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**“Doing What We’ve Always Done”: A Case Study of Rural Policing**  
**DRAFT**

Prepared

by

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## ABSTRACT

Crime and justice cannot be adequately analyzed without an understanding of the historical and social contexts. Policing in a rural community provides an useful example of how social forces shape the delivery of informal as well as formal justice yet little is known about rural law enforcement. Furthermore, although approximately 50 percent of American law enforcement agencies are rural or small town, the vast majority of the research has been on the urban experience. Based upon a baseline study of policing in a rural Kansas community, this study begins to fill part of that hiatus. The objective of the research project funded by the National Institute of Justice was four-fold: (1) to describe the existing policing model from the perspectives of citizens, community leaders, and law enforcement; (2) to identify the indicators of success or effectiveness of the law enforcement as perceived by citizens, community leaders, and law enforcement; (3) to identify law enforcement priorities and preferred policing models as identified by citizens, community leaders, and law enforcement; and (4) to make recommendations for rural law enforcement policy and training. The data for this study were obtained from four sources: official crime data, a random sample telephone and mailed survey of community citizens and a hands-on survey of local law enforcement; participatory meetings with key community organizations; and interviews with community "gatekeepers." Citizen response to the majority of indicators of law enforcement effectiveness was positive and supportive of the existing policing model in contrast to the law enforcement response which was more mixed. When asked how law enforcement should be done, citizen response indicated a conflict between their beliefs about how policing should be done and their evaluations of the success of the delivery of local law enforcement services. The theory of cognitive dissonance renders a useful theoretical framework for understanding the conflict between citizen perceptions of the effectiveness of their law enforcement agencies and their "John Wayne/Wild West" image of fighting crime.

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## PROJECT OVERVIEW

This report is a summary of a National Institute of Justice locally initiated research project<sup>1</sup> which provides baseline data from a case study of rural community policing and its effectiveness in Council Grove, Kansas. The research site, historical Council Grove, home of a former Kaw Indian mission, was also the rendezvous point for trappers, settlers heading further west, and Custer's troops. Today the Council Grove area lies in the heart of the Flinthills Preserve of tall grass. At the time of the development of the research proposal, a plan to make a local state highway into the first scenic highway in Kansas was well underway. Upon its completion, the historical Z Bar Ranch and the proposed national park area will become far more accessible making Council Grove and its surrounding area one of the regional tourist centers of central Kansas. In addition to the concern about the effect of rapid population change upon the traditionally low crime rate, the Council Grove population has been especially interested in stabilizing or lowering the rates of drug offenses.

Given the anticipated changes and the need for baseline data to shape law enforcement policy, the objective of the research project was four-fold: (1) to describe the policing model from the perspectives of law enforcement, community leaders, and other members of the community; (2) to identify the indicators of success or effectiveness of local policing as perceived by law enforcement, community leaders, and other citizens; (3) to identify law enforcement priorities as perceived by law enforcement, community leaders and citizens; and (4) to make recommendations for law enforcement policy and training. The baseline data for this four-fold objective was obtained from five sources: (1) official crime data, (2) surveys of community

citizens and law enforcement , (3) meetings with key community organizations; (4) in-formal interviews with community “gatekeepers” as well as town business people; and (5) field observation.

The citizens of Council Grove and its surrounding area generally indicated that local law enforcement, city, sheriff, and state, was effective. The law enforcement response was more self-critical as they thought that they were already doing community policing but should be doing more “real police work.” When asked how law enforcement should be done, the rural citizens revealed conflict between their beliefs about how policing should be done and their evaluations of the success of the delivery of the local law enforcement services. The theory of cognitive dissonance renders a useful theoretical framework for understanding citizen and law enforcement’s perceptual conflict about what law enforcement should do: continue their area’s style of rural policing which has closely resembled the recent model of community policing or become more imitative of their images of “John Wayne/Wild West” Texas Rangers and/or mass media Big City cops fighting crime.

#### RURAL KANSAS POLICING: THE SOCIAL CONTEXT, POPULATION, AND SAMPLE

Crime and justice cannot be adequately analyzed without an understanding of the historical and social context. Policing in a rural community is an excellent example of how social forces shape the delivery of justice yet relatively little is known about rural law enforcement. Furthermore, although almost half (48.5 percent) of American law enforcement agencies are rural or small town organizations, hiring one to nine full time officers, the vast majority of the research has been on the urban experience (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1990). Preliminary research indicates that “aside from violent crime, rural citizens share many of the same concerns about

crime as their urban counterparts (Weisheit *et al.*, 1996, p. 27); however, an understanding of the unique characteristics of rural culture and geography is essential for an adequate interpretation of the nature of rural crime and an analysis of the formal and, in particular, the informal means of dealing with criminal and civil acts and with the perpetrators (*Ibid*; Thurman, 199.; Sawyer 1997). This case study will begin to fill part of that hiatus.

Council Grove is a Midwest, modern replica of Grover's Corner, New Hampshire of the drama classic "Our Town." Like Grover's Corner, Council Grove's population is slightly over 2000, to be specific 2210 (1990 U.S. Census), not including residents surrounding the city or full-time residents at the City's water supply lake where 350 cabin sites are found three miles northwest of the city. Council Grove, an independent, full service town serving as the county seat and location of Unified School District 417, is located in Morris County in the east central portion of Kansas, about 129 miles west of Kansas City (see map of Morris County on page 4). Morris County has a population of 6198 (1990 Census of Population). Alta Vista, located approximately 13 miles north of Council Grove and just over the Morris County line but considered part of the community because its children attends schools within Morris County and reciprocal law enforcement agreements, has a population of less than 100 people.

Unlike the Grover's Corner community, Council Grove has not been an isolated rural American town as it is situated at the intersection of Highways U.S. 56 and K 57. These highways are key routes between Emporia (a college town less than an hour drive south of Council Grove), Manhattan (a major university town less than a 45 mile drive north ), and to the west Junction City (the town adjoining a major army military site) and Fort Riley (the home of the "Big Red" and the original home of the Calvary). Other major highways including Interstate



