

Introduction

Politics and the Police

THIS BOOK is a study of patrolmen, the lowliest but most significant of policemen. It is about the routine decisions patrolmen make as they work the street, as they manage their task of coping with crime and disorder: a decision to stop and “shake” two black kids walking down the street; a decision to let a drunk driver meander on his way; a decision to forcibly break up a fight between a man and his wife; a decision to pull the trigger to stop a suspected “felon” as he recedes into the darkness. Much of the book is devoted to describing and explaining how, when, and why patrolmen wield their awesome powers of coercion and with what effect.

My intention is not merely to illuminate how working cops confront and grapple with the uncertainties and moral dilemmas of their work nor to assess how justice is administered on the streets. A study of police discretion can tell us something about the workings of public bureaucracies and the way in which the structural characteristics of these bureaucracies shape political choice. An analysis of the exercise of discretion by patrolmen provides a glimpse into the problematic relationship between politics and administration and the attendant problem of democratic control. It poses questions about the scope, use, and political control of the power of administrative discretion.

Police discretion—the day-to-day decisions of policemen—is tan-

tamount to political decision making, for the role of the police is based upon the legitimate use of coercion. The significance of this fact extends beyond the narrow responsibility for enforcement of the criminal laws: coercion both defines the role of the police and lies behind or is instrumental in the accomplishment of most police functions. It is the use of coercion that unites the otherwise disparate activities of the police; it is present in both the act of enforcing the law and in that of peacekeeping. This is not to say that the police always rely upon coercion; only that their role is defined by the necessity of mediating or controlling situations which require, as Egon Bittner has put it, "remedies that are non-negotiably coercible."¹ Broadly, then, we may define the role of the police as the coercive regulation of social behavior among the members of a community in the interests of the protection of life and the preservation of order.

It is not just that the police wield coercive powers that is of interest; rather, that they do so selectively. Arthur Woods, a New York Police Commissioner during the Progressive era, once likened policemen to judges: they have to decide "whether or not a law is violated and therefore whether to take official action."² Discretion is an inescapable element of police work, and it arises from two factors: the ever-present reality of scarce resources and the ambiguity of the law. Police departments are required, like other public organizations, to carry out their functions with limited public resources. Policemen must set priorities and allocate their resources accordingly. The administrator must decide how to deploy his men and how to divide up the annual budget allocation, while the patrolman or detective must decide how to allocate his time and energy. Control of the purse strings enables a police administrator to create and nurture specialized units that can direct their efforts to a particular problem. Traffic enforcement is very different in a department that has a specialized traffic unit than in one that does not. But many of the most important decisions are made by patrolmen, working the streets, singly or in pairs, at all hours of the day. And here one of the most important questions is how one's time away from calls shall be used.

The choices of working cops are rarely made on the basis of clear-cut legal standards. Far from meeting the standards of specificity and clarity required by the principle of *nulla poena sine lege*, the law as it unfolds to the average street policeman is unarguably ambiguous. What, for example, constitutes disturbing the peace? When is a man

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drunk and in violation of the law? When he has passed out in the street, when he is seen staggering down the street, or when he merely responds to a patrolman's interrogations with a slurred voice? What is the difference between a misdemeanor and a felony assault? A felony assault is frequently defined in practice by prosecutors as an assault in which the victim sustains a "traumatic injury." But what is a traumatic injury? The law defines only the outer limits of discretion, and tells a policeman what he may not do—rarely what he should do.

The reasons for this ambiguity are commonplace. Legislators cannot anticipate all of the daily problems of law enforcement nor can all of the ambiguities be eliminated through successive drafts of the law. Yet, much of the ambiguity is a consequence of the legislative process, reflecting either intentional gambits or the passions of legislators and the vagaries of the deliberative process. In either case, the result is to expand the powers of discretion the police possess. For example, statutes are often made all-encompassing in order to preclude the existence of "loopholes" which would allow offenders to escape.³ Most gambling statutes are written in such a way that both commercial and social gambling are against the law, though it is normally assumed that the laws were written to prevent the local Mafia from running crap games rather than to stop little old ladies from giving bingo prizes at the church social. Yet, as a practical matter, if this distinction is drawn, it is the police who draw it. Frequently, then, the police must interpret the law's intent and the circumstances under which it applies. One of the difficulties this poses for the legal system is that some laws may be used by the police to harass people.

