Problem-Oriented Policing: Reflections on the First 20 Years

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Foreword

In the last three decades, several concepts have been advanced to structure efforts to improve policing. Among them have been team policing, neighborhood policing, community policing, problem-oriented policing, and, most recently, quality-of-life policing. With much overlap, each concept, as reflected in its name, emphasizes a different need, relegating other commonly advocated reforms to a secondary role, shaped to support that need. This volume traces the efforts to implement problem-oriented policing.

The emphasis in problem-oriented policing is on directing attention to the broad range of problems the community expects the police to handle–the problems that constitute the business of the police–and on how police can be more effective in dealing with them. A layperson may think this focus elementary on first being introduced to it. Indeed, laypeople probably assume that police continually focus on the problems they are expected to handle. But within policing, this focus constitutes a radical shift in perspective.

Problem-oriented policing recognizes, at the outset, that police are expected to deal with an incredibly broad range of diverse community problems–not simply crime. It recognizes that the ultimate goal of the police is not simply to enforce the law, but to deal with problems effectively–ideally, by preventing them from occurring in the first place. It therefore plunges the police into an in-depth study of the specific problems they confront. It invites consideration of a wide range of alternatives, in addition to criminal law, for responding to each specific problem. Thus, problem-oriented policing draws the police away from the traditional preoccupation with creating an efficient organization; from the heavy investment in standard, generic operating procedures for responding to calls and preventing crime; and from heavy dependence on criminal law as the primary means for getting their job done. It looks to increased knowledge and thinking about the specific problems police confront as the driving force in fashioning police services.

The introduction of a new concept to policing is not a neat process, especially in the United States, where approximately 17,000 police agencies operate with a high degree of independence and a record of strong resistance to change. One would be naïve to expect dramatic results in a short time. Indeed, when related to the total field of policing, progress toward achieving the shift in emphasis called for in problem-oriented policing has, over the past two decades, been negligible–a project here, a cluster of problem-solving efforts there. While "problem-oriented policing" has become part of the policing vocabulary, pure examples of its implementation are hard to find; various permutations of the concept are more common. Nevertheless, there have been some indications of significant movement–examples of situations in which officers have identified a specific problem, subjected it to in-depth analysis, and implemented a fresh, novel response that is more effective in dealing with it. When this occurs, one sees the potential of the concept confirmed. And when one assembles these efforts, as occurs at the annual Problem-Oriented Policing Conference or in a publication such as this one, the results appear to be substantial.

Michael Scott has taken on the ambitious task, in this report, of describing what has happened in claimed efforts to implement problem-oriented policing over the past two decades, both in the United States and abroad. He is uniquely equipped to have done so, having been directly involved with me in developing the concept in his days as a student; having had a wide range of experiences in training, implementation and research relating to the concept; and having, throughout this period, been a valued colleague. This was an extraordinarily difficult project. Except for mail and telephone surveys, which have proved unsatisfactory in other contexts, and penetrating field inquiries, which

are very costly, there is no way to quantify what has occurred—to assess the influence, if any, that the advocacy of problem-oriented policing has had on the minds and operations of police scattered about this vast country and the world. We know that much literature has been distributed and numerous training sessions have been conducted, but we know little about the results of these efforts.

Despite these limitations, Scott has, by making maximum use of an eclectic collection of sources and some limited field work, succeeded in producing an extraordinarily useful description of what has occurred under the label of problem-oriented policing, appropriately qualifying, at critical points, the sweep of his findings. Given my own effort to follow these same developments, his summation appears both comprehensive and objective. He distinguishes the strong efforts from the weak; identifies the several misunderstandings and distortions of the concept, providing helpful clarifications; reports on the permutations of the concept—both those that have advanced and sharpened the original goals, and those that have detracted from them; and describes the conditions that have facilitated implementation, and the barriers that have been encountered. He has located and made the fullest use of published materials that relate to the topic. His collection of references is the most comprehensive bibliography that has been compiled on problem-oriented policing; his detailed footnotes enrich the manuscript. Throughout the report, he effectively uses specific case studies from the growing collection of problem-oriented policing projects to illustrate his points.

In 1990, when I published *Problem-Oriented Policing,* I wrote, in the introduction, that the concept of problem-oriented policing is open-ended; that it invites criticism, alterations, additions, and subtractions; and that my intent was to stimulate others to contribute to further developing this overall approach to improving policing. Given the vast arena of policing in democratic societies, I had not contemplated how difficult it would be to sort through what has occurred, to "separate the wheat from the chaff." Looking at what has happened in the past 20 years, Scott extracts some of the most significant developments: the extent to which beat-level police officers, with an abundance of latent talent, have grasped the concept and produced remarkable results; the linkage problem-oriented policing has to the parallel development of situational crime prevention, and how the two can enrich each other; and the degree to which implementation efforts reflect the commitment of individuals rather than agencies. Struggling with the difficulty of integrating problem-oriented policing into an agency that is often preoccupied with responding to calls, handling emergencies and investigating crime, Scott himself contributes to advancing the concept by offering some solid suggestions, based on his experience and research, for achieving that integration. And, in the final section of the report, he explores, in some detail, the most pressing questions and issues that have arisen from the efforts to date, and sets forth ways these might best be addressed.

For those who are interested in advancing problem-oriented policing and who have read my 1990 work on the subject, this report should be read as a companion volume, updating developments over the past 10 years. It will be of some help to those who are looking for specific guidance in addressing a specific problem. Its greater value, however, will be in the contribution it makes to advancing the fundamental point that improvements in policing—whether in organization, staffing, operations, or even relationships with the community—can best be achieved by focusing more directly on the business of the police—on the varied problems that the community expects the police to handle—and, through study and experimentation, on developing a wider range of new, more specific and more effective ways to deal with them.

Herman Goldstein
Madison, Wisc.
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About the Author

Michael Scott is an independent police research and management consultant. He researched and wrote this report as a Visiting Fellow at the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office).

Scott has helped implement problem-oriented policing from management positions in several police agencies. He served as the chief of police at the Lauderhill, Fla. Police Department where he founded that police agency in 1994 under the principles of problem-oriented policing. He was special assistant to the chief of police at the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department where he was primarily responsible for overseeing the problem-oriented policing implementation in St. Louis. He was director of administration at the Fort Pierce, Fla., Police Department where he trained officers and guided a reorganization of the department in accordance with the principles of problem-oriented policing. He served as legal assistant to New York City Police Commissioner Benjamin Ward where he helped guide the development of a major community policing effort, the Community Patrol Officer Program.

Scott has also worked as a senior researcher at the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) where he developed and delivered problem-oriented policing training to police agencies around the country and helped organize the first national conference on problem-oriented policing. He has served since 1996 as a judge for the Police Executive Research Forum's Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing and has been a regular presenter at PERF's annual conference on problem-oriented policing. He was the 1996 recipient of PERF's Gary P. Hayes award for leadership in improving police service. He is the author of *Managing for Success: A Police Chief's Survival Guide* and co-author of *Deadly Force: What We Know. A Practitioner's Desk Reference to Police-Involved Shootings in the United States* and *Challenge to Change: The 21st Century Policing Project,* all published by PERF. He is also co-editor of *Tackling Crime and Other Public-Safety Problems: Case Studies in Problem-Solving* published by the COPS Office.

