

U.S. Department of Justice  
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National Institute of Justice



# MEASURING WHAT MATTERS

Proceedings From the Policing  
Research Institute Meetings

NIJ

COPS

Office of Community  
Oriented Policing Services

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RESEARCH REPORT

by the National Institute of Justice and the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

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*National Institute of Justice*

# **Measuring What Matters: Proceedings From the Policing Research Institute Meetings**

*Edited by Robert H. Langworthy*

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# NIIJ COPS

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Opinions or points of view expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the U.S. Department of Justice.

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# Measuring What Matters: A Policing Research Institute

Robert H. Langworthy

In 1992, a paper by George Kelling appeared in *The City Journal* titled "Measuring What Matters." In this paper, Kelling raised the perennial specter of police performance measurement, but this time with a new twist. His discussion focused on the organizational performance measurement demands of community-oriented policing. In essence, Kelling's argument was that our traditional yardstick was outdated and needed to be changed.

The National Institute of Justice (NIJ) and the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) also recognized that our historic measures of police organizational performance were outmoded. To address this issue, NIJ and COPS collaborated on a first-of-its-kind Policing Research Institute that focused on "measuring what matters." The Policing Research Institute examined the implications of community policing for measuring organizational performance and helped move the industry toward a new, more relevant set of assessment criteria. To accomplish this task, police executives, researchers, scholars, and others interested in police performance measurement were invited to Washington, D.C., to address a range of measurement issues.

Measuring What Matters consisted of three meetings, each focusing on a particular set of topics. Each meeting considered a set of discussion papers commissioned by NIJ and COPS and prepared by selected Institute participants. The meetings produced:

- A series of papers, designed to reach a wide audience, chronicling the Institute proceedings (see, Brady, 1996, for the first in this series).
- This compilation of revised papers.

- Heightened awareness within the police and research communities of changing measurement needs associated with the shift to community policing.
- Better informed Federal research and development grant programs on measuring police performance (the NIJ Measuring What Matters research solicitation, issued in May 1997, was shaped in part by these discussions).

The first Institute meeting, held on November 28, 1995, focused on two questions: How do we measure the amount of crime, disorder, and fear and their effects on the quality of community life? and Should we expect police activities to impact on measures of crime, disorder, and fear and how will we know if they have? Discussion papers regarding the first question were prepared by Darrel Stephens, then Chief of the St. Petersburg, Florida, Police Department; Wes Skogan, Professor at Northwestern University; and Ralph Taylor, Professor at Temple University. The second question was introduced by papers prepared by William Bratton, then Commissioner of the New York City Police Department; Al Blumstein, Professor at Carnegie Mellon University; and George Kelling, then Professor at Northeastern University. In essence, these discussions focused on how to measure police organizational performance and whether we can reasonably and unambiguously attribute changes in crime, fear, and disorder to it.

The second session, held on May 13, 1996, focused on police constituencies' expectations and, perhaps more importantly, what police could expect of different constituencies in a partnership. Seven discussion papers were presented at this meeting. Jean Johnson, of Public Agenda, addressed public attitudes toward the police. Aric Press, then of *Newsweek*, and Andrew Benson, then of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, collaborated on a discussion paper that explored the relationship between the police and the media—particularly the print media. David Duffee, Professor at the University at Albany, and Stuart Scheingold, Professor at the University of Washington, independently considered alternative police constituencies and the implications for community policing partnerships.

## Measuring What Matters: A Policing Research Institute

Warren Friedman, of the Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety, and Michael Clark, of the Citizen Committee for New York City, collaborated on a paper that explored the community and police partnership from the perspective of "what's in it" for each of the partners. Mark Moore, Professor at Harvard University, discussed police organizations as instruments of local government with a particular focus on the nature of interagency partnerships. Finally, Johnnie Johnson, Jr., then Chief of the Birmingham, Alabama, Police Department; Dennis Nowicki, Chief of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina, Police Department; and Robert Ford, Chief of the Port Orange, Florida, Police Department, collaborated on a paper that addressed their experience in identifying important constituencies, what those constituencies expect of the police, and what the police can expect of those groups. This session was designed to address a salient community policing problem—police do not deal only with one community but simultaneously with many publics, often with competing expectations and differing capacities to be partners in a community policing enterprise.

The title of the discussion paper prepared by Carl Klockars, Professor at the University of Delaware, captures the focus of the final Institute meeting, held December 4, 1996. His paper, "Some Really Cheap Ways to Measure What Really Matters," was intended to lead into a discussion of indexes and instruments that police agencies might consider to assess organizational competence, skill in the use of force, and integrity. The format of this session departed from the previous sessions by dividing the participants into small groups to discuss economically feasible and meaningful measures of police organizational performance. These breakout sessions considered a discussion paper I prepared while working with NIJ on a sabbatical from the University of Cincinnati. The five breakout groups were each assigned a conceptual domain and asked to focus their discussions on that topic. The domains were:

- The impact domain—how might intended police effects on the environment be measured.
- The process domain—how might police know if they are doing their work as they should.
- The community assessment domain—how might public assessment of police performance be monitored.
- Organizational health—how might police departments know if their employees are satisfied with their work.
- Community context—how might police organizations monitor changes in the work environment that impede or promote their ability to achieve organizational goals.

The aim of this meeting was to initiate discussion of organizational performance measurement systems that could provide information to organizations that they can use to monitor and contextualize their performance.

Community policing, with its emphasis on problem solving and community restoration, significantly expands the police domain and demands that organizational performance be reconceptualized. It is no longer sufficient to measure organizational crime-control prowess (which we never did very well). Now we must address crime control plus the expectations created under the rubric of community policing. The Policing Research Institute improved our capacity for "measuring what matters" in the context of this new policing paradigm. This collection of papers was instrumental in shaping those conversations.

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**Meeting One:  
November 28, 1995**



# Measuring What Matters in Policing

*Alfred Blumstein*

## The police and measurement of their impact

The most traditional measure of police effectiveness is typically reflected in some measure of the aggregate crime rate or, possibly, in its disaggregation into crime types about which the public may be most concerned. When the crime rate is increasing, the public might demand police accountability for the rise. Usually, however, the police are quite effective in fending off those challenges, and thus we more often consider the rise to be attributable to demographic shifts or changing social conditions.

When the crime rate is declining, the situation is usually quite different. It is common for the more aggressive police officials to seek to claim credit for the decline, usually attributing that decline to the latest operational innovation they have introduced. I have seen declines attributed to a new K-9 corps, new management practices, or a special action force designed for rapid response. Thus, we have one of the important measurement dilemmas on the effect of policing on crime—the asymmetric nature of police officials' claims of credit for their control over crime cycles: They claim credit for the decline, but they avoid any blame when crime is on the rise.

A second issue closely related to crime measurement is that of arrest, and here we have a similar situation. Many police see their primary function not to be as closely related to crime as to the arrest of those who violate the law. Until recently, with the advent of community policing, arrest was their primary interaction with the community. Since most arrests result from onsite detection or witness or victim identification, shifts in the arrest rate for any particular kind of crime can also be affected by police policies or practices (e.g., setting up speed traps, cracking down on prostitution, setting up a burglary sting) or exogenous events involving changes in the composition of crimes (e.g., growth in the fraction of homicides involving strangers, which are more difficult to solve than those involving intimates). Here, again, it is important to

distinguish the contribution associated with more effective policing from that associated with shifts external to policing.

Closely related to crime is the issue of the fear of crime, and there is little question that anything that can be done to reduce that fear contributes to an improvement in the quality of life in a community, even if there is no impact on the crime rate itself. Also, since the police are one of the few agencies that are on the street all the time, there are many other aspects of quality of life to which they can contribute (ranging from rescuing the proverbial cats from trees to the settling of disputes that might escalate to serious violence). Even though the connection of these activities to crime may often be indirect, they clearly contribute to the community's support of the police in their crime-related work.

In addition, there are many other community-related activities the police engage in that may be seen as ends in themselves but that also contribute to improved ability to prevent crimes or solve them once they occur. This is one of the basic principles underlying problem-oriented policing and community policing. Crimes can be prevented if the conditions leading to them can be identified and the potential offenders dissuaded from pursuing the crime. Also, connection to the community and its information networks provides important opportunities to learn of the perpetrator of a crime and enhance the likelihood of an arrest. Since arrest probabilities are so small, this potential for enhancing the intelligence capability represents a far more significant means of increasing general deterrent effectiveness than any of the changes that might be considered downstream from arrest in the criminal justice system.

Aside from these activities in which a common interest exists between the police and the community, there is another aspect of policing that must be considered in any measurement of police performance. Policing inherently involves conflict between the police and at least some members of the community who may be—or may be suspected of—violating a law. Interacting

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with such suspects often involves the use of force in ways that may be seen as excessive by the suspect, bystanders, or viewers of a videorecording of the encounter. For a variety of reasons that could be legitimate (e.g., greater hostility to police based on past encounters or by oral history in the community) and illegitimate (e.g., racism by individual police officers), these situations occur disproportionately with minority suspects, and they represent a major problem in policing in minority communities where strong positive connections between the police and the community are most needed. Here, again, these problems could be attributable to police performance (e.g., inadequate training leading to premature invocation of excessive force) as well as outside the control of the police (e.g., when the community rallies around a legitimate arrest because emotions have been aroused over a previous questionable one).

Thus, in addressing the issue of measuring police performance, we have two primary challenges: (1) identifying the variety of ways in which the police contribute to or detract from community well-being, and (2) partitioning both blame and credit for such changes, at least in a binary way between police and nonpolice factors.

In this paper, we begin by addressing the issue of crime and arrest, partly because of its traditional relationship to policing and partly because it is one aspect that is regularly measured and reported to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) for the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), thereby permitting comparison across police departments. These data, with local augmentation, provide a base for empirical analysis that enables a police department to identify where it is being effective or ineffective. That information and its analysis should be used for the basic purpose of continuous improvement, which should be far more important to effective management than the short-term political benefit of overblown claims of performance successes.

### Factors in crime and arrest

Perhaps the most important indicator to the public about police performance is its effect on the crime rate; the magnitude of that effect is widely debated. Some argue that social and economic conditions, demographic shifts, and individual choices unaffected by police activity represent the total influence on

crime rates. Others—notably police officials during crime downturns—argue that the credit fully belongs to the police. Of course, there are many points between 0 and 100 percent, and so a more meaningful partition somewhere in this range would generally be desirable.

There seems to be wide agreement that a large fraction of the crime rate—and particularly the violent crime rate—is largely immutable and unresponsive to anything the police might do short of a massive intensification of police presence in the community and in everyone's lives. But there is also little doubt that more aggressive or targeted police tactics (e.g., intensive patrol or focused stop and frisk to confiscate guns in high-violence areas) or changes in police strategy (e.g., use of community policing to develop community ties to identify problems before they become crimes and obtain critical intelligence information on potential or actual crimes) can have a sizable effect on suppressing some crimes.

It would appear to be valuable for most police departments to develop a tight feedback measuring capability enabling them to observe the influence of changes in tactics (typically short-term response) or strategy (where the response is expected to take longer and will not be seen as quickly) on crimes or arrests. The jargon for this approach has recently emerged almost as a religion in industry under the name "total quality management." This requires maintaining detailed and high-frequency information on crime measures. But it also requires keeping careful logs of police operations, particularly noting those locations and situations where there has been a change from what was previously standard or routine. This latter aspect is necessary to permit the linkage between operational actions and their consequences. Attributing the changes to "better policing," without being able to identify what aspect of "better policing" to apply elsewhere to achieve comparable success, may have its political and public-relations values but does not directly improve the effectiveness of police management.

Of course, the problem is complicated by the fact that changes in the crime rate will often be generated by factors exogenous to anything the police might do. This could occur, for example, with the appearance of a new gang, the initiation of a new drug market, or the outbreak of warfare between two rival gangs. Although police efforts could well contribute to

suppressing that increase once it occurs or keeping it from escalating, it is quite difficult to anticipate its emergence. But displaying speed and effectiveness in responding to its emergence can also be a factor inhibiting its appearance in the first place.

Isolating how police contribute to upward or downward shifts in crime or arrest rates requires that information be maintained on key factors that might explain the shift. These should include at least the following:

- Precinct or other spatial units, especially to distinguish those places where special effort or changed tactics or strategy are applied. A geographic information system (GIS) can be particularly helpful in maintaining and displaying such information.
- Age, particularly because different criminal justice approaches are applied to different age groups. Incarceration and its associated incapacitative effects are most likely to influence older groups; younger groups are more likely to respond to changes in socialization and family structure patterns.
- Drug markets, since so much of crime can be linked to drugs. The mores and practices that surround drug markets can easily contaminate the communities in which they are located.

In addition, it is important to maintain other baseline data against which to relate the changes, such as locations in which officers are assigned at different times and shifts or those areas where innovative or experimental operations are introduced. Basic demographic information by location on socioeconomic conditions, family structure, and age and race composition are needed to provide a basis for measuring rates. In addition, the analysis should include intelligence information on the emergence of gangs and their criminogenic activities and on markets for drugs and guns and other criminogenic products.

Whatever is used as a performance indicator poses the danger that operating officers will work at manipulating the measure itself rather than the underlying process being measured. This is of particular concern with respect to crime statistics, which are principally generated by the police. Intensive emphasis on crime statistics provides an undue incentive to distort the recording and reporting of the phenomenon being observed. Some homicides could be classified as suicides, robberies as larcenies, aggravated assaults as

simple assaults, and auto thefts as joyriding. There could be a greater degree of unfounding of marginal crimes. And any police officer with sufficiently strong incentives who controls recording and classification can make the results look more favorable merely by changes in recording or classification practices.<sup>1</sup> The similar phenomenon with arrest statistics and clearance rates has been pointed out by Skolnick<sup>2</sup> in his classic work.

## Measures beyond crime and arrest

Although crime is certainly a salient measure, it is clear that police have—or should have—a responsibility for other facets of the quality of life in a community. Some of these relate to fear of crime (which may or may not respond to shifts in actual rates of crime or victimization); some relate to affecting police ability to deal with crime (e.g., connections to the community and associated access to intelligence regarding crime). In this period of distrust and hostility between police and certain sectors of the community, especially in minority communities, it is important to measure the state of those relationships. These issues are addressed in this section.

### Fear of crime

Fear of crime does not derive from a careful reading of UCR or National Crime Victimization Survey statistics. Rather, it is stimulated by dramatic incidents (the Polly Klaas murder and its impact on the passage of “three strikes” laws is a prime example), repetition of highly visual stories about crime on TV news programs, and reports of incidents involving individuals one knows or hears about. Thus, the time trends in fear could easily move in the opposite directions from crime trends. Indeed, even though there seems to be strong evidence of a growing fear of violence in the United States, most Americans would be surprised to learn that the homicide rate trend in the United States has been flat for the past 20 years, has not been increasing at all, and has been decreasing since it peaked in 1991.<sup>3</sup>

It would be desirable to have a regular measure of fear in any community, particularly to see how that level of fear shifts with individual crime events, changes in the reporting of crimes, changes in police deployment tactics, and any of the other activities police engage

in, whether intended to deal with fear or with crime itself. That might be done through periodic surveys of the community. But generating sample sizes of sufficient frequency with the potential for small-area estimation would probably make the cost of such surveys prohibitive for other than special measurement associated with a particular experiment or innovation.

It would be much more desirable to have unobtrusive measures (see Webb et al.)<sup>4</sup> of public fear. That could be reflected in the number of people who are willing to walk in the street at night and in the use of places like public parks that may be viewed as inherently dangerous. One interesting such measure that has previously been reported on is the sale of the early evening edition of the *Daily News* in New York City, a reflection of the willingness of people to go out at night to buy the paper. These measures have the advantage of reflecting behavior rather than attitudes, they can be easily and cheaply obtained, they can be a good reflection of the state of fear in a neighborhood or community, and they involve no distortion of the behavior through the process of measurement. Finding such measures is an important challenge.

### Citizen cooperation with the police and use of excessive force

Citizen cooperation with the police is a critical aspect of policing. It will be reflected in improved intelligence information for policing and a generally supportive and prosocial attitude within the community. Various indicators of this might be reports of citizen intelligence, surveys of the community, improvement in crime clearance rates, and various related measures.

One of the most important factors inhibiting citizen cooperation with police is the tension, particularly in minority communities, between the police and the community. Because such communities tend disproportionately to be the locus of serious crime, it is critical that effective management control be maintained over excessive use of force. This requires a mixture of training, discipline, and punishment for blatant violations.

Measurement of the level of such violations can be very difficult. For example, as the public comes to perceive police management as being more responsive to these concerns, it is possible that this increased sensitivity could stimulate reporting of incidents that might not otherwise have been reported and so give

rise to an *increase* in the reporting of incidents. Thus, some kind of calibration is necessary to assess the threshold of incidents being reported by location and nature of the encounter.

### State of disorder

One important indicator of a sense of disorder in a community is the "broken windows" theory highlighted by Wilson and Kelling.<sup>5</sup> This does seem to be an important issue for indicating both the quality of life in the community to its residents and the care with which policing is being done.

### Research possibilities

These issues of measurement of police contribution are certainly important. In light of the large expenditure (in the order of \$50 billion) throughout the Nation on policing, it is striking how little effort has been devoted to measuring police performance and using such measurements for the purpose of continuous improvement. In the military, beginning more than 50 years ago, operations research groups were assigned to many operating units to perform exactly that function.

It would be extremely useful for the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) to identify a number of police departments that would value such service and establish pilot units to carry out measurements and report on the results of those measurements directly to top operating officials. This kind of activity is particularly useful when there are regular repetitions of the same kind of operations (e.g., police patrol).

In establishing such groups, it is important that they maintain scientific integrity and their results not be oriented toward the public relations effort for the department. If that becomes the case, then there will be strong pressures to distort the results. The danger of these distortions could be reduced by establishing an external audit overseeing the work of these pilot programs.

Aside from this more general assignment of operations research groups, it would be desirable to pick several cities that are willing to engage in careful and detailed incident-based data collection (e.g., through the National Incident-Based Reporting System) on crime and arrests to perform the partitioning and attribution discussed earlier in this paper. In the process,

new methods of measurement and analysis are likely to be developed, and those results are likely to be generalizable to other jurisdictions, particularly to the operations research groups assigned to a number of departments.

Approaches such as this would bring the competence that has been extremely important in enhancing military and business performance into the world of policing. It has the potential to significantly enhance the professionalism and effectiveness of management, not only in the jurisdictions where the studies are pursued but in others to which their results might be generalized. This is clearly an important mission for NIJ and would cost a tiny fraction of the operating cost of policing.

## Notes

1. My own experience highlights some of these possibilities. I was in New York (well before William Bratton was commissioner of the New York Police Department) and experienced an event at 5 p.m. on a summer Sunday afternoon in a crowded part of midtown that was a cross between a mugging and a pickpocketing incident. I asked the police officers who came to my aid following the incident if they wanted to take a report, and they

replied, "Nah, that kind of thing happens here all the time." In another incident in Pittsburgh, when I tried to report an attempted larceny, I was bounced from central headquarters to the local precinct, where they tried to bounce me back to headquarters. When I told precinct staff I had already spoken to someone at headquarters, they told me to come into the police station to file the offense report—which I never did. Although this may be fairly common police practice, intensive evaluation of a unit on the basis of the crime reports on its beat could easily be seen to shift the frequency with which crime reports are discouraged or rejected.

2. Skolnick, Jerome H., *Justice Without Trial: Law Enforcement in a Democratic Society*, New York: John Wiley, 1966.

3. See, for example, Blumstein, Alfred, "Youth Violence, Guns, and the Illicit-Drug Industry," *Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology* 86 (1) (Fall 1995): 10–36.

4. Webb, Eugene J., Donald T. Campbell, Richard D. Schwartz, and Lee Sechrest. *Unobtrusive Measures: Nonreactive Research in the Social Sciences*, Chicago: Rand McNally, 1966.

5. Wilson, James Q., and George L. Kelling, "Broken Windows: The Police and Neighborhood Safety," *Atlantic Monthly* (March 1982): 29–38.





# Great Expectations: How Higher Expectations for Police Departments Can Lead to a Decrease in Crime

William J. Bratton

## Police management

I have been asked to write on the question: "Should we expect police activities to impact on measures of crime, disorder, and fear, and how will we know?" I'd like to begin by turning the question around: If we *don't* expect police activities and police departments to have an impact on crime, disorder, and fear, they almost certainly *won't*. By accepting the prevailing image of police departments as slow moving and relatively ineffectual bureaucracies, and by assuming that nothing can be done to change them, we are, in effect, making a self-fulfilling prophecy. No organization, whether it is a police department or a private business, is going to achieve high-performance results in an atmosphere of such low expectations.

I am a police manager, not a criminologist. I tend to think about crime not as a sociological problem but as a management problem. The scholarship about the underlying causes of crime is very interesting, but it is of limited utility to someone charged, as I am, with public safety in a large city. The fact that many criminologists have argued that police don't have much impact on crime adds to my management problem. My job is to direct police resources and motivate 38,000 police personnel. I cannot afford to subscribe to a system of belief that tells me the police can't accomplish our primary mission of controlling and preventing crime.

Instead, like many police managers, I've turned to modern business theory and the study of how to make large organizations work more effectively toward their goals. Goals, it turns out, are an extremely important part of lifting a low-performing organization to higher levels of accomplishment and revitalizing an organizational culture. Goals become a means not only of measuring success but of replacing unproduc-

tive or counterproductive behaviors with effective, goal-oriented activity. Goals can be used to inspire an organization, long dominated by negativism and faultfinding, toward positive cooperative efforts and, therefore, toward success. As a police manager, I have learned how to set ambitious goals for police departments as the first step toward achieving ambitious results.

In this paper, I will describe two police management stories: the New York City Transit Police since the early 1990s and the New York Police Department (NYPD) in the past 2 years. I think I can make a strong case that management changes and goal setting in both organizations were the primary catalysts for the steep decline in subway crime, beginning in 1991, and in citywide crime, beginning in 1994. I use the word catalyst intentionally. In organizations as large and complex as the Transit Police and the NYPD, no management team can claim sole or even primary credit for success. The role of top management is to motivate and support the organization as a whole, driving it to work to its full potential, but the credit for ultimate success belongs to the cops, detectives, supervisors, and precinct commanders who take our plans into the real world and make them work.

Following the general police management discussion, the second part of this paper will discuss what we are doing in New York in terms of the relevant criminological theory about police departments and crime. It also considers some of the other possible factors, besides the NYPD, that might be causing the decline in New York City crime. In certain quarters, there seems to be a near-absolute certainty that police *did* not and *could* not have caused the steep drops. Scholars are ready to attribute these declines to demographics, social causes, supposed changes in the drug market, and unsubstantiated speculations about drug gangs making

peace—in short, to any possible cause *except* police work. I think most of these alternative explanations can be easily discounted. They are simply not supported by the facts in New York City, where the number of youths between the ages of 15 and 19 has increased slightly rather than decreased, the economy is relatively stable, drug-use patterns are relatively unchanged, and small drug gangs continue to fight over turf in a number of locations throughout the city.

I am hopeful this symposium will begin to change some of the preconceived notions about policing and crime. Better management, better strategies, higher expectations, and more effort on the part of police departments can do far more than just affect crime rates at the margins. We have in the Nation's police departments an enormous untapped potential. If we can bring just a portion of that potential into play, we can have a swift and decisive impact on crime. If we start to use police resources strategically and efficiently, we can cut crime by 20, 30, or even 50 percent in the space of several years.

Consider the following story. A series of robberies is taking place in a neighborhood and giving the local area a steeply rising crime rate. It just so happens that this neighborhood has enough political clout to have an elite police unit, expert at apprehending robbers, assigned to the problem. With its special skill, the unit identifies the robbery patterns, deploys its resources, and systematically apprehends the members of two loosely knit robbery gangs. The robbery rate and the crime rate in the neighborhood plummet. Did the police cause the drop in the local neighborhood crime rate? Of course they did.

But I can hear the arguments now. A police department could never apply that level of skill and resources to an entire city. Neighborhoods without clout—poor and minority neighborhoods especially—would be slighted. Crime would be displaced from the places where elite units are active to the neighborhoods where they are not. And so on.

If I were to assert that lowering the crime rate in an entire city—even in New York City—is simply the process of repeating the success of the elite unit over and over again, many criminologists would be skeptical. They would be even more skeptical if I were to say that an entire police department—even the NYPD—could be geared to function like an elite unit, bringing to bear the same kind of timely intelligence,

rapid deployment, effective tactics, and relentless followup that make elite units so effective. But that is exactly what I *am* going to argue because that is what the New York experience, both the Transit Police and the NYPD, demonstrates.

## The Transit Police

When I became Transit Police Chief in 1990, subway robbery rates were rising steeply, disorder was rife in the system, and fare evasion was skyrocketing out of control. Robberies rose 21 percent in 1988, 26 percent in 1989, and about 25 percent in the first 2 months of 1990. Many of these robberies were what we called “multiple perpetrator” cases, involving five or more youths who would often attack and beat subway riders in order to rob them.

A lot of the robberies seemed to be crimes of opportunity. The groups doing the robberies were not real gangs but loosely organized associations of youths who knew the subway was a good place to steal. They would meet after school or encounter each other in the system, look for a likely target, and strike. As more and more kids picked up the tricks of this nefarious trade, the subway robbery rate headed off the chart.

The farebeating problem was just as severe. This is a petty crime that can collectively amount to a colossal theft. In 1990, at the peak of the problem, some 57 million fare evaders were costing the public about \$65 million. The turnstile areas were overrun not only with farebeaters but with token thieves, who sometimes seized control of subway entrances and brazenly collected tokens from commuters as they shooed them through illegally opened exit gates. The public was appalled and frightened by the spectacle. The criminals were emboldened by it.

In addition, we faced a huge disorder problem beyond the turnstiles. Some 5,000 homeless people—most of them drug abusers—were trying to live on trains, platforms, and in the restricted track areas. In fact, more than 80 homeless people died in the subway in 1989. In addition, aggressive panhandlers and illicit hawkers were everywhere, disrupting transit operations and lending an air of chaos and disorder to the entire subway environment.

I drew on the collective wisdom of dozens of Transit cops—many of whom were frustrated because they had never been given a chance to try their ideas—to

develop a Transit Police patrol strategy concentrating on robbery, fare evasion, and disorder. We all agreed there was a clear connection between felonious crimes of opportunity, i.e., robberies and petty crimes, and violations. Seeing an environment of apparent disorder, young multiple perpetrators reasonably concluded that they could get away with anything in the subway, including beatings and robbery. We had to change their perceptions in a hurry.

We coupled a program of full enforcement of all subway rules and regulations with a targeted attack on repeat subway felons, especially youth gangs. Instead of closing multiple-perpetrator cases after one or two arrests—as we had been doing—detectives were instructed to pursue all of the participants in a robbery. Even if we failed to find them all, we reasoned, the effort of searching, bringing witnesses into schools, and the general ubiquity of Transit Police detectives in pursuit of subway robbers would start to alter criminals' perceptions of the chances of success in a subway robbery.

We also greatly intensified the pursuit of people wanted on subway warrants. Using computers and faxes, we cut the time it takes for the police to act on a bench warrant from 30 days to 24 hours. Our warrant unit started work at 2 a.m. when the fugitives were still at home, and our apprehension rate rose sharply, eventually rising to more than 60 percent. We turned out to these locations in force, once again sending a message that subway criminals were being relentlessly pursued.

In the fare evasion sweep, we developed a near-perfect tactic for the subway. Previous programs to attack farebeating had usually focused on deterrence by stationing uniformed officers in front of turnstiles. The cops hated this work, and the uniformed presence wasn't having any impact on the overall farebeating problem. We began intensive plainclothes fare evasion sweeps throughout the system. The sweeps not only caught farebeaters in the act, they also gave us an opportunity to intervene with robbers because every arrested farebeater could be searched for weapons and checked for warrants. Not surprisingly, most subway robbers weren't paying the fare, and a good number of them were caught in our sweeps. During the first 6 months of this operation, about one in seven people arrested for fare evasion was wanted on a warrant.

The last piece of the puzzle was our attack on disorder. We mounted a huge outreach effort to the homeless, cutting the resident homeless population in the subway by about 80 percent over a couple of years by steadily enforcing the rules and offering round-the-clock transportation to shelters. We quelled disorder among school-age riders with a safe passage program on 80 key trains and intensive truancy sweeps.

We began enforcing the rules and regulations of the subway system against panhandling, illicit merchants, smoking, drinking, lying down in the system, and many other antisocial acts. The message was sent by both our uniformed patrol force and anticrime plainclothes units: The subway system is under alert police control.

It took about 6 months to put everything in place, but subway crime then began dropping, and it kept dropping for the next 5 years. Total subway felonies and robberies declined every month from October 1990 through October 1995, with the exception of March 1993, when there was a slight increase in both categories. If anything, the trend accelerated under my successor, Michael O'Connor, and has continued to accelerate since the merger of the Transit Police with the NYPD in April 1995.

The bottom line? Subway felonies in the first 10 months of 1995 have fallen nearly 64 percent compared with the first 10 months of 1990. Subway robberies have fallen 74 percent. There are fewer than 20 felonies a day on a system that carries more riders daily than the population of most American cities.

Even more surprising, given the proportions of the problem, was the Transit Police's success against fare evasion. By the end of 1994, it was cut more than in half. By the end of 1995, it will have dropped by two-thirds, for a total savings of about \$40 million. It would be difficult to identify a demographic or social cause for the decline in subway crime. Subway ridership is poorer, younger, and more minority than the city as a whole. Yet, in the early 1990s, subway crime dropped far more steeply than New York City crime, of which it is a subset. Between 1990 and 1993, the drop in subway robberies was three times greater than the drop in citywide robberies. In 1991, subway robberies accounted for nearly two-thirds of the drop in the citywide robbery rate, even though subway robberies never represented more than 10 percent of the

citywide robbery total. What, besides the work of the Transit Police, could possibly explain that?

Yet, as a closed and contained system, the subway does present a special case. By intensifying police efforts in the subway, the Transit Police may have been driving crime to street level. It is possible to argue that subway crime was merely displaced to the rest of the city. The Transit Police experience in the early 1990s showed how a police department can swiftly and effectively redirect its efforts toward solving key problems and achieving key goals. It also showed that a redirected police department can prevent crime by changing criminals' perceptions of their chances of success. But it does not prove with any certainty that such a redirection can reduce an entire city's crime rate. For that kind of evidence, we will have to turn to the NYPD during the past 2 years.

### The NYPD

When Mayor Rudolph Guiliani appointed me New York City Police Commissioner in 1994, we both believed the NYPD had vast untapped potential. But like the Transit Police, the New York City Police Department needed sharply focused strategies and a stronger direction to achieve its potential. With its array of skilled and experienced personnel, the department was like a race car that had never been driven more than 40 miles an hour. The mayor and I decided to experiment by putting the pedal to the floor.

We challenged the NYPD to focus its full talents and resources on its core missions of driving down crime and controlling disorder. We set a public goal for the department of a 10-percent decrease in felony crimes in 1994. While many within and outside the department were skeptical that we could come anywhere near to achieving this goal, we ultimately exceeded it with a 12-percent decline in 1994, and we are exceeding it again with an expected 16- to 17-percent decline in 1995.

It took some doing to propel the organization forward. Although the public believes that police departments spend all their time thinking about and combating crime, the truth is that these large organizations are rather easily distracted from their core mission by the political or social issue of the moment. In addition, the burden of emergency response leaves police leaders with the sense that there is always something

urgent to do, and this day-to-day emergency footing cuts into the time spent on strategic planning. Work on crime is usually done on a case-by-case basis without any real strategic oversight. As a result, police organizations can be particularly subject to drift.

Traveling further down the ranks, one finds many of the problems that plague any large bureaucracy. For years, the NYPD had been organized around avoiding risk and failure. Although the department is decentralized into 76 precincts, precinct commanders had been constrained on every side by regulations and procedures issued from headquarters. Many police operations, such as prostitution sweeps and execution of search warrants, could only be conducted by centralized units, reflecting an abiding distrust of precinct personnel and resources. Yet, despite the micromanagement, the department was providing little in the way of genuine strategic direction. It was clear what precinct commanders and personnel weren't allowed to do, but it was much less clear what they *ought* to be doing to combat crime, disorder, and fear.

Beginning in 1994, there were major changes in the management philosophy of the NYPD. We established seven crime control strategies dealing with guns, drugs, youth violence, domestic violence, reclamation of public spaces, auto-related theft, and police corruption. In all these areas, we got the entire organization thinking about how to attack crime and disorder problems, best deploy police resources, disrupt criminal enterprises, and use each arrest to develop information that would lead to other criminals and arrests.

Precinct commanders were granted far more latitude in initiating their own operations and running their own shops. Uniformed patrol cops were encouraged to make drug arrests and assertively enforce quality-of-life laws. At the same time, the central strategic direction of the department became far stronger and the lines of accountability far clearer. Today, avoiding failure is no longer a formula for success. Instead, the positive efforts of commanders and cops at reducing crime, disorder, and fear are being recognized and encouraged.

For the first time in its history, the NYPD is using current crime statistics and regular meetings of key enforcement personnel to direct its enforcement efforts. In the past, crime statistics often lagged behind events by months, and so did the sense of whether crime

control initiatives had succeeded or failed. Now there is a daily turnaround in the "Compstat" (computer comparison statistics) numbers, as the crime statistics are called, and NYPD commanders watch weekly crime trends with the same hawk-like attention private corporations pay to profit and loss. Crime statistics have become the department's bottom line, the best indicator of how the police are doing, precinct by precinct and citywide.

At semiweekly Compstat meetings, the department's top executives meet in rotation with precinct and detective squad commanders from different areas of the city. During these tough, probing sessions, they review current crime trends, plan tactics, and allocate resources. Commanders are called back to present their results at the Compstat meetings at least once every 6 weeks, creating a sense of immediate accountability that has energized the NYPD's widely scattered local commands.<sup>1</sup>

Four steps or principles now guide the department's patrol and investigative work: timely, accurate intelligence; rapid deployment; effective tactics; and relentless followup and assessment. Debriefing people taken into custody, even for minor crimes, is now standard practice, and it has greatly increased the department's timely, on-the-ground intelligence. Computer pin mapping and other contemporary crime analysis techniques are functioning as the NYPD's radar system, achieving early identification of crime patterns. The barriers that long separated the department's Patrol Bureau, Detective Bureau, and Organized Crime Control Bureau have been broken down, and a new spirit of cooperation is resulting in the rapid deployment of appropriate resources. Although overall strategic guidance flows *down* to the precincts, many of the tactics that are accomplishing the strategies flow *up* from precinct commanders, squad commanders, and rank-and-file police officers and detectives.

In the 6-week Compstat cycle, the effectiveness of every new tactic or program is rapidly assessed. Failed tactics don't last long, and successful tactics are quickly replicated in other precincts. Gathering field intelligence, adapting tactics to changing field conditions, and closely reviewing field results are now continual, daily processes. The NYPD can make fundamental changes in its tactical approach in a few weeks rather than a few years.

The new flexibility allows much quicker response to shooting and robbery patterns. Identified by computer pin mapping, shooting "hot spots" can be blanketed with uniformed and plainclothes quality-of-life enforcement. People carrying illegal guns begin to realize they risk facing gun charges after being arrested for a minor offense. The result is fewer guns carried, fewer guns drawn, and fewer guns used. We have seen a 40-percent drop in handgun homicides in New York City since 1993.

The new strategic approach to crime problems has sharpened the focus on the criminal support system: on burglary fences, auto chop shops, stolen car exporters, and gun dealers who supply both drug dealers and armed robbers. In many instances, we have been able to dismantle key pieces of the criminal enterprise. Shutting down local fences, for instance, can have a dramatic effect on neighborhood burglary rates. It may take burglars some time to find another outlet for their stolen goods. The same is true of auto thieves, who need an immediate outlet—e.g., a chop shop or stolen auto exporter—because stolen cars are difficult to hide and easy to identify. We are also focusing on people wanted on warrants who we believe are likely committing additional crimes. Like the Transit Warrant Unit before it, the NYPD Warrant Unit has been revitalized. It has rearrested 10,103 wanted felons in the first 10 months of 1995, compared with 6,113 in all of 1993.

Intensive quality-of-life enforcement has become the order of the day in the NYPD. Throughout the city, we are responding to problems such as public drinking, "boombox cars," street prostitution, and street-level drug dealing. Neighborhoods feel safer, and people see the police taking action against these highly visible problems. The NYPD's success against the "squeegee pests," who had begged for money by washing car windows at most highway entrances in Manhattan, is a prime example of what steady quality-of-life enforcement can accomplish. Continuing police pressure, backed by arrests when necessary, has all but eliminated what was once a constant urban annoyance.

The NYPD Civil Enforcement Initiative has given us a powerful tool to combat petty crime and disorder. First developed by my predecessor, Commissioner Ray Kelly, and by Jeremy Travis, who then was NYPD's deputy commissioner for legal matters and

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now is the director of the National Institute for Justice (NIJ), civil enforcement sends NYPD attorneys into the field to assist precinct commanders in devising their enforcement strategies. Together, they use civil law—especially nuisance abatement law, police padlock law, and various forfeiture proceedings—to augment the traditional police sanctions of summons and arrest. They close brothels and drug and gambling locations and confiscate drug dealers' cars and cash. We have been able to have a significant impact on street prostitution by arresting johns and confiscating their cars, which we are authorized to do because the car would have been used in the intended crime. We have also had a powerful impact on boombox cars—using the threat of a temporary confiscation of the auto to be used as evidence. We have achieved a high level of compliance in neighborhoods that were once continuously assaulted by these drive-by noise polluters.

All this focused, strategic police activity has translated into steep declines in crime. The seven major felonies were down 12 percent in 1994 and, according to preliminary data through November 12, are down 17 percent in 1995. The preliminary numbers through November 12 show a 2-year decline of 27.4 percent. Crime is down in every felony category, including 2-year drops of 39.7 percent in murder, 30.7 percent in robbery, 36.1 percent in auto theft, 24.4 percent in burglary, and 23.8 percent in grand larceny. Only the declines in felonious assault (12.9 percent) and rape (7.7 percent) have failed to reach 20 percent for the 2-year period. These relatively lower numbers probably reflect the department's domestic violence strategy, which is actively eliciting complaints of assault and sexual violence from battered spouses.

In terms of human impact, the real numbers are even more impressive. After steep declines in 1994, there have been 51,728 fewer felonies in 1995 through November 12, including 373 fewer homicides, 47 fewer rapes, 11,949 fewer robberies, 3,103 fewer assaults, 12,520 fewer burglaries, 7,788 fewer grand larcenies, and 19,988 fewer auto thefts.

There have been declines in every borough and precinct in the city. All five of the city's boroughs have registered 2-year declines of 23 percent or more. Keep in mind that Brooklyn and Queens would be the fourth and fifth largest cities in the country if they were independent municipalities. In effect, we have achieved crime declines of 23 percent or more in three of the five largest cities in the country.

One clear benefit of the strategic policing approach has been the allocation of police resources where they are most needed and the consequent declines in crime in some of the most crime-prone neighborhoods in the city. As of November 12, for instance, the 75th and 77th precincts in Brooklyn, which are among the toughest in the city, were the leaders for real-number declines in homicides, shooting victims, and shooting incidents. The 75th precinct, covering East New York and Brownsville, has seen 45 fewer killings this year. The 67th precinct, another tough neighborhood in Brooklyn, leads the city in real-number decline with 544 fewer robberies. The 107th and 109th precincts in Queens, which had been the car-theft capitals of the world, saw real number declines of 1,186 and 1,063 auto thefts, respectively, through November 12.

If the current trend continues through the end of this year, total Uniform Crime Report (UCR) index crimes in New York City will have fallen 26 percent between 1993 and 1995 and 38 percent since 1989. These decreases are even more impressive when compared with the percentage change in total UCR index crimes in other venues: Whereas crime fell 3.0 percent in the Nation as a whole and 9.0 percent in New York State during calendar year 1994, New York City's total UCR index crime fell 11.7 percent—our largest percentage decrease since 1972. New York City's ranking for total index crimes among the Nation's 25 largest cities moved from 18th in 1993 down to 21st in 1994.

The reduction in New York City crime has effectively pulled the Nation's aggregate crime level down quite significantly. Based on the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI's) preliminary 1994 UCR figures, crime reductions in New York City accounted for approximately 33 percent of the national homicide and robbery reductions and 70 percent of the national decrease in motor vehicle thefts. Although preliminary 1995 FBI UCR data are not yet available, we expect that New York City's decreases in crime will again contribute significantly to the Nation's overall reduction in crime.

Why are the steep declines in crime happening at this time? I believe it is because of fundamental changes in the NYPD's management philosophy and operating principles. We have gone from a micromanaged organization with little strategic direction to a decentralized management style with strong strategic guidance at the top. Our four operating principles—timely,

accurate intelligence; rapid deployment; effective tactics; and relentless followup and assessment—have made the NYPD a much more responsive, flexible, and effective force in the field.

In the broadest sense, an effective police department can't keep people from becoming criminals or control the social and demographic forces that, according to many criminologists, engender criminal activity. But we can keep people from becoming successful criminals. We can turn the tables on the criminal element. Instead of reacting to them, we can create a sense of police presence and police effectiveness that makes criminals react to us. And then, in a narrower sense, we do keep people from becoming criminals or at least from committing criminal acts as they realize their chances of success are much smaller. This is certainly what the New York City Transit Police achieved in the subway to drive robbery rates down 74 percent. The young felons who committed most of the subway robberies quickly learned that their chances of success had been greatly reduced. Now the NYPD is sending the same message to New York City as a whole, and we are seeing comparable results.

Criminology tends to view criminals as a kind of irresistible social force. Its prognosis for the future amounts to the cry of "Look out! Here comes a demographic bulge in the crime-prone age cohort of 15- to 19-year-olds, and we are all going to be swamped by it." I don't think so. Criminals are not an irresistible force. In fact, the criminal element responsible for most street crime is nothing but a bunch of disorganized individuals, many of whom are not very good at what they do. The police have all the advantages—in training, equipment, organization, and strategy. We can get the criminals on the run, and we can keep them on the run. It is possible. We are doing it in New York.

## Theory and practice

One of the prevailing views in contemporary criminology as I understand it is the position that police have little impact on crime—that variations in the rate and prevalence of crime within a community are primarily or entirely attributable to variations in population demographics, the impact of social trends, and a number of economic factors. Criminologists, some of whom are quite fixed in their opinions, cite innumerable studies employing a variety of methodologies to show the relationships between these variables and

the rate of reported crime or crime victimization. Specifically, they point to the relative size of a community's cohort of young males between 15 and 19 years of age as a primary determinant of crime rates, along with the availability of guns, the supply-and-demand economics of the illicit drug market, drug-abuse patterns in the community, and a host of other broad social and economic variables. These views are supported by empirical research showing statistically significant and highly positive correlations between the rate of crime and the various demographic, social, and economic variables over time as well as by intuitive arguments and anecdotal evidence.

As a basic tenet of epistemology, however, we cannot conclude that a causal relationship exists between two variables unless the intuitive explanation for the relationship has face validity—it must make sense and conform to our objective observations of the world around us—and unless three necessary conditions occur: one variable must precede the other in time, an empirically measured relationship must be demonstrated between the variables, and the relationship must not be better explained by any third intervening variable. Although contemporary criminology's explanations for the crime decline in New York City meet the criteria of the first two conditions, they don't explain it better than a third intervening variable. That variable is assertive, strategic enforcement by police officers in a well-managed and highly directed police agency. When it comes into play, the causal equation is radically altered.

As a corollary to the assertion that crime is primarily pulled by the engine of social and demographic trends, contemporary criminology maintains a longstanding belief that police activities have little or no appreciable effect on crime, despite the public ideology and political rhetoric periodically mustered to justify larger police budgets and staffing increases. In support of this belief, academicians proffer a number of empirical studies showing that the addition of police resources, including personnel, has rarely, if ever, had a sustained impact on crime rates. If increasing the number of police within a given jurisdiction has no discernible impact on crime, the reasoning goes, the institution of policing is powerless to influence crime. This logic incorrectly assumes that all police patrol activity is undertaken with the same intensity and that police officers in disparate agencies will be

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deployed, managed, and directed in the same or similar fashion.

I do not take issue with the empirical validity of any of these studies or with the observation that police activity has historically had little impact on crime. I do question the basic premise that because no credible causal relationship has ever been shown to exist between police activity and reductions in crime, no causal relationship *can* exist.

One of the earliest studies of this issue was conducted in the NYPD's 25th precinct in 1954, where the operational strength of the precinct was more than doubled for a 4-month period. At the project's conclusion, reported street robberies declined by an astounding 90 percent, and burglary and auto-theft reports—crimes that are typically visible to patrolling police officers—declined as well. Increased manpower had no impact on homicides and minimal impact on felony assaults, however, since many or most of these crimes took place indoors or in locations that patrolling police could not easily scrutinize. Despite the project's brevity and several flaws—it did not control for or measure the displacement of crime, and it did not account for reductions that might be attributable to factors other than manpower deployment—it was used to justify demands for an increase in police personnel and resources (Wilson, 1985: 62–63).

In 1966, consistent results were obtained when this study was replicated through saturation patrol in the 20th precinct. Street crimes visible to patrol again declined in the target precinct, but no appreciable declines were noted in crimes occurring indoors or in other private places. As James Q. Wilson (1985) pointed out, the results of these two projects "were sufficiently striking and consistent to warrant entertaining the belief that very large increases in police patrols may reduce "outside" or "street" crimes significantly, at least for a short period of time" (p. 64). Neither study, though, used sufficient controls or measures to adequately determine how much of the crime-reduction effect was due to deterrence and how much was due to displacement.

The main conclusion derived from these studies—that any impact the police may have on crime is due to a deterrent effect and is limited to the type of street crimes easily visible to patrolling officers—prevailed in criminology and police management circles for

several decades. The accuracy of this conclusion is called into question by our contemporary experience in New York City, where we have achieved steep reductions in all categories of crime, irrespective of their visibility to patrolling officers. We have not found any significant variance in the relative proportion of reported "indoor" versus "outdoor" crimes in any offense category.

Samuel Walker (1985) has argued that the addition of more police to an agency has historically had no demonstrable effect on crime. Although Walker acknowledges that police do deter crime to some unspecified and limited extent and arrests serve a specific deterrence purpose through incarceration of criminals, he says the impact of mere police presence as a crime deterrent can scarcely be measured in precise terms. Walker asserts that while police patrol since the time of Robert Peel has been designed to prevent crime, the "police are at best a last-resort, reactive mechanism" of social control, and he concludes quite validly that "even the most superficial evidence suggests no relationship between the number of cops and the crime rate" (p. 104).

Walker's characterization of police patrol as a "last-resort, reactive mechanism" describes activities of agencies and officers cast in the traditional mold. Walker has argued elsewhere (1984) that this reactive model of police organization was in large part forged as the legacy of O.W. Wilson, whose classic *Police Administration* became the "bible" of an entire generation of police executives. These executives embraced Wilson's gospel of efficiency and were profoundly influenced by his ideology of crime suppression, which emphasized the deployment of resources to control "serious" crimes—the seven felonies comprising the UCR crime index (pp. 409–410). Indeed, for decades police executives were locked into a narrow mindset in which the UCR index was practically the sole benchmark for police performance. When index crimes declined, they took credit; when index crimes increased, they blamed either improved reporting rates or broad social factors beyond their control. The narrow mindset has its advantages.

I can hardly dispute the empirical evidence cited by Walker (1985) or the overall validity of his argument, but I would emphasize that the state of contemporary policing in New York City differs enormously from the traditional reactive model on which criminologists



have based their conclusions. In New York City, we have radically altered the face of policing by empowering the agency and its officers with policies and tactics that “capitalize on community crimefighting initiatives *and* take the bad guys off the streets,” a strategic approach that John DiIulio has so graciously dubbed “Bratton’s Law” (DiIulio, 1995: A19).

Perhaps the best-known and most frequently referenced study of the effect of police patrol on crime is the Kansas City Experiment in 1974. This year-long study determined that changing the level of preventive patrol within demographically matched neighborhoods had virtually no impact on the number of reported crimes or the level of fear experienced by residents of the various neighborhoods. However, as James Q. Wilson (1985) observed, the experiment “did *not* show that police make no difference, and it did *not* show that adding more police is useless in controlling crime. All it showed was that changes in the amount of random preventive patrol in marked cars did not, by itself, seem to affect . . . how much crime occurred or how safe citizens felt” (p. 67, emphasis in original). He points out that the experiment might have yielded very different results if important changes were made in the way police were used, including assignment to plainclothes patrol, sustained attention to places identified as having been frequent sites of crimes, or more extensive followup investigation of past crimes (pp. 67–68).

After examining the body of research on the impact of police on crime, Wilson (1985) concluded that “*what* the police do may be more important than how many there are, that patrol focused on particular persons or locations may be better than random patrol, and that speed may be less important than information” (p. 71, emphasis in original).

There is much wisdom in Wilson’s conclusions, and they certainly jibe with our experience in New York City. What we have done in New York is, in effect, to focus and coordinate police officers’ activities, to free them from random patrol duties by providing coherent tactical directions and enforcement strategies to occupy their undevoted time, and to provide them and their commanders with accurate and timely crime intelligence necessary to make a difference. They relentlessly follow up their enforcement activities and identified crime problems, and we provide them with the discretion and authority to practice their consider-

able crimefighting skills and experiment with new methods and tactics in fighting crime. These policing skills were always present but usually underused. Street cops have always said they had the ability to reduce crime if the agency’s executives would only relieve them of the constraints imposed by an unimaginative and timid management cadre. At the NYPD, we did remove many of these constraints without sacrificing discipline or our command and authority over police officers’ behavior. In New York, random preventive patrol is a thing of the past because we’ve given our officers better and more productive things to do with their time. The time they once spent aimlessly driving or walking the streets is now devoted to tactical strategic enforcement activities.

I would be remiss to leave you with the impression that the absolute number of officers deployed in the field is of little consequence. In fact, the number of officers deployed is an essential ingredient in this formula, but it is probably less important in terms of reducing crime than the *manner* in which officers are deployed. Certainly, we require a sufficient number or “critical mass” of officers to make our crime strategies effective and workable, but we could probably do with fewer officers if we could significantly reduce the amount of time they devote to purely reactive policing and increase the amount of time they spend in a proactive enforcement mode. At the same time, we cannot ignore the fact that visible police patrol leads to a heightened public sense of safety and security. Making people feel safer is an important police function, and a certain amount of police time and personnel will always be devoted to that purpose.

In the traditionally managed, reactive agencies, police work often followed a set of contradictory, or at least conflicting, operating principles. Officers were deployed in reaction to crime trends and patterns that might, at best, be several weeks or months old. And yet, as part of O.W. Wilson’s legacy, many police executives displayed a near obsession with shaving seconds off the response time to 911 calls about crimes that had already occurred. Although they were given a long list of rules intended to govern their behavior, police officers in reactive agencies operated virtually unsupervised, with little meaningful management oversight of their specific activities. These officers were, in effect, set loose on the streets without the benefit of coordinated and integrated tactical strategies. Police officers and executive alike shared a

rhetoric and a sensibility that “real police work” involved fighting the “serious” crimes of robbery, burglary, larceny, assault, rape, and murder, to the exclusion of less important quality-of-life offenses. Yet few agencies developed strategies to deal with these crimes in their totality as opposed to dealing with them on a crime-by-crime and case-by-case basis. And few recognized that the failure to enforce quality-of-life laws was sending a message of lax police enforcement and encouraging the commission of more serious crimes.

As described earlier, the NYPD now has the technological capacity to identify crime patterns almost immediately, and our response can be virtually contemporaneous with evolving patterns. We also have significantly tightened our management controls over police activities, empowering officers and commanders at the local level while holding them accountable for their crimefighting results. Officers and commanders are now guided by comprehensive and coordinated strategies and tactical plans that provide enough flexibility to permit the crafting of appropriate site-specific responses. We relentlessly follow up on their activities to ensure that problems are solved rather than displaced. We have also recognized and embraced the wisdom of Wilson and Kelling’s “broken windows” theory and its emphasis on the criminogenic nature of quality-of-life offenses (1982). We have convinced officers and commanders that serious crime as well as public fear of crime can be reduced by tending to these “minor” offenses and annoyances of urban life.

The NYPD circa 1995 is a very different agency than the reactive organizations that previously characterized American policing, and it is achieving very different results. The assumption that all police departments can provide only a “last-resort, reactive mechanism” is in need of thorough study and evaluation. A new kind of police department is emerging—a flexible, responsive, focused organization that can swiftly identify new crime patterns and just as swiftly counter them. It is time for the discipline of criminology to recognize the change. To compare the old reactive agencies to the NYPD circa 1995 is to compare apples and oranges.

I turn now to the main hypotheses, inferences, and research data that make up the view that crime is primarily pulled by social and demographic engines.

Let’s look at how these theories are challenged by empirical facts in New York City’s contemporary crime picture.

### Age, demographics, and crime

The relative size of the cohort between 15 and 21 years of age historically has been shown to have enormous influence on the rate of reported crimes. Criminologists have clearly demonstrated that adolescents commit a disproportionate number and percentage of total crimes, criminality peaks between the ages of 16 and 20 for the majority of specific offenses, and the rate of offenses attributable to a particular age cohort declines as the cohort ages (Hirschi and Gottfredson, 1983; Wolfgang et al., 1972; Tracy et al., 1990). These conclusions are supported over time by the UCR data as well as by victimization studies.

It should also be noted that individual criminologists define such important variables as “youth” and “youth crime” differently, which complicates the comparability of their research. By slightly altering the operational definitions used to collect data sets or altering the upper and lower limits used to categorize an age group, for example, substantially different results might be obtained.

Despite these caveats, official data and criminological research do reveal that the rate at which adolescents and young adults commit crimes is three to five times higher than their proportional representation in the general population. They account for a disproportionate number of arrests as well. In particular, the highly credible cohort research conducted by Marvin Wolfgang and his colleagues (Wolfgang et al., 1972; Tracy et al., 1990) found that about one-third of both Philadelphia birth cohorts they studied had been arrested by age 18 and one-half had been arrested by age 30. These results support the general observation that the number of male adolescents in a population will have considerable impact on levels of crime. Between 40 and 50 percent of the increase in crime index offenses during the 1960s, for example, is attributed to the “baby boom” generation.

Arrest data from New York City also show the heightened criminality of adolescents aged 15 to 19. Between 1980 and 1994, for example, the average annual robbery arrest rate for young people between 15 and 19 (17.38 per 100,000 population) was more

than five times higher than for the population as a whole (3.29 per 100,000) and nearly double that of the next closest age group (20 to 24, 9.20 per 100,000). In 1994, this cohort accounted for more than 37 percent of all robbery arrests in New York City, almost four times the percentage for the population as a whole (9.47) and almost two-and-one-half times the percentage for the cohort aged 20 to 24 (15.7). The age 15 to 19 cohort clearly accounts for a disproportionate number and percentage of robberies, and generally similar relationships can be discerned by examining complaint and arrest data for other specific offenses.

When robbery arrest trend data from 1980 through 1994 are examined, however, a somewhat different picture emerges. Although the age 15 to 19 cohort has consistently accounted for the greatest proportion of robbery arrests, that proportion in New York City has declined over time—from 47 percent in 1980 to 37 percent in 1994. This cohort's share of the total robbery arrests declined steadily between 1980 (47.0 percent) and 1987 (30.8 percent), when it began to climb upward by one or two percentage increments per year.

Criminology's conclusions about the influence of the age 15 to 19 cohort on overall crime may have been historically accurate, but they no longer seem to apply in New York City. The city's youthful population declined during the two decades from 1970 to 1990 when crime rates soared in New York City and across the Nation. The group between 15 and 19 declined by almost 22 percent in New York City during this period, but the proportion of the cohort involved in crimes increased enormously. Per capita arrests for youths between 15 and 19 increased almost 60 percent between 1970 and the early 1990s. During this period of significant decline in the city's high-risk youth population (between 1970 and 1990), total index crimes increased by 22.8 percent—from 578,149 index crimes in 1970 to 710,221 in 1990. Both homicide and motor vehicle theft hit 20-year peaks in 1990.

But as New York City crime started to decline in the 1990s, the decline in youth population reversed itself. Based on its analysis of the 1990 U.S. census, the Department of City Planning estimates that the city's population of youths between 15 and 19 years of age has increased slightly between 1990 and 1995. Most significant, especially for criminologists who consider race as a variable, the number of black males between

15 and 19 is estimated to have increased by nearly 2 percent and the number of male Hispanic youths by 5.7 percent. Asian and Pacific Islander males between 15 and 19 also increased an estimated 2.36 percent. Pulling the average for the entire cohort down were the white males whose numbers decreased 8.4 percent. These data are confirmed by New York State Department of Education school enrollment figures for the City of New York, which show that total public school enrollment increased 4.4 percent between the 1989–90 and 1994–95 school years. The number of public school students in grades 9 through 12, comprising a significant portion of the high-risk group aged 15 to 19, increased by 12 percent.

The demographic rationales for crime and their emphasis on criminality among the cohort of males between the ages of 15 and 19 cannot explain the significant crime reductions in New York City over the past several years. These rationales would, in fact, predict the opposite effect. The demographic data provided here point to the indisputable, if theoretically inconvenient, reality that the number of individuals who have historically been shown to account for a disproportionate amount of crime relative to their percentage representation in the overall population was relatively low during the late 1980s when New York experienced a rise in crime, and that that number has actually increased between 1990 and 1995, when New York City began to realize a notable decrease in crime.

## Drugs and crime

A great deal of recent discourse and research in contemporary criminology has focused on the nexus between drug abuse and crime, particularly violent crime. Hypotheses typically establish a causal link between drugs and crime in two ways:

- (1) The physiological effects of a particular drug are said to induce violent crime through the removal of inhibitions or other pharmacological effect.
- (2) The prohibitive cost of some drugs is said to cause users to commit crimes, particularly property crimes, to generate sufficient income to satisfy their addiction.

Of central concern to the "drugs cause crime" hypothesis is the question of which variable comes first—do individuals become addicted and then commit crimes,

## Great Expectations

or do criminals begin to use drugs after their criminal careers have begun? It is my understanding that this empirical question remains unresolved despite a quantity of research. Nevertheless, positive correlations between drug use and criminality have been demonstrated, despite the fact that many of the studies are based on convenient samples of prison and jail inmates and therefore present the problem of sample bias (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1988, 1991). Another empirical issue is the difficulty in determining what portion of overall crime is committed by drug abusers. As Wilson and Herrnstein (1985: 366) pointed out, it is virtually impossible to calculate how much crime heroin addicts commit even if there are accurate data about the number of addicts and the monetary costs of their addiction.

Criminologists seek to explain fluctuations in crime rates by pointing out how variations in drug markets and drug-abuse patterns have historically correlated with crime trends. Specifically, some have argued that the precipitous increases in robbery complaints experienced nationwide during the late 1980s were attributable to the emergence of crack cocaine, a drug that has been intuitively and anecdotally linked to higher rates of crime. Crack cocaine exploded onto the drug scene in New York City in 1985 and 1986, a period in which robbery complaints did in fact increase dramatically. Based on the concurrence of these historic trends and a general tendency to infer causation from mere correlation, many criminologists would conclude that New York City's increase in robberies during the late 1980s was driven by the advent of crack. Conversely, those criminologists would tend to conclude that New York City's recent decline in robberies signals a dramatic reduction in crack addiction and use. Some would argue, in a similar vein, that the supposed reemergence of heroin as the drug of choice among street criminals might translate into an increase in burglary complaints because burglary rates have long been associated with or attributed to the extent of heroin addiction. Unfortunately for these criminologists, however, neither of the hypotheses is supported by the current empirical evidence in New York City.

In 1984, just prior to the crack explosion, the first NIJ-sponsored Drug Use Forecasting (DUF) urinalysis study at the NYPD Manhattan Central Booking facility revealed a 42-percent positive rate for cocaine among all arrestees sampled, irrespective of charge.

By 1988—perhaps the height of the crack epidemic—the prevalence of cocaine use among all arrestees had nearly doubled to 83 percent, lending credibility to the hypothesized relationship between crack cocaine and crime.

Although a decline has been recently noted in cocaine use among all arrestees, it has been fairly modest. In February 1995, 78 percent of arrestees tested positive for cocaine, and in May 1995 (the most recent quarterly data available), 68 percent tested positive for cocaine. These quarterly data fall within the typical range of variance for positive cocaine tests. Since 1988, the proportion of arrestees testing positive for cocaine in each quarterly sample varied from 59 percent to 83 percent, and since 1993, the proportion of positive cocaine tests varied from 63 percent to 78 percent. Cocaine use among those arrested in New York City has not declined substantially, certainly not to the extent that declining cocaine use could account for the enormous decline in the crime, particularly violent crime, that cocaine supposedly engenders.

The hypothesized increase in heroin abuse has not been evident in the quarterly DUF data either. In 1984, 21 percent of arrestees tested positive for opiates; positive tests peaked at 27 percent in June 1988 and 25 percent in October 1988. In the most recent DUF testing quarters, February and May 1995, 22 percent and 20 percent of arrestees, respectively, tested positive for opiates.

