



# Maximizing the Benefits of Reform:



Integrating Compstat  
and Community Policing  
in America

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COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES  
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**The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services** (the COPS Office) is the component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing by the nation's state, local, territory, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources.

Community policing is a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies which support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime.

Rather than simply responding to crimes once they have been committed, community policing concentrates on preventing crime and eliminating the atmosphere of fear it creates. Earning the trust of the community and making those individuals stakeholders in their own safety enables law enforcement to better understand and address both the needs of the community and the factors that contribute to crime.

The COPS Office awards grants to state, local, territory, and tribal law enforcement agencies to hire and train community policing professionals, acquire and deploy cutting-edge crime-fighting technologies, and develop and test innovative policing strategies. COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government leaders and all levels of law enforcement. The COPS Office has produced and compiled a broad range of information resources that can help law enforcement better address specific crime and operational issues, and help community leaders better understand how to work cooperatively with their law enforcement agency to reduce crime.

- Since 1994, the COPS Office has invested more than \$12 billion to add community policing officers to the nation's streets, enhance crime fighting technology, support crime prevention initiatives, and provide training and technical assistance to help advance community policing.
- By the end of FY 2008, the COPS Office had funded approximately 117,000 additional officers to more than 13,000 of the nation's 18,000 law enforcement agencies across the country in small and large jurisdictions alike.
- Nearly 500,000 law enforcement personnel, community members, and government leaders have been trained through COPS Office-funded training organizations.
- As of 2009, the COPS Office has distributed more than 2 million topic-specific publications, training curricula, white papers, and resource CDs.



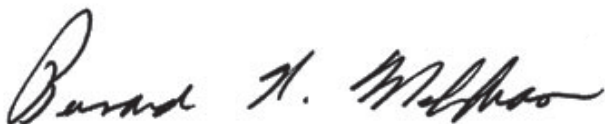
## Letter from the Director

Compstat and community policing have been two of the most influential policing reforms taking place during the turn of the century. Both reforms have significantly altered how routine police business is conducted and understood. Despite the continued growth and popularity of both, these reforms have operated along largely separate tracks.

Recognizing the potential for these reforms to work in unison to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of police organizations, the COPS Office partnered with well-respected policing researchers at George Mason University. They were commissioned to conduct the first-ever detailed examination of the potential linkages between Compstat and community policing. This report is a result of that work.

Based on their in-depth survey, interviews, and field work, the authors present a group of potentially very powerful recommendations to maximize the impact of both reforms. We hope that you give thoughtful consideration to these recommendations in your own law enforcement agency, and we encourage you to please provide us with feedback on your reactions to them and experiences implementing them.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bernard H. Melekian". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bernard" being the most prominent.

Bernard Melekian  
Director





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The authors would like to thank the many individuals and organizations that made this research possible. First, we are indebted to the following police chiefs for granting us permission to visit their agencies: former Chief William Bratton, Los Angeles (California) Police Department (LAPD), Chief John Douglass, Overland Park (Kansas) Police Department (OPPD), Chief Daniel Flynn, Marietta (Georgia) Police Department (MPD), Colonel Jerry Lee, St. Louis County (Missouri) Police Department (SLC), Chief J. Thomas Manger, Montgomery County (Maryland) Police Department (MCPD), Chief Robert Petrovich, Cape Coral (Florida) Police Department (CCPD), and former Chief Luis Velez, Colorado Springs (Colorado) Police Department (CSPD). We also are grateful to Chief John Romero of the Lawrence (Massachusetts) Police Department and Philip O'Donnell, Director of Public Safety at the University of Massachusetts-Boston, for assisting with some of our on-site training.

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A note of appreciation goes to the many sworn officers and civilians who shared their experiences with Compstat and community policing during interviews, ridealongs, and focus groups.

An earlier version of this report was disseminated to 15 police leaders and scholars with extensive experience in police practice and research. We received many helpful comments, which we have tried to incorporate where possible. Commentators expressed a wide variety of viewpoints on these recommendations, but all agreed that discussion about the integration of Compstat and community policing was important and timely. The many different opinions about this report constitute evidence of the need for a continuing debate about the possibilities of integrating these reforms. While we were not able to address all their comments satisfactorily, we are very grateful to those who responded.

Finally, special thanks go to Dr. Matthew Scheider, our program manager at the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, who provided us with very helpful guidance and support throughout this entire project. We are especially grateful for his patience and encouragement.



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## Executive Summary

During the last quarter century or so, Compstat and community policing have emerged as powerful engines of police reform in the United States. Compstat is a strategic management system focused on reducing serious crime by decentralizing decision-making to middle managers operating out of precincts or districts, by holding these managers accountable for performance, and by increasing the organization's capacity to identify, understand, and monitor responses to crime problems. Community policing can be characterized as a philosophy and an organizational strategy designed to reduce crime and disorder through community partnerships, problem solving, and the delegation of greater decision-making authority to patrol officers and their sergeants at the beat level. It varies more than Compstat from place to place in response to local problems and community resources. To date, researchers have focused their energy on identifying the individual merits and weaknesses of each, but have given much less attention to how well these reforms operate when implemented in the same police organization. The Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (the COPS Office) asked us to conduct research and write a report on this co-implementation issue: Do Compstat and community policing work together, mutually supporting each other, or are there points of conflict, where pursuing one makes it harder to pursue the other successfully? Moreover, do they work separately, that is each having little consequence for the other?

This report summarizes findings from the first national study of Compstat and community policing, suggesting that these reforms operated largely independently from each other, with one having little effect on the other. Their simultaneous operation helped departments respond to a broader set of goals and to engage in a wider variety of tasks than had they implemented just one reform. Thus, they had an additive effect—one compensating for the limitations of the other in helping the organization respond more comprehensively to the diverse demands it confronted in its external environment. Put another way, what our survey suggested and what we observed during our short site visits to seven police departments that reported fully implementing Compstat and community policing was that Compstat contributed X, and community policing contributed Y. By implementing both reforms, an agency gained X + Y.

The finding that Compstat and community policing worked in parallel, but independently, suggests there may be opportunities for making these reforms work more closely with each other. This report uses these findings as an empirical basis for making recommendations for these reforms' integration. Given our finding that Compstat and community policing were essentially stove-piped and operating independently of each other, we inferred that there were opportunities for combining their core elements in ways that may promise greater multiplicative effects to co-implementation (Compstat x community policing)—effects that could be higher than those that are simply additive (Compstat + community policing). Take, for example, a department that has fully implemented Compstat and community policing but only reinforces its Compstat crime-reduction mission through the regular reporting of official crime statistics. In this case, because there are no similar measures to underscore the importance of community policing objectives, Compstat and community policing can be viewed as coexisting rather than mutually reinforcing. In contrast, an integrated model might include the prioritization, measurement, and reporting on community policing concerns (e.g., problems identified by community members, less serious social order offenses, fear of crime) as well

as traditional crime statistics at regular Compstat meetings. Among other benefits, taking such an approach allows top management to simultaneously place a high value on Compstat *and* community policing objectives and on monitoring the organization's performance under each. Thus, by simply including measures of success for both crime *and* community policing at Compstat meetings, the department more than doubles the return on its investment in these reforms. This potential for "efficiency gains" through integration is the basis for the recommendations that follow (Stephens, 2009).

We envision a Compstat/community policing model that tries to reinforce the values, objectives, and practices of community policing by integrating them with Compstat's core organizational structures. In order for these reforms to work in ways that are mutually reinforcing rather than at cross-purposes, we also recommend a number of significant changes to how the Compstat structures we observed currently operate. Thus, integration is not simply a case of grafting some elements of community policing onto fundamentally unaltered Compstat structures. Such an approach would not counter Compstat's tendency to reinforce the traditional hierarchical structure of the police organization.

## Methodology

To better understand this co-implementation issue, we used information from two sources collected sequentially: (1) a national mail survey conducted during spring and summer 2006 of 566 local and county police agencies with at least 100 sworn officers; and (2) intensive site visits (5 days in length) made to seven police agencies in 2006 and 2007 who reported fully implementing Compstat and community policing, experiencing a wide variety of successes and problems with their co-implementation, and who differed in size, organization, and crime environment.

## Recommendations

Our research suggests that compared with Compstat, whose components constitute a single program, community policing is more multifaceted, flexible, and diverse, which can make it more challenging to implement in a systematic or coherent way. The distinctive values and policing styles that these reforms embody, at least as they are currently implemented, may also help explain why many of those we interviewed struggled to envision a more integrated Compstat/community policing model.

The four recommendations we propose here seek to take advantage of the more tangible framework that Compstat provides while simultaneously countering its tendency to reinforce the traditional hierarchical structure of the police organization (through its focus on serious crime, top-down control, and centralized decision-making)—an approach that conflicts with several key community policing principles, including broadening the police mission beyond serious crime and delegating greater decision-making authority to those at the street level. Thus, our recommendations try to integrate Compstat's core elements under the broader community policing philosophy while restructuring these elements in ways that make these reforms mutually reinforcing rather than working at cross-purposes.

Our major recommendations for integrating Compstat and community policing, including specific strategies or action steps for their implementation, are as follows:

### **Recommendation 1:**

#### **Harness community policing values, goals, and practices to Compstat**

*Broaden the Compstat process beyond serious crime to include the prioritization, measurement, and reporting of community policing concerns at regular Compstat meetings.*

##### ***Strategies for implementation:***

- ◆ Routinely report on community-identified problems during Compstat meetings to focus the organization on community policing priorities
- ◆ Create performance measures that reinforce the fundamental importance of community policing objectives, values, and activities to the organization's overarching existence.

### **Recommendation 2:**

#### **Increase accountability down the chain of command for performance**

*Push accountability for crime and community policing down the chain of command by assigning individual officers to beat teams headed by a patrol sergeant, delegating responsibilities to these teams and not to individual community policing specialists or units, and requiring that all team members participate regularly in monthly beat meetings.*

##### ***Strategies for implementation:***

- ◆ Assign patrol officers to permanent beat teams supervised by patrol sergeants to increase their sense of "ownership" for reducing crime and disorder problems and reconsider call-management policies
- ◆ Hold district-level Compstat meetings with beat team leaders to distribute accountability more equitably throughout the organization
- ◆ Provide patrol sergeants with the necessary guidance and leadership skills to carry out the organization's Compstat and community policing mission.

### **Recommendation 3:**

#### **Change Compstat meetings to operate more strategically**

*Restructure Compstat meetings to focus the organization's attention more intensively on using scientific research and in-house evaluations to guide the identification and implementation of the most promising strategies for tackling crime and community problems, and on assessing short- and long-term outcomes.*

#### ***Strategies for implementation:***

- ◆ Lengthen the period between department-level Compstat meetings to encourage district commanders to innovate and develop a better understanding of the nature of problems and more comprehensive long-term solutions
- ◆ Create small group meetings attended by key decision-makers and focused on addressing crime and community problems by thinking out loud, exchanging ideas, and querying assumptions
- ◆ Use evidence cops to help focus resources on solutions that research evidence shows are the most likely to reduce crime and disorder problems
- ◆ Build an institutional memory by systematically recording efforts and outcomes of police strategies.

