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**THE BALTIMORE COMMUNITY POLICING EXPERIMENT:**

**SUMMARY REPORT**

by

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**Draft Report  
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**ACQUISITIONS**

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## ABSTRACT

For one year, the Baltimore Police Department implemented two community policing strategies: foot patrol and "ombudsman policing," in which a foot patrol officer asked the residents for information about the most serious problems in an area and, working with residents and others, devised methods to address those problems.

Three areas in each of two neighborhoods, one in the southeast and one in the northwest part of the city, were selected for the experiment. Within each neighborhood, the three experimental areas were randomly assigned to receive either foot patrol, ombudsman policing, or no new police programs.

The basic evaluation design was based upon the comparison of attitudinal and victimization measures collected through in-person interviews with a panel of the same individuals before and twelve months after the introduction of the experimental treatments. In addition, monthly calls for police service and recorded crime data were collected and analyzed.

The most significant result was that ombudsman policing, as practiced with full-time staffing in the southeast area of the city, produced highly significant improvements in evaluations of police effectiveness and behavior, reduced perceptions of disorder, increased feelings of safety, and reduced awareness of victimization in the area. In the northwest area, ombudsman policing, staffed only part-time, produced a significant improvement in evaluations of police effectiveness but achieved none of the other desirable effects found in the southeast. Foot patrol had no significant effect on evaluations of police, had mixed effects on perceived crime and disorder, and led to some reductions in awareness of crime.

## THE PROBLEM: THE NEED TO EVALUATE COMMUNITY POLICING

In their beginnings, urban police were expected to remain close to, and draw their support from, the citizens they served. Through the years, however, frequently as a consequence of well-intentioned reforms--such as the centralization of operations, narrowing of the functions assumed by the police, and upgrading of the quality of police personnel--the distance between police and the community grew ever wider. As a result, police officers assigned to an area may have little understanding of the priorities and concerns of peoples living or working there. This lack of information could cause officers to be unaware of, and therefore unresponsive to, important neighborhood problems. In turn, this may cause citizens to feel that police neither know nor care about them. At best, such distance limits cooperation between the police and the public they are hired to served. At worst, such "stranger policing" has been accused of causing urban riots.

Increased distance between police and the public can also impair crime prevention and fear reduction strategies that depend for their success on a joint effort between those two groups. Therefore, the reduction in trust that has resulted from the distance can be expected to have contributed to an increase in both the fear and the actual incidence of crime.

"Community policing" has been widely proposed as a means of addressing this problem of distance between the police and the community. Although this general term has been used to describe everything from Neighborhood Watch to storefront police stations to increased liaison with

minority communities, the most frequently mentioned community policing strategies have been foot patrol and "ombudsman policing," assigning patrol officers to identify and address the most pressing problems in particular neighborhoods.

Although much has been written about the possible advantages of foot patrol and "ombudsman policing," few rigorous evaluations of these strategies exist. Even those studies that have been conducted have generally failed to test these approaches in a variety of different types of neighborhoods.

#### THE BALTIMORE COMMUNITY POLICING EXPERIMENT

Recognizing that the distance between police and the public was increasing, and that empirical research about how to narrow that distance was sparse, the Baltimore Police Department agreed to conduct an experiment to test the relative effectiveness of foot patrol and ombudsman policing in two very different types of neighborhoods. Furthermore, they agreed to allow the Police Foundation to conduct an evaluation of the effectiveness of these two types of community policing.

A multi-stage process was used to ensure that the experimental areas were both comparable to each other and representative of a broad range of socioeconomic neighborhoods. Based on a factor analysis of a number of variables, two Baltimore neighborhoods were selected for the study. One neighborhood, in the southeast part of the city, consisted largely of rowhouses inhabited by immigrants from Central Europe and Greece who had lived there

for several years and who had few children living with them. The other neighborhood, in the northwest part of the city, consisted mainly of single unit homes inhabited almost exclusively by middle class blacks, many with young children.

Within each neighborhood, three areas, matched on the basis of size, number of units, and recorded crime, were selected for involvement in the experiment. Within each neighborhood, each area, containing 500 to 600 households on approximately 16 square blocks, was randomly assigned to receive either foot patrol, ombudsman policing, or no new police programs.

