing. In virtually every full-service police agency, more personnel are assigned to the patrol unit than to any other unit; in smaller agencies, the proportion of officers assigned to patrol duties can actually reach 100 percent. When police analyze their work load, they find that most of it is handled by patrol officers. When incidents occur, whether routine or emergency, patrol officers are usually the first to arrive, and thus must deal with people in the most agitated emotional conditions and confusing situations.

Although patrol may always have been the central component of policing, its nature has changed over time. After reviewing the most important of these changes, we will focus directly on the effectiveness of this mainstay of policing.

A BRIEF HISTORY

Until the early part of this century, police patrolled primarily on foot, and to a lesser extent in wagons or on horseback. They typically worked 12-hour shifts, splitting their time between their patrol beats and the station

house (Uchida, 1989). Because of their geographic dispersal and the absence of communications technology, patrol officers operated largely on their own, with little supervision. They also received very little training or direction in how to perform their duties.

Much has been written about the political nature of police work in the U.S. during the 1800s. Patrol officers were more like political operatives than professional public servants (Walker, 1977). Most officers obtained their jobs through political connections, and wholesale replacements were made after each election. Corruption (Haller, 1976), brutality (Miller, 1977) and general lawlessness were widespread among police.

Just what patrol officers did in the daily conduct of their work has received less attention, but the best evidence indicates that they often did very little (Walker, 1984). Some argue that patrol officers in the 1800s employed the watchman style (Wilson, 1968), using casual and informal methods to regulate behavior on their beats according to neighborhood norms and values (Wilson & Kelling, 1982). Others consider this view to be little more than romantic nostalgia (Walker, 1984), arguing that patrol officers were unconstrained and powerful officials who frequently acted to protect personal or partisan political interests, not consensual community standards.

Clearly, patrol work changed dramatically as the twentieth century progressed. Ultimately, nearly all patrol officers were put in cars, enabling them to cover larger geographic areas and respond more rapidly to calls for service. Two-way radios were installed in patrol cars, and later became part of each officer's personal equipment, enabling direct and immediate communication between the patrol officer and the station house. Telephone service, culminating in 911 emergency systems, became almost universally available, enabling any citizen to quickly contact the police.

During this century a reform movement also changed the political nature of police work (Kelling & Moore, 1988). Employment came to depend more on merit and less on political connections. Police work became a career rather than a temporary political appointment. Educational requirements were established, and lengthy training programs were instituted. Administrative controls were implemented to minimize corruption, brutality and other abuses. The due process revolution in the courts and the civil rights movement further contributed to the reduction in police abuses of their authority (Hartmann, 1988).

An equally important development was the narrowing of the police function—or at least the narrowing of the popular image of the police function—increasingly toward crime control and law enforcement. Patrol came to be viewed in terms of the prevention and control of serious crime, as represented by the Part I crimes of the Uniform Crime Reporting system (Manning, 1977). In order to maximize the impact of patrol on crime,

police began to analyze crime occurrences; allocate and deploy patrol officers in accordance with crime patterns; and emphasize one-officer cars, which were deemed more efficient than two-officer cars (Walker, 1984).

PREVENTIVE PATROL

The practice that developed is variously termed preventive patrol, interception patrol, random patrol or routine patrol. Essentially, it involves moving about (usually driving about) an assigned area in a manner designed to prevent or intercept crimes. Officers are instructed to patrol in a “systematically unsystematic” way and to avoid patrolling in predictable patterns.

Patrol officers engage in this patrolling behavior while they are free of calls for service and other assigned duties. Such time periods are often termed “free patrol time” or “uncommitted time.” The amount of time available for patrolling varies greatly, of course, from one police department to another, and even from one day to the next. However, most studies have found that at least 50 percent of patrol time is uncommitted and thus available for patrolling (Whitaker, 1982).

What police officers do with their patrolling time also varies greatly—by jurisdiction, by beat, by time of day and by individual (Cordner, 1982). Patrolling can be stationary or mobile; slow-, medium- or high-speed; and oriented toward residential, commercial, recreational or other kinds of areas. Some patrol officers intervene frequently in peoples’ lives by stopping cars and checking out suspicious circumstances; other officers seem more interested in inanimate matters such as parked cars and the security of closed businesses; still other officers rarely interrupt their continuous patrolling. Some officers devote all of their uncommitted time to police-related business, while others devote substantial time to loafing or personal affairs.

Presumed Effects

The widespread employment of preventive patrol has been based on the belief that it contributes to the achievement of important police objectives (Goldstein, 1977). In particular, patrol might help attain the high-priority crime control objective in two basic ways: by preventing (detering) crime from occurring; or by intercepting crimes in progress. Patrol might also help protect people from harm and facilitate the movement of traffic (two other police objectives) in similar ways: by preventing accidents from occurring; or by intercepting dangerous driving in progress. Additionally, patrol might contribute substantially to the attainment of other police objec-