### **Recommendation 4:**

#### **Commit substantial resources to crime analysis and training in problem-oriented policing (POP), problem solving, and building partnerships**

*Encourage acceptance of the goals and values of Compstat and community policing and the successful application of their strategic elements by committing substantial resources to crime analysis units and to helping officers of all ranks develop new skills and knowledge. Primary responsibility for the comprehensive application of POP should be assigned to middle managers (district commanders), while the rank and file and local residents should be taught basic problem-solving skills, so that they can work together on tackling crime and neighborhood problems effectively.*

#### ***Strategies for implementation:***

- ◆ Broaden responsibility for problem analysis to include rank-and-file officers who are knowledgeable about local crime and disorder problems
- ◆ Decentralize crime analysis units to support district personnel in their problem analysis efforts
- ◆ Increase training in problem analysis for all line personnel and provide training to community members.



These recommendations are based on what we observed at the seven sites we visited and on the experiences of this report's senior authors who have been researching and writing about Compstat and community policing for more than a decade. Because these recommendations have not been implemented and tested in any police organization, we do not have empirical evidence that what we propose here will actually work. Despite this limitation, we suggest that the evidence of how things *currently* work warrants serious experimentation with our proposals. It was our goal to make practical suggestions, but it is beyond the scope of this report to lay out a step-by-step guide for how integration might be accomplished. Obviously departments vary in size, resources, and crime environment, so these recommendations would have to be adapted to an agency's particular goals and circumstances. Despite these limitations, given the lack of research on this subject, we believe that there is considerable value in this initial effort to identify and examine the major compatibility issues, and then to describe our findings across several sites as a platform for suggesting some plausible changes. The alternative is simply to maintain the status quo. Thus, the purpose of this report is to deepen understanding among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers about the current relationship between Compstat and community policing, and also to stimulate debate about alternative combinations that have the potential to make them work together in more desirable ways.

Because these recommendations are necessarily broad and call for a transformation in the way that most police agencies currently operate, they will undoubtedly be viewed by some as implausible. What we suggest may be ambitious and only represent the tip of the iceberg in terms of what needs to be done to bring about the kind of change we envision. Still, it is our hope that this analysis of two of the most highly touted policing innovations to emerge in the last 30 years provides a useful vision for reform and sharpens awareness of different possibilities for their co-implementation.



## Introduction

In the last quarter century or so, American police have witnessed two major reform efforts that focus on shaping what the police do and how they do it: Compstat and community policing (Bratton, 1998; Greene and Mastrofski, 1988; Rosenbaum, 1994; Weisburd et al., 2003; Willis et al., 2007). Compstat is a strategic management system focused on reducing serious crime by decentralizing decision-making to middle managers operating out of districts, by holding these managers accountable for performance, and by increasing the organization's capacity to identify, understand, and monitor responses to crime problems (Bratton, 1998; Henry, 2002; Weisburd et al., 2003). Community policing can be characterized as a philosophy and an organizational strategy designed to reduce crime and disorder through community partnerships, problem solving, and the delegation of greater decision-making authority to patrol officers and their sergeants at the beat level (NRC, 2004: 232). It varies more than Compstat from place to place in response in local problems and community resources (Moore, 1992; Skogan, 2006).

Both these innovations have diffused rapidly throughout the United States. Community policing reform became visible in the 1980s, and in a 1997 Police Foundation survey of police departments, 85 percent reported that they had implemented community policing or were trying to do so (Skogan, 2006: 5). This diffusion process was facilitated through the creation of the national COPS Office, and as community policing was being implemented, Compstat burst on the scene. Originating in 1994 in the highly visible New York City Police Department (NYPD), it quickly spread across large police departments.

Another Police Foundation survey showed that by 2000, one-third of police departments with 100 or more sworn officers had implemented Compstat or a similar program, and an additional one-fourth was planning to do so (Weisburd et al., 2003). According to our 2006 survey, this Compstat implementation figure has increased to 60 percent and practically all police agencies (97 percent) now report implementing community policing (Willis et al. Forth).

Researchers are still trying to determine what the effects of these reforms have been and what their future prospects are (NRC, 2004; Weisburd and Braga, 2006). However, it is also important to know just how well these two reforms work together in the same police agency. COPS asked us to conduct research on this co-implementation issue to learn what lessons could be gleaned from the experiences of American police departments that had tried to pursue both community policing and Compstat at the same time.

## Purpose of Report

In this report, we summarize findings from the first national study of Compstat and community policing, suggesting that these reforms operated largely independently from each other, with one having little effect on the other.<sup>1</sup> Put another way, what our survey suggested and what we observed during our short site visits to seven police departments that reported fully implementing Compstat and community policing was that Compstat contributed X and community policing contributed Y, and by implementing both reforms an agency gained X + Y. The report uses these findings as an empirical basis for making recommendations for integration of these reforms. Given our finding that Compstat and community policing were stove-piped, we inferred that there were opportunities for combining their core elements in ways that *may* promise greater multiplicative effects to co-implementation (Compstat x community policing)—effects that *could* be higher than those that are simply additive (Compstat + community policing). This inference is the basis for the recommendations that follow.

We envision a Compstat/community policing model that incorporates Compstat's core organizational structures within the broader community policing philosophy and tries to reinforce the values, objectives, and practices of community policing. In order for these reforms to work in ways that are mutually reinforcing rather than at cross-purposes, we also recommend a number of significant changes to how the Compstat structures we observed currently operate. Thus, integration is not simply a case of grafting some elements of one reform onto the other. Such an approach would not counter Compstat's tendency to reinforce the traditional hierarchical structure of the police organization (through its focus on serious crime, top-down control, and centralized decision-making)—an approach that conflicts with several key community policing principles, including broadening the police mission beyond serious crime and delegating greater decision-making authority to those at the street level (Weisburd et al., 2003).

These recommendations are not only based on what we observed at the seven sites we visited, but also on the senior authors' experiences researching and writing about Compstat and community policing for more than a decade. Because these recommendations have not been implemented and tested in any police organization, we do not have empirical evidence that what we propose here will actually work. Despite this limitation, we suggest that the evidence of how things *currently* work warrants serious experimentation with our proposals. Our goal was to make recommendations that were practical, but it is beyond the scope of this report to lay out a step-by-step guide for how integration might be accomplished. Obviously departments vary in size and resources, so these recommendations would have to be adapted to an agency's particular goals and circumstances. Despite these limitations, given the lack of research on this subject we believe that there is considerable value in this initial effort to identify and examine the major compatibility issues, and then to describe our findings across several sites as a platform for suggesting plausible changes. The alternative would be to maintain the status quo. Thus, the purpose of this report is to deepen understanding among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers about the current relationship between these two reforms, and also to stimulate debate about alternative combinations that have the potential to make these reforms work together in more desirable ways.

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1 A comprehensive and more detailed final report of our findings, "Compstat and Community Policing: Taking Advantage of Compatibilities and Dealing with Conflicts," is forthcoming (Willis, Kochel, and Mastrofski).

“Nothing happens unless first a dream,” (Sandburg, 1970: 282), and it is our hope that this analysis of two of the most highly touted policing innovations to emerge in the last 30 years will begin to sharpen awareness of different possibilities for their co-implementation.

## **The Compatibility Issue: A Comparison of the Doctrines of Compstat and Community Policing**

Compstat’s supporters speculate that it complements and supports community policing and even improves it (McDonald, 2000: 250; McDonald et al., 2002: 27, 55). In so doing, they cast doubt on compatibility or integration as an issue at all. Given that these reforms originated at different times, from different sources, and for different purposes, we may rightly be skeptical about any viewpoint that asserts a natural synergy between them, even more-so when we consider that to date there is little scientific evidence to support these claims. This may explain why others are more cautious and adopting a “wait-and-see” approach (Skogan, 2006: 99). Our own prior research indicated that although some elements of Compstat were compatible with community policing, there were also some tensions and incompatibilities as well (Willis et al., 2004a; 2007). Nor is this co-implementation issue insignificant: according to our national survey, 59 percent of large police agencies (>100 sworn) are pursuing both Compstat and community policing simultaneously, suggesting how these reforms work together has significant implications for how policing is done in the United States (Willis et al.).

Moreover, the reform literature suggests that there are reform elements where community policing and Compstat are similar, and there are elements where they differ. In this section, we identify eight key elements and assess where the respective reform doctrines stand on each. Table 1 on page 12 summarizes the main compatibility issues and then discusses each in detail.

### **Mission**

One of the key distinguishing features of community policing and Compstat is the role of the community in defining the mission of the police. Community policing requires that those who are outside of the police organization (construed generally as the “community”) play a key role in defining what the organization should be trying to accomplish (Roth et al., 2004: 20). The police are obliged to bring the community into the process of selecting and prioritizing objectives (Weisburd and McElroy, 1988). Given the diverse expectations that the public places on police, and given the diversity of communities that have an interest in what the police accomplish, community policing has necessarily encouraged a substantial broadening of the police mission from the rather singular focus on law enforcement and crime control that flourished in an earlier reform era from the 1930s until the 1970s (Moore, 1992). Thus, community policing embraces the notion that what is a high priority for one neighborhood may not be for another. And while community participation may vary widely, it is nonetheless a constant and ongoing feature of community policing—an essential part of the process of departmental guidance, rather than a preliminary step to be taken once and not repeated. Thus, community policing is all about promoting the more democratic aspects of guiding the police in setting major goals (Mastrofski 1998).

**Table 1.** A Comparison of the Doctrines of Compstat and Community Policing.

Reform Element	Community Policing	Compstat
Mission	Broadening of police mission to include wide range of objectives	Focusing core mission on reducing serious crime
Policing methods	Community role greatly enhanced	Community role peripheral or nonexistent
Internal accountability	Peripheral or nonexistent	Highest priority
Decentralization of decision-making	To lowest level in the organization	To middle managers (district commanders)
Organizational flexibility	Capacity to accommodate innovation and differing needs within communities	Capacity to reallocate resources for effective accomplishment of crime control objectives
Data-driven problem identification and assessment	Empirical analysis is expected and valued	Empirical analysis is essential
External accountability	Police consult with community on objectives and progress toward them	Police publicize traditional crime statistics as measures of agency accomplishments
Innovative problem solving	Innovation is expected and valued	Innovation is expected and valued

Greatest difference
  Some difference
  No appreciable difference

In contrast, Compstat emerged as a mechanism to focus and clarify *the* core mission of policing, namely serious crime (McDonald et al., 2002). Indeed, its progenitors in the NYPD saw it as a way of getting back to the essential crime-control element of the police—a marked diversion from the community policing philosophy of the police administration that preceded them (Smith and Bratton, 2001: 459). The community's role in deciding the nature of the police mission is scarcely mentioned in the Compstat reform literature, except perhaps to note that there was a strong community desire for safer streets and neighborhoods, as evidenced by the results of mayoral election campaigns and fear of crime statistics (Silverman, 1999). Under Compstat, the police leader must select the core element of the organization's mission but is not constrained by how he or she does it. Rather than defining the community as an essential partner in identifying the mission, Compstat has evolved as a management responsibility essential in the first step of acting strategically, not toward a wide range of potentially diffuse, democratically designated goals, but rather to focus department resources on the few things that matter most (Bratton, 1998).

## Policing Methods

Similarly, there appear to be stark differences in the priority given to community participation in actually doing police work. Community policing places a high value on police partnership with people and organizations outside of the police department to *do* policing (e.g., citizen voluntary organizations

and other public and private service agencies in solving problems) (Skogan and Hartnett, 1997). For community policing, the presumption is that community participation has inherent value, in addition to whatever it contributes to crime control and order maintenance. But Compstat is, at least in theory, purely instrumental. It is all about selecting the most effective method, whatever that may be for a given situation. It may involve community participation, but it may not—depending on what has proven to be, or has the best chances of achieving the mission (Henry, 2002).