Next, consider laws that are normally intended to accomplish desired social objectives rather than to prevent criminal behavior per se. These include "non-support" laws, which are designed to ensure that child-support payments are met. How far and under what circumstances the desired objectives are attained is a matter largely decided by the police. Is society better served if every husband who defaults on his child-support payments is carted off to jail? Or is this matter better handled through referral to a social agency? Whatever the answer, the point is that the police presently decide these questions.

Thus, the police have crucial policy-making powers by virtue of their power to decide which laws will be enforced and when. At issue is not simply the legality of these decisions, but the routine use of the

legitimate means of coercion in society. The day-to-day choices of policemen affect the meaning of law, order, and justice within American society. Decisions to abrogate constitutional safeguards diminish individual liberties. Decisions to employ coercion—to stop and interrogate, and to arrest—determine who will or will not be held accountable to the courts, and thus what is legally acceptable behavior. Finally, the use of social distinctions based on class and race in enforcement and in maintaining order by the police can significantly affect the outcome of criminal justice proceedings. It matters not at all if the criminal courts are color-blind, as some investigators contend, if the police routinely employ such invidious distinctions.⁴ All of these police decisions are political in the sense that they influence, if not determine, the impact of formal social controls and the allocation of justice.

To say that the police, through their discretionary choices, determine the meaning of law and order, is largely to say that patrolmen determine the meaning of law and order. It falls to patrolmen to decide when to take action, how to apply vague legal standards to specific circumstances in a heterogeneous society while adapting to changing social mores and values, and how to fashion a working set of priorities. For better or worse, the societal goals to which police action is directed are served by the intelligence, whims, caprice, desires, and craftsmanship of patrolmen.

It may appear preposterous to assert that patrolmen have the power to determine the course of justice; patrolmen obviously do not make the laws nor do they set policy within a police department. Indeed, the contemporary view holds that much of what patrolmen do is not connected with law enforcement and justice at all; rather, they are all-around social workers who keep the peace and provide services. Patrolmen direct traffic, manage domestic disputes, administer stern warnings to wayward juveniles, find lost children, talk suicidal people down from rooftops, and perform a variety of incidental administrative chores. Such a view obscures their coercive role and the political consequences of their decisions. Patrolmen make most of the arrests for major felonies, all decisions to stop and interrogate, and decisions not to enforce the law or take action, particularly in the context of assaults.⁵ If and when the police deny legal protection to individuals, abridge due process, or employ distinctions of race and class, it is patrolmen who do so. In short, patrolmen are profoundly involved with the most significant questions facing any political order, those pertaining to justice, order, and

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equity. They necessarily trade in the recurring moral antinomies that accompany political choice, and through the exercise of discretion patrolmen define and redefine the meaning of justice.

Given the significance of police discretion for the allocation of justice within American society, it is crucial to understand what determines the routine choices patrolmen make. Part of the answer is to be found in an understanding of the beliefs patrolmen hold toward their jobs, the law, and the events and people they confront on the street. Choice is possible for a patrolman only if he can impose order on the raw, turbulent world that is his fare eight hours a day. Patrolmen do not react to each incident as though it were unique; they draw distinctions, they generalize—in short, they fashion a coherent set of beliefs to guide their actions. These beliefs structure their perception of events and their definition of the situation, and provide the norms and standards that influence their judgment of alternative courses of action. Ironically, then, police discretion, often justified as a way to take account of the unique and mitigating elements of an incident, requires the use of beliefs and decision-making rules to structure action.

What counts in the exercise of discretion is a patrolman's sense of priorities and his considered reflections on the conflicts and requirements of his task. The decision to arrest, the decision to stop and interrogate an individual, or the decision to ignore a family dispute is partly the result of a succession of choices a patrolman has already made. How he believes his time free from calls should be utilized, how strictly he believes minor violations should be enforced, his views on service and order-maintenance activities, the depth of his preoccupations with controlling crime, and even his day-to-day mood are not, strictly speaking, discretionary decisions. But these decisions shape his choices on the street.