Scott began his policing career as a police officer in the Madison, Wisc. Police Department. He was a research assistant to Herman Goldstein during the first test of problem-oriented policing in the early 1980's in which researchers helped the police explore the problems of drunk driving and repeat sex offenders in Madison. He was again Goldstein's research assistant on a project that culminated in the publication of Goldstein's book, *Problem-Oriented Policing.*

Scott holds a J.D. from the Harvard Law School where he was also an observer of the early Executive Sessions on Community Policing held at the Kennedy School of Government. He also holds a B.A. in Behavioral Science & Law and Sociology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison where he was a student of Herman Goldstein's and where he wrote his undergraduate thesis on the occupational perspectives of police patrol officers.

Summary of the Report

Introduction

What is the Purpose of the Report?

This summary report describes how Herman Goldstein's problem-oriented policing framework has been developed and, at times, distorted in the many efforts to make it a standard way of policing. I prepared the report as a Visiting Fellow to the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS Office). I drew upon my personal experience, reviewed relevant literature and problem-oriented policing project reports, visited selected police departments, attended conferences, and talked extensively with Herman Goldstein and others well-versed in problem-oriented policing.

A Brief History of the Spread of Problem-Oriented Policing

The first formal experimentation with Goldstein's model of problem-oriented policing occurred in Madison, Wisc., in 1981 when Goldstein and his associates worked with the Madison Police Department exploring the community's response to drinking drivers and repeat sex offenders. Around 1982 the police in London and in Surrey, England undertook their own experimentation with the concept. The Baltimore County Police Department formally introduced Goldstein's problem-oriented policing model into its COPE unit's operations in 1983 and the Newport News, Va., Police Department followed suit in 1984. A number of other police agencies began to incorporate at least some of the problem-oriented policing methodology into broader community policing efforts during the 1980s.

In 1994, the COPS Office began to link funding for new police officers to the broad concept of community policing of which problem-solving was a key element. The COPS Office was required by law to advance community policing generally, but outside of a few of its competitive funding programs, most of its large funding programs did not require that recipient police agencies engage more specifically in problem-oriented methods. While the link between problem-solving and community policing in this large federal funding program has yielded many benefits, the linkage has also blurred the distinction between problem-oriented policing and community policing.

Many police agencies in the United States and Canada, and a growing number in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, South Africa, and Scandinavia, report that they are now

engaged in problem-oriented policing in some fashion. While there is no easy way to quantify the number of police agencies engaged in problem-oriented policing, much less to gauge the precise nature and quality of those efforts, it is safe to say that far more agencies claim to be engaged in problem-oriented policing today than at any other time.

Problem-oriented policing continues to advance across the police field, even while the adoption of problem-oriented policing into particular police agencies seldom happens in a linear fashion. Interest in the concept and commitment to its implementation rises and falls in response to many internal and external factors. Changes in leadership, competing priorities or simply inertia can alter the course of implementation. Accordingly, one might reach different conclusions about the vitality of problem-oriented policing depending on whether one was looking only at selected police agencies or at the police field as a whole.

However slow, modest and uneven the movement in problem-oriented policing has been, it is now a central part of at least the language of modern police management. But along with the rise in popularity of problem-oriented policing has come a certain amount of distortion of its original meaning. The next chapter describes how the elements of Goldstein's ideal model of problem-oriented policing have developed in practice.

CHAPTER 1: REVISITING THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF PROBLEM-ORIENTED POLICING

Revisiting the Basic Elements of Problem-Oriented Policing

Herman Goldstein's problem-oriented policing concept is a comprehensive prescription for improving the way in which the police do business. It calls for the police to understand their work in a new light, to recognize that what they are called upon to do is to address a wide range of problems that threaten the safety and security of communities, including, but not limited to what is commonly viewed as serious crime. The concept calls for the police to improve their understanding of the underlying conditions that give rise to community problems and to respond to these problems through a much wider range of methods than they have conventionally used. Behind the seemingly common-sense simplicity of the basic elements of problem-oriented policing lie real challenges for the police, communities and the rest of government to fully understand and implement them.

What is the Distinction Between Problem-Oriented Policing and Problem-Solving?

In its broadest sense, the term "problem-oriented policing", as used by Goldstein, describes a comprehensive framework for improving the police's capacity to perform their mission. Problem-oriented policing impacts virtually everything the police do, operationally as well as managerially. The term "problem-solving" is a more limited notion; it describes the mental process that is at the core of problem-oriented policing.

What Does "Problem" Mean in Problem-Oriented Policing?

The current literature on policing finds the term "problem" popping up everywhere. While it refers to many different matters, Goldstein's use of the term in the context of problem-oriented policing is highly specific. He used the term to convey the notion that one can classify, package and understand police work in a new way, as an aggregation of incidents that share certain common features. The precise understanding of the term "problem" remains much in need of reinforcement.

How Should Problems be Defined and Described?

How one defines a problem greatly influences how one will address it. One can define or describe problems in a variety of ways. One can describe them in terms of what the offensive behavior is, who the people involved are, when the problem occurs, or where the problem occurs. These various descriptors obviously are not mutually exclusive. The descriptor is merely a shorthand way of describing the entire problem.

However one describes a problem in shorthand, one must address the offensive behavior. This is important for several reasons. Without a clear focus on specific forms of offensive behavior, the police run the risk of adopting overbroad or ineffective responses. While it is sometimes convenient to describe problems in terms of a class of people or even one individual, it is dangerous morally, ethically and legally for the police to treat a person or people as the problem itself. Shorthand labels can also mask important distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate behavior. Describing problems as the "drug problem" or even the "narcotics problem" is so broad as to be nearly useless. Characterizing problems with broad labels like "drugs," "violence," "disorder," "neighborhood decline," or "juveniles," without specifying the behavior at issue, often results in a simplistic analysis of the problem and, consequently, to hopelessly inadequate responses. Overly broad definitions of problems also create the risk that the

police will be drawn into trying to address aspects of a large problem that are well beyond their capacity or mandate. Any shorthand label for a problem should be followed by a more complete and exacting description of the specific offensive behavior. I have sometimes reminded myself and others of this rule of problem-oriented policing in grammatical terms, by saying, "If you don't have a verb, you don't have a problem." Forcing oneself to include a verb in the description of the problem helps maintain the appropriate focus on problematic behavior. For example, a problem described in shorthand as "transients in a public park" is made more explicit by labeling it "transients sleeping and panhandling in a public park." This simple change draws one's attention to the behavior and not merely to the status of the persons involved.

When problem-solvers redefine or reclassify the problem on the basis of preliminary analysis, this leads to conceptually clearer and more manageable initiatives. Asking whether the problem looks any different upon closer analysis remains a vital step in the problem-solving process, but it is too often overlooked.

What Should the Police Be Concerned About in Problem-Oriented Policing?

Focusing on Community Concerns vs. Internal Concerns

Goldstein's starting point for articulating the problem-oriented approach was that police managers should focus on how their agencies address community problems and not merely on how their agencies are administered and organized. Getting police to refocus on community concerns is in itself a significant challenge. Police administrators and officers understandably focus on the organizational, administrative and procedural problems that directly affect their physical safety, career opportunities, financial status, and general occupational contentment. The police are no different in this regard from practitioners in other fields. Ask most medical practitioners today to list their problems, and one can expect to find managed care higher on the list than emphysema or heart disease. Teachers talk more about classroom discipline than how to teach algebra more effectively. Existing case studies in problem-oriented policing demonstrate that the police are capable of using problem-solving methods on substantive community problems. But if the police continue to focus exclusively or primarily on internal organizational problems, even if they apply some problem-solving methods toward their resolution, then problem-oriented policing will have failed on its face.

