



## Chapter 4

### Major Challenges to Advancing Problem-Oriented Policing

In the 20 years since Herman Goldstein first proposed his problem-oriented approach to policing, we have learned a lot about how it can and might be implemented and improved. We have learned more, perhaps, about the limits of reform than about the successes of reform, but in the whole history of policing, that seems always the case. The development of problem-oriented policing in the past 20 years is encouraging even though quite limited. Perhaps this is to be expected given that the police profession, certainly as compared to most other professions, is relatively young and still in an early developmental stage. It is still developing systems, standards and methods for accumulating and applying research knowledge to practice. Police, government and community leaders must come to appreciate the value that research can add to their decision-making about how to address complex problems of crime, disorder and fear. They must reflect thoughtfully on complex problems, even in the face of demands for immediate action, and resist adopting simplistic responses. Problem-oriented policing's full potential will not be achieved in a climate of haste and impatience.

Problem-oriented policing, as an idea rather than a program, has no particular central institution controlling or guiding its development, if indeed that is desirable or feasible. No single institution controls the operations and administration of the thousands of U.S. police agencies. Various efforts at implementation have focused on different aspects of problem-oriented policing. Certain aspects are especially appealing or relevant to different police agencies and research organizations at various times. Considerable progress has been made with respect to some aspects of the concept, and less with respect to others.

#### Setting an Agenda for Advancing Problem-Oriented Policing

There are only a few institutions capable of setting a national agenda for the advancement of problem-oriented policing, but to date, no institutions have done so. Several have incorporated parts of Goldstein's vision into their overall agendas.

The National Institute of Justice funded the Madison pilot project in problem-oriented policing in the early 1980s, and has since funded a number of other projects and initiatives related to problem-oriented policing. The COPS Office made “problem-solving” a component of

“We have many more police agencies and officers involved in problem-solving, and there are many exceptional efforts at addressing problems. But for the most part, no one has taken what was done by Herman Goldstein or by the Newport News Police Department and expanded upon it in any substantial manner.”

– John Eck



its funding programs through a wide range of initiatives falling under the general definition of community policing. So while some NIJ, COPS Office and other Department of Justice funding has clearly helped advance problem-oriented policing, it cannot be said that problem-oriented policing is the central component of any of these agencies' agendas (National Institute of Justice 1999; Office of Justice Programs 1998; Office of Community Oriented Policing Services 1999).<sup>122</sup>

<sup>122</sup>NIJ's former director, Jeremy Travis, wrote about the need for the federal research community to engage in more problem-oriented research of the type conducted by Harvard University and the Boston Police Department in Operation Cease-Fire. He wrote, "The research profession needs to catch up with policing and to define a role in the problem-solving process" (1999).

Initially, PERF was the primary institution advancing problem-oriented policing, much of it through Department of Justice funding. In PERF's early years, when Gary Hayes, a former student of Goldstein's, was the executive director, problem-oriented policing was a priority on PERF's research agenda. During this time, the Madison, London, Baltimore County, and Newport News experiments in problem-oriented policing were launched. After Hayes' untimely death, PERF continued to advance problem-oriented policing when Newport News' police chief, Darrel Stephens, took over as executive director. Projects replicating the Newport News study were launched, out of which grew the annual Problem-Oriented Policing Conference and strong San Diego Police Department leadership. The conference gave problem-oriented policing some base of support that was only partially tied to PERF's research agenda. Although conference attendance continued to grow, further research and experimentation in problem-oriented policing have been less prominent parts of PERF's research agenda after Stephens' tenure. Problem-oriented policing principles and methods are still incorporated into many of PERF's current projects, programs and publications, but few are as directly related to advancing the practice of problem-oriented policing as were the early projects.

Herman Goldstein has set forth his own priorities for seeing the concept further developed, but as yet those priorities have not been translated into a coherent policy agenda for the profession. Goldstein has proposed a national agenda to support problem-oriented policing (Goldstein 1993a, 1994a, 1994b; see, also, Rosen 1999), though several elements remain largely unaddressed. Goldstein has proposed the following major elements to a research and technical support agenda.

- Fund and promote applied research on specific community problems, including experimentation with different response strategies.
- Publish case studies of effective practices related to specific community problems.
- Compile, synthesize and disseminate research and practice related to specific community problems.
- Develop high-quality training programs and materials for various audiences.



- Develop materials to better communicate the concept to various audiences.
- Help police agencies develop capabilities to do problem-oriented research.
- Develop guidance in the analysis of problems and evaluation of results.
- Identify and develop information technology that supports problem-oriented policing.
- Train researchers to conduct problem-oriented research.
- Explore internal and external organizational issues related to implementing problem-oriented policing.

Among the many questions and concerns about the future of policing and the future of problem-oriented policing, I raise and address those I think are the most critical for advancing the concept. Many of the items in Goldstein's agenda are reflected in this discussion as well. The first set of questions relate to how the problem-oriented policing concept and substantive knowledge about community problems will be advanced and shared. The second set of questions relate to the role those other than the police must play if problem-oriented policing is to be practiced effectively and fairly.

### **Advancing Problem-Oriented Policing Through Training, Research and Practice**

#### How Will the Principles and Methods of Problem-Oriented Policing Be Taught?

Training in the principles and methods of problem-oriented policing for the many different audiences who might benefit from it remains sporadic and of varying quality. PERF continues to offer training in problem-oriented policing, some of which is now offered under the auspices of the Community Policing Consortium. The Community Policing Consortium has produced a standard training curriculum in community policing, one module of which is an eight-hour session on “community problem-solving” that was developed principally by PERF. The written curriculum adheres to the basic problem-oriented policing model. A short training course, however good, cannot possibly convey a complete understanding of, and proficiency with, the principles and methods of problem-oriented policing anymore than a short course could suffice to make police officers proficient in any other police operational strategy. The Community Policing Consortium also produced a six-part video series on community policing and problem-solving. Like the written curriculum, the series adheres to the basic problem-oriented policing model and is useful for an introductory-level audience. PERF and the Community Policing

“One of the strengths of the concept is its simplicity, so it's hard to understand why it's so difficult for some people and agencies to do it... Those who struggle with the concept tend not to appreciate the value of data, the time it takes to make use of it, and the patience required to reflect on the real nature of problems.”

– Gloria Laycock



Consortium now offer some of this training on-line. In the absence of other high-quality, professionally developed training materials, many problem-oriented policing trainers continue to rely on an ad hoc collection of training videos and handouts. Some of these training videos are now almost 15 years old, still in use for want of anything better or more recent.

<sup>123</sup> served as a technical consultant to several of the regional community policing institutes from 1998 to 1999, observed several training courses and met with other institute consultants.

