

Constituent Expectations of the Police and Police Expectations of Constituents

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Let me begin this paper by taking a close look at its assigned title. I want to suggest that this title implies—misleadingly, in my judgment—a dyadic relationship and symmetrical expectations between police and “constituents”: *two* roughly equivalent parties trying to understand each other to work out *mutually satisfying* ways of interacting. As I see it, this title conveys an idealized sense of the way the police and the public perceive and deal with each other. There is, of course, nothing wrong with having ideals, but in deciding what matters and, therefore, what ought to be measured, it is important not to confuse the ideal with the typical day-to-day circumstances of policing in the United States.

Until relatively recently, the police were by and large free to act as if the ideal and the real were pretty much the same. That is, the police have had significant leeway to project and impose their expectations on the public—presuming, in other words, dyadic and symmetrical relationships. In recent years, however, the leeway accorded the police has been dramatically curtailed—at least in urban America. Social, political, cultural, and legal changes have made it more and more difficult to ignore the increasingly assertive and influential multiplicity of parties and the diverse expectations that now impinge insistently on the police. Still, we know relatively little about this diversity of expectations. To complicate things still further, the police themselves seem divided—both among and within departments—about how much things have changed and the extent to which it is appropriate, or even feasible, to respond to altered patterns of expectations.

I think I detected some of these divisions, as well as a reluctance to confront them, at our initial meeting. Thus, continual mention was made of the core functions of policing as if there was general agreement on this contested issue. Similarly, and this was more

implicit than explicit, there seemed to be a taken-for-granted belief that reducing crime is, in itself, a goal that transcends divisions and reliably draws the police and the public together. Finally, community policing was invoked with approval as an enterprise that all right-thinking academics and practitioners accept and agree on. However, some things were said during the course of our session that suggested, at least to me, that community policing did not mean the same thing to all of us. This should, of course, come as no surprise, because community policing has no commonly accepted meaning.

I would like this paper to be seen, in part, as an invitation to open up these issues, because each of them bears directly on the police mandate. While there is, in all likelihood, agreement that the police mandate has been broadened, only if some agreement can be reached on the new parameters of policing does it seem possible to decide *what matters* and, therefore, *what ought to be measured*. Similarly, I want to argue that the available evidence strongly suggests there are indeed a multiplicity of public expectations and, more to the point, that some of these expectations tend to put the police at odds with elements of the public. The evidence, however, is largely anecdotal and spotty, and there is, consequently, a need for reliable data to determine whether the police and the public are on the same page and, if not, what can be done to make things better and how we will know when things are moving in the right direction.

Crime control: solution or problem

“A conservative is a liberal who has been mugged.” This aphorism (which I associate, perhaps incorrectly, with James Q. Wilson) readily captures the notion that opposition to crime does, at the end of the day, provide a theme that unifies all of the law-abiding,

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nondelusional members of the public. The contemporary case for this position has been particularly well-developed by the distinguished social scientist Ralf Dahrendorf in a splendid little book entitled *Law and Order* (1985). But Dahrendorf acknowledges throughout this slim volume that he is largely updating—albeit with references to such current issues as “no go areas”—the ideas of Thomas Hobbes, who argued that without law and order, life is “nasty, solitary, brutish, and short.”

In the abstract, this position is unassailable, but in practice it is under constant assault—and not just from naive and deluded liberals. There are constant indications of the deep ambivalence of afflicted minorities toward the wars that have been declared against crime and drugs. Indeed, the strongest supporters of these wars are frequently to be found among those who are least at risk from street crime (Scheingold, 1995). They may be insulated by rural and suburban living or by a variety of security measures that keep them relatively safe, even when in close proximity to crime and criminals. To suggest ambivalence among the most victimized of Americans is not to suggest that they are oblivious or hardened to their victimization, but rather that—as is the case for most Americans—law and order is one value among many and that—unlike most Americans—they worry that their neighborhoods will be the battlefields of the wars against crime and drugs, with all of the attendant risks.

Can law and order be the value of values—the definitive solution to social conflict? There are at least three basic reasons to believe that this question should be answered in the negative.

- In the first place, law and order is not a dichotomous variable. The choice, at least in the typical American urban setting, is not between the Hobbesian war of each against all and a harmonious and crime-free society. It seems more appropriate, as I see it, to think in terms of multidimensional continua of more or less law, more or less order, more or less crime.
- Second, crime is not an entirely uncontested category. Charles Silberman made this point almost two decades ago in an eloquent elaboration of Robert Merton’s distinction between legitimate and illegitimate opportunity structures among marginalized elements of the society (Silberman,

1978: 87–116). The mixture of despair and ambition that drive criminal acts may make it more difficult for minorities to dismiss those who break the law as *the criminal other*—in much the same way that Americans at all levels find it difficult to turn their backs on friends and relatives who commit crimes.

- Third, the criminal justice system is often understood in minority areas as, at best, an untrustworthy and unpredictable ally in the struggle against victimization. To the extent that police, prosecutors, and judges are perceived as biased, corrupt, or even as victimizers, it stands to reason that the call to join with law enforcement officials in the fight against crime will ring hollow.

I submit these three caveats not because I am convinced that they reflect the overall climate of opinion in minority communities. The available evidence, admittedly spotty, does, however, provide cause for concern. I have in mind the many indicia of African-American mistrust of the criminal justice system in general and of the police in particular. This mistrust, moreover, does not seem to have been confined to young African-American males—who are traditionally in conflict with police—nor to their families and friends. Consider, for example, the frequent reports of humiliations visited by the police upon African-Americans from the “respectable classes”—including African-American police officers. Similarly, Sasson reports in a recently published article that working-class blacks are inclined to adopt conspiracy theories, for example: “A conspiracy of powerful whites is the real cause of crime, drug dealing, and violence in black neighborhoods” (1995: 265).¹

More broadly, there were racially defined reactions to the verdicts in two notorious California trials—the prosecution of the Los Angeles Police Department officers in the Rodney King case and the murder trial of O.J. Simpson. The Bernard Goetz case in New York resonated in the same racially charged and divisive fashion (Rubin, 1988). Similarly, Cullen and his associates have found that while both blacks and whites approved of the use of deadly force against fleeing and manifestly dangerous felons, African-Americans were less likely than whites to support the illegal use of deadly force (Cullen et al., 1996: 454–456). My research also revealed significant black-white differences on police shooting policy (Scheingold, 1991: 50–55).

The sharply contrasting reactions of blacks and whites cast further doubt on the proposition that the fight against crime brings Americans together. Instead, there is reason to believe that white trust in the police may be inversely proportional to African-American distrust. This may be partly because, as I wrote a number of years ago, whites are likely to see the best police officers on their best behavior, while African-Americans and other marginalized groups are likely to see the worst police officers at their worst (Scheingold, 1984: 126). It may also be because whites expect the police to treat “the dangerous classes” in just the ways that antagonize minorities. If so, then Andrew Hacker’s (1992) ominous admonition that we are “two nations: black and white, separate, hostile, and unequal” may apply at least as much to the fight against crime as to other areas of American life.

Of course, high-profile cases and issues may conceal more than they reveal about the true feelings of both minorities and whites toward crime and criminal justice. As Jennifer Hochschild has written, there is reason to believe that African-Americans feel they “must defend all blacks in trouble with white society, no matter what they have done to call down this trouble” (1995: 128). Beneath this public show of solidarity, there may well be sufficient concern about the increasingly violent character of criminal activity to make opposition to crime the unifying force that brings the police and minority communities together. There is, moreover, reason to believe that the views of both minorities and whites are more conflicted and contingent than is conveyed by the fragmentary and tendentious evidence that is available. Formally incompatible views may coexist within both minority and white communities and families; indeed, individuals may be equally torn.

My underlying point is that it is inappropriate to assume that the fight against crime will bring Americans together and that a reduction in the crime rate is, therefore, a sufficient gauge of successful policing. Given the complexity, the fundamental importance, and the paucity of information on public expectations, it follows that research—measurement, if you will—is in order. In short, the first step in deciding what to measure is figuring out what matters to the consumers of police services.

The core concerns of policing

It might well be argued that the previous discussion is gratuitous—that it amounts to little more than preaching to the choir. Was there not, after all, implicit in our initial discussion a recognition that crime control is not a sufficient, although it may be a necessary, indicator of successful policing? Perhaps so. But to begin with, we certainly seemed to dodge the issue of just how far and in what directions the police mandate had expanded beyond crime control. Indeed, it was not clear to me that there was general agreement that such an expansion was called for. More fundamentally, at times I found the case for expanding the mandate expressed in ways that privileged crime control while seeming to move beyond it. Indeed, as I suggest below, the practices associated with this new discourse of crime control seem likely to feed mistrust of the police among minorities and marginalized Americans more generally.

A truism in law enforcement literature is that there is tension between two intrinsic elements of policing: order maintenance and law enforcement (Wilson, 1968). Traditional beat policing tends to emphasize the former, while professional policing emphasizes the latter. Law enforcement depends on the impersonal authority of the law and is typified by the formal procedures of arrest and prosecution. Order maintenance, in contrast, depends on the personal authority of individual police officers and is typified by informal persuasion, admonition, and intimidation. Accordingly, the two approaches call for contrasting forms of police organization, training, skills, and temperament. Of course, neither departments nor individual officers can confine themselves exclusively to law enforcement or to order maintenance; they must therefore find ways to reconcile the tensions between the two.

There are both internal and external elements of the problems of reconciling law enforcement and order maintenance. Internally, law enforcement imposes a variety of constitutional and legal constraints on police officers. Order maintenance, on the other hand, frees up police officers: So long as they do not contemplate prosecution, there is no need to worry much about legal niceties. A basic tradeoff occurs between bureaucratic control that is facilitated by the procedural regularities of law enforcement and

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rank-and-file morale that tends to be enhanced by the freedom associated with order maintenance. From the external perspective, police-community relations can be jeopardized by the relative freedom that police officers have, insofar as the mandate is defined primarily in terms of order maintenance and a law enforcement approach that imposes externally measurable standards of civility on police interactions with the public.²

As the police mandate has expanded in recent years, the distinction between law enforcement and order maintenance has tended to blur. Although it might appear that this blurring would ease the tension, that does not seem to be the case. Indeed, my own view is that as the mandate has expanded, just the opposite has been happening. The internal and external problems of reconciling law enforcement and order maintenance have grown ever more burdensome. Either way, if what matters is to be measured, there are two basic reasons to pay attention to the expansion of the police mandate. It will be necessary, on the one hand, to work out ways of measuring whether and to what extent the police are meeting these new expectations and, on the other, to determine whether the expanded mandate is generating unintended and unwelcome costs.

It seems reasonable (at least in terms of the criminology literature) to trace the current expansion of the police mandate to Wilson and Kelling's seminal "broken windows" argument (Wilson, 1985: 75–89). They claim that there is an intrinsic relationship between disorder and crime and, accordingly, between order maintenance and crime control. Broken windows is about the physical indicia of neighborhood decline—abandoned automobiles, boarded-up houses, untended trash, etc. Such circumstances, according to Kelling and Wilson, are taken by criminals as invitations to locate their criminal activities in these neglected venues. As Kelling and Wilson see things, this is all part of a spiral of decline that can be arrested and reversed if law-abiding citizens can reclaim the streets. More broadly, this kind of thinking is linked to the idea that fighting crime can serve as bait—that crime reduction will attract a newly empowered public to the kind of civic activism required to rebuild community institutions. These institutions will then take on a meaningful share of the responsibility for dealing with broken windows and other signs of decline.

I want to suggest that this expansion of the police mandate shifts the balance of policing activities further along the law enforcement-order maintenance continuum (in the direction of order). If this process works as intended, the result will be increasingly intense and harmonious relationships between police officers and neighborhood residents. If not, just the opposite is likely to happen.

In its narrowest and most problematic reading, the broken windows argument leads to what is sometimes referred to as a zero-tolerance policy. Zero tolerance means, for example, that the police act forcefully against people and behavior they deem suspicious but not necessarily illegal or criminal. Similarly, former Commissioner William Bratton argued at our last meeting that the reduction in crime in New York City could be attributed to putting "hyper law enforcement" (my term) at the service of order maintenance. Would-be lawbreakers are put on notice that the most trivial infraction will lead to police intervention if they are suspected of gang, drug, or other kinds of illegal activity. Knowing that they are subject to surveillance and intervention, these would-be criminals will, for example, be less likely to carry guns and, thus, be less dangerous and, presumably, less able to conduct their criminal activities.

I see these zero-tolerance and hyper law enforcement policies as problematic for three reasons. In the first place, the available research suggests that for a variety of daunting reasons, anticrime campaigns are not effective agents of community reconstruction (Skogan, 1990). Second, in this formulation, broken windows assumes just what I sought to call into question in the previous section of this paper—namely, the primacy and consensus-building power of crime control. Finally, and most significantly, the kinds of police practices associated with zero-tolerance and hyper law enforcement seem likely to increase the mistrust of the police that robs crime control of its consensus-building capacity. As Skogan points out:

[R]esidents of poor and minority neighborhoods with serious disorder problems often have antagonistic relations with the police. They regard the police as another of their problems, frequently perceiving them to be arrogant, brutal, racist, and corrupt. (p. 172)

The intrusive and preemptive practices associated with zero-tolerance and hyper law enforcement are likely to increase this resentment and mistrust.

