CHAPTER 2
PATROL GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After completing this chapter, the student should be able to:

1. Explain the importance of goals and objectives as they apply to the municipal police function.
2. Understand the importance of goals and objectives relating to the police service.
3. Describe how police goals and objectives are formulated and used in the police service.
4. List the principal functions of the police and describe how police performance can be measured.
5. Give examples of the ways community values and characteristics affect the development of police goals and objectives.

INTRODUCTION

Police organizations are guided by rules, regulations, policies, ordinances and statutes, but overriding these are the values and philosophy which describe what the organization stands for and how the organization sees itself within the context of the culture of the community. As Cordner and Sheehan have observed: “The mission statement typically expresses the most important values that guide the department and the overall philosophy of the agency.” See Figure 2.1.

The reason that a mission statement is important is that each man and woman in the organization must have a sense of what the organization represents in terms of values and norms. The mission statement also informs the community of the principles that guide the agency in carrying out its obligations to the community.

If it is difficult to precisely define the role of the police in contemporary society, it is equally difficult to reach consensus concerning police goals and objectives. Just as all organizations should have a mission or sense of purpose, they also need goals and objectives by which their performance can be measured. An organization without defined goals and supporting objectives is like a ship without a rudder; it bobs aimlessly upon the seas, without destination or means to guide it in its travels.

Defined goals and objectives are essential for the police, if they are to provide effective public service and maintain good public relations. Political leaders, municipal administrators, and the general public are usually not very well informed about what the police do or how they do it. As indicated in Chapter 1, some people have very unrealistic expectations about police capability. They may, depending upon the circumstances, feel instinctively that the police are doing a “pretty good job,” or that the police are highly efficient, or that the police in their community are not as good as those in other

The mission of the Carol Stream Police Department is to serve all people within our jurisdiction with respect, fairness and compassion.
We believe in the dignity and worth of all people. We strive to provide professional and caring police service in partnership with the community.
With a dedication to public service, it is our goal to enhance the quality of life for everyone by creating a sense of security within the Village.
The Carol Stream Police Department takes pride in being a progressive law enforcement agency dedicated to meeting the needs of a diverse and vital community.

We are . . . PROUD TO SERVE

Figure 2.1  Sample Mission Statement

communities. However, they usually do not have reliable standards upon which to make these judgments. This is usually because the police have failed to provide accurate and realistic means by which to measure their performance. In other words, the police have not taken the initiative to develop for themselves a set of realistic goals and objectives.

Police officers spend a great deal of time assisting the public in a variety of situations.
(Source: River Forest, Illinois, Police Department)

Source: Carol Stream, Illinois, Police Department.
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The need for defined goals and objectives in police work has been recognized by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA):

A written directive requires the formulation and updating of written goals and objectives for the agency and for each organizational component within the agency. Established goals and objectives are made available to all affected personnel.3

Generally, each department should establish its own goals and objectives on the basis of what it perceives as community values, needs and expectations. Moreover, as noted above, these goals and objectives need to be periodically reviewed and updated to ensure that they reflect changing conditions in the community as well as new departmental requirements.

Cordner and Sheehan have identified eight primary police objectives that exemplify the unique and wide-ranging nature of the police role:4

1. Preventing and Controlling Threatening Conduct
2. Aiding Individuals in Danger of Harm
3. Protecting Constitutional Guarantees
4. Facilitating the Movement of People and Vehicles
5. Assisting Those Who Cannot Care for Themselves
6. Resolving Conflict
7. Identifying Potentially Serious Problems
8. Creating and Maintaining a Feeling of Security

Without established goals, the police operate in a vacuum and lack specific guidance or direction. Articulated goals and objectives provide a framework within which operating policies, procedures, and programs can be developed. When properly developed and defined, goals and objectives help the police to monitor their own performance and assess their own effectiveness.

The words goals and objectives are sometimes used interchangeably; however, they are not synonymous. A goal, for example, is a statement of a desired state of affairs, described in general, rather than specific, terms. An objective, on the other hand, can be stated in rather specific and measurable terms. Objectives can be used to help us measure our progress toward the accomplishment of a goal. In this respect, then, objectives are subordinate to and supportive of goals.

4Cordner and Sheehan, op. cit., pp. 50–52.
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To illustrate: A goal for next Sunday afternoon might be to enjoy a pleasant drive in the country. Use your imagination to describe what a pleasant drive in the country might be like. In order to have a more specific means of describing the goal, or measuring attainment of it, set forth a series of objectives. To make the goal more precise, and to measure the extent to which our goal is achieved, set forth certain supportive objectives such as the following:

- To experience weather with temperature between 75 and 80 degrees
- To have blue skies with no more than 25 percent clouds
- To experience no traffic congestion, road construction, or mechanical breakdowns

Each of these objectives can be measured in rather precise fashion and can help us to determine whether our goal has been achieved.

Police goals and objectives can be stated in somewhat the same way. A legitimate goal for the police, for example, would be to provide an environment free from crime and the fear of crime. While this is a very lofty goal, we can set several objectives which will help us determine whether or not we are making progress toward it. For example, the following objectives would tend to support the goal of an environment free from crime and the fear of crime:

- To achieve a 25 percent reduction in the number of crimes of violence during the next 12 months
- To increase the rate of apprehension for robbery and aggravated assault
- To reduce sexual assault by 20 percent during the next 18 months
- To decrease citizens’ fear of crime and to increase their perception of safety by 15 percent over the next year

Each of these objectives is intimately linked to the goal of creating an environment free of crime and the fear of crime. Local community standards need to be considered when fashioning police goals and associated objectives. Police goals and objectives, the importance attached to them, and the means by which they are achieved, vary considerably among police agencies. This is as it should be, for the philosophical foundation of the American police system is based upon the concept of local control and autonomy. For this reason, police goals and objectives, and operating procedures, will be influenced to a great extent by local community characteristics and expectations. Some communities, for example, may place a high value on the maintenance of social order, while others may not. In some towns and villages, the police may have a high service orientation, while this may not be the case in others. In still other communities, aggressive enforcement of traffic laws may be a top priority for the police, while this may be of considerably less importance in other jurisdictions.
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As a result, any discussion of police goals and objectives must take into consideration the influence placed upon police conduct by local community values and expectations. The police exist solely to serve the community and their methods of operation must take this fact into consideration. Nevertheless, there are a number of functions that are common to all local government police agencies, even though the emphasis placed on these functions will vary considerably. Within each of these functional areas, it is possible to define police responsibilities and to set goals and objectives that are consistent with local community values. Generally, these functions consist of the following: (1) crime prevention; (2) criminal apprehension; (3) law enforcement; (4) order maintenance; (5) traffic enforcement; and (6) public service. It is largely through the efforts of the patrol force that these functions are performed.

CRIME PREVENTION

The detection, suppression, and prevention of crime has traditionally been accepted as one of the primary goals of the local police force. Some authorities have even defined crime control as the “core mission” of the police.5

This responsibility falls directly on the patrol force. Unfortunately, police performance is often judged on the basis of the incidence of crime in the community. When sharp increases in the rate of crime occur, the assumption is sometimes made that the police have failed to accomplish one of their primary objectives. What many people fail to realize, however, is that crime is not just a police problem, but is a community problem and that its causes and cures are beyond the control of the local police.

On the other hand, it is not entirely wrong to hold patrol officers accountable for the problems that occur in their individual areas of responsibility. Patrol officers assigned to designated patrol beats, for example, should be immediately aware of the conditions in their assigned areas and should be expected to be cognizant of those conditions and circumstances which may indicate that criminal activity is taking or has taken place. Broken windows, jimmied doors, security lights out, fresh damage, and other such indicators ought to attract the attention of the patrol officer. While the officer may not be able to prevent a break-in in his or her district, he or she should be the first one to discover it.

All too often, the public holds a rather narrow view of the police mission and perceives the police as being primarily concerned with the control of crime. In some instances, the police share the belief that crime control is their most important responsibility. This misconception of the police function is often supported by the romantic

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portrayal of police work in the news media and in television and motion pictures. In reality, this has little basis in fact.

