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## The Persistent Pull of Police Professionalism

David Alan Sklansky

### Executive Session on Policing and Public Safety

This is one in a series of papers that will be published as a result of the Executive Session on Policing and Public Safety.

Harvard's Executive Sessions are a convening of individuals of independent standing who take joint responsibility for rethinking and improving society's responses to an issue. Members are selected based on their experiences, their reputation for thoughtfulness and their potential for helping to disseminate the work of the Session.

In the early 1980s, an Executive Session on Policing helped resolve many law enforcement issues of the day. It produced a number of papers and concepts that revolutionized policing. Thirty years later, law enforcement has changed and NIJ and Harvard's Kennedy School of Government are again collaborating to help resolve law enforcement issues of the day.

Learn more about the Executive Session on Policing and Public Safety at:

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### Introduction

For most of the 20th century, and especially from the 1950s through the early 1970s, efforts to reform American law enforcement were dominated by the ideal of police professionalism. There was always a degree of fuzziness about that ideal; by the late 1960s virtually every effort to improve policing was called "professionalization."<sup>1</sup> At its core, though, police professionalism had three elements: police departments should focus on crime suppression; they should do so objectively and scientifically, free from political influence; and authority within the department should be centralized and rationalized.<sup>2</sup> By the 1980s the ideal of police professionalism was increasingly under attack, and by the end of that decade it had been displaced as the reigning orthodoxy of police reform. The new ideal was community policing. It, too, could be hard to pin down; by the 1990s almost every program of police reform was called "community policing."<sup>3</sup> At its core, though, community policing reversed the three key elements of police professionalism. Police departments broadened their focus from crime control to a range of other goals; they selected and pursued those goals in consultation and

cooperation with the public; and, to facilitate that consultation and cooperation, authority within departments was decentralized.<sup>4</sup>

Outside law enforcement circles, the ideal of community policing remains broadly popular. Inside policing, though, a sense has been growing for at least the past decade that it is time for something new. That sense is still far from universal. Many police executives and many police reformers continue to believe in community policing. But for years other figures within policing have been casting about for the next big thing. There are signs that those efforts are beginning to coalesce, and that the next big thing is ... police professionalism. No one is arguing explicitly that policing should return to the 1960s. But there is increasing sympathy for the notions that police departments should focus on crime suppression, that they should do so in ways dictated by objective analysis rather than public whims, and that authority should be centralized and rationalized.

The first part of this paper describes some of the ideas getting the most attention today in police management circles and the underappreciated ways in which they constitute a return to the ideal of police professionalism. The second part briefly speculates about why professionalism, so recently discredited, seems to be coming back. The third part sounds a note of caution, warning that, despite changes since the 1970s, there are still reasons for police departments to resist the pull of professionalism. The fourth and final part suggests that the competing ideal of community policing, for all its ambiguity and limitations, may deserve a longer run.<sup>5</sup>

## The Return of Police Professionalism

When police reformers said in the 1990s that community policing was “a philosophy, not a program,” they meant, usually, that the essence of community policing was not any particular set of tactics or procedures — beat meetings, officers on bicycles, graffiti abatement, or the like — but rather a set of ideas guiding the selection and implementation of tactics and procedures, a set of ideas centered around listening to and working with people and organizations outside of policing.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, police professionalism was not fundamentally about the tactics and programs characteristic of urban policing in the 1960s — random patrol, central dispatch, rapid response and so on — but rather about the governing mindset behind the selection and implementation of those policies: a mindset that saw the police as a “rational, efficient, scientifically organized, technologically sophisticated bureaucracy,”<sup>7</sup> operating “independent of local social conflict” and pursuing “objective and aggressive law enforcement.”<sup>8</sup> Community policing was about the police not “going it alone”; professional policing was about the “thin blue line.”<sup>9</sup>

It is at the level of fundamental mindset, not at the level of specific policies, that professional policing is mounting a comeback. It may be easiest to see this in the forms of local policing pushed by the federal government. Federal funding reflects and, to a degree, helps shape prevailing ideas about best practices in policing. For example, grants from the federal government to local law enforcement agencies in the 1960s and 1970s reinforced and intensified the heavy reliance on technology that had always been part of police professionalism.<sup>10</sup>

In the 1990s, the federal government aggressively promoted community policing — causing some departments to slap the label “community policing” on “programs” that really were just business as usual, but also helping to spread the fundamental mindset of community policing: listening to and working with the community.<sup>11</sup> But federal support for community policing has since declined. The newest approaches to policing pushed by the federal government are “intelligence-led policing” and “predictive policing.”<sup>12</sup>

Intelligence-led policing — trumpeted by its supporters as a “new paradigm in policing,” “rapidly growing” into a “worldwide movement”<sup>13</sup> — emphasizes the use of intelligence collection and data analysis to guide the selection and implementation of police policies. It is a “business model and managerial philosophy” for “objective decision-making” using “data and intelligence analysis.”<sup>14</sup> The Department of Justice defines “ILP” as “a business process for systematically collecting, organizing, analyzing, and utilizing intelligence to guide law enforcement operational and tactical decisions.”<sup>15</sup>

The Department claims that “ILP is not a new policing model” and is fully consistent with community policing. “The ILP process,” it says, “can provide a meaningful contribution by supporting the agency’s existing policing strategy, whether it is community-oriented policing, problem-oriented policing, or other methodology.”<sup>16</sup> But this is window dressing. The whole thrust of intelligence-led policing is to make “objective” analysis of crime data and intelligence “the central component of police strategic thinking.”<sup>17</sup> In the words of an

influential backer, intelligence-led policing is a “top-down managerially driven approach to crime control,” in which “a community’s concerns are not permitted to perpetually trump an objective assessment of the criminal environment.”<sup>18</sup>

There is thus “a great deal of daylight separating intelligence-led policing and community policing.”<sup>19</sup> In fact, intelligence-led policing returns the police to each of the three central elements of professional policing. It makes crime control the “dominant function” of the police.<sup>20</sup> It makes “objective,” scientific analysis the touchstone for the selection and implementation of police tactics and procedures. And it emphasizes the importance of centralized, “top-down” decision-making, on the model of modern, large-scale businesses. Indeed, intelligence-led policing stresses the importance of centralizing much of the handling and analysis of data above the department level, at regional “fusion” centers.<sup>21</sup>