Narcotics enforcement activity data also provide indirect evidence that drug abuse has not diminished significantly. In 1994, total arrests for narcotics offenses in New York City increased 28.9 percent, reaching their highest point since 1989. Felony drug arrests rose 11.4 percent in 1994, and misdemeanor drug arrests rose 54.2 percent. Through November 12, 1995, total NYPD narcotics arrests increased 10.14 percent over the comparable 1994 period and 39.06 percent over the comparable 1993 period.

Although this increase is clearly due to our heightened enforcement and the strategic approach we are taking to address the city's narcotics problem, and although arrest data cannot be taken as conclusive evidence of the prevalence of drug abuse, these numbers provide a rough indicator that drug abuse remains pervasive.

## Firearms use

Without engaging in the contentious and ongoing debate about gun control and the right of citizens to possess firearms, one can intuitively grasp a connection between the availability of guns, particularly handguns, and violent crime. Guns are certainly more lethal than other weapons used in the commission of crimes, and it is a reasonable assumption that gun availability facilitates the commission of many crimes. Roughly half of the Nation's homicides are committed with guns, and guns are used in about one-third of all robberies and one-third of all rapes. I won't address the question here of whether guns cause crime in the sense of serving as a catalyst for the escalation of violence or if they deter crime when they are in the hands of law-abiding citizens. It is scarcely debatable, however, that a large number of criminals have carried and used guns in the commission of their crimes or that, in the case of New York City at least, the vast majority of these guns are illegally possessed.

The number of firearms, especially handguns, used in criminal activity has declined substantially in New York City during the past 2 years. The data supporting this conclusion are derived from several sources, each of which confirms the observation that fewer criminals are carrying and using guns. The percentage of robberies in which firearms were used, for example, fell from 36.3 percent in 1993, to 33.05 percent in 1994, to 28.7 percent for the first 6 months of 1995. The total citywide number of shooting incidents between January 1 and November 12 fell 39.67 percent between 1993 and 1995, and the number of shooting victims injured in these incidents fell 37.62 percent. The decline in firearms use can also be inferred from the declining number of calls reporting "shots fired" to our 911 system. The department received 23 percent fewer shots-fired calls from citizens and dispatched 12,353 fewer radio cars for these calls in the first 9 months of 1995 than it did for the comparable 1994 period.

The declining number of shooting incidents and shooting victims reflects a general decline in the number of firearms being carried and used by criminals, which we attribute to the effectiveness of our strategic gun enforcement efforts. We are hard pressed to conceive of any demographic or social variable that might induce street criminals to refrain from carrying or using their guns. Although the total number of gun

arrests for the year-to-date period through November 12 declined 34.8 percent from comparable 1993 levels, we do not claim to have taken all of these guns off the streets or away from criminals. We merely assert that criminals have considered the wisdom of leaving their guns at home. Indeed, our gun arrests increased fairly rapidly subsequent to the introduction of our gun strategy and then began to decline as a function of the aggressive enforcement. It should also be noted that implementation of our strategy seems to have had the unanticipated consequence of promoting the use of other, but fortunately less lethal, weapons. The number of arrests for nonfirearm dangerous weapons *increased* more than 6 percent during the 1993 to 1995 year-to-date period.

The following example illustrates one creative way of approaching the problem of illegal guns. Our research and investigations showed that unscrupulous private gun dealers holding Federal firearms licenses (FFLs) were a major source of illicit guns on New York City's streets. In March 1993, we began to jointly review FFL applications from New York City residents with the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. Of the 238 new applications received through December 1994, 97.4 percent were disapproved. In addition, 71 percent of the renewal applications between August 1993 and December 1994 were abandoned, surrendered, or disapproved in the face of increased police scrutiny. Although we cannot quantify the extent to which this policy actually reduced the availability of illegal firearms and handguns, we believe that it is certainly a contributing factor.

## Social and economic factors

Whether or not poverty causes crime has been one of the most controversial and enduring issues in criminology and the political arena. Academic research efforts have failed to provide conclusive data to support or reject any of the common economic theories of crime causation. Arguments over the role of poverty and other economic factors tend to follow the lines of political ideology and are largely based on rhetoric and intuitive reasoning. Wilson and Herrnstein (1985) pointed out that the presumed connection between unemployment and crime is rather tenuous. They said the empirical research in this area is inconclusive and noted several logical faults within the competing theoretical models that seek to link unemployment and crime.

In any case, none of the common social or economic factors that criminologists typically cite to explain fluctuations in crime has registered changes of sufficient magnitude in New York City to suggest they are responsible for any appreciable decline in crime. New York City's economic picture has improved slightly over the past several years, but those years cannot be accurately characterized as a boom period or even as a period of significant growth. Monthly data from the U.S. Department of Labor show New York City's unemployment rate at 10.8 percent in January 1994, 7.2 percent in September 1994, 9 percent in February 1995, and 8 percent in September 1995. Throughout the 2-year period, the city had a higher unemployment rate than the Nation. A comparison of the New York City Human Resources Administration's July 1994 and July 1995 public assistance rolls reveals that the number of city residents receiving public assistance benefits declined by 45,354, or fully 4 percent. A comparison of the number of city residents receiving food stamps in August 1994 and August 1995 reveals a very modest decrease of 0.4 percent.

Certain other indicators, however, seem to show a return of confidence in the safety of the city. In time, we might see an improvement in the city's economy following a decline in crime rather than the other way around. The New York City Convention and Visitors Bureau estimates that the city will welcome more than 25 million visitors in 1996, a 14-percent increase over 1995 levels. This translates into 3,500,000 more visitors who contribute to the local economy. New York City's hotel occupancy rate rose from 71.7 percent during the first 6 months of 1994 to 74.2 percent during the comparable 1995 period. Overall airport arrivals rose 2 percent, and international arrivals rose 7.4 percent. Attendance at Broadway shows rose 14.1 percent, and the number of visitors served by the Convention and Visitors Bureau increased by 5.1 percent.

Similarly, subway ridership has mirrored the decline in subway crime. Daily subway ridership fell 3.5 percent between 1990 and 1991, but it increased 0.2 percent between 1991 and 1992 when subway crime fell 15 percent. In 1992 and 1993, when subway crime fell an additional 24.3 percent, daily ridership rose 5.1 percent. In 1994, with subway crime falling another 21.7 percent, ridership increased an additional 5.2 percent. From these data we can infer that public fears associated with riding the city's rapid transit system have declined and residents and commuters are

increasingly willing to travel freely throughout the city using public transportation.

### **Prison and jail populations, arrests, and incapacitation**

Even the best-managed, most effective, and most highly directed police agency cannot reduce crime solely through arrest and enforcement. Other spheres of the criminal justice system—the courts and corrections, probation, and parole functions—take responsibility for an offender once he or she is in custody, and each plays a salient role in reducing crime and enhancing public safety. Corrections agencies in particular are instrumental in reducing crime through incapacitation and perhaps to some extent through deterrence, although the importance of the correctional role rarely receives much attention in the public discourse on crime.

Like each of the other spheres of the criminal justice system, the view of correctional agencies is subject to prevailing political and organizational ideologies. During the 1960s when national crime rates tripled, correctional policies and practices were driven to a large extent by the rehabilitative ideal. We did not conclude until the 1970s that, in terms of rehabilitation, "nothing works" (Lipton et al., 1974; Martinson, 1974). In the 1980s and 1990s, the ideology of incapacitation has come to the fore.

Although it may be difficult to accurately estimate the relative effectiveness of incapacitation strategies, the rationale for incapacitation is fairly simple. We know that some criminals, particularly "career criminals," commit a highly disproportionate number of criminal offenses. Blumstein and his colleagues have noted that the most active 10 percent of offenders each commit in excess of 100 crimes per year (Blumstein et al., 1986: 94). The clear implication is that drastic reductions can be made in the overall crime rate if this group of high-rate chronic offenders is incapacitated.

As discussed above, cohort research on youth crime (Wolfgang et al., 1972; Tracy et al., 1990) also reveals that a relatively small percentage of young people are responsible for a vastly disproportionate share of offenses. Statute law and the ideology of the juvenile justice system preclude sentencing youthful offenders with the same severity directed toward adult criminals. But it also stands to reason that significant inroads can be made in the overall crime picture if

we implement some sort of realistic intervention to discourage criminals at the early stages of an evolving criminal career. Too often in the past, police and juvenile courts have not treated youth crime seriously enough. Both police and courts have operated on the assumption that it is not in children's best interest to burden them with criminal records. Many police officers have failed to take appropriate discretionary action in cases involving young people, possibly in the cynical belief that juvenile court authorities would, at best, merely give the juvenile offender a "slap on the wrist." It should be no surprise, then, that many young people who have had contact with the juvenile justice system learn that their offenses will not be taken seriously. For the small percentage of feral youth whose contacts with police and courts are frequent, this perception is repeatedly reinforced. Some are genuinely surprised when the criminal court system finally imposes a real sentence.

An article in the *Detroit News* described New York City's tremendous drop in crime and speculated whether the strategies and tactics the New York City Police Department pursued would have a beneficial effect in Detroit. The article also noted that criminologists were skeptical about the role of the NYPD's strategic approach in achieving these reductions as well as the credit police deserve for them. One criminologist was quoted as saying that police do not control any of the things that generate crimes: "[Cops] don't control the demand for drugs. They don't control who's on welfare and who's not. They don't control who has a job and who doesn't. They don't control what Republicans like to call 'family values'" (Tobin, 1995: A3). This is a fair and accurate assessment. The police do *not* control these broad social and economic factors. But the same criminologist went on to explain why, in his opinion, crime had declined so precipitously in New York City: "The bad guys are in jail," he said. "Even a small number of crooks taken off the street can make a big difference in crime statistics." Who, if not the police, put them there?

For the year-to-date period ending November 12, 1995, the total number of arrests for *all criminal offenses* in New York City—felonies and misdemeanors—increased 26.73 percent over 1993 levels for the comparable period. Arrest for combined index crimes—all felonies—increased 4.27 percent. The disparity in these data demonstrates the effectiveness of the department's shift away from limiting emphasis on the traditionally "serious" index offenses commit-

ted by adults toward strategic enforcement of appropriate and applicable laws, and it provides evidence of the efficacy of the "broken windows" theory. By increasing enforcement—as measured through arrests—for misdemeanor quality-of-life offenses among adults and young people, we were able to achieve enormous reductions in felonies, particularly index crimes.

Not all of those arrestees were incapacitated through incarceration. Although a large percentage of the 3.4-percent increase in New York State's prison population between 1993 and 1994 is attributable to arrests from New York City, it must also be noted that both admissions to and releases from State prisons declined in 1994. Admissions fell by 3.4 percent and releases by 1.8 percent. Fewer criminals are being incarcerated, but they are being incapacitated for longer periods.

The increase in arrests, especially misdemeanor and juvenile arrests, did not impose an untenable burden on our jail system. In fact, the city's average daily jail population actually fell 1.2 percent between 1993 and 1994, after rising in both 1991 and 1992. For the first 9 months of 1995 versus the comparable 1994 period, the average daily jail population fell by 5.9 percent, from 19,558 inmates to 18,397 inmates.

The inference to be drawn from these data is that dramatic crime reductions can be achieved through the sustained and tactical enforcement of quality-of-life misdemeanor offenses, coupled with vigorous enforcement of "serious" felony crimes and the concomitant incapacitation of "career criminals."

## Summary

The magnitude and direction of change among the various socioeconomic and demographic variables reviewed here lends little credibility to traditional criminological conceptions about the causes of crime and crime reduction. Indeed, given the direction and magnitude of change evident in many of these variables, traditional criminological thought might have predicted increases in crime in New York City rather than the significant declines we have actually experienced. A third intervening variable—a well-managed and highly directed police agency—provides a better explanation for the decline in New York City crime than any of the traditional explanations cited by criminologists.

### Note

1. For a good account of Compstat meetings, see Kelling, George, "How to Run a Police Department," *City Journal*, Autumn 1995.

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# Measuring What Matters: A New Way of Thinking About Crime and Public Order

*George Kelling*

Here is a public policy paradox: New Yorkers are frantic over what seems to them the increasing lawlessness of the city. Crime and fear are consistently among the top two or three reasons cited by New Yorkers who say they want to leave town. Yet according to professional standards and the most common statistical measurements, the New York City police departments are among the best in the country, especially after taking into account their size and the problems they face.

For generations, police have tried to develop a model of policing that is equitable, accountable, efficient, lawful, and honest. They have largely succeeded: In the quest for equity, police are distributed across cities on the basis of crime rates and calls for service—seemingly objective criteria. To be unobtrusive, police have relied on responding to citizens' calls for help, rather than initiating action on their own. To ensure lawfulness, police have focused their resources on serious crimes—murder, rape, assault, robbery, and burglary—acts prohibited by unambiguous laws and about which a broad consensus exists that police should take strong action. To ensure honesty, police have limited contacts with possible sources of corruption, including citizens.

By these measures, New York City is excellently policed: Its departments, especially the New York City Police Department, distribute police equitably throughout the city, respond quickly to 911 calls (especially considering the enormous volume here), are unobtrusive (despite rare and highly publicized exceptions), have concentrated on serious crime, and maintain high levels of integrity. Among professionals, the NYPD is widely believed to be one of the "cleanest" very large departments in the country.

Even by more widely touted measurements, New York police do relatively well; so many people have been arrested that neither jails nor prisons can hold them.

If the number of cells was expanded, few doubt that New York City police could fill almost any added capacity as well. Crime rates are also encouraging, at least compared to other large cities. In 1989, eight large American cities had higher homicide rates than New York City, 21 had higher rape rates, 17 had higher burglary rates, and eight had higher automotive theft rates. The differences were not trivial: Washington's murder rate was almost 2.8 times as high as New York's; Cleveland's rape rate 3.5 times higher; Dallas's burglary rate twice as high. Only in robbery did New York lead the nation, and not by much.

But New Yorkers are not the least bit reassured by these statistical and relative achievements. One prominent local political leader eager to discover his constituents' concerns recently gathered some New Yorkers in "focus groups" to discuss major issues. When he asked them to react to the statement "New York City is tough on crime," their response was incredulous laughter.

The citizens are right. These formal measures of police work have little to do with community needs. After all, even after decades of increase, individual serious crimes remain relatively rare. But if a typical annual increase in the mugging rate does not materially increase the chances that one will be mugged, neither does a similar decrease reduce the real harm done to those who are not mugged—which is to make them afraid and cheat them out of a little bit more of their lives. Lawlessness consists not just in the relatively rare "index" crimes counted by the FBI, but can also refer to an atmosphere of disorder in which it seems like these and less serious crimes and harassments might occur at any time. Lawlessness locks neighbors behind doors, chases storeowners off streets, shuts down business, and spreads poverty and despair.

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Still, twice a year when the official FBI crime statistics are released and the *Times* announces, "New York Leads Big Cities in Robbery Rate, but Drops in Murders," and the *Post* and the *News* chip in with their more-colorful versions, police officials frantically counter with their own numbers that show how well they are doing. Even now, when "community policing" (which is supposed to deemphasize statistics) is all the fashion, police chiefs know that every time the ritual is repeated, the political powers-that-be will call them on the carpet and the powers-that-would-be will call press conferences. Police strategy, tactics, and even police mythology and esprit de corps are driven by statistical and bureaucratic measures of performance. The result is disastrous for the community.

Ironically, the statistics police find most nettlesome, the FBI's Uniform Crime Reports, were invented by The International Association of Chiefs of Police in the 1920s. The original UCR index consisted of seven crimes: murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny, and motor vehicle theft. In 1979, arson was added to the list. The UCR also include data on crimes cleared (someone was arrested), on the people who were arrested, and on law enforcement personnel. Victimization surveys supplement the UCR by providing additional information about victims and offenders in crimes which may never have been reported.

Once chiefs had high hopes for the UCR, believing that reported crime and clearance rates would provide "scientific" measures of the nature and extent of serious crime and of the relative effectiveness of police departments. And during the comparatively quiet years of the Forties and the Fifties, police were quick to claim credit for the relatively low reported crime rates.

In the Sixties, this honeymoon ended. Crime levels, in the statistics and in the minds of citizens, became intolerable. As the crisis worsened and became a bigger national story, the UCR framed the problem for the media, the general public, and therefore for politicians and police as well. The crime problem was reduced to the seven crimes on the index; important crime-control activities were clearances and arrests for index crimes. Police departments, broadsided biannually with bad news, became obsessed not only with statistics, but also with statistical responses. They pointed with pride to figures showing that arrests were up, response times were faster, police were working hard,

and criminals were going to jail. And by all these quantifiable standards, their departments were indeed going well. If crime still raged after such prodigious efforts, it could hardly be the fault of the police. Better to blame lazy prosecutors, lenient judges, push-over probation officers. And don't forget the liberals. Got a problem, buddy? Tell it to Earl Warren.

If it had only been a dodge for the press and the pols, it would not have been so bad. Unfortunately it is hard to say things too often without coming to believe them, and in any event bureaucracies of all sorts love numbers, which hold out the promise of order and accountability, a way of toting up the score at the end of the game. Unfortunately crime, arrest, and response reports not only fail to keep an accurate score, they also confuse everybody about the object of the game.

While low levels of recorded crime may conceivably reflect low crime rates, they can also reflect a lack of confidence in police. It is well known, for instance, that about half of all rapes are ever reported to police. Women fail to report rapes because of embarrassment, fear, and guilt—emotions that depend in part on how police agencies handle rape victims and their cases. So what does the difference between Cleveland's and New York's rate mean? Is it true that there are more rapes in Cleveland than in New York? Are New York police to be credited with being more efficient? Or are women in Cleveland more confident that they will be treated sensitively by police and other criminal justice agencies in Cleveland?

What about burglary? Does Dallas have more burglaries than New York? Perhaps. But another explanation is that burglary victims in New York City have simply come to expect so little from police that they often do not report the crime.

The UCR's stiff legal categories say little about the crime problem as citizens actually experience it. The popular conception is that serious crimes are acts committed by ruthless predators against innocent strangers. In 1989, however, more than 40 percent of violent crimes, including one-third of all rapes, were committed not by strangers, but by friends, lovers, spouses, and colleagues. Within families and relationships, abuse can be repeated over and over with increasing ferocity and suffering. Society has an enormous investment in the institutions in which these victimizations occur: family, schools, the workplace, just to mention three.

For communities, the intent of crimes often is more important than the actual crime itself. Generally, we consider vandalism a relatively minor crime, often committed by obstreperous youth. It does not show up on the UCR. Yet a swastika painted on the door of a Jewish home or a cross burned in front of a black family's home often has more serious consequences than a random robbery or burglary. Such vandalism demoralizes communities, destabilizes neighborhoods, and terrorizes families.

Arrest counts are no more reliable than the UCR. Consider the following: An officer sees a dispute between a Korean merchant and a black citizen. The officer stays at a distance observing the dispute. It flares into violence. The officer moves in to stop the violence and proceeds to arrest both of the citizens. Tensions increase in the neighborhood, but two arrests are chalked up for the officer.

Is this a success? Should the officer and department be credited for this performance? Or were the arrests really indications of failure? Would it not have been better to intercede earlier and prevent the violence that not only threatened the individuals' well-being, but the community's peace?

Obviously. And in such a situation most New York City police officers almost certainly would have done the right thing. Yet it is important to note that if the officer had stepped in to defuse the incident, perhaps sparing the community months of anguish, his action would never have been recorded. That suggests a serious problem, not only in providing recognition for officers, but also in keeping the department accountable to the community and focused on its real needs.

Likewise, consider the much-studied problem of graffiti on subway trains. For over a decade, while police had been unable to reduce subway graffiti, arrests for graffiti increased year by year and were touted by the Transit Police Department whenever it was queried about the problem. Then Transit Authority President David Gunn instituted a successful program to eliminate graffiti—a program based not on arrests but on quickly cleaning cars and painting over graffiti so as to frustrate the "artists" and create the impression that the TA [Transit Authority] took the antigraffiti rules seriously. Arrests immediately dropped and stayed at a low level throughout the five-year effort. The earlier volume of arrests had indicated failing policy, not success.

If the volume of arrests says little about the effectiveness of police performance, another favorite set of police statistics, the number and speed of responses to emergency calls, are equally uninformative. The anti-crime potential of 911 was once thought to be quite high. Research and experience, however, have suggested that though rapid responses to calls for service have very limited impact on crime, they consume enormous amounts of police time. This view is now widely shared by police and police scholars, although less so by city policymakers and politicians, for whom 911 has become a symbol of being "tough on crime." Former Police Commissioner Ben Ward put the trade-offs starkly at a meeting of community leaders, one of whom complained, "We have our neighborhood foot patrol officer, we now want rapid response to calls for service." Ward's response was refreshingly frank: "You can't have both."

As I have previously noted, since the 1960s, research has confirmed that crime, as well as the fear of crime, is closely associated with disorder. Disorder includes petty crime and inappropriate behavior such as public drunkenness, panhandling, and loitering; its physical manifestations include graffiti, abandoned cars, broken windows, and abandoned buildings. For most people, New York's crime problem comes down to the fear they endure as a consequence of disorder—the well-founded belief that in disorderly places society has ceded control to those who are on the margin of or outside the law, and therefore that anything might happen in such places.

I say this belief is well-founded because both experience and substantial formal research demonstrate that disorder left untended ultimately leads to serious crime. Citizens' fear of disorder is entirely rational. Fighting disorder, by solving the problems that cause it, is clearly one of the best ways to fight serious crimes, reduce fear, and give citizens what they actually want from the police force.

Yet disorder and police efforts (or lack thereof) to eliminate it have recently been largely ignored by official police doctrine. The reasons for that are many and complex, ranging from the belief that uncivil, threatening, and bizarre behavior is a constitutional right, to fears created by past police abuse of statutes prohibiting disorderly behavior. But a significant reason disorder has been ignored is that professional criminal justice ideology narrowly defines the appropriate business of police and criminal justice agencies as

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dealing with serious crime—that is, index crimes. Crime, response, and arrest statistics form a pillar of that ideology. Disorder does not appear on any FBI index; therefore, it has not been a priority.

Community policing, which is being put into place in this city [New York] slowly and with considerable difficulty, is supposed to take disorder seriously. But community policing itself is hampered by the tools police use to measure the crime problem and police performance. There is a great gap between the current bureaucratically defined measures of productivity and the kinds of help communities really want from their police. Levels of fear and disorder, evidence of mounting community tension, and, most importantly, information about the specific sources of such difficulties and police response to such problems, go officially uncounted.

Can we develop new measures of performance, measures more in line with what communities really need and want? Can we quantify the “soft” indicators that really matter to communities? Or are we doomed, like the man who lost his keys in the alley but searches for them under the street light, to keep looking in the wrong place because it is too hard to turn our attention where it belongs?

During the 1980s and into the 1990s, a series of independent studies tried to define New York’s real crime problem. Citizens, neighborhood groups, business associations, and others examined community problems, at times in collaboration with police and criminal justice officials, but often without any official support. With remarkable consistency, the studies tell us what citizens want government to do. Implicitly, and in at least one case explicitly, they tell us how to measure community crime problems and police response.

One of these studies, “Downtown Safety, Security, and Economic Development,” was published by the Citizen’s Crime Commission of New York City and the Regional Plan Association in July 1985. As Laurence A. Alexander wrote in the preface:

Working with both city officials and with developers, it was clear that many private and public downtown investment decisions were being killed by underlying nagging worries over the safety and security of people and of investments.

At the same time, I saw many studies that showed downtowns were not necessarily high-crime areas (especially not with respect to so-called serious crimes). But, nevertheless, shoppers, workers, bosses, and bankers were all convinced that crime was rampant downtown.

It was very clear that this problem—to some degree real and to some degree a matter of perception only—was a major deterrent to rational downtown planning, development, marketing, and management.

The report went on to document fear of crime in downtown Brooklyn, Fordham Road in the Bronx, and Jamaica Center in Queens. The results were stark: Almost 60 percent of those surveyed believed that if they went to these areas their car would probably be stolen or broken into; 40 percent believed that they would be attacked, beaten, or raped; and 75 percent believed that they would have their money, wallets, or purses stolen.

Confirming earlier research, the study found strong correlations between levels of fear in the area and the amount of drug use and sale, public drinking, street gangs, loitering teenagers, and graffiti. The consequences of fear were considerable: People stayed off the streets and avoided public transportation and “multi-purpose visits” (that is, shopping).

While “Downtown Safety” documented citizens’ fears about shopping in commercial centers, a report called “Small Business, Big Problem,” published in May 1989 by the New York think tank Interface, focused on the impact of the crime problem on commercial establishments. The organization surveyed 353 small businesses—retailers, service companies, manufacturers, and wholesalers with an average of 27 employees—in the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan, and Queens.

Direct losses from crime, especially from break-ins, vandalism, shoplifting, and auto thefts, were high. More than 80 percent of the firms reported being victimized during the previous three years. Crime, and the fear of crime, also took an indirect financial toll on those firms in the form of increased labor costs from high employee turnover, reduced sales, and curbed expansion plans. The neighborhood conditions

most often cited as causes of these difficulties included loitering, drug dealing, panhandling, illegal peddling, and in manufacturing and wholesale areas, prostitution.

Thus, even in an area where indexed crimes were a serious part of the problem, merchants specifically cited disorderly conditions as a major difficulty and were able to point to consequences. The section of the report devoted to solutions specifically recommended measures usually associated with maintaining order and reducing fear—foot patrols, community policing and neighborhood watches.

Another study, "CPOP: the Research—An Evaluative Study of the New York City Community Patrol Officer Program," published by the Vera Institute of Justice in 1990, offers insights into the problems of primarily residential neighborhoods. Their analysis of a set of reports by CPOP (community policing) officers and a survey of community leaders is particularly interesting.

CPOP officers used "Beat Books" to record the types of problems with which they dealt. The problems that citizens complained about most often were drugs (29 percent), parking and traffic (16 percent), disorderly groups (14 percent), auto larceny (10 percent), and prostitution or gambling (6 percent). Burglary and robbery followed at 5 percent each. Explaining "drugs" as a priority, the authors indicate: "These were typically problems of fairly low-level street dealing, rather than large volume trafficking."

None of the top five problems was an index crime. Yet all five contribute to perceptions that one's neighborhood is out of control, that one's turf is not secure. Even parking and traffic problems can add to such fears, particularly if residents believe the source of the problem is "outsiders"—fast drivers using residential streets as throughways; unfamiliar cars parking on residential streets; increasing the number of strangers and making it difficult to tell who has a good reason for being there.

Turning to the survey of neighborhood leaders, the report states: "Very few respondents who lived in predominantly white, middle-class, residential areas identified robbery or burglary as problems." Or as the president of a merchants' association reported:

"Is there a crime problem now?" Yes. We have eggs splattered on our store windows, but we don't have stick-ups. Commercial crime involves shoplifting and pickpocketing in the larger stores. There is also residential crime, which involves burglaries. But no, we don't have a crime problem of any grave consequence.

Certainly neither the authors of the report nor I would want to give the impression that these responses are typical of all of New York's neighborhoods. Violence among youths is endemic in many areas and should be the highest priority for community leaders, public health officials, police and criminal justice officials, and political leaders. Nonetheless, the experience of community organizers, confirmed by my own research, is that disorder is as much or more of a problem in middle- and working-class neighborhoods, even in neighborhoods that are seriously marred by violence.

Like other purveyors of goods or services, the Metropolitan Transportation Authority regularly conducts market research to learn about user satisfaction, market potential, and problems in service delivery. My own research as a consultant to the TA, using surveys, focus groups, and other data, confirms that fear has seriously hindered the public's use of subways.

Ninety-seven percent of passengers report taking some form of defensive action when riding the subway: They stay away from certain types of people, locations, cars, and exits. Forty percent of New Yorkers believe that reducing crime is the top priority for improving the subway. Only 9 percent believe the subway is safe after 8 p.m.; 76 percent disagree with the statement that there is very little chance you will be a crime victim if you ride the subway after that time; and 62 percent say that fear of crime keeps them from riding the subway at night. Overall, those questioned estimated that about 25 percent of the city's serious crime occurred in the subway.

These perceptions are important. But they are not accurate. In reality, only 3 percent of New York City's recorded felonies occur in the subway. By some estimates, only one in 200,000 subway trips is marred by a confrontation felony, which means most New Yorkers could ride the subway regularly for hundreds of years without being part of such an incident.

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So why are people afraid? Though they rarely experience serious crime, they are constantly exposed to disorder and left with the impression that no one is in charge. Broken turnstiles, litter, graffiti, the homeless, and panhandlers threaten riders and lead New Yorkers to believe that serious crime is more frequent. Fare-beating and other turnstile scams not only amplify this message, but also cost the system as much as \$120 million annually.

What do subway riders want? First, more police. Second, order: 84 percent of survey respondents agree that it is important for police to stop fare-beaters and 65 percent believe that the homeless should be removed from the subway.

In sum, studies of commercial centers, neighborhoods, and subways all call for increased attention to quality-of-life offenses including disorder and drug dealing and for new partnerships between police, citizens, neighborhoods, and businesses. They ask for community policing, often endorsing CPOP by name, and for foot patrols. These studies are hardly exhaustive, but they tend to confirm what common sense and experience suggest: The professionalized, bureaucratized preoccupations of police organizations do not reflect the concerns of most citizens. Police and policymakers must undertake a systematic effort to discover what citizens want from police, what problems are really undermining communities, and how effective police are in fighting them. What these studies have done in fragmentary and informal ways is what formal law enforcement evaluations ought to be doing. We need a new sort of database that will shift the attention of press and politicians alike away from the UCR and arrest and response reports and toward citizens' real problems.

Ironically, in the late 1970s the New York City Police Department performed an experiment called "Operation Crossroads" that nearly did just that, although without actually meaning to. Unfortunately, the experimental program was allowed to die and the NYPD never capitalized on what it learned. As described in an unpublished study by the Fund for the City of New York, one of the program's funders, the program's goal was to clean up Times Square, which suffered from the same problems it does today: prostitution, hustling, gambling, scams, and drug dealing.

Even then, the consequences of disorderly conditions were intuitively understood:

Police and other enforcement officials believe that certain types of street conditions such as the number, type, and frequency of street solicitations, the number of individuals loitering in doorways, and storefront uses and their hours of operations do contribute to . . . serious crime. At the very least, offensive street conditions are perceived as dangerous and threatening to the public . . . They are a primary contributor to the negative image of Times Square, part of a self-perpetuating cycle of decay.

Before Operation Crossroads, police in the area relied on repeated aggressive "sweeps" as their main cleanup tactic. They would identify a problem area, mobilize a squad of officers, and arrest all those who were loitering. Little was accomplished. The troublemakers were often back on the streets sooner than the officers who arrested them. Sweeps consumed enormous amount of police time and were eventually declared unconstitutional.

Operation Crossroads addressed three separate but linked questions. First, could counts of disorder be useful in assigning police officers to particular beats or neighborhoods? Second, were alternative tactics available that were both legal and successful in reducing disorderly conditions? Third, could the same counts of disorderly conditions be used to evaluate police tactics for reducing disorder?

Researchers established a procedure for documenting disorder. Trained observers counted incidents of disorderly behavior in specific areas. Disorderly behavior was defined to include solicitation or sale of sex or drugs, use of drugs or alcohol by loitering people, all non-food vendors, and several categories of loiterers including vagrants, troubled persons, three-card monte dealers, other gamblers, handbillers, and hawkers.

It developed that although the entire Times Square area was viewed as disorderly, the problems tended to concentrate on a few blocks. And while disorder continued throughout the day, the ratio of disorderly persons to other street users changed as evening

approached, thus making the area seem more threatening. But perhaps most important was the discovery that disorderly conditions could actually be quantified in this manner.

Armed with these new data on disorder, the police decided on a markedly different approach: a high-visibility but low-arrest strategy that explicitly rejected mass arrests in favor of direct action to interrupt and deter disorderly behavior. Thus police would order, counsel, educate, cajole, and use other noncoercive methods to discourage offenders, and would arrest them only as a last resort.

The researchers hoped that the disorder counts could be used to allocate officers. Police managers, however, continued to rely on traditional measures to assign police—reported crimes and calls for service.

A crisis, however, made it clear that the street condition reports (as they were called) could be useful. Parks commissioner Gordon Davis threatened to close Bryant Park (adjacent to the main branch of the New York Public Library). Drug dealing had reached epidemic levels. Police could not or would not control it. Police managers responded to Davis's threat and the publicity that followed with an aggressive effort that relied on the low-arrest tactics of Operation Crossroads. Instead of using such traditional means as arrest counts to evaluate their own efforts, they used the condition reports. The results were not only interesting but of great practical value:

- The number of people engaged in positive activities increased by 79 percent; the number of drug sellers, buyers, and users decreased by 85 percent.
- The percentage of loitering and drug-related use as a function of total use declined from 67 percent to 49 percent.
- Drug selling was not displaced en masse to any single location outside the park.
- While the decrease in the number of dealers was not as dramatic as police had hoped, dealers behaved more discretely.
- The aggressiveness of the uniformed officers, not just the fact that they were in the park, appeared to be the key factor in changing the dealers' mode of operation.

- Supervised, directed patrol, rather than the absolute number of officers assigned, seemed critical to affecting conditions in the park.
- Stationing a uniformed officer in front of the library during lunchtime and early afternoon virtually eliminated the clustering of drug activity.

Nevertheless, the project was aborted. Once the crisis was over, police simply were not interested in using the information. As time went on, key personnel were transferred, not to frustrate the project, but as a matter of routine police practice. Soon the funders had little choice but to drop the project altogether.

It does not take much reading between the lines to know what was going on: the police were not about to abandon their traditional ways of evaluating their performance and assigning officers in favor of the low-arrest strategy. Operation Crossroads and the Bryant Park crisis had forced police back into a problem area—disorder—that violated the dominant police paradigm. However police managers might phrase their reluctance, in effect they were unwilling to shift to a system that would measure actual results as citizens might experience them, rather than such apparent efforts as arrests. For the police, the goal was still to demonstrate that “we held up our end,” rather than “we solved the problem.”

Distinguishing between what citizens experience in their neighborhoods, shopping centers, and subways and the official crime problem as defined in crime, response, and arrest statistics is not an academic quibble. For generations, public policy has been built around priorities established in response to these data, satisfying the eternal bureaucratic yen to be evaluated by numbers and process rather than by results. Yet whenever citizens are queried—whether systematically, as in many of the reports noted above, or informally—their greatest complaints always include disorder and an accompanying fear. Statistics which indicate that people are hardly ever raped or murdered in their neighborhood or that help is just a 911 call away offer little comfort. I am certain that if systematic studies were available about the “crime problem” in schools, parks, and public housing, the results would be similar.

Official police doctrine is changing, especially in New York City. The Mayor, the MTA, the Transit Police Department, and the NYPD all strongly endorse the

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notion that police must focus on solving the problems that really upset New Yorkers. By controlling disorder and stemming fear, they will keep citizens on the street and thereby discourage serious crime. Serious programmatic reform plans are already underway, with the most well-known being the Mayor's Safe Streets, Safe City plan.

At the level of theory, the corner has been turned. But the real change will be much harder than is imagined by those who glibly drop phrases like "community policing" and then stand back and wait for miracles. Despite the city's enormous official commitment to community policing, the issue is still very much in doubt. The dominant criminal justice model has been in place a long time and is supported by powerful traditions and mythologies. The task facing police forces here, and across the country, is to turn away from several decades of accumulated, preconceived, and self-regarding notions about their mission, and to discover instead the real needs of the communities they seek to protect.

It is not easy to change an entire subculture. First and foremost, police need to change their own minds about their mission, and give up the view that police work consists of racing around in patrol cars, apprehending criminals after the fact, and feeding them into a "criminal justice system." That "cowboy" version of policing has considerable allure for most of the young people who become police officers, attractions that "problem solving" and community work (often with civilians) do not necessarily have.

Former Chief Robert Igleburger of the Dayton Police Department, one of the country's most innovative police chiefs during the 1960s, has likened police departments to rubber bands. They can be stretched, pulled, and twisted into a variety of shapes, yet whenever pressure is relieved, they snap back into their previous shape. Many forces bridle public organizations: traditions, habits, vested interests of groups both within and outside the organization, political chicanery, public myths, and so forth. As we know from the current experience of the auto industry, which had to be brought to the brink of bankruptcy before it began to reform itself, repositioning organizations is difficult, and keeping them repositioned is harder.

One way to start—one way that has been overlooked so far—is for New York's Police Department to begin a revolution in American crime statistics. They should

move American police (and the American media) away from their unproductive preoccupation with current official data. Taking a cue from Operation Crossroads, the city's police should build new citywide databases that measure the problems that citizens really care about, the ones that spread crime and fear, disrupting the trust of neighbor and community cooperation that is essential to preventing crime. They should develop databases that measure whether police are responding to these problems and databases that measure whether the problems are getting better.

Collaborating with citizens to prevent crime and disorder requires knowing what citizens think about crime and disorder. It is useless to demand that police respond to community needs rather than self-serving bureaucratic standards, unless we know what those needs are. It would be unjust and demoralizing to criticize police for not helping to maintain order (which they have been doing to some extent, albeit fitfully, and without commendation or encouragement throughout the 911, UCR-dominated decades) without the data to prove the case, or to commend them when deserved.

Creating such databases is one thing, maintaining and updating them will require a real commitment of resources and managerial will. For if they are to be useful, the surveys must measure New York's many neighborhoods separately and in detail. To assume that all communities have the same priorities would be fatal to the effort described here.

Yet despite all the work, will, and widgets this effort would consume, it would be very efficient even in the medium term. Such data would be crucial in helping transform police culture and make community policing self-sustaining. By providing police with a new way of thinking about their jobs, they would overcome the entrenched traditions that have impeded past reforms.

Even police who initially regard such community policing tactics as foot patrols with distaste almost always learn to like them as soon as the programs get underway. But liking a duty does not go very far unless it is linked to career advancement. Currently, officers move up in the force by leaving patrol work for a job with a specialized unit. And they are promoted out of patrol by doing things that can be added up statistically, like making lots of arrests, rather than by solving community problems.



In order to truly change the culture of the police department, the department must tie career advancement to the tasks that make community policing work, especially being a good patrol officer. The department will not be able to do this without data. It is, after all, a bureaucracy, and a bureaucracy it will remain until its dying day. As such, it will always want to play by the numbers. So we must find a way to change the numbers and show police officers that the new way to get ahead is to rack up good numbers of a different sort.

For the same reason, the New York Police Department, and all the other departments that follow in its wake, should make an enormous annual or biannual public fuss about the new numbers, crowing shamelessly about every bit of good news, and cheerfully expending the great portions of patience and fortitude it will take to explain them to the press. For to really ensure the future of community policing, we have to change not only the internal culture, but also the public mythology of policing.

As one prominent New York police official has put it, "It's not just what these guys learn on the force, most of them are cowboys or 'buffs' [lovers of police tradition and lore] before they sign up." And while chiefs battered by the UCR twice a year may no longer be cowboys, there is no doubt that the enormous publicity that accompanies the current statistical measures of performance affects the way police forces behave.

Powerful images sustain the "crime fighting" view of policing: the "thin blue line" and the "wars" on crime, drugs, and violence waged by arresting and incarcerating offenders. The statistical parallels of those images, broadly accepted by the media as a scorecard for police performance, now come back to haunt police. Tragic events, such as killings in schools, get wide publicity and fuel demands that police "do something," regardless of what it is. Tough measures must be taken against those who are violent. But we must also take tough measures against myths that deflect press, public, and police alike from the real problems of the community.

Not much more than a generation ago, there were other police myths that were powerful and emotionally rewarding: myths of the cop on the beat who knew his block, his people, and what they needed. Officer Murphy—and his nightstick—would not be popular in most New York neighborhoods today. But we can create new heroes of public service in his place, citizen soldiers who know how much their fellow citizens suffer from the grinding, day-to-day incivilities and minor street offenses that erode the quality of urban life, make people afraid, and create the milieu within which serious crime flourishes. Images as powerful as the war metaphors of the 911 era can support them in their struggle. But all this would be made far easier with, and may be impossible without, concrete measures of achievement that redefine successful policing as policing that actually makes people want to live here.



# Measuring What Matters: Crime, Disorder, and Fear

Wesley G. Skogan

This chapter considers two issues: (1) measuring the possible effects of an innovative policing program, and (2) doing so in a framework that could support the inference that the program caused variations that the measurements might reveal. Measurement involves (among other things) the collection of data that represent—sometimes only indirectly—the problems that programs target. These are “outcome” measures, and it is vital that they represent the scope of a program’s intentions as accurately as possible. The framework within which these data are collected is evaluation’s research design, and it is crucial that the design account for as many alternative explanations for what is measured as is possible under the circumstances. Arguing that “the program made a difference” over the past month or year involves systematically discounting the potential influence of other factors that might account for changes in the measures through the use of randomization, matched control groups or time series, and other design strategies.

Measurement issues are a bit more closely related to analytic issues than this distinction suggests. One cannot divorce what is measured from how the measures can be linked causally to programs. What evaluators call the “logic model” of a program—how, exactly, it is supposed to have its desired effect—needs to be specified clearly enough that appropriate outcomes can be identified and their measures specified. For instance, if evaluating a crime prevention program, exactly what kinds of crimes involving what kinds of victims during what periods of the day or night should we examine for evidence of impact?

This essay focuses on measurement issues, but it addresses issues through concrete examples of how measures have been used to make judgments about the impact of programs. It examines some of the experiences the evaluation community has had in taking the vital signs of a community by measuring crime, disorder, and fear. This is far from a complete list of what matters in policing, as other articles in this volume attest. However, in Kelling’s original plea for a

focus on “what matters” in policing, he concluded with a call for a renewed focus on “the grinding, day-to-day incivilities and minor street offenses that erode the quality of urban life, make people afraid, and create the milieu within which serious crime flourishes” (1992: 33). In recompense for the brevity of the list of issues considered in detail in this chapter, I conclude with an inventory of other issues that need to be considered—and appropriately measured—in any thoroughgoing evaluation.

## Measuring crime

The development of a new research technology—survey-based measures of victimization—has enabled evaluators to dig deeper into claims about the effects of policing on crime. Although not without their problems (which will be examined below), survey measures of crime bypass two enormous sieves that strain out so many offenses that it can be difficult to interpret official crime statistics. These sieves are citizen reporting and police recording practices. Together, they work to the disadvantage of the poor and residents of higher crime areas, and they can disguise the effects of programs that might otherwise appear promising.

## Citizen reporting

Interviews with victims indicate that many incidents are not reported to the police, either by themselves or (as far as they know) anyone else. Among crimes measured by the National Crime Victimization Survey, about 40 percent of all personal crimes and 33 percent of property offenses are reported. Reporting is high for auto thefts (93 percent of successful thefts) but much lower for simple assaults (43 percent), attempted rapes (33 percent) and robberies (36 percent), and pocket pickings (22 percent). Only 52 percent of successful residential burglaries and less than 12 percent of thefts of less than \$50 are reported (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1996, table 91). Crime reporting by witnesses rather than victims is even lower. In Britain,

only about 12 percent of the instances of shoplifting, 8 percent of serious fights, and 29 percent of thefts from cars observed by the public are reported to anyone (Skogan, 1990b).

Furthermore, the National Crime Victimization Survey reveals that reporting differs by population group. Generally, lower income people, younger victims, and men report victimizations at a low rate, while homeowners report at a high rate. Incidents away from home, those with smaller financial consequences or for which victims had no insurance, and crimes in which victims and offenders know one another well are reported less frequently. Black on white crimes are also more likely to be reported. In some crime categories, fear of retaliation discourages reporting; in others, people do not report because they plan to take action on their own. The belief that police would not want to be bothered or that they are ineffective or biased is responsible for about 10 to 15 percent of nonreporting, depending on the category of crime.

In addition, programs and practices that involve people more intimately with policing also encourage crime reporting when these people are victimized. That is, crime prevention and other programs that ask citizens to “be the eyes and ears” of police, hopefully do increase reporting, but the higher crime figures could make those efforts look counterproductive even if the actual crime rate has not changed or has decreased. It appears this effect has only been documented once—by Anne Schneider (1976) in an evaluation of a residential burglary prevention program in Portland—but the threat of looking worse as a result of doing better has made almost all evaluators aware of the difficulties of using reported crime figures to evaluate programs.

### Police recording practices

In addition to the fairly systematic bias introduced by citizen nonreporting, official figures are further confounded by the vagaries of police recording practices. Founded incidents are not the same thing as reported incidents, often for good reasons, but the gap between the two can disguise deceptive recording practices. At several levels, police may act to avoid unpleasant or seemingly unproductive work, forestall complaints about their behavior, or respond to pressure from their supervisors to keep the crime count down. Bona fide reported offenses may be shifted from one category to

another, mostly to downgrade them or so they can be ignored. In numerous well-documented cases, there have been sharp changes in crime rates associated with reform movements, changes in political administration, turnover among district commanders, and the like. In Chicago, detectives were caught “killing crime” at an enormous rate by unfounding (determining that a case is unverifiable) rape, robbery, and assault incidents without investigation. The practice was widely understood within the department, which kept two sets of books—one public and one private—on reported offenses (Skogan and Gordon, 1983).

Administrators who want honest accounting have few choices. One is to examine the ratio of recorded crimes to arrests in hope of spotting districts where the two figures are too close together; they can also monitor the crime clearance rates reported by their detectives. Another strategy for encouraging honesty in bookkeeping is to conduct expensive field audits that track the course of 911 calls, beginning with the communication center’s running tape: Chicago’s department did this for a decade in response to the “killing crime” scandal. However, changing technology is undermining the apparent control that centralized complaint-taking and dispatch gave downtown managers over police operations. Police and the public are increasingly communicating with each other directly—using beepers, cell phones, and voice mail—rather than through 911. In addition, community policing strategies almost always involve increasing the frequency of face-to-face meetings and informal encounters between the police and the public for the purpose of exchanging information. The old systems for command and control within police agencies produced a torrent of data on crime and disorderly conditions; these data were sometimes of dubious quality, and now they are becoming increasingly unreliable.

### Survey measures of crime

There are alternative measures of crime, however. The most well known are victimization rates based on surveys that quiz respondents about their recent experiences with crime. These measures bypass citizen reporting and police recording practices and typically produce estimates of the crime rate that are two to three times those based on official sources. In the aggregate, they sometimes trend in the same

direction as official figures. This is particularly true at the national level when expansive categories of crime are considered over a period of years and after adjustments are made to account for some of the differences between the two series (Biderman and Lynch, 1991; Mirrlees-Black et al., 1996). However, for small areas, tight timeframes, and detailed categories of crime, it is unwise to expect survey and official figures to point to the same conclusions.

Exhibit 1 presents a fragment of a typical victimization screening questionnaire designed for telephone administration. The original questionnaire (Skogan, 1995) included 18 screening questions that probed for both personal and property victimizations. The questioning strategy was to first elicit yes-no responses about each scenario on the list, and then return to followup questions like those employed in this study ("Was it reported to the police?" "Did this happen in your neighborhood?"). For the respondent, this breaks any apparent link between giving a "yes"

response and the burden of answering additional questions, a link that suppresses the victimization count (Biderman et al., 1967). Information about the location of incidents is frequently required to identify those that took place in the targeted area and those that occurred elsewhere. In personal interviews it is possible to show respondents a map and ask them to identify where specific incidents took place. This is particularly useful if the area under consideration is a police district or administrative unit that does not closely correspond to popular conceptions of local neighborhood boundaries.

### Problems with survey figures

**Coverage.** Not everyone will be included. Interview refusal rates can be high, and they are growing. The problem is compounded in multiwave studies in which respondents are reinterviewed over time. In a mobile society, recontact rates can be low if more than a few months pass between the waves of a

#### Exhibit 1. Sample Victim Screening Questionnaire Fragment

Next, I would like to ask you about some things which may have happened to you or your family [HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS] during the past year. As I read each one, please think carefully and tell me if it happened during the past year, that is since (March) (April) of 1992.

IF YES, ASK a and b ("most recent" if multiple)

a. Was this reported to the police?

b. Did this happen in your neighborhood?

NO YES UNC NO YES UNC NO YES UNC

V1. During the past year has anyone broken into your home or garage to steal something?  
..... 0 1 9 0 1 9 0 1 9

V2. (Other than that), have you found any sign that someone tried to break into your home?  
..... 0 1 9 0 1 9 0 1 9

V3. Have you had anything taken from inside your home by someone, like a visitor, during the past year? ..... 0 1 9 0 1 9 0 1 9

V4. To the best of your knowledge, has anything of value been stolen from your mailbox during the past year or has someone tried to?  
..... 0 1 9 0 1 9 0 1 9

V5. In the past year has anyone damaged or vandalized the front or rear of your home, for example, by writing on the walls, or breaking windows?  
..... 0 1 9 0 1 9 0 1 9

V6. Have you or anyone in this household owned a car or truck during the past year? ..... 0 1 9

[IF "NO" SKIP TO V10]

V7. Did anyone steal that (car) (truck), or try to, during the past year? .... 0 1 9 0 1 9 0 1 9

V8. Other than that, did anyone take anything from inside your (car) (truck), or try to steal parts of it? ..... 0 1 9 0 1 9 0 1 9

survey, and that loss differs from group to group. In particular, young people, renters, and short-term residents of the community are difficult to reinterview, while women, family members, and homeowners can be found again more easily. Young people (who are at greatest risk) are hard to find at home at any time. Also, many crimes are reported by organizations (such as schools), merchants (Shapland, 1995), and others who will be left out if only households are included in the survey. These groups experience a considerable number of victimizations. The last national commercial victimization survey revealed a burglary rate of 217 per 1,000 establishments, as contrasted to a household rate of 89 burglaries per 1,000 dwellings (National Criminal Justice Information and Statistics Service, 1976). Among crimes reported to the police, one-third of burglaries involve "nonresidential" (largely commercial) targets (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 1995). However, it is common practice to survey only households.

There is a great deal of debate about the relative merits of telephone versus in-person surveys. The latter cost more, but many inner-city homes have no telephones. In Chicago, there are strong links between race, poverty, crime, and the accessibility of people for telephone surveys. At the census-tract level, the correlation between telephone access and the gun crime rate is (-.44). It is (-.67) for families on public aid and (+.50) for homeowners. Among the city's prototype community policing districts, 10 to 19 percent of households in the two poorest areas did not have a telephone, and more than 20 percent of households in the northern end of another district did not have a phone (Skogan, 1995).

On the other hand, survey refusal rates in big cities are lower for telephone than in-person surveys, partly because respondents are unwilling to let strangers into their homes. The difficulties involved in managing and protecting the safety of interviewers in higher crime neighborhoods are considerable because it is important to conduct interviews during evening hours (Groves and Kahn, 1979). It is not clear what the bottom line is on this issue, and in the end it is usually decided by cost.

**Expense.** Surveys typically use samples to represent the populations of neighborhoods, districts, or cities. This introduces error in the findings; if that error

is going to be acceptably small, the surveys have to involve fairly large numbers of respondents. The issue of how many respondents are needed is determined by the subject. For example, documenting an anticipated drop in the prevalence of burglary victimization from 15 percent to 10 percent of households (a 33-percent decline) requires interviews with about 340 respondents each time (cf., Kraemer and Thiemann, 1987).

**Getting the count straight.** One of the most interesting developments in studies of victimization is the analysis of what makes high-crime neighborhoods "high crime." Research in Great Britain suggests that the key fact is not that *more* people are victimized in these areas; while that percentage is higher in high-crime areas, what distinguishes the worst areas is that some residents are *repeatedly* victimized. Repeat or multiple victims contribute disproportionately to the overall crime count in high-crime areas (Farrell, 1995; Trickett et al., 1992). This is both good news and bad news.

It is good news because it gives us more leverage on the crime rate. It suggests that programs that target first-time victims could have "more bang for the buck" than scatter-shot prevention efforts because once-victims are much more likely than nonvictims to be targeted. This phenomenon presents a cheap and apparently effective way of targeting criminal justice resources and suggests that cities that have invested in security surveys, hardware upgrades, and other support services for victims were on the right track (Anderson et al., 1995; see Spelman, 1995, for another view).

It is bad news because even the best surveys are not very good at measuring repeat victimization. The reasons victim surveys are poor at measuring repeat victimization are complex: A combination of general bounding, telescoping, temporal ordering, forgetting, differential recall, series victimization, estimation, design-effect, and confidence-interval problems pile up on this particular issue (Skogan, 1981). One way of ignoring some of these problems has been to avoid trying to measure victimization *rates*, that is, the number of crimes occurring in an area divided by the number of residents or households. Rates are severely affected by most of the problems listed above because rates involve estimating the number of crimes that have occurred.

**Exhibit 2. Three Measures of Crime Trends**

Area and Crime Type	Percent Rate a Big Problem	Official Crimes per Month	Survey Percent Victims
Morgan Park Auto Theft			
Before	15	146	8.0
After	10	108	3.2
	p=.02	-26%	p=.02
Austin Robbery			
Before	31	197	9.0
After	18	181	4.0
	p<.01	-8%	p=.03

Note: Official crimes per month average a 17-month period before the program and 17 months following program implementation; tests of significance are for before-after changes in problem ratings and victimization; percentage change is given for monthly recorded crime.

Instead, almost every published evaluation in the police field has examined survey measures of the *prevalence* of victimization, or the percentage of persons or households who have been victimized once or more. This figure is resistant to some of the problems outlined above: We only need to know that something happened to someone to categorize that person as a "victim." Prevalence measures are also easier to analyze using multivariate statistics, because whether or not a person was a victim is an experience that easily can be related to the individual's background, household, and lifestyle factors. Finally, prevalence measures require less questionnaire space and interviewer time because fewer details are required to get a yes-no answer. But we now know that this approach is remarkably insensitive to one of the forces that drives up neighborhood crime rates, and it is not well-suited for evaluating what appears to be a promising crime prevention strategy.

### An example

The situation is not as hopeless as the discussion above might suggest. Because they are so difficult to assess when many issues and potential program outcomes compete for evaluation resources, I have found *triangulation* a useful strategy for analyzing multiple, flawed measures of crime rates. Exhibit 2 illustrates

the findings of a recent evaluation of community policing in two of Chicago's police districts (Skogan et al., 1995). It compares the findings of household surveys and an analysis of 34 months of founded crime incidents. Exhibit 2 reports (1) perceptual measures asking "how big a problem" specific crimes were in the community (see the next section about this); (2) officially recorded crime counts; and (3) survey measures of the prevalence of victimization. These two crimes were selected for close examination because they were among the four top-rated problems in these two districts. The probability figures presented below each of the survey-based figures indicate how likely the changes described were to have arisen by chance. The percentage change is presented for officially recorded crimes.

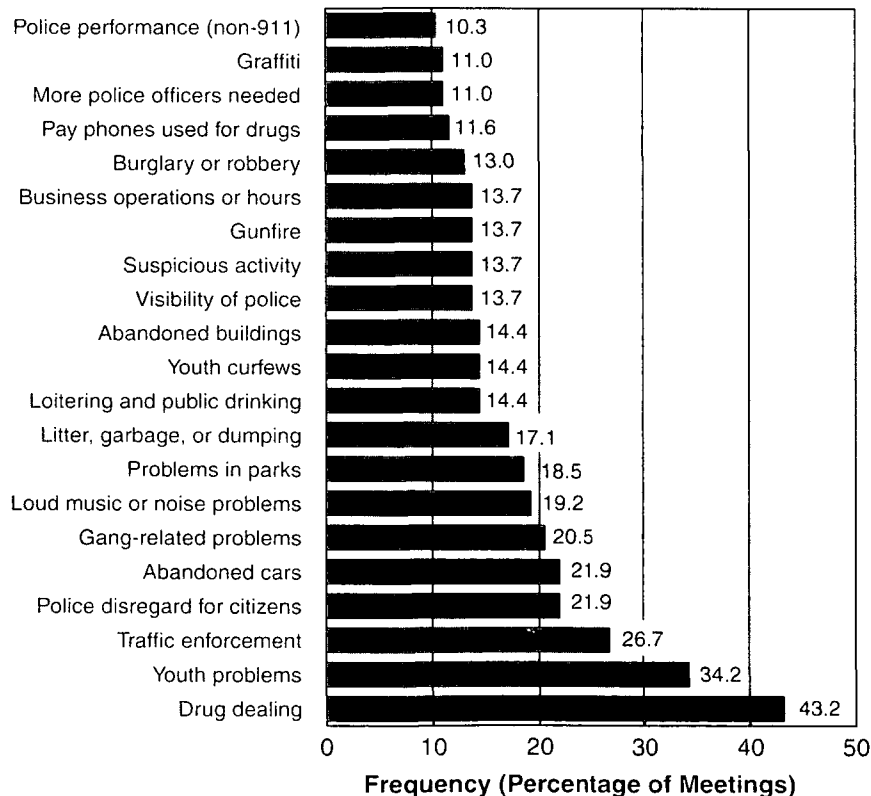
In this example, all of the measures pointed in the same direction, lending more confidence to the conclusion that crime went down substantially in these districts. In Morgan Park, auto theft as measured in the survey was down significantly, as were reports that it was a "big problem" in the area. In Austin, robbery was down in both survey measures. Both districts saw a decline in officially recorded crimes in these categories, especially Morgan Park. In the comparison areas matched to these districts, robbery and auto theft also declined, but only slightly.

## Measuring disorder

Important as it is, there is reason to doubt that crime reduction is the sole "bottom line" for evaluating policing. Narrowing their traditionally wider scope of responsibility was one of the strategies reformers used to capture control of police organizations (Kelling and Coles, 1997), but the profession has paid a price for the consequences. To "police" society implies a wider mission, and expanding the police mandate is a fundamental feature of modern problem-oriented policing. Police are the only servants of the people who are available 24 hours a day and continue to make house calls. They also have taken on a wider range of problems because, when given the opportunity, their "customers" demand it. In Chicago, observational studies of small public meetings that are an integral part of the city's community policing program reveal that neighborhood residents are concerned about a broad range of problems, including traffic enforcement, illegal dumping, building abandonment, and teenage loitering (Skogan and Hartnett, 1997).

One aspect of this new and larger police agenda is an untidy bundle of problems that I have labeled "disorder" (Skogan, 1990a). Disorder is apparent in widespread junk and trash in vacant lots, decaying and boarded-up buildings, vandalism and graffiti, and stripped and abandoned cars in the streets and alleys. It is also signaled by bands of teenagers congregating on street corners, prostitutes and panhandlers, public drinking, verbal harassment of women on the street, and open gambling and drug use. For many purposes, it is useful to think of these problems as falling into two general classes: social and physical. Social disorder is a matter of behavior: You can see it happen or observe direct and tangible evidence that it is a problem. Physical disorder involves visual signs of negligence and unchecked decay: abandoned or ill-kept buildings, broken street lights, trash-filled lots, and alleys strewn with garbage and alive with rats. By and large, physical disorder refers to ongoing conditions, while social disorder appears as a series of more-or-less episodic events. What these conditions have in common is that they signal a breakdown of the local social order. They are violations of what

Exhibit 3. Problems Frequently Mentioned at Beat Meetings





James Q. Wilson (1968) called “standards of right and seemly conduct.”

Of course, to be useful, a concept must also be bounded. It cannot encompass every nuance of behavior. Disorder violates widely shared norms about *public* behavior; these norms prescribe how people should behave in relation to their neighbors or while passing through the community. They are not a neat bundle of rules, because legislatures have not set some of them in cold type even though they are widely agreed upon. Some activities in the bundle are unlawful, but it has been difficult to get police to take most of those very seriously. Because many norms about public behavior are uncodified and others are not traditionally defined as “serious,” evaluators need to work through the untidiness of disorder to identify its dimensions in a particular context. They usually need to develop new measures of their prevalence because the uncodified status of many disorders means there are few official reports or indicators of the extent to which they plague particular neighborhoods.

The importance of disorder to policing’s customers can be illustrated by what happens during beat meetings in Chicago. These meetings are a central aspect of the city’s program, for they are the principal arena in which joint problem identification and problem solving takes place. Attending 146 of these meetings, we noted a total of 113 different problems that were discussed, as well as 36 types of solutions to them. Of the problems recorded in our observations, 21 were mentioned in at least 10 percent of all beat meetings. These are depicted in exhibit 3. About half of these problems are related to social disorder issues: note the high rating given to “youth problems.” Complaints about police procedures made up another quarter of these issues, including two of the top four problems. Another fifth of the top issues involved the decay of the physical environment, in the form of graffiti, litter, and abandoned cars and buildings. The kinds of core problems around which reactive policing was organized—represented here by complaints about either burglary or robbery—ranked only 17th on the list and were brought up in only 12 percent of all meetings (Skogan et al., 1995).

There are at least three approaches to measuring the extent of disorder: analysis of archival records, direct observation by trained observers, and sample surveys. Each has strengths and weaknesses, and these are reviewed in detail by Ralph Taylor in his essay “The

Incivilities Thesis: Theory, Measurement, and Policy” in this volume. I focus here on survey-based measures of disorder.

