

CAN WE FIX THE “CRISIS OF LEGITIMACY” IN AMERICAN POLICING?

INTRODUCING PERFORMANCE METRICS THAT MATTER TO THE COMMUNITY

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Rethinking Police Reform

The police mission is “to serve and protect.” Today’s national movement to reshape and redefine the “to serve” portion of the mission is nothing new. From the origins of modern police organizations, police brutality and corruption have been followed by public rebellion, protest, and reform. Today, calls for reform focus less on the effectiveness of the police in fighting crime and more on whether community members are treated in a fair and respectful manner. Hence, when seeking to define “good policing,” this paper calls upon government officials, police leaders, and policing scholars to give as much attention to the process of policing as they do to outputs and outcomes of policing. That will require giving a clear voice to the community when evaluating police performance.

Official law enforcement statistics, such as crime rates and clearance rates, not only suffer from inaccuracy, but more importantly, they fail to capture the quality of police-community encounters and the public’s level of satisfaction with policing services. Current policies and procedures call upon police officers to be better public servants, but where are the systems to support or require such behavior? For most police agencies, reward systems give attention to increasing productivity and aggressiveness in terms of citations written, arrests made, contraband recovered, crimes investigated, etc., with little attention to improving police interactions with the public.



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Ideas in American Policing presents commentary and insight from leading criminologists on issues of interest to scholars, practitioners, and policymakers. This series has sparked thought-provoking conversations about the ever-changing profession of policing since its first essay in February 1998. *Ideas in American Policing* challenges readers to think differently about the concept being addressed, resulting in inspirational and transformational progress toward excellence in policing. Points of view in this document are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position of the National Policing Institute. The full series is available online at policinginstitute.org.

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To achieve marked improvements in public satisfaction and police legitimacy, others have joined me in making the argument that performance metrics must be expanded to incorporate new measures of the quality of policing as defined by the community (Langworthy, 1999; Lum & Nagin, 2017; Engel & Eck, 2015; Mastrofski, 1999; McCarthy & Rosenbaum, 2015; Moore et al., 2002). After all, police legitimacy is judged, to a large extent, by whether the public believes that the police are acting in the best interest of the community (Tyler, 2005, 2014).

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This paper examines the downsides of past reforms and recommends changes to how we measure and apply data about police performance. The proposed changes should impact officers’ behavior and change organizational culture from an emphasis on crime-fighting “warriors” to “guardians” (Rahr & Rice, 2015) who seek to help community members. Furthermore, any new system of collecting, analyzing, and reporting data about police performance will be a waste of time if the results are not used by police organizations for management, supervision, training, accountability, and program evaluation.

The Strengths and Costs of Past Reforms

Over the past century, we have witnessed many efforts to professionalize American police forces. “Uniforms, military ranks, written policies and procedures, centralized control and command, highly trained specialized units (including detectives), motorized patrols, and modern technology were expected to eliminate corruption, professionalize the police, and above all, prevent crime through rapid response, random patrol, and forensic investigations” (Rosenbaum, 2007, p. 14).

While some of these changes helped to reduce corruption and improve effectiveness in fighting crime (Walker, 1998), police organizations remain under attack and recent reforms have failed to noticeably improve

police services. The sluggishness of reform can be explained, in part, by the expression, “organizational culture eats policy for lunch.” Many commissions that have investigated police misconduct have defined police culture in terms of secrecy, suspicion, and group loyalty. Thus, police organizations have allowed peer group pressure to exceed the influence of positive guidance from management. The cost has been significant.

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The downsides of problematic management include:

- **Financial cost of enforcement:** We want the police to enforce the law and bring justice to lawbreakers, but enforcement tactics are expensive. Arrests, for example, are “costly to all involved—the police who make them, the public who must pay for the ensuing punishment, and the individual who must endure that punishment” (Lum & Nagin, 2017). Misconduct settlements, too, have cost the taxpayer billions of dollars (Alexander et al., 2022), to say nothing of the cost of consent decrees.
- **Increase in lives lost:** Despite all the new attention on managing use of force, the number of fatal police shootings continues to increase, reaching 9,703 since 2015 (Washington Post, 2024). The 378 police officers who were shot in the line of duty in 2023 is the highest in history (National Fraternal Order of Police, 2024). As a group, police officers are more likely to commit suicide than die on the job (Stanton, 2022), and they have a suicide rate higher than civilians (McAward, 2022). Clearly, the national trend to introduce officer wellness programs (U.S. Department of Justice, 2024), as well as the increase in early retirements, is a clear indication of the stressfulness of police work. Most officers are simply trying to do their job under very difficult circumstances.
- **Impact on vulnerable groups.** In my view, the largest cost of modern policing is the unconstitutional treatment of protected classes, defined by race, color, sex, gender identity, age, religion, mental health, disability, national origin, sexual orientation, and other at-risk segments of the population. Whether due to targeted enforcement in high crime neighborhoods (Rosenbaum, 1993, 2019) or personal biases (Fridell, 2008; 2017), or both, racial

