

## **STOREFRONT POLICE OFFICES**

### **The Houston Field Test**

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This chapter summarizes the results of a field test conducted by the Houston Police Department and evaluated by the Police Foundation. The project, carried out from the fall of 1983 through the summer of 1984, tested the hypothesis that the operation of a police community station in a neighborhood could reduce fear of crime and increase citizens' satisfaction with their neighborhood and with the police.

The evaluation found that the creation of the station had several statistically significant effects indicated by random sample surveys conducted before and after the program, and in the analysis of a subset panel of individuals who were interviewed at both times. The program, the evaluation methods, and the major findings are described in this chapter.

### **THE THREAT OF FEAR**

Fear of crime can have corrosive effects on the social and economic fabric of cities. Although fear can have a reasonable basis in documented levels of crime, research has found that fear often exceeds what might be considered rational levels and is unrelated to the fearful individual's personal probability of victimization. There is

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some evidence that social disorder and physical deterioration in public areas are additional sources of fear. Although there is insufficient information about the causes of fear, there is a pressing need to try to assuage fear in order to short-circuit the cycle in which fear leads residents to abandon the streets or move away, either of which may lead to a decline of business, diminishing informal social control, more crime, more fear, and more flight.

### THE HOUSTON PROGRAM

To promote the search for causes of, and cures for, fear of crime, the National Institute of Justice selected the Police Foundation to evaluate police-based fear-reduction strategies. Two cities were chosen in which to conduct the tests—Houston, Texas, a new city with low population density, rapid population growth, and an expanding economy; and Newark, New Jersey, an old, dense city with a declining population and a deteriorating revenue base. In each city, a Fear Reduction Task Force was created to consider possible strategies, select those most appropriate for the local conditions, and plan and implement the strategies over a one-year period.

The Houston Police Task Force hypothesized that one source of fear in their city might be a sense of physical, social, and psychological distance between ordinary citizens and police officers. When this process began in early 1983, Houston was a city of 1.8 million residents and 3,357 police officers distributed over 565 square miles. Almost all patrolling was done in vehicles. The average citizen had little opportunity to know police officers except in the stressful circumstances of receiving a ticket or talking to police following a victimization. Lack of interaction with “regular citizens” might cause officers assigned to a beat to have little understanding of the priorities and concerns of the people living there. Recognizing this, people might well feel that their police neither knew nor cared about them. The Task Force felt that such alienation could lead to public dissatisfaction with police services, to dissatisfaction with the neighborhood as one in which to live, and to fear of crime.

The Task Force concluded that the location of a small, storefront office in a neighborhood might provide one means of overcoming the feeling of distance between citizens and the police. Staffed by police personnel, the station would be open at times when it would be conve-

nient for citizens to lodge complaints, give or receive information, or just stop by to chat with a local officer. The office would provide a base of operation for the area officers, whose job it would become to get acquainted with the neighborhood residents and businesspeople, identify and help solve neighborhood problems, seek ways of delivering better police service to the area, and develop programs to draw the police and community closer together. The effects of the station and its programs would be reinforced by a monthly police-produced newsletter that would be distributed by the community station staff.

### Station and Staff

The Task Force located space in a small, one-story complex of glass-front offices. Good used furniture was provided by a large Houston firm, and the station sign was donated by another. The large one-room office was spacious, well-furnished, and comfortable. In addition to desks, chairs, and sofas, the office contained a photocopier and a soft drink machine that were available to the public.

One Task Force officer had primary responsibility for the new station. He consulted with the district captain in the selection of a second officer and the two, together with a civilian office coordinator, one community service officer and three police aides, constituted the original staff. Within four months of the opening the station was open from 10 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. weekdays and until 6 p.m. on Saturdays, and two more patrol officers were assigned to staff a second shift. The four station officers were freed from the responsibility of responding to calls for service in the area and from routine patrol; other officers maintained regular patrol assignments in the area. The station officers did patrol occasionally, however, and did respond to calls when they were patrolling and when residents called the station directly. It was the job of the station officers to design and implement the programs to be run out of the storefront and to be available when citizens came to the station seeking help and information.

