

U.S. Department of Justice  
Office of Justice Programs  
National Institute of Justice

116019



**National Institute of Justice**

*Research  
Report*

# **A Model of Community Policing: The Singapore Story**

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# A Model of Community Policing: The Singapore Story

by  
**David H. Bayley**  
*School of Criminal Justice*  
*State University of New York at Albany*

March 1989

**NCJRS**

**MAR 28 1989**

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James K. Stewart  
*Director*

The Assistant Attorney General, Office of Justice Programs, coordinates the activities of the following program Offices and Bureaus: the Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Institute of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crime.

This project was supported by purchase order OJP-87-M-259, awarded to David H. Bayley, State University of New York, by the National Institute of Justice. Points of view or opinions stated in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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## Preface

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This monograph grows out of my involvement with the Singapore police department's development of community policing. When they began considering plans for community policing in 1982, they invited me to lecture on the Japanese *koban* system, because at that time I had written one of the few English books on Japanese policing. In 1984, I participated in evaluating Singapore's 1983 to 1984 pilot project in community policing. I returned during 1987 to examine the implementation of community policing islandwide for the entire police force. On all these occasions, I had long talks with officers of all ranks, observed police operations in the field, and read and discussed all the reports prepared about community policing.

My work in Singapore has been both intellectually stimulating and personally enjoyable. The Singapore police force's cooperation and assistance has been unstinting. They have been open and candid and have treated me as a colleague. I am grateful to all ranks for their generosity, helpfulness, and welcoming hospitality.

The work of preparing and writing this monograph has been supported by the National Institute of Justice, U.S. Department of Justice. I am grateful to James "Chips" Stewart, its Director, for understanding the importance of learning in a directed way about worldwide policing and therefore for supporting me in this work. America's problems with crime and justice are not as unusual as we might think. This monograph is written in the hope that other countries may help us solve our problems more quickly and successfully.

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## Chapter 1

# Does Singapore matter?

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Singapore represents the most ambitious and successful attempt in the English-speaking world to change in a short time the fundamental strategy of policing. Since 1981, the Singapore police force has carefully shifted from a reactive, incident-centered mode of operation to full-scale community policing. In brief, it has deemphasized motorized patrolling and emergency response in favor of intensive community involvement through the establishment of Neighborhood Police Posts; it has redeveloped foot patrols; it has organized a substantial proportion of patrol personnel from the emergency-response system and made them available for community problem solving; it has decentralized the command of patrol operations; it has emmeshed policing in a network of independent community organizations; and it has managed change in a reflective and professional manner.

While most police forces in the United States as well as those in Canada, Australia, and Great Britain are still arguing over the meaning and desirability of community policing, the Singapore police have boldly created it.<sup>1</sup> What they have done fits almost anyone's notion of community policing. It certainly fits the rigorous test Jerome Skolnick and I have suggested: (1) community-based crime prevention, (2) reorientation of patrol to emphasize proactive servicing, (3) decentralization of command, and (4) development of accountability to local communities.<sup>2</sup>

Singapore provides a tremendous opportunity to learn because the recent changes in policing are precisely the same as those being contemplated, and in some cases experimented with, in the United States. The police in Singapore and the United States formulate their problems in exactly the same terms. The past practices of the Singapore police are the same as ours, while their present innovations encompass options being considered seriously in the United States.

At the same time, of course, Singapore is not the United States. Even though English is the first language of its multiethnic population, its people are predominantly Chinese; it is tropical, located 82 miles north of the equator in the heart of Southeast Asia; and it is more than 8,000 miles from the United States. (Map 1 on page 10 shows Singapore and the surrounding countries.) Is it fair to ask, then, if Singapore's practice of community policing, dramatic as it is, is relevant to American problems? Ought we try to learn from Singapore? Are its lessons worth learning?

I believe the answer is yes. Singapore may be a foreign place, but it is similar to urban areas in the United States in several critical aspects. To begin with, Singapore is a country that is the size of a city. At 228 square miles, it is slightly larger than Chicago.<sup>3</sup> As map 2 on page 11 shows, Singapore is a diamond-shaped island located just off the

southern tip of Malaysia, joined to it by a causeway over a narrow strip of sea, very much as Manhattan is to New Jersey. Its population of 2.5 million is slightly smaller than Los Angeles (2.9 million) and slightly larger than Philadelphia (1.7 million). In terms of population density, Singapore has 10,965 persons per square mile as opposed to 12,108 in Philadelphia and 13,119 in Chicago.<sup>4</sup> The police force has 7,394 sworn officers, comparable to Philadelphia or Los Angeles. Singapore has one police officer for every 338 people, which is slightly fewer officers per capita than American cities with more than 1 million population (1 officer to 286 people).<sup>5</sup> The physical situation of the Singapore police is very similar, therefore, to that of a large urban American police force.

Singapore is a developed rather than an underdeveloped nation. It ranks 19th in the world in per capita GNP, just ahead of New Zealand.<sup>6</sup> Like New York and London, it is one of the world's major commercial, financial, and trading centers. It is second only to Rotterdam in the number of ships calling at its port every day. Less than 1 percent of Singapore's population is employed in agriculture versus 1.4 percent in the United States; 15.5 percent is in manufacturing and construction versus 11.3 percent in the United States.<sup>7</sup> Singapore is modern in every aspect, with all the material and technological amenities that Americans expect, such as safe drinking water, air-conditioning, posh hotels, freeways, beach resorts, golf courses, and wall-to-wall shopping centers.

Also like the United States, Singapore is a melting pot of diverse races and cultures. Its population is 76 percent Chinese, 15 percent Malay, 6.4 percent Indian, and 2.3 percent other races.<sup>8</sup> Singaporeans are acutely conscious of the effects of ethnic division. As recently as 1969 Singapore was the scene of violent racial strife. Its police, like ours, have bitter memories of trying to separate and pacify rioting mobs inflamed by racial hatred. Since independence in 1965, the Singapore government has worked tirelessly to develop a larger sense of Singapore nationality, in the hope of ultimately reducing the intensity of cultural rivalries.

Like the United States, Singapore's education level is high. Schooling is compulsory through the equivalent of American junior high school. In 1986, 21 percent of the population was enrolled in an educational institution of some sort (versus 24 percent in the United States)—50 percent of those were in primary schools (54 percent in the United States), 38 percent in secondary schools (24 percent in the United States), 8 percent in colleges and universities (21 percent in the United States), and 4 percent in technical and vocational institutes (21 percent in the United States).<sup>9</sup> As one might expect, employment levels are also high. Unemployment in 1986

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was 6.5 percent—higher than had been common during the preceding decade.<sup>10</sup> Singapore has become a magnet for people of the region seeking jobs. “Guest workers,” comprising approximately 12 percent of the work force, commute across the causeway each day from Malaysia or live temporarily in Singapore on special permits.<sup>11</sup>

Singapore, then, shares important characteristics with medium- to large-size American cities. At the same time, there are differences that distinctly affect policing in each country. One such factor is the character of political life.<sup>12</sup> Although Singapore is certainly democratic by world standards, opinions differ sharply about the freedom of political life. On the one hand, its laws and government forms are very much like ours, derived in large measure from the British. Singapore has a written constitution, detailed codes of penal law and criminal procedure, an independent judiciary, and a representative, parliamentary form of government. It is always important to remember that this parliament, given the scale of Singapore, is analogous to an American city council. Most American observers would agree that Singapore is not visibly repressive, unlike China, Vietnam, Taiwan, or, until recently, Korea. It can be justly proud of its open society; its freedom to travel, write, and speak; and the vigor of intellectual life in schools, universities, and professional associations. For these reasons, foreigners from democratic countries like Britain, France, Japan, Australia, and the United States find Singapore an attractive place to visit and live.

On the other hand, the Singapore government manages society in ways that sometimes surprise and disturb visitors. Many people remember that “hippies” had their hair cut on arrival in Singapore. The Government censors magazines, movies, and TV shows for moral, rather than political, purposes. Singapore also has a family limitation policy backed by financial penalties and inducements. A handful of political dissidents, Marxists, and members of Communist organizations are being detained without trial. By and large, the American judgment about whether Singapore is a full-fledged as opposed to a marginally democratic country depends on individual evaluations of the necessity for these policies. Conversely, it depends on whether one believes the United States should be regarded as being irresponsibly “permissive.” Thus, while most people, apart from ideologues, consider Singapore part of the free world, some might argue about its precise ranking among the world’s democracies. Singapore’s climate of pervasive directedness is certainly very different from the one in which American police operate.

Singapore’s criminal sanctions are also sterner than those in the United States, although they are, for the most part, within the bounds of what most Americans consider discussable policy options. For example, the death penalty has been retained and has no serious opposition. Preventive detention is allowed for certain classes of habitual criminals, notably members of Chinese “secret societies.” Drug addicts are subject to compulsory hospitalization; drug traffickers

receive mandatory death sentences. The possession of handguns by private citizens is prohibited and the use of a firearm in the commission of a crime carries a stiff penalty. Even more dramatic, conviction for some offenses are punishable by “caning”—being struck on the back and buttocks with a thin malacca cane. Although done under medical supervision, this practice would certainly not be acceptable to most Americans.

The most unambiguous difference between Singapore and the United States is its culture. Singapore is not a Western country; it is Chinese and, to a lesser extent, Malay and Indian. Culture affects every aspect of life—the family, morality, humor, civility, friendship, piety, dress, and patterns of respect. Do the differences in culture make policing in Singapore unique and therefore meaningless for Americans? I don’t think so.

Many of the problems of policing are common across cultures, whether cultural differences are within countries or between countries. Furthermore, nations have borrowed practices from one another for generations—the British from the French, the Americans from the British, the Germans from the British, and the Japanese from the Americans.<sup>13</sup> Community policing practices might in fact be more transportable internationally than other practices, precisely because community policing stresses the need for police to adapt to local conditions. Community policing may be a unique means by which police can bridge the gap between cultures. Finally, whether a foreign policing practice can serve as a model or not needs to be demonstrated through experience and not assumed without evidence. Unless a foreign practice deals with wholly unique circumstances, it is reasonable to expect it might work in the United States if tried in a conscientious manner.

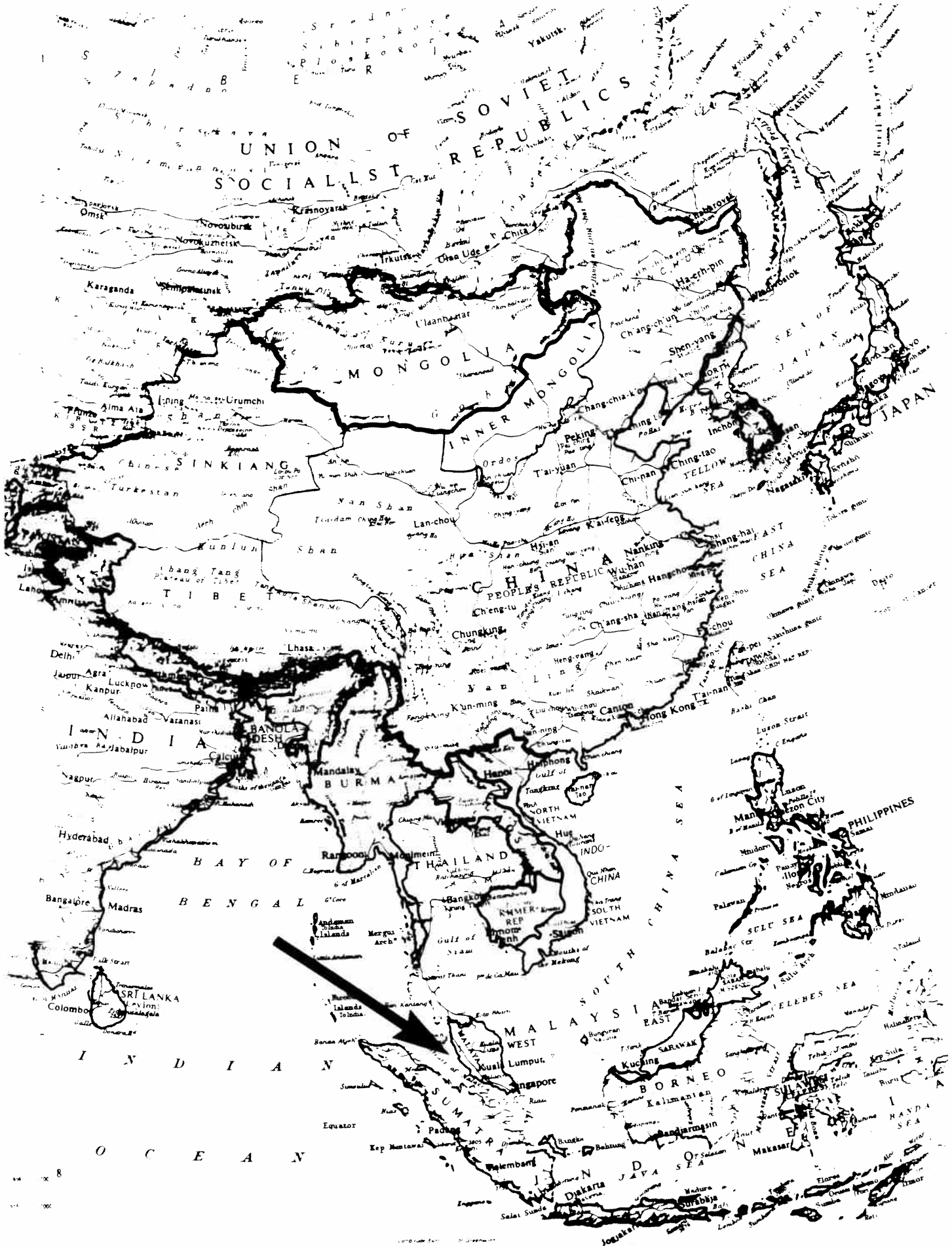
In sum, then, apart from the possible elements of culture and political climate, Singapore is not “off the graph” of American life. On the contrary, it confronts many of the same public order and law enforcement problems as the United States. And it does so in an economic and social setting that is remarkably similar to Western urban societies and on a physical scale that is precisely that of a large American city. Police officers in the United States and Singapore belong to the same professional world, dealing with the same problems with the same tools and similar approaches. The only important difference is that the Singapore police have recently given up strategies that American police still cling to and have adopted a strategy that American police are seriously considering, namely, community policing.

