Chapter Six

POLICING STYLES: THE SMALL TOWN ERA

L. Clairmont and A. Thomson

The question of changes in policing jurisdictions is especially relevant to the study of community policing because of the persistence of different policing styles among the various agencies. Murphy (1986) has argued that agencies policed in ways which demonstrated significant differences in philosophy and policing styles. With the issue of a federal policing contract on the agenda of the both small towns and amalgamated regions, in the context of increasingly rigorous policing standards being defined by the government, small town policing is undergoing a significant transformation.

The concept of policing styles is a way to classify departments and differentiate contrasting elements in a variety of policing environments. For example, Brown defined operational policing style as, "how a patrol [officer] will go about working the street and how [he or she] adapts to the contradictory requirements of behaving as a professional performing an uncertain task and as a bureaucrat subject to the stringent but uncertain discipline of the police bureaucracy" (Brown, 1981: 223). Policing involves considerable discretion on the part of officers who are inconsistently supervised in the day-to-day performance of their work. On the other hand, police departments operate according to a quasi-military model within which police organizations have devised detailed operational procedures and rules for officers to follow.

The basic statement of organizational police style was developed by Wilson (1970) who distinguished between three policing styles characteristic of specific types of urban settings. The "watch-style" of policing, which is highly discretionary, discriminatory and oriented toward order maintenance, occurs in inner cities controlled by machine politics. Legalistic policing, which is professional, obtrusive, and emphasizes enforcement as a dominant quality, is characteristic of newer cities administered by professional city managers. Finally, in service-style policing, which typically occurs in homogeneous, middle-class communities, departments take all calls for police intervention seriously and are more proactive in the development of a positive community-police relationship. This style is characterized by informality and leniency.

These models are seldom, if ever, encountered in such ideal forms (Muir, 1977; Wilson, 1970). Nor is it always the case that one model is predominate in the various types (rural, small town, urban) of police organizations, or indeed, within a single department. However, Wilson's typology utilizes a number of dichotomies which help describe, for a specific case, the style of policing. Departments, for example, may permit wide discretionary powers or attempt to circumscribe the work of officers through bureaucratic regulations.

Although police officers, as "street-level" bureaucrats, make relatively unsupervised decisions, as Phyne (1988: 1) points out, their discretion is "structured by the work situations and the organizational and client-based demands" they face "in

their day-to-day work." Alternatively, police departments can emphasize strict enforcement of regulations or advocate leniency and informal resolution of disputes (Lipsky, 1980). With greater discretion may come the possibility of discriminatory policing. It has been argued that to some extent, in Nova Scotia as elsewhere, there has been a three-tier system of justice: a preferential system for the powerful, an obtrusive one for minority groups, and another for the majority of the citizenry. The majority of people in the province appear to have very positive attitudes toward the police. However, as the Royal Commission on the Donald Marshall, Jr., Prosecution in Nova Scotia concluded: "Even where stereotypes [concerning the police] encourage positive images (about honesty, hard work, intelligence, and the like), problems may emerge" (Apostle and Stenning, 1989: 119n). These problems may be closely associated with the policing environment.

To a significant degree, a particular policing style is influenced by a host of external factors, such as the relationship between political authorities and the police force. In municipal policing, the size of the department is also an important variable and is, in part, a function of the size of the policed population (which is, in turn, related to the organization of police services, such as the extent to which a form of regionalization has developed). Within the population, socio-demographic factors such as occupational and ethnic structures, shape policing style. The style of policing has also been found to vary according to the type of municipal contract, whether policing is done by an independent municipal police department or through a contract with a provincial or federal force such as the RCMP. All the above factors taken together do not minimize the impact, on municipal policing style, of a myriad of internal considerations such as the personality and management skills of the chief administrator, the degree and character of unionization, the level of professionalism of the officers, the peculiarities of the department history and the make-up of the police force.

Given these varied determinants, whether small town or rural policing represents distinctly and identifiable models are by no means certain. Whereas, traditionally, small town policing has emphasized the order-maintenance police function rather than crime-fighting, the RCMP model which developed in the last half of the twentieth century tended to be the reverse. Maintaining order was the initial mandate of the federal force. The North West Mounted Police, created in 1873, was modeled after the Royal Irish Constabulary and developed in the context of the need for a centralized military force to maintain order in a potentially rebellious frontier society. Organized militaristically, the federal force was structured to resemble an occupying army and placed under centralized control, accountable to the federal government and its own bureaucratic hierarchy.