Like intelligence-led policing, predictive policing has been proclaimed “the next era in policing” — especially by the Los Angeles Police Department, which beginning under Chief William Bratton “assumed a leadership role” in developing and promoting it.<sup>22</sup> Like intelligence-led policing, predictive policing puts intelligence collection and data analysis at the center of police decision-making, emphasizing “directed, information-based patrol; rapid response supported by fact-based pre-positioning of assets; and proactive, intelligence-based tactics, strategy, and policy.”<sup>23</sup> The main distinction between intelligence-led policing and predictive policing is that predictive policing claims to be more ambitious and more

technologically sophisticated: it “builds on and enhances the promise of ILP” using “new technology, new business processes, and new algorithms”<sup>24</sup> that allow the police “to forecast crime and ... interven[e] before it happens.”<sup>25</sup> Like intelligence-led policing, though, predictive policing refocuses the police on “fighting crime,” emphasizes the objective, scientific selection of strategies and tactics, and puts a premium on centralized, rationalized, bureaucratic decision-making. It replicates, that is to say, all three core elements of police professionalism.

There are important differences, of course, between what the backers of intelligence-led policing and predictive policing are promoting and the kind of policing practiced and celebrated in the 1960s. For example, no one is calling for a return to random patrols; instead, patrols should be “directed, information-based,” and “pre-position[ed].” More fundamentally, intelligence-led policing and predictive policing both emphasize the importance of continually reassessing strategies and tactics in light of their measured outcomes, albeit with measures that focus heavily on rates of serious crime. The emphasis on directed patrol, for example, is based in part on experimental evidence, accumulated over the past few decades, that crime rates can be reduced by sending more officers to “hot spots” where large numbers of offenses take place.<sup>26</sup> That kind of reflective empiricism was no part of police professionalism in the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>27</sup> But the underlying mindset of intelligence-led policing and predictive policing is similar, in crucial ways, to the mindset of police professionalism. The guiding philosophy is bureaucratic and technocratic rather than collaborative and community-based; the

police are professional crime-fighters, not “street-corner politicians.”<sup>28</sup>

Nor are backers of intelligence-led policing and predictive policing the only ones drawn today by the pull of police professionalism. Christopher Stone and Jeremy Travis, for example, propose a new “conceptual framework” for policing centered not around data analysis but instead around “accountability, legitimacy, and innovation,” along with something they call “national coherence.”<sup>29</sup> They are far more complimentary of community policing than of “the so-called professionalism of mid-20th-century policing,” with its detachment from the community, its “limited set of routinized activities,” and “centralized and top-down” management.<sup>30</sup> Nonetheless they call their own framework “the New Professionalism.” They want to recover a “truer, more robust” sense of professionalism — a sense of professionalism that they argue was better represented, ironically, by community policing than by the policing of the 1950s and 1960s.<sup>31</sup> Policing in the earlier period, they say, was too clumsy and unenlightened to deserve the name “professional.” “Its expertise was flawed, its techniques crude, its management techniques more military than professional, and it reinforced rather than challenged the racism of the wider society.”<sup>32</sup> That indictment suggests, though, that professionalism is to a great extent a matter of better expertise, greater sophistication and more skillful management — precisely the attributes most heavily prized (no matter how poorly achieved) by the “old” police professionalism.

Stone and Travis also want mobility of officers and uniformity of standards across state and local

boundaries; that is what they mean by “national coherence.” They think this is necessary if police officers are to be “true professionals,” like doctors, lawyers or engineers.<sup>33</sup> This may or may not be a departure from the mid-20th-century version of police professionalism. Police professionalism in the 1950s and 1960s focused less on “the individual professional police officer” than on the “professional agency<sup>34</sup>”; it claimed autonomy “primarily for the institution of policing and only secondarily, and then only in a severely limited sense, for its functionaries.”<sup>35</sup> But it is not clear whether the “New Professionalism” would prove very different in this regard, even if it gave police officers more job mobility. Metropolitan police officers operate within highly developed bureaucracies; they differ in this way from doctors and lawyers, and to a lesser but still significant degree from engineers. Any appeal for policing to operate with more objectivity and expertise is likely to be translated into “the bureaucratic ideal epitomized in modern police practice,” which is to say the ideal of the police department as a “rational, efficient, scientifically organized, technologically sophisticated” organization.<sup>36</sup> More importantly, the “old” police professionalism was criticized even in its heyday, and on its own terms, as tolerating too much decentralization and too much parochialism.<sup>37</sup> Centralized standards and job mobility were and remain fully consistent with the core commitments of traditional police professionalism: a focus on crime control; an emphasis on objective, scientific decision-making; and the centralization and rationalization of authority.<sup>38</sup>

## The Persistent Pull

By the early 1980s, the “professional model” of policing was thoroughly discredited. It was blamed for making police departments insular, arrogant, resistant to outside criticism and feckless in responding to social ferment.<sup>39</sup> Community policing was very consciously a reaction against police professionalism: emphasizing the plurality of police functions instead of a single-minded focus on crime control, prioritizing community input and involvement over expertise and technical analysis, and favoring decentralized over centralized authority and locally tailored rather than globally rationalized solutions. And community policing is widely seen, at least by outsiders, as a spectacular success. At law schools, for example, scholars across the ideological spectrum began to argue in the 1990s that legal constraints on the police should be loosened to allow community policing to proceed unimpeded,<sup>40</sup> and that these new forms of policing should serve as a model for other government services in need of reform.<sup>41</sup> So why does police professionalism continue to hold appeal for thoughtful police executives and scholars of policing?