disparities in police enforcement, use of force, and disrespectful treatment are well documented (Harrell & Davis, 2020; Tapp & Davis, 2022). The psychological impact can be enormous, resulting in resentment, loss of trust and growing anger toward the police in communities of color (Epp et al., 2014).

We must remember that procedural injustice can result in escalation of conflict and even use of force. One of the most common complaints by community members is that the officer was discourteous, including offensive language (e.g., Seron et al., 2006; Terrill & Reisig, 2003), which can escalate the tension. Research has shown that police respond in a punitive manner when civilians fail to comply or are judged to be disrespectful of police authority (Mastrofski et al., 2002; Worden & Shepard, 1996).

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Thus, today’s model of a professional, detached police force has done little to build confidence in the police, and in fact, it has reduced police legitimacy when responding to many calls for service. Furthermore, the militaristic style of policing has reduced police legitimacy in other settings, including the protests associated with the civil rights movement in the 1960s, the unrest in Ferguson in 2014, and the protests following the murder of George Floyd in 2020.

Failure of “Improved” Reform Strategies

The United States has sought to increase police accountability and transparency in many ways (National Research Council, 2004). Unfortunately, the main strategies have achieved limited success in building public trust, for the reasons summarized here:

Accountability and Punishment: Typically, “police accountability” is an internal process focusing on the control of officers through punitive enforcement of rules, regulations, and laws (Chan, 2001). However, with strong union contracts and appeals to arbitration, these

investigations rarely result in serious consequences. In one review, roughly half of the fired officers were reinstated (Barker et al., 2021), and disciplinary records from various departments show that officers with multiple misconduct complaints typically receive little or no discipline (Kelly & Nichols, 2020). Most police officers agree that accountability systems are not working. In our national survey, only 1 in 5 officers agreed that “officers who do a poor job are held accountable” (Cordner, 2017).

Early Intervention Systems (EIS): Since the 1990s, EIS has been widely adopted by large police agencies to address police misconduct. Existing data, such as complaints, are used to identify and possibly intervene with officers whose behavior patterns put them at risk of future serious events (Walker et al., 2000). While I see enormous potential for EIS in the future, today there is no standard set of metrics or interventions. Furthermore, existing EIS programs have been unable to predict problematic behavior with accuracy (Worden et al., 2013; 2014; Russek & Fitzpatrick, 2021). Summarizing the findings of the Task Force on Policing, La Vigne (2022) warns that relying on existing police records, even if EIS uses fancy algorithms to identify patterns, can lead to “garbage in, garbage out.”

Performance Evaluations: When I ask officers today, “How does your department judge your performance?”, many respond, “Whether I can stay out of trouble.” Clearly, they are not being judged or held accountable for “bad policing” or rewarded for “good policing.”

Traditional performance evaluations lack credibility. Researchers have offered many suggestions for improving internal evaluation systems (e.g., Oettmeier & Wycoff, 1997; Skolnick & Fyfe, 1993; Walker, 2005), but the fact remains that an officer’s work is largely unsupervised by their boss and difficult to measure with current police records. Furthermore, given that human behavior is shaped by immediate consequences, conducting performance evaluations only once per year is not helpful.

Civilian Oversight: For decades, researchers have proposed independent “auditing bureaus” to collect data on how residents are treated by the police and vice versa (Mastrofski, 1999; Reiss, 1971; Walker, 2005). However, many of the current civilian oversight systems not only lack credibility, but they also lack critical data about daily police-public interactions that matter so much to the

public. Below, I provide suggestions for improving the use of external data management programs.