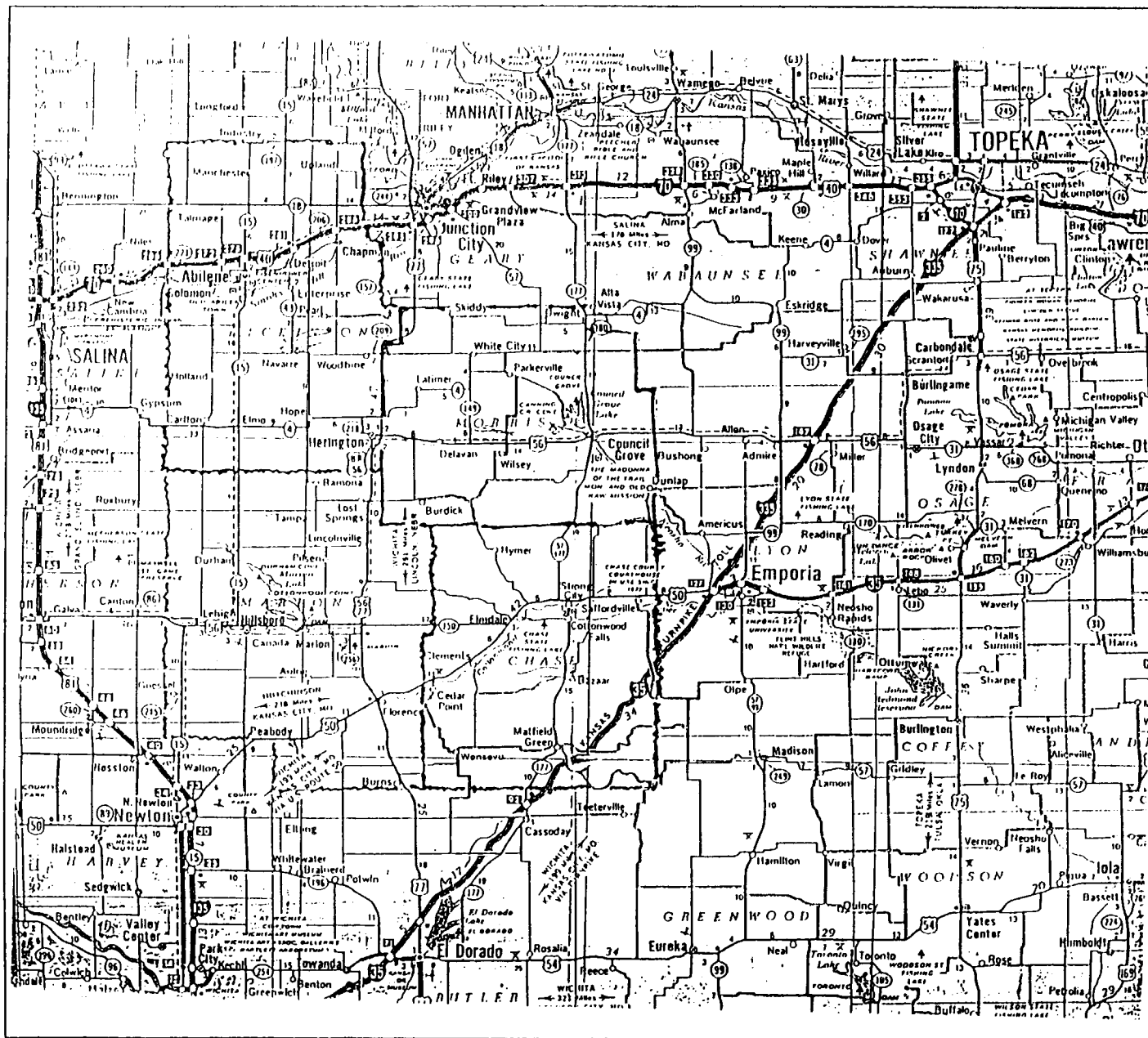


Figure 1. Map of Morris County

70, 20 miles to the North; Highway 50, 20 miles to the South; and the Kansas Turnpike connecting Kansas City and Wichita, 25 miles to the East, make Council Grove a heavily traveled city and a potentially attractive rendezvous center for drug related traffic.

Nineteen state and/or nationally recognized historic sites along the Santa Fe Trail, in the city proper, have brought significant numbers of tourists to the area. A river revitalization project completed in 1996 has provided walking and biking trails along the Neosho River. The National Park Services's opening of a Tall Grass Prairie Park, 20 miles south of Council Grove, will also lure additional visitors, tourists, and full time residents to the city and surrounding area in years to come.

Adjusting to the increasing influence of tourists, Council Grove and the majority of its surrounding area villages remain exemplars of small town, rural America. This part of Central Kansas is a good place to live. Community members report that they have chosen to stay in the area, to move to the area, or to return upon retirement because of the quality of life including attributes such as the low crime rate, the opportunity to know neighbors, the slow pace, and excellent educational resources.

The population is homogeneous, older, and financially stable. According to the 1990 Census, 6101 people, 98 percent, in Morris County were white. Thirty-one were American Indian, Eskimo, or Aleut; 20 were Black; 11 were Asian or Pacific Islander; 90 were Hispanic origin (of any race); and 35 were classified as "Other." The residents are primarily of Northern European descent, the largest group, circa one third, being German, followed by English, Irish, Swedish, and a group calling themselves "United States of American."

Twenty-six percent, 21 percent, and 22 percent of the Morris County population were in the age categories of 25-44, 45-64, and 65 and over, respectively. Slightly over six percent were 80 years of age and over. The median age for Morris County was 38.8 (1990 U.S. Census). Seventy-seven percent of the County population were 16 years and over.

Fifty-one percent of the Morris County population was female. There were 95.2 males per 100 females. Of the 4900 residents who were over 15 years of age, 56 percent were married. Although women outnumbered men, men were slightly less likely to be married: six percent and eight percent, respectively. Of that same group only six percent were divorced. Ten percent were widowed. And 13 percent had never married.

Twenty percent of the Morris County population 16 years and over were in the military or were veterans. Forty percent of the men from the same age group were in the military or were veterans; two percent of the women.

Of the persons 25 years and older residing in Morris County, 44 percent were high school graduates, including equivalencies. Thirty-six percent had some college with no degree, associate degrees, bachelor's degree, and graduate or professional degrees. Nationally, about 20 percent of the population at that time had some college experience.

The median family income was \$35,225; per capita income in 1989 was \$11,451. Of the population for whom poverty status (6075) was determined, 14 percent were living below poverty level. Of the 2551 households in Morris County, six percent reported public assistance income and 41 percent reported Social Security income. Fifteen percent of the County households had retirement income and 46 percent had interest, dividend, or net rental income.

Sixty-seven percent of the households reported wage and salary income; 18 percent, nonfarm self-employment income; and 15 percent farm self-employment income.

The three chief occupations, each category comprising 14 percent of the employed Morris County residents 16 years and over, are administrative support, including clerical; service occupations, except protective and household; and farming, forestry, and fishing. The area residents consider themselves to be rural people. This self-perception is also reflected in the U.S. Census which has classified the population as rural, categorizing less than one fifth (969) of the total population, 16 percent, as farm population.

Weisheit *et al.* (1996) have identified five characteristics of rural community that shape both criminal behavior and the exercise of justice: geographic isolation, the availability of guns, economic factors, race and ethnicity, and social climate. All but one of the five rural indicators, overall poverty, are replicated by the Council Grove area experience.

***Geographic Isolation.*** The area citizens, especially farmers and ranchers, as well as law enforcement recognized that geographic distances affected response time. For instance, five percent of the citizen survey household respondents reported that law enforcement needed to respond faster; however, the majority modified that observation by noting that they understood that this is difficult to do when the law has to travel so many miles. Law enforcement respondents added that they are so sparsely spread over the county that in addition to "just getting there," it also takes time for a backup to arrive. Furthermore, given the small number of sworn officers, if one member of the force is ill, there is often no one to replace that officer. Obtaining a backup becomes even more problematic given the number of times the various law enforcement agencies help each other. To be more specific, during the four year period from 1994-1997, the Council

Grove Police Department's official report listed 967 instances under the category of "Other Law Enforcement Agencies Assist."

*Availability of Guns.* The presence of guns is part of the "taken for granted" lifestyle of rural central Kansas residents. For instance, when the citizen survey was being conducted in the Council Grove Police Office located in City Hall, on a late weekday afternoon a city officer's two sons, who were around nine and ten years old, dropped into the station. Each was wearing "play" guns in hip holsters. One asked, "No cops in here? You don't have guns." The principal researcher replied, "We're plains clothes cops." The student survey interviewers supported her tall tale. The boys seemed to take the survey team seriously and left. In addition, only six percent of the survey household respondents thought that guns were a serious problem in the community.

The crime rate is low as is the use of guns in the commission of crimes. The official yearly Council Grove reports for the four year period of 1994-1997 reported no murder and manslaughter by negligence<sup>2</sup>; three cases of robbery; 20 cases of aggravated assault/battery; 113 cases of simple assault/battery; 94 cases of burglary/breaking & entering; 18 cases of criminal trespass; 211 cases of larceny theft; seven cases of motor vehicle theft; four cases of arson; three cases of forgery; ten cases of sex offenses; and 351 domestic calls. Two hundred and ninety-five adults arrests were made and contact/custody was made with 172 juveniles. During that same four-year period the yearly offense category rates remained consistent. There were only five weapon violation charges, an average of one per year.

The official crime data was reflected in the citizen perceptions of crime seriousness. Forty-nine percent of the household survey respondents reported that they had had formal contact

with law enforcement; 56 percent reported crime incidents that closely paralleled that of the official records of types of offenses and rates. Included in those reports were a number of incidents typical of rural crime such as theft of livestock and a rural resident telling law enforcement about a "pot grower" on the place next to his.

***Economic Factors.*** Poverty may be a common problem in rural America; however, overall, Morris County is not poor. The 1990 national poverty level for an one person household was \$6280. The 1989 per capita income for Morris County was \$11,451 and 14 percent of the county's population was living poverty level. However, this figure is misleading. When the incorporated town figures for those persons living below the poverty level is reviewed, the poverty income of one town is clearly atypical. Forty-three percent of the below poverty residents live in Dunlap,<sup>3</sup> a community in the southern part of the county where the biggest drug raid was made several years ago. In addition, 17 percent of those living below the poverty level are from White City, the community closet to Fort Riley, the military home of the Big Red. The below poverty level rates for the residents of the other Morris County towns range from four to 13 percent: Latimer City, four percent; Parkerville City, eight percent; Dwight City, nine percent; Wilsey, ten percent; and Council Grove, 13 percent.