Part of the explanation is that community policing has some shortcomings, which have become particularly apparent to the officers, supervisors and chiefs who have tried to implement it. The most important of these is not that the strategies most commonly identified with community policing — beat meetings, bicycle patrols, anti-graffiti campaigns and so on — have never been proven to reduce serious crime, although that is

true enough.<sup>42</sup> Even on its own terms — as “a philosophy, not a program,” and as a philosophy that does not treat suppressing serious crime as the be-all and end-all of successful policing — community policing has always been troublingly vague, and it has too often traded on a naïve and simplistic picture of “the community.”<sup>43</sup> What does it mean to “listen to,” “engage with” or “partner with” the community? What are the respective roles of line officers, supervisors and command staff in that process? Despite their preference for decentralization, enthusiasts of community policing have always been particularly weak at articulating a meaningful role for middle managers.<sup>44</sup> And who or what is “the community,” anyway? What are the police to do when — as is always the case — different groups of residents have different concerns and different ideas about how the police should operate?<sup>45</sup> And how are the police to think about the vast majority of the public who never attend community meetings and who may themselves have no clear ideas — or, worse, contradictory ideas — about how the police should go about their business?

But the allure of police professionalism today is not just a matter of the weaknesses of community policing. The core ideal of the professional model — the police as crime control experts, leveraging managerial sophistication and advanced technology to enforce the law objectively, aggressively and apolitically — is in some ways more appealing today than it used to be. For one thing, claims of expertise by the police are more credible now, because police departments know more than they used to about how to fight serious crime. They may not know as much as they think they know. Just as the

steadily rising crime rates of the 1960s and 1970s led to excessive pessimism about the effectiveness of criminal justice programs and resigned assertions that “nothing works,” the plummeting crime rates of the 1990s allowed virtually every police department but the most hapless or unlucky to claim stunning successes.<sup>46</sup> But, even discounting for “the euphoric fallacy in eras of crime decline,”<sup>47</sup> the state of knowledge about effective crime-fighting is undeniably better today than it was 40 years ago.<sup>48</sup> And one thing we now know is that police can, in fact, improve their effectiveness by paying attention to data, including data about where and when crimes tend to happen.<sup>49</sup>

Equally important, police departments themselves are different than they were 40 years ago. American law enforcement in the 1960s was overwhelmingly white, overwhelming male, and politically and culturally homogeneous. That made the “go it alone” mentality of police professionalism especially unfortunate. It reinforced levels of insularity, arrogance and hostility that were already dangerously high, and it gave license to the police to act on forms of prejudice that received few checks inside law enforcement agencies. Police forces today are much more diverse. Large numbers of minority officers, female officers and — increasingly — openly gay and lesbian officers have changed the internal culture of policing, making departments less cohesive in some ways, but also more vibrant, more open and better connected to the communities they serve.<sup>50</sup> Police officers today are also better educated than they used to be: college education and even advanced degrees are no longer rarities.<sup>51</sup> All of this may make trusting in police expertise easier and less frightening than it was 40 years ago.

Police expertise and police demographics are not the only things that have changed. Police face different challenges today than they did before September 11, 2001. Local law enforcement agencies have been enlisted in the fight against global terrorism, and to many that fight has seemed to call for a more aggressive, technology-intensive, expertise-driven style of policing — less *Andy Griffith* and more *24*.<sup>52</sup> As it happens, the most important contributions that local police departments can make to homeland security probably depend on precisely the kinds of outreach, partnership, and low-tech, person-to-person trust-building stressed in community policing. Information cannot be collated, shared or cross-tabulated until it is collected, and people are much more likely to speak frankly with police officers they know, have worked with and trust. When a police officer goes to talk with, say, a local Arab-American leader, it helps if the officer has “met and assisted that leader before — protecting property, ironing out some administrative complexity, or ensuring his safe worship.”<sup>53</sup> If we want to prevent attacks from Islamic extremists, our most important allies will be found among moderate, mainstream Islamic Americans, and the way to gain their trust and cooperation is by working with them in precisely the ways emphasized by community policing.

Finally, budget crises throughout the country have put pressure on police departments to cut costs, and community policing — not just the specific programs adopted under that framework but the framework itself — can seem a luxury.<sup>54</sup> This assumes, though, that working with

communities is less cost-effective for law enforcement agencies than going it alone. It could in fact be the other way around: the partnerships promoted in community policing might allow law enforcement to leverage its own resources, doing more with less.<sup>55</sup> And whether community policing is more or less cost-effective than professional policing may depend, in part, on what the police are asked to do.

In the end, the most important attractions of police professionalism today are likely the same ones it has always had. For reformers, the professional model offers not only a way of isolating the police from potential sources of corruption (the overriding concern of early 20th-century reformers)<sup>56</sup> but also a way of emphasizing that the police have, or should have, special skills and knowledge that can be written down, taught and continually improved (a more common concern of reformers today).<sup>57</sup> For the broader public, police professionalism offers the comforting idea that we can be kept safe by a heroic corps of high-tech guardians, applying objectivity and expertise, and operating in the background, without requiring our involvement. And for the police themselves, police professionalism offers status, glamour, organizational independence and — not least important — excitement. Some of the skepticism that community policing always elicited, and continues to elicit, has to do with the sense that the police will never embrace it enthusiastically because it does not seem like “real police work.”<sup>58</sup> The notion is that police officers want to be part of an elite, gadget-equipped crime-fighting force, not a team of social workers.<sup>59</sup> That



is plainly an oversimplification: it takes too little account of the challenges and rewards of community policing, the diversity and sophistication of today's police officers, and the ways in which even veteran officers can be won over to the philosophy of community policing.<sup>60</sup> But it is likely true that the kind of policing valorized in the professional model remains exciting to many officers in ways that community policing often is not.

### Choosing What to Emphasize

The attractions of the professional model are real. So are the weaknesses of community policing, and so are the changes in policing forces and the advances in police knowledge since the 1970s. One hesitates, moreover, to quibble with ideas about policing backed by law enforcement executives as spectacularly successful as William Bratton and scholars as thoughtful and well-informed as Christopher Stone and Jeremy Travis. Nonetheless there are grounds for concern about the renewed popularity of police professionalism.