The station was managed by the Task Force officer assigned to the station. Station officers did not report to regular roll calls and did not meet frequently with a lieutenant or sergeant. These supervisors were not expected to maintain close supervision of the station. This loose system of management and supervision worked well in this case

because of the personal qualities of the station officers and because of their direct and frequent contacts with their district commander.

### Programs Developed

The programs developed by the station officers included the following:

*Monthly Meetings.* Meetings were held on a monthly basis in a neighborhood church. The first attracted just over 100 residents; attendance in the seventh and eighth months averaged 250. Officers discussed crime and other items of interest to the neighborhood and then presented a guest speaker, who might be a department commander, judge, politician, banker, representative of a utility, or other person of interest to the local community.

*School Program.* Station officers met regularly with neighborhood school administrators to discuss school problems; as a result, officers began to work vigorously on the truancy problem. Truants were picked up and, unless involved in a crime, returned to school; older individuals who were with the truant children were advised to discuss the problem with the station officers, who might talk with the child and parents and refer them to a counseling agency.

*Fingerprinting Program.* Officers fingerprinted children whose parents brought them to the station. They later extended the program to a neighborhood hamburger shop in an effort to reach a larger segment of the community.

*Blood Pressure Program.* Area residents were invited to have their blood pressure taken at the station on one day each month when a nurse or paramedic would be available to take the readings.

*Ride-Along Program.* Area churches and civic clubs were invited to select one of their members to ride with an officer patrolling in the neighborhood.

*Park Program.* A park in the center of the neighborhood had been taken over by rowdy persons who caused other residents to be reluctant to use it. Officers began to patrol the park regularly and made several arrests. During the summer months they instituted monthly athletic "contests" (softball, football, volleyball, and horseshoes) in which residents played against police officers. Residents returned to the park and a soft drink company that had removed a vending machine due to repeated vandalism installed another one at the park swimming pool.

*Newsletters.* On five occasions between November 1983 and June 1984, the station staff distributed approximately 450 newsletters to the neighborhood. An additional 50-100 newsletters were picked up each month by visitors to the station.

Table 9.1 presents administrative data indicating the frequency of various storefront activities, the number of hours the station was open by month, and the number of persons participating in various programs.

### EVALUATION DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Five areas, closely matched in terms of size, demographic characteristics, land use, level of crime, and other characteristics, were selected to be included in the overall Houston Fear Reduction Program. One of those areas was selected to be the program area in which the police community station would be located. Another of the five neighborhoods was designated the comparison area, in which no new police programs would be introduced. Any changes discerned in this area would be interpreted as representative of prevailing trends in the city during the time of the study.

Personal interviews were conducted with large samples of randomly selected residents of the program and comparison areas three months before, and nine months after, program implementation began. Sample households were chosen randomly from a list of all residential addresses in each area. Then, a random (Kish) selection was made of an individual adult respondent. At least five callbacks were made before a sample respondent was classed as a noncompletion. Table 9.2 presents a basic description of the evaluation surveys. These surveys had area response rates ranging from 75% to 78%. Attempts to conduct interviews with a set of respondents both before and after the program began were less effective, producing completion rates of approximately 62% and 53% in the program and comparison areas, respectively. This was expected, given the mobile populations of these areas and the large number of apartment dwellers and renters living there. Interviews also were conducted with owners and managers of businesses and other establishments (such as churches). The response rates for these surveys were all higher than 80%.

Tests for possible effects of the police community station were designed to measure program effects on both the area and on individual residents.

TABLE 9.1 Numbers of Station Hours, Activities, and Participants by Month

Month	Hours Open	Citizen Walk-In	Phone Calls	Reports Taken	Children Fingerprinted	Blood Pressures Taken	Attendance at Monthly Meetings	Total Arrests by Officers
November	184	135 <sup>a</sup>	3	2	d	d	d	0
December	168	49	32	4	d	d	d	4
January	168	47	39	11	d	d	d	3
February	185 <sup>b</sup>	124	78	6	18	d	110	40
March	282	183	112	6	16	d	122	33
April	— <sup>c</sup>	270	238	4	87	73	140	73
May	263	200	253	29	108	9	127	25
June	224	234	254	20	21	19	134	36
July	224	235	225	16	11	23	157	37
August	291	210	308	32	9	31	230	40

a. Includes 125 persons attending grand opening.

b. Hours expanded on February 20.

c. Not recorded.

d. Program not yet in operation.