***Race and Ethnicity.*** Weisheit *et al* (p. 13) reports that "U.S. Census data show that rural areas are substantially more homogeneous than are central cities on both race and ethnicity." Morris County which is 97 percent white is typical of the general pattern. Officers from the Council Grove Police Department were able to identify 29 Morris County racial minority households. As noted earlier, three percent of the County population were classified in the 1990 U.S. Census as black, American Indian, Asian, Hispanic or other. The Chief of Police reported that there was

little racial tension in the various communities. This appraisal contradicted citizen survey and field data. Survey respondents in minority households reported “favoritism.”

Supporting the survey findings, a white University student who was informed that a professor was doing research on law enforcement in her hometown contacted the principal investigator. She said that local law enforcement regularly ran out Black military and/or college students who were dating local girls and described two incidents in detail. During an informal conversation, one law enforcement officer verified the accuracy of one of the incidents. He was not asked about the other.

*Social Climate.* Other aspects of the social climate of the Council Grove area, like other American rural areas, have “implications for rural crime and rural justice.” (Weisheit *et al*, p. 16). Three features of the rural social climate commonly shaping the delivery of criminal justice are informal control, a mistrust of government, and a reluctance to share internal problems.

#### Informal Social Control

People know each other in the Council Grove area. Only 13 percent of the reporting respondents had not lived in the area for one or more generations; 12 percent had families who had been there for five or six generations; 75 percent of the respondents’ families for two to four generations. The trust level is so high that a family hired a stranger to take care of their father without having a background check done on her. She took off with the older man and most of his money and the case eventually received national attention. The status of a family can greatly influence an election. For example, the grandmother of the Chief of Police was very active in the Senior Citizen organization.

The officers reported that, in most cases, they just needed to call families to “nip things in the bud.” Unless there is a crisis, they know not to call after 7 p.m. or on high school sports event Friday or Saturday evenings, Wed. church night, or Sunday mornings.

The following reflections on the informal social control methods of rural areas were made by Michael Sawyer while he was a Kansas State University senior in criminology and shortly after he had worked as a student research assistant for the KSU/Council Grove policing research project. At the time Mr. Sawyer had not only grown up on a farm close to Holton, Kansas, a rural Midwestern area with a social climate that closely paralleled Council Grove’s, but also was working as a reserve officer in his home town area (Sawyer, 2, 4-6).

In rural areas you can see that it is often the case that everyone knows everyone. Law enforcement officers are acquainted with the public professionally as well as socially. It seems that there is *informal control* [sic] of crime in small towns. People often handle minor incidents of crime informally without contacting the police. This doesn’t exactly mean that rural residents always take the law into their own hands. Informal control [in this context] does not include revenge for a crime. It is more like restitution or an alternative form of punishment. For example, if a young boy vandalizes a community business, the owner might tell his son, who is the same age as the vandal<sup>4</sup>, to listen around and find out who trashed his business. Once the owner finds out who did it, he will call the boy’s father and let the father handle it appropriately. Often, the vandal’s father will make the boy work off the damage for the store owner, as well as punish the boy at home. This is all handled informally, without the police. This way the police can focus on major crimes that are of greater concern to the public safety.

...Since smaller communities have a higher density of acquaintanceship the watchfulness of its citizens is greater. People keep an eye on each others’ homes, children, and other property. This also makes it more likely that a resident will feel responsible to act if a crime is being committed....

The overall effectiveness of police in rural areas is boosted by the network they form with the local citizens. When people are acquainted with one another, it is easier to get to the bottom of a case and find out “who done it.” As a result, police departments in rural areas have higher clearance rates (crimes cleared by arrest) for all index crimes than do urban police agencies.



In contrast to the national (ten) percent clearance rate, Council Groves Police Department's clearance rates for 1994 and 1995 were 45.3% and 54%, respectively. People not only know each other but they, including law enforcement members, also play together as families and friends. For instance in the citizen survey, of the 30 categories of recreational activities self-identified by 178 household respondents, ten were sports related ranging from fishing, boating, golfing, hunting; riding and breeding horses, playing sports, watching sports, and doing "outdoors" and Lake activities. Thus, a police officer is not only a law enforcement official but also a family member, a friend, or a hunting buddy. These primary relationships lend themselves more readily to informal social control measures rather than formal institutionalized legal action.

Policing styles in rural areas differ a great deal from those used in big cities. In urban areas, policing consists mainly of enforcing criminal law through arrests (reactive policing). However, in rural communities policing is seen more as a social work kind of job. Police in small towns focus on crime prevention (proactive policing). Also, their duties might include anything from fire fighting to emergency medical treatment to helping an elderly lady cross the street.

The yearly reports for 1994, 1995, 1996, and 1997 indicate that Council Grove law enforcement provided "special escort" services 117 times and took "Emergency messages" 107 times to local citizens.

It is important for a successful police officer to be respected by the people he or she serves. In big city departments, respect for police is seen as coming with the position. However, in small towns an officer has to earn respect on an individual level through his or her own actions. In rural areas, it is found that people view their police officers as citizens first and as police officials second. This is apparent when policing agencies hire local citizens to work as an officer in the area. This seems to strengthen the bond between the community and local law enforcement...

In rural areas, it is considered good policing when there are only a minimal number of arrests and police reports. If an officer can successfully handle a situation

informally without bringing anyone in, he or she is doing the job well. In fact, too many arrests can be seen as an officer's inability to handle situations informally.

From 1994-1997, the Council Grove Department issued 1222 "Verbal/Written Warnings" as contrasted to 645 "Citations Issued".

Finally, police must be willing and able to help solve general problems in the community rather than just react to a problem that has already gotten out of hand. If an officer genuinely cares about the well being of the community, this is more likely to happen. Officers who are also hometown citizens of a rural community are more likely to care deeply about the direction in which the community is going. After all, if you had small children and you were a law officer, wouldn't you do everything in your power to ensure that the community remained a safe place to live and grow up in? This is the way I feel about my hometown.

#### Mistrust of Government.

When the research proposal was being designed, the Chief of Police pointed out that the local people would be immediately suspicious of telephone calls about law enforcement and advised that the calls be made from the City Hall or one of the city government buildings so that the interviewers "could be checked out." Although these were "government" sites, the residents knew all of the employees, including law enforcement, so trusted their explanations of who the callers were and what they were doing. This strategy was successful in reducing anxiety and fears. On the very first day the random telephone surveys were begun, one of the interviewers called an elderly man who came to City Hall to check on the research team, especially the female interviewer whom he "took a liking to." The Chief chuckled and said that the man was called the "Town Crier" and his positive reports would serve the interviewers well, especially amongst the senior citizens.

However, 19 percent of the household respondents would not give their specific income or would give only a general label such as "not a lot" or "social security" although they answered

all of the other items. And several asked if the survey had anything to do with the sheriff's election. The law enforcement officers were even more suspicious as only 9 of the 16 law enforcement officers returned their surveys

Michael Sawyer succinctly summed up the common mistrust of government in rural Kansas (p.3):

The greater reliance on informal methods of social control also has a down side. Informal control is often used due to a mistrust of the government. In most rural areas there is a great deal of suspicion and hatred toward any form of central government. The presence of citizen militia is on the rise. Anti-government emotions run high in some rural communities that feel they have been wronged by a federal government that has become much too powerful and intrusive.

#### Reluctance to Share Internal Problems

After the telephone surveys were completed and a preliminary report was released, the principal investigator received a long distance telephone call from a man who reported that he had lived in the area all of his life and that his family had been there for several generations. He asked if the researcher would meet with him and a former "cop" as they wanted to share some stories that they felt that people had not shared with the "outsider" interviewers. The investigator informed him that she could not change the random survey findings but could add their perceptions of law enforcement success to the narrative. She drove to Council Grove and chatted with the caller, who self-labeled himself as a "drinking man," and his friend, a disgruntled former urban cop who had retired in the area. The former law enforcement officer did most of the talking. His concern was that local law enforcement was not tough enough on the youthful speeders, especially after school, and thought that a speed trap should be set up and the kids should be arrested. Both men said that there was drug growing, dealing, and using in "old

families” but that no one was talking although law enforcement knew about it and was doing “nothing.” They did acknowledge the drug bust at Dunlap but felt that was not far reaching enough. Other than reporting the “old family” problem and only one specific incident of a young couple growing pot on the roof of their apartment building, the men could not provide other specific cases.