Even if they are conducted in a strictly legal fashion, aggressive tactics such as saturating areas with police, stopping cars frequently, conducting extensive field interrogations and searches, and bursting into apartments suspected of harboring gambling or drugs can undermine police-community relations in black and Hispanic neighborhoods. (Skogan, 1990: 166)

Is it reasonable to assume a strictly legal *modus operandi*? Working as much on the basis of probabilities as specific knowledge, police officers will make mistakes or become overzealous—thus antagonizing law-abiding residents while seeking to intimidate lawbreakers. The result may well be to reinforce the sense that the police cannot be trusted to distinguish the violent and incorrigibles (who must be put away to maintain a tolerable level of public safety) from the unruly but redeemable (who ought to be empowered rather than overpowered).

Goldstein's problem-oriented policing expands the police mandate in a more promising and symmetrical fashion (1990). The assumption of problem-oriented policing is that if police officers take seriously neighborhood grievances against landlords and merchants or about the shortage of drug treatment programs, for example, the police can effectively intercede as advocates—either directly in the disputes or by mobilizing responsible city officials. In so doing, the police will be alleviating some of the conditions that lead to disorder and decline. Thus, there are crucial differences between the broken windows and problem-oriented policing strategies. In the former case, the police assume that crime and incipient crime are at the heart of the matter and, in effect, impose that assumption on the public. Problem-oriented policing is, by definition, meant to be more of a two-way street, with the police being attentive to a broader range of public discontent. In this way, problem-oriented policing addresses itself to some of the underlying forces of disorder and crime. Although problem-oriented policing does not deal with “root causes”—for example, the structural forces that generate unemployment—it does go beyond the purely symptomatic in ways that broaden

the range of expectations to which the police are attentive.

Community policing

Community policing is currently represented as the magic bullet that will lay to rest the concerns that have been developed in this paper. Thus, community policing is seen as a way to elicit the following:

- Agreements between the police and the public on law enforcement priorities.
- Mutual confidence in each other's good intentions.
- Sufficient energy to arrest neighborhood disorder and decline.

I want to suggest, however, that community policing can be, and is, implemented in divergent ways—not all of which are conducive to increasing confidence between the police and neighborhood residents or to generating energy on behalf of community reconstruction. Moreover, even at its problem-oriented, participatory best, partnership may be a problematically apolitical solution to a serious political problem.

A number of years ago, one of the first books on community policing was subtitled “Rhetoric or Reality” (Greene and Mastrofski, 1988). Now, almost a decade later, it seems abundantly clear that community policing is *both* rhetoric *and* reality. There is evidence in Seattle and Chicago, two examples with which I am somewhat familiar, of concerted efforts to take community policing seriously. To me, this means taking *community* seriously, not simply enlisting the law-abiding elements of society in a fight against crime mounted in and by the police department.³ The police take community seriously insofar as they encourage mobilization of, and are accountable to, a broadly representative cross-section of the neighborhoods they serve. The goal is, in other words, to engage ordinary citizens in the processes of establishing police priorities and gauging police performance.

But there are other visions of community policing. Community policing is sometimes taken to mean little more than a return to traditional beat policing—getting officers out of the car and into the street, where they become as well acquainted as possible with their neighborhoods. Then there is the proactive, or “crime attack,” vision (Wilson, 1985: 69) that

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deploys nontraditional practices—from zero-tolerance policies to neighborhood watch programs—to reduce crime. Or, as was suggested previously, community policing is understood primarily in terms of block watch programs and other efforts to elicit information that law enforcement officials deem useful. Often, the more authentically communitarian practices coexist with one or more of these top-down approaches within the same the department—or, for that matter, within the same program, as could be the case with Operation Weed and Seed.

Departments are likely to be sharply divided on matters that impinge directly on the values and interests of rank-and-file officers, midlevel managers, and police leadership.⁴ Chiefs and their immediate coterie are ordinarily appointed by, and hold office at the pleasure of, elected officials, and—as Mastroski pointed out at our last meeting—their job security tends to be more caught up with matters like corruption or major rioting than with rates of crime or levels of fear (Brady, 1996: 9). Midlevel police managers, like midlevel managers everywhere, are caught between the upper echelons and rank-and-file officers. As such, they are likely to be more concerned with keeping the wheels of the department turning smoothly. The rank and file are, of course, in the front lines—that is, in the streets—and are deeply influenced by those experiences and are more caught up with crime and everyday public order problems. All of this brings to mind the often-heard description of the division of labor among the finders, the minders, and the grinders in corporate law firms. But, unlike corporate law firms, this police division of labor is reinforced by formal and often assertive organizations that articulate and work on behalf of the interests of rank-and-file officers, and sometimes midlevel managers as well. Adding to the current complexity are minorities and women within the police ranks who often feel sufficiently distinct to have their own organizations. In short, police organizations are increasingly unwieldy, and it is no mean feat to get them to work smoothly—much less to introduce reforms that run counter to the prevailing inertial forces.

Insofar as community policing follows the line of least resistance, the path seems likely to lead in familiar directions—that is, toward a return to traditional policing or a vigorous and enterprising pursuit of proactive efforts to control crime. If so, it is relatively easy to identify and measure what matters. When the

crime rate is going down, the police are successful; otherwise, they are not. Accordingly, the paper presented by then-Commissioner Bratton of the New York Police Department at our first session makes, as was apparently his intention, an arguably convincing case for a successful community policing program. Similarly, if a return to beat policing is what community policing is all about, the challenge would be to devise tests of the familiarity of officers with the people and places that comprise their beats (Rubenstein, 1973). An immensely sympathetic and subtle portrait of this kind of policing is to be found in Muir’s book, *Police: Streetcorner Politicians*—in particular, in the person of the pseudonymous professional, Jay Justice (Muir, 1977: 15–21).

The point is that both traditional and proactive policing represent familiar and largely top-down understandings of policing. Although street officers in recent decades may have become more comfortable with impersonal policing and may have to be coaxed out of their cars, the traditional and proactive approaches to community policing are not likely to be a tough sell internally. Beat policing is normally done on the officers’ terms and can entail, at least by implication, a warrant to “kick ass” among perceived troublemakers. The proactive, or crime attack, approach gives street officers less individual discretion. It does, however, empower them to adopt the long-cherished role of crimefighter and may also entail the kind of heavy-handed tactics that Skogan and others have warned against.

To take community seriously is a much more daunting task, whether in terms of altering police practices or measuring what matters. In the first place, taking community seriously entails treating the public as “constituents”—that is, viewing people and police in ways analogous to the relationship between elected officials and the electorate. Officers and managers may, however, continue to be tempted, irrespective of the rhetoric of community policing, to view the public as split, primarily between law-abiding citizens on one side and criminals and other kinds of troublemakers on the other side. Of course, as I have already argued, that vision of society is problematic because it tends to ignore racial, class, and gender divisions that, for better or worse, seem to influence expectations of the police. And insofar as community policing calls for mobilizing neighborhoods and encouraging them to participate in policymaking, community policing

will inevitably be seen as introducing *politics* into policing. But rank-and-file officers are inclined to attribute to politics virtually all of the ills of policing. More specifically, the struggle over civilian review boards certainly suggests a deep-seated reluctance to think of the public as constituents to whom the police are answerable and who therefore ought to be given a voice in the policing process. In short, while some advocates of community policing do seem to cherish a police-constituent vision, this vision is contested in the theory of community policing and even more so in its practice.

No doubt some progress has been made on these matters. I recall my late colleague, Ezra Stotland, recounting his amazement at attending a public meeting in which community residents and police officials negotiated police priorities.⁵ Similarly, I remember Ezra telling me of the gradual transformation of the community advisory group from all-white, antiblack militancy to a genuinely, if somewhat precariously, integrated advisory body (Fleissner et al., 1991). In Chicago, too, some success seems to have been achieved by incorporating district advisory committees into the policing process. (Chicago Community Policing Evaluation Consortium, 1995: 63–74).

While there is reason to believe that community policing, at least in some places, has been somewhat successful in transcending racial divisions, it is less clear that other gaps have been bridged. Thus, the police may make common cause with those elements of the public—both white and minority—who share police understandings and concerns. If community policing is about reconstructing “disordered” and “declining” communities, it is presumably necessary to reach out beyond the respectable elements to those who are at risk and on the margins. (The term “at risk” here is meant to imply at risk of *becoming* victimizers, not at risk of victimization.) For these purposes, a zero-tolerance policy may well be counterproductive, giving rise to organizations such as Seattle’s “Mothers Against Police Harassment.” The broader vision of community policing neither validates nor rejects the claims of such organizations. Instead, it acknowledges a complex understanding of the composition of neighborhoods, one that transcends the easy divisions of good and bad, the manageable and the intractable, and that charges police with the onerous responsibility of taking a broader view of communities.

But to acknowledge this complexity is not to resolve its attendant dilemmas. Consider the issue of teenagers, especially minority teenagers, hanging out. They may well challenge accepted notions of proper behavior and drive their parents as well as their neighbors and the police crazy. But they are not necessarily irredeemable, nor are they necessarily thought to be so by their family and their neighbors. Traditionally, police have dealt with these disputes about the “legitimate use of public space . . . by imposing an unnegotiated order that adversely affects the interests of the young people concerned, and significantly undermines police-youth relations” (Loader, 1994: 524; see also Werthem and Piliavin, 1967: 57–62; Reiss, 1971: 150). Community policing calls for a different approach that takes account of the legitimate expectations of both youths and other neighborhood residents:

The issue needs to be reconstituted outside of a “law and order” paradigm and subject to processes of mediation in which all interested parties can endeavor to produce resolutions that do not constantly threaten to criminalize the social practices of young people. (Loader, 1994: 524)

At the very least, it would seem incumbent upon the police to take their cues from the community and to work toward reintegration of these youths back into their communities, as they often do in middle-class neighborhoods.

Of course, in middle-class neighborhoods there are more likely to be the stable family settings and favorable job prospects that reassure the police of the prognosis for successful reintegration. In neighborhoods in decline, it is necessary to construct the conditions conducive to reintegration. This means a problem-oriented approach to community policing—an approach that “recognizes the secondary nature of the criminal justice system in sustaining social order”—without suggesting that the police do not have an important, albeit a demanding and unfamiliar, role to play (Loader, 1994: 525). Needless to say, this vision of community policing taxes the resources, the energy, and the goodwill of police officers and asks them to step outside their conventional conceptions of themselves—indeed, to act in a manner that is contrary to these conventional conceptions.

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The problematic implications of following the line of least resistance toward the traditional beat policing or crime attack versions of community policing seem reasonably predictable. Most broadly, the result is likely to be a continued inclination to take for granted a dyadic and symmetrical pattern of relationships between the police and the public. In other words, the top-down bias of this approach will enable the police to project and impose their expectations on the public. More specifically, the police may well be tempted to make their peace with those groups in the neighborhood with whom they tend to agree. Marginalized groups will continue to be excluded, misperceived, and, in all likelihood, antagonized by some of the heavy-handed tactics associated with these anticrime-centered policing strategies. If so, the result is likely to be an intensification, rather than a diminution, of cleavages between police and marginalized elements of the public.

The aspirations of community policing imply two different kinds of measurements that are only indirectly related to crime. On the one hand, there is a need to have *process* measures—indicators of community mobilization, police participation in this mobilization, and mechanisms that promote police accountability to their constituents. Moreover, it is important to be attentive to how broad a cross-section of the community is involved or represented in these processes. On the other hand, there is also a need to develop *product* measures, which assess the extent to which community reconstruction is taking place. Crime rates may reasonably be seen as one relevant indicator—but only one, and not necessarily the most important. Thus, other indicia of constituent satisfaction and a healthy community life must be identified and measured. Included in this latter and rather amorphous category might be such things as the vitality of community organizations, the physical condition of the neighborhoods, and educational matters such as truancy and graduation rates.

To list such things is, by implication, to reveal one of the limitations inherent in attempting to measure what matters in terms of even the most enlightened understanding of policing. As has already been suggested, the conditions that lead to crime, disorder, and decline may well be rooted in structural problems that are beyond the reach of the most well-intentioned and inventive efforts of law enforcement officials—even when acting in concert with local officials and the

private sector. Crawford warns of one of the pitfalls of the “multiagency approach to community crime prevention,” an approach of the sort associated with problem-oriented policing (1994: 498). Among his concerns is the way in which the multiagency approach emphasizes *unity*.

There exists a distinct ideology among agency personnel and participants in multiagency crime prevention work [that] is rooted in the very existence of multiagency forums. It is an ideology of “unity,” which claims the capacity to reduce conflict through cooperation of diverse professional and interest groups in a homogeneous body with collective aims Conflict and competition are perceived to be the enemies of effective multiagency work. (p. 504)

The result, according to Crawford, is that “fundamental public issues are being marginalized except insofar as they are defined in terms of their criminogenic qualities” (p. 508). In short, even at its best, community policing is per force biased toward symptomatic reactions to what may well be underlying structural problems. In directing attention away from causes and from conflicts engendered by these causes, community policing can be seen as a strategy for evading problems rather than for solving them. What this suggests with respect to measurement is the importance of being attentive to indicators of social and economic well-being, especially those relating to employment and income. These problems cannot be solved, or even addressed, by the police. But neither should the police, according to Crawford, contribute to a process that represses the expression of these grievances.

