



RESEARCH IN BRIEF
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Evaluating

Patrol Officer

Performance Under

Community Policing:

The Houston Experiment

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PATROL OFFICER PERFORMANCE
UNDER COMMUNITY POLICING:
THE HOUSTON EXPERIMENT

Research In Brief Report

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EVALUATING PATROL OFFICER PERFORMANCE UNDER COMMUNITY POLICING: THE HOUSTON EXPERIMENT

Introduction

This report describes a process of evaluating the performance of first line patrol officers developed by a department that was attempting to change its style of policing to reflect a community orientation. The evaluation found that personnel performance measurement can enhance other organizational efforts to implement a new philosophy of policing.

Project Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop and test a new personnel performance evaluation process designed to support the philosophy of Neighborhood Oriented Policing (NOP) in Houston. The development of the performance measurement process and an evaluation of it were supported by a grant from the National Institute of Justice in recognition of the broad interest in this topic among departments that are developing community oriented approaches to policing.

The development of the new process was to yield one model of performance evaluation that other departments might use in designing their own performance measurement methods. The evaluation of it would determine whether performance measurement was, in fact, a means for supporting the re-orientation of a police organization to a new style of policing. The evaluation sought to determine whether the department's new performance assessment process effectively communicated and legitimized the organization's management philosophy as expressed by the redefinition of roles, responsibilities, and relationships between and among patrol officers and supervisors (sergeants).



Performance Measurement Issues for Community Policing

Creating a valid and effective means of measuring performance in the workplace is a continuing challenge in organizational life (Gabor, 1992), and it is not a new issue to policing. Recent interest in community and problem-oriented policing simply has re-focused attention on long-standing concerns about performance analysis. In 1972, a report from the Dallas Police Department stated:

In the past, performance evaluation in the Police Department has been a largely meaningless bi-annual exercise in numerically grading employees with little thought to the true purpose of performance evaluation. (Dallas Police Department, 1972, p. III-23,24)

Since this was written, Dallas has changed substantially its own employee performance evaluation process, but this same statement could be penned in 1992 by a great many police agencies. This is not because the need for better evaluations has gone unrecognized. In fact, good performance evaluations are difficult to create. The process is time-consuming, expensive, and potentially divisive, especially for an occupation as broad as policing for which a performance evaluation may require establishing priorities within the patrol officer's multifaceted role. Further, the design of a dynamic evaluation process may be an unending task given the role shifts that accompany the changing needs of a society and the changing ability of a profession to meet those needs. Given the magnitude of the challenge, it is not remarkable that many police agencies have relied for years on outdated and inadequate performance evaluation processes.

Purposes of Employee Performance Measurement

What is measured and how it is measured should depend on the reasons for collecting the data. Mastroski and Wadman (1991) identify three principal reasons for measuring employee performance:

Administration: to help managers make decisions about promotion, demotion, reward, discipline, training needs, salary, job assignment, retention, and termination.

Guidance and counseling: to help supervisors give feedback to subordinates and assist them in career planning and preparation, and to improve employee motivation.

Research: to validate selection and screening tests and training evaluations and to assess the effectiveness of interventions designed to improve individual performance. (P. 364)



To these three the Houston Police Department adds three more:

Socialization: to convey expectations to personnel about both the content and the style of their performance, to reinforce other means of organizational communication about the mission and the values of the Department.

Documentation: to record the types of problems and situations officers are addressing in their neighborhoods and the approaches they take to them. Such documentation provides for data-based analysis of the types of resources and other managerial support needed to address problems and allows officers the opportunity to have their efforts recognized.

System improvement: to identify organizational conditions that may impede improved performance and to solicit ideas for changing the conditions.

In an organization that is undertaking a shift in its philosophy about service delivery, as is the Houston Police Department, these last three functions of performance measurement are especially important. A philosophy that is articulated and reinforced through the types of activities or performances that are measured should be more readily understood by personnel than one simply espoused by (perhaps) remote managers.

This operational articulation is needed not only by the line personnel but by their supervisors as well. Sergeants and lieutenants who are first introduced to community policing as supervisors and managers will have less familiarity with the operational implications of the philosophy than will the officers they supervise. As much or more than their subordinates, supervisors may need the new performance assessment system as a guide to, or validation of, appropriate role behaviors for the employees they supervise.¹

When the new service philosophy calls on officers to identify problems in the areas they serve, the systematic documentation of these problems will be the best data available for the guidance of management decisions about resources and other types of support officers may need.