Before the interviews were conducted, the principal researcher spent several afternoons and mornings visiting local Council Grove businesses. One business man who was a newcomer stated that he had seen “home town” drug dealers pedaling their wares openly in a local bar. He reported that the old timers were a “big incestuous family covering each other.” He also remarked that he was still treated as an outsider although he had lived in the area for several years.

These reports of reluctance to share internal problems were not reflected by the citizen household respondents albeit this mistrust may have been a primary motivation for the heads of households who declined to be interviewed. And the reluctance to share internal problems as well as the mistrust of government were certainly factors in the low return rate of the law enforcement surveys.

The preceding five characteristics of a rural community, which, for the most part, describe the Council Grove culture, helped shape the methodology and the survey questions used in this research.

## METHODOLOGY

This rural policing study was initiated by Mark Abeles-Allison, Council Grove City Manager, who received a National Institute of Justice announcement about the Locally Initiated

Research Community Policing Project in the latter part of June of 1995. Abeles-Allison immediately contacted Baird-Olson, a criminologist with expertise in American policing at Kansas State University, Manhattan, about her interest in forming a team to study rural policing in Council Grove and its surrounding areas within and adjacent to Morris County that are serviced by Council Grove area law enforcement. These areas include the villages and surrounding areas of Latimer, Parkersville, Dwight, Wilsey, White City, Dunlap, and Alta Vista<sup>5</sup>.

The original three member team which included the City Manager of Council Grove, its Chief of Police Tom Furman, and the professor/ researcher held several preliminary meetings on the Kansas State University campus and in the City Hall of Council Grove to plan the research design. After Baird-Olson wrote the research proposal, the other two members of the team suggested modifications and additions. This same cooperative approach was used in the creation of the citizen and law enforcement survey instruments, in the design of the plans for conducting the telephone survey, and doing a field check on the validity of the survey findings. Before writing the final report, Baird-Olson returned to Kansas in March of 1998 to discuss the interpretation of the findings with the new city manager and law enforcement representative for the Chief of Police.

The traditional measures of law enforcement efficiency, namely official crime rate data and research surveys, have limitations (Clark 1994; Sparrow 1992). Crime rates are always suspect because of under reporting and surveys may not reflect the issues which a community may deem important. As has been pointed out earlier, the informal crime control measures often found in rural communities add a critical dimension to the reliability of official data. Thus, in this research project in addition to the use of local law enforcement crime data, five other data sources were

used: a random telephone survey of citizen households; a mailed survey of seasonal Lake residents; a survey of law enforcement; and field data obtained at public meetings and law enforcement training forums as well as through observation and informal interviews with community gatekeepers, business owners, ranchers, and employees.

After the Chief of Police reviewed the first drafts of the citizen and law enforcement survey instruments initially modeled after existing two rural policing surveys used in Massachusetts and Oklahoma research projects <sup>6</sup> and influenced by the researcher's first hand knowledge of rural life, he pointed out that one item on the instruments needed to be eliminated to reflect Kansas law. In addition, as a result of sometimes quite frank admissions about racial, domestic abuse, and homophobic attitudes during professional training sessions provided by KSU consultants for Council Grove area law enforcement, the investigator added related items about behavior to both surveys<sup>7</sup>. For instance, both officers and citizens talked about supporters of KKK and militia groups and the connections of some law enforcement with such organizations. The researcher then met with the Morris County sheriff, the county commissioners, the county senior citizens organization, the Council Grove City Council, and visited informally with area business people before finalizing the questionnaires for the area citizens and law enforcement.

Both surveys were designed to obtain input on the following concerns: local attitudes about police involvement in community activities; the importance of policing activities, the effectiveness of local law enforcement, and the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents.

### ***Citizen Household Survey and Sample***

A systematic random sample of citizen respondents was chosen by selecting every fourth phone number in local telephone directories after all identifiable businesses were excluded. The head or co-head of each household was then interviewed. The phone calls conducted by University undergraduate students were made from the Council Grove police offices and the road service offices for 17 days during the period from September 18 through October 20, 1996.<sup>8</sup>

308 household telephone surveys were completed, 12 ten percent of Morris County's 2551 households. At least ten percent of the households of each town and its surrounding rural area was surveyed. In addition, the Council Grove city manager was especially interested in the views of the City's water supply lake residents because of their significant tax base and their community influence. After completing the telephone interviews, citizen surveys were mailed to all of the seasonal lake households who had not been included in the random telephone survey. Of the 276 mailed surveys, 15 percent were returned. A number of the part-time residents indicated that they did not know enough about law enforcement in the area to respond. Thus, from both sources, 337 surveys, 13 percent of the County's households, were usable.

Given the homogeneous racial makeup of the area and the findings from the field data, the minority population was over sampled to determine if there were differential experiences. Since the Chief of Police had reported that there were at least three households where Spanish was the primary language, two students whose first language was Spanish translated and conducted the interviews with Spanish-speaking only households.

As noted earlier, the Council Grove area population, overall, is older, financially stable, well educated, family oriented, and homogeneous. The demographic characteristics of the

household survey respondents reflected that profile. The ages of the respondents ranged from 20 to 99 years of age. The modal category was 40-59 years of age. Forty-one percent were 20-39 years of age; 31 percent were 60-79 years of age; and six percent were 80-99 years of age. Since the 1990 U.S. Census reported that slightly over six percent of the population was 80-99 years of age, the last age category was over sampled. This was undoubtedly due to the fact that most of the household respondents in this age group were more likely to be at home than younger household respondents when the telephone interviewers called.

Twenty-eight percent of the citizen respondents had some college education or an associate degree and three percent had a graduate degree or some post secondary education. As noted earlier, according to the U.S. Census, 36 percent of the Morris County population had college experience ranging from some to graduate degree. Less than one fifth of the Morris County survey respondents, 19 percent, had completed less than the eighth grade or some high school. Nineteen percent of the County population 25 years and over, according to Census statistics had less than a ninth grade education or 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> experience with no diploma.

Of the 81 percent of the respondents who were comfortable sharing their household incomes, the reports mirrored the Census data. However, 37 respondents did not give a dollar category but offered labels such as "social security", "pension", "retired/fixed", "middle-middle class", and in four cases, "not a lot." However, for those who gave an actual monetary value, less than one percent of the sample reported an income of less than \$5000. The modal category was \$50-74,999, 13 percent of the reporting sample. (As noted earlier, according to the 1990 U.S. Census, the Morris County median family income was \$35,225.) Five percent of the study respondents reported incomes over \$75,000. In general, with the notable exception of the Dunlap



area, the longer the respondents had lived in the area or if they lived in the Lake area, the higher the household income. Another indicator of financial stability can be found in recreational activities. For instance, of the 178 respondents who responded to the open-ended item about their recreational activities, almost ten percent reported that they traveled

Gender and marital status of the survey respondents closely paralleled the 1990 Census figures. Forty-eight percent of the household respondents were male; 52 percent were female. Seventy-five percent of the respondents were married; 11 percent were widowed; eight percent were divorced; and one percent was separated. Only six percent had never married. These were primarily young men who had moved to the area to work in one of the small manufacturing industries.

Over fifty-three percent of the respondents came from families who had lived in the Council Grove area over three generations. The bimodal categories were three and four generations, 21 and 20 percent, respectively. Nine percent were from five generation families; three percent were from families who had lived in the area for six generations. Seventy percent of the respondents reported that they had not moved in the last five years. According to the 1990 Census in 1985 sixty two percent of the Morris County population lived in the same house.

Twenty-one percent of the household respondents had been or were in the military. As has been seen, twenty percent of the Morris County population 16 years and over were in the military or were veterans (1990 U.S. Census).

Seventy-three percent of the respondents were members of a Christian church; of that group, almost half, 45 percent, defined themselves as active members of their churches.

### ***Law Enforcement Survey and Sample***

All of the local law enforcement personnel were given the opportunity to complete a survey which mirrored the citizen survey and included additional items about occupational stress factors and attitudes about work expectations. The 1996 Council Grove area law enforcement force included six City of Council Grove officers, two reserve officers, four Morris County Sheriff officers, one officer from the town of Alta Vista, one Kansas State Highway Patrol officer, and two dispatchers. Nine of the sixteen law enforcement personnel returned their completed surveys. As noted earlier, this response rate was shaped by the mistrust of government including federally funded research projects as well as the local politics of the sheriff's election.