TABLE 9.2 Evaluation Survey Description

	Residential Survey		Residential Panel Subset	Nonresidential Survey	
	Wave 1	Wave 2		Wave 1	Wave 2
Program Area					
Completed interviews	406	460	239	45	41
Response rate <sup>a</sup> (%)	77	81	62	88	82
Comparison Area					
Completed interviews	389	403	183	39	44
Response rate <sup>a</sup> (%)	75	78	53	81	88

a. Response rate subtracts vacancies and ineligible respondents.

### Wave 1-Wave 2 Change

Possible program effects were examined by pooling the results of surveys conducted with random samples of residents interviewed before and after the introduction of the program, both in the program area and in the comparison area.

The pooled data were analyzed, controlling for area of residence, wave of interview, and numerous other control factors (age, sex, race, and so forth). Program effect was judged by the significance of the coefficient associated with an indicator for respondents who lived in the program area *and* were interviewed after the program was inaugurated. A disadvantage of such an approach is that the various control factors cannot account for all of the nonprogram differences between residents of the two areas, so we cannot be sure that differences in outcome measures can be attributed to it.

### Panel Change

Possible program effects also were examined by comparing the results of surveys conducted with a panel of the same persons before and after the program was implemented, both in the program area and in the comparison area. Interviewing the same people twice yielded a *pretest* score for each respondent on the outcome measures. The panel data were analyzed to isolate the effect of living in the program area as opposed to the comparison area, controlling for the pretest scores and many other factors ("covariates" such as victimization and age) that might also differentially affect the outcomes. As with the pooled data, if the coefficient associated with living in the program area was significant at the probability level of .05, controlling for the pretest and the covariates, it was taken as evidence of program effect. One disadvan-

tage of a panel survey spaced over 12 months is that inevitably only certain types of people can be found and interviewed the second time, making it potentially inappropriate to generalize any findings to the population of the area as a whole. The pooled cross sections were much more representative, albeit without the advantage of a pretest.

To further explore possible program impacts among panel members, we examined responses to questions that asked whether or not respondents *recalled* being exposed to particular components of the program. Measures of a number of program outcomes were compared for panel respondents living in the program area who recalled being exposed and respondents who said they did not. This approach attempts to identify respondents who actually encountered the program, and presumably provides the most favorable evaluation of program impact. A major disadvantage of this approach is that people may choose to be or not to be exposed to the program; those who choose exposure may differ in statistically uncontrollable ways from those who do not choose exposure. What may appear to be program effects resulting from exposure may actually be the results of differences among people. Further, respondents do not always accurately report their exposure to program activity, thereby causing these data to contain unmeasurable errors.

Finally, possible subgroup-specific effects, suggesting differential program impacts upon members of particular age, sex, racial, or other subgroups, were examined using tests for statistical interaction. This analysis was designed to determine whether or not the community station program might have had an effect on certain types of area residents and had no effect at all—or a different type of effect—on other kinds of people. As with the recalled program-exposure analysis, these tests were made using the panel sample so that pretest scores on the outcome measures could be controlled. As a result, this test has the same general advantages and disadvantages of the panel data analysis discussed above.

Questions were included in the survey to measure each of the following outcomes:

- (1) recalled program exposure
- (2) fear of personal victimization in the area
- (3) perceived area personal crime problems
- (4) worry about area property crime victimization
- (5) perceived area property crime problems
- (6) perceived area social disorder problems
- (7) satisfaction with area

- (8) evaluation of police services
- (9) defensive behaviors to avoid personal victimization
- (10) victimization

## FINDINGS

### Wave 1-Wave 2 Analysis

*Recalled Exposure.* In both the program and comparison areas there were significant increases in the percentage of respondents who indicated they were aware of the community station, perhaps because of stories about it and other community stations in a local newspaper that was distributed in both test areas. However, the percentage of increase in the program area (from 2% to 65%) was much larger than the increase in the comparison area (from 3% to 11%). Only in the program area was there a significant increase in the percentage of respondents who had attended a monthly meeting at which a police officer was present (0 to 8%). In the posttest survey, 13% of those in the program area, but only 4% in the comparison area, said they were aware of the distribution of a monthly police newsletter in the community.