During the “reform” era of policing, the police claimed total responsibility for crime control, perhaps not anticipating the futility of this effort, or their own limitations in controlling crime. As the police have moved toward a more open relationship with the community, they have begun to recognize the importance of community involvement and support in controlling crime. Not only are the police not the first line of defense in the war against crime, they are not wholly responsible for controlling crime in their community. Other social institutions, such as the family, churches, and schools share in this responsibility.6

Part of the problem is that police executives have failed to speak out on this issue; when they have spoken out, their words have not been heeded by political leaders and community members. Few chiefs want to admit openly that they are largely ineffective in controlling crime and that some type of crime will occur despite the best efforts of the police. What they should be saying is that crime is a community problem and that it requires the concerted and coordinated efforts of all segments of the community to deal with it.

In reality, crime prevention is not the single most important function of the police in most communities. Police spend relatively little time in activities directly related to the prevention and investigation of crime and the enforcement of laws.7 In addition, crime is the result of many factors and conditions over which the police have little direct control. Unemployment, poor educational opportunities, alcoholism, drug abuse, lack of adequate housing, and community attitudes contribute more to the incidence of crime than perhaps any other factors. Thus, the police are but one element in any comprehensive crime control strategy.

This does not mean, of course, that crime prevention should not be a major goal of the police, for clearly it is and should be. It simply means that we must recognize the limitations under which the police work and not assess their overall performance based on the incidence of crime in the community. Clearly, there are many things the police can and should do to control crime. Some of these methods are discussed at length in other chapters of this book.

It is also important to distinguish between different types of crime and to assess realistically the ability of the police to prevent them. Some types of crime, such as robbery, burglary, and auto theft, because of the conditions and circumstances in which they occur, are more likely to be prevented or deterred through aggressive and vigilant police patrol efforts. Other types of crime, such as bank fraud, forgery, embezzlement, and other kinds of white-collar crime, are much less susceptible to preventive efforts by the police. As Goldstein has observed, such distinctions are necessary if we are to be able to judge police effectiveness realistically.

6Cordner and Sheehan, op. cit., p. 10.
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It is, of course, absurd to argue that the police have the same responsibilities regarding a robbery, for example, as they would have regarding disorderly conduct, simply because both are defined by the legislature as criminal offenses.8

In evaluating the effectiveness of the police in their crime prevention role, it is important to understand the nature of crime and its causes as well as the limitations of the police. Constitutional guarantees which benefit all of society place significant restrictions on the police. These restrictions are most burdensome in detecting and preventing those types of crimes which are less apparent to the casual observer, such as the white-collar crimes referred to earlier. Street crimes, on the other hand, are more visible and can be detected and interdicted much more easily by the police. Skogan and others talk about situational prevention, "which . . . aims at reducing opportunities presented for crime by specific settings. The idea is to increase the risk associated with committing a crime, increase the effort that it takes to be successful, or decrease the value of the take."9

This theory presupposes that criminals weigh the odds of being successful in their criminal activity and apply some rudimentary cost–benefit analysis in deciding whether the risks of being apprehended are worth the potential gain. By carefully studying crime patterns, offender behavior and methods of operation, researchers have the opportunity to develop strategies to "harden the target" and other measures to reduce the probability of success as well as increase the likelihood of detection, interdiction and ultimately, apprehension.

In recent years, the police have begun to recognize that traditional methods of crime prevention, such as routine, random patrol, are of limited value. They have begun to search for more effective methods of deterring crime. It is difficult to measure the effectiveness of these methods, however, since it is impossible to determine how many crimes are not committed due to the efforts of the police. Moreover, the usual means of comparing results of various crime control methods under similar conditions are not reliable, since the causes of crime are so many and varied. It is thus difficult to establish precise cause-and-effect relationships.10

Clearly, more effective ways of controlling crime are necessary. In addition, there needs to be a much more realistic assessment and understanding of what kinds of crime the police can and should control, and which they cannot or should not. For example, if a city is faced with stretching its available resources as far as they can go, how much time and effort should the police department devote to enforcing so-called victimless crimes, such as bookmaking and prostitution? Shouldn’t police resources

8Ibid., p. 24.
be devoted to those kinds of crimes which pose a greater threat to public safety and quality of life in the community?

The police cannot continue to rely on traditional, reactive methods of attacking crime in the community. Beefed-up patrols, quicker response times, and a wider variety of tactical strategies are only part of the solution. The police must not necessarily work harder but rather think harder to become more effective in the means they employ. For example:

... improved crime control can be achieved by (1) diagnosing crimes, (2) fostering closer relationships with the community to facilitate crime solving, and (3) building self-defense capabilities within the community itself.\textsuperscript{11}

Although the police cannot control the root causes of crime, they can improve their ability to detect and deter certain types of crime. They can also develop and implement various kinds of target-hardening programs, designed to acquaint members of the community with the means to better safeguard themselves and their property. Security surveys, for example, can be used by police to instruct homeowners and business owners in the use of reliable antitheft and anti-intrusion devices.

The police can also cooperate with private vendors who are marketing various proven and reliable means of safeguarding property, such as the Lojack system, and other systems designed to prevent automobile theft. Programs such as Operation Identification, Block Watchers, Citizen Patrol, and other activities designed to promote greater citizen awareness of and participation in crime prevention efforts are equally useful. Crime prevention needs to be a cooperative effort between the police and the public.

\begin{quote}
Community interaction provides the framework for the agency’s establishment of action priorities. The agency, in concert with the community, should decide which crime types present the greatest problem: where the problems are most severe or where crime prevention activities could be most effective and what types of response would be most effective.\textsuperscript{12}
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The police can also learn to better understand the precipitating causes of certain kinds of crime and develop more practical means of dealing with those causes. For example, there is a strong correlation between certain types of street crime, such as robbery and aggravated assault, and the use of drugs. Some sections of large cities are havens for drug dealers and users, and serious crimes occur frequently in such areas.

Some cities have taken innovative steps to eliminate these hard-core drug havens by combining forces with other city agencies to declare the buildings where drug sales
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\textsuperscript{11}Moore, et al., p. 32.
\textsuperscript{12}Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc., \textit{op. cit.}, p. 45–2.
and use take place as public nuisances and having them torn down. In Hallandale, Florida, the city formed a private corporation to provide low-interest loans to building owners to erect new buildings on the sites where drug houses once predominated, thereby providing much-needed housing for the poor.

One of the most powerful tools available to the police to gain public participation in crime prevention is the local news media. Radio, television, and newspapers can play an important part in informing the public of crime trends and crime prevention techniques. The use of television by the police to alert the general public to criminal activity and to solicit their assistance in identifying and locating criminal suspects has become very fashionable during the last decade. A number of syndicated television programs, watched by millions of viewers, have aided in the capture of some of the most wanted criminals in America. Local news media, including cable television, have been used very effectively by local police agencies to warn the public about particular kinds of crime.

If the police are to be successful in their crime prevention responsibilities, they must learn more about the nature, scope and causes of crime and the means by which crime is committed. They must better understand the criminal mind and be more adept at predicting crime trends from available information. They must utilize available technology as well as their own instincts and experience in order to develop ways to “harden the target.” They must also expand their knowledge and understanding of when, where, how, and under what conditions certain kinds of crime are committed. They must also have a much better understanding of which kinds of crime are most likely to be deterred through their efforts and which ones are not. This will help them to develop much more effective strategies to be employed by the patrol force.

Police administrators need to recognize that patrol officers must not be simply turned out to “go and fight crime,” but need to be given much more definitive direction. Patrol supervisors and command officers must be encouraged to use discretion and imagination, rather than tradition and custom when deploying their forces. They must reject the notion that simply assigning more officers to patrol will reduce crime. They must continue to seek out new ways of dealing with both traditional and emerging kinds of criminal activity.

