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NUMERICAL STRENGTH OF SMALL POLICE DEPARTMENTS

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A persistent area of concern regarding police departments has been size or numerical strength. In general, this concern is reflected in discussions of either striking power¹ or patrol shifts and assignments.² Yet, as Leonard points out, "The question has raised a corresponding solicitude on the part of municipal management in general as well as the average taxpayer. . . ."³ Apparently no satisfactory ratio between number of police and population has been established. Noting the traditional rule of thumb of one policeman for each 1,000 population, the International City Manager's Association has listed variables to be considered in determining the size of the police force.⁴ Smith reviewed relationships between the size of cities and the police force and found wide deviations.⁵ He noted that as size of the city increased, so too did the proportion of police to the population although for cities of less than 25,000, this did not hold true.

Originally, in this study it had been assumed that a direct relationship existed between the size of small cities and the size of the police department. In other words, as population increased, so too did the size of the police force. Initially, sixteen towns and cities, varying from 7,000 to 16,000 population were selected for investigation. A brief survey, however, revealed wide differences in the size of the police force and the city. Thus, Smith's findings were upheld. Since this did raise

a question as to why, it was decided to select two cities of approximately equal size, from the same subcultural area, with variations in the size of the police force and then, through a series of interviews and search of records and newspapers, attempt to account for variations in the size of the police departments.

From Table 1 it may be seen that Delta is older, but by 1930, Carbon had a larger population.⁶ The situation reversed itself in 1940, and Delta has remained larger although the population of both cities has decreased rather significantly between 1950 and 1960.

TABLE 1
SIZE OF POLICE DEPARTMENT AND POPULATION FOR
TOWNS "DELTA" AND "CARBON": 1910-1960

Year	Delta		Carbon	
	Number of Police	Population	Number of Police	Population
1910	16	14,548	2	2,111
1920	10	15,203	3	8,478
1930	11	13,532	6	14,683
1940	20	14,407	5	12,383
1950	8	12,123	5	11,384
1960	18	9,348	5	9,004

These fluctuations in population, however, do not alter the basic fact that Delta has always had a relatively large police department while Carbon has always had a comparatively small department. This takes on added significance when it is realized that the community leaders and the police of both cities have somewhat similar attitudes toward the adequacy of the size of the force, i.e., they could use a few more men.

⁶ For obvious reasons, Carbon and Delta are fictitious names.

¹ LEONARD, POLICE ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT 14-19 (Brooklyn: The Foundation Press Inc., 1951).

² WILSON, POLICE ADMINISTRATION 107-110, 473-512 (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1950).

³ LEONARD, OP. CIT., 14.

⁴ INTERNATIONAL CITY MANAGER'S ASSOCIATION, MUNICIPAL POLICE ADMINISTRATION 223-232 (Chicago: International City Managers Association, 3rd Ed., 1950).

⁵ SMITH, POLICE ADMINISTRATION 122-126 (New York: Harper and Brother, 1949).

How can these discrepancies be explained? It appears as though four factor-complexes have influenced the size of the police department in two cities of roughly equal size. These are (1) ecological patterns and topographical features, (2) demographic conditions other than size, (3) traditions and attitudes, and (4) fortuitous events. It should be emphasized that these factors are interrelated and interdependent. Any variation in one may produce variations in any or all of the others. An understanding of the relative influence of these factors may be obtained by describing each of them.

ECOLOGICAL PATTERNS AND TOPOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

Delta is located at the confluence of two rivers. Each river serves as a boundary between another state and the state where Delta is located. Originally a refueling point for steam boats, the city still attracts some river boats plus a great many interstate auto travelers. The town has become a traditional stopping point for traveling salesmen either entering or leaving the state. Each fall, literally thousands of hunters from metropolitan areas hunt geese and ducks in the near vicinity. The city serves as a base for the hunters and as the major source of entertainment during the evenings. Economically, the city's chief source of income has been from trade with residents of the surrounding area and the traveler.

Carbon is physically isolated. Although one state highway does pass through the city, there is not a major restaurant or motel on the highway. With the exception of the farmer or occasional traveler, the stranger is seldom found in the city. Indeed, the stranger is conspicuous by his presence which is unusual in a city of this size. In the past, the chief source of income was from the coal mines which surrounded the area. As mining has declined, trade and services for residents of the area have become more important.

DEMOGRAPHIC CONDITIONS (OTHER THAN SIZE)

Delta was originally settled by native-born whites in the late 1840's. Foreign-born immigrants were of predominately Irish or German extraction. From 1870 to the present, approximately one-third of the population has been Negro. Significantly, however, the white population has consistently overestimated the Negro population to be $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ of the total population. Although Negroes do not

reside in any one area of the city, there is complete social, educational, and religious segregation.