The evaluation survey conducted in the program area after the office was in operation revealed that recognition of and contact with the community station was very differentially distributed. Some people living in the area “got the word” in large numbers, but others did not. Table 9.3 documents some of those differences. It examines the demographic correlates of two program exposure measures. One measure involved showing respondents an area map and asking if there was “a small community police office located here where you can get information from the police and talk to them about neighborhood problems?” If they knew of an office, respondents were then asked if they had called or visited it. The second measure in Table 9.3 combines those two forms of program contact.

As Table 9.3 indicates, blacks, low-income residents, those with less education, renters, younger people, and short-term area residents all were significantly less likely than their counterparts either to know about or have direct contact with the community station. These differences in program exposure often were very large, and indicate that the storefront—for all of its outreach activities—was touching only part of the community. As discussed below, this may explain in part why some area residents appear to have been more affected than

TABLE 9.3 Demographic Correlates of Recalled Program Exposure (program area Wave 2 respondents)

	<i>Percentage Recalling Program Contact and Significance of Subgroup Differences (p &lt;)</i>		<i>N</i>
	<i>Know a Small Police Office in Area</i>	<i>Called or Visited Office</i>	
Sex			
Males	61	17	242
Females	69	21	218
	(.12)	(.37)	
Race			
Blacks	43	2	123
Whites	77	12	261
Hispanics	57	3	68
	(.001)	(.002)	
Income			
Under \$15,000	47	9	146
Over \$15,000	72	24	302
	(.001)	(.001)	
Education			
Not high school graduate	59	11	148
High school graduate	67	23	312
	(.14)	(.01)	
Housing			
Owners	80	26	247
Renters	46	12	213
	(.001)	(.001)	
Age			
15-24	53	14	76
25-49	61	16	272
50+	81	30	111
	(.001)	(.005)	
Number of adults in household			
1	55	11	115
2	68	21	299
3+	64	24	46
	(.07)	(.04)	
Length of residence (years)			
0-2	46	10	218
3-5	71	18	73
6-9	83	22	37
10+	86	35	132
	(.001)	(.001)	

NOTE: Number of cases is for "visited or called storefront." N is approximately the same for both measures. Chi square test of significance.

TABLE 9.4 Program Effects on Pooled Wave 1 and Wave 2 Respondents

<i>Outcome Measures</i>	<i>Relation to Living in Program Area</i>	<i>Statistically Significant? (p &lt;)</i>
Fear of personal victimization in area	down	yes (.001)
Perceived area personal crime problems	down	yes (.001)
Worry about property crime victimization in area	down	no (.33)
Perceived area property crime problems	down	yes (.001)
Perceived area social disorder problems	down	yes (.03)
Satisfaction with area	up	no (.29)
Evaluations of police service	up	no (.38)
Defensive behaviors to avoid personal victimization	down	yes (.001)
Victimization by personal crime	down	no (.16)
Victimization by property crime	down	no (.42)

NOTE: Controls for 13 covariates. The number of cases is about 1657 for all analyses.

others by the community station. It is our suspicion that a "passive" storefront office would have been even more differentially visible and consequential.

*Impact.* Across the two surveys, residents of the program area, compared to those in the comparison area, reported a statistically significant ( $p < .05$ ) decrease between the pretest and posttest surveys in the following:

- (1) fear of personal victimization in the area
- (2) perceived area personal crime problems
- (3) perceived area property crime problems
- (4) perceived area social disorder problems
- (5) defensive behaviors to avoid personal victimization

Respondents in both the program and comparison areas showed significant increases in evaluations of police service, suggesting there may have been a citywide phenomenon causing an improvement in attitudes toward the police in Houston. This was the only significant change registered in the comparison area. There were no changes in victimization by personal or property crime, or in assessments of police aggressiveness. Table 9.4 summarizes many of these differences.

Respondents from nonresidential establishments in the program area, relative to those in the comparison area, were more likely, at a statistically significant level, to register decreases in fear of personal victimization in area. There were no significant changes on any other outcome measures in either area (see Table 9.5).