Consent Decrees: These legal agreements have been implemented in roughly 40 cities where DOJ observed a “pattern or practice” of unconstitutional policing against protected groups. Consent decrees typically seek to improve the definition, reporting, early warning, supervision, and investigation of use of force. While these agreements can result in some improvements to the organizations being monitored, little attention has been given to police behaviors other than use of force (U.S. Department of Justice, 2017; Lawrence & Cole, 2019; Walker, 2017). Also, other law enforcement agencies (nearly 18,000) are not required to make the changes outlined in these consent decrees.

Policy Changes and Training: In the past two decades, agencies have tried to address public criticism with new policies and training programs focused on use of force, but these classes are a drop in the bucket, and give little attention to the communication skills needed to increase public trust and de-escalate conflict. A nationwide survey found that recruits in state and local law enforcement training academies receive an average of 168 hours of training on firearms, self-defense, and use of force, compared to only 10 hours on communication and eight hours on ethics and integrity (Reaves, 2016).

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Shakeup at the Top: A typical response to a crisis of legitimacy is to replace the police chief. I have known many outstanding individuals who have served in this capacity, but most survived only until the next crisis emerged or until a new mayor was installed. Image management must be followed by real changes to management practices.

Body-Worn Cameras: Driven by use-of-force incidents that have “gone viral” in the 2010s and complaints about lack of transparency and accountability, cities invested heavily in body-worn camera (BWC) technology (White, 2014). Major reviews of the scientific literature (Lum et al., 2019; 2020) indicate that the introduction of a BWC system does not have consistent effects on police or public behavior, with the exception that complaints from community members tend to decline. Furthermore, the original goals of transparency and accountability have not been achieved. A very small subset of videos is reviewed by Internal Affairs when an incident involves a serious complaint, high level of use of force, or an officer-involved shooting (estimated at 1% of all encounters). For the other 99%, the millions of hours of BWC footage remain untouched (Farooq, 2024). I believe that BWC data, if mined and analyzed, hold great potential for identifying patterns of behavior that contribute to, or undermine, public trust and confidence in the police. Below, I discuss how such a task might be accomplished.

Information Technology and Crime-Fighting Strategies: Police organizations have tried a number of strategies to improve police legitimacy by improving police effectiveness in fighting crime. Since the 1990s, various police innovations have been introduced, all aided by advances in information technology, to target crime and disorder hotspots (e.g., Weisburd & Braga, 2006). Although hot spots policing is one of the few policing strategies that has been shown to be effective in reducing crime (Sherman & Weisburd, 1995; Weisburd & Braga, 2019; Weisburd & Eck, 2017), I have argued that this type of targeted policing, as practiced by most agencies, tends to be aggressive and inequitable, thus running the risk of undermining civil rights and public trust in the police, especially in minority and marginalized communities (Rosenbaum, 1993; 2007; 2019).

Community Policing: Beginning in the 1980s, many community-oriented reforms were introduced to directly address the legitimacy problem, from the restoration of foot patrols (Cordner, 1994; Trojanowicz, 1983) to community policing programs (Green & Mastrofski, 1988; Rosenbaum, 1988; 1994; Skogan & Hartnett, 1997). However, the obstacles to full-scale implementation of these initiatives have been numerous (Fridell & Wycoff, 2004; Rosenbaum, 2004; Skogan, 2003). They were intended as public relations programs to show that the police are trying to engage the community and care about the public’s safety, but they were never fully

integrated into the daily practice of policing (Maguire, 1997; Mastrofski, 2019) and were often insensitive to many of the concerns raised by community members (Lyons, 1999; Gascon & Roussell, 2019).

Summary of Reforms

We have witnessed dozens of tactics and strategies to make police organizations more effective, fair, and accountable, but these interventions have achieved very limited success. Police culture and behavior on the streets is similar to the 1960s, as aggressive enforcement remains the dominant style of American policing and peer pressure to conform to traditional police norms remains strong. In addition, growing external criticism of the police seems to have increased internal solidarity, anger toward the community, and de-policing, as we would expect from research on group dynamics (Lang et al., 2021).

Progress in police organizational reform has been restricted by failure to explore new measures of performance and new methods of accountability that are grounded in social science knowledge and give attention to the community’s voice when evaluating police services. Without the proper incentive structure, management will continue to face a crisis of public confidence and will be unable to monitor or shape the performance of its officers on the street. Also, aggressive styles of policing, as well as de-policing, can lead to increased crime, where both officer safety and public safety are compromised.



Measuring What Matters to the Community

Lum and Nagin (2017) make a compelling case that policing in a democratic society should be built on two basic principles:

1. Crime prevention should be prioritized over arrests.
2. The public’s views about the police and their tactics matter independently of police effectiveness.

