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research briefs

National Institute of Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice

POLICE RESEARCH: An Overview NCJRS

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(Individual projects are described more fully in the section following the overview.)

The study of policing is now advancing more rapidly than ever toward the beginning of a science. Much of this progress stems from enactment of the 1968 Safe Streets Act and subsequent Federal funding for law enforcement improvement. Compared with the massive need for research results, only a beginning has been made; compared with the rudimentary level of knowledge of police matters, the progress is significant.

To a large degree, police science textbooks still rely heavily on professional anecdotes, descriptive experience, and ad hoc rules-of-thumb. For example, the "golden rule" is that 10 percent of the force should be detectives and 2 percent should be vice squad — but no one really knows why. The textbooks also are uneven, giving scant coverage to such subjects as productivity, corruption, and internal discipline.

Today, more police research is being undertaken, and harder data are increasingly becoming available. While the police continue to invest proportionately less in research than do most profit-conscious corporations, old traditions are being challenged and the need to increase the present state of knowledge is more keenly felt.

To advance police science, the National Institute has chosen to target on three major areas with critical significance for police effectiveness. The first is **police management**, emphasizing research to strengthen program evaluation systems and program direction systems. The second is **police operations**, concentrating on more efficiency and effectiveness in patrol and criminal investigations, and on special problems. The third is an **overview of the law enforcement system**, i.e., how police agencies can better meet the needs of society and of the criminal justice system. Research in these areas is directed by the Police Division of the Institute's Office of Research Programs.

ACQUISITIONS POLICE MANAGEMENT

Perhaps the greatest need in the police area is to assist administrators to develop the effective management systems required to facilitate program evaluation and program direction.

Program Evaluation Systems

The effectiveness of police programs is seriously impeded by the lack of sound **performance evaluation**. Existing program evaluation systems not only fail to give the administrator needed information but also lead to unproductive police activity. For example, the FBI's Uniform Crime Report statistics, while serving a valid purpose of their own, are insufficient for the police administrator. The UCR uses a crime classification system that does not adequately differentiate types of cases: the varieties of rapes, for instance, are lumped into a single category. Further, it reflects only part of police activity—crime-related services. It also measures only reported crime. Most important, the UCR "measures" activity that results not only from police work but also from other factors, such as social forces and the work of non-police agencies. The distortions that can result from using this type of system can be illustrated by considering property recovery. Where arrests and clearances are stressed, for example, detectives will tend to perform poorly in terms of recovering stolen property. In other words, people will respond to the criteria by which they are evaluated.

Two ideas underlie Institute thinking in this complex area. The first is the concept of performance indicators. Economists have had considerable success in describing the "health" of the economy by analyzing indicators. It seems practi-

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cal for police administrators to take a leaf from the economists' notebook. Indicators are not measures; rather, they are indirect signs that show something about the thing to be measured—the "economy" in the one case or the "police program" in the other. Some indicators may point up and others down, and, unlike measures, they may not have a straight-line relationship with the thing to be measured. In police terms, burglary clearance constitutes a defective "measure" of burglary investigative performance. The defects, noted earlier, apply to burglary clearance utilized as a "measure". Understood properly and combined with other indicators, however, a burglary clearance figure can be a satisfactory "indicator" of performance.