Some of those reasons have to do with the heavy emphasis that police professionalism has always placed on technology — an emphasis that, if anything, has grown even more pronounced in today's versions of the professional model. Overreliance on technology, particularly computers, was part of what earned police professionalism its unpopularity the last time around. An early, influential critique of the Los Angeles Police Department, written in the wake of the Watts Riots, complained that the police had been “caught up in the mania for systems analysis” and had equated “professionalization” with “computerization.” Data processing plainly had its

uses in law enforcement, but a computer could not “sit in a house, winning the confidence of a juvenile arrestee.” That required “a dedicated police officer with enough time available” — which was to say an officer who was not judged predominantly “by computerized productivity standards” or asked to chase quotas generated by a “computerized anticipation of offenses.”<sup>61</sup>

The number-crunching carried out by leading police departments today is a good deal more sophisticated than what critics saw in the 1960s and 1970s. One critical difference — rightly emphasized, in particular, by advocates of predictive policing<sup>62</sup> — is the focus on measuring actual results, rather than simply tallying “arrests, shakedowns, routs, and interrogations.”<sup>63</sup> But there is still a strong tendency for technology to be overhyped. For all the talk about “advanced analytics”<sup>64</sup> and “data fusion”<sup>65</sup> that can “discover non-obvious relationships” among risk factors for crime,<sup>66</sup> the proven successes of predictive policing have involved fairly prosaic techniques. One commonly cited example of predictive policing is the “data mining” that police in Richmond, Va., employed to address the problem of gunfire on New Year's Eve.<sup>67</sup> Categorizing each complaint of gunfire by time and location, the police discovered that most of the shots occurred in four neighborhoods during a narrow time window around midnight on December 31. By concentrating its patrol officers in those areas and that time window, the department was able to reduce gunfire complaints, boost seizures of weapons and cut overtime expenses.<sup>68</sup> Backers of intelligence-led policing and predictive policing can sometimes be dismissive of the old “dots on a map” style of

analysis, but this amounted to dots on a map and on a timeline. As the consultant who helped the Richmond Police Department devise its new strategy points out, “[t]his wasn’t complicated at all; this was just simple descriptive statistics.”<sup>69</sup>

Part of the reason technology tends to be overhyped is that there is money to be made from selling it. Another part of the reason is simply that gear and gadgets are sexy: shiny video screens, interactive maps, and “mathematical prophesy”<sup>70</sup> have allures that are not shared by, say, a poorly attended community meeting in a church basement. Once purchased, though, “the penetration of technology into the contours of the job is almost entirely dependent on its perceived utility on the ground.”<sup>71</sup> This will be apparent to anyone who tours a high-tech crime control center and sees detectives and uniformed officers, surrounded by advanced information technology, continuing to rely on the tools with which they are familiar: spiral notebooks, index cards, telephone calls, etc. But it can be seen in less prosaic ways as well. A sociologist who spent six years watching the use of crime mapping and information technology in management meetings in three U.S. police departments concluded that the data were almost never used to call existing strategies into question; for the most part, information technology was simply “adapted to the police organization and its characteristic practices.”<sup>72</sup>

The larger problem with advanced technology in law enforcement is not that it is overhyped, but that it can draw attention away from other concerns. It remains true in policing that “the primary technology is verbal — the words

used to persuade and control others in interaction.”<sup>73</sup> Attention paid to new computer systems is, inevitably, attention not paid to talk. More broadly, technology can draw attention away from traditional and more fundamental challenges in policing: how officers can do better in the complicated, dangerous situations in which we place them; how departments can do better in their relations with the public; and how managers and supervisors can do better both in dealing with problem officers and in developing and drawing on the intelligence and judgment of line personnel.

None of this is to deny the “explosive potential” of information technology in policing,<sup>74</sup> the importance of building on past advances in this area, or the desirability of continually reassessing police practices with the best data and assessment methods available. It would be foolish to ignore the new opportunities that smart phones and mobile computing, for example, provide for police officers to share information, pool expertise and coordinate responses — not only among themselves, but also with community members. And part of what the backers of predictive policing are calling for is what others have called “evidence-based policing”<sup>75</sup> — a commitment to “parse out and codify unsystematic ‘experience’ as the basis of police work, refining it by ongoing systematic testing of hypotheses.”<sup>76</sup> That is surely a good thing, and it can be assisted by data processing and statistical sophistication. The point is that numbers and hardware cannot do this work by themselves. A fixation on technology can distract attention from the harder and

more important parts of this process, the parts that rely on imagination and judgment. It can distract attention, too, from other critical parts of the contemporary policing agenda: building trust and legitimacy, ensuring democratic accountability, and addressing the enduringly corrosive connections between criminal justice and racial inequity.

As with technology, so with the broader ideals of objectivity and professional expertise. Dispassionate analysis is a good thing. So are institutional self-reflection and a commitment to a process of continual learning. These are critical values in policing and they deserve attention. There is a constant danger, though, that they will crowd out imperatives that are at least as important, but harder and less glamorous to pursue, such as trust, legitimacy, fairness, accountability and racial equity.<sup>77</sup> Not coincidentally, these are the imperatives that tended to be emphasized by enthusiasts for community policing, which was framed from the outset as a reaction against police professionalism.<sup>78</sup>

Stone and Travis are quite clear that their “New Professionalism” should be built around the core goals of accountability, legitimacy and innovation.<sup>79</sup> And backers of intelligence-led policing and predictive policing often claim that these new models build on and can strengthen community policing.<sup>80</sup> But it is not enough to add goals like trust, legitimacy and fairness to a model of police professionalism, or to say that they are part of what the term “professionalism” should convey. Fundamentally, it is a question of emphasis, and you cannot emphasize everything at once.