*Finding the Best Response vs. Merely Improving Current
Responses and Systems*

Problem-solving inquiries should seek the best response to the
substantive problem at hand, and not merely seek to improve current
responses and systems. This distinction is a subtle but important one.
A fair number of problem-oriented policing projects are essentially
efforts to improve a criminal justice or investigative process, devoid of
a careful inquiry into whether that process is the most effective means
of addressing the problem in the first place. For example, in recent
years, a number of police agencies have recognized value in
establishing more collaborative working relationships with probation
and parole agencies. Accordingly, a number of problem-oriented
policing projects have set about finding ways for the police and
probation and parole agents to more effectively and efficiently
supervise people under conditional release. The underlying logic, of
course, is that more effective and efficient supervision will reduce the
levels or seriousness of crimes committed by those people. In many
instances, however, the assumption that supervision of previously
convicted offenders is the best response to the problem goes
unexplored and unchallenged. The value of police-probation and
parole collaboration becomes stronger if it is first clearly established
that improved supervision will result in substantial improvements to
the specific community problem.

*Focusing on Community Problems for Which the Police Should Assume Some
Responsibility*

Goldstein has advocated that the police recognize their role in society
as being broader than enforcing the criminal law. At the same time,
however, he has argued that the police mandate must not be
unlimited. If the police become too involved in every government and
quasigovernment function, they risk eroding balances of power in
local and even national government. Police agencies run the risk of
overextending their expertise and resources–trying to achieve
objectives about which they have little or no expertise. By expending
resources on newly adopted mandates, they risk devoting too few
resources to conventional mandates.

The community problems the police should focus on are those that
fall within their mandate as it is defined for each agency. In the era of
community policing, that mandate has been expanded, partly by the
police themselves. Police departments everywhere are initiating
programs in which police officers adopt roles of counselors, teachers,
coaches, and brokers of charitable works. The most common
justification offered for adopting these new roles is that the police can
inculcate good moral and civic habits in the community, and as a

result, some unspecified measure of offending will be reduced. Too often though, the police adopt these roles for other purposes–to improve their community image or deflect criticism of other, objectionable, police practices.

Under a problem-oriented policing approach, the police would recognize how functions like moral education, youth recreation and charity are integral to public safety, but would not see their role as one of providing these services directly, at least not permanently. The key for the police is first, to establish some sense of ownership or responsibility for a community problem, and if the problem falls within the police mandate, either address it themselves, broker ownership to some other entity or, in some instances, merely refuse to accept ownership. The police may join with many divergent entities in studying a problem, but ultimately the responsibilities for various responses should be apportioned among those entities according to their resources and competencies. A good example was provided by the Glendale, Calif., Police Department when in 1997 it helped develop a new program for day laborers that directly responded to legitimate police interests in reducing crime and disorder. The police did not assume responsibility, however, for actually running the program. Similarly, the Fontana, Calif., Police Department in 1998 helped develop a new assistance program for transients that achieved similar objectives without assuming the large responsibility of administering the program.

What Does a Search for Underlying Conditions, Contributing Factors and Causes Really Mean?

Root Causes vs. Underlying Conditions

The search for contributing factors and underlying conditions is sometimes confused with efforts to address the broadest of social and psychological factors that contribute to crime and disorder, factors often referred to as the "root causes" of crime and disorder. Associating problem-oriented policing with a search for "root causes" is misguided. Problem-oriented policing looks for the deepest underlying conditions that are amenable to intervention, balancing what is knowable with what is possible. Many of what are commonly thought of as "root causes" are beyond the police's capacity to change.

Causation vs. Blameworthiness

Causation and blameworthiness are not the same thing. Problem-oriented responses affix responsibility on those most capable of effecting lasting improvements to the conditions that give rise to the crime and disorder. Those most capable of addressing a problem may

not be those most blameworthy for that problem. To many police officers, steeped in the legalistic traditions of assigning blame through the enforcement of the law, the process of spreading out responsibility for responding to problems does not come naturally. Effective problem-solving places a higher priority on improving the overall response to the problem than on assigning blame for the problem. This is why it is so critical that the police develop effective working relationships with those affected by a problem, relationships built in a spirit of mutual trust, to overcome the natural defensiveness that accompanies discussions of causation, blame and responsibility.

What Standards of Proof Should Apply in Analyzing Problems?

Some police scholars advocate setting high standards of social scientific proof in problem-oriented policing, standards that can best be met by rigorous application of experimental testing conditions. Other scholars have advocated a more flexible standard of proof that takes into account the severity of the problem, the costs of being wrong, the research skills of the problem-solvers, the practicality of various research methods, the body of existing knowledge about the particular type of problem, and so forth. As a practical matter, the standard of proof that ultimately will prevail varies from problem to problem and place to place. Within the broad limits of the law, what stands as an acceptable response to any particular problem depends on what is acceptable to the local community, at least to those members who are paying attention to the problem and who can exercise influence on the particular policymakers.

How Should the Police Analyze Problems, and How Well Are They Doing So Now?

Problem analysis remains the aspect of the concept most in need of improvement. This is partly due to inadequate resources and weak analysis methods, but it is also due to the different ways in which the police and researchers understand how analysis contributes to addressing problems.

The Value and Limits of Analysis

In order for the police to commit adequate resources to analyzing problems, they must first fully appreciate how analysis can improve their responses to problems. In order for researchers to help the police with analysis, they must appreciate the practical concerns of and demands upon the police with respect to community problems. (These issues are discussed more fully in chapter 4.)

A thorough problem analysis, at a minimum, means fully describing the problem, describing the multiple and often conflicting interests at stake in the problem, calculating the nature and costs of the harm arising from the problem, and taking inventory of and critiquing the current responses to the problem. In the problem-oriented policing model, problem-solvers, whether they be police practitioners or researchers, should be open to doubt about things they thought they knew about the problem and insist upon proving or disproving matters with objective evidence. They must balance the desire to be certain and precise with the practical difficulties in being so. They must recognize what data can and cannot tell them. They should be interested in learning how similar problems have been analyzed and addressed elsewhere while at the same time recognizing how their local situation might be different. They must ask the right questions and not waste effort finding answers to questions of no practical significance. They must balance the need to reflect on problems with the need to act upon them. These are no small challenges and they require that both police practitioners and researchers adjust and adapt the conventional ways in which they analyze problems and decide how to respond to them.

Inadequate Analysis Resources

Problem analysis can fall short of ideal without adequate time to complete the analysis and the research expertise necessary to do so properly. Research expertise is valuable for setting up an appropriate methodology for conducting the inquiry, ensuring data are complete and reliable, and applying statistical data analyses from which valid conclusions can be drawn. Some problem-solving and analysis guides have gone a long way toward providing street officers with some basic understanding of problem-solving methodologies, but they do not provide the same level of expertise as can trained and experienced researchers.

The Action Research Model

Goldstein envisioned an action research model in which the researcher is an integral part of a team of people working toward some particular result. The researcher not only collects and analyzes data and draws conclusions, but also proposes interventions along with others trying to intervene in the problem. This research model seeks to balance an outside researcher's independence and objectivity with a pragmatic interest in achieving certain results.

Accessing and Analyzing Police Data

Computerized record-keeping has been a boon to problem-oriented policing. Data that just a few years ago would have been enormously

difficult to retrieve are now available at the touch of a few buttons. Unfortunately, the ease of searching and analyzing large volumes of aggregate coded data too often leads problem-solvers to skip a more detailed analysis of the written narratives in individual police reports. Police report narratives contain many of the more useful insights about problems.

