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# ON FURTHER DEVELOPING PROBLEM-ORIENTED POLICING: THE MOST CRITICAL NEED, THE MAJOR IMPEDIMENTS, AND A PROPOSAL

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by

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***Abstract:** Problem-oriented policing is now a common term among police. Under the umbrella of the term, many commendable projects have been carried out — especially by street-level officers. Continued support for the concept is most likely explained, in part, by the self-evident nature of the central premise: police practices in responding to common problems that arise in the community should be informed by the best knowledge that can be acquired about those problems and about the effectiveness of various strategies for dealing with them. But many projects under the problem-oriented policing label are superficial, and examples of full implementation of the concept, as originally conceived, are rare. This paper argues that if problem-oriented policing is to advance beyond its current state of development and reach its greater potential, a much larger investment must be made within police agencies in conducting more in-depth, rigorous studies of pieces of police business, in implementing the results of these studies, and in the evaluation of implementation efforts. The paper identifies five major impediments in reaching this goal. A specific proposal to overcome some of these impediments is offered. By concentrating commitment and resources, the proposal is designed to create the leadership, skills and momentum to produce, within policing, a critical mass of high-quality studies that would: (1) inject a body of new knowledge into the overall field of policing of immediate value in upgrading practice; (2) serve as exemplars of the greater need; and (3) hopefully also serve to begin to build an institutional capacity to continue the effort.*

## INTRODUCTION

Almost 25 years have passed since problem-oriented policing was first conceptualized (Goldstein, 1979). In that period of time, the term itself has become a part of the vocabulary of modern-day policing. But the term has been used to describe a wide variety of initiatives, many of which bear little relationship to the original concept.

The purpose of this paper is to join with others in exploring the future development of problem-oriented policing. But given the many meanings now attributed to the term, it is important, at the beginning of such an endeavor, to be clear on what it is that we are trying to expand and grow. I turn first, therefore, in this paper, to a brief restatement of the concept and some reflections on implementation efforts. I then suggest a focus for future development.

As originally conceived, problem-oriented policing is an approach to policing in which each discrete piece of police business that the public expects the police to handle (referred to as a "problem") is subject to careful, in-depth study in hopes that what is learned about each problem will lead to discovering a new and more effective strategy for dealing with it. The concept places a high value on developing, within that strategy, new responses that are preventive in nature, that are not dependent on the use of the criminal justice system, and that draw on the potential contributions of other public agencies, the community, and the private sector. The concept carries a commitment to implementing the new strategy, rigorously evaluating its effectiveness, and subsequently reporting the results in ways that will benefit other police agencies and that will contribute to building a body of knowledge that supports good practice and ultimately, thereby, will also contribute toward the further professionalization of the police.

Analysis, study and evaluation are at the core of problem-oriented policing, not simply because they provide the factual basis for whatever strategies are adopted, but because, carried out adequately, they provide the license for sharing the results with the policing field. In its fuller development, adoption of the concept would have many implications for a police agency, its leadership, and its personnel (Goldstein, 1990). As originally set out, problem-oriented policing was described as a new way of thinking about policing: it introduces a thought process that could become the centerpiece around which all elements of police operations are organized. Specifically, the concept offers an integrated, coherent scheme for the delivery of services; for the recruitment, training and reward of police personnel; and, most especially, for making more effective use of police officers directly involved in providing routine services. This fleshed-out vision of the

potential in problem-oriented policing remains strong, but it is not likely to be realized or, if tried, sustained without a strong commitment to analysis, study and evaluation. To the degree that police agencies have sought to implement changes that are at the periphery of problem-oriented policing without adopting its core, those efforts have often contributed to a diluted understanding of the original concept.

Fortunately, there is no need here to describe in detail the wide variety of adaptations and permutations that are now tied to the concept. Michael S. Scott, in an extraordinarily helpful and timely publication, has brought together a comprehensive description of developments under the problem-oriented policing umbrella (Scott, 2001). And he has performed the tedious job of sifting through them, separating the wheat from the chaff. Others have critiqued a more limited set of the initiatives with narrower objectives, but in equally helpful ways (Leigh et al., 1996, 1998; Clarke, 1998; and Read and Tilley, 2000). Each of these commentators concluded, as I have, that the vast percentage of the efforts to date, even when they contained some of the elements of the original concept, were nevertheless superficial. But each commentator acknowledged that substantial progress has been realized through these efforts, and, sharing in the sense that much more could be achieved, has suggested ways in which that potential might be more fully realized. With that potential as the focus of this paper, it is helpful to reflect anew, in a general way, on the efforts at implementation.

### **The Many Variations in Types of Problems, Analyses, and Evaluations: The Concept versus the Experience**

As problem-oriented policing was originally conceived, it was assumed that the primary responsibility for identifying problems, analyzing them, developing new responses and testing them would rest with the management of police agencies (Goldstein, 1979; Goldstein and Susmilch, 1981). In large agencies, it was assumed that management would look to their research and planning units, newly energized and staffed, to develop the capacity to conduct in-depth analyses and to carry out the bulk of the work. It was contemplated that the problems would be sizeable — a collection of many similar incidents — usually occurring throughout the jurisdiction served or within a reasonably defined area. Examples would be the problem of the drinking-driver, the robbery of convenience stores, or theft from retail establishments.

Commenting on this formulation, Albert J. Reiss (1982:139) made this observation:

Were police to shift their concerns to these kinds of problems, the role of research for the police could change dramatically. The police would be no longer consumers of research but producers of it, and research would not be done primarily by outsiders but as a management operation. Moreover, the research and development department of a police organization might become as critical to its future as research and development are to other modern industrial and government agencies.

Early on, some police administrators and researchers concluded that the process of inquiry leading to new approaches had application throughout a police agency — all the way down to the officer on the beat (e.g., Taft, 1986; Eck and Spelman, 1987a, 1987b). They concluded that an officer who was authorized and encouraged to identify problems, analyze them, and develop creative tailor-made responses that increased police effectiveness could contribute a great deal toward improving the quality of policing. The logic was the same; that proactively addressing problems and the factors contributing to them made more sense than repeatedly responding reactively to the incidents that were the most overt manifestations of those problems. Problems, in this context, were usually viewed as persistently troubling situations — a collection of incidents involving the same behavior, locations, or individuals — loosely described, for example, as involving a specific apartment house, a specific playground, a specific group of disorderly children, or a specific drug dealer.

In this shift from addressing problems at the management level to addressing them at beat level, the quality of analysis and evaluation was destined to be much less exacting than originally contemplated. Officers have varying levels of skill in identifying and analyzing problems, and little relevant experience or training. The time and resources of officers are limited. Rigorous analysis is difficult, often impossible and, under many circumstances, not even appropriate.<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, the movement to encourage and empower officers to address problems they encountered, albeit in a somewhat looser fashion, had many attractions for the policing field. It promised greater effectiveness and a higher level of community satisfaction. It made better use of the time of police officers. It tapped their increasing levels of education and their latent talents, insights and commitment. It provided them with greater satisfaction in their work.<sup>2</sup>

The addressing of problems by officers working the streets gained so much momentum and, in relation to other reforms in policing, produced such positive results, that it was embraced by those who had advocated the original concept as an integral part of problem-oriented policing. The logic was simple and pragmatic. Given the enormous difficulty that was foreseen in gaining support for the more

rigorous study of larger problems at higher levels in the police organization, initiatives that so closely paralleled the same thought process and that were so enthusiastically accepted should, it was argued, be endorsed. They were seen as an embryonic form of the more ambitious original concept. Weaknesses were understandable, it was argued, and should be tolerated. Appropriately nurtured, subsequent efforts, it was hoped, would be more refined and, through a "bottom-up" process, might ultimately lead to more exacting inquiries at the top of an agency. Additionally, the involvement of many police officers in addressing problems was seen as a potentially effective vehicle for changing the way in which an entire agency thought about its responsibilities and responded to them.