Conclusions

If this paper seems to be more about what is already known than about what we must find out, it is misleading, not only as to the state of the available research but also as to my own state of mind. I have, of course, argued over and over again that if we are to measure what really matters, it is important to go beyond crime, fear of crime, and the indicia of disorder. But despite a rather assertive tone and repeated invocation of this admonition, I actually mean to offer only a plausible proposition that must be tested and for which, therefore, data need to be gathered.

Moreover, insofar as I suggest that crime is not a sufficient indicator of public expectations, I surely do not mean to suggest that it is not a necessary indicator. Indeed, as Carl Klockars reminded us at our initial gathering:

I've heard discussion about how we get the community involved. . . . There is another way to ask that question . . . namely, the community asking in what do we want to get the police involved. (Brady, 1996: 8).

Finally, while I call attention to diversity of race, class, gender, and circumstance, the extent and relevance of this diversity is also a matter for empirical inquiry—another matter in need of measurement rather than of *a priori* conclusions.

My impression is that at our last meeting, for whatever reasons, the issues of divergence and diversity were marginalized. As the summary of our session indicates, when these matters upon occasion crept into the discussion, the issue was seldom joined (Brady, 1996: 4, 6). Some participants did register their objections to what was thereby being excluded (p. 12). Perhaps the explanation is simple and without any deeper meaning: What was being marginalized was in fact marginal to a meeting that focused primarily on the “hows” rather than on the “whats” of measurement. And surely it is no accident that those of us who were most concerned have been asked to prepare papers for this second meeting. In any case, irrespective of where a discussion of divergence and diversity might lead and the controversy it may generate, addressing these matters is, to my way of thinking, an unequivocally necessary step on the road to “measuring what matters.”

Notes

1. Sasson's explanation for this admittedly preliminary research finding is that the absence of any public discourse that acknowledges the contribution of white racism to crime and violence “increases feelings of marginality among blacks . . . and the credibility of conspiratorial interpretations of social reality (as in, What are they trying to hide?),” 281.

2. Proponents of community policing have pointed out that the impersonal style associated with law enforcement and the “professional” model of policing in general inhibits building relationships of mutual trust and real

understanding. This matter will be taken up in the following section.

3. The idea of taking community seriously comes from a Ph.D. dissertation by William Lyons, *Taking Community Seriously: Policing Reform in Southeast Seattle*. Although the interpretations and conclusions are my own, this section of the paper draws heavily on Lyons' work and insights.

4. The nature, complexity, and significance of intra-departmental cleavages are currently being explored by Manning in his study “Culture as Control in Police Careers” (undated).

5. Ezra Stotland's comments were made to the author during a private conversation.

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**Meeting Three:
December 4, 1996**

Some Really Cheap Ways of Measuring What Really Matters

Carl B. Klockars

Had I been asked to script and cast a symposium on “Measuring What Matters” in contemporary policing, I cannot imagine how I might have done better than the National Institute of Justice and COPS. The cast is equally composed of world-class academic experts at measuring important things and police and all-star police leaders who, if anyone, should know what really matters in the real world of policing. To spice up that already potent mix, NIJ and COPS wisely added some top-drawer journalists (whose job is to report what matters), some articulate advocates for those who should or would like to be more involved in deciding what matters, and, for good measure, a few agent provocateurs.

For the most part, the prepared papers and the discussions at the first two meetings were quite sensible. At both meetings, the measurement people explained that serious measurement was difficult, complicated, time-consuming, and expensive, and that inference from even the best measurements must be made with the greatest caution, particularly when causal claims are being advanced. In counterpoint, the police leaders emphasized that the public, the press, and other interested parties demand fairly simple measures of their agencies’ performance. The chiefs also added that they need such information for management purposes and, less than perfect though such measures might be, they should be produced in a timely manner and at modest cost.

These fundamental truths about measuring and about what matters are by no means new in general nor are they new with respect to the two particular issues—crime and community—on which the discussions in the previous two sessions of this symposium dwelled. It has been known for more than 30 years that, in general, police statistics are poor measures of true levels of crime. This is in part because citizens exercise an extraordinary degree of discretion in deciding what crimes to report to police, and police exercise an extraordinary degree of discretion in deciding what to

report as crimes. Moreover, some unknown proportion of perpetrators are actively engaged in committing crimes in ways that make it unlikely that their crimes will ever be discovered. In addition, both crime and crime clearance rates can be manipulated dramatically by any police agency with a will to do so. It is also absolutely axiomatic that for certain types of crime (drug offenses, prostitution, corruption, illegal gambling, receiving stolen property, driving under the influence, etc.), police statistics are in no way reflective of the level of that type of crime or of the rise and fall of it, but they are reflective of the level of police agency resources dedicated to its detection. Is there a police chief anywhere in this country who does not believe that he or she could double or half the drug crimes his or her agency reports by doubling or halving the number of officers assigned to drug enforcement?

This is not to say that there are no types of crime for which police statistics are not excellent, true-level measures. If I had to select a single type of crime for which its true level—the level at which it is reported—and the police statistics that record it were virtually identical, it would be bank robbery. Those figures are likely to be identical because banks are geared in all sorts of ways (hidden and exposed cameras, exploding dyepacks, silent alarms, tellers trained to fill out forms describing the perpetrators, etc.) to aid in the reporting and recording of robberies and the identification of robbers. And, because most everyone takes bank robbery seriously, both Federal and local police are highly motivated to record such events.

Homicide, in the forms of murder and nonnegligent homicide, is also often spoken of as a crime for which the true level and the level reported in police statistics are likely to be very close. I know of no research to support this contention, but I doubt very seriously that the congruence between the true level of that crime and the level reported by police even begins to approach the identity that exists for bank robbery.

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Suicide and accidental deaths surely serve as masks for some murders. For example, it is possible that we may never know whether the 230 deaths that occurred on July 17, 1996, when TWA Flight 800 exploded and crashed into the ocean off the coast of Long Island, New York, were murders or accidental deaths. However, the number of murders and nonnegligent homicides that are classified as suicides or accidental deaths are probably minuscule in proportion to the number that are classified as unresolved cases of missing persons. Particularly vulnerable to having their murders misclassified this way are transients, street people, illegal aliens, and others who, if missed at all, are not missed for long.

Because police reports of crime are subject to citizen discretion in reporting, to perpetrator efforts at concealment, and to police discretion in recording, criminologists have long viewed police crime statistics with great skepticism. This is particularly true whenever these statistics are offered as evidence of the consequences of police performance. The reason for this skepticism goes well beyond the measurement problems noted above. It springs as well from the axiomatic belief of social scientists that all social behavior, including crime, has multiple causes, most of which police can neither influence nor control.

I cannot imagine that anything I have said so far comes as news to or offends anyone in attendance at our seminar. (If so, please write.) For that reason I would like to use some of the previous topics to clarify three concepts that are central to our seminar and are found in the title of this paper: measuring, cheap, and what really matters. This is more than an academic exercise. These terms conceal much of what has been unspoken or glossed over in our previous meetings. It is therefore critical to spend some time thinking about them because our conversations will not move much beyond the pedestrian observations I have made above unless we come to specific and explicit grips with what each of these core terms means.

Measuring

You are thought here to be the most senseless and fit man for the constable of the watch, therefore bear you the lantern.

Dogberry to the First Watchman
Much Ado About Nothing, act 3, scene 3
William Shakespeare

In general, measuring is the assignment of numbers to things according to some rules. There is some controversy in the philosophy of science over whether all things are measurable (e.g., the twinkle in an eye, the sincerity of a smile), but such issues are beyond consideration here. It may be said, however, that the act of measuring in and of itself implies at least three articles of some faith.

The first is that there is value in the *standardization* of whatever one is measuring. For example, theft can be committed in an infinite variety of ways under an infinite variety of circumstances. Most anything can be stolen; most anyone can be a victim; and most anyone can steal. Despite this limitless variety of the things that theft can mean and be, the act of measuring manages, by one rule or another, to ignore that complexity and reduce a complex occasion to a single unit—a theft—so that it may be defined as one of them.

This first article of faith of measurement may seem simple enough, but it is a very subtle point and one of immense consequences. Line police officers, in chronicling calls for service and describing crimes, arrests, and other activities, do not see themselves as engaged in measurement. They understand what they do as recording. It is only when those records are cumulated and enumerated by others who seek to draw inferences from them that their acts of recording and describing become measurements.

Herman Goldstein, in his classic article “Improving Policing: A Problem-Oriented Approach,” (Goldstein, 1979) was, I believe, the first to call attention to this issue and the difficulties it creates with respect to police measurements of crime. Goldstein points out that the classification of the problems that police deal with into categories of the criminal code is not adequate for a variety of reasons. Chief among Goldstein’s criticisms is that doing so masks diverse forms of behavior that police must respond to differently. He offers the example of events classified as “arson.”

Incidents classified as “arson” might include fires set by teenagers as a form of vandalism, fires set by persons with severe psychological problems, fires set for the purpose of destroying evidence

of a crime, fires set by persons (or their hired agents) for the purpose of collecting insurance, and fires set by organized criminal interests to intimidate. Each type of incident poses a radically different type of problem for police.

Goldstein also warns that the classification of police problems into categories of the criminal code inclines people to believe that unless police define events as crime they will not be taken seriously. There is no more poignant contemporary example of this misperception and its unfortunate consequences than the trend over the past decade toward mandatory arrest policies in cases of domestic violence. Spurred by well-meaning interests, the message they communicate to victims is that they should not call for police assistance unless they are prepared to have their problem classified as a crime and their domestic partner arrested for it. No longer can victims call police merely to request advice, counseling, or assistance in securing a temporary separation.

The second article of faith that marks measurement is the aspiration to increasingly subtle description and precise discrimination through the power of mathematics. It is not by accident that measuring seeks to connect things by rule to *numbers*. Numbers liberate mathematics, making it possible, among other things, to add, subtract, multiply, and divide and thus recognize and specify differences in exceptionally precise terms. It is this power of mathematics that makes it possible to recognize and specify, for example, that some type of crime has increased or decreased by some exact percentage.

Most criminal events lend themselves readily to measurement. To stay with the theft example mentioned above, not only can the amount of the theft be measured, but the identity, race, ethnicity, gender, age, occupation, and complaint or criminal history of victims, suspects, witnesses, and offenders can be connected to numbers as well. The same is true of the location of the offense, the relationship between victim and offender, the time and duration of the police response, the arrest or lack of it, and at least a dozen other data points that record features and events in the judicial and correctional process.

In a free society, this ability to describe the components of events police attend to with mathematical precision invites those with an interest in any of those

components to make whatever use of those precise descriptions they deem appropriate. Their uses may range from providing support for allegations of discriminatory police responses based on age, race, ethnicity, gender, income, or neighborhood, to commercial ventures advising prospective home buyers how to locate in safe neighborhoods, to documenting police claims of success at fighting crime. The capacity to describe with mathematical precision may have commercial or political value and may be used correctly or incorrectly, responsibly or irresponsibly, fairly or unfairly. Because the power to describe with precision may be used for good or ill by anyone with access to it, three real-world questions are usually attendant when one proposes measurement:

- Should measurement be performed at all?
- Who is likely to profit from it?
- Who should have access to it?

These are all political questions, and no serious social measurement ought to be done without consideration of them.

The third article of faith of measurement is that what is measured (i.e., attached to numbers by some rule) is worth measuring. Admittedly, there are exceptions to this rule. Surely it is possible to envision an occasion in which measurement may be done out of curiosity or for frivolous purposes. Serendipitous discovery sometimes results from such activity, so a modest value might be assigned to it. Far more common is the case in which measurement is continued out of habit when no rational reason for continuing to measure remains. It is precisely the faith that what is measured should be worth measuring that advises discontinuing measuring on such occasions.

Having said this much about measuring, it is now possible to turn to the topic of its costs. Before doing so, it may be helpful to emphasize the three articles of faith in measurement. They are:

- In every instance of measurement, the conversion of a thing, event, or occasion to a number requires ignoring or discarding all other meaning that thing, event, or occasion might have. The easy way to appreciate this very hard point in all its paradox and irony is to remember this: a kiss is just a kiss, a sigh is just a sigh, and a crime is just a crime, as

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time goes by. (Which, of course, anyone who has kissed, sighed, or committed, investigated, or been the victim of a crime knows is not true.)

- Every human event or occasion offers many opportunities to measure and to bring the truly awesome power of mathematics to its description and discrimination. (The easy way to remember this important point is to remember that measurement creates power. Whether that power is used or not, by whom, and for what purpose are separate but ever-attendant questions.)
- Measure only what is worth measuring and stop measuring it when it is no longer worth it. (This is the easy way to remember this simple but easily forgotten point.)

One more note on measurement before proceeding. Although I have tried to deal gingerly with measuring, the fact is that measuring in the social sciences is a very sad affair. It is an activity so fraught with mind- and soul-wrenching difficulties that only grossly ignorant beginning students and the least capable or least virtuous of social scientists engage in it with good humor. A warning is in order to any police practitioner who is approached by a quantitative criminologist with a smile on his or her face: Listen very, very carefully, keeping one hand on your wallet and the other on your gun.

Cheap

I can think of five popular meanings of the word cheap. The fact that four of them are distinctly pejorative should not go unnoticed. In attempting to achieve the singular meaning that is laudatory, we invariably risk the four that are not.

- Inexpensive: a cheap meal.
- Of little value: talk is cheap.
- Of poor quality: a cheap suit.
- Easy to obtain: a cheap laugh.
- Unworthy of respect: a cheap shot.