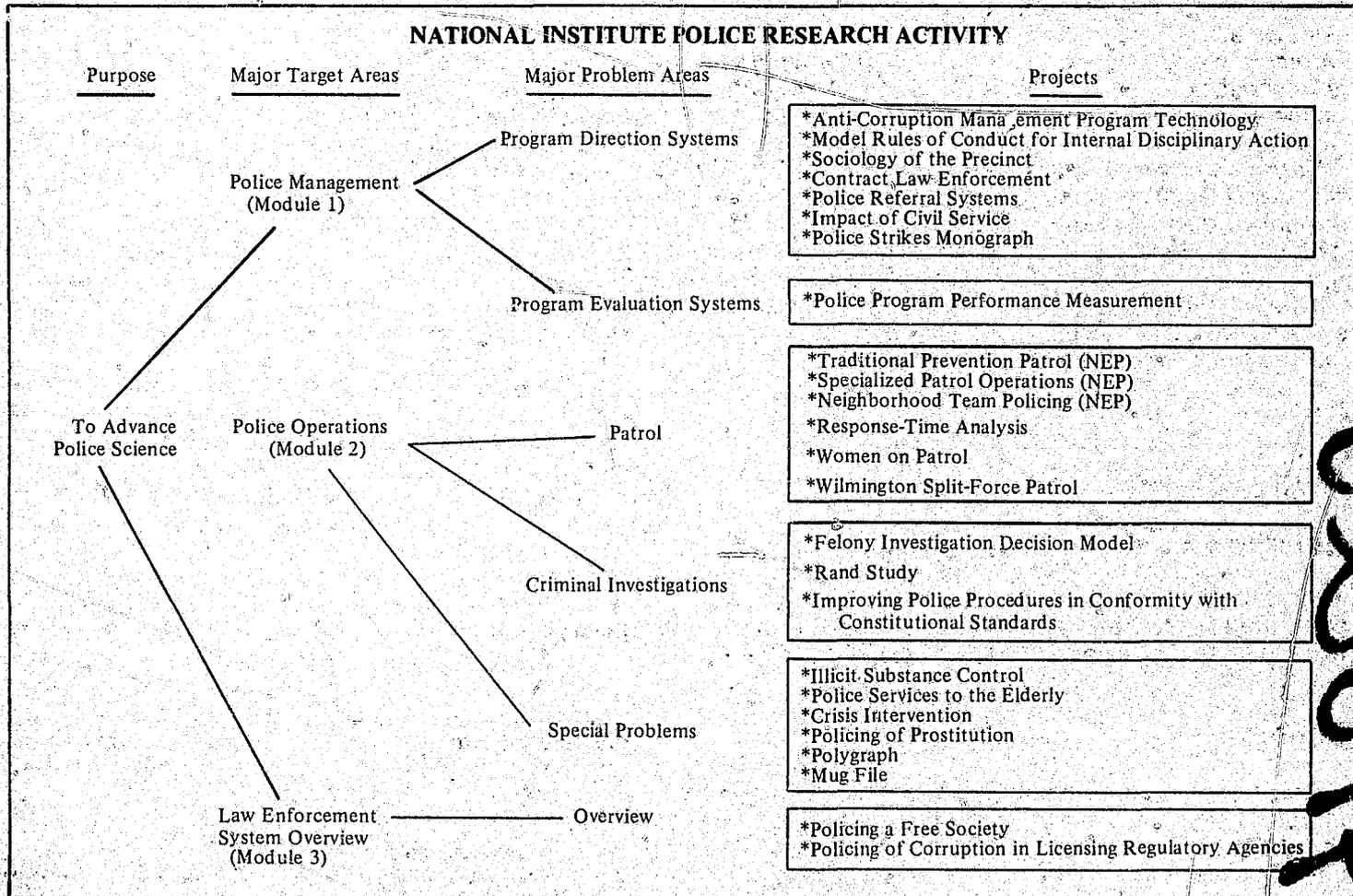
The second idea concerns the source of performance indicators. Traditionally, police agencies have relied too heavily on data generated within the department, such as reported crime, clearance, and workload statistics. Externally-generated data, viewed as indicators rather than measures, are also available—particularly now that sophisticated opinion sampling has become commonplace. This permits the collection of information on citizen perceptions (for example, the perception of safety), that can be analyzed over time. For example, information that fear of crime has increased can be as valuable an indicator as an increase in the number of crimes reported.

Program Direction Systems

The police also need **program direction** systems so that administrators can develop and execute more effective programs. Because police management practices rely heavily on traditional practices rather than well thought-out and researched assessments of alternatives, current Institute projects are attempting to expand knowledge about specific programs and practices.

An **anti-corruption management** project, for example, is attempting to give police administrators a systematic approach to follow in this sensitive area. At present, there is no adequate typology of corruption or analysis of anti-corruption strategies. Since corruption is covered only minimally in police science textbooks, the police administrator is virtually on his own in confronting this critical problem. Yet the potential for corruption always exists, because the nature of police work presents the officer with both significant opportunities and pressures to accept corrupt rewards. Any city, large or small, is vulnerable, as is evidenced by the existence of internal affairs sections in all sizeable departments.

At the same time, it should be emphasized that corruption is not a problem that is confined to police. It exists throughout society. With this in mind,



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the Institute is supporting research on the **policing of corruption in licensing and regulatory agencies.**

Related to the problem of corruption is **internal police discipline**, another area where police managers receive inadequate help from the textbooks. There is a need for an effective system of rules and procedures that is fair, rational, and legal. An Institute study has addressed this problem, and model rules are being tested in two cities.

Other Institute research designed to improve police programming is studying the sociology of the precinct, contract law enforcement, police referral systems, the impact of civil service, and police strikes. The **Sociology of the Precinct** is attempting to study the police precinct as a social system, which operates according to a code of rules, and to analyze how the precinct influences the operation of the entire department. The **Contract Law Enforcement** study examines the practice of jurisdictions' obtaining police services by contracting with an agency in another area. This practice offers both opportunities and pitfalls for the smaller community.

Police Referral Systems research addresses the problem that little information now exists about the effect of different organizational arrangements or policies for handling the large volume of social service cases that come to the attention of local police agencies. Wide variations exist within agencies on how to handle these cases.

The **Civil Service Systems** study is analyzing both the positive and the negative aspects of civil service systems and attempting to prescribe acceptable and workable modifications. The study of **Police Strikes** is intended to provide information that will help the police community deal with labor disputes as effectively as possible.

Taken together, these studies are attempting to build on existing knowledge to assist in modernizing police management practices. While better qualified and better trained police managers are certainly needed in many jurisdictions, individuals cannot do the job alone. More effective police management systems are essential, and the Institute is working to expand the knowledge base in this area.

Police Operations

Institute-supported research on patrol, on criminal investigations, and on special operational problems is casting new light on the management of police operations. This new understanding promises over time to assist in reshaping the character of police operations.

Patrol

Questions about the traditional efficacy of police patrol concepts have been raised by several significant studies. The concept primarily at issue is **traditional preventive patrol**, which has been explored

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in three important studies: the **Proactive-Reactive Patrol Study**, conducted for The Police Foundation in Kansas City, Mo.; the **Response Time Study** undertaken for the National Institute in Kansas City, Mo.; and the **Split-Force Patrol Experiment** being conducted for the National Institute in Wilmington, Del.