These two principles are equally important. Thus, reformers must acknowledge the importance of public perceptions for achieving police legitimacy.

Procedural Justice and Equity

If we truly believe in evidence-based policing, then we should begin by acknowledging the importance of procedural justice as a major determinant of police legitimacy. By measuring the community’s reaction to police encounters, policing scholars have created a large body of scientific knowledge on procedural justice that should be incorporated into evidence-based policing. By itself, this research provides an alternative perspective on community values and preferences and directly suggests the reforms needed to achieve “best practices.”

The pioneering work of Tyler and his colleagues (Lind & Tyler, 1988; Tyler, 1990) has provided a theoretical pathway for hundreds of studies across many countries showing that people’s judgments about the police are heavily influenced by their sense of whether the process is fair and the officer’s behavior is appropriate (Bradford et al., 2014, Mazerolle et al., 2013; Rosenbaum et al., 2017; Skogan & Frydl, 2004; Tankebe, 2013; Tyler, 2004; Tyler & Fagan, 2006; Weitzer & Tuch, 2005). No doubt, community residents in many cities want safer streets, but more importantly, they want a police force that is fair and sensitive to their needs.

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So clearly, we are talking about police-community interactions that reach far beyond criminal incidents. Serious violent crime incidents make up only 1% to 3% of all calls for service in large cities, and nearly two-

thirds of all calls involve no criminal activity whatsoever (Asher & Horwitz, 2021; Dholakia, 2022). Thus, we need to acknowledge that the detached crime-fighting model has little relevance to the vast majority of calls handled by the police, yet officers’ treatment of the public during all encounters remains very important. Traffic stops have been particularly problematic for racial disparities in searching and ticketing (Langton & Durose, 2013), humiliating treatment of drivers (Epp et al., 2014), and lack of “reasonable suspicion” before conducting a search (Skogan, 2023).

Drawing attention to non-crime incidents and police treatment of community members, however, does not mean that crime is irrelevant, as procedural justice can be linked directly to public safety. For example, research shows that when the police are viewed as procedurally just, the public is less cynical about the law, more likely to obey the law, and more likely to cooperate with the police (Gau, 2015; Rosenbaum et al., 2017; Maguire & Lowrey, 2017; Tyler, 2004; 2006; Murphy & Cherney, 2012).



In contrast, disobedience and resistance are likely when police officers are disrespectful toward community members (Terrill & Reisig, 2003). Resistance or fleeing also occurs when people are afraid of the police. Furthermore, procedural justice can increase public safety by contributing to stronger police-community partnerships—something I have been advocating for years (see Rosenbaum, 1986; 1988; 2002; Rosenbaum et al., 1998). The implication is clear: civilian cooperation reduces the need to use force, facilitates the “co-production” of public safety, and increases police legitimacy.

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Policing scholars have identified four key components of procedural justice when interacting with the police:

1. **Dignity and respect:** Are community members treated with dignity and respect by officers?
2. **Voice:** Are community members given a voice or chance to express their concerns? Are they allowed to participate in decision making by telling their side of the story?
3. **Neutrality:** Are officers neutral or unbiased in their decisions, guided by consistent and transparent reasons? In other words, are decisions based on the facts and legal procedures, rather than personal biases about race/ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, mental health, or other factors that are not legally relevant?
4. **Trustworthiness:** Do officers convey trustworthy motives and show concern about the well-being of those who are affected by their decisions?

Here, I will make a few points about procedural justice, drawing on social science research from other fields:

- An officer’s interpersonal communication skills are critical for achieving procedural justice goals. Both verbal and non-verbal communication can send messages and can be easily misunderstood with serious consequences.
- Nonverbal communication can send a message or attitude, whether it be touching, frowning, head shaking, or raising one’s voice.
- Active listening skills are in short supply but are essential for giving voice to community members and communicating effectively with them.
- Implicit bias is widespread, can be detected, and must be addressed.
- Trustworthiness can be achieved through empathy, which is essential when interacting with victims of crime, persons with mental health conditions, and anyone facing trauma.

In sum, there is much more to police-public encounters than is shown in enforcement statistics such as traffic

citations, arrests, and use of force. Procedural justice is at the heart of police-public interactions, yet the social dynamics outlined above remain unmeasured.