As a consequence, many of the efforts to support problem-oriented policing took the form of teaching problem solving to officers working the streets; to trying to instill support for problem-oriented policing into an entire police agency. The SARA model, so well known that it is often viewed as synonymous with problem-oriented policing, was itself designed, in part, to communicate the thought process to all ranks of police personnel. Scott summarizes the results of these efforts (Scott, 2001). He identifies some agencies that, over a period of time, largely as the result of a chief executive or a key staff person who "championed" the concept, made substantial progress in incorporating the concept into their way of regularly doing business. Among the agencies that distinguished themselves in this manner were those serving the cities of San Diego, Reno, Sacramento and Santa Ana in the United States; Edmonton in Canada; and Merseyside, Lancashire, Leicestershire and Thames Valley in the United Kingdom.

Over time, the volume of activity by rank-and-file officers in addressing problems has greatly overshadowed those relatively rare efforts on the part of management to address larger and more pervasive problems through in-depth studies. Indeed, in the eyes of many police practitioners, problem-oriented policing is beat-level "problem solving."

The best case studies that have emerged from the work of police officers are quite impressive, especially when related to other reforms and developments in policing (see Sampson and Scott, 2000). They take creative approaches to old problems, using non-traditional strategies, and go on, within the limitations of the officers involved, to demonstrate what they were able to achieve. The cases clearly confirm that there is indeed an enormous reservoir of talent, resourcefulness and commitment in street-level officers that has not been tapped. The best among these case studies have been appropriately

recognized through a system of awards and, more recently, publication (U.S. National Institute of Justice, 2000, 2001a, 2001b).

And yet, measured against the need, the value of even these nationally recognized efforts is relatively modest. As noted in an earlier context, the best among them usually have major weaknesses — especially in the quality of analysis and in the evaluation of new strategies put in place. They are often the products of an intense effort by one or more especially motivated officers in an agency in which their work is an exception, in which other problems are not similarly addressed, and in which there is little involvement of top management. And both the projects and the work of the involved officers are often not sustained, with the result that the credibility of the case studies as exemplars is gradually eroded (Rojek, 2001).

As for the anticipated "bottom-up" benefits, there is little evidence that they are being realized. Without outside help, projects initiated by officers have not stimulated similar inquiries with regard to broader problems at higher levels in their respective agencies. With but a few exceptions, they do not seem to have propagated a substantial increase in the number of projects undertaken within an agency. Nor is there a discernible pattern in which projects, over time, have led to case studies with a higher quality of analysis or evaluation. Spectacular as the results of some officer-led projects have been, it is unrealistic to expect that these efforts alone carry sufficient force to meet the larger need.

The reasons for the limited growth of officers' efforts in addressing problems are rather apparent. Chiefs leave office. Agencies undergo changes in their orientation. Key people are promoted or reassigned. Individual officers are reassigned, or acquire less supportive supervisors, or are reigned-in or discouraged by other changes in their working environment. To my knowledge, there is no way in which to acquire an accurate measure of the volume and quality of current efforts. But based on a variety of informal measures, it is my impression that officer involvement in addressing problems in any depth has reached a plateau and may, in fact, be receding.

It does not follow from these observations that efforts to develop support among officers and throughout police agencies for problem-oriented policing should be abandoned. To the contrary, these efforts should be encouraged for all of the reasons cited earlier. The work of beat officers will continue to constitute an important part of the overall movement to implement problem-oriented policing. What these observations do say is that we cannot depend so heavily on those efforts to produce the benefits held out for in the original concept.

To energize and hasten the development of problem-oriented policing, the greatest current need, in my opinion, is to invest heavily in

building a capacity into local policing to analyze discrete pieces of police business in depth and to carefully evaluate the effectiveness of alternative strategies for responding to them. Such an investment should continue to draw on the knowledge and experience of all police employees, but it will depend heavily, for its success, on the full engagement of the chief executive and management. And it will require, in one form or another, the acquisition of research skills that are not currently available within police agencies. The immediate goal should be to produce a good number of high-quality studies that constitute solid building blocks in expanding the body of knowledge relevant to the problems police must handle. With this objective in mind, the measure of success should be the quantity and quality of case studies completed, their dissemination, and their use, rather than indicators of the degree to which any one agency has institutionalized the processes associated with problem-oriented policing.

It is difficult to argue for such a bold investment in the absence of a greater number of cases drawn from the experience of recent years that (adequately studied, fully implemented and carefully evaluated) clearly demonstrate their value. The exhortation must continue to rest on the original arguments offered in support of problem-oriented policing. But as highlighted in the following section, those arguments, I believe, remain strong.

## **THE JUSTIFICATION FOR CONTINUING THE EFFORT**

### *The Fundamental Underlying Premise: The Need To Build a Body of Knowledge in Support of Good Practice*

The fundamental premise underlying the concept of problem-oriented policing is that police practices, in responding to common problems that arise in the community, should be informed by the best knowledge that can be acquired about the nature of those problems and about the effectiveness of various strategies for dealing with them.

This bare-bones premise — that operations should be informed by knowledge — is so elementary and so self-evident, that one feels apologetic in drawing attention to it. It is not an especially controversial proposition. It is certainly not radical. And it is not novel. Indeed, it is precisely for these reasons that problem-oriented policing strikes many people as just plain common sense. That is why, when newly explained to those in other endeavors (such as the business world) or to members of the community, the reaction is often one of disbelief:

"You mean to tell me that the police have not been doing that for all of these years?"

And yet, the premise has gained little acceptance in policing. Apart from what is reflected in the case studies in problem-oriented policing and the substantial rhetoric associated with the concept, there is no discernible, sustained and consistent effort *within* policing to make the basic premise that "knowledge informs practice" a routine part of professional policing. Considerable progress has been made in recent decades to upgrade policing through the recruitment of college-educated officers. Much progress has been made in modernizing police forces. But there remains a strong strain of anti-intellectual feelings in policing — a bias of sorts — that shuns connections with knowledge-building efforts and the use of that knowledge which has already been acquired. The police establishment, as a whole, has done little, especially when related to the need, to embody the notion that it should invest in developing a body of knowledge that can be used to drive the decisions police make in using their limited resources and authority.<sup>3</sup>

Veteran police will likely respond to this characterization defensively, and claim that it is an overstatement and too broad an indictment of their field. They will contend that they do indeed conduct studies; that they make extensive use of data, intelligence, and research in support of their daily operations. That is true.

Police do, for example, use a large body of forensic knowledge to assist them in the investigation of crime and in scientifically establishing the identification and culpability of offenders. They value the collection of facts in their reactive work in solving crimes. They gather intelligence in attempting to deal proactively with such problems as organized crime and, now, terrorism. In the management of their agencies, police use data to plan the use of their limited resources. In crime analysis, they use data to identify and apprehend offenders and to analyze patterns of crime — including the use of geographic information systems (GIS). And most recently, in meetings making intensive use of computer statistics (Compstat programs), they are increasingly using internally developed data to strategize field operations and to hold their officers to a higher level of accountability.