If a patrolman's beliefs are significant in understanding police discretion, how are we to characterize these beliefs? Are they to be described in terms of a "working personality," a more or less common set of beliefs which derives from the reaction of patrolmen to intrinsic characteristics of the police occupation (the presence of danger, social isolation, and [perceived] public hostility), as Jerome Skolnick has suggested?⁶ Or, alternatively, do they reflect deeply ingrained attitudes, such as authoritarianism, which are a consequence of being socialized into a working-class ethos?⁷ While there may be some truth in both of these views, they obscure the dissimilarity among patrolmen. What immediately strikes the observer

of patrolmen is their diversity. Patrolmen from much the same background, who have undergone roughly similar experiences, and who share a wide range of political and social attitudes handle the same kind of incidents differently. Some believe that every drunk driver, regardless of mitigating circumstances, should go to jail; others will arrest a drunk driver only as a last resort. Patrolmen react in fundamentally different ways to the pressures and demands of their occupation, and rather than a common set of values and beliefs, what we find, I shall contend, are highly distinctive approaches to police work.⁸

Much of this book describes the beliefs of patrolmen and shows their relevance to the way they wield their powers of discretion. But if one focused solely on the encounters between patrolmen and citizens, and merely described the strategems that patrolmen employ on the street and the beliefs that guide their actions, a central fact of life on the street would be omitted. A patrolman is not free to act solely on the basis of his personal beliefs. It is often forgotten that the role of a patrolman is characterized by a fundamental duality: he is both an autonomous official who responds to the needs of a community as he deems necessary, with the power to determine the fate of the citizens he encounters, and a bureaucrat subject to the coercive inclinations of administrators. Though patrolmen have greater latitude in performing their task than most operatives in public bureaucracies, they are nevertheless enmeshed in a system of hierarchical controls and work-group pressures.

But how are a patrolman's decisions and behavior affected by the system of administrative controls in a police department? Oddly enough, despite the importance that numerous authors have attached to bureaucracy in understanding police behavior, there are few clear-cut or satisfactory answers to this question. Perhaps the most thorough treatment of the matter to date is James Q. Wilson's study of eight police departments.⁹ If Wilson suggests, for a variety of reasons, that police administrators may have only limited control over the behavior of patrolmen, he argues that they can affect discretion by manipulating the beliefs of patrolmen. In his view, the beliefs of patrolmen derive from a set of expectations communicated to them by police administrators that define broad norms of conduct and reflect distinctive administrative styles. Wilson identifies three such styles—Legalistic, Watchman, and Service—and then goes on to show how these administrative styles lead to different patterns of decision making.

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Despite Wilson's clear explanation of discretion and the impact of bureaucratic controls, his argument is flawed by a questionable assumption. He argues that the choices of patrolmen are consistent with the expectations of the chief of police, but this assumes precisely what is most problematic: whether patrolmen will, in fact, conform to the expectations of administrators. Moreover, his evidence, consisting largely of arrest rates, is far from conclusive.¹⁰

The virtue of Wilson's study is that it focuses on the right problem in the analysis of police discretion, namely, the way in which the dynamics of bureaucracy influence the behavior of patrolmen. It is thus a reasonable point of departure. But there are other questions that ought to be asked. What is the structure of administrative controls within police departments? What kinds of cues and incentives are actually conveyed to patrolmen? How do they perceive the expectations of the chief of police and other administrators? Do the extremely authoritarian hierarchical controls in police departments have any bearing on the exercise of discretion, and if so, what? To what extent do sergeants and watch commanders influence the way patrolmen exercise their discretion? Is the chief of police as omnipotent as so many students of the police have assumed? Are there work-group norms, shared by patrolmen, that shape their choices on the street? Is the impact of administrative controls influenced by the size of the department?

