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LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING PROJECT

SURVEY OF COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS
OF POLICE SERVICE: A PILOT STUDY

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FIRST REPORT

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POLICE TRAINING COMMISSION
DEPARTMENT OF LAW AND PUBLIC SAFETY
STATE OF NEW JERSEY

LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING PROJECT

SURVEY OF COMMUNITY EXPECTATIONS
OF POLICE SERVICE: A PILOT STUDY

FIRST REPORT

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We have been pleased in our previous reports to acknowledge our gratitude to the many persons who helped us and we are pleased to do so again.

This study, a small part of a proposed new method for designing basic police training curricula, developed out of our research work. We were helped in many ways by many persons and we thank them all although space does not permit listing everyone.

Professor Peter Dubno of the New York University Management Department helped to shape our research effort and was invaluable in the critical examination of the basic concepts of the study. We enjoyed his warmth and friendliness and appreciated his highly professional skills.

We were fortunate to have another consultant whose assistance exceeded professional requirements. Dr. J. Myron Johnson, Director of the Laboratory for Psychological Studies, Stevens Institute of Technology, was such a person.

The actual field work was made smoother by the cooperation of the municipal authorities of Hamilton Township, Mercer County. Chief Philip F. Booz of the Hamilton Township Police Department was especially helpful in expediting our work.

The staff and employees of the Police Training Commission gave us indispensable assistance in many ways throughout

this study effort. We are also indebted to the people of the Department of Community Affairs who gave valuable technical and personal assistance and encouragement.

Ralph Green
Director

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I. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The Law Enforcement Training Project of the Police Training Commission was established to conduct research in developing basic police training curricula. The first results of the Project's research activities were presented in the Initial Curriculum Study and the Curriculum Study: Data Analysis.

The Initial Curriculum Study provides an analysis of work on the design, construction and evaluation of basic police training curricula. We did this by consulting with leading police training experts and by examining the literature that was then available.

In the course of preparing the Initial Curriculum Study, raw data was gathered relating to the curricula of a nationally representative sample of eighty-eight police training agencies. Since we had been unable to find any indication of a completed comprehensive nationwide study of basic training programs in our search of the literature, we decided to analyze this raw data. The results of this analysis appear in the second publication of this Project, the Curriculum Study: Data Analysis.

The research completed and presented in the Initial Curriculum Study and the Curriculum Study: Data Analysis made certain facts regarding basic police training curricula clear. No references were found to a method for designing basic curricula that encompassed a formalized, systematic procedure and that was tested and validated.

We decided, therefore, to try to develop such a needed

method and to carry out a pilot study of the proposed method in an appropriate community.

It is the opinion of the Project staff that identifying the need for devising such a tested method for developing basic police training curricula was the most important conclusion of the first phase of the Project's completed research.

II. STUDY APPROACH

The following description outlines the study approach developed by the Project:

1. Identify the police functions and tasks and rank them in terms of their relative importance to the community.
2. Identify the functions and tasks and their relative importance as expressed in the police curriculum.
3. Identify the functions and tasks that are ranked differently in importance by the community and in the curriculum.

The approach envisioned evaluating the following four separate interpretations of police functions and tasks:

1. Functions and tasks as expressed by the local police department objectives.
2. Functions and tasks as implied by the administrative structure of the department.
3. Functions and tasks as derived from observation of police activities.
4. Functions and tasks as expressed by the expectations of local citizens.

After identifying and evaluating the functions and tasks emphasized in the above four interpretations, the current local basic training curriculum could then be evaluated in relation to the functions and tasks so identified. It would then be possible to determine whether the functions and tasks

stressed in the local curriculum are consistent or inconsistent with the functions and tasks indicated by the above analyses. This should provide reliable bases upon which an efficient curriculum could be constructed.

The subject for this report will be an evaluation of the functions and tasks as expressed by the expectations of local citizens (item 4). It is the first report of the Pilot Study outlined above and it is hoped that the remaining portions of the Study will be completed at some future date.

This survey of community expectations of police service was conducted in Hamilton Township, Mercer County, New Jersey. A total of one hundred and three (103) personal interviews were held. The 103 respondents were a randomly selected sample of the community and were chosen by methods devised for the Project by the Opinion Research Corporation, Princeton, New Jersey.