Emphasizing military training, structure and discipline, the RCMP was meant to provide a single, national standard of legal enforcement. Operating independently of local elites and, in most cases, of the provincial government, the RCMP ideology enjoined members to police impartially, and emphasized strict recruitment policies, specialized professional training, centralized command, bureaucratic, impersonal rules and military structure. This was facilitated by frequent transfers of personnel from one "detachment" to another and the development of a high degree of organizational loyalty

and an intense RCMP subculture reinforced by regulations requiring new recruits to be single and providing barracks for accommodation.

In contrast to the municipal police departments, RCMP policing was relatively formal, legalistic and oriented to crime control. Emphasizing aggressive law enforcement, the legalistic style emphasizes the application of legal rules and attempts to limit discretionary decision making (Murphy, 1986, p. 24). Murphy contended that this high level of organizational control and the great commitment of the members to the organization, continued to characterize the RCMP in the 1980s (1986: 118). The mystique of being a "member" persists in the twenty-first century, although many changes in the policing environment, internally and externally, have modified the degree of attachment of members to the organization as a whole.

Historically, then, there were significant differences in the policing style of RCMP and small town municipal policing. To use Wilson's typology, the traditional image of small town policing might suggest that it was more closely aligned with the service model in which police "intervene frequently but not formally" and "there is a high level of apparent agreement among citizens on the need for and definition of public order but in which there is no administrative demand for a legalistic style" (Wilson, 1970, p. 200). The service style incorporates "informal, non-arrest sanctions" which are typical in a small town environment.

Murphy (1986) has depicted traditional policing in small towns as distinguishable by a number of characteristics. He maintains that any definition of the "police function" in small towns included a number of services which, in urban areas, have been separated from police work. With respect to police roles, town policing was "established as a general order maintenance operation." Officers were "recruited on the basis of physical size and local citizenship" and were basically untrained. The law was enforced informally whenever possible and informal dispute settlement, short of arrest, was routine. "[P]olice departments were small, simple organizations, with minimal bureaucracy and little operational autonomy." The police office was in close proximity to the Town Hall (frequently in the basement). A police chief reported directly to the Council or Mayor "and was almost totally dependent on them for all operational expenses." Consequently, police forces "could not develop the organizational autonomy necessary to support a more independent model of operation." In contrast to many urban police forces traditional small town police departments had low levels of technology and training. The towns were "isolated from outside urban influences" and police service was personalized (Murphy, 1986: 111-114).

Murphy's research measured the extent to which municipal police departments in small towns had departed from this traditional image. Over the last thirty years, small town policing has experienced significant changes typically labeled "modernization," or "professionalization." In the process, some of the disparities between policing in small and larger towns and cities have eroded. To an extent, professionalization has resulted from the application of elements of urban policing in smaller departments.

The direction of change, however, has been two-way. During the same period, larger police departments implemented a number of programs to modify their styles of policing. Team policing models, storefront operations, increased foot patrol, enhanced

police-community relations, problem-solving, family conferencing, new crime prevention programs, and mechanisms for alternative dispute resolution have modified the image and practice of urban policing. These ambitious changes have been part of a widespread reform of policing in the 1980s known as Community-based Policing, a style which embraces a more proactive police-community relationship as well as organizational changes within the police establishment. A tendency toward emphasizing general police skills rather than specialization, for example, can potentially represent a very different style of policing (Clairmont, 1988). This recent innovation appears to have reversed the direction of influence in the evolution of policing. Whereas hitherto, small towns were the poor relatives of policing, slowly modernizing their structure in the wake of urban-initiated change, now Chiefs of small town police departments are quick to point out that, in their view, Community-based Policing is the application of a small-town model in larger, urban settings.

The evaluation of various Community-based Policing programs in urban settings, and the degree to which urban policing has come to resemble the practice in small towns are separate from the study which is reported in this volume. Certainly, the link between the small town model and CBP is more complicated than might be implied. Furthermore, the influence of a "professionalization" or "modernization" model is more appropriate when detailing the recent history of small town policing. Significant changes have occurred over the last few decades. While the model of the traditional characteristics of small town policing, which was outlined above, may no longer accurately reflect the actual practices of small town policing, it is useful as a comparison point for describing these changes, as Murphy (1986) had done, utilizing this model as an analytical device.