Important as all of these efforts are to make use of forensic knowledge, information, intelligence and internally produced data, they do not involve using the kind of knowledge contemplated in problem-oriented policing. Taken together, the results of these efforts do not constitute a body of knowledge about the problems police are routinely expected to handle and about the effectiveness of various strategies for dealing with them. Police, for example, daily handle



large volumes of cases involving concerns about noise, vehicle theft, and assaults in bars. But they make little use of in-depth knowledge about the nature of these specific behaviors and the effectiveness of methods for either preventing or responding to them. If police are asked to explain their practices for dealing with most such substantive problems, they will rarely articulate a uniform, coherent agency-wide strategy. And even if it appears that there is a consensus on a response, it is rare that the agreed-upon strategy would have been validated by in-depth study.

The norm, with regard to most problems handled by the police, is that their response is generic. It takes the form of patrolling, investigating, arresting, and prosecuting, without detailed regard to the specific nature of the problem they are seeking to impact and without benefit of rigorously derived knowledge about the effectiveness of what they do. And when confronted by a crisis, the response is too often, on examination, largely cosmetic, designed as a show of force that has the effect of temporarily reducing the most overt manifestations of a problem and, thereby, temporarily relieving public pressures to do something about it.

There are some recent and important exceptions to this overall pattern. Police can appropriately cite the relatively new forms of response to sexual assaults, domestic violence, child abuse, and those experiencing some form of mental illness. It is hard to separate how much of the initiative for newly addressing these problems originated with the police and how much with researchers. The work on domestic violence, much of it carried out by Lawrence Sherman and colleagues, is most extensive and most closely parallels the kind of endeavor contemplated in problem-oriented policing (Sherman, 1998). Some of the underlying research relating to the four problems commendably engaged police personnel, but, for the most part, the bulk of the research was conducted outside police agencies. A blend of social and political movements that sought to redefine public attitudes toward these problems stimulated much of the research and pressured the police into making use of it.

More recent is the recent case study on gun violence among youth by the Boston Police Department and researchers at Harvard's Kennedy School. This study was initiated as a problem-oriented policing project and stands as one of the best examples of not only how such a project can inform police practice, but also how police and researchers can enter into a productive relationship (Kennedy, 1997; Braga et al., 2001).

Another major exception is all of the work done on domestic abuse, burglary and car crime — primarily in the United Kingdom — in which the focus has been on repeat victimization. In a relatively

short period of time, a good number of experiments have been conducted and evaluated. Based on that work, the analysis of repeat victimization has emerged as an essential, powerful analytical tool in studying the police response to any problem, and in formulating new, more effective responses (Pease, 1998). Especially noteworthy is the effort that has been made to translate the research for use by police personnel (Bridgeman and Hobbs, 1997). Most significant, perhaps, is that the strength of the recommendations growing out of these studies has resulted in their adoption being made a formal measure of police performance in all of the U.K.

When an exhaustive literature search is made, one finds an impressive list of problem-focused studies that clearly constitutes a body of knowledge regarding problems commonly handled by the police. A large number of these are studies in situational crime prevention, the field of criminology that is most relevant to problem-oriented policing (Clarke, 1997). Many of these case studies are conveniently collected in the series of volumes, now numbering 14, published as *Crime Prevention Studies*. The crime prevention and research staff of the Home Office in the United Kingdom has, over the past several decades, produced an extraordinarily rich accumulation of studies on specific pieces of police business. Scott, in his recent monograph, has included many of these studies and others in an effort to begin to catalogue relevant work on specific problems (Scott, 2001:Appendix B).

It is regrettable that, at least in the United States, this literature is rarely used by the police.<sup>4</sup> Access by practitioners is admittedly often difficult. One gets the impression that the police, if they do have access to the studies, feel that they are of limited value to them; that the studies do not connect with their perspectives, interests, language, and practical needs. That felt disconnection stems, in part, from the fact that a good number of the studies were conducted from outside police agencies, without making full use of police data and insights, and without engaging police personnel. We have learned that studies conducted within police agencies not only benefit from the rich sources of available data and the insights of operating personnel; they better connect with the interests and perspectives of police personnel (e.g., Goldstein and Susmilch, 1982; Clarke and Goldstein, 2002, 2003). But, in the end, the strongest explanation for the limited familiarity of the police with these studies is most likely that there has been no tradition within policing to seek out such knowledge and to make use of it.

The current lack of a connection between available research and the police use of that research in the U.S. highlights the importance of the recent project to produce 19 guides for the police, each of

which addresses a common problem.<sup>5</sup> By sorting through all of the research relevant to each problem, synthesizing the most significant points, and reporting those findings in a context and in terms relevant to the police, the authors have made the needed connection. They bridge the present gap by making the existing literature relevant and accessible to the police. The guides persuasively demonstrate the value in drawing on already existing knowledge. They invite both police and researchers to emulate the effort relative to other problems. And, through the questions that are posed and the pattern by which problems are analyzed, the guides will hopefully stimulate the development of new knowledge as well. If this works, the guides will have served as the vehicle for making a significant start on building a body of knowledge that, while previously available in somewhat scattered form, can more clearly be identified as connected to the police — as informing police decision making. Simultaneously, of course, the guides will provide a big boost to the continuing efforts of police officers up through the ranks of management to examine the problems addressed by the guides as they arise in their respective communities. Much of the work, in reviewing existing literature and in framing their local analysis, will have been done for them.

*The Need for a New Framework for Remediating the Infirmities in the Current-Day Arrangements for Policing and in the Police Institution*

A second important reason that problem-oriented policing warrants development is its potential for providing a coherent framework for achieving true reform in policing. Going beyond the building of a body of knowledge, the various elements that together constitute the fuller concept of problem-oriented policing are interwoven with the complex dynamics of policing and the intricacies of the police institution — complexities that are not generally recognized nor widely understood.

To the average citizen, the police function seems straightforward and, except for the intrigue associated with some detective work, rather mundane. But a foray into the dynamics of policing — especially in large, congested and diverse urban areas — rapidly reveals that policing is an incredibly complex business. The police function is ill defined. Demands on the police are often in conflict. The police are commonly thought to be omnipotent, but are in fact extremely limited. Public expectations exceed both available resources and authority. As a result, police are frequently pressured into stretching their authority in order to get things done, thereby increasing the potential for abuse. Police are assumed to operate based on highly

specific laws and guidelines, but in fact exercise enormous discretion. They must take risks all of the time, but no allowance is made for error. Police are thought to be in control of their workload, but it is the citizenry, through their use of 911, that has the strongest influence on the use of police resources.

These conflicts bedevil policing as an institution. They account for the fact that the police often feel overextended. They eat away at the integrity of police operations. Stripped of the mythology and pumped-up popular image of the police, one could persuasively argue that the police job, as formally defined, is impossible of achievement.<sup>6</sup>

Police succeed as well as they do because they have, over the years, made an endless number of accommodations. They improvise. They take many shortcuts. And they often resort to "bluff," hoping that their authority is not challenged and their true capacity is not revealed. The police should not be forced to be devious, disingenuous, or circuitous in carrying out that which is formally required of them. They ought not to have to operate *sub rosa*. The fact that they must do so, sometimes euphemistically referred to as "the art of policing," is acknowledged by most practicing, reflective police in moments of candor.