After carefully enumerating all households in each area, samples of households were randomly selected in which interviews would be conducted. Within each household, individuals were randomly selected and interviewed. Approximately 150 persons were interviewed in each of the six neighborhoods at wave one during the spring of 1986. Attempts were made to reinterview the same individuals a year later, creating a panel sample of 636 persons.

### OUTCOME MEASURES

Survey questionnaires were designed to collect information about the following outcome measures:

- o Recalled Program Awareness
- o Evaluation of Police Service in Area
- o Perceived Area Social Disorder Problems
- o Perceived Area Property Crime Problems
- o Perceived Likelihood of Area Crime
- o Perceived Safety of Area
- o Worry About Crime in Area
- o Crime Avoidance Behaviors in Area
- o Utilization of Crime Prevention Devices

- o Familiarity with Neighbors**
- o Cohesiveness of Neighborhood**
- o Satisfaction with Area**
- o Victimization in Area**
- o Knowledge of Victimization in Area**

In addition, data concerning calls for police service and recorded crime were collected from January 1984 through June 1987.

### **PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION**

Implementation of the foot patrol and ombudsman policing programs began on July 13, 1986 and continued through July 18, 1987. Foot patrol officers generally worked from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The department, however, was unable to assign a full-time officer to walk foot patrol in either experimental area. In the Northwest District, the foot patrol area was patrolled approximately 25 hours per week; in the Southeast District, coverage ranged from 15 to 30 hours per week.

In each foot patrol area, an officer would walk through the assigned beat at his or her discretion, concentrating somewhat more heavily on the locations with business establishments and recognized trouble spots. They would occasionally stop in a shop or a residence for coffee and conversation. In the Northwest District, the foot patrol assignment was shared among several, generally young, officers, most of whom concentrated heavily on their law enforcement and order maintenance functions. They therefore spent much of their time dispersing groups of youths on street corners and reducing other signs of disorder.

With few exceptions, one officer, a veteran of 26 years on the department, was responsible for foot patrol duties in the Southeast District. Although he paid attention to disorder problems, he spent much of his time communicating with residents and merchants in his area.

Officers assigned to ombudsman policing were foot patrol officers with a mission: to determine what the major problems of their area were and, working with the people in the neighborhood and other public and private agencies, to devise methods to address those problems. In addition to walking foot patrol, ombudsman officers were expected to attend community meetings and talk to residents, merchants, and patrons in the neighborhood to acquire an understanding of the people and their concerns. Although the ombudsman officers generally worked from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., they were allowed, with their supervisor's approval, to alter their schedule as they found it necessary.

In their discussions with citizens, ombudsman police officers used a questionnaire on which they asked what the resident thought were the two most serious problems in the area, how those problems affected them or their family, what caused those problems, and what could be done to solve the problems. The officer was then expected to provide a recommendation for each problem identified and, eventually, indicate on the questionnaire what action(s) had been taken. These questionnaires were reviewed by the officer's supervisor, who would discuss the officer's handling of the situation and add his comments on the instrument.



Implementation of ombudsman policing varied notably across the two experimental areas where it was implemented. In the Northwest District, the original officer assigned, a young female was replaced by a young male with a strong law enforcement orientation. Eager and aggressive, he preferred to patrol near the corners where he was most likely to be able to arrest drug dealers, break up groups of loiterers, and issue traffic tickets. He appeared to approach the other aspects of the job--interviewing citizens and attending community meetings--with less enthusiasm. Coverage of the post varied from 10 to 25 hours per week.

The ombudsman officer in the Southeast District, a 22 year department veteran, adopted his assigned area as if it were his own neighborhood. Unlike the other experimental areas, he patrolled his area almost 40 hours per week throughout the year. In addition, for the first seven months of the program, he received the half-time assistance of another officer responsible for keeping records, making phone calls, and providing other support as needed.

The Southeast District ombudsman quickly knew every citizen in his assigned by his or her first name. He recorded the days of their birth on his personal computer so he could surprise them with birthday greetings. He established close personal relationships with members of special police units and other public and private agencies whose assistance he might need. He rejuvenated the local blockwatch program, had trees trimmed, had trash removed, had vacant buildings boarded up. He changed his working hours to

be able personally to confront unruly juveniles and explain the consequences of their behavior to the neighborhood. Most strikingly, after years of bureaucratic inaction, the ombudsman officer organized a successful neighborhood campaign to have a dangerously collapsing street repaired.