If we wish to understand how bureaucratic controls affect the exercise of discretion by patrolmen, we must look at the way patrolmen respond to the demands of administrators and the consequences for discretion. Yet it would be folly to treat patrolmen as ordinary bureaucrats. Their behavior, even in highly professional departments, cannot be understood on the basis of the rule-oriented behavior that is characteristic of so many public bureaucracies. Their task is far too complex and uncertain for that. What must be recognized is that patrolmen lead something of a schizophrenic existence: they must cope not only with the terror of an often hostile and unpredictable citizenry, but also with a hostile—even tyrannical—and unpredictable bureaucracy. The core argument in this book is built around the idea that police discretion is to be understood in terms of an enduring conflict between the uncertain requirements of police work and the demand of administrators for control. This conflict affects both the structure of administrative controls within police departments and the behavior of patrolmen. Ultimately, police discretion turns on the way patrolmen adapt to the contradictory re-

quirements of behaving as autonomous professionals who perform an uncertain and arduous task and as bureaucrats subject to the restraints imposed by a multitude of administrative controls.

My purpose in this book, then, is to fashion an explanation of police discretion that takes account of the impact of bureaucratic controls on the behavior of patrolmen. It is written largely from their perspective at the bottom of the bureaucratic ladder. My concern with police bureaucracies must be understood in light of the emergence in late twentieth-century America of a professionalized police and the implications of this for police work and the political control of police power. For the theoretical and empirical significance of this study finally turns on an attempt to assess the impact of police professionalism on contemporary police work.

The Police and the Reformers: New Variations on an Old Theme

How are we to control the police? How are we to prevent abuses of power and obtain a measure of political control over police discretion? This question resurfaced in America in the context of the civil strife of the late 1960s. The catalysts were the decisions of President Lyndon B. Johnson to pursue an extended war in Vietnam and to go beyond the initial civil-rights victories of the early sixties to wage a war on poverty, which produced not the beneficent results that he had hoped for—American power standing fast overseas and the elimination of poverty—but instead intense social and political conflict. Events could not be contained. Criticism of the decision to expand the war in Vietnam led to criticism of American foreign policy since World War II; the decision to embark on a war on poverty and the riots in American cities focused attention on the urban crisis. The police were important figures in both conflicts. The conduct of the police in handling demonstrations against the Vietnam War during these years became a matter of controversy as did the relationship between the police and the poor black and Mexican-American residents of the inner city. The police were regarded either as the symbols of an oppressive and illegitimate political order or as the lone guardians of order, the bulwark against anarchy.

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It is profoundly ironic that the police were the center of controversy at this time, for serious questions were posed about the use of police power after the police had undergone extensive professionalization and after many of the abuses of police power had presumably been curtailed. The evolution of the American police can be characterized as an effort to professionalize the police along lines initially laid down by nineteenth-century reformers. The thrust of the reform effort was to insulate the police from politics through civil service reforms, to put police work on a technical basis, and to bring about greater control over the police through the imposition of legal and administrative controls.¹¹ But the questions about the scope and use of police power that animated the nineteenth-century debates on the police were never resolved. Much as the reformers might wish, politics was never really separated from the administration of police work; it was only submerged under the rhetoric of professionalism. The tumultuous years of the late 1960s reopened all the old questions, and the debates over the use of police power during this period punctured the rhetoric of police professionalism and brought politics—*with a vengeance*—back into police work. But how could it be otherwise? As in the nineteenth century, the police were at the center of many of the raging political controversies. The larger public issues which vexed people during this period brought to the fore the enduring problems of the exercise of police power that any free society must face. Just as the Irish migration, the subsequent ethnic and class conflict in nineteenth-century American cities, and the slavery issue raised questions about the use of police power one hundred years ago, so the contemporary plight of blacks and Mexican-Americans and the Vietnam War raised similar issues a decade ago.

Central to the controversies in both eras were allegations of police brutality, race and class discrimination in law enforcement, violation of civil liberties and suppression of rights to protest government actions, desire for zealous enforcement of puritanical laws, and the placement of seemingly arbitrary restrictions on the police in their literally never-ending war on crime and disorder. Yet in all of these controversies the *right* of the police to exercise discretion in the application of their coercive powers was never seriously questioned. Rather the questions have always concerned how, when, and according to what standards the police exercise their discretion.