Searching for Relevant Research and Good Police Practices

An important aspect of problem analysis should be a review of the literature on that problem. That literature might be in published books and articles, or in unpublished reports from within and outside the police agency. In practice, however, literature reviews conducted as part of a problem-solving project are rare. Police practitioners often do not have the benefit of assistance from researchers or do not have access to research libraries.

Unfortunately, even if police had more access to research libraries, or if trained researchers were conducting a literature review, their search would not be productive with respect to many types of problems. While there is more relevant research on some community problems than many police officers realize, it is far less than one might expect given how common many problems are and how many public resources are spent trying to address them. Again, compared to the body of literature in most other professions, the amount of published research about common community problems seems miniscule. There simply isn't enough quality research conducted to reliably inform the police about what does and does not work with respect to most crime and disorder problems.

The police can also improve their responses to community problems by studying their own and other agency's past efforts to address similar problems. Reports about problem-solving initiatives are a valuable source of knowledge from which to draw, even if those initiatives did not apply rigorous research methods. Unfortunately, most police agencies do not routinely prepare detailed reports on most of their problem-solving initiatives. Some police managers are reluctant to impose what might be perceived as excessive reporting requirements on officers whom they do not want to discourage from engaging in problem-solving. While this is understandable as managers try to coax officers into policing in a different way, a lot of knowledge about how various problems have been handled has been lost. Some police agencies have created computer records, project reports, forms and newsletters to document problem-solving efforts. These have great potential to help officers search for solutions to common problems and to teach officers problem-solving skills through real examples. Somehow, more police-led problem-solving efforts must be

documented in writing and police managers must then make these resources accessible and encourage that they be reviewed as a standard step in future problem analysis.

Compared to the record-keeping systems and reporting requirements for calls for service, incident reports and criminal investigations, the state of record-keeping and reporting for problem-oriented activities is rather primitive. Ultimately, police agencies must assign the same degree of importance to the official records related to problem-oriented initiatives as they do other official records.

What Does It Mean to Develop an Understanding of the Multiple and Competing Interests at Stake in Problems?

Many problem-oriented policing initiatives fail to take complete account of all the interests at stake with respect to the problem. This matter of accounting for the various interests is often simplified into a mere inventory of stakeholders. In fact, most stakeholders have multiple and competing interests in a problem. Exploring interests in a problem begins by asking what the *social* interests are in the problem, and then asking what the *government* interests are in the problem. Not all social interests should be government interests. Once one identifies the government interests, one can turn to asking what police interests are at stake. If the police conclude they have no interest at stake in the problem, there is little justification for their continued involvement regarding it. There are many social problems in which the police are well-advised not to become embroiled. In exploring the various nonpolice interests at stake in a problem, it is important to go beyond the most visible and obvious interests. There are often hidden commercial interests involved in many problems, as well as latent social prejudices and biases. These interests should at least be brought out in the open, where they can be considered. The careful probing of these interests is among the most enlightening parts of the problem-solving process.

What Does It Mean to Take Inventory of and Critique the Current Responses to Problems?

Many problem-oriented project reports allude only briefly to the inadequacy of current responses, mainly by making the obvious assertion that a new response is needed. Current responses are often described briefly and generally, and casually discredited as being ineffective. One often reads in problem-solving project reports cursory assessments of current practices such as "the traditional response of handling calls, taking reports and making arrests was not working". But brief and general descriptions like these are not illuminating and, often, not entirely accurate. Individual police officers

frequently develop their own innovative responses to problems, responses that are not fully and accurately encompassed in their agency's standard operating procedures. Other agencies and groups may be responding to problems in ways that the police are unaware. Some responses, however traditional, may prove more effective upon closer analysis than they might initially appear. It takes some effort to discern precisely how problems are being handled and to what extent current practice is effective.

The flip side of dismissing the value of current conventional responses is, when faced with a problem that is not getting adequate attention, to simply increase the effort put into conventional responses, without carefully considering their strategic value. Many reports on problem-solving projects leap quickly to judgments that greater police presence, more arrests, more certain prosecution, or stiffer penalties are the best response to a problem. Such judgments are often made without examining the effectiveness of existing levels of these interventions.

How Should the Police Develop and Implement New Responses to Problems?

Expanding the Range of Response Alternatives

Goldstein urges the police to greatly expand their range of alternative responses to problems, responses beyond the conventional increased police presence and criminal arrests. A wide range of responses is emerging from reports of problem-oriented policing projects. New responses to chronic problems should be well-considered, following logically from careful problem analysis, not merely a few clever ideas thought up as a hasty reaction. Clever ideas have some value, but without a clear line of reasoning that articulates the basis for the new response, they do not add much to the body of professional knowledge from which other police agencies and communities can draw. Police agencies often copy other agencies' clever or innovative ideas. But without first assessing how they might work in the local situation, these ideas might well prove ineffective. It is also unfortunate when the police launch problem-solving initiatives with a preferred response in mind. The subsequent problem analysis serves more to justify the preferred response than to inform the decision-maker about the nature of the problem.

What Does It Mean for the Police to Be Proactive?

Problem-oriented policing prefers proactive responses to reactive responses. Proactivity means first, that responses to problems should prevent future harm, and not just address past harm, and second, that

the police should speak out about community problems that are not being adequately addressed. Advocating that the police should be more proactive should not be understood as an endorsement of overaggressive police tactics. Goldstein has described a continuum of pressure the police might apply to get other entities to assume or share ownership for community problems. The degree of pressure the police apply should depend on the strength of the evidence they have regarding the nature of the problem and its causes. From least to greatest pressure, the police can do the following to get others to accept ownership or responsibility for problems:

- develop educational programs regarding responsibility for the problem
- make a straightforward informal request of some entity to assume responsibility for the problem
- make a targeted confrontational request of some entity to assume responsibility for the problem
- engage another existing organization that has the capacity to help address the problem
- press for the creation of a new organization to assume ownership of the problem
- shame the delinquent entity by calling public attention to its failure to assume responsibility for the problem
- withdraw police services relating to certain aspects of the problem
- charge fees for police services related to the problem
- press for legislation mandating that entities take measures to prevent the problem
- bring a civil action to compel entities to accept responsibility for the problem.

Who Should Be Involved in Problem-Oriented Policing, and How?

Goldstein has always encouraged line officers' involvement in problem-oriented policing, but he did not anticipate that they would emerge as the leaders in addressing problems. He imagined that command-level police officials and research collaborators would lead most problem-oriented initiatives. In practice, line officers have led many projects, even when the scope of the project has been quite large. In one respect, this provides some evidence of the talent line-level police officers have, talent that police managers do not fully appreciate or exploit. But it may also be that supervisory and command-level officers are not sufficiently engaged in practicing problem-oriented policing. Getting command-level officers involved in, and holding them accountable for, addressing community problems is critical, but there are pitfalls if not done properly. When commanders are held accountable for problem-solving, problems tend to get defined in their terms, and less so in the terms of those most familiar with problems—the community and line officers.

The ideal level of police authority for providing leadership in problem-oriented policing projects depends on the scope of the problem being addressed. As a general proposition, supervisors should provide active leadership in localized beat problems; commanders in intermediate-level problems; and top commanders, perhaps including the chief executive, in communitywide problems. In every instance, line officers should be encouraged to be as involved as their time and abilities permit.