Non-urban policing in Canada has also undergone significant changes in the last two decades. Internal and external demands for greater accountability in policing led to the development of detailed operational procedures, the adoption of the latest technology in crime fighting, and the creation of new policies for file maintenance and data collection. These changes were easily adapted by the RCMP. Modernization of the police function was well suited to a centralized, tightly controlled, militaristic policing establishment, and was one factor contributing to considerable organizational growth, as municipal units across the country contracted policing services from the federal force. From the point of view of municipal governments, the RCMP was not only well subsidized by the federal government, but also offered a superior, professional and politically neutral policing.

For municipal elites, the trade-off for this professional policing was a loss of political control. The status quo could not be maintained in the face of demands from the public for better police service, the unionization of municipal police officers, and demands from the police establishment itself. Where independent town police forces were maintained, what evolved was a degree of semi-autonomy for municipal departments with the creation of Police Commissions, which were designed to keep the Town Council at arms length from day-to-day policing, while retaining municipal control over the budgets of police departments and continuing a direct means of exercising some control over police policy. Within the share of the limited resources available to

the towns, which were politically made available for policing, municipal departments underwent significant degrees of modernization. Small municipal departments, then, began to adopt methods, structures and administrative procedures which more closely resembled those of the larger and more modernized police forces. Despite these changes, overall in Nova Scotia the Royal Commission on the Donald Marshall, Jr. Prosecution concluded that the distinction between municipal and RCMP policing drawn by Murphy (1986) continued to be accurate (Apostle and Stenning 1989: 9).

The second major change affecting rural policing was that, along with some urban departments, the RCMP was adopting a community-policing philosophy. From the point of view of small town police officers, city police forces as well as the federal police were adopting methods of informal and less structured policing which were modeled after small towns. The direction of influence, then, appeared to have been reversed: small town practices were being replicated in urban and national policing.

The move to a more community-oriented style of policing was influenced by social factors more profound than the emulation of small town departments. At the same time that small towns were modernizing, Canadian society was undergoing great changes which have affected policing. Large immigrant populations had moved into the larger cities making them more cosmopolitan and increasingly heterogeneous. The Canadian population has grown more cognizant of political and social rights as Canada adopted an increasingly American model of individual liberties, incorporated into a formal Constitution. Governments at all levels have been faced with fiscal crises of various degrees of severity. These changes have all helped shape the context of policing in the country as town officials demand greater accountability and efficiency (Murphy 1991).

As expectations external and internal to the police force have changed, so have policing styles. Larger police departments have implemented a number of programs to modify their styles of policing. According to Clairmont (1990), Community-based Policing is a philosophy of policing which entails expanded police community relations involving more proactive policing and police-community linkages, and changes to the internal structure and hierarchy of the militaristic police forces.

Although the RCMP has also adopted a Community Policing model, unlike the substantial changes involved in the adoption of professionalized procedures and accounting which occurred earlier, this new role is not necessarily as consistent with the centralized, bureaucratic structure of the RCMP, which emphasized professional, independent policing by members who were loyal to the organization and relatively detached from the communities within which they enforced the laws. Consequently, it is likely that the implementation of Community-based Policing by the RCMP will differ significantly from those organizations which have, of necessity, stronger community links, such as small town municipal police departments. It was to address these questions that a study of small town and rural policing was initiated in the Annapolis Valley region of Nova Scotia in 1989.

The Policing Scene: The Annapolis Valley

In the past two decades, the functions of police departments across Canada have broadened to include problems and issues beyond the traditional law enforcement role. In a department not exclusively focused on traditional enforcement activity, especially in small towns, the police are less likely to work in isolation from both the community and other segments of the criminal justice system. Moreover, police-role functions have been modified in terms of both substance and priority. Criminologists and researchers have put forward a number of paradigms to define and/or rationalize small town police functions in terms of order-maintenance, service, "information giving" and law enforcement (Vanagunas, 1977; Shearing, 1974; Wilson, 1968).