The ability to identify impediments to improved performance is important at any stage in the life of an organization. Conditions, both internal and external, that can affect quality of performance can change constantly (if imperceptibly) and must be regularly monitored. But this need is perhaps never greater than when the organization is in the midst of a shift in its service philosophy that will require deliberate realignment of organizational policies and

¹ It was a patrol officer in Houston who suggested that his peers perhaps should be patient with sergeants who initially did not know what was needed from them as supervisors of Neighborhood Oriented officers. He pointed out that existing sergeants had never had the opportunity to perform the role they were now expected to supervise and of which they, unavoidably, had less understanding than the officers who were only now in the process of re-creating and re-defining the role.



practices if the philosophy is to be successfully implemented. Management must be able to determine what, if anything, is preventing employees from doing what is expected of them.

Requirements of Employee Performance Evaluation

There are at least five standards that an employee performance evaluation process should meet:

- validity
- reliability
- equity
- legality
- utility.

If the process is "valid," it accurately reflects the content of the job the employee is expected to perform, as well as the expected quality of the job performance.

A "reliable" process is one that will result in the same performance being given the same evaluation across evaluators and across repetitions of that performance. It will not be a product of the personality or the mood of the evaluator.

An "equitable" process is one that will allow employees doing the same or similar work to receive equal evaluations. This is especially critical in an organization in which performance evaluations are used to determine pay, transfers, or promotions. In such organizations, it is not uncommon for one evaluation point or even a fraction of a point to separate the rewarded from the unrewarded employee. This is a difficult issue for a profession like policing in which the nature and frequency of performance occur, to a large degree, in response to external conditions that vary by area of the city, time of day, season of the year.

"Legality" also is an issue primarily for those organizations that use performance evaluations to determine rewards and punishments for employees. It is also an issue in departments for which certain requirements of the evaluation process are established by law--either state law, city ordinance, or civil service code. Legality typically turns on the validity of the performance evaluation; that is, the extent to which it accurately reflects the performance and is statistically predictive of the role (e.g., assignment) for which it determines entry.

"Utility" refers simply to the purpose for the evaluation. If nothing is done with it, if employees see no benefit from the evaluation for either the organization or for themselves personally, the process will be less than useless; it will breed contempt for management among employees.

It is beyond the scope of this report to instruct the reader in the various means of meeting each of these standards. These topics are discussed extensively in Whitaker et al. (1982) and by Mastrofski and Wadman (1991) whose works provide technical references of value to agencies struggling with these issues.



Special Measurement Concerns for Community Policing

The issues that characterize performance analysis in a community policing context are much like those in any police setting. The requirements outlined above remain the same, regardless of the organizational philosophy. For neither community policing nor more traditional approaches are they easily met, and conflicts among them are not readily resolved. The goal of equity, for example, may conflict with the goal of validity. When jobs are as dissimilar as police patrol work may be across different assignments or different areas of a community, the need for equity may reduce the evaluated job dimensions to the most common elements of the role. The result is an evaluation that fails to reflect any officer's actual job.

Concerns for both legality and reliability have pushed departments toward quantifiable performance indicators. The greater emphasis the policing profession began to put on the crime fighting aspects of the police role in previous decades (Kelling and Moore, 1988) also created pressure for quantifiable measures. Unfortunately, the most important indicators may be those that are the most difficult to quantify. The indicators that were most readily available were those associated (even if spuriously) with crime fighting (e.g., rapid response, numbers of arrests) and with organizational regulations (e.g., tardiness, sick time, accidents, etc., see Kelling, 1992.). When important behaviors or activities cannot be counted, then the ones that are counted tend to become those that are considered important (Wycoff, 1982a). The emphases on the crime function and on quantitative assessments have led to performance assessments that overlook as much as seventy percent of the police role (Wycoff, 1982b).²

Revision of performance evaluation to reflect the broad police role is something many police managers still need to accomplish in the 1990s, regardless whether they have any interest in changing their organization's current approach to policing. Community policing, problem oriented policing, and neighborhood oriented policing all encourage officers to expand their role, exercise more discretion, and tailor responses to the needs of local communities. To a large extent, however, what they do is encourage managers to acknowledge and support activities good officers always have conducted, but which have gone officially unrecognized. As Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux (1992) note, the challenge is (as it always has been) one of

...finding ways to express quality as quantity, in other words, to make quality a countable commodity....the challenge is to identify quantifiable outcomes that

² The record of researchers is no better in this respect than the record of police managers. Despite their disclaimers about the validity and reliability of such indicators, researchers continue to use recorded crime data, arrest data and administrative data as indicators of performance and outcome because other indicators are unavailable or are too costly or time-consuming to create. This fact led to Kelling's (1978) call for "...a modest moratorium on the application of crime related productivity measures" until the full range of the police role could be documented and decisions made about how to measure a much wider range of police activity.



truly relate to the job and to ensure that this does not corrupt Community Policing³ into policing by the numbers.