That higher-ranking police officials seldom actively lead problem-oriented policing initiatives suggests that the problem-solving method of operations has yet to achieve a high level of importance in most police organizations. It tends still to be viewed as something that only beat police officers do. Police chiefs need to pay at least as much personal attention to substantive community problems as they do to administrative and political concerns. Some command officers, to the extent they are supportive of problem-oriented policing, see their role as administrative manager, ensuring that systems are in place and resources available for line-level problem-solving. This is fine as far as it goes, but without more personal and direct command-level leadership, few large and complex community problems are likely to be taken on in a sophisticated, problem-oriented way. Line-level officers lack the requisite resources in most instances to conduct the sort of analysis and effect the sort of responses necessary to bring about substantial improvements in communitywide problems. Given the abundance of communitywide problems in every jurisdiction, supervisors and command-level officers need to become more personally engaged in problem-oriented policing.

How Should the Effectiveness of Implemented Response Strategies Be Evaluated?

Process vs. Outcome Measurement

Perhaps the single greatest source of confusion relating to the evaluation of problem-oriented policing initiatives surrounds the distinction between the measurement of processes and the measurement of outcomes. The measurement of processes is the documentation of the actions taken in implementing responses, and an assessment of whether the responses were actually implemented as intended. The measurement of outcomes is the assessment of the ultimate impact the responses had on the problem, as defined (i.e., Did the problem improve, worsen or remain the same? Were the outcome objectives achieved?). These two different types of evaluation are often confused. Most commonly, evaluators limit their inquiry to determining how well and to what degree the police and others actually implemented their plan of action. While this

information is vitally important, it cannot be substituted for some inquiry about what effect the plan of action, however well-implemented, had on the problem. Ideally, a problem-oriented policing project will include measurement of both processes and outcomes.

What Standards of Proof Should Apply in Evaluating Effectiveness?

Goldstein acknowledges the many difficulties in establishing precise and certain conclusions in the complex world of human behavior where policing occurs, and accordingly, he is willing to settle for less than the most rigorous tests of effectiveness in most instances. Insisting on rigorous standards, however justified theoretically, would likely stifle much experimentation with the problem-oriented concept. How precise and certain one has to be in problem-oriented policing depends greatly on the consequences of being wrong.

What Are the Specific Objectives of Problem-Solving Efforts?

The Newport News study first delineated a set of generic legitimate objectives in problem-solving. It grouped those objectives into five categories:

1. totally eliminate a problem;
2. substantially reduce a problem;
3. reduce the harm created by a problem;
4. deal with a problem better (e.g., treat people more humanely, reduce costs or increase effectiveness); and
5. remove the problem from police consideration.

The fifth objective, removing problems from police consideration, differs from the first four in that it does not directly address the question of whether the problem, as experienced in the community, will be improved by removing it from police consideration. Taken to the extreme, the police could claim success in problem-oriented policing merely by working to absolve themselves of responsibility for problems. If shifting responsibility for addressing a problem to another entity results in more effective handling of the problem, then the objective is legitimate. If such a shift results merely in some efficiency gains for the police, then it may have some merit, but one cannot consider it an effective resolution.

Often neglected in evaluations are indicators of the prevalence of the problem, the net harm caused by the problem, the possible displacement of the problem, the possible unintended benefits of the response, and an accounting of the total costs arising out of the problem and responses to it.

CHAPTER 2: PUTTING PROBLEM-ORIENTED POLICING AND PROBLEM-SOLVING IN THE CONTEXT OF THE WHOLE POLICE MISSION

How Does Problem-Solving Fit in With Other Aspects of Police Work?

Where does problem-solving leave the conventional tasks and methods for responding to calls for service or investigating crimes? How should police administrators who endorse problem-oriented policing reconcile the demands on their agencies to continue performing conventional police tasks with the new demands to engage in substantive problem-solving? Answering these questions requires returning to some first principles of policing. Goldstein argued that to understand policing properly, one has to distinguish between the objectives the police are trying to achieve and the methods they use to achieve them. Accordingly, investigating crimes and enforcing laws, long thought of as basic policing objectives, are not objectives in and of themselves, but rather methods for achieving other, more broadly stated, objectives. Problem-oriented policing, then, is concerned with expanding on and improving the methods the police use to achieve their more fundamental objectives.

What Are the Fundamental Objectives of Policing?

The fundamental objectives of policing are the ultimate purposes for which police agencies have been created. Goldstein characterized the fundamental objectives of the police as follows:

1. to prevent and control conduct threatening to life and property (including serious crime);
2. to aid crime victims and protect people in danger of physical harm;
3. to protect constitutional guarantees, such as the right to free speech and assembly;
4. to facilitate the movement of people and vehicles;
5. to assist those who cannot care for themselves, including the intoxicated, the addicted, the mentally ill, the physically disabled, the elderly, and the young;
6. to resolve conflict between individuals, between groups, or between citizens and their government;
7. to identify problems that have the potential for becoming more serious for individuals, the police or the government; and
8. to create and maintain a feeling of security in the community.

The ultimate aim of problem-oriented policing is to continually make the police better at accomplishing each of the above objectives–to better prevent crime, to better assist victims, to make communities feel safer, and so forth. Everything the police do, whether using

conventional or innovative methods, should be in pursuit of one or more of these fundamental objectives. Problem-oriented policing makes sense to those who share these fundamental beliefs about the police's role and who see policing as a complex and sensitive function, but less so to those who don't.

What Are the Various Operational Strategies of Police Work?

It is also possible to understand policing in terms of the various methods or strategies used to achieve these objectives. The police employ innumerable specific tactics, but one can better understand these in terms of a few core operational strategies. There are five core operational strategies–preventive patrol, routine incident response, emergency response, criminal investigation, and problem-solving–and one ancillary operational strategy, support services. The first four operational strategies constitute the ways police have conventionally done their work, at least since the 1930s. Problem-solving is a new operational strategy, introduced in Goldstein's problem-oriented policing concept.

Each operational strategy of police work has unique and distinct features. Each represents a particular process or method for approaching situations the police encounter. Each is taught to police officers (problem-solving, only recently), and officers are taught when each is appropriate. Each has a distinct general procedural framework that guides officers in doing their work within that operational strategy. Each has a distinct general goal or objective. Each entails a unique way of defining a unit of work, and distinct general performance standards and indicators. Each has its own accountability, reporting and record-keeping systems.

Preventive patrol remains the predominant operational strategy of policing in terms of time spent, all research questioning its effectiveness notwithstanding. Most reactive police business is handled using *routine incident responses* which entail the methodical collection of information about a situation, and classification of the situation. Police use *emergency responses* far less frequently than routine incident responses, yet they are probably the most critical to the police agency's success, because human life is most directly at stake. *Criminal investigations,* while constituting a smaller proportion of police work than most people imagine, dominates the public's (and the police's own) perception of police work. *Support services* (like providing copies of police reports, taking fingerprints for noninvestigative purposes, distributing or teaching generic crime prevention information, and operating youth activity programs) serve primarily to promote and enhance police legitimacy in the eyes of the public by providing nonconfrontational, nonadversarial and noncontroversial services to the public.

Problem-solving is the least well-developed operational strategy. Like the other operational strategies, problem-solving has a distinct framework for guiding action. Problem-solving methodology in policing is known familiarly by such acronyms as SARA or CAPRA. It entails problem identification, analysis, response, and evaluation. The general objective of problem-solving is to reduce harm caused by patterns of chronic offensive behavior. The unit of work in problem-solving is known as a "problem," a "problem-solving project" or a "POP project." Performance indicators are significant reductions in harm that are plausibly caused by some specific intended intervention, reductions that hold for some reasonable period of time. Standards of proof have not been sufficiently developed, but the current standards are adapted from the social sciences. Problem-solving also involves some specialized training, and systems for reporting and accounting for problem-solving are being developed. For most of the history of policing, problem-solving has not been recognized as a distinct operational strategy of police work. Even since the advent of problem-oriented policing, most police agencies still have not elevated problem-solving to the level of the other operational strategies, failing to develop the formal systems needed to sustain it.