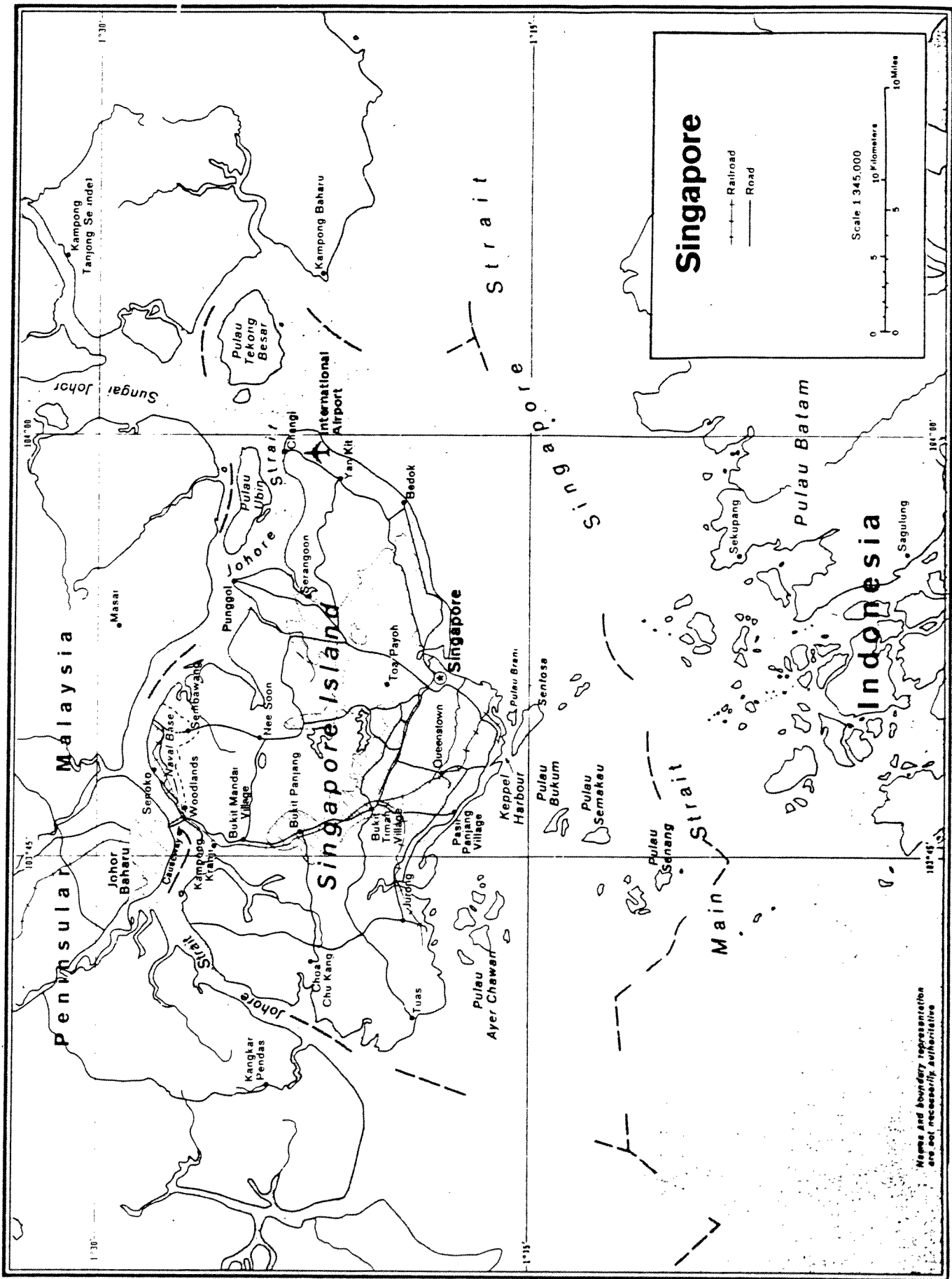
This report takes advantage of the opportunity presented by Singapore’s planned adoption of community policing as the operating paradigm for urban law enforcement. The following sections examine the distinctive operations of Singapore’s community policing, the process by which community policing was successfully planned and implemented, and how the Singapore police shifted from a reactive British system to a community oriented system. The



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Singapore police have given great attention to evaluating the effects of community policing. Data describing the impact of community policing are presented in chapter 4. Throughout, the report makes explicit reference to general and specific problems American police face with reference to community policing. When relevant, Singapore's experience is brought to bear on them. The lessons derived from this comparison of American problems and Singapore experience are summarized in chapter 5.





Names And boundary representation are not necessarily authoritative

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## Chapter 2

# How community policing works

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### An overview of community policing in Singapore

Before the transition to community policing, police operations in Singapore had two command levels: central headquarters and dispersed precincts. Precincts were organized into eight land divisions—or precincts—and one water division. (Although Singapore uses the word “division” for its police units, I shall use the word “precinct” because that is more familiar to an American audience.) Both the central headquarters and the precincts performed the following functions: patrol, criminal investigation, traffic regulation, riot control, and administration. Patrolling was largely motorized, supplemented in some areas by bicycle and scooter patrols. Fast response cars, staffed by two officers, handled emergency calls. Divisional patrol cars, staffed by four officers, performed directed patrols—most of it driving. Only 20 percent of the directed patrol was devoted to foot patrol.<sup>14</sup>

The transition to community policing, which began in a concerted way in 1981, has involved three elements:

- Development of community-based crime prevention
- Deemphasis on motorized patrolling in favor of foot patrols
- Creation of more decentralized area commands within the precincts.

All of these actions were accomplished in large part with the development of a single new institution—the Neighborhood Police Post (NPP). The NPP’s are essential, fixed bases of operation for patrol, development of community-based crime prevention, nonemergency servicing, and liaison with communities. By 1989, Singapore will have 91 NPP’s; 62 were established by the end of 1987. The bulk of patrol personnel will be deployed in NPP’s, where they will operate almost exclusively on foot. The number of patrol cars has been reduced from about 100 to 60. Although the distribution of personnel between cars and NPP’s will ultimately be determined by respective work loads, the ratio of NPP to mobile personnel will be about 5 to 1. By 1989, when implementation of the community policing program is completed, 25 percent of Singapore’s total police force will be assigned to NPP’s.

Singapore has redeployed personnel into NPP’s by reducing the number of officers assigned to motorized patrols, by reducing the number of support units, and by dissolving the precinct task forces, which were kept in reserve at precinct headquarters for directed patrols and special crowd-control events. In the future, NPP personnel will perform these latter activities as needed. It is important to note that the reorganization has not affected criminal investigation; the proportion

of personnel assigned to it remains the same. Similarly, the strength and organization of traffic units remains the same—a centralized unit plus small traffic enforcement sections in each precinct.

In short, community policing in Singapore has meant that policing has become more intensive on the ground, less mobile, and more dispersed in terms of command.

Two small qualifications need to be made. Older officers often point out that NPP’s are not quite as new as their proponents contend because all of Singapore’s precincts had two or three fixed police posts, as they were called, before NPP’s were created. Singapore had many more fixed posts before independence in 1965, but they were gradually eliminated.

The second qualification to make is that NPP’s themselves will have a small motorized presence. Although cars were not available by the end of 1987, Singapore planned to have pairs of NPP’s share a patrol car for routine patrolling but not for responding to emergency calls. It remains to be seen whether the NPP’s will use the vehicles selectively and creatively for purposes consistent with community policing or will fall back into unreflective, random motorized patrolling.

In the early 1980’s, the government of Singapore invited a British team to review police operations. The British proposed that Singapore increase the number of land divisions from 8 to 15, thus decentralizing command by changing its scale but not necessarily changing the character of operations. Commendably, Singapore was not happy with this mechanical solution to reform. They adopted instead the more radical plan of creating 91 command centers—the NPP’s—each with a new and distinctive function. The precinct commands will, in fact, be reduced for efficiency, from 8 to 7. The British advice points to a neglected truth in policing: 9 times out of 10, foreign advisors recommend doing what they do at home. The advice of foreign professionals is usually predictable if host countries study the foreign country’s routine.

Community policing in Singapore involves more than the redeployment of police personnel. The character of work has changed sharply. Rather than concentrating on the classic functions of creating a “visible presence” on the street and responding quickly to emergency calls, the Singapore police now regularly visit individual residences and businesses to offer security related services, organize Neighborhood Watch Groups and promote citizen crime prevention, encourage the use of NPP’s for general services, maintain ongoing liaison with community groups, and patrol intensively on foot. According to recent comprehensive study,

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NPP's in the lower ranks devote 41.5 percent of their time to patrolling, mostly on foot; 5.5 percent to visits to premises; and 25 percent to counter services at the NPP's.<sup>15</sup> Let us now see how these activities are carried out in the field.

## The nature of Neighborhood Police Posts and their jurisdictions

By 1989, Singapore will have 91 NPP's, 1 for each of the country's 79 parliamentary constituencies and 2 in constituencies larger than 5.2 square miles or more than 2.4 miles between boundaries. Each NPP is responsible for an average of 28,000 people and 2.5 square miles of territory. Individual NPP's vary considerably, however; 62,000 is the largest population covered, 12,100 is the smallest. The largest area is 12.8 square miles; the smallest, 0.16 square miles.

Singapore's NPP's cover larger areas and more people than Japanese *koban* on which they are modeled.<sup>16</sup> Japanese *koban* are responsible for 10,492 people on the average in areas of 0.38 square mile.<sup>17</sup> The Japanese police try to keep the numbers of people for which a *koban* is responsible under 12,000 and areas under 0.4 square mile. No *koban* may be closer to another than 0.6 mile. Locations of *koban* are also determined by work load and availability to the populace. Consequently, they are often put in areas with more than 320 criminal cases per year, more than 45 traffic accidents, and with a high volume of pedestrian traffic, as in town centers, railroad stations, and at street junctions.

Singapore, too, locates its Neighborhood Police Posts with great care. Political problems are minimized by assigning at least one NPP to each parliamentary constituency. Thus, all of Singapore's grassroots politicians have their own NPP. As in Japan, NPP's are situated with an eye to availability and equality of work loads. Since the primary work of NPP's involves interacting with individuals and groups in neighborhoods, the key variable in locating NPP's is population density. This means paying close attention to the distribution of what are called "HDB Housing Estates." The very first fact a visitor to an NPP is given is the number of Housing and Development Boards—HDB blocks—that the NPP covers.

Eighty-five percent of Singapore's population lives in what the United States would call public housing.<sup>18</sup> One of Singapore's most distinctive features are the enormous blocks of high-rise apartments that dot the landscape, all seemingly built to the same pattern. The view is dismally similar to public housing projects in the United States, only on a much grander scale. Surprisingly, however, one's first glance is misleading: this is public housing with a difference!

Although the government has built, and continues to build, these vast projects, residents own 76 percent of the apartments. Indeed, because experience has shown that owner-

occupied apartments are much better maintained than rented ones, Singapore is phasing out rental apartments and moving as close as possible to 100 percent ownership. Since the late 1960's, the Singapore government has systematically razed and replaced the city's stock of housing. In the process it has uprooted almost everyone. Not only have substandard multifamily urban apartment buildings been torn down, but the dispersed villages, called *kampongs*, have also been destroyed. Almost all of Singapore now has an urban environment consisting of HDB housing blocks, offices, factories, and amenities, all linked by a growing public transit system. In place of the old *kampongs* and congested urban neighborhoods, the government offered one- to five-room apartments for purchase with very small down payments and at subsidized interest rates. Although regulations have changed over the years, occupants are generally required to live in a purchased apartment for 5 years before reselling. They can sell and relocate once, as housing needs change and income grows, but if they decide to do so again, they must resell to the government at a predetermined price. These rules prevent private speculation in publicly provided housing. At present, Singapore has a surplus of housing, a circumstance that must be unique among major cities of the world. Very poor people, such as migrant laborers, either rent flats at subsidized rates or apply for concessional loans in order to buy.

The HDB blocks are enormous—9 to 25 stories—containing hundreds of people. The housing blocks are generally long and narrow so that apartments extend the full width of the building, allowing windows both front and back for ventilation. A single corridor on one side of the building gives access to apartments. This corridor is open to the air and protected by a solid chest-high railing. Floors are connected by stairwells and elevators, usually one elevator stop for a pair of floors. The height and openness of Singapore's housing creates a peculiar safety problem known as "killer litter." The public is continually reminded not to rest objects on the corridor railings, lest they fall and injure people. The same is true at the back of housing blocks, where laundry is draped out kitchen windows on long poles to dry in the sun. The highrise design also abets suicide, although the suicide rate in Singapore is not high by world standards. The open highrise design offers stunning views of the city to a substantial proportion of the Singapore population. The housing blocks are particularly awesome at night, when they loom out of the tropical haze like huge oceanliners, their well-lit external corridors encircling them like lines of portholes.

Housing blocks are grouped into estates, which are laid out in a very orderly way. Each block is numbered, every staircase lettered, and every apartment numbered so as to indicate both floor and location. Thus a person might say to a friend that she lives in Ang Mo Kio housing estate, building 37, apartment 834 off staircase C. Although painted maps are mounted on small billboards at the entrances to the estates, it's all very confusing. Even police officers get lost, driving around with their heads craned out the car window trying to catch sight of building numbers to find where they are.

The size of apartments varies by income, and estates contain a mixture of blocks so that income segregation cannot occur. Singaporeans can glance at a housing block and tell immediately—and mysteriously, as far as I am concerned—the size of the apartments within. A one-room apartment, generally for people who are renting, contains a single combined living room/bedroom—what the British call a “bed sitter”—and separate kitchen and bathroom. A one-room apartment, then, actually contains three rooms. The size of apartments refers to the number of rooms available to use as the owner wishes. A three-room apartment, then, has three rooms to be used as bedrooms, dining room, study, or living room, plus the standard kitchen and bathroom.

Apartment owners are encouraged to make home improvements to fit their own taste—primarily interior decoration and floor coverings. Furnishings are exclusively the responsibility of the owner. The government, through the Housing Development Board, is responsible for the physical condition of the building—structural safety, water and sewerage, external painting and maintenance, cleaning and lighting of public places, and care of the grounds. The HDB also provides space for such public accommodations as stores, restaurants, car parks, and playgrounds. The larger estates may have, in addition, complete shopping centers containing large stores, a post office, bank, and cinema; swimming pools; senior citizens’ homes and medical clinics; primary and secondary schools; and mosques, temples, and churches for the island’s mixture of Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, and Christians. Each constituency also has a community center containing recreation facilities and meeting rooms.

Contrary to what Americans might expect, the housing areas, though awesome in size, are set off by well-tended trees and lawns, which give them a habitable, parklike appearance. The feeling of spaciousness is enhanced by a unique architectural feature—most housing blocks have an open ground floor. Buildings are set on thick pillars that rest on a concrete pad, creating what is called the “void deck.” Mailboxes are located there as well as entrances to stairs and elevators. Most of the space is entirely open, dotted perhaps with a few concrete benches or stools, so that one can look through buildings for almost the entire width of an estate, seeing at one glance walks, playgrounds, and shops. Even more important, one can see other people walking, sitting, reading, playing, and chatting. The public places are not walled in; they are filled with isolated corners and cul-de-sacs. Thus, the void deck creates a view that belies the concentration of people residing overhead and also reassures inhabitants, who are rarely out of sight of other people. I do not know if crime prevention was considered in the architectural design of HDB blocks, but it is surely accomplished.

Some void decks are filled in after the block is built to accommodate small shops, each usually as wide as an apartment, extending from front to back of the building. The space is leased privately from the HDB. These “Mom and Pop” stores cater to the needs of the residential population; they sell packaged foods, small appliances, furniture, clothes

and fabrics, kitchen wares, paper goods, and newspapers and magazines. They are usually open in the evening. Food stores, by the way, are of two sorts. Small “dry” markets sell prepackaged food and are located in the void decks, and “wet” markets sell produce and meat and are located in large, open-sided sheds that are distributed among housing blocks.