Community policing draws attention to other issues about employee performance evaluation:

- the means by which supervisors and managers can hold officers accountable for the greater discretion they are permitted;
- the inclusion of the community in the evaluation process; and
- the evaluation of team, or unit, or organization as distinct from the evaluation of the individual officer.⁴

Weisburd, McElroy and Hardyman (1989) suggest that the paramilitary model of policing facilitates close supervision of the traditional role but is inappropriate for the broader, more discretionary⁵ role of the community police officer (see also Goldstein, 1979 and Bittner, 1980). While it is debatable how many sergeants effectively "supervise" their officers in departments that traditionally restrict what officers are allowed to do, it is clear that community policing will require a reformulation of the sergeants' role that corresponds with changes in the responsibilities of officers.

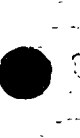
As officers continue to refine and improve their ability to react to service demands, they will be expected to become more involved in implementing proactive strategies. When time permits, officers will be expected to develop active partnerships with local residents and businesses as a means of addressing crime and noncrime issues. The net effect for sergeants is that they will be expected to become more efficient managers, team builders, and group facilitators as opposed to devoting the majority of their time to supervision. A sergeant's ability or inability to effectively perform these functions will have a direct bearing on the successes or failures of his or her officers.

The inclusion of the community in the performance evaluation process is not commonly a goal of traditional departments, except insofar as they attend to complaints from citizens about improper police activity. Community policing takes as a basic tenet the need to match police service to the perceived needs of citizens. This means that departments will need to

³ (or any other orientation to policing)

⁴ There is also, of course, the issue addressed by Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux (1992), Wadman and Olson (1990) and others of the need to develop outcome or impact measures that correspond to the problems officers are trying to solve in communities. We do not deal with that issue in this discussion, since it is beyond the scope of the performance evaluation system designed and tested in this project.

⁵ Discretion and the greater flexibility it gives an officer for how, when and where to use time is not a new issue for supervisors. It has always been an issue for rural police departments and sheriff's agencies in which officers and supervisors may never have occasion to meet after roll call (and, sometimes, not even at roll call). Researchers need to develop information about supervision in these types of agencies.



collect data about what services citizens want and about whether citizens believe their service needs are being met. A number of means have been advocated for accomplishing this. Numerous departments have used community meetings as a forum for eliciting service needs and preferences. Some (e.g., Grand Rapids, Michigan; Houston, Texas; Newark, New Jersey) have employed door-to-door surveys conducted by officers, and a few with substantial resources (usually provided by grants) have conducted scientific community surveys. The Madison, Wisconsin Police Department routinely surveys by mail a sample of all citizens who have received service from the department in an effort to measure satisfaction and to collect information about ways of improving service.

Another issue raised by community and problem oriented approaches is that of the appropriateness of individual employee evaluations. Some departments are emphasizing a focus on the team or workgroup rather than the individual. Those that retain individual evaluations may abandon the evaluations as a means of differentiating among employees for the purpose of rewards and use the individual evaluations, instead, as a means of helping individual employees identify and meet their own career goals (Gabor, 1992).

The Madison and Houston police departments, for example, while having parallel goals of decentralization and community policing, have taken different approaches to individual performance evaluation. Madison has, at least for the present, abandoned them.

Acknowledging the shortcomings of traditional performance evaluations, that department has eliminated them until a more appropriate process can be developed. In the meantime, the organization is emphasizing the improvement of organizational systems (including management) and the development of teamwork. Discussions of performance focus on the changes or improvements that need to be made in order to support the work of officers in the field. Evaluations are made of managers by employees that take the form of questions about the changes the manager needs to make in order for the employee to function more effectively. These critiques are for the purpose of information gathering rather than "grading," and they are used by managers for self-diagnosis.