Traditional preventive patrol uses uniformed police officers who patrol at random in assigned geographical areas. They respond to calls for service and, in the remaining available time, drive their vehicles or walk their beats for preventive patrol purposes. The assumption is that the patrols create a feeling of police omnipresence and thus deter potential criminals. By intercepting crimes in progress, the general patrol officer also suppresses crime. At the same time, the patrol officer on the beat is thought to be in a good position to respond rapidly to a call for service.

Some police administrators have been dissatisfied with traditional preventive patrol because these assumptions are open to question. They are concerned about the cost effectiveness of the traditional concept and with the desirability of developing more effective strategies. Until recent experiments, common sense and ad hoc experience have been the administrator's only guides, and these may conflict. On the one hand, the traditional view holds that conspicuous patrol—involving highly distinctive uniforms and marked vehicles—seems the most effective way to deter the potential criminal. Recent experience in a few departments, on the other hand, has seemed to indicate the efficacy of supplementary patrol in casual clothes (e.g., New York City) and of city-wide patrol in the less visible blazers (e.g., Menlo Park, Calif.), both of which appeared to increase the feeling of omnipresence and augment community satisfaction.

The same uncertainty is felt about the chance of interception during patrol. Interceptions sometimes do occur. The anecdotal evidence of the station house is strong, despite the relative infrequency of such occurrences. In reality, the randomly patrolling officer has a small chance of intercepting a crime in progress, particularly as so many crimes occur in private places. The mathematics of probability are against it, as Richard Larson in his **Urban Police Patrol Analysis**, and others, have shown.

The same sort of uneasiness is felt about response time. There are situations where a fast response has been a matter of life or death, and yet it seems ludicrous to rush with sirens and lights to a burglary that took place hours before. Intuitively, one feels that people "out there on patrol" will get there quicker than if the police operated on a fire-station basis. Fire departments do not patrol. Nevertheless, they usually respond quickly enough to meet their goals.

Research in Kansas City and Wilmington, and other experiments, are now beginning to shed light on these issues.

The Police Foundation's **Proactive-Reactive Experiment** in the Kansas City Police Department has cast serious doubt on the effectiveness of traditional preventive patrol. In the words of former Kansas City Police Chief Joseph McNamara, it has shown that "routine patrol in marked police cars has little value in preventing crime or making citizens feel safe," and that the substantial amount of time spent on routine preventive patrol might be devoted to more productive assignments.

(The experiment on which these conclusions are based is detailed in **The Kansas City Preventive**

Patrol Experiment: A Summary Report and a Technical Report, George L. Kelling, et al., The Police Foundation, Washington, D.C., 1974.)

A 15-beat segment of the city was used for the experiment. Five of the beats were designated as reactive: officers responded only to calls for service and preventive patrol was discontinued. Five matched beats were control areas: preventive patrol was maintained at normal levels. Five were designated as proactive areas: preventive patrol was increased up to three times the normal levels. Victimization surveys were conducted to measure unreported crime. Community surveys were undertaken to assess citizen and business satisfaction. Reported crime and other data were analyzed. In general, the differences between the three types of beats (i.e., the three levels of patrol coverage) were not significant in terms of reported and unreported crime, of citizen satisfaction, and of citizens' perceptions of their own security.

It should be noted that the validity of this study has been questioned. The most significant criticisms concern the location of the cars withdrawn from reactive beats when not responding to calls for service; the small sizes of the beats, presenting uncertainty concerning public perceptions of variations in patrol levels; and the small sizes utilized in the surveys. (For an assessment of the study, see the report of the National Evaluation Program Phase I study, **A Review and Assessment of Traditional Preventive Patrol**, University City Science Center, Philadelphia, Pa., 1975). Whatever its limitations, the Proactive-Reactive Patrol study does appear to suggest, at a minimum, that police commanders have



far more discretion in deploying patrol forces than many of them suppose.

The **Response Time Study**, supported by the National Institute and also conducted in the Kansas City Police Department, is changing our understanding of the nature of police response time. We now know that police response cannot be considered without also examining citizen mobilization time—the time that elapses from the moment the citizen observes that a crime is in progress or has taken place and when it is reported to the police. Equally important, the study's examination of the relationship between speed of response and crime outcome has significant implications for patrol allocation, for communications technology, and for citizen reporting.

Through the use of civilian observers, analyses of the communications center's tapes, and interviews with victims and witnesses, the project collected a wealth of data. To date, only the data on some 979 Part I crimes has been analyzed. The remaining data is on Part II crime calls, non-crime medical emergency calls, potential crime calls (e.g., disturbance, prowler, suspicious persons), and general service calls.

The results of the Part I data analysis include the following:

- Arrests occurred in only a small percentage of all Part I crimes. In only 3.7 percent of Part I crime incidents could at least one arrest be attributed to rapid response.
- Rapid citizen reporting had a greater effect on suspect apprehension than did police response.
- Police responded faster to calls involving serious injuries than those with minor injuries, although citizens took longer to report incidents involving serious injuries than incidents involving non-serious injuries.
- Citizen mobilization time was the major determinant of witness availability.
- In 76 percent of all cases, citizens encountered problems in reporting crime to the police.
- In 75 percent of all cases, citizens were responsible for the most common cause of delays: they talked to at least one other person before calling the police.
- Citizens did not use special emergency numbers for reporting *only* emergency calls.

