



## Enhancing Police Legitimacy through the Integration of Compstat and Community Policing

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**Summary:** This presentation uses findings from a national study funded by the Office of Community-Oriented Policing Services (COPS) to consider ways that Compstat and community policing might be integrated to enhance police legitimacy. These recommendations have yet to be implemented and tested; so my purpose is to use existing research evidence as a platform for suggesting some plausible changes and areas for future inquiry.

Research suggests that an important source of police legitimacy is crime effectiveness, but an even more potent source lies in the judgments people make about how they feel the police treat them. Based on site visits to seven police agencies, the COPS study found that Compstat and community policing operated largely independently – each having little effect on the other. This finding is the basis for the following question: “How might Compstat’s focus on crime control be combined with community policing’s emphasis on partnerships to deliver greater legitimacy benefits than currently on offer?” Because many large police departments (> 100 sworn) are pursuing both Compstat and community policing simultaneously, how these reforms are co-implemented has significant consequences for how policing is done in the United States.

**Approach:** To address this question, I provide a brief summary of the research on legitimacy-based policing. This suggests that when police act in ways that promote legitimacy, they become more effective at achieving several highly-valued goals, including reducing crime and disorder. Specifically, there is consistent evidence that when members of the public view the police as legitimate, they are more likely to:

- obey the law
- voluntarily comply with the demands of police officers rather than challenge them
- assist the police by providing information that helps with the identification, arrest and conviction of offenders
- proactively participate in community crime prevention programs
- grant broad discretion to police leaders to fight crime in ways they consider to be most effective

So how might police acquire legitimacy? Theory and research indicate that public assessments of the police are powerfully shaped by the degree to which people feel the police treat them with fairness and respect – that is public judgments about the legitimacy of the police are strongly influenced by procedural justice judgments.

**Policy recommendations and relevance:** The different aspects of procedural justice (participation, neutrality, dignity and respect, trustworthiness) suggest the following three recommendations for integrating Compstat’s focus on policing outcomes with community policing’s emphasis on the nature of the policing process:

1. Systematic reporting of major community problems at Compstat
2. Involvement of community members in problem-solving efforts
3. Use of Compstat data to strengthen perceptions of fairness in police decision making

Compstat and community policing are two of the most highly-touted police reforms to have emerged over the past twenty-five years. Federal funds have supported valuable research on each, but this presentation suggests that future studies on Compstat and community policing should focus on implementing and testing more novel combinations of these reforms. Rather than the “separate but equal” approach that distinguishes current co-implementation efforts, promising attempts at integration should be tried to maximize their potentialities.

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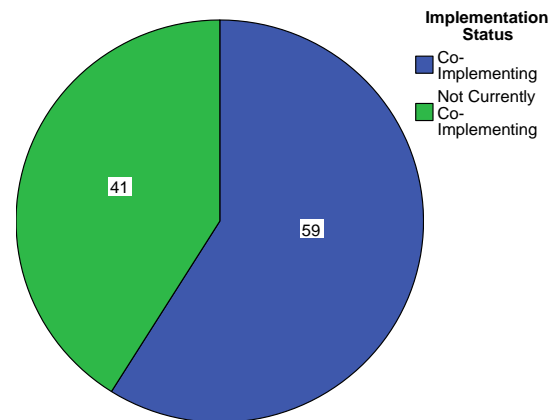
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# Relationship between Compstat and community policing

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- How do these reforms work when implemented in same organization?
  - **They work independently**
    - Suggests opportunities for integration that may enhance legitimacy
    - Recommendations here are untested, but worth experimentation
- Extent of co-implementation among large agencies (>100 sworn) in 2006



# What is legitimacy and what are its potential benefits?

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## Legitimacy

- Judgments of rightfulness of police conduct and organizations that employ them



## Desired Outcomes

- Obey laws
- Voluntary compliance
- Assist police with investigations
- Participate in crime prevention programs
- Give police leaders broad discretion



# Compstat, legitimacy, and desired outcomes

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- Compstat = strategic management system:
  - Laser-like focus on core crime control mission
  - Makes middle managers responsible for selecting and implementing crime strategies
  - Gathers and uses accurate, timely information to formulate strategies and to evaluate performance
- Major source of legitimacy = effectiveness in reducing crime and disorder



# Community policing, legitimacy, and desired processes

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- Community policing:
  - Focus on reducing crime and disorder and on building police-community relationships
  - Major source of legitimacy = treating people right (procedural justice)

# Procedural Justice and Legitimacy

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## Procedural Justice

- Participation
- Neutrality
- Dignity & Respect
- Motives

## Legitimacy

- Judgments of rightfulness of police conduct and organizations that employ them

## Desired Outcomes

- Obey laws
- Voluntary compliance
- Assist police with investigations
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# 1. Systematic reporting of community problems at Compstat meetings

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- Traditional crime measures at Compstat; few measures of community policing objectives
- **Apply Compstat to community policing goals**
  - **Prioritize, measure, and report on community policing concerns at Compstat meetings**





## 2. Involve the community in problem-solving efforts

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- Compstat: decision making devolved to middle managers
- **Assign greater role to community in all stages of the problem-solving process**



### 3. Use Compstat data to strengthen perceptions of fairness

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- Community members passive recipients of official crime data
- **Collect and share data on local crime and disorder problems at neighborhood meetings**



# Conclusion

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- Opportunities for integration to enhance legitimacy
- Where to go from here?
  - Experimental field studies on legitimacy - testing its core propositions
  - Experimentation with integrating Compstat and community policing and evaluating outcomes