## Survey measures of disorder

The importance of disorder in the eyes of the general public can be seen in surveys. Boston’s 1995 public safety survey asked respondents about 16 different kinds of incidents or conditions in their neighborhood, asking them to rank “how big a problem” each was. The top rankings belonged to auto theft and drugs, but next were noise, public drinking, and vandalism; then, after burglaries, came kids hanging around, graffiti, and panhandling (Boston Police Department, 1995). A survey of the most dangerous district involved in Chicago’s community policing project found that two of the most highly rated local problems were gang violence and drug dealing, but between them came abandoned buildings; the fourth-biggest problem was junk and trash in the streets and sidewalks. Respondents in that survey also thought that public drinking was a bigger problem than burglary, assault, or rape (Skogan et al., 1995). While many surveys ask “how big a problem” specific disorders are, other formulations of the question include “how worried are you about . . .” (Maxfield, 1984) and “how concerned are you about . . .” (Mayhew et al., 1989). These approaches confound the prevalence of problems in their environment with their perceived impact on the respondent, which are not necessarily the same issue, and I would not recommend them.

Determining what disorders to include in an evaluation is, of course, driven by the problems facing the communities involved and the nature of the programs being developed. For example, some circumstances might call for targeting alcohol-related problems. In Chicago, we asked residents of program and comparison areas about “things that you may think are problems in your neighborhood.” They were read short lists of problem descriptions and asked each time if they thought it was “a big problem, some problem, or no problem in your neighborhood.” The following alcohol-related problems were addressed:

- Public drinking—27 percent thought it was some problem; 20 percent, a big problem.
- Taverns or liquor stores selling alcohol to minors—21 percent thought it was some problem; 15 percent, a big problem.

## Measuring What Matters: Crime, Disorder, and Fear

- Taverns or liquor stores attracting troublemakers—23 percent thought it was some problem; 19 percent, a big problem.

In other studies, I have examined survey reports of the extent of a variety of disorder problems:

- loitering
- vandalism
- street harassment
- fly dumping
- massage parlors
- abandoned buildings
- noise
- abandoned cars
- junk-filled vacant lots
- truancy
- panhandling
- litter and trash
- graffiti
- public drinking
- broken windows
- public gambling
- loud parties
- school disruption
- public insults
- spray painting
- dilapidated buildings
- taverns
- topless bars
- dirty streets and sidewalks
- pornographic theaters

In each case, it was necessary to tailor the specific wording of the question to local conditions. For example, questions about topless bars were included in surveys in Houston because I could not help but notice beer halls with flashing neon signs announcing “Naked Girls Dance” in several of the targeted residential areas (Skogan, 1990a).

Are these perceptual measures valid indicators of the true extent of disorder in a community? Unlike survey measures of victimization, relatively little research has addressed the matter, and much of it is reviewed in Ralph Taylor’s “The Incivilities Thesis: Theory, Measurement, and Policy” in this volume. The question is whether responses to these kinds of survey questions can be accepted as useful *reports* on neighborhood conditions and whether we can treat respondents as *informants*. Responses to questions about disorderly conditions might reflect respondents’ biases or personal preferences, or they might be random answers made up on the spot to satisfy interviewers. The middle choice (respondent bias) implies that disorder largely rests in the eye of the beholder

and that surveys are not a very useful way of gathering intelligence about the distribution of neighborhood problems. However, statistical analyses suggest that the surveys are not just measuring intolerance for all but conventional middle-class views of how people ought to behave. Rather, there is evidence that major economic, social, and lifestyle groups within neighborhoods are in a great deal of agreement about the problems they face and that the surveys actually represent neighborhood differences in conditions, not just individuals’ views.

Another approach to validating survey results is to compare them with the extent of specific disorders measured by observing the same area. This is easiest to do for such observable neighborhood conditions as litter, graffiti, and building abandonment. Ralph Taylor and his colleagues made carefully controlled observations of those factors in 66 neighborhoods. The results were correlated with perceptual measures gathered in surveys of the same areas. The correlations were not always very high. They were highest when the survey and observational data were combined to form general indices and when they were compared for small areas. However, at the single-measure, problem-specific level, the extent to which the low correlation could be attributed to measurement errors on both the survey and observational sides of the comparison is unclear.

### Observational measures of disorder

As this hints, there are great possibilities for observational measurements of the targets of some policing programs. This work was pioneered by Ralph Taylor, who has conducted block-by-block physical surveys of neighborhoods in Baltimore. His observers assessed and scored the physical dilapidation of individual buildings as well as the deterioration of streets, alleys, and sidewalks. They noted the presence of abandoned buildings and storefronts, graffiti, and litter. These factors were then correlated with resident morale and calls for police service. Other researchers have examined the distribution of graffiti and abandoned cars or the impact of taverns, schools, and mixed land use on crime. This research is not easy to conduct. There must be acceptable levels of inter-observer agreement on what they observed for us to accept the results of their judgments; also, it is important to ensure the safety of observers.

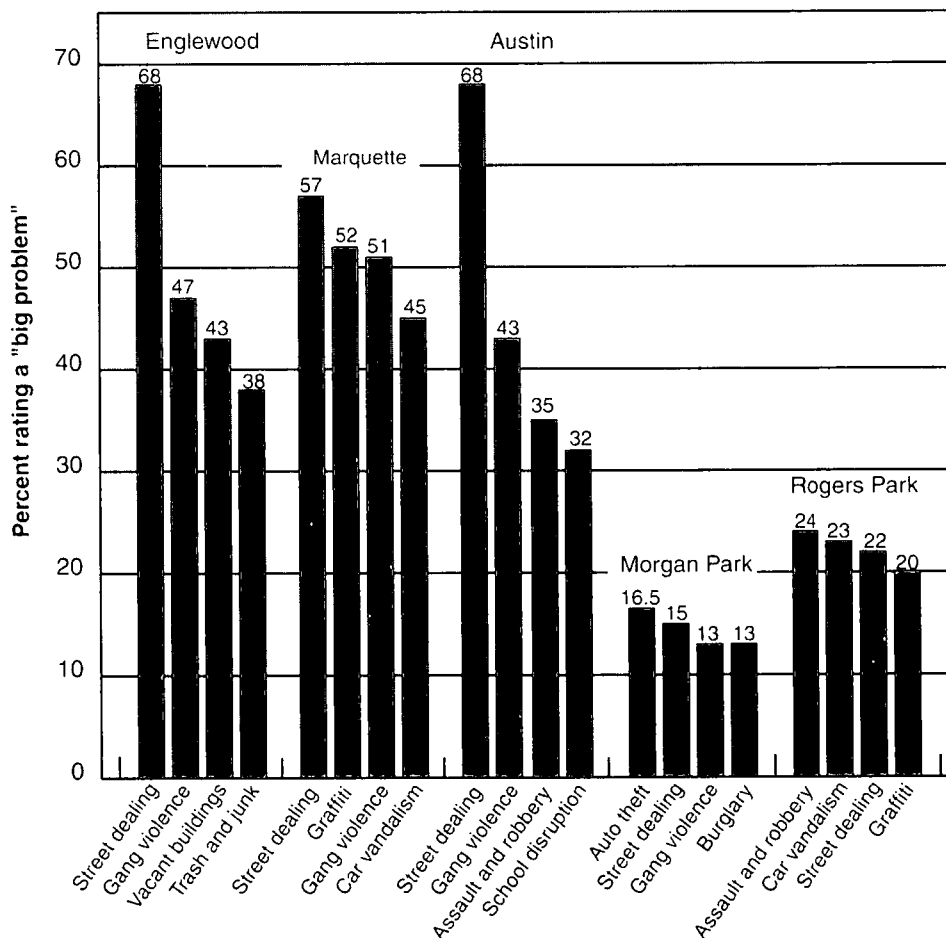
There are limits to what can be observed and what persons living in a neighborhood can be asked about. For example, Richard Taub (Taub et al., 1984) found that his observers could not reliably count junk in front yards and vacant lots that was "smaller than a toaster," so they used that standard. Many of the phenomena we would like to observe can be transitory in character, especially if observers are looking at social behavior rather than physical manifestations of decay. These disorders are events rather than conditions, so brief observations are likely to miss them. They vary enormously by the time of day, the day of the week, and the weather. In one study, during repeated and lengthy observations of specific locations that had been identified as high-disorder hot spots, observers actually saw something disorderly take place very infrequently.

### A survey example

Exhibit 4 reports the results of surveys of five police districts in Chicago, using the "how big a problem" formula described above. It identifies the 4 neighborhood problems that were the most highly ranked in each district from a list of 22 problems that were presented to respondents in 3 different sections of the questionnaire. Several points are illustrated.

First, some problems were common across many or most of the districts, including drugs and gang violence. Street drug sales were on the agenda in every community; gang violence, in four of the five. However, the other top problems differed from place to place, and issues that loomed large in some areas were scarcely problems in other districts. In one dense

Exhibit 4. Biggest Problems in Experimental Districts: Wave 1 Survey Results



## Measuring What Matters: Crime, Disorder, and Fear

area with little off-street parking, vandalism to automobiles was one of the area's top four problems; only in the wealthiest area was auto theft on the list. Thus, one goal of community policing is to open departments up to local input—so they can effectively discern these variations in local concerns and tailor their operations to respond to them.

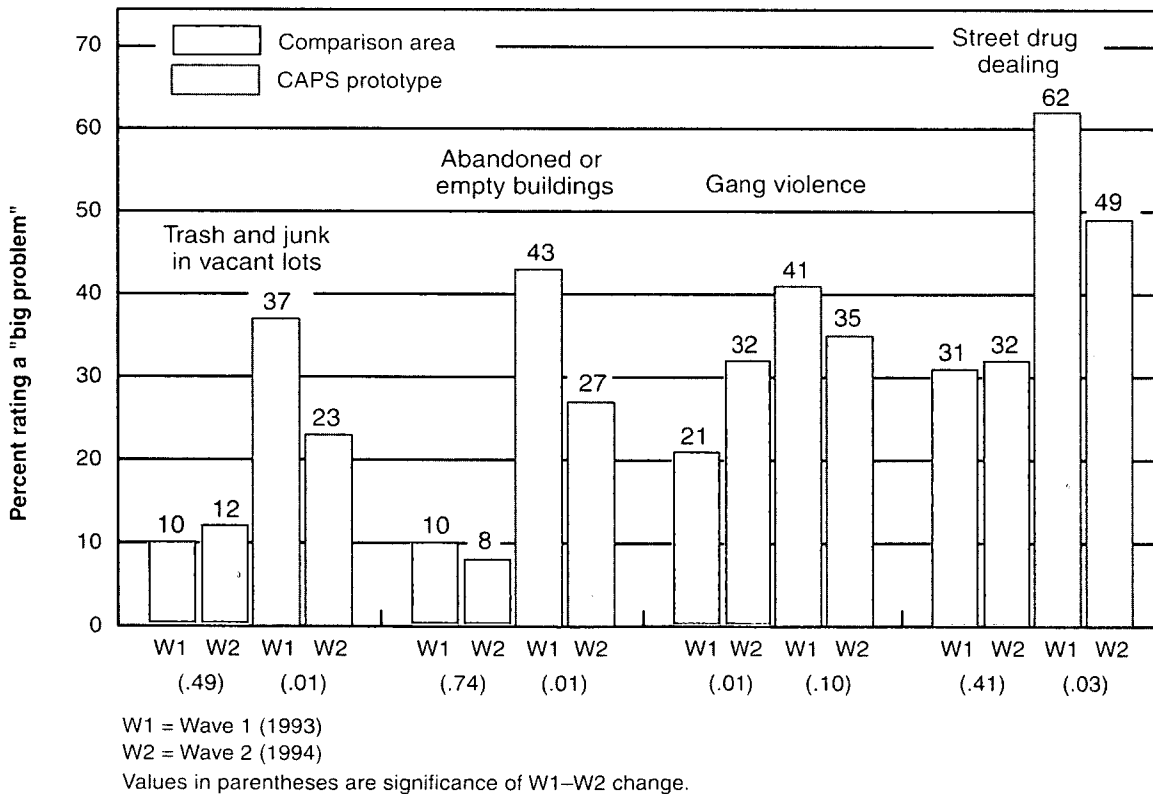
Second, not all of the problems on people's minds fell in the "conventionally serious crime" category. A wide range of problems were identified as vexing. Car vandalism was near the top of the list in two areas, as was graffiti. Street crime was also highly rated in two areas. Auto theft, burglary, disruptions around schools, abandoned buildings, and "vacant lots filled with trash and junk" each stood near the top of the list in one district. It is interesting to note that only in one district—Morgan Park—did conventionally serious crimes constitute all four of the area's most highly ranked problems. This was the wealthiest area of the group, one that is the home of many city workers and has strong connections with city hall and municipal service agencies. In the other four districts, two of the

top four problems were quality-of-life concerns rather than conventionally serious criminal offenses.

Finally, exhibit 4 illustrates that the initial levels of these "biggest problems" varied considerably from district to district. For example, street drug dealing was rated a big problem by more than 60 percent of residents of Englewood, but only by about 13 percent of the residents of Morgan Park, and by 20 percent of those we interviewed in Rogers Park, even though it was among these areas' top-ranked issues. In Morgan Park, burglary was a top-ranked problem, but only 10 percent gave it a high rating. In Morgan Park in particular, there was not much room for improvement on many dimensions, and expectations about the potential impact of community policing on problems had to be tempered by this fact.

What was the impact of the program on these problems? Exhibit 5 examines this question. It depicts Wave 1 and Wave 2 survey results for one district and its matched comparison area. The biggest problems in Englewood included drugs, gang violence, abandoned

**Exhibit 5. Neighborhood Problems in Englewood**



buildings, and trash-strewn lots. The values in parentheses near the bottom of the figure present the statistical significance of Wave 1 to Wave 2 changes within the area. This is the likelihood that the change recorded actually reflects a chance fluctuation in the survey. (We only want to pay attention to changes that were probably *not* due to chance.) Detailed statistical analyses of the data are not presented here, but they reinforced the patterns that can be observed in exhibit 5.

In Englewood, all four of the biggest problems declined, while none went down significantly in its matched comparison area. Street drug sales were ranked a big problem by 62 percent of Englewood residents in 1993, but by only 49 percent in 1994. Abandoned building problems dropped from 43 percent to 27 percent. Gang violence was down only modestly, declining from 41 to 35 percent, but it increased significantly in Englewood's comparison area. Detailed statistical analysis provided additional evidence that these problems all declined significantly after 15 months of community policing.

## Measuring fear of crime

There have been many efforts to clarify the meaning of the concept of "fear of crime" (Ferraro and LaGrange, 1987; Maxfield, 1984). Some are troubled that there is no clear consensus on what the concept means or how it is best measured and that studies that measure the concept in conceptually diverse ways find that different operationalizations of fear are only moderately correlated with one another. However, this heterogeneity of meaning simply reflects the fact that fear of crime is a concept of everyday language, one suited for casual conversation. People commonly talk about fear of crime and its social and political effects; for example, one hears that the elderly are "prisoners of fear," traumatized by the thought of venturing out because of the risks they would face. But the concept needs to be refined for research purposes, and how it is best defined depends upon the purpose of the research.

Research on fear of crime conceptualizes it in one of four ways. Three definitions are cognitive in nature, reflecting people's *concern* about crime, their assessments of personal *risk* of victimization, and the perceived *threat* of crime in their environment. The remaining approach to defining fear is *behavioral*

and defines fear by the things people do in response to crime. Dissecting these variations in how fear of crime is defined is important because they make a great deal of difference in what researchers have found. Different definitions of fear can lead to different substantive research conclusions.

## Concern about crime

The "concern" definition of fear focuses on people's assessments of the extent to which crime and disorder are serious problems for their community or society. Concern is a judgment about the frequency or seriousness of events and conditions in one's environment.

There are a number of approaches to measuring concern. Opinion surveys ask whether crime or disorder is increasing or decreasing and whether respondents would place them on their list of "most important problems." Most research adopting this definition of fear examines neighborhood conditions. In my research I have asked about "how big a problem" respondents think various conditions are in their immediate area. The 1995 Boston Public Safety Survey asks, "Is crime a problem in Boston?"

The British Crime Survey gives respondents a list of crimes and disorders and asks, "how common or uncommon they are in your area?" (Maxfield, 1984). Respondents also are sometimes asked to compare crime in their neighborhood to the city as a whole. Even in the highest crime cities, most report that their own area is "below average." Massive surveys of 13 cities conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau during the 1970s found that only 7 percent thought their neighborhood was more dangerous when compared to others in the metropolitan area (Garofalo, 1977). This is likely to be true because the distribution of crime within cities typically is very skewed, with a few areas driving up the citywide total. Because they ask for a report on neighborhood conditions that is independent of how respondents perceive their own risks, measures in this category are typically unrelated to those that tap the emotive dimensions of fear.

## Risk of victimization

The second common meaning of fear is the perception that one is likely to be victimized. Since the surveys sponsored by the President's Crime Commission in the mid-1960s (Biderman et al., 1967), researchers have asked people to rate their chances of being

victimized. For example, survey respondents may be asked to rate “how likely” they are to be attacked or burglarized, on a scale ranging from “not very likely” to “very likely.” Assessments of risk are respondents’ perceptions of the likelihood of things happening to them, and these are frequently recommended as measures of “fear.” In the 1988 British Crime Survey, respondents were asked to rate their risk of being victimized in the next year using a six-point scale from “certainly not” to “certain to be victimized” (Mayhew et al., 1989). Risk measures appear to factor in what respondents have done to protect themselves from victimization. As a result groups like the elderly—who report high levels of fear on other dimensions—do not perceive of themselves as particularly at risk because they are much less exposed to victimization (Skogan, 1993).

### Threat of crime

Definitions of fear focusing on threat emphasize the potential for harm that people feel crime holds for them. Threat levels are high when people believe that something could happen to them, if they exposed themselves to risk. The concept of threat is distinct from those of risk and concern. People may adopt various tactics to reduce their vulnerability to victimization; as a result, they may not rate their risk as particularly high because they avoid exposure to risk. However, they might rate the threat of crime as high if they were to be exposed to risk. Because many people believe they are capable of dealing with crime, threat is also distinct from concern about the issue. Threat is measured by questions that ask, “How safe would you feel if you were out alone?” or, “How would you feel if you were approached by a stranger on the street or heard footsteps in the night?” (Taub et al., 1984). Numerous surveys have found that the threat of crime is felt most strongly by the elderly, and in comparison to measures of risk or concern, questions measuring threat clearly differentiate senior citizens from the remainder of the adult population.

### Fear as behavior

A final, important conceptualization of fear of crime is what people do. This operational definition of fear focuses on the behavioral, rather than cognitive, aspects of the attitude. From this perspective, fear is best assessed by how it manifests itself in the frequency with which people go out after dark, restrict

their shopping to safer commercial areas, fortify their homes against invasion, and avoid contact with strangers. The International Crime Survey, which has been conducted in almost 30 countries, asks if respondents avoid certain areas, go out with an escort, have a burglar alarm, leave their lights on when away from home, and ask neighbors to watch their homes when they are away (Van Dijk and Mayhew, 1993).

This research usually examines two general classes of reactions to crime: those that limit risk of personal attack by avoiding potentially threatening situations and those defensive tactics that reduce the vulnerability of households to burglary and home invasion. This distinction was first drawn by Furstenberg (1971), who dubbed them “avoidance” and “mobilization.” Avoidance definitions emphasize behaviors aimed at reducing risk of personal crime, such as avoiding dangerous places and people and walking only with an escort (rather than alone) after dark. Mobilization includes the extent to which people fortify their homes against crime by adopting security measures such as special outdoor lights, door locks, window bars, and interior lights and by marking their property with a special identification number.

### Which measure to use

It makes a difference what measure is used. For example, research on the effects of mass media coverage of crime is contingent upon the conceptualization of fear that is used. Tyler and Cook (1984) found that exposure to media stories about crime increased people’s concern about crime (as it is defined here, the belief that crime is a growing community problem). However, they found that it did not affect people’s perception that their own neighborhood was unsafe or that their personal safety was at risk. Other researchers have found that political attitudes and measures of ideological position are correlated with concern measures, but not with risk or threat measures. Victimization, on the other hand, has clearer effects on both risk and threat measures. Interestingly, the elderly’s well-known fear of crime is manifested only on the threat measure; they do not rate their own risk of being victimized as particularly high, they do not perceive their neighborhoods as particularly disorderly, and they are much less likely than others to be concerned about crime (Skogan, 1993).

As this summary implies, it is important that evaluators pick and choose fear measures carefully. To evaluate the impact of visible patrol, it would be wise to use threat measures, which assess perceived risk "outside." On these measures, almost no one feels very unsafe during the day, so after-dark fears—and after-dark programs—need to be assessed. Domestic violence programs would call for tailored behavioral measures that would assess, for example, things victims do to distance themselves from abusive partners. The fear-of-crime measure employed by the National Opinion Research Center, the Roper poll, and others ("Is there a place nearby"—that is, within a mile—where you would be afraid to walk alone after dark?") would be a useful hot spot question, especially in conjunction with a followup open-ended question identifying the location. Specific interventions might call for fear measures linked to specific types of crime: for example, house burglary or robbery near automatic teller machines. Offense-specific measures of fear are more strongly linked to one another than are broad or heterogeneous measures (Warr, 1984).

### An example

Can better policing affect fear of crime? This is an area where I think the common research wisdom is wrong. The notion that visible policing does *not* make a difference in fear and attitudes toward police stems from early experiments conducted in Kansas City. Police there were selectively withdrawn from some experimental precincts and their numbers beefed up in others to gauge the effect of the extent of routine (largely motorized) patrol on crime and fear. Researchers found no differences in the subsequent views or victimization experiences of residents of the experimental and comparison areas. Residents also did not notice that the number of police assigned to their area had changed. There has been research before and since that ran counter to these conclusions, but the Kansas City findings (Kelling et al., 1974) became famous.

However, researchers working with survey data on the visibility of policing and contacts between the public and the police quickly note that associations between visibility, contacts, satisfaction, and fear are strong, persisting even when a long list of alternative correlates are controlled for. This can be illustrated by the findings of an ongoing evaluation of community policing in Chicago (see Skogan and Hartnett, 1997).

Unlike Kansas City, the evidence in this case is correlational rather than experimental. But it also involves a program that suddenly increased—this time visibly—the level of police activity in selected areas. The apparent consequences of police visibility in Chicago contradict the Kansas City results. In this evaluation, respondents were questioned twice, once before the program began and again after about 15 months. The research examined the impact of experiences the respondents personally had between the two waves of interviews. Fear of crime was measured each time by responses to three questions about localized, outdoor crime threats:

- How safe would you feel being alone outside in your neighborhood at night? [four responses, ranging from "very safe" to "very unsafe"]
- Is there any particular place in your neighborhood where you would be afraid to go alone, either during the day or after dark? [yes or no]
- How often does worry about crime prevention prevent you from doing things you would like to do in your neighborhood? [four responses, ranging from "very often" to "never at all"]

The reliability of the composite scale combining these items was 0.66. Before the program began, levels of fear were higher among women, low-income and less educated people, African-Americans, and renters.

Statistical analysis found that the impact of visible community-oriented police efforts (walking on foot, talking with residents, patrolling the alleys) on this fear measure was large and highly significant. Controlling for many other factors, residents who subsequently observed the police involved in a list of community-oriented activities (*not* just driving by) felt safer. The most important control factors took advantage of the fact that the respondents were interviewed twice: The analysis controlled for a measure of how fearful they were before the program began and what they reported seeing police in their area doing before the program began. Controlling for past experience, residents of the target community policing neighborhoods were less fearful and more satisfied with police responsiveness to community concerns; they also thought police were more effective at dealing with crime. The effect of police visibility on fear was of about the same magnitude as the effects of age and sex, two of the strongest determinates of fear.

To illustrate the magnitude and generality of the involved effects, exhibit 6 charts Wave 2 responses to the first fear question listed above, "How safe would you feel being alone outside in your neighborhood at night?" It shows the percentage of respondents who replied "unsafe" or "very unsafe." The visibility of community-oriented policing during the period between the interviews is represented by a count of sightings (ranging from zero to four) of two different kinds of foot patrol—police checking buildings and alleys, and officers having informal conversations with citizens. Whites were less fearful than African-Americans or Hispanics, most notably when police visibility was very low. However, levels of fear were lower for all groups when the police were more visible. Also, the downward slopes of the lines for African-Americans and Hispanics were somewhat steeper than the slope for whites. This suggests the effect of police visibility was greater for minorities than for white respondents.

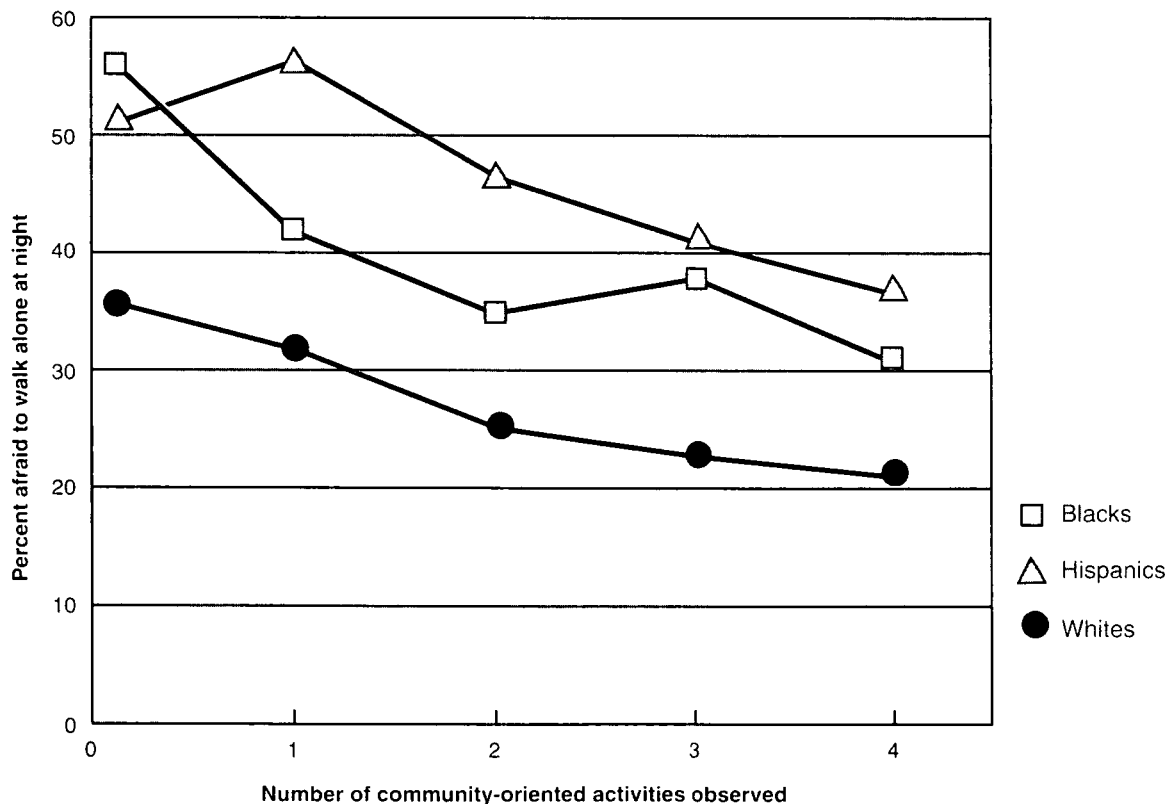
## Police-related measurement issues

Having developed useful indicators of the extent of crime, disorder, and fear, is the evaluator's task done? What we have reviewed is just the beginning. A thoroughgoing evaluation may have to attend to many more issues that call for systematic measurement. The list is long, and some issues—such as those related to assessments of the quality of police service, the visibility of policing, police-citizen contacts, and satisfaction with encounters with police—are worthy of a conference in their own right. The following section addresses some of the issues that evaluators have found crucial.

## Visibility of police

Since the Kansas City preventive patrol experiment, surveys have routinely included questions about obser-

Exhibit 6. Police Visibility and Fear of Crime: Wave 2 Response





vation of various police activities. No research has addressed the accuracy of these measures, which is probably fairly low. Visibility should be mostly related to how frequently people are positioned to see police, and it is typically much lower among older people, the unemployed, and women.

In our Chicago study, we used a checklist of seven common police activities that neighborhood residents might observe, including driving through the area, patrolling a nearby commercial area, pulling over an auto or searching or frisking someone, patrolling an alley or checking garages, and having an apparently friendly chat with people from the neighborhood. All of these were commonly observed in the dense, not-well-off areas that we surveyed. Over time, the activities commonly associated with community-oriented policing (conversations, foot patrols, and alley or garage checks) were observed more frequently in the program areas than in the comparison areas. Those activities were also linked to reduced fear of crime (as illustrated in exhibit 6), while visible motorized patrol seemed to have no consequences at all.

### Encounters between police and the public

The survey approach screens for encounters between police and the public within a specified recall period (e.g., "the last 6 months"), using a list of typical contact situations. The British Crime Survey, which is conducted in person, presents respondents with a checklist of 17 scenarios—ranging from reporting a crime to asking for directions—and asks if they have been involved in them during the past 12 months. More than 50 percent of Britons recalled such a contact during 1992. Almost 40 percent contacted the police, while an overlapping 33 percent were stopped by police or were contacted in the course of an investigation (Skogan, 1994).

There are no comparable national figures for the United States. In our Chicago surveys, we screen respondents for nine types of citizen-initiated contacts, ranging from reporting a crime to contacting the police to ask for information. We also ask about their involvement in motor vehicle stops and being stopped while they are on foot. In April 1993, 61 percent of adult Chicagoans recalled one or more of

these direct contacts with police during the past year. In addition, almost 30 percent indicated they had received a parking ticket in the city during the previous year, but we did not include that indirect contact in the 61 percent figure.

### Assessments of the quality of police service

Remarkably little attention has been focused on developing measurements of public assessment of police service. In Chicago, we have asked "how good a job" respondents think the police do at a variety of tasks and under a variety of circumstances, "how satisfied" people are with specific police efforts, and how well the police behave "toward people in this neighborhood." Typically, 15 to 20 percent of respondents insist that they "don't know" about these things; analytically, they turn out to be older, to have had no recent contact with police, to watch little or no television, and to be uninvolved in neighborhood life.

### Assessments of encounters with police

Following a contact screen like that described above, respondents recalling an encounter can be questioned about what transpired. If they have had multiple contacts, they should be asked about the most recent one. These data are particularly useful because they can provide a detailed "consumer report" of recent encounters with police. The British survey asks those who contacted the police about response time, efforts that police made at the scene, the interest the police seemed to show in the case, if the respondent had any followup contacts with police about the matter, and how politely the respondent was treated. People who were stopped by the police are asked if they were given reasons for being stopped; if they were questioned, searched, or breath-tested; and if they were arrested, prosecuted, or otherwise sanctioned. In Britain, all of these factors are closely related to how satisfied people who have had contacts are with the quality of police service (Skogan, 1994). One complication is that many crime victims who contact the police have also been stopped or even arrested by them in the recent past, complicating how they judge the quality of the service they receive (Maxfield, 1988).

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# Measuring What Matters

Darrel W. Stephens

In recent years, discussions of policing among practitioners and scholars have begun to emphasize the importance of outcome and impact measures. These discussions have pointed out that the police have developed a series of performance measures that, for the most part, have little relationship to results. James Q. Wilson, in "The Problem of Defining Agency Success," says it this way:

Most of the efforts to improve performance measures for policing have concentrated on finding either real measures of overall effectiveness or plausible proxy measures. Not much has come of these efforts for reasons that should be obvious. There are no "real" measures of overall success; what is measurable about the level of public order, safety, and amenity in a given large city can only partially, if at all, be affected by police behavior. (For example, if the murder or robbery rates go up, one cannot assume that this is the fault of the police; if they go down, one should not necessarily allow the police to take credit for it.) Proxy measures almost always turn out to be process measures—response time, arrest rates, or clearance rates—that may or may not have any relationship to crime rates or levels of public order. (Wilson, 1993)

Many practitioners and scholars would agree with Wilson. Nevertheless, the police continue to face the challenge of dealing with the impact of crime, fear, and disorder in their communities and the public's belief that it is their responsibility. The police are the first, and frequently the only, government agency the public looks to for answers when crime rates change, a heinous crime occurs, or citizens are afraid to go out of their houses after dark. Like many other aspects of their job, even when the police do not have a clear answer, there is an expectation that they say or do something that will provide a sense that things are

either under control or will be in short order. A survey of Florida residents by the *St. Petersburg Times* (November 4, 1995) indicates that 85 percent of the respondents say the problem of greatest concern to them is crime. Over the past 10 to 15 years, national public opinion surveys routinely indicate that crime and drug abuse are among the highest priority concerns.

The police are truly on the front line in dealing with the crime, fear, and disorder that have such a great impact on a community's quality of life. Before the police can address these problems, however, they face the significant challenge of *measuring* them. This challenge, along with the impact of these problems on the quality of community life, is the subject of this paper. The problems associated with measuring the levels of crime, fear, and disorder in the community are discussed in separate sections devoted to each of these areas, followed by an examination of the impact of these problems on the quality of life in the community. The concluding section discusses how these measures can be applied to specific neighborhoods in a way that allows the police to gain a sense of both the overall community problems and the efforts to deal with them.

## Measuring crime

How do the police measure the level of crime in their community? For all intents and purposes the police measure the level of crime, and any change in crime, through the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR). In many cities, monthly, quarterly, and annual reports are released to the public to show the number of serious crimes (Part 1 or index crimes) that citizens have reported to the police during each timeframe. These reports often provide comparisons to the same period in the previous year so anyone interested can see if reported crime has increased or decreased. News media stories about these crime statistics usually include quotes and sound bites from police representatives who attempt to explain any significant variations from one timeframe to the next. Occasionally, the stories include observations

## Measuring What Matters

about the statistics from political figures and academic experts. Political figures are most often available to the media when crime reports are down from the previous reporting period.

The UCR data represent the official level of crime in the community. These reports and the news media stories about them can have a significant impact on the community. They often serve as grist for the political mill—local elections have been greatly influenced by crime reports. In some cases, the careers of police chiefs and sheriffs have been affected in either positive or negative ways by these statistics. Because of their potential impact, UCR data have been the subject of considerable debate, discussion, and criticism as a measure of crime in the community.

The criticism of the UCR has been focused primarily on a number of well-known limitations of the reporting system (Silberman, 1978; Kelling, 1996). First, the UCR represents only that portion of crime that is reported to the police. Although well known, this fact is not usually noted in either the reports provided by the police or the news media stories about them. In many residents' minds, these statistics represent the actual level of crime in their communities, particularly if there are significant increases from one year to the next. The second criticism is that only eight crimes have been included as Part I offenses. Crimes that the public cares a great deal about such as narcotic offenses are not included in the reports. Third, a series of program rules contribute to confusion about what the reports actually mean. For example, a bicycle or lawn mower stolen from an open garage is classified as a burglary. If these same items are stolen from the driveway a few feet from the open garage door, the offense is called a larceny. Some are also critical of the "hierarchy rule," which requires that an incident be classified as the most serious crime if multiple crimes occur at the same time. The fourth and perhaps most significant criticism is that crimes are reported to the police, who classify them, tabulate them, and send them to the State or directly to the FBI. Those suspicious of the police argue that this provides the opportunity for intentional manipulation of the numbers or mistakes in classification.

The possibility of crime reports being manipulated by the police is not without some basis in fact. One example is the Kansas City, Missouri, police chief who had served with distinction for a number of years and

was indicted by a county grand jury in 1960 for manipulating the UCR. The indictment was eventually dismissed, but he lost his job in the process. The same problem has surfaced in other cities over the years and continues to be one of the most significant concerns about crime reports. After all, there are subtle differences between attempted burglary and vandalism. A window might be broken in both, but there are different motives for each type of crime, and the motive may not be immediately clear. There is also a slim margin of difference between a strong-arm robbery and a purse snatching. It is clear when the victim is knocked to the ground in the process of taking the purse. In many cases, though, the difference is the degree of resistance involved in hanging onto the purse. There are similar distinctions that can be made in shoplifting cases where the suspect is confronted and resists apprehension. These are important issues because the seriousness of the crimes can be influenced by the benefit of the doubt going to the less serious incident. In the case of burglary or vandalism, if the latter classification is used, the incident drops completely out of the Part I crime category.

All of the other limitations of the UCR are just that—limitations that need to be taken into account when using the data as a measure of crime. At the local level, *intentional manipulation* of the reports, however, is an entirely different matter. Manipulation of the reports renders them virtually useless as a measure of crime in a city. This, in turn, casts a dark shadow on the only measure of crime that most cities have and raises serious questions about the overall integrity of the police. Although local victimization surveys might be helpful, their cost puts them well beyond the ability of most police departments to conduct them with any regularity.

Given the limitations of the UCR, how useful is it to the police and community as a measure of crime? In one sense, the question is academic: Until someone develops a suitable replacement, the UCR is the best available measure of reported crime—even with the flaws. A substitute for the UCR is not likely to be available anytime soon. An alternative system developed in the mid-1980s by the Police Executive Research Forum with the support of the Bureau of Justice Statistics failed to attract sufficient interest to serve as a viable replacement. No other initiatives are under way to develop a crime reporting and measurement system to take the place of the UCR.

Therefore, it is important to reach a consensus on how significant the limitations of the UCR are to measuring crime in the community. If police departments pay close attention to proper collection and classification methods, the UCR can be a valuable and useful measure of *reported* crime. In fact, so much time is spent criticizing the system, little attention is given to the useful aspects of a reporting process that provides a good indication of the matters the public believes is important enough to bring to the attention of the police.

Several aspects of the UCR provide helpful information to the police. One useful aspect is that it provides a relatively simple method of classifying criminal incidents that are brought to the attention of the police by the public. Even with the limitations, it provides a common language that most people, police officers and citizens alike, can understand. Using State statutory definitions presents some of the same problems as the UCR, and generally State definitions are more complex. For example, in some States, a burglary is limited to building structures; in others, a theft from a vehicle can be a burglary. State statutes contain many overlapping definitions for similar incidents, which can result in several criminal charges from one incident.

A key criticism of the UCR is that it measures only the crime that is reported. That criticism would exist with any system unless it included victimization surveys, which are generally not practical for police departments. Moreover, one might want to explore just how valuable it would be for a police department to invest the resources to know what citizens have failed to report. How helpful would victimization data be for a police department? For the most part, knowing about every fight that takes place between two juveniles on the way home from school that might be classified as an assault is probably not particularly helpful to the police or the community. To be sure, most citizens will report what they believe is important for the police to know. If the police routinely encourage citizens to report incidents, what is reported might be a useful measurement of the level of crime in the community that the public believes is important for the police to know.

Given the challenges of measuring crime, the UCR has been and can continue to be a useful way of measuring reported crime in a community. One of the greatest difficulties with the UCR is not the system

itself but how the police and politicians use the information that comes from the system. Criticism of the UCR is loudest when reported crime is increasing. In spite of the cautions against comparisons from one city to another, it is done with great regularity, and it is naive to believe that will not continue. In fact, police, academics, and the news media regularly engage in the practice. The limitations of making such comparisons are rarely pointed out, except when reported crime is increasing. During these periods of increasing crime, it is often said that the primary reason the comparisons are not useful is because other cities may not give the same amount of attention to the accuracy of the reports. Although most police executives have learned to be cautious about what they say about UCR crime statistics when reported index offenses are declining, some are quite vocal about police contributions to the decline and look to the most recently implemented program as the source of the change.

An important question that begs for some professional resolution in dealing with the issue of measuring what matters is who gets the credit—or the blame—for fluctuations in reported crime. Are police executives entitled to take credit for a decline in reported crime? If so, under what circumstances? While some in policing believe the police are essentially powerless to do much about crime, others argue that the police can make significant contributions to reducing crime in specific neighborhoods and circumstances.

Focused, thoughtful responses to specific crime problems at the neighborhood level that involve those affected by the problem can contribute to reductions in reported crime. The police also should be able to accept some of the credit or responsibility for changes in reported crime. At the citywide level, it may be appropriate for the police to share in the credit for a decline in reported crime under at least two circumstances. First, the police should share in the credit if they address a problem in a small geographic area and changes in reported crime in the area affect the citywide totals. A good example of this is what happened with thefts from autos in the downtown area of Newport News, Virginia, in the mid-1980s. As a part of the department's problem-oriented policing effort, officers focused on the issue of thefts from vehicles parked in the area of the shipyard that employed more than 35,000 people. A careful analysis of the problem and the implementation of solutions tailored to the various aspects of the thefts resulted in a 52 percent

decline in theft reports over a 12-month period (Eck and Spelman, 1987). That decline corresponded with a significant decline in the total number of thefts from vehicles in the city. While there are other possible explanations for this, it seems it is appropriate for the police to say this initiative is likely to have had some impact on the overall reduction in thefts from vehicles in the city. Moreover, since the larceny category was a major part of overall crime, it could be argued the subsequent decline in property index offenses was due in part to the initiative at the shipyard. It is also important to note in this example that the solutions implemented relied heavily on the contributions of others—the shipyard, the city, owners of the vehicles—to take steps to change the environment; thus, they should share in the credit for reducing the problem.

Second, the police should share in the credit for declines in a specific crime on a citywide basis if they have implemented a specific response to the problem and the problem declines. Gasoline driveoffs have been affected by pay-before-you-pump policies advocated by police in many cities. In the mid-1970s, most urban areas enacted exact-change policies for public buses, and the once frequent bus robberies stopped. In neither case can other factors be ruled out because change and displacement influence overall numbers, but it seems appropriate for the police to accept some of the credit for the outcome.

The UCR is perhaps the best available tool to address the question of how the police measure crime in a community. Given careful attention to the process and how the information is used by officials, some of the concerns can be addressed. In addition, the UCR can gain greater credibility, which might enhance its value. The UCR, however, has taken on a role as a measure of police impact that is well beyond what it should be—even if it works exactly as it was designed and everyone understands its limitations. Community measurements of crime and fear do not seem to be influenced to a great extent by the fluctuations in Uniform Crime Reports. The community uses other barometers.

## Measuring disorder

How does the public measure crime? How much influence do official police reports have on citizen perceptions of crime? Do police annual rituals of pro-

viding UCR statistics to the public create a sense of relief or contribute to concern about crime? Part of the answer to these questions lies in how citizens define crime. Experience in working with citizens in a number of communities suggests that citizens define crime in very different terms than the police, and, by and large, official periodic pronouncements of the level of crime in the community have little influence on citizens' feelings about crime. In fact, these experiences lead one to believe the average citizen's perspective is influenced to a much greater extent by the amount of disorder they encounter, what they hear from friends and family members, their personal victimizations, and news media reports. The combination of these and other factors influence both their sense of the significance of the crime problem and their level of fear. Perceptions of disorder clearly seem to have an effect on citizens' views of crime and its impact on the quality of community life. Therefore, it is important for the police to define disorder, gain a better understanding of its influence on citizens' perceptions, and make stronger efforts at measurement.

In "The Impact of Community Policing on Neighborhood Residents," Wesley G. Skogan looked at disorder through the use of survey questions that each of the projects included as a part of their evaluations (1995). The amount of disorder was determined by questions on public drinking, begging, street harassment, truancy, and gang activity. Surveying is one good way to understand citizens' views of disorder and its impact in a neighborhood or community. In fact, surveys of neighborhoods by the police in cooperation with residents are both practical and useful tools that are well within a department's capacity to conduct. There are other ways of measuring disorder as well.

One helpful way to measure disorder is through simple observation of neighborhood or area conditions. It would not be difficult for police officers or motivated citizens to conduct a disorder assessment of the neighborhood by systematically recording what they see in a drive or walk through an area of concern. In St. Petersburg, neighborhood groups have volunteered to conduct surveys of residents as well as record the physical aspects of the area. If security is a concern, and it almost always is, they routinely walk the neighborhood at night to do an inventory of street lights, noting those that need repair as well as identifying locations where they believe additional lighting



is needed. To measure disorder in a neighborhood, consideration might be given to the presence of graffiti, groups of people loitering on the street, the level of noise (from boom boxes or loud car stereo systems, for example), boarded and vacant structures, abandoned vehicles, homeless or street people, and litter. The presence of these elements in a neighborhood tends to contribute to a sense that the situation is out of control and to heighten the level of fear.

The police also have an abundant source of information about disorder that would provide a sense of both its extent and location. Police call records, arrests, and reports are all good sources of information on public concerns about disorder (Skogan, 1990). Police call data is little used but is one of the best sources of information that police have about citizen concerns and their views of what police work should be. Calls about noise disturbances, street corner drug dealing, drinking on the street, graffiti, and gunfire are all good indications of public concern about disorder. Regular analysis of call information—frequency, type, location, and time—can give police a strong indication of the nature of the problems and, in some cases, insight into what might be done to improve the situation.

Perhaps the greatest challenges for police in measuring disorder are to make it a priority and do what they can to change conditions. Wilson and Kelling's theory of "broken windows" is well accepted, and there is evidence that efforts to control disorder have some influence on the level of citizen fear, satisfaction, and reported crime (Houston, Newark, New York City, and St. Petersburg). However, it is often difficult for a street police officer to make the same connection. It is not because they do not have the intellectual capacity—they do. Police officers simply get caught up in the urgency of dealing with robberies, burglaries, auto thefts, and blatant street-level drug dealing. It is not easy for them to step back from the fray far enough to see the relationship between rowdy youths on the street corner, noise calls, and how those activities might contribute to the environment that produces the "real crime" they are most concerned about and believe is of greatest concern to the public.

Although a challenge, disorder management is becoming a higher priority in many cities as the police make greater efforts to develop partnerships with the community to solve problems. Interaction with residents about neighborhood problems helps officers

understand the importance of disorder to citizens' sense of safety. As police officers explore problems—and think about prevention and noncriminal justice responses—they begin to see the links between neighborhood conditions, fear, and crime. The development of a police department environment where officers have not only the expectation but also the opportunity to focus on problems in their areas of responsibility is critical. Police executives, managers, and supervisors have the obligation and responsibility to create this environment. With this environment comes the knowledge and understanding of the importance of measuring and responding to disorder problems.

## Fear

Many would argue that the local government is as obligated to deal with the fear of crime as it is to deal with the actual incidence; that it is important, whatever the basis for existing fears, that citizens feel secure in their home and on their streets. (Goldstein, 1977)

Over the past 20 years or so, it has become increasingly clear that the true mission of the police ought not to be "to protect and serve" but to help create a sense of safety in the community. To contribute to the production of safe communities, the police must both acknowledge and take steps to address citizen fear. This is a complicated task indeed, particularly because Skogan showed that the level of fear is not directly related to the risk of victimization (1986).

Obviously, citizen surveys are the most helpful tool in measuring citizen fear and, like disorder, are within the capacity of the police to conduct on a neighborhood level. In fact, neighborhood surveys can be designed and conducted in a way that provides information on a variety of issues. The questions in exhibit 1 were included in surveys conducted in St. Petersburg that provided information on fear. While the information is not sufficient to understand the reason for the change in fear, it does give the police and citizens a sense of the level of fear and how it has changed over time.

Although measuring fear is a bit more complicated for the police than measuring crime and disorder, data are available that would be helpful if viewed in the context of this problem. Once again, police calls can be a useful source of information about the level of fear

## Measuring What Matters

in the community. Of particular importance are calls related to suspicious people and vehicles. Alarm calls might also serve as a crude measure of the level of fear in some areas. Alarm calls, particularly false alarm calls, have increased in most cities. While part of that increase is due to faulty systems, the rise in the use of both building and vehicle alarms has contributed to the increase as well. In some communities, ordinances have been enacted that require alarms for structures to be registered with the police. New alarm permits provide an indication of the level of fear in the community. In St. Petersburg, alarm permits increased almost 25 percent in the second year following the enactment of an ordinance requiring alarm systems to be registered. Looking at these data in concert with neighborhood survey data might identify areas where police can engage in specific activities to address citizen fear.

While it may be difficult to capture, the investment in or presence of other security measures might be an indication of the level of fear in the community or

neighborhood. The use of window bars, dead bolt locks, and demands for increased lighting provide some indication of the level of fear in a neighborhood. The police or other governmental agencies also have information on gun permits, security guard services, and off-duty police employment. All of these areas can provide some indication of the level of fear in the community and offer the potential for identifying specific areas where fear levels seem to be increasing.

Although it is very difficult to measure, the impact of the news media, the entertainment industry, and police educational programs on citizen fear must be considered. The media obviously has some influence on how citizens feel about crime and violence and is, at least partially, responsible for contributing to citizen fear. When one considers the attention given to crime in both the print and electronic media, it is reasonable to conclude it affects the fear level in the community. In many metropolitan areas, local television news consumes from 4 to 6 hours of programming time. When combined with national news coverage, as much as a

**Exhibit 1. St. Petersburg Survey Questions Measuring Citizen Fear**

<b>Change in Safety of Your Neighborhood in Past Year</b>			
	<b>1991</b> (%)	<b>1994</b> (%)	<b>1996</b> (%)
Became safer	7.7	10.7	11.3
Stayed the same	57.9	66.8	68.9
Became less safe	33.3	18.9	17.7
<b>Very Concerned About Neighborhood Problems</b>			
	<b>1991</b> (%)	<b>1994</b> (%)	<b>1996</b> (%)
Crime	65.3	41.7	40.4
Feeling safe/secure	50.8	37.5	33.3
<b>Fear of Being Out Alone in Neighborhood</b>			
	<b>1991</b> (%)	<b>1994</b> (%)	<b>1996</b> (%)
Afraid at night	46.4	41.1	31.1
Afraid during the day	7.6	6.7	6.1

third of programming time is devoted to news. If the lead story is not devoted to crime, at least one of the top two or three stories is likely to deal with crime—generally the most violent or vicious of the day. In addition, a considerable portion of tabloid television shows are devoted to crime and violence. The steady diet of crime, murder, and mayhem reinforces daily the notion that there is good reason to be afraid.

A significant portion of the television and movie entertainment industry is focused on crime and violence as well. The police shows like “COPS,” “Stories of the Highway Patrol,” and “America’s Most Wanted” enjoy high ratings and add to the sense that crime and violence are completely out of control. This, of course, is an additional contribution to fear in the community.

The police contribute to fear as well. With the best of intentions, the police have made the challenge of dealing with fear even more difficult. Police efforts to convince citizens of the importance of taking precautions to minimize their potential for victimization almost always begin with statistics or anecdotes about crime. The idea is to motivate citizens enough to take reasonable steps to protect themselves or their property. Unfortunately, these efforts have also caused additional fear; a police officer telling a citizen about the risks of crime has an extra amount of credibility. The clear challenge for the police is to educate citizens about their risk of criminal victimization in a way that motivates action—but does not unnecessarily increase their fear.

The police must become more thoughtful and aggressive in providing information to the public to mitigate the effects of all the messages that promote fear. One tool that can be helpful is public cable television. Many cities have developed special programming designed to inform citizens about steps that can be taken to reduce the potential for victimization without living in fear. Police departments have also developed a range of methods to provide accurate information to citizens about crime in their neighborhoods. Some use telephone call-in systems allowing residents to access data 24 hours a day by entering the appropriate codes for their neighborhoods. Others provide periodic reports that are included in neighborhood newsletters. Still other departments have made crime and workload data available over the Internet. Many public newspapers in urban areas have returned to the practice of printing a police log that lists calls and

crime reports by neighborhoods. The *St. Petersburg Times* lists crime reports and calls by community policing area in a biweekly neighborhood section. All of these tools are important to help members of the community be mindful of their potential for victimization but not so fearful that they become prisoners in their own homes.

## The effects of crime, disorder, and fear on the quality of community life

What are the effects of crime, disorder, and fear on the quality of community life? Are the choices that people make on where to live, work, shop, or recreate influenced by their assessment of the risk of being a victim of crime? Fear is one effect of crime and disorder that clearly has an influence on how people live their lives. A *USA Today* poll indicated that 43 percent of Americans no longer shop at night because of the fear of crime. In a recent meeting, St. Petersburg car dealers concerned about crime indicated that citizen fear about the location of their businesses made it more difficult to attract both employees and customers. Concerns about safety in public schools have also had as much or more to do with parents placing their children in private schools than the quality of education.

The fear of crime and disorder contributes to neighborhoods declining and dying because people are afraid to invest in them. Those who can afford it escape to the suburbs. Those who are not able to escape watch single-family houses turn into multiple-family dwellings that eventually get boarded up and demolished after absentee landlords reach the point where even minimal investments in meeting codes do not result in profits. Local governments wrestle with the dual problem of meeting increased service demands in these neighborhoods—fire protection, police service, code enforcement, environmental cleanups—while the revenue to support the services decreases. Measuring the effects of crime, disorder, and fear on the quality of life requires more than just measuring the levels of each of these variables.

Once again, surveys can provide an indication of how crime, fear, and disorder affect individuals in the community. In many respects, “quality of life” is a difficult concept to understand. While there will be agreement on many aspects of what a good quality of life might include, individual perspectives will differ

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considerably. The fear a young man has about crime and disorder is likely to be very different from the fear of an elderly man. A person who is financially well off will not feel the same effects of crime and violence that a poor person will. The wealthy can simply move away from the problem or invest a small portion of income in creating a greater sense of security. Surveys can help sort out these various effects of crime and disorder on the quality of life.

One can also monitor population shifts, property value changes, boarded and vacant properties, loss of public revenue, and similar variables that might provide some indication of the effects of fear, crime, and disorder. Another indication might be the willingness of the public to invest resources in public safety. The will to support get-tough policies continues to increase as more of the public treasury is devoted to the prison industry.

### A focus on neighborhoods

When one thinks about crime, violence, drug abuse, fear, and all of the factors associated with them the problems seem overwhelming. The endless debate about what to do about these problems and who is responsible—individuals or society—takes place for the most part at the State or Federal level of government where the primary responsibility for many of the programs to address crime actually lies. And both of these levels of government are, for all intents and purposes, inaccessible to the general public. To effectively deal

with crime and disorder and the fear they generate, it seems that a focus on neighborhoods or small geographic areas of the larger community offers the greatest promise of both understanding what is happening and doing something meaningful about these problems.

The police have been more willing in recent years to acknowledge their limitations in dealing with crime. They have begun to talk about crime and violence in the context of neighborhood conditions, education, the economy, and other demographic factors in areas with the greatest problems. Yet most police departments have not considered changes in these conditions as possible measures of their contributions.

Fortunately, some police departments are beginning to look at these factors to determine the effect of initiatives aimed at neighborhood problems. One example is the appearance of the neighborhood. Building on the theory of “broken windows,” police departments working with neighborhood associations, other arms of government, and the private sector have begun to consider change in the way a neighborhood looks as a positive impact of their collective efforts. An improvement in the way a neighborhood appears could translate into less fear or higher property values. Both of these variables can be measured at the neighborhood level as can the level of reported crime and amount of disorder. The efforts in St. Petersburg since 1992 have made an important contribution to property values in targeted neighborhoods. Exhibit 2 provides an indication of the change in property values from

**Exhibit 2. St. Petersburg Neighborhood Property Values**

	1994	1995	1996	Change (%)
Bartlett Park	\$16,198	\$18,991	\$19,840	22.5
Childs Park	22,980	24,147	24,752	7.7
Kenwood	36,147	37,186	38,418	6.3
Old Northeast	96,977	99,786	102,999	6.2
Old Southeast	32,908	32,735	35,133	6.8
Palmetto Park	17,573	18,604	20,012	13.9
Roser Park	17,963	21,708	22,914	27.6
Uptown	34,780	36,281	37,716	8.4
Target Area Average*	34,690	36,429	37,972	9.5
Citywide	58,890	60,093	61,319	4.1

\* Target area includes additional neighborhoods outside the boundaries of the eight neighborhoods listed above.

1994 to 1996 in eight neighborhoods where citizens and local government developed and implemented specific plans to address problems of concern. The police played a key role in each of these neighborhoods because of the priority that citizens placed on security issues.

What is the value of a new or expanded business in a neighborhood from the perspective of crime and disorder? Could new job opportunities help transform some individuals from criminal activities to legitimate forms of work? Can the foot and vehicular traffic associated with new business contribute to safer streets? Can police engage in programs or adopt policies that will enhance neighborhood improvement and investment? Is the police contribution to reducing truancy a valid measure of police performance, and how does that translate into reduced crime and disorder? Does an increase in occupancy of an apartment complex where police have worked on problems reflect a positive contribution? Obviously, the answers to these questions depend in part on the interventions police have initiated in cooperation with the community—but they also might provide greater insight into the ability of the police to affect crime and disorder and the fear they cause.

## Conclusion

Measuring crime, disorder, fear, and their effects on the quality of life in the community is important to the police. It seems, nevertheless, more important to consider a wider range of issues to gain a true sense of the potential impact of the police on contributing to the creation of safe communities. It also appears that the police have the best chance of understanding these issues and making a meaningful contribution to dealing with them if the focus is on neighborhoods. At that level, even difficult, persistent problems do not appear to be quite so overwhelming. At that level, both the public and government can see visible signs of progress or the lack of it.

Many baby boomers remember a time when their neighborhoods offered a sense of safety and security and neighbors rallied to provide support to each other in times of need. Many can recall a story of their youth where someone in the neighborhood intervened in a way that enforced standards of acceptable behavior—and then made sure that parents were aware of the incident. These baby boomers also point out that neighborhoods are not what they used to be.

In spite of the changes in society, progress is being made in rebuilding neighborhoods and the sense of identity associated with them in cities throughout the United States. That experience suggests that crime, disorder, and fear can be influenced in a positive direction at the neighborhood level.

We should be building on that experience. We should measure crime, disorder, and fear at the neighborhood level and develop tailored responses to deal with these problems. In that way, the police can make a substantial and meaningful contribution to the creation of safe communities.

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# The Incivilities Thesis: Theory, Measurement, and Policy

Ralph B. Taylor

This paper traces the theoretical evolution over the last two decades of a close-knit family of theories linking incivilities to reactions to crime, crime changes, and neighborhood changes. Incivility indicators are social and physical conditions in a neighborhood that are viewed as troublesome and potentially threatening by its residents and users of its public spaces. More recent as compared to earlier theorists in this area have shifted from a psychological to an ecological perspective on responsible processes; expanded the scope of relevant outcomes; separated the causes of crime from the causes of incivilities, justifying a separate policy and theoretical focus on the latter; and switched from a cross-sectional to a longitudinal focus. Several measurement questions are raised by the thesis and its variations:

- The thesis proposes that incivilities represent a construct separate from other related features of the individual, street block, and neighborhood. But researchers have not yet examined the discriminant validity of incivilities indicators.
- Later versions of the thesis emphasize ecological processes. Indicators at this level are available from different sources, and we do not know yet whether those indicators display multimethod convergent validity.
- Later versions of the thesis focus on community change. We do not know if incivility indicators capturing change display convergent validity.

This paper analyzes data from different sources (Atlanta, Baltimore, Chicago, Minneapolis-St. Paul, and Seattle) to address these issues. Early, individual-centered versions of the thesis receive the strongest empirical support and rely on indicators with satisfactory measurement processes. Shifting to later versions of the thesis and focusing on community dynamics and change, empirical support weakens and measurement issues prove more troubling. These concerns deserve attention from practitioners and policymakers

charged with framing or evaluating order maintenance policing initiatives.

## Controversy calls for reexamination

We witnessed during the early months of 1997, in the wake of falling violent crime rates in several large cities—with New York City's being the most noted—articles in the popular media debating the contributions made by police initiatives toward reducing grime and disorderly street activity. Jerry Skolnick (Skolnick, 1997) and George Kelling (Kelling, 1997) argued that these police efforts played a pivotal role; Richard Moran said we just could not know (Moran, 1997). At about the same time, in Baltimore, city council leaders harshly criticized Chief of Police Frazier for failing to mount policies similar to New York's zero tolerance for disorder.

At the center of these controversies are questions about the relative contributions of order maintenance policing—one component of community policing—versus traditional policing practices, to reductions in serious crime. Community policing and problem-oriented policing include order maintenance as well as numerous other strategies geared to address problems in a community that may precede serious crime (Goldstein 1990, 1993; Greene and Mastrofski, 1988). Receiving increasing attention during the past 20 years in such police strategies have been social and physical incivilities, also called signs of disorder, or simply disorder. These incivilities include public order problems such as groups of rowdy teens, public drunkenness, public drug use or sales, people fighting, street hassles, prostitution, aggressive panhandling, vacant or burned out buildings, shuttered stores, unsavory businesses such as adult bookstores, abandoned and trash-filled lots, graffiti, litter, and abandoned cars. Community and problem-oriented policing initiatives focus on far more than just these problems; nevertheless, these concerns have received

considerable community and problem-oriented policing attention (Buerger, 1994; Greene and Taylor, 1988; Greene and McLaughlin, 1993; Pate, 1986 and 1989).

Given current public controversies about whether incivility-reduction community policing can help reduce serious crime, an examination of the proposed theoretical rationales underlying these initiatives seems overdue. What have theorists in this area told us about how these incivilities cause crime, inspire fear in residents, and contribute to neighborhood decline? This paper undertakes such a review, examining a family of theories describing these processes. I will suggest that theorizing in the area has evolved in a number of discernible directions.<sup>1</sup> The theorizing and its evolution raise three distinct, but related, measurement questions, not as yet satisfactorily answered by the empirical research. First, is the incivility construct separable from related constructs? Do its indicators demonstrate discriminant validity (Campbell and Fiske, 1959)? Second, later versions of the thesis focus on community dynamics, giving researchers a choice of how to capture disorder. They can rely on aggregated resident perceptions or assessments of onsite conditions. Do indicators from different methods display convergent validity (Campbell and Fiske, 1959)? Finally, when we examine disorder change over time, to which the later versions of the theory direct our attention, do the change indicators demonstrate convergent validity?