The **Wilmington Split Force Experiment** is an attempt to look beyond the response time research. It was designed to test and evaluate a selected patrol strategy, Split Force Patrol, a concept that has been discussed for some time. At the same time, it sought to develop and evaluate a directed or planned approach for improving preventive patrol. Directed preventive patrol in this sense contrasts with the traditional practice of leaving preventive patrol essentially to the discretion of the individual officer. It involves the prior planning of patrol activity in terms of specific goals and tasks.



For one year, the patrol force in Wilmington was split into two parts. One part responded only to calls for service; it undertook no preventive patrol activity. The other part was responsible only for preventive patrol and did not respond to calls for service. (Naturally, there were situations in which this distinction was not maintained, as in the case of certain types of extreme emergencies.) In this way, an effort was made to isolate, improve, and analyze preventive patrol. The results of the study are currently being analyzed.

Along with the two Kansas City experiments (the South Patrol and Response Time studies), Wilmington sets a new pattern. No longer can the modern patrol administrator merely be content to do today whatever was done yesterday. Serious and documented doubts have been raised about patrol and the substantial opportunity for experimentation available to most police departments has been demonstrated. Like Wilmington, the modern police department should look more closely at its patrol methods, trying new approaches and collecting hard evaluative data on these alternatives.

Institute research on patrol has also included studies of the current state-of-the-art and practice of patrol, and an analysis of the utilization of women on patrol. As part of the Institute's National Evaluation Program, studies were supported to examine **traditional preventive patrol, specialized patrol operations, and neighborhood team policing.** The use of **women on patrol** was researched in New York by the Vera Institute of Justice.

Criminal Investigations

Detective bureaus typically have been one of the areas of the police service most resistant to change, and they have been the guardians not only of tradition but also of some questionable management practices. Criminal investigation activities are a good target for research and for reform, for police administrators have become increasingly concerned about investigative productivity.

Two Institute-supported studies have addressed this issue. The Rand Corporation surveyed **detective management and operational practices** in departments throughout the country. The Stanford Research Institute developed a **felony investigation decision model**. Final reports were produced in 1976.

Essentially, the Rand Study is an evaluation of detective and investigative practices in the United States, and its conclusions confirm the suspicions of many police administrators that the investigative function can be much better managed. Among its findings:

- More than half of all serious reported crime receives no more than superficial attention from investigators.
- An investigator's time is mainly taken up in work on cases that experience indicates will not be solved.
- For solved cases, the investigator spends more time on post-arrest processing rather than the pre-arrest phase.
- The single most important determinant of whether a case will be solved is the information the victim supplies to the immediately-responding patrol officer.
- Of solved cases in which the offender is not identifiable at the time of the initial report, almost all are cleared as a result of routine police procedures.
- In many departments, investigators do not consistently and thoroughly document the key evidentiary facts, with untoward consequences for prosecutors.

The Stanford Research Institute study focuses on identifying unproductive cases: cases that should not be investigated beyond the preliminary investigation phase because chances of solution are too slight. Here is an area where police reality and public myth collide, because the notion that some crimes are difficult or even impossible to clear (not because they are "perfect" crimes but because there is nothing to work on) is hard for the public to accept. Police departments have tended to disguise this reality by involving detectives in considerable activity whose main purpose is to satisfy public expectations. At the same time, departments and investigators actually have tended to do the only possible thing: concentrate on cases where possibilities for results are the greatest and do whatever public relations work is necessary on the remainder. The problem is that the criteria for selecting cases with high-payoff potential are sometimes dubious, involving

the political clout of the victim(s), the public attention given the case, and the ad hoc judgments of the investigator. In the face of increasing crime and limited manpower, the necessity of closing unproductive cases after preliminary investigations is more clearly apparent. Most robberies and burglaries in New York City, for instance, are in this category. Obviously, there is a need to give closer attention to the criteria on which the go/no-go judgments are based. The Stanford Research Institute has done pioneer work in this area by developing decision tables for some major crimes.

Institute research has also focused on improving **police operating procedures** to increase both effectiveness and conformity to constitutional standards. Research conducted in the Boston Police Department has focused on such problems as searches of automobiles and searches incident to arrest. Current work will examine the structuring of discretion in selective enforcement, affecting both investigation and patrol.

Special Problems

A variety of special problems in managing police operations is being examined by Institute-supported research. These relate to illicit substance control, police services to the elderly, crisis intervention, the policing of prostitution, polygraphs, and the mug file problem.

The **Illicit Substance Control** study is intended to identify various goals and strategies in narcotics law enforcement on the local level and to assess the effectiveness of these approaches. The project focuses on policies and practices directed toward the control of "hard drugs" (opiates). The research has two phases. In the exploratory or pilot phase, an in-depth investigation of a selected police department in a medium to large-size urban area will be made to obtain an overview of its goals, policies, means, administrative controls, and resource allocation. A second phase will then evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the various strategies employed by a number of departments in their drug enforcement activities. The final report will clarify drug enforcement options for police departments by identifying those now exercised and noting their consequences and cost. The report also will offer operational alternatives for various goals tied to cost-benefit analyses.