### Panel Analysis

*Recalled Exposure.* Panel respondents in both areas also indicated significant increases in awareness of the community station. However, there was a 73% increase in awareness in the program area (from 1% to 74%) and only a 12% increase (from 2% to 14%) in the comparison area.

*Impact.* Panel respondents in the program area, relative to those in the comparison area, were more likely, at a statistically significant level ( $p < .05$ ), to have lower scores on fear of personal victimization in area and perceived area personal crime problems. These findings are summarized in Table 9.6.

The *effects of recalled exposure* to various program components were assessed by regressing the posttest outcome measures on the program awareness measures, controlling for the pretest outcome score, and 16 measures of the demographic background and crime experiences of residents of the program area. The following conclusions were reached:

- (1) Respondents who reported being aware of the community station had higher scores on evaluation of police service after program implementation.
- (2) Persons who remembered calling and visiting the station had higher scores on perceived area social disorder problems. (Further analysis found that people who contacted the station were more likely to have experienced victimization than those who reported no contact. The higher perception of area problems may be a function of the victimization.)
- (3) Persons who recalled having seen a police officer in the area in the previous 24 hours scored lower on fear of personal victimization in area, perceived area personal crime problems, and perceived area social disorder problems. They had higher scores on satisfaction with the area and evaluation of police service.

Assessments of possible *differential program effects on subgroups* of panel respondents were made through an analysis of "treatment-

TABLE 9.5 Changes in Outcome Measures by Area Location for Nonresidential Samples

Outcome Measures	Program Area		Comparison Area	
	Direction of Area Change	Statistically Significant? ( $p < .$ )	Direction of Area Change	Statistically Significant? ( $p < .$ )
Fear of personal victimization in area	down	yes (.01)	down	no (.025)
Worry about property crime victimization in area	up	no (.50)	down	no (.10)
Perceived area property crime problems	down	no (.10)	down	no (.25)
Perceived area social disorder problems	down	no (.25)	down	no (.25)
Employee and patron concern about crime	down	no (.025)	down	no (.05)
Favorable change in business conditions	up	no (.50)	up	no (.25)
Satisfaction with area	up	no (.40)	up	no (.25)
Evaluations of police service	up	yes (.001)	up	no (.10)
Victimization by robbery	down	no (.50)	down	no (.90)
Victimization by burglary	up	no (.95)	up	no (.70)
Victimization by vandalism	down	no (.70)	up	no (.70)
N	45-41		39-44	

NOTE: One-tailed t-tests of significance.

TABLE 9.6 Program Effects on Panel Respondents

<i>Outcome Measures</i>	<i>Relation to Living in Program Area</i>	<i>Statistically Significant? (p &lt;)</i>	
Fear of personal victimization in area	down	yes	(.03)
Perceived area personal crime problems	down	yes	(.04)
Worry about property crime victimization in area	up	no	(.36)
Perceived area property crime problems	up	no	(.56)
Perceived area social disorder problems	down	no	(.39)
Satisfaction with area	up	no	(.32)
Evaluations of police service	up	no	(.08)
Defensive behaviors to avoid personal victimization	no change	no	(.88)
Victimization by personal crime	up	no	(.14)
Victimization by property crime	down	no	(.31)

NOTE: Direction of effect of area of residence and significance level controls for the pretest score and 16 covariates (age, race, victimization, housing, and so on). The number of cases is about 415 for all analyses.

covariate interaction" effects. This consisted of creating special analytic measures that were assigned a value of 1 for respondents who lived in the program area *and* belonged to a subgroup of interest (such as blacks, renters, the poor), and assigned a 0 otherwise. Then, likely outcome measures were regressed against the "main effects" in this analysis model (that is, area of residence and group membership) and the interaction term, controlling as well for pretest scores on the outcome measures. Table 9.7 presents the sign and significance of the coefficient associated with "being in the group and living in the area" when those other factors have been statistically controlled.

Among the twelve outcome measures examined, blacks appeared to do worse relative to other groups on six of them; renters were significantly differently affected on three measures. Table 9.8 provides a more detailed examination of these seven outcomes by presenting average pretest and posttest scores for various racial and housing tenure groups.

