

**The Bill Blackwood  
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

=====

**The Impact of the Geographic Policing Model on Criminal  
Investigations**

=====

**An Administrative Research Paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
Required for Graduation from the  
Leadership Command College**

=====

**By  
Mark Norcross**

**Waco Police Department  
Waco, Texas  
April 2004**

## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact the geographic policing model has had on the criminal investigation units of the Waco Police Department and if such impact had affected the crime rates of the City of Waco. More than thirty years ago it was recognized that the prevalent method of managing criminal investigative or detective units resulted in a low number of both arrests made and cases cleared. In the mid-1990's the Waco Police Department began to implement the geographic policing model. In order to apply the geographic policing model to the criminal investigation units the case assignments for three of the Department's investigative units were changed from specialized assignments to generalist assignments based on a geographic area.

A crime analysis report was examined which compared the five years preceding the change (1993-1997) to the five years after the change (1998-2002). The offenses included in the report were theft, vehicle thefts, burglary, and assaults (excluding family violence). A comparison of national statistics and local statistics revealed that crime had decreased 5% locally while declining 13% nationally by 2002. A survey was conducted of the detectives working in the affected units. The results of the survey reflected that the detectives felt the change to the geographic model had not been effective. It is the author's opinion that the change to the geographic policing model had no impact on Waco's crime rate and was not accepted by the detectives.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	
Introduction. . . . .	1
Review of Literature . . . . .	3
Methodology . . . . .	8
Findings . . . . .	9
Discussions/Conclusions . . . . .	12
References . . . . .	16

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact the geographic policing model has had on the criminal investigation units of the Waco Police Department and if such impact had affected the crime rates of the City of Waco. More than thirty years ago it was recognized that the prevalent method of managing criminal investigative or detective units resulted in a low number of both arrests made and cases cleared. Herbert Isaacs completed one of the first empirical studies of criminal investigation for the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice (Isaacs, 1967). Peter Greenwood examined New York City Police Department programs for apprehending serious criminal offenders in 1968 (Greenwood, 1970). The best known analysis of criminal investigation was the two-year study done by the Rand Corporation in the mid 1970s (Greenwood, 1977). These and other studies showed that the work done by detectives produced little in the way of results regarding clearance and crime rates.

Beginning in the late 1970s police departments started to change the way they operated. Police administrators began trying to open the lines of communication with the community. One of the first experiments was the *Neighborhood Foot Patrol Program* in Flint, Michigan (Miller & Hess, 1998). This was conducted from January 1979 to January 1982. Communication with citizens was one of the main goals of the program. Throughout the 1980s several other police departments including Oakland, California, Boston, Massachusetts, and Houston, Texas also tried various programs designed to reach out to their respective communities. This movement became known by several names: community policing, community-oriented policing, neighborhood policing, and the like (Miller & Hess, 1998).

One of the last areas of the police departments to be affected by the community policing movement was the criminal investigation units. The Rand Study made several recommendations for changes in management of criminal investigation units. One of the recommendations was to create a generalist detective assigned to a local commander (Greenwood, 1977). In 1998, as part of an organizational change to the Geographic Policing Model, Waco PD changed their property detective units (Burglary/Auto Theft, Forgery/Fraud, and Theft/Criminal Mischief) to generalist assignments. The three units were assigned to specific geographic areas of the city. Each detective was assigned to a particular neighborhood within that geographic area. It was hoped that this would encourage communication between the detective and the community and improve the arrest and clearance rates for the assigned cases.

The question this paper will examine will be: What impact has the geographic policing model had on the crime rate for the affected areas at Waco PD? Literature will be examined that is relevant to this topic. Surveys will be conducted on the detectives that have worked in these units to determine how effective they feel the change has been. The statistics for the UCR crimes investigated by the affected units will be reviewed. It is anticipated that the UCR crime statistics have either stayed the same or gone up. If this is true then the Department needs to determine whether the change to a generalist assignment was good and if the program is functioning the way it was originally intended.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The role of law enforcement in American society began to be examined in the middle 1960s. This was as a result of the Presidential election campaign of 1964. Barry Goldwater raised crime and lawlessness as a political issue (Silver, 1968,). The result was the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice which was appointed by President Lyndon Johnson. The Commission examined all aspects of the criminal justice process. During its examination of the role of the police the Commission found the following (Silver, 1968):

Our (society's) belief that most crimes are not solved or even reported (because we realize that they cannot be solved) is true. As the Report notes, "if a suspect is neither known to the victim nor arrested at the scene of the crime, the chances of ever arresting him is slim" (p 24).

