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# Proactive Policing by Post and Community Officers

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Using data collected through social observations of 188 police officer shifts, the current research examines the time allocated to proactive and reactive activities by traditional and community police officers to assess (a) the extent to which post officers engage in proactive activities, (b) whether these activities differ from the (proactive) activities conducted by community officers, (c) whether post and community officers' activities reflect an emphasis on different functions of policing, and (d) to what extent the activities of both types of officers reflect community policing philosophy.

**Keywords:** *police; proactive; reactive; community; professional*

Police scholars distinguish between reactive policing, in which citizens mobilize the police to intervene in private affairs (typically through calls for service), and proactive policing, in which police intervene on their own initiative. Reactive policing is characterized as incident driven, with police “reacting” to incidents and seeking solutions aimed at restoring order, whereas proactive policing “attempts to deal with problems before they come into being” (Patterson, 2004, p. 144).

Patterson (2004) observes that there is a general misconception regarding the professional policing model and the community policing model and cautions that “if we are not careful, we could fall into the trap of seeing the professional model as reactive and the community policing model as proactive. This is not the case. The difference is what actions to prioritize” (p. 144). He notes, for example, that under either the professional or the community

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policing model, responding to a call for service is using a reactive approach. The officer responds to the call and attempts to find a solution to the problem. However, professional policing and community policing differ in how the officer goes about resolving the problem:

The officer using the professional model would look to a supervisor, other officers, or professional literature for a solution. An officer using the community policing model would use these same sources but would also look to the residents in that area to find a solution. (Patterson, 2004, p. 145)

One of the basic objectives of community policing is to transform police officers from specialists to generalists, with all officers performing both 911 and community policing (Cordner, 1997; Goldstein, 1990; Greene, 1989; Maguire, 1997; Trojanowicz, 1990). Pelfrey (2004) argues that this is generally not realized. In most police agencies, the majority of officers continue to serve reactively, with only a small percentage of officers assuming community policing roles, “in effect producing yet another specialist,” and in many agencies, “this dichotomy of assignments has produced two groups of officers with distinctly different orientations—one reactive, the other proactive” (p. 580). Goldstein (1987) cautioned that a basic requirement for the success of community policing is integration within the police organization. Although initially it might be necessary to separate officers engaged in community policing from the rest of the agency, in the long run, separate units with different orientations will not work because much of traditional reactive policing is incompatible with community policing.

For example, a department could not long tolerate a situation in which officers in a residential area go out of their way to demonstrate that they are caring, service-oriented individuals, while other officers assigned to a roving task force make wholesale sweeps of loitering juveniles in that community. Such activities greatly diminish the credibility of officers who have invested heavily in developing rapport. (Goldstein, 1987, p. 7)

Although a few studies have examined how community policing officers spend their time, we have yet to examine whether community and traditional officers are working at odds, as Goldstein suggests.

The current research examines the proactive and reactive activities of traditional and community police officers in a department where community officers are generally relieved from responding to calls for service to explore how community officers are different from post officers. More specifically, the time allocated to and the nature of proactive and reactive activities of traditional and community officers are compared to assess

whether post and community officers have different orientations—one reactive, the other proactive—as Pelfrey (2004) argues; whether the proactive activities conducted by post and community officers differ, as Goldstein (1987) cautions; whether post and community officers' activities reflect an emphasis on different functions of policing; and to what extent the activities of both types of officers reflect community policing philosophy.

## Review of the Literature

Although “commentators on police service argue that the police have become a ‘slave to 911’” (Kessler, 1993, p. 488), there has always been a proactive component to police work. Under the traditional or professional model of policing, the time available between responses to citizen calls for service has predominantly been used for random preventive patrol. The rationale underlying preventive patrol is to facilitate a rapid response to citizen calls for service but also to increase the probability that officers will interrupt offenses in progress and to deter or prevent citizens from committing offenses (Bayley, 1998; Scott, 2000). Several studies conducted during the mid-1970s to early 1980s cast doubt on the effectiveness of preventive patrol (and rapid response) as a means to achieve these objectives. The Kansas City Preventive Patrol Experiment found varying levels of patrol had no significant effect on apprehension of offenders, crime, or citizen fear of crime (Kelling, Pate, Dieckman, & Brown, 1974). A study conducted by the Police Executive Research Forum revealed that arrest of offenders at the scene of the crime depended on swift reporting by citizens (Spelman & Brown, 1984). In light of these findings, efforts were directed toward identifying ways to more effectively structure and use preventive patrol time to accomplish specific patrol objectives (e.g., split force, directed apprehension, and directed deterrent patrol). During the course of several decades, numerous movements in police reform and crime prevention emerged (e.g., community-oriented policing, problem-oriented policing, zero-tolerance policing). Although these philosophies and strategies vary both in theory and practice, they all stress the use of proactive tactics.

### Proactive Policing in the Community Era

Much has been written about the philosophy of community-oriented policing, the strategies and activities expected of officers engaged in community policing, and the role and function of the police under this philosophy.

Community policing recognizes that citizens are coproducers of crime prevention (Skolnick & Bayley, 1988). The results of research experiments and analysis regarding the effectiveness of traditional police strategies (preventive patrol, rapid response, and criminal investigations) collectively suggested that police, on their own, were not very effective in preventing and controlling crime. The Rand Corporation's study of the criminal investigation process found that arrest of offenders through investigation hinged on citizen information rather than investigative techniques (Greenwood & Petersilia, 1975). Various crime commissions also discovered that most crimes were not reported to police. The shift to a community policing philosophy acknowledges the importance of citizen information as the basis for solving crimes and arresting offenders and the need for positive police-citizen relations to this end. Vito, Walsh, and Kunselman (2005) state,

From its title, community policing infers a partnership between the police and the people they serve. This partnership is designed to improve the quality of life in the community through the introduction of strategies designed to enhance neighborhood solidarity and safety. (p. 491)

It is expected that officers operating under a community policing model will emphasize different strategies and activities than officers operating under a professional model of policing. Cultivating relationships with citizens, building a partnership between police officers and community residents, and seeking community input in the identification and resolution of problems require that officers spend less time in their cruisers and more time in direct contact with the community (Vito et al., 2005).