Table 9.8 makes it clear that in no case were renters living in the program area significantly worse off after the community station was in operation. Rather, on one measure their view of the area showed an

TABLE 9.7 Regression Analysis of Impact of Program Area of Residence Upon Subgroups Program and Comparison Areas (all panel respondents)

<i>Outcome Measures</i>	<i>Blacks</i>		<i>Hispanics</i>		<i>Female</i>		<i>Victims</i>		<i>Age</i>		<i>Live Alone</i>		<i>High School Graduates</i>		<i>Renters</i>	
	Sign	(p <)	Sign	(p <)	Sign	(p <)	Sign	(p <)	Sign	(p <)	Sign	(p <)	Sign	(p <)	Sign	(p <)
Fear of area personal victimization	+	(.08)	-	(.56)	-	(.70)	-	(.04)*	+	(.10)	+	(.12)	-	(.34)	-	(.83)
Perceived area personal crime problems	+	(.01)*	-	(.07)	-	(.82)	-	(.58)	-	(.53)	+	(.21)	-	(.17)	+	(.09)
Worry about area property crime victimization	+	(.01)*	-	(.42)	-	(.99)	-	(.20)	-	(.06)	+	(.67)	-	(.51)	+	(.05)*
Perceived area property crime problems	+	(.001)*	-	(.06)	-	(.91)	+	(.83)	-	(.16)	+	(.50)	-	(.64)	+	(.18)
Perceived area social disorder problems	+	(.001)*	-	(.03)*	+	(.48)	-	(.96)	-	(.30)	+	(.05)*	+	(.44)	+	(.02)*
Satisfaction with area	-	(.001)*	+	(.37)	-	(.73)	-	(.69)	+	(.06)	-	(.01)*	+	(.52)	-	(.001)*
Evaluations of police service	-	(.01)*	+	(.64)	-	(.19)	+	(.36)	-	(.75)	-	(.24)	+	(.27)	-	(.17)
Defensive behaviors to avoid personal crime	-	(.65)	-	(.36)	+	(.96)	-	(.51)	+	(.01)	+	(.10)	+	(.19)	+	(.30)
Total victimization	+	(.15)	-	(.04)*	+	(.35)	-	(.18)	+	(.87)	+	(.60)	-	(.58)	+	(.91)
Personal victimization	+	(.71)	-	(.24)	+	(.48)	-	(.13)	-	(.50)	+	(.94)	-	(.29)	-	(.68)
Property victimization	+	(.06)	-	(.05)*	+	(.90)	+	(.15)	+	(.88)	+	(.65)	-	(.57)	+	(.51)

NOTE: Number of cases is approximately 420 for all analyses. Victimization is a dichotomy—victim or nonvictim. Regression analysis includes pretest, area of residence, subgroup membership, and an area-subgroup interaction term. This table reports the sign associated with the interaction term and its significance.

\*p < .05.



TABLE 9.8 Indicators of Program Effects for Subgroups (panel respondents only)