Citizen exposure to the two types of programs varied greatly. According to the citizen surveys, approximately one-third of the residents of the Southeast ombudsman area recalled seeing an officer on foot within the past week. Approximately 16 percent of those living in each of the foot patrol areas, but only 3 percent of those in the Northwest ombudsman area, recalled seeing an officer on foot in the last week. This low level of visibility in the latter area may have been due to the fact that the foot patrol component of that program was confined largely to trouble-prone corners in non-residential sections of the neighborhood. Almost 64 percent of the residents of the Northwest ombudsman area, and over 74 percent of those in the Southeast ombudsman area, recalled an officer coming to their door to ask about their problems.

The majority of respondents in both ombudsman areas indicated they had no serious problems. The most frequently mentioned concerns were juveniles, environmental decay, disorder, drugs, and traffic.

## ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Four types of analysis were conducted:

1. To provide statistical indicators of overall program effects, multivariate regression analyses were conducted to test for differential changes in outcome measures between Wave 1 and Wave 2.
2. To test for differences in program effects across the two experimental areas, regression analyses were conducted including district as a predictor variable.
3. To test for possible subgroup-specific program effects, regression analyses allowing for the testing of treatment-covariate interaction effects were conducted.
4. Call for service and recorded crime data were subjected to interrupted time series analyses to determine if trends or levels were affected by program implementation.

The results of each type of analysis are summarized below.

### Analysis of Overall Program Effects

o Recalled Program Awareness. Significant program effects on police visibility in both the foot patrol and ombudsman program areas were found when data from all six experimental areas were combined. The same results were replicated in the three areas of the Northwest District. In the Southeast District, however, although there was a slight increase in visibility indicated in the foot patrol area and a large increase in the ombudsman policing area, neither increase was statistically significant.

Based on data from all six experimental areas, there were significant increases in perceived police presence in the ombudsman and foot patrol areas. Sizable effects were also produced in both the Northwest and the

Southeast areas, although the effect associated with foot patrol in the Northwest District was not significant at the .05 level.

Based on the analysis of data from all six areas combined, highly significant increases in the percent of residents who knew a police officer well occurred in both the ombudsman and foot patrol areas. At the district level, it is clear that the largest contribution to these effects came from the areas within the Southeast District, where dramatic, and highly significant, increases in knowledge of an officer took place in both the foot patrol and ombudsman areas. In both areas, approximately 60 percent of Wave 2 respondents said they knew an officer well enough to talk to them, about six times higher than was found at Wave 1.

In the Northwest District, on the other hand, a significant increase in knowledge of an officer occurred in the ombudsman policing area but no significant change took place in the foot patrol area. This differential effect may be due partly to the fact that foot patrol in the Southeast District was provided by the same officer throughout the year of program implementation, while in the Northwest District foot patrol was provided by a series of different individuals.

In both districts, the introduction of ombudsman policing was associated with significant increases in the number of respondents saying that a police officer had come to their door to inquire about local problems. This increase was notable in both the Northwest and Southeast districts as well as in the combined data.

o Evaluation of Police Service in Area. Statistically significant improvements in evaluations of police effectiveness were produced in both the Northwest and Southeast ombudsman policing areas, as well as in the combined data. No such effect was associated with the introduction of foot patrol.

A highly significant ombudsman policing program effect on the evaluation of police behavior was produced in the Southeast District. No other program effects were found at the district level. Because of the highly significant effect in the Southeast ombudsman area, however, the overall ombudsman program effect also proved to be statistically significant.

o Perceived Area Disorder Problems. There was a statistically significant reduction in perceived disorder problems in the Southeast ombudsman policing area; although the reduction in the Northwest ombudsman area was not significant, the reduction demonstrated in the combined data set did prove to be statistically significantly. There was a significant increase in perceived disorder problems in the foot patrol area in the Southeast District, a marginally significant increase associated with foot patrol in the Northwest District, and a significant increase in the combined data set.

o Perceived Area Property Crime Problems. Although there were marginally significant reductions associated with ombudsman policing in the Southeast District and in the combined data set, the only effect reaching the

.05 level of statistical significance was the decrease noted in the Northwest District foot patrol area.