### Organization

Beginning in the mid-1970s, five distinct variants of the incivilities thesis emerged: James Q. Wilson, Garofalo, and Laub; Hunter; Wilson and Kelling; Lewis and Salem; and Skogan. I describe the central processes highlighted by each theory. Placing these versions of the incivilities thesis in a temporal ordering reveals several clear shifts in emphasis and scope over the period, and I describe these changes. I then briefly summarize empirical support to date for some of the key hypotheses in each version of the theory. Following that, I turn to a detailed consideration of the three measurement questions raised above, using data from five different cities. I close with a discussion of the policy, practice, and theory implications of these measurement results.

### Variations on a theme

In this section I summarize five different versions of the incivilities thesis. After reviewing the processes of central interest to each, I describe in more detail how thinking has shifted on this topic from earlier to later versions of the thesis.

**Wilson, 1975, and Garofalo and Laub, 1978.** In *Thinking About Crime*, Wilson takes up the question of why urban residents are so fearful for their safety (Wilson, 1975). He suggests it is not only crimes that they find troubling. The daily hassles they are confronted with on the street—street people, panhandlers, rowdy youths, or “hey honey” hassles—and the deteriorated conditions that surround them—trash-strewn alleys and vacant lots, graffiti, and deteriorated or abandoned housing—inspire concern. Wilson does not provide extensive detail on the interpretations residents made when confronting minor disorderly conditions, except to point out the fear they inspired among residents and users of urban spaces.

In a closely related vein, Garofalo and Laub suggest that fear of crime reflects a more general “urban unease” rather than a specific concern about crimes that have occurred or may occur (Garofalo and Laub, 1978). This led to their dictum that fear of crime was more than “fear” of “crime.” Again, the key idea is that urban conditions, not just crime, are troublesome and inspire residents’ concern for safety.

These theories emerged in the wake of the first analyses of the National Crime Victimization Survey showing that residents’ fear was far more widespread than their victimization (Cook and Skogan, 1984; DuBow et al., 1979), and represented attempts to explain this discrepancy. For both sets of authors, the outcome of interest is fear of crime, an affective state reflecting safety-related concerns about possible street victimization (Ferraro, 1994). It is distinct from perceptions of risk, a more cognitive assessment of the likelihood of victimization (LaGrange and Ferraro, 1989). It is also separate from worry about property crimes while away from home, or worry about the potential victimization of family members (DuBow et al., 1979; Taylor and Hale, 1986).

In both of these theories focusing on fear, there is no explicit specification of the relationship between the conditions inspiring concern and local crime, except



to note that the conditions are far more prevalent than crime incidents. In short, they do not try to either connect or disconnect the causes of incivilities from the causes of crime.

One further similarity is the focus on psychological rather than community dynamics. Although community differences are implicitly acknowledged, the key focus is on why so many more people are afraid than would be expected given the prevalence of victimization.<sup>2</sup>

**Hunter, 1978.** Al Hunter presented a paper entitled “Symbols of Incivility” at the 1978 American Society of Criminology (ASC) conference.<sup>3</sup> Like the Wilson, Garofalo, and Laub version, the outcome in question is still fear of crime, and it is assumed that incivilities are far more prevalent than crime or victimization.<sup>4</sup> Exhibit 1 depicts Hunter’s causal model of the thesis.

Hunter’s framework elaborates on earlier statements in four major ways. Perhaps most importantly, he describes in some detail how residents may interpret signs of incivility; he considers what residents read into these conditions. He proposes that local residents attribute disorderly actions and deteriorating physical conditions to two complementary sources. Internally, the perceivers attribute conditions to local residents and organizations unable to manage or preserve the neighborhood. Beyond the neighborhood, perceivers conclude that the external agencies of control, which

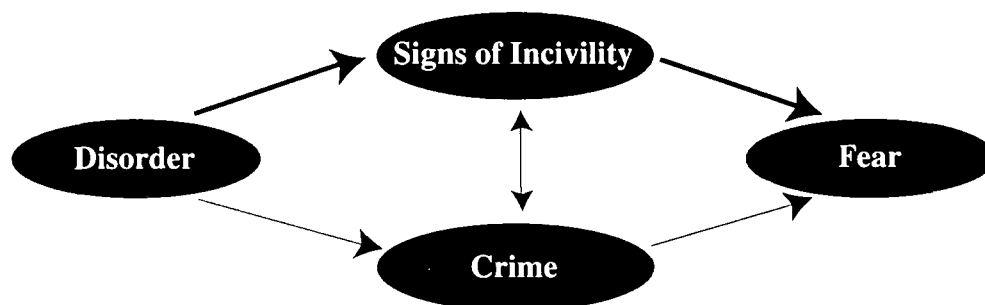
bear some responsibility for preserving order, are unwilling or incapable of doing so in that locale.

Therefore, because matters are out of hand in the neighborhood and local actors and external agencies cannot or will not intercede, residents feel personally at risk of victimization. This description is important because it suggests that the causal attributions residents make—their conclusions on why the incivilities occur and persist—shape their fear. It is not just the presence of the signs of incivilities that is threatening to them, it is also the meaning attached to them. Those origins, he suggests, are viewed as both endogenous and exogenous to the community.

Hunter’s second specification is to nonrecursively link crime and signs of incivility. Each causes the other; one does not precede the other. This view suggests that extensive incivilities will be found in high-crime neighborhoods, and high crime will be found in neighborhoods with extensive deterioration.

Third, Hunter connects incivilities and crime again through a common underlying exogenous cause: neighborhood disorder. It is not clear, however, if by disorder he specifically means social disorganization—the inability of a community to regulate itself and work toward common goals (Bursik, 1988)—or the community characteristics more generally associated with high offense or high offender rates (Baldwin and Bottoms, 1976; Harries, 1980).

**Exhibit 1. Hunter’s Incivilities Thesis**



Note: Heavy arrows indicate most common pathway. Reproduced from Hunter, A., “Symbols of Incivility,” paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Society of Criminology, Dallas, TX, November 1978.

Finally, Hunter's model moves us from the individual-level processes described by Wilson, Garofalo, and Laub to a contextual model (Boyd and Iversen, 1979). The earlier focus was on psychological processes. Here, these processes are elaborated, but with the inclusion of neighborhood crime rates and mutual impacts of crime and incivilities, these psychological processes are placed within varying community contexts.

Hunter's elaboration of the thesis leads to specific empirical predictions: Communities with higher crime rates should have more extensive incivilities; high community crime rates and extensive incivilities share common structural origins, such as instability, low status, and more extensive minority populations. But even after putting these common origins aside, crime and incivilities will still feed one another. Controlling for structural origins, crime should have an independent impact on incivilities and incivilities should have an independent impact on crime.

**Wilson and Kelling, 1982.** In their first *Atlantic Monthly* piece, Wilson and Kelling elaborate on the thesis in three important ways (Wilson and Kelling, 1982). This piece has proved enormously influential on researchers examining fear of crime (Ferraro, 1994) and on policy analysts in community policing (Greene and Taylor, 1988).

First, Wilson and Kelling inject a temporal perspective, describing a specific, multistep process whereby persistent physical or social incivilities lead to higher neighborhood crime rates. Their causal model of the thesis appears in exhibit 2.

The proposed sequence is as follows. A sign of incivility, such as a broken window, is not important per se. Windows are always getting broken, homes are always deteriorating, and some homes are always being abandoned. More important is how long the broken window remains unrepaired, the house remains in bad condition, or the building stays unoccupied. If the condition is not repaired in a relatively short time, then residents will infer that resident-based informal control on the street is weak and other residents do not care about what is happening in their neighborhood; they will surmise that the neighborhood is socially disorganized.<sup>5</sup> Making such a judgment, residents become increasingly reluctant to use public spaces or to intervene in disorderly situations. As the withdrawal becomes more general and resi-

dents' informal control weakens, they become increasingly concerned about their safety. In the language of routine activity theory, natural guardians and place managers grow more reluctant to act (Eck, 1995). In Jane Jacobs' terms, there are fewer eyes on the street (Jacobs, 1961).

At the same time, local "lightweight" offenders, such as teens who spray paint buildings or taunt passersby, will become emboldened, causing further resident apprehension and withdrawal. For local delinquent youths and at-risk children, the persistent physical incivilities symbolize opportunities for delinquency (Cloward and Ohlin, 1960; Taylor and Covington, 1993).

After the above conditions have been in place for some time and local resident-based control has weakened markedly, motivated "heavy duty" offenders from outside the neighborhood will become aware of the conditions, the opportunities to victimize others, and the lower risks of detection or apprehension associated with offending in that locale. If offender motivation is high enough and enough targets are available, they will move into the neighborhood to commit street crimes.

In short, the authors temporally sequence the connections between physical deterioration, increased delinquency, decreased resident-based control, and increased serious crime.<sup>6</sup> Time shapes not only the flow of consequences, but also the meaning attributed to the signs of incivility by residents and other users of local spaces.

Kelling and Coles (1996) update the thesis and provide a broader context. They further develop the rationale for order maintenance policing structured around social incivilities, but they also point out the challenges when police and the community work closely together to try to reduce disorder. In addition, they argue that disorder has increased in the past few decades in part because police have retreated from order maintenance, concentrating on serious crime. This retreat has coincided with shifts in civil law, placing limits on police and other agents of public control, further facilitating burgeoning disorder.

As is apparent from the above suggested dynamics, a second major difference in Wilson and Kelling's thesis compared to prior incarnations, is the expanded range of outcomes. Individual and group behaviors

and ecological features of the setting are now of interest. The authors move beyond fear per se, to also include resident-based informal social control on the street, the vitality of street life itself, and, perhaps most importantly, increasing neighborhood crime rates. Their inclusion of neighborhood crime rates as the ultimate outcome of interest justifies community policing initiatives designed to reduce social incivilities or to facilitate service delivery from other public agencies addressing physical incivilities.

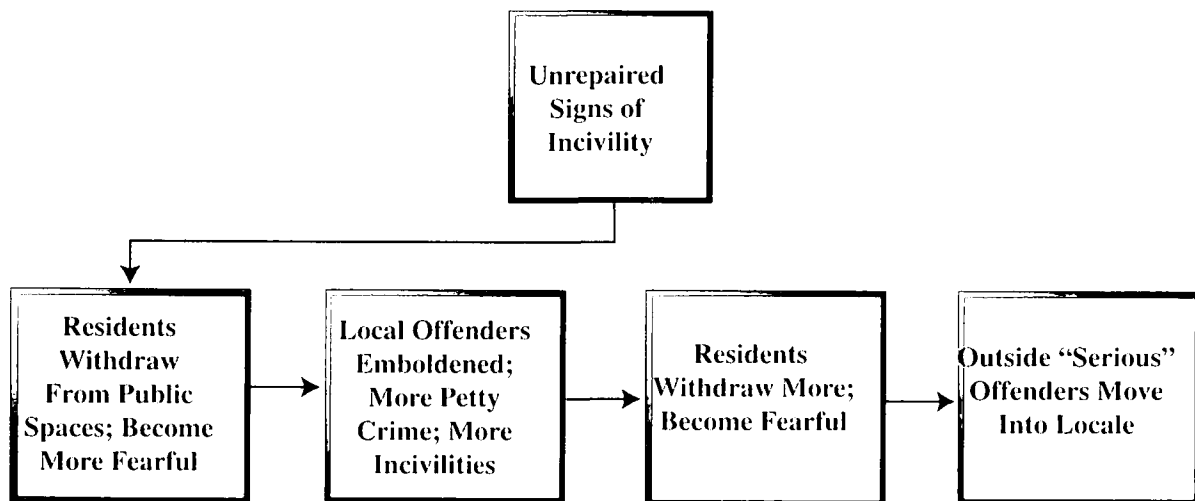
Given their concern for community policing, the authors also consider where to deploy these officers. Their stronger attention to local context represents an important third difference from prior treatments. They roughly separate communities into three groups: those with assured stability, those that are deteriorated and beyond hope, and those that have been stable but are currently threatened with an uncertain future. They suggest that this last group of teetering neighborhoods is where signs of incivility will have the strongest impacts on behavioral, crime, and emotional outcomes. Therefore, it is in these sites that remediation efforts, including community policing, should be concentrated.

The above focus brings us to the final contribution of the current model. Wilson and Kelling discuss the specific roles police officers can play in helping communities address disorderly conditions. In essence, the

job of community police or problem-oriented police is to learn what conditions are troubling residents and merchants in these teetering neighborhoods and then help them address these concerns. (Kelling and Coles [1996] develop in detail what actions are relevant and address some of the issues surrounding officer-community cooperation.) The officers might be moving rowdy groups out of an area, notifying agencies so that landlords are cited for needed repairs, or arranging to get junked cars towed or trash-filled lots cleaned. These problem-solving roles for community police officers have received attention in different demonstrations and evaluations (e.g., Greene and McLaughlin, 1993; Spelman and Eck, 1987).

**Lewis and Salem, 1986.** Dan Lewis and Greta Salem returned to a sole focus on fear of crime and a cross-sectional, as opposed to longitudinal, perspective in their 1986 volume *Fear of Crime* (Lewis and Maxfield, 1980; Lewis and Salem, 1986). They argue that both the extent of signs of incivility and crime levels contribute synergistically to fear. More specifically, they suggest that if crime and signs of incivility are both at high levels, residents will exhibit the highest fear levels. If crime is high but signs of incivility are not, or if signs of incivility are high but crime is not, residents will be less fearful. In analysis of variance terminology, it is the interaction effect of the two that influence fear, not the main effects of either. The authors support their argument using data from a

**Exhibit 2. Wilson and Kelling's (1982) Incivilities Thesis**



three-city, multineighborhood survey conducted as part of the 1975–80 Northwestern University Reactions to Crime project.

This model is of interest because it continues the trend of separating the causes of crime and incivility. By implication, if one can be high and the other low, each has causes that are somewhat unique from the causes of the other. The origins of each are distinct, strengthening our rationale for looking at incivilities as problems separate from serious crimes.

**Skogan, 1990.** Skogan provides an extended theoretical and empirical investigation of how incivilities influence crime and fear at the neighborhood level (Skogan, 1986, 1990).

Skogan's variant of the incivilities thesis (1986, 1990) focuses on neighborhood change as the ultimate outcome of interest. Labeling signs of incivility as disorder (1990: 2), he argues that "disorder plays an important role in sparking urban decline." He defines disorder by saying: "[It] reflects the inability of communities to mobilize resources to deal with urban woes. The distribution of disorder thus mirrors the larger pattern of structured inequality that makes inner-city neighborhoods vulnerable to all manner of threats to the health and safety of their residents" (p. 173). In short, as with Hunter's model, there are two causes of disorder: social disorganization within the community itself and inequality resulting from the sorting of neighborhoods in the urban fabric. This interpretation of incivilities again ties us to the extensive social disorganization literature and, simultaneously, to the extensive literature on urban inequality (Wilson, 1996).

Incivilities spur neighborhood decline because they influence a range of psychological, social psychological, and behavioral outcomes such as, respectively, fear, informal social control, and offender immigration and resident out-migration. In short, according to Skogan, physical and social incivilities engender a range of consequences that ultimately result in neighborhood decline.

Skogan is clear about the processes mediating the connection between incivilities and neighborhood decline. First, echoing Wilson and Kelling, he suggests that incivilities undermine informal social control (Skogan, 1990). Second, echoing several of the prior theorists, he proposes that disorder "sparks concern

about neighborhood safety, and perhaps even causes crime itself. This further undermines community morale" (Skogan, 1990: 65). Third, incivilities "undermine the stability of the housing market" (Skogan, 1990: 65). This latter economic impact means that a neighborhood's housing prices would decrease relative to other urban neighborhoods. Impacts of neighborhood crime on housing values have been well established in the academic literature (Little, 1976; Taylor, 1995a); separate impacts of incivilities on house prices, net of other factors, have not.

Skogan states clearly that signs of incivility play an important part in this process. "Disorder can play an important, *independent* role in stimulating this kind of urban decline" (Skogan, 1990: 12, emphasis added). Current theorists (Kelling and Coles, 1996: 25) agree that Skogan has proven that "disorder, both directly and as a precursor to crime, played an important role in neighborhood crime."

Skogan's thesis represents an evolution beyond Wilson and Kelling's model in three respects. First, he has moved to an explicit focus on neighborhood change, in the form of decline, as the ultimate outcome of interest. This outcome was included but not emphasized in Wilson and Kelling's treatment; now it has been promoted as the outcome of most interest to residents and policymakers alike. High fear and weak informal social control by residents are important not in their own right, but rather because they result in later decline. With Skogan's model, we have completed the evolution from a focus solely on psychological outcomes represented by Wilson, Garofalo, and Laub, to a focus solely on ecological outcomes, leading Skogan to test his thesis using only neighborhood-level information.

Since the outcome in Skogan's model is explicitly neighborhood change, this leads him to expand the scope of contributing and mediating dynamics. The first versions of the incivilities thesis focused on fear; subsequent versions expanded to include weak informal social control and withdrawal from street life. Skogan further augments the relevant process dynamics to consider intent to move, neighborhood satisfaction (Skogan, 1990: 88), community solidarity (Skogan, 1990: 70), and involvement in privatistic crime prevention. Other authors (e.g., Kirschenbaum, 1983: abstract) have argued that perceptions of neighborhood deterioration act "as a major catalyst in provoking a move," or contribute independently to

neighborhood decline (Fisher, 1991). The literature, however, fails to consistently link crime or crime-related neighborhood conditions with mobility (Taylor, 1995a).

Third, Skogan explicitly acknowledges in several models that structural conditions give rise to signs of incivility. He reports that poverty, instability, and racial composition all contribute equally to signs of incivility and crime in the form of robbery victimization rates (Skogan, 1990: 75). In an earlier statement of the thesis, he suggests that "random shocks" arising from factors outside the neighborhood itself also can influence the expansion of incivilities (Skogan, 1986). In his 1990 analysis, signs of incivility almost totally mediate the effects of neighborhood structure on victimization.<sup>7</sup> His is the first model to begin examining links between incivilities and community structure. His suggested causal dynamics appear in exhibit 3.

### Evolution of the perspective

The main variants of the incivilities thesis reviewed above reveal numerous differences. In four areas, these differences reflect a clear evolution of the perspective applied.

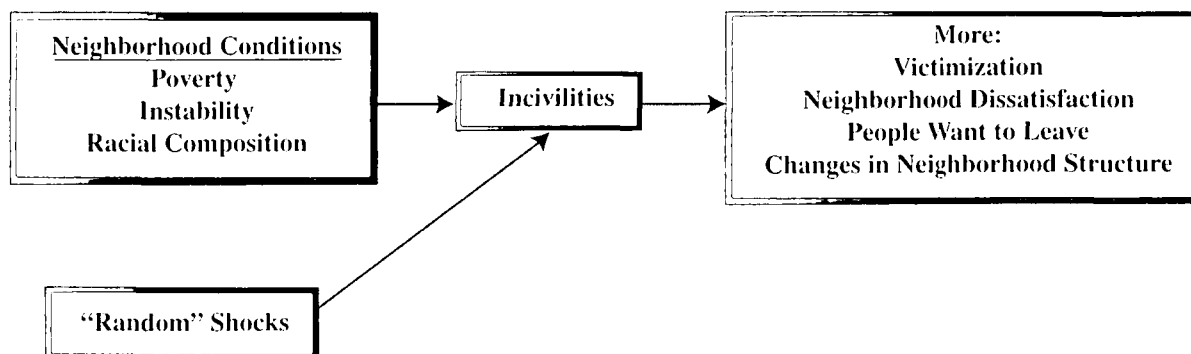
**Expansion of outcomes.** The models progress from a sole focus on fear of crime (Wilson, Garofalo, and Laub; Hunter; Lewis and Salem) to concern about neighborhood street life and crime (Wilson and Kelling) to neighborhood structural decline (Skogan). The enlargement of outcomes increases the importance of the thesis; it is relevant not only to reactions

to crime but also to the stability and viability of urban communities. The broadening scope also provides rationales for community policing initiatives focusing on order maintenance. It highlights the short-term (lower crime, residents taking back the streets) and long-term (neighborhood stability) benefits of such initiatives.

**Shifting levels of analysis.** As theorists have augmented outcomes, they also have shifted upward in their levels of analysis. Early statements of the thesis clearly present a psychological perspective. Garofalo's and Laub's notion that fear reflects "urban unease" expects that perceptions of local order-related problems will inspire residents' fear. The dynamics in question are internal to individuals. Hunter's and Lewis and Salem's models are contextual, pointing out impacts of community as well as psychological factors on psychological outcomes such as fear. Wilson and Kelling's discussion includes both street block and neighborhood outcomes, but the most central dynamics appear to be operating at the street block level (Taylor, 1997b). Skogan moves us explicitly to the neighborhood level, using neighborhood predictors and neighborhood outcomes. Reactions to crime, such as fear, and other person-environment transactions, such as neighborhood satisfaction or intention to move, are modeled at the neighborhood level because they contribute to long-term neighborhood decline. We are now interested solely in ecological dynamics.

When examining measurement issues, two concerns surface related to this shift in interest. The migration of interest upward presumes that the reactions to

Exhibit 3. Skogan's Decline and Disorder Thesis



crime and person-environment transactions seen as part of the neighborhood dynamics have substantial ecological components; that is, that sizable between-neighborhood variance exists in these variables relative to the pooled within-neighborhood variance. In addition, the migration suggests researchers might want to use ecologically based rather than psychologically based incivilities indicators. These measurement issues receive consideration below.

**Shifting temporal perspective.** Models clearly evolve in their temporal perspective. Theorists start out discussing why some people are more afraid than others at one point in time (Wilson; Garofalo and Laub; Hunter) and end by focusing on changes in fear, informal social control, street life, neighborhood crime rates, and neighborhood structure (Wilson and Kelling; Skogan). Wilson and Kelling provide the most detailed temporal sequencing here, describing specific series of events linking incivilities, fear, resident withdrawal, petty crime, and, finally, increased serious crime. Again, as with the change in levels of concern, there are measurement implications. One would expect, given the shift from cross-sectional to longitudinal processes, that indicators would change correspondingly and that researchers would begin to look at changes in fear, neighborhood structure, and incivilities, for example.

**Progressive unlinking of crime and incivilities.** The early models (Wilson; Garofalo and Laub; Hunter) suggested a common origin for crime and incivilities. Incivilities were presumed to vary from neighborhood to neighborhood, roughly paralleling the crime differences from neighborhood to neighborhood, but taking place at higher rates than crime and thus influencing more residents. Hunter's model provides incivilities and crime with a common exogenous variable. Skogan, by contrast, explicitly anticipates that incivilities will make independent contributions to neighborhood change, net of neighborhood structure and, presumably neighborhood crime, although indicators for the latter were not available in his data set.<sup>8</sup> Lewis and Salem anticipate that crime and incivilities can vary independently, leading to situations where one is high and the other not. The modeling implication is that neighborhood crime rates and neighborhood incivilities can be separated in a cross-sectional model and that changes in each can be separated in a longitudinal model.

## Empirical support for hypotheses

Before turning to a detailed discussion of measurement issues, I provide a brief summary of what we know about some of the key hypotheses generated by each version of the incivilities thesis. I organize the evidence by theory version. I do not consider the extensive evaluation research on community policing programs based on some version of this thesis. (For recent reviews of this work, see Kelling and Coles, 1996; Sherman, 1997; Eck, 1997.) That evaluation work often fails to provide sufficient detail in the timing of measurement and the scope of indicators to address specific hypotheses mounted in these models.

**Wilson, Garofalo, and Laub.** The key idea that those perceiving more neighborhood problems are more concerned for their safety has been repeatedly supported. Initial analyses of individual-level outcomes confounding between- and within-neighborhood predictor variance (e.g., Lewis and Maxfield, 1980) have been confirmed by later studies partitioning predictor variance (Covington and Taylor, 1991), correctly modeling within-neighborhood correlated errors and controlling for direct and indirect victimization experiences (Taylor, 1997a). Rountree and Land (1996a, 1996b) found effects of community-level perceived incivilities on perceived risk and fear of crime in hierarchical linear models, but did not include perceived incivilities as individual-level predictors, in accord with the thesis discussed here.

In short, we have strong evidence that those who are more afraid than their neighbors see more local problems than their neighbors. At this time, it is not clear if social or physical disorders are more troubling to residents.

**Hunter.** Hunter's key idea is that both incivilities and local crime rates may contribute independently to outcomes like fear. One study using assessed indicators could not test this thesis because incivilities and crime were so closely linked (Taylor, 1996b). It is the case that, controlling for neighborhood crime rates, individuals who perceive more local problems than their neighbors are more fearful than their neighbors (Taylor, 1997a). Rountree and Land find that average perceived incivilities in a neighborhood and the neighborhood burglary rate contribute independently

to burglary-specific fear of crime (Rountree and Land, 1996a) and to perceived crime risk (Rountree and Land, 1996b). They do not test the contributions of perceived incivilities at the individual level to fear of crime or perceived risk, controlling for the local victimization rate.

The work so far suggests that, net of local crime rates, both individual and community differences in perceived incivilities contribute to reactions to crime such as fear and increased perceived risk. We do not yet have studies simultaneously examining impacts of individual and community perceived incivilities while controlling for local crime or victimization rates and individual victimizations.

**Wilson and Kelling.** Numerous studies claim to find support for portions of the Wilson and Kelling thesis, varying in the degree to which they applied needed statistical controls.

Although we do not have longitudinal confirmation, we do have cross-sectional confirmation that perceived incivilities predict perceived crime at the street block level, controlling for block composition and layout (Perkins et al., 1992).<sup>9</sup> Wilson and Kelling anticipate that over time more incivilities on a block will lead to more crime problems. This street block analysis does not confirm that tenet in the longitudinal manner in which it was framed, but it does provide cross-sectional confirmation using crime perceptions.

Returning in the 1990s to local leaders in neighborhoods where residents had been interviewed in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Skogan and Lurigio (1992) find that average perceived social and physical disorder reported 7–12 years previously strongly predicts severity of current drug problems in the neighborhood. The authors conclude that these results “point strongly in the direction of the ‘broken windows’ hypothesis: that levels of noncriminal decay and social disruption can spawn more serious problems in the future by undermining the capacity of communities to respond to crime . . .” (p. 525). This conclusion, however, may be premature. The authors did not control for the earlier level of perceived drug problems in the community; thus, their outcome does not reflect community change. In addition, their data source, with a small number of communities, does not allow researchers to control for community structure.

Another longitudinal hypothesis receiving some cross-sectional support is Wilson and Kelling’s suggestion that incivilities have the strongest impact on teetering neighborhoods. In 66 neighborhoods studied in Baltimore, we found impacts of assessed social and physical incivilities on fear of crime were most evident in moderate-stability neighborhoods (Taylor et al., 1985). This analysis, however, failed to simultaneously control for socioeconomic status and racial composition. In addition, it appears that the impacts of incivilities on fear are extremely weak in the most deteriorated neighborhoods (Taylor and Shumaker, 1990).

Empirical research on interactions between incivilities and other predictors appears to have moved beyond the theoretical groundwork already laid out. For example, Rountree and Land (1996b) found that average neighborhood perceived incivilities shape the impact of race and unoccupied homes on individual risk perception. The relevant conceptual underpinnings for these moderating effects are not clear. More clear is the theoretical basis for interactions between perceived disorder at the individual level and social support on fear of crime. Ross and Jang (1996) find that among those with more local ties, the impact of perceived disorder on fear is weaker. This represents an example of the buffering hypothesis developed in the social support literature (House et al., 1988). The moderating effect, however, was extremely small in size compared to the main effect.

A third feature of the model receiving empirical support is Wilson and Kelling’s suggestion that increasing incivilities may signal opportunities for delinquency for local teens and other “lightweight” offenders. Replicated contextual models link neighborhood-assessed deterioration with residents’ belief that groups of unsupervised teens are problems in their neighborhoods (Taylor and Covington, 1993). Again, this confirmation is cross-sectional rather than longitudinal. This connection is of further significance because it connects theories about incivilities with social disorganization processes. Unsupervised teen peer groups have been used as a key indicator of weak local informal social control (Sampson and Groves, 1989).

**Skogan.** Skogan connects data from different studies spanning 40 neighborhoods in 6 cities, which was originally gathered between 1977 and 1983. Eighteen

of the different study areas are Chicago communities, some of which were surveyed three times (Skogan, 1990: 88). He operationalizes incivilities using subjective, survey-based responses in which respondents indicated how serious they perceived different incivilities to be in their own neighborhoods. He analyzes neighborhood-level outcomes using simple and multiple regressions and path models. Treating the time of the surveys as roughly comparable, he analyzes all the data in a cross-sectional design.

Skogan examines the causes of incivilities (Skogan, 1990: 60). He finds that nonwhite neighborhood racial composition, poverty, and instability are all linked to higher incivility levels. He also examines a range of the consequences of incivilities. He finds that in neighborhoods where incivilities are perceived to be more intense, neighbors are less willing to help one another (p. 71), robbery victimization is more extensive (p. 75), residential satisfaction is lower, and more people intend to move (p. 82). He also finds some extremely strong correlations (greater than .80) between signs of incivility and indicators of neighborhood structure, such as unemployment (p. 173). He models the perceived incivilities as mediating the impacts of neighborhood structure on the outcomes, leaving open the question of whether incivilities make independent contributions to these outcomes.

Harrell and Gouvis (1994) propose to test Skogan's thesis using census and crime data for Cleveland and Washington, D.C. Using the census tract as the unit of analysis, they determine if leading indicators of decay help predict later crime changes. Unfortunately, questions arise about their decay indicators, which do not focus on deterioration but instead are rates for crimes like arson. Their study appears to be showing that some crime rates help predict shifts in other crime rates.

**Summing up empirical support.** To date, we have the strongest confirmation for the Wilson, Garofalo, and Laub psychological model. Studies routinely find extremely strong correlations between individual differences in perceived incivilities and individual differences in fear of crime; these remain after controlling for neighborhood crime rates and neighborhood structure. Studies also find contextual impacts of neighborhood-level perceived (or assessed) disorder, suggesting that multilevel impacts may be operating. We do not yet have studies using the same indicator that compare individual and contextual disorder impacts.

The main effects of incivilities observed at the individual and community levels appear to be contingent on other factors. At the community level, Wilson and Kelling's thesis predicts that disorder impacts are contingent on community stability; Lewis and Salem's model predicts that impacts are contingent on local crime rates. Some empirical support has been obtained for the first model, although further testing with more adequate statistical controls is needed. Lewis and Salem's hypothesized interaction effect has not yet been tested. Part of the problem with doing so is that, especially with assessed indicators, disorder usually correlates very strongly with local crime rates. Researchers have begun suggesting that individual-level impacts of perceived incivility may be conditioned by other personal attributes, and work looking at these contingent impacts is beginning.

Hunter's version of the thesis also has received substantial support. It suggests that both crime and disorder contribute to the fear of crime. This idea is supported by perceived disorder indicators at the individual and community levels, controlling for other personal and neighborhood features. Assessed disorder at the community level correlates too strongly with crime to test for independent contributions without committing the partialling fallacy. You commit the partialling fallacy when you have two highly correlated variables, and you partial on the first variable and attempt to interpret how the second variable links to other variables. After partialling, there is too little of the second variable remaining for meaningful interpretation.

The support picture appears far murkier when we turn to versions of the incivilities thesis—Wilson and Kelling's, and Skogan's—that are explicitly longitudinal. Researchers interpret results from several cross-sectional studies as lending support to the thesis. But cross-sectional data do not provide an adequate test of the thesis. To test Wilson and Kelling's thesis, we need longitudinal studies of individuals within communities, using a large number of communities. This would permit us to gauge the independent impacts of incivilities to changes over time in fear of crime, perception of risk, and offender movement patterns. To test Skogan's thesis, we need to assess impacts of incivilities, independent of community structure and crime rates, to neighborhood structural changes and crime changes. These studies have not yet been completed.



## From theory to research: incivilities indicators

Three important measurement questions arise from the incivilities thesis. First, all variants of the thesis presume that incivilities refer to a construct independent of related constructs. At the individual level, this means that incivilities indicators would be separate from indicators for perceived risk, fear of crime, territorial cognitions, sense of community, attachment to place, or neighborhood confidence and satisfaction. At the neighborhood level, this means that incivilities indicators would be separate from indicators for neighborhood structure (status, stability, racial composition) and crime. In short, all versions of the thesis presume that discriminant validity (Campbell and Fiske, 1959) has been established for incivilities indicators. In this section, we will look at a small number of data sets to determine whether this presumption is correct.

A second important measurement question raised by the evolution of the incivilities thesis is multimethod convergent validity. As noted above, incivilities theories began with a focus on psychological dynamics (Wilson, Garofalo, and Laub), moved forward to an interest in social psychological processes (Wilson and Kelling), and finally evolved into a focus on community dynamics and outcomes (Skogan). Paralleling this drift across analysis levels have been shifts in the incivilities indicators used. For psychological processes, researchers used perceived incivilities. To capture social psychological and ecological variations in incivilities, most researchers have averaged survey-based perceptions across residents in a neighborhood. A smaller number of researchers have responded to the ecological drift by gathering onsite assessment data, including site and street block features and aggregating those items to the street block level for social psychological investigations, and to the neighborhood level for ecological investigations.<sup>10</sup> Our confidence in the construct validity of incivilities will be boosted if we find that incivilities indicators from different methods converge. Researchers have not yet investigated this question. Ideally, at each level of aggregation, different indicators of incivilities based on different data collection procedures would correlate closely with one another and would barely correlate with related constructs (Campbell and Fiske, 1959).

Finally, the latest variant of the incivilities thesis focuses on changes over time. Changes in disorder should, according to Skogan, lead to a host of consequences for a neighborhood. However, researchers have not yet extensively examined relationships among disorder change indicators.

### Discriminant validity

What evidence do we have that incivilities indicators are distinct from other features of a community, such as its structure, crime rates, and land-use patterns?

**Structural dimensions of community.** Researchers using census data to describe community structure generally refer to three independent dimensions: socioeconomic status, stability, and racial and youth composition (Berry and Kasarda, 1977; Hunter, 1974a, 1974b).<sup>11</sup> These dimensions appear when researchers analyze census data from cities in the United States and abroad. These three dimensions also can be used to describe the structural pathways along which neighborhoods may change over time (Hunter, 1974a; Taylor and Covington, 1988).

*Socioeconomic status* is captured by variables reflecting income levels, housing values, occupational status, educational levels, and the extent of poverty and unemployment. *Stability* is best captured by variables reflecting the extent of home ownership and the proportion of residents living at the same address during the 5 years prior to the census. Housing type, such as the percentage of single-family structures, is also relevant. *Race and youth composition* is reflected in percentages of Hispanic and African-American persons and the proportions of the population under the age of 5, or between 6 and 13 years of age.

Assessed incivilities indicators appear to be linked to neighborhood structure. Using 1981 data from onsite assessments of more than 800 street blocks in Baltimore, aggregated to the neighborhood level ( $N=66$ ), we completed an exploratory principal-components analysis of assessment-based incivilities and land-use indicators (Taylor et al., 1985). We defined a general incivilities index based primarily on physical items, but included some social factors as well.<sup>12</sup> We found moderate to strong links between this index and both reported crime and community structure. The simple correlations were: crime, 0.64; instability, 0.59;

**Exhibit 4. Exploratory Principal-Components Analysis of Community-Level Indicators**

<b>Component</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
VANDLSM2	0.916	0.092	0.070	-0.031	0.197
TEEN2	0.856	0.015	0.064	0.298	-0.016
ABNDBLD2	0.643	0.215	0.401	0.237	0.163
LENGTH5	0.032	-0.906	-0.054	0.281	-0.029
OWN	-0.224	-0.854	-0.121	-0.282	-0.110
ASTRATE	0.142	0.111	0.935	0.164	0.178
BLACK	0.144	-0.005	0.159	0.914	0.215
EDUC2	-0.485	0.103	-0.225	-0.615	0.459
ROBRATE	0.312	0.121	0.372	0.203	0.788
Lambda	2.411	1.644	1.277	1.585	0.989

Note: VANDLSM2, TEEN2, and ABNDBLD2 refer, respectively, to neighborhood problems with vandalism, unsupervised or rowdy teens, and abandoned buildings. Indicators are dichotomous. LENGTH5 refers to the proportion of residents living in the community at least 5 years. OWN is the proportion of homeownership respondents. ASTRATE is the reported assault rate. ROBRATE is the reported robbery rate. BLACK is the proportion of African-American respondents in the community. EDUC2 is the respondents' years of education. Varimax rotation. Community-level indicators are from five different data sets in five cities. The number of communities in each city appear below. Suburban communities were removed from the Chicago data set, as were Chicago communities with fewer than five respondents.

<b>City</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Atlanta	6	2.8
Baltimore	30	13.9
Chicago	56	25.9
Minneapolis-St. Paul	24	11.1
Seattle	100	46.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>216</b>	<b>100.0</b>

income, -0.53; and proportion of African-Americans, 0.40 (Taylor et al., 1985). Neighborhood structure explained 63 percent of the variation in assessed signs of incivility and 55.8 percent of the variation in residents' perceived signs of incivility. Exploratory principal-components analyses closely connect this same incivilities index with a structural component capturing poverty, low education levels, and neighborhood instability. Even if we rotate four separate principal components, incivilities continue to load highly on a poverty component.

Reanalysis of data from 24 small commercial centers and their residential surroundings in Minneapolis-St. Paul showed neighborhood instability correlating 0.62 with vacancies in small commercial centers, and assessed graffiti correlating 0.87 with the percentage of the neighborhood that was African-American (Taylor, 1995c). Exploratory principal-components analyses with the Minneapolis-St. Paul data, looking at specific assessed incivilities rather than a broad index, linked graffiti with the racial dimension of neighborhood structure and vacancies with instability in the surrounding neighborhood.<sup>13</sup> (For a description of the original data collection, see McPherson and Silloway, 1986.)

These two analyses suggest indicators of assessed incivilities are not readily separable from neighborhood structure and crime. When we turn to perceived disorder indicators, however, what do we find?

We constructed a 5-city data set spanning 216 communities. The data were drawn from Atlanta (Greenberg et al., 1982), Baltimore (Taylor, 1996a), Chicago (Lavrakas, 1982), Minneapolis-St. Paul (McPherson and Silloway, 1986), and Seattle (Mieth and Meier, 1995). Only the six neighborhood Atlanta data set overlaps with those examined by Skogan (1990). All five data sets share several perceived incivilities. Aggregating perceived incivilities to the community level and carrying out an exploratory principal-components analysis of those items along with neighborhood structure and crime indicators generates the results shown in exhibit 4. Five components were rotated: incivilities (1), crime (1), and neighborhood structure (3). The three incivilities emerge distinctly on their own components. The only other variable loading above 0.40 on this component is the average years of education of residents. In this set of cities, although data suggest a modest connection between

incivilities and low socioeconomic status, perceived incivilities appear to be relatively independent of crime and structure at the neighborhood level. This analysis is limited, of course.<sup>14</sup> Reanalysis with more indicators and a confirmatory, rather than exploratory, approach is desirable.

Using the same variables from the five cities, but not including the two crime rate variables, we carried out a series of exploratory individual-level principal-components analyses, using four components: socioeconomic status, stability, race, and incivilities ( $N=8,195$ ). Again, as with the ecological-level principal-components analyses, the incivilities indicators formed their own separate component. No other variables loaded above 0.40 on the incivilities component.<sup>15</sup> At the individual level, perceived incivilities separate clearly from other social demographics. When we added two indicators for person-environment bonds (neighborhood satisfaction, and attachment to place) and completed an exploratory principal-components analysis requesting five components, perceived incivilities and person-environment bonds each associated with different components.

**Crime.** Using the same five-city data set, we examined neighborhood-level connections between neighborhood perceived incivilities and neighborhood crime rates, before and after controlling for neighborhood structure. The number of neighborhoods ranged from 6 in Atlanta to more than 100 in Seattle. Results appear in exhibit 5. The first column shows the city-by-city correlations of community-level perceived problems with vandalism, teens, and abandoned buildings, and the community robbery rate. The second column repeats these correlations after partialling for the percentage of African-Americans, percentage of homeowners, and average education level. The third and fourth columns repeat the same information for the assault rate. Correlations are averaged across the five cities at the bottom of the table. Given the small number of neighborhoods in Atlanta, the numbers are reaveraged after excluding Atlanta.

The partialled correlations based on the four cities suggest that community-level perceived incivilities correlate modestly with street crime rates after removing community structure; the average partialled correlations, excluding Atlanta, range from 0.20 to 0.43. Perceived incivilities at the community level overlap enough with crime to lend support for

## The Incivilities Thesis: Theory, Measurement, and Policy

Hunter's proposal that the two may nonrecursively influence each other, even after controlling for common structural origins. Comparable analyses from multiple cities using assessed incivilities are needed.

**Land-use features.** Using our 1981 general index of assessed incivilities, which was based on information from 66 Baltimore neighborhoods (Taylor et al., 1985), we were able to separate signs of social and physical incivility from indicators of residential versus nonresidential land-use mix. (The resulting component loadings appear in endnote 11.) These results suggested that signs of incivility could be discriminated from land-use and block layout patterns and that indicators of signs of incivility converged as expected.

We were similarly successful in Baltimore and Philadelphia using street block data and more rigorous analytic techniques. In the early 1990s, Barbara Koons, Ellen Kurtz, and Jack Greene collected onsite information from a large number of blocks in Logan, a North Philadelphia neighborhood. Using this information, along with onsite assessments from 50 Baltimore blocks collected in the late 1980s, we successfully separated land-use mix from signs of incivility using confirmatory factor analyses (Taylor et al., 1995). I am not aware of any other data sources available that would permit examining connections between land-use and assessed incivilities.<sup>16</sup>

**Defensible space features and territorial signage.** If we turn to other microlevel features in the urban

**Exhibit 5. Neighborhood-Level Correlations: Crime Rates and Perceived Incivilities**

City	Incivility	Crime			
		Robbery Rate	Partialled	Assault Rate	Partialled
Atlanta	Vandalism	.53	.69	-.13	.99
	Rowdy Teens	.32	.81	.52	.06
	Abandoned Buildings	.76	.88	.94	.92
Baltimore	Vandalism	.10	.14	.10	.03
	Rowdy Teens	.09	.18	.32	.05
	Abandoned Buildings	.34	.33	.54	.26
Chicago	Vandalism	.22	.45	.23	.38
	Rowdy Teens	.30	.25	.38	.34
	Abandoned Buildings	.56	.30	.67	.50
Minneapolis-St. Paul	Vandalism	.72	.40	.73	.45
	Rowdy Teens	.32	.22	.46	.46
	Abandoned Buildings	.68	.38	.73	.63
Seattle	Vandalism	.71	.49	.72	.51
	Rowdy Teens	.51	.15	.62	.15
	Abandoned Buildings	.54	.18	.65	.31
Average	Vandalism	.46	.43	.33	.47
	Rowdy Teens	.31	.32	.46	.21
	Abandoned Buildings	.58	.41	.71	.52
Four-City Average	Vandalism	.44	.37	.45	.34
	Rowdy Teens	.31	.20	.45	.25
	Abandoned Buildings	.53	.30	.65	.43

Note: The four-city average ignores Atlanta's data because the city had only six neighborhoods. The second and fourth columns control for percentage of African-Americans, percentage of homeowners, and average education level.

residential environment, such as defensible space features and territorial signage (Taylor, 1988), we do not yet know if they can be separated from signs of incivility. Multitrait, multimethod investigations at the block and neighborhood level are needed. Territorial signage refers to things people do to sites to show that they own or care about them. Features may include high levels of upkeep, intensive gardening, and signs of personal identification.

**Summing discriminant validity.** Is it possible to separate disorder at the community level from community structure and crime? The answer is yes, if we use indicators based on aggregated resident perceptions. It is not as easy to clearly separate them if we rely on indicators from onsite assessments. Analyses at the street block level in two different cities and at the neighborhood level in one city show that assessed incivilities are clearly separable from land-use features. At the community level, discriminant validity with respect to some community features depends in part on the type of indicator used.

At the individual level, disorder appears to be easily separable from other constructs, such as person-environment bonds, when both constructs rely on the same data collection instrument. Researchers have not yet investigated connections between disorder and related constructs like territorial signage, where the two constructs rely on different data collection methods.

### Convergent validity and multiple assessment modes

A key idea behind the multitrait, multimethod approach to validity is that expected convergences and divergences within and between constructs, respectively, should appear even when multiple methods provide indicators of the same construct (Campbell and Fiske, 1959). When we turn to multiple methods, focusing on cross-sectional or longitudinal perspectives, we see incivilities indicators from different data sources failing to converge as expected.

Using cross-sectional data described in detail in Perkins and Taylor (1996), I completed an exploratory principal-components analysis of indicators of signs of incivility and crime. The analysis suggested two independent dimensions.<sup>17</sup> The results appear in exhibit 6.

These mid-1980s data come from analyses of 50 different blocks, each in a different neighborhood in Baltimore. Three types of assessment are included: onsite assessments by trained raters, perceptions as reported by residents and aggregated to the block level, and coverage of crime and incivility issues in the neighborhood as reported by local newspapers.

Unfortunately, the multitrait, multimethod matrix does not generate strong evidence of convergent and discriminant validity independent of assessment method. Three variables with high loadings on the first component refer to signs of incivility: perceived social disorder, perceived physical disorder, and assessed incivilities of on-block households. These three high loadings suggest the first component refers to signs of incivility. Two survey items "go together" with one of our onsite assessment indicators.

Regrettably, this interpretation runs into two problems. First, onsite assessments of social incivilities—counts of people outside—do not load strongly on the component (0.168). In addition, serious crime news, measured from newspaper stories, does load on the component (0.639).

On the second component, the item with the highest loading is disorder news from newspaper stories. Nonresidential assessed incivilities, groups of young males loitering, and other crime news also load highly on the component, as does serious crime news. In short, the second component contains indicators of both signs of incivility and crime from two different methods. The second component appears to favor items based on newspaper sources.

The results from these 50 blocks in Baltimore are somewhat encouraging, in that two survey-based disorder items and one assessment-based disorder item appear together. However, they are discouraging because one component seems to favor the survey items, while the second component favors newspaper- or assessment-based items. Such results need to be considered with great caution given the small number of cases.

The incivilities thesis, especially as stated by Wilson and Kelling and Skogan, emphasizes the importance of *changes* in disorder. In 1981 and 1982, we collected survey data from residents in a random sample of Baltimore neighborhoods and completed onsite assessments in those neighborhoods (Taylor, 1996:

**Exhibit 6. Exploratory Principal-Components Analysis of Cross-Sectional Disorder Indicators: Loadings**

Variable	Name	Component I	Component II
Perceived physical disorder [S]	ZPHYSINC	0.94	0.10
Average residential address-level score on index combining litter, dilapidation, and vandalism [A]	ZAGINCIV	0.85	0.24
Perceived social disorder [S]	ZSOCINCV	0.85	0.24
Serious crime news (homicides, rapes, assaults, robberies, burglaries) [N]	ZSERCRNW	0.64	0.58
Disorder news (physical deterioration, racial unrest) [N]	ZDISNEWS	0.05	0.82
Nonresidential disorder (poorly maintained open land, graffiti, dilapidated buildings) [A]	ZNRINCIV	0.27	0.77
Young men outdoors (as proportion of housing units on block) [A]	ZMALEPRO	0.17	0.74
Quality-of-life crime news (drug abuse, carrying weapons, domestic disturbances, prostitution, vandalism, disorderly conduct) [N]	ZOTHCRNW	0.54	0.72
Lambda (before rotation)		<b>4.61</b>	<b>1.32</b>

Note: Principal-component loadings given are after varimax rotation.

Note: [S] = survey-based data source; [A] = onsite assessment items; [N] = based on newspaper archive. Survey and assessment information is based on 50 blocks, each in a separate neighborhood; newspaper data are based on reports from each of 50 neighborhoods during the study period. For more detail, see Perkins and Taylor (1996).

The loadings that are shown indicate how strongly each variable “correlates” with the broader component. A large number indicates a stronger “correlation.” Lambda indicates the size of the underlying component before rotation. A larger lambda indicates a more sizable component. Components are rotated using a varimax solution, designed to provide simple structure, i.e., a few variables with high loadings, and the remaining variables with loadings close to zero.

Taylor and Covington, 1993). Returning to a stratified sample of 30 of those neighborhood blocks in 1994, we interviewed residents again and completed onsite assessments. These data permit us to see how unexpected changes in perceived incivilities and assessed incivilities relate. Each variable in the analysis reflects unexpected change—1994 scores after partialling for respective 1981–82 scores. We used two survey-based measures of perceived changes in disorder: changes in physical incivilities and changes in social incivilities. We used two measures in assessed disorder: changes in vacant, boarded up houses and changes in the amount of graffiti.

Exploratory principal-components analysis suggests changes in disorder based on survey questions are relatively separate from changes based on onsite assessments. The results appear in exhibit 7.

Two measures of changing perceptions of disorder relate closely to one another, appearing with large loadings on the first component. Two measures of changing physical conditions based on assessments relate closely to one another and have high loadings on the second component. Stated differently, the changes cluster according to the assessment method used.

We repeated the analysis adding reactions to crime, such as changes in avoidance. Again, the survey items related closely to one another, loading better than 0.80 on their dimension. The two assessment items loaded better than 0.80 on a separate dimension.

Repeating the analysis again adding unexpected changes in three crimes—robbery, assault, and larceny—provided a diffuse pattern as well. The crime variables went together on one dimension, the survey items went on a different dimension, and the assessment variables clustered by themselves. If we asked for a two- rather than three-component solution, results became rather unclear, but we still saw the assessment-based variables separating from the survey-based variables.<sup>18</sup>

These analyses using different data sources raise questions. The latter finding regarding changes in disorder, although deserving an extremely cautious interpretation, suggests that changes in disorder may be far less unitary than previously thought. Neighborhoods where perceptions of disorder were increasing were not necessarily the same neighborhoods where

on-street conditions were worsening, nor were they the same neighborhoods where crime rates were rising.

The divergent patterns apparent in the latter analysis suggest two possible interpretations. One is that changes in different incivilities indicators may be driven by different processes. For example, the processes driving shifts in residents' perceptions may be heavily influenced by media reports and certain high-profile events in the neighborhood, whereas changes in vacancies may be driven by longer term trends in local housing and job markets.

Another possible interpretation is that perceptions do not immediately respond to ongoing changes in the locale. The perceptions may be "sticky" and slow to incorporate more recent events.<sup>19</sup>

## Conclusions on measurement questions

This portion of the paper addresses three measurement questions raised by the incivilities thesis.

The first and second questions are: Can we separate incivilities indicators from related constructs? Are incivilities at the neighborhood level distinct from community structure and community crime rates? The answer to both questions is yes if we use aggregated indicators based on residents' perceptions. If we use assessed indicators, we have more trouble separating them from community structure and crime, but we can separate them from land-use features. At the individual level, perceived incivilities appear to be easily separable from related constructs, such as attachment to place. In short, discriminant validity for survey-based items appears acceptable, but not so for assessment-based items.

The third question asked about cross-sectional and longitudinal convergent validity is: Do incivilities indicators based on different data collection methods converge as expected? The data examined suggest they do not. Cross-sectionally, at the street block and neighborhood levels, indicators tend to converge as much by method as by construct. When we examine longitudinal data focusing on unexpected changes in neighborhoods over an extended period, such as a decade, indicators also cluster by method. Other researchers using shorter time frames have observed comparable patterns.

## Implications for policy practice and theory

There are four approaches to gauging the amount of disorder in a locale: surveys, onsite assessments of conditions by trained raters, census data, and archival data. Most of the work on the incivilities thesis has used indicators based on the first two methods.

Incivilities theorizing, as described above, has moved through several levels over time, with a current focus on neighborhood dynamics. At the neighborhood level, we have a choice of how to measure incivilities,

relying either on aggregated survey responses or assessments of local conditions. Theoretically, which is more appropriate?

One can argue for aggregated survey responses because those capture residents' current views, subject only to the limitations of the sampling and surveying processes. They provide a snapshot of how residents gauge the problems in the community, and reveal the collective view.

Alternatively, one can argue for reliance on assessments. For example, by counting boarded-up houses, abandoned stores, and graffiti, raters can present

**Exhibit 7. Unexpected Changes in Disorder: Exploratory Principal-Components Analysis**

Variable	Component I	Component II
Unexpected changes in perceived social incivilities [S]	0.91	-0.09
Unexpected changes in perceived physical incivilities [S]	0.84	0.29
Unexpected changes in vacant, boarded up houses [A]	-0.02	0.83
Unexpected changes in graffiti [A]	0.17	0.80
<b>Lambda</b>	<b>1.77</b>	<b>1.20</b>

Note: [S] = survey-based data source, 17–28 respondents per neighborhood (24 = average); [A] = onsite assessment items.

All indicators are neighborhood-level indicators. Unexpected change = 1994 actual score–1994 predicted score, where the actual score is an empirical Bayes estimate of true neighborhood score derived from hierarchical linear models (HLM). The predicted score is likewise derived from HLM ( $n=30$  neighborhoods).

For the onsite assessment items, the period of change is 1981–1994 with the same blocks assessed in 1981 and 1994. For the survey items, the period of change is 1982–1994. Excellent inter-rater reliability was obtained for both items at both time points. For vacant houses, the reliability coefficients were 0.78 (1981) and 0.93 (1995) using Cronbach's alpha. For graffiti present/absent on each block, the reliability coefficients were 0.78 (1981) and 0.83 (1995) using Kappa as the reliability coefficient.

The perceived problems used the standard format in which respondents were asked if the issue was not a problem (0), somewhat of a problem (1), or a big problem (2). We carried out a principal-components analysis of the perceived problems, extracting two eigenvalues explaining 60 percent of the total variance. Rotating the two components to a varimax solution one component picks up physical problems only: vacant houses, vacant lots, people who do not maintain their property, and litter. A second component focuses on social problems: insults, teens, noise, bad elements moving in, and people fighting. Vandalism had moderate loadings on both components. Putting vandalism together with the other physical problems, we created an index with a reliability (alpha) of 0.80. The reliability of the social problems was 0.86.



conditions on neighborhood streets subject only to the limitations linked to the raters' schedule of observations and inter-rater agreement.

Practitioners and policymakers evaluating initiatives geared to reducing incivilities need to choose the type of data on which they will rely for evaluating program impact. The foregoing analyses suggest which type they choose will have important implications for their evaluations.

If they choose survey-based assessments, they are focusing on an outcome more readily separable from fundamental community fabric. It should be easier to achieve changes on survey-based outcomes than on assessment-based outcomes because the former are somewhat more independent. If they choose survey-based measures, they can more easily argue that incivilities are a problem separate from neighborhood fabric and neighborhood crime and can more easily produce results.

The analyses presented, however, in particular the investigation into changes in incivilities, warn against assuming that conditions have improved just because residents think they have. Over a long period, such as a decade, it appears that different incivility indicators tap into different pathways of neighborhood change. Resident perceptions might worsen while neighborhood conditions improve, or the reverse could occur. Other researchers, using much shorter timeframes of 1 to 2 years, also find divergence between perceived incivility changes and assessed incivility changes (Giacomazzi et al., 1996; Popkin et al., 1996). If evaluators rely on survey-based incivility indicators, they may more readily find resident views improved but will not necessarily know how conditions have actually changed.

In sum, what we know about disorder and how to remedy these conditions depends on the theory used to frame the issue and the type of indicators chosen. The version of the theory receiving strongest empirical support to date is the Wilson, Garofalo, and Laub, individual-level theory. In addition, the disorder indicators it views as appropriate—survey-based reports of neighborhood problems—have demonstrated the expected convergent and discriminant validity patterns. These indicators point most clearly to a separate problem deserving separate policy attention. The intervention focus suggested by the thesis calls for identifying individuals who are more troubled by

local conditions than their neighbors and intervening with those individuals.

By contrast, when we move to the later versions of the incivilities thesis, shifting from an individual to a community focus, and from a cross-sectional to a longitudinal perspective, empirical support is much weaker and measurement questions persist. To date, we have no longitudinal tests of the independent contributions of incivilities to neighborhood changes in fear, crime, or structure. In addition, it is not clear if we should rely on onsite assessments or aggregated resident perceptions to gauge incivilities. The two types of indicators appear to reflect different, relatively independent dynamics and fail to demonstrate convergent validity when indicators from more than one method are used.

Researchers, practitioners, and policymakers also may want to widen the scope of inquiry into incivilities to consider two additional issues: a group that has been excluded in previous studies and a concept that has been ignored.

Researchers have overlooked many others who use neighborhoods besides residents: business personnel working at local establishments; or service providers passing through, such as delivery drivers, cable technicians, or phone company personnel. Researchers have not considered their perspectives: What types of local conditions draw their attention? Do they make inferences comparable to those made by residents? Are their conclusions markedly different? In short, are the attributions made dependent on the type of interpreter? We have one study from Minneapolis-St. Paul where impacts of assessed incivilities on business personnel were the opposite of what was expected based on research with residents (Taylor, 1997a).

Turning back to theory, researchers also have not explored the connection between incivilities and social disorganization. An extraordinarily rich conceptual and empirical literature exists on the latter topic (Kornhauser, 1978; Sampson 1988, 1991; Sampson and Grove, 1989). One of the premier items used to gauge social disorganization is the presence of unsupervised teen groups. This concern also has been labeled as a key social incivility. Are social incivilities little more than indicators of social disorganization, or do they refer to a related but distinct set of local processes? How should we establish the latter processes? If we are concerned that incivilities are little more

than perceived social disorganizing action, how do we resolve those concerns? Is the Wilson, Garofalo, and Laub incivilities thesis no more than the psychological counterpart of community social disorganization dynamics?

The discussion here faintly echoes the debate in the 1960s in the literature regarding anomie, social status, and delinquency (Chilton, 1964; Gordon, 1967; Lander, 1954). Given our current concerns, if we consider the relationship between incivilities and social disorganization, research in this area will at least become less theoretically insular.

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### Notes

1. It is not possible within the confines of this article to also review empirical work on the impacts of physical and social incivilities or empirical work on community policing impacts on incivilities.
2. Skogan and Maxfield's (1981) indirect victimization model also attempts to address this question. Instead of moving beyond crime per se, the authors discuss how crime impacts can be amplified through local social networks.
3. Although, to my knowledge, this presentation was never published, it significantly influenced workers in the field at that time and merits attention here. Hunter's influence can be seen in publications like Lewis and Maxfield (1980) and Skogan and Maxfield (1981).
4. Hunter appears to be the first to coin the term "symbols of incivility."
5. Whereas Hunter allows that residents would make inferences about residents within the neighborhood, public agencies outside the neighborhood, or both, Wilson and Kelling suggest that the inference made refers to internal actors, such as other residents.
6. Unrepaired signs of incivility inspire nonserious crime initially, but contribute to later increases in serious crime arising from offender in-migration. Unfortunately, Wilson and Kelling fail to explain how prior crime levels might contribute to unrepaired signs of incivility in the first place. Their view appears to be different from Hunter's. He suggests that crime and incivilities have the same structural origin and are nonrecursively locked in an escalating loop.
7. Skogan's modeling of incivilities as mediating variables seems counter to his statement that incivilities make an independent contribution to the outcomes examined.
8. Skogan uses robbery victimization as an outcome variable, but does not carry out analyses that use victimization as a predictor, so that its impact can be separated from the impact of perceived incivilities.
9. The partial impact, however, exceeded the coefficient linking perceived vandalism with assessed vandalism on the block, suggesting that onsite incivilities may influence local crime in ways that do not involve residents' perceptions.
10. The only previously archived data set containing extensive assessed and perceived incivilities at the Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research is from Minneapolis-St. Paul (McPherson and Silloway, 1986).
11. Prior to 1970, variables describing youth population related to the stability dimension, which was sometimes referred to as the familism dimension. From 1970 to the present, youth population relates more closely to the race dimension. Thus, we refer to the latter as a race and youth dimension.
12. The individual items and the principal component loadings are shown below. The loadings show the "correlation" between the item and the underlying, broader component. The larger the lambda, the more sizeable the component.

	Commercial/ Incivilities	Residential
Small groups	.86	.06
Graffiti	.78	.33
Volume of males on street	.72	-.04
Vacant houses	.71	.23
Housing density/block size	.69	.32
Litter	.69	.46
Commercial/industrial/ institutional land use	.13	.86
Percent residential frontage	-.35	-.84
Parking lots	.04	.77
Amenities drawing foot traffic	.31	.64
High traffic/high volume streets	.08	.52
Vacant lots	.14	.50
<b>Lambda</b>	5.25	1.79

13. The exploratory principal-components analyses reported here for Baltimore and Minneapolis-St. Paul need to be interpreted with extreme caution, given the extremely low ratios of cases to variables.

14. Although this exploratory principal-components analysis has an acceptable ratio of cases to variables (216:9), it is problematic in that socioeconomic status and racial composition have only one indicator variable each. Thus, these components cannot be clearly defined. Nonetheless, we have three perceived indicators of incivilities which provide a relatively clear definition.