Widespread antipathy toward the police has subsided, but an unease remains. According to public opinion polls, blacks (and other

minority groups) continue to believe that the police are routinely guilty of misconduct. More relevant than public opinion polls, however, is the disquieting evidence of police misconduct. If the police are now reasonably honest and less likely to engage in the widespread brutality characteristic of the depression years when the Wickersham Commission conducted its investigation into police actions, neither do they approach the ideals of professionalism. There is widespread corruption in putatively professional police departments, evidence of brutality and substantial lawbreaking by the police themselves, and a persistent incivility in relations between police and public.¹² Contemporary criticism extends beyond these traditional issues to questions about police effectiveness in coping with crime and disorder, their preoccupation with crime control when much police work consists of providing services, and the matter of equal or differential law enforcement.

If the civil strife of the late 1960s reopened the question of the use of police power, the nineteenth-century debate on the police continued to define the contours of any discussion of the police in American society. In this debate, both issues of the effectiveness of the police in controlling crime and public disorder and issues of political control over police discretion were inextricably linked to the question of centralized versus local control. The nineteenth-century reformers argued for centralized control over police actions, and for impersonal and uniform enforcement of the law. Implicit was the idea of the police as professional elites, separated from the particularistic influences of the local community, who would strive for equal and strict enforcement of the law. Political control was to be obtained through centralized administrative control. In contrast, local politicians, not all of them connected with political machines, emphasized the need for the use of police power to be tempered by the mores and values of a particular community. Control over police discretion was predicated on the idea that the police had to be part of the community rather than above it.¹³ The debate continues today but with an ironical twist: it is now the reformers who advocate decentralization and those favoring the status quo who advocate a professional police. Contemporary reformers argue that professionalism has not resulted in a fair, equitable, and humane approach to social problems, as an earlier generation of reformers assumed it would. Rather, the professionalization of local government has served only to centralize decision making and to insulate professionals from client pressures and demands through bureaucratic auton-

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any. The professional bureaucracies of local government are not only unresponsive to external pressures, especially by the poor and downtrodden, but they are also incapable of effectively responding to a changing social and political environment. The police are only the most important manifestation of this development.¹⁴

The "new" reformers argue that the cycle of bureaucratic dysfunctions that leads to abuses of police discretion and a lack of responsiveness can be broken only through radical decentralization of governmental functions and by allowing citizens greater control over the formulation and implementation of policy in police departments. Under a decentralized system, it is argued, citizens will be better able to articulate demands, will know more about the individuals who serve them, and consequently will be able to gain more effective control over police discretion. From the standpoint of administrators, decentralization will facilitate greater internal control over patrolmen and increase their knowledge of the community and citizen demands. Decentralization ultimately means control over police discretion on the basis of shared values between the police and residents of a community.¹⁵

In contrast, those who prefer the status quo are far more sanguine about police professionalism. Professionalism has brought about decided improvements in police behavior: it has greatly minimized brutality and corruption, has worked subtle and beneficial changes in the values of policemen, and has made the police more efficient and effective in what they do. This is not to deny that serious problems remain; rather the argument is that greater accountability is to be obtained through continued professionalization of the police, and any radical attempt at decentralization would only make things worse.¹⁶ Often, then, the suggestion is that things could be improved by requiring more education and better training for cops, and by devising mechanisms to respond to complaints and achieve greater internal control over patrolmen.

Yet the more astute students of the police as well as a few police officers themselves have begun to express reservations over some elements of the model of police work fashioned over the last eighty years. In particular, these individuals have begun to question the wisdom and effectiveness of such extant doctrines as "preventative patrol" and to wonder if the police have become far too isolated from the communities they serve. This has led to a reevaluation of the police function and a call to de-emphasize crime fighting in favor of the service and order-maintenance role.¹⁷ It has also led, in a few

departments, to attempts to decentralize operations through team policing in order to reestablish contact with the residents of a community or neighborhood and to improve the effectiveness of police work.¹⁸ These responses represent not an abandonment of police professionalism but an attempt to modify it to take account of its most serious shortcomings.