Factors such as the officer’s demeanor, fairness and impartiality, emotional and informational support, and professional competence all play a role in determining whether community residents are satisfied with their encounter, whether they will work with the police in the future, and whether they will be inclined to obey the law themselves. Hence, the components of procedural justice that contribute to police legitimacy deserve to be routinely measured and utilized to improve police service delivery and public safety.

Introducing New Systems of Measurement

I cannot emphasize enough a basic principle of organizational behavior: If you measure something, you can manage it and hold employees accountable for achieving it. Conversely, if you fail to measure something, you are sending the message to employees that it doesn’t matter, and they can ignore it as they go about their work.

As a psychologist, I also want to remind the reader that human behavior is heavily influenced by incentives and disincentives. At present, I do not see a reward structure that encourages police officers to change from the crime-fighting “warriors” to “public servants” or “guardians” who seek to protect and help people. Police officers tend to agree with my assessment. Our national survey of over 13,000 officers found that roughly two-thirds agreed that “the department is more interested in measuring activity than the quality of work” (Cordner, 2017). In fact, many agencies have informal quotas requiring a certain number of stops or tickets for a given time period, regardless of the justification for enforcement (Fielding, 2022; Ossei-Owusu, 2016), although many laws now prohibit such practices, as they can lead to racial profiling.

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Thus, the time has come to “measure what matters to the public”—procedural justice—and incorporate the resulting new data into systems that will strengthen procedurally just policing on the streets. I propose two such systems: Contact surveys and BWCs.

Contact Surveys

Beginning in the 1990s, community surveys became popular as a way to gauge public satisfaction with the police (e.g., Bradford et al., 2009; Brown & Bennett, 2002; Decker, 1981; Fridell & Wycoff, 2004). However, there are several major limitations to previous and ongoing survey research:

- The findings cannot be disaggregated to small geographic areas or types of police encounters—they are typically citywide or national.
- They are one-time “snapshots” of community responses rather than ongoing data collection systems.
- They are not linked to officer performance evaluations or accountability systems.
- They often capture only the general public’s perceptions of the police rather than the perceptions of community members with lived experience.

As we have learned from the national Police-Public Contact Survey, only 21% of Americans have contact with the police in a given year (Tapp & Davis, 2022). Hence, we need to give voice to this 21% who have experiential knowledge of actual police behavior.

I credit the Bureau of Justice Statistics for introducing the Police-Public Contact Survey, but this is a national survey that is only carried out every few years, and only asks community members about police contacts within the last year. As the President’s Task Force noted (2015, p. 24), “...these surveys do not reflect what is happening every day at the local level when police interact with members of the communities they serve.” Also, research on human memory clearly indicates that a person’s recall of events is quickly damaged by the passage of time (Baddeley et al., 2009; Barrouillet & Camos, 2012; Edwards, 2010), so we need to capture their experience within the first week or two after contact.

Locally, we must move beyond the simple approach of doing one-shot contact surveys with a single report summarizing the findings. We need to institutionalize contact surveys at the local level. Recently, a few very small cities introduced contact surveys to improve

performance (Davies, 2022), but the methods and survey questions would need to be upgraded to achieve evidence-based procedural justice measurement standards. Also, these survey findings are simply handed over to the agencies to use as they please, and without public access to the data.

In the future, we need a standardized system of reliable data collection across multiple cities for comparison purposes. This measurement system should routinely collect information from individual community members who have had a recent contact with a police officer, perhaps beginning with victims of crime and traffic stops.

Once the survey has been developed and field-tested, methods of data collection should be finalized. I would recommend that police officers be required to distribute business cards with a survey invitation and QR code, supplemented by a follow-up text message. A text or online surveys must be brief to ensure reasonable response rates. Audits will be needed to ensure that officers are distributing the cards to all persons with a police report. Furthermore, the city will need a public education campaign (through social media, billboards, and flyers) to make the community aware of this new program and encourage their participation.

Body-Worn Cameras

Clearly, the introduction of BWCs is a major innovation in policing with significant potential applications. I would argue that the limited behavioral effects of BWCs (Lum et al., 2019) can be dramatically increased with the proper analysis of BWC footage. Thus, I am proposing that such data be used not only for misconduct investigations, but also to measure the quality of police services in general.

Building on the pioneering work at Stanford University (Voigt et al., 2017), software built with artificial intelligence (AI) is now being developed and field-tested by several companies, so that cities can engage in more systematic and proactive reviews of police-public interactions captured with BWCs (Farooq, 2024; Polis Solutions, 2024). These AI systems will become smarter as they are tested on larger samples of BWC data, but they need to focus on what’s important to the community.