Architects of police professionalism in the 1950s and 1960s were also, at times, as explicit as anyone could want about the importance of fairness, accountability and community partnerships. In his influential treatise on police administration, for example, O.W. Wilson insisted on the need for accountability: “[C]ontrols must be provided so that those who exercise authority will be held responsible for the consequences of their actions. . . . *Every delegation of authority should be accompanied by a commensurate placing of responsibility.*”<sup>81</sup> He stressed, too, that the patrol officer is “the ultimate in the decentralization of municipal service” and should serve as “a roving city-hall information and complaint counter for the distressed citizen.”<sup>82</sup> Officers needed to know their beats and “community geography,” and it was important for them to cultivate personal relationships with residents, business owners and employees.<sup>83</sup> Wilson wrote that “[t]he active interest and participation of individual citizens and groups is so vital to the success of most police programs that the police should deliberately seek to arouse, promote, and maintain an active public concern in their affairs.”<sup>84</sup> And he was explicit about the importance of building trust and legitimacy. “Public cooperation,” he explained, “is essential to the successful accomplishment of the police purpose,” and it cannot be obtained without scrupulous courtesy and fairness on the part of the police. Wilson advised police agencies to “critically examine their own conduct in all public contacts and remodel it to avoid situations unnecessarily unpleasant to citizens. They cannot hope to retain the friendship of the public if their conduct is unfair and unreasonable and if they unnecessarily embarrass, humiliate, annoy,

and inconvenience the public.”<sup>85</sup> He reiterated the point in a subsequent edition of the book, warning against reliance on “superficial community relations programs.” Instead, he argued that the police could best improve their image and their effectiveness through “dialogue with the community” and “fair and just treatment of all citizens.”<sup>86</sup>

All of this, though, was secondary to the principal emphases of Wilson’s book, which were technological and managerial. Accountability, fairness and legitimacy got lost in the shuffle. So it was with police professionalism more broadly. The vast majority of what community policing advocates said in the 1980s had been said at least in passing by at least some advocates of professional policing in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The problem was that it got short shrift.

There are grounds for worrying that a revival of police professionalism — whether packaged as intelligence-led policing, predictive policing, the New Professionalism or something else — will operate in the same way, focusing the police and the public on the vision of an elite corps of expert crime-fighters, acting independently but objectively and scientifically, to keep communities safe. We know this is a false ideal. It ignores most of what we learned about policing in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s: that much of what the police do is not crime control; that effective policing requires building trust and legitimacy; that trust and legitimacy depend heavily on fairness and decency; that policing depends heavily and unavoidably on the judgment and discretion exercised by street-level officers; that rigid, top-down management can impede tailored,

innovative problem-solving; and that, especially in a democracy, calls for the police to be publicly accountable and publicly controlled are inevitable and fully appropriate. But adding these caveats to a vision fundamentally in keeping with the old ideal of police professionalism is likely to prove ineffective because the ideal itself is so alluring, so energizing for officers and so comforting for the public.

The point of having an explicit model or philosophy of policing is to emphasize particular aspects of the police mission that, for one reason or another, need emphasizing. Mark Moore, one of the scholars who did much to promote community policing in the 1980s, argued for that framework partly on the basis that it “challenge[d] the police in the areas in which they are least likely to make investments in repositioning themselves,” namely forging “a relationship with the community” that would allow the police to “enlist their aid, focus on the problems that turn out to be important, and figure out a way to be accountable.” Moore did not deny the importance of developing “more thoughtful, more information-guided, more active attacks on particular crime problems.” But he suggested this agenda — which was fundamentally an elaboration of key strands of police professionalism — would “take care of itself,” because it was “much more of a natural development in policing.”<sup>87</sup>

Stone and Travis quote these remarks, and they draw the right lesson: in fashioning any new model or philosophy of policing, “we should be alert to those aspects that will prove most difficult for police organizations to embrace.”<sup>88</sup> Relations

between major U.S. police departments and the communities they serve are plainly better today than they were in the 1960s, the 1970s or even the 1980s. But it remains true that working with communities, rather than adopting new technology, is the hardest task facing metropolitan police forces and the one that most needs emphasis, encouragement and assistance.

### Community Policing, Carried Forward

If not police professionalism, then what? One alternative is to forsake overarching philosophies altogether and to “engage, instead, in policing.” This was the advice that Gil Kerlikowske — a famously successful practitioner of community policing — gave in 2004. Kerlikowske warned that police executives were prone to “a 20-year learning cycle”: “after 20 years we forget the lessons we learned . . . and move on to ‘the next new thing’ in policing.”<sup>89</sup> (By that measure, the unlearning of community policing and the revival of the professional model are right on schedule.) To avoid the “20-year learning mistake,” Kerlikowske suggested that police leaders should abandon all conceptual models — not just police professionalism, but community policing as well. “Let us take the best of what we learned in this business over the last half century,” he urged, and just “call it policing.”<sup>90</sup>

There is something to be said for this. The three core principles of the conceptual framework proposed by Stone and Travis — accountability, legitimacy and innovation — could be pursued without wrapping them in the language of professionalism, and would be more appealing without that packaging. (It is less clear whether the same can be said for what Stone and Travis call “national coherence.” That may be

tied more closely to the ideal of professionalism.<sup>91</sup> But it also seems less obviously desirable and certainly less fundamental.) Stone and Travis seem to be right, though, that a conceptual frame can help police leaders, line officers and members of the public prioritize goals for policing.<sup>92</sup> The problem is that professionalism is an undesirable frame; it pushes policing toward the wrong priorities. What would be a better frame?

One possibility is community policing — or, if we want to encourage continual refinement of the model, “advanced community policing.” Community policing is a radically incomplete philosophy. If the police should focus on more than crime control, what should the “more” be, and how much of it should there be? How, in particular, should the police pursue fairness, accountability and legitimacy, and how should those goals be balanced against or combined with crime-fighting? Similarly, if the police are to partner with the community, what does it mean to “partner”? What kind of leadership should the police exercise, and in what directions should they lead? Who or what is “the community,” and how are the police supposed to respond to conflicts between or within communities — especially when those conflicts run along fault lines of race, class or ethnicity? If decentralization of authority is a good thing, how far should it go, and what is the proper role of middle management? And what role should new communication and data processing technologies — from cell phones to crime mapping — play in facilitating consultation and cooperation between police departments and the communities they serve?