Community policing also demands that police replace their preoccupation with handling calls for service with identifying and resolving community problems through proactive strategies and tactics (Goldstein, 1987; Skolnick & Bayley, 1988). Zhao, He, and Lovrich (2003) note that "community policing is said to emphasize crime control as an indirect result of the other core activities of maintaining order and providing services" (p. 698). As such, police are expected to focus more on order maintenance as both an end and a means to reduce crime (Mastrofski, 1988). Community policing has been guided by both aggressive order-maintenance strategies and community service strategies. The first approach involves "the proactive application of formal and informal sanctions to the presumed proximate causes of public disorder on the beat: winos, panhandlers, prostitutes, drug violators, rowdy juveniles, and other street people" (Mastrofski, 1988, p. 519). Strategies such as initiating suspicion stops and field interrogations, surveillance of suspicious people, and vigorous enforcement of

public order and nuisance laws are not new to policing, and Mastroski notes that “some community policing advocates seek to justify them as a routine response to or preventive of disorder” (1988, p. 519). In contrast, the notion of police–community coproduction and order maintenance through informal social control underlies the community service approach. Police become involved in organizing and facilitating community meetings and block watches and emphasize strategies such as foot patrol, casual contacts with community residents, and victim follow-up. Whereas Goldstein (1987) implies that aggressive order-maintenance strategies characteristic of traditional policing may be incompatible with community service strategies, Kelling and Coles (1996) argue that aggressive order maintenance directed at those who disturb public order is not inconsistent with engaging citizens to define and preserve public order. As of yet, no studies have examined whether these two approaches or strategies are at odds, although a few studies have compared the activities of traditional patrol and post officers to community policing officers in departments employing a split-force or specialist approach.

## Empirical Studies

Three studies bear directly on this issue. Frank, Brandl, and Watkins (1997) compared the tasks and workloads of beat officers to neighborhood officers in a “community-oriented” police agency in an attempt to better understand the contribution of community policing in the delivery of police services. Using data collected through systematic social observations of 20 patrol officer shifts and 59 neighborhood officer shifts in Cincinnati, Ohio, during 1995, they classified the activities conducted by officers into 35 categories, which were then collapsed into 8 more general categories.

Parks, Mastroski, DeJong, and Gray (1999) compared the tasks undertaken by generalist patrol officers and community policing specialists in Indianapolis, Indiana, and St. Petersburg, Florida, to explore how the two types of officers spend their time with the community. Parks et al. also used data collected through systematic social observations of 360 officer shifts in Indianapolis (1996) and 360 shifts in St. Petersburg (1997); 80% of observations were with patrol generalists. Parks et al. reported the average allocation of officer time in several categories.

In a second Cincinnati study, Smith, Novak, and Frank (2001) documented the activities of traditional beat officers and neighborhood or community officers using observation data from 236 beat officer shifts and 206 community officer shifts between April 1997 and April 1988. Smith and his

colleagues classified 71 tasks into 23 different activity categories (activities were defined as anything not involving a face-to-face interaction with a citizen) and classified encounters (with citizens) into 102 different types. They then recoded all activities and encounters into 16 mutually exclusive categories representing all observed officer time.

As expected, these studies found that for certain activities, the time spent by traditional officers and neighborhood or community officers differs significantly. Traditional officers spend more time engaged in crime-related activities, whereas community officers spend more time engaged in administrative activities and community meetings. In fact, community-based service activities, such as setting up and attending community meetings or programs or visiting schools, are one of the few reported activities for all three studies that community officers conducted and beat officers either did not conduct at all (Frank et al., 1997) or spent very little time on (in Parks et al., 1999, Indianapolis, 4%, and St. Petersburg, 1%; in Smith et al., 2001, less than 1%). Frank et al. (1997) also found that beat officers spent no time on foot patrol, and Smith et al. (2001) found beat officers spent less than 1% of time on foot patrol and on problem-focused activities.

However, Frank et al. (1997) found that differences in mean uncommitted time (vehicle and foot patrol) for beat and neighborhood officers were not significant. Smith et al. (2001) also found no significant difference in the total proportion of time spent on foot patrol, service, ordinance enforcement, and order-maintenance activities. Parks et al. (1999) found that patrol generalists spent more time than community policing specialists in encounters with citizens and aggressive order-maintenance activities (suspicion stops and problems of public disorder). These findings call into question whether the emphasis on police function has shifted from crime control to order maintenance as suggested by community policing advocates. One would expect not only that community officers, exempt from responding to calls for service, would spend significantly less time than traditional officers engaged in vehicle patrol and possibly more time on foot patrol, order-maintenance activities, and in encounters with citizens but also that the total proportion of time allocated to order maintenance and service activities would be significantly greater. For example, Frank et al. (1997) and Smith et al. (2001) found vehicle patrol consumed the greatest proportion of time for both beat (33%, Frank et al., 1997; 29%, Smith et al., 2001) and neighborhood officers (22%, Frank et al., 1997; 24%, Smith et al., 2001). Smith et al. (2001) found that order-maintenance activities accounted for only 3% of beat officers' time and 1% of community officers' time, while service activities consumed 3 percent of beat officers'

time and 2 percent of community officers' time. For Indianapolis officers, Parks et al. (1999) found 26% of beat officer time and 20% of community officer time allocated to general patrol, as compared to 11% of beat officer time and 8% of community officer time allocated to problems of public disorder.

Comparing these findings to police workload studies conducted in departments prior to implementation of community policing could lead one to conclude that not much has changed, or at least not as expected. For example, Kelling et al. (1974) reported average patrol officer time expenditures on "mobile police-related" activities in Kansas City (1972 to 1973) to be only 14%. Cordner (1979) found patrol officers in a midwestern city (1978) spent 21% of their time patrolling. Greene and Klockars (1991) reported police officers in the Wilmington Police Department (1985 to 1986) spent 29% of their time engaged in free patrol, 9% on order maintenance, and 4% on service activities.