The section of this report called "Research Questions" defines the specific questions to be answered by this study. A section describing the procedures used to gather the data for this study follows. In the section "How the Data was Analyzed," the methods used to analyze the data are described. In the last section of the report, "Findings," the results of the study are presented and analyzed.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The basic questions, "What does a policeman do?" and "What should a policeman do?", have always been problems in the field of law enforcement. No completely satisfactory answers have been found. Yet, it is obvious that these questions must be the starting point in an attempt to design an efficient curriculum related to real life needs.

We have stated that we believe the method for the designing of a curriculum that we proposed will answer these questions. We also believe that this is best done locally and will result in a training program suited to the community's needs.

Part of the proposed method is a survey of community expectations of police service. In cooperation with the Department of Community Affairs, we undertook to survey Hamilton Township, Mercer County, New Jersey. The specific questions which this survey sought to answer are:

1. What do people believe policemen should do?
2. What do people consider important in police service?
3. What are these people's attitudes toward the police?
4. Do people who have experienced restrictive action by the police or who have had unfavorable experiences with them tend to have adverse attitudes toward the police service?
5. Do people who have had generally favorable experiences with the police tend to view the police service favorably?

The answers to questions 1 and 2 may be found in Tables I - III in the section "Findings." Questions 3 - 5 are answered in the section "Attitudes Toward Police as Indicated by the Propolice Index and Correlated to Personal Experiences with the Police."

The information gained as a result of this study can be extrapolated from the study and used to establish guidelines for evaluating the basic training program. Thus, the police service may be improved by providing training more closely related to actual, identified needs.

IV. SURVEY PROCEDURES

Direct personal interviewing was decided upon as the most effective data gathering technique because of the depth of the information that we felt was needed for this study. We considered interviewing to be the best method available to us for ascertaining people's attitudes, feelings and opinions. An alternative method of using mail questionnaires was rejected because of the difficulties in assuring reliability.

A data gathering survey instrument was designed and tested on an adequate sample of respondents in Mercerville, New Jersey. Each item in the instrument was tested on numerous occasions. Questions that elicited a high number of ambiguous or non-responsive answers were eliminated or rewritten.

The field interviews were conducted during September and October, 1968, with a representative sample of (103) one hundred and three respondents from Hamilton Township, New Jersey. Permission to conduct this survey had been granted by the municipal and police officials of the Township. These officials extended unusual cooperation and assistance to the Project that was indispensable.

Letters of introduction to arrange the personal interview were prepared and dispatched to all selected sample respondents. A standardized procedure was established for conducting the interview. Call backs were made to limit non-responses.

The 103 respondents were chosen by scientific sampling methods devised by the Opinion Research Corporation, Princeton, New Jersey. A breakdown of the sample indicating the sex, race, education, etc. of the 103 respondents may be found in the section on "Findings."

The survey data gathering instrument consisted of the Police Activity Scale, the Propolice Index, the Police Service Index, and a series of structured open-ended questions.

The Police Activity Scale lists 32 specific police activities to be rated as to importance by community respondents. This Scale was devised by consulting such basic police texts as:

1. The Police in the Community (Michael Banton)
2. The Police: Six Sociological Essays
(David J. Bordua, ed.)
3. Behind the Shield: The Police in Urban Society
(Arthur Neiderhoffer)
4. The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society
(President's Commission on Law Enforcement
and Administration of Justice)
5. Task Force Report: The Police (President's
Commission on Law Enforcement and
Administration of Justice)
6. Justice Without Trial: Law Enforcement in a
Democratic Society (Jerome H. Skolnick)
7. Police Administration (O. W. Wilson)
8. Police Planning (O. W. Wilson)

What these experts indicated as important police functions were listed in the Activity Scale.

The Propolice Index is a six-item scale to measure attitudes toward police. The Index was developed by the Bureau of Social Science Research. The items on the scale were empirically derived through factor analysis.

The Police Service Index is a six-item Likert-type scale developed by the Project to measure the respondent's perception of the role of the police in relation to the community power structure.

A series of open-ended questions in the questionnaire attempt to determine the respondent's personal experiences with the police.