The problem of crime and the elderly is being studied from four perspectives: victimization, fear, dissatisfaction of the elderly with police services, and difficulties encountered by the police in delivering services to older citizens. **Police Services to the Elderly** is based upon specific information from communities describing police-elderly interactions. It is being supplemented by a national review and assessment of on-going police and community programs designed to improve these interactions. The study includes: a national review of criminal justice programs related to the elderly; a 3-city community survey of the elderly; a 3-city police officer survey; the development and analysis of case studies of police interactions with the elderly; an analysis of de-

partmental records on police-elderly encounters; and professional assessments of factors interfering in police-elderly transactions. This study, begun recently, will produce: a comprehensive analysis of police-elderly interactions; guidelines and programs for the police and elderly to address the identified problems; a methodology for identifying and managing problems related to police interactions with special segments of the population; and a general statement of the issues involved in providing special police services to particular segments of the population.

Several years ago, Institute-sponsored research produced **crisis intervention techniques** to help police intervene more effectively in family disputes. In light of the success of family crisis intervention, a new study is exploring the feasibility and practicality of applying crisis intervention principles and practices in other aspects of police work, such as dealing with robbery and burglary victims and with the relatives of homicide victims.

Police administrators also need more help from researchers in developing and evaluating ways to deal with sensitive crimes such as prostitution. The **Policing of Prostitution** study is designed to give law enforcement administrators and practitioners a foundation of knowledge on which to base appropriate prostitution prevention and control strategies. The study should help administrators make operational decisions about objectives, priority setting and resource allocation, interpretation of statute and case law, selection and effectiveness of enforcement tactics, control of corruption, and response to external pressure from political and allied sources. The primary source of data will be five cities that will provide a variety of perspectives on policing of prostitution.

The **Polygraph** project, conducted by the University of Utah, has provided information on the effectiveness of the polygraph and has raised questions about the quality of instruction in polygraphy schools.

The **Mug File** project also addressed a special problem of police operations. The study is based on the premise that it is easier for witnesses to identify a suspect from a small number of mug shots rather than from many volumes of photos. Prolonged searching of photos leads to confusion and fatigue on the part of the witness, thus reducing the likelihood that a suspect will be identified. The first step in solving the problem has been completed. A computer system has been designed to quickly and accurately select from a large library of mug shots a small number of photos that closely fit the description of a suspect.

This research and development project was primarily a laboratory experiment, generally using computers and other equipment owned by the University of Houston. The follow-on study, however, will design an appropriate system that law enforcement agencies can install. This will not only be able to retrieve a "look-alike" but will also provide information on characteristics such as estimates of height, weight, age, sex, race, and type of crime committed.

The system will be flexible enough to allow agencies to include factors unique to their technique and filing system. Testing and evaluation of this project will be conducted in a division of the Houston Police Department.



Law Enforcement System Overview

The first two major thrusts of the Institute's police research program are directed at police management and police operations. The third building block is designed to increase knowledge by a general overall look at law enforcement.

In this area, the Institute has commissioned books on the police function: Jonathan Rubinstein's **City Police** and, more recently, Herman Goldstein's **Policing in a Free Society**.

The Institute has also supported studies examining policing in its widest sense. The study, **Policing of Corruption in Licensing and Regulatory Agencies**, conducted by the Stanford Research Institute, is an example. This study will recommend detection, prevention, and enforcement measures to help public officials combat the problem of corruption in regulatory agencies. The emphasis is on identifying and describing typical patterns of corruption in licensing and inspection functions of regulatory agencies.

The research is in three phases. Phase I is exploring existing knowledge about corruption in regulatory agencies and will compile an annotated bibliography of the corruption literature. Phase II will involve a detailed analysis of regulatory processes, inducements to illegalities, and control mechanisms for policing regulatory agencies. The final phase will involve filling identified gaps in the published literature, and completing a report for public officials to use in combatting corruption related to licensing and inspection.

CURRENT POLICE RESEARCH PROJECTS

Additional information on the following projects may be obtained from the grantee whose name and address appears at the end of each summary. Published reports, when available, can be purchased from the Government Printing Office. For information concerning the availability and price of publications, write to Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402

Where noted, reports are available, on loan, from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS), P.O. Box 24036, S.W. Post Office, Washington, D.C. 20024.

Taking Corruption Out of the Closet

This project is developing materials to help police administrators cope with internal corruption problems. Among the materials being developed are a manual for police administrators on developing and managing an anti-corruption program, a number of research papers which examine different aspects of police corruption, and an extensive bibliography and literature review of police corruption.

The first product will be **Developing and Managing An Anti-Corruption Program: A Manual for Police Administrators**. It will address such issues as defining, locating, and measuring corruption; policy and program development; and program implementation. This manual is intended to help administrators in developing a systematic approach to anti-corruption management. This approach involves activities such as cataloguing corruption hazards (tow trucks, bars, construction sites, etc.), specifying indicators of the level of corrupt activity for each hazard, and then selecting the appropriate management strategies. Examples of management alternatives are the creation of "turnarounds"; the policy of requiring a proportion of self-initiated investigations by internal affairs units; and the use of field associates. The manual will also guide administrators in developing a realistic and operationally meaningful definition of corruption that will permit them to focus on specific types of corruption.