Zhao et al. (2003) contend that in fact, police core-function priorities have not shifted from crime control to order maintenance and service provision despite the diffusion of community policing across the country. Zhao et al. analyzed panel data from three national surveys conducted in 1993, 1996, and 2000 of more than 200 municipal police departments. Surveys required police chiefs to rank Wilson's (1968) list of 16 police activities reflecting the crime-control, order-maintenance, and service-provision functions on a 4-point scale, ranging from *very low priority* to *high priority*. The researchers concluded "that during the period under study, the core functional priorities of American policing remained largely in alignment with the dictates of the professional model" (Zhao et al., 2003, p. 715).

The limited research on the work routines of traditional and community officers reveals that the extent to which officers engage in certain activities differs by officer assignment. The time traditional or beat officers allocate to patrol and crime-related activities suggests an emphasis on the crime-control function of policing. However, community officers also devote a substantial amount of time to patrol, and findings regarding time allocated to order-maintenance and service activities are mixed. The limitations of these (and previous workload studies) make it difficult to assess how "proactive" community officers are as compared to traditional officers, because the catalyst for activities conducted by traditional officers (dispatch or officer initiated) is not known. For example, Smith et al. (2001) report that beat officers spend 8% of their time, and community officers 2%, engaged in traffic enforcement. If 6% of the time beat officers spend on traffic enforcement is in response to dispatched calls for service (reactive),



beat and community officers are spending the same amount of time engaged in proactive traffic-enforcement activities. A second limitation of many workload studies is the tendency to collapse the activities conducted into fewer general categories (e.g., checking suspicious circumstances, searching crime scenes, and traffic enforcement are reported as “problem directed”); the percentage of time spent on problem-directed activities is reported, but there is no information provided as to which problem-directed activity consumes the most time, for example, checking suspicious circumstances or traffic enforcement. This limits not only what is known about the amount of time consumed by various activities but also whether the time allocated to activities within a category differs by type of officer, and it makes comparisons across studies and over time difficult. The problem is studies are too condensed; we have lost too much information in our categorizations.

The present study uses data collected through systematic social observations of post and community officers. For each activity undertaken by officers during an observed shift, observers asked officers about the catalyst for mobilization, whether the activity was conducted in response to a dispatch (reactive), or if the officer initiated the activity (proactive). Activities are subgrouped into categories for summary purposes, but the time allocated to activities within each category is also reported. Thus the data enable assessment of whether post and community officers have different orientations—one reactive, the other proactive—as Pelfrey (2004) argues; whether the proactive activities conducted by post and community officers differ, as Goldstein (1987) cautions; whether post and community officers’ activities reflect an emphasis on different functions of policing; and to what extent the activities of both types of officers reflect community policing philosophy.

## Study Site

Data for the present study were initially collected in Baltimore, Maryland, during 1999 as part of a larger study assessing the impact of implementing alternative methods for handling nonemergency citizen calls for police service on the quality and quantity of policing.<sup>1</sup> At the time of the study, the Baltimore Police Department served a population of 716,446 residents (1996)<sup>2</sup> in a jurisdiction of 86 square miles.<sup>3</sup> The department was organized into nine districts, with each district divided into 3 or 4 sectors (29 sectors in the city) and each sector divided into a number of posts (beats). Baltimore police officers were assigned as “post” and “community outreach” officers.

Post officers were generally assigned to the same post for each shift (manpower permitting) in single-officer units and performed traditional patrol duties in that they had primary responsibility for responding to calls for service within their post. In contrast, a limited number of officers in each district were assigned as community outreach officers; these officers were generally exempt from responding to calls for service.

The Baltimore Police Department employed a strategy known as CrimeSTAC.<sup>4</sup> Similar to COMPSTAT, CrimeSTAC used computerized crime-incident mapping to identify patterns and crime trends. District majors (commanders) and sector lieutenants (managers) were provided with the data to structure unit (e.g., post, community outreach, flex, neighborhood services) operations in their area of responsibility. They were then held accountable for developing focused interventions directed at the identified crime-incident locations. At the street level, post officers maintained “post books” (binders containing relevant crime information for their post), and officers were expected to know where the problem areas were in their post.

## Data and Methods

The data for this study were collected through systematic social observations of officers during a 2-week period in 1999 (June 14 through June 27). Trained observers accompanied officers on 242 shifts. Observers took brief notes on officers’ activities to account for every minute of the officer’s shift, recording the time at which each activity began and ended and a description of the activity (e.g., disorderly, alarm, transport person not in custody, assist motorist). For all activities except those pertaining to administration and personal activities,<sup>5</sup> observers also recorded the catalyst for officer mobilization whether the activity was reactive (conducted in response to a 911, 311, or district dispatch) or proactive (the activity was self initiated, the officer chose to engage in the activity upon receiving information from a citizen at the scene, or the officer engaged in the activity on the basis of information or instructions provided by other police). After each observation session, observers transformed their field notes into detailed coded data.

The research team promised confidentiality to the individual officers observed and the police department, as required by federal law.<sup>6</sup> Concerns about officer reactivity in observation research were addressed by encouraging observer passivity so that officers did not feel they were being judged by observers and subsequently alter their activities (Mastrofski & Parks, 1990).<sup>7</sup>

## Selection of Sample Patrol Areas

Observations of officers were conducted in three districts, within one sector of each district. Districts and sectors were selected by first interviewing district commanders and sector managers<sup>8</sup> to identify sectors where lieutenants reported using crime analysis data to structure or direct officer activities (thus the percentage of time spent on proactive activities, which includes activities conducted on the basis of information or instructions provided by other police, may be higher than in sectors where officers were not observed). Second, the distribution of calls for service throughout Baltimore was examined, and sectors with a higher-than-average number of calls for service were selected (thus the percentage of time spent on reactive activities, conducted in response to a dispatch, may also be higher than in sectors where officers were not observed). Third, the primary land use of sectors was considered, and sectors with different land use were selected (i.e., residential communities, business communities, and transient-commuter-tourism areas).<sup>9</sup> Area selection biases such as these are consistent with previous observation studies (Ostrom, Parks, & Whitaker, 1977; Parks et al., 1999; Reiss, 1971) but render the findings unrepresentative of events in all parts of the city and the activity of all officers (Parks et al., 1999).