The police need to become more receptive to the notion of enlisting and accepting the aid of the private sector in providing services traditionally reserved for the police. In recent years, citizens have begun to contract with private security firms to provide supplemental police protection to their neighborhoods, arguing that the police cannot provide services sufficient to their needs. Moreover, the police should redouble their efforts to enlist the aid of the public in the prevention of crime. To this end, they must admit publicly that, without widespread community support, they will not have a significant impact on crime. As the former Chief of Police in Los Angeles stated:

The police themselves cannot control crime. . . . However, the police play a major role as the catalytic agency in society to assist the process of “feeding back” to the rest of society
information on what is happening in terms of crime and disorder. No one else can perform this function but the police. No one else is in contact with crime and disorder in its totality. No one else has the machinery or perception or access to the basic facts as do the police.\textsuperscript{13} 

In recent years, the use of volunteer citizen patrols has become popular in many American cities. These patrols serve as the eyes and ears of the police and are cost-effective ways of supplementing police manpower. These patrols have been used effectively in a number of large cities, including New York, Boston, Los Angeles, St. Louis, and Detroit. In one neighborhood in New York City, crime dropped sharply after the institution of the volunteer citizen patrols.\textsuperscript{14} 

\section*{Crime Prevention Goals and Objectives}

Although it is difficult to accurately assess the effectiveness of a police agency’s crime prevention efforts, it should nevertheless be possible to establish reasonable goals and objectives for crime prevention. These goals would be defined as process goals rather than as outcome goals, since they refer to activities contributing to an outcome rather than to the actual outcome.

There are a number of activities for which the patrol force can be responsible which are directly related to the prevention of crime. One reasonable objective would be to set aside a specific portion of time during each tour of duty to specific patrol activities. Such activities might include, for example, patrolling parking lots in retail shopping areas where a high incidence of auto theft has been reported; conducting foot patrol in neighborhood parks and around school playgrounds where a high number of incidents involving crimes against children have been reported; and conducting bicycle patrol in parks and recreation areas where strong-armed robberies and assaults have been reported.

The amount of time devoted to various nontraditional patrol activities by a particular shift or group of officers over a period of time can be measured and compared with increases or decreases in target crimes. While it may not be possible to establish a direct cause-and-effect relationship between these activities and the incidence of specific types of crimes, some correlation between them may be possible. Moreover, as the time devoted to these activities is recorded and measured, it should be possible to alter, or more precisely define, future objectives. For example, if it is discovered that an average of three hours of bicycle patrol between the hours of 4:00 P.M. and 8:00 P.M. during summer months has had a noticeable impact on the incidence of targeted crimes in the affected area, it may be desirable to determine whether a slight increase or decrease in bicycle patrol in the same area will effect further change in criminal activity.

The identification of specific types of crime prevention activities by the patrol force must be made by the individual patrol supervisor or patrol commander, based

upon information provided by the department’s crime analysis section or crime prevention officer. Not all types of crimes are susceptible to preventive efforts by the patrol force, but many are. These need to be identified, and specific means for attacking them should be developed and implemented on a trial basis. If the desired effect is not achieved, alternative measures can be developed and tried. Developing innovative ways in which to deploy and direct the patrol force should aid the prevention of selected types of criminal activity.

CRIMINAL APPREHENSION

When crimes occur despite the best efforts of the police to prevent them, it then becomes a police responsibility to identify, locate, and apprehend the person(s) responsible. In some instances, a patrol officer may be present when the crime occurs and may be able to apprehend the criminal at the scene of the crime, or soon after the crime has been committed. In other cases, the perpetrator may be identified only after a long and exhaustive investigation. In the majority of cases, however, the criminal will never be apprehended. Only about one in five serious crimes will be cleared by the arrest of the offender or through some other means. The rate of apprehension is considerably greater for crimes against persons (homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault), and substantially lower for crimes against property where there are few reliable leads to aid in identifying the persons responsible.

The primary means by which criminals not apprehended in the commission of an offense are eventually brought to justice by the police is through the careful and meticulous investigation of the circumstances surrounding the crime. Often, this investigation is conducted by plainclothes detectives, who act upon information supplied by the patrol officer at the conclusion of a brief preliminary investigation. Unfortunately, many police agencies continue to ignore and misunderstand the vital role of the patrol officer in the investigation of crimes and the subsequent apprehension of offenders.

All too often the patrol officer’s responsibility is limited to preparing a brief report containing the basic information about the crime. This report is then forwarded to detectives, who will probably screen it to determine whether there is sufficient information to warrant further investigation. When it is determined that a follow-up investigation is warranted, the case will be assigned to a detective, who will often retrace some of the same ground covered in the preliminary investigation by the patrol officer. In some instances, the patrol officer may be required to stand by and protect the crime scene to await the arrival of the detective. Often, other specialists, such as crime-scene technicians, are also called in to gather up and preserve important items of evidence.

This strategy often ignores the training, experience, and interest of the patrol officer. It is assumed that the patrol officer is too busy to conduct a thorough crime-scene investigation, or lacks the basic skills to do so. It is also assumed that victims will be placated by seeing the case turned over to plainclothes detectives, since our society has
been led to believe that detectives are more expert at conducting investigations than are uniformed officers. All too often, the patrol officer who conducted the preliminary investigation, and who has a vested interest in the outcome of the case, is never advised regarding the progress of the investigation. Moreover, the contributions of the patrol officer to the successful conclusion of the case and the apprehension of the offender are often ignored by the agency. This is perhaps one of the most important factors contributing to poor relationships between patrol officers and plainclothes detectives.

In more progressive police departments, however, attempts have been made to broaden the role of the patrol officer in the investigation of crime and the apprehension of offenders. This trend has been prompted by several factors, among them economic pressures forcing police administrators to make critical decisions about the utilization of limited resources. As a result, they have begun to realize that it is simply not possible to assign detectives to investigate all crimes that warrant follow-up work. They have begun to explore alternative means of conducting criminal investigations. In some departments, patrol officers are being given greater latitude in conducting follow-up investigations, thus allowing detectives to concern themselves with only the more serious cases, or those which, due to their complexity, cannot be adequately investigated by the beat officer.

In addition, police administrators are beginning to realize that something must be done to elevate the professional image of the patrol officer. As indicated in the previous chapter, the important contribution of the patrol officer to the overall mission of the police has often been overlooked. To counteract the trend toward police specialization, there has been a concerted effort in some police agencies to broaden the role of the patrol officer through a more generalized approach to policing. This broadening effect also helps to ensure that patrol officers are able to take advantage of the training and education which has prepared them for their responsibilities.

Two major research efforts helped to demonstrate the important contribution made by patrol officers in the investigative process. These studies have shown that, notwithstanding the efforts of detective specialists, it is often the information developed by the patrol officer during the preliminary investigation of the crime that determines whether a case will eventually be solved. In contrast, the painstaking efforts of detectives—checking modus operandi files; interviewing victims, witnesses and suspects; tracing vehicle license numbers—often contribute little to the final outcome of a case.

The single most important determination of whether or not a case will be solved is the information the victim supplies to the immediately responding patrol officer. If information that uniquely identifies the perpetrator is not presented at the time the crime is reported, the perpetrator, by and large, will not be subsequently identified.15

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Studies conducted by the Stanford Research Institute produced similar findings. The SRI studies revealed that, for specific types of crimes (robbery, rape, assault with a deadly weapon, and auto theft), the chances of a case being solved by detectives were minimal unless relevant information concerning the offense and the offender was obtained by the patrol officer during the preliminary investigation.

A conclusion to be drawn from this observation is that the roles of the patrol officer and the investigator cannot be viewed as separate and distinct functions. We view patrol as fulfilling not only a crime suppression role but also as performing an investigative function. How effectively a patrol officer documents the event of a crime to which he responds will have a definite impact on the case outcome when investigators attempt to pursue the case.16

This does not mean that detectives are not instrumental in solving crimes, or that all crimes can be successfully investigated by patrol officers, for this is clearly not the case. Nor does it mean that specialist skills beyond those possessed by patrol officers are not important, for clearly they are. These findings do suggest, however, that greater recognition needs to be made of the skills and abilities of patrol officers and that the traditional dichotomy between the patrol officer and the plainclothes investigator needs to be reassessed. Police administrators have an opportunity to maximize the resources available to them by allowing patrol officers greater latitude in the criminal investigation process.