<sup>124</sup> Among the colleges and universities that have recently listed courses in problem-oriented policing are Florida State University, the University of Maine at Presque Isle, Dalhousie University (Nova Scotia), Northwestern University (Traffic Institute), and Charles Sturt University (New South Wales, Australia).

<sup>125</sup> The Seattle Police Department, with some funding from the U.S. Department of Justice, has developed a set of basic and advanced training curricula in problem-oriented policing. These materials were developed principally by the department's community policing division, and not by the training academy.

At least 13 of the approximately 30 regional community policing institutes that were provided start-up funding by the COPS Office provide training in problem-solving, but the institutes had considerable latitude to design their own curricula and courses. Some institutes reportedly provide good-quality training in problem-oriented policing, and regional agencies heavily depend on them. While there were good and valid reasons to encourage innovation and local control of the institutes' curricula, it is unfortunate that the institutes' training in problem-oriented policing was not mandated and standardized.<sup>123</sup> Mandating training in problem-oriented policing would have ensured a wider exposure of the concept to the field and standardizing the problem-oriented policing curriculum would have ensured greater control over the quality of the instruction.

Much of the balance of national training programs in problem-oriented policing is provided by small training and consulting firms, and individuals. A few colleges and universities also offer courses related to problem-oriented policing.<sup>124</sup> So while a number of organizations offer courses in problem-oriented policing, the number of training experts remains remarkably small. Even in police agencies that offer training courses in problem-solving as part of their preservice or in-service curriculum, the trainers are often the same subject-matter experts from the earliest days of the agencies' experimentation in problem-oriented policing; that is, the same few individuals are relied on at the local, regional and national level to provide training in problem-oriented policing. A challenge in the advancement of problem-oriented policing is to get those with an introductory-level understanding of the concept to progress to intermediate levels and those at intermediate levels to progress to an advanced level, thereby increasing the pool of people participating in and promoting the problem-oriented policing movement.

It is also still common for individuals and units other than the department's training unit to develop and conduct in-house training programs related to problem-oriented policing.<sup>125</sup> This suggests that police agencies and professional training organizations have not yet fully adopted problem-oriented policing into their organizational missions. Most in-house training in problem-oriented policing, including that offered as part of preservice academies, is limited to



one or two days of instruction. Such limited instruction, offered in discrete blocks of time, can familiarize participants with only the basic concepts; it can hardly be expected to make them proficient in practicing problem-oriented policing. A few police agencies go further by having recruit trainees actually do some problem-solving as part of their field training experience. Among the more encouraging recent developments in problem-oriented policing training is a project to develop new police field training guidelines and a model field training program. Funded by the COPS Office, the Reno Police Department and PERF seek to update what is known as the San Jose field training model to better reflect the new expectations in police work brought about by community and problem-oriented policing. The San Jose model, a considerable advancement for its time, is now almost 30 years old, and may not be suited to instruct new officers in the principles and methods of problem-oriented policing.

The amount of training in problem-oriented policing today is far greater than it was even 10 years ago even if the total need is still not being met. Most organizations that provide police training offer at least a few courses in community or problem-oriented policing. Most training programs provide some instruction in the rationale for problem-oriented policing, the basic elements of the concept, and the process of problem-solving, as well as case studies or practical exercises in problem-solving. Some additional courses cover various related administrative matters like supervision or implementation. It is far rarer to find training courses in specific substantive community problems. Ideally, training in problem-oriented policing will move beyond simply covering the mechanics of problem-solving to a more advanced treatment of the state of knowledge about common community problems the police confront. One can imagine someday finding a range of courses covering police responses to such problems as commercial robbery, street-level narcotics trafficking, shoplifting, domestic violence, and so forth. Such training would not be limited to teaching enforcement procedures, investigative methods, or laws and policies, but would cover the nature and known causes of the problem, and proven methods of effective prevention, intervention and reduction. When such training courses become commonplace, problem-oriented policing will have moved out of its experimental stages and into a more sophisticated and detailed stage.

There is a need for national training programs to provide police officials, including chief executives, middle managers and analysts, with intensive guidance in applying problem-oriented policing methods to difficult substantive community problems. Training programs like the U.S. Department of Justice's National Executive Institute, Law Enforcement Executive Development Seminars and National Academy concentrate more on the mechanics of police



administration and leadership than on the substantive concerns of problem-oriented policing. One can imagine new programs, as well-funded and supported as these others, that provide police officials with more direct guidance on practicing problem-oriented policing.

Some work has been done developing written instruction in problem-oriented policing methods for researchers and practitioners. The Bureau of Justice Assistance (1993) published a guide for police, written by John Eck and Nancy La Vigne, on methods for surveying citizens and the physical environment. The COPS Office has funded Michigan State University Professor Tim Bynum to produce a guide to problem analysis (forthcoming). NIJ has funded one of the principal researchers in the Boston Youth Violence project, Anthony Braga, to prepare a primer in environmental criminology (a branch of criminology that views the physical setting of crime as a causative factor) and problem-oriented research methods. As part of the COPS Office-funded project to produce a series of problem-specific guides for police, a companion guide to assessing the impact of problem-solving initiatives will also be produced.

<sup>125</sup>Mark Moore of Harvard University recounted how doctors in the late 1800s began to distinguish their profession from others, largely by developing a body of written information about effective medical practices (*Law Enforcement News*, June 15, 1999).

While there has been some progress in developing training courses and instructional materials for police practitioners and researchers, little has been done to develop materials to convey the concept to other audiences. Among the target audiences whose particular interests have not been adequately addressed are judges, prosecutors, elected officials, other government agency leaders, and community organization leaders. There are a few promising efforts. With funding from the Soros Foundation, Herman Goldstein is preparing a publication intended to reach some of these neglected audiences. Malcolm Sparrow's book *Imposing Duties* (1994) examines the underlying principles of problem-oriented policing in the contexts of the police, tax administration and environmental protection. It addresses some of the neglected audiences, too.

#### How Will the Police Accumulate and Transfer Knowledge About Substantive Community Problems?

The concept of problem-oriented policing is grounded in research methods. Thus, police agencies should place a high premium on written information—reviewing studies of similar problems and reporting in writing the results of the problem-solving process. The spread of knowledge about problem-oriented policing occurs at least in part through publications.