## Sampling Patrol Rides

In two of the districts where observations of officers were conducted, Baltimore post officers work one of three 8-hr shifts: first shift, 11:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m.; second shift, 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.; or third shift, 3:00 p.m. to 11:00 p.m. In the third district where observations were conducted (business district), each shift begins and ends one half hour earlier. Observations were conducted only during the second and third shifts (days and evenings). A stratified random sample of 50% of "posts" was drawn from the population of posts in the three sectors (for the second and third shifts, for the 14-day study period). This resulted in a random sample of 251 observation periods. Of the 251 scheduled observation periods, 27 were with community officers (9 in each study sector), leaving 224 observations to be conducted with patrol officers. In total, 96% ( $N = 240$ ) of the scheduled observations were completed in accordance with the ride schedule (25 community officer, 215 post officer).<sup>10</sup> To increase confidence that the observers properly coded the time post officers spent responding to calls and performing tasks during their shifts, the number and nature of calls for service recorded by observers for each shift were matched to computer-aided dispatch (CAD) data for that shift. The present study uses only the observations

of post officers where the calls in the observation data matched the calls in the CAD data, 163 of the 215 completed observations with post officers (76% of the original sample). All completed observations of community officers ( $N = 25$ ) are used.

## Findings

More than 180 types of officer activities were observed. To organize the activities for summary purposes, activities are subgrouped into 10 general categories guided by categorizations used in prior studies. To examine officer workload using a reactive–proactive framework, in the following tables, all activities conducted during the observed shifts are classified according to the catalyst for officer mobilization, either *reactive* (activity conducted in response to a 911, 311, or district dispatch) or *proactive* (activity initiated by the officer, initiated in response to a citizen at the scene, or based on information or instructions provided by other police). The activities for which observers were not required to ask about the catalyst for mobilization are classified as *other*. As community officers were generally exempt from responding to calls for service, only 2% (8 activities) of all activities conducted by community officers during the observation periods are reactive.<sup>11</sup> These 8 activities account for just more than 1% of total community officer time; thus the reactive–proactive framework is not applied to community officer activities.

Table 1 summarizes the time spent on other, reactive, and proactive activities by post officers and the total minutes and percentage of total time spent on each category of activities for post and community officers.

The values in the *Total %* columns for post (column 9) and community officers (last column) reveal the highest proportion of officer time is allocated to patrol for both post (approximately 35%, or 2 hr, 47 min, per 8 hr observed) and community officers (approximately 30%, or 2 hr, 23 min). Administrative activities consume the next highest proportions of officer time (17% post officer; 26% community officer). Baltimore post officers spend approximately the same amount of time engaged in crime-related activities (10.93%) as in personal activities (10.64%, or 51 min). Community officers spend comparable amounts of time engaged in order-maintenance activities (13.29%) and personal activities (12.03%, or 58 min). Although service activities consume the least amount of post officer time (2.94%, or 14 min), community officers also spend little time on service activities (1.43%, or 7 min), but investigative activities consume the least amount of community officer time (1.12%, or 5 min).

**Table 1**  
**Total Minutes and Percentage of Total Time Allocated to Activity Categories by Type of Officer**

Category	Post										Total %	Total Minutes	Total %	p value <sup>a</sup>
	Other		Reactive		Proactive		Community		Total %	Total Minutes				
	Minutes	%	Minutes	%	Minutes	%	Minutes	%						
Patrol	—	—	—	—	26,498	34.76	26,498	34.76	3240.00	29.81	0.229			
Administrative	12,652	16.59	—	—	—	—	12,652	16.59	2811.00	25.86	0.036			
Crime-related	—	—	7,382	9.68	955	1.25	8,337	10.93	479.00	4.41	0.104			
Personal	8,109	10.64	—	—	—	—	8,109	10.64	1308.00	12.03	0.518			
Backup	—	—	371	0.49	6,752	8.86	7,123	9.34	415.00	3.82	0.000			
Traffic	—	—	1,698	2.23	2,032	2.67	3,730	4.89	528.00	4.86	0.752			
Investigative	—	—	2,269	2.98	449	0.59	2,718	3.56	122.00	1.12	0.554			
Information gathering	1,267	1.66	643	0.84	581	0.76	2,491	3.27	366.00	3.22	0.664			
Order maintenance	—	—	1,705	2.24	638	0.84	2,343	3.07	1445.00	13.29	0.003			
Service	—	—	1,816	2.38	425	0.56	2,241	2.94	155.00	1.43	0.888			
Total	22,028	28.89	15,884	20.83	38,330	50.27	76,242	100.00	10869.00	99.85				

a. *T* tests were performed to examine whether the average amount of time spent on *proactive* activities per shift and *other* activities per shift differed significantly by type of officer.

The values in the *Total* row (bottom row) show that post officers spend approximately 21% of their time engaged in reactive activities (activities conducted in response to a 911, 311, or district dispatch), 50% of their time engaged in proactive activities (activities initiated by the officer, initiated in response to information from a citizen at the scene, or based on information or instructions provided by other police), and 29% of their time engaged in other activities. The greatest proportion of post officers' reactive time is consumed by crime-related activities (9.68%); the greatest proportion of proactive time is consumed by patrol activities (34.76%).

A series of *t* tests were performed to examine whether the average amount of time post officers spent on proactive activities and other activities per shift differed from the average amount of time community officers spent on activities per shift (for each broad category of activities). Statistically significant differences were found for only three categories of activities. Post officers spent significantly more time on proactive backup activities than community officers ( $p = .000$ ), whereas community officers spent significantly more time than post officers on administrative activities ( $p = .036$ ) and proactive order-maintenance activities ( $p = .003$ ).<sup>12</sup>

Table 2 presents the percentage of time (average per 8 hr of observation) consumed by specific crime-related and investigative activities as well as the total number of each activity conducted during the observed shifts for each type of officer. Activities within each category are listed by greatest to least allocation of post officer time.