Several changes must be made in police operating procedures if the investigative skills of patrol personnel are to be employed to their full potential. First, patrol officers should be allowed and encouraged to devote more time to the investigation of crimes to which they respond. Patrol supervisors should be encouraged to allow their subordinates to pursue investigative leads on their own initiative, rather than be content to simply turn a case over to detectives. In most cases, patrol officers have both the time and the ability to do this, despite traditional beliefs to the contrary. In some cases, this may require that another officer be assigned to handle the investigating officer’s calls while the investigation is in progress. The patrol supervisor should be able to provide the patrol officer with the assistance necessary to determine whether a case merits follow-up investigation by the officer, and whether that investigation can be successfully pursued by the officer.

Second, patrol officers should be better trained and equipped to conduct routine investigations. Even in situations where specialists are required, there are many basic investigative functions that patrol officers can perform. If a burglary suspect has been identified, it may be possible for the patrol officer to locate and question that person concerning the case. When witnesses are available and can be contacted, their statements should be taken as soon as possible, not three days later when the case is

assigned to a detective. When physical evidence is available, it should be identified, marked, and taken into custody.

The investigative skills of patrol officers should also be reflected in their regular performance evaluation reports. The ability to gather physical evidence at a crime scene, to locate and skillfully interview victims and witnesses, to prepare a complete and accurate report on a criminal investigation, to correctly analyze and interpret the pieces of an investigative puzzle, and to pursue investigative leads to their logical conclusion should all be taken into consideration when evaluating the performance of patrol officers.

Finally, patrol officers should be given credit and encouragement for their accomplishments in the investigation of crime and apprehension of criminals. Too often, credit for the solution of a major case or the apprehension of a notorious criminal goes to the detectives who make the arrest, even though the arrest might not have been possible without the contribution of the uniformed patrol officer. Monthly activity reports, which report on the number of cases cleared and persons arrested, rarely distinguish the contributions of patrol officers from those of detectives. Too often, case clearances are viewed as a measure of investigative performance, even when patrol officers contributed significantly to the solution of those cases.

**Criminal Apprehension Goals and Objectives**

Criminal apprehension goals must be based upon reasonable expectations of the mission of the patrol force. Moreover, any specific goals should focus not merely upon the number of arrests effected, but the quality of those arrests, both in terms of the ultimate disposition of the case and its overall impact upon the police mission. The type of arrests made and the circumstances under which they were made are also important. Arrest efforts should be geared toward the reduction of specific types of criminal activity. In addition, arrests made other than through the initiative of the individual officer should be given considerably less weight than those resulting directly from the officer’s own initiative.

For example, an officer assigned to a patrol beat in which there is a number of retail establishments may make a number of arrests of shoplifters. Many, if not all, of these arrests may actually be effected by store security personnel or clerks, in which case the officer is simply responsible for transporting and booking the persons arrested. In addition, these arrests may or may not result in conviction and may or may not have a deterrent impact on criminal activity.

Police planners and patrol supervisors need to identify certain kinds of criminal activity which can realistically be impacted by increased arrest rates, and should set forth reasonable goals for the patrol force in terms of arrests for those offenses. These goals should be developed very carefully, giving due consideration to other patrol responsibilities. In addition, the quality of the arrests, as indicated by their final disposition, should also be considered.

Reporting systems should be designed to account for the contributions of patrol officers to arrests made by detectives. As is the case in basketball, an officer should be
given credit for an “assist” even though he may not have actually made the arrest. Similarly, those arrests made by an officer which are not the direct result of the officer’s own initiative should be given considerably less consideration.

Establishing reasonable and realistic criminal apprehension goals for the patrol force will aid in the monitoring and evaluating of patrol performance and provide officers with greater incentive by acknowledging their contributions to the overall police mission.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT**

It is a basic responsibility of the police to enforce the law. This responsibility is especially important due to the potential impact upon the community if laws are not enforced vigorously enough, or if they are enforced too rigidly. If the police fail to enforce the laws in a fair and reasonable manner, public confidence in the police will be seriously weakened. Conversely, police authority may be seriously undermined if laws are enforced in an arbitrary and prejudicial manner.

The law enforcement role of the police is one of the characteristics that makes the occupation unique. Because the police have a virtual monopoly on the authority to enforce laws—that is, no other group, occupation or professional possesses this power—the power of the police is virtually absolute, although subject to later review and validation by the courts. Since they share this power with no one else, they alone are able to determine how that power is to be wielded. In more recent years, however, the police have come to recognize that their law enforcement role is affected by community values. While they may have unlimited power to enforce the law in the way they see fit, they now recognize that community values and expectations are important determinants of the type, manner and extent that laws are enforced.

That the patrol officer has a statutory obligation to enforce the law is obvious. However, the manner in which this obligation is fulfilled raises a number of questions and poses many potential problems. There are many more laws on the books than can ever be reasonably enforced. Indeed, in enacting some of these laws, it is questionable whether the legislature ever meant for them to be wholly enforced. Instead, laws are often enacted by lawmakers as a means of establishing public policy. How those laws will actually be enforced, or whether they should be at all, may not be a real consideration for those who enact the laws.

In addition, there are many laws on the books today which are hopelessly outdated and which have no relevance to modern society. Rarely, however, are such laws repealed, except for those which are diametrically opposed to the public interest or popular appeal (i.e., prohibition). Nevertheless, these outmoded and unnecessary laws remain in effect and the police are, at least in theory, responsible for their enforcement. In practice, however, the police themselves usually decide which laws to enforce, based upon their own sense of necessity and practicality. These decisions are most often made by the patrol officer on the street, based upon his or her understanding of
departmental policy, public need, and practical necessity. These decisions are subsequently reviewed, critiqued, and sometimes reversed by the general public, superior officers, and the courts.

Compounding the problem of the police in deciding which laws to enforce is the fact that the public is often ambivalent in its attitude toward the law. Many people are interested in seeing certain types of laws enforced vigorously when it serves their own interests. For example, people who do not own pets (as well as some who do) are often anxious to see leash laws and other laws directed toward the control of animals enforced because they view such animals as a public nuisance. Animal lovers often do not share this view. Similarly, elderly people, or those who live alone, or those without children, may be anxious to have the police enforce local ordinances regarding loud parties, curfew, and speeding vehicles on neighborhood streets; younger members of society are usually much more tolerant of such occurrences. Depending upon the person’s point of view, the police may be seen as being either too lenient or overly strict. They can rarely satisfy everyone.

The police are also called upon to enforce laws which are very unpopular with some parts of society. These laws often have more to do with moral conduct than they have to do with antisocial behavior. Such laws are often enacted in response to various interest groups, without regard to their full impact or enforcement. This creates problems for the police as well as for the other elements of the criminal justice system and could be considered, in some cases, an abuse of the legislative process. While, in theory, laws are enacted to serve the interests of all people, it often turns out that some interests are better served than others.

Police patrol officers, unfortunately, often have little to guide them in their law enforcement responsibilities. In the police academy, they are introduced to the state criminal code. Later on, they are given a set of local ordinances which they are expected to know, understand, and—when necessary or practical—enforce. However, they are usually not told which of these thousands of laws they are expected to enforce, nor are they told how much discretion they are expected or allowed to use in enforcing them. In addition, local departmental policies rarely offer any useful guidance to the individual officer.

As a result, officers must rely upon their own judgment, what they have learned from their peers, or what they have learned from their own experience on the street. They learn, for example, which laws can be enforced without incurring the wrath of their superiors, the public, the news media, and the courts. In this way, they formulate their own informal standards, which guide them in their exercise of discretion. Thus, the enforcement of law in this country varies not only from department to department, and from one community to the next, but also from one officer to another.

The exercise of discretion creates problems for police administrators, since it means that all laws are not enforced equally and that officers must use their own good sense in determining which laws to enforce and in what way. This can make a police administrator very uncomfortable, since it exposes him to criticism when an officer’s good sense leads him to make a decision which later proves to be a problem. A police
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chief’s “comfort zone” would be considerably wider if the range of discretion afforded to officers could be considerably limited.