Traditionally, maintenance of good community relations in small town policing involved the use of informal, non-arrest sanctions whenever possible. An example of the use of informal sanctions by a traditional, small-town force may be exemplified by a case of vandalism investigated by Kentville Police in 1969. Vandals who broke windows at night plagued Kentville schools. The damage was sufficiently serious that two members of the KPD staked out the school in the evening and apprehended eight vandals. Rather than press charges, the matter was handled between the police, the School Board and the parents of the children. The parents agreed to re-pay the school $600 in damages. "[Deputy Mayor] Dr. Smith said policemen had watched the building for several hours and he lauded the force on bringing the matter to a successful conclusion" (*Kentville Advertiser*, 15 May 1969: 1).

This mater prompted a congratulatory editorial from Harold Woodman of the *Advertiser*. With damage amounting to considerable proportions: "The police were asked to do something". A "couple of constables spent many hours lying in the chill and sodden darkness of April nights". Woodman also praised the outcome which "will probably be more effective than usual" since it involved the parents and School Board, cost the parents money "which will probably be large enough to generate disciplinary measures sufficient to cure the juveniles concerned".[1] In the Valley, informal dispute settlement is still routinely used. In the standard comparison between bureaucratic, legalistic policing and small town models, it is common to assert that legalistic policing involves the imposition of a justice model on disputes which may have been resolved, or "smoothed over", in less formal ways. The argument that the RCMP employ a more legalistic style of policing style may be qualified by the actions of individual town police officers who are equally legalistic and the possibility that some RCMP officers may informally resolve certain problems. Other factors may lead to informal resolution across jurisdictions. For example, the complex procedures of the Youth Criminal Justice Act (formerly the Young Offender's Act) may compel officers, whether RCMP or municipal, to handle complaints informally as much as possible to avoid the lengthy paperwork involved. More significantly, what has evolved are more formal procedures for informal (non-legalistic) handling. The best example is restorative justice, discussed below, which diverts certain criminal cases from the formal route of charges and courts

---

1 *Kentville Advertiser*, Editorial, 15 May 1969, p. 4.

to a semi-formal mechanism of dispute resolution. What was often informal becomes formalized in a modified way. In addition, over the last decade and a half, demands for police accountability have greatly increased the importance of record keeping, statistical compilations, and formal practices, changing, to a degree, the nature of police work.

In an effort to assess the question of the degree of support for the informal resolution of disputes, Kings County residents were asked, in the 2000 GPI survey, to agree or disagree with the statement, "Friends and neighbours should settle their disputes out of court." The conflation of "friends" with "neighbours" may have helped skewed the results positively; however, phrased this way, only 5.6% disagreed while 70.9% agreed that informal was better. As Table 6-1 indicates, there was very little gender variation on this question (with women marginally more likely to disagree); but there was a significant difference by age: older respondents were more likely to support the use of informal measures than were younger respondents.

Table 6-1
Support for Use of Informal Dispute Settlement, by age and gender (2000)

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	St.Agree	n
Gender					
males	5.7	21.4	59.7	13.1	785
females	5.5	25.3	55.3	13.9	965
Age					
15-24	16.1	39.4	35.8	8.8	137
25-54	6.2	26.3	54.1	13.5	1024
> 54	2	15	68.1	14.8	580

At the level of ethnographic research the matter of informal or formal handling seems to relate to individual styles of policing and the proclivities of chiefs and supervisors. Muir's attitudinal models (1977), using the "passion" and "perspective" measures, explained individual variation in terms of the inherent belief systems of police officers. Certainly, in the Valley, there is observable variation with respect to selective enforcement, for example, of the *Liquor Control Act*. The definition of public intoxication and illegal possession are subject to considerable interpretation. When statistical information on charges laid is taken into account, there is evidence to suggest that the town police continue to handle many matters informally, for example, cheque frauds are frequently resolved without the laying of charges. Evidence also exists which suggests that domestic disputes are frequently resolved informally. With these general considerations in mind, this and the following chapter provide an overview of small town policing in the era of CBP, focusing specifically on the town police forces of Kentville, Berwick, and Middleton, and the RCMP rural detachment in New Minas.