These are difficult questions, and they remain largely unanswered. They also remain the most important questions facing the police in the United States and in other modern, industrialized democracies. And they are still questions that often fail to get the attention they deserve. One virtue of retaining community policing, or some variant like “advanced community policing,” as the overarching conceptual frame for policing is precisely that it can help focus attention on the right questions. The rhetoric of police professionalism raises questions, too: What does it mean to be a “professional”? In what ways would it make sense for police officers to be like doctors, lawyers and engineers?<sup>93</sup> But these seem far less critical than the questions to which community policing directs our attention. In assessing, for example, whether to make “national coherence” a central priority of police reform, the key questions worth asking are whether it would help police to be more open and accountable to the communities they serve, and more productive partners with those communities — not whether policing needs national coherence in order to be a “true profession,” like law, medicine or engineering.

Any model of policing will highlight certain dimensions of the job, and certain challenges facing leaders, officers and reformers, while downplaying others. The strength of community policing — in the 1980s, the 1990s and today — is that it focuses attention on the problems in policing that most deserve attention, not only because of their intrinsic importance but also because of their difficulty and their tendency to be neglected. Much of the value of community policing, that

is to say, may lie precisely in the ways that it can help law enforcement agencies, police researchers and the public resist the persistent pull of police professionalism.

## Endnotes

1. See President’s Commission on Law Enforcement & the Administration of Justice, Task Force Report: The Police 20–21 (1967).
2. See, e.g., Gene E. Carte & Elaine H. Carte, Police Reform in the United States: The Era of August Vollmer 114–15 (1975); David Alan Sklansky, Police and Democracy 35–37 (2008) [hereinafter Sklansky, Police and Democracy].
3. See, e.g., David H. Bayley, *Community Policing: A Report from the Devil’s Advocate*, in *Community Policing: Rhetoric or Reality* 225, 225 (Jack R. Green & Stephen D. Mastrofski eds., 1988) [hereinafter *Community Policing: Rhetoric or Reality*]; Willard M. Oliver, *The Third Generation of Community Policing: Moving Through Innovation, Diffusion, and Institutionalization*, in *Contemporary Policing: Strategies, Challenges, and Solutions* 39, 40 (Quint C. Thurman & Jihong Zhao eds., 2004).
4. See, e.g., Bayley, *supra* note 3, at 226; Sklansky, *Police and Democracy*, *supra* note 2, at 82–83.
5. The focus in this paper is on policing in the United States, but many of the trends described here may have parallels elsewhere. See, e.g., David Dixon, *Why Don’t the Police Stop Crime?*, 28 *Austl. & N.Z. J. Criminology* 4 (2005).

6. See, e.g., David Thacher, *Conflicting Values in Community Policing*, 35 Law & Soc’y Rev. 765 (2001); Mary Ann Wycoff, *The Benefits of Community Policing: Evidence and Conjecture*, in *Community Policing: Rhetoric or Reality*, *supra* note 3, at 225, 226.

7. Peter K. Manning, *Police Work: The Social Organization of Policing* 121 (2d ed. 1997) [hereinafter Manning, *Police Work*].

8. Carte and Carte, *supra* note 2, at 3, 105.

9. See, e.g., Egon Bittner, *The Rise and Fall of the Thin Blue Line*, 6 Rev. Am. Hist. 421 (1978) [hereinafter Bittner, *Rise and Fall*], reprinted in Egon Bittner, *Aspects of Police Work* 357 (1990) [hereinafter Bittner, *Aspects of Police Work*].

10. See, e.g., Kent W. Colton & James M. Tien, *Technology Transfer of Computer-Based Applications in Law Enforcement*, 4 J. Tech. Transfer 63, 63–64 (1979).

11. See, e.g., National Research Council, *Fairness & Effectiveness in Policing: The Evidence* 30–34, 105–06 (Wesley Skogan & Kathleen Frydl eds., 2004) [hereinafter *Fairness & Effectiveness in Policing*].

12. See, e.g., U.S. Dep’t of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, *Navigating Your Agency’s Path to Intelligence-Led Policing* (2009) [hereinafter *Navigating Your Agency’s Path*]; U.S. Dep’t of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, *BJA Fact Sheet: Smart Policing Initiative* (2009) (announcing \$4 million in grants “to identify law enforcement tactics and strategies that are effective, efficient, and economical”). In September 2009, the National

Institute of Justice (NIJ) and the Bureau of Justice Assistance, in collaboration with the Los Angeles Police Department, sponsored “The First Predictive Policing Symposium,” in Los Angeles, Cal. A second symposium was held in Providence, R.I., in June 2010, co-sponsored by NIJ, the Providence Police Department, and Roger Williams University.

13. Jerry H. Ratcliffe, *Intelligence-Led Policing* xiii, xiv, 1 (2008).

14. *Id.* at 6.

15. *Navigating Your Agency’s Path*, *supra* note 12, at 3.

16. *Id.*; see also, e.g., Charlie Beck & Colleen McCue, *Predictive Policing: What Can We Learn from Wal-Mart and Amazon About Fighting Crime in a Recession?*, *Police Chief*, Nov. 2009, at 18, 18 (suggesting that “ILP does not replace the community-involvement and problem-solving approaches in the community-policing model”).

17. Ratcliffe, *supra* note 13, at 7.

18. Jerry H. Ratcliffe, *Intelligence-Led Policing*, in *Environmental Criminology and Crime Analysis* 263, 271 (Richard Wortley & Lorraine Mazerolle eds., 2008).

19. Ratcliffe, *supra* note 13, at 88; see also David H. Bayley & Christine Nixon, *The Changing Environment for Policing* 22 (discussion draft, Nov. 2009).