In the void decks, too, will be found most of Singapore’s NPP’s. Sometimes located in a row of shops, more commonly they occupy an end of a void deck enclosed for that purpose. NPP’s pay rent to the HDB, from \$1,500 to \$2,000 per year. The appearance of NPP’s is startling in comparison with police facilities around the world because they are new, bright, well-equipped, and immaculately clean.

NPP’s are hard to miss because of their blue-on-white foot-high signs, mounted over the front entrance. Direction signs to the NPP’s are also scattered throughout the housing estates. The fronts of most NPP’s are open across the width of the facility, giving an open air atmosphere and putting officers within view. A low counter with chairs is set a few feet inside the entrance. People coming to the NPP on business normally sit at the counter, dealing with officers who are seated across it. Behind the counter are one or two desks, telephones, and filing cabinets. The walls are adorned with a large official photograph of the country’s president and his wife; a large brass plaque commemorating the inauguration of the NPP by some politician; and maps of Singapore, the NPP’s jurisdiction, and the surrounding housing estate. Many have a large illuminated tropical fish tank donated by the community.

Behind the public reception area is a multipurpose room, which serves as both the office for the officer-in-charge and as a public meeting room. It is the only air-conditioned room in the facility and seats 20 to 30 people on folding chairs. Crime trend charts and pin-maps showing the location of recent offenses hang on the walls. There are also large schematic diagrams of the most important local community organizations—universally referred to as grassroots organizations—complete with color photographs of their leaders.

The NPP facility also contains a small interview room, a storeroom for police equipment, a resting room for NPP personnel, and a toilet. A small shed for bikes and scooters can be reached through a side door. The resting room is small, well-ventilated, and pleasant and is furnished with chairs, a couch, a hot plate or small stove, a refrigerator, and a television set often donated by the local member of parliament. This is where NPP officers eat or rest during breaks. Some of the new NPP’s even have showers, a great convenience in a hot climate, where officers can change clothes before going off duty.

NPP’s are more than just a place where police business is conducted. They are also a facility for public meetings and a home-away-from-home for their personnel. NPP officers seem to have a proprietary feeling about them, proud of such

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homey touches as fish tanks and pictures. They keep the NPP's scrupulously clean. NPP's have become even more central to officers since 1987, when it was decided that NPP officers would no longer report for duty and roll call at the precinct stations but come directly to the NPP's. They now keep their uniforms and firearms there.

Because NPP's are physically open and centrally located, they provide a wonderful vantage point from which to observe Singapore's daily life. Children may line up for the school bus in front of the NPP. Women with net baskets stream by in the early morning to do their shopping at local stores. The refreshing sound of school children singing the national anthem floats down the block. As the sting goes out of the late afternoon sun, residents return from work and the smell of food cooking drifts in the evening air. In the early evening, people come out of their apartments to lounge on the grass, play Chinese chess on game boards etched on concrete tables, and children laugh as their parents push them on swings in the playground. Compared to most police facilities in the world, NPP's are familiar, almost domestic places, touched inevitably by the undramatic, mundane activities going on around them. Although NPP's are devoted to police business, their atmosphere demonstrates louder than words that their business has to do with ordinary problems in everyday lives.

## Staffing the NPP's

After several years of careful study, the Singapore police decided to staff each NPP with 20.5 officers—four teams with four constables and corporals, four sergeants who supervise the teams, and one half-time inspector, who is the officer-in-charge. (Originally, one inspector was assigned to each NPP, but the work load was too limited to support a full-time inspector.) Because NPP's are open 24-hours a day, four teams are needed to staff a four-shift system in which three teams serve respective 8-hour shifts while the fourth team has a rest day.

Teams work seven consecutive days, rotating through all three shifts in a pattern that may include two day-shifts (8 a.m. to 3 p.m.), three evening-shifts (3 p.m. to midnight), and two night-shifts (11 p.m. to 8 a.m.). To ensure equity among the teams over a month, the pattern may also be two day, two evening, and three night-shifts or three day, two evening, and two night-shifts. The effect of these patterns is such that at any time of the day NPP's are staffed by five officers and a part-time inspector in charge.

The officers who served in the original eight NPP's in 1983 were carefully selected volunteers. Now that the community policing method is expanding islandwide, all officers will serve in the NPP's sometime in their careers, although preference will be given to people who are especially keen. Precinct commanders select the best patrol officers for NPP duty. Special attention is given to mixing newcomers with officers experienced in NPP work. When new NPP's are

established, for example, pioneers from the older NPP's are transferred to develop the second generation of NPP officers. Since 1983, all recruits undergo a 6-week training course in NPP's, plus 2 days of onsite observation. Older volunteers or middle-rank supervisors assigned to NPP's for the first time attend the academy for a similar 5-week inservice training course. New officers are not expected to be assigned immediately to the NPP's because they are considered too inexperienced to handle the sensitive public relations aspect of the NPP job. In addition, some officers suggest that younger recruits might find NPP work a bit dull. In fact, however, some recruits with only 2 or 3 years service are posted to NPP's. This is probably inevitable and is not necessarily undesirable provided the newer officers work with officers who set a proper example.

The police have given NPP's a special status in the hope of improving chronically low morale of patrol officers. Senior officers are aware that the long-term success of NPP's depends on maintaining NPP duty as a special assignment. It would be harmful to the community policing effort for younger officers to regard NPP duty as something they must complete before going on to more interesting assignments.

NPP's offer female officers an excellent opportunity to display skill and initiative. Women constitute 14 percent of the Singapore police force, a percentage that is high by world standards, but their position is equivocal for various reasons, and they are not given the same assignments as men. Since first posted to NPP's in late 1985, their numbers have grown to approximately 20 percent of NPP personnel. They work alongside men night and day but do not patrol on scooters or bicycles because skirts are the uniform dress for female NPP officers. Evidently, it is considered impractical for them to change into slacks to ride cycles or scooters.

## Supplemental police

Normally, an NPP is staffed by five officers (plus a half-time inspector). Since some officers are usually out on patrols or house visits, one would not expect to find many officers at the NPP at any one time. But in fact, the Singapore police have five kinds of special supplemental police—Special Constables, Reservist Special Constables, Vigilantes, Volunteer Special Constables, and National Police Cadets—who assist NPP staff.

The two most unusual groups of supplementary police, from an American perspective, are the Special Constables and the Vigilantes, who are draftees in the National Service. Every physically fit male in Singapore must serve 2 to 2 1/2 years of National Service immediately after high school. The majority of the members of the National Service are in one of the military branches but some are assigned to the police or the fire service. About 3,000 actively serve with the police every year—40 percent of the full-time officers.<sup>19</sup> National Service police officers receive a special police training course at the National Police Academy, which is the

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same institution that trains regular police personnel. National Service police officers may be: (1) Special Constables, whose legal powers, uniform, and firearms are the same as regular police, or (2) Vigilantes, who have only the power of citizen arrest, are unarmed, wear blue berets and white shirts rather than visored caps and blue shirts, and who did not finish high school.

The third group of supplementary police are the National Service Reservists. After 2 years of active duty, all National Service people return for 2 weeks of active service each year for 13 years. They, too, work along with regular personnel.

The fourth group is the small but growing force of Volunteer Special Constables. By and large, these are business and professional people who, after a short training course at the police academy, work as volunteer police near their homes or businesses. They have full police powers, are armed, and wear standard uniforms but with a different collar badge.

Finally, Singapore has a National Police Cadet Corps in colleges and secondary schools. Financed by the Ministries of Home Affairs and Education, police cadets take short courses in police procedure so they can help maintain order at school functions. As part of their training, the 21,800 police cadets sometimes accompany police officers on duty.<sup>20</sup>

An important consequence of the quasi-police organizations is that many Singaporeans have worked with the police or know someone who has. American cities pride themselves on having ride-along programs; Singapore has a work-along program. Policing in Singapore is a less closed activity than in most places in the world. Uniformed police operations are thoroughly integrated with people who have a fundamentally civilian point of view. It would be interesting to know the effect this has on the public. Do the quasi-police become disenchanted as a result of their association with the regular police or are they assimilated, thereby becoming more sympathetic to police problems?

It is difficult to estimate the number of special police personnel who are available on a regular basis. Police estimate that about 1,440, or 19.4 percent of force strength, may be available on any given day.

Quasi-police activities vary considerably among NPP's. In some NPP's, they perform all required duties, substituting indiscriminately for officers who are sick or on leave. More commonly, they assist exclusively with patrolling, particularly night patrol, when two-person teams are required for alleged safety reasons. Sometimes, I was told, National Service personnel accompany female police officers on house visits and day patrols as a safety measure. All National Service personnel receive the same NPP training as regular personnel.

Singapore also has three formations of auxiliary police. They, too, are virtually indistinguishable in appearance from the regular police. Under government authority, the auxiliary police were created by and are commanded by the Commissioner of Police. They are responsible for security at the airport, the docks, and selected industrial and commercial enterprises. The Singapore police also recently decided to create another auxiliary police formation for the new cross-island light-rail system known as the Mass Rapid Transit (MRT).

## Typical foot patrol activity

Community policing creates a vexing strategic problem: how can the time-consuming, labor intensive, relatively immobile activities of community policing be integrated with the traditional function of responding to emergencies?

One solution involves creating separate commands—one for patrol and one for community policing—but this solution tends to generate rivalry and mutual disdain between what are sometimes called “real cops” and the “grin-and-wave squad.” Patrol officers resent devoting resources to community policing; community police officers denigrate the intelligence and sensitivity of “crime fighting” police officers, and, partly for bureaucratic reasons and partly for human ones, information is not shared between the two functions.

Another solution involves placing community policing, especially fixed posts, under the operational control of patrol. American experience suggests that this solution inhibits the development of community policing because emergency calls cannot be postponed, and community police officers get drawn into emergencies and the random motorized patrolling that accompanies them. A robbery in progress or a traffic accident with injuries cannot be ignored, but making house calls or organizing a neighborhood watch can be postponed. The potentialities of community policing are lost to the exigencies of traditional patrol.

Singapore, like Japan, has found that functional specialization among tiers of patrol personnel solves the strategic problems community policing creates. Singapore has not made community policing a separate command. NPP's report to precinct patrol commanders (known as Deployment Officers) and through them successively to the precinct commander, the Commander Areas, and finally to the Deputy Commissioner for Operations. NPP's do not respond to emergency calls they might hear over their personal radios, except in the very few cases where they are nearby. NPP officers focus exclusively on patrolling and community involvement. All emergency calls for service are handled by a network of patrol cars overlaying NPP jurisdictions. Any NPP patrolling is a by-product of being available for emergency work.



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For this coordinated system to work, calls for services are placed in priority order. Urgent calls go to fast response cars and nonurgent calls to NPP's. Before the system became operational in 1987, an analysis of a one month field test showed that 59 percent of the 240,000 emergency telephone calls made annually were urgent, 34.4 percent nonurgent, and 6.7 percent miscellaneous, often requiring only referral.<sup>21</sup>

The Singapore police have acted on the discovery that patrol personnel assigned to mobile units have substantial amounts of uncommitted time. Moreover, research shows that random patrolling probably does not deter crime or reduce the fear of crime.<sup>22</sup> The Singapore police recognized that most patrol personnel had time available that, if captured, could be used for community policing, including patrolling in more intensive and effective ways. Police planners now estimate that a ratio of one mobile fast response officer for every three and a half NPP's can effectively handle all emergency calls, i.e., almost three-fourths of the personnel previously allocated to traditional patrolling can be used for community policing. In the Singapore scheme, then, community policing and emergency response are integrated within the patrol command by assigning different functions to officers deployed in different ways.<sup>23</sup> Both groups constitute the police visible presence. The critical point to recognize is that this plan makes the community police officer a generalist and the mobile officer a specialist, rather than vice versa.

NPP patrolling is conducted almost entirely on foot, supplemented by bicycles and scooters in areas where population densities are low, such as estates with detached private houses. Patrolling is a time-consuming duty, accounting for 41.5 percent of an NPP's time.<sup>24</sup> NPP officers patrol for no more than 2 hours at a time. During their shift, officers spend 1 to 2 hours on each of the NPP's major duties — house visiting, patrolling, counter services, and community liaison—and they seem to enjoy the variety. But as a result, it is not always possible to put a patrol out. Someone must stay in the NPP at all times to handle walk-in requests. This leaves only three people for patrolling, four if the sergeant participates. Patrolling becomes even more difficult after 7 p.m. when two officers must patrol together. The timing and placing of foot patrols is a decision the duty sergeant makes according to the needs of an area and the personnel available.

Foot patrols provide the traditional visible presence, as officers automatically say, and allow officers to watch for suspicious persons. Singapore officers amble along at the familiar pace—slow enough to allow for measured looks but fast enough not to be offensive. Patrols are especially alert for “snatch thefts” of purses and “lift (or elevator) thefts.” Singapore foot patrols are relaxed, not particularly guarded, and barely noticed by passersby. Patrolling officers are much less assertive than their Japanese counterparts in stopping people to ask their identity and purpose.<sup>25</sup> Like the Japanese, however, young men and ill-kempt vagrants are most likely to draw their attention. Street stops occur more

frequently in the downtown tourist areas, where break-dancers and teenagers gather, than around the HDB's.

Contrary to what foreigners expect, foot patrols are not officious about enforcing minor regulations. Although jaywalking, for example, is prohibited, it is often allowed when the distance between intersections is great. Officers themselves, like residents, stroll across streets to take the shortest distance between places. Sometimes people crossing against a traffic light will be warned to be careful, but the warnings are mostly ignored.

Foot patrols meander through the housing blocks, cutting across car parks, chatting briefly with shopkeepers, and occasionally twisting doorknobs or shaking barred gates to make sure they are secured. They call in occasionally at post offices, banks, and jewelry stores to sign log books that supervisors check periodically. Log books are also kept in waterproof boxes fixed to the front gates of a few private houses located in housing estates.

Jewelry stores are as common in Singapore as fast-food outlets in the United States. Every shopping block has several, as alike as peas in a pod. Raised a step or two above the pavement, the entire front is open even though the store is always air-conditioned. Officers step up into the cool, bright, mirrored interiors with barely repressed sighs of relief. Low glass cases, which display pure gold ornaments of various sorts, line the room in a U-shape. Numerous neatly dressed young women are available to help customers. Air-conditioning also draws foot patrol officers into the large enclosed shopping plazas. They come in one side, circle around the open, multistoried interior court, go up or down an escalator, and exit the other side, all the while breathing deeply and surreptitiously mopping their heads under their uniform caps.