The degree to which small town departments in the Annapolis Valley adopted Community-based Policing depended on a variety of factors. Of the six Municipal Police Departments (MPDs), two were very small (Hantsport and Annapolis Royal). Policing practices and ideologies had evolved from the traditional, personalistic policing characteristic of earlier styles to the degree of professionalism that was possible with a

small resource base. Nevertheless, the style of policing in these towns was consonant with the typical informality and service orientation of small town police departments, more as a consequence of the nature of the police role than of a conscious adoption of Community-based Policing. Two other towns (Middleton and Wolfville) did not embrace community policing in any comprehensive way. From the point of view of the Chiefs of these four departments, small town policing was community policing, and their priority was modernization. There was no need to conceptualize their style beyond enforcing the law, maintaining order, and responding to the myriad of citizen complaints.

Two other departments (Kentville and Berwick) hired Chiefs in the 1980s who were committed to articulating a vision of community policing and changing the orientation of their departments. Shortly after the Kentville Inquiry (NSPC 1984) and the dismissal of then-Chief McRae, the style of policing in Kentville became increasingly service-oriented. Annual department reports prior to this time reflect an order-maintenance and enforcement emphasis. With the hiring of Chief Innes in 1983 and then of Chief Crowell in 1987, the department embarked on a more proactive, Community-based Policing style, "maximizing observations of and interventions in the community" (Sims, 1988: 98).

Both the Berwick and Kentville departments employ a self-described service-oriented style of policing. Proactive policing necessarily incorporates a reactive component; nevertheless, proactive policing exceeds the response-orientation of a reactive style. One manifestation of the proactive bent of the Kentville force is the emphasis of foot patrol and germane, self-generated duties in the central, downtown core of the town. According to Sims (1988), U.S. studies indicate that there is little correlation between foot patrol and decreased crime; however, foot patrol was preferred by citizens and local business people. In Kentville the utilization of foot patrol is an indication of the department's commitment to highly visible, service-oriented policing and is well received by local business and political interests.

The stated policy of the Kentville Police Department is to offer a service-oriented, community-based, proactive policing style, characterized by visibility, interaction with the public through foot and bicycle patrols and crime prevention initiatives, and an interpretation of the police responsibility to be a functioning a part of the community. Research indicates that, in Kentville as in other Canadian and American police departments, a definition of CBP is obfuscated by the numerous interpretations, the broad ideological basis and the variant number of programs defined as "community-based". In Kentville the Department's CBP style is "embedded in current political sentiments" and reflects public expectations, concerns and priorities. Without doubt, however, the public relations aspect of Community-based Policing is a crucial component of the model. Community-based Policing is central to the ideologies of policing of the three police chiefs who held office during the last decade and a half in Kentville (Innes, Crowell, and MacLean).

Community policing was also a central philosophy in Berwick. In his first Annual Report in 1982, Chief DeWolfe declared his aim to be the construction of "a department which will provide a basic, preventative type of policing" for the town. This entailed both high visibility and "low key preventative policing", emphasizing the protection of

public property, civil rights, and the citizens' right to come to the police for advice.   It was to be a pro-active, "community involved" style (Annual Report, 1982).   This was not the type of department the new Chief had inherited.   In 1982, the Chief stated, some of the officers "didn't think they had to be answerable" to the public for their actions. They had the attitude that the "public didn't have the right to know: the less you tell the better."   This approach was typical of the pre-Community-based Policing model that maximized the distance between the police and the public.   In the community-involved model, however, the Chief declared, "You have to be visible and answerable for your actions."

Typical of small town police departments, the Kentville and Berwick police were service-oriented. It was departmental policy to respond to all complaints from the public.   Generally, the Departmental Secretary, who usually first answered the phone, exercised some degree of discretion over how a complaint was directed.   Still, a wide variety of calls were handled by the police, including lost animals and matters which appeared to be civil cases.   Citizens requested and the policed accept a wide mandate for police service. Referring to the time that he picked up a prescription for the elderly woman, a constable noted: "This was something that the RCMP wouldn't do". On one occasion, a constable delivered food from a local restaurant to the hospital and returned with the exact amount to the restaurant. Another main source of contacts between the police and the population came from community activities.   Most of the constables were sports-minded and they played softball and hockey, as well as umpired or coached.   As one officer argued, making an exaggerated point, "99% of municipal policing duties on a small town are above and beyond the call of duty".