15. Removing Seattle from the analysis, because its more than 5,000 cases drove the analysis, and reanalyzing the remaining 2,893 cases, produced slightly different results. Most notably, education almost reached a sizable negative loading (-0.39) on the incivilities component, suggesting that low socioeconomic status and perceived neighborhood problems are weakly related. However, the incivilities indicators continued to load tightly together.

16. The Greenberg et al. (1982) data set from Atlanta contains perceived incivilities along with land-use information. But, it does not contain information on assessed incivilities.

17. Strictly speaking, principal-components analysis extracts linear composites, not underlying dimensions. These results should be viewed cautiously because the ratio of variables to cases does not reach the recommended ratio of 1:10.

18. Some researchers might argue that we should have tried a solution rotating to correlated components rather than orthogonal components and simple structure.

Oblique rotations raise extremely serious concerns about construct clarity (Gordon, 1968). Furthermore, looking at the factor loadings suggested clear orthogonality between the two components noted in exhibit 7.

19. I am indebted to Pam Lattimore and Jack Riley from the National Institute of Justice for this suggestion.

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# Constituency Building and Urban Community Policing

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## Policing, constituencies, and social capital

The institution of policing is undergoing a shift toward greater responsiveness to the variable demands for service enunciated by subdivisions within jurisdictions and toward greater concern for strategies to prevent or reduce crime. Increasing attention is being paid to whether and how the police can contribute to the quality of life in neighborhoods through the adoption of these strategies (Bayley, 1994).

This change in policing has been gradual and fitful. Harbingers of the current ideas for community policing and problem solving first emerged in the late 1960s (Sherman et al., 1973; Toch, 1969), and current strategies are in part incremental adjustments to two decades of evaluation research that challenged the core strategies of professional law enforcement: street patrol, rapid response to calls, and expert investigation (Bayley, 1994: 3).

The current policing adjustments in organization and service strategy are not isolated innovations by one slice of government. Other public-sector institutions have also responded to criticism about insensitivity to differential demands by various segments of their service domains and to the ineffectiveness of large, centralized service bureaucracies (Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). Partnerships between neighborhoods and government have been attempted in a number of policy sectors (Hallman, 1984). The police share in the concern for greater governmental responsiveness, but they did not invent it.

Among the more common elements in new policing strategies are those that Bayley (1994: 105) summarizes with the acronym CAMPS: consultation (with citizens about needs); adaptation (through more flexible resource allocation); mobilization of citizens (to share the tasks of producing public safety); and

problem solving (to address the proximate causes of repeat disturbances).

These elements of community and problem-solving policing vary considerably across implementations. Two of these elements, consultation and mobilization, are not entirely within the control of the police. These will not be successful simply on the basis of what the police do. They will also be affected by historical patterns of citizen consultation with the police or other centralized authorities and by residents' prior experiences with mobilizing to achieve collective ends, with or against the police, and with other partners or against other targets.

Some areas in a city and some citizens are more skilled than others in the tasks of consulting and therefore can marshal more of the resources necessary for mobilization than others. Current research on new policing strategies indicates that the police are least effective in working with the neighborhoods that are most in need of greater and more effective police service, partly because typical consultation and mobilization strategies are least effective in these areas (Skogan, 1990).

Consultation with residents about neighborhood problems and preferences and mobilization of residents to implement programs are critical, civic activities (Cortes, 1993; McKnight, 1995; Stoecker, 1994), but government has had a poor track record in prior attempts (Warren et al., 1974). Government agencies, including the police, are concerned about losing control (Lipsky, 1980). They usually channel citizen consultation in ways that will be most convenient for the agency and seek to direct rather than facilitate mobilization (Weingart et al., 1994; Warren, 1976).

Whether and how the police now engage in consultation and mobilization should not be taken lightly. In any public endeavor, one must begin with the assumption that harm as well as good can be done and that

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beneficent intent may often have harmful consequences. If consultation and mobilization are critical elements in the development of an active citizenry, the police may promote more than police aims by supporting such activities. But, at the same time, they can undermine more than police goals by doing it poorly.

The police can build community, but they can also destroy it. They can destroy it directly by actions that fail to engage residents in the coproduction of public order. They can destroy it indirectly and inadvertently by providing disappointing experiences in civic partnership, thereby reducing the future supply of energy for collective problem solving, or contributing to narrow and incomplete definitions of neighborhood problems. Some of the strongest enemies of community would benefit greatly if the "community problem" were seen only as the result of residents' characteristics and behaviors—such as criminality and crime—rather than also the result of policies that draw resources away from the communities.

This paper takes a deeper look at the community side of community policing strategies by examining whether CAMPS can contribute to community building. It examines the extent to which police encourage constituency building and constituency behavior in neighborhoods. It frames that examination by analyzing the especially difficult task of constituency building in the poorest, highest crime, urban areas.

The main argument is that the police face an uphill, but not impossible, battle in fostering constituency behavior. Arrayed against their efforts are the political economies of urban areas, which traditionally favor some city interests and neighborhoods over others. This traditional tilt in city governance is described as the "urban struggle." Within this struggle, certain beliefs about what is normal and appropriate have been institutionalized, providing some urban actors advantage over others.

The argument is presented in five sections. This section, "Policing, Constituencies, and Social Capital," reviews the historical context in which the police work for community order and introduces the concepts of constituency and social capital. "The Urban Struggle" outlines this issue, its key participants, and recent shifts in the urban struggle that provide potential for city government partnerships with neighborhoods. "Constituency Building in Controlled Communities" examines seven critical variables in

constituency building in poor neighborhoods. "The Police and Sustained Community" illustrates how community policing may influence those variables for better or worse. "Prospects and Strategies for Sustaining Constituency" concludes by reviewing the preferences of different parties in the urban struggle for police impact on community variables and sketches some strategies for the police that would make constituency building more likely.

Although the police are often genuinely unaware of the nature of the urban struggle, they have played a part in it. Indeed, the traditional policing strategies of patrol, rapid response, and investigation (along with centralization) were devised by police executives as their response to the demands of the more powerful, politically connected parties to the urban struggle.

The police and the rest of local government may, in fact, change their strategic plan and change sides in the struggle to define the quality of urban living. But they will not do so successfully without understanding the role urban politics has played in the last 50 years and the great forces arrayed against significant change that have been produced by that tradition (Byrum, 1992; Logan and Molotch, 1987; Skogan, 1990: 172–173).

The reconfiguration of police strategies and missions should be seen as a small but significant part of the broader struggle to reshape public and private administration. On the one side are significant attempts to be more responsive and more humane to employees and to citizens or customers (e.g., French and Bell, 1995: 236–253; Osborne and Gaebler, 1992). On the other side are major pressures for the privatization of wealth, the reduction of public services, and the minimization of the public's bottom line (Bayley, 1994: 144; Dyckman, 1996; French and Bell, 1995: 250–251).

The outcome of these counterpressures will be the result of a long-term, not a short-term, struggle. It is doubtful that many police leaders, or city leaders in general, have sufficient staying power to adopt a long-term perspective (Wycoff and Skogan, 1993: 87–88). But without greater appreciation of the meaning of consultation and mobilization in urban communities, the police can engage in a number of short-term programmatic efforts and achieve short-term successes on measures of public order while contributing

nothing positive in the long term to the quality of urban life.

The frequent lack of connection between short-term innovation and long-term change is mainly explained by the ability of the forces that are against neighborhood livability to coopt citizen programs and steer them toward the achievement of greater private gain (Logan and Molotch, 1987; Stoecker, 1994). The sustainability of neighborhood improvements is in large measure explained by the creation, nurture, and institutionalization of constituencies that build neighborhood life (Castells, 1983).

### Police constituencies

Police constituencies in urban settings can be conceived with varying levels of complexity. Some early conceptions, for example, simply designated four primary interest groups: the general public, the court work group, local government officials, and levels within the police department (Whitaker et al., 1982). The approach taken here will be broader in some respects and narrower in others.

Constituents are recognized as part of a polity and therefore have a hand in shaping policy by selecting representatives to formulate or implement policy. Constituents express concerns about the public agenda that must be taken into account. They can exercise that influence directly or indirectly, periodically or continuously, formally or informally. The constituents whose expectations are most accounted for often may not be the most visible in their exertion of influence.

Police constituencies can be identified narrowly by observing only those persons who or groups that take a direct and visible interest in police behavior or more broadly by designating those who have an interest in shaping the quality of life in urban systems, for which the police provide a primary function. This paper will take the broader approach, under the assumption that those actors who shape the city shape the police.

This discussion of police constituency will be narrower than others because it will focus on community constituencies in urban settings—the groups that shape the meaning of living in cities. Although definitions of community vary, they tend to focus on residential areas or neighborhoods in which people unrelated by family or organizational membership

carry out the tasks of daily living (Hallman, 1984; Lyon, 1987; Warren, 1978). The focus will be on the actors whose expectations shape the quality of urban living space and the role that the police are to play in contributing to that quality.

Expectations of police officers and citizens can be analyzed in terms of immediate situational cues that predict decisions in that specific encounter (Worden et al., 1995), but these are not directly relevant to community constituencies. The expectations of interest here are those that contribute to how the police participate in the definition of community. Most of these are not expectations of individuals interacting on the street but the expectations institutionalized in structural relations and cultural understandings. These expectations include those built into police roles by recruitment, training, and evaluation criteria; the expectations of mothers that their children will be safe in the neighborhood; and the expectations of real estate developers that a proposal for a new office complex will be accepted as a benefit to everyone in the city. In other words, the expectations most relevant are those built into the structure and traditions of city life.

Although expectations at this level are not as variable and fluid as those related to individual encounters, they are not set in stone. The primary actors in structuring urban communities are not simply playing out a script of preordained expectations; they act on the basis of them, but they also struggle to maintain them and interpret particular proposals or actions as consistent with their general expectations. Which expectations apply may not always be clear since cultures and traditions, particularly in diverse and open societies, may contain contradictory elements competing for enactment. Even specific actors may have difficulty articulating which expectations apply in determining what to do about particular urban issues.

It is in this context that Hope (1995: 22) and Goldstein (1987) interpret changes in crime prevention and policing strategies not as changes in scientific theories about crime control but as the outcomes of political struggles for the definition of community. For example, crime prevention strategies have varied over time in their conceptualization of offenders and victims as community members. In the 1960s, crime prevention strategies considered offenders as community members with some claims on those responsible

for shaping crime control, while more recent views are less likely to see offenders as constituents—as part of the community—with legitimate expectations of influence. Similarly, victims traditionally have been ignored in shaping crime prevention policy but have recently gained legitimacy as constituents (Hope, 1995: 66–67).

### Constituency and social capital

Constituencies are not clients receiving services (McKnight, 1995), but are people actively engaged in defining the processes of their governance. Constituents have an active role in the inputs to policy. They are heard when goals are set and alternatives are weighed. People assume the obligations of constituency when they feel they are a part of local life and are connected to the rest of society (Alinsky, 1969: 40; Cortes, 1993). Putnam has argued that the quality of public life and the performance of public institutions are linked to structures for and traditions of civic engagement (1995: 3).

This general observation has appeared relevant to the control of crime since the most frequent conclusions about crime prevention activity are that they are best implemented when integrated with existing community associations and they are least successful in areas with little associational life (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993: 154). Whether individuals do something about crime is not related to the personal relevance of crime to them; instead it is related to their personal involvement in communal activities (Skogan and Maxfield, 1981: 226–227).

Putnam's term for the "features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and social trust, that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit" is social capital (1995: 4). A community organizer in Texas has defined the same concept as "a measure of how much collaborative time and energy people have for each other" (Cortes, 1993: 17).

Putnam's analysis of a wide variety of joining behavior indicates that the United States has suffered a steady and serious erosion of social capital since World War II (1995: 4). This drop can be seen in all classes of people and all regions of the country. He interprets this drop as a generational effect: people born prior to 1940 are aging out of the population, and no group since has exhibited a similar level of

associational behavior (1996). Life in many neighborhoods has become a private rather than a communal affair.

While not all social capital is invested in civic engagement, civic engagement is dependent on the stock of social capital available. A wide range of commentators have argued that the nature of public institutions, such as the police, is fundamentally changed when those receiving services are not engaged in the process of defining the nature of services to be delivered or problems to be solved (Alinsky, 1969: 55; Lipsky, 1980; Posner, 1990: 17; Putnam, 1995; Spergel, 1976: 90). One community organizer hypothesizes that any progress with poverty or other urban ills is dependent on the creation and nurturing of neighborhood-level institutions that can mediate between the private lives of neighbors and the public institutions of the state (Cortes, 1993: 23). Another experienced organizer asserts that some areas are too bereft of associations to constitute a community and that constituencies with the capacity to define or take action on community issues such as crime cannot exist in these areas (Delgado, 1986: 83).

While social capital is declining throughout the United States, it is at its lowest in poor, diverse, urban neighborhoods (Wilson, 1987). These neighborhoods contribute disproportionately to crime and victimization and are the areas most in need of new policing initiatives such as community policing (Buerger, 1994; Grinc, 1994). However, these neighborhoods are also those least able (and at times least willing) to participate with the police in the coproduction of public safety (Skogan, 1990). Without sufficient social capital, they often lack the processes and structures that support constituency behaviors (Cortes, 1993; McKnight, 1995). Policing initiatives to prevent crime in such areas are particularly problematic—often engendering no citizen involvement at all or increasing, rather than reducing, dissension within the neighborhood (Skogan, 1990). Before the police begin to engage such neighborhoods, the special difficulties of these localities must be understood. The police have traditionally played a role, albeit a minor one, in the reduction of constituency building in such neighborhoods. The difficulties of constituency building in these "controlled neighborhoods" (Alinsky, 1969; Reitzes and Reitzes, 1982) can only be appreciated in relation to the broader urban struggle in which these neighborhoods have generally been the losers.

## The urban struggle

Skogan and Maxfield (1981: 238) assert that most programs, research, and theory about fear of crime and victimization have focused on the residential neighborhood as the arena for action. A more recent review suggests that policy and research attention has not changed in the intervening years (Hope, 1995).

There are severe dangers in equating the target of program goals (better neighborhoods) with the locus of effective actions toward those goals (e.g., crime prevention should focus on problems within neighborhoods). For example, if we focus on the exertion of social control within a neighborhood, we may miss processes by which some neighborhoods control crime by funneling it into other neighborhoods (Byrum, 1992).

The progenitor of much community organizing in the United States, Saul Alinsky, said that the two major failures of typical approaches to neighborhood problems were the failure to recognize the interdependence of problems and the failure to understand that neighborhood life is influenced by forces that transcend the neighborhood (Alinsky, 1969: 57). While highly critical of Alinsky's strategies for avoiding these failures, the preeminent scholar of urban social movements, Manuel Castells would agree with him about tendencies of American attempts to improve neighborhoods: (1) they tend to occur at the level where the problem is experienced without regard to the broader context, (2) they tend to focus on single issues isolated from other related objectives, and (3) they are organized locally without regard for linking neighborhoods to external agencies and resources (Castells, 1983: 123; see similar list in Boyte, 1980: 35).

Understanding the neighborhood as a product of local and nonlocal forces is critical in analyzing what a number of researchers and organizers have called the urban struggle. As Logan and Molotch put it, "Neighborhood futures are determined by the ways in which entrepreneurial pressures from outside intersect with internal material stakes and sentiments" (1987: 123). While disorder in neighborhoods has proximate, neighborhood causes, its roots are embedded in "capitalism, racism, and the emerging role of the U.S. in the international division of labor" (Skogan, 1990: 172; see also Hallman, 1984: 261; Hope, 1995: 24).

In Castells' view, the interaction of these forces in urban settings is best understood as a constant struggle because the quality of city life at any point in time is a product of different groups' interests and social values vying for influence in the use of urban space. The process of change is conflictual because some of these interests and values are contradictory, and the process is dialectical because the opposition of forces produces a trajectory of action in the struggle that is unintended by any single actor or coalition of actors (1983: xviii).

While the outcomes of the struggle are not intended by any single group, this does not mean that the problems are not the product of policies, rather than impersonal forces (Wilkins, 1991: 57-70). The primary threat to neighborhoods, say Logan and Molotch (1987: 111), is not urbanization but "organizations and institutions whose routine functioning reorganize urban space" (see also Castells, 1983: 12; Warren, 1976: 9-14). The urban struggle is not predetermined but open (Castells, 1983: 72), not inexorable but manageable (Bratton, 1995). But the openness and manageability also imply that prior failures, especially in the poorest neighborhoods, are largely the product of policy choices. Poverty and crime, or at least their concentration, have been created. Arguments to the contrary are most often put forth by two parties: the currently dominant actors in the urban struggle who enjoy the greatest benefit from the current use of urban space (Castells, 1983: xvii) and the exhausted and apathetic who have suffered the greatest costs of the current use of urban space (Cortes, 1993).

The principal competing values for the use of space are those of exchange value and use value. Exchange value operates on the premise that owners of city space or investors in city development should be able to extract as much profit as possible from the use of urban space. Exchange value therefore places a premium on high-density usage and population growth. Use value rests on the premise that those living in urban space should have accessible services to meet their needs for daily survival, enjoy networks of informal social support, and share symbols of security and trust (Logan and Molotch, 1987: 103). Use value places a premium on livability or community.

Exchange values are typically championed by interests organized in large institutions such as corporations, banks, and political parties. Use values are

typically championed by grassroots movements in neighborhoods and citizens' organizations. Therefore, the urban struggle also typically includes a conflict over the form of decision processes. Use value adherents tend to push for increased autonomy and power through grassroots democracy, while exchange value interests stress the advantages of centralized and expert decisionmaking (Castells, 1983: 12–48; Bruyn and Meehan, 1987: 24).

### The primary actors in the struggle

The primary actors in the urban struggle are State authorities (including local government), citizens' movements, and exchange value interests, such as large capital interests, developers, and landlords (Cunningham and Kotler, 1983: xxi; Logan and Molotch, 1987: 47; Stoecker, 1994: 12). None of these are consistently unified groups, always acting in concerted fashion with other members of the same group.

Exchange value interests are fragmented in a variety of ways, including their relative commitment to place. Large capital can be moved with electronic speed in response to advantages in international markets and has little, and increasingly less, commitment to any particular place. In contrast, utilities and local landlords can hope to influence local markets but cannot leave (Logan and Molotch, 1987: 39). Within the same space, various capital interests will compete with each other and forge alignments with other urban actors to advance their own projects over the proposals of their competitors (Stoecker, 1994: 15). Nevertheless, all capital interests will fight to defend the dominant rules of the city game. They expect free market assumptions to be seen as natural and right. They expect the negative byproducts of capital exchange to be externalized and paid by other actors, either by the State or by neighborhood residents. They expect that most external benefits, such as the increased value of land after development, will accrue to capital. In other words, economic elites agree that acceptable debate will take place within the exchange value framework (Logan and Molotch, 1987: 64).

The American state is likewise separated into Federal, State, and local systems and a host of public authorities that buffer elected officials from direct responsibility for and criticism about many urban planning functions and services. It is the peculiar nature of American federalism that all three levels of govern-

ment operate conjointly and simultaneously in the urban struggle. Local government is not necessarily closer, in the sense of being more responsive to neighborhood interests, than State and Federal agencies (Grozdzins, 1963; Stoecker, 1994: 90–140; Warren et al., 1974). All three provide direct services as well as planning and coordinating functions. Despite competition and conflicts among and within governmental structures, government officials, like various members in the market, tend to share and defend basic underlying premises. For agents of the State, the primary expectation is their control of formal decisionmaking (Lipsky, 1980; Miller et al., 1977: 169–174). Local government is likely to respond to neighborhood pressures, capital projects, and State and Federal policies in relation to how those initiatives are perceived to enhance or constrict local decision discretion. The local government generally favors exchange value interests and defends exchange value assumptions, but it is vulnerable to counterclaims from neighborhoods because it must maintain legitimacy. If city growth strategies visibly threaten the livability of neighborhoods, the local government may become sympathetic to calls for greater attention to use value in decisions about urban space.

Citizens' groups also vary in several ways. Their objectives vary from racist and reactionary to progressive (Logan and Molotch, 1987: 37). Some citizens' groups are organized around public issues that are not place specific (e.g., Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, Ralph Nader and his consumer protection group, civil rights) but are apparently concerned with resisting corporate or government power or policies in general. Others are place specific and have been identified loosely as the neighborhood movement (Boyte, 1980: 7). The neighborhood movement, in turn, varies in its philosophy and strategies for action. Neighborhood organizations can seek to defend specific localities against encroachment of new members and lifestyles or can seek a greater share of resources for all neighborhood residents (Skogan, 1988). Neighborhood organizations can compete with each other or form coalitions to gain power against other urban actors (Boyte, 1980: 148–166).

### The growth machine

Since the 1950s market forces have overwhelmed the countervailing forces in the city (Byrum, 1992; Cunningham and Kotler, 1983: xxi). In the urban

struggle, the economic elite have prevailed. As a result, the concentration of wealth has increased while the payment for infrastructure costs is less shared. The fastest growing industries pay less for labor than the declining industries. On average, real wages are down while profits are rising. The proportion of the population that is poor is increasing while the proportion that is middle class is decreasing. The proportion of tax revenues that come from corporations declined by about two-thirds between 1960 and 1984 (Faux, 1987: 28).

Capital interests have a number of advantages in the urban struggle that help explain these outcomes. In terms of understanding the expectations of constituencies in the urban struggle, the economic elite have a strategic advantage in choosing how to participate. Capital interests can participate directly in city politics by backing a particular political party or candidate, but they can also take more indirect routes, such as relying on influence in government boards and committees or leveraging favorable government policies through control of the economy. The state will usually act to please capital interests under the fear (and often the threat) that capital interests will otherwise go elsewhere (Stoecker, 1994: 12–14).

Capital interests' expectation that indirection is sufficient is often met. For example, most government urban planning has favored capital interests over neighborhood interests despite legislation to the contrary. Eighty percent of urban renewal funds have been used for economic development rather than housing, and urban renewal programs have destroyed more housing than they have built (Logan and Molotch, 1987: 147–179).

The economic elite can also coopt community organizations, such as preservation committees, neighborhood associations, and community development corporations. The efforts of these organizations to promote stability and vitality in neighborhoods can have the unintended effect of promoting profit taking, as the value of space becomes more attractive for outside investors (Logan and Molotch, 1987: 139; Stoecker, 1994: 240).

Long-term negative effects of short-term improvements in neighborhoods are particularly likely when collective action by residents is not guided by knowledge of the urban struggle and therefore does not

include limits on exchange value in revitalization plans. This oversight is frequent when neighborhoods rely on interpretations for urban problems that are consistent with the exchange value framework—that the market should determine how neighborhoods fare (Kling and Posner, 1990: 34; Boyte, 1980: 172).

The coalition of interests seeking exchange value in the use of city space has been called the growth machine (Swanstrom, 1985: 25; Logan and Molotch, 1987: 34). Growth machines can be conservative, in which case government aids and abets the maximization of profit without much regard for externalized costs. Growth machines can also be liberal, in which case government both reallocates through taxes some of the benefits from growth for the development of neighborhood services and also controls how growth will take place (Logan and Molotch, 1987: 67–69; Swanstrom, 1985: 11–34).

The United States is currently in an era of conservative growth politics, in which the prevailing view is that government social programs are too costly and government controls have failed. This includes the notion that social science understanding of community order is faulty and that city development should be left to the marketplace (Hope, 1995: 41).

Under the conservative growth machine, legitimate understandings of community problems are limited to those that concentrate on the organization and behavior of neighborhood residents. Problems are viewed as the product of internal disorganization within the neighborhood. Policies and programs that seek to enhance the internal controls in neighborhoods will be favored, while those that examine the position of neighborhoods in the larger urban system will be seen as off limits (Hope, 1995: 71–72). Consequently, conservative growth machines will favor community policing and crime prevention over changes in other policies as means to deal with community problems so long as these programs focus on resident behavior rather than on linking that behavior to the costs of conservative growth policies.

Although concentrated economic power appears indomitable, there are limits to the conservative growth machine. While a number of commentators have characterized the current economic system as unbridled capitalism, even the recognition of that system characteristic may provide some limitations to the

machine, since the power of capital interests seems greatest when it goes unrecognized and unquestioned. Dramatically visible inequality may limit continued hegemony of the conservative growth machine.

The increasing concentration of wealth and the increasing internationalization of the economy have created fissures in the growth machine. Internationalization of wealth has meant that local economic actors do not control investment decisions as they used to do. Local economic leaders have less chance to share in the wealth, and local political leaders have less chance to share in the decisionmaking (Logan and Molotch, 1987: 201–208; McKnight, 1995: 154). This trend has led to calls that corporations must evaluate moves in capital in terms of community impact (Etzioni, 1993: 127), to President Clinton's criticism of the stock market's negative reaction to higher employment, and to presidential candidate Patrick Buchanan's blue-collar, populist Republican campaign. It has also led one student of crime prevention to wonder if neighborhoods need reinvestment rather than disorder policing (Hope, 1995: 61).

### Differential costs in the urban struggle

While the growth machine promises that increasing exchange value is in everyone's interest, it does not deliver on this promise. The benefits and costs for growth are differentially distributed, both within and across cities (Byrum, 1992; Logan and Molotch, 1987: 70–91). Certain neighborhoods have been increasingly isolated from the rest of their cities and separated from the rest of society as a result both of market forces and government policies (Byrum, 1992: 28–31; Hope, 1995: 73–76; McGahey, 1986: 233; Wilson, 1987).

Poor neighborhoods in older central cities are the most vulnerable to the negative changes that growth politics involves. The poor are the most likely to be displaced in renewal, and displacement is likely to break the neighborhood connections that provide the organization for resistance (Logan and Molotch, 1987: 112–113). People who have the power in inner-city neighborhoods typically live elsewhere, reducing allegiance to use values among those with the skills and resources to object to growth and leaving exchange values unrestrained (Comer, 1985: 69–72; Logan and Molotch, 1987: 132).

In neighborhoods with high concentrations of renters, living in progressively less maintained older housing stock, these trends have led to higher turnover of residents, less commitment to particular places, fewer ties among residents, and less of the social capital required for associational structures (McGahey, 1986: 244; Wilson, 1987). These personal and physical disorders may lead to increased fear, increased serious crime, further erosion of resident control of public behavior, and further reductions in neighborhood stability (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993: 15; Skogan, 1990: 3).

The predominating explanation of such neighborhoods in crime control circles is that they are disorganized because the informal social control once exerted by residents on each other has disappeared (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993; Skogan, 1988: 40). But attempts to aid such neighborhoods based on the disorganization premise have often failed. The attempts meet with internal resistance from residents who exert tremendous energy in organizing to survive under such circumstances (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993: 148–180; Reitzes and Reitzes, 1982: 343) and are understandably suspicious of expert motivations and interpretations of their problems. These attempts are also resisted by external forces for whom the devalued neighborhood is an important component of the economy of the city (Byrum, 1992: 1; Hope, 1995: 34–40).

Within the broader view of the urban struggle, such areas are not disorganized but controlled by external forces (Alinsky, 1969; Spergel, 1976). In controlled areas, residents' costs in time, energy, and money for day-to-day survival are so high that there are few resources left over for the development of social capital (Stoecker, 1994: 213–215). "[T]hose who have the most need to mobilize have the least time" (Stoecker, 1994: 215). As a result, there is a dearth of indigenous organizations that can serve as bases for constituent behavior (McKnight, 1995: 154). As the police begin to explore the meaning of community policing, such areas often lack the associational structures that might express expectations about policing (Grinc, 1994: 459). Bayley (1994) and Grinc (1994) ask whether the police should have a role in creating such structures.



## Potential realignment of the local State

It is usually only in alliance with the political elite that neighborhoods can obtain the resources necessary to promote the use value of space and disrupt the growth machine. While the local State usually sides with capital interests, it does not always do so. The growth machine is not always strong enough to form a regime (Swanstrom, 1985: 36). Local city government is particularly vulnerable to counterclaims, since it must maintain legitimacy through some attention to use value or the collective consumption needs of residents (Stoecker, 1994: 14–15).

Historically, increased demands on the State to ameliorate the problems left in the wake of capital accumulation have produced other problems, such as a larger and more oppressive State bureaucracy (Bruyn and Meehan, 1987: 2; Lipsky, 1980). As State services have grown, governments have ignored or even destroyed communities in the effort to provide services to individuals (Etzioni, 1993: 1–20; McKnight, 1995; Spergel, 1976). Citizens' movements may then organize against government as well as, or instead of, against the economic elite (Boyte, 1980: 7).

Until recently, the urban police component of the expanded service State has been legalistic policing. It emerged in the 1920s and 1930s as progressive politicians aligned with capital interests sought to wrest control of city hall from ethnic neighborhoods (Haller, 1971; for a related court example, see Levine, 1972). The result, according to Kelling, has been a model of crime control that removed access to law from the citizens policed (1995: 13). While the typical portrayal of legalistic policing is that it has been removed from politics, the notion of removal has been an interpretation fostered by the growth machine. Since the progressive reforms of city government have generally favored growth machine objectives (Stoecker, 1994), legalistic policing has removed the police from the counterclaims of neighborhoods on central authority (Skogan, 1990: 86). The police job has been to maintain order without changing the dominant direction of the urban political economy toward economic growth and away from neighborhood quality of life.

Beginning in the 1970s, there have been halting but repeated attempts to make government more responsive to neighborhood constituents, often under the

notion of partnerships between neighborhoods and government service organizations with broader jurisdictions (Hallman, 1984: 272). This trend is borrowed to some extent from the quality movement in private firms and the active client movements in education and medicine (Fleissner et al., 1991: 9–10).

The police have been involved in this trend since its inception (Couper and Lobitz, 1991; Fleissner et al., 1991; Sherman et al., 1973). But the forces arrayed against the restructuring of policing (or other aspects of government) in partnership arrangements are many. These include bureaucratic standardization, the long isolation of government bureaucracies from service recipients, and professional or specialist antagonism to lay participation in deciding actions to be taken (Bayley, 1994; Hallman, 1984: 272; Lipsky, 1980).

In the police case, the internal blockages include a midmanagement trained in the autocratic, but ineffective, control of officers and wedded to particular techniques of crime control (Bayley, 1994; Kelling and Bratton, 1993; van Maanen, 1974) and a host of expectations built into police recruiting, promotion, supervision, and evaluation systems (Goldstein, 1987: 13). The external blockages include a police organization structure that is unfamiliar with the process of improving linkages with other organizations, such as neighborhood groups, in voluntary exchanges (Hall et al., 1977); a deeply ingrained association of neighborhood ties with corruption; and a tendency to grant legitimacy only to community leaders associated with the growth coalition.

The result is that "police departments have paid . . . little attention to the education and inclusion of community residents in their transition to community policing. Indeed, in most cases, community policing is an isolated police department phenomenon including neither community residents nor other city agencies" (Grinc, 1994: 441). If this assessment remains accurate, then community policing would be only another sop to the growth machine—a means to pay lipservice to the needs of neighborhoods while city business progresses as usual (Manning, 1988).

The police and other segments of government may restructure and realign with neighborhoods in opposition to the forces of centralization and capital growth. The fissures in the growth coalition, as described above, may well provide an opportunity for a different

form and function of policing than that provided by progressive urban reform and professional law enforcement.

While the political opportunity structure (Stoecker, 1994: 22–23) may be more open in many cities than in the past to alliances between neighborhoods and the State, the most likely predictions are that police bureaucracy will find a way to interpret community policing in ways that are the least challenging to its internal structure and that exchange value interests in the urban struggle will find ways to bend community policing to its objectives, contrary to neighborhood desires and independent of policing intentions.

The extent to which community policing and related efforts at crime prevention represent a true realignment of government with neighborhoods is dependent on the extent to which community policing is a part of, rather than a substitute for, reinvestment in neighborhoods, and to which community policing facilitates neighborhood constituency building, rather than simply supplying another set of services to neighborhoods.

The strength of these twin characteristics can be examined in existing community policing programs. But this search is more accurately conducted after an elaboration of the nature of constituency building in controlled neighborhoods.

### Constituency building in controlled communities

What would the reorganization of controlled communities require? How can neighborhoods be less determined by nonlocal forces, have more influence over those forces (or at least how those forces will affect the neighborhood), and become more livable, or provide greater evidence of use value premises in the use of space?

A search of the neighborhood movement and neighborhood revitalization literature provides a host of desirable outcome variables—characteristics of improved livability—such as greater participation in the labor market, greater residential stability, greater access to services and commodities for daily living, and reduced disease, disorder, and crime. But the same literature provides less guidance about processes of neighborly and organizational interactions and the

structures that support and maintain these processes. Yet all community literature agrees that outcomes are dependent on altered processes and structures, first to achieve improvement on these outcome indicators and second to institutionalize their attainment—to reproduce them on a regular basis.

Unfortunately, descriptions of these neighborhood structural variables are often embedded in accounts of change in which the focal point is the end result rather than how it was accomplished. Definitions of neighborhood qualities therefore remain relatively amorphous, or defined differently by individual studies. Evidence bearing on their enactment is anecdotal rather than systematic.

One consequence of this relative inattention to neighborhood structure is an overconcern with outcomes as opposed to the means of achieving them. This is hazardous if long-term improvement is desired. As W. Edwards Deming has said of results-based management, it is like driving a car with your eye on the rear-view mirror. If that is true of organization management, it is also true of neighborhood organizing. The neighborhood remains a black box.

The deficiencies in this plan are well-known in economic revitalization efforts. Housing renovation in dilapidated areas fails to improve housing stock or long-term housing value because the area cannot compete with more attractive suburban real estate. A local economy is given a boost through luring to an area a new enterprise, which then hires from a nonlocal labor pool and later abandons that plant as less profitable than some other company line in another city (Byrum, 1992).

The same kinds of deficiencies are reported in early crime prevention efforts. Advice about reducing victimization produces more fear of crime and less neighborhood participation (Rosenbaum et al., 1986). Neighborhood complainants about drug markets receive advice from the police to lie low. Precinct captains who successfully involve neighborhood residents in neighborhood projects are promoted out of the neighborhood and away from neighborhood building (Weingart et al., 1994).

The police can and often do create improvements in particular areas, even without significant participation of the residents in the area or longer term changes in

the structure of neighborhood life. But sustaining those gains requires that other neighborhood characteristics also change.

A tentative listing of neighborhood sustainability variables and their definitions is given in exhibit 1. These variables appear to be present in neighborhood processes and structures that increase social capital and transform it into constituency behavior—the collective efforts to maintain quality of life in a neighborhood.

The list is preliminary because of the unsystematic nature of research on neighborhood revitalization. The definitions no doubt need refinement. Particularly troublesome is that the variables in their present state do not seem mutually exclusive. But it is not clear from available research if this is because they cluster empirically or because they are partially overlapping indicators of more fundamental concepts. These vari-

ables do appear in several different research reports on neighborhood improvement, addressing different kinds of neighborhood problems in varying regions and cultures. Examples to illustrate each variable are provided below.

### Internal coordination

The extent to which neighborhood groups and organizations act in concerted fashion toward solving problems has long been recognized as a critical variable in the strengthening of neighborhoods. Internal coordination, or unification, is the primary objective of locality development—self-help strategies for neighborhood improvement (Warren, 1978). It also is a critical component of social action strategies, such as those used by the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) (Cortes, 1993) and the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) (Delgado, 1986).

#### Exhibit 1. Variables Important In Sustaining Neighborhood Constituency Behavior

Variable	Definition
Internal coordination	The extent to which groups and organizations with separate functions but a common location act in concert for identified projects.
External linkage	The extent to which a locality has ties to nonlocal centers of resources and expertise.
Limits on exchange value	The extent to which development in a locality places limits on profit maximization.
Self-correcting process evaluation	The extent to which neighborhood collective action is attentive to its processes as well as its outcomes; self-evaluations are regular and concerned with renewal.
Autonomy	The extent to which a neighborhood has influence on decisions about actions taken within it; the neighborhood retains its identity when participating in nonlocal networks.
Shared culture	The extent to which a neighborhood is conscious of cultural uniqueness and shared symbols of common place.
Dialogue	The extent to which information about the area is shared and accurate; conflicts are addressed in forums in which all participants are recognized as having legitimacy to speak.

## Constituency Building and Urban Community Policing

Internal coordination can also be problematic or incomplete, since some neighborhood structures can cooperate with each other without incorporating the views and the energy of other neighborhood components. In President Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty," for example, there was great emphasis on the coordination of the formal structures in a neighborhood, but these agencies systematically excluded the residents of the neighborhood in the decisions made by the agencies (Warren et al., 1974). More recently, crime prevention efforts have stressed internal coordination on the informal level—better communication among residents—without considering the connections of resident unification with the public agencies and private organizations in the neighborhood (Hope, 1995). Measures of internal coordination must consider both formal and informal interactions to be complete.

Internal coordination can play a critical role in the economic viability of an area. The Jamestown (New York) Area Labor Management Committee (JALMC) serves as an example. Among its various objectives was "cooperative action by union, management, and local leaders to save jobs in plant shutdowns and to strengthen the economic base of the community" (Meek, 1985: 142). In line with the strategy of cooperation, an industry-wide training program was formed through the cooperation of Jamestown Community College, the United Furniture Workers, and the Jamestown Area Manufacturers Association. The small plants in Jamestown all had similar needs, with training being one of the most pressing. The plants also shared a lack of resources to effectively meet these needs. Coordination was needed to identify mutual needs and to utilize resources in an area to meet those needs. The community college, which previously had little involvement in area economic concerns, became an active partner in the struggle toward economic viability (Trist, 1986; Meek, 1985). Cummins Engine located a new diesel engine-building plant in Jamestown in 1974, largely due to this climate of cooperation between diverse members of the community, resulting in 1,100 new jobs for area residents (Gittell, 1992).

Although Jamestown had benefited from the areawide focus on industrial needs, the mid- to late-1980s brought increased unemployment and a general downturn in the quality of life. The unemployment rate in Jamestown rose above national and State averages.

Twenty percent of its residents were on some form of public assistance (Gittell, 1992).

Problems in Jamestown were attributed to social factors that were not addressed in the focus on the needs of area industry. An Economic Development Committee was formed in 1986 with a broader mandate than that of JALMC to deal with these issues. The committee included representatives from human services, education, and downtown development organizations and attempted to view problems holistically, recognizing the interdependency among economic and social factors (Gittell, 1992).

### External linkages

The extent to which a neighborhood has access to nonlocal centers of resources and expertise is critical to the viability of any locality. No neighborhood is self-sufficient. Indeed, one of the major problems with community revitalization efforts is the lingering but mistaken myth that community problems are self-generated and that solutions will be only a matter of mobilizing internal willpower and resources (Byrum, 1992). One of the major deficiencies in the neighborhoods with the highest rates of crime and disorder is that they become increasingly isolated from nonlocal resources and expertise as time passes (Wilson, 1987).

Hope (1995) argues convincingly that crime prevention efforts for the last 30 years have either ignored external linkages entirely or have failed to alter the nature of those linkages in the few instances in which they have been viewed as important. Improving external linkages is a critical component of all social action strategies for neighborhood improvement (Cortes, 1993) and one of the variables least likely to be affected by locality development or self-help approaches. Crime prevention efforts that focus on neighborhood disorganization do not by themselves provide neighbors with new connections to nonlocal resources (Hope, 1995).

External linkages are critical to the economic well-being of a neighborhood. For example, neighborhood-level economies are often dependent on the initiation of small, or "microenterprise," ventures. Butler reports that two-thirds of all new jobs are in businesses of less than 20 employees (National Council for Urban Economic Development (CUED), 1994). Neighborhood economic revitalization strategies require sources of funding and expertise for the new

entrepreneur that are not typically available locally. Those lacking collateral and a loan history have difficulty attaining the capital needed for business startup costs. Also, banks and other traditional lending institutions hesitate to extend business loans for the small amounts of money sought by microenterprises (CUED, 1994). Aside from the issue of capital is the lack of expertise to increase the chances of successful ventures. The following example shows how these needs for both funding and expertise can be met.

The Detroit, Michigan, Self Employment Project is designed to promote economic independence through self-employment and entrepreneurship among individuals with limited resources (CUED, 1994: 37). It is operated through the collaborative efforts of the Michigan Department of Social Services and Wayne State University. It is intended to help residents actualize their business ideas through assistance in a wide range of business-related skills, including market research, public relations, problem solving, and loan packaging. Training comes through courses, workshops, conferences, and problem-solving clinics. Since October 1990, 199 applicants have completed the program and 101 have started their own enterprises (CUED, 1994).

The timing of public support can be as critical as the level of support. JALMC received a \$22,500 Federal grant, which enabled it to hire a coordinator at a critical stage in its development. In this instance, the Federal Government responded in a timely manner to locally supported and engineered means of renewal. This strategically placed grant may have played a large role in the continued growth of an organization critical to the economic health of the city (Gittell, 1992).

Local development can be assisted by nonlocal allies in a variety of ways. France's Chomeurs Creature program offers an innovative means of developing entrepreneurship opportunities. Instead of collecting regular welfare payments, qualified and motivated recipients are given a lump-sum payment to cover startup costs for their own businesses. Approximately 70,000 people are involved in this program. One-third of all new French businesses get their start in this manner, and 60–80 percent have survived longer than 3 years (Meehan, 1987).

## Limits on exchange value

Whyte (1985) distinguishes between profit maximization and profit as a limiting factor. Etzioni's argument for a communitarian value system (1993) includes enhancing the concern for corporate decisions' impact on neighborhoods. Stoecker (1994) and Logan and Molotch (1987) argue that exchange value premises must be limited by, if not replaced by, attention to use value premises in decisions about how urban space will be used. Byrum's analysis of housing and labor markets in Minneapolis (1992) indicates that market forces, left unchecked, will inevitably lead to the deterioration and isolation of some neighborhoods because the exchange value premises of the growth machine require some spaces to be devalued in order for profit to be maximized.

Plants can be closed not because they are operating at a loss but because profits are not sufficiently high. In the late 1970s, U.S. Steel closed 14 plants, resulting in layoffs of 13,000 workers. It then paid \$6 billion to acquire Marathon Oil of Ohio (Bluestone and Harrison, 1982). Youngstown, Ohio, was hit by the closing of U.S. Steel and other major steel mill employers. By 1984, all basic steel manufacturing in Youngstown was gone. A nearby General Motors plant also moved out. Closings resulted in an official unemployment rate of 17 percent. Considering those who were involuntarily retired, and those who were only employed part time, estimates of true unemployment were as high as 33 percent (Moberg, 1985). Studies on the impact of plant closings indicates that long-term unemployment is the result for at least one-third of those affected. Corporations such as U.S. Steel were able to operate on their own balance sheets with little need to consider the balance sheet for the neighborhood (Bluestone and Harrison, 1982).

In contrast to that balance sheet dynamic, Whyte (1985) gives the example of Bates Fabrics Company in Lewiston, Maine, an employer of 1,100 workers. The parent company had grown into a conglomerate, with increased investments outside of textiles. Corporate decisionmakers determined that a 15- to 20-percent return was possible on investments in energy and natural resources. This was compared with the 5- to 7-percent profit that could be expected from their textile operations. From the company's standpoint, profit maximization would point toward the conglomerate ridding itself of the textile plant. However, the

community saw the decision quite differently, given the possible social and economic repercussions should the plant close. Local management, union leaders, and citizens in the community were able to arrange for employees to assume ownership and to modernize the plant (Whyte, 1985).

Neighborhood economic revitalization depends on recasting economic precepts within a neighborhood orientation. Such strategies center on long-term, stable growth (Gittell, 1992). Free-market benefits can be directed toward social needs, thus avoiding both the lack of accountability of unrestrained capitalism and the lack of flexibility of State control (Bruyn, 1987).

### Self-correcting process evaluation

A healthy, sustainable community requires neighborhood organizations that are conscious of their place in the urban struggle and are therefore attentive to their processes for continuing problem solving as well as for achieving specific outcomes or solutions at any one point in time. To be sustained, neighborhoods need organizations that learn, that are self-evaluative, and that are concerned with renewal.

Community development corporations (CDCs) may operate in this capacity. CDCs act as mediating structures, or "those institutions standing between the individual in his private life and the large institutions of public life" (Berger and Neuhaus, 1981). They were initiated in 1966, as part of the War on Poverty. CDCs are neighborhood-based, grassroots organizations and are funded through financial institutions, foundations, corporations, and government programs (CUED, 1994).

CDCs have the potential to expand the professional skills and financial resources available to cities for neighborhood economic development by coordinating neighborhood opinion and providing leadership to stimulate the development process within the community; packaging public and private financing; assisting city planners in development planning; investing in development projects; developing and managing development projects; providing technical assistance; and assist-

ing in directing city investment within neighborhoods to achieve their greatest impact and leverage (CUED, 1994: 4).

CDCs must be able to develop initiatives in neighborhoods that traditional funding sources typically avoid and need the competence and direct knowledge of the neighborhood to bring this about (Blakely, 1989). CDCs have traditionally been involved in housing activities. In the recent past, they have expanded their involvement to other business ventures and to social interventions that are seen as having a positive impact on the community.

CDCs are not the only neighborhood organizations with potential for self-correcting process evaluation. In traditional community organizing, social action organizations such as IAF and ACORN often provide the most attention to development of urban political consciousness on the part of their members and are most concerned with a thorough process evaluation of particular projects and meetings (Delgado, 1986; Reitzes and Reitzes, 1986). But these organizations can also become ineffective, develop rifts between leaders and members, or become too caught up in day-to-day service delivery or problem solving to retain their concern for healthy communication and member commitment.

### Autonomy in decisionmaking

The viability of a neighborhood depends on its ability to define its own goals and governing structure and to control its access to, and impact from, public and private forces (Boyte, 1980). For a neighborhood to be sustained, it must have the autonomy to exert influence on nonlocal decisionmakers, rather than simply accepting services and resources from nonlocal centers of power (Cortes, 1993).

Autonomy is one of the most overlooked variables in community revitalization efforts (Hope, 1995), but a sustained community does not exist without autonomy. It is critical to examine autonomy in relation to external linkages, since autonomy, or the lack of it, indicates the directionality in those linkages. Some neighborhoods may have access to centrally financed services but no influence over how those services will be defined or allocated (Spergel, 1976). Controlled neighborhoods lack the constituency voice to act on their own behalf.

An independent resource base is a critical component of autonomy (Delgado, 1986: 204). The few crime prevention programs that included attempts to increase neighborhood autonomy failed because the neighborhood groups seeking influence over central decisionmakers lost their access to resources controlled by those resistant central powers (Hope, 1995). Neighborhood organizations such as ACORN chapters seek to increase autonomy by generating their own resources through dues and neighborhood-controlled economic enterprises (Delgado, 1986).

Trist (1986) states that JALMC's success came with its acquiring of the properties of a local organization and thereby gained influence over individuals and organizations, though it lacked formal political authority. JALMC then was able to bring about substantive rather than simply marginal changes.

According to Bruyn (1987), autonomy is obtained when the neighborhood gains more control over land, labor, and capital. Community land trusts can rescue these resources from speculation. When applied to housing, it can assure affordability for present and future buyers. Worker cooperatives help stabilize the neighborhood, since the neighborhood, as represented by the workforce, is more directly involved in company decisions. Democratization of capital can empower neighborhoods to find new means of local development (Turner, 1987).

The following is an example of increased autonomy in the economically depressed upper Great Lakes peninsula. The Lake Alternative Energy Board (LAEB), a CDC, joined with other community action agencies and a private company to bring revenue to the community, create jobs, and at the same time provide low-cost fuel to area residents. The area has extremely low winter temperatures and an annual average of 120 inches of snowfall. Fuel at affordable prices is a primary concern (Blakely, 1989).

LAEB served as a catalyst for developing solutions to these problems. The first initiative involved developing wood pellets as a fuel source. Pellets can be made from scraps from the area lumber industry, the refuse of wood-chipping operations, and trees and limbs cut down in forestry operations. Through an arrangement with a private company, a wood pellet processing plant was constructed in the area. Though the plant employs only 20 to 25 people, it is estimated that the

business activity sparked by the plant brought \$30 million into the area (Blakely, 1989).

LAEB was successful in initiating economic development to meet the needs of the community. The plant, customers, and sources of raw materials were all locally based. The product served the local need for low-cost energy and at the same time brought jobs and revenues to the area.

## Shared culture

Castells (1983) writes of the destructive impact on city movements when issues are defined in a one-dimensional, ideological fashion. He terms cities reflecting these struggles as "urban shadows." They simply become political arenas for partisan organizations. Successful urban movements instead require the resolution of diverse interests and the sharing of a new value system. "[O]nly when the bureaucratic city, the merchant city, the professional city, and the working class city will agree on an alternative model of government can a city . . . rely on a stable majority supporting social change. And these very diverse interests can only be reconciled when a new set of cultural values are shared" (Castells, 1983: 255). Through the process of reconciling diverse interests and defining a common cultural heritage, a neighborhood is able to effectively deal with political forces in ways that increase rather than compromise its autonomy.

Sister Ferre, the founder of the Ponce Playa Project, in Ponce Playa, Puerto Rico, initiated a photography program for all youths in the area after a number of cameras were donated by Kodak. To Sister Ferre, the main point was not simply to teach photography skills but to develop a greater awareness of family, friends, and neighbors, the subjects of the photos. This related to the objective that "[T]he community realizes that its own full development depends on the fulfillment of its members" (Ferre, 1987: 34).

Trist (1986) relates that the JALMC initiative developed through a perceived need for change rather than through design. It was described as a gradual, cumulative, but incomplete movement toward establishing a culture based on symbiotic relationships among organizations, groups, and individuals. In such a culture, interdependence and collaboration would qualify and constrain individualism and competition (Trist, 1986: 236–237). JALMC became the symbol of a new

culture. The words labor-management were repeated liturgically on innumerable occasions in many settings (Trist, 1986: 227). The meaning gained clarity over time as specific actions were taken by the committee. Such actions collectively served as the theme of the emerging culture (Trist, 1986).

### Quality of dialogue

Possibly the most subtle aspect of bringing about neighborhood revitalization concerns the manner and quality of communication. Are various actors talking past each other or is there instead an equal sharing of ideas across differing perspectives and positions? Leadership skills can be essential in pointing out mutual interests and in empowering others, rather than focusing on one's own powers and interests.

Stanley Lundine, the mayor of Jamestown, New York, in the 1970s, played a critical role in the formation of JALMC. What had been an industrial environment marked by severe conflict was transformed to an atmosphere of cooperation. Lundine's credibility as the initial leader of this effort was based on his strong stand for government activism in solving Jamestown's economic problems. With the support he had from both labor and management, Lundine set a tone where both sides could talk and feel like they were being heard by the other (Meek, 1985). It was in this climate of trust that the ceremonial activities, such as dinners, conferences, and picnics, paved the way for labor and management agreement in project-oriented activities (Trist, 1986).

Pittsburgh was able to avoid economic disaster following the steel plant closings of the 1980s, largely due to the tradition of constructive dialogue and cooperation between the public and private sectors. The city was able to quickly form the necessary alliances and structures to enable it to rebound from the loss of 100,000 manufacturing jobs. Pittsburgh invested in its universities, hospitals, and advanced technology firms and was able to regain many of the lost jobs. This economic strategy was undertaken concurrently with a strategy to preserve the neighborhoods (Fainstein, 1990).

The mayor of Pittsburgh during the 1970s, Peter Flaherty, was attuned to neighborhood groups and insisted that city officials retain an open dialogue with them. Such groups became an important part of city politics. This attitude was seen as instrumental in establishing the partnerships necessary for the eco-

omic transformation required after the collapse of the steel industry. Those with different perspectives and interests were able to work together toward a common goal and resisted the tendency to pursue their own factional interests (Fainstein, 1990).

Enhancing the level of dialogue in a neighborhood requires multiway communication and a willingness of all parties to be influenced by others. Particularly in the early stages of community building, dialogue building will include the ability of parties to endure messy and angry meetings (Weingart et al., 1994). In the Cedar Riverside (Minneapolis) neighborhood redevelopment efforts, neighbors were so committed to dialogue that they were willing to meet all night to reach consensus, rather than settle for compromises and vote taking (Stoecker, 1994).

One of the major threats to community building is the frequent association in American culture of community with cooperative, peaceful communication. Many central authority officials will short-circuit communications with a neighborhood if the initial meetings are full of anger and resentment. Such impatience simply leads to continuation of one-way communication. At other times, nonlocal officials with a commitment to due process and inclusion may need to urge some neighborhood groups to include other local groups that are being ignored. Dialogue can break down both within a neighborhood and between the neighborhood and critical outsiders.

### The police and sustained community

Prospects for community policing will depend on the structure of the urban struggle in a particular city, and even a particular neighborhood, at a particular time. Expectations abstracted from this context will not make a great deal of sense. Expectations about community policing can be seen as pressures for local police departments to manifest or support particular values toward the use of space in the urban struggle. In other words, community policing, or any other form of policing, is likely to be only one more negotiation in an ongoing struggle to define community.

Community policing is not invented out of whole cloth. Expectations for community policing will be partially shaped by institutional memories of the urban struggle as implementation unfolds. Therefore,



the interpretation of community policing, by both the police and others will include the:

- Particular variations of professional law enforcement in any specific city, as interpreted by both those who have benefited and those who have not.
- Previous experiments by the department with getting closer to neighborhoods and the results of those attempts.
- Particular traditions of urban growth that have surrounded the police department.
- Status of the local growth machine in competition with other locations and whether the local political opportunity structure is relatively closed to pressures from neighborhoods or, instead, has been opened to coalitions between government and neighborhoods because of visible failures for growth politics to pay off as promised.

In relation to these local dynamics, additional factors in determining how and whether community policing unfolds in a particular place will be the pressures for adoption of programs highly touted in the media, by national experts, or by other levels of government. Some of these pressures are part of the institutionalized environment of police departments, to which departments may respond with formalized and ceremonial acquiescence more than with substantive change in how officers work (Crank and Langworthy, 1992; Manning, 1988). Other pressures are, or become, contractual obligations, as when police departments join a State or Federal program initiative in exchange for resources and perhaps for more exacting expectations and standards about performance components in implementation (Grinc, 1994).

Neighborhood interests will be only one of myriad forces which may lead toward or away from adoption of community policing or toward greater or lesser sincerity in the commitment to constituency building as part of the community policing initiative. The police will also find considerable variation in demand both within and among neighborhoods (Whitaker et al., 1982). Some neighborhoods will be more interested in community policing than others, and not all neighborhood demands will be informed by systematic understandings of the urban struggle. Indeed, most will not.

Those that are not are far more likely to take their cues from the police about what is appropriate to

expect of any form of policing. In most neighborhoods where there is some organized request for police response, the most typical overture is the relatively unsophisticated and unspecific demand for greater police presence (Whitaker et al., 1982; Podolefsky, 1983) rather than for different forms of policing or more involvement by neighborhood residents in control activities.

Most police departments have no systematic protocol by which to assess and prioritize interactions with community groups (Weingart et al., 1994: 11). While community policing might theoretically include the development of such a protocol, that innovation will itself depend on the initial meanings attached to community policing both in and outside the department. Unless a particular police department develops a sophisticated, critical sense of urban structures and learns to assess the status of various neighborhood overtures within that framework, there will be tremendous pressures to adopt a version of community policing that promises the department the least departure from current practice.

Community policing is generally presented as a realignment of police with neighborhoods (Bayley, 1994). But is it a way of extending the influence and dominance of the growth machine, by providing a new approach to paying for the externalized costs of growth? In other words, do neighborhoods get more policing, or even more responsive policing, as a tradeoff for continuing to suffer the negative effects of economic isolation and profit maximization? Or is community policing a way of providing neighborhoods with more power to impose use value premises on the structure of city space, by supporting the process of constituency building in controlled neighborhoods? Is policing used to pacify neighborhoods or does it become an active part of the process of constituency building?

Unfortunately, the available community policing research does not permit more than preliminary, and perhaps inaccurate, answers to these questions. Despite exhortations that the neighborhood position in the urban system must be specified to set the context of police and citizen actions about crime issues (Taylor, 1995) and that accounts of police interactions in the community must be disaggregated to the neighborhood level to make much sense of means and ends connections (Blumstein, 1995), most community policing evaluations provide little if any direct

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evidence of conscious concern for the political economy of neighborhoods (Hope, 1995; McGahey, 1986). Additionally, accounts of police practices give insufficient detail about the nature of neighborhood organizations to allow for systematic comparisons of structure, activities, and mobilization strategies (Skogan, 1988: 42–43). Under these limitations, the current assessments of the process and objectives of police-neighborhood interaction are little more than suggestions for further study. Exhibit 2 lists the seven dimensions of neighborhood sustainability and provides examples of their relationship to existing community policing projects.

### Internal coordination

Internal coordination in a neighborhood can be improved through the linkages community policing

officers establish with other municipal and government agencies. These linkages facilitate residential referrals to social service agencies and help to coordinate quality of life and law enforcement activities. The community policing program at the Stonegate housing community in Fairfax, Virginia, for example, required community policing officers to make referrals to social service agencies as a part of their problem-solving activities. These officers were assisted by the availability of counselors and other social service providers at the project site. Establishing working relationships with these service providers enabled community policing officers to give residents information on available drug treatment programs, as well as family counseling, education, and health and child care services (Baranyk, 1994). Similar coordination is reported in Spokane, Washington (Giacomazzi et al., 1993: 97).

### Exhibit 2. Examples of Police Effects on Neighborhood Sustainability

Variable	Program
Internal coordination	Increased planning and coordination among police and social services in Fairfax, Virginia, Austin, Texas, and Spokane, Washington; among police and city agencies in Brooklyn, New York, and Baltimore, Maryland; among residents and businesses in Seattle; but increased conflict in Houston and Minneapolis.
External linkage	Connection of neighborhoods to each other and to city central offices in Seattle; negative effects in Lawrence, Massachusetts; no change in Madison, Wisconsin, and Richmond, Virginia.
Limits on exchange value	Pressure on landlords and drug dealers in many cities; police and business planning merged in Portland, Oregon.
Self-correcting process evaluation	Seattle SSCPC works on inclusion; Fairfax and Fort Worth, Texas, concerned about group satisfaction; Madison loses concern for problem solving.
Autonomy	Seattle institutionalizes neighborhood planning councils, but in Philadelphia neighborhood-oriented managers are transferred; in Lawrence and Boston, neighbors urged to be eyes and ears for the police.
Shared culture	Shared concern for environment in Austin; lack of concern for place reduces control efforts in Philadelphia.
Dialogue	Two-way planning in Flint, Michigan, and Seattle; no conflict resolution in Lawrence; no sustained groups in Madison.

Similarly, in Austin, Texas, the simultaneous adoption of Total Quality Management (TQM) by both the police department (as an integral part of its community policing program) and all city agencies brought about a high degree of cooperation and coordination among the police department and other city agencies. With these linkages, the Austin community policing project could incorporate into their customer service model an array of services that were outside of traditional law enforcement activities. They then also had the capacity to assess the effectiveness of problem-solving strategies that took advantage of other interventions than the choice of arrest or nonarrest. Designers of the community policing program in Austin believed that the simultaneous adoption of TQM by the police department and other city agencies would cultivate a shared vision of what the city should be doing and where it should be going. This shared vision was also viewed as increasing the effectiveness of services to Austin residents (Barton, 1993: 22).

Linkages with other municipal agencies also helped to coordinate quality of life and law enforcement activities. Linkages with city agencies enabled community policing officers in Spokane to take action against conditions in the neighborhood that contributed to its deterioration. Community policing officers surveyed the neighborhoods for boarded-up buildings that might invite exploration by children and accommodate transients, areas in need of sidewalks, and streets and alleys in need of repair (Giacomazzi et al., 1993: 98). This information was forwarded to the appropriate city agency, and requests for services were tracked over time to verify that improvements occurred. Similarly in Brooklyn, New York, and Baltimore, Maryland, community policing officers worked closely with city sanitation departments to remove abandoned and derelict vehicles (Pate, 1994: 405) and to seal empty buildings (Skogan, 1994: 169).

Internal coordination is not limited to tightening the exchanges among agencies in a neighborhood. In Seattle, the initial impetus of community policing came from a particular set of neighborhoods through an organization dominated by their business elite. Process evaluation data indicate that the police were instrumental in community unification by insisting that the original business group seek minority resident members. The business group responded with a suc-

cessful, more inclusive membership drive (Fleissner et al., 1991).

There is evidence from other community policing efforts that coordination has not always worked so well. Some departments have expended tremendous energy and thought in attempts to implement new policing strategies in controlled neighborhoods. Studies of a few of these (Newark, New Jersey, Houston, Texas, and Minneapolis, Minnesota) suggest that these programs were more likely to involve middle-class residents than the poor and sometimes created dissension within the neighborhood (Sherman, 1986; Skogan, 1990). In Seattle and elsewhere, police pressures on other city agencies, on behalf of the neighborhood, resulted in resentment from the other agencies and concerns that some neighborhoods would receive special treatment.

### External linkages

The external linkage most likely to be affected in policing efforts is between the neighborhood and the police department itself. However, the level and effects of that linkage may vary considerably. The literature indicates that the process of involving the police in neighborhood organizing is limited, superficial, and in numerous instances, demoralizing for both the police and citizens.

Goldstein (1987: 24–25) suggested that involvement could range from citizens serving as eyes and ears for the police, through citizens providing consultation and advice, to active citizen participation in determining how the people are to be policed. This potential range appears to be truncated in practice to the lower end of the continuum, with a few notable exceptions, such as Seattle (Fleissner et al., 1991). Buerger (1994: 416) indicates that even when citizens expend considerable energy, their involvement is limited to meeting traditional police objectives.