NPP patrol officers are poised and generally self-assured, stopping to talk to residents and shopkeepers easily and without embarrassment. They are not put off, for example, by having a foreign observer along. They generally ask as many questions about the United States and my reactions to Singapore as I ask them about Singapore. They wear good looking dark blue uniforms with short sleeves and no ties. Their visored caps display the silver medallion of the police force on the front. Sikh officers pin the medallion on the front of their dark blue cap. Each officer wears a plastic nameplate on his shirt pocket. Attached to belts are standard Smith & Wesson .38-caliber revolvers, handcuffs in a pouch, a short truncheon, and a personal radio. To appear less forceful, NPP officers initially carried short telescoping metal blackjacks that could be worn inconspicuously on the belt.

Foot patrols have a particularly intimate view of Singapore because so much of daily life occurs outdoors year round, as homes, shops, restaurants, and workplaces are thrown open to the air. As NPP officers walk through the void deck of a

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housing block early in the evening, for example, they may stop to chat with a group of elderly Chinese women clad in loose-fitting printed cotton skirts and slacks who are sitting on folding chairs they have brought down from their apartments. Their husbands are grouped in a similar circle across a lawn in another void deck, in sight but apart. Young men shoot a basketball under lights, while parents with freshly bathed young children dressed in pajamas sit around the side. An elderly man conducts a class in stately, slow-moving Chinese exercises in a playground. Patrolling officers frequently query people with a soft, "OK?" "OK," people answer.

On "vertical patrol," officers walk the external corridors of housing blocks. On these patrols, officers can see people through their barred doorways eating dinner, watching TV, playing mah-jongg, or reading the newspaper. The men are usually dressed in boxer-style underpants; the women in baggy housedresses, ankle-length sarongs, or printed pants and short-sleeved shirts. Officers are careful not to intrude or stop unless asked. The same is true at the ubiquitous hawker centers where Singaporeans go to eat Indian, Malay, and Chinese food. All in all, patrolling officers are much closer to the private lives of people than would be possible in the United States.

Patrolling officers reassure housing block residents by riding the elevators occasionally, especially if a rash of lift thefts has occurred. They also note small handbills stuck to the walls near elevators naming people who have defaulted on their payments to loan sharks. The HDB then removes them. People caught sticking them up are arrested for vandalism.

Complaints about noise are common in the housing blocks, as one might expect in an open-air society, and NPP officers check to make sure that funeral celebrations, which in the case of the Chinese may go on for 3 days, have HDB permits to put up altars and food stalls in the void decks or in open-sided tents on the lawns. Weddings as well as funerals can be noisy affairs, with music, drums, and fireworks. Most residents accept them philosophically, knowing that the seasons of life are inexorable and that their turn will come.

The small, well lighted shops stay open until 9 or 10 p.m. Officers join people who drift in to the speciality stores to view the myriad species of tropical fish in the sparkling tanks. Small groups of men sit admiring one another's pet birds, which hang in cages brought from home and are fixed to a frame provided by the housing authorities. During the summer months, the cloying smell of *durians*, southeast Asia's unique fruit that "smells like hell but tastes like heaven," permeates the void deck shopping areas. A compact, rough-skinned, oval fruit, they spill out of woven palm frond baskets onto the sidewalks. Singaporeans gleefully ask foreigners whether they like them, taking pleasure in their tight expressions of distaste.

Foot patrol officers display an almost uncanny familiarity with their area and its people. I have seen officers return to the NPP or sit in the dark corner of a playground after a 2-hour patrol and record times, places, and events in their notebooks. Their logs may contain 20 or 30 entries, yet they can accurately recall names and apartment numbers. Their notes correspond exactly to those I took along the way. They seem to carry in their heads detailed maps showing the physical and human topography of these densely populated areas.

## NPP's reach out to their population

Not only do NPP officers make contact with the public through foot patrols, they also regularly visit every home and business within the NPP jurisdiction. Each officer is responsible for a particular area, visiting all premises at least once a year and the homes of neighborhood watch and grassroots leaders twice a year.

Visiting homes means for the most part calling at apartments in HDB blocks. NPP officers begin at the top floors and work their way down floor by floor, apartment by apartment. They carry clipboards listing the apartments to be visited and briefcases filled with crime prevention pamphlets, stickers with emergency telephone numbers, and business cards printed with the NPP's address and telephone number. The business card contains space for the officer's name, so residents have a personal contact if needed. Most calls are made late in the day, after people have returned home from work but before 8 p.m., when prime-time television begins. Weekends are a better time to call than weekdays. House visits are generally not made during the 15 days of Chinese New Year because alcohol will be offered, and it is considered rude to refuse. Furthermore, the Chinese gamble on such occasions. Whole families play games of chance as part of the tradition of holidays. Visiting NPP officers would be caught in the invidious position of having to decide whether the gambling was among friends, which is not illegal, or among strangers, which is.

NPP officers knock gently at the doors of apartments so they will not interrupt people napping or taking a shower. They are quite willing to return another time. Doors are usually open but entryways are barred by swinging or folding metal gates fastened on the inside with large padlocks. If the padlock is unfastened, officers remind the residents, especially women and children, that this is dangerous. Children are asked if their parents are at home. Most people who come to the door are casually clad, almost always barefoot. Shoes and sandals are piled outside the doors. Officers talk quietly through the bars, all the while smelling food cooking, hearing the TV, or glimpsing religious objects on the walls, such as a tapestry showing a mosque, a votary light burning

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in front of the picture of Mary, or incense smoking before Chinese gods. The officers usually assure people that nothing is wrong, that this is just a friendly visit—"casual talk-lah"—for the purpose of seeing if the police can be of service. Officers ask if the residents know where the NPP is located and if they know the emergency telephone numbers.

If conversation is easy, officers will ask if there are any problems to report, especially trouble with neighbors. In the crowded HDB blocks, most of the complaints are about noise, especially loud radios or raucous games of mah-jongg late at night. Sometimes about dogs barking. One Chinese woman complained that an Indian family overhead pounded chilies on the floor late at night. Admitting this was only a small annoyance, she was grateful when the officer promised that on his next round he would speak about it to the Indian family. A man complained that excess water ran down the stairwell from a small kumquat tree that a neighbor kept outside her door. The officer mentioned the problem to the neighbor a few minutes later, and she promised to be more careful.

Making house visits is bewildering linguistically, but officers take it in stride. Although everyone is educated in English, Singapore has three other official languages—Tamil, Malay, and Mandarin. Most signs are written in the distinctive scripts of the four languages. Furthermore, Chinese often prefer local dialects, notably Cantonese, Hakka, or Hokkien. NPP officers who are Chinese shift back and forth from English to Mandarin or their own dialect and then to Malay or a bit of Tamil. Officers are commonly trilingual. Language versatility is encouraged by paying monthly bonuses of \$25 for fluency in a language that is not one's native tongue; \$15 for knowledge but not fluency; and \$5 for ability to use another Chinese dialect. Since most Singaporeans are Chinese, Chinese officers have an advantage in making house calls. Malay and Indian officers admit that they sometimes take a Chinese colleague along on house visits. Older people may not know or perversely resist speaking English, so it is not uncommon for visiting NPP officers to ask younger members of the family to translate.

At each stop, officers fill out a personal information card containing the occupants' names, sex, race, telephone numbers, occupations, workplace, work telephone number, and any additional comments. These files are kept in notebooks at the NPP with a copy sent to precinct headquarters. They are used primarily to reach people in case of emergency, to identify people after accidents or fires, and occasionally to assist detectives with inquiries about persons or premises. No attempt has been made to collect and collate this information centrally. Obtaining this sort of information is clearly sensitive, and policy is changing. Although the police prefer that NPP officers get names and telephone numbers from government computer files rather than asking, many officers continue to ask. They do this in part to check on the accuracy of the computer records. Some officers consider willingness to give out names and telephone numbers an indication that trust has been established. One

officer said that if he didn't ask, people would wonder how the police got the telephone number if they were called about something later on. He considered asking to be a matter of politeness. Some officers ask matter-of-factly early in interviews; others ask only at the end when they feel rapport has been built.

Most house visits are fairly perfunctory, taking an average of 4 to 6 minutes.<sup>26</sup> Officers are anxious to get down the list in the allotted time. The police department wants officers to take more time and to get to know people better. It would prefer that house visits occupy 12 percent of constables' and corporals' time, rather than the current 5.5 percent. Such a policy would require greater conversational skill on the part of officers, but it should be manageable in terms of the work load. While a few officers are responsible for as many as 400 premises each year, most have less, some as few as 260. Even if an officer were responsible for 400 households, they could be covered at the rate of about 35 a month, or slightly more than one per day. Currently, officers are easily handling 15 to 20 calls in a 2-hour period. House visiting is not something officers do every day, and time for it appears to be ample.

## Community crime prevention activity is widespread

A concerted effort to develop community crime prevention slightly preceded the establishment of Neighborhood Police Posts. In 1981, a Crime Prevention Department was formed with approximately 40 headquarters staff and precinct teams of six to eight officers. Crime prevention officers organized Neighborhood Watch Groups, advised homes and businesses about security, developed multilanguage pamphlets and leaflets about preventing crime, and distributed monthly "Crime Watch" newsletters featuring stories about crimes and how to prevent them. They also organized 101 Crime Prevention Committees composed of local area business people. In 1987, the Crime Prevention Department launched "TV Crime Watch," a program that reenacted especially poignant crimes the public could help solve if they came forward with crucial pieces of information. Crime prevention teaching modules are a regular part of the curriculum from the fourth grade of primary school through the second grade of secondary school. The police brief teachers on the material and support them with slide shows and videocassettes.

Just as Neighborhood Police Posts had to be integrated with patrols, they had to be integrated with previously established crime prevention programs. The solution found was once again functional specialization. Beginning in 1988, 4 years after the first NPP's were established, the precinct crime prevention teams were disbanded and local crime prevention efforts were transferred to NPP's. NPP officers are now the field staff for crime prevention. Their primary work is organizing Neighborhood Watch Groups and conducting

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residential security surveys. The Crime Prevention Department continues to oversee this work and supports it with printed materials, videos, slide shows, and lectures. For this planning and coordinating role, it has been merged with the Public Affairs Department to become the new Public Relations and Crime Prevention Department.

The hope is that NPP officers with their local knowledge and contacts can more effectively involve people in crime prevention. By 1987, about half of Singapore's population was covered by Neighborhood Watch Groups of four to six adjacent households—much smaller than the fundamental organizing units in the United States. In 1987, approximately 77,000 Neighborhood Watch Groups covered 310,000 households and 1,200,000 people. A police-sponsored survey discovered, however, that membership did not mean significant involvement. Seventy-six percent of the population had not received oral briefings about Neighborhood Watch, 90 percent did not know the name of their group leader, and 97 percent had never worked with neighbors in any crime prevention activity.<sup>27</sup>

Singapore's extensive and now more intensive crime prevention activities are part of the country's tireless effort to improve itself through exhortation and education. Billboards everywhere urge people not to smoke or spit. (One sign says "Don't spit, it's not nice," showing a woman turning away in disgust.) The sides of buses and fronts of buildings carry pictures of "Teamy, the production bee," slogans about having two-children families, the logo reminding people to speak Mandarin, and invocations of "Singapore Excellence." There is always a campaign of some sort going on, calling people's attention to an aspect of life that needs improvement. For example, Courtesy Week featured the smiling face of Singa, the city's lion emblem. Banners proclaimed "Bring a smile today" and the police wore large yellow Singa heads on their shirts. The campaign cited such discourteous behavior as crunching food loudly in cinemas, driving slowly in passing lanes, blocking the entrances to buses, jumping queues at bus stops, holding noisy mah-jongg parties, staring at others in public, and not keeping children and pets quiet. A new campaign in 1987 focused on "counter behavior," defined as rudeness and inattention by people who serve the public in offices and over the telephone.

Community policing in Singapore is more than a police strategy. It is the police contribution to the creation of "the new Singapore man." Community policing is part of civic development. It is a component in the growth of a new moral awareness that Singapore's leaders hope will unite its diverse people. Community policing is linked, then, to morality and through it to patriotism. Preventing crime is what good citizens must do, just as they must work hard, be courteous, and limit the size of their families. Crime prevention is an aspect of national ambition, and the police and the public recognize that the police make a direct contribution.

## NPP's role in criminal investigations

In Singapore, as elsewhere, criminal investigation has been the most difficult function to integrate into community policing. NPP personnel, like patrol car officers, are instructed not to investigate crimes; their function is to preserve the scenes of crimes, hold witnesses, and disperse bystanders until teams of investigators arrive from central or precinct police stations. Among the commands of the police, criminal investigation is unique in that it has not lost strength as the result of the adoption of the community policing strategy.

One argument for limiting the role of NPP officers is that NPP's must present a friendly image; making arrests from criminal investigations and the possible use of force should be left to detectives who are not based in local communities. Whether this has worked or not, it has caused confusion among the police and some ridicule. Regular police officers laughingly refer to NPP officers as "No Powers Police." It reminds one of "Grin and Wave Squads" in the United States or "Hobby Bobbies" in Great Britain! Junior officers as well as middle-rank supervisors frequently asked me whether I thought NPP officers should enforce the law. Although the senior command has no doubt that they must, and has tried to encourage greater NPP activity against criminals, the role of NPP officers still does not include taking an active part in investigations.

The NPP's investigative role was broadened very slightly in 1987. NPP's were directed to handle "routine" as opposed to "crime" cases—that is, cases in which an arrest is unlikely and only a report needs to be made. In addition, the high command is considering having sergeants investigate Magistrate's Complaints. This is somewhat ironic because Magistrate's Complaints are generally civil matters that do not involve criminal violations. However, because Magistrates need investigative help in resolving complaints, the police may become involved.

The distinction between civil and criminal matters in the United States may save the police from being submerged in a tide of petty matters, but it also distances them from disputes that can shake people's sense of security and even lead to problems of order. Community policing in Singapore is exploring this connection, albeit in a tentative way so far. Looked at more generally, community policing may lead inevitably to the police developing their capability for mediation and resolving disputes. This is implicit, for example, in problem-oriented policing, which is attracting so much attention in the United States.<sup>28</sup> If police follow this path, they will have to develop guidelines about the sorts of noncriminal controversies that community policing personnel should handle. Otherwise, they will either be overwhelmed or will anger complainants whose cases they refuse arbitrarily.

NPP officers have, in fact, made some notable criminal arrests, usually by setting up an "ambush" after a string of crimes. They have caught red-handed, for example, a young man breaking into a Catholic school, another stealing gasoline from drums, and a third smashing the headlights of trucks in a car park. NPP inspectors and shift sergeants can authorize their personnel to undertake plainclothes operations, although this is rare, as most crime targeting is done by precinct personnel on the basis of a collator's analysis. One can argue that NPP's have only a small crime apprehending role. In 1986, Singapore had only 49,932 serious offenses.<sup>29</sup> This is a ratio of approximately 2,000 offenses per 100,000 people. In the United States, the ratio for Index crimes in 1985 was 5,206 per 100,000. Weeks can go by without a "preventable" crime occurring in an NPP area—robbery, housebreaking, car theft, snatch theft, or "outraging modesty." ("Outraging modesty" means touching women's bodies and is distinct from rape or indecent exposure.) From a crime point of view, life in an NPP is fairly uneventful.