With such imperfect working conditions, it should not come as a surprise that, with monotonous regularity, shortcomings in policing surface: allegations of inefficiency, abuse of authority, corruption, negligence or incompetence. And with equally monotonous regularity, shotgun remedies are proposed from a standard litany of so-called reforms: more personnel, more training, improved equipment and technology, new leadership, or more civilian oversight. But few of these reforms reach and affect the underlying infirmities. They do not get at the fact that something is inherently wrong and often lacking in the arrangements by which we expect the police to operate.

Remedying some of these infirmities was as much a goal in formulating problem-oriented policing as meeting the basic need to inform police operations. The two needs are inextricably interrelated. The absence of a strong body of knowledge supporting policing contributes to many of the cited conflicts; and, in reverse, the pressure to live with these conflicts contributes to blinding the police to the importance of developing that body of knowledge.

The gradual acquisition of knowledge to inform police operations would contribute to honing the arrangements currently in place that shape modern day policing. Here are a few examples of the potential:

- Insight into a specific problem makes it possible to more clearly define the police role vis-à-vis that problem, thereby reducing unrealistic public expectations and increasing the likelihood that the police can meet agreed upon goals.

- Knowledge about a problem leads to identifying new strategies for dealing with the problem that could prevent it in the first instance, thereby reducing police workload and increasing effectiveness and citizen satisfaction.
- A wide range of new strategies for dealing with problems reduces the over-dependence currently placed on the criminal justice system, thereby reducing the potential for abuse of police authority, increasing police effectiveness, and providing greater satisfaction to both the police and those served.
- The compilation of hard data about a problem often leads to identifying others in the public and private sector who may be in a better position to prevent or deal with the problem, and is useful in persuading such parties to assume a greater role, thereby reducing the burden on the police while increasing effectiveness in dealing with the problem.
- The design of specific strategies for dealing with specific problems, including the identification of those in the best position to implement those strategies, provides specific guidance for building partnerships, thereby reducing the ambiguities now commonly associated with the concept of community policing.

These potential benefits are but illustrative of the inter-relationship of these two needs — how study of specific pieces of police business can contribute to remedying some of the systemic infirmities in policing, and vice versa. The full range of possible benefits is described elsewhere (Goldstein, 1990, 1993; Scott, 2001). If police can succeed in refining their operations relative to a highly specific problem and, in the course of doing that

- define expectations more realistically;
- make better use of their resources;
- develop new strategies that are more effective;
- give a higher priority to prevention;
- depend less on the criminal law; and
- engage others;

they can — over time — reshape their overall function in ways that will eliminate many of the current conflicts inherent in their operations. They can make their organizations more internally coherent. And they can thereby increase the likelihood that they can carry out their function in a straightforward, forthright and, most importantly, effective manner. It should be possible for the police — in all aspects

of their work — to act legally, honestly and openly. It is this potential, so important to the quality of policing in a democracy, that fuels the desire for further progress.

## **THE FIVE MAJOR IMPEDIMENTS AND SOME THOUGHTS ON PENETRATING THEM**

Those who have worked on any aspect of the development of problem-oriented policing can contribute a long list of difficulties that they encountered, both in tackling a specific problem and, more broadly, in trying to develop a commitment to the concept within a police agency. Because the list is so long, there is need to sort through the most common complaints, separating substantial difficulties from the petty; the bigger barriers from those that are only manifestations of those barriers; and universal impediments from those that are specific to a given agency or locale. After much squeezing and culling, I have identified five major concerns. But even these are interconnected. Developing a way in which to address, at least partially, one or two of them will not be enough. Progress requires some movement in addressing all of them.

### *(1) The Absence of a Long-Term Commitment on the Part of Police Leaders To Strengthening Policing and the Police as an Institution*

Problem-oriented policing has always contemplated building, within police agencies, an *internal capacity* to examine specific types of crime and disorder. The assumption is that the police themselves — along with community members — are in the best position, in the first instance, to identify problems warranting study. They have extraordinary insights into problems that often go untapped by outside researchers. Commenting on the potential value in policing of applied research conducted by practitioners, Bittner (1990:378) drew on the experiences in other fields in observing:

The discoveries that led to the conquest of the so-called infectious diseases were not made by the faculties of the schools of medicine at university centers, but rather in the laboratories of public health physicians who had the noble, but quite practical, task of keeping people from getting sick and making them well when they did get sick.

The police have easier and direct access to relevant data. Their involvement can greatly expedite an inquiry if, as is contemplated, they develop a sense of ownership of both the problem and a potentially

more effective response. And while studies conducted outside policing, perhaps even with police cooperation, are of great value in support of such efforts, such studies will simply sit on library shelves unless police make use of them. Implementation of the results of a study, in particular, requires the full engagement of the police. The likelihood of meeting that need is greatly enhanced if the police are involved from the outset.

Developing this capacity within policing places heavy demands on police leadership. It requires, initially, that the chief executive of an agency fully understands the rationale behind problem-oriented policing and be committed to it. As Scott has pointed out, the police agencies that have made the greatest progress in experimenting with problem-oriented policing had top executives who championed the concept (Scott, 2001).

Such dedication requires a strong commitment up front to the importance of carefully analyzing problems. It requires an appropriate allocation of resources. It requires protecting those personnel engaged in detailed analysis from the demands of daily operations. It requires patience, because each in-depth study may take a substantial amount of time. It requires that those conducting a study and implementing its results have easy access to top executives for reviewing their recommendations. And, if approved, it requires that these staff members have their backing in gaining both internal and external support for implementation. Moreover, there is an altruistic element involved. The investment of one agency in the study of a problem should be seen as having the potential for contributing to a body of knowledge that will benefit other police agencies as well. That benefit may require defending an investment of resources beyond what the agency can justify for its own needs.

These requirements of police leadership are in sharp conflict with the culture of police agencies and, specifically, with the demands being made on police executives today. Even the most outstanding current police executives would have trouble meeting them. Police and, it follows, their leaders, are under extraordinary pressure in these times to respond most directly to the urgent concerns of the moment — be it a serious crime that awaits clearance, a crime wave that is generating widespread fears, or a much larger and amorphous threat such as, most recently, terrorism. This is certainly not a new phenomenon. It is inherent in the emergency nature of police service. Police are committed to focusing on the here and now — maintaining a readiness to respond quickly to the next unpredictable crisis. That gets highest priority. And that mindset affects the entire institution, including the chief executive whose support for any long-term planning — for the agency and for the policing field — is most crucial.

Beyond this common characteristic of police institutions, police executives, more recently, seem to be increasingly engaged in handling administrative problems that rise to the level of a crisis for their agency and that require fixing: e.g., allegations of abuse or corruption; questionable use of deadly force; allegations of racial profiling; complaints of unanswered calls or slow responses. The majority of a police administrator's time is consumed in matters relating to the management of his or her personnel. One indication of the increased pressures on police administrators in recent years is evidenced in the sharp reduction in their tenure. It was reported in 1998 that, based on a survey of chiefs in cities and counties with a population over 50,000, the average tenure of the survey respondents' predecessors was 4.93 years.<sup>7</sup> That is a very short time in which to establish oneself in office, take on the most pressing crises, and also commit to bringing about constructive change, let alone make long-term investments in study and research that *may* produce demonstrable results some time down the line. Moreover, the citizenry and both elective and appointed officials to whom police chiefs are accountable have little awareness of the need for long-term thinking in policing. They tend to give greater support to the chief who is likely to endorse familiar and immediate responses to problems, even though the responses may be of questionable value.