Patrol officers in Madison's Experimental (South) Police District receive evaluations directly from citizens. The survey the Department mails to service recipients is returned directly to the officer who delivered the service. The identity of the citizen is not known, but the officer has general information about the type of situation on which the evaluation is based. Officers decide whether to share their personal evaluations with peers and supervisors. After reading it, the officer removes his identification from the survey and gives it to the supervisor. The individual responses are then aggregated to determine whether the district as a whole is meeting citizen expectations.

At a similar stage in its own re-direction of philosophy, the Houston Police Department invested significant effort in redesigning individual performance evaluations so they would reflect the job officers were now being encouraged to perform. Houston, like many other departments, does not have the same legal latitude as Madison to eliminate individual



performance evaluations. More importantly, Houston managers view performance evaluation as a critical support system to be used to communicate and reinforce expectations about the new philosophy. Like Madison, Houston has included means of having officers evaluate supervisors and of having citizens evaluate officers in the new performance evaluation process.

The appropriate role of employee performance evaluations in a community policing context (or perhaps any policing context) is an issue that is being explored. The answers for each department may depend ultimately on the uses the agency wishes to make of the evaluations. Perhaps, as agencies embracing the Demings philosophy of management argue (Scholtes, 1987), there is no reason to "grade" individuals relative to each other. However, evaluations might still be a means of:

- informing governing bodies about the work of the organization, accountability that will become ever more critical in the face of shrinking resources;
- determining the nature of problems in various neighborhoods and the strategies that are more and less effective in dealing with them;
- permitting officers to record and "exhibit" the work they are doing; and
- determining career objectives and progress for individual employees.

Some organizations may improve individual evaluations to better serve these purposes, and others may design alternative means of accomplishing these ends. One of the valuable consequences of the current interest in community policing may be a variety of new approaches to performance measurement.



The Houston Performance Measurement Project

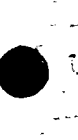
Project Background

In the 1970s, the growth of the City of Houston led the department to begin planning for the physical decentralization of police services that would eventually be delivered from four "command stations," each located in one quadrant of the city.

This perceived need to decentralize provided both impetus and opportunity to think about the style and structure of policing that would be provided in the new settings. In the 1980s, the department began to experiment with several approaches to policing that eventually would lead to a new view of the way in which police worked together and with the public. The department experimented with team policing (Directed Area Responsibility Team), with community interaction (Positive Interaction Program), strategies aimed at reducing fear, and community revitalization tactics (Project Oasis). By 1986, through the combined lessons learned from these various projects, the department set forth as its policing style for the 21st century a concept that has come to be known as Neighborhood Oriented Policing (NOP).

Defined as an interactive process between officers and citizens for the purpose of identifying and addressing crime and non-crime problems, NOP established a philosophical foundation which has a direct bearing on managerial and operational practices. As a management philosophy, NOP provides managers with a conceptual framework to direct a multiplicity of organizational functions in a manner consistent with efficiently addressing citizen needs and demands. Operationally, NOP encourages officers to assume direct responsibility for managing the delivery of services in geographic areas to which they are assigned. Particular attention is aimed at identifying and addressing problems of crime and disorder.

Initial efforts to translate the NOP philosophy into police operations occurred at the Westside Command Station, the first of the decentralized facilities to be completed. In this early stage of the change process, many managers, officers, and investigators recognized that broad organizational change would be required if Houston's version of community policing was to represent a real and lasting change in the nature and style of police service. Concerns were expressed about the need for broader based training, more efficient management of calls for service, a comprehensive performance evaluation system, more effective management of patrol and investigative operations, a revamped disciplinary system, a redefinition of the



investigative role and expanded roles for citizens. It was predicted that without changes in these support systems, efforts to institutionalize the new philosophy would fail.

In responding to these concerns, the Houston Police Department developed a vision of organizational change that called for the examination and possible restructuring of many of the organization's support systems. Steps were immediately taken to address the management of the dispatch operation. The disciplinary system was revamped, and an Executive Session⁶ was held to examine how investigations and patrol could be integrated under NOP. Included among these organizational changes was the issue of performance evaluations.

It was believed that if a new concept of policing was to be successfully implemented, a clear message of what was to be expected of officers, sergeants, and lieutenants needed to be developed. One of the tools available within the organization to accomplish this task was performance evaluation. Houston managers viewed performance evaluation as a critical support system that could be used to communicate and reinforce expectations about a new philosophy.