## NPP's relationship with local politics

In the United States, community policing efforts are bedeviled with finding community organizations to interact with. This had led to concern about whether community policing can occur in places characterized by social anomie, high turnover of population, social disorganization, and lack of identity with place or people. The problem has also generated tedious discussions about the difference between communities and neighborhoods and whether American cities have communities. The presumption is that without communities, community policing cannot work. Such arguments are not helpful because the issue will be resolved by experience. At the same time, it is clear that respected organizations that are concerned about the quality of life can help community policing enormously.

In this respect, Singapore is blessed. It had a well-known, carefully delineated, and active network of grassroots organizations before the advent of community policing. The role of community policing, therefore, is to develop a crime prevention orientation within this infrastructure.

Neighborhood Police Posts are located in parliamentary constituencies: one NPP in most constituencies, two NPP's in several. Each of the 79 constituencies have tiers of representative organizations (developed in the 1970's) that reach from housing blocks all the way to the Prime Minister's office. At the bottom of the structure are the Residents' Committees (RC's), representing zones of 6 to 10 blocks of private or HDB housing. The city has about 360 RC's. Representatives from RC's make up the bulk of the membership of the 79 Citizens Consultative Committees (CCC's), one for each parliamentary constituency. They in turn coordinate with the Ministry of Community Development and through the ministry to the Cabinet and the Prime

Minister. This three-tier system ensures, at least in theory, that matters of concern to neighborhoods in Singapore can be brought to the attention of top political leadership.

Neighborhood Police Posts tie directly into this structure. Each NPP inspector is responsible for developing cooperative relations with the Citizens Consultative Committee. He attends their monthly meetings. The four team leaders, who are usually sergeants, do the same with the subordinate Residents' Committees. Photographs of NPP personnel are stuck on wall charts showing the grassroots organizations to which they are attached, alongside photographs of each organizations' leaders. Neighborhood Watch, newly developed in the 1980's, dovetails neatly with the structure because the Neighborhood Watch Groups of four to six adjacent households are coordinated through housing zone committees. The groups and the RC's work together to sponsor campaigns and special events. The Neighborhood Watch Groups are the responsibility of the NPP constables and corporals. Crime prevention at the grassroots thus becomes the lowest rung of a preexisting structure of community consultation.

In addition, each constituency has a Community Center Management Committee and Crime Prevention Committees composed of businesses. Liaison with these is the responsibility of the NPP inspector.

So far, the close ties with community organizations do not appear to have bred corruption or resulted in unequal enforcement of the law. Such fears have been voiced in the United States. In Singapore, however, close contact between police and political groups has not diminished professionalism. Rather, it seems to have reinforced police efforts to establish high standards of behavior. According to older officers, discipline was lax under the British, especially with respect to the use of force. "Giving a slap" to a suspect was common. So too was bribery for overlooking petty offenses. This reputation lingers. When a young woman walking with her husband and young son saw a police patrol, she turned to them and said, "Pah, pah," indicating that one could expect to be beaten by the police. Another woman told her 4-year-old son to behave or "the police will catch you." I was told such threats are no longer commonplace. The police were committed to improving individual behavior of this sort before community policing was implemented. They recognized that the gap between police and public could not be closed unless police behavior improved. Community policing, then, did not correct deficient performance. It depended on it, and it validated the fact that policing could afford to be put on view.

Following the lead of the Singapore government, the police are fierce about preventing even the suspicion of corruption. Police officers pay full price for their food and durable goods. They may accept nonalcoholic refreshment only during house visits.

Through the formal structure of grassroots organizations, the populace now watch police at all rank levels. Furthermore, their behavior may be constrained by the constant presence of civilians who work with them, Special Constables, Vigilantes, Reservists, and Cadets. Thus, both formally and informally, the Singapore police are on view to civilians.

Because the placement of NPP's is based on electoral units and the local Member of Parliament is chairman of the Citizens Consultative Committee, politicians actively encourage cooperation with the police. Because members of Residents' Committees are also appointed by the Citizens Consultative Committee on the advice of the Prime Minister's secretariat, one would also expect supporters of local Members of Parliament to be heavily involved in this infrastructure. The Singapore police appear to have made a virtue of political necessity and gone out of their way to get politicians involved in useful ways. MP's are consulted, for example, on the location of NPP's; they are usually the guests of honor at NPP inaugurations. When an MP goes on a walking tour of the constituency, the NPP inspector goes with him. Politicians were briefed thoroughly on the concept of community policing and the plans for it before the strategy was launched in 1983.

In effect, cooperation between police and politicians has been institutionalized through the CCC's and RC's. The infrastructure, which both depend on, provides a mechanism for working together. Politicians preside, for example, over the transmittal of public complaints about services of all sorts to the government. The police, on their side, find they have an acceptable way to bring local problems of safety or crime to political as well as bureaucratic attention. Contrary to what has happened in some places in the United States and Great Britain, the Singapore police have not had to develop their own political organizations to improve public order and safety.<sup>30</sup> The Singapore police do not compete with politicians—they work with them.

Nor have politicians tried to shape NPP activities to political ends, although they certainly are willing to take credit for police initiative. This is a small price for the police to pay and is inevitable in democratic politics. Police regard it as a way of getting things done rather than a hindrance. MP's sometimes do raise awkward questions about police performance. For example, several objected to the policy of having one inspector supervise two NPP's. This meant sharing an inspector with another MP. Senior police officers had to persuade them that sharing was more cost-effective. Similarly, some MP's complained that inspectors were reassigned before the community, and the MP could get to know them well.

The bottom line is that community policing has fit into and uses a preexisting organizational infrastructure. It has not had to invent its community or convince government to be more responsive to grassroots concerns. The community policing agenda does not threaten either government or politicians. Community policing is viewed as another device

for articulating community concerns. Although community policing mobilizes citizens to be concerned about law-and-order issues, those concerns seem to reflect genuine perceptions of the population rather than of a political elite. So far, therefore, community policing has enhanced democratic policing.

## Accountability for NPP's actions

Officers in charge of NPP's—shift sergeants as well as inspectors—have full authority to direct daily operations to carry out their functions: namely, preventing crime, handling requests, patrolling, visiting homes and businesses, organizing Neighborhood Watch, and maintaining cordial relations with community groups. NPP inspectors are judged, for example, by trends of the five preventable offenses—robbery, burglary, car theft, snatch theft, and outraging modesty. Charts of the crime rates are kept on the walls of NPP's. Precinct supervisors also stress the “keenness” of NPP inspectors.

Because NPP's are part of the patrol branch of the police force, they report to the patrol commander at precinct police stations even when they carry out crime prevention tasks or engage in community liaison.<sup>31</sup> Although NPP's are supposed to display initiative and adapt operations to local conditions, it is not clear how creative they have been. The examples that are repeatedly brought up are the plainclothes officers' “ambushes” and cooperative contact with other government departments, usually the Housing and Development Board, about improving safety or amenities. Because NPP's operate with a small number of officers, it would be hard to accomplish a great deal more and still continue patrolling, house visits, counter services, and so forth.

It is also unclear whether Singapore could benefit from a problem oriented approach, which Herman Goldstein has advocated so persuasively in the United States.<sup>32</sup> Crime rates are low in Singapore and urban disorder minimal. The government's activist welfare orientation is already linked to the public through a representative infrastructure. Senior officers doubted that Singapore had much need for problem-oriented policing because almost every community problem quickly comes to someone's attention. This may sound complacent, but one should not forget that Singapore is the size of a city, prosperous, and bent on cradle-to-grave social management. Problems have fewer cracks to fall through than in the United States.

Neighborhood problems may appear in NPP records as Ground Reports. A Ground Report must be completed for every request made by citizens who identify themselves. NPP's are not required to take action or forward a report for anonymous complaints, but they frequently do. More established NPP's—those established in 1983—receive about 325 per month, or just over one per day for each NPP.<sup>33</sup>

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Thus, the NPP receives one request for action a day for approximately 28,000 people. Most of the Ground Reports concern gambling, use or sale of drugs, suspicious persons, peeping toms and indecent exposure, pedestrian safety, illegal parking, and the need for better lighting in housing estates.<sup>34</sup>

Most problems, such as complaints about barking dogs, noisy parties, and uncontrolled adolescent children can be handled immediately. Showing up and saying a quiet word is all that is needed. These matters usually do not represent ongoing problems that require coordinated, long-term solutions. Serious criminal matters like gambling or drugs are referred to precinct squads. Physical problems like lighting or dangerous intersections are referred to appropriate agencies. The course of action taken is recorded at the bottom of the Ground Report. Complainants are informed of police action only if criminal enforcement results. Most of the time the public has no idea if the police have done anything. As a result, the Singapore police may not be getting full credit for their efforts and might want to reconsider their notification policy.

Apart from working with the HDB's to improve lighting or with traffic engineers to relieve congestion, the only example of coordinated problem-solving I encountered concerned complaints about teenagers playing musical instruments and tape decks too loudly on a void deck. An NPP worked with the HDB and the Public Works Department to have a music room built.

Most requests for police assistance, whether criminal or "routine," were made personally at NPP's (55.7 percent). Another 20.2 percent came through patrolling, 13.4 percent from house visits, 6.3 percent from community meetings, and 4.4 percent by telephone.<sup>35</sup> These figures show that the physical availability of NPP's is important in drawing out nonemergency requests, some of which do involve criminal matters. They also show the importance of what are called counter services. NPP's become familiar to the public in part because they are willing to help with mundane bureaucratic problems, such as providing government forms, advising about regulations, recording changes of address, issuing death certificates, acting as a lost-and-found, providing information about police matters, and publicizing Residents' Committee activities.<sup>37</sup> The volume of such work, which must be done sympathetically, is not burdensome. NPP's average 3.5 hours per day on general inquiries and another 3.5 hours on an average 12.3 requests per day that generate paperwork. Counter work engages one officer-shift per day, indicating that the counter service officer for each shift is not fully occupied.

Neighborhood Police Posts accomplish their work within a managerial environment that stresses high levels of individual performance, especially in contacts with the public. The next section describes the process of implementing community policing.

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## Chapter 3

# Implementing community policing

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From 1981 to 1987, the Singapore police changed from a reactive, incident-centered policing strategy to community policing. In this short period of time, they changed the paradigm of policing—the way of thinking about and implementing policing.<sup>36</sup> What caused the Singapore police to do it? How was it managed? Does the process contain lessons that American police managers might learn? The following section discusses the answers to these questions.

### Initial considerations

Oddly enough, the Singapore police had little reason to change their methods in the early 1980's. Crime was rising somewhat, but the crime was not at a crisis level, and certainly the public did not perceive there to be a crisis. Nor were they especially fearful. Between 1974 and 1980, total serious crime rose about 50 percent; the incidence of crimes against persons was steady; violent crime against property sharply declined; and housebreaking, theft, and fraud increased.<sup>37</sup> In 1984, Singapore's rate for all offenses known to the police was 1,635 per 100,000,<sup>38</sup> which is low by world standards and lower than rates in rural parts of the United States. Compared with Singapore's crime rate of 1,635, Tokyo's was 2,139; Sydney's, 7,714; San Francisco's, 8,686; New York's, 8,773; and Los Angeles', 9,735.<sup>39</sup> Singapore had one-fifth as many murders per capita as the United States, one-twelfth the forcible rapes, one-eighth the robberies, one-sixteenth the thefts, and one-thirtieth the car thefts.

With respect to calls for police service, the trend line was flat; its fast response cars were not overworked. Singapore was also not afflicted with collective violence of any kind. Ethnic tensions that had led to riots a decade earlier had lessened. Singaporeans seemed to have found a common national identity.

In short, police officials in the early 1980's had no reason to be dissatisfied or anxious to undertake radical reform.<sup>40</sup> Several factors compelled Singapore toward a fundamental change. First, the wrenching relocation of most of Singapore's population in the preceding 10 to 15 years caused officials to question whether traditional patrolling, deterrence, and crime solving would continue to work. The dense highrise public housing blocks separated the population from contact with a police force that was deployed in a traditional way. Citizens as well as politicians seemed to sense this and began to request more police substations to be located within housing estates. Second, the government of Singapore began a self-conscious effort to remake its ethnically diverse society into a cohesive, educated, and progressive nation. To accomplish its goal, Singapore needed mechanisms for fashioning a new morality and civic

consciousness. The police could assist the effort by transforming their customary relations with the public and penetrating society more thoroughly, thereby developing contacts with a cross section of respectable citizens as opposed to focusing on troubled or criminal elements. Third, although Singapore wanted to be modern and prosperous, the growing disenchantment with the Western lifestyle—especially its association with crime, drugs, insecurity, incivility, and hedonism—prompted Prime Minister Lee Kuan Yew to say it was time to “learn from the East.” Fourth, senior police officers knew that morale among the rank-and-file, most of whom were involved in patrol activities, was not high. To attract more highly educated young people to the police force, the lower ranks would have to be given more responsibility and their work would have to become more satisfying. Fifth, a new cadre of university educated, often professionally trained managers was being promoted to police leadership positions. Internationally minded and knowledgeable about research on management and policing, this new generation was not content to be caretakers of other people's police strategy. Community policing was the paradigm of the new managers, responsible to national needs but uniquely their own.

These elements, rather than more obvious police failings, caused Singapore to reconsider its standard police operations when the Deputy Prime Minister appointed a Special Study Team to examine the operations of the police. Although not members of the team, police played an important role in guiding its deliberations and supplying essential information. Of particular importance, the police, prompted and assisted by officers who had completed courses in Japan, began to collect information about the Japanese police system. Although senior officers were familiar with British and to a lesser extent American police practices, they were inclined, following the Prime Minister's suggestion, to look more closely at a uniquely Asian system that seemed to fit both a developing economy and a political democracy. Movement in this direction was set when the Minister for Home Affairs visited Japan in the autumn of 1981, and a police study group followed shortly after.

By early 1982, the police had drawn up a draft report urging development of community policing along the lines of the Japanese system. This report and its explicit plan was endorsed by the Government and adopted by the force in the spring of 1982.

Two committees were established to organize the transition. One was called the Neighborhood Police Post Steering Committee. It was chaired by the Police Commissioner, Goh Yong Hong, and consisted of the most senior commanders and a representative from the Home Ministry, to which the



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police in Singapore, as in London, report. The other committee was called the Neighborhood Police Post Implementation Committee. It was the working group for the first Steering Committee and was chaired by the head of the Strategic Planning Department of the Singapore police. The composition of these committees showed that the Police Commissioner was personally and attentively leading a change that was backed by a solid, well-trained, professional staff.

The committees decided that the first step in changing traditional practices would be to develop a pilot project in community policing and to evaluate it thoroughly.

## Preparation for launching the project

The pilot project was scheduled to be launched in the summer of 1983, giving the police about a year to prepare. The project involved establishing eight Neighborhood Police Posts (NPP's) in one police precinct. The Japanese Government, through its International Cooperation Agency, sent a team to train the middle- and lower-rank officers who would staff the NPP's. At the same time, all officers in the Singapore police were required to take a 3-day National Police Academy course in community policing and NPP's. The course stressed the need for police to change their attitudes toward relations with the public. Community policing meant more than a change in deployment; it meant a new kind of police officer. In early 1983, the Commissioner and his team briefed members of parliament on the NPP system. Extensive literature on community policing was distributed to the public. Particular attention was given to the grassroots leaders in the CCC/RC network. The Home Minister, Police Commissioner, and the implementation team met with the grassroots leaders to make sure they understood the pilot project and recognized that the police considered it to be very important.