In this highly pressured environment, it is no wonder that a plea for more intensive study of common problems is resisted or, at best, gets low priority. Appeals for building in a capacity for internal research are seen as having an "ivory tower" quality to them — as somewhat amorphous, uncertain in their value, and consuming of both time and resources. Given this atmosphere, it is understandable why there has been so much more support for street-level "problem solving" by beat officers. It is an exercise that tends to be discrete, limited in its implications, and requiring much less in the way of time and resources, and much less personal attention by police managers. Many are content to provide some general agency-wide encouragement for beat-level problem solving without making any adjustment in their own routines.

Given the formidable, perplexing nature of this situation, it is unlikely that appeals alone will produce much progress. And yet there are a good number of chief executives in policing who see the value in deeply probing specific problems and who would become engaged if they were provided with sufficient funds to hire staff with the technical skills required to help conduct the needed studies. The likelihood of their doing so would be further increased if involvement was not conditioned, from the outset, on their taking on the much more ambitious, albeit desirable, effort to change the nature of their entire



organization; if the more modest, immediate goal — in order to get going — was limited to addressing only one, two or three, at most, substantial problems in a restricted period of time. The design of such a program would obviously need to be integrated with measures to meet other current impediments to which I now turn.

*(2) The Lack of Skills Within a Police Agency That Are Required To Analyze Problems and To Evaluate Strategies for Dealing with Those Problems*

In popular accounts of policing, the police are commonly portrayed as highly analytical. Successful detectives — in novels, in the movies, in TV serials, and, indeed, in real life — engage in sound reasoning, are resourceful, exploit all possible sources of information, ask all of the right questions, and are precise and rigorous in putting a case together. Striking as these well-honed analytical skills are in the context of solving crimes and apprehending offenders, there is little transfer of them to the management of police agencies — to the analysis of the behavioral problems that constitute police business and to the evaluation of strategies for dealing with them.

Many police agencies of sufficient size have, over the past half-century, established units or designated individuals to engage in research, planning, and crime analysis. The scope and quality of the work of these units is quite uneven. Some are unfortunately relegated to performing rather mundane administrative and clerical tasks in support of an agency's operations. Most analyze crime patterns and seek to identify the offenders responsible for them. The best among them, buoyed by advances in the use of computerized data and in crime mapping, are now quite sophisticated in their operations. They go well beyond helping operating officers in identifying offenders. They study crime patterns as a basis for allocating personnel, for selecting strategies for dealing with these patterns, and for achieving greater accountability in the organization. But even the most advanced of the crime analysis efforts have not extended their work to analyzing in depth (as contemplated in the context of problem-oriented policing) the common problems that the police are required to handle. Nor have their efforts extended to evaluating police strategies in responding to these problems.

To study management-level problems in depth, police agencies must have one or more individuals on their staff, depending on their size, who have the needed advanced research skills.<sup>8</sup> Such staff must be trained in research methodology; be comfortable collecting and analyzing data from various sources; be familiar with criminological theories; be understanding of the complexities and dynamics of po-

lice operations; and have familiarity with — or have easy access to — the literature accumulated to date on problems handled by the police. They must also have some strong personality traits. Contrary to a widespread image, digging into a specific problem in depth can be very hard work. It requires patience, tenacity, and a sharp mind. Organizationally, it is important that such staff be insulated from the very intense pressures, within a police agency, to get involved in meeting daily operational needs.

Two quite different views exist on how best to build this capacity. One argues for augmenting the skills of the best of the existing cadre of crime analysts. The other, against the background of the strongly ingrained, more limited focus of crime analysis, argues for making a clean break from that job classification — for creating a newly defined position of problem analyst. This, it is contended, would stress the novelty of the position and the very distinct new contribution that such a staff person would be expected to make to the capacity of a police agency to examine and evaluate its response to those matters the public expects it to handle.

However the need is met, given the past history and unique culture of police agencies, it is important that those selected to meet this newly defined function have the personal skills that enable them to build a constructive relationship with police officers. Such a person must respect the contribution police can make to a critical analysis of pieces of police business while, at the same time, be capable of working diplomatically to introduce police to the methodology involved in conducting such an analysis. And wherever the job is placed in the organization, it is important that the person filling the newly defined role has easy access to the chief executive of the agency and be fully informed regarding the management of the agency. Maintaining that access and introducing new skills into police management while relating to all ranks of officers and their pragmatic concerns requires a high degree of humility and tact.

Ultimately, in the development of this capacity, an agency would require a staff that, in its size, would be proportional to the size of the agency and the jurisdiction it serves. And even a single problem analyst would require clerical support lest the analyst get bogged down in routine, mundane tasks. Looking to the future, as distinct from the most immediate needs in getting going, it is not unreasonable to argue that a police agency should have no less than one program analyst and appropriate support for every 500 employees; that the return on the investment in those 500 employees would be heavily dependent on the contribution that the analyst makes to assuring that they achieve the greatest effectiveness in dealing with the problems they are called on to handle.

### *(3) The Lack of A Clear Academic Connection*

A natural inclination, when one identifies the need for specially trained problem analysts, is to look to the universities and colleges to produce them. Likewise, when one decries the absence of a sufficiently strong body of knowledge to support policing, one tends to turn to academia for help in producing it.

Given the volume and variety of work that has been done by academics and other researchers on crime and on the police, it would be foolhardy, within the limits of this paper, to assess the relevance of that work to the needs that have been identified here. For purposes of this paper, it will suffice to make two broad observations: (1) From among the universe of studies, only a small percentage have focused specifically on researching problems that the police routinely handle and on the way in which those problems present themselves to the police. Among these studies, even fewer focus on strategies for responding to those problems and, particularly, on the relative effectiveness of those strategies. (2) An array of complex issues in the relationships between practitioners and academics and other researchers impede initiating more such studies. These same issues greatly limit the use of that knowledge which has already been acquired.

The most relevant work has been produced by a small number of researchers (located not just in universities, but in government research units as well), many of whom now identify themselves as environmental criminologists. The relevance of their work to the needs identified in this paper stems from their focus on controlling crime rather than on just dealing with the criminal; from their emphasis on prevention rather than just apprehension; and from their efforts to understand the circumstances that give rise to specific crimes and how those circumstances might be changed so as to reduce the opportunity to commit them (Clarke, 1997).

While the volume of scholarship relevant to the needs identified in this paper is comparatively small, it is clear that the volume nevertheless already exceeds the capacity and willingness of practitioners and policy makers to make use of it. Happily, environmental criminologists are increasingly struggling with the difficulty of transferring already available knowledge to practitioners and policy makers (Tilley and Laycock, 2000; Laycock, 2002; Ekblom, 2002).