The Science and Technology Task Force of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice conducted a study with the Los Angeles Police Department. The purpose of the study was to identify and assess the influence of various factors in the apprehension process on the solution of crimes (Silver, 1968). The study examined 1,905 crimes. 25% (482) resulted in arrest or some other type of clearance. 70% of the cleared cases were cleared by arrest, 90% of which were made by the patrol force. The most significant factor in clearance is whether or not a suspect is named in the crime report.

There were several studies done over the next several years examining the investigation of crimes, but the study that the Rand Corporation conducted over a two year period in the early 1970s was the most significant examination of the investigative

process. The results of the Rand study were published in 1975. The findings of the study were controversial because one of the conclusions of the study was that detectives were ineffective in solving crimes. Some of the other findings include (Greenwood, et al., 1975):

- Department wide arrest and clearance rates are unreliable measures of the effectiveness of investigative operations (p. 225).
- While serious crimes are invariably investigated, many reported felonies receive no more than superficial attention from investigators (p. 229).
- Many police departments collect more physical evidence than can be productively processed (p. 230).
- In many large departments, investigators do not consistently and thoroughly document the key evidentiary facts that reasonably assure that the prosecutor can obtain a conviction on the most serious applicable charge (p. 230).
- Crime victims in general desire to be notified as to whether or not the police have solved their case (p. 232).

The Rand Study made several recommendations. Some of them were (Greenwood, et al, 1975):

- The prosecutor's office should do the post arrest investigation (p. 238).
- Police departments should assign detectives to generalist assignments under the control of a local commander (p. 240).
- There should be a major offenses unit to investigate major offenses (p. 241).
- There should be investigative teams led by a team commander to investigate cases (p. 241).

- Departments should make use of proactive investigations for specific offenses (p. 241).
- Departments should work more closely with the public. They should initiate programs designed to promote citizen involvement in cases (p. 242).
- Departments should reallocate most investigations back to patrol with the creation of a generalist investigator (p. 243).

This information assists in recognizing the beginnings of what became known as community policing from some of these recommendations. While the conclusions and recommendations of the Rand Study were controversial many of the recommendations were adopted and tried by police departments. Some of the recommendations failed to produce satisfactory results but others were successful and are still being followed. One of the recommendations that failed to produce the desired results was Team Policing. This program was tried in several agencies including the Dallas, Texas police department in the 1970s (Young, 1991). Most agencies abandoned Team Policing because many felt the program failed to meet expectations and because of resistance from officers in the departments to fully implement the program. One of the recommendations that was successful and has been expanded is citizen involvement. The first attempts at citizen involvement began with what are commonly referred to as Community Services Units. These units often began by coordinating neighborhood watch programs and crime prevention programs. This has now been expanded to include citizen police academies and crime stopper programs along with many other programs designed to encourage the interaction between police departments and the citizens they serve.



The next major study done of the investigative process was a two year study conducted for the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) by John Eck. *Solving Crimes: The Investigation of Burglary and Robbery* was published in 1983. Eck's study examined the investigation of burglary and robbery cases in three jurisdictions: DeKalb County, Georgia; St. Petersburg, Florida; and Wichita, Kansas (Eck, 1983). The PERF study felt that the Rand Study was unfairly critical of detectives and their contribution to the solving of crimes. The PERF study came to several conclusions. Some of which were (Eck, 1983):

- The work of both patrol officers and detectives is extremely important with respect to the subsequent making of follow-up arrest. Preliminary and follow-up investigations complement each other (p. 154).
- Investigative emphasis on victims is inappropriate (p. 155).
- The arrest of suspects was related to detectives both conducting routine actions and collecting crucial pieces of information (p. 155).