The Uniform Crime Reports (UCR)<sup>13</sup> categories were used as a guide to determine crime-related activities.<sup>14</sup> Activity codes and descriptions that correspond to Part I and Part II offenses are recoded as such. For example, activities coded as residential or commercial burglary, robbery or attempted robbery, theft or attempted theft, and shoplifting are recoded as Part I (burglary, robbery, larceny or theft). Disorderly, drug violation, drunkenness, gambling, loitering, vagrancy, and vandalism are re-coded as Part II. Note that in using this recoding system, activities coded as aggravated assault are considered Part I offenses (aggravated assault), simple assaults are Part II (other assaults), and "arguments" or "fights" are listed in the order-maintenance category.

The value in the third column for the first row in Table 2 shows that on average, 3.63% of post officer time (approximately 17 min per 8 hr of observation) is consumed by responding to calls regarding activities categorized as potential UCR Part II offenses (primarily simple assaults, disorderlies, drug violations, and drunkenness). The value in the fourth column for the first row ( $N = 155$ ) is the number of reactive UCR Part II-related

**Table 2**  
**Percentage of Time Allocated to Reactive and Proactive Crime-Related and Investigative Activities**  
**(per 8 hr observed) and Total Number of Activities by Type of Officer**

Category	Activity	Post					
		Reactive		Proactive		Community	
		%	n	%	n	Total %	n
Crime-related	UCR Part II	3.63	155	0.71	30	4.34	27
	UCR Part I	3.71	98	0.40	11	4.11	2
	Attempt to locate suspect, witness, informant	0.94	44	0.10	7	1.04	3
	Warrant, subpoena service	0.79	27	—	—	0.79	—
	Search/Guarding of crime scene	0.61	14	—	—	0.61	—
	Pursuit of fleeing suspect	—	—	0.04	3	0.04	—
Investigative	Crime-related sum	9.68	388	1.25	51	10.93	32
	Residential or commercial security check; alarm	1.67	105	0.22	9	1.90	4 <sup>a</sup>
	Checking out of suspicious circumstances	0.81	44	0.37	22	1.17	1 <sup>a</sup>
	No voice call	0.50	34	—	—	0.50	—
	Investigative sum	2.98	183	0.59	31	3.56	5

a. Three of the four community officer residential or commercial security check and alarm activities and one checking out of suspicious circumstances activity are reactive.

activities that post officers conducted during all observed shifts. The value in the fifth column for the first row (0.71%) is the percentage of time post officers allocated to proactively dealing with UCR Part II activities (approximately 3 min per 8 hr of observation). Post officers conducted 30 proactive UCR Part II–related activities during the observed shifts. In total, 4.34% (approximately 21 min) of post officer time is spent dealing with potential UCR Part II offenses, as compared to 3.65% (approximately 18 min) of community officer time. Presenting the time spent on activities using a reactive–proactive framework illustrates that although post officers spend more time on UCR Part II activities than community officers, for post officers, the majority of this time is reactive, yet community officers spend an equal amount of time proactively initiating activities related to potential UCR Part II offenses.

The values in the second row of Table 2 reflect the percentage of time post and community officers spend on reactive and proactive activities categorized as potential UCR Part I offenses (primarily burglaries and thefts, followed by robberies, aggravated assaults, and motor vehicle thefts). Post officers spend slightly less total time on Part I offense activities (4.11%) than Part II offense activities (4.34%). But again, the majority of the post officer time consumed by these activities is reactive (3.71%). Post and community officers spend approximately the same amount of proactive time (approximately 2 min per 8 hr of observation) dealing with UCR Part I activities.

The values in the *crime-related sum* row illustrate that although post officers spend almost 11% of their time on crime-related activities (10.93%, or 52 min), more than 9% of this time is in response to dispatched calls for service. In fact, community officers spend more proactive time (4.41%, or 21 min) on crime-related activities than post officers (1.25%, or 6 min). Of all the activities in the *crime-related* category, UCR Part II activities consume the greatest proportion of both post and community officers' time.

Of the investigative activities performed, residential or commercial security check and alarm responses consume the highest proportion of officers' time. Although officers may conduct proactive security checks of residential or commercial buildings, dispatched police responses to alarm activations constitute the great majority of the activities in this category.<sup>15</sup> No voice calls (calls to 911 where the caller hangs up before speaking to the call taker) are by their nature a reactive activity; an officer must be dispatched to the location of the call, and thus it would be expected that community officers do not conduct this activity. It is interesting to note that post officers are twice as likely to be dispatched to check out suspicious circumstances



(reactive  $N = 44$ ) as they are to proactively check out suspicious circumstances (proactive  $N = 22$ ).

Table 3 presents the average percentage of time officers spend on specific order-maintenance and service activities. Again, activities within each category are listed by greatest to least allocation of total post officer time. As with the crime-related and investigative activities (presented in Table 2), the time post officers spend on order maintenance is more likely to be reactive than proactive. Post officers spend less than 1% of their time (.90%, or 4 min) engaged in proactive order-maintenance activities, whereas community officers spend 13% (62 min) of their time on these activities. The greatest proportion of post officer proactive time is spent on aggressive order-maintenance activities, such as surveillance of persons (0.40%, or 2 min) or addresses (0.11%). Community officers also spend time on aggressive order-maintenance activities; 2.87% (14 min) is allocated to surveillance of addresses or places. However, community officers spend the greatest proportion of time on community service activities; on average, 6.23% of time (30 min) is allocated to meetings with service providers or businesses and neighborhood groups, activities not generally conducted by post officers. Neither post nor community officers spend much time in casual contacts with community residents or on police–community relations.

Overall, service activities consume the smallest proportion of post officer time (2.94%, or 14 min), and again, the majority of time allocated to these activities is reactive (2.38%, or 11%). For post officers, medical and health activities consume the greatest proportion of time (1.30%, or 6 min), whereas community officers allocate the most time to animal problems (0.86%, or 4 min).

The first category in Table 4, *patrol*, includes time engaged in vehicle patrol, traveling with no specific destination and without focus on another activity (preventive, random, or routine patrol), or foot patrol. For both post and community officers, almost all patrol time is via vehicle as opposed to foot patrol.