20. Ratcliffe, *supra* note 13, at 9.

21. Navigating Your Agency's Path, *supra* note 12, at 10.
22. Beck & McCue, *supra* note 16, at 18, 23; *see also* William Bratton, John Morgan & Sean Malinowski, Fighting Crime in the Information Age: The Promise of Predictive Policing 8 (discussion draft, Nov. 18, 2009) (claiming that "we have entered the era of predictive policing").
23. Beck & McCue, *supra* note 16, at 19.
24. *Id.*
25. Bratton et al., *supra* note 22, at 1. There may also be a difference in emphasis: intelligence-led policing is sometimes said to be marked by a "concentration on prolific and persistent offenders," Ratcliffe, *supra* note 13, at 8; and predictive policing is sometimes said to focus on "times and locations predicted to be associated with an increased likelihood for crime," rather than on "specific individuals," Beck & McCue, *supra* note 16, at 22. But intelligence-led policing has also been said to include the identification of "hot spots" through "temporal and spatial analytical assessments," Navigating Your Agency's Path, *supra* note 12, at 17; and predictive policing has been described as including technologies that allow analysts to "identify, track and correlate repeat or potential offenders," Bratton et al., *supra* note 22, at 3.
26. *See, e.g.*, David Weisburd & John E. Eck, *What Can Police Do to Reduce Crime, Disorder, and Fear?*, 593 *Annals Am. Acad. Pol. & Soc. Sci.* 42 (2004).
27. In fact, the leading treatise on police management in the era of police professionalism argued explicitly that "indexes of efficiency" were of "limited utility" in assessing police practices because the available data were so crude. O.W. Wilson, *Police Administration* 8 (1950). This passage was retained in the second edition of the treatise, *see* O.W. Wilson, *Police Administration* 24 (2d ed. 1963), but not in the third, *see* O.W. Wilson & Roy Clinton McLaren, *Police Administration* (3d ed. 1972).
28. William Ker Muir, Jr., *Police: Streetcorner Politicians* (1977).
29. Christopher Stone & Jeremy Travis, *Toward a New Professionalism in Policing* 1 (pre-publication draft, June 2009).
30. *Id.* at 5–6.
31. *Id.* at 8.
32. *Id.*
33. *Id.* at 19–20.
34. Carte & Carte, *supra* note 2, at 112.
35. Bittner, *Rise and Fall*, *supra* note 9, at 426; *see also* Dorothy Guyot, *Policing as Though People Matter* 5–10 (1991).
36. Manning, *Police Work*, *supra* note 7, at 120–21.
37. *See, e.g.*, George E. Berkley, *The Democratic Policeman* 21–35 (1969). Localism in American policing has always been defended on grounds of democracy, not on grounds of professionalism.



See, e.g., *id.* at 21–22; John Edgar Hoover, *The Basis of Sound Law Enforcement*, 291 *Annals Am. Acad. Pol. & Soc. Sci.* 39, 40–42 (1954). For a more recent and more elaborate defense of local, democratic control over policing practices, see William J. Stuntz, *Unequal Justice*, 121 *Harv. L. Rev.* 1969 (2008).

38. Which is not to say, of course, that a push for standardization is necessarily a push back toward insularity, hierarchy and technocracy. Just as old-style police professionalism never included a serious commitment to uniformity or a serious rejection of parochialism, so nationwide standards could conceivably be developed that lead the police away from, rather than toward, the core elements of mid-20th-century police professionalism. But nothing in the ideal of standardization makes that direction inevitable or even likely.

39. See, e.g., Carte & Carte, *supra* note 2, at 105, 115; Herman Goldstein, *Policing a Free Society* 7, 135–36 (1977); William A. Westley, *Violence and the Police: A Sociological Study of Law, Custom, and Morality* xv (1970); Bittner, *Rise and Fall*, *supra* note 9; Paul Jacobs, *The Los Angeles Police*, Atlantic, Dec. 1966, at 95.

40. See, e.g., Dan M. Kahan & Tracey L. Meares, *The Coming Crisis of Criminal Procedure*, 86 *Geo. L.J.* 1153 (1998); Debra Livingston, *Police Discretion and the Quality of Life in Public Places: Courts, Communities, and the New Policing*, 97 *Colum. L. Rev.* 551 (1997).

41. See, e.g., Michael C. Dorf & Charles F. Sobel, *A Constitution of Democratic Experimentalism*, 98 *Colum. L. Rev.* 267, 328–32 (1998).

42. See, e.g., *Fairness & Effectiveness in Policing*, *supra* note 11, at 232–35.

43. See, e.g., Sklansky, *Police and Democracy*, *supra* note 2, at 86–93, 98–102; Gerald E. Frug, *City Services*, 73 *N.Y.U. L. Rev.* 23, 81–85 (1998).

44. See, e.g., R. Gil Kerlikowske, *The End of Community Policing: Remembering the Lessons Learned*, *FBI Law Enf't Bulletin*, April 2004, at 6.

45. See, e.g., Sklansky, *supra* note 2, at 100–101; James Forman, Jr., *Community Policing and Youth as Assets*, 95 *J. Crim. L. & Criminology* 1–48 (2004).

46. See, e.g., Franklin E. Zimring, *The Great American Crime Decline* 25–42 (2006).

47. *Id.* at 42.

48. See, e.g., Dixon, *supra* note 5, at 7–13.

49. See, e.g., Weisburd & Eck, *supra* note 26.

50. See, e.g., David A. Sklansky, *Not Your Father's Police Department: Making Sense of the New Demographics of Law Enforcement*, 96 *J. Crim. L. & Criminology* 1209 (2006).

51. See, e.g., Roy Roberg & Scott Bonn, *Higher Education and Policing: Where are We Now?*, 27 *Policing* 469 (2004). On parallel developments in Britain, see Maurice Punch, *Cops with Honours: University Education and Police Culture*, in *Police Occupational Culture: New Debates and Directions* 105 (Megan O'Neill et al. eds., 2007).