Among the monographs to be produced are:

**The Functional Approach to Police Corruption
Police Socialization and the Psychological
Costs of Police Corruption**

The Role of the Media in Controlling Corruption

**A Police Administrator Looks at Corruption
Police Integrity: The Role of Psychological
Screening of Applicants**

Developing a Police Anti-Corruption Capability, and

A Six-City Comparison of Responses to a Questionnaire on Police Corruption.

An annotated bibliography provides a selective review of the literature and theory pertinent to police corruption. Gaps in the current literature and future research needs are also identified.

Police Anti-Corruption Management Program, John Jay College of Criminal Justice, 444 West 56th St., New York, N.Y. 10019. Grant No. 75-NI-99-0083

Procedures for Internal Police Discipline Developed

Police officers are regularly exposed to situations that may result in accusations of improper conduct. Effective standards, well administered, may help to reconcile the often conflicting needs for accountability and for procedural protection.

An earlier Institute-supported study, conducted by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, developed a set of prototype rules of conduct and procedures for internal police discipline. Based upon an in-depth study of 17 law enforcement agencies, rules and procedures were prepared that are felt to reflect a rational, fair, and legal approach to a system of internal disciplinary action, which will lead to the formulation of model rules of conduct.

Currently, the rules are being subjected to a 15-month field evaluation in two cities, Denver, Colo., and Albuquerque, N.M. The objective is to assess the effectiveness of the rules in an operational setting.

Implementation and Evaluation of Prototype Rules and Procedures for Police Discipline, International Association of Chiefs of Police, 11 Firstfield Rd., Gaithersburg, Md. 20760. Grant No. 76-NI-99-0104

(Managing for Effective Discipline, including a final report and an executive summary, International Association of Chiefs of Police, 1975. Available: International Association of Chiefs of Police, Gaithersburg, Md.)

Performance Measurement System To Be Tested

An Institute-supported study, conducted by the American Justice Institute, is developing a system to enable police administrators and others to better evaluate the effectiveness of police operations.

Program evaluation systems now in use not only measure police program effectiveness poorly, but

actually distort police activity. The Uniform Crime Report statistics are an example. Such data are inadequate in that they consider only reported crime; they consider only anti-crime activity, and they "measure" activity which results not only from police action but also from other factors such as luck, social forces, and the activities of other elements of the criminal justice system.

The lack of an effective program performance evaluation system was reported by the 1973 National Advisory Commission on Criminal Justice Standards and Goals. It recommended that "a national study be undertaken to determine methods to evaluate and measure the effectiveness of individual police agencies in performing their crime control functions."

This study first identified and ranked the five basic objectives of police work. Then productivity measures were developed to correspond with these objectives. The resulting performance measurement system attempts to solve some of the problems associated with the traditional measures of police work.

The system will be refined and tested in three major cities. Once implemented and validated, the system will give public administrators a new tool for evaluating police performance and determining alternative allocation of resources.

Implementation of Police Program Performance Measures, American Justice Institute, Sacramento, Calif. 95814. Grant No. 76-NI-99-0119

Re-Evaluating Police Response Time

An Institute-supported study of response time, conducted by the Kansas City Police Department, promises to reshape our understanding of the significance and nature of response time. The study has implications for the use of communications technology, for citizen reporting, and for patrol allocation.

Using civilian observers — unlike earlier studies on the subject that relied on officer self-reporting — and following analysis of the communications center tapes and interviews with victims and witnesses, the Kansas City Police Department collected data on Part I Crime, other crime, potential crime, medical emergency, and other incidents where police responded to citizen calls for service. The citizen and police response times were analyzed in terms of outcomes such as arrests, handling of injuries, and citizen satisfaction.

Findings and interpretations from the study include the following:

- For the first time, response time was examined in its broadest context, including the time it takes a citizen to report an incident. This is particularly noteworthy, since citizen mobilization

time was found to be longer than any other response time interval.

- Overall, more than 46 percent of the total response time continuum, from the time the citizen was free to call the police until the field officer began his investigation on scene, was consumed by citizen reporting. Long citizen reporting delays tended to nullify the potential impact of rapid police response.
- Citizens were generally very satisfied with police response time. Citizens were satisfied with police response time in 86.3 percent of the cases, and they were very satisfied in 70.2 percent of the cases. Dissatisfaction with police response time occurred in only 13.3 percent of the cases.
- Citizens tended to be more dissatisfied when they thought faster response time could have made a difference in the outcome of the crime.
- Citizens reported problems in reporting crimes to the police in 76 percent of all cases.
- Citizens were responsible for most of the problems that caused delay. 75 percent of the problems resulting in reporting delays stemmed from an exchange of additional information, advice, or instructions with other citizens prior to calling the police.
- Problems with police communications were the least frequent cause of reporting delays. Problems in communicating with the police dispatcher about the incident occurred in only 7 percent of the cases.

Response Time Analysis, Kansas City Police Department, Kansas City, Mo. Grant No. 73-NI-99-0047SI

(Response Time Analysis Study, Kansas City Police Department, available through the NCJRS Loan Program.)

Wilmington Tests Split Force Patrol

The Wilmington Police Department is now concluding an experiment designed to test and evaluate a selected patrol strategy — **Split Force Patrol**. A significant by-product of the research was the development and evaluation of a directed or planned approach for improving preventive patrol.