Many police administrators believe that an open acknowledgment that all laws are not inflexibly enforced in all situations would be tantamount to admitting that police agencies are shirking their duty—that they are ignoring the rule of law.\(^{17}\)

**Police Discretion**

Police officers are continually confronted with situations in which there are no clear guidelines and in which they must decide upon a course of action. In applying discretion, police officers must first decided what rules apply to the situation, then they must decide whether to invoke these rules. Brooks identifies five specific reasons underlying the need for police officers to exercise discretion.\(^{18}\)

1. Vague laws which require officers to use their judgment.
2. Limited resources of the police department and the criminal justice system that make it impossible for police officers to enforce all the laws all the time.
3. The likelihood of community alienation if the police attempted to engage in full enforcement of the law.
4. The idea that police need to be able to exercise discretion in order to fit the law into the unique circumstances of varying situations.
5. The idea that discretion is necessary to deal with law violations which are either minor or involve moral offenses.

The exercise of discretion, both in the enforcement of laws and in the performance of their many other duties, is an awesome police responsibility.\(^{19}\) Ironically, it is the patrol officer, who holds the least formal authority in the police organization, who exercises the greatest discretion in matters of critical importance. Surely, the discretion afforded the police is a great responsibility that must not be taken lightly. Patrol officers must be made to understand the importance of their role, not just in the enforcement of laws, but in defining, through the application of their own discretion, what is legal and illegal behavior. As Niederhoffer has indicated:


\(^{19}\)It has been estimated that the police make half of all the discretionary decisions made within the criminal justice system. See George L. Kelling, “Broken Windows” and Police Discretion (Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice, 1999), p. 23.
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. . . because the application of the law depends to a large degree on the definition of the situation and the decision reached by the patrolman, he, in effect, makes the law; it is his decision that establishes the boundary between legal and illegal.\(^\text{20}\)

Due to the kinds of conditions under which the police operate—uncertainty, danger, crisis, tragedy, hostility, anger, and frustration—the individual police officer is confronted with a wide range of alternative courses of action in any situation. In some instances, and under some conditions, a violation of the law may be ignored altogether. In other situations, and under other conditions, a person may be arrested for committing the same offense. In some circumstances, a verbal warning may be an appropriate response to a violation of the law, while in others, and for different reasons, the officer may elect to make an arrest for the same infraction. In making these decisions, the officer must rely almost entirely upon his or her own judgment.

Discretion on the part of the individual officer is not absolute, however. Even when the limits of power and authority are only loosely controlled by the law or by department policy, other limitations directly or indirectly influence the options available to the officer.

First, the officer’s immediate supervisor may set down informal rules or guidelines governing the officer’s performance. These rules or guidelines are usually learned by the officer over time. Officers learn through experience what their supervisors expect of them. They learn what kinds of arrests will be approved or condoned by a particular supervisor and which ones will not. Some supervisors, like some officers, encourage their officers to be aggressive in their law enforcement responsibilities. These supervisors will support their officers when they make good and reasonable arrests.

Other supervisors tend to be more passive and do not encourage their officers to be aggressive in enforcing the law. Through their own actions and attitudes, they convey an impression to their subordinates that inaction is to be preferred to action. They like to keep things quiet on their shift and prefer to have officers working for them who don’t “rock the boat.” These are usually supervisors who are in the twilight years of their career and who are more concerned with their plans for retirement than they are with their supervisory responsibilities. Unfortunately for those they supervise, retirement never seems to come soon enough.

Another factor affecting police discretion in the enforcement of laws is what is known as the unwritten code, which prescribes acceptable police conduct in particular situations. Although the code is unwritten, it nevertheless exists in most police agencies and officers soon learn that they must live by it if they are going to be able to get along in the department. One article of the code, for example, dictates that officers will extend professional courtesy to fellow law enforcement officers who are stopped for violations of the law. Professional courtesy usually means

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that the officer is given a “pass” and that no formal enforcement action is taken. In more serious cases, such as drunken driving, the offending officer may be turned over to a supervisor or fellow officer rather than be arrested. Police officers are expected to comply with this part of the code and may be chastised by their fellow officers if they do not.

Peer-group pressures also influence the number and type of arrests that an officer will make. Officers who share permanent shifts often develop group personalities which dictate, among other things, their attitudes toward law enforcement. Some groups of officers tend to be very traffic oriented, while others are not. Some groups of officers tend to place a premium on searching out and arresting particular kinds of violators. Officers who work on shifts with other officers soon learn the orientation of their fellow officers and will usually learn to adapt their own performance to that style of behavior.

Finally, community values and public attitudes help to influence and limit police discretion. Most police officers, whether they recognize it or not, are guided in their actions by community values and expectations. Once they have graduated from the police academy and are introduced to the real world of policing, new officers soon learn what the community expects from the police. They learn what kinds of violations are tolerated by the public and which ones are not. They quickly learn that the residents of one neighborhood may have a very tolerant attitude toward parking infractions and speeding vehicles, while the residents of another neighborhood may not. They learn that the residents of one part of town may be quite concerned about juvenile problems, while people living in another part of town have concerns of a very different nature.

Police officers soon learn that they must adapt their style of performance to these expectations if they are to obtain and maintain community support, and they usually recognize that community support is very important to the successful performance of their duties. As a result, they learn to tailor their actions to what the community wants and expects. For the most part, this is a very legitimate response by the officer.

Police discretion in the enforcement of the law may be viewed by some as a necessary evil. Given too little latitude, police officers will not be able to effectively perform the duties expected of them. There are simply too many laws to enforce and more infractions than they can reasonably be expected to deal with uniformly. On the other hand, if they are afforded too much discretion, and are provided with too few guidelines, there is a possibility that they will abuse the authority conferred upon them. Perhaps the answer lies not in restricting the discretion of the police, but rather helping them learn to exercise their discretion in the most reasonable and appropriate manner possible under the circumstances of the moment.

It is in the enforcement of laws that the police play perhaps their most vital role in helping to influence the quality of life in the community. The police possess powers that no other agency of government, except for the military under emergency conditions, possess. They have the absolute and nearly unlimited authority to affect a person’s life, liberty, and safety through their discretionary powers of arrest. Through these powers, they can convey an image to the public that will reflect upon the police department, public officials, and the community itself. The consequences of their actions, or lack of action, are far-reaching and most significant.
Law Enforcement Goals and Objectives

Due to the considerable importance the law enforcement responsibilities of the police play in influencing the quality of life in a community, it is important that reasonable goals and objectives be established for this area of police activity. The establishment of law enforcement goals must be approached carefully, however, and must take into consideration community values and expectations. Indeed, a full understanding of the community and its needs is fundamental to the successful development of law enforcement goals. This would not be necessary if all laws could be uniformly enforced, but as has already been pointed out, this is not the case. Therefore, some means must be devised to determine which laws can and should be enforced, to what extent, and under what circumstances.

Unfortunately, police administrators might be reluctant to undertake this task, or even to admit that such a task is practical. To do so is to admit that the police, through the exercise of discretion, develop their own standards of conduct. This may seem to some as an abuse of police authority, but it is rather a necessary and appropriate extension of that authority. Some police administrators, though, have taken the necessary steps to outline reasonable limits on the use of police discretion.

One obvious goal of the police in terms of their law enforcement authority is the development of more uniform guidelines that will prescribe how various kinds of laws are to be enforced and under what circumstances. These guidelines should be flexible enough to allow the exercise of needed discretion by patrol officers, but yet clear and precise enough to limit unreasonable and unnecessary discretion, which might be construed as abuse of police authority.

While total uniformity of the law enforcement process is neither possible nor desirable, greater uniformity in the enforcement of the law than is usually provided for under department guidelines or state law is a very desirable goal. For example, some police departments have issued written policies that dictate the limits of discretion that will be allowed in the enforcement of various kinds of traffic regulations, such as speeding. These directives have the effect of limiting the discretion of the individual officer. Such directives need to be developed only after fully considering community needs.