At What Levels is Police Work Done?

One can also understand police work in terms of the various levels at which police operate. That is, policing in any given jurisdiction occurs on several scales, ranging from highly localized to intermediate levels to a communitywide level. Each operational strategy can be applied at each operating level. For example, criminal investigation occurs at the localized level during the investigation of a single crime with a single victim. It also occurs at the communitywide level, where the policies and practices for investigating an entire class of crimes, and potentially affecting the entire community, are determined. The same pattern holds for the problem-solving operational strategy, which ranges from highly localized problem-solving (e.g., one drug house, or even one person) to the intermediate level (e.g., a prostitution strip), to the communitywide level (e.g., juvenile homicides throughout a city).

Nearly all police work can be understood within this general conceptual framework of objectives, operational strategies and operating levels. The framework helps explain what the police are trying to achieve, how they are trying to achieve it, and on what scale they are operating. The ultimate goal of police reform is to enable the police to better achieve the full range of their objectives, effectively, efficiently and in a manner consistent with basic principles of justice. To do so, the police must be able to perform well in each operational strategy of police work, and at each operating level. This requires that the police develop an organizational capacity to employ the

appropriate operational strategy of police work with the appropriate level of resources. It means having a refined understanding of what particular objectives the police are trying to achieve. It means being able to make smooth transitions between and among the various operational strategies of police work, and up and down the operating levels.

Making the links between and among the cells of this matrix is challenging and demands sophisticated police work and management–knowing, for example, when a pattern of routine incidents indicates a larger underlying problem that might lead to worse disruption of community life if not addressed, and then using the right level of resources and the right processes to address the situation. A good police department is one in which all operational and administrative systems are aligned and prepared to respond to the community's needs. Where policing often goes wrong is in failures to recognize and balance competing objectives, failures to recognize that a different operational strategy is required for a situation, and failures to use the right level of resources for a particular situation. Precisely because the dynamics of social conflict change so quickly, police organizations are seriously challenged to become highly sensitized to these changes and to respond appropriately. In its broadest sense, problem-oriented policing is a framework designed to help police meet this challenge.

How Should the Police Integrate the Need to Address Community Problems With the Desire to Improve Administrative and Procedural Processes?

Problem-solving methods can be applied to community problems as well as to internal administrative and procedural problems, but the mere application of a problem-solving process does not automatically render the undertaking a form of problem-oriented policing in Goldstein's terms. For example, a police department supply clerk could use a problem-solving process to work out difficulties ordering uniforms, but this would not make uniform acquisition part of problem-oriented policing. The "problems" to which Goldstein refers in problem-oriented policing are matters directly relating to the public's safety and security, not to the police agency's inner workings.

The police can apply problem-solving to the process of investigating crimes or responding to emergencies, but if this results only in making these processes more efficient, without creating some overall improvements to the public's safety and security, it does not constitute problem-oriented policing. Problem-oriented policing entails making tangible improvements to the public's safety and security, and increasing police effectiveness, not merely making police processes less burdensome to the police and/or the public. While it is legitimate and

proper to apply problem-solving methods to administrative issues or to promote procedural efficiency, no amount of efficiency-driven problem-solving can substitute for the more important and more challenging application of problem-solving to community crime, disorder and fear.

Similarly, making the organizational and administrative changes necessary to support problem-oriented policing is not the same as practicing problem-oriented policing. Only systematic and well-analyzed improvements in policies and practices–those made to increase public safety and security–constitute the essence of problem-oriented policing. All else, however important, is ancillary.

It is difficult to overstate the extent to which administrative and political matters can consume the time and attention of the decision-makers most responsible for public safety, including police administrators, other government agency administrators and legislators. Even when there is a deliberate move to adopt a problem orientation to policing or local government, the business of managing organizational change often crowds out the business of addressing actual community problems, at least among top decision-makers.

It may turn out that the practice of problem-oriented policing should precede the realignment of the police organization. Without a clear understanding of what the final product is–the successful conclusion of problem-oriented policing initiatives that demonstrably improve public safety–the process of realignment seems uncertain and threatening. Organizational change in police agencies should flow from the experiences of addressing community problems, in somewhat the same way that assembly-line processes in automobile manufacturing plants should flow from the design of the automobile. In short, form should follow function.

CHAPTER 3: RELATING PROBLEM-ORIENTED POLICING TO OTHER MOVEMENTS IN POLICE REFORM AND CRIME PREVENTION

Various schools of thought on modern police reform, as well as several parallel or complementary movements and theories, have significance for the problem-oriented policing movement. All these movements in the realm where policing, crime prevention and research intersect, have influenced, and been influenced by, problem-oriented policing. Some of these movements complement problem-oriented policing and are variations on its themes, emphasizing one or another element. Other movements compete with problem-oriented policing for acceptance as a general model for improving policing.

Team Policing

Team policing, a loose collection of ideas about how the police might more effectively serve the public, is, in hindsight, the precursor to contemporary community policing methods. Decentralization of authority, which was central to team policing's underlying theories, proved threatening to many police executives, and did not survive as well as geographic decentralization. Team policing might have been a bit ahead of its time–too much, too soon, to be sustained–but many of its premises were and remain sound, and it had sufficient appeal both to the community and to rank-and-file police officers. Indeed, several core features of team policing, like stability of geographic assignment, unity of command, interaction between police and community, geographic decentralization of police operations, despecialization of police services, greater responsiveness to community concerns, some decentralization of internal decision-making, and at least some shared decision-making with the community, are in place in many of today's police agencies.

Community Policing

It is beyond the scope of this writing to explore all the distinctions between and similarities of community policing and problem-oriented policing, except to summarize a few distinctions Goldstein has made. Problem-oriented policing primarily emphasizes the substantive societal problems the police are held principally responsible for addressing; community policing primarily emphasizes having the police engage the community in the policing process. How the police and the community engage one another under a problem-oriented approach should depend on the specific problem they are trying to address, rather than being defined in a broad and abstract sense. Carefully analyzing problems before developing new response strategies is given greater weight and importance under problem-oriented policing than under community policing. Community policing emphasizes that the police share more decision-making authority with the community; problem-oriented policing seeks to preserve more ultimate decision-making authority for the police, even while encouraging the police to solicit input from outside the department. Community policing expands the police's role to advance large and ambitious social objectives, like promoting peaceful coexistence, enhancing neighborhood quality of life, promoting racial and ethnic harmony, and strengthening democratic community governance; problem-oriented policing is more cautious, emphasizing that the police are more limited in their capacity to achieve these goals than many people imagine, and guards against unrealistic expectations of the police.

From the perspective of those committed to problem-oriented policing as a framework for police reform, the community policing movement has been a mixed blessing. On the positive side, the general idea of community policing has been enormously popular with the general public and, consequently, with elected officials. More specifically, the promise to the public of more access to the police, more police presence in the community, and greater police responsiveness to community concerns largely accounts for community policing's popular appeal. This popularity has translated into substantial financial and authoritative support for a wide range of programs, policies, training, and research, some of which has also benefited the problem-oriented policing movement. Community policing's emphasis on improving the general relationship of the police to the community at large, to minority communities and to organized community groups has undoubtedly helped the police be more effective in their efforts to address particular community problems in a problem-oriented framework. This is no small achievement of the community policing movement.