Over the next several years police departments across the country began trying to open lines of communication with the community. This movement took several different names community policing, community oriented policing, neighborhood policing, etc. As a result of the studies mentioned above police administrators had made changes to the way criminal investigative units were managed. Case screening for assignment was begun and an emphasis was placed on the initial investigation. The first attempts at community policing were for the most part centered on patrol. It was not until the mid-1990s that significant efforts were made to include detectives in the community policing initiative.

In October 1997 the Arlington, Texas Police Department instituted a citywide change in personnel distribution. Officers were assigned to a geographic area to better meet community needs. This assignment included both patrol and detective personnel (Anonymous, 1998). This is one example of the changes police and sheriff departments are making to their organization. Mary Ann Wycoff and Colleen Cosgrove conducted a study beginning in 1997 to determine what was being done by different law enforcement agencies in regards to implementing the community policing philosophy into the investigative process. The study was conducted by mail surveys being sent to municipal police departments and sheriff departments in jurisdictions with populations of more than 50,000 and 100 or more sworn officers. Site visits to selected agencies were then conducted. Their report *Investigations in the Community Policing Context* was published in 2001 (Cosgrove, et al., 2001). The authors looked at what changes had been done to the investigative process by different agencies. Some of the changes noted in the report included physical decentralization of detectives, area vs. city – wide responsibility, and bifurcated vs. unified chain of command (Cosgrove, et al, 2001 pp. IV–9). Four models were identified that represented the three noted changes. The four models are:

- Physical centralization of detectives who have citywide responsibilities;
  - Physical centralization of detectives; assignment to specific geographic areas;
  - Physical decentralization of detectives who report through an investigative chain of command; and
  - Physical decentralization of detectives who report through area command
- (Cosgrove, et al, 2001).

A fourth factor, generalization vs. specialization of investigative assignments, affected the sites that were selected but is not clearly identified in the four models (Cosgrove, et al, 2001 pg. IV – 10). The study did not identify any one model as being better than the rest although the authors felt the last model was the strongest of the four models.

Beginning in the mid-1960s the role of detectives began to be examined and their efforts questioned. The earliest studies were very critical of the work done by detectives and its by-products. Recommendations were made to change the way in which detective units were managed and the way follow-up investigations were conducted. Many of these recommendations were tried and were found to be successful. During the late 1990s departments were still implementing some of the recommendations of the 1975 Rand Study. One of those was a generalist investigator assigned to a local area commander. This was done during the community policing initiative. We are still waiting to see how successful this will be.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact the geographic policing model has had on the criminal investigation units of Waco P. D. It will look at two different aspects of the change: (1) the impact the change may have had on the crime rates of the City of Waco and (2) whether the detectives, assigned to the units, believe the change was effective. The author hypothesizes that the change to the geographic policing model has had no impact on the crime rate. The move to the geographic policing model dramatically changed the types of cases the investigative units worked on. The crimes that will be examined are Theft, Vehicle Theft, Burglary, and Assault. A report will be run to determine the crime rate of the offenses investigated by the neighborhood

detectives. The five years (1993 – 1997) prior to the change will be compared to the five years (1998 – 2002) after the change.

A survey was given to the twenty-two (22) detectives assigned to the units. Many of the detectives worked in the units when the units had specialized assignments. The author felt the detectives would have first hand knowledge of the changes experienced by the units and how effective the changes might have been. Eighteen (18) of the twenty-two surveys were returned for a response rate of 81.8%. This survey posed four questions.

The questions were:

1. Do you think the change to general assignments has led to an increase in cases being cleared?
2. Do you think the assignment of detectives has increased and/or improved the communication between citizens and detectives?
3. Do you think the assignment of detectives by neighborhood has increased and/or improved the communication between patrol officers and detectives?
4. Which is the best way to assign cases specialized or generalized assignments?

The detective's responses will be evaluated to determine how they felt the change affected the units.