Carbon was originally settled by native born whites in the early 1900's. Population increases were due equally to migrants from the south central states and foreign-born immigrants from Southern Europe. A policy of Negro exclusion has been practiced, and Negroes do not reside in or near the city. Due to conflicts between the mine owners and the union, assimilation of the various nationality groupings occurred rapidly and without incident. Anthropologically, it may be said assimilation is complete and amalgamation of the various groups is in the final stages.

TRADITIONS AND ATTITUDES

Delta has had the so-called traditional morality of the river town. Drinking, gambling, and prostitution have always been a part of the community. In 1910, 58 taverns were licensed at an annual rate of \$1,000 each. While the number has decreased somewhat, there are still many taverns in and near the city. Until ten years ago, a segregated district for houses of prostitution existed. As evidenced by the sale of Federal Stamps, gambling is still a major industry. The Negro, so long as he remains in his own districts, has equal opportunities for recreation. The city has retained the same attitude it held when the river was king—the hunter, the salesman, the visitor, has come to be entertained. Neither prohibition, state police, nor local reformers (the last and only local option election was held in 1934) have changed this philosophy.

Carbon, on the other hand, has displayed what might be called rural values regarding vice of any sort. The male who wished to engage in gambling or pursue women has greater opportunities elsewhere. As a result, gambling is on a small scale and is limited to fraternal organizations and neighborhood taverns, patronized almost exclusively by men. Prostitution is non-existent. The attitude of the city toward recreation of any sort was best described by a clergyman some thirty years ago when he spoke, successfully, against a proposed city park, "It is more work and less play that the laboring men want."

FORTUITOUS EVENTS

This factor has been established to account for unplanned events or happenings which accentuate or modify situations. A case in point is the fact that Delta is partially surrounded by "dry" counties. As a result, the person who wishes to

drink is drawn either to the city or to the night clubs adjacent to the city. This does illustrate the fact that frequently factors outside and independent of the city do have an influence on the police department. Perhaps this point is better illustrated by the substantial (and temporary) decrease in the size of the department in 1950. This decrease was due to two factors, intensified state police raids and a change in municipal administration. City finances for several years had been based on a system of quasi-licensing of gambling devices through fines. Each month, operators were fined in accordance with a set fee schedule for each slot machine, card game, and crap table they possessed. When gambling was driven underground, revenue was lost and the number of city employees, including police, was reduced accordingly. Allegedly and ironically, the elimination of an extra-legal method of control resulted in the development of graft and pay offs.

On the other hand, an analysis of the recreational patterns of Carbon's population reveals three areas of prostitution and gambling within twenty miles of the city. In a city dominated by rural morality, those who wish to drink or gamble in anonymity can drive to any one of three small villages which catered almost exclusively to these activities. Thus, the people of Carbon who wish to drink and gamble leave and do not present a problem to the city's police.

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

It is often assumed that communities of equal size have police departments of similar size. An examination of such cities, however, reveals wide differences in the size of the force. A detailed analysis reveals that variations in size exist because the functions of the police department vary by community. Aside from routine police duties,

the basic factor which accounts for the variations in Delta and Carbon is that the role of the police in the two cities is fundamentally different. In Carbon, the Department has acted to suppress any overt manifestation of vice. Delta's police, on the other hand, have had the responsibility for regulating and controlling vice. It follows that more men are required to regulate than to suppress activities of this nature. Moreover, Delta's Department has also served a secondary function of maintaining the status quo in Negro-white relations. Finally, the problem is accentuated by the fact that one city attracts disorganizing and unlawful elements while the other does not.

It must be assumed that every Police Department has certain routine duties such as traffic control, patrolling, and the like. The ultimate determination as to the functions and thus the size of the department result from a community definition. It is the thesis of this paper that such a definition results from four factors: ecological patterns and topographical features; demography; traditions and attitudes; and, fortuitous events.⁷ Of utmost importance is the fact that many times, conditions outside of the community also have great influence on the size of the Police Department.

On the basis of this study, it would not be realistic to propose a certain number of police for cities of less than 25,000 population. Instead, each city must assess the relative importance of the factor-complexes noted above and from this determine the proper number of police officers needed to do an adequate job of protecting the city.

⁷ These factors are dynamic and subject to change. For example, ecologically, land usage may change from residential to industrial; racial or ethnically homogeneous neighborhoods may become heterogeneous in composition. The implications of such changes to Police Departments are apparent.