The first step toward the total redesign of performance measurement was to be the development of new performance evaluation criteria, scaling methods, instrumentation, and processes for police officers. This report reflects how this first step was taken and what occurred as a result.

Designing the New Performance Evaluation Process

A task force of officers and first line supervisors at the Westside Command Station began the task of analyzing the jobs of patrol officers and redesigning performance evaluation in terms of NOP expectations. They felt officers should be responsible for managing the delivery of services within their areas, involve the community in problem identification and resolution and, when appropriate, assist in community organizational efforts. Their perceptions evolved from task force discussions, small group discussions held between task force members and their peers, and responses from a survey of a sample of patrol officers. Task force members also visited other Departments involved with community and problem oriented policing to learn what these agencies were using for performance evaluations.

A second committee, consisting of police officer volunteers from each of Westside's three shifts, used the information gathered by the first group to develop the new performance

⁶ In Houston, an Executive Session was a working seminar attended by approximately thirty department personnel selected to represent all ranks and functions of the organization. The same group would meet for one morning every two weeks over a period of three months to discuss philosophies or organizational aspects of NOP. Participants changed with the topic addressed.



evaluation methods. This process and the resulting instrumentation sought to build a bridge between existing roles and responsibilities and newly emerging ones associated with the NOP philosophy.

Description of Performance Measurement Forms, Their Purpose and Application

The experimental performance evaluation instrumentation for patrol officers and their respective sergeants consists of a packet containing six forms, each of which is described below:

1. Patrol Officer's Bi-Annual Assessment Report:

This is the primary instrument the sergeant uses to evaluate officer performance across 22 different criteria. Additionally, space is provided for commentary regarding work assignments, work progress, accomplishments, and special recognition. Officers are also allowed to provide written comments regarding their evaluation. The material contained within this instrument reflects the department's expectations regarding officer responsibilities under Neighborhood Oriented Policing.

2. Patrol Officer's Monthly Worksheet:

This form serves as a tool to guide the officers' actions during their tour of duty. In completing this form, the officer has an opportunity to have direct input into his/her own evaluation. Officers can identify the different types of projects, strategies or programs they are working on for a specified period of time, as well as the progress they are making.

3. Community Information Form:

There will be times when an officer spends a lot of time working in the community with citizens on various types of projects. This form was designed to be completed by the citizens who have worked on projects with the officers. The information requested is quite specific and will provide the sergeant with additional insight as to how and what officers are trying to accomplish. Officers have the option of determining whether they want to use this form.

4. Calls For Service - Citizen Feedback Form:

The most frequent form of officer-citizen contact is during the handling of calls for service. This form is designed for the sergeant to use in obtaining information about the nature of that contact. The citizens will be asked a



few questions by the sergeants about the quality of the interaction.

Sergeants are to use this form at least once a month during the test period.

5. Investigator Questionnaire:

Officers have been, and will continue to be, expected to conduct quality criminal investigations. This work is seldom reviewed by the officer's immediate supervisor, yet the information contained within the officer's report is essential to the investigative sergeant. This form is designed to obtain information from the investigative sergeant about the officer's knowledge and performance in the handling of preliminary or follow-up investigations. Again, it is the officer's option to determine whether s/he wants to use this form.

6. Officer's Immediate Supervisor Assessment Form:

Officers are given an opportunity to provide information about the performance of their sergeant across a number of different dimensions. Although cursory in nature, this information, when given to the sergeant's superior (the district lieutenant), has the potential of identifying significant trends about the nature of the relationship between a sergeant and his/her officers. The officers are required to complete the form but have the option of signing their name to the document.

This instrumentation represents a radical departure from the forms presently being used. The diversity of information that can be collected from a variety of sources is designed to provide the sergeant with a broad perspective on what the officer is accomplishing during each evaluation period.

Further descriptive information regarding the forms, the performance factors and scaling criteria is contained in Appendix A of the technical report for this project.

Evaluation Research

The new performance measurement process was evaluated experimentally to measure its impact on both officers and citizens. The general evaluation question was whether a performance evaluation process could significantly reinforce efforts to move a police organization toward a new style of policing. The first goal of the research was to determine whether use of the new system gave officers a clearer understanding of their roles as neighborhood oriented officers and whether attitudes toward their roles changed. The second goal was to determine whether citizens perceived any change in the quality of service they received as a result of implementation of the new evaluation process.