The operating policing philosophy was that the department's main objective was public service and that personal contact with the citizens generated the most effective public relations.   Berwick was a quiet town, one constable said, where the public "really likes to see you enforce the handicapped parking zone in front of the bank."   Town police continued to handle many matters informally.   Cheque frauds were frequently resolved without the laying of charges.   More problematic is the observation that domestic disputes (as is the case for many small town departments) were frequently handled informally, despite the provincial directive to the police to lay charges themselves in situations where they believe the evidence warranted a prosecution.

In Middleton, however, the Chief operated a less self-consciously community-oriented small town force.   The traditional model of policing in small towns is characterized by general order maintenance and a service style of policing which involves a wide definition of the "police function" that includes a number of services, which in urban centres have been separated from police work (Murphy, 1986). Although policing in Middleton is less proactive and community-oriented than in some other small towns, the public is quick to call the town police about such things as loitering, squealing tires, and barking dogs. In Middleton, as in most of the small town police departments in the area, the police not only take seriously all requests for either law enforcement or order maintenance (Wilson, 1970:), but respond to most calls for service. This is one major factor which distinguishes the practice of small town policing from both that of metropolitan forces and of the RCMP. One Middleton constable, for

example, responding to a farmer whose distressed cow was attempting to deliver a still-born calf near the outskirts of town.

While some larger cities are adopting elements of a service style in their Community-based Policing initiatives, which is often interpreted as adopting a small town policing model, in many ways the direction of influence has been the reverse, reflecting the spread of a professional police model. Small town police departments have, to the extent possible, copied big city models of specialization, such as initiating plain clothes investigative units. Professionalism is synonymous with crime-oriented, legalistic policing. The Chief in Middleton said, when he accepted the position, his major task was to improve the standing of the Department in the eye of the public and create better morale among the constables. At that time in the early 1980s, the fundamental problem facing the police in the town was the need to modernise.   Chief Cook modelled the small town force in a style reflective of modern urban policing. He created a plain clothes position for investigations (a one-member CID) and attributed the subsequent decline in break and enter offences to the new position, claiming that the reputation of the department was enhanced by its success in apprehending criminals.   Middleton was the first to create this specialization in the Valley. Furthermore, the department emphasized high visibility and quick response, and the Chief implemented changes in equipment, communications and recording practices. While constables are still generalists, a degree of specialization has been created. The choice of a more "professional" investigation division complemented by a relatively more restricted patrolling role for uniform constables indicates that the philosophy of Community-based Policing has not been a priority in Middleton. Professionalization of policing has meant greater attention to legalistic practices, with its accent on laying charges and enforcement, although when compared to the RCMP small towns are still less enforcement-oriented.

On the other hand, much of what the CBP movement stood for -- particularly its adoption of a small town model -- is exemplified in Middleton. All officers are expected to contribute to positive police-community relations and other tasks, although there tends to be less of this activity than in other towns. Typical of the watchman-style characteristic of small town policing, for example, Chief Cook emphasized private home and business property checks, programmes which had been initiated prior to his tenure, but had not been implemented consistently. Standard crime prevention programmes, such as Block Parents and bicycle safety, are also carried out, but none of this activity is indicative of the emergence of a new type of policing in the town. Crime prevention initiatives are emphasized most in Kentville, which has a larger force and therefore more capacity to expand the police role in the CBP direction.

Structure and Organization of Small Town Policing

In terms of complement, the size of small town police forces is generally proportional to the size of the town, although additional factors significantly affect force size. The usual way to measure complement size is the ratio of the population per full-time officer. Police Departments justify their size and growth in a number of ways. In

144

Berwick, the increase in staff in 1989 was attributed to a 20% increase in the population of the town which was one of the largest increases in Eastern Canada.