## **FINDINGS**

A report was run covering the years 1993 – 2002 for the offenses investigated by the neighborhood detectives. Those offenses include thefts, vehicle thefts, burglary, and assaults. The report was run through the Waco Police Department Records database. The report reflected the following:

Table 1

Years	93 - 97	98 - 02
Thefts	31000	31139
Vehicle Thefts	5946	4445
Burglary	10324	9328
Assaults	13250	12564
	-5%	60520
		57476

When the years 1998 – 2002 are compared to the years 1993 – 1997 there is an overall decline of 5% reflected. When examined individually it can be seen that thefts increased by 0.4%, vehicle thefts decreased by 25%, burglaries decreased by 10%, and assaults decreased by 5%. It should be noted that a large decrease in auto theft occurred in the time period 2001 – 2002. An auto theft task force was started in McLennan County in 2001. The assaults investigated by the neighborhood detectives included misdemeanor and aggravated not including family violence.

Figure 1

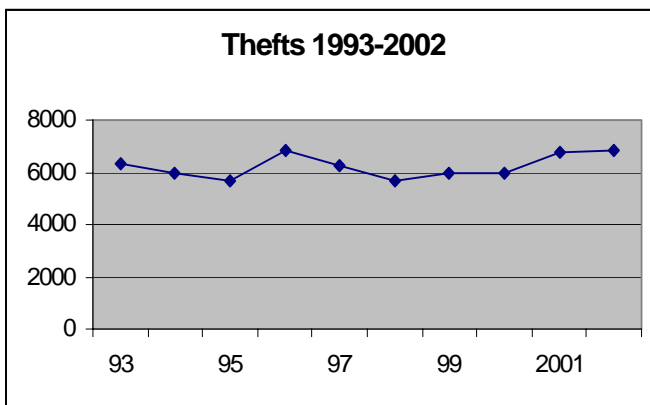


Figure 2

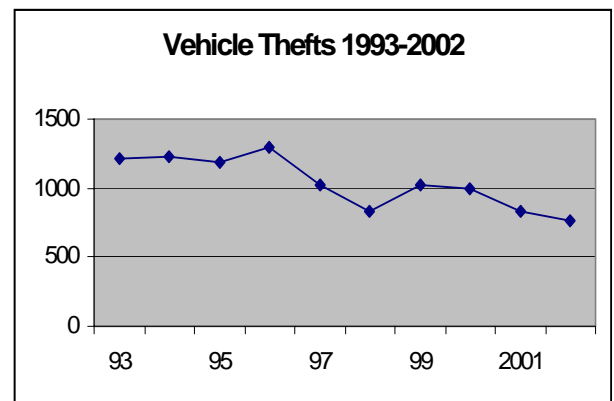


Figure 3

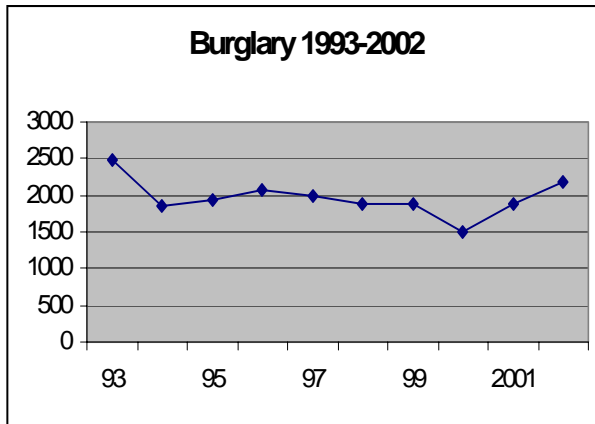
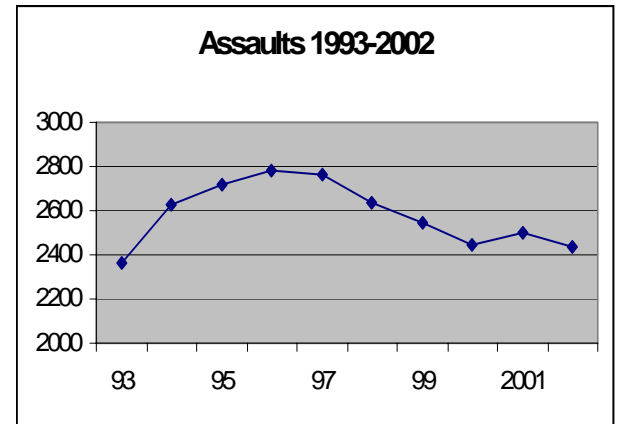