Four research areas were selected within two of Houston's patrol districts. One of the districts was Westside where there already existed a management emphasis on the

100

100

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100

philosophy and practice of Neighborhood Oriented Policing. The other district was one in which there as yet had been no special effort to move away from a more traditional style of policing. In both districts, one area was designated an experimental area and the other, a control area. Officers in the two experimental areas were evaluated three times within a six month period with the new performance assessment process. Officers in the control areas were evaluated as Houston officers had been evaluated for forty years.

Before implementation of the new process in the experimental areas, officers in all four areas were administered surveys that measured attitudes toward the role, attitudes toward the community, and job satisfaction. At the same time, samples of citizens who had been victims of burglaries in each of the four areas were interviewed by telephone to measure their perceptions of service and levels of satisfaction. After the new performance process had been administered three times, the same officers in all four areas were surveyed again, and new samples of burglary victims in all four areas were interviewed.

Administration of the new evaluation process was monitored throughout the course of the project. At the end of the project period, officers, sergeants, lieutenants and captains who had participated in the implementation of the new process were interviewed about their experiences with the process and their opinions about both the old and the new system.

Research Findings

For patrol officers, participation in the new performance evaluation system was positively and significantly related to:

- *officers' belief in the value of foot patrol*
- *officers' perception that managers increased the priority they assigned to the management of uncommitted time by officers*
- *the frequency with which officers report conducting problem solving activities*
- *the probability that officers said they had identified problems in their areas in the previous two months*
- *officers' reports of the number of Patrol Management Plans written*
- *officers' reports of the frequency with which they said they discussed area problems with other department personnel*
- *the frequency with which officers said they had initiated problem solving activities*
- *officers' belief in the decency of human beings*
- *their satisfaction with the performance evaluation process*
- *their satisfaction with the recognition they receive for work*
- *their satisfaction with supervision.*

Participation in the new evaluation process was negatively and significantly related to:

- *the priority officers assign to traditional patrol functions under current working conditions.*



Another finding is worth noting: while officers and supervisors liked the new performance measurement process better than the one it replaced, they were little more than neutral about the new one. This was true despite the fact that the new process was the product of a task force consisting largely of patrol officers. It simply may be the case that while performance evaluation is useful, it may never be a process that anyone embraces with enthusiasm. If done well, it will require considerable effort on the part of supervisors. For officers, it always will hold the potential for bad news, and it always will remind the individual of the organizational status that leaves judgments about their work to someone with higher status.

The method of performance measurement evaluated by this project was more work than the traditional process for the sergeants who implemented it. Only for the purposes of research were these sergeants asked to use the process three times within six months; normally they would use it once in this same time period. Even if used once every six months, the new process would require more effort than the old one. Recognizing this, the task force recommended the new process be used on the anniversary date and at subsequent six month intervals for each officer. This would mean that any one sergeant would conduct only two or three evaluations each month. An additional benefit of this arrangement is that it would cause performance evaluation to be an on-going rather than a periodic concern of supervisors and managers.

For citizens, analysis of the surveys of burglary victims found that burglary victims in the experimental areas were more likely to recall the name of the responding officer than were victims in the control areas. A second measure, whether officers gave victims advice about how to seek assistance with their problems, approached significance at $p = .08$. Only these two, out of fourteen, outcome measures offer evidence that the performance evaluation process can affect the way in which officers relate to victims. This appears to be a small number of effects; however, researchers had considered it unlikely that any differences would be detected following the brief six month program period.

Conclusion

Based on findings from the officers' and citizens' surveys, this study provides evidence that a personnel performance measurement process designed to reflect and reinforce the functions that officers are expected to perform can provide structural support for a philosophy of policing and can be a valuable aid in the implementation of organizational change.

Discussion

It is important to recognize that the performance measurement process developed and tested in this project is but a first step toward performance measurement for community policing in Houston or any other department. When the new performance evaluation forms were



developed, the Houston Department was still in the process of learning what Neighborhood Oriented Policing could mean operationally, given existing constraints of budget and manpower shortages and the existence of an organizational structure that was designed for a reactive style of policing. As with community policing in most cities, the practice of Neighborhood Oriented Policing in Houston was being created by officers who were "feeling their way" without a map through new challenges, responsibilities, and authority.