- o Perceived Area Personal Crime Problems. No program effects were found to reach the .05 level of statistical significance, although a marginally significant decrease was associated with the introduction of ombudsman policing in the analysis of the combined data set.

- o Perceived Likelihood of Crime in Area. No program effects were found to be statistically significant at the .05 level.

- o Perceived Safety of Area. The Southeast ombudsman program was associated with a statistically significant increase in perceived safety. No other tests for program effects were statistically significant.

- o Worry About Crime in Area. No program effects approached the .05 level of significance.

- o Crime Avoidance Behaviors in Area. No significant program effects were observed.

- o Utilization of Crime Prevention Devices. Although a significant increase in the use of crime prevention devices occurred in the Northwest ombudsman policing area, neither the Southeast ombudsman program effect nor the overall program effect reached the .05 level of statistical significance. No foot patrol effect approached significance.

- o Familiarity with Neighbors. No significant program effects were found to be associated with either foot patrol or ombudsman policing.

- o Cohesiveness of Neighborhood. No significant program effects were observed.
- o Satisfaction with Neighborhood. No program effects reached the .05 level of statistical significance.
- o Victimization in Area. No program effects reached the .05 level of statistical significance.
- o Awareness of Victimization in Area. Several statistically significant program effects were discovered. Among the combined data, the foot patrol program was associated with significant reductions in awareness of six types of crimes: assault, robbery, larceny from persons, larceny from automobiles, damage to automobiles, and vandalism. Within the foot patrol area in the Northwest District, significant reductions in awareness of larceny from persons, auto theft, and damage to automobiles was indicated, with the reductions in awareness of larceny from automobiles and robbery coming close to meeting the .05 criterion. The foot patrol program in the Southeast was associated with a significant reduction in awareness of vandalism and assault--but also with a significant increase in awareness of burglary.

Overall, ombudsman policing was associated with a significant reduction in the awareness of assault, an effect that was also significant within the Southeast ombudsman area. The Southeast ombudsman program was also associated with a significant reduction in the awareness of vandalism. Within the Northwest District, the ombudsman program was associated with a significant increase in awareness of crimes of any type.

### **Analysis of Implementation Effects**

To provide a more rigorous test of the significance of the differences between program effects created in the Northwest and Southeast Districts, regression analyses were conducted in which an additional predictor variable was included to indicate in which district the respondent lived.

Only one statistically significant implementation effect was found with respect to program awareness. Specifically, the increased knowledge of a police officer associated with foot patrol was stronger in the Southeast District than in the Northwest District. Given that the levels of visibility of police on foot were similar to those two areas, it is tempting to speculate that the more sociable style of foot patrol demonstrated in the Southeast might have led to more personal contact than the more strictly law enforcement approach utilized in the Northwest.

The positive effect of ombudsman policing on citizen evaluations of police behavior in the Southeast District was significantly greater than in the Northwest District, where no notable effect was found. The fact that, as noted above, the ombudsman officer in the Southeast functioned, and was perceived, as both a foot patrol officer and an ombudsman, while the Northeast ombudsman was infrequently seen on foot, may account for some of this difference.

The decrease in perceived property crime problems associated with the introduction of foot patrol in the Northwest District was significantly greater than in the Southeast District, where no significant effect was achieved.



The increased use of crime prevention devices associated with the implementation of ombudsman policing in the Northwest District was significantly greater than in the Southeast District, where no notable program effect was found.

The decrease in auto theft related to ombudsman policing in the Southeast District was significantly greater than that found in the Northwest District ombudsman area.

The implementation of foot patrol in the Northwest District had a significantly greater effect on reducing awareness of burglary, larceny from persons, auto theft, as well as a composite measure of awareness of any crime than was produced by foot patrol in the Southeast District. On the other hand, ombudsman policing as implemented in the Southeast District was significantly more effective in producing a decrease in awareness of vandalism or in a composite measure of awareness of any crime than it was in the Northwest District.