Much of what I have said and will say supports the four less-than-laudatory meanings of cheap as applied to police measures of crime. They need not be repeated here. What merits elaboration is the sense in

which police measures of crime are inexpensive and genuine bargains, despite the fact that to criminologists they may be of little value, of poor quality, easy to obtain, and unworthy of respect.

What explains this apparent contradiction is that police do not intend for their records to be measures of crime or of the effectiveness or efficiency of police in fighting it. Records' principal purpose is the documentation of events and specific features of events police may be required to account for at a later time, of which only one (and probably the least important) is their contribution to the general crime rate. Whether it is a field interrogation, a lunch break, a response to a call for service, the discharge of a weapon, the investigation of a complaint about a barking dog, or an arrest for murder, police document such events to the degree and with such detail (or lack of it) as may serve their purposes.

This difference and multiplicity of purpose make police records, despite their tremendous shortcomings and defects, extraordinary and irresistible bargains as measures of crime. The fact is that, because records serve these other organizational, occupational, and institutional purposes, police are obliged to collect them no matter how defective criminologists may find them to be as measures of crime. In this sense—as measures of crime—police statistics are free.

Criminologists should not be chastened for looking this gift horse in the mouth. That, among other things, is their job. Their job is also to point out that the very costly business of measurement can be made very inexpensive when it serves some other crucial purpose. The trick is not to cheapen either purpose in the process.

What really matters

A philosopher, if he has a toothache, is more likely to be interested in dentistry than in mathematical symbolism.

We interest a man by dealing with his interests.

Permanence and Change
Kenneth Burke

I know of only three ways to discover what really matters: to ask others what really matters; to observe

how others, despite what they say, behave when something really matters, and to reflect on the subject, examining both my own and others' ideas and behaviors. None of these methods of discovering what really matters is terribly reliable, and anyone who has ever tried to deal with this problem seriously is almost always struck not only by how difficult finding out what really matters is, but by how often each approach—asking, watching, and thinking—leads to contradictory answers and conclusions.

To illustrate this point, permit me to pose a problem and ask that, should you find the time, you pose it to a few other people:

Suppose the house next door to yours came up for sale. To the delight of your neighbor, three buyers put in bids at the asking price. However, none of them will offer a penny more. Your good neighbor comes to you and says that, as he will get the same amount of money from the sale no matter who he sells to, he'd like to know the order in which you would prefer he offer the house to the three prospective buyers. He will ask the neighbors on the other side of his house for their preferences as well. The prospective buyers are Rodney King, O.J. Simpson, and Mark Fuhrman. In what order would you prefer them as your new neighbors?

Over the past year, I have posed this question to about 30 people, most of whom are criminologists or police administrators. (It makes for interesting chat at conferences and meetings.) All of them, I believe, thought Simpson was guilty. They also thought Fuhrman had at least perjured himself and possibly tampered with evidence in order to frame a guilty man. Without exception, they believed that King was the victim of police use of excessive force, although they differed in their opinions on what punishment the police officers involved in the incident deserved. Be that as it may, with two exceptions,¹ every one of them placed Simpson or Fuhrman first and King last. Of those who placed Simpson second, virtually all explained they did so only because the press and tourists hanging around his house would constitute an annoyance.

The answers I received (and, I suspect, those that you will receive if you pose this question to yourself and

others) are similar to what many police agencies discover when they hold community meetings focusing on neighborhood problems. Even in neighborhoods with disproportionately high levels of felony crime, residents typically express their greatest concern with public order problems—litter, vandalism, graffiti, loitering, noise, traffic, illegal parking, abandoned buildings and autos, etc.

Thinking about this problem and the answers it generates is helpful in understanding the difference between what matters and what really matters. This is because it juxtaposes the two ideas and in so doing helps clarify both. Typically, "What matters?" is a question that invites answers about the position or the meaning of something in a general or abstract hierarchy. In the problem above, Simpson, Fuhrman, and King stand for the categories of crime each represents. We ask about what matters when we ask questions such as "What are the most important problems in America today?" or "How much do you worry about. . . ?" Social scientists as well as pollsters often ask such questions. There are, for example, long histories of social science research that have sought to establish not only a hierarchy of the seriousness of crimes but also an order of punishment appropriate to them.

The difficulty with measuring what matters is that, in order to achieve the comparisons such measures intend, they must be ungrounded and removed from context. How else could it be asked whether crime is more or less important or serious than unemployment, illness, pollution, racism, terrorism, drug addiction, poverty, or divorce? All can be devastating in their effects on individuals, families, and communities, but they also can be of little consequence to those who are personally unaffected by them.

While questions of what matters always enjoy a relative freedom from circumstances and context, questions of what really matters are typically locked to individuals who are located in specific roles or institutions at particular times. In a general sense, crime, unemployment, illness, pollution, and family breakdown matter, but they really matter if it is you that is victimized, fired, sick, poisoned, or divorced. The problem of measuring what really matters is that, because it is so closely tied to specific individuals, events, roles, times, and places, generalizations of the kind that can be made about what matters are usually very difficult.

These what-matters and what-really-matters distinctions bear on police, crime, and measurement in a number of critical ways. First, for police and particularly for police leaders, crime not only matters but, to a degree, it really matters, in that public attitudes toward police may influence how police can and do work and whether police leaders keep their jobs. The extent to which it does depends in part on the degree to which police are believed to be responsible for crime. Although police cannot control the extent to which they are believed to be responsible for crime, they can influence that perception. In recent years, police leaders have begun to differ on whether to encourage that belief. Most police leaders have continued the longstanding strategy of claiming credit when crime decreases and warning that increases in crime are the product of insufficient police resources. They claim that if police resources are increased, crime will be reduced or, if not reduced, at least grow more slowly than it would have had those resources not been provided. The rhetoric of this position is tried and true, and it is hard to imagine that a police chief exists in the United States who does not know the script.²

In contrast, an alternative voice, one heard most often from police leaders committed to some form of community- or problem-oriented policing, seeks to weaken the perception that police are primarily or directly responsible for crime. That voice claims only modest police credit when crime goes down. It credits instead individual, neighborhood, and community efforts for success. When crime rises, that same modest voice speaks of the need for individuals, neighborhoods, and communities to take steps to bring it under control.³

This what-matters versus what-really-matters distinction is by no means limited to, nor even most importantly, a matter of crime. Although a police agency or chief may suffer some difficulties or enjoy some favor in the wake of general trends in crime, it is far more common that things that really matter happen to them on other occasions. Favor follows public demonstrations of exemplary achievement. Undesirable things that really matter happen when an inadequate police response is publicly linked to some other type of undesirable situation. Such occasions include, but are not limited to, scandalous instances of police incompetence, brutality, and corruption.

The measurement-relevant point of this observation is that while police routinely offer crime statistics as (often defective) public measures of what matters and what, to a far more limited degree, really matters, they offer few if any measurements of most of the things they do that invariably really matter. Put differently, and by way of introduction to the sections that follow, what are the measurements that police can routinely produce that measure the competence, skill, and integrity with which they do their work and for which they should rightly be held accountable?

Some really cheap measures of three things that really matter

Police competence, police skill, police integrity

What follows are three specific and highly limited solutions to three general problems of measuring things that really matter in policing. Each solution meets the criteria developed in the above discussion of what really matters and of what ought to be considered before measuring. Each is also inexpensive. All are offered here merely as examples, and as such are meant to encourage both similar and competing efforts.

Problem I—measuring police competence: the consequences of a good definition

In 1974, Egon Bittner described the role of the police as attending to “situations which ought not to be happening and about which something ought to be done now” (Bittner, 1974). Bittner offered this definition in direct challenge to those who understood the police role as simply enforcing the law and making arrests. In contrast, his definition emphasizes the wide range of things police are obliged to attend to (“situations which ought not to be happening”), the variety of things that they may do in attending to them (“something ought to be done”), and the unique capacity their ability to use force gives them to handle situations that could not await a later resolution (“now”). If Bittner’s definition of the role of police is correct (and I know of no other that is better), it is possible to derive two general axioms about police competence from it:

- A competent police agency should be able to describe with great precision what ought not to be happening and what it ought to be doing something about now.
- A competent police agency should be able to describe with great precision what it is doing about things that ought not to be happening and that it ought to be doing something about now.

It may be helpful to think of routine measures of police competence as falling into one of these areas.

Measuring what ought not to be happening—the systematic and standardized use and distribution of calls for service and dispatch data

I know of no police agency that does not record many things that ought not to be happening. In very small police agencies, these records may be handwritten, but even in some very small departments and virtually all larger ones, they are computerized and often provide a level of detail that is truly extraordinary. It is not uncommon, for example, for the average computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system to classify calls for service and police inservice records into dozens of different categories. These records can specify to the second the amount of time police officers report having spent at a particular place or area as well as the nature of the problems they attended to there.

Admittedly, records of this type can and will be manipulated and distorted by both police and citizens. Police can report doing things they do not do. They can also do things without reporting them. They can “milk” calls, taking more time than is necessary before reporting themselves available to handle another call. In many cities, citizens have likewise learned that describing an event as more serious than it is may provoke a more rapid response by police. They learn, for example, to “add a gun” to a report of a disturbance. But because citizens have a substantial stake in getting police to respond to their requests for service and police officers have a substantial stake in such records as a means of recording the work they do and as lines of safety and assistance, calls for service are relatively reliable accounts of what really matters—what citizens tell police they ought to be attending to and what police on their own initiative decide merits their attention. Defects and distortions fully conceded, they are

infinitely superior to crime records as descriptions of what ought not to be happening.

To turn such accounts into measurements and report those measurements in a form that makes them meaningful and usable has become progressively easier with the advent of computerized calls for service and dispatch records. As is the case with all things that really matter, as opposed to those things that matter only in the abstract, how this ought to be done is a question of the specific roles and purposes such measurements are expected to serve.

At the general level of police organization, an accounting of what ought not to be happening in the entire jurisdiction for which the agency is responsible might be designed to augment, if not compete with, annual crime statistics. It may be given the same prominence and provide approximately the same level of detail as crime statistics. Although this document may be a general description of what really matters to police, it most surely will be, as are crime statistics, merely one more thing that matters for almost everyone else.

It may be useful to think of this general description, based on calls for service and dispatch records, as data collection in support of an extended answer a police executive would offer in response to the question, “What happened in the _____ [State, county, city] of [_____], about which your agency should have done something during the past year?” There will, of course, be those who are not satisfied with a general annual accounting of what ought not to be happening. They will want to be informed of how much police know about what is happening to them.

For this reason, at all other levels within a police organization these data should be organized in such a way as to make it possible for anyone with responsibility for policing in any given area to answer the same question as it pertains to that area. The detail of their answers should, of course, be finer, the time periods they are able to describe should be shorter, and the frequency with which they should be expected to answer that question should be far greater. Modern systems make generating this type of information so easy and inexpensive that any CAD system that cannot do it should be replaced. Likewise, the detail with which each person at each level is capable of answering that question should be regarded as a direct measure of his or her competence.

Measuring what you are doing about what ought not to be happening—surveying consumers

Imagine a police leader, administrator, supervisor, or line officer who is asked of his or her area of responsibility, “What is happening that ought not to be happening and that you ought to be doing something about now?,” and who cannot anticipate the question that will inevitably follow? (*What did you do about it?*) The inability to anticipate this question should be grounds for immediate termination of employment.

To know the question is one thing; to know the answer and provide cheap measures of it is quite another.

One answer is that we need to go where what ought not to be happening is happening to see what needs to be done now. This answer has been much criticized of late, disparaged as “Dial-a-Cop” policing, and deemphasized as we are urged to move beyond 911. I am supportive of many efforts to move policing beyond 911, but because most people believe that responding promptly to calls for help is the single most important thing police do, it is crucial to get 911 right before moving beyond it.

Again, measures of both the timeliness of and time consumed in police responses are cheap and easy to produce from almost any CAD system. In systems employing differential response protocols, they can be sorted and reported by level of response urgency. They may also form the basis for developing efficient patrol deployment strategies and equitable patrol workload distribution.

The problem with such measures is that, while they can describe in fine detail how long it takes police to respond to a request for help and how much time officers report doing something in response to that request, they are of little value in describing what was done and of practically no value in determining whether it was done competently. To make this determination, police agencies usually rely on two mechanisms. One is supervisory review of reports of their activities that officers generate; the other is complaints received from citizens about poor service.

Both of these mechanisms are important for quality control, but both are also so subject to distortion, manipulation, and error that even if their results are combined and quantified, they will not constitute adequate measures of competent police responses. As a measure of competence, the major defect in supervisory review is that it relies on the supervisor’s review of the responding officer’s written account of what happened. The main defect in citizen complaints is that the service rendered must fall to such a level that citizens are motivated to take the time and effort necessary to come forward to complain. Moreover, as both efforts are appreciated within police agencies as attempts to detect deficiencies, shortcomings, and misconduct, all sorts of defensive responses tend to arise.

It is possible to both remedy shortcomings and thwart the natural tendencies toward defensive responses by viewing the problem not as one of detecting deficiency but of creating measures of good service. It has been my experience that, even in police agencies with serious problems, the overwhelming majority of calls for service are handled competently and excellent officers in those agencies are rarely recognized for their good work.