#### *How Substantive Knowledge is Shared in the Police Profession*

The police culture leans more toward an oral tradition than a written one.<sup>126</sup> In other words, police officers gather information about



practicing their work principally by listening and talking to other practitioners. This holds true from the field training of new recruits to the exchange of ideas about problem-solving. One reason the annual Problem-Oriented Policing Conference is so popular among police practitioners is that it affords them an opportunity to meet and talk with fellow police officers about practices that do and do not work. Officers can gauge the veracity and reliability of reports about problem-solving practices by getting a feel for the character of the people reporting them, and by asking detailed questions.<sup>127</sup> By contrast, the Problem-Oriented Policing Conference is not as well-attended by police researchers. There are not formal presentations of written papers at the conference, yielding less grist for the mill of academic research. However much this oral tradition strengthens the police's social bonds, it inhibits the transfer of reliable, accurate knowledge. As many myths are perpetuated as truths.

To a large extent, the concept of problem-oriented policing is designed to bridge the worlds of police practice and research by establishing common interests and a common lexicon. This bridge is far from complete. The transfer of collected knowledge and wisdom occurs differently among academicians than it does among the police. Researchers are expected to be familiar with the relevant literature on a particular subject. There is no similar expectation in policing. The police expect to learn about new practices by attending training courses and, occasionally, conferences, not so much by keeping abreast of the latest professional literature.

Paid sabbaticals, by which a professional temporarily relocates to another professional organization in order to exchange knowledge, are common among academics, but not among police. Extended time spent outside one's own organization in an environment conducive to learning is every bit as necessary for spreading ideas and good practices in policing as it is in academia. A number of the leading police agencies in problem-oriented policing can trace the introduction of the concept to a key individual's sabbatical.<sup>128</sup> Many other agencies that have implemented problem-oriented policing have been headed by police chiefs with experiences in other police departments, or have had key individuals who traveled extensively, providing training in problem-oriented policing. There remain far too few such opportunities for police officials, however.

#### *Writing Down Problem-Oriented Practice*

The practice of problem-oriented policing has suffered from a lack of quality writing about project work. Some police departments, mindful of other duties that compete for officers' time, have minimized the reporting requirements for problem-solving, emphasizing the work

<sup>127</sup>In 1999, the Lancashire, England, Constabulary held an internal problem-oriented policing conference at which police constables from throughout the large police agency presented problem-solving initiatives. From what I observed, the presentations were well-received by fellow police officials, and the conference proved an effective means of exchanging ideas, promoting good practices and encouraging others to become engaged in problem-oriented policing.

<sup>128</sup>Learning through sabbaticals strongly influenced the implementation of problem-oriented policing in Edmonton, Sacramento, Reno, and Merseyside.



rather than the writing. However much this may encourage officers to engage in problem-solving, it has left little lasting evidence that the work occurred. Without written evidence, the transfer of knowledge about problem-oriented police work is limited to the storytelling of the particular officers involved. Once they lose interest in telling their stories, the knowledge dissipates.

The efforts to chronicle good problem-oriented practice at the national level have been beneficial, but modest. NIJ funded a project to collect case studies in effective police problem-solving, the results of which have been published by the COPS Office (Sampson and Scott 2000).<sup>129</sup> In 1999, NIJ and the COPS Office funded the publication of the best submissions for the Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing. Several Community Policing Consortium publications include narratives about problem-solving submitted by police agencies. Since 1988, PERF has published *Problem Solving Quarterly*, a newsletter that chronicles police problem-solving projects. Publication of this newsletter has been sporadic in recent years, however, largely due to the lack of sufficient quality submissions. The electronic database POPNet, maintained by PERF, is another means of disseminating information about problem-solving initiatives, but as noted earlier, it has only a limited number of entries, only summary information, and little or no quality control. These few efforts represent a much smaller investment than Goldstein had in mind, and few of the case studies entail rigorous research methods.

Practitioners must be encouraged to continue using problem-oriented approaches to community problems, and to maintain records of their actions. Researchers, whether in-house or external, must be encouraged to do the more formal writing about problem-oriented projects, writing that serves two audiences: researchers and practitioners. To do so effectively, they should spend enough time with police officers to genuinely understand the issues from the officers' perspectives. My own experiences chronicling police officers' problem-solving efforts confirm this. The most effective method for gathering information about problem-solving projects has been to interview the officers involved, independently review data about the problem, and write a narrative about the project. Self-reporting alone yields little, and without some independent verification, lacks reliability. If the profession desires and values good written reports of problem-oriented policing, then it must use people with substantial research and writing skills to produce them.

*Collecting, Synthesizing and Disseminating Research and Practice on Specific Community Problems*

A number of publications sponsored and/or published by the federal government have attempted to capture the state of research and

<sup>129</sup>The categories of problems addressed in this volume are alcohol-related crime, apartment complex and other rental-property crime, burglary, college-related crime, cruising, domestic violence, drugs, false alarms, gangs, graffiti, group homes, homeless-related crime, mental illness, neighborhood disorder, parks, prostitution, robbery, and theft from vehicles.



practice with regard to specific types of community problems the police confront (see Appendix B). These various publications have not been organized into a centralized reference system, nor have they followed a standardized format. While many of the publications are of good quality and offer useful information to police practitioners, there still is no coherent research agenda that would lead to a comprehensive and current body of knowledge about specific types of community problems and/or common types of responses to them.<sup>130</sup> The COPS Office recently awarded funding to this author and several colleagues to produce a series of problem-specific guides for the police, that will partially address this element of a national research agenda.<sup>131</sup>

The Office of Justice Programs and the COPS Office have sponsored conferences in recent years on research and evaluation. The conferences are intended in part to bridge the gap between researchers and police practitioners, and to focus on research lessons that would be of interest to practitioners. However valuable the research may be, a police official would not have found much in those conferences that directly related to the police response to community crime and disorder problems: much of the substance of the conferences related to organizational and management issues.<sup>132</sup>

### How Can Problem Analysis Be Improved, and a Systematic Body of Research on Substantive Community Problems Be Developed?

The police field continues to lack an organized and substantial body of knowledge about effective methods for addressing common community problems.<sup>133</sup> There are few sources readily found that provide information about the causes of, and effective responses to, most such problems. This is largely because there simply hasn't been much relevant research conducted. A standard literature search on any particular problem would lead the researcher to a host of different professional journals, books and technical reports, many of which would provide only a theoretical perspective, rather than a practical perspective from which one might adopt proven interventions or fashion new ones. The amount of potentially useful information is no doubt much greater than most police officials realize, but because it has not been systematically compiled and annotated for use by practitioners, it remains largely unavailable to the police. The police profession would do well to begin such a systematic compilation and digesting of relevant knowledge if problem-oriented policing is to become an even more viable approach. A systematic program to conduct applied research on substantive community problems, and to compile and disseminate the results of the research findings to the police, would begin to build a body of knowledge both about specific types of problems and about types of responses to address them.