A recent examination of community policing in Richmond, Virginia, where there is apparently greater concern on the part of the department than in many other cities for changing the police-neighborhood linkage, still concluded that officers "who embraced community policing responded, not as delegates of the community, but more like trustees of the neighborhood welfare" determined by their own standards (Worden et al., 1994: 556–557).

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A number of studies have found that, despite rhetoric about greater community responsiveness by departments, police are often resistant to stronger connections with neighborhoods. They have understandable concerns about losing control of internal resource allocation decisions and trepidation that uninformed and overzealous community groups will demand behavior from the police that is unconstitutional. But departments may hide behind such excuses rather than seek greater linkage. In several accounts, the police were prodded to respond only when the neighborhood group threatened to embarrass the police in the media (Fleissner et al., 1991; Weingart et al., 1994).

Despite these problems, there are instances of increased linkage and increased resources in both directions. For example, the police may provide resources for local neighborhood organizations. In Newark, community policing officers made their storefront substation available to neighborhood block organizations for meetings. Neighborhood meetings at the storefront gave community policing officers an opportunity to interface with neighborhood groups. (Pate et al., 1986: 7) In Portland, Oregon, the chief of police reported that selecting the site for a new precinct station included neighborhood involvement in choosing the site and in designing the structure to include space for new neighborhood businesses.

In return, neighborhoods have the potential to generate new resources for the police, such as in residential tax increases earmarked for the police. In Flint, Michigan, for example, the success of the neighborhood foot patrol prompted residents to approve a special tax to continue the foot patrols at the expiration of the community policing experiment. The citizens were not prepared at that time to end what they viewed as a successful crime prevention program (Trojanowicz, 1986: 174).

### Limits on exchange value

Policing initiatives may have small but direct and important effects on limiting profit maximization and inserting use value in the use of space. In Seattle and elsewhere, civil abatement programs involving the police and neighborhood organizations have placed pressure on landlords who were careless in tenant selection or oblivious to drug dealing on their properties. Direct assault on illegal profit taking is also

important. Citizen groups, especially those with police support, have been successful in disrupting and closing drug markets (Weingart et al., 1994).

### Self-correcting process evaluation

An example of how to increase the self-reflective quality of neighborhood organizations can be seen in the community policing program undertaken in Flint, Michigan, Fairfax, Virginia, and Fort Worth, Texas. In Flint, community policing officers were expected to encourage citizens to work together in neighborhood associations or citizens' watch groups for their mutual support and protection (Trojanowicz, 1986: 160). A more hands-on organizing approach by community policing officers occurred in Fairfax and Fort Worth.

In Fairfax, community policing officers held regular meetings with core residents of the Stonegate housing community. These residents were viewed as having some degree of social influence. At these meetings, they were given an opportunity to express what they believed to be the most pressing issues in the housing community. After a number of meetings, the community policing officers helped to organize residents into an informal tenants' association. This group was then encouraged to solicit the support of other residents in addressing neighborhood problems (Baranyk, 1994: 31-32).

Similarly, in the Fort Worth neighborhood crime watch groups and citizens' patrol project, a process goal was to simulate a small-town feel and involvement of community residents by making information available to organized blocks and neighborhoods as events occurred. It was believed that this would enable residents to participate more fully in their own protection and security (Givens, 1993: 9).

In general, however, police organizations are themselves poorly equipped to deal with organizational health and renewal (Bayley, 1994; Couper and Lobitz, 1991; Wycoff and Skogan, 1993), and their members are poorly trained to instill self-corrective processes in neighborhood organizations. They are likely to provide more attention to the crime and disorder objectives faced at the moment than to whether the means of reaching these objectives also builds a sustainable neighborhood organization. Not only are the police underconcerned with important morale, belonging, and satisfaction issues, but they also may demand

that neighborhood organizations adhere to stifling bureaucratic procedures (Hope, 1995: 47–48; Grinc, 1994: 442).

## Autonomy

Consistent with the general theory of neighborhood organizing about noncrime issues (Bursik and Grasmick, 1993: 150), there is some evidence that attempts to increase involvement of citizens in community policing is far more superficial and has more negative consequences for neighborhood autonomy when the initiative is undertaken by the police department rather than by the neighborhood (Grinc, 1994: 445–451). Police attempts to initiate contact are often limited to information dissemination sessions about the proposed (and preplanned) program, during which the police misinterpret large audiences as increased citizen participation (Grinc, 1994: 451). The most thorough account of citizen-initiated community policing (Fleissner et al., 1991) suggests that citizen involvement is more multidimensional and includes more mutual decisionmaking when the citizens are pulling rather than the police pushing.

The police, like any other agency of the state, have considerable control over one nonfinancial resource critical to neighborhood organizations: the ability to take them seriously. These organizations become constituencies for the police only if they are taken seriously. Signs of constituency status include the department granting access to senior officials, departmental willingness to share decisionmaking, and departmental efforts in providing information (Duffee, 1984; Fleissner et al., 1991: 15; and Weingart et al., 1994: 14). Granting such access enhances the autonomy of the neighborhood group because its influence is increased.

Increasing the autonomy of neighborhood groups does not necessarily reduce the autonomy and influence of the police organization. Indeed, some reports suggest it may increase it (Fleissner et al., 1991: 70–80). When the autonomy of the neighborhood is enhanced, neighborhood groups engage in partnership roles, and residents may have greater access to the media, legislators, and public and private businesses. In Seattle, the partnership established between the police and the South Seattle Crime Prevention Council (SSCPC) not only helped decentralize the Seattle Police Department (giving the South Precinct more control over its activities)

but also provided the department with additional clout to influence crime legislation and the municipal budget (Fleissner et al., 1991: 96). Consequently, autonomy for neighborhoods may increase police influence over other central actors who are sympathetic to the neighborhood rather than to the police.

## Shared culture

By recognizing the cultural and environmental uniqueness of the neighborhoods they work in, community policing officers help to establish a shared identity that can in turn facilitate the development of shared goals and objectives. In Austin, the environment provided a quality of life that is viewed by its residents as their most precious resource. This shared view of Austin facilitates citizens' involvement in preserving their neighborhoods. The citizens in Austin vigorously defend any intrusion on the quality of the environment and on the safety and security of their neighborhoods (Barton, 1993: 21). Recognizing these sentiments, the community policing effort in Austin is attempting to utilize them to maintain the quality of life.

## Dialogue

Establishing mutually beneficial communication between residents and the police is one of the primary goals of community policing. Information received from police can help neighborhood residents best utilize their local resources to assist in crime prevention activities. Information received from residents can help the police target problems that are of the greatest concern to neighborhood residents. In addition, information from residents helps police identify individuals or groups engaged in criminal activity.

The quality of dialogue between neighborhood residents and police departments about community policing may become an issue before the initiation of a new strategy in a neighborhood or during its implementation. In the planning stages, the issue is whether the residents have influence in the design of the effort. During implementation, the issue becomes the level of ongoing participation in policing decisions. Do the police welcome only eyes-and-ears information, or are they prepared to engage in two-way communication about problem solving and evaluation?

Examples of communication between the neighborhood and the police prior to implementation are found

in Seattle, Washington, Madison, Wisconsin, and Flint, Michigan. In Seattle, for example, prior to implementing community policing, members of SSCPC and the precinct commanders from the South Precinct met regularly to discuss ways to improve police services (Fleissner et al., 1991: 61). These meetings eventually built trust and cooperation among the police and members of SSCPC. Police discussions with residents included sharing information that was traditionally viewed as sensitive and highly confidential.

In Madison, neighborhood residents and the Madison police department had a 15-year history of negotiations and discussions about ways to improve policing. Madison residents have always been concerned with quality of life issues (Couper and Lobitz, 1991: 86). Immediately preceding the implementation of community policing in Madison, community meetings were set up to give residents some input into identifying and prioritizing neighborhood problems (Couper and Lobitz, 1991: 86). However, in the implementation of the experimental police district, dialogue did not seem to carry over to implementation. Police reported too little time to engage in problem solving, and the police tended to engage the community as individual customers rather than as organized neighborhoods (Wycoff and Skogan, 1993).

In Flint, many efforts were made by the police department to avoid imposing a program on the population (Trojanowicz, 1986: 160). Citywide meetings were held for 2 years prior to the start of the program. The goal was to solicit the neighborhoods' views on how the program should function and to keep neighbors informed on the program's progress.

A more frequent approach is reported in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Discussions primarily focused on information provided by neighborhood residents on the criminal activities of specific individuals or groups. The newly created citizen advisory committee was ostensibly designed by developers of the community policing project in Lawrence to provide residents with a forum to communicate their concerns with the community policing officers. Instead, its role was limited to providing the police of Lawrence with information on criminal activities in the area. Members of the advisory committee essentially functioned as the eyes and ears of the Lawrence police department (Bazemore and Cole, 1994: 132).

In contrast, the most successful case in maintaining real dialogue appears to be Seattle. There, neighborhood committees have been organized throughout the city, supported by tax dollars, with the expectation that citizen groups will engage actively in target selection, tactical choices, and evaluation of control efforts (National Institute of Justice [NIJ], 1992). This kind of organization was not developed without conflict. The project's evaluators ask whether both the police and community groups are prone to interpret conflict as lack of community and to give up on dialogue rather than engage in conflict resolution. Neither community participants nor the police may be well equipped with sufficient time, knowledge about structural sources of conflict, or skills in conflict resolution, to remain committed once conflict is heard (Fleissner et al., 1991).

In summary, there are numerous anecdotal accounts suggesting both positive and negative impacts of community policing efforts on internal coordination, external linkages, limits on exchange value, self-corrective process evaluation, autonomy, shared culture, and dialogue. Since no existing accounts of community policing conceptualize these impacts on specific dimensions of community, it is impossible to tell how multidimensional any one implementation effort is or to compare one city to another on common dimensions with a uniform measure. Moreover, we cannot assess whether the positive impacts on neighborhood sustainability variables are more frequent than the negative impacts. The process evaluations, however, do provide strong evidence that the implementation of community policing can be conceptualized as a complex process in which police and neighborhoods interact along all seven of these dimensions.

### Prospects and strategies for sustaining constituency

The police must provide services, enforce the law, and control, if not reduce, disorder regardless of the direction in which a neighborhood is moving and of whether the policing efforts are complemented by other efforts to strengthen community or operate in isolation from other urban policies and practices. One of the most critical problems, then, in any attempt to alter police strategy, is that the police do not control all the elements crucial to the success of a strategy

and must proceed despite counterproductive trends among the elements they do not control. The police may be sincere in efforts to improve community but find little community with which to work.

Despite this difficulty, cynicism about the potential for reinvention of policing and significant increases in police effectiveness are mistaken. The conclusion that nothing works is itself an action prescription—to leave the desperate to their own devices much to the benefit of the winners of the urban struggle. The examination of the variables that renew and sustain neighborhoods indicates that urban improvements are possible, if difficult. The review of police effects on those same neighborhood variables suggests that all of them can be increased or improved through police action. But the same review indicates that most policing programs involving community often ignore whether the neighborhood is restructured. On occasion, there are negative rather than positive effects on these variables.

How community policing will fare as a strategy will ultimately depend on whether neighborhoods improve rather than on whether the police perform well. Therefore, the police must become more cognizant of these neighborhood characteristics, on the trends among them across and within neighborhoods, and on the most effective time to deploy one policing strategy or another in each neighborhood, contingent on the developmental position of each locality. One size will not fit all.

Because of the typical dynamic of the urban struggle and the fact that the police department is a part of that struggle, affected by the same forces as other units of the city, the police will covertly and explicitly be pressured to be more concerned with some neighborhood characteristics than others. The growth machine and the professional law enforcement bureaucracy that developed as part of growth politics will both benefit from particular values on these variables. For example, they would prefer that:

- Internal coordination be incomplete and limited to improving informal coordination among neighbors, rather than also coordinating public and private agencies and policies. Too much attention to policy coordination could demonstrate that many urban policies do not benefit neighborhoods, especially poor neighborhoods. Attention to any policies other

than law enforcement itself will be criticized as nonprofessional.

- External linkages be limited—the police should concentrate on police-neighborhood relationships. Linkages among neighborhoods will be seen as politically threatening to the power of downtown corporate interests and to the control by central offices of State agencies.
- There be no limits on exchange value and no threats to competitive claims on urban space that would limit extracting value from it. Economic policies that are responsive to neighborhood effects of economic decisions will be criticized as bad for growth. Police concern for quality of life in neighborhoods will be criticized as social work.
- Self-corrective process evaluations be limited. Crime control should focus on immediate crime and disorder objectives. Neighborhood groups should not become more conscious of the relationship of neighborhood politics and crime. Neighborhood organization, sustained beyond its crime control rationale, may become politically active and critical of centralized power and resources.
- Autonomy be kept on the lower end of the spectrum. Control efforts should be organized for the convenience of the experts in central administrations. Greater services for neighborhoods may be begrudgingly granted, but greater influence of neighborhoods over the defining of service will be resisted. No other dimension of city life is more threatening to bureaucracy than autonomy of constituency groups in neighborhoods.
- Shared culture be the focus of neighborhood improvement. The growth machine and professional law enforcement will stress the culture-based solution to crime and disorder, since it is consistent with the notion that neighborhoods cause their own problems. Political or economic steps, which alter external linkages and autonomy, to facilitate and nurture shared culture will be resisted.
- Dialogue be limited. Central powers should plan and neighborhoods should accept the well-crafted ideas of planners. A dialogue that requires interactive and responsive policing will be resisted as too cumbersome and expensive. Dialogue that includes venting of frustration and anger will be used as

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evidence that the community is deteriorating, not improving.

The current evaluations of community policing implementations suggest that these kinds of limiting effects on neighborhood sustainability are not only possible but common. However, there is also evidence that, in some neighborhoods, development of partnerships between the police and neighborhood groups is also possible. When partnership is actively sought, there would appear to be more conscious attention paid to these positive variables and more conscious attempts to increase them. In this case, the values preferred are that:

- Police interact with other city agencies and the private sector to promote holistic attention to life in a neighborhood. There is evidence that the police can occasionally provide encouragement for residents in neighborhoods to be more inclusive themselves and to form organizations that represent most neighborhood interests.
- Neighborhoods should be linked to share common concerns and problem strategies and should have greater access to a variety of State services.
- Quality of life in neighborhoods may need to include setting limits on the exchange value that space might represent to individuals. Not all negative effects of growth can be externalized and paid for by resident bystanders or by the State.
- The self-correcting evaluation capacity of neighborhood organization should be improved. Partnership includes concern not only for what was done but how it was done: Did the neighborhood learn from this project how to solve other problems? Did neighbors become more committed through participation? Did they end up angry and exhausted?
- Autonomy of neighborhoods should be increased, and the quality of State services should be judged by neighborhoods, not the bureaucracy. Increased autonomy for neighborhoods can actually enhance the ability of State officials to do their work.
- Shared culture is necessary but not sufficient. Opportunities for shared culture should be identified in all neighborhood undertakings; processes for achieving specific objectives (such as crime or disorder control) must also include time for social

rewards and celebration of belonging to a place. Culture without restructuring is fragile.

- Dialogue must be pursued, even if less time-consuming means of dealing with particular issues appear to be available. Improved external linkages without dialogue decrease chances for autonomy. Internal coordination without dialogue reduces chances of shared culture.

The prospects for achieving the higher rather than the lower values on these variables are not good, but they are not bleak. To take community seriously and to take steps to empower neighborhoods represent commitments and actions that are contrary to 50 years of urban politics and policing tradition. But history does not write the future.

Police departments can take some independent steps to enhance sustainability, but they cannot do very much on their own. They also need to encourage independent action by other components of the State, by the private sector, and, very importantly, by neighborhoods. If neighborhood sustainability is left to the police, it will not endure.

Some research, planning, and policing strategies may increase the chances for increasing rather than decreasing the values of these variables.

First, a serious, sustained effort is necessary to obtain reasonably valid, reliable, and feasible measures of these neighborhood characteristics. While interest in the measurement of neighborhood indicators and police investment in gathering nonarrest data have increased, it would appear that greater attention is still given to police-relevant outcomes (fear, disorder, crime) than to measures of how the police, or the neighborhood with the police, achieved or failed to achieve those outcomes. Investment in measuring structures and processes will be important for outcome precision to have any strategic meaning.

If measures for these neighborhood variables can be developed, then it is critical to also develop an assessment of their prevalence in policing programs. As policing evaluations stand now, it is possible to find illustrations of police effects on these variables, but it is impossible to gauge prevalence. Left to their own devices, the police are less likely to be concerned about these neighborhood effects than the neighborhoods themselves. Empowering neighborhood organi-



zations to employ measurements of neighborhood effects from policing and other urban programs is more likely to institutionalize commitments to these neighborhood qualities where they matter most, in the neighborhoods themselves.

Since the police, like any other agency of the State, have jurisdiction over many neighborhoods that will differ considerably on these variables, the chief police executive will be faced with constant pressures to "do something now," even though what can and should realistically be done will vary from neighborhood to neighborhood. The tendencies among police agencies will be to adopt programs jurisdictionwide despite the varying qualities of neighborhoods or to target neighborhoods most in need, as defined by the department. Both tendencies pressure police to predetermine how to interact with a neighborhood and, only after services are planned, to disseminate the plan to the locality. These approaches have rarely worked in the past, but they relieve the pressure to do something and failures can be blamed on specific neighborhoods. If the police recognized the multidimensional character of neighborhood-building processes and could measure these dimensions, they could use these data in deciding which neighborhoods were ready for what and in explaining those choices.

The data on police-neighborhood interaction, while presently sketchy, suggest that the police cannot build neighborhood constituency but can take constituency behavior seriously when it occurs. If the police want to take neighborhoods seriously, they can include a means to scan the neighborhoods continuously for trends in sustainability, and they can be ready to respond when invited. A neighborhood's attempts to influence policing should be read as one indicator of readiness for partnership, even, or perhaps particularly, when those influence attempts include criticism, however rancorous.

Finally, the review of the research on the urban context of community policing suggests that the police, as a city agency, will be affected by many of the same forces in the urban struggle that affect urban neighborhoods. An important task in community policing research would be the construction of a theory about how the political economy of cities affects the form and substance of community policing. In this concluding section, we have sketched in broad strokes two different scenarios: one where the growth machine is strong and police are likely to give superficial atten-

tion to neighborhoods and to stress the causes of crime and disorder that arise from within the neighborhood, and another where the growth machine is weaker or has been replaced by a quality of life regime and the police are more likely to treat neighborhoods as important political constituencies that have influence over city policies and reshape urban services. Clearly, the variations in community policing are much finer and more complex than this sketch can capture. But if we can specify more systematically how police interact with neighborhoods, then we can also begin to examine the urban forces that affect the quality of that interaction. Only at that point can we begin to sort out the noise from the melody in the huge variety of sounds that are now considered community policing.

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# Community Policing: What Is the Community and What Can It Do?

*Warren Friedman and Michael Clark*

Even perfect partnerships between the community and police are only part of the answer to the crime that haunts many of America's neighborhoods. Nevertheless, belief in the power of collaboration is more than just an article of faith. Over the past decade, it has become clear that urban communities can and will mobilize against crime and drugs. Despite decades of serious tensions and hostility between police and residents in many neighborhoods, serious effort can forge bonds of cooperation, mutual respect, and trust even in the most crime-ridden communities.

Progress, however, has not been even. Hostility between communities and law enforcement continues in many areas. Many cities have failed to join the movement toward improved police-community cooperation, while others appear to have only adopted the rhetoric of community policing as a way of accessing Federal funds.

At the same time, hundreds of urban neighborhoods have organized fresh anticrime efforts and discovered new, more effective ways of working with local law enforcement. Many police and prosecutors who are responsible for these neighborhoods have adopted more results- and community-oriented ways of tackling such tough crime problems as open-air drug trafficking and gang violence. In the best of cases, these efforts have led to community-police collaboration that has permanently closed crack houses, eliminated drug markets, and sustained long-term reductions in violent crime levels.

Today, it is broadly accepted that, working together, community, police, and other institutions can reduce neighborhood crime. There is widespread acceptance—and even praise—of community-police collaboration. This is clear from the lists of reasons provided by scholars, elected officials, and police chiefs for the recent declines in most crime categories. Along with changing demographics and stabilized crack markets, almost everybody's list mentions smarter policing and the role of the community.

Nevertheless, progress in forging police-community collaboration remains fragile and reversible. There is little agreement about exactly what community policing is or what should be expected of it. Nor is there consensus about what the community is or what can be expected of it. Little wonder, then, that there is confusion about why and how progress has been achieved.

## Expectations

In cities where community policing has been aggressively pursued, community expectations of police have shifted over the past decade. In the early 1980s, it is fair to say, one of two attitudes prevailed among many urban residents, especially community leaders. Many had come to see local crime and disorder as products of large forces beyond the reach of local law enforcement. Coupled with tensions and mistrust left over from the 1960s and 1970s, city residents often were grateful if local police simply did not make things worse. On the other hand, many saw public safety as the job of the police alone. "We pay taxes, we pay their wages, let them do it," were refrains in many communities that focused narrowly on government accountability. In either case, "partnership" and "collaborative problem solving" were not the slogans of the day.

Today, much grassroots activity still remains based on outmoded, incident-driven strategies. In most American communities, ordinary citizens report crime and act as witnesses, but they play little further visible part in preventing or reducing crime. These roles as "eyes and ears" of the police are not insignificant. But in some communities, grassroots activity has been far more proactive, creative, and courageous.

The existence of active community anticrime work—often, but not always, undertaken in sync with so-called community policing—is a reality check on the common charge of community apathy in America.

The best of this work challenges the common casting of the police as the sole agent of positive change. Throughout the United States, community anticrime efforts serve as a source of information about what most concerns a community: what kinds of roles the community has and will continue to choose for itself, and who must be negotiated with if policing is to have a progressive future.

In cities where it has been enthusiastically marketed, community policing has led to a shift in attitudes and rising expectations. Urban residents in many cities today expect the police to be visibly present on their streets, problem oriented (that is, to try to eliminate crime problems, not just respond to complaints and make arrests), available for and interested in working with local residents as partners, accountable through periodic updates for what is being done to solve problems, and concerned with the prevention of crime.

In well-informed and well-organized communities, police departments are increasingly expected to understand the community as a partner, prepare department personnel for their part in the partnership process, and support officers in the process. Veteran community organizations expect the police to know them and understand that they have the capacity to solve crimes and other problems. Vacant lots can be cleaned up, housing problems addressed, young people reached, services provided, serious criminal activity checked, and opportunities expanded through organized community efforts.

Veteran community organizations, many of whom have years of experience in anticrime work, have begun to recognize and demand significant departmental commitment to community policing, including: (1) a focus on serious crime-solving results, (2) periodic, practical training for police officers, (3) support for the training of community leaders, (4) a focus on behavior change and measurable results, (5) involvement of the community at the most decentralized level, (6) outspoken policy support from departmental leaders and the city administration, and (7) a voice in policies that set the department's direction so that community policing evolves to match the needs of neighborhoods.

### Community roles

The literature, promotional materials, and discussions of community policing are full of phrases like "problem-solving partnerships," "coproduction of safety," "working together," and "democracy in action." But, despite the rhetoric, members of the community remain generally cast in relatively passive roles as "eyes and ears" of the police, reactive sources of information about crime. They are still primarily viewed as potential witnesses, much as they were under traditional policing. Partnerships are too often operationally defined as a few people chosen by police officials to sit around a table and advise, usually those who have the time and inclination and with whom a department is comfortable. The division of labor in the relationship often assigns crimefighting to the police and neighborhood cleanup to the community.

A great deal of potential progress is lost in this minimal view of the community role in anticrime work. Police officials and criminal justice researchers seem to have little sense of community traditions of self-help and mobilization as they relate to community policing. This passive view of citizens ignores widespread examples throughout the country—and throughout American history—of people taking responsibility and launching their own efforts against crime. In fact, during the 1980s and 1990s in urban America, side by side with the development of new problem-solving methodologies by law enforcement and new theories of community policing, there has arisen a deeper and broader grassroots tradition of active community anticrime work.

Yet, the new community sophistication and activism regarding crime is in danger of disappearing. Most of the dialogue on public safety continues to be carried on without the actors and initiators of this activity, those who are most knowledgeable about communities—community leaders, professional organizers, and ordinary neighborhood activists. As a result, practitioners on both sides of the potential partnership continue to have an unclear view of community-police collaboration as a strategy or of its particular targets, strengths, and weaknesses.

The danger is that victories that are not understood are unlikely to be replicated. Today, when urban police and community residents team up to solve serious neighborhood crime problems, the history of those



victories is too often misunderstood. As a result, those who care deeply about making inner cities safer usually do not fully understand the success stories or know how to repeat them.

When neighborhood residents and police work together successfully to resolve a high-priority crime problem, a variety of explanations are offered publicly, usually by a law enforcement spokesperson:

- **The “officer friendly” explanation.** The police are getting more sensitive to the feelings of the community. Since they are friendlier, people trust them and will work with them. Police officers smiling, attending church breakfasts, helping kids or the elderly, and attending large numbers of community meetings are generally cited as evidence of progress. The underlying logic is: When community residents trust the police more, residents will support them, acting as good witnesses individually or occasionally playing an organized eyes-and-ears role regarding a specific crime. The police can then do their job better.

This explanation confuses community policing (police and community working together to reduce crime) with community relations (police better communicating what they do to improve public opinion and support). It also fails to recognize that, over time, trust in the police is usually an outcome of reducing crime and increasing genuine collaboration rather than public relations gimmicks.

- **The “more is better” explanation.** There are more police, or they are smarter and better equipped. New technology, new enforcement tactics, new management strategies, and additional or reinforced personnel are the sole reasons for success. Although police organization and management certainly matter, such explanations unfortunately evoke the image of the cavalry riding to the rescue, whether the cavalry is new managers, new officers, new computers, or new management approaches. This explanation focuses exclusively on the “better policing” side of the equation, ignoring new resources, strategies, and tactics brought to the table by organized communities.
- **The “beat cop is back” explanation.** The spread of new police-community collaboration in hundreds of urban neighborhoods is nothing more than a return to older traditions in policing. According

to this explanation, before the mid-20th century, one cop walked (or cycled or motor scootered or rode) around a fairly small geographic neighborhood on a regular beat until everyone on the beat knew and respected him. (It was almost always “him.”) “My granddad did community policing,” can frequently be heard from adherents of this view.

All these explanations, while containing some truth, are misleading in their exclusive focus on new styles of policing. Sadly, little systematic analysis has been devoted to digesting the significance of new styles of community action and organization or new forms of police-community collaboration, which together constitute the “other half” of community policing success stories.

Occasional triumphs, therefore, are not turned into conditions for sustained, citywide collaboration. Few know how to create community policing departments in which partnership with the community is routine.

## Community policing

Community policing is more than a collection of tactics, more than storefront offices, more than officers on beats or on bikes, more than friendly relations between police and residents. On the other hand, community policing is not a general method for improving the quality of life. It is something more than the sum of these tactics and something less than community development. It is, as we see it, a specific strategy for fighting crime based on a working relationship between the community and the police. The purpose of the work, in which each has an active role, is to improve the quality of life by reducing crime, disorder, and fear.

One of the precepts that should guide police work is to do things in such a way that the community does for itself as much as possible—that it develops the habits and skills of doing. At the community level, this requires that police see their work in a longer term context, that they enter into the relationship understanding and supporting the goal of developing capable communities. It means less doing *for* and more doing *with*. This does not assign the task of organizing communities or community capacity building to the police; that is work for local leaders and community organizers. But it does ask for police support of such capacity building.

The hope is that the partners will work together to prevent some future crimes and help build a more cohesive community. But without clarity about goals and mutual expectations, there will be no sustained partnerships that can generate healthier, revitalized communities.

### Identifying partners in community policing

Much time is spent attempting to define the "community." People mean many things when they use the word. "Community" is used to describe not only specific geographic areas containing residents who live, work, and socialize together but also entire ethnic or national groups (such as the Jewish community or the African-American community), groups with common interests across vast geographic areas (such as the user communities of the Internet or the artistic community), and even the entire planet (the global community).

The civilian, nongovernmental partner for the police will be one group, for instance, in the case of hate crimes against members of a group that are geographically dispersed. It will mean another group when the people are direct or indirect victims of crimes by virtue of where they live.

The job is to identify the most productive partner for the problems. Pattern analysis studies in Minneapolis, New York, and elsewhere confirm what patrol officers and community residents know firsthand. Problems are not evenly or randomly distributed across communities. There are locations known as hot spots where problems concentrate that account for a disproportionate amount of a neighborhood's crime and disorder.

Both *crime* and *disorder* are important. Kelling and Wilson's classic treatise, "Broken Windows,"<sup>1</sup> underscores the point that visible and disruptive signs of disorder are symbolically important to communities and may be viewed as bellwethers of how seriously a community cares about crime. (See "Urban Residents Rank Crime Problems.")

But few communities will mobilize for long or pay sustained attention even to serious crimes involving violence or serious property loss if the crimes seem more or less randomly distributed and do not threaten community life. The reality of crime's geographical distribution provides a critical first step in answering

who, in the context of community policing, the appropriate community partners should be.

A chronic, visible problem sets the stage for community organizing. It convinces people that it will not just go away. It often leads to frustration, anger, fear, and impulses to flee or fight. These are the conditions that can lead neighbors to get organized, to conclude that "something has to be done." But a problem's persistence only provides one of the necessary conditions for organizing. The impulse to flee must, if possible, be redirected. The impulse to fight must be mobilized.

The bulk of urban community anticrime efforts occurs in relatively small geographic areas within the larger city at the level of individual neighborhoods or even single blocks or buildings. These are places where participants share some common identity or common problems distinct from others in the city and where they engage in some regular activities in common. The principal actors in these efforts are those who have deep stakes in the maintenance of a neighborhood's order and safety. Usually, they include local residents, community-based organizations, and other not-for-profit groups.

The residents and institutions based in an area differ significantly from those who travel in and out. While transients may share concerns about safety, they are generally far less willing or able to work intensively on crime problems over the long run. Residents are the actors most affected, most concerned with, and most likely to volunteer to solve problems that disrupt the neighborhood, create fear, and reduce the quality of life. They are the most likely partner in combating community-based crime.

To become effective partners, however, neighbors not only must become aware of each other's concerns, they must also develop some mutual trust before they will undertake what may appear to be a risky project. They must develop skills at conducting meetings and recruiting neighbors. They must learn to analyze, select among, and prioritize the many problems that they might work on. They must learn how to work with each other and the police. They must develop enough trust in their allies to know they will not be abandoned. Finally, they must develop the capacity to organize from victory to victory so that the number of involved local residents increases over time.

## Urban Residents Rank Crime Problems

As communities differ widely in socioeconomic status, ethnicity, level of organization, and local history, so do their crime priorities. Ultimately, this means there is no substitute for sitting down with representatives of each neighborhood to ask them about these priorities. Nevertheless, survey data and experience suggest that crime problems often are ranked by urban community residents roughly as follows: (1) serious crimes that cause community disorder—either directly (as when

streets or hallways become unusable), or indirectly by grossly escalating local fear of crime and inhibiting normal community activities (like the use of streets, parks, or playgrounds); (2) less serious crimes that cause disorder—such as widespread graffiti, street prostitution, illegal parking, misuse of parks and other public spaces, loitering, and vandalism; and (3) isolated crimes that do not appear to persist over time.

Even when well organized, however, most community residents will need to learn the basic elements involved in tackling crime problems safely, effectively, and in collaboration with law enforcement. How do you report crimes confidentially and without exposing yourself or neighbors to unnecessary risks? How do you reach out to, and work closely with, local police and prosecutors against serious crime conditions? How do you organize from victory to victory so that the number of involved local residents (and your strength) increases over time? How do you use your neighborhood's own unique resources?

## Creating successful partnerships with organizations

Organized people are more likely to safely and simultaneously implement a variety of crime-reduction activities like civilian patrols, community rallies, marches, positive loitering, and other forms of direct action, as well as civil and criminal legal strategies, court monitoring, and legislative actions. (See "What Can the Community Do?")

Organizations are more capable of focusing on problems that affect a large number of people in the community. They are better able to get the attention of agencies and institutions important in a coordinated process of solving a community problem. Organized groups have greater staying power than individuals.

It is important, however, to understand that not all kinds of community-based organizations are equally effective as partners. Critical to having an impact on locations with chronic crime is an organization that

has a collective problem-solving perspective and a commitment to reach out to and involve neighborhood residents. The organization can be a block club, community organization, church committee, school or youth group, or social service agency. The organization can be formal or informal, have a big budget or no budget, or have a staff or be totally volunteer.

An agency that looks at people in the neighborhood only as individual clients or consumers is likely to have difficulties reaching out to significant numbers of people and coordinating and sustaining their efforts. On the other hand, purely volunteer organizations often have trouble maintaining ongoing activity over the long term without support from staffed organizations. Block clubs, for instance, are more effective if they have the support of umbrella organizations. In the most strongly organized neighborhoods, block or building organizations are linked with larger neighborhood or civic organizations.

Communities with weak organizations, no organizations, or organizations that serve only individual clients—especially those communities that face serious crime—should not be ignored or abandoned to traditional reactive policing just because they do not make the most effective partners for police. They need to be brought to the point that they will make effective partners. They need to be organized. But this is not a job for the police. It is a task for local leaders, assisted where possible by professional community organizers who know about crime, the police, and community policing. These organizers need to know how to involve residents in collaboration to develop neighborhood leadership, establish organizations, and design actions to solve community problems.<sup>2</sup>

### What Can the Community Do?

- **Identify, analyze, and solve problems.** An informed, organized, and involved community can work with police to identify, analyze, and implement solutions to community problems. As Herman Goldstein has written, "A strong commitment to consulting with the affected community is inherent in problem-oriented policing."<sup>\*</sup> Citizens not only have unique knowledge of their own community but also may have skills and contacts that facilitate problem solving.
- **Mobilize the community.** Members of the community are best positioned to organize their neighbors to safely combat crime and related problems. Groups often get started through neighborhood meetings, rallies, and recreational events. Door-to-door surveys serve as both information-gathering and community outreach efforts. Community organizations, by their very nature as continuing organizations with rosters of members and regular meetings, can help sustain community involvement in community policing over time.
- **Share information with police.** Citizens often help by gathering information. Community organizations can organize community meetings on how to safely provide police with useful information (license plate numbers, detailed descriptions, brand names of street drugs, and code signals used to alert drug dealers of police presence). Standard forms for recording information can also be distributed.
- **Deny criminals access to space.** No matter how dedicated community policing officers are, they cannot be everywhere all the time. Community organizations can help by conducting antidrug patrols and initiating block watches in neighborhoods, in apartment buildings, and along school routes.
- **Influence city agencies.** A group of organized citizens are much more likely than individual citizens or police officers to get a response from city agencies. Community organizations can request meetings with mayors or city council members to support effective community policing practices, adequate street lighting, towing of abandoned cars, and additional social services in their neighborhoods.
- **Educate the media.** Neighborhood groups are well positioned to provide information to the media about crime and disorder problems and the effectiveness of problem-solving and community policing approaches. Leaders of neighborhood and citywide community organizations can write letters to the editor, appear on local radio or TV shows, and organize press conferences.
- **Take legal action.** Citizens can pressure landlords to evict drug dealers and maintain and improve building security by improving lighting, door locks, intercoms, and roof doors. Legal actions can be taken, in concert with local officials, to close down bars or other establishments that tolerate illegal activities. Civil actions can be used in lieu of, or to complement, criminal proceedings.
- **Monitor court actions.** After arrests in the neighborhood, community members can monitor and track the progress of cases and encourage prosecutors to seek and judges to give appropriate sentences. Neighborhood organizations can also encourage prosecutors' offices to develop drug courts, community courts, and alternative sentencing programs.
- **Develop prevention and treatment programs.** Community groups can draw on private and public resources as well as their own "people power" to establish youth centers; mentoring, tutoring, or parenting projects; and Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, or other substance abuse prevention or treatment programs for neighborhood residents.
- **Partner with neighborhood-based institutions.** Churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples as well as private businesses and schools can be recruited to help combat crime and recruit volunteers for community-based programs.
- **Rebuild social cohesion.** Community organizations, through their neighborhood activities, can help communities rebuild social control and increase citizen accountability for the actions of residents and their children.
- **Create a constituency for community policing.** Independently organized communities, partnering with police and other agencies, not only help prevent and control crime in particular neighborhoods, but also collectively build and sustain a jurisdiction's long-term commitment to community policing.

\* Goldstein, Herman, *Problem-Oriented Policing*, New York: McGraw-Hill, 1990.

## The Chicago example

Partnership requires the development and implementation of coordinated activities. This requires meetings, the collection and sharing of information, planning, and exchanges about the effectiveness of implementation. Police and community must regularly report to each other. Of course, anticrime activity goes on in every community without involving any police time. But true problem-solving partnerships cannot develop without regular exchanges and some meetings.

The importance of an organized and trained community and the potential for a wide and effective impact in creating safer neighborhoods is clearly illustrated by the experience in Chicago. Responding to community pressure and police support, the city invested several million dollars in citywide training of the community for its role. The Joint Community Police Training Project (JCPT), which trained nearly 12,000 people, was run by a community-based organization, the Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety (CANS). Twenty-five outreach organizers spent more than a month in each police beat (average population 10,000 residents) knocking on doors; making presentations to block, church, school, and other community groups; and inviting them to training sessions and further involvement.

The orientation on Chicago's version of community policing and on problem solving was delivered to people invited by the outreach workers. A team of community and police trainers working with the organizers then spent weeks supporting residents in actual problem solving.

Evaluators of Chicago's policing strategy and training point out that "People have turned out by the tens of thousands to get involved in training, participate in beat community meetings [with police], and take responsibility for neighborhood problem solving."<sup>3</sup>

The evaluators also found that the likelihood of citizen participation in crime-and-disorder reduction activities is related to participation in traditional community-based organizations. Residents involved in a neighborhood's community, religious, civic, or charitable organizations, with their developed habits of participation and the organizational support for maintenance of these habits, were roughly four times more likely to attend and participate in meetings and

get involved in problem-solving activities. They participated in rallies, positive loitering, and meetings with landlords and businesspeople to make their neighborhoods safer. Those with no organizational affiliation participated in problem solving 48 percent of the time. Those who indicated affiliation with four or more organizations got involved in problem solving more than 80 percent of the time.

Those most likely to participate in the training live in high-crime neighborhoods. "In the safest fifth of the beats," the authors report, "attendance averaged 25 per 1,000 adults, while in the most unsafe fifth of beats (where the personal crime rate was five times higher) attendance averaged 53 per 1,000, more than double the lower rate." This training attracted people in high-crime, low-income, minority neighborhoods where it proved useful in improving the quality of life.

Among participants surveyed 4 months after they received training, attempts had been made to solve 63 percent of the problems they listed. To make their neighborhoods safer, 17 percent of JCPT graduates participated in positive loitering, 15 percent joined a community policing-related rally or demonstration, 41 percent met with property owners to address crime, and 25 percent met with local businesspeople to address crime. On average, 26 percent of all problems were partially or completely solved during the 4-month followup period covered by the study.

Forty-four percent of the regular beat meetings with the police were run by a resident or community organizer. Another 14 percent were run collaboratively by a community person and an officer. These community-run or collaborative meetings were more likely to prepare an agenda, call for volunteers, and distribute sign-in sheets for other activities. At these meetings, discussion was evenly divided among police and residents at 60 percent of the meetings, and civilians took on a dominant role at another 25 percent. When area residents or community organizers chaired beat meetings, police dominated crafting of solutions only 34 percent of the time. When police ran the meeting, they took the lead in proposing solutions 77 percent of the time.

## Beyond solving a problem

Beyond the education and mobilization of participants for problem solving, the capacity to sustain efforts must be embodied in ongoing community-based

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organizations that do not have to be reorganized to deal with every new crisis. This is important because the critical issue for the success of community policing generally is consolidation of victories, once achieved, over time. Without consolidation, communities will permanently increase the tax burden and assign hundreds of thousands of new police officers to the streets. With consolidation, active, informed community organizations will do their part to maintain safe and livable communities.

The time horizon in thinking about community policing and problem solving must extend beyond the initial declaration of victory over a particular problem. If we want to improve the quality of life in troubled neighborhoods, sustaining solutions for months and years matters. Community-based organizations are important in solving problems, and they are critical in consolidating improvements over time.

Neighborhood safety and the quality of life are not significantly improved by suppressing a problem temporarily. Although intensive efforts can reduce a problem—e.g., community groups can apply prolonged and intense pressure on a drug house and have a dramatic impact—once an initially defined problem is solved and the situation becomes less pressing, it can become far more difficult to maintain the capacity and readiness to bring pressure on that problem if it begins to return. To go through a process that cannot secure long-term improvements will recreate the principal shortcoming of incident-driven policing: “Bust them today, and they’re back tomorrow.”

If, on the other hand, people who are affected by a chronic crime problem organize, work with the police and others to reduce the crime, and stay organized and involved after crime is reduced, they have a better chance of keeping things safer.

### Building partnerships

Police and community each come to the partnership table with their own traditions and culture as well as their own myths, half-truths, and misperceptions. These play out within the context of the still-dominant model of policing that casts the community as passive and police as active. The more the process is driven by established habits, the more likely it is to bring community and police together in a face-to-face variation of a 911 call, premised on merely transferring information and delegating the responsibility for

action to police. Genuine partnership should expect to break this mold.

For most urban residents, even those who have participated in successful anticrime activities, expectations of the police are a vague and often contradictory mixture of old and new; of incident-driven, problem-oriented, and community policing; and of phrases without clear content. Even if they have followed closely in the press the advent of police reform in their city, they are likely to have read that community policing is foot patrols, motor scooters, storefront substations, nonemergency numbers, or some combination of these tactics.

Both the community and the police must learn that problem-solving partnerships are often labor intensive. But both parties should also understand that for every hour of paid police time spent on the process, dozens, sometimes many hundreds of hours of volunteer time are invested. The reward for all this effort: the greater the mutual expectation to coordinate police and community action, the more likely an active community will develop on which police can depend and in which neighbors can hold each other, as well as the police, accountable.

If community policing partnerships are to develop and succeed, police and the community also must understand the different organizational contexts within which each operates and the constraints and opportunities created by these contexts. Community and police often come to the collaboration with false expectations.

Community residents sometimes expect too much of the police: a cop on every block, rapid response to every call, intensive and exhaustive investigations of every incident, and great community relations skills. The community must learn the constraints on an officer’s time and decisionmaking latitude—that, whatever the rhetoric, when a police officer is on the job, he or she is not one of them. If they are to work together, police processes must be clear to the community. Agreements made at meetings with the community may have to be cleared with supervisors before an officer can commit to participation. Community participants must understand that, for example, their desire for support from a special unit, even with an officer’s concurrence, is no guarantee of that support.

Conversely, many police often expect too little of community residents. Police officials and representatives with low expectations of community roles in crime prevention and reduction generally base their skepticism on work with unorganized and uninformed citizens. Perhaps experience has taught them that the best that can be hoped for in such cases is an eyes-and-ears role.

Individual police officers can come to community meetings expecting too little or too much. Often impatient, under pressure from a supervisor to get back "in service" and fearful of being swallowed by the dynamics of neighborhoods and their organizations, it becomes increasingly critical for police officers to understand those dynamics and values of community organizations. Among the most cherished values and an important determinant of the dynamics in many volunteer-based community organizations is participatory decisionmaking. Especially in the case of a community's actual and potential leaders—those who can move their neighbors into action and set the direction of that action—participation in decisionmaking is key to buying in or having a stake in the process. Having a stake is key to sustained activity. To maintain volunteer involvement, organizations need to engage people in selecting the problem they will work on, fashioning the strategy to solve it, and implementing that strategy.

This participatory nature of decisionmaking in many community organizations is foreign to police departments. It can be frustrating to professionals who have become used to a paramilitary chain of command. Yet such participation is critical to the community-police collaboration. Police must come to meetings in the community with the expectation of negotiating with volunteers with whom they hope to be involved. Resident volunteers are neither passive resources nor paid employees: It is their neighborhood, and they must live with whatever decisions are reached on a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week basis.

Often, what is uppermost for the police department does not match what concerns the community. Like the community, officers must be prepared to take as well as give leadership. They also must understand that follow-through is critical, that losing momentum loses volunteers.

In the problem-solving process, both parties can expect initial venting, passing of the buck, and defensiveness. Police may blame the courts, personnel on another shift, the command structure, or community apathy for the persistence of problems cited by the community. The community may blame the police, city services, the kids, or neighbors not getting involved. Both may blame the decay of the family, the absence of jobs, and other root causes. All these accusations may contain elements of truth, and some venting and finger pointing is inevitable. But it is critical that someone at the meeting have the skills to keep the focus on the targeted problem, and what participants will do to solve it.

Inevitably, there will be testing throughout the process. If the recruitment of neighborhood residents has been successful, it will have reached beyond those comfortable with the police. These residents will have come because they have felt the urgency of a crime problem in their neighborhood. But they also will bring their doubts and bad experiences to the collaboration, and their defenses will be up. Doubters will look for bad attitudes and signs that an officer is not doing his or her part. They will need to be convinced that this is worth their time, that the police care and are reliable. (This will be especially true among young people.) If a problem is solved through cooperative work, former doubters become a voice in the community for future collaboration. Their doubts are worth working through because their word-of-mouth advocacy is powerful.

To accomplish its mission, community policing must build on the shared traditions and objectives of the partners. Both have much to learn from each other. Both share the goal of safer neighborhoods, and hidden beneath the partners' specialized vocabularies is a core of shared concepts. On the police side, there is problem-oriented policing as a methodology for looking at and responding to crime. On the community side, there are community organizing and anticrime activity as community-building activities. Both the police and community traditions are, to a large degree, geographically focused and involve the ideas of sustained, purposeful effort and concepts like targets, patterns, repeated occurrences, and coordinated activities. Both call on research and analysis before action, and both encourage evaluation of results.

### Measuring what matters

While problem-solving partnerships are the foundation of community policing, what matters most is how the goals are selected, how the participants work together to accomplish those goals, whether the goals are accomplished, and whether community capacity is developed.

Some of the assessment or evaluative questions that need to be asked include:

- Is the collaboration target-oriented? What kinds of targets were selected? Did the community and the police both have roles in selecting the problem and designing the strategies? Did both play a role in implementing the strategy? What was the division of labor? What kinds of support, training, and technical assistance did each receive (and should each have received) for their part in problem solving?
- Were the goals realistic? Was the strategy a success? Were the desired outcomes actually realized? Did trust between police and community improve? Were previously inactive residents enlisted in the work?
- Did participants understand the process in which they participated? Did they gain a new understanding of collaboration? Did attitudes toward the use of 911 and incident-driven policing change? Did community residents know what to expect from officers and how to assess whether they were getting it?
- Did organizational skills such as setting agendas and running meetings improve among community participants? Did collaboration continue over time, from problem to problem? Did collaborative work expand across communities?

### Conclusion

Measuring the problem-solving interaction of community and police is measuring something that matters deeply to the future of America's cities. Focusing on community self-help and the development of its capacity to solve neighborhood problems is not to deny the major influence that issues at the national, State, and city levels have on neighborhoods. The Nation's deeply entrenched divisions of race and income, and recent rises in the numbers of youth living in poverty,

affect the prevalence of crime and are mostly beyond the reach of local activity.

Focusing on community-police partnerships does not diminish the importance of community development. Community action against crime will obviously have a greater effect if it takes place in the context of a concerted effort to produce locally accessible jobs, decent education, and hope for young people. The impact of community action would also be greater in the context of efforts, for instance, to improve housing stock, business investment, and transportation in poor and at-risk communities. But even in the absence of broader efforts, local anticrime action is valuable. It can raise people's sense of efficacy and increase community cohesion, reduce crime, improve the quality of life, and heal a tiny part of the rift between government and citizens.

Getting communities organized and maintaining community organizations cost money. If the police can't produce neighborhood safety by themselves, if they need community partners, if improving the general welfare and domestic tranquillity of our neighborhoods requires 100,000 community organizers to match the 100,000 police, then the community has a right to expect public support from police and other law enforcement leaders for the resources they need to fulfill the community role effectively.

### Notes

1. Kelling, George, M., and James Q. Wilson, "Broken Windows," *Atlantic Monthly* 249 (3) (March 1982): 29–36.

2. The "how to's" of community action against crime have been translated by support organizations that work with neighborhood residents—such as the Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety, the American Alliance for Rights and Responsibilities (now the Center for the Community Interest), the Citizen's Committee for New York City, the National Crime Prevention Council, and others—into practical guidance materials in basic skills and strategies. The citywide Citizens Committee provides technical assistance, publications, small grants, and a Neighborhood Safety Leadership Institute. The Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety also offers technical assistance and training. See also Kirby, Felice, Alex Kopelman, and Michael E. Clark, *Drugs: Fighting Back!*, New York: Citizens Committee for New York City, 1995; Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft, Attorneys at Law, *A Civil War: A Community Legal Guide to*



*Fighting Street Drug Markets*. New York: Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft, 1993; and Conner, Roger, and Patrick Burns. *A Winnable War: A Community Guide to Eradicating Drug Markets*, Washington, DC: American Alliance for Rights and Responsibilities, 1992.

3. Skogan, Wesley G., et al., *Community Policing in Chicago, Year Three: An Interim Report*, Chicago:

Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, November 1996. See also Friedman, Warren, *Building on the Promise: Reason for Hope/Room for Doubt*. Chicago: Chicago Alliance for Neighborhood Safety, 1996, for a community perspective on the status of Chicago's version of community policing and what must happen to sustain and enhance community participation.



# Americans' Views on Crime and Law Enforcement: A Look at Recent Survey Findings

*Jean Johnson, Steve Farkas, Ali Bers, Christin Connolly, and Zarela Maldonado*

Americans from every walk of life, in every community in the country, routinely make decisions that strengthen or hinder the country's ability to fight crime. Citizens elect the governors, mayors, and legislators who shape crime-fighting policy. When citizens choose not to report crimes or press charges, when jurors decide to accept or discount police testimony for any reason other than merit, they profoundly affect the quality of law enforcement and justice in this country.

At the request of the National Institute of Justice, Public Agenda, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization, analyzed recent public opinion data on crime, the criminal justice system, and the role and effectiveness of the police. This paper summarizes our key observations based on an analysis of surveys from the past 5 years.<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the surveys cited here are national random sample telephone surveys conducted in 1995 or later.

Crime and law enforcement are areas where attitudes often vary sharply between African-Americans and whites, and we have reported the views of these groups separately where the differences are significant. Unfortunately, most national surveys are not large enough to allow us to report with any confidence on the views of Hispanics or other minority groups.

## Falling crime rates: rooted fears

Despite falling crime rates and remarkably good news from some of the Nation's large cities, crime remains an urgent issue for most Americans. Crime routinely appears at or near the top of surveys asking Americans to name the most important issues facing the country. Ninety-two percent of Americans, for example, say the issue of crime should be a priority for Congress (The

Gallup Organization for CNN/USA Today, October 1997). Just 24 percent of the public believe the country is making progress on crime; 44 percent say the country is losing ground (Princeton Survey Research/Pew Research Center, November 1997).

The public's concerns about crime seem to be somewhat independent of the actual crime rate, a phenomenon that may discourage law enforcement professionals but underscores just how frightening this issue is for most people. Public concern about jobs and unemployment often shows a similar pattern, remaining high even in times of comparatively low unemployment. Crime and unemployment can devastate people's lives in ways that a far-off foreign policy crisis or long-term environmental threat cannot. Deeply held public fears about crime—developed over decades—may be slow to dissipate even in the best of circumstances.

Public attitudes in New York City, which has experienced dramatic and highly publicized decreases in violent crime, provide a case in point. Polls in New York City show a remarkable jump in the New York City Police Department's approval rating, which rose from 37 percent in 1992 to 73 percent in 1996 (Empire Foundation, April 1996). Mayor Rudolph Giuliani, former Police Commissioner William Bratton, and current Commissioner Howard Safir have earned good marks for their efforts in fighting crime (Quinnipiac College, April 1996 and February 1997). Although half of New Yorkers (51 percent) say the city is now safer, almost two-thirds (65 percent) say they worry about being a victim of crime (Quinnipiac College, February 1997).

Many observers have suggested that public fears about crime are driven by media coverage rather than by any real knowledge of crime rates in their area. And 76 percent of Americans themselves say this is

true: They get their information about crime from the news media (ABC News, May 1996).

Almost 6 in 10 Americans (57 percent) say their own community has less crime than the country as a whole (*Los Angeles Times*, January 1994); 8 in 10 say they feel safe in their own community (*Los Angeles Times*, October 1995). Even in New York City, where 81 percent of residents say crime is a "big problem," only 38 percent say crime is a "big problem" in their own community (Quinnipiac College, February 1997).

But people's fears are nevertheless real, and they may be intensified by the conviction of many Americans that the crime problem is getting worse, not better. Sixty-five percent of Americans say they think there is more crime in the United States than a year ago (The Gallup Organization for CNN/*USA Today*, July 1997); 62 percent say they worry "a lot" about an increase in crime in their own community (Yankelovich Partners for *Time/CNN*, January 1995).

Some groups in the population voice even higher levels of concern. More than two-thirds of women (68 percent), compared with just over half of men (56 percent), say they worry "a lot" about an increase in crime in their community. Seventy-six percent of African-Americans, compared with 60 percent of whites, voice a high level of concern. Two-thirds (66 percent) of low-income Americans (those earning less than \$20,000), compared with only half (51 percent) of those with incomes above \$75,000, worry a

lot about an increase in crime (Yankelovich Partners for *Time/CNN*, January 1995). Since crime statistics show that blacks and low-income Americans are more likely to be victims of crimes, the concerns of these groups have a factual base (see exhibit 1).

### Causes of crime: complex and multifaceted

Americans identify a wide variety of social, economic, and moral conditions as the causes of crime. Fifty-six percent cite illegal drugs as a chief cause of crime; 38 percent name a lack of religion and morality in families; and 36 percent point to economic problems and lack of jobs. More than a quarter (28 percent) say the way judges apply the law is an important cause of crime (CBS News/*New York Times*, June 1996).

People back a variety of approaches they view as effective ways to fight crime—some designed to remove dangerous criminals from their neighborhoods, some to prevent youngsters from falling into a life of crime, some to express society's outrage at those who disdain its laws. Public views on fighting crime do not fall neatly into either a liberal or conservative political framework. Sixty-nine percent of Americans want to make it more difficult for individuals to own handguns or assault weapons. A virtually equal number (71 percent) want to make greater use of the death penalty (Hart and Teeter Research Companies, December 1996).

#### Exhibit 1. Concern About Crime

"People all have different concerns about what's going on in the world these days, but you can't worry about everything all the time. Will you please tell me for each of the following whether right now this is something that worries you personally a lot, a little, or not at all? . . . An increase in crime in your community."

	General Public %	Women %	Men %	Blacks %	Whites %	<\$20K per year %	>\$75K per year %
A lot	62	68	56	76	60	66	51
A little	27	23	32	17	28	22	38
Not at all	11	10	12	7	11	11	11

Yankelovich Partners for *Time/CNN*, January 1995. National survey of 1,000.

Note: Table percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

The public considers “mandatory life sentences for three-time felons” and “youth crime prevention programs” equally effective as crimefighting measures (*Los Angeles Times*, April 1994). Asked about the best overall approach to reducing crime, 30 percent of Americans want to emphasize punishment, 18 percent want to address the causes, and 51 percent want to emphasize both (Hart and Teeter Research Group, January 1995).

Research on prison overcrowding and alternative sentencing by Public Agenda for the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation also strongly suggests that most Americans believe in a mixture of approaches.<sup>2</sup> For youngsters in particular, people want the preventive approach—“stop them before they start, if you can.” But for most Americans, the worst possible lesson for young offenders would be to not to get caught or to receive the “slap on the wrist” of probation. Indeed, the Public Agenda studies found that the most popular sentence for young offenders is boot camp. Most Americans are convinced that the young person who “gets away with it” is all the more likely to continue a life of crime.

Opinion research strongly suggests that, for the public, the concept of justice includes both protecting the rights of the accused and redressing wrongs done to victims and society. The vast majority of Americans appears to believe that the balance between these two goals has tipped too far in favor of the accused. Eighty-six percent of Americans say the court system does too much to protect the rights of people accused of crimes and not enough to protect the rights of crime victims (ABC News, February 1994). Only 3 percent of Americans say the courts deal too harshly with criminals: 85 percent say they are not harsh enough (National Opinion Research Center [NORC], May 1994).

### The police: on the front lines

Putting more police on the streets as an effective way to fight crime is broadly supported. Nine in ten Americans (90 percent) say that increasing the number of police is a very (46 percent) or somewhat (44 percent) effective way to reduce crime (ABC News, November 1994). And, given the general skepticism people feel about many institutions and most of government, Americans voice substantial confidence in law enforcement. Sixty percent of Americans say they have a “great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in the police; another 29 percent say they have “some” confidence in the police; only 12 percent

express very little or no confidence (The Gallup Organization for CNN/*USA Today*, May 1996).

In a 1996 Gallup survey, only one major American institution rated higher than the police: 66 percent of the public have a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the military. The police score about as well as “organized religion” (56 percent), and many groups—business corporations, Congress, the news media—do much worse. The police also score significantly higher than “the criminal justice system” as a

#### Exhibit 2. Public Confidence in Selected Institutions

“I am going to read you a list of institutions in American society. Would you tell me how much respect and confidence you, yourself, have in each one—a great deal, quite a lot, some, or very little?”

Institution	Percentage of general public saying “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence
Military	66
Police	60
Organized religion	56
Supreme Court	45
Banks	44
Medical system	42
Presidency	39
Public schools	38
Television news	36
Newspapers	32
Organized labor	25
Big business	24
Congress	20
Criminal justice system	19

The Gallup Organization. 1996. National survey of 1,019.

whole; only one in five Americans (19 percent) voices strong confidence in it (The Gallup Organization, 1996). (See exhibit 2.)

But confidence in law enforcement is one area where African-Americans and white Americans differ dramatically. While 66 percent of whites say they have a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in the police, only 32 percent of African-Americans feel the same way. Perhaps even more important, while only a handful of whites (8 percent) say they have very little or no confidence in the police, 25 percent of blacks make this statement (The Gallup Organization, May 1996). (See exhibit 3.)

### Incidents that shape perceptions

Much of the recent opinion research on police bias and brutality has focused on two widely publicized incidents in the past 5 years: the trial of four Los Angeles police officers in the beating of Rodney King and the role of retired Los Angeles detective Mark Fuhrman in the murder trial of O.J. Simpson.

Public attitudes about these two incidents suggest the basis for some of the public's thinking about what constitutes appropriate police behavior and the degree to which people believe most officers act professionally most of the time. Surveys conducted during periods of extensive press coverage and heightened public debate can, of course, show levels of concern or anger that recede in quieter times. Mark Fuhrman, for example, has written a bestselling book and made numerous media appearances in the wake of the civil judgment against O.J. Simpson. Public attitudes about him personally may shift somewhat with time. But the initial public reactions to these two incidents as people understood them at the time are revealing.

Surveys of public reaction to the Rodney King beating—undoubtedly shaped by repeated broadcast of a videotape of the incident—show that the overwhelming majority of Americans did not like what they saw. Just 6 percent of Americans surveyed after the officers' initial acquittal said they thought the verdict was "right" (CBS News/*New York Times*, May 1992). Only 9 percent said they "sympathize[d]" more with police than the beating victim (Yankelovich Clancy Schulman for *Time/CNN*, April 1992.)

Exhibit 3. Confidence in the Police

	General Public %	Blacks %	Whites %
Now I am going to read you a list of institutions in American society. Please tell me how much confidence you, yourself, have in each one. . . . The police? <sup>1</sup>			
A great deal/quite a lot	60	32	66
Some	29	43	25
Very little/none	12	25	8
Don't know (volunteered)	<.5	0	<.5
How much confidence do you have in the ability of the police to protect you from violent crime? <sup>2</sup>			
A great deal/quite a lot	50	37	53
Not very much/none at all	48	61	46
Don't know (volunteered)	1	2	1

<sup>1</sup> The Gallup Organization for CNN/*USA Today*, May 1996. National survey of 1.019.

<sup>2</sup> The Gallup Organization for CNN/*USA Today*, September 1995. National survey of 1.011.

Note: Table percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

Reactions to the tape-recorded comments of Mark Fuhrman played during the Simpson criminal trial show a similar public recoil against an officer who did not seem to fit commonly held standards for appropriate police behavior. At the time, 87 percent of Americans, with blacks and whites agreeing in roughly equal numbers, said they had an “unfavorable impression” of Fuhrman (The Gallup Organization, October 1995), although Americans were split largely along racial lines about whether he actually planted evidence in the Simpson case (CBS News, September 1995).<sup>3</sup>

Regardless of their differing perceptions about what Fuhrman actually did or did not do, there is one area where blacks and whites agree overwhelmingly: Only 9 percent of either group said that watching the

Simpson trial gave them more confidence that “police officers perform their duties in a professional and ethical manner” (The Gallup Organization for CNN/ *USA Today*, October 1995).