In March 1983, just before launch of the pilot project, senior officers assembled for a 2-day seminar on community policing. Discussion was full and searching; officers were encouraged to raise questions and voice doubts. By the end of 1983, the launch year, a majority of the force had taken the special inservice course in community policing provided by the Police Academy.

## Evaluation of the project

The pilot project with eight NPP's was launched with appropriate fanfare in June 1983. Special attention was given to preparing the public for sensitive house visits. Members of parliament and NPP inspectors made walking tours to explain NPP's and their activities. The NPP Steering Committee, chaired by the Commissioner, met monthly to monitor the implementation process. The Implementation

Committee evaluated the pilot project in two ways: first, an examination of the performance and impact of the NPP's using such traditional measures as crime rates and police activity, and second, a before-and-after survey of public opinion. The survey was conducted by two social scientists from the National University of Singapore, not by the police. Commitment to a rigorous evaluation had been made the previous year when initial plans for implementing the NPP's were drawn up.

Results from the pilot project were collected and presented to the Annual Workplan Seminar in August 1984. This seminar for senior officers became a management tradition during the 1980's. By August 1984, of course, the high command knew that most of the evaluation measures were favorable and that they would be able to recommend expansion. In addition to their own inhouse evaluation and public opinion survey, the police had a favorable report from the Japanese, who had sent observers to study the pilot project. The purpose of the Workplan Seminar was to build support throughout the force for expansion of NPPs.

## Expanding NPP's

Shortly after the Workplan Seminar occurred, the cabinet of the Singapore Government decided to expand the NPP community policing approach islandwide. Originally, the expansion was scheduled to be completed by 1991. The Japanese, however, recommended 1989 so that momentum would not be lost, and this suggestion was accepted.

The management of community policing changed slightly when it became the operational plan for the entire department. Responsibility for implementing the program was transferred from the ad hoc NPP Implementation Committee to the Strategic Planning Department, a unit under the Planning Command. The high-level NPP Steering Committee continued to meet, but less frequently. As control over community policing was transferred to the regular police structure, continuity was assured not only because Commissioner Goh remained in charge overall but because the chairperson of the NPP Implementation Committee became, first, head of the Planning Command with continuing responsibility for supervision and evaluation, and, then, Senior Commander for Field Operations.

Great care was taken in expanding the number of NPP's, following experience gained in the pilot project. Extensive consultations were held with local members of parliament and grassroots organizations and their leaders. Advice about the location of NPP's was solicited. The NPP's purpose was explained again and again. Evening meetings were held with Residents' Committees in every new NPP area. The responsibility for successfully establishing the new NPP's was given to precinct commanders, who took the lead in all preparatory work.

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In each new NPP area, relations with the public were carefully cultivated before normal work routines were established. NPP officers delivered circulars explaining the functions of an NPP to all residences and businesses. Liaison was established with CCC's and RC's. Grassroots leaders and NPP officials became better acquainted. The formal opening of an NPP took place 1 or 2 months after it had been in operation. Even then, house visits, apart from delivering leaflets, were approached cautiously, often not taking place until several months later. In other words, NPP's were established carefully. Each one had to build its own rapport with the local community.

In 1986, the community police program received a shock. Planners had counted on a steady increase of personnel to ease the transition. The Government decided, however, to reduce all Government employment by 10 percent because of a steadily declining birth rate. The decision increased the internal costs of the new strategy. NPP's could not be supported by new personnel; officers from existing units would have to be transferred to the NPP's. Faced with a new political situation, the high command took a shrewd step. It decided to hire a prestigious business consulting firm—Booz Allen & Hamilton—to examine the efficiency of its operations and recommend optimal staffing patterns. This was done with government approval and paid with Treasury funds.

Booz Allen & Hamilton began work in 1986. A Special Duties Team, created within the police force, worked with the firm and provided inhouse information. Booz Allen was authorized to examine efficiency in every unit and advise how to develop NPP's without jeopardizing other essential police activities. They could not, however, recommend that NPP's be abolished on cost-effective grounds. Their solution, as we have seen, was to reduce personnel slightly in each NPP and to reassign to NPP's personnel who were assigned to mobile units, precinct reserves, and administrative offices throughout the force.

The efficiency study won the police a concession from the Government not to cut the force by 10 percent. But the police force would not be allowed to increase, either. They would be required to expand community policing islandwide with existing personnel. What the Government had done, unwittingly, was to force the police to face a real test of the new program: would commanders and officers accept it if it impinged on business as usual in other units? The Government's decision not to reduce police personnel must have been affected by its prior commitment to the new community policing program. Since other departments also had new programs, the decision showed that community policing was considered important. Having a management consulting firm conduct an efficiency study may have been not only a bold move but a very shrewd one. It demonstrated the police force's commitment to rational and efficient management. Few police forces, in my experience, would be willing to allow outsiders to open a potential Pandora's box in this way.

Recommendations for internal reorganization and more efficient use of personnel were made and largely adopted by mid-1987. Implementation of Booz Allen's recommendations was supervised by a Steering Committee composed of the Permanent Secretary to the Home Ministry, Police Commissioner Goh, and other senior officers. To ensure continuity between management planning and operational implementation, the chairman of the liaison group with Booz Allen became the head of Strategic Planning, which had overall responsibility for implementing the recommendations. At the same time, the former head of Strategic Planning, who had been responsible for supervising NPP expansion, became senior field commander for operations. Throughout the implementation of community policing, promotions and assignments were used to ensure that plans coincided with practice.

By summer 1987—3 years after the pilot project and 2 years before the completion date for NPP expansion—acceptance of community policing seemed to be widespread throughout the force. Older officers who had misgivings were retiring; everyone had taken courses in community policing and participated in seminars about the working of NPP's; all recruits since 1983 had studied community policing as part of basic training; and precinct personnel were either establishing NPP's or working with them. Young officers accepted assignment to NPP's as routine; sergeants saw such assignment as essential for promotion. Although pockets of the old deployment strategy remained, their days were numbered. The fact that community policing had not been abandoned when it began to hurt other operational units showed unmistakably that community policing was the wave of the future.

The advent and implementation of community policing in Singapore was done under the leadership of Commissioner Goh Yong Hong. When he was appointed Commissioner in 1979, he was 39 years old. One of the first officer-candidates selected in the early 1960's for high educational attainments, he has a law degree. While community policing is not the brainchild of one person, it is fair to say that it resulted from the imagination and shrewd management of like-minded people that Goh selected and used effectively. Decisionmaking in the Singapore police department seems highly consensual. According to one close observer, Singapore police managers are not hard-charging authoritarian types. They work together to build consensus. Although initiative for community policing undoubtedly arose from a few, the process of developing it involved many. For example, even before the pilot project began, all senior managers were involved, officers in the middle ranks were consulted, and inservice training was given to all personnel. The process involved the senior leadership group working systematically to persuade others of the new program's soundness. Community policing did not come to Singapore by command—it came by persuasion, experimentation, and evaluation. It also came because the leaders of the police force had the intelligence, confidence, and foresight to realize that management of significant change does not just happen; it requires explicit planning and persistent, time-consuming attention.

# Chapter 4

## Does community policing work?

Evaluation has accompanied all stages of Singapore's development of community policing. The pilot project of 1983-84 was evaluated in terms of police activity, impact on crime, and public opinion. Since then the police have continued to monitor trends between NPP and non-NPP areas. Furthermore, the Crime Prevention Department recently completed an extensive study of Neighborhood Watch. This section discusses each of the evaluation efforts.

### Effects on crime

NPP's appear to have reduced preventable crime. As Table 1 shows, the incidence of three of the five offenses the Singapore police consider preventable—robbery, housebreaking, and snatch theft—has fallen in NPP areas relative to areas without them and to the country as a whole. Car thefts, however, rose substantially in NPP precincts, whereas outraging modesty increased about the same amount.

**Table 1**  
Comparison of crime in NPP and non-NPP areas, 1985-1986 (percentage of change)

Offenses	Percent of precincts with NPP's	Percent of precincts without NPP's	Percent of all Singapore
Robbery	-1.3%	6.2%	2.9%
Housebreaking	-18.3	-15.6	-17.1
Motor vehicle theft	17.9	-14.2	-15.8
Snatch theft	-21.3	-17.4	-19.2
Outraging modesty	30.0	26.7	29.2

Source: Singapore Police, 1987.

In the pilot study involving eight NPP's, crime of all sorts rose during the experimental year but at a lower rate than Singapore generally (5.5 percent versus 7 percent). For preventable crime, the effect was slightly more substantial: a rise of 9.2 percent in the pilot area versus 12.5 percent in adjacent non-NPP areas and 9.9 percent in Singapore as a whole.<sup>41</sup> Comparing NPP areas with adjacent non-NPP areas, Table 2 shows that the incidence of snatch theft and automobile theft increased the most, followed by housebreaking and robbery. Simple theft and bicycle theft actually rose sharply in the NPP areas compared with adjacent non-NPP areas, while outraging modesty remained relatively stable in both.

**Table 2**  
Percentage of change in the incidence of crime during the pilot experiment

Offenses	NPP area	Adjacent non-NPP area	Singapore
Simple theft	38.2%	14.6%	12.7%
Bicycle theft	2.4	-35.6	-29.4
Housebreaking	14.6	20.6	19.0
Robbery	6.1	2.1	9.2
Theft of motor vehicle	17.9	41.1	26.2
Snatch theft	-25.7	39.1	11.5
Outraging modesty	0	3.7	2.9

Source: Singapore Police, "Evaluation Report on NPP's," 1984.

These data show that NPP's had a desired, although small, effect on crime. The presence of NPP's seemed to encourage people to report minor thefts. With respect to more serious offenses, the magnitude of the deterrent effect of NPP's seemed to depend on whether an offense was preventable through foot patrolling. Car thefts registered the sharpest relative decline; housebreaking and outraging modesty, the smallest.

It is important to bear in mind that the absolute numbers of crimes involved are small as Table 3 shows. A change of only a few incidents of bicycle theft or outraging modesty, for example, could change dramatically the percentage comparisons between control and test areas.

**Table 3**  
Number of preventable crimes in NPP areas in the quarter prior to their establishment in 1983

Offenses	Number
Outraging modesty	13
Housebreaking	56
Robbery	38
Snatch theft	40
Motor vehicle theft	100
Theft from motor vehicle	53
Bicycle theft	41
Simple theft	54
Total	395

Source: Singapore Police, Analysis for B Division, 1987.

NPP's appear also to have had a favorable effect on criminal apprehensions and prosecutions. During the experimental period of 1983-84, the arrest rate for "seizable offenses," which are similar to felonies in the United States, rose from 17.5 percent to 25.1 percent. The arrest rate for all crimes in the experimental area rose from 15.5 percent to 24.6 percent. Evidently, NPP's contributed slightly more to arrests involving less serious offenses. As the original eight NPP's matured, their effect on arrests grew; by 1986, the arrest rate for preventable offenses was 69.2 percent above what it was the year before NPP's were established. During the pilot year, NPP officers made 243 arrests, which was 21.7 percent of all patrol force arrests in the same area.

The percent of offenses that lead to a criminal prosecution rose 4 percent during the pilot project and was 4 percent higher than Singapore's average for the same time period. Prosecution increased most for housebreaking (12 percent higher than before the pilot project and 13 percent higher than all of Singapore) and snatch theft (17 percent higher than before the pilot and 14 percent higher than all of Singapore). Smaller increases were recorded for robbery and outraging modesty. The prosecution of motor vehicle theft, however, declined.

Are reported crime figures in Singapore trustworthy, especially because NPP's are evaluated closely with respect to the incidence of "preventable crimes?" I believe crime reporting is at least as reliable, and probably more so, than in the United States. NPP personnel would find it difficult to manipulate crime statistics in their own interest. First, detectives categorize and record offenses, not patrol personnel. Second, senior officers at precinct headquarters collectively monitor the recording of crime. First thing every morning, the commanding officer, deployment officer, senior investigating officer, and administrative officer meet to review the records pertaining to all offenses committed during the previous 24 hours. They discuss each case with investigating officers, clarifying what occurred, and approve the course of investigation. Offenses are classified at that time. Although a conspiracy to minimize crime within NPP's might take place, it would involve command personnel acting in concert in all precincts.

NPP's appear to improve substantially the willingness of the public to report matters to the police. Reports from the public have increased from 12 percent to 56 percent in all three divisions where NPP's have been established.<sup>42</sup> During the pilot project, reporting rose 43 percent in the NPP areas compared to 13.8 percent for Singapore as a whole. Before NPP's were established, 6,415 reports had been made, 9,442 in the year after. Telephone reports rose sharply, up 66.8 percent in the pilot area. Traffic accident reports increased 35.8 percent as opposed to a decrease of 0.1 percent in Singapore as a whole during the same period.

The effect NPP's have on reports from the public does not appear to diminish once the initial burst of activity is over.

In the pilot area, reports continued to rise throughout the ensuing 3 years, although the yearly increases were not as great. By the third year, 1986, reports numbered 10,635, up only 1 percent from the pilot year. Ground reports, however, which generally involve information about situations that do not require immediate action, almost doubled between the first year and the third year. It is also worth noting that between a quarter and a third of all reports now made to the police in precincts with NPP's come through NPP's.<sup>43</sup> Booz Allen & Hamilton's study concluded that NPP's took about 18 months to mature. After that, substantial improvements in their effect on crime or on reports to the police were negligible.

The Singapore police keep detailed figures about NPP activities—house visits, Neighborhood Watch Groups, counter services, referrals, lost-and-found, engraving of property, and requests for security surveys. They show initial high activity levels, then a leveling off or a sharp decline. Formation of Neighborhood Watch Groups decline, referrals remain about the same, requests for security services rise, and requests for directions decline. Such figures are useful for projecting the future work of NPP's but they do not reflect the impact NPP's are having on communities. They are a measure of output (what police do) rather than outcomes (what police accomplish).<sup>44</sup> Furthermore, such figures are artificial in the sense that the commanders' reemphasis on them will usually produce more output. For these reasons, I have not included a discussion of them.

## Effects on public opinion

During the pilot project, two social scientists—Jon and Stella Quah—from the National University of Singapore evaluated the effect NPP's have on public perceptions of safety and police performance. They interviewed 383 people in the pilot project area before and after NPP's were established.<sup>45</sup>

The evaluation found that the creation of NPP's did not reassure the public with respect to their personal safety.<sup>46</sup> There was no statistically significant change in the public's sense of security in the neighborhood or their sense of personal efficacy in preventing crime or protecting themselves.<sup>47</sup> The public's sense of security at home changed equivocally: some thought they were safer at home than before NPP's, others thought they were less safe.<sup>48</sup> More disturbing, the NPP's actually raised fears with respect to the amount of robbery and theft in the neighborhood during the previous year.<sup>49</sup> Only the public's perception of vandalism declined.<sup>50</sup>

Victimizations fell marginally with respect to 17 forms of crime.<sup>51</sup> Because the crime rate in Singapore is so low, it would have been difficult to find substantial changes in the incidence of victimization.<sup>52</sup>

The public's view of the quality of police performance was very unfavorable before the experiment in community policing. The Quahs compared the results of their survey with a similar 1975 London study. As Table 4 shows, the London Bobby was clearly more highly regarded than the Singapore police officer, although the opinions in London might have changed considerably by 1983.