<sup>130</sup>Peak and Glensor (1999) dedicate a chapter to describing in summary fashion police agencies' innovative responses to problems related to drugs, gangs, graffiti, special populations (mentally ill, homeless, alcoholic offenders), domestic violence, housing problems and neighborhood disorder, prostitution, cruising, teen hangouts, and false alarms.

<sup>131</sup>These guides will provide practitioners with a summary of the state of knowledge about effective responses to specific community problems the police commonly confront. The guides will draw from the fields of both problem-oriented policing and situational crime prevention. These problem-specific guides, along with a listing of community problems, a classification scheme for community problems, and a companion guide on assessing problem-oriented policing projects, are expected to be available in late 2001 or early 2002. The initial guides in this series will cover the police response to assaults in and around bars, drug dealing in privately-owned apartment complexes, street prostitution, graffiti, thefts of and from cars in parking facilities, false burglar alarms, school bullying, shoplifting, residential burglary, commercial burglary, disorderly youth in public places, speeding in residential areas, loud car stereos, panhandling, rave parties, clandestine methamphetamine labs, robbery at automated teller machines, 911 hangups and acquaintance rape on college campuses.

<sup>132</sup>Of the 45 workshops and panels at the 1998 National Conference on Community Policing: What Works: Research and Practice, by my estimation, only seven addressed substantive community problems faced by the police. Most of the research panels addressed matters related to community policing implementation, police sociology, community perceptions of the police, police misconduct, information technology, and police management and administration.

<sup>133</sup>Toch and Grant (1991) articulated the need to develop a problem-oriented network of knowledge, both about effective responses to common community problems and about the implementation of problem-oriented policing. They argue that, to be useful, such a network must be more than a simple distillation of published research; it should incorporate the practical experiences of police officers engaged in problem-solving.



<sup>134</sup>As noted by Harvard University's Mark Moore, the most substantial body of research on the effectiveness of police interventions is in the area of domestic violence, and this consists of only six significant experimental studies, from which it remains difficult to draw any firm conclusions (Law Enforcement News, June 15, 1999). The research on the multitude of other problems faced by the police is far more miniscule. Wrote another Harvard researcher, David Kennedy, "Over and over again, when consulting the literature to address particular problems, one realizes that the most basic questions about these problems have not been answered in a way that is very useful for informing policy and shaping practice" (1999).

<sup>135</sup>The geographic scope of a problem does not necessarily correspond to the degree of sophistication of the problem analysis. Some problems, though concentrated geographically, are quite large and warrant sophisticated analysis. The study of telephone fraud at New York's Port Authority Bus Terminal is such an example (Bichler and Clarke 1997). By contrast, some problems affecting an entire community are addressed by line-level personnel using less sophisticated research methods. The Fremont, Calif., Police Department's study of domestic violence repeat victimization is such an example (1997).

<sup>136</sup>For discussions of the many issues involved in conducting policy-level problem-oriented research, see Goldstein and Susmilch (1982c), and Kennedy (1999).

<sup>137</sup>The chapters that report some police involvement are those by Matthews (prostitution); Knutsson and Kuhlhorn (check forgery); Poyner (crime in parking lots); Brown (crime and disorder in public spaces in town centers); Hunter and Jeffrey (convenience store robberies); Anderson and Pease (repeat burglaries and car crime); Laycock (burglary); Homel et al. (drunkenness and violence near nightclubs); and La Vigne (crime in subways). The police involvement in these crime prevention projects varied. In some, police officials were instrumental in designing the intervention; in others, they were instrumental in implementing the intervention.

<sup>138</sup>Bichler and Clarke (1997) reported a significant missed opportunity for the police to address the problem of telephone fraud in a bus terminal.

In contrast to the earliest experimental initiatives in problem-oriented policing conducted by Goldstein in Madison and by the London Metropolitan Police, the vast majority of problem-oriented policing initiatives since that time have originated and been conducted at the operating level of police organizations. Police officers and their supervisors have led most of the problem-solving projects and have, for the most part, focused on problems concentrated in specific locations, neighborhoods or districts. There are few projects conducted at a policy level that involve reasonably sophisticated analysis and that focus on a large problem affecting an entire community.<sup>135</sup>

Goldstein's earliest works on the problems of drunken drivers and repeat sex offenders in Madison are prototypes of policy-level problem analysis.<sup>136</sup> New York City provides two examples of commendable efforts at policy-level problem analysis. One was a study of the problem of runaway children in the city (Ryan and Doyle 1986). It captured the scope and nature of the problem, though stopped short of recommending particular changes to policy or practice. The second was a study of safety in city schools (Travis, Lynch and Schall 1993). It concluded with recommendations for structural and policy changes in the school system to enhance safety. Both studies were conducted and/or led by the New York City Police Department's administrative and research branches.

From among the best submissions for the Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing, approximately one-third of the projects addressed problems that affected an entire community, yet only about one-sixth of those had demonstrable leadership or involvement of policy-level administrators and/or professional research staff (see Appendix A). The best example of high-level problem analysis from the Goldstein awards was the study of the problem of youth gang violence in Boston (Boston Police Department 1998). This was a joint effort of university researchers, police officials and community leaders. From among those sophisticated crime reduction efforts reported in *Situational Crime Prevention* (Clarke 1997b), only a few involved substantial police involvement in problem analysis and subsequent response.<sup>137</sup>

From a crime reduction perspective, it matters less whether the police or some other entity is responsible for effecting the changes that bring down crime rates, but from a police perspective, the police miss many opportunities to effectively address crime and disorder problems because they are not engaging in much policy-level problem analysis.<sup>138</sup> Large police agencies with research and planning units should consider shifting more of those units' focus to analyzing large-scale community problems. This also requires that police research units reorient their



approach, expanding beyond conventional methods such as identifying spatial patterns of crime through mapping.<sup>139</sup> Police agencies without such in-house expertise or resources should consider collaborating with outside researchers.<sup>140</sup> Police researchers should have the skills necessary to conduct advanced problem analysis or, at a minimum, be able to make intelligent use of what literature exists on substantive problems.

The sort of police practitioner-researcher collaboration envisioned for problem-oriented policing has not occurred more often as a result of difficulties on both sides. For their part, some police officials are impatient with extensive research, preferring to work on smaller-scale problems with rudimentary research than to wait for more sophisticated research to shed new light on larger problems. Researchers, for their part, sometimes find it difficult to make the transition from pure social science research methods to the action research called for in problem-oriented policing. Pure research frequently produces either interesting theory with little practical value, or exquisitely precise findings about factors that do not lend themselves to effective intervention. Consequently, they have limited value for problem-oriented policing.