Figure 4



When the UCR numbers for the nation are examined for the same time periods 1993 – 1997 and 1998 – 2002 the following is found (Table 2). Thefts decreased by 10%, vehicle thefts decreased by 18%, and burglaries decreased by 19%. There was an overall decrease of 13% for these crimes nationally (FBI).

Table 2

UCR Years	93 - 97	98 - 02
Thefts	39346900	35402466
Vehicle Thefts	7323200	5993856
Burglary	13104300	10670233
-13%	59774400	52066555

A survey was given to the nineteen detectives and three sergeants assigned to the neighborhood detective units for a total of twenty-two surveys handed out. Eighteen of the surveys were returned for a response rate of 82%. The surveys were composed of four questions. The response reflected the following:

1. 94% of the detectives that responded felt there was no increase in the number of cleared cases and 6% felt it was unchanged.

2. 78% of the detectives felt the communication between the detectives and the citizens of their neighborhoods had not improved as a result of the change to general assignments, 17% felt there had been an improvement and 5% felt it was unchanged.
3. 83% of the detectives felt the communication between the patrol officers and detectives had not improved, 11% felt it did improve and 6% felt it was unchanged.
4. 94% of the detectives felt the department should return to a specialized assignment of cases and 6% felt it would be best to stay with the generalized assignment of cases based on geographic area.

As part of the change to a neighborhood assignment in 1998 the detectives were required to attend neighborhood meetings in their assigned area. This was changed in 2000 and the detectives were no longer required to attend the meetings. The ability to communicate between the different units of the department has improved since 1998. Many officers have access to Mobile Data Computers which allows them to access several different e – mail systems the department has available. The department also has an electronic bulletin board that allows the officers to communicate with everyone working in their area.

## **DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS**

The purpose of this paper is to examine the impact the geographic policing model has had on the criminal investigation units of Waco P. D. It looked at two different aspects of the change: (1) the impact the change may have had on the crime rates of the City of Waco and (2) whether the detectives, assigned to the units, believe the change

was effective. The author hypothesized that the change to the geographic policing model has had no impact on the crime rate.

The rates for the crimes investigated by the neighborhood detectives (thefts, vehicle thefts, burglaries, and assaults) were examined. The detectives investigate other offenses as well but those offenses listed above represent the majority of the cases investigated. When the crime rate for Waco is compared to the national numbers it is quickly evident that the nation's crime rate went down quite a bit more than Waco's did for the same time period. There was an overall decline of 13% for the nation while Waco declined only 5%. Thefts have increased by 0.4% for Waco while the nation had a 10% decrease. Burglaries decreased in Waco by 10% while they declined by 19% for the nation. The nation had a decline of 18% in auto thefts and Waco had a decline of 25%. An auto theft task force was started in 2001. Waco's auto theft rate had been level for several years and then began a decline the same year the task force started operating (Figure 5). The nation's crime rate for the specific crimes declined almost 3 times as much as Waco's did.

Figure 5

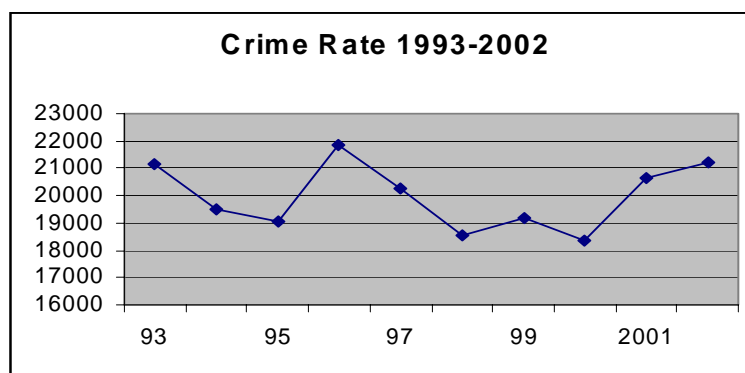




Figure 5 shows that the overall crime rate for Waco has gone up the last two years. If the crime rate is to be used as an indicator of how successful the detectives have been the author believes it shows they have not been successful.