**Table 4**  
Comparison of regard for the police: samples of London and Singapore populations

The police are:	London	Singapore	
	Percentage of adults who responded "very" or "extremely"	Percentage of adults who responded "very" or "extremely"	Percentage of adults who responded "very" or "extremely"
	1975 (N=1200)	1983 (N=543)	1984 (N=382)
Friendly	50	23.9	36.3
Frightening	6	1.3	1.8
Well trained	85	38.1	43.7
Proud	-	5.2	2.1
Efficient	66	35.5	45.4
Distant	12	10.7	7.0
Courteous	65	33.0	46.5
Dishonest	3	3.9	2.9
Intelligent	55	20.4	27.4
Secretive	50	21.7	17.8

Source: Stella R. Quah and Jon S. T. Quah, *Friends in Blue* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1987), 15.

Establishing NPP's raised the public's regard for the police. The basis for this conclusion is not Table 4, which is based on samples that are not comparable between 1983 and 1984. The 1983 sample was random; the 1984 sample consisted of those people from 1983 who could be recontacted. Those who dropped out may have had very different opinions than those who remained. But other data in the study allow one to determine that public opinion did become more favorable in a statistically significant way with respect to perceptions of friendliness, fearfulness, being well trained, pride, efficiency, courtesy, honesty, intelligence, and secretiveness.<sup>53</sup> The public's trust in the police and their respect for the police in a general way also improved.<sup>54</sup> Contacts NPP officers made with the public were especially well regarded. People grew to appreciate the importance of house visits, became more satisfied with how they were conducted, and were more inclined to approve the police building rapport in this way.<sup>55</sup>

Personal contact with the police doubled during the pilot project year: 46 people had talked to a police officer the year

before the experiment; 92 did so during the pilot project.<sup>56</sup> During the pilot year, 24 percent of the population had contact with the police; only 12 percent had contact before NPP's were established. By 1984, a much larger proportion of the population knew about NPP's—73 percent versus 39 percent.<sup>57</sup> People also reported knowing more about how the police worked generally.<sup>58</sup> No changes were discovered, however, in knowledge of the location of the nearest precinct police station or how it functioned.<sup>59</sup>

In summary, then, the eight NPP's in the pilot project did not make the Singapore public feel more secure. On the contrary, they raised fears about theft and robbery. The public did develop greater knowledge of NPP's, and they appreciated the personal contact with police officers during house visits. Their regard for the police rose generally. The public's respect and trust increased along with perceptions about police courtesy and honesty. It is clear, however, that the Singapore police still have a long way to go toward improving the public's perception of them.

These equivocal findings about the impact of NPP's on public opinion should be regarded as preliminary, since they are based on an evaluation of a 1-year pilot project. Although the findings are disappointing, they are not surprising. In the United States, too, public opinion of crime prevention and police-community ventures have sometimes been negligible or perverse.<sup>60</sup>

## Doubts about Neighborhood Watch

In 1985, after Neighborhood Watch had been in place for 4 years, the Singapore police began to question whether it had a significant impact on the behavior of the formal members of Neighborhood Watch Groups (NWG). Hence, they evaluated the levels of involvement with NWG's and investigated ways to increase activity.

The evaluation compared the effect that intensified police involvement had in Neighborhood Watch in eight precincts, two Residents' Committees housing zones per precinct. The two housing zones in each of the eight precincts were matched according to crime rates, population, socioeconomic characteristics, and participation in Neighborhood Watch. Police increased their involvement with NWG's in one zone in each precinct and made no change in the other; all other aspects of policing remained the same. In effect, eight test housing zones were matched with eight control housing zones. At the end of the first year of intensified police efforts (March 1986), an interim survey was made to assess the impact. Another survey was conducted the following year (March 1987). Approximately 600 people were interviewed in each survey, 300 respectively in the test and control zones (roughly 37 people in each of the 16 zones).

The police intensified their efforts by (1) forming new Neighborhood Watch Groups, (2) distributing newsletters

about Neighborhood Watch, (3) conducting crime risk surveys, (4) exhibiting and selling security devices, (5) offering engraving services, (6) installing NWG stickers and community signs, (7) identifying NWG block leaders to connect NWG's with the police and Residents' Councils, (8) conducting simple crime prevention drills such as blowing whistles, and (9) visiting houses twice to discuss Neighborhood Watch. It is hard to imagine what else the police might have done to promote the Neighborhood Watch program.

The results of the intensification were slight, both in terms of crime rates and public attitudes and involvement. As Table 5 shows, preventable offenses declined in both control and test areas, although slightly more in test areas. Only robbery rose in the test areas. Improvement was greatest with respect to snatch theft and outraging modesty. Once again, it is important to remember that the volume of crime was low, thus, a change of only a few incidents affects the situation dramatically. Evaluating the effects of Neighborhood Watch in Singapore involves studying even fewer events than is the case in the United States.

Table 5  
Neighborhood Watch intensification results

	Control area			Test area		
	Before	After	Percent change	Before	After	Percent change
Offenses						
Robbery	24	14	-.42%	29	31	.07%
Housebreaking	33	19	-.42	41	12	-.71
Motor vehicle theft	65	46	-.29	75	43	-.43
Snatch theft	12	20	.67	16	14	-.12
Outraging modesty	<u>7</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>.71</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>-.38</u>
Totals	141	111	-.21	169	105	-.38

Source: Singapore Police, Crime Prevention Department, "An Evaluation of the Neighborhood Watch Scheme" (1987).

The public opinion survey showed that fear of crime declined slightly in the test zones and that knowledge about crime rose.<sup>61</sup> Otherwise, results were disappointing. Only 10 percent of those in the test zones took any crime prevention action other than displaying NWG stickers. They did not engrave property or assist neighbors. Of respondents in the test zones, 17 percent had not even contacted other families in their Neighborhood Watch Groups. People who joined NWG's had no clear sense of their purpose or responsibilities. Evaluators concluded that despite the best police efforts, NWG's were a paper organization. They recommended that in the future police concentrate more on the quality of NWG's, especially with respect to the selection of leaders, than on the number formed.<sup>62</sup>

The police undertook a careful evaluation, even though Neighborhood Watch was the centerpiece of their crime prevention efforts. This reflects a laudable willingness to put operational effectiveness ahead of image building. The Singapore police have not taken community policing on faith, but have insisted throughout on learning from experience. Community policing has been rigorously studied, even though such study is expensive and may lead to unpleasant surprises.

## Is community policing worthwhile?

The evaluations of community policing in Singapore, including the controlled study of Neighborhood Watch, show that small gains have been made in public safety. Compared to traditional practices, community policing had a favorable impact on crime, but it cannot be hailed as a panacea. Considering Singapore's low crime levels, this is perhaps all that could be expected. Community policing was not faced with an epidemic of crime; the likelihood of making a huge difference was limited from the start. It may be more difficult to reduce low crime levels than high ones, and there may be a point of diminishing returns with respect to the efficacy of reducing crime, even with an intensive community involving strategy. Before we pass final judgment on how well community policing prevents crime, it needs to be tested in high-crime cities, where the opportunity to affect the crime rate is greater.

The proportion of offenses cleared by arrests and the proportion of prosecutions rose in Singapore after community policing was implemented. Since the public's willingness to report matters to the police also increased substantially, it is reasonable to conclude that community policing encouraged the public to provide information to the police that improved their crime-fighting capability.

The impact on public attitudes appears to have been slight even on self-defense activities, which the public undertook after an intensified police campaign. The evaluation of the pilot project showed mixed to negative effects on the public's sense of security. On the other hand, the intensified Neighborhood Watch campaign did reduce slightly the public's fear of crime. The pilot project had a negligible impact on improving the public's knowledge of the police or their evaluation of police services.

These modest gains in crime rates and public attitudes were not achieved easily. They required an enormous effort to reorient the police department's basic philosophy and strategic paradigm. Some might argue that the changeover was also costly in terms of training and evaluation. Evaluation, however, should not be treated as an incremental cost in discussing any new police operation. For it to be responsible, policing needs to be evaluated at all times. True professionalism does not regard evaluation as an optional, even daring, element.

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In terms of direct financial costs, NPP's are more costly than traditional patrol operations. Police planners had projected initially that 10 percent more officers would be needed to staff community policing. That projection is no longer relevant, however, since the Singapore Government insisted that the NPP program use the existing roster. And the police, with the help of management consultants, have found a way. Cost in terms of physical plant and equipment is hard to measure but appears to be about the same. Though the number of fast response patrol cars has been reduced, about an equal number have been assigned to the NPP's. There may be some savings in wear-and-tear on police vehicles, because NPP's will use them less often and in less demanding circumstances. However, the cost of NPP buildings and equipment is substantial. The construction cost of an NPP in a void deck is \$35,000. Rent alone for 91 NPP's will amount to about \$135,000 per year.

Altogether, then, community policing in Singapore probably costs a bit more than traditional operations. The small incremental cost has produced a modest improvement in physical security and a small improvement in public cooperation with the police.

A number of very important but less tangible benefits may have accrued as a result of community policing, but it is impossible to know at this time. The only data on public attitudes toward the police, for example, were obtained immediately after the first year of NPP operation. Long-term effects have not been evaluated as the NPP's have expanded and matured. The police firmly believe that the public's attitudes toward them have changed from begrudging acceptance and even hostility to friendliness and sympathy. Is this true? Has the public learned, moreover, that the police can be useful in ways they value highly but never considered previously? The figures on the rise of reports made to the police, especially over the NPP counters, would indicate this may be so. Even more important, has the sense of community grown in Singapore's vast housing estates, at least in part as the result of the establishment of NPP's? This was an explicit goal of the community policing program. Relatedly, has community policing contributed to a growing sense of identification between community and government because of NPP's responsiveness to grassroots problems? Attitudes like these will be difficult to measure and attribution of causal effect to NPP's may be impossible. It would certainly have been premature to try to do so earlier. But as the NPP's expand to the entire island, the time will soon come for the police to undertake such studies.

A crucial nonevent might be attributed to NPP's—the absence of racial strife in Singapore during the 1980's. This cannot be determined empirically, but it is important to remember that it was one of the objectives of community policing. Paradoxically, a recurrence of civil unrest would pose the most important threat to the continuation of community policing, as police officials and the Booz Allen & Hamilton report acknowledge. In such circumstances, police might be forced to retreat from the exposed NPP facilities and return to group patrolling as well as to the maintenance of large riot control reserves. Community policing through NPP's is a defense, then, against the very problem that would cause the police to abandon it. In this one respect, the continuation of NPP's is the best evidence that they are working. This is a very soft argument because it cannot be proven. It may be true, nonetheless.

Finally, no information is available about the effects of community policing on the police themselves. Has the morale of police personnel risen generally, especially in patrol operations? Before a final judgment can be made about the value of community policing in Singapore, an assessment should be made of changes in the attractiveness of policing as a career, in the pride and self-respect of officers, and in police officers' knowledge of and sympathy with the public. Unfortunately, a survey of such matters was not made before community policing was implemented; hence, a baseline for comparison is not available. Improvements in these factors is enormously important and, in the long run, might be more helpful than specific NPP programs in producing a groundswell of favorable public opinion toward the police.

In sum, community policing in Singapore has produced reasonable but not dramatic improvements in public safety and public cooperation in a fairly short period of time, at what appears to be very small additional cost. Recognizing that community policing in Singapore has not fully expanded, nor have its cumulative effects over time been measured, it would seem to be a reasonable venture for other police forces to consider. The proper conclusion about community policing, based on Singapore's experience, would be that it has achieved realistic objectives. More attention needs to be given, however, to assessing the more subtle aspects of community policing, especially its effects on the police force itself.

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## Chapter 5

# Lessons for the United States

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What Singapore has done, impressive as it may be, cannot be transferred, lock, stock, and barrel, to the United States. Foreign experience is important not as a recipe for Americans to apply immediately, but as a point of departure in considering what is feasible. Singapore's experience offers an opportunity to examine issues that the United States must confront if it seriously embarks on creating community policing. In this concluding section, I have tried to summarize key features of Singapore's program and process that American police managers might consider as they study community policing.

### Program-related lessons

(1) Singapore shows in concrete, programmatic terms what community policing can be. An operational definition of community policing has replaced the rhetoric that still characterizes so much discussion in the United States. The elements of Singapore's community policing are the following:

- Deployment of police in Neighborhood Police Posts.
- Specialization of the function of emergency response.
- Willingness to assist in solving small problems of interaction between individuals as well as between the public and government.
- Encouragement of community-based crime prevention.
- Public participation in planning and sometimes implementation of policing in particular localities.

These programs form a package; they fit together, one leading to the other or reinforcing another. The key operational element is command-decentralized, fixed-based police posts. All the programmatic elements flow through them.

(2) Community policing can be accomplished without breaking the budget. Even though community policing in Singapore involved increasing the number of police deployed on the street—NPP's plus emergency-response units—this was accomplished with existing human resources. The street presence increased through command reorganization and, most importantly, through releasing, aggregating, and redirecting the time of traditional patrol personnel. Singapore's experience also suggests that personnel for community policing can be found in administrative offices, in reserve forces kept for "special events," and in criminal investigation. The latter, especially, will be difficult to tap. The Singapore police left the sacrosanct preserve of investigation untouched in the community police reorganization.

(3) Patrol personnel who are preoccupied with radio-dispatched emergency calls for service cannot be expected to have significant amounts of community involvement. Exigent needs will undermine meaningful community interaction. Rather than forcing highly pressured mobile patrol personnel to undertake community policing, the Singapore police allowed them to concentrate on patrolling and assigned community policing to others. In effect, Singapore has staffed community policing, which is a multifaceted activity, with generalist officers. Emergency response has become a focused specialist activity.

(4) Community policing requires the development of broad-based skills. It demands new forms of training. At the same time, because community police officers are encouraged to develop and use generalist skills that traditional patrol officers have no time to apply, community policing becomes a vehicle for making police work more interesting to the majority of police personnel.

(5) Singapore solved the problem of coordinating community policing with patrol operations by integrating both activities into a two-tier specialization structure under the same command. In Singapore's scheme, patrol command is responsible for both emergency response and community policing. But each function is performed by different personnel.

(6) The problem of coordinating crime prevention activities with field operations also was solved by placing both activities under the same command. The best personnel to do community-based crime prevention are patrol field personnel who are freed from the obligation of emergency response. Singapore has decided that community crime prevention need not be a separate command. It can be conducted by field personnel based in fixed posts supported by a central unit.