On the negative side, the most politically popular features of community policing have not been the behind-the-scenes analyses of community problems, but the more visible programs that put police officers in all kinds of unconventional settings–on foot and bicycles, in classrooms, in community meetings, at youth recreation functions, etc.–and that have police officers providing unconventional services to the public, like entertaining and educating youth. The attraction to these aspects of community policing has drawn some financial and authoritative support away from the analytical aspects of problem-oriented policing. The popularity of community policing has helped problem-oriented policing gain a degree of attention it might otherwise not have so quickly, but has reduced it to the level of a simplified analytical process for guiding police activities. The challenge for problem-oriented policing advocates will be to maintain support for the further development of the concept's less visible, but more critical, elements.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

Crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED), while existing as an independent method for analyzing and addressing crime problems closely tied to a geographic setting, has supported the movement toward problem-oriented policing. Conversely, problem-oriented policing has reinforced the concept of CPTED. It has allowed police officers and others who make design decisions to view crime control from an entirely new perspective other than law enforcement. Once exposed to the CPTED principles and methods, many police officers find themselves more open to understanding problem-oriented policing's broader implications.

Situational Crime Prevention

Situational crime prevention, a relatively new branch of criminology, is perhaps the single most important intellectual development that reinforces and informs the problem-oriented policing movement. The two concepts developed somewhat independently, and then began to influence one another. Situational crime prevention shifts the focus away from deterrence and rehabilitation-based efforts to change offenders' underlying attitudes and behaviors, and toward more situation-specific methods of convincing offenders that committing a particular crime in a particular place at a particular time is not worthwhile. In one respect, problem-oriented policing is the broader concept, not limited to crime problems, but also concerned with the full range of social disorder problems the police must address. In another respect, situational crime prevention is the broader concept, not limited to police actions, but concerned with the actions of any entity capable of preventing crime.

Problem-oriented policing has at times been criticized for lacking a criminological theory for its foundation. This criticism presumes that a theory for improving police service must first set forth a theory for preventing crime. This, however, is a far more ambitious, and perhaps unrealistic, goal to which problem-oriented policing never aspired. Problem-oriented policing is best understood as a framework for organizing the police and their activities so that the police are better positioned to learn how to prevent crime and disorder, and to apply that knowledge. It has no explicit preference for one criminological theory over others. It seeks to leave the police open to understanding various criminological theories, and experimenting with practical applications of those theories to determine what works best under what circumstances. If those theories were ultimately proven wrong, it is unlikely that problem-oriented policing advocates would similarly conclude that the problem-oriented approach was also wrong. It would merely add to the knowledge base from which police practitioners could draw to guide their strategic decisions.

Crime Analysis and Compstat

Crime analysis, as it has conventionally been practiced, is quite different from problem analysis. One of the most prominent and popularized crime analysis methods is patterned after the New York City Police Department's Compstat method. In essence, Compstat is a crime analysis method by which computerized crime statistics are analyzed and presented to operational commanders, who are then responsible for developing operational tactics to respond to emerging crime patterns. The degree to which this basic method is consistent with problem-oriented policing depends entirely on the details of how it is practiced.

Problem-oriented policing calls for a broad inquiry into many types of community problems demanding police attention, not just reported Part I offenses. It also calls for analyzing multiple sources of information to develop a fuller understanding of each problem. Where a Compstat-style method results in commanders' selecting from among a limited and conventional set of responses to address problems, such as extra patrol or increased enforcement, it also departs radically from a problem-oriented methodology. Problem-oriented policing calls for a broad and uninhibited search for responses to particular problems, placing special emphasis on responses that minimize the need for the police to use force and large-scale arrest campaigns. A Compstat-style method can foster a hostile atmosphere, more like an inquisition than an inquiry; in this sense, it also differs from problem-oriented policing. Problem-oriented policing, while stressing accountability, also places a high priority on the free exchange of ideas, an exchange that is difficult to achieve in a tension-filled and rigidly hierarchical setting. Finally, problem-oriented policing puts a high premium on communication, consultation and collaboration with entities outside the police department at all stages of the planning process.

Ideally, a Compstat-style method would be entirely consistent with problem-oriented policing. As one way to identify specific problems, a computer-generated pattern of crimes would be only the beginning of a more in-depth and broader analysis of the nature of the problems, their underlying conditions and the limits of current responses. For many police agencies, Compstat methods represent a significant advancement in the use of crime data to inform operational decisions. Problem-oriented policing, however, is a considerably more sophisticated and involved approach to handling police business.

Crime Mapping and Hot-Spot Policing

Crime mapping, now almost a specialized field in itself, can support problem-oriented policing. Crime mapping is enabling police practitioners and researchers to think about crime and disorder and their relationship to other geographic phenomena in ways that were previously unimagined or impractical. Problem-oriented policing specifically calls for, among other things, an analysis of police incidents in terms of location as a potentially useful way to aggregate incidents into clusters. A spatial incident pattern can help stimulate a better understanding of the underlying causes of certain community problems. Crime mapping alone seldom suffices as problem analysis, but it is a potentially useful analytical tool.

Hot-spot policing, in essence, requires that the police concentrate their attention and resources on places where and times when there is a significantly high volume of demand for police services. At this basic level of understanding, the idea is compatible with problem-oriented policing. But crime mapping and hot-spot policing are not comprehensive approaches to policing, as is problem-oriented policing. Many problems the police must contend with do not lend themselves to spatial concentrations, and thus will not show up on any hot-spot maps and much of the information the police need to get a complete and accurate picture of community problems is not readily captured in data that are mapped. To the extent that those who use computerized maps to analyze problems become fascinated by the technology itself, there is a risk that the reliability of the data underlying the maps will be taken for granted. In fact, a lot of police data relating to the location of crimes and incidents are ripe for misinterpretation.

Broken Windows and Zero Tolerance

The "broken windows" theory of crime and disorder asserts that by having the police and community address the many minor community incivilities and signs of neglect, more serious crimes and disorder will be prevented. This idea has spawned as a consequence, intended or not, an idea popularly referred to as "zero tolerance." Zero tolerance prescribes that the police will restrict or eliminate the use of discretion in enforcement, that they will enforce laws as strictly as possible within their means. The way in which the broken windows theory and the zero tolerance strategy have developed in practice, they have little in common with problem-oriented policing. In so many respects, the very notion of zero tolerance is antithetical to problem-oriented policing. The police, of necessity and largely for good cause, exercise enormous discretion in choosing which laws to enforce, when, where, and how. Problem-oriented policing builds on that premise, drawing into enforcement decisions even greater input from the community, prosecutors and other government officials. Optimally, the refined use of the police's arrest powers and the exploration of the many alternatives to arrest will result in less reliance on criminal sanctions to address crime and disorder. Problem-oriented policing does allow that brief periods of concentrated law enforcement might be entirely appropriate to intervene in and disrupt a pattern of crime or disorder, but rejects the wholesale adoption of anything like "zero tolerance law enforcement" as a standing remedy for most community problems.

CHAPTER 4: MAJOR CHALLENGES TO ADVANCING PROBLEM-ORIENTED POLICING

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 leaders and the government officials they report to must better appreciate the value that research adds to their decision-making about how to address complex problems of crime, disorder and fear. They must overcome the pressures on them that demand immediate action to complex problems, and resist adopting simplistic responses to them. Problem-oriented policing's full potential will not be achieved in a climate of haste and impatience.