Analysis of New Data

Beginning with BWC data, we need to deconstruct and code what is being communicated during police-community encounters and how it is being communicated both verbally and nonverbally (e.g., officers introducing themselves, listening instead of commanding, showing kindness instead of anger, nodding instead of shaking their head, speaking in a soft tone instead of raising their voice, showing patience instead of seeming rushed, having open arms instead of crossed arms, answering questions instead of avoiding questions, showing concern and empathy instead of indifference or victim blaming, showing respect instead of derogatory language or profanity, etc.).

I am proposing that the analysis of BWC data overlap with the analysis of new contact survey data, so that we can validate both data sets, while advancing knowledge of procedural justice. When one data set suggests a pattern, the other data set can be used to provide new insights or explanations. As noted earlier, words and actions are not always received as intended. When an officer exhibits a particular type of body language or uses certain words (based on BWC data), how does that influence the community members’ satisfaction with that officer and the perceived level of procedural justice (based on contact survey data)?

One major analytic outcome should be a Procedural Justice (PJ) Index that measures the level of procedural justice and related communication skills exhibited by police officers during their encounters. The data should produce different sub-indexes within the overall PJ Index, such as respect, fairness, voice, empathy, and other communication skills. Each officer should have their own PJ Index and sub-index scores, along with standard deviations for each, to see how the officer compares with others working in similar settings. (Scores for supervisors can also be compiled by taking the average of the PJ Index scores for officers who report to them).

Down the road, I envision programs driven by AI running algorithms that will be able to sharply distinguish between individual officers in their style of communication and interaction with other human beings. The analyses should identify officer skills that are more effective or less effective in building trust with different community members.

For this new measurement system to have a significant impact on police accountability and organizational

reform, the output must also include breakdowns on procedural justice dimensions at different levels of analysis: the city as a whole, police districts, beats, shifts, special units, supervisors, and individual officers.

In statistical terms, groups or individuals who score at least two standard deviations above or below the mean should be identified for intervention, whether it be coaching or positive recognition. Given the pressing issue of constitutional policing and concern about bias, the analysis should, to the extent possible, include breakdowns by protected classes of service recipients.

We are only at the starting line. The Bureau of Justice Assistance and the National Institute of Justice, as well as private foundations, should be credited with funding preliminary research on BWC data, helping researchers and police agencies automate new dimensions of police behavior.

Beyond Measurement: Translating Evidence into Practice

Very rarely do we see survey data and BWC data translated into police practice. Essentially, we need an ongoing, sustainable, multifaceted program, where management at all levels is required to respond to the flow of new data generated by contact surveys and BWCs.

Real reform will require the comprehensive use of data by all levels within an organization and coordination with external organizations. Some of the basic changes are outlined here.

External Changes

We have learned from experience that the data

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systems and operating procedures proposed here cannot be managed entirely by personnel within police organizations. Thus, to achieve maximum credibility with the community and strong program implementation, these data systems should be managed by a unit of government that is completely independent of the

police department. Let’s call it the Police Performance Agency (PPA).

The PPA would have the following responsibilities:

1. Develop the questions and methods for the contact survey with input from local community leaders, police personnel, and members of the research team.
2. Manage the new Performance Evaluation Program, including data collection and analysis by a professional survey laboratory.
3. Work with the BWC vendor to ensure that they have the necessary AI software to analyze procedural justice data from the BWC footage and that it overlaps with the data collected via the contact survey.
4. Work with the police department’s records division to create a separate database that can be linked to the incidents being analyzed, e.g., incident number, date, type of incident, action taken, unit involved, geographic location, and the demographics of the community member and primary officer. The database should be updated weekly and made available to the external PPA.
5. Develop dashboards that contain the breakdowns noted above. This would include working with police supervisors to ensure that the dashboards are user-friendly and relevant to current police operations.
6. Create a public education campaign to increase participation in the contact survey.
7. Conduct audits to ensure that police administrators are using the dashboard data regularly and properly to supervise employees.
8. Conduct rigorous evaluations to determine if employee scores on the PJ Indices are improving as a result of changes in performance metrics.