As the practice of community policing becomes more clearly defined, it will be appropriate to refine performance measurement processes to reflect more articulate operational definitions of the style. But this does not mean that a department should wait until there is consensus about the new approach before attempting to reshape performance measurement. The process of creating a new approach to performance assessment helped task force members better understand the potential of Neighborhood Oriented Policing. And, as this study shows, even as a first stage revision, a new performance measurement system can facilitate and support a philosophic shift among officers who are evaluated with it. The process of revising performance measurement in Houston is referred to as a dynamic one, in recognition of the need to improve it as new roles become more fully defined and understood.

Whatever the style of policing to which a department is committed, a performance evaluation process that remains unchanged for many years probably does not reflect changing needs of the community and changing skills and abilities of an organization's personnel. Any department's approach to measuring the performance of personnel ought to be a dynamic one.

But there is a larger sense in which this project represents only a first step. There remains the need to develop measures of: The **impact** (effect or outcome) of an officer's performance; the performance of managers; the performance and impact of units or teams and the performance and impact of the organization as a whole. The intent, when this project began in Houston, was that it would lead to the development of performance measurement for sergeants, lieutenants and captains. To stop the process at the level of the first line officer is to ignore the important ways in which other roles must change in the organization if community policing is to be successfully implemented.

As a final note, we would like to discuss an accidental finding from this research. For purposes of economy and efficiency, Houston police cadets were trained to conduct the telephone interviews with burglary victims that constituted part of the evaluation data. The cadets were quite competent and, because of their status, eager to do good work. This was anticipated. The unanticipated benefits associated with having the cadets conduct the interviews include:



1. This process helped establish the idea, from the time of the new officer's first exposure to the profession, that seeking feedback from citizens is an appropriate practice.
2. The experience increased cadets' confidence in talking with citizens. You could hear their comfort grow with each call. If the survey served no other purpose, this kind of "practice" in speaking with victims would be a valuable part of the training experience. Several cadets stated that their interviewing skills were being improved and one believed that he gained experience in using the telephone as an investigative tool.
3. Cadets learned that, despite their victimization, citizens have positive feelings about the service they receive. They found that citizens did not have unrealistic expectations about the ability of the police to solve the crime or recover their property. This is an early lesson that should help mitigate against development of a "we-they" feeling toward citizens on the part of young officers.
4. Cadets learned about victims. They learned that many burglary victims change or unlist their phone numbers or even move soon after their victimization. They learned that a burglary is a traumatizing experience for many victims, some of whom remain fearful several weeks after the incident. They experienced victim gratitude for the fact that the Department "cared" enough to check back with them.
5. They learned about quality of report writing. Because they had to take information from the incident report before making the call to the victim, they quickly became alert to differences between well written and poorly written reports. They experienced the frustration of a report that could not be easily read or of one on which the phone number perhaps had been inaccurately recorded. At breaks, they could be heard discussing this among themselves and showing each other good or bad examples. They were trying to determine from officers' employee numbers whether the difference between good and bad reports could be explained by recency of academy training. One cadet asked to keep a copy of the best report he had seen so that it could continue to serve as an example for him. The simple fact that they believe another cadet will one day be scrutinizing their own reports may have a positive effect on the quality of their report writing long after burglary calls have begun to seem too routine to experienced officers.
6. They learned about research and its relationship to their profession, both from having had this project explained to them and as a result of asking questions that occurred to them during the course of conducting the survey. Were this kind of process to be implemented as a regular part of the academy



curriculum, the benefit of it would be increased if the supervisor were someone who could discuss research with the cadets as their questions arise. Also, they might be provided a reading list of materials on findings about victims, citizen surveys, and other related research topics.

We did not expect the experience of the cadets to be one of the important products of the project but we have come to believe that the experience would be beneficial to a cadet in any police organization. In a community policing agency, it could be a valuable tool for shaping performance expectations, skills, and attitudes consistent with this approach.

We strongly recommend that cadets conduct well supervised follow-up interviews with victims.

Project Products

In addition to this report, the full technical report for this project is available.

It is entitled "Evaluating Patrol Officer Performance Under Community Policing: The Houston Experiment. Technical Report." It contains a detailed description of the process of developing the new performance measurement approach and copies of the evaluation instruments as well as detailed descriptions of the research process, analysis and findings.

The technical report may be obtained from:

Publications Office
National Institute of Justice
633 Indiana Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20531

or

Police Foundation
1001 22nd Street, NW
Suite 200
Washington, DC 20037



Recommended Reading

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