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. Some of the regional community policing institutes that were provided start-up funding by the COPS Office provide some training in problem-solving, but they had considerable latitude to design their own training curricula and courses. From a problem-oriented policing perspective, it is unfortunate that the institutes' training in problem-oriented policing was not mandated and standardized. Much of the balance of national training programs in problem-oriented policing is provided by small training and consulting firms and a few colleges. The number of training experts is remarkably small. Many 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.

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. 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.

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. Moreover, little has been done to convey the concept to audiences other than police practitioners and researchers. 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.

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

How Substantive Knowledge is Shared in the Police Profession

Knowledge in policing is passed on more by listening and talking to other practitioners than by reading published literature. However much this oral tradition strengthens the police's social bonds, it inhibits the transfer of reliable, accurate knowledge. Whereas researchers are expected to be familiar with the relevant literature on a particular subject, there is no similar expectation in policing. Also, there remain far too few opportunities for police officials to spend an extended period of time outside their own organizations in learning environments, a practice deemed essential in many other professions. There are several notable exceptions in which a key police official's sabbatical resulted in problem-oriented policing being introduced upon their return.

Writing Down Problem-Oriented Practice

Problem-oriented policing has suffered from a lack of quality writing about project work. 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. 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. But self-reporting, without some independent verification, lacks reliability. 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. 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

Those publications that have attempted to capture the state of research and practice with regard to specific types of community problems have not been organized into a centralized reference system. Many of the recent conferences 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 do not present much that directly relates to the police response to community crime and disorder problems.

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

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. 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 are not engaging in much policy-level problem analysis themselves. Police research and planning units should shift their focus to studying their agency's response to large-scale community problems. They should expand beyond conventional methods such as identifying spatial patterns of crime through mapping. Police agencies without such in-house expertise or resources should collaborate with outside researchers. Police researchers must 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. Criminology and related criminal justice sciences have been slow or reluctant to substantively engage in problem-oriented policing. There are few academic researchers with 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. 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 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. 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 is not clear. 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 stresses police collaboration with the community to address problems. Under certain conditions, however, 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. 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. The mere application of a problem-solving process to community problems, however, does not guarantee that all the interests of a constitutional democracy will be protected.

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

The police and other agencies can often accomplish more working together than they can working independently, but new alliances between the police and other government agencies hold potential for overreaching. Each agency, police included, must maintain some independence 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.

What Should Be the Role of Prosecutors?

Historically, prosecutors have related to the police almost exclusively in terms of the criminal investigation function. Prosecutors exert a powerful influence on police practices, despite the reality that only a small percentage of police work culminates in criminal prosecution. Prosecutors jealously guard against any diversion of police resources away from criminal investigation. There have been some efforts to reconsider prosecutors' role in the larger enterprise of promoting public safety. A few local prosecutors' offices around the United States have experimented in what has come to be known as community prosecution. Typically, in community prosecution, prosecutors are assigned to geographic areas and are responsible for learning more about their area's public safety concerns, and prosecuting all or most of the crimes that arise out of that area. 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.

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 relative 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 court 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. The absence of prosecutors from the problem-solving 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.

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 to reorient prosecutors to their work as it is taking to reorient police officers to theirs. 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. It is not enough that local government leaders generally endorse community policing. They must invest time and energy in understanding problem-oriented policing's full implications. 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. 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. They must invest in research and analysis, and information technology–investments that, while not guaranteed to pay off immediately, are highly likely to pay off in the long term. Without leadership to create new expectations that departments analyze and collaborate on public safety problems, it is not likely to happen.

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

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. 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. 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.

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. 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.

Conclusion: How Will We Know if Problem-Oriented Policing Works?

The ultimate test of problem-oriented policing is whether it proves successful in enhancing police service. Asking whether problem-oriented policing works, and asking whether the problem-oriented policing movement has been successful, are separate matters. The first question is a search for proof that the problem-solving methodology reduces crime and disorder, makes communities safer, and does so better than any other approach to policing. The second question is a search for proof that problem-oriented policing has become the standard approach to policing.

Whether problem-oriented policing works depends, of course, on what one believes to be the objectives of the police. Successful

policing, in the broadest sense, is policing that achieves its multiple objectives. Because these objectives sometimes compete with one another, there can be no such thing as maximally effective policing, only optimally effective policing, whereby the police have balanced their objectives. To paraphrase Morgan Stanley Dean Witter's marketing slogan, one can only determine problem-oriented policing's success "one problem at a time", at least at the microlevel. That is, one should assess police effectiveness with respect to each discrete social problem the police are at least partially responsible for addressing.

Because problems of crime, disorder and fear arise and abate through a complex interaction of social norms, laws and technology, there really can be no end point to policing. As one class of problems abates, new classes of problems arise. Indeed, police work is always described in the present participle–"policing"–and never in the past tense. A community is never considered to have been policed. Thus, while it is appropriate to judge problem-oriented policing by the degree to which it is effective in addressing society's current problems, one should also judge it by the degree to which it prepares the police to identify and respond to future problems.

The problem-oriented policing movement can be said to have succeeded once police agencies have integrated the problem-solving operational strategy of police work into their operations at least as completely as they have the other operational strategies of preventive patrol, routine incident response, emergency response, and criminal investigation. It will have succeeded too once the imbalance between policing's "means" and "ends" has been altered to better reflect a direct concern on the part of police administrators and researchers with the substantive aspects of police business.

As is probably true in all fields, the development of an important idea, or of several important ideas simultaneously, is not neat and clean. There is no central policymaking entity, at least not in American policing. Scholars and practitioners alike shift through time in their understanding and support of the various ideas. The ideas themselves are shaped by factors other than pure theory or tested practice: by political and popular interest, available funding and the desire to achieve distinction. While the uneven and sometimes contradictory way these various movements push and pull the police profession frustrates those who are committed to one idea or another, in the long run, this is for the best. It is best for society as a whole, and best for the problem-oriented policing movement. The diversity of ideas and the highly decentralized way they are implemented have ultimately led to refinement of the best of them. Were it even possible for the development of problem-oriented policing to be centralized and made

more consistent, it would likely weaken the idea. A single wrong turn in centralized policymaking results in many wrong turns in police practice. There are risks to promoting homogeneity in the implementation of problem-oriented policing, whether through the requirements of federal funding programs or through other means. An idea such as problem-oriented policing, which has yet to be fully developed, needs diversity to grow. And so it is that problem-oriented policing competes in the messy marketplace of ideas about how to improve policing.

Problem-oriented policing must pass the rigorous tests of academic scrutiny and criticism to prevail as a path for improving policing. To be tested properly, it must be implemented with at least basic fidelity to the fundamental principles laid out by Herman Goldstein. Goldstein never intended that problem-oriented policing, at least as he articulated it, be understood as a finished or definitive product. Indeed, as the police scholar Jean-Paul Brodeur wrote: "[I]t would seem as difficult as it is futile to measure with precision the extent to which the new strategy has been implemented. Such a measurement implies freezing a paradigm that is characterized by its open-endedness."

Problem-oriented policing has come a long way in 20 years, from the chalkboards and classrooms of the University of Wisconsin, to the squad rooms, community meeting halls and conference rooms where modern policing is played out. It has achieved a degree of professional interest, and some measure of public and political interest, that must be heartening to Herman Goldstein and those who believe in his idea. The development of problem-oriented policing, however, is far from complete. Ironically, the popularity of the idea puts it at risk of burning out, and that would be unfortunate. It is precisely because problem-oriented policing is so deeply rooted in what Goldstein calls the basic arrangements for policing in a free and open society—the most fundamental challenges for establishing domestic tranquility and order—that police, community and government officials can ill afford to rest comfortably on the progress made to date.