The *backup* category does not appear in previous workload studies but, as Table 4 illustrates, backing up other officers on calls for service consumes, on average, 9% (45 min) of post officer time and almost 4% (18 min) of community officer time. As observers were instructed to ask about the catalyst for mobilization, it is possible to distinguish between whether an officer was responding to a call for service because it was dispatched to their unit (classified as reactive and categorized according to the description of the activity the officer responded to), the officer was dispatched as a backup unit (classified as a reactive backup activity), or the officer made the

**Table 3**  
**Percentage of Time Allocated to Reactive and Proactive Order-Maintenance and Service Activities**  
**(per 8 hr observed) and Total Number of Activities by Type of Officer**

Category	Activity	Post					
		Reactive		Proactive		Community	
		%	n	%	n	Total %	n
Order maintenance	Domestic argument/Family trouble	0.68	33	0.07	4	0.74	—
	Surveillance person	0.23	14	0.40	18	0.63	—
	Other order-maintenance activities	0.36	22	0.16	11	0.52	15
	Surveillance address	0.37	19	0.11	4	0.48	11
	Noise disturbance	0.32	25	—	—	0.32	—
	Juvenile disturbance	0.21	16	0.03	26	0.24	—
	Casual conversation with public	—	—	0.06	5	0.06	—
	Police-community relations	0.03	1	0.06	2	0.09	5
	Meeting—Other nonpolice service providers	0.04	1	—	—	0.04	1
	Meeting—Business	—	—	—	—	—	1
	Meeting—Neighborhood, housing	—	—	—	—	—	7
	Order maintenance sum <sup>a</sup>	2.24	131	0.90	46	3.13	40
Service	Medical, health service	1.12	22	0.18	2	1.30	1
	Other service activities	0.65	22	0.24	3	0.89	2
	Escort or transport of person	0.44	9	0.02	2	0.45	—
	Animal problem	0.18	6	0.00	—	0.18	2
	Citizen request for information from officer	—	—	0.12	5	0.12	1
	Meeting with other nonpolice service providers	—	—	0.00	—	—	2
	Service sum	2.38	59	0.56	18	2.94	8

a. Community officers spent significantly more time than post officers on proactive order maintenance activities ( $p = .003$ ).

**Table 4**  
**Percentage of Time Allocated to Other, Reactive, and Proactive Patrol, Backup, Traffic and Information-Gathering Activities (per 8 hr observed) and Total Number of Activities by Type of Officer**

Category	Activity	Post									
		Other		Reactive		Proactive		Community			
		%	n	%	n	%	n	Total %	Total %	n	n
Patrol	Vehicle patrol	—	—	—	—	33.83	737	33.83	28.30	97	7
	Foot patrol	—	—	—	—	0.93	18	0.93	1.51	7	104
	Patrol sum	—	—	—	—	34.76	755	34.76	29.81	104	26
Backup	Backup sum <sup>a</sup>	—	—	0.49	28	8.86	383	9.34	3.82	26	1
	Accident	—	—	1.75	38	0.29	10	2.04	0.17	1	10
	Traffic enforcement—Mobile	—	—	—	—	1.34	81	1.34	1.39	10	8
Traffic	Traffic enforcement—Stat.	—	—	—	—	0.88	38	0.88	2.97	8	4
	Parking	—	—	0.35	13	0.07	7	0.42	0.32	4	—
	Direction of traffic, parade	—	—	0.13	2	0.09	2	0.22	—	—	23
Information gathering	Traffic sum	—	—	2.23	53	2.67	138	4.89	4.86	23	3
	Information gathering from citizen	—	—	0.82	28	0.60	27	1.42	0.15	3	11
	Meetings with other police	0.99	51	—	—	—	—	0.99	2.51	11	2
Information gathering	Research or inquiry on a problem	0.67	13	0.01	1	—	—	0.68	0.58	2	1
	Police records or crime analysis	—	—	0.01	1	0.10	2	0.12	0.13	1	17
	Information gathering sum	1.66	64	0.84	30	0.70	29	3.21	3.22	17	—

a. Post officers spent significantly more time on proactive backup activities than community officers ( $p = .000$ ).

**Table 5**  
**Percentage of Time Allocated to Administrative and Personal Activities (per 8 hr observed)**  
**and Total Number of Activities by Type of Officer**

Category	Activity	Post		Community	
		Total %	<i>n</i>	Total %	<i>n</i>
Administrative	Report writing	4.86	131	11.33	22
	Other administrative activities	3.81	140	7.65	29
	Arrest processing, booking	1.87	15	—	—
	Automobile maintenance/Checking out of equipment	1.85	82	1.09	9
	Transport of police, prisoner, witness, evidence	1.48	31	3.30	15
	Processing of evidence, property	1.12	10	0.57	1
	Meeting with prosecutor/Appearance in court	0.93	7	1.66	3
	Waiting	0.67	14	0.28	3
	Administrative sum <sup>a</sup>	16.59	430	25.86	82
	Meals, breaks, errands	9.54	230	11.46	39
	Meetings with other police—Not business related	1.10	28	0.57	3
	Personal sum	10.64	258	12.03	42

a. Community officers spent significantly more time than post officers on administrative activities ( $p = .036$ ).

choice to back up another unit (classified as a proactive backup activity). For post officers, self-initiated backups consume more time than all of the other proactive activities combined (excluding the time allocated to patrol). As patrol staffing in Baltimore is generally one-officer units, backing up other officers would to some extent be expected. However, in 60% of the proactive backup activities observed, three or more officers responded to the call; in 10% of the proactive backups, between 6 and 14 officers responded to the call.

Though post and community officers spend approximately an equal amount of time engaged in traffic activities (approximately 4.9%, or 24 min), traffic accidents consume the highest proportion of post officer time, and stationary traffic enforcement consumes the highest proportion of community officer time. Aside from patrol and backup, traffic-related activities are the only observed post officer activities that are more likely to be proactive than reactive.