Exhibit 1 is a device that one agency with which I was affiliated attempted to address the problem of measuring competent service delivery to victims of serious crimes in a positive way.

One month after a victimization, the head of the agency wrote a brief letter to the victim asking him or her to evaluate how well the case had been handled. When a problem was reported, it was taken seriously. Typically, the evaluation was followed with a contact, often in person, by the captain of the agency’s patrol division. The agency was a 200-officer sheriff’s department, and the sheriff appreciated the effort not only as a mechanism for detecting and correcting problems but also as a device for generating a record of competent service at the same time he advertised his commitment to quality to potential voters. It was this multiplicity of purposes that in the sheriff’s view made this effort, at a cost of approximately \$0.70 per survey, very cheap. Ironically, the county executive, a political opponent of the sheriff, attempted to curtail this effort, dismissing it as merely a campaign device.

Exhibit 1. Cover Letter and Victim Survey

Mr. John Doe
Any Street
Any City, Any State, Zip

Dear Mr. Doe:

According to our records, you have recently been the victim of a serious crime that was assigned to an officer from our agency for investigation. Often, due to lack of evidence, cases cannot be solved. But, whether your case was solved or not, I am personally committed to seeing to it that every case assigned to my officers is investigated thoroughly and that you feel you were treated with dignity, courtesy, and respect.

In order to do so, I need your assistance. Would you take a moment to fill out the enclosed questionnaire and return it to me in the postage-paid envelope provided? I value your response and assure you that I will give it my personal attention.

Thank you.

Sincerely yours,
Chief [Sheriff, Commander, Precinct Captain]
encl.

**Chief, Sheriff, Commander, or Precinct Captain
Police Service Survey**

Case # _____

1. Do you recall the name of the officer who handled your case?

No _____ Yes _____ If "yes," who was it? _____

2. Were you provided by the officer or some other representative of our agency with a pamphlet called "Victim Assistance," which describes your rights as a victim under *our State's Law*?

No _____ Yes _____

3. Did the investigator leave you a business card or otherwise provide you with information on how to contact him or her on the progress of the investigation?

No _____ Yes _____

4. Do you know the outcome of your case?

No _____ Yes _____

5. Was a person arrested for victimizing you?

No _____ Yes _____ Don't know _____

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Exhibit 1. Cover Letter and Victim Survey (continued)

6. Were you treated by the investigating officer with dignity, courtesy, and respect?

No _____ Yes _____

If "no," please explain: _____

7. Do you feel that your case was handled in a professional manner and that the investigator assigned to it did everything within reason to investigate it thoroughly?

No _____ Yes _____

If "no," please explain: _____

8. Any other comments? _____

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Please return it to me in the enclosed, postage-paid envelope.

_____ (Signature)

Chief [Sheriff, Commander, Precinct Captain]

Problem II—measuring police skill: good policing yields good measurement

In the same pioneering essay in which Egon Bittner defined the role of the police as attending to “situations which ought not to be happening and about which something ought to be done now,” he offered an equally groundbreaking definition of police skill. Bittner wrote, “While force is the core of the police role, the skill of policing consists in finding ways to avoid its use,” (Bittner, 1974).

It is this advice from Bittner that suggests the key to solving the problem of measuring police skill. If Bittner is correct, and I believe he is, five police agency obligations follow logically from his claim. The first is a matter of agency policy—in every police agency, the commitment of that agency to skilled policing requires, by definition, the adoption of a use-of-force policy that obligates officers to work in ways that minimize the need to use force. The second is that the agency monitor the use of force by its officers. The third is that the agency evaluate officers when they find it necessary to use force. The fourth is that the agency teach officers how to work in ways that minimize the use of force. The fifth is that the agency correct officers when they fail to do so.

To the extent that police agencies accept these obligations and responsibilities, they should, in the course of doing so, generate excellent measures of police skill. The measurement problem in the case of police skill is not one of deciding whether or how to measure, it is one of assisting police agencies in overcoming obstacles that impede them in doing what a commitment to skilled policing logically obliges them to do.

Impeded they are, indeed. The fact is that most police agencies do not have formal policies that explicitly require officers to work in ways that minimize their need to use force; have only the most limited and primitive capacity to monitor the use of force by their officers; have no idea whether the use of force by their officers is increasing, decreasing, or remaining the same; do not know if or why their officers tend to use force more or less frequently than officers in similar agencies; rarely evaluate their officers’ skills in avoiding the use of force; are incapable of determining whether specific police practices minimize the need to use force; and are severely compromised by

all these shortcomings in their capacity to learn about and teach skilled policing.

I have given this problem extensive and detailed consideration in other writings and invite anyone with an interest in implementing practical changes in enhancing police skills to consult them. Here, for the limited purpose of considering it as a problem of measuring what matters, a brief summary of obstacles standing in the way of measuring police skills and ways to overcome them will suffice.

Obstacle 1—misconception of the problem. The chief obstacle to measurement of police skills is a fundamentally flawed conception of the problem. To understand the problem of excessive use of force by police, one must begin by appreciating what defines police and distinguishes them from other citizens—that we give them the general right to use force as they see the situations they attend to call for it. They are in this respect like other professionals (e.g., doctors) to whom we give special rights to do things (e.g., cut people open, dispense dangerous drugs, examine their private parts, etc.) that we permit no one else to do.

At present, there are three major mechanisms that control police abuses of use of force:

- Criminal law—an officer’s use of force shall not be so excessive as to constitute a crime.
- Civil liability—an officer’s use of force shall not be so unreasonable that the person on whom it is used should be awarded compensation for the officer’s behavior.
- Fear of scandal—an officer’s behavior shall not be of such nature to bring embarrassment to himself or herself or the agency that employs him or her.

The excessive use of force is at present defined in terms of a violation of one or more of the above standards. In consequence of that understanding, the apparatus most police agencies currently employ to control the use of excessive force is a mechanism designed to detect and punish behavior that violates one of these standards.

The problem is that none of these standards is sufficiently high for the kind of policing we expect and want to encourage in a modern democratic society. Consider an analogy. Suppose you were looking for a

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physician to treat you, and you sought a friend who knew many area physicians to obtain a recommendation. Your friend suggests Dr. Jones with the following observations: Dr. Jones has never used his physician's powers criminally, he has never lost a malpractice suit, and he has never been discovered to have engaged in scandalous medical behavior. Satisfied? Hardly. I know of no one who would regard that as an adequate standard for medical conduct. Obviously, any prospective patient would want and would have a right to expect far more.

At present, meeting these three standards—avoiding punishment under criminal law, escaping the costs of civil liability, and averting public scandal—is all we expect of police and all that police, in practice, expect of themselves.

The conclusion is simple, straightforward, and unavoidable. If one wants to encourage good, professional policing (not merely to settle for policing that is not criminal, civilly liable, or potentially scandalous), one has to establish far higher expectations for the skilled police use of force than either criminal or civil law or public expectations currently permit. Only by setting standards for police conduct at that elevated level will we keep it from the levels that flirt with criminal and civil liability and scandal. In fact, until we do just that, we will make no progress whatsoever on solving the problem of excessive use of force.

The way to do so follows Bittner's lead. It is to define the problem of controlling excessive force as an issue of enhancing police skill. The first task in getting police agencies to accurately and systematically measure their use of force is to change the conception of the problem of excessive force from one of detecting and prosecuting misconduct to developing and encouraging skilled policing.

If one wants to raise the minimal standards for police use of force from the minimal standards currently set by criminal and civil law and the fear of scandal, where should one go to find these new standards? As is the case in medicine, law, engineering, and any other profession, they can be found in only one place: within the craft itself, as exemplified in the work of the kind of police officers whom police themselves regard as highly skilled practitioners. In any police agency there are officers who are well known for their ability to walk into an out-of-control situation and stabilize it peacefully. (There are others, of course, who

can turn any situation into a riot.) The skill of such officers is knowing how to work in ways that minimize the use of force.

Historically, U.S. police have resisted external reviews of police conduct on the grounds that "civilians" could not understand what police work requires. They are right, in the same way a physician would be right in insisting that a layperson would not have the knowledge to properly evaluate skilled medical practices. The problem with outsider reviews of either police or medical practices is not that laypersons would demand too much of police or physicians, but that they do not possess the kind of knowledge of options and alternatives that would permit them to demand more. The only ones who have the detailed knowledge necessary to distinguish good policing from that which is merely not criminal, civilly liable, or scandalous are experienced, skilled police officers.

The practical problems, then, for any police agency that wants to make real progress in controlling the excessive use of force by police are to establish an agency policy that calls for police to work in ways that minimize the use of force and to create conditions under which experienced, skilled police officers will be willing and able to teach other officers how to comply with that policy.

Solving the first part of the problem is easy. Create a use-of-force policy that opens with the following words: "Officers in this agency shall work in ways that minimize the need to use force."

Obstacle 2—mobilizing the proficiency of skilled police officers. Solving the second part of the problem, getting skilled officers to teach other officers to comply with such a policy, runs into three major difficulties. The first is the Code—the usually unspoken agreement among police officers that calls upon them to go to extreme lengths to protect one another from punishment. The second is the CYA syndrome. Endemic in police agencies, it tells all police to constantly "cover your ass"—behave in ways that will not expose you to criticism. The third is the widely held view among line officers and many supervisors that the "god" supervisor is the one who will back up an officer when he or she makes a mistake.

Each of these obstacles springs from a single source: the fundamentally punitive orientation of the apparatus currently employed in police agencies to control

officers' behavior. From the point of view of working police officers, the administrative structure of the agencies that employ them is little more than a collection of hundreds, and in some cases thousands, of rules and regulations, the violation of which can lead to their punishment. Under such conditions, it is inevitable that the Code and CYA flourish. It is also inevitable that under such conditions supervisors do not supervise. Rather they discipline or, if they are "good" supervisors, gain the loyalty and support of those who work for them by covering for them when they run afoul of those rules.

Thus, the problem of getting skilled police officers to teach other officers to work in ways that minimize the use of force requires that such teaching be done under conditions in which the normal punitive and disciplinary orientation of police administration is suspended. Only under such conditions will officers be prepared to assume a reasonably receptive, nondefensive posture, and only then will experienced, skilled supervisors be capable of offering constructive criticism of officer conduct. To encourage such behavior on the part of skilled supervisors, police agencies must do five things.

First, the agency must commit itself to recording every use of force by its officers. While many use-of-force incidents, such as those that cause death or bodily injury or involve the use of police equipment such as firearms, batons, chemical irritants, stun devices, and canines, should obviously be reported, the overwhelming majority of occasions of police use of force inflict little or no physical injury on the person on whom they are used. Police use low levels of force in almost every custodial arrest. Grasping a person by the arm or shoulder, grabbing a shirt or a belt to hold a suspect, twisting arms to apply handcuffs, tightening handcuffs until they fit, and pressing an arrestee's head down to protect it in the course of sitting the arrestee in the back seat of a vehicle all constitute uses of force. The same is true of the use of force in accident and rescue situations—restraining friends and family of victims; steadying and transporting the sick, the injured, the infirm, and the delirious; and controlling crowds. Although on all of these occasions police use force, it is simply impractical to require a report of such uses.

At the same time, every one of the above-mentioned, low-level uses of force can be done in a manner or under circumstances that a skilled police officer

would find excessive. It is possible to choke a person with a twisted shirt, strain a back or break a rib with a hard enough pull on a belt, twist arms into a handcuff position in a manner that dislocates shoulders, tighten handcuffs to severely painful, punitive levels, and force heads down so firmly that they hit knees. Most occasions when police use excessive force are likely to be instances of low levels of use, if for no other reason than the vast majority of all police uses of force are of low levels.

I know of no wholly satisfactory way to solve the problem of requiring the report of potentially excessive uses of low-level force without paralyzing police by requiring the report of all such uses. Tentatively, and fully subject to revision based on research, I would propose two rules to govern when a low-level use of force that does not produce injury should be reported: whenever anyone gives any indication or suggestion of any dissatisfaction with the officer's use of force or any occasion when an officer involved in the incident believes for any reason that a use-of-force report would be desirable. Both rules are admittedly imperfect but certainly extend the scope of force monitoring beyond monitoring limited to instances causing injury.

Second, police must make writing reports of the use of force the responsibility of supervisors, not line officers. This in and of itself will provide an inducement to supervisors to encourage officers to work in ways that minimize the use of force, if only to save supervisors the work of preparing such reports more often than necessary.

Third, upon completion of the report, which should require interviews with witnesses, the officer or officers involved, and collection of appropriate physical evidence, the supervisor must be obligated to evaluate the use of force by the officer. In making that evaluation, the supervisor should be forced to reach one of three conclusions: the use of force was necessary and appropriate; the use of force was legitimate, but an alternative approach might have made it unnecessary; or the use of force may constitute a violation of agency policy—refer to internal affairs.

The key evaluation is the second. It is an evaluation of police conduct made by a senior, experienced police officer, not a civilian, lawyer, or internal affairs investigator. What makes it key is that to reach it a supervisor must call upon his knowledge and skill as a police

officer and use them to explain how the situation might have been handled in a way that would have avoided use of force.