Another series of structured open-ended questions relate the respondent's social roles to perception of police service. These questions ask respondents to indicate the important functions and tasks of the police in the community from the respondent's point of view as a parent, a homeowner, a jobholder, an active member of a community organization, a neighbor, and an ethnic group member. By asking respondents to indicate their expectations of police service from the points of view of the respondent's different social roles, specific functions and tasks were elicited. As originally posed, the open-ended questions simply asked respondents to indicate the functions and tasks they expected policemen to perform. These questions proved to be too general for they did not elicit specific functions and tasks. The social role frame of reference proved necessary to gather useful data.

A copy of the questionnaire appears in the Appendix.

V. HOW THE DATA WAS ANALYZED

Police Activity Scale

Responses for each of the 32 items on the Police Activity Scale were coded, sorted and counted. A table was drawn indicating the number of respondents who rated the importance of each particular activity on a scale from (1) to (5). Also, the number of respondents who indicated the police should not be performing this type of function was indicated. The scores for this table were computed by multiplying the number of respondents rating an activity (1) by 5, (2) by 4, (3) by 3, (4) by 2, and (5) by 1 and totaling the results. The 32 activities were then ranked according to these total scores. The results appear in Table I of the "Findings."

Personal Experiences with the Police

Respondents were asked to recall a personal encounter with the police and what impressions were formed therefrom. The encounter was rated as a favorable experience if the respondent indicated approval of the way the situation was handled by the police. If disapproval was indicated, the experience was rated as unfavorable. We counted the number of favorable experiences, unfavorable experiences, combined favorable and unfavorable experiences and unclassifiable experiences. The results appear in the section "Attitudes Toward Police as Indicated by the Propolice Index and Correlated to Personal Experiences with the Police."

Police Service Activities as Mentioned in Open-Ended Questions

The sixteen (16) items in Tables II and III were empirically derived by a factor analysis of the open-end questions (see questions 9 - 17 of the Opinion Survey). This necessarily involved interpretations of the respondents' answers into the derived sixteen categories. The interpretations were done by the field interviewers and we believe they are, therefore, as reliable as is possible.

Propolice Index

People were considered to have favorable attitudes toward the police if they received a positive score on the Propolice Index.

Disagreement with statements 1 - 4 and agreement with statements 5 and 6 were scored as positive for each of the six statements. Agreement with statements 1 - 4 and disagreement with statements 5 and 6 were scored as negative for each of the six statements.

The score for the Propolice Index was computed by adding the number of positive and negative responses. The results of administering the Propolice Index appear in the section "Attitudes Toward Police as Indicated by the Propolice Index and Correlated to Personal Experiences with the Police."

Police Service Index

Results of administering the Police Service Index will appear in a future report.

VI. FINDINGS

The data hereunder presented is clear and self explanatory. It is reliably applicable to Hamilton Township and generalizations, if made, should be done with caution.

It is apparent that this community is deeply concerned with juvenile problems and crime and crime prevention as might be expected. Peculiar to these times is the very high rating given to the necessity for good police community relations. It is interesting that the community values this so highly. This is an area in which police efforts have not been too successful in the past and even today is often given a low priority.

At the other end of the scale are family fights, school crossings and election duties. The ubiquitous family fight has long been a traditional principal component of police activities. Perhaps some rethinking is needed here about the police responsibility and function in this and the other low-ranking activities.

We believe that these tables and data will be of use to our readers. Information of this nature is needed for decision making in many areas of police administration.

LAW ENFORCEMENT TRAINING PROJECT
NEW JERSEY POLICE TRAINING COMMISSION

Community Opinion Survey
Hamilton Township, August-September, 1968

Total Number of Persons in Sample N= 103

BREAKDOWN OF THE SAMPLE

	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
<u>Sex</u>		
Male	50	48.5
Female	<u>53</u>	<u>51.5</u>
Total	103	100.0
<u>Race</u>		
White	100	97.1
Negro	<u>3</u>	<u>2.9</u>
Total	103	100.0
<u>Education</u>		
Grammar School	18	17.4
Some High School	22	21.4
High School	42	40.8
Some College	12	11.6
College	5	4.9
Post Graduate	<u>4</u>	<u>3.9</u>
Total	103	100.0
<u>Age</u>		
21-24	13	12.6
25-29	12	11.6
30-39	17	16.5
40-49	31	30.2
50-59	13	12.6
60-	<u>17</u>	<u>16.5</u>
Total	103	100.0