Complement size is also affected by coverage. By the 1990s, Valley small town police departments had successfully argued for 24-hour patrol coverage. In part this was justified by the threat of rising crime compounded by the tendency for property break-ins to occur late at night when there were no police patrols. Furthermore, it was argued, officers were busier than ever, not only because of increased crime, but because of an increase in the amount of time officers were required to spend writing reports, attending court, and maintaining files and records. This change in the content of the work – described derisively as "paper-work" by constables – reflected both the adoption of a more professional, legalistic style and the effect of pressures external to the department as expectations of professional standards of recording and investigating offences increased. This office work limited the amount of time offices could be actually "on patrol" but, according to one Valley Chief, "the same number of hours must be spent outside the office patrolling". Consequently, more staff was needed because of the "increased paper work". The size of the policed population (as distinct from the town population) was also utilized to justify additional personnel. Small towns in rural areas attract people from the surrounding rural countryside to work, shop, and for entertainment. The Berwick Police department, for example, claimed that it had to service an additional 5,000 people who used the town as a service centre. The policed population, then, changes daily and it was uncertain what proportion of crimes and violations the police handle were actually performed by residents of the town.

Kentville's staff establishment increased modestly from the late 1970's until the early 1990s. Four additional constables were hired in 1977 bringing the number of police personnel in the department to ten, one Chief and nine constables. When the police department expanded from 12 to 15 regular members a decade later for a town of 5,200, the police ratio dropped to 1:347 from 1:433. There was a similar growth in Wolfville, reaching a complement of ten officers by 1999. A standard rule of thumb for the size of municipal police establishments was at one time to have one full-time officer for every 500 residents of the town. This standard is no longer employed. The town of Berwick, for example, population 2,200, added a sixth member in August 1989. This represented a decrease in the police/citizens ratio from 1:440 to 1:367. With one police officer for every 304 citizens, the ratio in Middleton in 1980 was high. Comparing Middleton with five other towns (Wolfville, Berwick, Lunenburg, Stellarton and Trenton), the Nova Scotia Police Commission found that Middleton spent the highest proportion of the town budget on the police, 10.56%. According to the Commission, this ratio was justified by the efficiency of the department (NSPC, 1980: 6).

Fiscal decisions also affect department size. Just as police departments have to intervene in the political arena to justify complement increases, they are often faced with the opposite problem: having to defend the existing complement from Town Councilors wishing to reduce expenditures. In 1995 budget cuts forced the Kentville department to release two constables, reducing the complement of the town police to 13 where it remained for the rest of the decade.

In addition to the complement size, a second important issue in the organization

145

is turn-over. The police departments of many towns were faced with high attrition rates in the 1970s and early 1980s. In Kentville, this phenomenon was largely the result of the Provincial Commission of Inquiry into police misconduct in that town. Only five of the officers employed by the Kentville Police Department in 1989 had worked there in 1981. Thereafter, in Kentville as well as the other towns, relative stability of membership prevailed until the mid-1990s. Some of this seemed to indicate a return to the bad old days of pre-professional policing. In both Kentville and Berwick, for example, constables resigned in face of charges involving misappropriating funds. Some members were drawn out of the small towns. In Kentville, two members of the local department who were former RCMP officers returned to the federal force, serving in a local detachment. It should be noted, as well, that small towns have long served as an on-the-job training ground for metro police forces. Dartmouth and Bedford police departments, for example, had often recruited younger officers from the towns. Town policing, then, is marked both by some permanence -- many officers have their entire career in the small town -- and by periods of considerable attrition, opening opportunities for new members and creating instability in policing. The absence of a stable department has been seriously compounded by changes at the top in some Departments. Three of the small town Departments lost their Chiefs – one to retirement and, as alluded to above, two through resignation in the face of criminal charges. In Hantsport, the scandal was directly related to the decision to replace the local police with the RCMP. When the Chief resigned in Kentville and the decision was made to retain a local force, the position was filled by an ex-RCMP Sergeant.

With respect to rank structure, differentiation is also affected by town size and by the organizational models under which the police force operates. For almost one hundred years (1887-1978) the Kentville Police Department had functioned with a Chief and constables and no intermediary or supervisory positions.[2] It was not until 1978 that NCO positions were established and two constables were promoted to the rank of corporal. In 1979 one of the corporals was promoted to sergeant. After the Kentville Inquiry (N.S.P.C. 1984) the sergeant's position was vacated, to be later re-established by Chief Crowell, who reorganized the department through several promotional routines. By 1991, Crowell had induced Town Council to expand the force to fifteen members, including a Chief, a Deputy Chief (promoted in 1991), five corporals and eight constables. The department was designed to operate on a four-platoon mode, with each platoon consisting of one corporal and two constables.