Both of these critiques and others are predicated on the assumption that police professionalism is either a complete or partial failure. Yet it is not at all obvious what impact professionalism has had on police work, especially on police discretion, nor what kinds of reforms would bring about greater accountability and control over the police. The theme stressed in the most recent works on the police is that police professionalism has led to the bureaucratization (in the Weberian sense) of police departments and the emergence of a style of police work that is impersonal, strict, and detached from community and political pressures. The crude, often violent beat cop who was intimately tied to the political machine has been replaced by the spit and polish of efficient, impersonal professionals who are tied to quasi-military administrative structures. Yet no profound and deep-seated change such as the reform of the police proceeds unimpeded and without its share of unintended outcomes. What, we should ask, are the limits of police professionalism and the consequences for the exercise of discretion by patrolmen? In what ways and to what extent have the values of working policemen been changed by the onslaught of professionalism? In what sense has police professionalism made the police not just more efficient and effective in controlling crime (though there is some doubt about this) but more accountable as well? Accountability in a professional police force rests on the strength of hierarchical and professional controls over police discretion. But to what extent has professionalism, through the proliferation of bureaucratic rules and an authoritarian style of command, actually led to centralized control over the behavior and decisions of patrolmen? Does the effect of administrative controls differ in small as compared to large departments as the decentralizers presume? If so, how, and with what effect for police discretion?

Thus, an explanation of police discretion that takes account of the impact of bureaucratic controls and an assessment of the impact of police professionalism are two sides of the same coin. Serious students of the police and would-be reformers who fail to understand the pressures and constraints of police work and how the bureaucratization of police work under the guise of professionalism has affected

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police discretion, run the risk, in my judgment, of greatly oversimplifying the problem of accountability. This is true of both those who advocate continued professionalization of the police and those "anti-professionals" who seek decentralization. My intention in this book is to set forth the empirical analysis that will both provide an explanation of police discretion and allow an evaluation of various strategies for reform.

The plan of this book may be described as follows. In Part One, I develop a theoretical framework for the analysis of administrative discretion and apply it to the police. Chapter 1 develops the logic behind the framework, and in chapter 2 I use the framework to develop a preliminary assessment of the impact of police professionalism. Part Two explores the nature of a patrolman's relationship to the community in which he works and to the department. In chapter 3, I discuss the implications of the separation between police and community that is a consequence of professionalism. In chapters 4 and 5 a theoretical model of the structure and impact of bureaucratic controls on patrolmen is developed and evaluated on the basis of data collected from the three departments that are the subject of this study. In Part Three, I develop the analysis and explanation of police discretion. Chapters 6 and 7 are devoted to describing how patrolmen use their discretion in crime fighting and in handling minor violations and disturbances. In chapters 8 and 9, I turn to the matter of explanation. Chapter 8 explores the implications of a patrolman's beliefs for the exercise of discretion, and chapter 9 evaluates the impact of administrative controls. Part Four returns to the issues I have raised here and evaluates four different proposals for reform.

A Methodological Preface

The analysis in this book is based on a study of three professional police departments in Southern California. Two of these are small departments, each with fewer than one hundred policemen; the third is the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD), a department that has the reputation of being one of the most professional in the country. One of the small departments, Inglewood, faces a rather serious crime problem; the other, Redondo Beach, serves a complacent community with a moderately low crime rate. In LAPD, I se-

lected a high-crime division (Rampart) and a low-crime division (Northeast) for study.

These three departments are not representative of American police departments, but they do reflect, perhaps more precisely than a more inclusive sampling, all the dilemmas and consequences inherent in police professionalism. The research design permits a comparison between two small departments and a large department, and between two high-crime and two moderately low-crime areas. This allows an evaluation of the impact of administrative controls in small and large departments, and provides for a crude control of the effects such things as the crime rate and the complexion of the community have on the behavior of patrolmen. My logic in regard to the latter is that if department policies or expectations, for example, are *relatively unimportant* in determining the choices of patrolmen, one would expect, given the research design, that there would be few, if any, differences between the two high-crime areas and between the two low-crime areas in the kinds of decisions patrolmen make, but significant differences in the choices made between the high- and low-crime areas regardless of department. On the other hand, if departmental policies and expectations were *relatively important*, one would expect the converse. There is no pretense that this research design takes account of all the exogenous factors that could conceivably affect the behavior of patrolmen. But it does allow for a reasonable assessment of some rival explanations.