As a general proposition, the entire criminology field and related criminal justice sciences have been slow or reluctant to substantively engage in problem-oriented policing (see Clarke 1997a).<sup>141</sup> The number of environmental criminologists is growing. Environmental criminology, from which the concept of crime prevention through environmental design flows, has a theoretical kinship with problem-oriented policing, although many environmental criminologists have yet to connect directly with police concerns. Environmental criminology to date remains on the periphery of mainstream criminology. There are few academic researchers with much practical experience in problem-oriented policing, so some police agencies would be hard-pressed to find the right kind of research assistance, even if they sought it.<sup>142</sup> For their part, the police have viewed criminology as abstract and, accordingly, have not sought to incorporate the lessons of criminology into their practices. The field of environmental criminology is giving the police good reason to do so, however, and they would be well-advised to become more familiar with its lessons.

In recent years, some research funding has promoted action research in policing. As mentioned earlier, the COPS Office's Problem-Solving Partnership and School-Based Partnership grants and NIJ's Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative (SACSI) and Locally Initiated Research Partnerships in Policing programs (described in chapter 1, action research model section) encourage collaborations

<sup>139</sup>The Westminster, Calif., Police Department recently reported a commendable effort to enhance its internal capabilities to conduct sound evaluation studies of departmental programs and initiatives (Community Policing Consortium 1999). The examples of evaluation studies cited, however, are either process evaluations or administrative-initiative evaluations; none are outcome evaluations of efforts to address substantive community problems, the sort of evaluations essential to the practice of problem-oriented policing.

<sup>140</sup>Goldstein and Susmilch (1982c) discuss the challenges faced by external researchers collaborating with police agencies in problem-oriented research.

<sup>141</sup>I reviewed a list of the panel discussions offered at the 1997 Annual Meeting of the American Society of Criminology. Of the 442 discussions listed, only 42 (about 10%) of the titles related to the substantive community problems the police face.

<sup>142</sup>One of the objectives of NIJ's Strategic Approaches to Community Safety Initiative is to train researchers in problem-oriented policing research methods.



“Since the early 1990s, it has been frustrating that, after 10 years, most problem-solving efforts remained small local efforts by line officers, not intermediate or communitywide sorts of problems.”

– David Kennedy

Research units can't and shouldn't do all the work in problem-oriented policing, but they should do problem-solving of a different type than beat-level problem-solving, and should engage in some experimentation.

– Rana Sampson

between the police and researchers. NIJ has also announced a funding program called Computer Mapping, Planning and Analysis of Safety Strategies (COMPASS). This program is intended to enhance the internal data analysis capabilities of police agencies in ways that will be compatible with community and problem-oriented policing. The COMPASS model expands on the Compstat model, combining police data with other community-related data (e.g., data on fear levels, vacant housing, street lighting, sanitation, housing, school safety, hospital records, courts and corrections, victimization, and drug use). In England and Wales, the national government is offering substantial funding (£250 million, or the equivalent of almost \$400 million) to implement and evaluate crime reduction practices. The government will provide police and other agencies with research advice and expertise as part of the program. The program specifically promotes “placing greater emphasis on problem-oriented policing” (Home Office 1998). However much reliable research all these programs produce, they fall short of constituting a coherent and comprehensive research agenda regarding the specific types of crime and disorder problems the police confront.

#### Summary

What these gaps in knowledge and learning methods mean for the further development of problem-oriented policing is not yet clear. Perhaps researchers will do more research that is directly relevant to police practitioners. Perhaps researchers will learn to write more intelligibly for a practitioner audience, and attend more practitioner conferences to convey their knowledge in person. Perhaps the police will come to read more and rely more on published information. Perhaps the expanded use of Internet technology will make written information more available, obviating the need to develop and staff extensive police libraries. The experiences of the past two decades suggest that the best avenue for systematically advancing knowledge is one that requires contributions from both practitioners and researchers. I don't know whether improvements in the research community will generate greater interest among the police in using research to address community problems, or whether a greater police demand for such research will spur researchers to action. One thing is clear: The quality and quantity of the underlying research and the writing about problem-oriented projects need substantial improvement, even while the current, more modest efforts should be recognized and encouraged.



## Defining Roles for Others in Practicing Problem-Oriented Policing

### Are New Alliances Between the Police and the Community Healthy?

Problem-oriented policing, like community policing, stresses police collaboration with the community to address problems. This general proposition is hardly controversial, though the particulars of actual collaboration can spark debate and controversy. The general proposition that the police collaborate more extensively with the community has, on balance, been a positive development, for many reasons. However, under certain conditions, these new collaborations between police and community present significant challenges in a constitutional democracy. At times, the “majority rules” philosophy of the community and the conservative traits of the police combine to support police practices that the courts find threatening to the constitutional order. A couple of examples typify this concern.

In June 1999, the U.S. Supreme Court struck down a Chicago ordinance that empowered the police to order people seen loitering on the streets with reputed gang members to disperse or be arrested.<sup>143</sup> The Chicago police had ultimately endorsed this ordinance after initially voicing opposition. It also had support from segments of the predominantly minority communities in Chicago most likely to be affected by it. National police and municipal executives' organizations supported legal arguments in favor of the ordinance (though national police organizations representing black police officers opposed it). Civil libertarians and some neighborhood association groups also opposed it. The Supreme Court found that the ordinance granted excessive discretion to the police, even while acknowledging the legitimate interest the police had in reducing intimidation of the public by gangs.<sup>144</sup>

In the early 1990s, the city of Santa Ana experienced problems with transients' congregating around civic buildings, intimidating others. The Santa Ana police, in trying to respond to widespread citizen complaints, developed a strategy that entailed strict enforcement of all laws and ordinances against those deemed to be transients. Both the strategy and the insensitive tactics the police used—targeting their enforcement only on suspected transients, rounding them up and marking their bodies with booking numbers—led to a harsh legal judgment against the police for violating the offenders' rights.<sup>145</sup>

The Chicago police did not specifically undertake the initiative in the name of problem-oriented policing, although the department generally espoused the principles of community policing and problem-solving.

<sup>143</sup>*City of Chicago v. Morales et al.* No. 97-1121. Decided June 10, 1999.

<sup>144</sup>For further explorations of the issues addressed in the *Morales* case, see Roberts (1999).

<sup>145</sup>See “Homeless Roused in Santa Ana,” *Orange County Register*, Aug. 17, 1990; and “Cases Dismissed in Santa Ana’s Homeless Sweep,” *Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 7, 1991, for journalistic accounts of the situation.