Three of the nine who returned law enforcement surveys were dispatchers; one, a sergeant; two, city police officers; one, a patrol officer; one, a sheriff, and one, a sheriff's deputy. The ages of law enforcement respondents ranged from 25-59. Seven were married; one was divorced; and one had never married. Four of the nine had served in the military. Three had earned only a high school degree; four had some college or an associate degree; one had a college degree; and one had a M.A. Three had lived in Morris County for less than five years. The range of years in the area was one to thirty-five years. Two respondents had families that had lived in the area two and three generations, respectively. All of the law enforcement respondents self-reported their racial background as white. Seven reported that they were members of a church; however, four of that group reported that they were not active participants. Three of the law enforcement respondents reported family incomes under \$29,000; three did not answer the income item. One had a household income of \$30,000-34,999 and two were in the \$40,000-

49,999 income categories. Similar to the citizen responses about recreational activities, the law enforcement personnel were involved in sports and family activities.

### ***Stage Two: Field Data***

After completing the surveys, the principal investigator went again into the field in order to validate and to gain further insight to help interpret the survey data on public and law enforcement perceptions. In December of 1996 she accompanied the DARE officer when he conducted four DARE classes at three Morris County schools. Earlier, the evening of September 26, the principal researcher attended a Board of Directors meeting of the local, eight month old Crime Stoppers Organization. On October 7, the City Manager, the Crime Stoppers officer, and the researcher gave a well received preliminary report on the research findings at the Kansas State Municipalities 86<sup>th</sup> Conference.

As a result of a brief news article in the local weekly paper about this preliminary report, a life time Council Grove resident who personally had not been interviewed in either the random household telephone sample or the mailed survey sample made a long distance call to the researcher. The man, whose extended family has considerable influence in the area, asked if she would meet with him and his friends so that they, one of whom was a retired big city law enforcement official, could have their disagreements with the survey findings recorded. The interviewer respecting their request met with them in Council Grove for almost three hours in February of 1997 and added their observations to the field data.

## FINDINGS

Following the summary of citizen and law enforcement rank ordered perceptions of crime and public disorder problems in the area, the findings for the Council Grove policing study are

divided into two broad categories: citizen perceptions and law enforcement perceptions. Three general areas were covered by both surveys: (1) law enforcement responsibilities or professional roles; (2) effectiveness of local law enforcement; and (3) rural/urban differences. The differences and similarities between the citizen and law enforcement perceptions are discussed in the analysis and discussion section of this report.

### **Citizen Perception of Crime and Civil Problems**

Citizens were asked to describe the seriousness of 15 various behaviors ranging from vandalism to drugs to domestic abuse to gun use. The choice of five rankings ranged from not serious to very serious. In addition, the respondents could add offenses that were not included in the list.

Circa two thirds and over of the household heads ranked seven of the 15 potential social problems as not serious: (1) loitering, 61 percent of 309 respondents; (2) gangs, 66 percent of 311 respondents; (3) parking violations, 72 percent of 312 respondents; (4) rape, 74 percent of 306 respondents; (5) graffiti, 76 percent of 312 respondents; (6) homelessness, 81 percent of 311 respondents; and (7) prostitution, 87 percent of 310 respondents,

Respondents had split opinions about four of the potential 15 problems: guns, assault, auto theft, and drinking. Forty-eight of the respondents felt that guns were not a serious problem, 35 percent ranked the use of guns as being somewhat serious and in between being somewhat serious and very serious; six percent, very serious. When asked about assault, 53 percent said the crime was not a serious problem, 44 percent ranked the act as being somewhat serious and in between being serious and very serious; 3 percent felt that assault was a very serious problem in Morris County. When considering auto theft, 58 percent of the household

heads ranked the act as not serious; 41 percent, in between not serious and somewhat serious; and 23 percent, somewhat serious and very serious. Drinking ratings were similar to the split in opinions about assault and auto theft. Forty one percent felt that drinking was not a serious problem; 38 percent, in between not serious and somewhat serious; and 21 percent, somewhat serious and very serious.

Four activities were clearly identified as problems in Morris County: burglary, domestic abuse, drugs, and vandalism. Thirty-three percent of the respondents (315) felt that burglary offenses were not a serious problem; 41 percent, in between not serious and somewhat serious; and 23 percent, somewhat serious and very serious. Thirty-two percent of the respondents (308) considered domestic abuse a non serious problem; 42 percent, in between not serious and somewhat serious; and 26 percent, somewhat serious and very serious. The concern was even clearer for drugs and vandalism. Seventeen percent of the respondents (303) rated drugs as not a serious problem; however, 36 percent felt that it was in between a not serious and somewhat serious problem and the majority, 47 percent, ranked drugs as a somewhat serious and very serious concern. Vandalism was perceived as not being a serious problem by 24 percent of the Morris County study respondents (307) as contrasted to 40 percent who saw the act as in between a not serious and somewhat serious problem and the 36 percent who rated the offense as a somewhat serious and very serious concern in their communities.

When asked to add offenses not given in the 14 item list, respondents identified dangerous boating (1 respondent), substandard housing (1), increasing number of teens (1), need to regulate cross walks (1), accidents (1), illegal immigration (1), shoplifting (1), parental neglect (1), lack of youth activities (2), and alcohol abuse (4).

## Law Enforcement Roles

### *Citizen Perceptions of Law Enforcement Professional Responsibilities*

The items examining perceptions of law enforcement roles are grouped in two categories: crime fighting and community service.

Crime Fighting. Three items were used in the citizen survey to measure their perception of crime fighting roles. For each item the respondent was asked if she/he strongly agreed, agreed, disagreed, strongly disagreed, or had no opinion. The first question asked if all of law enforcement's time should be spent in detection and apprehension; the second asked if only one part of the time should be spent on investigation; and the third queried if only one part of the job should be arresting suspected offenders.

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**Table One: Crime Fighting**

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	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	No Opinion
• Detect/Apprehend All Time	38%	46%	16%
• One Part Time Investigate	9%	85%	6%
• One Part Time Arrest	9%	83%	8%

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As can be noted in Table One, almost half of the respondents did not think that their local law enforcement officers should be spending all of their time detecting and apprehending offenders and over 80 percent thought that the crime fighting activities should include detecting, apprehending, and arresting criminal offenders.

Community Service. The community service items reflect community policing roles. When asked if virtually all of the time of law enforcement officers should be spent in responding to alarms and citizen complaints, the household respondents were of more mixed opinion about community service roles than they were about crime fighting roles. Forty percent strongly agreed or agreed that most of law enforcement time should be spent responding to alarms and citizen complaints as contrasted to 40 percent who disagreed or strongly disagreed. Seventeen percent neither agreed or disagreed, *i.e.*, they had no opinion.

Thirteen additional closed item items were used to examine citizen perceptions of law enforcement's community service activities. Two of these indicators, the support of coaching different youth activities and sponsoring gender sensitivity programs, revealed clear support for the community policing model. The other results were not as clear and, as will be seen, were contradicted by open ended responses as well as the responses to the questions about local law enforcement effectiveness.

As can be noted in Table Two, for four of the proposed community service roles-- coaching youth programs, at least one fourth of the respondents had no opinion. At the same time 53 percent agreed or strongly agreed that law enforcement should help coach youth activities. A similar ambivalence, if not as pronounced, can be found in the responses to support of law enforcement doing public media talks. Fifty eight percent disagreed or strongly disagreed while 22 percent agreed or strongly agreed and another 20 percent had no opinion. The ambivalence about law enforcement's roles in sponsoring race programs, sponsoring gender programs, providing information about social programs, and allowing citizen/student Ride-a-longs is quite apparent.

Table Two: Community Service

	Strongly Agree/ Agree	Strongly Disagree/ Disagree	No Opinion
• Coach youth activities	53%	22%	25%
• Sponsor youth activities	8%	79%	27%
• Hold informal get-togethers	2%	87%	11%
• Hold meetings with community	5%	88%	7%
• Talk to PTA	9%	80%	11%
• TV/Radio Speaker	22%	58%	20%
• Talk with teenagers re: driving	11%	75%	14%
• Educate about home security	16%	66%	18%
• Crowd control	9%	83%	8%
• Sponsor race respect programs	32%	45%	23%
• Sponsor gender respect programs	37%	29%	24%
• Information on social programs	36%	45%	19%
• Citizen Ride-A-Long Program	36%	49%	15%

In this measure of citizen support for community service law enforcement activities, there was clear lack of support for seven roles: sponsoring youth activities, holding informal get togethers, hold meetings with community groups, talking to the PTA and related organizations, talking with teenagers about drinking and driving, educating citizens about home security, and doing crowd control at local festivals and sports events. In each of the cases, over two thirds of the respondents were not in support of the activities.

