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REMARKS

BY

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BEFORE

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1990 ANNUAL MEETING PLENARY SESSION

ON

THE KANSAS CITY PREVENTIVE PATROL EXPERIMENT:
A HOT SPOTS REPLICATION

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Thank you, and good morning.

I am very pleased to be here, and I want to thank our good friend Larry Sherman from the Crime Control Institute and the University of Maryland for inviting me.

Before we start, I would like to introduce the panel -- David Weisburd, Larry Sherman, George Kelling, Minneapolis Police Chief John Laux, and his Deputy Chief for Patrol, Douglas Smith. David is a researcher from Rutgers who has done a lot of work in the area of white-collar crime and is now a principal investigator for the NIJ Drug Market Analysis project in Jersey City. He's proven himself to be a bright young star.

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As you know, we will be discussing the Minneapolis hot spots patrol experiment today. Larry Sherman and David Weisburd will be giving the first public description of what they have learned in Minneapolis.

I have had a chance to look at a draft of their paper, and I believe they are going to affect police thinking, and policing research, for the next 20 years.

That's perhaps appropriate because, after all, this experiment grows out of the Kansas City preventive patrol project of 1972 and 1973. Kansas City was one of the first major scientific experiments involving police practices in the United States. It has been affecting policing and policing research for nearly the last 20 years.

George Kelling -- presently a Research Fellow at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management, is also with us today. It is a special honor for me to introduce him as a commentator on this panel. Why? you may ask. Well, George and I have just completed a chapter for the golden anniversary edition of the International City Management Association's classic police administration book, Local Government Police Management, entitled "The Evolution of Contemporary Policing."

George is, of course, the person who conceived and tested the idea in Kansas City and started all this rolling. The real genius of this plenary session is that it brings George together with the next generation that is building upon his work.

We are also pleased to have with us here today the two men who made the experiment happen on the street. Chief John Laux took command of the Minneapolis Police Department one month into the experiment, after rising from patrol officer to Deputy Chief for Investigations in the MPD. Deputy Chief Douglas Smith took command of the MPD patrol force in September of 1988, just in time to help plan the details and agree to the dosage levels of patrol for the experiment.

Without the strong and active support of both these police leaders, the experiment could easily have gone awry. We are all grateful for the steadfast way they took their knocks that an experiment of this magnitude inevitably requires. It was, incidentally, the largest patrol experiment in history and the first to involve the entire patrol force -- for over fifty thousand hours of patrol car time in the experimental group alone.

I said earlier that the Kansas City experiment has been having effects on both policing and policing research for almost two decades. I want to begin this session by looking at those effects, bringing us to where we are today.

Then, with that as background, Larry and David will tell you about their research. After they finish, George Kelling, Chief Laux, Deputy Chief Smith, and I will join them in commenting on the research findings and their significance. We also hope to have time to hear from those of you in the audience who have thoughts and opinions to share.

Before Kansas City -- and ever since -- policing typically has made history through big events -- the arrest of Bonnie and Clyde, the captures of John Dillinger and "Baby Face" Nelson, the neutralization of the SLA, the seizure of tons of cocaine. It measured its progress in headlines.

Police professionalism was based on certain assumptions. One was that the primary purpose of police is to fight crime. Another was that rapid response to calls for help enables police to identify and arrest more wrong-doers.

A third assumption said that if you patrol on a random basis, you suppress crime. Because the criminal never knows where you're going to show up, went the reasoning, he doesn't commit as much crime. A secondary assumed benefit of random patrol was that members of the public felt more secure when they saw you driving around.

Until the 1960s, policing felt that it had been doing all right by using these assumptions. But then it started getting beaten up by the civil rights movement, the courts, the anti-war demonstrations and things like that. A perception arose among police professionals that maybe the police weren't doing a very good job.

At the same time, the police were saying: "Well, we still know how to fight crime; we're the experts in preventive patrol and rapid response."

The Kansas City experiment was one of the first studies to test a policing hypothesis through use of "experimental" and "control" groups. To test the effects of different levels of patrol, they designed a study that would double or triple the amount of patrol on five police beats, kept it the same on five and cut it to zero on five.