	<i>Mean Scores and Significance for Subgroups</i>					
	<i>Program Area</i>			<i>Comparison Area</i>		
	<i>Wave 1</i>	<i>Wave 2</i>	<i>(p &lt;)</i>	<i>Wave 1</i>	<i>Wave 2</i>	<i>(p &lt;)</i>
Perceived personal crime problems						
Owners	1.62	1.24	(.01)	1.29	1.33	(.25)
Renters	1.59	1.35	(.01)	1.53	1.33	(.01)
Blacks	1.63	1.36	(.01)	1.32	1.13	(.01)
Whites	1.60	1.26	(.01)	1.42	1.37	(.24)
Hispanics	1.63	1.22	(.01)	1.46	1.48	(.44)
Worry about property crime						
Owners	2.20	2.00	(.001)	1.98	1.91	(.17)
Renters	2.14	2.19	(.27)	1.84	1.82	(.39)
Blacks	2.21	2.30	(.27)	1.88	1.74	(.13)
Whites	2.18	2.03	(.01)	1.94	1.90	(.29)
Hispanics	2.13	1.94	(.06)	1.89	1.88	(.46)
Perceived property crime problems						
Owners	1.95	1.60	(.001)	1.97	1.91	(.17)
Renters	1.94	1.83	(.12)	1.55	1.47	(.13)
Blacks	2.00	1.98	(.44)	1.53	1.41	(.14)
Whites	1.97	1.63	(.001)	1.62	1.54	(.11)
Hispanics	1.81	1.46	(.01)	1.42	1.48	(.31)
Perceived disorder problems						
Owners	1.50	1.35	(.001)	1.36	1.38	(.30)
Renters	1.67	1.58	(.09)	1.39	1.38	(.42)
Blacks	1.64	1.67	(.37)	1.34	1.29	(.25)
Whites	1.54	1.36	(.001)	1.39	1.38	(.43)
Hispanics	1.48	1.33	(.04)	1.37	1.49	(.11)
Satisfaction with area						
Owners	2.42	2.66	(.001)	2.43	2.48	(.22)
Renters	2.42	2.32	(.19)	2.54	2.60	(.24)
Blacks	2.35	2.24	(.22)	2.63	2.70	(.28)
Whites	2.39	2.64	(.01)	2.42	2.50	(.15)
Hispanics	2.53	2.62	(.25)	2.43	2.43	(.99)
Evaluations of police service						
Owners	3.28	3.52	(.01)	3.35	3.40	(.25)
Renters	3.09	3.32	(.01)	3.22	3.40	(.025)
Blacks	3.15	3.11	(.36)	3.52	3.52	(.48)
Whites	3.23	3.59	(.001)	3.30	3.42	(.04)
Hispanics	3.29	3.36	(.31)	2.97	3.17	(.09)
Numbers of cases						
Owners	162			90		
Renters	67			79		
Blacks	42			43		
Whites	160			98		
Hispanics	34			37		

NOTE: One-tailed paired t-tests of significance. Number of cases varies slightly from scale to scale.

improvement that was not significant although among homeowners it was significant; on two other measures renters were *very slightly*—and not significantly—less sanguine than owners in the posttest survey. There was no treatment-renter interaction effect on nine other outcome measures.

Table 9.8 also presents similar breakdowns by race. There it can be seen, for example, that whites showed significant improvement in their views of neighborhood problems, although blacks and Hispanics simply were unaffected, and that the same was true for their evaluations of police service.

We find, then, that blacks and renters did not suffer *negative* consequences of the program as one might erroneously conclude from the treatment-covariate analysis in Table 9.7. Table 9.8 demonstrates that the negative coefficients resulted primarily from the fact that the perceptions of blacks and renters did not shift for the better over time, as they did for other racial groups and owners. Although living in the program area does not appear to be related to a deterioration of conditions for blacks and renters, it is clear that these groups experienced very few of the apparent program benefits measured for other subgroups.

## DISCUSSION

The Houston police community station appears to have been successful in reducing citizens' levels of fear and in improving their perceptions of their neighborhood and their attitudes toward the police. These findings are supported most strongly by the analysis of two waves of residential surveys. To the extent to which measured program *awareness* was responsible for these effects, it is important to note the significant increase in "awareness" of the community station among respondents in the comparison area as well as in the program area. Although the test station was physically removed from the comparison area, the test station and two other community stations in Houston had been publicized by local newspapers and television stations. This vicarious knowledge about the station may have cast a "shadow program effect" across the comparison area that served to blur the distinction between program and comparison area respondents.

The fact that there was only one significant effect for respondents from businesses and other nonresidential establishments is not surprising, as these respondents are more likely to have had routine contacts

with the police prior to the implementation of the station. Also, the small number of such establishments in these surveys decreased the likelihood of detecting statistically significant change. Furthermore, there was no reason to believe that commercial sections of the neighborhoods were suffering adverse financial consequences from fear of crime. That they did not report improvement in business to an extent that corresponded with the more positive attitudes of program area respondents may indicate that fear was not yet a problem that was harming business in the area.

The lack of positive program effects for blacks and renters may be a function of their lower levels of awareness of the program. The community station program relied, in part, on established civic organizations to attract residents to station programs. To the extent that blacks and renters are less likely to be members of these organizations, the program needs to utilize other means of reaching these people.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on our interpretation of the data, we would recommend that other police departments that perceive a need to help citizens feel more secure in their neighborhoods consider establishing community police stations similar to the one described and evaluated here. Based on observations of the program, we offer the following additional recommendations concerning the operation of a community station program.