When asked if about community appreciation given to law enforcement, five percent of the household respondents (308) replied that they were given no appreciation; 42 percent, little appreciation; 48 percent, moderate; and 5 percent, very much. Those respondents who rated the level of appreciation as moderate or very much were then asked to explain their ratings. Twelve



percent felt that appreciation was shown through paper coverage and 86 percent identified personal characteristics of the officer that were recognized in the community. One person said, "People are prone to criticize, but I'm just glad they're there." Another Morris County resident observed, "Because of the high turnover in officers, people don't know them."

Citizen evaluation of law enforcement roles and the appreciation shown to officers did not always mirror law enforcement perceptions of their professional roles as will be seen in the following discussion.

### ***Law Enforcement Perceptions of Professional Roles***

Although the sample of law enforcement is very small, nine members of sixteen reporting, their responses about crime fighting and community service are suggestive. When considering crime fighting responsibilities, five agreed and/or strongly agreed that arrests were only one part of the job. Four of the six respondents who answered the item indicated that they agreed that arresting suspected offenders should occupy only one part of officers' time, one strongly agreed, and one strongly disagreed. Four agreed that investigation was one part of the job while two strongly disagreed or disagreed and two had no opinion. When asked if all of the time should be spent detecting and apprehending offenders, four had no opinion, three disagreed, and one agreed. And when asked if they should spend all of their time responding to alarms and citizen complaints of crime, three of the seven who had answered the question had no opinion, three disagreed, and two agreed.

The law enforcement respondents were asked to write their definitions of community policing. Six answers were given:

1. Talking or working with the public
2. Developing good rapport with the community and involving citizens in crime prevention
3. Ask the city
4. Crimestoppers
5. Communication with the public or working with them
6. We already do it!

The responses to the items about community service, i.e. community policing roles, can be grouped into two broad categories: activities they should be doing and those roles about which they had no clear difference of opinion.

- A. Should be doing (agree/strongly agree)
  1. Formal and informal get togethers with other law enforcement, 6
  2. Hold meetings with community groups, 6
  3. Sponsor activities for children and youth, 6
  4. Provide information about social program services to citizens, 6
  5. Give talks at schools on crime prevention, 7
  6. Give talks at PTA, Senior Citizens, etc. on crime prevention, 7
  7. Give talks to teens on importance of safe driving, 8
  8. Educate the public about home security measures, 8
  9. Serve crowd function control at community festival or sports event, 7
- B. Split opinion I (No opinion and disagree or strongly disagree)
  1. Coach a sports team or similar activity, 3 and 3
  2. Supervision of young children in organized recreational activities, 3 and 4
- C. Split opinion II (No opinion and agree or strongly agree)
  1. Allow public or students to ride along with law, 3 and 4
  2. Appear on radio and TV to speak on crime prevention, 3 and 4
- D. Split opinion III (No opinion, disagree or strongly disagree, agree or strongly agree)
  1. Sponsor programs which promote race relations, 4, 1, 3
  2. Sponsor programs which promote gender relations, 4, 2, 2

Law enforcement respondents were also asked to identify the community agencies that had supported their community policing efforts. Seven identified the schools. Four wrote that the Fire Department and Senior Citizens had helped. The Department of Social Services received

votes from three respondents followed by two votes for recreational and youth programs.

Emergency Ambulance, Kansas Highway Patrol, and the Extension Service each received one note of acknowledgment.

The University research investigator's participant observation data supported the officer's perception of support from the schools, the local Senior Citizens group, and Social Service agencies. For instance, when invited, she joined the Seniors for their weekly lunch on April 9, 1996. About 50 elders were present, one of whom was the grandmother of the Chief of Police. They told the researcher a story about how the local officers had quickly found the stolen purse of one of their members, how pleased they were with the March 24<sup>th</sup> *Topeka Journal* news story<sup>9</sup> about the research project, and how wonderful it was that the Chief of Police who had never been east of the Mississippi River was able to go to D.C. as a member of the research team. Later, the researcher was stopped on the Main Street of Council Grove by a senior who had read about the presentation by Officer Steve Crichton, the City Manager, and the University researcher at the Annual October meeting of the League of Kansas Municipalities held in a suburb of Kansas City. He said that they were all pleased that the team had described how safe Council Grove was, "what a good place" it was.

Representatives for social service agencies, including a nurse, attended the four training sessions on hate crimes, domestic abuse, domestic abuse, and grieving conducted by University volunteers and coordinated by the principal research investigator. The officers received professional training credits for attending the sessions albeit not all came willingly.

In addition to meeting with the County Commissioners as well as the out-going sheriff and the in-coming sheriff, doing U.S. Census and historical research at the Council Grove public

library, and visiting informally a number of times with school officials and various business owners and employees in Morris County towns during shopping forays and a local parade, the University researcher attended a Crime Stoppers meeting chaired by Officer Steve Crichton and went with D.A.R.E. Officer Bill Tolliver to three classes in Council Grove, one in Wilsey, and two in White City. The University student research assistants were encouraged to keep their ears to the ground and they too heard support for law enforcement involvement with the community.

The negative remarks came from one “newcomer” who claimed to have had extensive experience as a “real cop” in a major urban area and did not feel accepted by the community and a self-identified “black sheep from an old family” and his self-identified “drinking and coffee cronies”, all of whom wanted a more formal, reactive style of law enforcement. For instance, the newcomer, a business man, claimed that there was much crime but it was covered by locals, including law enforcement, who suffered from “too much in-breeding” and who wanted to protect the area’s “safe image.” These perceptions were the exceptions; all of the other informal feedback the University researcher received was in support of the various local enforcement activities. The business people, elected officials, teachers, school administrators, and students liked this type of law enforcement involvement with the community, “the caring” rather than a punitive, reactive approach. Crichton and Tolliver, in particular, were seen as allies rather than potential enemies, legal entities to be feared.

### Effectiveness of Law Enforcement

Citizen perceptions of law enforcement effectiveness or success was measured by using two data sources: the household survey and participant observation.

## *Citizen Evaluations of Law Enforcement Effectiveness*

Table Three summarizes the effectiveness of law enforcement in accomplishing seven tasks: reducing fear, lowering crime rate, increasing community involvement, addressing root causes of crime, enhancing community trust, and forming partnership between law enforcement and community.

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Table Three: Effectiveness of Law Enforcement

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	Very Effective
• Reduce fear	96%
• Lower crime rate	95%
• Increase community involvement in crime prevention	93%
• Address root causes of crime	91%
• Enhance community trust in law enforcement	90%
• Promote working relationship with youth and schools	73%
• Form partnership between law enforcement and community	51%

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Another measure of citizen perceptions of local law enforcement success was obtained by asking those respondents whose households had used law enforcement services of any kind, how effective those services were. Ninety-nine percent rated law enforcement as very good or very effective. In a related open ended question, the respondents were asked if they had used law enforcement if they had any recommendations. Of the 163 people who responded to the item, 10 percent said that they had not recommendation, only praise and nine percent wanted more community involvement. Six percent wanted more training or education for their officers; more officers, a special issue for farm residents albeit they recognized that response time was related to traveling distances; and officers who were more "professionally oriented".<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, 15

percent of the respondents felt that the officers should receive higher salaries; within that group 18 percent of the Lake residents, the primary tax base for the County, were concerned about the salary levels as not being adequate.

A third indicator was obtained when all of the household respondents were asked in an open-ended item to identify the most successful local law enforcement programs. Of the 232 people who answered the question, 47 percent identified the DARE Program as being one of the most successful programs. Crime Stoppers were identified by five percent; “good work with the community”, 5 percent; “work well with the youth”, 4 percent; school programs, 4 percent; and Neighborhood Watch, 4 percent. And the 911, Bike Safety, SADD, McGruff, and Senior Driving programs each received recognition by five different respondents. Twenty-eight of the respondents stated that they were not aware of any law enforcement programs.

A final indicator of law enforcement success asked an open-ended question about problems with local law enforcement. Thirty-one of the people who answered the question stated that they were not aware of any problems. Thirteen percent indicated that there were “none”; that law enforcement “do a good job.”