The most critical needs, up front, are: (1) to increase the number of academics willing to study the problems of concern to the police and willing to work on the development of the methodologies for doing so; (2) to increase the number of practitioners who are willing to engage with academics involved in this work and to open their agencies to research; and (3) to develop university-level training for stu-

dents interested in a career working within the police field in the newly defined position of problem analyst.<sup>9</sup>

Thoughts about filling these needs bring to the surface the sensitivities that have long strained the relationship between police practitioners and academics or researchers based outside universities. Many of these tensions stem from factors inherent in their respective working environments. Academics and other researchers, by the very nature of their job, are accustomed to conducting unrestricted explorations, to experimentation, and to producing negative as well as positive results. Police work in an environment that is highly controlled (by law and by the citizenry), that involves the use of government authority, and that allows for very little risk taking. In many ways, these characteristics place the two occupations at opposite ends of a scale. It is no wonder that the personalities of those drawn to the two occupations often get in the way of a productive relationship. Many academics are arrogant in their relationships with the police. They are disdainful or least condescending. And many police view academics with equal scorn — as "egg-heads" — overly theoretical and disconnected from the real world in which the police work.

Establishing new and more productive relationships will require greater flexibility and openness on the part of both parties. The police must recognize that quality research takes time and patience. It requires challenging established practices and strongly held views. It must be objective, requiring facts to support conclusions. It may take researchers down paths that turn out to be dead ends. It may produce results that could be interpreted as critical of past and current operations. It may experiment with new strategies that fail. That is the very nature of research.

Researchers, on the other hand, cannot be condescending in their relationships with the police. They must demonstrate a healthy respect for the expertise and knowledge which the police possess, but which they tend not, on their own, to express. They must demonstrate that they have a genuine interest in helping the police to be more effective, acknowledging that while publication is an essential element for both researchers and the police in the building of knowledge, it is not the end-all that it is often made out to be. They must use good judgment in the selection of research methodologies and in standards of proof, adequate to produce credible results but not disproportionately demanding, given the limits on the data that can be acquired and the sometimes rough nature of the problem being studied or the strategy being evaluated. And researchers must be sensitive to their own limitations — aware that, while their work is exacting and must meet agreed-upon standards, it is not usually as

scientific as some would claim. They ought not to oversell their product.<sup>10</sup>

A good number of academics and researchers have, over the years, worked closely and productively in partnerships with the police in examining specific problems. By way of illustration, one can cite the work of: Morton Bard in New York City; Hans Toch and Douglas Grant in Oakland; John Eck and William Spelman in Newport News and Eck in numerous other cities thereafter; Lawrence Sherman in Minneapolis, Milwaukee and Indianapolis; David Kennedy and Anthony Braga in Boston; Ken Pease and Sylvia Chenery in Huddersfield; Malcolm Sparrow in several federal agencies in the U.S. and Ronald Clarke and Goldstein in Charlotte (Bard, 1970; Toch and Grant, 1991; Eck and Spelman, 1987b; Sherman et al., 1984, 1991; Kennedy, 1999; Braga et al., 2001; Chenery et al., 1997; Sparrow, 1994; Clarke and Goldstein, 2002, and this volume). Many of the projects that examined specific problems by the Police Research Group in the Home Office, and its successor, the Policing and Reducing Crime Unit, were undertaken as collaborations between researchers and police. Some of these partnerships resulted in the publication of a joint paper, acknowledging the degree of police involvement. Given the value derived from these partnerships, it would be useful to subject them to careful examination so that future collaborations between police practitioners and researchers based outside police agencies — committed to studying pieces of police business — might benefit.<sup>11</sup>

#### *(4) The Absence of Informed Outside Pressures*

Given the absence of a stronger initiative from within police agencies to make greater use of new knowledge to inform police practice, it has been observed that it will take pressure from outside police agencies to get them to do so. But there is little reason to believe that the public is sufficiently informed about policing to bring such pressures to bear — to know what they should be pressuring for or even what questions they should be asking.

The public as a whole is woefully ignorant about the nature of the police function and the capacity of the police. It has little knowledge of the legal limits under which the police operate — limits to which we assign a high value in a democracy. A prevalent perception in American society is that policing is very simple and straightforward — that, more than any other quality, it calls for determination and courage in moving aggressively against those who misbehave. So when an especially vicious crime is committed or when crime seems to have gotten out of control in a given area, the pressure to "do

something" usually translates into support for simplistic measures that are often highly visible and somewhat dramatic. While some even call them cosmetic, they may in fact have an immediate reassuring effect. But they rarely have a lasting impact on the problem and inevitably consume substantial resources. Among the most common measures is simply the assignment of more police officers to a given area. Another is the more aggressive practice of conducting "sweeps" — making a strong police presence felt by challenging those in a given area and making large numbers of arrests. There may be some aspects to these operations that are dysfunctional. Sweeps, for example, by virtue of their less discriminate nature, often create a fertile ground for police to exceed their authority. They are among the most common sources of increased hostility toward the police, especially when used in minority communities. And yet, these responses are adopted despite their high monetary costs, the diversion of personnel from other programs, and their potentially negative side effects.

Much of the support for traditional responses stems simply from the fact that no one in the police agency or the community has analyzed the problem in depth and offered a better alternative for dealing with it. The remedy for the poorly informed pressures brought to bear on the police is for the police to offer carefully crafted responses that are potentially more effective and that cause no collateral damage. If the police do not undertake this task, it is hard to imagine who will do the job. And in the absence of getting that job done, the police will continue to be relegated to an awkward cycle in which uninformed pressures pervert the police as an institution.

Experience to date in problem-oriented policing offers many examples of situations in which a community that is presented with the results of careful study and hard facts in support of a proposed solution will join in support of that solution. Good, rigorously developed data, carefully presented, can be very powerful in altering public attitudes and pressures. Affected citizens can become an important force in support of good practice. To get to that point, however, one needs a blend of factors: police leadership that will support careful study; staff members capable of conducting such a study and producing clear and persuasive results; and, of course, a citizenry and their elected representatives and leaders who are open to new and creative ways in which to respond to their needs.

### *(5) The Lack of Financial Support*

For a police agency to hire one or more problem analysts will require funds. And to free police officers from other duties so that they

can join in working on specific problems will also involve some costs. In the current milieu, most police executives would resist these new costs. In the intense competition for police resources, a police chief is hard pressed to create any positions that take funds, officers or other existing staff away from the established programs aimed at providing basic services in the field. Given the nature of public demands on the police, a police executive can more easily be persuaded to assign officers to an admittedly mindless and unproductive assignment than to set aside less costly resources to support rigorous inquiry into the agency's effectiveness. Admittedly, a proposal for such a novel set-aside does suffer — in this period in the development of problem-oriented policing — from an insufficient number of cases that clearly demonstrate, in concrete terms, its potential value.

Making the case to use scarce funds to develop an internal research capacity is made even more difficult because, in smaller agencies, the size of the commitment might appear to be out of proportion to what the agency itself might gain from such an exploration. A police agency of several hundred officers, for example, might see the value in better understanding the problem of theft from storage warehouses, but might conclude that the investment required for such a study would be out of proportion to the gains likely to be realized for that particular agency and jurisdiction. That conclusion, however, ignores how a study of one problem, undertaken by one agency, might then benefit numerous other agencies. Such sharing and building of knowledge is a key element in problem-oriented policing.