(1) *Personnel.* The creativeness and willingness to work on the part of the community station officers and their staff were perhaps the most critical elements of the operation. Much of the success of this station seems attributable to the skills of the station officers. Given the nature of their work, we believe that station staff members must be highly self-motivating and capable of working effectively without close supervision. Some commanders might be tempted to "bury" a lazy officer in a storefront operation, but such an assignment would bury the station as well.

(2) *Personnel Involvement.* The station described here was created by the two officers who ran it. They found the space, moved the furniture, hung the pictures, advertised themselves to the community, and designed and implemented the programs. As a result of their efforts and the community's enthusiastic response to the opening of the station, they felt proudly proprietary of it. We have no experience

with turnover of key personnel in such an operation, but suspect it would be important to devise ways of giving new station personnel a sense of ownership of already-established programs.

(3) *Supervision.* This station worked well with a minimum of supervision. Such a loose structure would not work well in all situations; in this case, it probably succeeded because of the strong relationship between the district commander and the officer in charge of the station. However, if the station officer needed more supervision, or if the commander had several stations to attend to, more consideration would have to be given to the development of a formal supervisory structure for the stations. (The Detroit Police Department appears to have worked out a satisfactory arrangement for the management and supervision of its storefront stations.) Substantial management *support* also is needed, especially in the start-up phase, as space and furnishings must be found, contracts negotiated, work schedules devised, and programs developed.

(4) *Programs.* There is no way of knowing which of the many Houston programs was most effective in producing the positive outcomes we have attributed to the station. Indeed, it may well be the mix of programs that was effective. In any case, it seems unlikely that there is a "package" of programs that could be transferred to another station. All of the programs implemented in Houston may be worth consideration for use elsewhere, but the success of community station programs likely depends on their match with the needs of the community.

(5) *Familiarity with the Community.* Getting to know the area and the people who live there appears to have been an important factor in the success of the Houston station. To get the program started, the officers who opened the station had to make a lot of community contacts. Officers assigned to the station later will not have the same motivation to learn the community and will have to be encouraged to do so, perhaps through assignment to programs that will necessitate meeting people.

(6) *Station Atmosphere.* It is important that the station give the impression that it is a place intended to accommodate citizens rather than police officers. The Houston station accomplished this with its open front, comfortable furnishings, and ready welcome for visitors. The only time a citizen was observed by our on-site process monitor to hesitate about entering was when three officers were talking together. Citizens must not be given the feeling, common to traditional police stations, that they are intruding upon "police business." Any effort to

combine a police substation with a storefront operation should reserve a front room of the office and a front parking lot for use solely by citizen visitors.

(7) *Publicity.* The community station cannot be effective unless residents know about it, and every means should be made to publicize the existence of the station and its programs. The repeated use of large numbers of fliers distributed by the community station staff probably was effective as a means of publicizing the station's opening and later programs. Good coverage in the local community paper also was useful.

(8) *Community Involvement.* The station staff made good use of existing community institutions as a means of drawing the community into the station program. A local church was used for the monthly meetings, which drew crowds too large for the station to accommodate. Neighborhood civic groups were used as "organizing agents" for the monthly meetings. This approach appears to have worked well for members of these groups, but other approaches will have to be developed for groups of residents who are not already affiliated with existing neighborhood organizations. The differential visibility of the station and the socially skewed distribution of contacts with it was noted by the staff of this program, and, since the evaluation, they have developed special new programs to extend their "coverage" to the entire neighborhood.

(9) *Selling the Program.* The officers had to sell the program to individuals and groups whose support they needed. They did this, in part, through publicity and their own enthusiasm. But they also appear to have done it by offering others the chance to be involved in an adventure. The patrol officer who managed the station rarely asked businesses or organizations for help; rather, he deliberately gave them the "opportunity to do something for the neighborhood." The skills of a good salesperson were in evidence.

Finally, any department considering the development of a community station program should take a firsthand look at one already in successful operation. Exemplary storefront stations can be observed in Houston, Texas; Newark, New Jersey; Santa Ana, California; Detroit, Michigan; and perhaps in other cities.