<sup>146</sup>The city of Westminster, Colo., described its version of these principles as “community-oriented governance” in a brochure developed in the late 1990s. The city of Sacramento restructured the way it delivered many municipal services, to better connect with police efforts to practice problem-oriented policing.

The Santa Ana police undertook their initiative as a problem-oriented project. Regardless of how the police label such initiatives, Goldstein imagined that the processes used in problem-oriented policing, in which the police carefully develop responses based on thorough research, and subject those responses to review and input from many perspectives, would reduce the possibility that the courts would challenge and strike down police actions. Had Chicago studied the problem of gang intimidation using a problem-oriented approach, it might have yielded a range of new responses, and any new legislation might have been better drafted to respond directly to the problem and thereby survive judicial scrutiny. Whether the police in the instances cited above were wrong in their actions is largely a matter of opinion (even the U.S. Supreme Court was not unanimous in the Chicago ruling). Some might see these examples as wrong-headed judicial opinions rather than wrong-headed police decisions. What bears remembering is that the mere application of a problem-solving process to community problems does not guarantee that all the interests of a constitutional democracy will be protected. Goldstein specifies that, when choosing from among various alternatives for responding to a problem, the police must consider the constitutionality of the response, the effectiveness of the response, and the potential for negative consequences. However, he does not, nor can he, specify what conclusions decision-makers might draw when considering these factors.

#### Are New Alliances Between the Police and Other Government Agencies Healthy?

The many new alliances between the police and other government agencies hold potential for overreaching. As a general proposition, Goldstein's model of problem-oriented policing endorses closer and more collaborative working relationships between the police and their counterparts in other municipal, state and federal agencies. By combining their respective expertise, resources and authority in creative ways, the police and other agencies can often accomplish more working together than they can working independently. Some jurisdictions have extended the principles of problem-oriented policing beyond the police to encompass the entire local government,<sup>146</sup> though I am not aware of any local government that has fully adopted a problem-oriented approach. Nonetheless, there will be instances in which the respective agencies' independence is necessary to protect against overzealousness and abuses of authority. Partnerships should not be abandoned because of the possibility of overreaching, or even because of occasional incidents of overreaching, but administrators and oversight bodies should remain aware of the risks.



During the early 1990s, when problem-oriented policing was being strongly promoted in St. Louis, city building inspectors were encouraged to work closely with the police. The inspectors and the police frequently found themselves teaming up to close down suspected drug houses. In one such incident, to enforce a condemnation order, building inspectors (wearing body armor) broke into a building with a sledgehammer and ordered the occupants out. The occupants complained, and the inspectors were disciplined and nearly charged with a crime. The police, who had been working with the inspectors to enforce the condemnation order, defended themselves by claiming they didn't actually swing the sledgehammer. Fortunately, the incident did not end the working relationship between the agencies, though it did place some restrictions on it. In this case, the building inspectors began to overidentify with the police role and lost sight of the limits of their authority.

<sup>147</sup>This practice has received considerable attention in Richmond, Va., but occurs routinely elsewhere, as well.

<sup>148</sup>Personal conversation with Chief Inspector Simon Byrne, local authority liaison officer, Merseyside Police, July 5, 1999.

There has also been some criticism of the extensive collaboration between police and federal prosecutors in their efforts to reduce shootings and homicides by aggressively prosecuting offenders under federal rather than state law.<sup>147</sup> Some critics, including members of the federal judiciary, are concerned that such routine and expansive collaborations between local and federal authorities undermine important principles of federalism and result in some degree of unfairness to defendants.

In Liverpool, England, the local (Merseyside) police have begun to work more collaboratively with housing authority agents. The agents have wider authority to conduct surveillance on tenants than do the police, and the police liaison between the agencies acknowledges the potential for abuse and confusion about their proper respective roles.<sup>148</sup>

Similar concerns can and do arise when the police work collaboratively with such other government personnel as liquor law agents and probation and parole officials. Again, whether these new practices are unfair is a matter of opinion (though, sometimes, a legally binding one), but they serve as reminders that some novel forms of collaboration, however effective they may prove, raise important issues about procedural fairness and the checks and balances of government power.

### What Should Be the Role of Prosecutors?

Historically, prosecutors have related to the police almost exclusively in terms of the criminal investigation function. From the policing



<sup>149</sup>One of the longest-running and most critically acclaimed U.S. television shows is "Law and Order." Every episode begins with the police investigation of a serious crime, and culminates with the prosecution of the resultant case. As each show opens, the narrator says, "In the criminal justice system, the people are represented by two equally important groups: the police who investigate crimes, and the district attorneys who prosecute the offenders."

<sup>150</sup>From 1986 to 1990, Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government sponsored the Conferences on New Directions in State and Local Prosecution, a series similar to its Executive Sessions on Community Policing. Community prosecution and problem-solving were among the topics, but the conferences have not had the impact on the field of prosecution that their counterpart sessions had on the field of policing.

<sup>151</sup>Among the better-known initiatives in community prosecution are those in Montgomery County, Md., and Multnomah County, Ore. (See Washington Post, "Community Prosecution: Montgomery relocates law enforcement to the neighborhoods," July 11, 1999. Op-ed piece by Montgomery County State Attorney Douglas Gansler.) Coles and Kelling (1999) refer to community prosecution efforts in Seattle; Portland, Ore.; Oklahoma City; Miami; Brooklyn, N.Y.; Kansas City, Mo.; Boston; Austin, Texas; and Indianapolis. The U.S. States Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia has also undertaken a pilot effort in community prosecution.

standpoint, prosecutors' interests are just a few of many the police must take into account. Much of police work does not result in even the consideration of criminal prosecution. However, the police are central to almost everything prosecutors do. Prosecutors prosecute cases, and few prosecutions are initiated by anything other than police work. (This is especially true in local prosecutors' offices, where the vast majority of criminal cases are prosecuted.) So while prosecutors continue to see their role as narrowly limited to prosecuting criminal cases, they also see the police role in similarly narrow terms. The police generate prosecutors' workload and make prosecutors' work easier by conducting thorough investigations. Understandably, from this perspective, prosecutors jealously guard against any diversion of police resources away from criminal investigation. Prosecutors exert a powerful influence on police practices, despite the reality that only a small percentage of police work culminates in criminal prosecution. Most prosecutors view themselves as the chief law enforcement officer in the jurisdiction, implying some supervisory role over the police, and many police officials do not challenge this, having themselves adopted a belief that the police function primarily to collect evidence for criminal prosecution. At a minimum, prosecutors represent a powerful constituency for part of police work. They represent a demand for criminal cases, and they set standards for the quality of criminal investigations against which the police are measured. Supported by popular images of police work as principally being an enterprise of catching and convicting criminals, prosecutors hold the police both accountable for portions of their work and, to some degree, captive to it.<sup>149</sup>