Fourth, after the first-line supervisor completes the use-of-force report, it should be passed up the chain of command. For example, if a sergeant prepares the use-of-force evaluation, the report should be reviewed by a lieutenant and, after that, a captain. Both of them, in order, should also be required to reach one of the evaluative conclusions. In reaching their evaluations, each should not only evaluate the conduct of the officer involved in the use of force, but the evaluation of the previous supervisor. A supervisor can fail to reprimand an officer for working in a manner that does not serve to minimize the use of force, but he or she does so in peril of his or her own reputation as a supervisor before his or her superiors. The idea is to mobilize the same sentiments on the part of police supervisors that exist among judges who do not want to have their decisions overruled by judges in a higher court.

Fifth and finally, after the review process is complete, normally within a couple of days of the use-of-force incident, the use-of-force report and evaluation by three supervisors should be returned to the officer. A finding that the use of force was necessary and appropriate requires no further comment. A reference to internal affairs will inform an officer that the incident is under further investigation. However, a finding that the officer's behavior was legitimate (i.e., that it did not constitute criminal, civil, or scandalous misconduct) but an alternative approach might have made it unnecessary should prompt an occasion in which a senior, skilled, experienced police officer sits down with a fellow officer to explain in detail how that officer might have conducted himself or herself in a way that would have avoided the need to use force. No discipline should follow, but supervisors must make clear that the officer will be expected to work in that way in the future.

Using such instructions—from making supervisors take seriously their obligation to supervise and teach the skills of good police work—real progress will be made in controlling excessive use of force by police. Incidental to that achievement will also come a whole host of free measures of things that really matter.

Problem III—measuring police integrity: overcoming the fear of finding out what you want to know

By virtue of the fact that policing is a highly discretionary, coercive activity that routinely takes place in private settings, out of the sight of supervisors, and before witnesses who are often regarded as unreliable, it is, as the history of virtually every police agency in the world bears testimony, an occupation that is ripe with opportunities for misconduct of many types.⁴ One type of misconduct, corruption—the abuse of police authority for gain—has been particularly problematic.⁵ Contributing to the difficulties of controlling corruption are not only the reluctance of police officers to report corrupt activities of their fellow officers—a phenomenon sometimes identified as the Code or the “Blue Curtain”—and the reluctance of police administrators to admit the existence of corruption but also the fact that the typical corrupt transaction benefits the parties to it and thus leaves no immediate victim or complainant to call attention to it (Muir, 1979; Klockars and Mastrofski, 1983).

These three features of corruption in and of themselves pose enormous obstacles to any attempt to measure it. Moreover, until relatively recently, the administrative view of corruption was to see it as largely reflective of the moral defects of individual police officers,⁶ fighting corruption by carefully screening applicants for police positions, pursuing defective officers aggressively, and removing them from their police positions before their behavior spread throughout the agency. Sometimes referred to as the “bad apple” theory of police corruption, it has been severely criticized in recent years.⁷

The inherent resistance of corruption to direct measurement combined with this police conception of how to deal with it doom any attempt to measure it directly, in the same way all police statistics on crimes without complainants are doomed. All such measures will not reflect the true level of the problem but rather the resources and energies that are applied to its discovery. Under such circumstances, it is possible for the most corrupt police agencies—ones that make little or no effective effort to detect corruption—to appear to be free of it.

Although high-quality research on corruption is very limited,⁸ contemporary approaches to corruption stress the importance of four dimensions of corruption that go beyond the understanding of corruption as a problem of the moral defects of individual “bad-apple” police officers. Unlike the individualistic approach to police corruption, each of these four dimensions is profoundly organizational in nature. Taken together, they urge a reconception of the problem of corruption from one of weeding out and hunting down corrupt officers to an organizational obligation to create an environment that supports integrity and an occupational culture among its officers that is intolerant of corruption. The wonderful thing about each of these four dimensions, from the point of view of those who would like to measure things that really matter, is that each is readily measurable.

Organizational rules. The first of these dimensions is organizational rules and the manner in which they are made, communicated, and understood. In the United States, police organizations differ markedly in what they officially prohibit as corrupt behavior (McCormack, 1986; Muir, 1979). This is particularly true of marginally or *mala prohibita* corrupt behavior such as off-duty employment and receipt of favors, gratuities, small gifts, free meals, and discounts. The problem is further complicated by the fact that in many agencies, although official policy formally prohibits such activities, the agency’s unofficial policy, supported in relative silence by supervisors and administrators, is to permit and ignore such behaviors provided they are limited and conducted discreetly.

Corruption control techniques. The second organizational dimension of corruption is the entire range of activities police agencies employ to prevent and control it. These include, but are not limited to, education in ethics, proactive and reactive corruption investigations, integrity testing, and the general deterrence of corruption by the discipline and punishment of offenders. The extent to which these and other organizational anticorruption techniques are employed varies enormously.

The Code. The third organizational dimension of corruption has already been mentioned. It is the Code or the “Blue Curtain”—the informal prohibition against reporting the misconduct of fellow police officers in the occupational culture of policing. Two features of the Code bear emphasis here.

First, exactly what behavior is covered by the Code varies enormously between police agencies. In some agencies, it may cover only relatively low-level corruption; in others it may cover corruption of even the most serious degree. Secondly, the Code not only differs in what behavior it covers but to whom the benefit of its coverage is extended. In some agencies, the Code is largely limited to police partners who enjoy, vis-à-vis one another, a testimonial immunity that police liken to traditionally privileged relationships between husband and wife, physician and patient, or lawyer and client.

Although most police administrators probably understand that circumscribing both whom and what the Code covers should be an administrative priority, (Barker and Wells, 1982) in virtually every police agency, the Code develops as a response to the punitive orientation of the quasi-military police administrative system. Put too crudely, quasi-military police administration works by creating hundreds and sometimes thousands of rules and then severely punishing deviations from those rules. It is a sociological inevitability that under such administrative and organizational conditions some form of the Code will evolve (Bittner, 1970; Bittner, 1990; Klockars, 1985; Jefferson, 1990; and Guyot, 1991).

The influence of public expectations. The fourth and final dimension of police corruption emphasized by contemporary police theory is the influence of the social and political environments in which police institutions, systems, and agencies operate.⁹ Even within the same country, as U.S. history illustrates, there are areas with long and virtually uninterrupted traditions of police corruption (e.g., Chicago, New Orleans, Key West), equally long traditions of minimal corruption (e.g., Milwaukee, Kansas City, Seattle), and still others that have undergone repeated cycles of scandal and reform (e.g., New York, Philadelphia, Oakland). From such histories we may conclude not only that public expectations about police integrity exert vastly different pressures on police agencies in different areas, but also that public pressures toward corruption may be successfully resisted.

The major propositions of the idea that controlling corruption is an organizational rather than an individual problem are questions of fact and opinion that can be explored directly and without anything like the resistance that direct inquiries about corrupt behavior are likely to provoke. It is, for example, possible to

Exhibit 2. Corruption Case Vignettes

Case 1. A police officer runs his own private business in which he sells and installs security devices, such as alarms and special locks. He does this work during his off-duty hours.

Case 2. A police officer routinely accepts free meals, cigarettes, and other items of small value from merchants on his beat. He does not solicit these gifts and is careful not to abuse the generosity of those who give gifts to him.

Case 3. A police officer stops a motorist for speeding. The officer agrees to accept a personal gift of one-half of the amount of the fine in exchange for not issuing a citation.

Case 4. A police officer is widely liked in the community, and on holidays local merchants and restaurant and bar owners show their appreciation for his attention by giving him gifts of food and liquor.

Case 5. A police officer discovers a burglary of a jewelry shop. The display cases are smashed, and it is obvious that many items have been taken. While searching the shop, he takes a watch, worth about 2 days of pay. He reports that the watch had been stolen during the burglary.

Case 6. A police officer has a private arrangement with a local auto body repair shop to refer the owners of cars damaged in accidents to that shop. In exchange for each referral, he receives a payment of 5 percent of the repair bill from the shop owner.

Case 7. A police officer, who happens to be a good auto mechanic, is scheduled to work during coming holidays. A supervisor offers to give him these days off, if he agrees to tune up his personal car. Evaluate the *supervisor's* behavior.

Case 8. At 2 a.m., an on-duty police officer is driving his patrol car on a deserted road. He sees a vehicle that has been driven off the road and is stuck in a ditch. He approaches the vehicle and observes that the driver is not hurt but is obviously intoxicated. He also finds that the driver is a police officer. Instead of reporting this accident and offense, he transports the driver to his home.

Case 9. A police officer finds a bar on his beat that is still serving drinks 30 minutes past its legal closing time. Instead of reporting this violation, the police officer agrees to accept a couple of free drinks from the owner.

Case 10. Two police officers on foot patrol surprise a man who is attempting to break into an automobile. The man flees. They chase him for about two blocks before apprehending him by tackling him and wrestling him to the ground. After he is under control, both officers punch him a couple of times in the stomach as punishment for fleeing and resisting.

Case 11. A police officer finds a wallet in a parking lot. It contains an amount of money equivalent to a full-day's pay. He reports the wallet as lost property but keeps the money for himself.

Vignette Assessment Options

1. How serious do *you* consider this behavior to be?

Not at all serious

Very serious

1

2

3

4

5

Exhibit 2. Corruption Case Vignettes (continued)

2. How serious do *most police officers in your agency* consider this behavior to be?

Not at all serious			Very serious	
1	2	3	4	5

3. Would this behavior be regarded as a violation of official policy in your agency?

Definitely no			Definitely yes	
1	2	3	4	5

4. If an officer in your agency engaged in this behavior and was discovered doing so, what, if any, discipline do *you think should* follow.

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. None | 4. Period of suspension without pay |
| 2. Verbal reprimand | 5. Demotion in rank |
| 3. Written reprimand | 6. Dismissal |

5. If an officer in your agency engaged in this behavior and was discovered doing so, what, if any, discipline do *you think would* follow.

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. None | 4. Period of suspension without pay |
| 2. Verbal reprimand | 5. Demotion in rank |
| 3. Written reprimand | 6. Dismissal |

6. Do you think *you* would report a fellow police officer who engaged in this behavior?

Definitely no			Definitely yes	
1	2	3	4	5

7. Do you think *most police officers in your agency* would report a fellow police officer who engaged in this behavior?

Definitely no			Definitely yes	
1	2	3	4	5

Some Really Cheap Ways of Measuring What Really Matters

ask factual questions about officers' knowledge of agency rules, opinions about the seriousness of their violation and the punishment they deserve or are likely to receive, and their estimates of officers' willingness to report such behavior, without asking them directly about their own or others' corrupt behavior.

As exhibit 2 to this paper I have included a device that my colleagues and I have been using to measure some of the basic organizational and occupational components of integrity. It describes 11 vignettes of police activity, most of which may be regarded as instances of corruption. It then asks the same seven questions of each of the vignettes.

To date, my colleagues and I have administered this questionnaire to about 6,000 police officers in the United States and abroad. I offer it merely as an example of an approach to measuring police integrity that avoids the pitfalls of conceiving it as a problem of measuring corruption. It is not perfect, surely does not probe officer knowledge, perception, or opinions on all types of corruption, and does not even try to uncover a single case of actual misconduct. What it can do is tell a police leader what, for the types of conduct specified, his or her police officers think the organization's rules are; how strongly they support them; what discipline they think the organization will mete out for violating those rules; whether they think that discipline is too lenient, too severe, or about right; and where they think officers in the organization draw the line on tolerating misconduct by other officers. It can offer these answers with mathematical precision for the entire organization as well as in a way that permits comparisons within the agency at administrative, supervisory, and line levels. It can also permit comparisons between agencies of different sizes and types. These answers really matter because each invites police leaders to think of ways in which their organizations can behave to enhance integrity. At the cost of a fairly simple in-house survey and some careful analysis, they come very, very cheap.

Notes

1. Both exceptions placed King first, Fuhrman second, and Simpson last. They ordered their choices in terms of the seriousness of the offenses they assumed each man had committed, and their ranking reflected their moral outrage. Both respondents were residents of the borough of Manhattan in New York City. One, in fact, had written a letter of outrage to the management of her condo-

minium when it was rumored that Simpson was considering purchasing a residence there. I suspect what permitted both respondents to express their general moral hierarchy in response to the question is that they, like most Manhattan residents, lived not in houses but in "buildings." Neighbor problems in such residences particularly in upscale settings, are of a wholly different order than those of people who live in houses, and this strongly involves the reputation of the building as a whole.

2. As is the case with all political strategies, there is danger to police chiefs who elect to speak this script—that they may speak it so successfully they come to constitute a threat to their political superiors, either by demanding of them more resources than they can deliver or by becoming more attractive than them.

3. As is the case with all political strategies, there is danger to police chiefs who elect to speak this script—that a competitor chief will come forward who is willing to assume the responsibility for waging a war on crime and not leaving that important task to civilians in the community.

4. Histories of police that document the abiding prevalence of corruption are too numerous to list here. The most thorough scholarly explorations of the temptations to corruption in contemporary policing include Marx, G., 1991; Punch, M., 1986; Manning, P.K., and L. Redlinger, 1983; and Rubinstein, J., 1973.

5. The "for gain" dimension of corruption typically distinguishes it from other forms of police misconduct such as brutality. There is, however, debate over whether the definition of police corruption should include various forms of the use of police authority for police political, organizational, or strategic gains. See Klockars, C., and S. Mastrofski, 1983; Sherman, L., 1978; Goldstein, H., 1977; and Goldstein, H., 1975.

6. The capacity to predict police integrity from psychological testing is extremely limited: Taller, J.E., and L.D. Hinz, 1990; Delattre, E.J., 1989; Malouff, J., and N.S. Schutte, 1980; and Daley, R.E., 1980.