The results, of course, were that the amount of patrol didn't make any difference. Levels of crime didn't change, and neither did the public's sense of security or its satisfaction with the police.

The reaction of the police community was: "Impossible! We do something out there. Somebody must have done something wrong with the experiment's results. Just ask the public if police make a difference. They will say 'yes.'"

Police leaders objected strenuously because the Kansas City results were so counter-intuitive to them. They attacked the Kansas City experiment on methodological grounds. They tried to deny it. I remember it, because I was a Commander with the police in Oakland, California, at the time.

The experiment did have some credible conceptual problems, like the beats being too limited. There were statistical and measurement problems, too. So the project came under a lot of criticism from police and from researchers -- some justified, some not.

More importantly, it led to a realization among police that research is important, that people are going to pay attention to it. And it showed history in policing may be made in a new experiment, such as the one we are about to talk about today.

After the fire died down over Kansas City, the more thoughtful police managers began to say: "Hey, there might be something to this. Maybe random patrol does produce random results. Perhaps it makes sense to analyze more carefully how to allocate limited resources to achieve certain results."

So the Kansas City experiment was an important stimulus to research on lots of other issues. We learned, for example:

- o that rapid response by the police doesn't have nearly the effect on crime that quickly made calls by citizens do;
- o that foot patrol may not reduce crime, but it can reduce citizen fear a lot more than random motor patrol does;
- o that officers in one-person cars are as safe, and as productive, as those riding in pairs.

But while the research led into all these other areas, no one tried to replicate the Kansas City experiment. Costs were a factor. Every time they came up with another idea for making the research design more rigorous, to assure the reliability of the results, it became more and more expensive.

About three years after the Kansas City project, the idea that random patrol has no effect was sort of quietly accepted as true, or not really relevant to crucial issues in policing.

That also was about the time that calls for police services began to jump sharply, commanding more of the police resources. That left fewer and fewer hours available for random patrol. So it became academic.

One thing Kansas City left open was whether saturation patrol has any effect on crime. The patrol levels may have merely failed to reach the threshold needed to have an effect.

When saturation patrol was tried elsewhere, the problem has been that the police could not keep it up, because of other demands. So the saturation was always temporary, and the problem would often return. The police would say that if we could have maintained high levels of saturation, we could have stopped the problem from returning. But that never got tested.

We tried once. The Georgetown area of the District of Columbia, as you may know, is a scene of big-time weekend partying, with lots of drinking and dope and illegal parking.

To try to control it, the District government banned parking from 4:00 in the afternoon to 6:30 the next morning on Friday and Saturday nights. The District police launched a program of massive ticketing and towing for several weekends.

We knew they couldn't keep it up, so I asked Larry Sherman to go in there and find out how many police it would take to maintain a deterrent effect. But the numbers of crimes were too small to give any definitive information.

But Georgetown, I am happy to say, stimulated Larry Sherman's thinking about saturation enforcement. He is very clever and imaginative. In Minneapolis he figured out ways to get enough treatment and control groups so he could do the analysis.

Larry and David found that just three percent of all the addresses and intersections in the city produced half of the police dispatches. In addition, as Larry and David were to find later, many of these sources of repeat calls are clustered in "hot spots."

Tell the police to spend time in certain hot spots when they weren't answering calls, Larry and David suggested. It could create a dramatic increase in police presence -- saturation patrol, if you will. Keeping the previous level of patrol in other hot spots would give us a control. But would the police cooperate? And would it show a measurable reduction in crime?

Larry Sherman and David Weisburd, please share your findings with us.

AFTER PRESENTATION

Thank you, gentlemen.

Before we start the discussion, I want to express public appreciation to former Chief Tony Bouza, current Chief John Laux, Deputy Chief for Patrol Douglas Smith, and the members of the Minneapolis Police Department. Their support was crucial to this experiment.

And it takes courage for police to subject themselves publicly to research and potentially negative findings. Think about the controversy that the Kansas City experiment caused.

On the other hand, that controversy didn't seem to harm Clarence Kelley, who was police chief in Kansas City when the preventive patrol experiment was initiated. You may recall that he went on to a very successful career as the Director of the FBI, after J. Edgar Hoover.