The experiment was conducted over an 18-month period on a city-wide basis. Wilmington split its patrol force into two parts. One responded only to complaints and requests for service; it undertook no preventive patrol activity. The other part was responsible only for preventive patrol; it did not respond to calls for service. Naturally, there were situations in which this distinction could not be maintained, as in certain types of extreme emergencies.

As part of the study, Wilmington developed improved approaches for planning and implementing directed preventive patrol activities. Directed prev-

entive patrol in this sense contrasts with the traditional practice of leaving preventive patrol essentially to the discretion of individual officers.

Patrol activities conducted as part of the experiment were evaluated in terms of crime control and service effectiveness. The results of the experiment are now being analyzed, and the Institute anticipates that the findings will be useful for strengthening patrol operations.

Tentatively, the study suggests that specialization, rather than the generalist approach, is useful and feasible; and that it enhances accountability of officers, which contributes significantly to patrol effectiveness. Wilmington has indicated its intention to continue and further develop the split-force strategy after conclusion of the experiment.

Wilmington Split-Force Patrol, City of Wilmington Police Department, Wilmington, Del. 19801. Grant No. 75-NI-99-0080.

Criminal Investigation Process Analyzed

The Rand Corporation, under an Institute grant, conducted a two-year evaluation and analysis of the criminal investigation function. Its findings question traditional practices in this area.

After surveying the investigative function in some 153 police departments, the researchers concluded:

- The single most important determinant 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.
- Of those cases that are ultimately cleared but in which the perpetrator is not identified at the time of the initial police incident report, almost all are cleared as a result of routine police procedures.
- Differences in investigative training, staffing, workload, and procedures appear to have no appreciable effect on crime, arrest, or clearance rates.
- The method by which police investigators are organized (i.e., team policing, specialists vs. generalists, patrolmen-investigators) cannot be related to variations in crime, arrest, and clearance rates.
- Substantially more than half of all serious reported crimes receive no more than superficial attention from investigators.
- The data consistently reveal that an investigator's time is largely consumed in reviewing reports, documenting files, and attempting to locate and interview victims on cases that experience shows will not be solved. For cases that are solved (i.e., a suspect is identified), an in-

vestigator spends more time in post-clearance processing than he does in identifying the perpetrator.

- Most police departments collect more physical evidence than can be productively processed. The analysis shows that allocating more resources to increasing the processing capabilities of the department can lead to more identifications than some other investigative actions.
- In relatively few departments do investigators consistently and thoroughly document the key evidentiary facts that reasonably assure that the prosecutor can obtain a conviction on the most serious applicable charges.
- Police failure to document a case investigation thoroughly may contribute to a higher dismissal rate and a weakening of the prosecutor's plea bargaining position.
- Investigative strike forces have a significant potential to increase arrest rates for a few difficult target offenses, provided they remain concentrated on activities for which they are uniquely qualified; in practice, however, they are frequently diverted elsewhere.

The researchers recommended that police administrators consider the following:

- Reduce follow-up investigation on all cases except those involving the most serious offenses.
- Assign generalist-investigators, who would handle the obvious leads in routine cases, to the local operations commander.
- Establish a Major Offenders Unit to investigate serious crimes.
- Assign serious-offense investigations to closely supervised teams rather than to individual investigators.
- Strengthen evidence-processing capabilities.
- Increase the use of information processing systems in lieu of investigators.
- Employ strike forces selectively and judiciously.
- Place post-arrest (i.e., suspect in custody) investigations under the authority of the prosecutor.
- Initiate programs to impress on citizens the crucial role they play in crime solution.

The Criminal Investigation Process, The Rand Corporation, 1700 Main St., Santa Monica, Calif. Grant No. 73-NI-99-0037.

Volume I: Summary and Policy Implications, by Peter W. Greenwood and Joan Petersilia, 1975;

Volume II: Survey of Municipal and County Police Departments, by Jan M. Chaiken, 1975; and

Volume III: Observations and Analysis, by Peter W. Greenwood, Jan M. Chaiken, Joan Petersilia, and Linda Prusoff, 1975. Available: The Rand Corporation, 1700 Main St., Santa Monica, Calif.

Tests Measure Polygraph Accuracy

How useful are polygraphs? To answer that question, this research project conducted two laboratory and six field experiments to investigate:

- the general accuracy and reliability of polygraph tests;
- the utility of various physiological measures;
- the adequacy of current field polygraphists' techniques; and
- the validity of the belief that psychopaths could deceive the polygraph.

According to the study, the polygraph can be over 90 percent accurate in detecting truth or deception in criminal cases. In one field experiment conducted at a provincial prison in British Columbia, Canada, polygraph tests were administered to 48 male prisoners. All of the volunteers were convicted felons and half were clinically diagnosed as psychopathic. Half the prisoners were instructed to commit a mock crime: "stealing" a \$20 bill from a desk drawer in a room that was off-limits to inmates. All the prisoners were then told to deny the theft, and anyone who appeared "truthful" on the polygraph test received a \$20 bonus. The principal investigator reported the polygraph tests to be 95.5 percent accurate.

A related series of experiments measured the accuracy of the polygraph when used with actual criminal suspects. Polygraph tests were administered to 102 criminal suspects from Utah and Nevada charged with a variety of offenses ranging from drunk driving to first-degree murder. A panel of judicial experts—two defense attorneys, two prosecutors and a judge—was assigned to review each case and reach a preliminary verdict, which was compared to the polygraph results.