<u>Income</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Under \$2,000	3	2.9
\$ 2,000- 3,999	9	8.7
4,000- 5,999	14	13.6
6,000- 7,999	16	15.6
8,000- 9,999	20	19.5
10,000-11,999	17	16.5
12,000-13,999	8	7.8
14,000-15,999	4	3.9
16,000-17,999	2	1.9
18,000 and over	4	3.9
Not reporting	6	5.8
Total	103	100.0

<u>Children</u>		
Yes	88	85.5
No	15	14.5
Total	103	100.0

<u>Marital Status</u>		
Married	87	84.5
Divorced	1	.95
Widowed	8	7.8
Separated	1	.95
Never Married	6	5.8
Total	103	100.00

<u>Homeowner</u>		
Yes	85	82.6
No	18	17.4
Total	103	100.0

<u>Occupation (Head of Household)</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Unemployed	8	7.8
Professional	10	9.7
Semi-professional	5	4.9
Proprietor, manager, official	6	5.8
Farmer or farm manager	1	.95
Clerical, sales or similar	5	4.9
Craftsman, foreman or similar	16	15.6
Operative or similar	33	31.8
Domestic service work	0	0
Protective service work	4	3.9
Other service work	10	9.7
Laborer	<u>5</u>	<u>4.9</u>
Total	103	100.00

TABLE I

POLICE ACTIVITY SCALE RANKED ACCORDING
TO IMPORTANCE AS INDICATED BY
RESPONDENT'S ANSWERS

Rank No.	Activity No.	Police Activity	Total Score	No. of Respondents	
				Rating Activity as <u>Very Important</u>	Indicating Police <u>Should Not</u> be Performing Activity
1	21	Advise, warn or arrest youngsters	475	76	0
2	14	Preserve evidence	465	75	2
3	2	Stop and question	464	70	3
4	8	Arrest	454	69	3
5	9	Good relations in community	450	70	3
6	22	Control crowds	442	71	7
7	6	Search crime scenes	429	66	8
8	4	Interview victims and witnesses	428	62	6
9	3	Issue traffic tickets	412	49	4
10	12	Search and question prisoners	404	55	13
11	26	Make written reports	402	52	10
12	10	Testify	396	58	12
13	7	Inspect places	392	51	10
14	5	First-aid	388	57	14
15	16	Give information	384	53	13
16	15	Mentally disturbed persons	374	52	13
17	24	Drunks and alcoholics	364	38	10
18	19	Rescue lost persons	359	40	11
19	32	Recover property	341	36	14
20	1	Control traffic	306	36	25
21	23	Assist motorists	302	32	19
22	11	Give directions	284	29	17
23	18	Guard visitors, property	268	31	30

TABLE I (continued)

Rank No.	Activity No.	Police Activity	Total Score	No. of Respondents	
				Rating Activity as <u>Very Important</u>	Indicating Police <u>Should Not</u> be Performing Activity
24	29	Refer citizens' complaints	260	22	19
25	30	Public nuisances	254	17	19
26	31	Election Day	218	27	45
27	13	Escort parades	210	19	36
28	25	School crossings	205	31	52
29	28	Check business licenses	186	20	55
30	20	Help people who have lost keys	150	11	54
31	17	Family disputes	148	10	56
32	27	Pick up stray dogs	121	14	68

TABLE II
POLICE ACTIVITIES MENTIONED MOST FREQUENTLY
IN OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS RANKED ACCORDING
TO THE NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS

Rank No.	Activity	No. of Respondents N = 103	Per Cent of Total No. of Respondents
1	Crime Prevention	76	74
2	Patrol	69	67
3	Community Relations	58	56
4	Juvenile Control	51	50
5	Police Policy	49	48
6	Traffic Control	38	37
7	Public Relations	26	25
8	Community Service	23	22
9	Public Safety	21	20
10	Control of Interpersonal Dis- putes and Disturbances	14	14
11	Riot Control	13	13
12	Emergency Situations	10	10
13.5	Investigation	8	8
13.5	Public Education Programs	8	8
15	Narcotics	7	7
16	Crowd Control	3	3

TABLE III
POLICE ACTIVITIES MENTIONED MOST FREQUENTLY
IN OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS RANKED ACCORDING
TO THE NUMBER OF RESPONSES