## The exception or the rule?

For many white Americans, these kinds of incidents are mainly viewed as regrettable exceptions to the rule. Only 15 percent of white Americans think that “the kind of improper behavior by police described on the Fuhrman tapes (racism and falsification of evidence)” is common among their local police (Princeton Survey Research Associates, August 1995). But black Americans see things very differently. More than half of African-Americans (53 percent) think that the racism and falsifi-

**Exhibit 4. Opinions About Police Behavior**

	General Public %	Blacks %	Whites %
From what you know, is the kind of improper behavior by police described on the Fuhrman tapes (racism and falsification of evidence) common among members of your police force, or not? <sup>1</sup>			
Yes, common	20	53	15
No, not common	64	32	70
Don't know (volunteered)	16	16	15
For each of the following, please indicate how serious a threat it is today to Americans' rights and freedoms. . . . Police overreaction to crime? <sup>2</sup>			
Very serious threat	27	43	24
Moderate threat	40	27	42
Not much of a threat	32	28	32
Don't know (volunteered)	2	1	2
Do you think blacks and other minorities receive equal treatment as whites in the criminal justice system? <sup>3</sup>			
Yes, receive equal treatment	36	12	41
No, do not receive equal treatment	55	81	49
No opinion	9	7	10

<sup>1</sup> *Newsweek*/Princeton Survey Research Associates, August 1995. National survey of 758.

<sup>2</sup> The Gallup Organization for America's Talking, June 1994. National survey of 1,013.

<sup>3</sup> ABC News, May 1996. National survey of 1,116.

Note: Table percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

cation of evidence described on the Fuhrman tapes is common among the local police (Princeton Survey Research Associates, August 1995). Almost twice as many blacks as whites (43 percent compared with 24 percent) consider "police overreaction to crime" a very serious threat (The Gallup Organization for America's Talking, June 1994). (See exhibit 4.)

Moreover, concern among African-Americans about their chances of being treated fairly extends beyond law enforcement: While 41 percent of whites say that racial and other minorities receive equal treatment in the criminal justice system, only 12 percent of African-Americans say they are confident that this occurs (ABC News, May 1996).

### Common standards, different experiences

Interestingly, there is substantial agreement among black and white Americans about what constitutes appropriate police behavior. Nine in ten Americans (90 percent)—with no significant differences between blacks and whites—disapprove of an officer striking a citizen who is being vulgar and obscene. A roughly equal number (92 percent) disapprove of an officer striking a murder suspect during questioning—again with no significant differences between blacks and whites. Ninety-three percent say a police officer *should be* allowed to strike a citizen who is attacking the officer with his fists, with blacks and whites again in agreement (NORC, 1994).

But judgments differ widely about what actually happens in most communities regarding police behavior. Middle-class whites generally have only positive interactions with the police, and most experience a sense of relief at seeing police officers out and about. In contrast, a study by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies (April 1996) reports that 43 percent of blacks consider "police brutality and harassment of African-Americans a serious problem" in their own community.

The level of distrust obviously affects the degree of support law enforcement can expect now and in the future. While 72 percent of whites think the police generally are fair in collecting evidence, only 47 percent of blacks believe this (Yankelovich Partners, June 1995). Even prior to the Rodney King incident, African-Americans were more likely than whites—

82 percent compared with 65 percent—to think that charges of police brutality are likely to be justified (CBS News/*New York Times*, April 1991).

Although blacks and whites agree on how police officers should behave when the situation is relatively clear-cut, there are important differences when the situation is more problematic. Seventy-eight percent of whites, compared with only 57 percent of blacks, would approve of an officer striking a suspect attempting to escape custody (NORC, 1994). Given a Rorschach survey question capturing the most immediate first thoughts of the respondents, the racial differences are marked: More than three-quarters of whites (76 percent) say they can "imagine" a situation in which they would approve of a policeman striking an adult male citizen, but less than half of blacks (45 percent) give the police this kind of benefit of the doubt (NORC, May 1994). (See exhibit 5.)

### The fault line

There are some issues, such as affirmative action, where policymakers cannot easily accommodate the anxieties both blacks and whites bring to the issue—fears among blacks that they will be the subject of discrimination if affirmative action is curtailed; fears among whites that they will be the subject of reverse discrimination if affirmative action stands.

But concerns about police bias and brutality are different. Although blacks and whites disagree about how widespread these problems are, neither group finds such behavior acceptable. Both blacks and whites disapproved of the Rodney King beating, at least as they saw it. Both groups were repulsed by the attitudes and behavior depicted on the Fuhrman tapes.

Indeed, those concerned that police officers behave—and are perceived as behaving—in a professional manner should not be overly consoled by the judgments of whites either. Americans of both races seem dubious that police departments will act forcefully to address problems of racism, dishonesty, or brutality to the extent that they exist in police ranks. Only 14 percent of white Americans and 15 percent of black Americans think it is "very likely" that the controversy surrounding detective Fuhrman will lead to "significant improvement in the way police in this country treat blacks" (The Gallup Organization for CNN/*USA Today*, October 1995).



In a decade when many Americans seem to think that "government" can do no right, law enforcement is viewed as an essential public service, and the police enjoy a robust vote of confidence from most of the public. But support for law enforcement has a fault line. Far too many black Americans are disaffected and suspicious. They are not confident that the police

will be fair. They are not confident that the police will be professional. They are not confident that the police will "protect and serve." And while the personal encounters most whites have with police officers may be positive, white Americans have witnessed some graphic, highly publicized examples of police behavior that, in their view, are entirely unacceptable. They

**Exhibit 5. Approval/Disapproval of Police Behavior**

	General Public %	Blacks %	Whites %
Would you approve of a policeman striking a citizen who had said vulgar and obscene things to the policeman?			
Yes	9	5	9
No	90	94	90
Not sure (volunteered)	1	1	1
Would you approve of a policeman striking a citizen who was being questioned as a suspect in a murder case?			
Yes	7	6	7
No	92	93	92
Not sure (volunteered)	2	1	2
Would you approve of a policeman striking a citizen who was attempting to escape from custody?			
Yes	75	57	78
No	21	36	18
Not sure (volunteered)	4	7	4
Would you approve of a policeman striking a citizen who was attacking the policeman with his fists?			
Yes	93	90	94
No	6	9	5
Not sure (volunteered)	1	1	1
Are there any situations you can imagine in which you would approve of a policeman striking an adult male citizen?			
Yes	71	45	76
No	26	48	22
Not sure (volunteered)	3	7	3

National Opinion Research Center, General Social Survey, 1994, National survey of 2,992.

Note: Table percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding.

## Americans' Views on Crime and Law Enforcement: A Look at Recent Survey Findings

may regard these incidents as exceptions, but not ones to be glossed over as "the cost of doing business."

Over the past 5 years, Public Agenda has looked closely at public attitudes about teachers, another group of government workers whom the public likes. Teachers, like police officers, are seen as performing an essential public service and are generally regarded with respect. But Public Agenda research also shows a rising frustration with teachers—and their unions—for seeming to tolerate and protect the few incompetents among them. Focus groups erupt in anger when discussion turns to teacher tenure. The stories pour out about the one bad teacher the school cannot seem to get rid of. Anger against the few infects attitudes about teachers overall.

Law enforcement may now be in a similar position. Police departments that are seen as tolerating racist, brutal, or corrupt officers—or police unions that are perceived as protecting them—could slowly and incrementally jeopardize the strong support for law enforcement overall. It is fair to ask how long police departments can tolerate widespread lack of confidence among the black community—an outlook that must daily undermine police effectiveness in fighting crime. Public confidence in law enforcement is, for the country and for law enforcement itself, a priceless

asset, but it is not indestructible nor a cause for complacency.

### Notes

1. In preparing this paper, we have relied extensively on data from the Roper Center Public Opinion Location Library (POLL), a resource housing survey data from many of the Nation's most respected opinion research firms—ABC News, The Gallup Organization, Louis Harris and Associates, National Opinion Research Center (NORC), Princeton Survey Research Associates, and others. POLL is operated by the Roper Center at the University of Connecticut and can be accessed through NEXIS. The service can provide full-question wording, complete responses, and, in most cases, demographic breakdowns for the surveys cited here, along with other findings about crime and criminal justice that could not be discussed in this brief overview.
2. Public Agenda has conducted three studies on public attitudes about incarceration and alternative sentencing in Pennsylvania (1993), Delaware (1991), and Alabama (1989). The research was sponsored by the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation.
3. The poll found that 78 percent of African-Americans think it is likely that Fuhrman planted the glove as evidence. In contrast, only 33 percent of whites think it is likely he planted the glove.

# To Whom Do We Answer?

Johnnie Johnson, Robert Berry, Juanita Eaton, Robert Ford, and Dennis E. Nowicki

*The costs of crime have reached such a level that the police community must take a cold, hard look at itself. The criminal justice system is failing the public. People want to be safe from crime, and it is up to the police to be the catalyst in making that desire a reality. (Wadman and Olson, 1990, p. 40)*

One of the questions confronting modern criminal justice theory is that of responsibility. Upon whom does the burden of "crime" in the United States lie? In addressing this matter, one must look not only at enforcing laws but also at the broader, more encompassing concepts of "service" and "accountability." To whom does law enforcement actually answer, and to whom are we responsible? The first, most logical response is that our primary responsibility is to the public we serve. This is a simple answer to a complex question. We will attempt to explore our cultures and the communities to whom we answer.

Modern, innovative law enforcement is rapidly coming to the realization that the era of adding more police, answering more calls in less time, and buying new gadgetry is coming to an end. Many agencies recognize that the police car, the radio, the air conditioner, and the decreased response times have actually removed and isolated the police from the public they are sworn to protect.

Modern police departments are 24-hour emergency operations that are available to any citizen. Technology, in particular 911 and enhanced 911 (which automatically identifies the call location), has not been a total solution to our problems. Although certainly a boon, it has also created new problems. Skolnick and Bayley (1986) note that many departments regard the emergency response system they created as a monster that consumes the operational guts of the department. Citizens are so accustomed to dialing the emergency number that police spend a large portion of their time speeding from one call to another without solving the underlying problem or benefiting anyone.

This pressure to react quickly is more often than not a response to outdated command staff strategies or priorities rather than to the public as a whole. Lack of knowledge of what the public actually wants is what has gotten us into our present situation.

The police community has slowly come to realize that the old tactics of preventive patrol and reactive investigation are incapable of preventing or solving most crimes. New innovations may have helped police manage their time better, but they have not helped to reduce crime significantly. The major point is that crime simply can no longer be the police's sole concern. Nationwide pressures have forced police to consider a broader range of problems and solutions. Eck and Spelman (1987) note that police can no longer regard themselves as part of the criminal justice system; they must become part of the larger human services system. Likewise, police administrators recognize that the old "classical" model described by Fesler and Kettl (1991) is obsolete. Police can no longer reach their objectives through rigid, hierarchical management styles. In police work, this style not only fosters standardization and specialization, it also decreases the motivation, innovation, and creativity needed to implement new solutions to old problems. Many departments are experimenting with newer alternatives and seeking help from the private sector and the public as a whole.

## Legitimacy

*Let every person render obedience to the governing authorities; for there is no authority except from God, those in authority are divinely constituted, so that the rebel against the authority is resisting God's appointment. (Romans 13:1)*

Fesler and Kettl (1991) write that a government having legitimacy has authority and that we as citizens owe our obedience "... only insofar as the demands ... comply with the relevant constitutional, judicial, and executive limitations and instructions" (p. 42).

## To Whom Do We Answer?

Therein lies one of the major controversies of modern policing. Justifying what police have to do has always been difficult in democratic societies. This is especially true in the United States where ambivalence about government authority is a constant force. The police and others who implement the will of the governed—and are given the power to intervene in private lives and the authority to use force to gain compliance—are always under close scrutiny in this country.

Pivotal to the character of American policing is its source of authority or legitimacy (International City Management Association [ICMA], 1991). Prior to the 1930s, U.S. police mandates came directly from local politicians. Reform movements pushed police away from political priorities and domination into a role of being primarily enforcers of the law. By characterizing criminal law as the fundamental source of police authority, reformers eliminated many social and regulatory functions from law enforcement duties. During this time, the perception of rising crime was prevalent. The notoriety surrounding such crime figures as John Dillinger, Pretty Boy Floyd, and Clyde Barker pushed the public to demand police protection. The police readily accepted and enhanced the portrayal of themselves as America's last bastion of defense against crime and held that picture for over half a century (ICMA, 1991).

This sense of mission is also described by Mastroski (1988) as a recognizable source of authority and legitimacy. He portrays police acceptance of a crime fighting mandate as comparable to other occupations that seek resources and status by claiming professional domain or the capacity and responsibility for certain outcomes—in this case, lower crime rates.

Regardless of the source, police power, autonomy, and isolation have predominated for many years. To succeed, that role must change. As early as 1829, Sir Robert Peel emphasized that police should work in cooperation with the people and police officers should protect the rights, serve the needs, and earn the trust of the population they police (Critchley, 1967).

Both police and researchers are coming to realize that for decades law enforcement agencies have taken on more responsibilities than they could ever handle. Sociologist Amitai Etzioni uses the term "communitarianism" to describe the general concept of community involvement in problem solving. He states that we have gone too far in extending rights to our citi-

zens and not far enough in asking them to fulfill responsibilities to the government as a whole. It is the duty of all of us to pay our civic rent with our time, skills, and money, not just "lip service." This brings us back to the question: "To whom do we answer?" Do citizens feel they are valued customers when they visit us or call on us for service, or are they treated as distractions who keep us from doing what we perhaps perceive as our "real" job? If this is true, then we have probably excluded them from our processes for some time, and we will have trouble identifying our "clients" and defining our goals and mission.

Herman Goldstein has noted that bureaucracies risk becoming so preoccupied with running their organizations that they lose sight of the primary purpose for which they were created. The police seem unusually susceptible to this. Organizations usually seek to minimize the influence of the external environment on internal operations. The external environment poses uncertainty for the organization and can affect government agencies dramatically. One major concern has been departmental ideologies. Changes in public beliefs threaten potential changes in government agencies. Though all agencies resist change, it is hard to think of one more resistant than the police. Typically, we have always been paramilitary rigid bureaucracies fiercely defensive of the status quo.

Skolnick and Bayley (1986) note that it was not easy to transform "Blue Knights" into community organizers. Police belong to a subculture marked by an "us-them" mentality that mistrusts working with outsiders. The authors reference the television program "Hill Street Blues," which depicted veteran Sergeant Yablonski saying, "Let's do it to them before they do it to us." This dichotomy of trust only lends itself to reinforce the split between two of the bases of organization described by Fesler and Kettl (1991), namely, purpose versus clientele. For years, police agencies have isolated themselves by claiming the right and professionalism to handle "operational matters" about which the public knows little. Despite the omnipresence of cops on the street, the American public seems to get most of its information about police from television shows that grossly distort reality and give rise to impossible expectations about what police can and cannot do (Bouza, 1990). Police tend to play up these beliefs and reinforce the public's ignorance by shrouding operations in secrecy.

The public often does not understand, and perhaps does not want to understand, the way police and their organizations operate. Police generally encounter people at their worst, not their best. They are called to family fights, not family picnics. They see mostly the dark side of human nature. Someone has to deal with the blood, the hurt children, and the human anguish that no one wants to face, and it is usually the police.

On the other hand, the public is often as guilty of causing rifts by maintaining the attitude that police work is dirty, tainted, or disgusting, forcing the police to isolate themselves. This exacerbates the clash between purpose and clientele. The police are there to "protect and serve." Unfortunately, police officers often see their purpose mainly as "to protect," and the public or clientele sees the purpose solely as "to serve." This isolation on both sides makes joint efforts difficult, and, in the meantime, the criminal element of society takes advantage of both sides.

One of the first steps is toward what Skolnick and Bayley call "police-community reciprocity" (1988, p. 211). The "us-them" attitude must give way to an "all of us" perspective. The community and the police have to be partners in crime prevention. All must share. The first move is to involve the public in the police mission.

## Mission, values, policy, and culture

The function of the police mission as defined by Couper and Lobitz (1991) is to focus on the department's purpose, call attention to what is important to the department, and define its values. The culture of a police department reflects what that department believes in as an organization. Those beliefs are reflected in the policies of the department and the way it conducts daily business.

All departments have a culture. The question is: Was it carefully developed or just allowed to happen? As an example, if a department views the use of force as a typical occurrence and the normal way to handle situations, its response to an excessive force complaint will be radically different from a department that views routine use of force as atypical. Its officers come to view the use of force as an acceptable way to resolve most conflicts. Ralph Waldo Emerson once said, "An institution is the lengthened shadow of one

man." The tone set by the leadership must be reflected by the organization, and the organization must project that tone to the public, who must respond in return.

In light of this, a department must establish a value system and state its policy. It must list goals, guidelines for performance, and standards for evaluation. Most important, and sometimes most difficult, is to involve the community in the policymaking process.

Dunham and Alpert observe: "Power sharing is not a central feature of . . . police agency programming" (1989, p. 353). A department must be accessible to the public, and that accessibility depends on whether there is a plan to enhance citizen involvement in police activity. Where the policymaking and decision-making relationship is one-sided, there is little hope for long-term involvement. If the public has little voice in how its problems are prioritized and addressed, there will be little desire for future participation. Likewise, if a department does not articulate its values to the community, the community cannot begin to understand how to help.

Sparrow, Moore, and Kennedy (1990) state, "Managing through values, and the values police executives choose to manage by, will play a crucial role" (p. 195). Ideologically and functionally, the police traditionally have resisted community participation in policy and goal formation. Unfortunately, police departments also have resisted the police officer's role in policymaking. Line officers often feel alienated from the very organizations that employ them. Police officers themselves have been disenfranchised and frustrated by complex, impersonal, and degrading organizational policies and practices (Dunham and Alpert, 1989). In general, rigid, bureaucratic police agencies often exclude not only the public they serve but also the officers who serve that public.

In the late 1970s, in the face of this truth, the police realized they needed help. As crime rates tripled between 1960 and the late 1980s (Bouza, 1990), both the police and the public began to see the flaws of the system, and changes began to be implemented.

## To whom do we answer?

In an informal survey of several chiefs of police, we asked, "To whom do you answer?" We received responses such as, "the mayor," "the elected officials who appointed me," "the community," "God," and

## To Whom Do We Answer?

"myself." All of these are elements of the communities we serve. Their strengths and demands for attention may wax and wane, but they are always present and are potential clients.

How individual officers and their departments are assessed is one of the specific issues that leads to many misconceptions on the part of the police and members of the community. The criteria used to evaluate a department must be consistent with the police mission and culture of the department. Morgan (1986) refers to culture as "the patterns of development reflected in a society's system of knowledge, ideology, values, laws, and day-to-day ritual" (p. 112). As previously noted, the culture of a department reflects what the department believes as an organization. The beliefs are reflected in the department's recruitment, selection, training, and, ultimately, the actions of its officers as they interact with the public. The values of the department should reflect its own community and should be based on concepts such as service, commitment, professionalism, integrity, and community involvement. The police should demonstrate leadership that is sensitive to community needs. Accountability to other institutions conforms to the American notion of a system of checks and balances. Our communities will not, and should not, tolerate isolation and lack of accountability.

Reviewing the Law Enforcement Code of Ethics—adopted by the Executive Committee of the International Association of Chiefs of Police in 1989 to replace the 1957 Code of Ethics—we are freshly reminded of the simplicity of the guidelines we must follow. The Code offers direction on the primary responsibilities, performance of duties, discretion, use of force, confidentiality, integrity, cooperation with other officers and agencies, personal/professional capabilities, and private life of a police officer. Policing is not an exact science, and dealing with people is not always easy. We are not perfect as police officers, administrators, or people, but our chosen career means we are held to a higher standard. We are all bound by this Code, which clearly defines our obligations.

Except in the smallest, most homogeneous police jurisdictions, various neighborhoods have different needs and require different responses from their police departments. Tradition, as well as need, affects these expectations and demands. Police departments

are civil service agencies and are responsible for providing a service and answering to the public.

Whether a police agency defines its operational style as traditional, community-oriented, or some mixture of the two, it must recognize the various communities it encompasses. Using this broad definition, everyone is a member of at least one community. Past practices have created a breach between the police and certain communities as we have minimized external influences on policymaking and how services are rendered. We are not an invading army, owing allegiance only to a distant force that commissions us. We are civil servants, and, although many of us work in positions that are protected from termination without cause, common sense and fairness dictate that we work to serve the public. We may define the public as composed of the communities that make up our jurisdictions. Mayhall, Barker, and Hunter define community as "a group of people sharing common boundaries, such as common goals, needs, interests, and/or geographical locations" (1995, p. 14). They divide the population into three communities: internal, external, and overlapping. We are responsible to each community.

### Internal communities

As policing has become more professional with a code of ethics, required training, professional associations, and stringent Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA) standards, police missions, training, and day-to-day activities have to some degree become standardized throughout the United States. Acceptable police behavior in the Southeast is appropriate in the Northwest, and inappropriate behavior in New York City is not acceptable in Los Angeles. National news has kept us abreast of police misconduct and scandal across the country, and we all recognize these behaviors as offensive, unethical, and even criminal.

The age of technology has brought us, as professional police officers, many welcome tools and advances. But it has also brought police indiscretions and criminal actions from across the Nation into the living rooms and lunchrooms of our communities. All officers are looked at with a jaundiced eye when a scandal-thirsty media paints us all with the same brush. We are all part of the police community and affected by the communities' perceptions. The stereotypes given us by the national media, including

television and movies, are not so negative that we cannot overcome them. We need the support of all of our employees.

**Support personnel.** Most calls for service begin with a phone call to the communications center. Regardless of the size of the operation, the person who answers the telephone sets the tone for the entire police interaction. A professional, helpful, concerned calltaker may never be recognized or praised, but an unprofessional, disinterested one will soon come to the administration's attention. All support personnel must be trained and motivated to do their jobs with pride. As members of our internal community, their importance cannot be overstressed, and communication between them and the administration must be two way. We answer to the support personnel.

**Sworn personnel.** We must encourage our officers to use each citizen contact as an opportunity to demonstrate professionalism and commitment to service. Police officers are not called to celebrate joyous occasions but to handle tragedy, disaster, crime, and, most often, petty annoyances. The officers are affected by the stressful nature of the job, and we owe them the benefit of our experiences. They are our hands, eyes, and ears, and we cannot accomplish our missions without their willing assistance. Our employees are our internal communities and are vital to the success of our organizations. All members of our internal community are what Lipsky (1980) calls "street-level bureaucrats" as they make decisions and render justice based on their interpretation of departmental policy. Lee P. Brown, during his tenure as the chief of the Houston Police Department from 1982 to 1990, gave his officers the charge of solving problems on their beats. He encouraged their interaction with local individuals and groups to get to the direct causes of crime. He said, "Police can be most effective if they help communities to help themselves." We must use selection and training to make our officers "the finest," then we must charge them with the duty of managing their areas of responsibility. If they are treated with respect and trust, they will respond in kind. We answer to the police officers.

To better serve our internal communities, we must realize the fabric of society is changing, and so are the persons who seek employment as police officers. Historically, work was viewed as performing one of four roles. First, work was considered to have intrinsic

value, and people worked because they enjoyed it. Second, it had moral, spiritual, or ethical value, and people received purpose, challenge, and responsibility from hard work, thrift, and frugality. Third, work was a necessary evil to be performed to get enough money to have pleasure while not depriving the worker of too much leisure. Finally, although work was a source of material existence, Eli Ginzberg, in *Contemporary Readings in Organizational Behavior* (Luthans, 1972), states "it also satisfied man's spiritual, social, and psychological needs, for research has shown that work regulates the life of individuals and binds them to reality" (p. 148). Although people find their productive role important in relating themselves to the social system and maintaining their sense of well-being in the economic order, many workers today seem to have difficulty in perceiving their jobs as being important except as they improve their standard of living.

Among other factors, this growing sense of low status and the inability to achieve a position of prestige in one's job minimizes employee individuality and creativity, resulting in boredom, lack of interest, a sense of inferiority and unrest, and a search for other means of obtaining status, especially in the personal struggle for professional identification. Loss of employment and subsequent embarrassment simply do not carry the same social risks for younger people as they do for older employees who would suffer greater loss. Some younger people fail to exhibit loyalty to their employer or express pride in workmanship. They seem to view shirking their duties as merely "ripping off the establishment" and feel no responsibility to perform. Employers can expand their relationships with employees to include concern and involvement with them as individuals who have needs, potential, and responsibilities that extend beyond the workplace. Stress, burnout, anxiety, depression, and other maladies are emerging, reflecting the new realities and conditions of work.

As Tofoya (1990) noted, the Metropolitan Police Act of 1829 marked the beginning of the "first wave" of law enforcement reform. Sir Robert Peel structured the London police on a military model but emphasized the "mutual reliance" between officers and citizens. In the 1930s, August Vollmer (chief of the Berkeley, California, Police Department) and O.W. Wilson's (chief of the Chicago Police Department) efforts brought on the "second wave" through "

professionalization.” Although the need for this reform was clear, it heralded the period of police isolation as they traveled rapidly in radio cars and wanted “just the facts, ma’am,” because these “professional” officers had all the modern technology and did not need the citizens. We stood alone and answered to ourselves. The civil and social unrest of the 1960s and 1970s provided the impetus for the “third wave” of reform. Police researchers and practitioners such as Patrick V. Murphy began to question the value of the bureaucratic and military models of professional policing.

Top-heavy organizational structures are no longer tolerated in private industry. Stepping forward, we must leave the inflexible organizational structures and adopt more flattened, progressive structures that push authority and decisionmaking to lower levels. We must recognize this as a positive change and begin developing managerial partnerships with supervisory and line officers. Through empowerment and job enrichment, we must share the decisionmaking with our personnel, thereby improving our relationships with our internal communities and our services to our external communities.

### External communities

There is a long list of external communities with which we interact. These groups include people who share strong bonds and histories and others whose associations are accidental. These may be public, private, or civic organizations. All of these communities have individual needs and demands, but we must consider the greater good when allocating resources. We have all heard demands for greater enforcement that have been contradicted by complaints when the increased enforcement struck the “good” citizens who had complained in the first place. As individuals, we have different personalities, and our departments often reflect this diversity. Our employees are aware of our treatment of them and “ordinary” citizens and often use this as a guide for their behaviors.

Our approach is no longer just crime reduction driven but citizen driven. When continuous, this approach creates the need for sound information about the community. The only place to obtain reliable information about the key shifts in the needs and expectations of the community is from the citizens and patrol officers who work most directly with them. Police administrators must understand that respect for citizens and a

sincere enthusiasm and desire to serve are true necessities. The only way we can develop a close relationship with our citizens is to accept them as intelligent, aware, and capable.

We know we cannot resolve the problems associated with crime without community support. The theory of community-oriented policing is based on establishing a partnership between the police and law-abiding citizens. We experience varying levels of success. It frequently seems we are “preaching to the choir” because the same concerned citizens are always involved. Some of them pledge involvement but never quite make the commitment and follow through. Others honestly admit they feel they pay the police for a service and do not want personal involvement with law enforcement. Just as police officers exercise discretion, so do citizens. They may choose not to report, witness, or testify. However, good police-community relations increases the number of involved citizens.

**Media.** Our interactions with the media are far reaching and vast. Although they are sometimes difficult, we must take care not to develop an adversarial relationship. Negative experiences felt by both the media and the police have caused feelings of distrust and anger. The media have a responsibility to provide information to the public, and the people have great interest in police activities. In their endeavors to earn the highest ratings in a competitive market, members of print and electronic media make constant demands on law enforcement agencies and may exploit citizens’ fear of crime. The fourth estate is very powerful, and we were all taught as rookies that the pen is mightier than the sword. We must respect the media’s power as they must respect our authority and need to maintain investigative integrity. Media activity is protected by the First Amendment, and it is our job to defend their rights and see that they are treated justly. We must keep our relationships with the media honest and as open as investigations permit. Negative experiences in both sectors have caused distrust, fear, and anger. The reporters do their jobs, just as we do ours. We must not misuse and abuse but, rather, make use of their services to educate the public on crime trends, provide safety tips, and seek assistance in obtaining information to solve crimes. The media can be very effective in presenting our proper image to the public, or it can be damning to an extent that public confidence and internal morale are harmed severely.



Therefore, our relationship with the media must be cultivated, but not to the point of "back scratching." We answer to the media.

**Elected officials.** A simple answer to the question "To whom do we answer?" is, "the elected officials." Police may answer to a mayor, city manager, council, commission, or an elected or appointed body. With civil service status and court rulings, the "political boss" atmosphere has thinned. We owe loyalty and service to the elected officials, just as the agency personnel owe us. These elected officials have received a mandate from the voting public as to the level and direction of law enforcement required by the community, and they must pass this information on to us. We rely on these officials for our budgetary needs, and we enforce the statutes they enact. We answer to the elected officials.

**Victims and other law-abiding citizens.** Law-abiding citizens outnumber criminals in all neighborhoods, but sometimes they are not as obvious. These people are the foundation of society, paying taxes and leading lives that require little government intervention. They are our supporters and our employers. Although many view us as the "thin blue line" and give us almost unconditional support, others judge us based on their limited police contacts, those of their friends and neighbors, and the image of police they receive from news reports, television, and movies. The degree of trust between citizens and police is a major factor in determining how much confidence is placed in the police response to their concerns. Modern society is better organized, more vocal, and less intimidated by government agents, and police managers must be prepared to address the concerns of the public in an honest and direct manner.

Birmingham, Alabama, has a strong neighborhood association, made up of 99 neighborhoods, that elects officers and meets monthly to discuss local matters. Beat officers and supervisors attend these meetings and address concerns pertinent to the department. The citizens of each neighborhood review all zoning changes, liquor permits, and other requests for licenses of businesses they feel will impact the quality of life in their communities, then make recommendations to the city council. Their decisions greatly influence whether these requests will be granted.

Citizens working with police officers at neighborhood association meetings and in other community activi-

ties help the residents to better understand the officers, just as the officers feel firsthand the climates of the neighborhoods. This interaction increases the sensitivity of both groups and is beneficial in increasing the officers' empathy with the citizens they serve. This knowledge is particularly important in dealing with victims. People experiencing the worst events of their lives rightfully become offended when responding officers seem not to care and to make light of their problems. We are judged by our reputations, and reputations are fragile. We answer to all law-abiding citizens.

**Offenders.** Offenders and suspects have certain inalienable rights, and we are sworn to uphold those rights. As police officers, we interact with the criminal element on different levels. We cannot discount recent technological advances, but it is our knowledge of criminal behavior and individual offenders that serves as our greatest weapon and allows us to succeed in our fight. We recognize that even those who engage in unlawful activities can be victims of crime and are also our clients. We answer to the offenders.

**Corporate citizens.** Businesspeople are often the most demanding of our constituents. The forceful personalities that have contributed to their success in the business world often make them difficult to serve. Businesses typically pay a large share of the tax base and demand commensurate services. They require a safe environment to operate. Although there are almost twice as many people employed in private security as public police, we are often the sole providers of corporate safety. We owe the same level of service to all "communities." We have not developed a model for measuring the social, psychological, and economic impact of crimes committed against business entities to those committed against citizens in their homes. We understand the economic repercussions of losing businesses to other "safer" jurisdictions, but we also sympathize with the suffering of all our constituents without regard to their status. We must provide adequate protection to our corporate citizens and their employees and customers, but there are not enough personnel to place an officer on every corner as some demand. We know this is an unnecessary level of police involvement, yet we hear constant requests for this service, and we must be able to explain our personnel allocation. We answer to the corporate community.

**Other government agencies, including the courts, corrections, service agencies, and law enforcement agencies.** Police departments do not answer directly to these other agencies, but they must work cooperatively with them. The effectiveness, efficiency, and services rendered by each depends, to some degree, on the other. The concept of community-oriented policing has shown the need for a greater degree of cooperation between the police and these agencies. Programs such as Weed and Seed have been used to foster this working relationship. However, the relationship works because of mutual respect for each other.

The relationship between the police and courts is not only different, it is complex and sometimes difficult. The police have been and are affected by judicial decisions from the courts. The Miranda and Terry cases are two cases that affect or dictate how police do their jobs. The court will issue orders directing the police to pick up certain person(s) and may hold the police in contempt if they fail to comply. There was a case where, as a young officer, Chief Johnson was ordered by the court to go to a hospital and arrest an older, feeble gentleman in a wheelchair and deliver him to jail. Had he been free to exercise discretion, Johnson would have chosen to leave the man in the hospital. We answer to other government agencies, especially the courts.

### Overlapping communities

Many people are part of overlapping internal and external communities interacting with law enforcement. These overlapping affiliations are based on social class, gender, ethnic status, sexual preference, and membership in civic and political groups. None of these are our "bosses," but they all have an impact on the way we do our jobs.

Depending on our backgrounds and the traditions and cultures in which we work, some groups will have more influence than others. Religious institutions and leaders hold more sway with the Southern and African-American cultures. Ethnic communities influence their local governments and have more of an impact on local police departments as hiring practices continue to reflect more closely the diverse communities served. (This is the personal opinion of the authors based on the church's role in the civil rights movement of the 1960s.) Police departments have traditionally been against homosexuals, but this position has

softened. Civic groups serve a multitude of purposes, but most are supportive of law enforcement. Citizens involved in civic groups are generally involved in other aspects of the local community, and, recognizing this, police officers are responsive to their needs. Even in times of political reform, human nature dictates that those in powerful positions—whether because of their economic status, education, or political position—have a greater influence on law enforcement than we would like to admit. We surely answer to all of these overlapping communities.

### Summary

Most important, we answer to ourselves. We must answer to the "man in the mirror." How we answer is framed by all of our past experiences, knowledge, and beliefs. Former Chicago Police Chief O.W. Wilson said that each police administrator must be prepared to resign rather than compromise on a serious ethical issue. It is incumbent on us to be good stewards and serve those who serve us. We can never be all things to all people, but we have achieved positions of authority and responsibility, and we have a duty to act with courage and honor. As we have seen, police executives recognize that their departments must be more accessible to the communities. We are trying to establish our legitimacy and manage our accountability by fostering closer relationships and tearing down the barriers that have isolated us from our internal and external communities. We must lift the veil of the police mystique and open our departments to public and internal scrutiny. We must step out in Faith.

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# The Police as an Agency of Municipal Government: Implications for Measuring Police Effectiveness

Mark H. Moore and Margaret Poethig

## The changing paradigm of policing: from “first step in the criminal justice system” to “agency of municipal government”

Since the publication of *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society: Report of the President's Crime Commission*, citizens, practitioners, and scholars have viewed police, prosecutors, courts, and correctional agencies as constituent parts of a criminal justice system.<sup>1</sup> What joins these separately administered agencies in a “system” is that their operations are linked in a specific process: the handling of criminal cases. The process begins with the allegation of a criminal offense, proceeds through an investigation to the arrest of suspects, progresses to the formal charging and prosecution of those arrested, and ultimately concludes with the adjudication and disposition of the cases. Viewed from this vantage point, the police play an obvious and important role: They begin the process of criminal justice adjudication by initiating cases with an arrest and a charge.<sup>2</sup>

This view of the police as the crucial first step in criminal justice system processing meshes seamlessly with a particular view of the overall role of the police in society: the “professional law enforcement model” of policing.<sup>3</sup> In this conception, the fundamental goal of the police is to reduce crime by enforcing the criminal law. They do so largely by arresting (or threatening to arrest) criminal offenders. To create the threat of arrest and actually produce arrests, they rely on three key operations: (1) patrolling public spaces, (2) responding to calls from citizens, and (3) investigating crimes.

This view of policing is also perfectly reflected in the measures conventionally used to evaluate police performance:

- The focus on *levels of reported crime* reflects the view that the most important result the police seek is reduced criminal victimization.
- The focus on *numbers of arrests* reflects the view that the most important thing the police can do to accomplish the goal of reducing crime is to arrest offenders to produce deterrence, incapacitation, and whatever opportunity for rehabilitation exists.
- The focus on *response times, clearance rates, and numbers of sworn officers* reflects (more or less precisely) our understanding about the ways in which the police can produce arrests (e.g., through rapid response, retrospective investigation, and—less perfectly—police presence).

What citizens expect is what police departments measure; what gets measured, in turn, profoundly shapes what the police do.

The problem is that this conception of what the police *should* do differs from what they *actually* do and what they *could* do to enrich the quality of urban life.<sup>4</sup> By viewing the police as the first step in criminal justice processing, we miss the important role that private institutions—such as families, community organizations, churches, and businesses—play in preventing, identifying, and responding to criminal conduct and the role that the police might play in supporting these efforts. Similarly, by focusing exclusively on reducing serious crime, we miss the important role that the police play in managing disorder in public spaces, reducing fear, controlling traffic and crowds, and providing various emergency services. By focusing

attention on arrests, clearance rates, and the speed of response to calls for service, we ignore the important contribution that other kinds of police problem-solving efforts can make to prevent crime, reduce fear, and improve the quality of community life. Thus, our limited expectations of the police, and our limited methods of measuring their performance, result in our failure to recognize the important contributions that police make to the quality of urban life beyond these boundaries and to manage police departments to achieve these valuable results.<sup>5</sup>

The purposes of this paper are essentially four:

- To establish a justification for viewing the police differently, as an "agency of municipal government" rather than as the "first step in the criminal justice system."
- To imagine (from this different vantage point) the varied contributions the police could and do make to the overall performance of municipal government and the quality of urban life beyond reduction of crime and enforcement of the criminal law.
- To develop ideas about how these contributions outside the boundaries of crime control, law enforcement, and criminal justice processing could be "recognized" (in an accounting sense) through measurement systems that could accurately capture the full public value contributed by police departments to the quality of life in their cities.
- To look at an example of a police organization that appears to be doing in practice what we recommend in theory.

### The police as an agency of municipal government

Consider first why it might be appropriate to view the police as an agency of municipal government rather than only an element of the criminal justice system. The most obvious and important reason is that municipal government supplies the resources the police need to do their work. The resources are of two kinds.<sup>6</sup> One resource is the money the police receive to pay salaries, provide for future pensions, and purchase the guns and computers they need to do their work. That money is raised through local tax levies and appropriated to the police through the processes of local government.<sup>7</sup>

The other resource that police rely on is less tangible: the legal authority to oblige citizens to behave in ways that allow them to live together with some degree of security and order. As the Philadelphia Police Study Task Force explained:

The police are entrusted with important public resources. The most obvious is money. . . . Far more important, the public grants the police another resource—the use of force and authority. These are deployed when a citizen is arrested or handcuffed, when an officer fires his weapon at a citizen, and when an officer claims exclusive use of the streets with his siren.<sup>8</sup>

The police need authority not only to arrest people for serious crimes such as robbery, rape, and murder but also to require citizens to refrain from driving while drinking, to park in places that do not interfere with traffic flow, and to desist from carrying guns in public spaces without a license. They also can require citizens demonstrating against government not to inflict too many costs on other citizens who want to use public spaces for their own purposes.

Much of the authority the police need to do their job comes from sources other than local government. The criminal laws they are charged with enforcing are passed, for example, at the State level or have been developed from the common law. Many of the powers they are granted to enforce the laws (such as the power to stop and search) are granted and conditioned by the U.S. Constitution. But some of the laws they enforce, and some of the powers they are granted to achieve this objective, are created at local levels. Thus, local police are charged with enforcing many municipal ordinances against such acts as spitting, disorderly conduct, or taverns being too loud and open too late.<sup>9</sup> Many policies regulating police behavior in such areas as use of deadly force or high-speed chases also are established locally.<sup>10</sup>

These observations seem important for this simple reason: If local government provides the money and (at least some of) the authority for the police to do their work, then it seems reasonable to conclude that local government "owns" the police. If local government owns the police, it seems reasonable to imagine that local government could direct the police toward whatever valuable purposes it has in mind.

A second reason for viewing the police as an agency of municipal government is closely related to (and partially qualifies) the first: If local government provides the resources to municipal police departments, then it seems plausible to assume that the police are accountable, in the first instance, to *local* government. Of course, the police also are accountable to "the rule of law." Indeed, that commitment is so strong that it would morally and legally oblige the police to resist or challenge local political requests to take "illegal" or "unfair" action against citizens. If they did not resist these demands, the police might well become vulnerable to prosecution for political corruption or civil rights violations. Moreover, due to their functional dependency on their fellow agencies in the criminal justice system, the police are at least powerfully influenced by the expectations of prosecutors, courts, and other State and Federal enforcement agencies, if not directly accountable to them. Thus, the elected officials of municipal government are not the only ones who can hold the police accountable or expect to influence them. Nevertheless, since local government supports the police with local tax levies and local ordinances grant them (conditional) powers, then arguably local government should be able to use the police for whatever (lawful) purposes it chooses.

A third reason is that the police both *can* and *do* take actions that affect many aspects of community life beyond controlling serious crime.<sup>11</sup> For example, police reduce signs of disorder that undermine a sense of security, regulate festering disputes that if left unattended might escalate into crimes, and protect the rights of individuals who might easily become the targets of racial prejudice. In doing so, the police enhance security and liberty and enrich the overall quality of life. Moreover, they accomplish both crime control and other valuable purposes through means other than making arrests.<sup>12</sup> In short, the police have capabilities that go beyond their ability to threaten and make arrests; further, these capabilities turn out to be valuable for more purposes than simply reducing crimes. If we conceive of the police as nothing more than "the first step in the criminal justice system," then we might easily miss the contributions that they make "outside the box" of crime control, law enforcement, and arresting people. On the other hand, if we conceive of the police as an agency of municipal government that shares with other agencies the broad responsibility for strengthening the quality of urban

life, then we are in a better position to notice that the police contribute much more to those goals than is captured by the simple idea of reducing crime. We also notice that the police have capabilities that go far beyond their ability to make arrests and that these capabilities are valuable to the enterprise of city government. In short, the police are a more valuable asset when viewed from the vantage point of trying to strengthen urban life than they are when viewed from the narrower perspective of reducing crime through making arrests.

The reason that this last point is both important and difficult to grasp has to do with the way that we think about organizations in the public sector.<sup>13</sup> In the public sector, an organization typically is viewed as an efficient machine for achieving a set of narrowly defined purposes set out in the organization's authorizing legislation. In essence, in the public sector, management begins with a specific set of objectives and then builds an organization designed to achieve them as efficiently and effectively as possible. In that way, society as a whole maintains effective control over public-sector organizations. If an organization spends money or exerts authority outside the boundaries of its authorization or for purposes that were not included in its initial mission, it is guilty of either "fraud, waste, or abuse" (in the case of misuse of funds) or "abuse of authority" and "malfeasance" (in the case of improper use of authority).

Three difficulties arise from this way of thinking, however. One is that, in building an organization to meet a specific set of objectives, we sometimes build a set of capabilities that are valuable not only for the specified purpose but *for other purposes as well*. Thus, for example, a library can be useful in providing afterschool programs to latchkey children as well as in providing library services to adults;<sup>14</sup> a registry of motor vehicles can be valuable in collecting unpaid parking tickets for local government as well as in distributing licenses and registrations;<sup>15</sup> and the U.S. military can contribute to reducing the supply of illicit drugs reaching U.S. cities as well as providing for the defense of the Nation.<sup>16</sup> The question facing the public and the managers of these organizations, then, is whether the organizations ought to be used for these other purposes as well as for the purposes for which they were originally established. If they have the capabilities, why not use them for valuable purposes?

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A second difficulty is that, because organizational leaders in the public sector are supposed to think of themselves as operating machines that have been designed to achieve specific purposes in the most efficient way, they often think that *the specific things they now do represent the best way to accomplish their mission*. After all, if their specific, current activities were *not* the most efficient means for accomplishing their mission, they would be guilty of fraud, waste, and abuse and undermining their own claims of professional competence. Since that is too horrible to contemplate, it must be true both that the current mission is the right one and that the specific means they have developed to achieve the mission are the only ways to achieve it.

A third problem is that, while the world often changes around public organizations, the changes are not always incorporated into a redefinition of their mandates. Sometimes the piece of the world that changes is the “task environment.” Certainly that happened to the police when the crack epidemic hit America’s cities. When street drug markets, violent youths, and child abuse and neglect all challenged police departments’ enforcement methods, the police were forced to shift the balance of their efforts and develop new methods to meet the challenges. At other times, the world around public organizations changes through the development of new operational procedures that are considered more effective than the old or the development of new technologies. For example, the police have changed their approaches to domestic violence<sup>17</sup> and begun to explore “problem solving” as an alternative to “rapid response.”<sup>18</sup> Still other times, citizens’ aspirations for the police, and how they would like to use the police, change. For example, many citizens want the police to shift to a strategy of “community policing,” in which the police are more responsive to the needs of particular neighborhoods and deploy themselves in ways that make them more accessible to and familiar with local communities.

At some level of abstraction, of course, the overall mission of the police never changes.<sup>19</sup> It continues to be “to serve and to protect,” “to ensure law and order,” and “to enforce the law fully and fairly.” But within the spaces created by these broad concepts, many significantly different ideas—of what the police do each day, what they are rewarded for, and how their resources are allocated—exist. There may be no particular reason for the current constellation of activities

and purposes to be seen as the only ones that are either consistent with these broad concepts or capable of achieving these lofty ends. Thus, there may be more room for innovation of all kinds than is commonly assumed by either the police or those who oversee them.

The point of these observations is that it is too easy for both the police and those who oversee them to imagine that they are already living in the best of all possible worlds—one in which the purposes of the police (at both abstract and concrete levels) are the right ones, and the means being relied upon (both organizationwide and in response to particular kinds of problems) are the most efficient and effective. The reality, however, may be different. There may be valuable purposes to which the police can contribute that are not recognized or adequately emphasized in the current understanding of the police mission. There also may be valuable new means that could be adopted to achieve either old or new goals. Such a situation could have occurred simply because the world around police departments changed. Thus, it might be important for them to change their operations (at a programmatic or strategic level); yet, they are held back by a rigid conception of their mission and the most efficient means for achieving their goals.

The problems of adapting and using organizations are less severe in the private sector because private-sector supervisors and managers think about their organizations differently from those in the public sector. Instead of thinking about an organization as an intricate machine that has been engineered to achieve a specific, well-defined purpose as efficiently and effectively as possible, private-sector supervisors and managers think of it as an asset whose value is contained in its “distinctive competencies”; that is, in the things the organization knows how to do well. Typically, their conception of distinctive competence is relatively abstract. For example, they might think of a police organization as one that comprises a large number of well-trained, highly motivated, and resourceful people—linked to citizens through telephones and radios, and able to get to most places in a city quickly and to form into different-sized operational groups—who are carrying out the authority of the State. What they ask themselves, then, about such an organization is not whether it is achieving a narrow purpose efficiently and effectively; instead, they ask: *What valuable things could I produce with this*



*organization*? If one thinks about policing in this way, one sees a remarkably different set of possibilities than if one thinks: (1) that the mission of the police is to control crime; (2) that the best way to do that is to make arrests; and (3) that the best way to make arrests is through (a) patrol, (b) rapid response, and (c) retrospective investigation. Thinking about the police as an agency of municipal government facilitates and to some degree justifies this fundamental paradigm shift toward the private-sector model.

## How the police contribute to the quality of urban life and improve the performance of municipal government

Given that it is at least plausibly appropriate and useful to think of the police as an agency of municipal government, what other roles could the police play? What additional responsibilities might they assume? What activities would support these different responsibilities? These questions can be analyzed in three different categories:

- How, in the context of a wider conception of the police mission that focuses on enhancing the overall quality of life in a city, police operations can contribute directly to these broader goals.
- How, in either the old or new vision of the police mission, the police can contribute to more effective operations of other agencies of municipal government or the government as a whole.
- How the police, in their new and expanded mission, might contribute to the development and operation of private institutions such as families, communities, and commerce that cities need to succeed.

### Police roles in supporting the quality of urban life

Pioneering work on the roles of the police was done by Herman Goldstein several years after the President's Crime Commission issued its report.<sup>20</sup> It is somewhat ironic that at precisely the time society was getting the benefit of Goldstein's accurate and broad vision of what the police do and what they contribute to community life, the Commission was defining a

relatively narrow vision of policing. In *Policing a Free Society*, Goldstein succinctly listed the functions of the police:

- To prevent and control conduct widely recognized as threatening to life and property (serious crime).
- To aid individuals who are in danger of physical harm, such as the victim of a criminal attack.
- To protect constitutional guarantees such as the right of free speech and assembly.
- To facilitate the movement of people and vehicles.
- To assist those who cannot care for themselves: the intoxicated, the addicted, the mentally ill, the physically disabled, the old, and the young.
- To resolve conflict, whether between individuals, groups of individuals, or individuals and their government.
- To identify problems that have the potential to become more serious problems for the individual citizen, the police, or the government.
- To create and maintain a feeling of security in the community.<sup>21</sup>

This was a much broader conception of the police role than the one endorsed by citizens, realized in police operations, or reliably captured through the measurement systems then (and now) being used to measure police performance. More recently, scholars have focused attention on three broad purposes that the police could (and often do) serve that are extremely valuable to communities, but that nonetheless go unrecognized, unsupported, and unmeasured.

**Crime prevention.** One such purpose is to prevent as well as react to crime. A traditionalist could argue that a great deal of crime is prevented by reacting (and threatening to react) quickly and aggressively to criminal offending. Such actions could deter crime or, by generating arrests and successful prosecutions, allow for the incapacitation and/or rehabilitation of offenders. These mechanisms would prevent future crimes from being committed. Yet, crime prevention emphasizes that there may be other things the police could do to keep offenses from being committed in the first place and if there are such activities, that they would be valuable to undertake.

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Initial thoughts about crime prevention tend to focus on what might be considered "primary prevention": efforts directed toward the broad social conditions that seem to spawn both criminal offenders and crimes.<sup>22</sup> These may be further divided into efforts designed to either: (1) ensure the healthy development of children to reduce the likelihood that they will be inclined to commit crimes, or (2) promote the social and economic development of poor communities to create environments that produce not only fewer criminals but also fewer opportunities and occasions for committing crime. Such work often seems like "social" or "community development" work, which is well beyond the capacities and responsibilities of the police.

Many tend to agree with this position. Yet, the police may be able to make important contributions to even these broad prevention objectives. For example, concern for the healthy development of children has long been expressed through police activities. In the past, this was manifested through the (largely, but not entirely) volunteer efforts associated with Police Athletic Leagues.<sup>23</sup> More recently, it has been expressed in the enthusiasm for the D.A.R.E.<sup>®</sup> program.<sup>24</sup> Even more important contributions to the healthy development of children may be made by police operations that do not have the development of children as a specific objective. For example, by enforcing laws against domestic violence and child abuse and neglect, by helping to keep routes to schools free from drug dealing, and by reducing the power and stature of gangs, the police may contribute to establishing conditions within which children have a better chance of navigating the difficult course to responsible citizenship.<sup>25</sup>

Moreover, the police also may contribute to community social and economic development by making themselves available for partnerships with communities that want to develop themselves. Police can be particularly valuable by dramatically improving the level of security in these neighborhoods so that hope is kindled and local residents have reasons for making investments in themselves, their children, and their property.<sup>26</sup>

Still, many of the most valuable contributions the police can make to crime prevention are the results of activities that often are considered more superficial than these primary preventive efforts. For instance, police engage in a wide variety of efforts focused

on controlling the situational factors that seem to contribute to crime. Ron Clarke has both developed the theory of "situational crime prevention" and presented many examples of its success.<sup>27</sup> His colleague, Marcus Felson, has demonstrated the role that "routine activities" play in shaping the observed patterns of crime.<sup>28</sup> Presumably, if the routine activities that contribute to crime could be disrupted, some crime could be prevented. Lawrence Sherman has added to these ideas both by investigating the methods that would be most effective in preventing future domestic violence and by showing the possibilities of identifying and responding to "hot spots" and reducing the incidence of gun possession and carrying.<sup>29</sup> William Bratton, guided by a theory developed by James Q. Wilson and George Kelling,<sup>30</sup> has shown that it is possible to reduce serious criminal offending by focusing on less serious criminal offenses.<sup>31</sup> All this suggests that controlling serious crime through means other than arrest is a plausible and important police activity.

**Fear reduction and order maintenance.** In addition to crime prevention, scholars have focused on the police capacity to reduce fear and enhance security. This line of work began with two findings: (1) levels of fear seem to be curiously independent of the objective risks of criminal victimization and are influenced more by signs of disorder than by changes in the real risks of criminal victimization;<sup>32</sup> and (2) some police activities, such as foot patrol, reduce fear but not necessarily victimization.<sup>33</sup>

These findings create an interesting strategic problem for police leaders and those who oversee their operations: Should they expend resources to reduce fear even if the actions they take leave actual victimization rates unchanged? On one hand, such efforts may seem insubstantial—a cheap public relations effort that produces a subjective rather than a real effect. Even worse, such actions might tempt citizens to behave in ways that would expose them to real criminal victimization. On the other hand, promoting security in the general population clearly is a police responsibility, and at least some portion of the fear that citizens experience is exaggerated—for example, they react more to fear of criminal attack than to other risks in their lives, such as the risk of traffic accidents.<sup>34</sup>

Although the issue is still being debated, the argument for police acceptance of responsibility for reducing fear is growing stronger. This movement is partly a

recognition that fear is an important and costly problem in its own right. However, citizens' reactions when they are afraid also exacerbate the real crime problem.<sup>35</sup> When they abandon the streets or arm themselves, the streets may become more dangerous. Thus, managing citizens' responses to fear may make an important contribution to enhancing security and controlling crime.

**Emergencies and calls for service.** Finally, partly because the police department is the only agency that works 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and makes house calls, police will continue to be the "first responders" to a wide variety of emergencies. These emergencies can be medical (although ambulance services increasingly take care of these) or they can be social, such as deranged people threatening themselves or others, homeless children found wandering the streets with no parents to care for them, or drunks at risk of freezing to death after falling asleep on a park bench.

At various times, it has been declared that such problems should be viewed as social problems rather than law enforcement problems and that social work agencies, rather than the police, should respond to them. Generally, the police would not disagree. This work is dangerous, dirty, and sometimes heartbreaking. The police would be happy to be rid of it.

The difficulty, however, is that emergencies happen on the streets late at night. Even though social work agencies have tried to build up their emergency response capabilities, many of their resources still are expended on people who work in offices from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. rather than on the streets at night. As a result, much of this work falls into the hands of the police.

In addition to handling emergencies, the police must immediately be available and accessible to citizens for rapid responses to serious crime calls. Therefore, they also are available for a wide variety of other less urgent and perhaps less important purposes. It has been estimated that less than 5 percent of calls coming into 911 systems of city police departments are for serious crimes that could be interrupted by a rapid response.<sup>36</sup> The vast majority of calls are for crimes that were committed several hours earlier and for problems that citizens feel are urgent or important but do not necessarily involve crimes. Many citizens want someone to hold their hands, listen to their stories, mediate their

minor disputes, help them deal with troublesome friends and associates, and find a way to get into their locked apartments and cars.

When one views the police primarily as a component of the criminal justice system—focused on arresting people for serious crimes and starting the process of sending them off to prison—such calls seem like an enormous waste of police resources. Thus, the task becomes minimizing the occurrence of nuisance calls and finding ways to make the minimum response.

When one views the police as an agency of municipal government—with responsibilities for preventing crime and reducing fear as well as for arresting criminal offenders and achieving other purposes that local government considers important—the status of nuisance calls changes. Such calls may represent real opportunities for crime prevention. For example, loud noise in an apartment may be a prelude to a domestic homicide; if reports of the noise are heeded, a preventive intervention could occur. Similarly, reports of gangs of rowdy youths could foreshadow serious gang violence. Courteous responses to these calls could build relationships with individuals in the community that would increase the likelihood that they would trust the police enough to call when serious offenses occur and serious offenders threaten them.

These are reasons to take nuisance calls seriously, even if the police are focused only on crime control and crime prevention. So if we think about the more general purposes of local government and recall that the police are among the most visible representatives of it, then we might conclude that the police should take citizens' nuisance calls seriously simply because the police are the most frequently encountered representatives of local government. Just as citizens form their general views about State government through their experiences with the Department of Motor Vehicles, they may form their views about local government through the activities of the police. If the police are responsive, courteous, and helpful, citizens will have a favorable view of government in general. If the police are indifferent or rude and dismiss their concerns, citizens will form the opposite view. They might conclude not only that less government is better than more but that private security is better than public policing, which has important consequences for the quality of our collective lives.<sup>37</sup>

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So far, we have observed that if the police rightly understand their own mission and the operations that contribute to it, they will make contributions to the quality of urban life that are far broader than reacting to crime with arrests. The importance of their contributions becomes even more evident when we think about the role they play in supporting the operations of other government agencies and the work of private institutions such as families, communities, and commercial enterprises.

### Police roles in supporting other government agencies

In addition to the police, many other government agencies and their workers contribute to the quality of urban life: for example, garbage collectors, firefighters, teachers, recreation staff, and social workers. The police contribute to overall government effectiveness and the quality of urban life by making the world a bit safer for these people to do their work and by creating an environment in which their efforts can be more efficacious and last longer than they would without the police.

In the past, we took it for granted that these workers would be safe and their contributions could endure; firefighters and social workers would be willing to visit all areas of the city, schools would be violence free, and playgrounds would deteriorate only from hard use rather than from vandalism. Now it seems that we have to work harder to ensure the conditions that we used to take for granted. The police play an important role in helping to create the conditions under which these agencies can be effective.

Much of the work the police need to do to support the work of these organizations is simply more of what was described above: more effective responses to serious crime, more imaginative efforts to prevent crime by working on situational factors, more attention to the conditions that produce fear, and greater willingness to respond to calls for emergency social services of various kinds and deliver quality services to citizens. Insofar as the police do this, they will make contributions to the performance of other city agencies.

Another part of police work is supporting other agencies' work without interfering with it. This is particularly important in dealing with school security, but it might also be important in dealing with child

protective services and recreational activities. In all these cases, the "face" of government should be a primarily *civil* face: students should see the teacher, desperate parents should see the social worker, young athletes should see the coach; they should not need to see the police. Yet, it might be important to both city workers and their clients to have a sense of the police being there in the background—to guarantee their security and remind them of their responsibilities. Constructing a presence that is reassuring and authoritative probably requires extensive discussions between the police and the other agencies. It is not easy to learn how to "buttress" and "backstop" without entirely usurping the function of another agency; yet, supporting without taking over is required when the police operate as an agency of municipal government.

Another important role of the police as an agency of local government is helping the government as a whole identify and respond to problems. Because the police are on the streets and in close touch with citizens, they are in a position to identify some of the key problems facing a local community and have a sense of their importance to the community. The Washington, D.C., Police Department has sought to institutionalize and exploit this capability by developing a form that the police fill out when they see a neighborhood problem that is threatening the quality of life in a local area. The completed form is forwarded to the relevant city department for action, and a copy is sent to the Mayor's Office of Operations.<sup>38</sup> This system takes advantage of the police as problem finders and creates the organizational conditions across the agencies of government that allow them to work collaboratively to solve local problems. Baltimore County, Maryland, saw the potential of a county-based "problem-solving government" after the police became involved in problem-solving activities that went beyond the usual police interests in preventing crime and reducing fear.<sup>39</sup> Once other agencies were brought into the system, the police could do a little less of the organization of problem-solving initiatives and more problem identification and assessment. Wesley Skogan has reported on the significance of this kind of work for the success of community policing in Chicago.<sup>40</sup>

For the police to become effective problem solvers or problem identifiers, some kind of capacity must be created for the central government to mobilize other

government agencies in response to problems identified by the police as needing attention. Otherwise, the problem-solving efforts eventually fall flat. Thus, an effective local government is critical to the success of problem-solving policing, as well as the other way around.

### **Police roles in supporting private institutions**

Finally, the police make important contributions to the quality of life and local governance by supporting the work of private institutions as well as other public agencies. This is crucial for achieving some of the primary preventive effects described above. For example, when the police act to prevent domestic violence and the abuse and neglect of children, they support a key private institution in its important function of raising children. When the police reduce burglaries, they give families a reason to invest and save. When they reduce fear, they create the conditions under which local merchants can succeed economically.<sup>41</sup>

As in the case of the support the police can give to public institutions, much of the success of the police in supporting private institutions may depend on learning how to work effectively with them, not only in general but on a case-by-case basis. The police capacity to help develop and sustain local community organizations may be particularly important.<sup>42</sup> The police have an advantage in their efforts to support community organization development because their line of work is of intense interest to most citizens. Controlling crime and enhancing security is often one of the best organizing issues for communities. The police also have an advantage because they have access to resources—including people, vehicles, and an authoritative and reassuring presence—citizens need to accomplish their goals. With these capabilities, the police often are in a strong position to help struggling communities build “social capital” in the form of explicit understandings about the responsibilities and commitments citizens have to one another.<sup>43</sup> In this respect, the police can play an important role in accomplishing a purpose that U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno seems to have constantly in mind: “reweaving the fabric of community.”<sup>44</sup>

## **A case example: the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department**

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina, Police Department demonstrates an understanding of what the role of the police as an agency of municipal government should be. In Charlotte, both the police and city government as a whole recognize that what the police do not only affects crime but also contributes to the economic vitality and overall quality of life in the city’s neighborhoods. The police and other agencies are convinced of the connection between environmental decay and crime—and find in this connection further motive for pooling resources in the planning and implementation of problem-solving strategies at all levels across all city agencies. This is the philosophy of the 1990s in Charlotte.