7. The analytical assault on the understanding of corruption as a problem of individually defective police officers was begun by Goldstein in *Police Corruption: Perspectives on Its Nature and Control*, and continued in Goldstein, *Policing a Free Society*. It has, however, taken more than a decade for most U.S. police agencies to embrace and begin to act upon Goldstein's pioneering analysis.

8. Spurred at least in part by the national attention given to a corruption scandal in New York City, documented in *The Knapp Commission Report on Police Corruption*, New York: George Brazillier, 1972, the 1970s produced a substantial number of serious studies of police corruption. Since 1980, scholarly attention to police corruption has been minimal, reflecting, at least in part, a shift in both public interest and Federal funding priorities. This change in research activity occurred despite the fact that the spread of drug usage during the 1980s created tremendous new opportunities for corruption. See Carter, 1990.

9. Although this understanding is the tacit assumption of virtually all historical studies of police, it received, to our knowledge, its first systematic exploration in Reiss and Bordua, 1967, and in Reiss, 1971. The specific application of these principles to police corruption was first advanced by Goldstein, 1975, and later in Goldstein, 1977. Both points inform the recent Croatian publication (Sintic, 1995).

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What Matters Routinely?

Robert H. Langworthy

For the past 30 years, there has been considerable interest in statistically documenting the quality of policing in America. Although the issue of “good” policing has been hotly contested since the inception of vocational policing, mass interest in measuring the quality of policing dates back only to 1967 with the report by the President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice. The perennial interest in quality policing, the emergence of the social sciences, and improvements in the capacity to process data coalesced in the mid- to late 1960s to make reasonable the call for the measurement of police services.

Since the President’s Commission, there have been several major efforts focused on measuring police performance. Most notable were the American Justice Institute effort headed by J. Needle (1980) and the University of North Carolina effort directed by Gordon Whitaker (1980). These were omnibus efforts that sought to provide comprehensive assessments of police organizational performance. That has been both their strength and their weakness. By trying to be comprehensive, they became too complex and expensive to be feasible. This paper seeks to outline a system of measures that permits police organizations to routinely monitor criteria that describe police organizational performance.

The scope of this paper is limited to criteria that describe police organizational performance for which data are already being collected or can be collected cheaply. This expressly excludes individual performance measurement, which is certainly routine but is not organizational in scope (see Wycoff and Oettmeier, 1994, for a discussion of individual performance measurement). Neither is program evaluation within the purview of this essay. Program evaluation focuses on assessment of an element of organizational activities but is neither routine nor organizational in scope. Finally, the system outlined below is distinct from what Wesley Skogan has described as “high tech” evaluations of police organizations. High-tech evaluations are exceptional audits for organizational performance that are typically performed by consult-

ants and strategically engaged (see attribution to Skogan in Brady, 1996). Skogan’s efforts to evaluate Chicago’s Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS) program is an example of a high-tech evaluation. Skogan is performing an exceptional audit of the Chicago effort to implement community policing (see Chicago Community Policing Evaluation Consortium, 1995 and 1996, for reports of the CAPS evaluation). Although high-tech evaluations are certainly organizational in scope, they are far too expensive to be undertaken routinely.

The focus here is on routine monitoring of police organizational performance. Routine organizational performance monitoring is the frequent review of indicators of organizational performance. The aim of such a system is to ensure that the organization is continuously aware of changes in performance and in conditions that affect performance. The following outlines four conceptual clusters of measures of police performance:

- Routine monitoring of intended environmental impact (crime, fear, and disorder).
- Routine monitoring of enacted and perceived police process.
- Routine monitoring of police organizational health.
- Routine monitoring of the context of policing.

Domain I: intended environmental impacts (crime, fear, and disorder)

The first domain focuses on routine measurement of the police’s reason for being. Police organizations were created to lessen crime, public fear, and disorder. There are a number of problems with the measurement of crime, but they pale in contrast to the problem of attribution—who gets credit for changes in the level of crime, fear, or disorder. Each of the intended environmental impacts is shared with other

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institutions (e.g., family, schools, churches), and each has a share in controlling those domains (see Duffee, 1980: 100; Langworthy, 1986: 10). Issues of attribution aside, it seems clear that police must monitor levels of crime, fear of crime, and disorder—conditions they are charged with affecting.

Crime. Historically, crime has been measured by official reports of crimes known to the police and victimization surveys. Official crime data are widely available and routinely reported. It seems clear that agencies will continue to be required to collect, report, and interpret these data. What remains is to determine the scope of official crime data examined. Do we focus on index crimes or do we extend the scope to include less serious offenses? If we extend the scope to less serious offenses, data other than crime reported to the police will have to be explored (e.g., arrest data, emergency room statistics) and more completely understood.

Victimization surveys are less frequently completed by police agencies. Routine collection and analysis of these survey data will provide the police a window into less serious victimization that is problematic for official statistics. It seems likely that costs associated with data collection and analysis are major limitations on this form of data collection. A number of victimization questionnaires are widely available and readily adapted to organizational purposes.

Fear of crime. The level of fear in a community may be monitored by surveys and focus groups. Numerous surveys have included items about fear of crime, and the literature is replete with technical discussions of alternative questions and the information elicited by each (for example, see Warr, 1995). This allows those interested in monitoring the level of fear of crime in their community to select questions that have been used by others to collect information about the specific form of fear at issue. Another advantage to a fear-of-crime survey that relies on established questions is that they allow comparison of community response with some other referent. As with victimization surveys, costs associated with data collection and analysis restrict this form of data collection.

Focus groups provide another vehicle for understanding fear. Focus group formats range from elaborate, well-modulated discussions with inperson and electronic monitoring of group subjects to meetings that more closely resemble structured coffee klatches. The

structured klatch is the form more common in criminal justice research and is particularly useful to help gain a “feeling” about things. The data that come from focus groups tend to be less likely to produce information that can be monitored routinely.

Finally, there are a range of unobtrusive measures that might be considered. For example, it may be reasonable to monitor crime prevention activities such as handgun sales, burglar alarm installations, and the frequency of calls to the police for prevention tips. These kinds of measures may or may not be routinely available in all jurisdictions, and they may be affected by saturation (e.g., burglar alarm sales will decline regardless of fear if everybody already has an alarm).

Disorder. The most famous measure of disorder in our literature is “broken windows” (Wilson and Kelling, 1982). Indicators of a place’s level of disorder may be monitored by surveys of perceptions of disorder, onsite assessments (physical surveys), and archival data. Just as there are numerous methods for collecting “disorder” data, numerous indicators of disorder have been established in the literature (see Skogan, 1999; Taylor, 1999).

Community surveys designed to assess disorder do not have the same historical scope as either victimization surveys or fear-of-crime surveys. Nevertheless, there have been numerous surveys designed to tap into perceptions of disorder that provide many of the same benefits alluded to in the discussion of victimization and fear surveys. Questions developed and tested by others may be used to assess disorder in communities, and perceptions of disorder in specific places can be compared with perceptions of disorder in other places.

Onsite assessments provide information about the physical condition of the community. Although less frequently employed than the other data collection methods outlined above, physical surveys such as perception of disorder surveys have precedents in the literature that can be drawn upon (see Taylor, 1998). It seems likely that costs associated with placing observers in the field to collect site-specific information are major considerations that limit applications of this form of data collection. It should be noted that there are a number of service personnel who routinely observe communities (e.g., postal carriers observe every address daily, trash collectors pick up at virtually every address weekly, and police are routinely in the

field), and if they can be mobilized to document disorder as part of their routine, the costs of physical surveys are substantially reduced.

Finally, there is a rich tradition of relying on archival data (particularly information about the quality of the housing stock—e.g., vacancy rates, plumbing, ownership) for indicators of decay that may be associated with disorder (see Maltz, 1995). These data are widely available (U.S. Bureau of the Census, many local planning/zoning departments) and economically analyzed but substantially limit conceptualization of disorder.

Domain II: enacted and perceived police process

Mastrofski (see attribution to Mastrofski in Brady, 1996) observed that many more police chiefs lose their jobs over process issues (e.g., corruption, riots, brutality) than over rises in the crime rate or other impact measures noted in Domain I. It seems clear that police departments are held accountable not only for what they are trying to accomplish but also for the means they use to do their work. The second domain focuses on isolating measures of policing process and of perceptions of policing process that will allow departments to routinely monitor their performance against salient dimensions of the means police use to do their work.

Assessment of services delivered

The concern here is with evaluations of service recipients (both those who specifically request services and members of the general public who are served by the police). The questions posed here are concerned with satisfaction, ethical service delivery, and equity of services delivered.

Satisfaction. Four concepts are salient to satisfaction: fairness, civility, concern, and effort. Public surveys concerned with attitudes toward the police frequently ask about contact with the police. If contact is indicated, respondents are asked to assess the quality of that contact. It seems likely that data to monitor the way police treat people will continue to be developed from surveys, but clearly it is not necessary to collect information from the general population. When our interest is in service delivered, our surveys may be directed to service recipients: citizens who request

service (officer concern and effort are particularly salient; see discussions by Parks, 1976; Dean, 1980; Frank et al., 1994), citizens who deal with police in officer-initiated situations (fairness and civility are particularly important; see discussions by Parks, 1976; Dean, 1980; Frank et al., 1994), and arrestees. Focusing on service recipients dramatically reduces the size of the survey and permits shorter questionnaires (e.g., surveyors do not have to ask screen questions and can focus on satisfaction) (see Klockars, 1999).

Ethical service delivery. Police are permitted far-reaching powers to promote their ability to achieve assigned social goals. Paramount among those powers is authority to use force as the situation dictates (see Bittner, 1970). However, the license to use force is not without restriction, and abuse of force has led to dire consequences for communities and police organizations. Therefore, it is important that police organizations monitor the frequency of use of force. Many police departments require officers to complete use-of-force forms anytime a police-citizen interaction results in a police officer using force. The data may prove a valuable source of monitoring information if indeed the reports are completed when they are supposed to be and if there is a plan for processing and reporting the data. Arrestees are another source of information that might prove useful to agencies interested in monitoring levels of force in their arrest. These interviews help police departments and researchers to better understand the frequency and character of force in arrest situations (see Garner et al., 1995a and 1995b; Garner et al., 1996).

Lawlessness and corruption frequently are raised in discussions as process concerns, but these issues are problematic for a routine performance monitoring system of the type addressed here. Police are expected to desist from lawlessness and corruption, unlike force, which police are expected to apply judiciously. It is not reasonable for police organizations to monitor levels of corruption and lawlessness in police practice because the level must be zero. Rather, the police and public interest is in developing detection devices that permit organizations to ferret out lawlessness and corruption so the department can respond appropriately. That noted, it is possible for police organizations to survey employees about their understanding of department policy and values (see Klockars, 1999).

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Equitable service delivery. The question posed here is, “Are police services provided equally throughout the jurisdiction?” The concern is with equitable distribution of a public good (or bad; see Rengert, 1989, for an interesting discussion of spatial justice; see also Lineberry, 1977). It will be necessary for agencies to define equity in terms of officer deployment (e.g., police per capita, police per square mile, police per calls for service), response times, and outcomes. Regardless of definition, it is likely that the data to monitor equity are available in calls for service and dispatch records, many of which are automated in computer-aided dispatch (CAD) systems. Although many agencies have automated data collection, it is not clear that they have also developed routine reports of those data that permit monitoring of equity issues.¹

Perceptions of police services

The foregoing has focused on service recipients’ assessments of the service they received from the police. This section outlines issues that could be raised with the public at large. As police depend on “the public” for support (with both information and funding so they may do their job), it is critical that police organizations monitor public perceptions of the quality of policing process. It is in this area that we have the most completely developed question bank, because numerous polling firms have for years asked questions of the general public about their attitudes toward the police. Agencies with an interest in monitoring public attitudes toward their department can use extant questions that have been benchmarked nationally. There are a number of polling firms that routinely ask questions about police; many of these results are posted annually in the *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics*.

Many questions about public attitudes toward the police have been asked by polling firms. Examples are listed below. These questions offer a range of issues that police organizations may benefit from by monitoring public attitudes. These questions are drawn from the *Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics, 1992* (Flanagan and Maguire, 1993).

- “How would you rate the honesty and ethical standards in these different fields—very high, high, average, low, or very low: Policemen?” (Gallup)
- “How would you rate the police in your community on the following: solving crime, preventing

crime, responding quickly to calls for help and assistance, being helpful and friendly, treating people fairly, not using excessive force?” (Louis Harris)

- “How much respect do you have for the police in your area—a great deal, some, or hardly any?” (Gallup)
- “In some places in the Nation, there have been charges of police brutality. Do you think there is any police brutality in your area or not?” (Gallup)
- “Are there any situations you can imagine in which you would approve of a policeman striking an adult male citizen?” (National Opinion Research Center)

This battery of questions taps many of the routine concerns of the public and the police. These questions tap into attitudes about levels of trust and confidence, police abilities, and police behavior.

Two things make these questions attractive. First, they have been developed by professional survey researchers to assess attitudes of the public toward the police. This means we do not have to go to the expense of question development. A second and far more beneficial feature of these questions is that they have been posed to national samples of respondents. This means we have information about the distribution of responses and can compare responses in our community with those of the national sample.