52. For the uninitiated, the television program 24 and its influence are discussed in Jane Mayer,

- Whatever It Takes*, New Yorker, Feb. 19, 2007, at 68. Regarding *The Andy Griffith Show*, see Adam Dobrin, *Professional and Community Oriented Policing: The Mayberry Model*, 13 J. Crim. Just. & Popular Culture 19 (2006).
53. Daniel C. Richman, *The Right Fight*, Boston Rev., Dec. 2004/Jan. 2005, at 6, 7; see also David H. Bayley & David Weisburd, *Cops and Spooks: The Role of the Police in Counterterrorism*, in *To Protect and To Serve: Policing in an Age of Terrorism* 81, 92, 94 (D. Weisburd et al. eds., 2009).
54. See, e.g., Sklansky, *Police and Democracy*, *supra* note 2, at 131; Eric Moskowitz & Maria Cramer, *Cities Cutting Police Work*, Boston Globe, Mar. 5, 2009, at A1; Bobby White, *California Cities Cut Police Budgets*, Wall Street J., Oct. 31, 2008, at A3.
55. See, e.g., George Gascón & Todd Foglesong, *How to Make Policing More Affordable* 7 (discussion draft, Oct. 2009).
56. See, e.g., Carte & Carte, *supra* note 2, at 66–83; Robert M. Fogelson, *Big-City Police* 12–116 (1977).
57. See, e.g., Egon Bittner, *The Functions of the Police in Modern Society* (1970), *reprinted in* Bittner, *Aspects of Police Work*, *supra* note 9, at 89; Stone & Travis, *supra* note 29, at 3 (arguing that “for any profession to be worthy of that name, its members must not only have transportable skills, but must also be committed both to a set of ethical precepts and to a discipline of continuous learning”).
58. Ratcliffe, *supra* note 18, at 269.
59. See, e.g., Ratcliffe, *supra* note 13, at 9.
60. See, e.g., Susan L. Miller, *Gender and Community Policing: Walking the Talk* (1999).
61. Jacobs, *supra* note 39, at 101. Jacobs’s critique appeared the same year that Deputy Chief Edward M. Davis committed the LAPD to development of “the instant cop”: a “technological ‘fusion’ of men, communications, computers, [and] dispatching, coupled with a near ‘instantaneous’ arrival of officers at a crime location with sufficient electronic and other exotic equipment . . . to provide the means to swiftly transact the investigation.” Los Angeles Police Department, *Advance Planning Division, LAPD and Computers* 1 (1972) (quoting Davis’s Sept. 1966 speech to the Los Angeles Rotary Club). Davis led the LAPD throughout the 1970s and retained his enthusiasm for “the search for uses of computer-based science and technology in law enforcement”; the department boasted in 1972 that it had become a national leader in that search. See *id.*
62. See, e.g., Bratton et al., *supra* note 22, at 3; cf., e.g., Stone & Travis, *supra* note 29, at 12 (noting appreciatively that “the CompStat accountability process, in which district commanders are held accountable by headquarters leadership for continuing reductions in crime and other measures of effectiveness, is now a staple of police management in most large departments”).
63. Jacobs, *supra* note 39, at 101.
64. Beck & McCue, *supra* note 16, at 20.
65. Bratton et al., *supra* note 22, at 12.

66. *Id.* at 8, 12.

67. *See, e.g.*, Beck & McCue, *supra* note 16, at 20–22; Rebecca Kanable, *Dig Into Data Mining: Enhanced Analysis Can Help Law Enforcement be More Proactive*, Law Enforcement Technology, March 2007, at 62.

68. Colleen McCue, Remarks at the First Predictive Policing Symposium, Los Angeles, Cal., Nov. 19, 2009.

69. *Id.*

70. Jacobs, *supra* note 39, at 101.

71. Peter K. Manning, The Technology of Policing: Crime Mapping, Information Technology, and the Rationality of Crime Control 252 (2008) [hereinafter Manning, The Technology of Policing].

72. *Id.* at 251–65.

73. *Id.* at 252. On the central role of talk in policing, *see also, e.g.*, Miller, *supra* note 60; Muir, *supra* note 28.

74. Manning, The Technology of Policing, *supra* note 71, at 262.

75. *See, e.g.*, Lawrence W. Sherman, *Ideas in American Policing: Evidence-Based Policing* (1998).

76. *Id.* at 4. Evidence-based policing, in turn, can be understood as one part of what others have called “problem-oriented policing”: an approach to policing that values innovation, eclecticism and fitting police tactics to the problem at hand. *See,*

*e.g.*, Herman Goldstein, *Problem-Oriented Policing* (1990); Weisburd & Eck, *supra* note 26, at 46.

77. *Cf., e.g.*, Carte & Carte, *supra* note 2, at 114 (suggesting that “[t]he more basic problems within the professional model emerged when it ceased being an *unarticulated approach* for reform and became a *rigid ideology*”) (emphasis in original).

78. *See, e.g.*, Sklansky, *Police and Democracy, supra* note 2, at 82–84.

79. Stone & Travis, *supra* note 29, at 1.

80. *See, e.g.*, *Navigating Your Agency’s Path, supra* note 12, at 3; Bratton et al., *supra* note 22, at 2.

81. O.W. Wilson, *Police Administration* (1950), *supra* note 27, at 58–59 (emphasis in original).

82. *Id.* at 82.

83. *Id.* at 91.

84. *Id.* at 420.

85. *Id.* at 388–91; *see also* O.W. Wilson, *Police Administration* (2d ed. 1963), *supra* note 27, at 182–85.

86. Wilson & McLaren, *supra* note at 27, at 217.

87. U.S. Dep’t of Justice, National Inst. of Justice, *Perspectives in Policing No. 5, Debating the Evolution of American Policing 5* (Francis X. Hartmann ed., Nov. 1988) (quoting remarks of Mark Moore).

88. Stone & Travis, *supra* note 29, at 10–11.

89. Kerlikowske, *supra* note 44, at 6. He attributed the diagnosis to Michael Shanahan, then Chief of Police at the University of Washington.

90. *Id.* at 9.

91. If not necessarily to the mid-20th-century version of police professionalism. See *supra* notes 37–38 and accompanying text.

92. See Stone & Travis, *supra* note 29, at 2.

93. For contrasting views on the nature and the merits of professionalism writ broadly, see, e.g., Margali Sarfatti Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism* (1977); Kevin T. Leicht &

Mary L. Fennell, *Professional Work* 25–43 (2001); Julia Evetts, *The Sociological Analysis of Professionalism: Occupational Change in the Modern World*, 18 *Int'l Soc.* 395 (2003).

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