To implement this philosophy, municipal government changed its structure. In 1993, the municipal government streamlined 29 departments into 9 “key businesses” and 4 “support businesses.” The consolidation of the city and county police departments coincided with this reorganization.<sup>45</sup> In addition to reducing costs, the reorganization was intended to enable a more customer-focused delivery of services to both individual citizens and neighborhood groups in the Charlotte area.

Charlotte also has adopted an ambitious neighborhood revitalization plan. In 1990, a group of influential leaders from business and government toured the city and found, just beyond the robust downtown center (called Uptown), neighborhoods in serious decay. In response, the city adopted the City Within A City (CWAC) initiative. CWAC is composed of 73 neighborhoods within a 4-mile radius around Uptown. Within CWAC, selected neighborhoods are targeted by local government for integrated service delivery and neighborhood capacity building.<sup>46</sup> In this reorganization for neighborhood improvement, the police play a critical role.

### An agency of municipal government in action

How does the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department realize its self-concept as an agency of municipal government in its day-to-day operations? It starts at the top of the organization. Shortly after the municipal reorganization, city managers sought new leadership for the police agency that could fit within their program. In 1994, they hired Dennis Nowicki to serve as agency head. Since Chief Nowicki's appointment, the police department has pushed forward with Charlotte's Community/Problem-Oriented Policing (CPOP) strategy and worked closely with the Neighborhood Development Key Business<sup>47</sup> and other city agencies to ensure a coordinated approach to solving problems of economic vitality and safety in Charlotte's distressed neighborhoods.

Initially, Chief Nowicki found himself in charge of an agency that perceived itself, and was perceived by others, as existing outside of the municipal government structure. Rarely, if ever, had the police chief participated in the twice-a-month executive meetings between the city manager and the heads of the city departments. Early on, Nowicki made clear his willingness and desire to be included in municipal decisionmaking processes. As one manager in city government observed:

Chief Nowicki clearly sees himself as an agent of city government. He articulates an expansive definition of what police can do for neighborhoods. He understands the links between economic conditions and crime. And he has been an advocate in City Council of investment in *nonpolice* resources that impact safety and community vitality. That's an unusual position for a police chief to take in this zero-sum game of resource allocation—and in the current political dynamic around the issue of police resources.<sup>48</sup>

Under Nowicki, members of the police department are realizing the advantages of participating in the city's team-based approach to neighborhood revitalization. Consider, for example, Officer Michelle Preston, a community coordinator in the Baker One district. Officer Preston is a member of one of the city's four experimental Code Enforcement Teams.

(Each of the four teams is assigned to one CWAC neighborhood.) The Code Enforcement Teams include city housing and litter code inspectors, job training and community empowerment field workers, and inspectors from the county's zoning and social services departments. Officer Preston's team includes a representative from a nonprofit mental health agency and three community residents. Working with the combined resources of this team, Officer Preston is able to quickly and easily bring the enforcement resources of the city to bear on the problems on her beat.

Officer Preston's Code Enforcement Team is targeting Grier Heights, a neighborhood in need of better housing and programs and strategies to address drug abuse and teen pregnancy. After a child fell through the floor of a house into the kitchen below, the team got the owners of the housing complex—dubbed "the hole" by officers—to agree to an inspection of all vacated units before new tenants move in. The team also hopes to push through a change in the city's litter ordinance that would require property owners to trim trees and clear up the brush in empty lots, which are frequently used as dumping grounds and also pose a safety hazard for police and residents. On her own, Officer Preston sought support from the Alcohol Beverage Control Board to revoke the liquor license of a neighborhood store that had been the source of numerous nuisance complaints.

The Code Enforcement Teams are clearly an effective way to clean up neighborhoods. They facilitate relationships and communication among agency workers (thereby enhancing accountability) and enable coordination of activities. Since only a few neighborhoods at a time can receive the benefit of these Code Enforcement Teams, perhaps their most important contribution is the heightened awareness they engender about the connection between the physical conditions in a neighborhood and crime. The police, in addressing chronic crime problems in other neighborhoods, are exhibiting higher levels of attentiveness to visible signs of neighborhood disorder and a willingness to act as the catalyst for a concerted municipal cleanup strategy.

### Using measurement systems to guide operations and recognize their value

To maximize efficiency in resource allocation and service delivery, more than structural changes and interpersonal teamwork are required. Measurement

systems that can support analysis and decision making and record the contributions of police operations also are key. In Charlotte, several tools and systems have recently been developed to support the government's coordinated neighborhood revitalization strategy. The Quality of Life Index serves as a tool to measure neighborhood "wellness" and guide the allocation of resources. A citywide problem-tracking system ensures that no complaint gets lost in the maze of city agencies and that city resources are not wasted through lack of planning and analysis. A third system developed by the police department helps the police identify the physical conditions that foster crime. Each of these tools also contributes to the conception and functioning of the police as an agency of municipal government.

**The Quality of Life Index.** A few years into the CWAC initiative, city leaders began to ask about the impact of the resources being poured into targeted neighborhoods. Were the neighborhoods becoming better places to live? The city contracted with the Urban Institute of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC), the university's primary public service outreach arm, to develop an index to measure neighborhood wellness. They wanted the index to serve as a performance assessment tool for the team of city agencies involved in neighborhood revitalization and as a diagnostic tool to help the team determine where the city's resources were most needed.

With input from all the key city and county agencies, UNCC created the Quality of Life Index, which provides indicators of a neighborhood's stability and sustainability along four dimensions—social, economic, physical, and crime. The index is based on measures of the health of a neighborhood's population; performance of youths in school; cultural and recreational opportunities; economic growth and opportunities; condition of the infrastructure; housing quality; accessibility to parks, commerce, and transportation; environmental quality; levels of crime; and other variables. Because U.S. census data are soon outdated, the developers of the index collected most of the data from city, county, and State agencies and selected private organizations.

The crime dimension includes data on juvenile delinquency, violent crime, and property crime. Each variable is a comparison between the rate of crime in the neighborhood and the citywide crime rate. The

number of hot spots, or clusters of crime incidents, in a neighborhood is another component of the crime dimension. Finally, data on the number of open-air drug markets are incorporated.

The Quality of Life Index does more than serve as a guide for resource allocation and a baseline for measuring progress. It also contributes to the conception and function of the police as an agency of municipal government in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. For example, by identifying the specific components used to measure the quality of life in a neighborhood, it encourages the police to think about what they can do—independently or in concert with other agencies—to affect each of those components. If school performance matters for the measure of a neighborhood's quality of life, then the police may be encouraged to think about what they can do to help improve the learning environment for children. The police might want to consider what they can do to motivate neighborhood institutions such as churches, schools, and libraries to offer more youth programs. Finally, the police may decide to be more attentive to conditions they observe that affect the health of residents, once they understand the importance of those factors to the overall stability of the neighborhood.

However, the Quality of Life Index does little to identify or motivate specific community- or problem-oriented policing activities. Only the hot spot and drug market variables provide some guidance for the police on where to focus their activities. If the Quality of Life Index included variables that measured actual police activity, it could serve both as an effective motivator for the police and as a research tool for exploring whether selected police activities are linked to desired outcomes. In its current form, the index represents only the potential for measuring what matters in Charlotte.

**Problem assignment and tracking.** Another mechanism for improving the response and coordination of city agencies in the delivery of services to neighborhoods is a citywide electronic problem-tracking system currently being implemented by the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Planning Commission. The system was designed by a team of representatives from each key business. The goal of the system is to ensure accountability, efficient problem solving, and regular feedback to citizens.

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In this new system, any city department that receives a complaint from a citizen becomes responsible for ensuring that the problem is addressed. So, even if a complaint received by the Transportation Department is a Solid Waste Department responsibility, Transportation is required to take the lead role in coordinating the response. The receiving department enters the complaint into the citywide electronic database, searches the database for similar problems or complaint patterns, ensures that a team is assembled to address complex problems, and contacts and regularly updates the complainant about the city's service delivery plan. The system is supported and maintained by the Planning Commission's new Neighborhood Problem-Solving Office.

Once the problem-tracking system is fully operational, it is likely that the police will take responsibility for a wide range of complaints. It also is likely that these complaints will not be much different from the complaints that police already handle. However, the electronic record, easily retrievable and analyzable, will be a valuable source of information about the level and range of contributions the police make to the quality of life in the city and to other agencies.

**Geographic Information System.** The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department's Research and Planning Division has developed a Geographic Information System (GIS) to support officers' analyses of problems. GIS is based on the idea that disorder—the physical conditions in a neighborhood—is associated with the level and concentration of crime incidents. The system, once it becomes accessible to officers through their laptop computers, will permit the visual identification of possible environmental reasons for the high incidence of crime or complaints in a specific area. Based on their analysis, officers can begin planning strategies and organizing municipal resources to address the problem.

GIS provides several layers of information. It shows the location of crime incidents as well as ordinance violations. Through windshield surveys, the system's developers plotted the location of pay phones, bus stops, trails, abandoned buildings, and other neighborhood features. GIS provides information about property ownership, owner occupancy, zoning, demolition orders, and the condition of curbs, gutters, and sidewalks. Finally, the developers, with information from the power company about the lumination value of the

street lights, approximated the lighted areas on the streets and sidewalks. The developers are waiting for the completion of a planimetric database, which will provide a layer of information for the entire county, including the outlines of buildings, pavement, footpaths, tree lines, and all other physical features that can be digitized from an aerial photograph.

Though still in its pilot stages, GIS already has served as a problem analysis tool in selected neighborhoods. The police in some districts, unwilling to wait for the automated citywide expansion of the system, are building the database for specific neighborhoods manually, based on an address-by-address survey. The enthusiasm for the system among officers is further evidence of the broad concept police have of their responsibilities and scope of activity.

### The Charlotte-Mecklenburg police and measuring what matters

In addition to the measures that have been developed at the city level to support the overall strategy of improving the performance of municipal government and that have been used to understand and shape the police contribution to this broader goal, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department has developed its own systems for measuring its impact on the lives of citizens in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area. These include (1) surveys of citizens to determine levels of victimization and attitudes toward the police, and (2) evaluations of district-level efforts to reduce crime and solve public order problems.

**Surveys.** Surveying residents to assess their perceptions of safety and police services is a frequent, though not yet routine, activity of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department. Starting in 1995, a general public opinion survey, a survey to measure public perceptions of safety in Uptown, a survey of burglary victims, and a survey of domestic violence victims were administered. The surveys were developed and administered for the city by the Department of Criminal Justice at UNCC or by the police department's own Research and Planning Division.

The general survey measured residents' opinions about their neighborhoods and their problems; priorities for the police; perceptions of safety in their own neighborhoods and in other parts of the city; levels of victimization; and perceptions of police performance and satisfaction with police service, including traffic



enforcement, visibility, community policing activity, and courteousness of police officers. The Uptown survey was designed to help identify the factors that led residents to feel safe or unsafe in Uptown.

The surveys of burglary and domestic violence victims assessed their experiences with police handling of their cases, including how frequently the officers arrived in the amount of time the telephone operator told the victim it would take; whether the victim felt the responding officers gathered all of the available information relevant to the case; and whether victims felt the telephone operators, responding officers, and followup investigators were courteous and helpful. For the burglary victim survey, respondents were asked whether they thought the burglary incident could have been avoided through some action of their own or by the police.

Individual districts also developed and implemented customer satisfaction surveys of their own. One district conducted a telephone survey of individuals who had contacted the police. Another distributed postcards to citizens who had contacted the police that were designed to be mailed back to the district. Both of these district-level surveys focused on the respondents' perceptions of the courteousness, professionalism, and helpfulness of the police officers who responded to the call for service.

An ideal package of surveys, according to Richard Lumb, Director of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department's Research and Planning Division, would include surveys of four individual districts a year on a 3-year rotation cycle. Before the police department makes such an extensive investment, however, more results are needed from the surveys that already have been conducted. Problems identified in the surveys should be addressed and the strategies implemented to address them should be evaluated, Lumb says.

**District evaluation.** Evaluating problem-solving activities is as much a challenge for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department as it is for every other police department. The department's goal, however, is to develop a system not only to measure the results of past activities but also to stimulate further problem-solving efforts. To this end, the department has institutionalized a district evaluation that is submitted monthly to the chief. This evaluation is used not to compare one district's progress to another but to measure the progress in each district over time.

Originally, the district evaluation report was to include a broad collection of factors measuring safety conditions, citizen fear of victimization, social well-being, crime trends and patterns, and police staffing and performance levels. However, most of the proposed elements were dropped due to difficulties in collecting the data, both internally and from other agencies. The final district evaluation form focuses on staffing and personnel data, including the number of letters of appreciation and use-of-force and other complaints received by officers; workload data, such as calls for service and the number of community meetings attended; and data related to problem solving, such as the number of problems identified and solved (by type), volunteer hours, and open-air drug markets identified and closed.

Deputy Chief Bob Schurmeier, who heads the department's strategic planning group, believes that a truly relevant and workable district evaluation system will depend on automation of data collection and recordkeeping and the willingness of officers to observe and record information. "We have to sell the officers on the value of collecting, tracking, interpreting, and using the data to the benefit of the city," he says. "If they don't understand the usefulness of the data, they won't collect it properly or they'll make it up." According to Captain Jackie Maxwell of the Baker One district, the real successes of Community/Problem-Oriented Policing are "small wins" that usually go undocumented. "They're passed on verbally, if at all," she adds. "No one yet has come up with an adequate way to quantify qualitative things."

## Summary and conclusion

In sum, it seems appropriate to view the police as an agency of city government as well as an important part of the criminal justice system. By doing so, however, the vision of how the police can contribute to city life is enlarged, thereby expanding the conception of the police mission. Since measures of police effectiveness must be designed to match the mission (i.e., the understanding of how the police might make important contributions to their cities), it follows then that the measures now used must be complemented by others. No one wants to relieve the police of responding to crime. Thus, all current police performance measures should be retained. The important question is what *new* measures should be added both

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to remind the police that these other contributions are important and to properly account for the full value they contribute to their cities.

We are convinced that the police should add two new capabilities to their current measurement efforts. The first is a large, continuing capacity to survey citizens. A set of surveys should focus on different populations, ask different questions, and be designed to serve different purposes. For example, a general population survey should capture information about criminal victimization, reasons for not reporting crimes to the police, general attitudes toward the police, levels of fear, and types of self-defense citizens rely on to supplement the protection they get from the police. Such a survey is important, partly to develop a more accurate picture than we now have about the real level of criminal victimization, partly to measure levels of fear as well as victimization, partly to measure citizen satisfaction with the quality of police service, and partly to discover the level and type of self-defense that is being used to complement police efforts.

A customer survey should be administered to a sample of individuals who call the police (or ask officers on the streets or in station houses) for assistance. This survey would focus primarily on the quality of the service they received as well as the type of service they requested. This is most useful in gauging the performance of the police as representatives of city government. Perhaps this survey could be extended to include other government agencies and private institutions with whom the police work.

Finally, serious consideration should be given to conducting regular surveys of people stopped or arrested by the police. It might be important to learn what citizens who encounter the police as enforcers think of their experience. For example, such surveys occasionally have revealed evidence that some police were systematically victimizing citizens through extortion. Conversely, in some places where this technique has been used, the police have been surprised to discover that many people they arrest give them high marks for their professionalism and courtesy. Such surveys could provide a sense of how economically and carefully the police use the authority they are granted to do their job. This is at least as important as knowing how well they use the money entrusted to them.

The second capability the police should develop is a continuing process for evaluating their own proactive problem-solving efforts. In 1987, John Eck and William Spelman offered a vision of this process in *Problem Solving: Problem-Oriented Policing in Newport News*, in which they describe the Newport News Police Department's overall problem-solving initiative: how many projects were initiated, what motivated them, and what resources were committed. All the efforts were at least informally evaluated through reports on whether the problem was solved and through letters from citizens who were satisfied. In addition, a few of the initiatives (those that were relatively large and seemed to have more general significance) were evaluated more formally through the use of statistics and other measures.<sup>49</sup>

The Newport News report was produced as a research document designed to show whether problem-solving policing could be implemented and, if implemented, would be effective. Ideally, however, such a document would become part of a police department's regular reporting system. Indeed, it is *only* through a document of this type that proactive problem-solving efforts of the police can be measured accurately. Furthermore, these are the kinds of efforts that are likely to be important as the police turn their attention to preventing crime, reacting to it, and working cooperatively with other agencies to help solve a variety of city problems.

In addition to institutionalizing these kinds of reports, police agencies could join with other municipal agencies to develop measures of overall community well-being, much as Charlotte-Mecklenburg has done. If the police believe they control crime not only to ensure justice and enhance citizen security but also to contribute to the broader goal of improving the quality of community life, then they must find ways to measure factors such as levels of citizen satisfaction, confidence in the future and government, and the economic and social health of the city. It is no accident that the word "police" comes from the root word *polis* (the Greek word for a city or state, especially when characterized by a sense of community), for the police make important contributions to the quality of life in the *polis*. That is what they can and should do. Therefore, the value of the police should be recognized through their contributions to the quality of life, both politically and in the measurement systems the polity constructs to hold its agents accountable.

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Department has 1,600 members, 1,300 of whom are sworn officers.

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47. Neighborhood Development Key Business is a consolidation of the former community development, community relations, employment and training, economic development, and neighborhood services depart-

ments. The Community Empowerment Division is charged with building neighborhood capacity and, in so doing, provides auxiliary support for community policing. The division provides leadership and conflict resolution training for neighborhood residents and leaders, supports neighborhood problem solving, and finds ways to increase citizen participation in government.

48. Personal interview with Lynne Jones Doblin, Neighborhood Development Manager, January 29, 1997.

49. Eck and Spelman, *Problem Solving*.



# The Police, the Media, and Public Attitudes

*Aric Press and Andrew Benson*

They work in dreary, overcrowded offices, with the music of police radios droning in the background. At crime scenes, they mask their emotions. At the homes of victims, they are all sincerity and condolence, wheedling to get someone talking. They are, in a phrase, action junkies, who idle between bouts of mayhem, waiting for their next big chance. Are these the ghouls from homicide, the jaded from the sergeants benevolent association, the cynical from internal affairs? Nah. These are police reporters, the men and women who take the crime reports of the day and convert them into the news and entertainment that fills tonight's broadcasts and tomorrow's papers.

Although no party to the relationship much likes to talk about it, the police and the press share a remarkable number of characteristics. They are professional skeptics and professionally self-righteous. Their job is to ask questions that in any normal circumstance would be regarded as impertinent at best. They seek the cold comfort of facts. They come upon situations of horrific chaos and narrow them into stories, into arrests, into a version of reality that is explainable and therefore comforting. They serve institutions that have outsized roles in their communities—and sometimes forget that the power and respect they enjoy is only on loan. They like to think of themselves as different, a caste apart, beset by unworthy critics in a nasty world. They tend to work out of the same building, and, of course, they distrust each other even as they breathe life into the word symbiotic.

With that kinship in mind, we meet to discuss, among other things, how the media influence the perception of the police held by that most innocent of bystanders, the public. As with many of our topics, this is a broad one. It is on our agenda because it presumably contributes to the meta-topic at hand: how the performance of police is and should be assessed.

With that in mind, this paper divided fairly neatly into a complementary package. Benson did the hard work, reviewing the relevant academic literature and analyz-

ing its conclusions. Press sought to describe the work of the press in relation to the police, figuring that to understand how the view of the police is shaped, it would be helpful first to understand the work of the shapers. This paper then is divided into two parts. First is a discussion of the press and its work; second is a discussion of the academic literature and its lessons.

## Part one

We begin with a few simple truths that are not so simple. What does the press want? It wants stories. Ideally, reporters want exclusives; better yet, exclusives that expose wrongdoing. At an irreducible minimum, reporters assigned to the police want crime stories—the television people need pictures, too—delivered quickly by a reliable official spokesman. With the outlines of a story in hand, the reporters can then supplement—if they've the time and inclination—by visiting a crime scene or seeking out someone with real or imagined knowledge. The prize here is the telling detail—the turn of irony, the extra dollop of tragedy, the larger pattern into which this crime fits—that can turn a police blotter item into an event of drama or wider significance.

The press is not a monolith, as some conspiracy theorists would have it, but it is a food chain. Television now supplies a majority of the news that most people get. (This includes the "news" provided by talk shows and other "information-providers" such as Sally Jesse Raphael, Oprah, and Jerry Springer.) But television still looks to print for leads, for subjects, and for its agenda.

So who are these not-so-hidden persuaders? They come in several different categories. Broadly speaking, they tend to be young and inexperienced, sent out to learn their craft before they're trusted with such exotic species as city council members and G-18s. "The police beat is an intake job," says David

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Anderson, the former editor of *Police* magazine and a long-time editorial page writer at the *New York Times*. "A young person comes on the paper and he's sent to go cover crimes. It's sort of an emergency room internship to toughen up the kid. So what happens? He does as good a job as he can and gets to the point where he's interested in more important issues. How is the department structured? What is its operating philosophy? Where does its budget go? And at the point he's transferred to Washington or overseas."

They are not all kids, of course. When they can afford it, city editors assign two or more reporters to the police beat. The junior person still chases squad cars; the other is assigned to do big-picture stories—trends, headquarters jockeying, or what they insist upon calling "investigations." Sometimes, the senior man—and in these cases it's always a man—is a burnt-out case, a reporter who has been around so long at headquarters that he is regarded by all parties as a fellow traveler. He can be valuable to both sides, but he dates from an age that was not as adversarial, an age that is unlikely to return anytime soon.

Even at papers that cannot afford to double-team the police, there is an ethic that more than the daily crime stories need coverage. But editors' talk can be cheap. When Bruce Cory was hired by one of the Houston papers (there was once more than one) to cover police, he was told to cover the department as an institution. Coming out of a niche publication that specialized in criminal justice, he had a surfeit of ideas. In the event, however, his first responsibility was to cover every homicide in town. After a while he stopped pursuing anything else, and then he resigned.

The third category in this taxonomy is the columnist. For these purposes, we focus on the subgroup that has played a disproportionate role in northeastern cities. These are men, typically Irish, typically with friends and relatives on the police force, who no matter how free they are to roam across subject areas, will inevitably return to local police stories. They have excellent sources and can generally be relied upon to report, in dramatic fashion, the views of a case as seen by one of the lead detectives. Occasionally they break important news—Jimmy Breslin's reports on the use of stun guns in a precinct house won a Pulitzer Prize. But these men are very important not so much for the information they impart—which is sometimes of dubious value—but because their writing is given

prominence, and they set a tone and style for younger reporters who are aiming not for Afghanistan but for a high local profile. The exception to this approach is Leonard Levitt of the late and much-lamented *New York Newsday*. At that paper, and now in its shrunken successor, the Queens edition of *Newsday*, Levitt writes a column specifically about police headquarters. Unlike the others who still seek to emulate Damon Runyon and Breslin, Levitt serves as the department's Liz Smith/David Broder.

Finally, and of considerable importance, is the investigator. These are reporters with the freedom to roam across their territory looking for mischief to expose. They are very good at what they do, they set police chiefs' teeth on edge, and their work, however rarely it appears, can be found on the front page. Two classic examples are Selwyn Rabb of the *New York Times*, whose work on a 1960s bungled murder case was the basis for "Kojak," and Brian Donovan of *Newsday*, whose last expose of a police pension scandal won a Pulitzer Prize.

In all this, crime news is paramount. In a distant second is news of the headquarters bureaucracy—who is up or down, what are the chances of labor unrest, etc. This coverage is often not detailed enough to be of much help or interest to anyone except the participants or their family members. Third is coverage of program initiatives. For quick reference, review the files of the *Sunday New York Times Magazine* for one breathless story after another describing in great detail the favorite idea of the resident police commissioner. Typically, these stories are told through the eyes of one officer or unit. And last are the special projects. For the most part, these are distinguished efforts that allow editors and publishers to demonstrate their public spirit. Readers often turn the page, but they have great influence on prize juries and policymakers. Among many examples, consider the *Boston Globe* on the abject disorganization of Boston's police department; the *Washington Post* on recruiting failures by the D.C. Metropolitan Police Department, and *New York Newsday* on precinct-level corruption.

The last is a particularly good example of how the world works. In 1991, *Newsday* ran a multipart series alleging failures in the New York Police Department's (NYPD's) internal affairs operation. Leonard Levitt was disappointed that the other papers didn't follow these stories; the PD's press office was furious that



there were so many unnamed sources involved that it could not fight back against *Newsday*. After a time, Mike McAlary, a columnist on another paper, began writing about one cop's corruption complaints. *Newsday* sought to reclaim the story. It had a tip that the U.S. Attorney's Office was beginning to sniff around the subject. Levitt wrote that story, but he says that an editor changed the wording to make it into a full-fledged "investigation." That was a flat error. But before Levitt or anyone else could correct it, Mayor David Dinkins had created a blue ribbon commission to probe corruption in the NYPD.

## Police stories

Now, what do the police want in all this? The police want "good" press. By that they mean favorable reports that emphasize bravery in the field and wisdom at headquarters. Good press is also the absence of bad press. Bad press in this context describes abuse, corruption, and other mistakes. Sometimes officials have difficulty discerning the difference. "The holy grail that every public relations person is in search of is positive press," says Suzanne Trazoff, a former NYPD deputy commissioner for public information. "When I got to the PD, I heard that the beat reporters were all negative. But it just wasn't true. I had come from [the city's welfare department] where there was never a good story. At the PD, reporters liked doing good stories about cops."

But they could never do enough to satisfy some members of the department. Cops, like reporters, see the world as divided into two parts—Us and Them. Rather than leading to a mature understanding of each other's roles, these attitudes can lead to hostility. "The overwhelming majority of police officers, from commanders on down through the ranks, felt the media were not on their side," says Vin LaPorchio, a former director of communications for the Boston Police Department. "It was always adversarial." He said that some officers made exceptions for "reporters they liked. They were the ones regarded as 'most-balanced' or most 'pro-cop,' depending on how you looked at it."

Despite such attitudes, departments are in the business of feeding the mouths that occasionally bite them. (The old saw has truth: Reporters are either at your neck or at your feet.) Crime reports and arrests are matters of public record and as such are distributed by

headquarters' staff. Partly this is a matter of convenience, partly it is a desire to seek out witnesses and evidence from the public, and partly it's a self-protective need to put the information out before someone else, such as an unhappy civilian, does. The second category of story, according to Trazoff, is the one that's important to headquarters and to City Hall. "Policy stories," she says, "are not big news the way the crime of the day is, and they're harder to get coverage for. But they are important to City Hall and to each agency. They want to let the public know what's happening." The third category of story relates to the second. It's the police commissioner's story. According to Jeremy Travis, our host and a former senior aide to three New York police commissioners, "Commissioners need to show their personal stamps; the public likes that. It's an effective way to communicate to the troops. And it lets you dominate the field. You want to put it out there, so critics have less playing room."

So, from all this, what is the impression left on the public of the police? It is an agency that announces crimes, makes arrests, has a few ideas, struggles with labor-management issues, suffers from some corruption, employs a few brutal officers who may or may not live within the jurisdiction, and appears to be led by a succession of well-meaning administrators who do not seem to last very long. These may be false or misleading impressions, but they are the ones that both the press and police cooperate to put forward.

Is there an issue missing here? Not in the era known as B.B. (Before [former commissioner William] Bratton). But in this A.B. period (we'll save the designation A.D. for the mayor of New York), the conversation is changing. The agenda now includes public safety and the police department's role in guaranteeing it. This is a topic that traditionalists approach with great care. "In '93, we had the lowest crime stats in 20 years," LaPorchio recalls. "They were just excellent numbers. But we only issued measured statements. We never gave the impression that our efforts made them go down because we always feared that next year they'd go back up. Police officers are a little cautious about their impact on crime reductions." Not anymore, not A.B.

The remarkable drop in crime reports in New York (and across the Nation) and the ensuing remarkable press coverage is well known. The implications on

## The Police, the Media, and Public Attitudes

the press-police relationship of this change in the public conversation are still being thought through. John Linder is a management/organization/public relations consultant who has worked closely with Bratton over the years. Consider his view: "The press has an enormous role in influencing the way in which police have been managed in virtually every city in the country. The press is concerned with corruption and the appearance of corruption. No one managed toward a goal of reducing crime. No one thought the police could do it. Now they can. The press could perform a valuable role by trying to monitor the performance of government, the actual performance of government instead of the appearance."

### The police commissioner's role

What would it mean to the press and the police to live in a world in which the police pledge to reduce crime and ensure safety? Already, the press influences decisionmaking at the highest levels. Everywhere, except perhaps Los Angeles, it seems to be an accepted rule that if a case merits press attention it is apt to get extra police resources. And most senior police executives acknowledge that once having reached a decision they will attempt to have it portrayed as positively as possible in the news media. But, says Paul Browne, a former reporter who became a key aide to former New York Police Commissioner Raymond Kelly, "There's always been an understanding that the mayor runs a reelection campaign while the PC [police commissioner] runs a paramilitary organization. Those are supposed to be different operations."

Managing public safety, which of course is more a matter of perception than reality, is a campaign unto itself. If the police commissioner is determined to be the public's paladin, then he or she has to take on a different and enlarged role, particularly with respect to the press. This is not a game for amateurs, and there are plenty of pros around to help manage it. Here are, at a minimum, the things a police commissioner will have to consider doing to succeed in this new world:

- **Stick to a message.** Safety has to be sold, daily and aggressively. It will not do to run a safer city and not have everyone know it. What would be the point? This is really analogous to running a political campaign, with one serious difference: Nearly every day, there are gruesome events taking place

that can step on even the most artfully constructed message.

- **Rent a medium.** Selling a campaign requires positive appeals, and the press is not a good vehicle for that. The other option, as Linder notes, is paid media. He did it with Bratton when Bratton was chief of the New York Transit Police and helped build public confidence in the safety of the trains. He thought similar work was possible with the New York Police Department but had neither the time nor the budget to try.
- **Information control.** You can't convince civilians that their city is safe if they are listening to a steady drumbeat of reports describing crime. And where do those reports come from? They come from the police. Once started down the message road, how long before a police commissioner or a mayor is tempted to limit information? Not long, as the *New York Times* reported on July 2, 1995:

Headline: Crime Coverage Mellows,  
and Answers Are Not at All Simple

Byline: By William Glaberson

Body: The New York City news media, usually packed with chilling accounts of urban mayhem, have been presenting a mellower portrait of crime in the city lately.

Although there are always especially horrifying crimes that force their way into the headlines, like the murder spree of Darnell Collins last month, a review of recent crime coverage indicates there has been sharply less of it—less than half the number of articles in the city's newspapers than in a comparable period last year.

Is the decline just a reflection of the well-documented slide in New York's crime rate? Is it, perhaps, a result of the media obsession with the O.J. Simpson trial?

Or is it, as some reporters and editors suggest, the product of shrewd management of crime news by a mayor who

won election pledging to crack down on crime?

In their view, the cutbacks that Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani ordered at police headquarters last February have made it so difficult to find out basic information about crimes in New York that—whatever his intentions—the effect has been to reduce crime coverage.

Jerry Schmetterer, who oversees police coverage as deputy metropolitan editor at the *Daily News*, said of the Giuliani administration's moves at police headquarters, "They are creating a perception that they don't want bad news reported."

Although Giuliani aides say there is no attempt at manipulation, the criticism that Mr. Schmetterer and his colleagues voice is at the center of a debate over how much information the government owes news organizations. And some experts on journalism and criminal justice suggest that a strategy aimed at easing people's sometimes exaggerated fears of crime might not be so bad.

The dispute began last winter when Mayor Giuliani said the police department's public information office was "out of control" and ordered its staff cut by more than two-thirds—28 officers in February to 8 newly assigned officers and 1 civilian. The mayor also forced the resignation of the Deputy Commissioner for Public Information, John Miller.

At the time, the widely reported interpretation was that Mr. Giuliani was jealous of the press attention that Police Commissioner William J. Bratton had attracted and wanted to take more of the credit for the city's declining crime rate.

But as time has passed, an additional consequence has appeared: The smaller public information unit made up of officers without public relations experi-

ence has simply been less able to supply information.

- **Running the numbers.** The whole strategy depends on the city getting safer. What happens if the numbers turn up and the safe-city plan goes south? There might be a temptation to fix the numbers. "The danger to the department of letting yourself be driven by how your numbers play in the press," says Paul Browne, "is that you are in danger of corrupting the reporting system." Blanket denials don't work here. The Uniform Crime Reports used to be a play thing in some cities. And numbers given outsized importance—look at school test scores—sometimes have a way of being tampered with. This only has to happen once for a departmental message to lose credibility with the public.

- **A hiding place.** Every public figure needs one. Another way of putting it is officials must have the ability to define an issue so that its mere presence is not crippling. Crime does not lend itself nicely to such treatment. "S—t happens every day," says Browne, pungently, "and our defense is we didn't do it. We have to clean it up. If your career can be ended because somebody else did something atrocious, you and everyone around you is put in a crazy position."

In this new world, there might be some changes in the press, too. At the beginning of a successful public safety campaign, artful leaking to a reporter from the most important outlet in town will serve a police commissioner extremely well. The reporter will be happy—he gets an easy exclusive. But reporters change assignments almost as rapidly as police commissioners and the next guy may not be so pliable. Or even worse, the standards may change. The press thrives on failure, thrives on it so much that it defines it so it can find it. Reducing homicides from 2,400 to 1,200 is dandy. But how long before someone starts asking why 1,200 is an acceptable number? In this game, the headline does not have to read "Do Something Dave!" There's a nice ring to "Do Something Howie!," too.

But I digress. What follows is Benson's careful exegesis, and I have delayed you too long. But one last thought: We should talk sometime about the power of the entertainment media to influence opinion. As surely as commercial advertising moves products, so too do fictional portrayals influence our views of

crime, cops, and safety. Consider it the Sipowicz Effect, named for the gruff detective on “NYPD Blue.” This show reaches more Americans than any news program. Its message: Cops are flawed good guys who always get the bad guys. (I mention also the show called “The Commish.” He doesn’t chase headlines. He chases bad guys, gets them too.) Those are powerful, positive messages, whatever their attenuated connection to reality. No department is likely to top them. So, as we all move into the A.B. era, police executives would be well advised to remember the advice another television cop used to offer: “Be careful out there.” It can always get worse.

### Media-created reality

Shortly after the turn of the century, journalist Lincoln Steffens picked a brief newspaper fight with his friend and crime-beat competitor, Jacob Riis, in New York City. Steffens scooped the competition on a peculiar burglary, which set off a flurry of crime reporting by the city’s crime-beat reporters.

“It was one of the worst crime waves I ever witnessed,” Steffens recounted later, “and the explanations were embarrassing to the reform police board . . . .”

The “crime wave” ended when President Teddy Roosevelt interceded in the newspaper war, urging his friends, Steffens and Riis, to ease up on the crime news because it undermined the Progressive reforms of New York’s corrupt city government. Decades later in his autobiography, Steffens seemed to chuckle when recounting the incident.

“I enjoy crime waves. I made one once . . .” he wrote in a chapter entitled, “I Make a Crime Wave.” “I feel that I know something the wise men do not know about crime waves and so I get a certain sense of happy superiority out of reading editorials, sermons, speeches, and learned theses on my specialty” (Steffens, 1931: 285).

Decades later, one media critic remarked, “For all the fear they inspired, it wasn’t that more crimes were being committed—only that more of them were getting into the paper” (Snyder, 1992: 201–2).

Some say that the news media are like a mirror, merely reflecting the day’s activities. But that notion is simplistic and perhaps a bit naive. If Steffens were

still alive today, no doubt he would also chuckle at the legacy he has left in the news media:

- In 1976, New York City experienced a major crime wave of brutal attacks on the elderly. The city’s news media publicized a rising tide of crime, and the public outcry prompted a government response to help protect the elderly. Yet, at the same time, official police statistics showed an actual decrease in those types of crime compared to the previous year. “New York’s crime wave was a public event produced through newswork. . . . A crime wave is a ‘thing’ in public consciousness which organizes people’s perceptions of an aspect of their community. It was this ‘thing’ that the media created,” wrote sociologist Mark Fishman, who studied the phenomenon (Fishman, 1980).
- In 1986, the Nation’s major newsmagazines and network news were in a year-long frenzy about drug abuse, particularly the use of crack cocaine. “The Nation’s No. 1 menace,” declared *U.S. News and World Report* in July. The problem, as described by one observer, was that the statistics did not show that more people were abusing drugs. Drug abuse, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, was hovering at about 16 percent among high school seniors for the previous 7 years. “Nobody, but nobody, was going to defend drug abuse in America, least of all the people who use drugs every day. In a way, it was the perfect cover story: sensational, colorful, gruesome, alarmist, with a veneer of social responsibility. Unfortunately, it wasn’t true” (Weisman, 1986: 15).
- In a study of news coverage in Chicago, murder ranked as the No. 1 reported crime in the *Tribune*, accounting for 26.2 percent of all crime covered by the newspaper. In actuality, according to the Chicago Police Department, murder accounted for only 0.2 percent of all crimes during that same period. Theft was the most frequently occurring crime, accounting for 36 percent of all crimes. But *Tribune* stories only mentioned theft crimes 3.4 percent of the time (Grabner, 1980: 40). “In every category—crimes, criminals, crimefighters, the investigation of crime, arrests, case processing, and case disposition—the media present a world of crime and justice that is not found in reality” (Surette, 1992: 245–6).

For most Americans, the reality of crime is what they see on television or at the movies and what they read in the newspaper or in a magazine. An overwhelming majority of citizens report they have not been a crime victim in the past year nor do they know anyone who has been a crime victim (see, for example, *Gallup Poll Monthly*, February 1993: 33). So they learn about crime and the police from entertainment shows like "Top Cops," from the police news roundup in their local newspaper, and from the lead news stories on the local TV station. "People today live in two worlds: a real world and a media world. The first is limited by direct experience; the second is bounded only by the decisions of editors and producers" (Zucker, 1978: 239, quoted in Surette, 1992: 81).

All in all, the media give their audience a lot of crime news. In her 1976 study, Doris Graber found that crime and justice topics averaged 25 percent of all news in the newspapers, 20 percent on local television, and 13 percent on national television. Stories that focused on individual crimes were 9 percent of news coverage in the newspapers, 8 percent on local television, and 4 percent on national television (Graber, 1980).

In the *Chicago Tribune*, the coverage of individual crimes just about matched election coverage and was topped by only two other topics: foreign affairs and domestic policy. Individual crime coverage received nearly three times as much attention as the presidency or the Congress or the state of the economy and nearly four times as much coverage as State or city government.

A more recent study, conducted in 1991, found that news that focuses on crime, law, and justice accounts for just under one-half of all news coverage in newspapers, about half of all coverage on television, and well over one-half of all news coverage on radio (Ericson et al., 1991).

All that attention seems to be fueling the public's appetite for crime news. According to research studies, TV news audiences are most interested in flames, blood, and sex and least interested in ethnic news and labor news (Bagdikian, 1978: 272).

Early on, newspapers recognized the public's interest in crime news. In 1836, James Gordon Bennett of the *New York Herald* reported in a series of articles "one of the most foul and premeditated murders that ever

fell to our lot to record." His stories described the hatchet murder of a New York prostitute by one of her "admirers," then later cast doubt that the police had the right suspect after conducting his own investigation. As a result, the suspect was acquitted, and the circulation of the *Herald* tripled (Pickett, 1977: 93–94, quoted in Bates, 1989).

By the late 19th century, crime news had become a staple of the mass-circulation newspapers of America's big cities. As Snyder writes of New York's newspapers, "The penny press became the guides for a readership confounded by the city's diversity—and alternately fascinated and repelled by the crime, vice, and poverty at its core" (Snyder, 1992: 198).

Today, as many as 95 percent of the general population say the mass media are their primary source of information about crime, surveys report (Graber, 1979).

But, as Steffens observes, this media-created perception differs from reality. And whether it is an intentional crime wave or an unintended effect of news reporting routines, the news media have an effect on the attitudes and perceptions of their audiences. That effect can alter their perception of crime and criminal justice, raising their level of fear or causing them to act in a different manner than they normally would.

The news media's portrayal of crime news can affect the public, as outlined below, and it may in turn, affect the public's attitude toward police and other criminal justice practitioners. Likewise, the attitudes toward criminal justice can make a difference in how policymakers pursue strategies to address crime.

Three of the major news media effects are outlined below, followed by a discussion of the effects of crime news specifically and how those effects relate to public attitudes toward police.

## Agenda setting

Numerous studies have shown that people attach greater importance to a problem when the problem has been highlighted by the news media. The media, by emphasizing or ignoring topics, may influence the list of issues that are important to the public—what the public thinks about, even if it is not what the public thinks (see, for example, Cohen, 1963, quoted in

Surette, 1992). At some point, the media agenda becomes the public agenda, the theory goes.

Under the agenda-setting theory, these guiding principles emerged (O'Keefe, 1971: 243, quoted in Surette, 1992):

1. The mass media may help form attitudes toward new subjects when little prior opinion exists.
2. The mass media may influence attitudes that are weakly held.
3. The mass media may strengthen one attitude at the expense of a series of others when the strength of the several attitudes is evenly balanced.
4. The mass media can change even strongly held attitudes when they are able to report new facts.
5. The mass media may suggest new courses of action that appear to better satisfy wants and needs.
6. The mass media's strongest and most universally recognized effect remains the reinforcement or strengthening of predispositions.

The influence of the news media, however, is subtle and is itself affected by personal characteristics of the public and the personal interactions among people. For instance, people with direct, real-world experiences on a topic are less likely to be influenced by news media depictions of that same topic. Not all types of news media have the same influence, nor do they have the same influence on different topics.

"In essence, the research indicates that media effects are variable, are more common for television than for newspapers, appear to increase with exposure, are more significant the less direct experience people have with an issue, are more significant for newer issues but diminish quickly, and are nonlinear, sometimes reciprocal, and highly interactive with other social and individual processes" (Surette, 1992: 88).

A refinement of the agenda-setting theory takes into account how the news media agenda may or may not influence the agenda held by policymakers. Those policymakers may act on their own without the public's urging, or they may act counter to the public agenda. The agenda-building theory looks at how the policymaker agenda is influenced by the importance the news media place on given topics. For example, research into the effects of investigative reporting has

shown that the most consistent factor in determining the impact of the media on policy is the relationship that forms between the media and local policymakers (Protest et al., 1991). In that case, the largely passive public can apparently be circumvented.

### Priming

This media-effects theory refers to the ability that news stories have to summon forth bits and pieces of memory from a person's mind on a given topic.

Conducting experiments using local television broadcasts, researchers Shanto Iyengar and Donald Kinder found that when people evaluate complex political phenomena, they do not use all the political knowledge they have. They can consider only what comes to mind at the moment, and television news, it turns out, is a powerful determinant of what springs to mind and what is forgotten. By drawing attention to some aspects of political life at the expense of others, television news helps to set the terms by which political judgments are reached and political choices are made (Iyengar and Kinder, 1987).

When primed by television news stories that focused on national defense, people judged the President largely by how well he has provided, as they see it, for the Nation's defense. When primed with stories about inflation, people assessed the President's performance largely on whether they believed he has handled inflation well.

Although the experiments used political issues and the presidency, it seems likely that the same effect would occur when focusing on other issues, like crime, and other leaders, like mayors and police chiefs.

### Framing

Again looking at television news, Iyengar shows unintended effects of the news format on public opinion (Iyengar, 1991). The research looked at the two primary news formats, episodic and thematic, that provide frames for news presentations. The episodic newsframe focuses on specific events or particular cases, while the thematic newsframe places political issues and events in some general context. Television presents news almost exclusively in an episodic format, Iyengar writes, which colors the presentation of issues and eliminates others from the newscast entirely. For instance, during the 1980s, network

newscasts showed hundreds of reports of particular acts of terrorism but virtually no reports on the socio-economic or political antecedents of terrorism. Global warming, on the other hand, was hardly covered at all because it cannot be readily reduced to a specific event or occurrence.

Through a series of experiments, the researcher found that the episodic news format affects the public's attributions of responsibility for political issues, so that viewers are "less likely to hold public officials accountable for the existence of some problem and also less likely to hold them responsible for alleviating it. By discouraging viewers from attributing responsibility for national issues to political actors, television decreases the public's control over their elected representatives and the policies they pursue" (Iyengar, 1991: 2–3). Likewise, viewers are less likely to attribute societal causes to problems.

### Crime story: public views of crime

As noted earlier, the news media emphasize the most violent and the least frequent crimes at the expense of other more frequent crimes—and at the expense of other less visual issues. So murders grab the headlines, even if they are rare occurrences.

The public, however, apparently does not pick up that distinction. When asked whether they thought coverage of crime by television exaggerates the amount of crime, the public overwhelmingly said they did not think it did (*Gallup Poll Monthly*, December 1993).

The public has a fear of crime that in most cases is out of proportion to the actual incidence or risk of crime, and as criminologists have noted, that fear can lead to actions that make neighborhoods less safe.

What does this fear come from? Researchers have found that repeated exposure to television news can alter people's perceptions of reality, especially in the absence of direct experience, such that they adopt a view of the world characterized by suspicion, fear, alienation, distrust, cynicism, and a belief that the world is a violent, crime-ridden, dangerous place (see Surette, 1992).

This so-called "mean-world view" leads to a set of attitudes and beliefs about crime and crimefighting, although some of those views are tempered by direct experience with crime. As Surette notes, "At the least,

heavy consumers of television do share certain beliefs about high societal crime and victimization levels. For Gerbner and his associates, a mean-world view translates into attitudes regarding who can employ violence against whom, who are appropriate victims of crime, and who are likely criminals. It posits a world in which it is appropriate for some to have power and some to not" (Surette, 1992: 91).

Other researchers have found that a reliance on television news was associated with antiestablishment attitudes that included social distrust, political cynicism, and powerlessness—a set of attitudes described as "videomalaise" (M. Robinson, 1976).

The impact of crime news on the public's fear of crime appears to hold true for newspaper readers as well. Heath (1984) found that readers report fearing crime more if a newspaper publishes a high proportion of local crime news in a random or sensationalistic manner.

Yet it is television that is thought to contribute more to the public's heightened level of fear. "Newspaper exposure tends to be associated with beliefs about the distribution and frequency of crime, whereas television exposure is associated with attitudes, such as fear of crime and victimization," notes Surette (1992: 93).

Just how the news media influence an individual's view of crime is hard to pin down because of individual differences in personal experiences and social interactions. But the overall presentation of crime in the news media tends to lead the public to support more punitive criminal justice policies over social welfare policies to reduce crime.

In a recent Gallup poll, 51 percent agreed that additional money and effort should go to attacking the social and economic problems that lead to crime through better education and training, while 42 percent agreed that money and effort should go to deterring crime by improving law enforcement with more prisons, police, and judges (*Gallup Poll Monthly*, August 1994: 12).

But over the past 5 years of Gallup polling, that support for social programs dropped from 61 percent in 1989 and a 5-year high of 67 percent in 1992 to just barely 50 percent. Likewise, the support for enforcement programs increased from 32 percent in 1989 and a 5-year low of 25 percent in 1992 to 42 percent.

In the same poll, crime and violence were cited as the most important problem first mentioned by 21 percent of the respondents, beating out health care at 12 percent and the economy at 9 percent.

“The repetitiveness and pervasiveness of the media’s general crime and justice content increase the possibility that the media may have significant unplanned effects on attitudes, particularly in the area of crime and justice and especially for persons with limited alternative sources of information. And because of the media’s emphasis on law enforcement and crime control, we can expect that any media effects would tend to promote crime control more than due process policies” (Surette, 1992: 87).

Graber, though, found that the public, while favoring crime control policies, had stronger support for social programs to reduce crime than the media portrayals would lead one to believe. The news media largely ignored social causes of crime and failed to stress socioeconomic reform as a way of coping with escalating crime. Instead, news stories placed an emphasis on the criminal justice process and on individual lawbreakers. “Curable deficiencies in the existing criminal justice system and personality defects in individuals are depicted by the media as the main causes of rampant crime. Social causes play a subordinate, though by no means nonexistent, role. Suggested remedies are sparse and do not generally include social reforms” (Graber, 1980: 74).

That differed from the public’s view, as Graber notes, “Social and economic factors were regularly mentioned by panel members as causes of crime, and social and economic reforms were advocated, albeit within the existing political structures. . . . These views were heavily attributed to personal experiences and evaluations, as well as conversations with lay and professional sources.”

Iyengar found that people who viewed episodic coverage of crime tended to produce fewer societal attributions for crime, a circumstance that exists because television news fails to make the connection between crime and the social causes of crime for the public. “Americans’ failure to see interconnections between issues may be a side effect of episodic news coverage. Most would agree that social problems such as poverty, racial inequality, drug usage, and crime are related in cause and treatment. Yet, television

typically depicts these recurring political problems as discrete instances and events. This tendency may obscure the ‘big picture’ and impede the process of generalization . . .” (1991: 137).

Public support for specific crime programs, it stands to reason, would lead to those programs being funded and implemented by policymakers. Surette makes these tentative conclusions: “The media emphasis on crime has frequently been credited with raising the public’s fear of being victimized to disproportionate levels and hence giving crime an inappropriately high ranking on the public agenda (Gordon and Heath, 1981: 228–229). The high ranking encourages the development of media-directed ‘moral crusades’ against specific crime issues, heightens public anxiety about crime, and pushes or blocks other serious social problems such as hunger from the public agenda” (Cohen and Young, 1981).

### Views of crimefighting

Given the public’s view of crime, one could expect the public to have a negative view of the police.

The news media present the public with a torrent of gruesome and violent crimes, raising the level of fear. These crimes appear in the media as a series of unconnected violent acts, and the police seem powerless to stop them. When the news media focus on causes of crimes, they look to deficiencies in the criminal justice system as much as anything as the reason for crime. Societal causes of crime—poverty, unemployment, lack of education—are rarely cited.

But despite the media’s constructed reality of crime, there is evidence of considerable support for the police. In fact, the public does not appear to blame the police for what they perceive is a rise in crime. In 1972 and 1975, the National Crime Survey asked respondents in 13 American cities to rate their local police.

“When we consider that fully 81 percent of the 1975 respondents said that police performance was either good or fair, it is apparent that a large amount of favorable opinion toward the police exists in the public mind,” the study concludes (Garofalo, 1977: 10). Other surveys at the time reported similar findings. Although most of the respondents indicated that their local police could improve (68 percent), the improve-



ments most often cited were the need for more police officers or more officers directed to specific areas or duties (such as foot patrols).

However, when race and age were considered, the performance of police slipped among some groups. African Americans and younger respondents gave police lower ratings, although even among young African-Americans (ages 16–29), 71 percent rated the performance of police as good or average (Garofalo, 1977: 13).

The survey also found that respondents who rated their neighborhoods as much more dangerous compared with other neighborhoods in the metropolitan area were four times as likely to give the police a very negative rating than were respondents in neighborhoods they thought were much less dangerous (Garofalo, 1977: 18). However, those who felt safe at night in their neighborhoods rated police performance only slightly better than those who felt unsafe.

The author comments, “The extent to which people feel personally safe about being out alone in their neighborhoods at night does not have much effect on their ratings of the local police, but when people evaluate the safety of their neighborhoods relative to other neighborhoods, their evaluations are related to their perceptions of the adequacy of local police performance” (Garofalo, 1977: 18).

Likewise, those who reported they were crime victims in the previous year, especially victims of more serious crime, were more likely to rate police performance negatively than those who were not crime victims (Garofalo, 1977: 21). However, police ratings do not strongly influence whether or not a victim reports a crime to the police (Garofalo, 1977: 36).

So, even with an increase in crime or a perceived increase in crime, the public does not appear to blame the police for it. “Apparently, respondents did not think that the crime problem was attributable to any deficiencies in the job being done by their local police,” the author concludes (Garofalo, 1977: 36).

Graber, in her 1976 study of crime news, found that 57 percent of her panel members gave police a “good rating,” although whites gave more positive assessments than African-Americans. That positive rating, she notes, continued the favorable ratings police officers had received throughout the previous decade.

When asked for responses for the “fair” ratings, the panelists noted the difficulty of the problems faced by police, including insufficient manpower, lack of public cooperation, lack of skills and dedication, and the poor caliber of police personnel. She observes that a typical comment often was prefaced by “considering the tough problems they face” or “given community attitudes” followed by a favorable evaluation.

She notes, “This leaves the impression that a large proportion of those who gave the police less than top ratings put the blame on the criminal justice system in general and the difficulty of its mission rather than the particular institution” (Graber, 1980: 78).

Other parts of the criminal justice system did not receive as good an evaluation as police in the Graber study, a finding confirmed by later surveys of the public. Both the court and corrections systems were deemed deficient, a circumstance Graber pegs to the public’s relative unfamiliarity with them. “Unlike the courts and correctional institutions, which seem remote, forbidding, and unpredictable, many people regard the police as a source of aid in various emergencies, including catching and safekeeping of criminals. People can understand and relate to the job performed by police. By contrast, they are mystified by the ways of the courts and correctional system and hold them responsible for returning unreformed criminals to society” (p. 78).

In a 1991 national survey conducted by the National Victim Center (Warr, 1995), the public rated the performance of the police above that of prosecutors, judges, prisons, and parole boards.

In her study, Graber asked the panelists to rate the success of the police in catching criminals, because she surmised that apprehending criminals is widely considered to be the most important function of the police. She found that 48 percent of the panel saw the police as very successful, 14 percent saw police as unsuccessful, and the remainder gave answers qualified to various crimes.

Nearly two decades later, the public still regards the police highly. Respondents were asked in 1993 to rate how well the police in their city were dealing with crime; 71 percent rated the police as doing an excellent or good job. However, that assessment was much lower for African-Americans, only 48 percent of whom gave an excellent or good rating to police in

their cities (*Gallup Poll Monthly*, February 1993: 31). And both whites and African-Americans agreed with the statement that police treat criminal suspects differently in low-income neighborhoods than in middle- or high-income neighborhoods.

As Warr (1995) notes, the police receive consistently higher ratings from the public in honesty and ethical standards than many other professions and that ranking has increased since the 1970s. Roughly half of respondents in 1993 and 1994 Gallup surveys rated the honesty and ethical standards of the police as very high or high, up from 37 percent in 1977. That gave police a ranking as high as medical doctors and teachers and placed them higher than lawyers (16 percent in 1993) and U.S. senators (18 percent). On another question, a large majority of Americans had a great deal of respect for the police, even during the 1991 Rodney King incident. Gallup surveys from 1973 to 1995 show that the public has the highest confidence rating in police over the past 20 years than any other institution, except for the military and organized religion (*Gallup Poll Monthly*, October 1991 and August 1994).

Similar to Graber's observations, Reiss (1967, quoted in Warr, 1995), notes that the lofty police evaluations by the public probably have more to do with sympathy for the difficult job police have to handle than with an objective evaluation of police performance. Graber reports that panelists believed economic and social causes deter efficient crimefighting, and they believed strongly that citizens can best aid the fight against crime by correcting these societal causes. For instance, 85 percent of the recommendations from panelists suggested that citizens should work for programs designed to reduce economic and educational deficiencies among the crime-prone population. Fourteen percent called for better crime reporting by citizens and for more participation in stopping illegal activities. Overall, 86 percent believed that citizens are lax in aiding in the fight against crime (Graber, 1980).

The generally positive assessment of police came in recent years even as the public believed crime was higher in the United States than it was a year previously and reported that they worried about being sexually assaulted or murdered more than they did a decade ago (*Gallup Poll Monthly*, December 1993: 21).

Trends in public opinion appear to show that the general fear of crime, although disproportionately higher than actual incidence of crime, has remained generally stable since the 1970s and 1980s (Niemi et al., 1988: 134–135). In a 1993 Gallup poll, respondents reported that crime in their neighborhoods had not increased over last year, and neither they nor anyone they knew were victims of crime in the previous year, although again, responses by African-Americans differed (*Gallup Poll Monthly*, February 1993: 27).

A year later, however, the proportion of Americans who rated crime as the most important problem in the country soared to 37 percent in a January 1994 Gallup survey (Warr, 1995). Alderman (1994) attributed the increase to a series of highly publicized crimes and trials that were under way beginning in the fall of 1993, including the murder of Polly Klaas, the assault on Nancy Kerrigan, the Long Island commuter train shooting rampage, the murder trial of the Menendez brothers, and the court proceedings surrounding the assault on Reginald Denny.

## Conclusions and recommendations

The research seems clear that the news media have pervasive, unintended, and unpredictable influences on public opinion. For instance, the news media can influence the importance the public attaches to a particular problem, the factors by which it evaluates its leaders, and the extent to which it makes connections between problems and causes.

The evidence also strongly suggests that the steady stream of crime news from the media affects the public, so that they are more fearful about the risks of crime than they need be and are more likely to demand punitive criminal justice policies to control crime. That is true even though the public generally understands the societal causes of crime and supports programs to counteract them, despite the news media's avoidance of that portrayal of crime.

The demand by the public for a specific response to crime is likely to lead policymakers to heed the public or, at the very least, to make it more difficult for policymakers to get support for responses that are counter to public opinion. Along those lines, Fishman notes that the media crime frenzy over elderly crimes

in New York swiftly led to police and criminal justice reforms.

"Even though one cannot be mugged by a crime wave, one can be frightened. And on the basis of this fear, one can put more police on the streets, enact new laws, and move away to the suburbs. Crime waves may be 'things of the mind' but they are real in their consequences" (Fishman, 1980: 11).

These attitudes about crime, however, do not appear to bring down the public's generally high rating of the police. Instead, they may have a positive effect on public attitudes toward police in that the public views the police as having a difficult job, being at the forefront of crime.

As a way to address the negative effects of news media accounts, criminologists and journalists have called for more context in crime stories (see, for example, Edmonson, 1994; Tozer, 1993; Bishop, 1993). By tying in the trends, patterns, and causes of crimes, the public would get a better picture of what crime is occurring, where it is occurring, and how often it is occurring. That gives them information by which they can make informed decisions about their personal safety.

This should lead criminologists and police administrators to provide more of the statistics and research data to the public through the news media. Police departments are virtually the exclusive source of information for crime news. It makes sense that the crime news be accompanied by statistical data or inferences from administrators that bring context and order to the seemingly unconnected series of crimes and violent acts emanating from television and newspapers.

Criminal justice policymakers must pay heed to the reports of the news media. This notion was espoused in 1921 by Felix Frankfurter, then a professor of administrative law at Harvard Law School, in a study he helped lead of the Cleveland criminal justice system (Fosdick et al., 1922). Frankfurter contributed a chapter outlining how the Cleveland newspapers affected criminal justice in the city. He called on the newspapers to take a more high-minded approach to crime coverage, recognizing the strong effect they had on public opinion.

"The public derives its opinions about the administration of criminal justice from the kind, the quality, and the volume of newspaper matter affecting criminal justice [and] the influence exerted by public opinion on the system of criminal justice is largely dependent upon the extent of informed opinion in the community . . . . The whole scheme of criminal justice, particularly under an elective system with short tenures, is pervasively affected . . . by the views which are gradually deposited in the minds of the electors through the more vivid and persistent, and therefore more potent, influence of the daily news columns . . ." (Fosdick et al., 1922: 518).

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# Constituent Expectations of the Police and Police Expectations of Constituents

Stuart A. Scheingold

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).<sup>1</sup>

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.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>5</sup> 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.

## Some Really Cheap Ways of Measuring What Really Matters

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

## Some Really Cheap Ways of Measuring What Really Matters

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,<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup>

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 in-service 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 \_\_\_\_\_

## Some Really Cheap Ways of Measuring What Really Matters

### 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 I—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 "good" 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.<sup>4</sup> One type of misconduct, corruption—the abuse of police authority for gain—has been particularly problematic.<sup>5</sup> 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,<sup>6</sup> 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.<sup>7</sup>

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,<sup>8</sup> 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.<sup>9</sup> 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

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### 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

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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.<sup>1</sup>

### 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 literature<sup>2</sup> 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 unit of analysis will promote routine assessment of problem solving.

**Organizational climate.**<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup>

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?

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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
<b>Impacts</b>					
Crime	X <sup>a</sup>		X		
Fear of Crime			X		
Disorder		X	X		
<b>Process</b>					
Fairness			X	X	
Civility			X	X	
Equity	X <sup>b</sup>		X		
Use of Force	X <sup>c</sup>		X	X	
Corruption			X		
Lawlessness			X		
<b>Organizational Health</b>					
Business and Product	X <sup>d</sup>				
Organizational Climate	X <sup>e</sup>				X
Resources	X <sup>f</sup>				
<b>Context</b>					
Political Climate	X <sup>g</sup>		X		
Changing Demographics	X <sup>h</sup>		X		
Critical Events <sup>i</sup>					

<sup>a</sup> Uniform Crime Reports. National Incident-Based Reporting System, calls for service.

<sup>b</sup> Calls for service, dispatch, patrol deployment.

<sup>c</sup> Use-of-force reports.

<sup>d</sup> Calls for service, dispatch, disposition (e.g., arrest, problem solved).

<sup>e</sup> Personnel records.

<sup>f</sup> Budget records.

<sup>g</sup> Voting records.

<sup>h</sup> Census, city/county planning data.

<sup>i</sup> 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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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.

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