The total time allocated to information-gathering activities is also equal for post and community officers (3.2%, or 15 min). However, information gathering from citizens consumes the highest proportion of post officer time (1.42%, or 7 min), whereas meetings with other police regarding official police business consumes the highest proportion of community officer time (2.51%, or 12 min). Both post and community officers spend less than 1% of their time conducting research on a problem, gathering information from police records, or crime analysis.

Table 5 presents the number and percentage of total time spent on administrative and personal activities for post and community officers. Observers were not required to ask about the catalyst for mobilization for activities in these categories. Post officers spend approximately 9% less time on administrative activities than community officers, with the majority of the time difference (6.47%) consumed by report writing.

## Discussion

An examination of the nature of reactive and proactive activities and the time spent on them by traditional patrol (post) officers as compared to community outreach officers was conducted to address four questions: (a) the extent to which post officers engage in proactive activities, (b) whether these activities differ from the (proactive) activities conducted by community officers, (c) whether post and community officers' activities reflect an emphasis on different functions of policing, and (d) to what extent the activities of both types of officers reflect community policing philosophy.

## **The Extent to Which Post Officers Engage in Proactive Activities**

Overall, 50% of post officer time is spent engaged in proactive activities, as compared to 29% of time engaged in administrative and personal activities (other activities), and 21% of time is spent on reactive activities. Clearly, post officers have a good deal of time for proactive work, though most of it is spent on patrol.

## **Proactive Activities Conducted by Post Officers Versus Community Officers**

Post officers spend more time than community officers engaged in proactive patrol and backing up other officers. They spend less time than community officers engaged in proactive crime-related activities (especially activities regarding UCR Part II crimes) and order-maintenance, service, and traffic activities. However, there are several proactive order-maintenance activities that post officers spend time on (though very little time) that community officers do not: surveillance of people and juvenile disturbances (aggressive order-maintenance strategies), domestic arguments or family trouble, and casual conversations with the public. In contrast, community officers spend time in meetings with businesses, neighborhood and housing groups, and other nonpolice service providers (community-service order-maintenance strategies), but post officers do not. As post officers spend so little time on proactive order-maintenance activities (0.90% per 8 hr observed), it is unlikely that their proactive activities are incompatible with those of community outreach officers. As would be expected, very little time is spent on proactive service activities by post or community officers.

## **Activities as a Reflection of Different Functional Emphasis**

Significant differences in the time spent on activities by post and community officers are found for only three categories of activities: administrative, order-maintenance, and backup activities. Baltimore community officers spend significantly more time than post officers on administrative activities and community meetings. These findings are consistent with the previously mentioned results of the studies conducted by Frank et al. (1997), Parks et al. (1999), and Smith et al. (2001). However, even when the time spent on community meetings is excluded, Baltimore community

officers spend more time than post officers on order-maintenance activities. This is contrary to the findings of Parks et al. that overall, patrol generalists spend more time than community specialists on order-maintenance activities and to Smith et al.'s finding of no significant difference in the time spent on order maintenance and ordinance enforcement by type of officer. Baltimore post officers spent significantly more time backing up other officers on calls for service, an activity that previous studies have not examined. Thus, although the core-function priorities of community outreach officers may reflect order maintenance, the majority of officers are assigned as post officers, and their priorities appear to have remained "largely in alignment with the dictates of the professional model" (Zhao et al., 2003, p. 715).

### **Extent to Which Activities Reflect Community Policing Philosophy**

One might expect that officers operating under a community policing model would be spending less time in their cruisers and more time in direct contact with the community to cultivate relationships with citizens and seek community input. However, consistent with Frank et al. (1997), no significant difference in mean patrol time was found by type of officer, and both post and community officers spend less than 2% of time on foot patrol. Post officers spend less than 1% of time (0.09%) engaged in casual conversation with the public, and only 1.4% of time gathering information from citizens. On average, community officers spend less than 1% of their day on both of these activities combined. Communication between community officers and citizens appears to be primarily within the context of prearranged neighborhood or housing meetings (5.4% of community officer time).

As Goldstein (1987) and others have noted, community policing demands that police replace a total preoccupation with handling calls for service with identifying and resolving community problems through proactive strategies and tactics. Although post officers spend 50% of their time engaged in proactive activities, approximately 35% of this time is spent on vehicle patrol, 9% is spent backing up officers on calls for service, and approximately 3% is spent on proactive traffic enforcement. This leaves only 3% of patrol officer time that is used to conduct other proactive activities, less than 1% each on order-maintenance, service, and information-gathering activities. Although all of community officer time is essentially proactive, even community officers are spending the largest proportion of time (28%) engaged in vehicle patrol. In sum, patrol, administrative, and personal activities consume 68% of community officer time. Baltimore community

officers may be spending approximately 6% of their time on order-maintenance activities aside from prearranged meetings, but they spend less than 1% of their time on information gathering from citizens, research or inquiry on a problem, and police records or crime analysis activities combined.

## Conclusions

A number of additional comments can be made on the basis of the findings regarding the time allocated to activities by post officers and community officers. First, despite the Baltimore Police Department assignment of officers to post and community outreach positions, post officers have time to engage in proactive activities even though they are primarily responsible for responding to calls for service; 50% of their time is spent on proactive activities.

Second, examining the nexus between call-mobilized and self-initiated activities provides insight on citizen priorities—what citizens are calling the police to do and police priorities—whether proactive philosophy has been adopted on the front lines, or whether it largely remains administrative rhetoric (Famega, 2005). Reactive activities are those activities initiated in response to a dispatch. As the Baltimore Police Department dispatches between 98.3% to 99.5% of all Priority 1 to 4 calls received through 311 and 911, the number and type of reactive activities conducted by officers is to some extent an indicator of citizen priorities. For example, observed post officers conducted 388 reactive crime-related activities, 183 reactive investigative activities, 131 reactive order-maintenance activities, and 59 reactive service activities. In contrast, post officers conducted 51 proactive crime-related activities, 31 proactive investigative activities, 46 proactive order-maintenance activities, and 18 proactive service activities, yet post officers conducted 383 proactive backups (more than 2 times all other proactive activities combined). Citizens really are coproducers of police activities: If citizens do not call the police, police do not tend to intervene on their own authority.