The survey given to the detectives reveals that they have not embraced the generalized assignments of cases. Most of them feel the cases are not being cleared any better than before the change was instituted and there is an apparent perceived problem by the detectives with communication both with the citizens they serve and the patrol officers that work in their assigned area. The results of the survey are significant for the following reasons. The literature examining follow-up investigations for the last 30 plus years has recommended the specialized assignment of detectives be replaced with a general investigator assigned to a local commander. The assignment to a local commander was supposed to facilitate the communication between the patrol officer and the detective. The assignment by geographic area was supposed to facilitate the communication between the citizens and the detectives. In the long term a reduction in crime was supposed to occur as the detective became familiar with the criminals active in his area. In looking at the data there is no real reduction in the crime rate. Most of the detectives feel they are ineffective in reducing crime and place the blame for that on the current generalized assignment.

It is the author's opinion that the frustration felt by the detectives is as a result of the way the change from specialized assignment to a general assignment was conducted by the department. In 1998 the detectives were assigned to geographic areas that corresponded to patrol beats. Case assignments were changed from specialized to general assignments. The units were assigned to several commanders over the next 4 years

sometimes in the Patrol Division and sometimes in CID. In 2002 each of the 3 units were assigned to a different commander responsible for a different geographic area. Each commander was given command of both patrol officers and detectives assigned to his area of responsibility. Almost all of the changes were done with little or no input from the detectives. The results of this examination have shown that the change to geographic assignment of detectives with general assignments has had little or no impact on the crime rate. The study was unable to look at clearance rates for the detectives because the department does not have a reliable method of keeping track of them.

This examination has shown what has already been shown before in studies dealing with change. If the individuals affected by change are not involved in the planning and execution of the change then there will be resistance to the change. Police administrators must include the individuals affected by the change in the process. While the changes in command may have been necessary, the administration must ensure that the same reason for the change is put forth by the different commanders. This study did not produce any evidence to support the argument that the geographic assignment of detectives with general assignments is more effective than specialized assignment.

## REFERENCES

- Anonymous (1998, October). Arlington's Geographic Policing Model, *Telemasp Bulletin*, 5, pp. 1 – 7.
- Cosgrove, C., & Wycoff, M. (2001, July). Investigations in the Community Policing Context. Washington, D.C.: U. S. Department of Justice.
- Eck, J. (1983). Solving Crimes: The Investigation of Burglary and Robbery. Washington, D.C.: PERF.
- Federal Bureau of Investigation. (June 2003) Uniform Crime Reports. On – line: [http: www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius\\_99/w99tbl01.xls](http://www.fbi.gov/ucr/cius_99/w99tbl01.xls).
- Greenwood, P. (1970). An Analysis of the Apprehension Activities of the New York Police Department. New York, NY: Rand Institute, R – 529 – NYC.
- Greenwood, P., Chaiken, J., & Petersilia, J. (1977). The Criminal Investigation Process. Lexington, Mass.: Lexington Books.
- Isaacs, H. (1967). “A Study of Communication, Crimes, and Arrests in a Metropolitan Police Department.” Appendix B in the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice. Task Force Report: Science and Technology. Washington DC: United States Government Printing Office.
- Silver, I. (1968) The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society: A Report by the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice. New York, NY: Avon Books.
- Miller, L. & Hess, K. (1998). The Police in the Community: Strategies for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Belmont, Ca: Wadsworth Publishing.

Young, W. (1991) Community Oriented, Problem Solving Policing and Implications for the Criminal Investigator. (Research Paper. Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas, 1991). Huntsville, Tx.