## Internal Accountability

Another difference between the doctrines of these two reforms is the attention paid to accountability for performance. Compstat is first and foremost a method to hold middle managers accountable for knowing more about what is going on in the areas for which they are responsible and for devising timely, effective solutions to the most important problems (Weisburd et al., 2003). The highest priority of the Compstat meeting is to pressure middle managers to demonstrate their knowledge and initiative by exposing their performance to peers, as well as headquarters' commanders (Willis et al., 2004a). By contrast, there is less concern, and certainly no detailed protocol, in the community policing literature for holding police feet to the fire of accountability. Put simply, the difference between the two boils down to Compstat's reliance on Theory X as a management philosophy (a strategy of direction and control through the exercise of authority), while community policing reformers have relied much more heavily on Theory Y, creating the proper conditions for guiding and supporting individual efforts toward organizational objectives (McGregor, 1960: 49). Community policing leaders have wanted to give the rank and file a chance to self-realize (at Maslow's highest level by solving community problems), and they are expected to do so naturally when given sufficient training, opportunity, and reward (Moore, 1992).

## Decentralization of Decision-Making

Both community policing and Compstat promote decentralizing decision-making authority, but they have thus far pursued it to different degrees. Compstat has concentrated on the delegation of authority down to middle managers, primarily at the district/precinct commander level. All of the efforts to give them control of more resources and hold them more accountable essentially stop at the district commander level (Willis et al., 2004a). Community policing approaches have admittedly been quite diverse, but in general, there has been far more interest in decentralizing decision-making much further down the organization (Maguire, 1997; Skogan, 2006). Community policing has tried to mobilize the knowledge, creativity, and skill of the lowest workers, expecting patrol officers to develop strong, direct working relationships with citizen groups and to work with them to customize policing to suit them best (Skogan et al., 2004). Kelling and Sousa have argued that in at least some precincts in the NYPD, CompStat now attempts to reach further down the organization by holding precinct-level meetings that promote problem-solving initiative at that level (2001). However, the only multisite study of Compstat suggests this is not a common feature of the reform as it has developed. Rather these district-level sessions appear to be focused primarily on informing district commanders about what is going on in their beats so that they can perform competently at the department-level Compstat meeting (Willis et al., 2007). That is, these meetings are focused more on improving the commander's performance at the meeting than making the district more responsive to his or her direction.



## Organizational Flexibility

The doctrines of both community policing and Compstat value organizational flexibility, data-driven decision-making, and innovative problem solving. Community policing requires flexibility to meet the varying demands of diverse constituencies (Mastrofski, 1998), while Compstat requires flexibility to put the key resources in the hands of the right people and to alter procedural routines to do what must be done to be effective in controlling crime (Silverman, 1999). In practice, community policing has attempted to develop organizational flexibility by focusing on developing a stronger neighborhood-level focus in internal police operations (e.g., permanent patrol beat assignments) and in reaching out to partner with neighborhood-level community organizations (Trojanowicz, 1986; Skogan, 1990; Skogan et al., 1999). Compstat has focused more on giving district commanders control over more and varied personnel so that they can customize responses within their districts to problems as they arise (Willis et al., 2004a). Community policing's general focus on having individual officers become extremely familiar with everything happening in a neighborhood in order to improve its overall health or well-being is very different from Compstat's focus on spikes in serious crime. The former, at least in theory, suggests a radical departure from the 911-reactive policing model, while Compstat tends to reinforce this traditional approach, albeit more strategically (Weisburd et al., 2003; Willis et al., 2007). Under Compstat, district commanders are pressured to respond quickly and decisively to emerging crime hot spots to reduce or eliminate them by the next reporting period. This does not conform well to more ambitious notions of having police ascertain the bigger picture and controlling long-term patterns of risk to prevent crime from occurring in the future (Sherman, 1995; Willis et al., 2004a).

## Data-Driven Problem Identification and Assessment

Data-driven decision-making is a core element of Compstat doctrine, while it is an important, if perhaps less-developed element of community policing when it is not combined with problem-oriented policing. There are, however, some important doctrinal differences: (1) Compstat relies on a department's official record-keeping systems to focus the organization's energies on serious crime, while community policing solicits input from community residents to identify a broader range of minor crimes and social disorders deserving of police attention; (2) Compstat empowers district commanders, along with crime analysts, to identify and analyze problems, while community policing, consistent with decentralization, places higher value on sergeants and patrol officers participating in the process; and finally (3) under Compstat, department responses are assessed primarily at weekly, biweekly, or monthly Compstat meetings by tracking enforcement activities (e.g., number of arrests and levels of officially reported crime); in contrast, community policing calls for the use of additional, nontraditional measures to assess success in the long term (e.g., citizen fear and satisfaction levels and indicators of physical and social disorder) (Goldstein, 1987; Peak and Glensor, 1999: 94–96).



## External Accountability

Both Compstat and community policing attempt to make police operations more transparent, but their accountability mechanisms work in different ways. The importance of the community as a source of oversight or governance of the police is well established in the community policing literature (Greene and Mastrofski, 1988; Weisburd and McElroy, 1988), and although Compstat innovators (such as the NYPD) did not list external accountability as an explicit goal, it is clear that Compstat has an important external dimension (Kelling, 1995: 5). Under Compstat, departments are externally accountable to the degree that they provide stakeholders with accurate and timely information about how well they are accomplishing their official crime control mission. External accountability, at least according to community policing doctrine, goes far beyond merely providing citizens with standard crime measures. Under this model, citizens are an essential partner in contributing to police policies and practices, particularly in regard to their own neighborhoods. Thus, under community policing police are accountable to the degree that they create a collaborative environment with local residents that is directly responsive to their concerns and to the degree that they foster an open dialog on what the police are doing and how well they are doing it.

## Innovative Problem Solving

Finally, under Compstat and community policing, crime data are supposed to provide a basis for searching for and implementing innovative solutions to reduce crime and disorder problems (McDonald 2000; Skogan 2006). Operationally, innovative problem solving is closely associated with Herman Goldstein's problem-oriented policing model (Goldstein, 1990). Where these reforms differ to some degree, however, is that Compstat assigns most of this responsibility to middle managers while the latter foresees a greater role for the rank and file and, as noted earlier, emphasizes the involvement of the community in the problem-solving process. Also, systematizing data analysis (especially the routinization of data collection and analysis) is a core feature of Compstat, while community policing treats empirical inquiry as a more customized or *ad hoc* process, designed to meet the needs of a specific problem based on a broader range of customized sources of data and information.

This review shows how the doctrines of Compstat and community policing are both similar and dissimilar. But of course doctrines are essentially theoretical statements about how things are *supposed* to work and not how they actually do so. Drawing in large measure on our site visit findings, we use these doctrinal principles to help structure our explanation of how these reforms actually operated and to inform our recommendations for integration. Before we turn to these recommendations, we first describe our methodology.



## Research Methods

In 2006, George Mason University's Center for Justice Leadership and Management conducted a national mail survey of large municipal and county police agencies with 100 or more sworn officers according to the 2000 Census of State and Local Law Enforcement Agencies (excluding sheriff's departments). Of the 566 agencies in this sample pool, 355 (63 percent) responded to the survey. We asked respondents to tell us whether their departments had adopted Compstat and/or community policing, what form they took, and how big a part each played in their agency. We also asked departments to report on their primary reasons for adopting these reforms and their experiences from operating them simultaneously.

While the representation of many police departments broadened our understanding of how these reforms had been implemented, the survey could not give us in-depth insights on how Compstat and community policing operated together. To gain detailed knowledge on how these reforms worked "on the ground," we used our survey findings to identify seven large (>1,000 sworn), medium (500–999), and small (100–499) police agencies suitable for on-site fieldwork.<sup>2</sup> These sites were selected because they reported that they had fully implemented Compstat and community policing, they had experienced a wide variety of successes and problems in implementing these reforms, and they were receptive to having a field researcher on site for a 5-day period. From the pool of agencies that met these criteria, we also tried to achieve variety in size, organization, geographic distribution, and crime environment. The largest selected was the Los Angeles Police Department, California (LAPD), followed by the Montgomery County Police Department, Maryland (MCPD).<sup>3</sup> The two medium agencies were the St. Louis County Police Department, Missouri (SLC) and Colorado Springs Police Department, Colorado (CSPD). The three smallest were in Overland Park, Kansas (OPPD), Marietta, Georgia (MPD), and Cape Coral, Florida (CCPD).

We conducted our site visits between July 2006 and June 2007. The main research activities were: (a) observing department activities, including community meetings and pre-Compstat and Compstat meetings at the department and district levels; (b) gathering documentation; (c) interviewing key decision-makers in the operational chain of command by means of a semi-structured questionnaire; (d) interviewing and observing patrol officers during ridealongs; and (e) conducting 90-minute focus groups with six (on average) first-line supervisors. Respondents were asked to describe how the organization had implemented community policing and Compstat; the substance of their programs; their experiences of reform; their assessments of successes, disappointments, and failures; and their recommendations for how to improve the simultaneous operation of these reforms.

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2 Terminology varied among sites. For the sake of convenience, we use the generic term "Compstat" to refer to these programs at their respective departments. Similarly, we refer to each department's chief executive officer as "chief," to precinct commanders as "middle managers" or "district commanders," and to all geographic areas of command, as "districts," unless otherwise stated.

3 A profile of the participating police departments is in the Appendix.

Our finding that Compstat and community policing, aside from their common interest in crime control, largely operated independently raises the question of whether the stove-piping of these two reforms is undesirable. Certainly the people we interviewed, with very few exceptions, seemed to be satisfied with their co-implementation. Their simultaneous operation helped departments respond to a broader set of goals and to engage in a wider variety of tasks than if they had implemented just one reform. Thus, they had an additive effect—one compensating for the weaknesses of another in helping the organization respond more comprehensively to the diverse demands it confronted in its external environment. Nevertheless, the finding that Compstat and community policing worked side-by-side, but not in unison, suggests there may be opportunities for making these reforms work more closely with each other in ways that are mutually beneficial. In the next section, we envision a more integrated Compstat and community policing model in the hope that our recommendations will offer useful guidance to police departments that are interested in “refining and expanding the possibilities of practice” of these two reforms (Thacher, 2008: 48).

## Recommendations for Integrating Compstat and Community Policing

Based on our observations of Compstat and community policing in a variety of U.S. police agencies, we identify four key recommendations for maximizing the benefits of their co-implementation. Each recommendation is followed with a brief explanatory statement, a summary of some of the main limitations to current co-implementation practices (“the issue”), a list of the strategies for integration, and a fuller explanation of how each of these strategies might be implemented.

### Recommendation 1:

#### Harness community policing values, goals, and practices to Compstat

*Broaden the Compstat process beyond serious crime to include the prioritization, measurement, and reporting of community policing concerns at regular Compstat meetings.*

#### *The Issue*

Compstat’s principal objective is to bend the performance of the organization to the chief executive’s will, and to do that by empowering middle managers to respond to the chief’s direction. The most visible manifestation of this approach is the Compstat meeting held at headquarters, which highlights the organization’s crime-reduction efforts through its focus on traditional indicators of success (most commonly reported crimes and number of arrests, and less frequently clearance rates and response times). This approach may be conducive to producing results, but it is highly constrained in its focus. Integrating the values and practices of community policing into this structure of Compstat would produce a more productive and inclusive vision of success that reinforces the goals of co-implementation.