The strength of the argument for needed funding flows largely from the difficulty in defending the current situation. Policing is one of the largest and most important functions of government. In the United States alone, it is reported that state and local police agencies have over 800,000 employees (U.S. Bureau of Criminal Justice Statistics, 2000). If there currently are, among these thousands, employees who, with appropriate training, are assigned full-time to the specific job of studying the problems the police are routinely called on to handle and to evaluating their effectiveness, that number is minuscule. This means that large police agencies, with thousands of employees, do not routinely have individuals on their respective staffs, insulated from the pressures of day-to-day operations, whose full-time job it is, through study and evaluation of their routine business, to provide guidance to management on the most effective means by which those agencies can respond to pieces of their business.<sup>12</sup>

When all else fails in looking for financial backing to fill critical needs in government, it has become common, at least in the U.S., to

seek federal support. But there are several factors that make a special case for such support in meeting the specific needs outlined here.

In the federal system in the U.S., there has long been a strong belief that policing should be a function of local government. Federal involvement and control has been resisted. The role of federal and state agencies has, nevertheless, increased rapidly in the past half century, largely in response to perceived needs relating to drugs. At the same time, the federal government's involvement in matters relating to local policing has moved from sponsoring research and funding very targeted initiatives (often experimental) to providing large sums for the hiring of personnel and the purchase of technology and equipment. And yet, in assuming this more expansive role, the federal government still resorts to a carrot and stick approach that is intended to stimulate certain types of change without taking on the total cost of that change. And at least in the pronouncements that are made, political leaders continue to express a strong reluctance to increase federal control over local police operations. Many would argue — liberals and conservatives alike — that the federal government has already exceeded its appropriate role.

In this sensitive framework of federal, state and local relationships vis-à-vis policing, a program that equips local police to essentially think more for themselves — to engage in explorations that will improve their own know-how — appears to be an ideal candidate for federal funding. It would meet a critical need that has enormous potential for improving local policing without exerting any new controls over how that policing is carried out. (With appropriate adjustments for the variety of different relationships, the pattern may have some relevance for other countries as well where policing is mostly decentralized.) Such a program would not only allow local police to get a start on studying, revising and evaluating their response to common problems; it would serve as an incentive for them to do so. It would have the potential for multiplying such efforts, once they gain a foothold and some momentum. And it would appropriately compensate agencies for those benefits of their work that might accrue to individuals living well beyond their borders. Carefully designed, the program could produce a "big bang for the buck." It could have a positive influence on the quality of policing in the U.S. far in excess of the influence of other larger and much more costly programs that have involved substantial federal outlays for personnel, technology and other equipment.

The hiring of problem analysts and the establishment of research units within local police agencies are at the core of an effort to develop the capacity of those agencies to improve the effectiveness of



their operations. It follows that highest priority would attach to the funding of such positions and units. But there will be other related costs for recruiting and training program analysts; recruiting and developing academic staff capable of expanding the academic component needed to support their efforts; cultivating, at least initially, the case studies that are undertaken; publishing the results; and engaging police executives in the process. These elements of a larger program are, like the creation of problem analyst positions, appropriate candidates for federal support.

A federal program in the U.S. to support these needs would not be a novel undertaking for the federal government. To the contrary, policing should be seen as a "Johnny-come lately," belatedly surfacing some long-neglected critical needs and seeking to have these needs met with the help of strategies that, with federal resources, have proved successful and are now routine in many fields. In a multitude of ways, the federal government has played a critical role — a role that only it can play — in advancing efforts to build and disseminate new knowledge in such fields as medicine and the other sciences. It has done the same in engineering, in agriculture, in public health, in education, and in traffic safety. To stimulate advances in these and numerous other fields, federal agencies sponsor scholarships and fellowship programs, stipends for faculty development, university-affiliated or freestanding research institutes, and research and training programs of various kinds. A program to build a knowledge base with regard to the problems local police are expected to handle in the United States will require similar support.

## A PROPOSAL

At the outset of this paper, it was argued that the great need at this time, in seeking to further develop the concept of problem-oriented policing, is to encourage more explorations of pieces of police business of the type contemplated when the concept was first proposed. As a minimum, such studies would:

- be conducted within a police agency;
- focus on a discrete common problem arising in the community that is of some magnitude (volume/geography);
- fully engage the chief executive and management of the police agency;
- make use of the skills of a person with special training in research methodology;

- analyze the problem in depth, including a review of all relevant literature;
- weigh the potential value of a broad range of alternative responses, with a high priority on prevention and on decreasing dependence on the use of the criminal law;
- implement a new response strategy;
- rigorously evaluate the results of that implementation; and
- disseminate the results for use by other police agencies.

Acknowledging that some of the original arguments for addressing problems in this way might have become blurred over the years (or are even in danger of being lost), the third section of this paper summarized, with a fresh perspective, the rationale behind problem-oriented policing and the rationale for continuing to work on developing the concept. The next section identified five of the major impediments that have been encountered, and offered some thoughts on how progress might nevertheless be realized.

It is tempting to synthesize those thoughts here and offer a broad, new agenda for development of problem-oriented policing, exhorting a large, diverse audience to take action on those pieces of the agenda that they are in a position to adopt. I choose, instead, to offer a highly specific and relatively modest proposal. It is shaped by a fresh awareness of the formidable difficulties that have been experienced in seeking to implement problem-oriented policing, having identified and explored those difficulties here. Its purpose is to launch an initiative in policing that would: (1) more clearly demonstrate the value of addressing specific problems; and (2) gradually, thereby, create a critical mass of significant projects that, by virtue of their own power and self-evident value, would hopefully be widely emulated and ultimately achieve broader change.

The strategy of this proposal, as distinct from the substantive work on problems that it would entail, rests on the observation that efforts to implement problem-oriented policing to date have been too diffuse. The concept of problem-oriented was, in a variety of ways, broadcast to the entire field of policing. Police were — through various publications, training programs, and conferences — exhorted to adopt it. Some agencies, some chief executives, and mostly, some beat-level officers picked up on the concept and, with varying interpretations, intensity and success, sought to implement it. When their experiences were collected in one place, as Sampson and Scott (2000) did in their collection of case studies and as Scott (2001) did in reflecting on the first 20 years, they constitute an impressive story. But when viewed in the context of the overall field of policing, these ef-

forts appear widely scattered among (and even within) agencies and limited in their impact to the local problems that were addressed. With the passage of time and changes in administration, it is increasingly difficult to point with confidence to a single agency in which there is a continuing concentration of high quality work in addressing pieces of its business. In exploring ways in which to develop problem-oriented policing, the need is not only to concentrate on conducting more in-depth management-level studies having all of the minimum elements identified above, but to do so in a way that creates a *critical mass* of such studies and evaluations.

The locus of such a concentration should be a center that is either university-affiliated or freestanding; either physical or virtual. Its life ought not to depend on strong attachments to one or more specific police agencies, given the frequent changes that occur in the management and priorities of those agencies. The basis for affiliation with the center for both practitioners and researchers should be their commitment to the central goal of the center in promoting quality research on substantive problems confronted by the police. The program proposed here for such a center is based on the experience in the United States, with which the author is most familiar, but could be adapted, with some adjustments to local circumstances and scale, to other countries as well. I would envisage the following as the key elements in an initial five-year program for such a center. (Obviously, the numbers and timeframe are not cast in concrete.)