There have been some efforts to reconsider prosecutors' role in the larger enterprise of promoting public safety (Coles and Kelling 1999; Glazer 1999).<sup>150</sup> A few local prosecutors' offices around the United States have experimented in what has come to be known as community prosecution, borrowing from the notions of community policing.<sup>151</sup> Typically, in community prosecution, prosecutors are assigned to geographic areas and are responsible for prosecuting all or most of the crimes that arise out of them. The prosecutors are expected to try to learn more about their area's public safety concerns. If community prosecution, however, is limited to prosecuting criminal cases along geographic lines, it is not a significant departure from conventional practice, and does not necessarily reinforce problem-oriented policing. If prosecutors actually reconsider their function as one of solving community crime, disorder and fear problems, rather than just prosecuting individual cases, they reinforce problem-oriented policing.

One of the earliest and best articulations of this shift in the prosecutor's role was written by a former organized-crime prosecutor, Ronald Goldstock (1991). Goldstock argued that prosecutors should see their roles as more than just prosecutors of individual cases, but



rather as leaders of efforts to reduce crime. He went on to argue that prosecutors, even more so than police or elected officials, are in the best position to exercise leadership in problem-oriented responses to crime. While that particular argument was less than fully persuasive, his advocacy for stronger prosecutor involvement in crime reduction was welcome.

Goldstock's vision of the prosecutor as problem-solver has gone largely unfulfilled. There have been a number of experiments with community prosecution and diversions from prosecution, including such alternatives as restorative justice programs,<sup>152</sup> all of which move generally in the direction of problem-oriented policing. There are also instances in which prosecutors have collaborated in police problem-solving initiatives, but there are few reports of systematic, policy-level problem analysis by prosecutors. Some descriptions of community prosecution sound more like commendable efforts by prosecutors to aggregate individual cases into larger cases, and to improve the coordination of law enforcement responses among various agencies; they don't describe the sort of comprehensive problem analysis Herman Goldstein proposed.

Prosecutors' failure to fully engage in a problem-oriented approach to reducing crime, disorder and fear is unfortunate for two related reasons. First, without prosecutors, a valuable perspective on crime problems is missing from many police-led initiatives. Prosecutors are better-aware of how cases are processed through the court system and, accordingly, are more aware of the effectiveness of existing means for disposing of cases. Prosecutors also are more aware of the range of legal responses that might be used to address a particular problem, as well as some of the risks of alternative approaches. Prosecutors have access to data and to judges, and research skills the police often lack. When prosecutors are open-minded and take a broad perspective on their role, they can greatly facilitate problem-oriented policing.<sup>153</sup> The second reason it is unfortunate that prosecutors are not more engaged in problem-oriented policing is that their absence from the process conveys a powerful signal to the police that problem-solving is not valued as highly as criminal investigation. This can discourage the police from investing more fully in problem-solving. Detectives are especially sensitive to prosecutors' signals. Prosecutors' general disengagement with problem-oriented policing partially explains why so few police detectives have engaged with the concept, as well.<sup>154</sup>

The emerging movement toward community prosecution is a positive development toward advancing problem-oriented policing, but it is far from complete. This new orientation toward prosecution remains rare among prosecutors' offices, and it will require every bit as much effort

<sup>152</sup>The COPS Office recently published two documents describing the links between restorative justice and community policing (Nicholl 1999a, 1999b).

<sup>153</sup>The prosecutor's office in Mecklenburg County, N.C., assigned one of its best prosecutors to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, where he became engaged with problem-oriented policing initiatives.

<sup>154</sup>In October 1999, the COPS Office sponsored a conference ("When the Heat's On: Leadership Sessions To Support Problem-Oriented Policing") dedicated largely to the matter of involving investigators in problem-solving. In preparing for this conference, as well as in analyzing the best submissions for the Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing (see Appendix A), I found it difficult to locate more than a handful of problem-solving initiatives led by detectives. For further discussion of the general lack of detective involvement in problem-oriented policing, see Eck (1999). See Cosgrove and Wycoff (1999) for a discussion of the trends among U.S. police agencies with respect to the role of investigations units in community policing and problem-solving.



to reorient prosecutors to their work as it is taking to reorient police officers to theirs.<sup>155</sup> It will require some changes in how law schools train students, especially those aspiring to become government lawyers. Currently, conventional legal training offers little that would prepare a prosecutor for problem-oriented prosecution.

### What Should Be the Role of Local Government Leaders?

If prosecutors have had limited involvement in problem-oriented policing, local government leaders have probably had even less so. To be sure, many, if not most, local government officials have found reasons to support community policing. At a minimum, it receives much federal support in the United States. Unlike those forms of community policing that readily translate into highly marketable programs whereby extra police officers provide new services to the public, problem-oriented policing does not lend itself to sound bites and simple political imagery. Consequently, local government leaders must first invest their time and energy in understanding problem-oriented policing's full implications, if they are to support it. They must invest in such areas as research and analysis, and information technology—investments that are not guaranteed to pay off at any particular time, but are highly likely to pay off in the long term.

San Diego provides one of the strongest examples of local government leadership in problem-oriented policing. From the police department's earliest initiatives in problem-oriented policing, then-Assistant City Manager Jack McGrory came to understand its value and fully supported its implementation. When he subsequently was appointed city manager, he provided the strong leadership necessary to incorporate problem-oriented principles throughout the structure of the city government.

Police departments are by no means the only government agencies susceptible to what Goldstein described as the “means-over-ends syndrome.” Fire departments, building inspection departments, public works agencies, social service agencies, and all others can become just as complacent as the police about their work. They, too, can easily come to understand their work in narrow terms, seeking to make themselves ever more efficient, and not necessarily more effective. They do not naturally see themselves in broader terms, as problem-solvers, anymore than do the police.