In determining enforcement policies and priorities, police agencies should identify and direct primary attention to those crimes which are “serious”: those that stimulate the greatest fear and cause the greatest economic losses. Beyond that, police agencies should be guided by the law, cumulative police experience, the needs and expectations of the community, and the discretion afforded to individual officers in carrying out their duties.

ORDER MAINTENANCE

Maintaining social order is one of the most troublesome responsibilities of the police. This is due, in part, to the difficulty in defining the term order and also because of different ideas about how order should be maintained. While civilized societies share a common desire for order, there is little consensus about what this term means, or how
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It should be accomplished. What is an accepted level of social order in one community or neighborhood may not be acceptable in another. As a result, the patterns of policing, the means of maintaining social order, and the level of social disorder that can be tolerated will vary from place to place. This puts an added burden on the police officer, who has few clear-cut guidelines for performing this function.

There is a thin line between law enforcement and order maintenance. The idea of public order is based in law and police use the law to ensure social order and to maintain the peace. However, the law is usually used only as a threat in order to gain voluntary compliance by persons who threaten to disturb social order or peace. While the police may invoke the law to gain compliance, they prefer that the authority of their uniform and the badge of office, if not the weapons at their disposal, will be sufficient to gain peaceful compliance with the law. In this way, social order is maintained. When this fails, the role of the officer switches from that of order maintenance to law enforcement.\(^{21}\)

The order-maintenance function also contains an element of danger, since it usually involves the police officer imposing (forcibly or otherwise) authority on others. Resistance by those upon whom this authority is imposed may result in conflict or bloodshed. Each year, thousands of police officers are assaulted in the process of simply trying to maintain order in the community.

The order-maintenance function of the police includes a variety of duties in which the possibility of legal sanction usually exists but is not imposed. This includes situations in which legal action clearly may be taken, but is not, as well as those in which the legal authority of the police is only presumed to exist. An example of this would be an officer’s command to “move on,” or to “clear out,” or to “break it up,” to a loiterer or group of juveniles found congregating in an area where their presence was not desired. Although the police officer may have no legal authority to order the persons out of the area, since they have committed no obvious crime, the officer’s authority is presumed to exist and the orders are usually obeyed. In those few instances where someone chooses, foolishly, to challenge this authority, the officer will usually be able to find some violation of the law upon which to invoke criminal action. Even though that action may not result in formal charges or prosecution later on, the immediate objective has been achieved.

In most cases, social order is maintained by the acceptance and observance of values and norms of conduct imposed by the community upon its members. The police are only needed to maintain social order when the value system fails to operate. This is more often the case in large cities, with heterogeneous populations and widely ranging styles of behavior, than it is in smaller communities, where community values and norms of behavior are more widely accepted.

The order-maintenance role of the police relies heavily upon the authority that is inherent in the position occupied by the police officer. The uniformed police officer in any community is the visible symbol of “law and order.” Even where legal sanctions

are available, they are rarely used. Police officers learn through experience that the best solution to a problem involving social disorder is something that falls short of an arrest. Family or neighborhood disturbances—to which the police are frequently called as mediators—offer the opportunity to invoke the criminal law, but may not result in criminal sanctions being imposed by the police officer, simply because sometimes much more can be achieved through more informal means. The exception to this would be in the case of spouse abuse, in which the discretion once afforded the police officer has now been replaced by formal policies or state laws requiring the arrest of the offending person.

Order maintenance, like law enforcement, requires the exercise of judgment on the part of the individual police officer. In most order-maintenance situations, the officer can choose from several alternate courses of action. There are very few written guidelines to aid officers in making these kinds of decisions. Instead, they learn to rely upon their own experience and what they believe to be the most appropriate course of action under the circumstances. They make choices based upon what they hope to achieve in particular situations. If seeking only a short-term solution to a problem that is likely to reoccur in the near future, the officer will probably resort to a more informal type of action, such as the threat of arrest, even though no violation may have occurred. Other, more serious situations, or those in which the officer wishes to achieve a long-term goal (such as ensuring that there will be no recurrence of the problem), may require the officer to make an arrest. The arrest will send a message to other participants that the officer means business and that similar action will be taken against others unless the problem is resolved.

While the order-maintenance function of the police occupies a great deal of the patrol officer’s time, the importance of this function is often ignored or treated lightly by police administrators. Few police departments have written policies which define the limits of police authority or discretion in order-maintenance activities. Little effort has been made to systematically analyze the order-maintenance duties of the police and the impact they play on the overall role of police in the community.

Little research has been conducted to determine the proper bounds of police conduct in order-maintenance situations. The exception to this statement is in the area of domestic violence, where a considerable amount of study has resulted in some very specific recommendations, guidelines, and even changes in state laws. This subject will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 13.

By failing to recognize the importance of order-maintenance responsibilities, training programs for police officers also fail to provide officers with proper insight or the interpersonal skills necessary to handle those situations in a sensitive and enlightened manner. Police officers need to be trained to recognize the consequences of their actions and the range of alternatives available to them to effectively resolve these problems without formally invoking their arrest authority.

Because the order-maintenance function of the police relies so heavily upon the discretion allowed police officers to define limits of acceptable behavior, there is considerable potential for abuse. Since it is virtually impossible, and not necessarily desirable, to define precisely what behavior will be allowed and what will not by laws,
ordinances, rules or regulations, we must rely upon the individual police officer to make those determinations on a case-by-case basis. This opens up the possibility that this discretion will be abused when it is used improperly, or misused altogether.

The order-maintenance function of the police must be recognized for the important part it plays in the police role in the community. While social order is important in any community, it is the community, not the police, that determines how social order is defined. The police must fashion their order-maintenance activities around their own understanding of what level of public order the community expects and demands.

The ultimate test of police in a democratic society is their capacity to safeguard life and to maintain order and to do so in ways that preserve confidence in democratic processes. While there is no easy measure of police performance, there is abundant evidence that some police fail to comprehend the delicate nature of a role that commits them not just to safeguarding life and maintaining order, but to doing it in ways that advance and support democratic values.22

Police administrators must ensure that personnel under their control understand that the means to achieve social order are just as important as the goal itself. Patrol officers need to appreciate the delicate balance that must be maintained between individual freedoms and community expectations concerning social order. Police policies need to be established that will provide clear-cut guidelines addressing the various social-order duties of the police, while at the same time allowing for the application of reasonable limits of discretion by the officer.

Police training programs and supervisory practices need to be altered to address the long-ignored order-maintenance responsibilities of the police. Training programs must emphasize the importance that democratic values play in determining what constitutes social order and how it should be maintained in the community. Police administrators need to recognize that community values and social norms are the determining factors in defining what constitutes social order in a community. It is these values, rather than the rule of law, that must guide the police in their efforts to maintain social order.

**Order-maintenance Goals and Objectives**

Of all police responsibilities, order maintenance is perhaps the most difficult of all to translate into measurable goals and objectives. Since there are no reliable definitions of social order, how is it possible for the police to know what level of order is desired by the community? Without having direct community input, it is impossible for the

police to know what is expected of them in terms of their order-maintenance respon-
sibilities and how well they have fulfilled those responsibilities.

Even if social order is defined as the absence of disorder (for example, relatively
few incidents involving domestic disputes, drunken or rowdy persons, etc.), can this
be taken as a measure of police performance? Probably not, since police control over
these occurrences comes only after the fact, not before. There is little that the police
can do, except through their sheer presence, to prevent violations of social order.

Perhaps the true measure of police effectiveness in terms of order-maintenance
duties is the absence of police invocation of formal controls (for example, arrest) to
maintain social order. Assuming that a workable definition of social order can be
achieved (an assumption not yet tested), it should then be possible to identify those
incidents which represent an actual or potential risk to social order (for example,
domestic disputes, public loitering, drunkenness). A realistic measure of police effect-
iveness, then, might be the number or magnitude of these incidents and the ability of
the police to handle them without invoking formal sanctions. Another measure might
be the level of police resources devoted to order-maintenance activities relative to the
number or magnitude of such incidents over time.