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I'd like to make several observations, if I may. First, the hot spots concept may give us a tool to help move policing from a craft to a profession that solves problems for people.

The traditional view of police officers has been that they're responsible for a time slot. You come in for your eight hours; you handle each call in 15 or 20 minutes; you get back on the air for the next call; when your eight hours is up, you go home. It's up to your replacement to hold it until his or her replacement comes on.

It's like being a shipping clerk. You take an order and you fill it.

Each call for police service, moreover, is treated as an individual event. I get the first call, and I tell the offender that if I have to come back, he is going to jail. I leave, and he does it again.

Another police officer comes this time, and says, "Don't do it again." Then a third officer came, and a fourth, and each time the same scenario is played out. Four calls, four officers think they've handled the problem -- but the problem still hasn't been resolved.

The call-backs are consuming immense amounts of time. Wouldn't it be better if someone had realized that these four calls to the same address are related? That there is a problem that needs solving if we want to avoid a fifth call...a 50th call? That if they can solve that problem, they can get off the call-back treadmill and have more discretionary time?

Police in some cities, of course, have made this realization. That's why they have focused on problem-solving policing.

In Minneapolis, Larry Sherman found that just 3 percent of all addresses and intersections account for half of the police dispatches. David identified those locations, and was able to aggregate many of them into "hot spots."

This has enabled the police management in Minneapolis to identify the specific problems in each hot spot. They can begin talking about tailoring strategies and tactics to treat each problem.

Minneapolis hot spots is helping to change the traditional thinking. Police are not responsible merely for responding to calls during a time-slot, like a shipping clerk fills orders. Police can in fact intervene, like a doctor. But if they do, they become responsible for the future health of that person insofar as that problem is concerned.

So they need to know how to intervene. And they have a stake in knowing if their intervention healed, or whether it didn't make any difference, or if it exacerbated the problem.

This can elevate policing from an intuitive craft and art to a more rigorous, more scientifically informed profession. It will still require judgment and discretion and occasional heroism, but it can lead to more safety and justice for people in our society.

My second point is that we have something here could be very powerful and history-making, but it involves only one city and one year's worth of looking. We need to find out if it could work elsewhere as well.

Just as Kansas City preventive patrol stimulated research on policing, this hot spots experiment should spark additional research on this idea of saturation. You in the academic community, in the policing community, will have to decide whether this specific research warrants replication.

NIJ has no funds allocated with which to replicate it. We need to know if you think it's worth investing the scarce dollars we have.

We are, however, going to look at a spin-off of saturation patrol, in projects that began February 1 in four other cities. The cities are pilot-testing a system called Drug Market Analysis, or DMA. This may be a tool that will enable police to interrupt drug sales in a systematic way.

The four DMA cities are Hartford, Pittsburgh, Jersey City, and Kansas City, Missouri. Larry Sherman and David Weisburd, incidentally, are the researchers in Kansas City and Jersey City, respectively.

DMA involves gathering information about drug trafficking from a variety of sources, and computerizing it, to identify and map all the drug markets. Then the police will design a variety of strategies and tactics to deal with them--saturation patrol as well as other interventions. Researchers will evaluate the effects.

DMA will let the police track when and where displacement occurs in different areas, and how long it takes to occur. The Kansas City project covers the entire metropolitan area, so we'll be able to see displacement across political boundaries.

DMA should let police agencies know very quickly when and where a new drug problem emerges. An individual officer on the beat may pick it up right away, of course, but the computer will pick it up a lot faster than the police as an institution can.

Finally, let me suggest that what we've heard today from Larry and David supports the intuitive feeling that police have had all along about saturation patrol. In spite of what the Kansas City experiment may have suggested, saturation patrol has continued to be a viable police tactic.

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George Kelling, Chief Laux, and Deputy Chief Smith, I'm afraid I've chewed up some of your time, as well as all of my own. Let's get your reactions to all of this. Then we'll see if Larry and David have any response.

There should still be some time left, to open it up to the audience for questions and comments.

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