- The recruitment, each year, of 10 individuals (from universities, from the private sector, or from within police agencies — including from among the most highly qualified of present crime analysts) to receive specially developed training of approximately three to six months' duration (depending on prior experience) in the knowledge and skills required of problem analysts. It would be necessary to cover the cost of the training and to provide a stipend to the participants.
- The preparation of the materials required to teach such a course, and the preparation of a manual that trained problem analysts could subsequently use as a guide in examining a specific problem.
- The identification, each year, of 10 police executives who endorse the value to their agencies, their communities and the policing field in conducting studies of the type contemplated. They would be asked, in exchange for having a trained, fully-subsidized problem analyst made available to them, to commit themselves to providing the full support of their agencies in conducting the study of from one to three problems; in im-

plementing a new response to those problems; and in evaluating the effectiveness of the response. If selected, the chief executives, themselves, would be expected, at the outset, to participate in a seminar, organized by the center, that is designed to explore in depth the elements of problem-oriented policing, the partnership to which they were committing themselves, and, in specific terms, what would be expected of them.

- The pairing of a problem analyst to a police agency for a minimum commitment of two years, recognizing that not all individual projects would take that period of time; that they might study an additional problem or move on to another agency.
- The monitoring of each such effort, providing technical and other forms of support, and setting standards for each project. It is envisaged that center staff would be involved in each stage of the project in each community, conferring frequently with department members and the problem analyst, and in promoting the sharing of experiences between and among analysts.
- The publication of the results of each project in ways that are designed to reach a broad audience of police practitioners, thereby sharing the knowledge acquired about specific problems and the results of experimenting with new responses, but also serving to promote similar examinations of other problems confronted by the police.
- The development of an outreach program — to mayors, city managers, judges, prosecutors, advocacy groups, business interests, and others — using the results of the overall project to demonstrate how rigorous study can contribute not only to improved police practice, but to remedying many of the current infirmities in policing — thereby creating a constituency for police services that is better equipped to assert its expectations of the police.
- The facilitation of future pairings between experienced problem analysts and those police agencies that recognize the demonstrated value of their work and who want to undertake projects on their own, thereby encouraging the establishment within police agencies of a continuing, institutionalized capacity to conduct such analyses and evaluations.

- The continued synthesizing of existing literature on common problems — the process established by the Problem-Oriented Guides for Police Project — with the objective of making such information conveniently available to the whole field of policing and, in the process, identifying problems most critically in need of new work that could appropriately be made the subject of study in one of the center-sponsored partnerships.
- The design of a program that seeks to identify present faculty in colleges and universities and those newly entering the academic world who have the qualifications and interest in developing a commitment to research and teaching in this area. This could be implemented through the sponsorship of summer seminars that introduce the candidates to research within policing; cover the work of the center; and offer incentives in the form of stipends to participants.

Like all model programs, one ought not to anticipate a success rate of 100%. Much can go wrong. Some of the investment will not yield a return. But if, for example, each agency studied only one problem and only half of the problems examined produce solid results, the field of policing in the U.S. would have exhaustively examined 25 different pieces of its business in a period of five years. A substantial percentage of those studies would most likely identify practices that are more effective than the practices now currently employed. Through dissemination of the results, the benefits would be realized not just in the one agency doing the study, but potentially in all police agencies.

The budget for such a model program — which would total several million dollars a year — would appear to some to be overwhelming. But that amount is modest — even paltry — when related to:

- the costs of providing police services throughout the nation,
- the costs to the victims of specific forms of crime,
- the costs of massive federal programs launched to improve local policing, or
- the costs of federal programs designed to promote similar development in other areas of government concern.

Improvements in policing — a government function so vital to the quality of life in a democracy — will not come about by simply increasing the numbers of police and by augmenting and modernizing the equipment they use. We need to invest proportionately and more heavily in thinking — in an organized, systematic and sustained way

— about what it is that the police are called on to do — and how they should do it.



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## NOTES

1. Bittner (1990), among others, in pleading for a requirement of higher education for the police, expressed skepticism about how well this might work. He notes: "...the effort involved in problem-oriented policing requires interests, inclinations, and aptitudes that are not well represented in police personnel at this time. It is not that such persons are wholly absent. Their number is actually larger than existing recruitment and training patterns lead us to expect...The idea that the principles and procedures employed today in recruitment and training will produce people inclined toward self-directed information gathering and analysis, capable of inventive planning, and motivated to work for long-range solutions seems absurd; and farfetched is better than absurd.

2. In this same period, the community policing movement grew rapidly in policing. One element of that movement supported the police becoming less legalistically-oriented: that police should redefine their role in ways that sought to achieve broader outcomes for those, especially victims, who turned to the police for help. Beat-level "problem solving" was seen as supporting these efforts and therefore often incorporated into the community policing movement (see, e.g., Skogan and Hartnett 1997). As community policing and problem-oriented policing evolved alongside each other, the two concepts were intermingled. I contributed to some of the resulting confusion (see Brodeur, 1998). For a clarification between

the concepts, see both Brodeur (1998) and Scott (2001).

3. This is especially troubling because the reform movement in policing was, for a long time, identified as the professionalization of the police. But the exact meaning of that term has never been clear. It is most commonly associated with higher entry standards or college education. Some associate it primarily with increased integrity or efficiency. The building of a body of knowledge, on which good practice is based and with which practitioners are expected to be familiar, may be the most important element for acquiring truly professional status.

4. In the U.K., the Home Office has initiated a number of programs recently, using the Web, to support local crime prevention efforts (see [www.crimereduction.gov.uk](http://www.crimereduction.gov.uk)). Some of the posted material facilitates access to relevant research.

5. Referred to as the *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police* series, published in 2001 and 2002, the series is funded by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Service (COPS) of the U.S. Department of Justice. The authors of the guides on specific problems are Michael S. Scott, Rana Sampson, Ronald V. Clarke, and Deborah Lamm Weisel. There is also an introductory guide on assessing responses to problems by John E. Eck.

6. For an elaboration on these points, see Goldstein 1977, 1990.

7. Police Executive Research Forum, "Police Executive Survey — 1998." [www.policeforum.org/data.htm](http://www.policeforum.org/data.htm) (Question No. 45).

8. For a full discussion of this need, see Clarke, 1998.

9. While the primary focus here is on engaging more academics in research relating to the police, the importance of opening police agencies to more research should not be discounted. One of the major lessons that can be drawn from the strongest problem-oriented policing projects is that their strength grew, in large measure, from the wealth of data and insights to which the researchers involved had such easy access. Having been involved in several such studies, it is hard to contemplate how studies without such access could be as penetrating and as confidently conclusive.

10. I'm mindful, of course, that an appeal for academics to engage in research of the type proposed here requires that they face a major problem in their relationships with their peers. Such research is often labeled "applied research" — a term frequently used in a pejorative sense by academics in the social sciences. For a helpful discussion of the dichot-

omy drawn between pure and applied research, as specifically related to the police, and for some thoughts on how to get beyond the current impasse, see Bittner (1990).

11. Currently, the project underway to test the *Problem-Oriented Guides for Police* makes a part-time researcher available to each of four police agencies for the limited purpose of enabling each agency to apply the guidelines to one or two problems within the department. This is another form of collaboration that should produce additional insights on how researchers located outside a police agency might cultivate productive relationships with the police.

12. In a larger context, moving beyond just focusing on specific problems and the effectiveness of police strategies in responding to them, Geller argues for a greater commitment within police agencies to the staff and resources that would enable them to become truly "learning organizations" (Geller, 1997).