There are no clear-cut measures of police effectiveness in this potentially trouble-
some area of police responsibility. Since public order is defined by the community
itself, only the community can realistically assess police performance in this area. Thus,
another measure of police effectiveness might be through periodic sampling of
community attitudes concerning police performance, not just in this area but in all
spheres of police responsibility. Such sampling might provide an important and useful
way of assessing police performance and could provide useful insight into how that
performance might be improved.

There are many ways police departments can obtain useful feedback by which
to measure community assessment of their services. For example, some depart-
ments have taken it upon themselves to conduct community surveys to measure
citizen satisfaction with their various functions. In some cases, these are conducted
as part of a citywide survey to assess “customer satisfaction” with all city services,
including the police. Other police departments have mailed out brief surveys to a
random sampling of all people in the community who have had contact with the
police, including under adverse circumstances, such as by arrest or by receiving a
traffic citation. The information obtained through these surveys can be vital to
the police administrator in evaluating police effectiveness and in shaping new
programs for the future.

PUBLIC SERVICES

It is fitting and appropriate that many police mottos or slogans promise to “serve and
protect” or some other phrase of similar meaning, for the police are, in fact, a service
agency. While they apprehend criminals, enforce the laws, and maintain social order,
service is their number one goal in most communities. The public service function of
the police has come under growing scrutiny in recent years, in part because of the increasing financial constraints placed on local government, which have resulted in fewer resources available to the police. Police administrators are being asked to provide an increased level of service with the same or declining resources. As a result, they have been forced to find ways to reduce or eliminate some service activities in order to devote sufficient resources to more pressing duties.

Some authorities have suggested that service activities occupy too much of a police officer’s time and that they interfere with the ability of the police to pursue other, more important, duties. Nevertheless, service functions continue to be an important part of the police officer’s daily responsibilities.

The argument against the police performing duties that are not directly related to the more important functions of law enforcement, criminal investigation, and criminal apprehension is certainly a valid one. In many cases, there are public and private agencies equally qualified or better prepared to perform these same functions. For example, would it not be more efficient to call a locksmith to help someone retrieve their keys from their locked car? Yet thousands of police officers are dispatched daily to perform this function.

Even though police administrators may question the value or utility of these service functions, the public has come to expect them. Through their own commitment to public service, the police have conditioned people to expect them to respond and to assist them when no one else will. Through past practice, and a desire to perform a service that few others can provide, the police have created a dependency among the public. Most people turn to the police automatically, assuming that they will be able to help, or to summon the necessary assistance in an emergency.

When people need help, it is to a police officer that they are most likely to turn. He responds—immediately—without first ascertaining the status of the person in need. It does not matter if the person is rich or poor; he need not meet complicated criteria to qualify as a recipient of aid or as a potential client.\textsuperscript{23}

Because the police are always available, because they possess powers not possessed by any other agency of government, and because they are the visible symbol of authority, they are called upon to assist stranded motorists, make death notifications, locate lost persons or runaway juveniles, deliver mail, provide bank and funeral escorts, and many other similar duties.

A few police agencies have begun to seriously study the full range of public-service activities performed by the police, to assess their relevance to the police mission, and to determine whether there are alternative means of providing these services. Some police departments, due to increased demands for police services and diminished resources, have begun to identify service activities which can be eliminated altogether or provided in other ways. For example, some police

\textsuperscript{23}National Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 9.
departments no longer will take accident reports for property-damage-only accidents occurring on private property or which are not immediately reported to the police. Instead, citizens are given information packets which contain the necessary forms and instructions to enable them to make the necessary reports and notifications themselves. Other police departments have established policies providing for routine reports to be taken directly over the telephone, thereby eliminating the need to send a uniformed officer to the location. Still other departments have either eliminated altogether or modified their traditional response to such service requests as lockouts and vacant-house checks.

It is likely that providing a variety of public services will continue to occupy a great deal of the patrol officer’s time in the future. It is also possible that the scope of those services, the priorities attached to them, and the manner in which they are provided may be radically altered as police administrators are forced to become more budget conscious. It may eventually come to pass that the police will not be able to be “all things to all people,” and that police administrators must make hard choices concerning their service delivery priorities. Nevertheless, it is unlikely that the police will ever be relieved of their public-service responsibilities altogether, since they are an essential part of the unique mission of the police. The police are, after all, an integral element of the community’s public-service delivery system.

**Public Service Goals and Objectives**

Although public services provided by a police department may be relatively difficult to quantify (for example, number of times the police respond to assist stranded motorists, aid in the search for a lost child, etc.), the quality with which these services are performed may also elude precise measurement. In effect, any time a public service is rendered by the police, it is a positive accomplishment. People rarely complain that the police did not do a good job in helping them in their time of difficulty.

Since it seems that tight economic conditions may eventually dictate the level and scope of public services provided by the police, it may be necessary to be very selective in setting goals and objectives for this category of police service. It may be necessary, for example, to identify those services which are considered integral to the police mission and which contribute most toward the quality of life in a community. Police executives need to critically examine their agency’s ability to perform service functions and to tailor those service-delivery strategies to community needs and expectations. They should also recognize

. . . that some government services that are not essentially a police function are, under some circumstances, appropriately performed by the police. Such services include those provided in the interest of effective government or in response to established community needs.\(^{24}\)

\(^{24}\)Ibid., p. 12.
Accordingly, the police need to recognize that their public-service responsibilities are equally as important as their other duties and establish priorities accordingly. Once this is done, appropriate goals and objectives concerning public services can be developed. These goals should be focused on improving the quality of life in the community rather than simply enhancing the public image of the police.

**TRAFFIC ENFORCEMENT**

Police responsibility with regard to the investigation of traffic accidents and the enforcement of traffic laws creates a real dilemma for many police officers and chief executives. Some police officers and administrators are very traffic oriented and take pride in establishing and promoting a climate of aggressive traffic enforcement. Other police officers and administrators take a very passive attitude toward traffic law enforcement. There is no question that a systematic and aggressive program of traffic law enforcement will have a desired effect on accident rates as well as driver behavior.

Enforcement action is the principal tool used by the police to reduce the number and severity of accidents. Although it is impossible to prove that increasing enforcement by some amount will decrease accidents by another amount, studies have shown that specific enforcement programs, especially when accompanied by public information and education, can reduce traffic accidents. Traffic stops accounted for 52 percent of all police–citizens contacts in 1999. About one in ten licensed drivers are stopped by the police each year.

Those who consider an aggressive program of traffic law enforcement to be a necessary, legitimate, and proper exercise of police authority recognize the fact that millions of dollars and thousands of lives are lost each year as a result of traffic accidents. Moreover, many would argue that there are very few real traffic accidents, because most mishaps classified as accidents are preventable through better education, enforcement, and engineering. Moreover, since it is the duty of the police to protect life and property, and since traffic violations jeopardize lives and property, the prevention of traffic violations through the aggressive enforcement of traffic laws is an appropriate role for the police.

In many police departments, the enforcement of traffic laws and the investigation of traffic collisions are basic responsibilities of the patrol officer. In many larger cities, specialized traffic units have been created to handle these duties. The creation of specialized traffic units in those departments that have sufficient resources makes sense

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for two reasons. First, the investigation of traffic accidents can be a very time-consuming matter and often requires special skills, particularly in accidents involving serious injury or death. Accident reconstruction is a very technical field and one requiring extensive training. It is not practical to train all officers to be specialists in accident reconstruction and investigation.

Second, many patrol officers simply do not like to work traffic. They do not enjoy the confrontation that is usually associated with the issuance of a traffic citation. It makes sense, then, to assign these duties to officers who do like to perform them. Unfortunately, many police departments do not have the resources to form specialized traffic units, and must rely upon the patrol officer to handle both traffic enforcement and accident investigation duties. In such cases, it may be advisable to have one officer (or more, depending upon the size of the department) on each shift designated as an accident investigation officer. This officer could be trained in the complex skills of accident investigation and reconstruction and would be available to handle those traffic accidents requiring special skills.