Goldstein has long argued that one of the central objectives of the police is “to identify problems that have the potential for becoming more serious problems for individuals, the police or the government” (1977). He argues that the police are in a position to observe the

<sup>155</sup>Several people with whom I spoke, including Dr. Ellen Scrivner, a deputy director of the COPS Office and a trained psychologist, and Dr. Mike Chatterton, the director of the Henry Fielding Centre at the University of Manchester (England), hypothesized that the transition to problem-oriented policing and prosecution may be proving so difficult because it is essentially a shift from the predominantly inductive reasoning methods of conventional policing and the law to the more deductive reasoning methods of science.



indicators of a wide range of problems affecting the community, not just those directly related to crime. This implies that the police might identify problems that do not fit squarely or exclusively within their domain. Moreover, the processes of problem-oriented policing promote the development of police partnerships with other government agencies, partnerships that enable all involved to more comprehensively understand community problems. Whether the police just identify problems for others to address, or address those problems themselves, effective collaboration requires strong leadership from local government leaders. These leaders must work to overcome the traditional divisions of labor and responsibility among the various government departments. One of the hazards of the more popularized versions of community policing is that other government agencies may believe the police can provide more services and assume responsibility for more social problems than they did before. Without leadership to create new expectations that departments collaborate on public safety problems, such collaboration is not likely to happen.

Problem-oriented policing is not featured prominently in the most recent conferences and publications of the major U.S. professional associations of local government leaders (the U.S. Conference of Mayors, the National League of Cities and the International City/County Management Association). Local government leaders have other concerns in addition to public safety, and many do not directly control police operations. However, given the importance of public safety, one would expect these leaders would think more about coordinated and systematic ways of improving it. For the most part, local government leaders still attribute primary responsibility for public safety to the police, fire and ambulance services, despite growing evidence that crime, disorder and fear are greatly influenced by land-use planning, economic development, business regulation, code enforcement, architecture, public housing management, and traffic engineering. Police officers have often assumed the roles of land-use planners, architects and economic developers, as the literature on problem-solving initiatives clearly indicates. It isn't that the police should be local government leaders' primary focus, but that the responsibility for public safety should be more evenly distributed among local government agencies. Were this the case, local government leaders would play a primary role in coordinating and guiding problem-oriented initiatives to reduce crime, disorder and fear.

Should the Police Be Held More Accountable for Reducing Crime, Disorder and Fear?

Should the experience of the past two decades in problem-oriented policing lead us to conclude that the police, in fact, can effect

“If the public demands better police service, the police will likely provide it. But demand is a very localized thing, and demand isn't always expressed in a very clear or sophisticated fashion. Where there are good police leaders, they can help translate that demand into better policing.”

– John Eck

Community leaders still cling to the idea that government and the police can and will solve all their problems, and they tend not to want to take responsibility for solving their own problems.

– Darrel Stephens

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reductions in crime, disorder and fear? Goldstein has long argued that problem-oriented policing is an approach that recognizes the limits of police authority and the limits of police practices alone to bring about significant changes in public safety. Goldstein argues that when the police and the community accept that the police are not omnipotent, the police can solicit and receive the active support of the community and other government agencies to more effectively address the problems of crime, disorder and fear. This makes sense, properly understood, but in light of how theory gets translated into public policy, there is a lot of room for misunderstanding.

<sup>156</sup>For further reading on the strategies and tactics of the New York City Police Department during the 1990s, see Silverman (1999), *Maple with Mitchell* (1999) and Bratton with Knobler (1998).

<sup>157</sup>The aggressive stop-and-search and arrest strategies used by various task forces and street-crime units have come under considerable criticism due to abuses of authority, though former Commissioner Bratton has publicly denounced those practices as being antithetical to his intended policies.

<sup>158</sup>Professor Gary Cordner of Eastern Kentucky University is currently researching the nature, quantity and quality of problem-solving by line officers in the San Diego Police Department. He hopes to develop an understanding of why some officers do effective problem-solving and others do not. The research project, "Enhancing the Analysis and Response Components of Problem-Solving in Community Policing," is funded by the National Institute of Justice.

<sup>159</sup>See Greene (1999) for comparisons between the New York and San Diego policing models.

Whatever else the experience of the New York City Police Department in the 1990s has meant, for a good many political leaders and some police executives, it has represented a bold claim to police efficacy not heard in many years. The distilled lesson from New York, as taught by those who claim credit for its methods, is that the police, given sufficient resources, support and latitude, can bring about significant reductions in crime and disorder. Many elected officials and police executives around the world scrambled to emulate New York's methods, whatever they perceived them to be. It is unlikely that anyone will ever adequately describe precisely what methods the police department used during that time.<sup>156</sup> The city and the police department are simply too enormous for simple explanations. How much the policies developed at police headquarters or the mayor's office actually reflected the practices of police officers in the city's 76 precincts and innumerable specialized bureaus, divisions and units might never be known. The broad characterizations of official policy emphasize high-volume arrests for even low-level offenses, and constant pressure on commanders to respond to emerging crime patterns.<sup>157</sup> Official policy does not appear to have emphasized collaborative problem-solving.

By contrast, the San Diego Police Department is held up as the model for a different set of official police policies that yielded statistical reductions in crime and disorder that were at least as impressive as, if not more so than, New York's during the same time. The department stands as the model agency for problem-oriented policing. However, broad claims about accomplishments in San Diego do not necessarily reflect the daily practices of police officers there either.<sup>158</sup> To what extent San Diego police officers engaged in New York-style aggressive arrest tactics, or New York officers engaged in San Diego-style problem-solving tactics, nor what impact these various tactics had on crime rates, is not fully known.<sup>159</sup>

So, after two decades of experimentation with problem-oriented policing, we are not really much closer to answering the question of whether the police should be held more accountable for reducing crime, disorder and fear, and if so, what approach would best achieve



this. Of course, the answers to these questions do not turn exclusively on the efficacy of problem-oriented policing. Elected officials and media representatives remain bent on having these questions answered in simple terms. Their search for simple answers remains in vain. After 20 years, problem-oriented policing has demonstrated an internal logic, has been successfully applied at the project level, and remains a promising approach for the foreseeable future. In light of the growing contributions to professional knowledge emerging under the framework of situational crime prevention and crime prevention through environmental design, there is growing reason to believe that collaborations of police, governments, businesses, and communities, committed to carefully analyzing community problems and developing tailored responses, can bring about significant changes to public safety levels. Beyond that, claims about the police's capacity to single-handedly reduce crime, disorder and fear at the community or higher level are simply not warranted. The greatest promise of problem-oriented policing may be that it is the approach most likely to maintain the delicate balance between freedom and order, and minimize the likelihood that police actions will undermine their legitimacy in society. This is so largely because the problem-oriented approach rejects the very excessive reliance on the enforcement of criminal law, and the use of force that accompanies it, that so often leads to abuse and consequent erosion of public trust in the police. Achieving that much, while incrementally and systematically improving our understanding about how police and communities can effectively reduce crime, disorder and fear, is a considerable improvement from past approaches to policing.

“Public policymakers and the uninvolved public develop their view of policing from watching TV cop shows. We haven't communicated the core elements sufficiently and consistently enough for them.

– Dennis Nowicki