Fourteen percent felt that local law enforcement had crime fighting problems, specifically law enforcement needed to get tougher on drugs/alcohol, minors drinking, and/or enforcing laws more

Eight percent identified community service problems: obtaining more support for law, getting more involved with the community, becoming more visible, and/or listening more to the community

Ten percent volunteered concerns that could reflect both crime fighting and community service roles: the need to respond faster, the need to more equitably treat youth and adults (comments about certain families being more favored), and/or the need to report better. Four percent of the respondents complained that parents needed more control of their kids.

Fifteen percent felt that law enforcement salaries were too low, were under staffed, and/or needed more training to be more professional.

## COMPARISON OF URBAN AND RURAL ENFORCEMENT

If the respondents had lived in both rural and urban areas, they were asked to identify differences in styles and delivery of law enforcement services. Thirty-five percent of the total sample responded and of that group of 118, 40 percent reported differences.

***The Rural Experience.*** Eighteen percent said that rural police were more friendly, more familiar with the community, responded faster, communicated more with the community, and/or were more visible. They also added that rural communities had less crime and/or were more peaceful.

In contrast, ten percent of the respondents described rural law enforcement in less favorable terms: showed more favoritism, had fewer officers, were slower to respond, were less visible, had less interaction with the community, and/or faced the obstacle of patrolling a bigger area.

### ***The Urban Experience***

Thirty percent of the respondents who had both urban and rural experiences identified positive attributes of urban policing: more funding, faster response time, more visible, more professional, less favoritism, better trained officers, and/or more organized citizen patrols.

In contrast, 20 percent had had negative experiences with urban law enforcement as the respondents rated officers less friendly, providing slower response time, and/or being untrustworthy. In addition, 13 percent reported being crime victims in urban areas, often a primary reason for returning home or moving to the Morris County area.

Finally, 40 percent reported urban characteristics which they did not rate as either favorable or unfavorable. Seven percent thought that there was more communication between law enforcement and the community while five percent perceived the communication as being less. Twenty percent reported more law enforcement while 8 percent reported less law enforcement.

#### ***Law Enforcement Self-Perceptions of Effectiveness***

As noted earlier, although over half of the officers returned the surveys, the sample size is small albeit suggestive. One half to three-fourth of the respondents felt that local law enforcement was effective in reducing community fear of crime, lowering the crime rate, increasing community involvement in crime prevention, addressing the root causes of crime, enhancing community trust in law enforcement, forming partnerships with the community, and promoting working relationships with the youth and the schools. At the same time a clear majority, at least two thirds, of the law enforcement respondents felt that all of these objectives were all important or very important. All agreed that improving communication between police, public agencies, and private organizations was very important.

When asked about the importance of seven community policing strategies, the reactions were mixed: ranging from ambivalence about three of the strategies to strong support for four. Half were in support of decentralization, support of permanent assignment to specific beats, and



participation in community advisory committees; half were not. The majority supported or strongly supported the need for progress reports, special training for officers, increasing the number of community policing officers, and receiving strong commitment from the community.

In an open-ended question, law enforcement respondents were asked to identify their most successful community programs. The following responses were given: "too early to tell." Driver's ed talks (2) , underage drinking, Capable Kids Can, Alternative Day, Career Day, Identify a Kid, Crime Stoppers, and Neighborhood Watch. In another open-ended item related to the prior one, law enforcement personnel were asked to identify the social problems that they had been successfully addressing. Underage drinking, smoking, drugs were identified.

Paralleling the citizen surveys, the law enforcement survey sought information about perceptions of community support and, in addition, opinions of senior administration support. The majority agreed that their supervisors' viewed community support as important; they liked the concept of law enforcement agencies giving considerable attention to preventing crime in addition to responding to crime; and they felt it was very important to widely recognize that law enforcement alone cannot solve crime and other community problems. Half or over half of the respondents had no opinion when asked about their perceptions about the following three statements: The new attention being given to improving law enforcement and community relations is not really called for; It is important that supervisors more directly articulate their strong desire for community policing; and Law enforcement should receive more training about new areas of community policing concern. Opinion was almost equally divided amongst Morris County law enforcement respondents when asked about their agreement or disagreement with the following three items about perceptions of community and administrative support: Local citizens view

community involvement as important; It is important that local elected officials more directly articulate the community's concerns; and It is important that supervisors go on record endorsing freer use of discretion of lower ranking officers to divert suspects or even offenders.

### ***Law Enforcement Self-Perceptions of Stress Factors and Professional Attitudes***

The questions about stress factors were limited to items about the impact of community policing strategies. Three fourths of the Morris County law enforcement respondents reported that they felt very uncomfortable "walking the beat" and almost all felt that their stress level would be reduced if responsibilities that included neighborhood meetings were eliminated. At the same time the respondents were equally divided when asked if they agreed or disagreed with the following two statements: Uncertainty of outcome of informal law enforcement and citizen contact causes some fear or stress and I feel less comfortable in a social agency referral role than in the offender apprehension role. Finally, only one respondent agreed with the item asking if community policing stress resulted in wasting much valuable time while serious criminals were running loose. Almost half of the respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed and one had no opinion.

When asked about their attitudes toward citizens, administrative rules, laws, and constitutional mandates, all agreed that they were frequently frustrated by the lack of public appreciation and at times frustrated by the probable cause requirement. The majority felt frequently frustrated by their agencies' rules which they saw as mostly benefitting the offender; their agencies' regulations on the use of force as being unreasonably restrictive; and laws that made immediate inspection of buildings more difficult. The majority agreed that law enforcement should be permitted to randomly stop motor vehicles for drunk drivers. In contrast, the majority

disagreed or strongly disagreed that the Miranda ruling was one of the worse setbacks for law enforcement; laws that permit suspects to have any attorney present during line-ups is a bad idea; to some extent, methods of interrogation that severely frighten the suspect should be allowed in order to obtain confessions. The group of Morris County law enforcement respondents were ambivalent about the following concerns: laws that require issuance of warrant before search making their work more difficult; wanting more concern given to catching offenders than to whether certain rules are being broken; laws preventing immediate physical inspection of persons and possessions making their work more difficult; and too many restrictions placed on law enforcement interrogation of suspects.

## DISCUSSION

Morris County residents, overall, were satisfied and often very pleased with the performance of their law enforcement officers and they wanted more of the same type of service. Yet when asked what they thought their officers should be doing: crime fighting or community service, the survey results indicated not only a lack of awareness but also much ambivalence, a type of cognitive dissonance between the reality of the style of law enforcement that was actually being done and that image of which they thought officers should be doing. If crime rates are used as a measure of both law enforcement effectiveness and compared to citizen knowledge about local crime problems, then citizen perceptions of the four most critical local offenses--burglary, domestic abuse, drugs, and vandalism-- paralleled official records of local law enforcement intervention for burglary, vandalism, and possibly domestic abuse. As has been seen, official Council Grove city police records for 1994-1997 showed 173 cases of vandalism/criminal damage to property and 94 cases of burglary/breaking and entering. Domestic abuse cases may have

been included in the 20 cases of aggravated assault/battery or the 113 cases of simple assault/battery. The 351 domestic calls may have also reflected domestic abuse as law enforcement officers reported during the training session on domestic abuse and during informal conversations that domestic abuse was often handled in an informal manner. Contrary to citizen perceptions of major problems with drugs, five drug violations were recorded locally for the period.

Given the low official crime rates and citizen satisfaction with law enforcement performance, how do we explain Morris County residents as well as law enforcement's ambivalence about policing styles and their misconceptions about the drug problem? A quick review of the history of the Council Grove area will shed some light on the question. Council Grove was a jumping off point for the Western expansion movement. Custer, after leaving Fort Riley which is still one of the major Army forts in the United States, camped for some time in the Council Grove area before heading to the Northwest. Much of the frontier aggressive mentality is still remembered by the older families and today is reinforced not only by the local tourism industry but also by the political and mass media images of "real" crime fighters in the form of tough guys such as John Wayne and Don Johnson who are not above breaking the law to get their bad guy. These problematic role images are further reinforced by political and mass media hype about the dangers of drugs and how this danger should be addressed. The residents of Morris County are not immune to the socialization of these institutional agents.<sup>11</sup>

At the beginning of the study rural community policing, the Chief of Police said, "We're already doing it. We always have." Another old timer later added, "We've just added some new twists and renamed some old practices." Their observations have been supported by the data in this study. One wonders why a community should spoil a good thing that is already in place.

## CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from the locally initiated research project on rural Kansas community policing revealed issues that need to be included in future decisions about the role of law enforcement, the role of research, and team work. The following discussion will outline policy considerations for three areas of concern for rural policing: law enforcement, university research partnerships, and city hall/ law enforcement team cooperation.