Rank No.	Activity	No. of Responses	Per Cent of Total Responses
1	Crime Prevention	134	20
2	Patrol	107	16
3	Juvenile Control	77	12
4	Police Policy	69	10
5	Community Relations	64	10
6	Traffic Control	50	7
7	Community Service	31	5
8.5	Public Relations	29	4
8.5	Public Safety	29	4
10	Riot Control	17	3
11	Control of Interpersonal Disputes and Disturbances	16	2
12	Emergency Situations	14	2
13	Public Education Programs	11	2
14	Investigation	9	1
15	Narcotics	8	1
16	Crowd Control	4	1
Total		669	100%

Attitudes Toward Police as Indicated by the Propolice Index
and Correlated to Personal Experiences
with the Police

To measure attitudes toward police, a six-item attitude scale, the Propolice Index, developed by the Bureau of Social Science Research, Inc., was used (see Appendix A). The results of this scale indicate that 88 (85.4%) of the 103 respondents showed a positive attitude toward the police. Only 13 (12.6%) persons expressed negative attitudes. Two (1.9%) people were neutral.

Respondents were then asked to describe a personal experience with a policeman that the respondents remembered best. They were also asked to indicate other contacts with the policemen that they recalled. Of the 103 respondents, 72 (69.9%) had such experiences with the police and 31 (30.1%) had none.

Of the 72 respondents having experiences with the police, 46 (63.9%) indicated the experience left a favorable impression. Six (8.3%) respondents had both favorable and unfavorable experiences. Only 9 (12.5%) respondents had unfavorable experiences. Eleven (15.3%) respondents indicated experiences that could not be designated as either favorable or unfavorable.

Of the 46 respondents who had favorable experiences with the police, 39 (84.8%) were found to exhibit positive attitudes, while only 7 (15.2%) respondents held negative attitudes.

Of the 9 respondents indicating unfavorable experiences and the 6 respondents indicating both favorable and unfavorable experiences, 13 (86.7%) respondents held positive attitudes. Only 2 (13.3%) respondents indicated negative attitudes. What is surprising is that even those who had indicated unfavorable experiences, for the most part, held positive attitudes toward the police.

When asked if they thought the policeman acted as he should have acted, 62 (86.1%) of the 72 respondents reporting experiences approved of the way police acted. Four (5.6%) respondents indicated that the policeman acted as he should have in one instance but not as he should have in another. Only 5 (6.9%) persons said the policeman did not act as he should have acted. One (1.4%) respondent did not express an opinion.

When asked what they liked about the way the policeman acted, 62 (86.1%) of the 72 reporting experiences mentioned specific items. One person indicated he liked the "professional manner" of the police. He recognized that they "did what they thought was necessary without going to any extreme." Another person said that the police were "very helpful, considerate and did their job well." Other people said such things of the policemen as the following: "He was just like a personal friend of the family."; "He was very straight down the line, no beating around the bush." Policemen were described as being "efficient," "courteous,"

"very nice," "very considerate," and "prompt." Nineteen respondents said that the policemen were helpful, courteous, friendly or understanding.

Only 22 (30.6%) of the 72 respondents said that they disliked some things the policemen did. One respondent described an incident in which a policeman "got mad and started yelling." Another respondent said, "The Sergeant must have thought we were armed bandits and really gave it to us." Two people indicated that the policemen did not respond to calls. Also, policemen were described as being "indifferent," "too loud during questioning" and "too quick to judge."

These findings do not concur with the generally accepted belief that favorable experiences with the police are needed in order to produce favorable attitudes. In addition, these findings do not concur with the conclusions reached by John P. Clark and Eugene P. Wenninger ("The Attitudes of Juveniles Toward the Legal Institution," Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology and Police Science, 55 (December, 1964), pp. 482-489) that involvement with the legal institution (whether actual or prospective) contributes to a negative attitude. These findings also contradict the conclusions reached by The British Royal Commission on the Police, 1962 (Final Report, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, Cmd. 1728, p. 103). The Commission found a high correlation between those who had a poor opinion of the police and

those who had experienced what seemed to them unfair treatment at their hands. The results of this study indicate that it may be that unpleasant experiences with the police do not necessarily lead to unfavorable attitudes toward the police.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

Copies of the questionnaire used to conduct the community opinion survey in Hamilton Township, New Jersey, may be obtained by writing to James O. Finckenuer, State Law Enforcement Planning Agency, 134 West State Street, Trenton, New Jersey 08625.

END