Across sites, respondents commented on the importance of community policing to the organization but compared to each department’s focus on serious crime, its core objectives were much less visible during these gatherings. Chiefs may have asked middle managers about their attempts to involve residents as part of a particular crime strategy, or to report briefly on their response to a handful of community concerns, but they were not asked to “take ownership” of community policing values and practices in the way that Compstat demands they do for serious crime. Hence, community policing was at best only weakly linked to the potentially powerful mechanisms that held middle managers accountable for performance. How might Compstat be used to sharpen a department’s focus and strengthen its commitment to community policing as an important dimension of police performance?

#### *Strategies for Integration*

- ◆ Routinely report on community-identified problems during Compstat meetings to focus the organization on community policing priorities
- ◆ Create performance measures that reinforce the fundamental importance of community policing objectives to the organization’s overarching existence.

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## Systematic reporting of community problems at Compstat

One approach to implementing this idea would be to include neighborhood/community problems and a wider variety of less serious crimes in the systematic reporting at Compstat. Depending on the goals of the department, a meeting might include serious crime reduction, but command staff would also be required to report on the major community-related issues in their districts and other crimes as prioritized in coordination with citizens in their district. They would not be expected to report on every issue, but to select those ongoing problems that concern a significant number of residents in any given area (Skogan, 2006: 72). Based on past experience with neighborhood priorities, these problems, identified with input from community residents, would usually not be serious crimes but minor crimes or social and physical disorders (e.g., vandalism, graffiti, public drunkenness, youth problems, and abandoned vehicles or buildings) (Kelling, 1993; Skogan and Hartnett, 1997: 121).

Because community policing is a strategy that grants residents a key role in setting priorities, it would be important that concerns reflecting local collective values about what the police should be doing had, in fact, been identified by consulting community members and not merely selected by the police or other city agencies without any community input (Moore and Braga, 2004: 9). It would be equally important that citizens be actively involved in responding to these problems along with the police who serve in their neighborhoods. To emphasize the organization's commitment to such a community policing approach, top management could ask district commanders how these issues were identified, what they were doing to tackle them, and explain their reasons for doing so. In this way, the top brass could use regular Compstat meetings to make its expectations of success for community policing explicit and to remind department members and the general public of the importance of this approach to the organization's overarching existence.

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## Development of performance measures for community policing

A common complaint about community policing is that its effectiveness is difficult to assess, unlike Compstat where the presentation of official crime data allows the organization to gauge its performance (NRC, 2004: 232; Skogan, 2006: 39). Not having ways to assess community policing is especially problematic when we consider that organizations tend to produce and care about those activities that are measured (Moore and Braga, 2004: 16; Neyroud 2008). The problem for community policing is that police organizations do not have well-developed data collection routines that go beyond traditional UCR crime and enforcement activities. It is, however, possible to collect data on the "health" of the agency's community policing approach. Given that most police agencies already have information systems for the collection and analysis of conventional crime statistics, some of the necessary infrastructure is already in place for recording community priorities and tracking responses to them in time.

What forms could these measures take? Departments could sponsor district-level surveys to be conducted annually to obtain the experiences and views of a representative sample of citizens on the police services they are getting, whether their needs are being met, and their suggestions for improvement (Oettmeier and Wycoff, 1994: 24). These could include a number of different dimensions, such as residents' perceptions of increases or decreases in the levels of: (1) fairness and dignity with which they are being treated by police (procedural justice); (2) crime; (3) neighborhood decay; (4) fear of crime; (5) quality of life; (6) police responsiveness to local concerns and problems; and (7) their willingness to help the police.<sup>4</sup>

These results could also provide an annual benchmark against which each year's progress could be measured against previous years and across districts. Survey questions could also be revised periodically to capture changes in the organization (such as the implementation of innovative policing methods) and changes in community needs at the district or even beat level. It would be important that these surveys were conducted systematically and to a sufficiently large pool of residents so that the data collected would be regarded by those inside and outside of the organization as valid, reliable, and useful not only for establishing accountability but also strategic planning (Mastrofski and Wadman, 1991). Administering a well-designed paper survey is a costly and challenging endeavor, and so an alternative would be to administer it through the web (Rosenbaum et al., 2008). To help overcome the problem of selection bias, a dual strategy could be pursued whereby participants could be presented with the option to fill out either a paper or online survey. This systematic approach obviously does not preclude supplementing these data with anecdotal evidence from police-citizen encounters and with community input at the beat or neighborhood level.

Of course, an annual survey of neighborhoods does not provide police the sort of timely data-driven input on problem hot spot emergence and the impact of police intervention efforts that is associated with the Compstat of the past. Use of these surveys would force departments to take a more long-term perspective in monitoring success, but this would seem to be quite appropriate, especially since it would encourage police managers to go beyond the "whack-a-mole" approach to crime spikes, be more selective about which problems should receive attention in each neighborhood, and then mobilize a more thorough and thoughtful approach to solving those problems. Furthermore, Compstat could incorporate less rigorous, but more timely ways to monitor the impact of police interventions on the problem by asking key community stakeholders (leaders of neighborhood organizations, businesses, churches, schools, etc.) to provide feedback. This might be monitored by holding a focus group of stakeholders at which someone from an administrative unit separate from the one with operational responsibility solicits feedback. These can be organized relatively quickly and at little expense, and they have the added benefit of increasing dialog between the community and the police.

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<sup>4</sup> The surveys designed for CAPS (the Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy) to assess these aspects of CP are a very useful guide. The Working Papers (especially nos. 1, 7, 23, and 31) provide sample surveys and can be downloaded for free at [www.northwestern.edu/ipr/publications/policing.html#G](http://www.northwestern.edu/ipr/publications/policing.html#G).

In addition, departments should consider changing the routine data systems used to feed the Compstat mechanism. This could be the responsibility of the department's crime analysts. For example, in evaluating a district's efforts to reduce vandalism, outcome measures could go beyond arrests to include measuring "the number of graffiti sites, number of broken street lights, number of defaced traffic lights, etc." (Oettmeier and Wycoff, 1994: 36). Crime analysts could assess whether the problem had been eliminated or, recognizing that many chronic problems are difficult to resolve completely, whether it had been reduced in terms of the seriousness or number of incidents it created (Eck and Spelman, 1987).

Adapting Compstat to advance the more diversified mission of community policing certainly would raise some implementation challenges. One of these is developing a system that can monitor success on a wide variety of problems, many of which are not now readily measured by most American police agencies. The attractiveness of the traditional Compstat focus on serious crimes is that nearly all urban police agencies have decades of experience in collecting such data, and the information systems are more readily adapted to tracking enforcement activities too. Being responsive to the great diversity of "minor" problems that find their way to the top of a neighborhood's priority list would require considerable planning by those responsible for designing report forms, recording the data, and analyzing them (Skogan, 1990). One possibility would be to assign volunteers or students to take notes at community meetings where local residents were asked to identify their most pressing concerns. The list of priority problems could then be recorded in a database which district commanders could use to report on these problems and their responses to them at Compstat meetings.

To a significant extent, Compstat defines what matters to the organization by the visibility it affords the measures it uses. This approach suggests a useful way of doing the same thing for community policing. If good policing is something more than making arrests and improving response times, including alternative measures of success, such as those for effectively addressing community concerns, would seem to be one critical step toward changing this feature of traditional police culture.



## **Recommendation 2:**

### **Increase accountability down the chain of command for performance**

*Push accountability for crime and community policing down the chain of command by assigning individual officers to beat teams headed by a patrol sergeant, delegating responsibilities to these teams, and requiring that all team members participate regularly in monthly beat meetings.*

#### ***The Issue***

For the most part, Compstat is an internal process designed to help top leadership hold middle managers accountable for their performance in reducing crime. Because district commanders are required to present at regular Compstat meetings in front of the top brass, they often feel the pressure to perform most acutely. Failure to do so can result in looking bad before an audience of one's peers, as well as the department's highest-ranking officials. As we have already noted, asking district commanders to report on and discuss their efforts to reduce quality-of-life problems during Compstat meetings would be a fairly straightforward way for an agency to increase its commitment and response to community policing concerns as well as serious crime. This also has the benefit of increasing accountability within the organization for community policing, at least among middle managers.

A shortcoming of this approach is that some research suggests that accountability under Compstat has limited scope (Willis et al., 2004; 2007). Compstat's top-down approach tends to reinforce the traditional command hierarchy by having the agency's top echelon establish performance criteria for middle managers and holding them accountable (Weisburd et al., 2003). Without the implementation of a similar mechanism for holding lower-ranking officers accountable, they do not experience it with much intensity (Willis et al., 2007: 165). In addition, accountability systems need not be tied exclusively to punishment-for-nonperformance. Constructed properly, an accountability system that reaches below middle managers can help lower ranks understand and embrace their responsibilities in a positive light.

Similar to our earlier research, our fieldwork suggested that Compstat's spike of accountability failed to reach below the middle manager level. Moreover, patrol officers did not appear to experience much pressure for their community policing performance. This is probably because the major burden for community policing duties at each site fell most heavily on district commanders and specialized community policing officers operating either individually or in units. Even where the patrol division was assigned primary responsibility for delivering community policing, departments had not provided a clear way of making their work transparent to the command hierarchy, and it therefore remained stove-piped. What remained underdeveloped was a system for tying the bottom-up elements of community policing to the strategic direction that the top of the organization was trying to provide.

Some of the accountability that middle managers and community policing officers experienced may have been because of Compstat meetings, but an important accountability mechanism for community policing was provided *externally* through regular face-to-face meetings with local residents. Those department members who attended these meetings to discuss and respond to community members' concerns seemed to us to be more invested in their organization's community policing program. Like Compstat, accountability at community meetings was experienced through the possibility of: (1) Having to demonstrate an understanding of district problems; and (2) being required to do so through dialog in a public forum. Given these observations on accountability under Compstat and community policing, what mechanism(s) could make rank-and-file officers feel more responsible for their performance under both reforms?

### *Strategies for Integration*

- ◆ Assign patrol officers to permanent beat teams supervised by patrol sergeants to increase their sense of “ownership” for reducing crime and disorder problems and reconsider call-management policies
- ◆ Hold district-level Compstat meetings with beat team leaders to distribute accountability more equitably throughout the organization
- ◆ Provide patrol sergeants with the necessary guidance and leadership skills to carry out the organization's Compstat and community policing mission.

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### **Assign patrol officers to permanent beat teams and reconsider call-management policies**

One solution to reinforcing community policing among generalist patrol officers would be to have them attend community meetings. The trouble with this approach is that by allowing them to sit off to the side in silence (as often happens when a commanding officer or community policing officer is present), accountability is not heightened. In contrast to middle managers and community policing officers, patrol officers are generally not expected to participate at these meetings in a way that would help increase their sense of ownership of local problems in their districts. Because they are not being held *directly* responsible for their performance by the citizens they serve, they are not under much pressure to do community policing. Because of time constraints, we were only able to attend community meetings at three sites, but at none of these meetings did we observe patrol sergeants or their subordinates take on a leadership role. These observations about how accountability under Compstat and community policing worked suggest how their features could be combined to distribute accountability more equitably and effectively.