### Rural Policy and Law Enforcement

1. Law enforcement, city management and county commissioners need to do more public awareness education in two areas: support the multiple law enforcement responsibilities and to promote effective law enforcement programs and activities. Rural law enforcement officers are not just crime fighters. Despite the opinions of a select group of citizens, there is simply not that much crime. If there is more crime, it was not reported either in the citizen survey nor formally processed by law enforcement. Secondly, for all but two of the 13 survey measures of law enforcement community service responsibilities, over ten percent of the household respondents did not feel that they had enough knowledge to make a judgment call about law enforcement roles; furthermore, for four of the measures, circa 25 percent of the respondents had no opinion. Therefore, community leaders need to spread the word more widely about law enforcement programs and activities which the aware public perceives as being successful.

2. Supervisors and decision makers need to improve internal and cross agency communication about program objectives and activities as well as personnel activities of the various law enforcement agencies. For instance, some of the law enforcement officers were not

well acquainted with the objectives of some of the newly implemented community policing programs.

3. As directed by the household survey respondents, community leaders need to show more appreciation of law enforcement in the form of higher salaries, more training, more formal public recognition, etc.

4. More training for law enforcement in democratic constitutional mandates is needed. If officers learn as well as accept that their responsibilities include both enforcing law and protecting due process rights, some, if not all, of their desire to be "real cops" would be diminished.

5. Since "outsiders" are regarded with major suspicion for some time, if they are hired, part of the screening should look at the potential officers and their families willingness to adopt the local rural life style. And once hired, every effort should be made to integrate them into the community as thoroughly and quickly as possible. For instance, given the family, sports, and church orientation, new hires and their families need to be not only invited but also escorted to the various community activities by community leaders and/or members of "old families."

6. Additional race and ethnicity sensitivity training needs to be implemented for a number of the law enforcement officers. In addition to the survey responses, the one time training workshop provided by the University consultants apparently did not so much increase awareness as to primarily reveal racist attitudes and behaviors of some of the local law enforcement officers although, for the most part, they knew the "correct" responses. The state training in respect for diversity is inadequate in terms of depth as well as time devoted to the subject. When needed for a particular officer, semester courses in race and ethnic relations offered at one of the nearby colleges or universities could be mandated.

7. Additional education in gender equity issues needs to be implemented for some of the officers. As with the issue of racism, the state training on sexism is apparently inadequate. Again, team work with the Women's Studies programs at a nearby university or college could provide extended sensitivity training or courses.

#### University Research Partnerships

If universities want to form research partnerships with communities, they must move beyond the focus on the old non-applied model and support the consequent acknowledgment that research can be done more than one way. In addition, administrators also need to learn to be more supportive of research which does not necessarily bring in the "biggest dollar." For instance, this should mean that the investigators of community research projects which may receive limited funding are given the same type of respect and cooperation in terms of reduced classrooms and respectful administrative support as do other researchers who receive more funding. There are more payoffs for academia than the dollar. For instance, community research projects provide unexcelled applied research opportunities for undergraduate and graduate students in addition to a source of income. Specifically, in this study, while assisting with the data collection an undergraduate student took an independent study course on rural policing and a graduate student not only worked as a research assistant but also wrote her masters thesis using the study data.

University research policies also need to be sensitive to rural, small town social dynamics, particularly in terms of "new comers" and time. To illustrate this point, the primary investigator remembers an incident from her experience growing up in a rural area in the Northwest. She had gone home for a visit and had been hearing for several days about an "upstart" who was trying to

force political decisions upon the community. Finally, having met the man in question several years previously, she asked just how long had he been living in the area and why everyone was so up in arms about his presumptive behavior. Her mother looked at her with surprise. "Why I thought you knew! He has only been here for ten years." Of course, the point of the story is that University deadlines need to be flexible enough to accommodate such realities.

Finally, applied research provides rich information about criminal justice topics where further information is sorely missing. In this case, as indicated earlier, the findings on rural policing suggest that further research is needed in three areas: the relationship between rural poverty and crime, the relationship between the rural use of guns and crime, and how these two types of rural relationships differ from urban experiences.

#### All Team Members

As indicated in the preceding discussion of the university's role in the success of a team research on law enforcement, the fate of that team is dependent upon cooperation of all parties. Not only must the university cooperate with its researchers, local law enforcement with the researchers, but also city hall with both the researcher and law enforcement. After the city manager who had spearheaded this locally initiated research project resigned to take another position, the final report for this study was delayed because his replacement did not recognize the value of the research findings. When the researcher flew back to Kansas in March 1998 to obtain feedback on the interpretation of the findings before writing the final report, the new city manager ignored the findings. He told the researcher that not only had he put the Chief of Police on suspension but that he was also going to reduce the size of the Council Grove police force because "I don't like cops!" Based upon feedback from Officer Steve Crichton and Officer Bill



Tolliver, she wrote the draft of the final report and mailed it back to Kansas. Respecting the political climate and rural time, the primary researcher did not press for a response until October of 1999. She found that the disgruntled city manager who did not like cops had been replaced by a third manager who lasted approximately eight months. The third manager involved with this study resigned due to health matters and, according to law enforcement reports, "did things without permission of the City Council." The final draft of this report was "lost" during his reign. The researcher then mailed the report directly to Officer Steve Crichton who in addition to his regular duties has been handling part of the City Manager responsibilities. On November 2, 1999 Officer Steve Crichton reported, "At this time the city [Council Grove] is planning to hire another administrator after the first of the year. The city has also contracted me to take care of all city grants and to apply for them."<sup>12</sup>

Fortunately, neither the first replacement city manager's emotional rationale for making policy decisions nor the delay in the local review of the research report because of city manager turnover will prohibit future rural city managers, chiefs of police, and sheriffs as well as researchers from making more informed choices about rural policing as they will still have access to this baseline case study of successful community policing in rural Midwestern America.

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## ENDNOTES

1. The research was funded by the National Institute of Justice: Grant 95-IJ-CX-0045; Council Grove, Kansas/Kansas State University Law Enforcement Team Project. The research report was completed at the University of Central Florida, Orlando.
2. In 1994 there was one attempted murder and manslaughter by negligence.
3. Originally, Dunlap was primarily a black community founded after the Civil War. The majority of the county roads in the area, in contrast to the rest of Morris County, are unpaved.
4. Sawyer used "vandal" rather than "criminal," a language choice that implies community recognition of the implications of labeling as well as the acknowledgment of the offender's membership in the community.
5. Alta Vista, which rests on the Morris County line, is considered part of the community because Alta Vista children and youth attend Council Grove schools and law enforcement officers from Council Grove and Morris County the Alta Vista officer.
6. Using the two existing surveys will facilitate future comparative studies on rural community policing.
7. The Council Grove/KSU research team benefitted both parties. As previously agreed, the researcher arranged for KSU consultants in diversity issues and domestic abuse to come to Council Grove to share, at no cost, their expertise. The officers were also invited to campus to attend a nationally sponsored teleconference on grieving. Because of scheduling conflicts and being short staffed, no officers were able to attend the campus activity. Later, after the local training sessions and surveys were completed, the City Manager volunteered to write a midterm tenure letter of support for the researcher, a offer which she accepted.
8. The survey was conducted in the fall instead of spring as originally planned because of potential political ramifications resulting from the sheriff's election for which position the Chief of Police was running as well as student assistant availability.
9. Earlier the primary researcher had been called by a reporter from the Kansas state capital newspaper *The Topeka Journal*. Apparently, given the reality that Morris County adjoins Bob Dole's home territory, one of the reporter's initial motives for doing the story was to fuel a Republican agenda about "foolish research". After several long but firm conversations with the researcher (one which included a personal invitation to visit the researcher's home in the Northwest) and a long discussion with the City Manager, the story slant was changed.
10. A number of Alta Vista respondents expressed concern about their local law enforcement officer. Four of the seventeen (circa one fourth) of the town and rural respondents who offered recommendations felt that the officer should be replaced as he was "not liked at all." Stories of irresponsibility were shared with the interviewers.

11. One of the more recent treatments of the literature about the drug war hysteria can be found in Katherine Beckett and Theodore Sasson's book *The Politics of Injustice: Crime and Punishment in America* (Thousand Oaks, California: Pine Forge Press, 2000).

12. November 2, 1999 e-mail message from Officer Steve Crichton, Council Grove Police Department, Kansas.

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