Third, and related, the results of this study provide support for Pelfrey's (2004) contention that the dichotomy of assignments (post officer vs. community outreach officer) has produced officers with reactive and proactive orientations. Post officers choose to spend time on patrol and backing up other officers on calls for service rather than on proactive order-maintenance or information-gathering activities (proactive backup to a call for service is still essentially a reactive activity; it is just recognizing that officers are



making the choice to back up rather than being dispatched). Community officers also spend time on patrol but choose to engage in proactive order maintenance to a much greater extent.

Fourth, Goldstein (1987) cautioned that in the long run, separate units with different orientations will not work because much of traditional policing is incompatible with community policing, but if post officers are not proactively conducting any activities other than patrol, backup, and traffic enforcement, their activities are not likely to be incompatible with community policing. The question is simply to what extent community policing as envisioned is being accomplished if it is the responsibility of only a few officers.<sup>16</sup>

Finally, Patterson's (2004) caution against viewing the professional model of policing as reactive and the community policing model as proactive until it is known how officers go about resolving problems (officers using a professional model look to supervisors, other officers, and professional literature for solutions, whereas officers using a community policing model consult these sources as well as residents for solutions) should still be recognized, but it is beyond the scope of this study. It is possible that the means by which post officers resolve calls for service reflect the philosophy of community (or problem-oriented policing), even though post officers do not choose to engage in other proactive activities emphasized under a community policing model.

## Notes

1. On October 1, 1996, Baltimore introduced a 311 nonemergency call system. One of the goals of the system was to divert nonemergency citizen calls for service away from 911 and a prioritized patrol unit response to a 311 telephone number and an alternative police response to provide patrol officers with more time to engage in proactive policing activities. In an evaluation of the 311 system, Mazerolle, Rogan, Frank, Famega, and Eck (2002) found that 99% of the 311 calls that were dealt with through an alternative police response were first dispatched to a patrol unit in the usual prioritized manner. Thus it is probably safe to conclude that the existence of the nonemergency call system in Baltimore did not have a significant impact on the number or nature of citizen calls for service dispatched to patrol officers and has limited impact on the generalizability of the findings to police departments that do not have such a system.

2. Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics (1997). Bureau of Justice Statistics (1997). *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics 1997*. U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs. NCJ 165361.

3. Baltimore City Police Department (1998). See <http://cw.ci.baltimore.md.us/government/police/history.html>.

4. CrimeSTAC is now COMSTAT.

5. For the following activities, observers did not ask the officer about the catalyst for mobilization:

Administrative: Report writing; automobile maintenance (refueling, washing); transport other police; transport prisoner, witness, evidence, other materials; calibrate equipment; process evidence, property; meet with prosecutor; meet with judge; appear in court

Information gathering: Meetings with other police—official business; electronic communications with other police; conduct research or inquiry on a problem

Personal business: Meals, snacks, restroom breaks; personal errands, relaxation; meetings with other police—not business related

6. When conducting research funded by the National Institute of Justice, researchers are required to maintain confidentiality; they enjoy only a limited protection from legal process under Federal Statute 42 USCS 3789g. As the focus of the larger study was on the impact of 311 on officer work routines, it is less likely that officers would alter their behavior than if, for example, officer work routines were the focus of the study.

7. Observers reported reactivity in 1.3% ( $N = 41$ ) of activities that officers engaged in.

8. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with all nine district commanders and 29 sector managers prior to the selection of sample patrol areas.

9. As the data used for the present study were initially collected to assess the impact of Baltimore's 311 nonemergency call system, patrol areas sampled for observation were selected to explore street-level policing under a fully implemented 311 system. The selection of districts and sectors was biased toward sectors in which commanders and lieutenants perceived 311 to have reduced the number of nonemergency calls dispatched to patrol officers, enabling officers to conduct more proactive activities based on crime analysis information; at the same time, sectors with a higher-than-average number of calls for service were selected to maximize the probability of observing patrol response to a 311 call, and sectors with different land use were selected to explore 311 use by residential citizens, businesses, and commuter or tourism areas.

10. Three of the observations were not completed because of the failure of the scheduled officer to appear for work because of personal reasons, and two additional rides did not occur because the police department did not have an available post car to cover the selected post during the shift. The remaining scheduled observations were not completed because of research error (e.g., failure of rider to turn up to the scheduled posting, miscommunication regarding who was assigned particular rides).

11. The reactive activities performed by community officers include four investigative activities (three of which were alarm responses), two backups, one crime-related activity, and one service activity.

12. The same categories remained significant when the mean time post officers spent on all activities (reactive, proactive, and other) per shift was compared to the mean time community officers spent on activities per shift.

13. UCR Part I offenses consist of eight index crimes: murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny or theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. Part II offenses consist of 19 offenses and an "other" category (excluding traffic offenses).

14. The UCR offense categories were used only to recode activities; the time officers spent on these activities may or may not have resulted in an arrest.

15. These activities are included under the *investigative* category rather than the *crime-related* category on the basis of the many studies concluding that 95% to 99% of alarms are false.

16. Although there were clearly many more post than community officers in the Baltimore City Police Department (BPD) during the time of the study, this is still the case. According to

the 2003 Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) survey (Hickman & Reaves, 2006), the primary job of 2,055 officers in the BPD is patrol, whereas only 200 officers are designated as community policing officers; thus roughly 9% of street officers (the number of officers whose primary job is patrol + the number of community policing officers) are designated as community policing officers. In turn, of the 1,031 municipal police departments that completed the 2003 LEMAS survey, only 471 reported that they had community policing officers. Of these 471 municipal police departments, 37 employ 1,000 or more actual, paid, full-time sworn personnel with arrest powers (including BPD, which recorded 3,258 actual, paid, full-time sworn personnel with arrest powers). For these departments, on average, only 9% of street officers are designated as community policing officers. Thus the BPD distribution of post and community officers appears to be representative of police departments employing a comparable number of full-time officers.

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