Nearly all the departments we visited had tried to assign patrol officers to geographic areas for a relatively long period of time (usually a year), but few had attempted to strengthen this turf orientation. Through the formation of small beat teams of patrol officers supervised by a patrol sergeant.<sup>5</sup> Moreover,

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5 The Montgomery County Police Department (MCPD) was experimenting with a geo-based management plan in some of its districts that involved teaming a sergeant with a small group of line officers and giving these teams 24-hour responsibility for a particular beat. At the time we visited, this was still in its trial phases and had not been implemented department-wide. For these reasons, we do not report on it here.

the focus groups we conducted suggested that the work of first-line supervisors was little changed by the implementation of Compstat and community policing, despite the key role they play in converting department policy into practice (Skogan, 2008). Building small teams, assigning them to fixed beats, and making them responsible for taking action and producing results is one way to strengthen accountability. Such an approach is challenging, but Chicago's largely successful reorganization around a beat team concept is well documented (Skogan, 2006: 59, 65).<sup>6</sup>

In Chicago, beat teams were still responsible for handling 911 calls in their area, but deployment included the creation of unassigned time for teams to engage in community policing activities (e.g., working with residents, business owners, and schools on problem solving and expediting requests for city services) (Skogan and Hartnett, 1997: 90). To institutionalize community policing throughout the entire organization, these teams were made up of officers from all three shifts—not just those working days. Another group of officers in the form of a rapid response team was established in each district to take some of the pressure off beat teams that were overloaded. They were assigned excess or low priority calls (Skogan et al., 2004: 1). Officers were rotated through both the beat and rapid response teams so that community policing was implemented department-wide (Skogan, 2006: 61). Many of our respondents remarked that the pressure of responding to calls for service was a considerable burden on patrol, hampering officers' ability to do directed patrol or community policing.

Although Chicago's approach required the hiring of additional officers, the argument that current 911 practices do not allow departments to deploy resources in strategic ways called for by either community policing or Compstat might compel local governments to make additional resources available. The organization's capacity to reallocate resources in response to nonroutine demands could be increased by creating specialist 911 response units to free up beat teams rather than having specialist community policing officers or units for freeing up patrol to answer 911 calls. This obviously calls for fundamental changes to a department's radio dispatch plan that allocates calls selectively to beat teams. In Chicago, detailed rules were put in place whereby:

Priority was given to responding to calls for which officers' knowledge of local conditions could make a difference. Other kinds of calls (such as "cold" burglaries for which victims just needed a report of their insurance companies) were routinely assigned to other units (Skogan 2006: 60).

This reorganization of how daily work is assigned and managed would be the reverse of how most departments are currently structured. Chicago's beat team concept was challenging to implement, especially making sure that officers were only dispatched to calls that originated in their beat and spent most of their time in their beat, but connecting teams to specific areas enabled them to get to know people and develop mutual trust—key components of making community policing a success (Skogan, 2006).

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<sup>6</sup> Notably, this form of decentralized authority and accountability to the lowest operational units has long been noted as a key factor in the effectiveness of German army fighting units in World War II (Wilson, 1989).

It is through this assignment of permanent beat teams that officers can develop a personal sense of ownership for the well-being of local residents and a deeper understanding of neighborhood problems and potential solutions. This connection is reinforced when all of a beat team's members are required to attend and participate at monthly beat meetings. Because these are the officers who are answering calls and responding to community concerns, it is beat officers (and not specialists who may have little or infrequent contact with the same residents) who must be called to account for meeting the expectations of their constituents. Some of the features of department Compstat meetings suggest a way that "calling to account" could work. Sergeants and their beat teams would be expected to respond to citizens' questions and concerns, to report on their actions, and to provide follow-ups to any strategies that had been suggested at prior meetings. They could also present on important crime and problem trends in the beat and solicit questions or comments on these.

It would be important to keep detailed and comprehensive records on the community concerns that were identified and discussed at these meetings. Not only would these beat meeting logs help with follow-ups at the beat level, but reliable and detailed records would help district commanders with their strategic planning and with measuring and tracking responses to problems at department-level Compstat meetings. A briefer version of these logs highlighting the major issues of discussion could also be posted on the department's web site to help stimulate interest and provide feedback to residents, particularly those unable to attend. Moreover, if a resident felt an issue had been missed, they could inform the beat sergeant. Rather than leave this note-taking responsibility to beat team members, it could fall on the shoulders of a conscientious volunteer who, if funds were available, could even be paid for this service to increase the quality of the information recorded.

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### Hold district-level Compstat meetings with beat team leaders

To ensure that the spike of accountability for Compstat and community policing does indeed run the whole length of the organization, we recommend that district commanders hold regular district meetings with their beat team sergeants and any units, such as drug enforcement and detectives, that had been decentralized to the district level. These could take the form of regular mini-Compstat meetings where sergeants would be expected to report on how they were identifying and responding to both crime and neighborhood problems in their beats. They would also enhance communication and collaboration within the district and decisions on how to reallocate resources in response to developing problems. We observed a district commander holding a mini-Compstat meeting in the LAPD that seemed to work well in encouraging information-sharing, brainstorming on problems, and discussion.

Although this meeting was not organized around a beat team concept, there is no reason why it could not act as a venue for having sergeants, under the guidance of the district commander, discuss the priorities in their beat and their plans for addressing them, and follow up on solutions implemented at earlier meetings. Strengthening control between district commanders and their subordinates through this mechanism would have the added benefit of making a district commander better prepared to report on any developments in his or her district at department-level Compstat meetings. Top management would also be able to use the data on beat plans, plus the usual crime data, at the Compstat meeting held at headquarters to identify a district's community policing objectives and to examine how well district commanders and their beat teams were responding to community needs.

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### Re-orient role of sergeant from supervisor to beat team leader

Because this Compstat/community policing model holds supervisors to a higher level of accountability, they must get the practical guidance and skills that would enable them to bring their new supervisory strategy in line with its demands. For the beat team concept to be successfully implemented, sergeants must receive the proper training to move them far beyond their traditional role of filling out forms and ensuring compliance with departmental rules and regulations. Under an integrated model, supervisors must be capable of acting as mentors, guides, team leaders, and resource managers. Training should include learning the nuts and bolts of the structural transformation demanded by integrating Compstat and community policing around a beat team concept (particularly beat integrity and mini-Compstat meetings), developing their supervisory and team-building skills, and being taught how to manage successful police-community partnerships.

In sum, an integrated model would empower first-line supervisors to carry out the organization's crime control and community policing mission. Rather than merely transmitting orders from above, they would be expected to decide on how best to respond to the distinctive crime and disorder problems within their specific territory or beat. Policing of this sort would enable the organization to respond with the variation that was sensitive to the priorities and circumstances of a wide range of geographic areas throughout the jurisdiction. Officers' sense of "ownership" would be enhanced by having district commanders hold their sergeants responsible for their performance (and the actions of their subordinates). Thus, the geographic decentralization of operational command beyond the district level would strengthen the link in the "chain of internal accountability" between middle managers and street-level police officers.

### **Recommendation 3:**

#### **Change Compstat meetings to operate more strategically**

*Restructure Compstat meetings to focus the organization's attention more intensively on using scientific research and in-house evaluations to guide the identification and implementation of the most promising strategies for tackling crime and community problems, and on assessing short- and long-term outcomes.*

#### ***The Issue***

Thus far we have noted the importance of regular Compstat meetings held at headquarters to increasing the visibility and accountability of community policing within the organization. We would, however, suggest major changes to how often these meetings are held and the form that they take in order to make them more strategic. Far from fostering the goal of incisive and critical inquiry, department-level Compstat meetings at most of the sites we visited focused on sharing information on crime issues and were characterized by participants expressing broad and supportive opinions on whatever actions district commanders were taking in response to a specific crime problem.

Prior research has suggested that the possibility of public censure or embarrassment at Compstat is a key factor in stifling innovation (Willis et al., 2007), but merely de-emphasizing accountability at Compstat meetings—as many of our sites had chosen to do—without making any other significant changes is unlikely to do much to deepen the level of discussion or problem solving. Most of the departments we visited had reacted against what they perceived as the “gotcha” element associated with the confrontational NYPD model by implementing a version of Compstat where that aspect of accountability appeared more-or-less absent. Across sites, district commanders were seldom asked to explain detailed strategic plans or justify their decisions. While this approach may have fostered greater collegiality, it also nurtured a permissive atmosphere that muddled or disguised those expectations that indicated what the organization valued and where it was heading. When almost any response from a district commander to a superior's question is deemed sufficient (no matter how superficial) then it is unclear what exactly the Compstat meeting is designed to accomplish. The lack of attention at Compstat meetings to using evidence to figure out what works best in preventing crime seems to reflect a larger trend in policing: the undervaluing of social science as a means for structuring everyday police operations (Weisburd and Neyroud, 2008). Given the lack of creativity, teamwork, and free-flowing discussion that we observed, what changes could be made to Compstat meetings to foster the kind of innovative thinking and collaborative learning that is supposed to be a hallmark of both Compstat and community policing?



### *Strategies for Integration*

- ◆ Lengthen the period between department-level Compstat meetings to encourage district commanders to innovate and develop a better understanding of the nature of problems and more comprehensive long-term solutions
- ◆ Create small group meetings attended by key decision-makers and focused on addressing crime and community problems by thinking out loud, exchanging ideas, and querying assumptions
- ◆ Use evidence cops to help focus resources on solutions that research evidence shows are the most likely to reduce crime and disorder problems
- ◆ Build an institutional memory by systematically recording efforts and outcomes of police strategies.

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#### Lengthen period between Compstat meetings

Regarding the time frame, meeting every 2 or 3 weeks and using the prior Compstat meeting to gauge effective performance means that district commanders often feel pressured to do something quickly in the hope that a hot spot will turn cold by the next reporting period. Such a Compstat system merely moves “fire-brigade” or incident-driven reactive policing to another level as district commanders rush from crime spike to crime spike, attempting to suppress them. The dominance of short-term concerns also fosters cynicism (Bayley and Bittner, 1984: 44). A more innovative response would require that district commanders have sufficient time to more fully understand the nature of problems and foster, develop, and test long-term preventive plans. If there are concerns about the length of time between Compstat meetings, departments could begin by holding them at shorter intervals. As the integrated program becomes better established and gains momentum, these periods could then be lengthened.

Having districts attend Compstat meetings on a quarterly basis would encourage the kind of creative and in-depth problem-solving efforts that Compstat claims to encourage yet often fails to deliver. District commanders would still be under pressure to reduce crime, but the focus would be on identifying crime events and quality-of-life problems across places and times, focusing strategic attention on a limited range of problems, using evidence as the basis for decision-making, and assessing results more rigorously in the long-term. This higher standard for performance is more likely to increase rather than diminish accountability while at the same time giving district commanders greater opportunity to be resourceful and creative in tackling crime and beat problems.

Obviously, we are not suggesting that departments abandon their focus on rapid response solutions, but that they do more to “consciously” balance the competing demands between “rapid responses and solutions to persistent crime patterns” (Sherman, 1995: 348). Holding frequent district-level Compstat meetings would be one way to ensure that chronic problems do not slip off the police radar by allowing district commanders to monitor how well their tactics were working, to help identify any problems or challenges being encountered, and to make suitable adjustments. What we are suggesting is that district commanders have a greater opportunity to develop greater understanding of the nature of problems and choose

strategies they consider most appropriate to the specific crime problem or pattern. This requires that they are allowed enough time to analyze and select the most effective strategy following their consideration of a number of alternatives. The expectation would be that district commanders would be working continuously with their crime analysts and the department's evidence cop (whose position we discuss below) to identify emerging crime patterns and to implement the most promising strategies.