Traffic enforcement, on the other hand, should be the responsibility of all members of the patrol force, even in those departments that do have designated traffic units. Traffic enforcement is an integral part of the police function and should not be ignored by officers simply because a specialized unit has been given this as a primary responsibility. As a result of their regular patrol duties, patrol officers know what parts of town, what times of the day, and what days of the week pose the most serious traffic problems. They also know what types of violations are likely to occur and which violations cause the greatest number of traffic accidents.

It is imperative that all uniformed officers driving marked cars be aware of the traffic enforcement programs and take action when they observe violations.\(^\text{27}\)

In addition, it has been shown that there is a strong relationship between traffic enforcement and crime prevention. First, a department that has an aggressive traffic enforcement program will be in a much better position to detect and apprehend criminals. Most crimes involve the use of an automobile or other vehicle for the purpose of escaping the crime scene or to aid in the transportation of stolen goods or other contraband. Thousands of arrests for serious crimes are made each year simply as a result of an otherwise routine traffic stop.

In addition, a police department that has an aggressive traffic enforcement program establishes a reputation for vigilance and a high profile. Police cars on the move, checking vehicles and pedestrians, making traffic stops at high-volume intersections, tend to make criminals nervous. They would just as soon commit their crimes somewhere where the police are not as visible and aggressive. There is a correlation, therefore, between a police department’s traffic-enforcement efforts and the incidence of serious crime in the community.

\(^{27}\text{Bufe and Thompson, } ot. cit., \text{ p. 68.}\)
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At the same time, police administrators need to be wary of sending the wrong kind of message to the community. Some police departments seem to have nothing better to do than to stop drivers for minor violations such as going five miles over the speed limit or not having the registration properly displayed. Some police departments have managed to create the image that they are only in business to generate revenue for the municipality through traffic fines. Unfortunately, this image is often supported and enhanced by statements made by local elected officials. Indeed, some police officers, and some police administrators, take great pleasure in boasting about the amount of money they generate for the municipality through traffic-enforcement efforts. Unfortunately, some political leaders think along the same lines. They see the police as primarily revenue producers and make it clear that the police should “pay their own way” through the generation of traffic fines.

Of course, this is exactly the opposite of what should be the case. The very last consideration that should be made in determining whether a traffic violator should be stopped and whether a citation should be issued is the amount of revenue that might be produced for the municipality. To allow this consideration to affect the officer’s decision is to demean and corrupt the integrity of the police department. Certainly, political leaders need to be concerned about balancing the budget and finding ways to provide for the services demanded by the public; however, they cannot and should not use the police department as a means of producing revenue. Police administrators should educate elected officials that this is not a proper role for the police.

Similarly, police agencies should avoid any attempt to establish a system of enforcement “quotas,” either for individual officers, or for groups or shifts of officers. In some states, traffic quotas are illegal, and even where they are not illegal, they create a very bad impression with the motoring public. Where quotas do exist, people tend to believe that the only reason they were given a citation was that the officer had to make his quota for the day, even when this is not the case.

At the same time, there can be established reasonable standards of performance for the individual patrol officer. These standards should be flexible enough to account for the shift to which the officer is assigned and other types of activities that occur during the shift that might preclude the officer’s ability to devote much time to traffic law enforcement. For example, an officer who, during an eight-hour tour of duty, made three arrests for shoplifting, took a burglary report, assisted in handling a three-car traffic accident, and handled a domestic disturbance probably could not be criticized for not spending any time on traffic enforcement or not issuing a single traffic citation. On the other hand, the same officer on the same shift who turned in an activity log showing no arrests, reports, or assists during the eight-hour period might be questioned as to why he had devoted no time to traffic enforcement and how he had managed not to issue a single traffic warning or citation.

Perhaps more important than anything else is that a police agency encourage its officers to be consistent in their traffic enforcement responsibilities. The public needs to know that, as a general rule, similar violations occurring in the same or similar locations will be treated in generally the same way. Even though officer discretion must
be employed, there should be limits to this discretion that will ensure a reasonable degree of uniformity in the enforcement of traffic laws.

**Traffic Enforcement Goals and Objectives**

Unlike other police responsibilities, goals and objectives for traffic enforcement can be more readily and precisely identified. The single objective of any traffic enforcement program is to reduce the frequency and seriousness of traffic accidents, thereby saving lives and reducing property loss. Thus, the specific objectives of a traffic enforcement program could be stated in the following ways:

1. To reduce the number of persons injured or killed as a result of traffic accidents by 10 percent a year for the next three years.
2. To reduce the amount of dollar loss as a result of traffic accidents by 10 percent a year for the next three years.

Although there are other factors such as engineering, traffic volume, and construction projects that affect the incidence of traffic accidents in a community, we can assume that enforcement activity does have a considerable impact as well. Determining the exact nature of that impact and how to translate it into enforcement strategies is not as simple. It may be sufficient to simply correlate the number of traffic accidents with traffic enforcement activity over a period of time. If enforcement activity does have an impact, there should be some correlation between enforcement efforts and the number of traffic accidents over a period of time. Other measures have been developed which are much more precise. One, for example, is the Traffic Enforcement Index, which is the number of traffic convictions for hazardous moving violations, divided by the number of accidents involving personal injury and death.\(^{28}\)

Using the Traffic Enforcement Index (TEI), it is possible to establish a very precise objective for enforcement efforts. This objective should be established based upon the level of enforcement activity that is required to decrease or hold stable the level of traffic accidents. For example, it may be discovered that a TEI of between 15 and 20 seems to make a difference in the number of serious injury and fatal accidents. If this can be found to be the case, then the department should establish this as a reasonable objective for the department.

Because each community is different and has its own unique problems relating to traffic safety, it is not possible or reasonable to establish uniform standards of traffic enforcement. However, it is possible, and it is highly desirable, that these standards be established by the local police agency based upon a thorough analysis and understanding of the needs of the community. Once these needs are determined, realistic

and relatively precise enforcement standards can be established and should be articulated within the police department.

**CONCLUSION**

No organization can operate effectively without clearly defined and articulated goals and objectives. The same principles that contribute to managing a successful business apply equally to police organizations. For too long, police departments have operated primarily in a reactive mode, without paying proper attention to the purposes for which they were created and without devoting sufficient attention to identifying goals and objectives as guiding principles. For too long, the police and the public have taken for granted what the police are expected to do and have given too little thought to how police performance is to be evaluated.

Any definition of police goals and objectives must begin with an assessment of community values, needs, and expectations. The police are, after all, a part of the community’s service-delivery system. The nature, scope, and level of the services provided by the police must be based on what the community sees as its needs, not on what the police see as best for the community. Accordingly, community input must be sought in the development of police goals and objectives.

**REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Why are goals and objectives important in planning, supervising and evaluating police patrol operations?
2. What is the difference, if any, between a goal and an objective?
3. Why do goals and objectives vary among police agencies?
4. Should the police not claim total responsibility for crime control? Why or why not?
5. In what ways are a patrol officer’s responsibilities for criminal apprehension limited and why?
6. What, more than anything else, determines whether a criminal case will be solved, and why?
7. Describe some of the things that make the law enforcement role of the police officer particularly troublesome.
8. Why is the element of discretion important in the enforcement of criminal laws?
9. What are some of the public-service functions traditionally provided by the police that might be performed just as well by other agencies?
10. What should be the primary goals of any police traffic-enforcement program?
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REVIEW EXERCISES

The following exercises are designed to reinforce or amplify comprehension of the material contained in this chapter.

1. As a class project, study and compare various cities of differing size, political structure, and socioeconomic composition. Using these differences or similarities, describe how police goals and objectives might vary among these cities.

2. Select one of the principal police functions described in this chapter. Prepare a detailed set of goals and objectives for this function as they might apply in your hometown or in a city with which you are familiar.

3. Using either factual or fictional data, prepare a five-page case study to show how the actions of a patrol officer might be compared with specific goals for one of the principal police functions described in this chapter.

REFERENCES


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Poole, Robert W., Jr., Cutting Back at City Hall (New York: Universe Books, 1980).