In cases where the panel and polygraph reached a conclusive decision, the agreement rate was 86 percent. When the actual judicial outcome was compared to the polygraph results, the agreement rate rose to 88 percent.

These research findings offer an empirical basis for assessing the general effectiveness of the polygraph. Although the findings are clear, the policy implications are a matter for further explication. The principal investigator believes that polygraph tests should be considered as another form of expert testimony. Others would limit its use to that of an investigative aid. Whatever the outcome, this study has provided a sounder data base from which policy decisions may be made.

Validity and Reliability of Detection of Deception, Department of Psychology, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah 84112. Grant No. 75-NI-99-0001

Making Mug Shot ID's Easier

Witnesses and victims often are asked to try to identify a suspect from the police file of mug shots, which may number in the hundreds. This time-consuming task can lead to confusion and fatigue and reduce the likelihood of correct identification.

The first phase of this study designed a "first generation" computer system that could quickly and accurately select from a large mug shot library a small number of photos closely resembling the description of a suspect. This phase was primarily a laboratory experiment.

In the second phase, a more advanced "second-generation" system was designed, suitable for installation and operation in a police department. This second-generation system not only retrieves "look alikes" but will also provide information on characteristics such as estimates of height, weight, age, sex, race, type of crime committed, etc. In addition, the system can be adapted for different police departments' techniques and filing systems.

A Man-Computer System for Solution of the Mug File Problem — Phase II, Department of Engineering, University of Houston, Houston, Tex. 77004, Grant No. 76-NI-99-0012

Guidelines for Police Discretion

Police officers, just as much as judges or prosecutors, must make decisions affecting the course of justice — decisions such as arrest, search, and the seizure of evidence. Increasingly, police administrators are under pressure to develop and enunciate policies for structuring this enormous discretionary power. Institute-sponsored research, conducted by the Boston Police Department in conjunction with the Boston University School of Law, is examining how this discretion can be structured in the use of investigative procedures. This builds on the work of the Arizona State University Model Rules Project and the American Bar Association Standards relating to the Urban Police Function.

Major findings include the following:

- Police guidelines, like those developed by Arizona State University, are needed to guide police officers in structuring discretion and to assist courts in defining reasonable police practices.
- If guidelines are to be useful to police officers, they must be a practical response to what police officers need. They must, therefore, be developed with the active participation of police officers.
- It is possible to develop a policymaking process in a police department in which outsiders participate. The method used in this pro-

ject is not the only one that can be used, but whatever methods are adopted ought to be tailored to a specific police department.

- Guidelines on criminal investigative procedures ought to describe what is permissible, not what is forbidden. Affirmative guidance appears to be more useful than negative prohibitions.
- Successful implementation of investigative guidelines will undoubtedly require a commitment by supervisors and command officers, creative training programs which involve supervisors, clear indicators that the guide-

lines represent the best interests of patrol officers, and close cooperation with courts and prosecutors on the guidelines.

- Research and development in police policy-making continues to be important. Special attention ought to be given to questions about selective enforcement of the criminal law and enforcement priorities, particularly in sensitive areas.

Project on Criminal Investigation Procedures, Boston Police Department and Boston University School of Law, Boston, Mass. Grant No. 76-NI-99-0129.

POLICE DIVISION STAFF



POLICE DIVISION STAFF (picture at left): Kay Monte, David Farmer, and Phillip Travers; (picture at right): William Saulsbury. The Police Division is part of the National Institute's Office of Research Programs.

David J. Farmer, Director of the Police Division, was formerly Special Assistant to the Police Commissioner and Director of Operations Management in the New York City Police Department, commanding the 250-man field operations office. He has also served as a Public Safety Commissioner for Park Forest South, Illinois, and as a consultant to some 50 law enforcement agencies throughout the nation and to the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders. He is the author of *Civil Disorder Control*, and has been an Adjunct Professor at American University. He received a B.S. degree from the London School of Economics and Political Science and an M.A. degree from the University of Toronto, and has done additional post-graduate work at the Universities of Toronto and London.

Kay J. Monte is a social scientist in the Police Division. Prior to joining the National Institute, she was Special Assistant to the Mayor's Criminal Justice Council in San Francisco and a consultant to the Alameda Criminal Justice Planning Board. Other research experience has been with Arthur D. Little, Inc., and MENTEC Corporation of San Francisco.

She received B.A. and M.A. degrees from Howard University, and has performed additional post-graduate study at the University of California at Berkeley.

William E. Saulsbury is a social scientist in the Police Division. He is a former officer with the Metropolitan Police Department of Washington, D.C. While with the police department he was assigned as a patrol officer as well as serving for a period in the department's Operations Planning Office. Prior to joining the department, he received a B.A. in Sociology from Catholic University. He also received a Masters of City and Regional Planning from Rutgers University. He worked at the Center for Urban Police Research while attending Rutgers University.

W. Phillip Travers, a social scientist in the Police Division, received a B.S. in criminal justice from Northeastern University and an M.P.A. from the University of Missouri at Kansas City. His research experience has focused on police operations. Before joining the Institute he worked in the Kansas City, Mo., Police Department on studies of preventive patrol and response time.