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### Create small group meetings to foster in-depth analysis and discussion

To further encourage a move away from a department's continued reliance on ad hoc interventions toward a more balanced approach that takes into greater consideration the development and assessment of long-range alternatives, the *form* department-level Compstat meetings take should also change. The officious and theatrical nature of these meetings does little to stimulate creativity. Having members of a department's administration, who may or may not have much knowledge about best practices in policing, pepper presenters in front of an audience of their peers with questions on Part I crimes that may or may not be related to broader patterns or trends, is not a particularly effective strategy of surfacing new ideas or possibilities. Because respondents are overwhelmingly concerned about looking foolish or ill-prepared, they are most likely to devote their time before the meeting memorizing, rather than deliberating on, information on crime trends and the responses they implemented. During the actual meeting, they may well be defensive or suggest courses of action that are safe (those that are most likely to be familiar, and hence well received, or least controversial) and not those that necessarily promise the best results. And from our observations, there is rarely much participation in the discussion by the large number of other district commanders who stand by while a given commander is under the spotlight. There may be some benefit in having so many people observe, on the outside chance that some will have useful information or ideas to share, but on the whole it is an inefficient use of the time of large numbers of middle managers. While some have suggested that Compstat should encourage "a collaborative atmosphere that encourages discourse," there is not much guidance on how this might happen (Bratton and Malinowski, 2008: 263).

Thinking out loud, exchanging ideas, querying assumptions, discussing limitations, taking part in the give-and-take of informed debate, and a willingness to take risks demands an atmosphere that fosters a willingness to accept constructive criticism, such as a small group meeting whose purpose is to encourage collaboration on tackling the organization's most pressing crime and community problems and not to penalize district commanders for their creative failures.

Under our Compstat/community policing model, district commanders would be encouraged to come up with alternative strategies to crime and disorder problems, or to refine existing approaches in ways that experience and research indicate tend to be most successful. The focus would be on tackling each district's greatest challenges, and not on reviewing and discussing every problem or crime. This is a "less is more" approach that is far more consistent with the notion that top leaders should lead by focusing on the big things: less showmanship, fewer meetings, and being more strategic in the selection of problems and the tracking of performance to create greater in-depth and long-term problem solving. Such an approach has the added benefit of diffusing much more analysis and planning outside the confines of the Compstat meeting to the everyday work of the organization.



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## Use evidence cops to help focus resources on effective solutions

We suggest much smaller Compstat meetings at headquarters. One or two members of top leadership, crime analysts, and the district commanders would attend these meetings. The meetings would be run by an “evidence-cop-in-attendance” in order to focus the organization’s attention on using its own crime prevention knowledge in combination with the latest research findings to come up with fair and effective strategies to crime and community problems (Sherman, 1998: 3). As part of a proactive effort to convert research into police practice, Lawrence Sherman proposed the idea of the “evidence cop” a decade ago—someone within a police department (smaller departments could share this position among them) responsible for continuously monitoring research on what works in policing, discussing this evidence with key decision-makers within the organization, and helping produce a set of guidelines for police policy and practice for the department (Sherman 1998, 2002; Walsh, 2006: 317). The idea was that such a position would help sharpen the organization’s focus on effective methods for reducing crime and disorder problems. Since it is not uncommon for middle and upper-level managers to have developed research skills while pursuing undergraduate or master’s degrees, the person assigned to this position could be drawn from these ranks. Or alternatively, a civilian could be hired with the necessary skills. While an officer’s own experience can be a valuable guide to making decisions, it is also limited by a lack of reliable information about whether a decision ultimately resulted in a desirable or undesirable outcome (Bayley and Bittner, 1984). Scientific research on policing, where available, is an invaluable supplement to subjective experience since it can provide police “with more reliable predictions than individual experience could produce” (Sherman, 1984: 64).

Compstat meetings would provide a regular opportunity for the evidence cop to discuss this knowledge and especially to alert district commanders to strategies that they may be using that research suggests are counterproductive. It should be noted that the role of the evidence cop is not to sanction or rebuke district commanders but to proactively redirect or push research into practice. In this regard, the evidence cop is not an enforcer or regulator but rather a resource who provides evidence-based support on selected problems and projects that the department identifies as worthy of strategic attention. The participation of a high-ranking official at these meetings would help keep executive staff informed about any developments and emphasize the importance of this approach to the organization.

In an effort to “translate” research into practice, the evidence cop would be responsible for introducing department members to tools designed for this specific purpose. Examples include the free POP guides at the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing and “the matrix” suggested by Lum, Koper, and Telep.<sup>7</sup> The latter is a visual model for organizing studies on the effectiveness of police interventions along three dimensions: the scale or scope of the problem (individuals, neighborhoods, etc.), the specificity of the intervention (ranging between general and more focused), and to what extent an intervention was characterized by a focus on short-term or long-term effects and reactive or proactive measures for their accomplishment. The purpose of this tactical tool is to help police easily and quickly match those crime strategies that research indicates are most promising to a given crime problem.<sup>8</sup>

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7 These can be found at [www.popcenter.org/guides](http://www.popcenter.org/guides)

8 The matrix can be found at <http://gunston.gmu.edu/cebcp/Matrix.html>

Academics from local universities with knowledge of crime and policing could also be invited to participate at these meetings and share their expertise in helping tackle crime and disorder problems that *the police* have defined as important. In this way, the police have ownership of research, not the institutions responsible for sponsoring and conducting the work (Weisburd and Neyroud, 2008). Outside of these meetings, these scholars could assist evidence cops by answering their queries or bringing their attention to study findings that are likely to be of interest to the department depending on the particular challenges it is facing. This could lead to the development of a more formal academic/practitioner partnership, one that could become an important part of a much more radical change in how police research is usually conducted. In time, an infrastructure could be developed between the police organization and a local university for involving the police and researchers as full partners in a long-term, sustainable effort to produce a science of policing that also meets the needs and priorities of the police (Weisburd and Neyroud 2008; Willis, Mastrofski, and Weisburd 2009).

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### Build an institutional memory of what works and does not work

In addition to keeping abreast of the latest research findings on crime prevention and consulting with other police organizations and researchers on promising developments, the evidence cop would also be responsible for documenting the long-term results of in-house police practices as part of a department's systematic attempt to identify "factors associated with success" (Sherman, 1998: 5). As a result of this feedback loop, police departments could not only use academic research to guide decision-making, but also generate their own local knowledge about which of their own strategies produced the best effects. Recording these attempts in a computerized database would provide a resource to inform future decision-making. This responsibility could be assigned to a civilian criminologist or a crime analyst in each district who would also write up final conclusions. Lastly, the evidence cop would play a similar role outside of these meetings—providing a resource that district commanders and crime analysts could approach for ideas about how to solve problems.

Much of the advice in this section for balancing top management control with empowerment at lower levels in the organization (Simons, 1995) also applies to district-level Compstat meetings. District commanders must learn how to convey their expectations about acceptable and unacceptable performance without discouraging the bubbling up of ideas from below. Community policing stresses that those workers who are closest to the organization's clientele are most knowledgeable of the neighborhoods to which they are assigned. District commanders need to encourage their subordinates to take initiative in seeking out opportunities and responding to the needs of community members without inviting behaviors that may be undesirable to the organization (such as privileging some groups of citizens above others). Establishing clear expectations for performance, fostering open dialog through personal contact, and anticipating problems are some plausible approaches to encouraging this approach.

The basis of our recommendation for improving innovative crime prevention and for doing community policing is that it requires more than simply relying on a department's existing Compstat format. Department-level Compstat meetings must be reorganized to promote a form of decision-making that seeks the best "evidence" from available data sources and emphasizes the careful assessment of long-term results (Sherman, 2002: 218). To this end, it is imperative that the department's administration communicates its Compstat and community policing priorities for district commanders in advance and uses Compstat as an opportunity to clarify and expand on these. By this we mean that the top

brass must exercise consistent *leadership*, not merely display its authority, during Compstat. This can be accomplished by expressing approval for trying out new ideas, by not penalizing individuals for their creative failures, rewarding people for learning from past errors, and by offering advice and encouragement. All of this demands careful scrutiny and discussion of crime strategies for weaknesses and does not preclude the possibility of a reprimand for poor performance. The challenge for senior department executives is in preventing Compstat from lapsing into a hum-drum and superficial review session of old information, as many of our respondents regarded these meetings. Top managers should conceive of a dynamic Compstat model that helps the organization continually learn and evolve in response to the experiences of those working in the districts. If Compstat meetings are truly to be a venue for promoting information sharing and innovative problem solving then the creation of an unduly harsh or laissez-faire atmosphere undermines this purpose.

#### **Recommendation 4:**

**Commit substantial resources to crime analysis and training in problem-oriented policing (POP), problem solving, and building partnerships**

*Encourage acceptance of the goals and values of Compstat and community policing and the successful application of their strategic elements by committing substantial resources to crime analysis units and to helping officers of all ranks develop new skills and knowledge. Primary responsibility for the comprehensive application of problem-oriented policing should be assigned to middle managers (district commanders), while the rank and file and local residents should be taught basic problem-solving skills, so that they can work together on tackling crime and neighborhood problems effectively.*

#### ***The Issue***

Research evidence suggests the traditional law enforcement model—engaging in routine patrol and reacting to individual incidents through an overreliance on the criminal law and retrospective investigations—is less effective at reducing crime than a proactive problem-oriented policing (POP) approach (NRC, 2004). The latter focuses on analyzing data to identify the most effective strategies (that may or may not involve enforcing the law) for correcting the underlying conditions that lead to crime or disorder problems arising in the first place (rather than merely reacting to its symptoms). Studies suggest, however, that the kind of meticulously researched and carefully coordinated POP approach, at least as it was originally conceived, is rarely implemented as its reformers intended (Goldstein, 1990; Cordner and Biebel, 2005; Braga and Weisburd, 2006). On the other hand, research also suggests that a “shallower” problem-solving approach that is less analytically demanding and less comprehensive than POP can still significantly reduce crime (Braga and Weisburd, 145). This involves the application of basic analytical models well-known in police circles (such as SARA) and focuses police resources on risks (such as crime hot spots and high-activity offenders). Under this approach, less stress is placed on trying to understand the criminogenic factors that cause problems than under POP. Simply put, it concentrates on finding ways to concentrate police efforts at times and places where the problems arise, usually using traditional, enforcement-oriented modes of police intervention. In both cases, community participation is necessary only insofar as it can contribute directly to the reduction of the problem at hand (Goldstein, 1990: 27), yet citizen involvement in addressing problems from a community policing perspective is valued for its own sake (Sherman et al., 1997: 352).

POP under Compstat and community policing at the sites we visited was not characterized, aside from a few high profile cases, by the kind of analytically demanding and creative process that distinguishes the original POP concept. Nor did the police systematically engage with the public for the purpose of working together to identify and respond to problems. In general, district commanders would report briefly on crimes in the neighborhood and how they were being handled, discuss general safety information, and respond to community concerns when they came to their attention.