#### **Analysis of Differential Impacts on Subgroups**

Statistical tests were conducted to determine if foot patrol and/or ombudsman policing might have had different effects on different types of people. Several such "treatment-covariate interaction effects" were found to be significant.

For example, persons living in a rowhouse in the ombudsman policing area in the Northwest District demonstrated less positive program effects on several outcome measures than did others.

Residents of the Northwest District foot patrol area with above average commitment to their neighborhood, on the other hand, indicated more positive program effects than others. Non-white residents of the two foot patrol areas were less likely than whites to come to know a police officer well but also more likely to perceive a decrease in property crime. On the other hand, non-white residents of the ombudsman policing areas were less likely than whites to improve their evaluation of police effectiveness and more likely to become aware of crime in their neighborhood. Other differential effects were also found with respect to residents of the ombudsman policing area in the Southeast District who were over 60 years old, residents of foot patrol areas who had children under 18 living with them in their homes, females living in foot patrol areas, and persons with high school educations who lived in ombudsman policing areas.

#### **Analysis of Calls for Police Service Data**

Monthly calls for police service data were subjected to interrupted time series analysis to determine if the introduction of the foot patrol and ombudsman policing programs had an effect on the volume of calls received. There were three effects associated with the introduction of foot patrol that reached the .05 level of statistical significance:

- o Calls about disorderly behavior (juvenile disturbances, curfew violations, disorderly persons, gambling, street disturbances, and intoxicated persons) increased;
- o Calls concerning alarms of any type increased; and
- o Calls about traffic problems or complaints decreased.

No significant effects were found to be associated with the introduction of ombudsman policing.

### Analysis of Recorded Crime Data

Monthly data for Part 1 and Part 2 crimes were also subjected to interrupted time series analysis. There was a significant reduction in the level of Part 2 crimes recorded in the ombudsman areas; there was a similar significant reduction, however, in the control areas and a marginally significant reduction in the foot patrol areas.

### DISCUSSION

After one year of implementing foot patrol and "ombudsman policing," in two parts of Baltimore, the most significant result was that ombudsman policing, as practiced in the Southeast District, produced highly significant improvements in evaluations of police effectiveness and behavior, reduced perceptions of disorder, increased feelings of safety, and reduced awareness of victimization in the area. In the Northwest District, ombudsman policing produced a significant improvement in evaluations of police effectiveness but achieved none of the other desirable effects found in the Southeast. Foot

patrol, regardless of the district in which it was implemented, had no significant effect on evaluations of police, and had mixed effects on perceived crime and disorder; in the Northwest District, foot patrol was, however, associated with reduced levels of awareness of larceny, auto theft, and auto damage.

When data from both areas are combined, significant reductions in awareness of several crimes were found.

Any attempt to understand these results must take into account the notable differences in the way the two types of community policing were implemented in the two districts. In the Southeast District, ombudsman policing was put into effect by a full-time patrol officer backed, for most of the year, by a half-time assistant. The ombudsman in that area exerted prodigious energy and demonstrated phenomenal resourcefulness and ingenuity. The citizen surveys indicate not only that many residents recall the ombudsman coming to their door but also that many of them had seen him walking in the neighborhood. It is encouraging that several significant effects were produced by this effort. It is sobering, however, to realize the level of commitment that was necessary to produce these effects.

In the Northwest District, ombudsman policing was implemented only part-time. Furthermore, although many residents recall the officer coming to their door, few of them saw the ombudsman officer walking in the area. It is perhaps not surprising, therefore, that few significant results were achieved under those circumstances.

The fact that neither version of foot patrol produced significant improvements in evaluations of police--but did produce several decreases in awareness of victimization--is perhaps testimony to the attention paid by the foot patrol officers, out of sight of many residents, to enforcing the law and maintaining order. It is worth noting, although not easily interpreted, that calls for police service about disorderly behavior and alarms increased with the introduction of foot patrol, while calls about traffic decreased. How much more effective these officers could have been had they been assigned to work full-time is an intriguing, but unanswerable question.

In sum, an intense effort to implement "ombudsman policing" produced several significant results. A less rigorous application of this approach did not. Foot patrol, implemented on a part-time basis, also produced results except for reductions in awareness of local crime.

Community policing can work, but only if applied steadfastly and energetically.