Domain III: police organizational health

The third conceptual domain is organizational health. In civil society, we charge the police with enormous responsibilities. Accordingly, it is particularly important that we monitor the “blood pressure” of these organizations to ensure that the organization granted a virtual monopoly on state-sanctioned use of force is healthy. This domain is composed of three classes of indicators: (1) the volume and nature of business and product, (2) organizational climate, and (3) resources.

Business and product. Organizations that fail to monitor the volume and nature of their business as well as the quality and volume of their product place themselves in jeopardy. For service organizations, it is reasonable to define the quantity of business as the volume of service the organization is asked to provide. Further, it is reasonable to describe product as

services delivered. Data describing these issues are most readily available from calls for service and dispatch records. As noted earlier, these data are frequently in electronic form.

What remains missing is an analytical plan for these data that recognizes the complexity of the information contained in CAD systems. While it is informative to know the number of calls for service (volume of business), it is far more informative to be able to track calls for specific types (e.g., ATM robberies, domestic assaults, bar fights). Monitoring the nature of calls for service requires a taxonomy of calls that isolates fairly homogeneous types of calls (see Goldstein, 1990). Once such a taxonomy is created, the organization has the capacity to monitor changes in both the volume and the nature of calls for service.

Recently, the police industry and the public have expanded the expectations of police beyond the range of a service organization to those of a proactive problem-solving organization. This brings a new set of measurement problems. Police must now monitor the volume, nature, and reaction to *problems* as well as continuing to monitor the volume, nature, and reaction to calls for service.

Corporate product is yet another concern. Historically, police corporate product has been measured by various arrest-related indexes (e.g., number of arrests, clearance rates) and occasionally by dispatches (see differential response literature² for creative uses of these data). There also have been calls for quality assessments of arrests by monitoring conviction rates. A number of States have developed offender-based tracking statistics (OBTS) databases designed to chronicle the disposition of felony arrests.

These established databases provide organizations the opportunity to monitor the police product as long as that product is defined in terms of response to calls and crime. However, if we are to include the problem-solving product, it is necessary to know if problems isolated and reacted to were solved. As problems are idiosyncratic, assessment of problem-solving efforts will have to be tailored to the situation. Ultimately, if we are to include problem-solving performance in an organizational performance system, it will be necessary to develop databases capable of capturing problems identified and the means to determine if identified problems are solved. The National Institute

of Justice (NIJ) has funded research that has focused on problems as the unit of analysis (see Capowich and Roehl, 1994; Capowich et al., 1995; Capowich, 1996). An emerging database technology that focuses on the problem as the unity of analysis will promote routine assessment of problem solving.

Organizational climate.³ In our society, we charge organizations (as opposed to individuals) with the formal exercise of social control. One organization in particular—the police—is charged with using force to compel conformity with society's expectations (see Bittner, 1970; Klockars, 1999, for further discussion of the police monopoly in the use of force). That being the case, it is in the interest of the larger society and the organization to ensure that these purveyors of force—police organizations—are healthy.

Healthy organizations both know what they are supposed to do and have the will to do it. Organizational health will most certainly be monitored by routine review of department personnel records and occasional personnel surveys. Department personnel records could provide information about such things as turnover rate, sick days, and frequency of disciplinary hearings. Routine personnel surveys could provide insights into job satisfaction, emerging problems, and knowledge of policy and procedures (the Baltimore County Police Department has conducted annual personnel surveys for several years).

Resources. Starved organizations are not apt to be healthy any more than starved plants or animals, so it behooves organizations to routinely monitor their importation of new resources.⁴

The focus will be principally upon budgets and cash flow but certainly can be extended to monitoring recruitment and retention of employees. Examples of questions addressed are:

- Do we have sufficient resources (personnel, money to retain personnel, etc.) to do the work we are expected to do?
- Do we have sufficient resources to make it to the next budget cycle?
- Do we have a capital improvement plan, and are capital improvement funds properly invested?

Careful monitoring of data to answer these questions will permit the organization to anticipate resource problems and develop strategies to guard against starvation.

Domain IV: the context of policing

Concern with monitoring the change in context focuses on monitoring conditions that affect an organization's ability to do its work and achieve its goals, influence perception of the organization, or have an impact on the health of the organization. The concerns raised here address the organization's capacity to interpret changes in the preceding three domains. For example, it is not terribly informative to police practice to note that crime has gone up (or down, for that matter) without also knowing something about conditions theoretically linked to the incidence of crime (e.g., population, demographics, economic conditions). Monitoring changes in these conditions will permit a more complete understanding of current trends (for example, see Bratton, 1999). Three contextual concerns will be touched on briefly: political climate, changing demographics, and critical events.

Political climate. The availability of resources to maintain a police organization is essentially the product of the political distribution of resources among public agencies. Changes to the composition of the electorate (including the degree of participation and political orientation) as well as governing bodies may alter the capacity of a department to garner the resources it needs to remain healthy. Voter participation rates and affiliation data are frequently available from agencies that conduct votes. It is also clear then there is turnover in governing bodies. Monitoring political climate data may allow police departments to understand and account for variation in levels of resources and thus explain a dimension of organizational health.

Changing demographics. There is a substantial body of literature that associates the incidence of crime with age, race/ethnicity, and sex. If the demographic characteristics of a community are changing, this may account for changes in the community's crime rate. These data are readily available from the U.S. Bureau of the Census every 10 years as official counts and more frequently as estimates. City and county plan-

ning departments are another data source because they frequently have ready access to population estimates.

Indexes developed from census and community survey data can provide insights into structural changes in the community that are correlated with the incidence of crime. Data from these sources can provide measures of the capacity for informal social control (e.g., social disorganization, heterogeneity, inequality, and social cohesion; see Sampson, 1986 and 1996, for examples of these measures).

Although there is ample evidence that the incidence of crime is related to demographic and structural characteristics of communities, it is important to remember that these characteristics evolve or change slowly. This means that it is difficult to explain dramatic changes in the incidence of crime (or fear or disorder) by reference to structural or demographic characteristics of the community (for example, see Bratton, 1999). Unless one is willing to demonstrate threshold effects, it is not reasonable to account for precipitous changes in one set of conditions by citing negligible changes in another. Monitoring community demographics and structural indexes will aid agencies as they account for long-term trends more than they will help explain short-term perturbations.

Critical events. Critical events can have a dramatic effect, particularly on perceptions of the police. Recent examples of events that shook confidence in the police are the beating of Rodney King and the handling of evidence for the O.J. Simpson trial. In both cases, favorable public perceptions of the police were diminished. Critical events are powerful agents for change precisely because they destabilize the environment. When serious enough, this destabilization can put the organization into what Sherman (1984) has called a "temporary state of . . . receivership" (p. 99). This is arguably what happened to the Los Angeles Police Department as a consequence of the Rodney King beating, which eventually led to the demise of then Chief Daryl Gates (see Crank and Langworthy, 1992). Monitoring the ebb and flow of critical events in the policing industry is accomplished by attention to current events. Because critical events are "critical," they will most assuredly be reported by the media. Routine monitoring of the media to watch for critical events could help police explain short-term perturbations in perceptions of the police and perhaps anticipate the effects of those changes in perception.

Summary and conclusions

This paper is intended as a point of departure for those discussing the content of a police organizational performance measurement system. Exhibit 1 highlights the performance concepts and sources of data that might be employed to measure each of the concepts.

What is immediately apparent is how much data are now within the grasp of police. More than half of the concepts addressed in this paper can be addressed with administrative statistics now collected by the

police department or another agency of local, State, or Federal government.

The most frequently noted source of information is public surveys. By this vehicle, one can monitor victimization, fear, perceptions of disorder, process concerns, and changes in the context of policing. Although general public surveys are expensive and require a degree of expertise if they are to be done reliably, they produce a wealth of information that may well justify the expense. This expense to the police department can be minimized if the police department can “piggyback” questions onto extant surveys

Exhibit 1. Police Organizational Performance Measurement: Concepts and Promising Sources of Data

Domain	Administrative Statistics	Windshield Surveys	Public Surveys	Client Surveys	Employee Surveys
Impacts					
Crime	X ^a		X		
Fear of Crime			X		
Disorder		X	X		
Process					
Fairness			X	X	
Civility			X	X	
Equity	X ^b		X		
Use of Force	X ^c		X	X	
Corruption			X		
Lawlessness			X		
Organizational Health					
Business and Product	X ^d				
Organizational Climate	X ^e				X
Resources	X ^f				
Context					
Political Climate	X ^g		X		
Changing Demographics	X ^h		X		
Critical Events ⁱ					

^a Uniform Crime Reports, National Incident-Based Reporting System, calls for service.

^b Calls for service, dispatch, patrol deployment.

^c Use-of-force reports.

^d Calls for service, dispatch, disposition (e.g., arrest, problem solved).

^e Personnel records.

^f Budget records.

^g Voting records.

^h Census, city/county planning data.

ⁱ Media monitoring.

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or if the unit of local government can be persuaded to routinely survey residents about a full range of government services.

Three other surveys are suggested:

- A client survey designed to find out what service recipients think about the way they were treated and how they would like to be treated.
- A personnel survey that asks about employees' feelings about the job.
- A windshield survey that is designed to monitor the condition of the local infrastructure.

Only the windshield survey is particularly onerous. Both the client and employee surveys are small enough (or can be with sampling) to keep expenses down, and the information produced is very important.

While it is apparent that much of the information needed to monitor police organizational performance is readily available (or can be), it is equally clear that this information is not being used. Two things are missing. First, there is no plan for analyzing the data. Data do not speak for themselves; they must be processed to be transformed into useful information. Any monitoring system must go beyond data capture to develop analysis plans and report formats that transform data into useful information.

Second, a monitoring system will need to deal with periodicity. That is, system administrators will need to determine how frequently to collect and process data. For administrative statistics, collection is ongoing (census and city/county planning data excepted), but processing will occur when reports are due. However, surveys will be conducted at discrete points in time. Generally, the longer the period between surveys, the larger the survey can be, but the less closely one will be able to follow short-term changes. Finally, several contextual data sources are updated only infrequently (e.g., census, voting records, city and county data), and estimates are used between enumerations.

Although it is clear that routine monitoring of police organizational performance is complex, it is also apparent that it can be done, and with some careful planning a great deal can be known for very little. The focus of this paper has been on sparking a discussion of salient concepts and sources of data by which we

may construct measures. The next task is more daunting—developing analyses and reporting plans capable of transforming these data into useful information. When that task is accomplished, police agencies will be in a position to empirically understand their domain.

Notes

1. See Buerger (1991) for a discussion of difficulties associated with the use of CAD data for analytical purposes.
2. For examples of differential response literature, see Summeral et al. (1991).
3. Organizational climate has a number of definitions. It can be viewed as a synonym for organizational culture or as “an amalgamation of feeling tones, or transient organizational mood” (Ott, 1989: 47). The latter definition is used here because the concern is with healthy or ill tones or organizational mood.
4. Yuchtman and Seashore (1967) make an interesting argument that organizational effectiveness can be assessed by monitoring an organization's capacity to gain resources. Organizations that get more resources are more effective.

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Appendix

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About the National Institute of Justice

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ), a component of the Office of Justice Programs, is the research agency of the U.S. Department of Justice. Created by the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968, as amended, NIJ is authorized to support research, evaluation, and demonstration programs, development of technology, and both national and international information dissemination. Specific mandates of the Act direct NIJ to:

- Sponsor special projects, and research and development programs, that will improve and strengthen the criminal justice system and reduce or prevent crime.
- Conduct national demonstration projects that employ innovative or promising approaches for improving criminal justice.
- Develop new technologies to fight crime and improve criminal justice.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of criminal justice programs and identify programs that promise to be successful if continued or repeated.
- Recommend actions that can be taken by Federal, State, and local governments as well as by private organizations to improve criminal justice.
- Carry out research on criminal behavior.
- Develop new methods of crime prevention and reduction of crime and delinquency.

In recent years, NIJ has greatly expanded its initiatives, the result of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 (the Crime Act), partnerships with other Federal agencies and private foundations, advances in technology, and a new international focus. Some examples of these new initiatives:

- New research and evaluation are exploring key issues in community policing, violence against women, sentencing reforms, and specialized courts such as drug courts.
- Dual-use technologies are being developed to support national defense and local law enforcement needs.
- The causes, treatment, and prevention of violence against women and violence within the family are being investigated in cooperation with several agencies of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
- NIJ's links with the international community are being strengthened through membership in the United Nations network of criminological institutes; participation in developing the U.N. Criminal Justice Information Network; initiation of UNOJUST (U.N. Online Justice Clearinghouse), which electronically links the institutes to the U.N. network; and establishment of an NIJ International Center.
- The NIJ-administered criminal justice information clearinghouse, the world's largest, has improved its online capability.
- The Institute's Drug Use Forecasting (DUF) program has been expanded and enhanced. Renamed ADAM (Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring), the program will increase the number of drug-testing sites, and its role as a "platform" for studying drug-related crime will grow.
- NIJ's new Crime Mapping Research Center will provide training in computer mapping technology, collect and archive geocoded crime data, and develop analytic software.
- The Institute's program of intramural research has been expanded and enhanced.

The Institute Director, who is appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate, establishes the Institute's objectives, guided by the priorities of the Office of Justice Programs, the Department of Justice, and the needs of the criminal justice field. The Institute actively solicits the views of criminal justice professionals and researchers in the continuing search for answers that inform public policymaking in crime and justice.