Moreover, while each organization had adopted several of POP's key tenets (such as crime prevention and being proactive), they worked in various combinations and at different levels in the organization rather than as a coherent or unitary strategy (Willis, Kochel, and Mastrofski, Forth). Thus, district commanders used crime analysis to identify serious crime problems and focus resources, but took an approach that tended to produce a traditional reactive response (e.g., directed patrol and increased arrests). Meanwhile, sergeants and patrol officers interpreted POP as synonymous with being proactive in relation to individual crime incidents rather than looking for patterns and problems and trying to identify the underlying conditions that gave rise to them. Although they were given access to crime-related data, they were not expected to use these data to make decisions about how best to achieve organizational objectives. These departments had taken great strides to provide lower-ranking officers with crime data (such as disseminating information on potential suspects and emerging crime problems through e-mail or roll call announcements), but, in the main, the lower ranks were not held responsible for using these data to make decisions about how best to achieve organizational objectives.

Finally, specialist community policing officers and their units were the most likely to broaden their focus to include minor crimes and social disorders and to engage in crime prevention, but generally as part of myriad other responsibilities (such as engaging in community outreach). Thus community policing officers generally combined the role of problem solver with community relations, a dual function which inevitably diminished the time they were able to devote to POP, particularly its most challenging elements. Because crime analysis and innovation are highly valued under Compstat and community policing, how might they be developed to simultaneously benefit both reforms?

### *Strategies for Integration*

- ◆ Broaden responsibility for problem analysis to include rank-and-file officers who are knowledgeable about local crime and disorder problems
- ◆ Decentralize crime analysis units to support district personnel in their problem analysis efforts
- ◆ Increase training in problem analysis for all line personnel and provide training to community members.

## Broaden responsibility for problem analysis to include line officers

We suggest that the capacity of police departments to operate strategically, a feature common to both Compstat and community policing, could be much improved by building the skills of the lower ranks and harnessing these to the goals of the organization (Toch, 2008: 60). NYPD's Compstat model deliberately focused decision-making authority on middle managers in opposition to a community policing philosophy that tried to delegate power to beat cops considered too inexperienced to make strategic decisions (O'Connell and Straub, 2007: 93). But Compstat's response is an overreaction, and it ultimately hinders the organization's capacity to handle the unstable environment in which it operates. By concentrating operational decision-making almost entirely with district commanders, Compstat limits the organization's ability to scan its environment and learn about problems that vary in magnitude and complexity across different geographical areas.

Given that the vast majority of police work is conducted by the rank and file who are most familiar with local conditions, these officers are a vital knowledge resource for rapidly identifying problems on a daily basis and helping develop local solutions (Skogan, 2006a: 38). Toyota, until recently, a highly successful automobile manufacturer, conceives of innovation in this way. It makes everyone in the company, not just a select few, responsible for coming up with new ideas and approaches every day. Innovation is small and incremental rather than large and sudden, but the effect is that "cumulatively, every day, Toyota knows a little more, and does a little better, than it did the day before" (Surowiecki, 2008: 48).

POP is an "analytically and creatively demanding" process and, although an appealing prospect to its supporters, it is probably unrealistic to expect every member of the rank and file to become a full-fledged neighborhood clinician anytime soon—screening for problems, diagnosing them, analyzing them, treating them, and assessing the results (Cordner and Biebel 2005: 155; Mastrofski, 1998: 174). We propose a hybrid model that places most of the burden for POP on crime analysts and district commanders but at the same time seeks to improve the problem-solving capacity of line officers and the communities they serve. For this to work, both district commanders and patrol officers must be provided with significant assistance in doing problem analysis and developing effective responses. More specifically, we propose that police departments employ sufficient numbers of qualified analysts that (a) they can be decentralized to the districts; (b) and they can collaborate with line level personnel to provide analysis support on a variety of POP and problem-solving projects. We also propose training district commanders in POP and line officers and citizens in basic problem-solving skills. We suggest that this approach takes time to implement, but in the long run, it should make a substantial contribution to the fundamental cultural change that must occur if POP is truly to become integrated into police department practice. Especially in the United States, where top police managers achieve that post by rising from the bottom ranks, it is essential to begin the education and socialization of the police to POP methods from the beginning of their career.



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## Decentralization of crime analysis units

When it comes to crime analysis, departments seem to spend far more time collecting, processing, and presenting information than analyzing data to make informed decisions and to evaluate the effectiveness of their crime reduction efforts (O'Shea and Nicholls, 2003). Compstat contributes to this imbalance, since preparing for the spectacle of the Compstat meeting at headquarters is time intensive and places a heavy burden on the handful of analysts who work in a department's crime analysis unit. In larger departments with sufficient resources, decentralizing crime analysis units would improve how the research and technical skills of these units are currently used. While some of our sites had assigned crime analysts to individual districts, their role as "district-level criminologists" was not well developed (Weiss and McGarrell, 1997). Some possessed a great deal of local knowledge on crimes in their area but were unfamiliar with research on crime prevention, while other analysts may have suggested crime strategies based on their analysis, but they were not involved in how (if at all) they were implemented.

Under a more integrated model, crime analysts operating out of headquarters would be responsible for processing routine crime information on a daily basis thereby relieving district-level analysts from this burden to focus more strategically on analyzing crime problems and consulting with the evidence cop. District-level crime analysts would work closely with their district commander in identifying and analyzing patterns and trends and designing responses, and they would also assist beat teams tackle persistent community problems (White, 2008). Analysis with more complex social science research methods (statistics, survey research, and crime mapping) would be an important part of the process of broadening the crime analysis unit's function beyond simply identifying offenders and high crime areas—elements of the traditional crime control model (O'Shea and Nicholls, 2003: 8). This would obviously require that analysts receive theoretical training and training in research methods, which is seldom the case in most police departments. Finally, crime analysts could be responsible for attending beat team meetings, at least until beat teams were comfortable with discussing crime data with community residents without their help.

While many of the departments we visited had implemented sophisticated computer technology and hired crime analysts, how these resources were used to drive daily decision-making was less well developed. Civilian analysts made suggestions, but communication was primarily one way: for the most part coming up with crime strategies was not a shared responsibility characterized by a dynamic dialog about the pros and cons of possible crime responses. There was a distance between analysts and police officials and crime analysts were seldom given feedback on their suggestions.

In addition to creating resources and involving analysts in closer, more collaborative relationships, decentralization could also provide a means for improving the organization's capacity to learn what works and why. Most important, crime analysts would be responsible for keeping records about how their district responded to a specific problem—what "treatment" was used, how much was delivered, and for how often. Summary sheets of what happened to whom, where, and when that are typically produced for Compstat are insufficient for effective decision-making. More detailed records would provide information on why a specific strategy was selected, how it was implemented, and what the results were results (both short-term and long-term). Particular emphasis would be placed on trying to figure out why a strategy did or did not work. From this "feedback information system," officers would

learn about the effects of their actions, avoid behaving in ways that contradicted earlier responses, and be in a better position to predict the consequences of a certain problem-solving approach. These records would also help districts learn more about what works best and under what conditions and this could be shared within the department and with other police agencies (Sherman, 1984: 63).

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### Increase training in problem analysis for all personnel and community members

Changing officers “commitment and ability to pursue agency objectives” is unlikely to happen without additional training—“the remedy of choice” when it comes to police professionalization (Mastrofski and Ritti, 1996: 291, 295). A problem-solving approach requires police officers and community members to learn new analytical skills, including the capacity to work more closely with one another. This is not to suggest that patrol officers and residents are expected to become experts in crime theory and analysis. After all, this is the domain of the department’s crime analysts and evidence cop. However, training all members of the department in the basic elements of problem solving would improve the organization’s strategic focus on reducing crime and resolving community problems.

To increase the likelihood of real change from the status quo among the rank and file, training must be conducted in such a way that it provides sergeants and patrol officers with practical skills in basic problem analysis that can be applied to the realities of their daily work. This means learning (a) when and how to identify a problem and, if necessary, how to make a request to the district-level crime analyst to help design response strategies; (b) how to make some reasonable suggestions for addressing a problem based on their knowledge of the beat and conversations with stakeholders; and (c) how to report on the results of their problem-solving efforts at community meetings. What form should this training take?

It would be important that training include a component that clearly articulates the central role that problem analysis will play in department operations, as well as a practical “nuts-and-bolts” guide to problem solving that can be readily applied as part of an officer’s daily routine. The former could be achieved through an initial orientation session that describes the strategic elements of these reforms and how they differ from traditional policing. Following this general orientation, the next phase would be a skill-building session. This would train officers in the well-known SARA and crime triangle models and introduce them to other problem-solving resources, such as POP guides.<sup>9</sup> As in Chicago, community residents should also be trained in the principles of problem solving and in their new roles as active participants in community safety (not just as a resource for the police). Doing this will not only help build the kind of “balanced and cooperative relationship that closely follows the community policing model” (Skogan and Hartnett, 1997: 133), but the presentation and discussion of crime data and problem analysis at beat meetings has the potential to strengthen police-community relations by increasing the transparency of the police organization.

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9 Specific explanations and examples of these models can be found at [www.popcenter.org/about/?p=triangle](http://www.popcenter.org/about/?p=triangle)

Finally, because district commanders are held accountable for identifying and responding to their district's most pressing problems, they should be provided with more rigorous training in POP and crime analysis so they might be better prepared to tackle these challenges and implement more sophisticated crime strategies. Crime analysts would be expected to explain and demonstrate some of the more advanced forms of data analysis that could be used to better understand the nature of a problem. For example, tabulating bivariate relationships such as the frequency of drug crimes with homicides in a district to see if an increase in homicides is drug related would be a more powerful method for detecting plausible patterns than just looking at a map. Given the skills and time this kind of crime analysis demands, district commanders would not necessarily possess the knowledge or freedom from their numerous command and administrative responsibilities to conduct it on their own. Thus it is particularly important that they have this additional source of support available at the district level. Familiarizing district commanders with this kind of analysis would help improve their understanding of what analysis could be executed to help them diagnose problems and effective solutions. While training for district commanders could be conducted over 1 or 2 weeks, ideally they would possess a level of knowledge that would require at least a "certificate" in problem solving (perhaps up to 15 credit hours of undergraduate work).

At a time when police budgets are squeezed, asking departments that are probably not operating at full strength to think about committing precious resources to crime analysis, POP, and problem solving might seem unpersuasive. However, it would be worth considering the growing body of research evaluating crime, crime prevention, and community policing strategies that is currently available but remains largely untapped (Lum, 2009). Finding routine ways to access this information promises the double pay-off of helping the organization develop the data analysis and innovative problem-solving elements shared by Compstat and community policing.



## Conclusion

All the departments we visited had worked hard to implement Compstat and community policing throughout their organizations, but our research suggested that these reforms worked largely independently of one another. In comparison to Compstat, community policing is more multifaceted and diverse which can make it more challenging to implement in a tangible and coherent way. This contrast between a Compstat model that is generally presented by its supporters as a set of well-defined and narrowly focused structures whose elements work together like a well-oiled machine and a community policing model that is broader and more flexible may help explain why most of those we interviewed struggled to make suggestions for these reforms' integration. When we asked respondents about the benefits or challenges they felt their organization had experienced on account of operating Compstat and community policing simultaneously, very few respondents identified specific elements where these programs overlapped (e.g., geographic decentralization, using data and crime analysis, or engaging in problem solving), or made suggestions for how greater benefits could be derived from integrating the structures and practices of these reforms more closely.