Three kinds of data are used throughout the study: data obtained through participant observation of police work; data obtained from the departments, for example, arrest rates; and survey data based on an interview schedule administered to patrolmen and field supervisors (sergeants and watch commanders) in all three departments. For the participant-observation phase of the study I spent about five months riding in patrol cars in all three departments. I rode in Redondo Beach and Inglewood for two and one-half months during the fall and winter of 1972-1973 and in the two divisions of LAPD during the summer of 1973. There were no restrictions set by any of the departments, and I always selected the officers and the beat. The majority of observations took place during night watch, the 4:00 P.M. to 12:00 A.M. shift, though I rode day watch and morning watch a few times for purposes of comparison. One of the reasons I concentrated on one shift was to facilitate the development of rapport between myself and the policemen I was studying which would enhance the validity of my observations. The field observations are not based on

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a sample of shifts, but I believe these data are a fair representation of the activities of patrolmen. Night watch is usually the busiest shift and provides the opportunity to observe a wide variety of calls and decisions. There are more calls for service than on morning watch (midnight to 8 A.M.) and more crime related activity than on day watch. The real problem with these data has to do with the possibility that patrolmen toned down their behavior in my presence (one patrolman admitted as much at the end of the night). This, of course, is a difficulty of any participant-observation study, and I attempted to minimize it by cultivating the necessary trust and riding for an extended period of time.

While riding I concentrated on two tasks. First, I closely observed each situation that patrolmen became involved in and then probed for their reasons for making a particular decision. Second, I conducted informal, open-ended interviews with patrolmen about their attitudes and feelings toward police work, crime, citizens, and the department. Many of the quotations used throughout the text are taken from these interviews. The case histories that appear in chapters 6 and 7 are also drawn from the field observations.

The questionnaire was administered to all patrolmen who agreed to answer it in the small departments (there were three refusals in Redondo Beach and none in Inglewood), and to a random sample of patrolmen in the two divisions of LAPD. Altogether, 198 patrolmen were interviewed. In addition, a total of 57 field supervisors were interviewed. This included every field supervisor in the small departments and all but two or three in the two divisions of LAPD. The interviews were conducted in the station at either the beginning or the end of an officer's shift of duty. Throughout, I attempted to minimize distortions and biased responses by taking stringent steps to assure the confidentiality of the results and to make patrolmen aware of the purposes of the study.

I have attempted to combine the use of participant observation and survey research for two reasons. The first has to do with the question of validity. While I have taken all the normal precautions with these methods, the reader is still entitled to be rather skeptical of the behavior of patrolmen when being observed by an outsider and of the responses of patrolmen to a questionnaire administered by an outsider. The field observations, interviews, and aggregate data, however, provide *alternative* measures of police attitudes and behavior, and I think it is possible through cross-checking the findings of one method with another to strengthen the overall valid-

ity of the analysis.¹⁹ Cross-checking the interview responses with the field observations provides a way of detecting distorted or dishonest responses. The chief criterion I use throughout to evaluate the adequacy of the survey responses is their consistency with the field observations. In turn, the interview data prevents one from drawing rash conclusions on the basis of the field observations. And both the survey responses and the field observations can be checked against aggregate data such as arrest rates. Such comparisons are hazardous, if not crude, but I believe that a more thorough understanding of the police hinges on such a procedure.

My second reason for proceeding as I did was a desire to combine the depth made possible by extended participant observation with the ability to generalize that can be obtained only through a comparative study of three departments using survey and aggregate data. Participant observation is touted for its utility in developing insights and hypotheses, and the survey is regarded as more rigorous methodologically because it affords the opportunity explicitly to test hypotheses and draw causal inferences. Yet both have disadvantages: participant observation often precludes generalizing and does not lend itself to evaluating hypotheses, while the survey can verge toward superficiality. But there is no reason why these approaches cannot be combined. Employing both methods in a study of several organizations may yield far better results than either used alone.

Yet it would be foolhardy not to admit that there is a deep-seated tension between these two methods. There are discrepancies in the results obtained between the two methods, discrepancies that cannot always be resolved. If I am often inclined to place more weight on the field observations than on the survey responses, it should be remembered that both are subject to bias. There is also tension in shifting the level of analysis from the way patrolmen behave on the street to a comparison of the three departments. This is sometimes messy, but it is necessary. Whatever discomfort the reader may feel, he or she should know that this procedure at least keeps me honest.