Among constables, seniority is an important principle. However, since in most cases members work alone, the assignment of day-to-day duties by seniority does not take place. In Middleton, prior to the resignations of two older constables, three were quite senior. With six years service, the junior officer did not treat the other members with great deference. After 1989, with the hiring of two young constables, seniority again became an important differentiating factor in the Department when two-officer patrols were undertaken, primarily on the week-end evenings. When two junior officers

---

[2] The exception occurred when "Lefty" Graves was made Acting Chief under Chief Archibald Strong in 1966.

made a routine highway stop late at night in one town, the offender suddenly re-started his car and drove away. Rather then engage in a high-speed pursuit, the less junior officer decided to wait until the morning shift and deliver Summary Offence Tickets for the original infraction and for disobeying the orders of a police officer. He knew who the offender was and where he lived, and there were two witnesses to the infractions. From the point of view of the second office, however, it had been the wrong decision. The other constables in the Department concurred. They were concerned about the contempt for police officers the incident demonstrated and the lack of action taken on the spot to re-establish authority. Certainly there were other career factors in his decision, but the young constable had a short career in policing. Even in a small force, constables become part of a police culture which is not always forgiving of violations of the unofficial code or responsive to the wishes of management.

For a small town department, the image of professionalization and political independence is enhanced by the provision of modern and relatively more spacious and detached quarters. In the past, police departments were frequently relegated to the basement or rear of municipal buildings, a spatial arrangement which symbolized the low esteem with which the department was held and the absence of political independence.

This type of arrangement, common throughout the Valley, was reflected in the provision of quarters for the Middleton and Kentville police forces. At the time of the Kentville Police Inquiry, the police force occupied cramped quarters in the basement of Town hall, a placement that symbolized the status of the police at that time. Separate quarters were subsequently built. By the late 1990s, however, this separation was again being questioned and Town Council was considering renovating a building adjoining the Town Hall. At that time, however, the justification fore the move was cloaked in contemporary rhetoric. The move would overcome the barrier between citizens and the police created by professional policing, reintegrating the police service in the community and better symbolizing community policing.

The adoption of a militaristic rank structure is an important part of police professionalization. The complexity of the rankings depends, initially, on the size of the complement. The rank structure of the Middleton department in 1977 consisted of a Chief and three constables. Consequently, as the only ranking member, the Chief was on-call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. In his absence, there was no direct supervision, which the N.S.P.C. concluded was an "undesirable situation as a ranking member should be available for decision making and control at all times" (NSPC 1977: 5). Consequently, the Police Commission recommended that a routine be held to promote one of the constables to the rank of corporal, which would be a "working rank", carrying out the supervisory duties of the position (NSPC 1977: 6). Following the hiring of Cook as Chief, a promotional routine was run in the department, changing the rank structure to four constables, a corporal and a Chief.

In Berwick, one senior constable on the 6-member force was promoted to Corporal. Other than being Acting Chief at times, the Corporal's duties were not significantly different from that of other officers (with the exception of the distinction between patrol and investigative officers discussed below). Unlike the Deputy Chief

role in Kentville, the Corporals in Middleton and Berwick were not "operational supervisors" in the sense that they did not supervise the constables nor write assessments of their work. In a small town force, the Chief performs annual assessments, authorizes overtime and call-outs, and adjusts the schedule to take account of immediate demands and necessities. In this respect, the small town Chief performs multiple roles, from managing day-to-day operations, to representing the interests of the Department to the political authorities. In Kentville, with double the size of the police force in the smaller towns, an operational Sergeant or Deputy Chief performs much of the day-to-day supervising.

What emerges from this overview of the policing scene in the Annapolis Valley is more complex than the designation "small town police" suggests. Certainly, even the largest of these municipalities – Kentville – is still a "small town" by most measures. There are many similarities in policing style occasioned by the fact that the population is small in number, relatively homogenous and established, and the area is relatively compact, making for frequent interactions between the police and the citizens. On the other hand, in small jurisdictions, individual variables have a more significant local impact. The ideologies and personalities of the Chief of Police and the Mayor play significant roles in determining the style of policing. Over time, however, the larger environment has impinged increasingly on these small towns, limiting the range of choices and, ultimately, transforming the policing landscape. Our intention below is to document the era of small town policing as it existed at the end of the twentieth century and account for the process of change that ensued.