(7) Implicit in Singapore's reorganization of patrol, notably the integration of specialist rapid-response units with generalist neighborhood police posts, is the lesson that creating a visible police presence that deters crime can happen without explicitly organizing it. The police can create sufficient visible presence as they move in communities for other purposes—house visits, emergency response, liaison, and the staffing of fixed posts. Although the Singapore police do patrol on foot from the fixed posts, these patrols are episodic and random. Overall, explicit patrolling has been considerably reduced.



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(8) Community policing in Singapore is more than a new deployment scheme or command reorganization. It is the culmination in a change in the orientation of police officers. Singapore police no longer see themselves as law enforcement specialists carrying out programs among a passive clientele. Rather, they have embraced the notion that successful policing requires genuine reciprocity between police and the community. Although the general goal remains the same in community policing—namely the enforcement of law and the maintenance of order—the content of its professionalism changes.

(9) Community policing does not improve the personal behavior of officers—it requires it. The Singapore police did not dare risk community policing until all police personnel improved their behavior. Community police programs are risky indeed if their practitioners cannot be trusted to behave in a highly disciplined and principled manner.

(10) There is considerable confusion in the United States about the relationship between “community policing” and “problem-oriented policing.” Singapore shows that problem solving is one of the things that dispersed community police officers do. Community policing in Singapore has integrated problem solving as well as rapid response and crime prevention into a functionally expanded patrol command.

(11) Singapore’s Neighborhood Police Posts have gone out of their way to provide service in small matters with the expectation that large matters can subsequently be handled more successfully. Servicing is not regarded as “bullshit work.” Done well, it can generate the kind of public cooperation that is essential in solving crimes and maintaining public order. As evidence of this, the number of complaints and reports brought to the Neighborhood Police Posts increased during the first 4 years of the program, and at the same time, the arrest and prosecution rates also rose.

(12) The corollary to this is that American police need to rethink the sacrosanct division between civil and criminal matters. Mediation and referral of civil complaints may not only prevent public disorder problems from arising, but can enhance the public’s sense of well-being, of efficacy, and of satisfaction with the neighborhood.

(13) Evaluations of Neighborhood Watch in Singapore suggest that its value may be more symbolic than instrumental. Although the Singapore police probably would not agree with this formulation, it seems to me that police should invest in Neighborhood Watch not because it reduces crime or the fear of crime but because it gives the police an excuse and an opportunity for working with the public outside a context of immediate demand. The real benefits of Neighborhood Watch are in the reorientation of police activity, the development of the habit of cooperation between police and public, and a tightening of the bonds of community among neighbors.

(14) While improvements in public security were emphasized by the Singapore police when they presented community policing to the public, the police had more diffuse goals in mind—allaying ethnic strife, enhancing civility, raising the quality of life in densely populated residential communities, encouraging self-restraint and discipline, and forging national identity. These deeper motivations for the creation of community policing should not be dismissed as high-sounding pretensions peculiar to a newly developed nation. What the police do and how they do it affects much more than crime and public perceptions of security, important though these may be. Policing is crucial to how government is perceived, how law is accepted, and how morality is respected. Community policing correctly broadens the perceived purpose of policing; it brings to life otherwise invisible social and political effects the police continually have.

## Process-related lessons

(1) From the start, Singapore’s development of community policing had the strong support of senior Government. Initially this meant money for planning and additional police personnel. Later on, their commitment helped save the police from government-wide retrenchment. Since Singapore’s implementation of community policing reflects a substantial shift in operating strategy, the Government’s willingness to try it was essential.

(2) The Police Commissioner actively led the development of community policing. He was willing to be identified with it, to sell it inside and outside the force, and to supervise its implementation and evaluation. He developed mechanisms for assuming personal command of community policing during its formative stages. This kind of commitment by the chief executive of a police force is critical if so fundamental a reform is to be enacted. Community policing cannot occur, I believe, unless it becomes the chief’s “baby.”

(3) The Singapore police developed an impressive capacity to plan, evaluate, and supervise the development of community policing. Although two important pieces of research came from outsiders—the Quahs’ public opinion survey and the Booz Allen & Hamilton manpower study—police committees coordinated all evaluations. The Singapore police clearly understood the maxim that management of information is critical. This augmented research and planning capacity remains in place to be applied to all aspects of future policing.

(4) For community policing to work, the Singapore police thought all personnel had to be trained in it. Everyone had to know what community policing was about, even those who did not work in it. This training helped measurably to prevent a gap arising between the pioneers in the new program and officers assigned to customary tasks. The

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Singapore police paid for force-wide training in community policing to provide a receptive climate for it within the force.

(5) Planning for community policing was characterized by openness and dialogue. Occasions were created for raising questions and ventilating doubts. This happened at all rank levels, with particular emphasis on senior- and middle-management personnel. Community policing in Singapore was not ordered into place; it was adopted through participatory exploration.

(6) The Singapore police used evaluation as a device for persuading people inside and outside the force of the worthiness of community policing. People were not asked to take the new program on faith or on the basis of cogent theoretical arguments. Evidence was collected about the pilot project before a decision was made to make community policing the operating strategy of the force.

(7) To adapt police operations to local areas and to supervise junior officers with expanded responsibilities, the Singapore police increased middle-management in the field. In the NPP's, one inspector supervises 8 sergeants and 32 constables/corporals. One sergeant supervises 4 constables/corporals. This is a higher ratio of supervisors to line personnel than is customary in patrol operations. Singapore's police managers plainly believe that community policing requires closer, more competent middle-rank supervision of field operations.

(8) Great attention was given to preparing local communities for decentralized operations out of Neighborhood Police Posts. The start-up phase was highly labor-intensive. Singapore police attempted to contact personally every business or residence in NPP areas. They also held public meetings and enlisted the support of local leaders.

(9) Community policing in Singapore was not allowed to challenge the position—especially the perceived importance—of politicians. Politicians were allowed to take credit for the NPP's as well as for new initiatives undertaken by local police. While care was taken that police purposes were not subverted by narrow political ones, the police strove for a

cooperative rather than a competitive relationship with local politicians.

(10) The willingness of the Singapore police to evaluate community policing and to bring in outsiders to study operations smoothed the way for acceptance of it inside and outside the force. Evaluation helped to demonstrate the reasonableness of innovation. Moreover, when government made a budgetary decision that might have crimped the expansion of community policing, outside evaluation of staffing and management helped to fend off the threat. The best defense of a new program is a demonstration that it is being run intelligently and efficiently. Reason and facts may not always prevail, but they are more persuasive than promises and high-flying rhetoric. A new managerial professionalism, then, helped to establish community policing in Singapore.

## Conclusion

Community policing in Singapore is an integrated package of programs that substantially changes the delivery as well as the philosophy of policing. It is, I believe, one of the most far-reaching examples of police reform in the world today. It represents a transformation in the concept of police professionalism. Community policing as it is being practiced in Singapore has changed the role of police officers at all levels. Rank-and-file have been pressed to develop new skills; middle-managers are encouraged to assume greater responsibility for the character of field operations and the quality of individual police performance; and senior managers have learned the critical importance of participatory decisionmaking, rigorous and continual evaluation, and systematic study of experience in other organizations and locations. Through community policing, operations in Singapore have become more adaptive and rational. These are surely qualities that would serve well any police organization. I am grateful for this formulation to George L. Kelling and Mark Moore, who allowed me to read a draft version of an essay soon to be published about paradigmatic changes in American policing.

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## Notes

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1. Jerome H. Skolnick and David H. Bayley, *Community Policing: Issues and Practices Around the World* (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice, forthcoming, 1988).
2. Jerome H. Skolnick and David H. Bayley, "Theme and Variation in Community Policing," *Crime and Justice: An Annual Review of Research* (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice, 1987).
3. The total land area of Singapore is 248 square miles, but the additional 20 square miles is accounted for by many small scattered islands. Almost the entire population of Singapore lives on the main island. It is the area continuously policed.
4. *U.S. Statistical Abstract* (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Census, 1986), 31–32.
5. Bureau of Justice Statistics, *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice, 1986), Table 1.15.
6. *Straits Times*, July 4, 1987. In 1986 per capita GNP was approximately \$7,218. *Singapore Facts and Figures* (Government of Singapore, Ministry of Communication and Information, 1987), 31.
7. *Europa Yearbook* (London: Europa Pubs. Ltd., 1987), Vol. 2, 2407, 2985, 2972.
8. *Singapore Facts and Figures*, 3.
9. *Singapore Facts and Figures*, 83. *U.S. Statistical Abstract*, 117.
10. *Singapore Facts and Figures*, 71.
11. *Ibid.*, 71, 133.
12. Singapore gained independence from Great Britain in 1959; however, it remained part of the Federation of Malaysia until 1965, when it became an autonomous state.
13. David H. Bayley, *Patterns of Policing* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1985), Part II.
14. Singapore Police Force, "Foot Patrol Study," 1984.
15. Booz Allen & Hamilton, *Final Report: Manpower Review of Neighborhood Police Posts* (Singapore Police Department, 1987). The ranks in the Singapore police are Constable, Corporal, Sergeant, Inspector, Assistant Superintendent, Senior Assistant Superintendent, Deputy Superintendent, Superintendent, Deputy Assistant Commissioner, Assistant Commissioner, Deputy Commissioner, and Commissioner.
16. For a description of Japanese *koban*, see David H. Bayley, *Forces of Order: Police Behavior in Japan and the United States* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1976), Chapters 2 and 3.
17. Confidential evaluation report of the Japanese Study Team, 1984.
18. *Singapore Facts and Figures*, 109.
19. *Ibid.*, 130.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Booz Allen & Hamilton, *Final Report*. Urgent calls included nuisance/false alarms, disputes, crime in progress, traffic incidents, traffic accidents, crime delayed action, fires, assaults, violent crime in progress, annoyance, and deaths. Nonurgent calls included noise pollution, minor annoyance, some crime delayed action, and traffic incidents like abandoned vehicles. Miscellaneous included illness/injury, police administration, and minor services, such as eradicating hornets. R.C. Larson, "What Happened to Patrol Operations in Kansas City?" *Journal of Criminal Justice* vol. 3, (1975): 267–297.
22. George L. Kelling, et al., *The Kansas City Preventive Patrol Experiment: A Summary Report* (Washington, D.C.: The Police Foundation, 1974). Pauline Morris and Kevin Heal, *Crime Control and the Police: A Review of Research*, Research Study No. 67 (London: Home Office, 1981).
23. This is very similar to the Wilmington split force experiment in 1979 with nonemergency calls being assigned to NPP's rather than to a Complaint Services Unit. See Michael Cahn and James Tien, *An Evaluation of an Alternative Approach to Police Response* (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice, 1981).
24. Booz Allen & Hamilton, *Final Report*, Part II, 22–24.
25. Personal observation in 1984 and 1987. Noted as well by the Japanese Study Team in 1984.
26. Booz Allen & Hamilton, *Final Report*, Part II, 7–12.
27. *Ibid.*

28. Herman Goldstein, "Improving Policing: A Problem-Oriented Approach," *Journal of Crime and Delinquency* (April 1979): 236-58; William Spelman and John E. Eck, *Research in Brief: Problem-Oriented Policing* (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice, 1987).
29. Singapore Police Force, personal communication.
30. Skolnick and Bayley, *Community Policing*. David H. Bayley, "Community Policing: A Report from the Devil's Advocate." Paper presented to the International Conference on Community Policing, Temple University, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, May 1987.
31. Precinct commands are composed of four branches: (1) investigations, which is composed of squads for burglary, murder, and drugs; (2) deployment, i.e., patrol; (3) administration; and (4) public relations and crime prevention.
32. Herman Goldstein, "Improving Policing: A Problem-Oriented Approach" and "Toward Community-Oriented Policing: Potential, Basic Requirements, and Threshold Questions," *Crime and Delinquency* vol. 33, (1987): 6-30.
33. Based on 1986 figures.
34. Analysis of the performance of NPP's in B Division, which was the original NPP precinct (1986).
35. Analysis from B Division (1986).
36. Booz Allen & Hamilton, *Final Report*, Part I, 4.
37. Stella R. Quah and Jon S. T. Quah, *Friends in Blue* (Singapore: Oxford University Press, 1987), 6. Figures supplied by the Singapore Police, 1984.
38. W. Timothy Austin, "Crime and Custom in an Orderly Society: The Singapore Phototype," *Criminology*, vol. 5: 279-84.
39. Quah, 5.
40. Singapore is a notable exception to the principle Skolnick and I formulated in *Community Policing: Issues and Practices Around the World*, which states that meaningful change in policing comes about only when past practices have manifestly failed.
41. Singapore Police, "Evaluation Report on NPP's," 1984.
42. Booz Allen & Hamilton. Figures through 1986.
43. Singapore Police, Study of B and C Divisions, 1987.
44. Elinor Ostrom, et al., "Evaluating Police Organization," *Public Productivity* (Winter, 1979): 3-27.
45. Quah, *Friends in Blue* (1987).
46. Although the Quahs' study was undertaken to determine the impact of the establishment of NPP's on the general public, the published report does not specify the number of items that changed in a statistically significant way between 1983 and 1984. Nor does the study provide frequency distributions that would allow one to make such calculations. Instead, the study reports variation tests for significant differences among subsamples of the polled population (Malay, Chinese, males, laborers, etc.) within each year respectively rather than across years.
- However, using percentage data contained in cross-tabulation tables, it is possible to calculate frequency distributions for responses for 31 items for both 1983 and 1984. That is a fair proportion of the 67 items the Quahs list as "main interview questions" (Appendix C). From these I have determined whether a statistically significant change occurred. The threshold of significance is the customary 0.05. The results I report here are based on those calculations. The footnotes refer to the pages in *Friends in Blue* where the data were found for my computations. In the text, the Quahs do cite at various places a total of 12 items that changed significantly between 1983 and 1984. Where our items coincide, their findings and mine agree.
47. Quah, 34, 171, 177.
48. *Ibid.*, 48.
49. *Ibid.*, 164, 167.
50. *Ibid.*, 170.
51. *Ibid.*, 25-26. Once again, no test for the statistical significance of this change was reported.
52. *Ibid.*, 25.
53. *Ibid.*, 160.
54. *Ibid.*, 146, 152.
55. *Ibid.*, 70, 145, 172.
56. *Ibid.*, 52.

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57. Ibid., 92.

58. Ibid., 96.

59. Ibid., 78, 80.

60. The Police Foundation, *Reducing Fear and Crime in Houston and Newark: A Summary Report* (Washington, D.C.: National Institute of Justice, 1986) and related documents. Dennis P. Rosenbaum, "The Theory and Research Behind Neighborhood Watch: Is it a Sound Fear and Crime Reduction Strategy," *Crime and Delinquency*, vol. 33 (1987): 103-134; Dennis P. Rosenbaum (ed.), *Community Crime Prevention: Does It Work?* (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publishing Co. 1986).

61. National Crime Prevention Council, "Evaluation of the Effectiveness of the Neighborhood Watch Scheme Intensification Program (Stage II-Round 1)," 18 (May 1987).

62. Ibid., 29-34.