This was also true for the challenges that co-implementation presented and the recommendations that respondents made for how their operation could be improved. Interviewees tended to focus on a general set of challenges that stemmed from operating both programs simultaneously (e.g., lack of resources), or on making recommendations for how a particular reform (Compstat *or* community policing) might be enhanced. This tendency to think of these reforms as separate yet broadly compatible approaches rather than as reforms whose structures and practices might provide an opportunity for a more integrated policing approach probably speaks to two broader issues in policing and police scholarship: (1) the distinctive values and policing styles embodied by these reforms, at least as they are currently implemented inhibits departments from envisioning a more integrated model; and (2) the lack of attention that has been paid among researchers to the relationship between these reforms compared to their individual merits and shortcomings.

The four recommendations we propose in this report for a more integrated Compstat/community policing model and their associated action steps are summarized in Table 2 on page 40.

These recommendations seek to take advantage of the tangible framework that Compstat provides. They do so by linking community policing to Compstat's core elements and then restructuring these elements in ways that try to make these reforms mutually reinforcing. Compstat attempts to sharpen the organization's focus by measuring what matters can be readily extended to community policing objectives. Collecting and discussing indicators of community policing performance at regular Compstat meetings would help balance the organization's commitment to both community policing and Compstat values and mitigate the likelihood that community policing will take a back seat to the organization's crime control function. It would also help ensure that the organization's community policing program is not "flying blind," lacking accurate information about community priorities and an ability to track long-term responses to these problems. Reductions in crime do not necessarily lead to increased confidence in the police (Neyroud, 2008: 341), so broadening the organization's focus to include a broader range of public safety problems that residents care about would likely improve citizen satisfaction with the police.

**Table 2.** Summary of Recommendations and Action Steps for Integrating Compstat and Community Policing.

<b>Harness community policing values, goals, and practices to Compstat</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Routinely report on community-identified problems during Compstat meetings to focus the organization on community policing priorities</li> <li>◆ Create performance measures for community policing objectives to reinforce the fundamental importance of community policing values and activities to the organization’s overarching existence.</li> </ul>
<b>Increase accountability down the chain of command for performance</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Assign patrol officers to permanent beat teams supervised by patrol sergeants to increase their sense of “ownership” for reducing crime and disorder problems and reconsider call management policiesHold district-level Compstat meetings with beat team leaders to distribute accountability more equitably throughout the organization</li> <li>◆ Provide patrol sergeants with necessary guidance and leadership skills to carry out the organization’s Compstat and community policing mission.</li> </ul>
<b>Change Compstat meetings to operate more strategically</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Lengthen the period between department-level Compstat meetings to encourage district commanders to innovate and develop a better understanding of the nature of problems and more comprehensive long-term solutions</li> <li>◆ Create small group meetings attended by key decision-makers and focused on addressing crime and community problems by thinking out loud, exchanging ideas, and querying assumptions</li> <li>◆ Use evidence cops to help focus resources on solutions that research evidence shows are the most likely to reduce crime and disorder problems</li> <li>◆ Build an institutional memory by systematically recording efforts and outcomes of police strategies.</li> </ul>
<b>Commit substantial resources to crime analysis and training in problem-oriented policing, problem solving, and building partnerships</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◆ Broaden responsibility for problem analysis to include rank-and-file officers who are knowledgeable about local crime and disorder problems</li> <li>◆ Decentralize crime analysis units to support district personnel in their problem analysis efforts</li> <li>◆ Increase training in problem analysis for all line personnel and provide training to community members.</li> </ul>

Accountability under Compstat is concentrated on middle managers and is not well developed under community policing, especially when it comes to the performance of those lower-ranking officers who are responsible for the lion's share of the organization's work. Requiring that district commanders regularly report on community policing concerns at Compstat meetings and assigning officers to beat teams headed by a patrol supervisor would help diffuse accountability for both reforms throughout the entire organization.

Beat teams are more easily coordinated and controlled than individuals working alone, and so they would also provide a structure for linking the bubbling up of ideas from below to the department's strategic decision-making process. Almost 50 years ago, Douglas McGregor, a leading management scholar, argued that "the capacity to exercise a relatively high degree of imagination, ingenuity, and creativity in the solution of organizational problems is widely, not narrowly, distributed in the population" (1960: 57). Beat teams would help foster the kind of collaborative relationships that both Compstat and community policing claim is essential to innovation, and because "the best ideas for improving effectiveness can come from any location in a police hierarchy" (Sherman, 2002: 230), their formation would open up an important avenue for increasing the organization's capacity to discover more innovative solutions to complex problems. Holding district-level Compstat meetings would allow district commanders to monitor how well their teams were working to accomplish organizational objectives, while simultaneously decentralizing greater decision-making power to first-line supervisors and their subordinates. Our focus groups suggested that the traditional role of patrol supervisors had been little changed by the implementation of Compstat and community policing: beat teams would be one way to drive accountability for objectives beyond middle managers and to focusing the energies of those at the street level on developing police-community partnerships, identifying problems early, and using their local knowledge to implement tailor-made strategies.

The integration of Compstat and community policing to heighten a department's capacity to use information scientifically in order to mobilize resources would also require significant changes to how Compstat meetings tend to operate. Compstat seems to attract more attention about how top managers exercise their authority at these meetings (if at all) than how these Compstat meetings might be improved to generate more effective responses to crime and community priorities, including a capacity to anticipate events and prevent problems from happening in the first place. T.S. Eliot's line, "where is the knowledge, we have lost in information," is applicable to many department-level Compstat meetings, which either function as rather routine briefings on a wide variety of department activities, or as lengthy question-and-answer sessions in order for district commanders to demonstrate that they are knowledgeable about their areas and are doing *something* to address crime problems. In both cases, information sharing and the presentation of crime data are rarely used to stimulate the kind of careful sifting of evidence, thoughtful deliberation, and rigorous assessment necessary for the selection, implementation, and assessment of the most promising problem-solving strategies. Because Compstat and community policing both place a premium on restructuring police operations around crime analysis, this change promises a double pay-off.

Smaller meetings managed by evidence cops responsible for consulting with district commanders on the latest research findings on what works best in preventing crime, and for surfacing knowledge about their department's own successes, would help create a climate where the "rules of evidence, and not the rules of power, drive the process of reaching conclusions and making decisions" (Sherman, 2002: 230). Having district commanders attend department-level Compstat meetings on a quarterly basis would help remove some of the pressure that invariably results in district commanders having to resort to the implementation of traditional reactive solutions that may have some effect in the short-term, but do not lead to long-term success. Lengthening the period between Compstat meetings would also allow for a more systematic and comprehensive assessment of results, so that the department develops a better understanding of which strategies do or do not work and why. Through this feedback loop the organization would be in a better position to learn from its successes and failures and thus be better positioned to respond effectively to similar problems in the future.

Finally, the integration of Compstat and community policing would demand that agencies strengthen their capacity for crime analysis, POP, and problem solving by assigning crime analysts to the districts and training all personnel in problem analysis. Rather than lament the limitations of how POP is currently practiced in the field and advocate its rejection in favor of a "shallower" problem-solving model, we propose a dual implementation strategy. This takes into account the challenges that accompany Goldstein's original concept by assigning its application only to those with sufficient technical skills and opportunity to make it work successfully. Thus, we propose that responsibility for POP is delegated to district commanders who work closely with district-level crime analysts and receive additional support and guidance from evidence cops. In contrast, the rank and file would be trained to use the more practical SARA and crime triangle tools to find creative and effective solutions to local problems, but they would not be expected to conduct the kind of in-depth and more sophisticated analysis that is a hallmark of POP as it has been originally devised.

An added benefit of training patrol officers to analyze information on crime and community problems and to discuss their findings with residents at regular beat meetings, is its potential for strengthening police-community relations. This is accomplished by increasing the transparency of the decision-making processes that lie behind operational decision-making, but more important it gives residents an opportunity to participate. Integral to this process is the willingness of beat teams to provide clear and consistent feedback on any progress or setbacks toward mutually agreed upon goals. Rather than being passive recipients of Compstat-generated crime statistics that they may or may not consider relevant to their communities, residents get to define and discuss *their* priorities directly with those officers who work their area and are charged with helping resolve them and offering solutions.

As we have noted, our recommendations are not based on rigorous tests of these changes. We think that the evidence available to us through our own survey and field observations, plus that which comes from prior research, suggests that these are promising avenues to pursue. The next step is fielding a program of such innovation coupled with rigorous evaluation that would yield hard evidence on the benefits and limitations of what we have proffered. This is an appropriate role for the COPS Office and progressive police leaders around the nation to assume.

In a recent article on “Why Reforms Fail,” a leading police scholar remarked that police reform was “hard, the political risks involved are considerable, and efforts to change the police often fall far short or fail” (Skogan, 2008: 23). Why then should any department heed our recommendations for a more integrated policing model, especially when Compstat and community policing seem to work happily on their own? The answer, we think, lies in the promise of the multiplicative effects that may stem from integrating these reforms. As they are currently implemented, at least at the sites we visited, one reform merely compensates for those features that the other lacks. In comparison to this stove-piping, a more integrated Compstat/community policing model may reinforce the strengths of each by sharpening a department’s focus on crime and disorder, increasing accountability for performance down the chain of command, enhancing the organization’s capacity to operate strategically, improving problem analysis, and by strengthening police-community partnerships. Given the potential benefits of an alternative Compstat/community policing model, taking a risk on trying to integrate these reforms might well be a risk worth taking.



## Appendix

**Table 3.** A Profile of Participating Departments.

Police Department	Population <sup>1</sup>	Police Officers <sup>2</sup>		Part I Crime Statistics <sup>3</sup>		Community Indicators		Community Policing Start Date	Compstat Start Date
		Sworn	Civilian	Violent Crime	Property Crime	Median Household Income <sup>4</sup>	% Unemployed <sup>5</sup>		
Los Angeles, CA	3,879,455	9,393	3,292	787	2,718	\$44,445	4.7%	1990s	2003
Montgomery Co, MD	932,131	1,211	440	231	2,484	\$87,624	3.7%	1992	1995
Colorado Springs, CO	376,807	681	313	569	4,797	\$50,892	3.7%	1992	2003
St. Louis Co, MO	331,489*	753*	250*	124	1,054	\$53,186	4.5%	1991	1991
Overland Park, KS	165,975	240	54	200	2,736	\$68,404	3.9%	1995	2001
Cape Coral, FL	142,371	209	124	285	3,447	\$54,026	3.3%	2002	2002
Marietta, GA	63,228	136	32	633	4,147	\$40,645**	4.0%	1997	2000

1–3 FBI (2006). *Crime in America*.

4 U.S. Census Bureau (2006). 2006 inflation-adjusted dollars.

5 Bureau of Labor Statistics, April 2007. For areas in a larger MSA area, these data are presented.

\* These data were collected from the St. Louis County Police Department Fact Sheet (2004). The population is for the jurisdictions served by the police department.

\*\* 2000 data- Marietta's 2006 data were unavailable.





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**C**OMPSTAT AND COMMUNITY POLICING ARE BOTH POWERFUL tools that have been quite effective in police reform in the United States. But just how well do they work together? This report takes a look at the impact of these reforms when implemented simultaneously in the same police organization. While some have speculated that Compstat complements and supports community policing and even improves it, there is very little systematic evidence to support these claims. This report uses fieldwork data from site visits to seven U.S. police agencies to address this issue. Our principal finding that these reforms operated largely independently suggested to us that there were opportunities for making them work more closely with one another in ways that promise greater benefits than having them operate separately. Our goal is to challenge policymakers, practitioners, and scholars to reconsider the current relationship between Compstat and community policing and conceive of more innovative approaches to their co-implementation. As a starting point, we make four key recommendations for integration of these two powerful reforms.



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