The Community’s Role: In addition to the community’s primary role of evaluating police services by completing contact surveys, members of the community should be directly involved in:

- identifying the dimensions of procedural justice and related police behaviors that should be measured through contact surveys and BWC data;
- training officers and supervisors on the importance of these dimensions for police legitimacy and public safety;
- helping to create a public awareness campaign that encourages service recipients to participate in the contact survey when asked; and

- providing feedback to the PPA regarding any implementation issues associated with the new data collection programs.

Improved community education should be one byproduct of this new measurement system because both police officers and community members can influence whether tense interactions escalate or de-escalate. General findings from the contact surveys and BWCs should be used to educate the public about ways to avoid escalating tensions with the police and to remain safe.

Internal Agency Changes

As I often say, there are two things that police hate—the way things are now and change. But we can’t let attitudinal obstacles be a roadblock to needed reforms. The key to organizational reform is to change performance evaluations for various units and individuals and hold everyone accountable for these changes.

Clearly, translating these new data into police practice will require more than a series of informative dashboards

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and external audits. Internal organizational changes should include:

Leadership: Police leaders should be promoted who believe in real organizational reform and are not afraid to introduce and defend these changes. Early intervention, coaching, role modeling, and training around equity and procedural justice should be reinforced among managers rather than discipline and punishment. Support for data-driven accountability is essential. Lieutenants and above should be trained in methods of monitoring supervisors and coaching those whose employees score low on the PJ Indices.

New Policies: The agency will need to develop new policies that emphasize the importance of procedural justice and the requirement to use the new data systems. Policies around EIS, accountability meetings, supervision, and performance evaluations

will also need to be updated to reflect this new organizational objective.

Performance Evaluations: Performance evaluation systems should be completely overhauled to give attention to the quality of service delivery and procedural justice, based on data-driven dashboards from contact surveys and BWC footage. Quarterly, not annual, performance evaluations are needed. Also, management should consider awards, certificates, and even pay raises for officers who are two or more standard deviations above the mean on specific PJ Indices.

Early Intervention System (EIS): For all officers, information should be entered into EIS from the PJ Indices when a pattern emerges. Alerts should be sent when officers appear at least two standard deviations below or above the mean on specific PJ Indices, so that supervisors can intervene with coaching or positive recognition. The same type of alert system should be created to identify and flag first-line supervisors who deviate from the mean in either direction.

Supervision: Supervisors must be given the tools needed to supervise, beginning with computer-generated reports that summarize data from contact surveys, BWCs, and EIS alerts. Dashboards with monthly procedural justice data must be made available to supervisors showing trends for both individual officers under their supervision and their team as a whole. They must be trained in how to identify at-risk employees who need additional training and coaching and how to reward outstanding performance.

Organizational research has taught us that supervisors need to communicate effectively with their employees to create effective working conditions and maintain job satisfaction (Pincus, 1986). This holds true for police agencies as well, where “organizational justice” and job satisfaction are heavily dependent on good supervision (Rosenbaum & McCarty, 2017). We have learned that when supervisors talk through a recent officer-civilian encounter using procedural justice principles, they can reduce incidents of arrest and use of force (Owens et al., 2016).

Internal Auditing and Evaluation: Police departments must create and empower an Audit and Evaluation Unit to continuously gather data on the reform process and selected outcomes to ensure high-quality

program implementation. Drawing on the CompStat model, this unit should be responsible for preparing all performance metrics for monthly or quarterly “RespectStat meetings” (cf. McCarthy & Rosenbaum, 2015) to establish clear expectations for commanders and supervisors. The police leadership should strongly encourage internal brainstorming and problem-solving sessions focused on these results, including strategies and tactics to improve scores on PJ Indices.

To date, the best example of this type of data-driven auditing and accountability is the MAX program (Management Analytics for Excellence) that was introduced in the New Orleans Police Department in 2016 in response to the consent decree (Morgan et al., 2017). With dashboards, visual maps, report cards, and monthly meetings, MAX was designed to hold administrators accountable for changes on a variety of performance metrics. While the MAX system may not meet scientific standards (regarding sampling, scoring, and reliability), it is a significant improvement in police accountability because it reaches beyond crime statistics. Thus, we encourage law enforcement agencies to employ this type of framework to build a RespectStat program using new procedural justice data outlined here.

Officer Training: As suggested throughout this paper, training is needed at all levels of the organization, including new recruits, to educate the workforce about new policies and management practices that will be introduced to enhance procedural justice and communication skills, with multiple benefits. Field Training Officers (FTOs) should review and model the desired procedural justice behaviors discussed in the classroom. To achieve officer “buy-in,” officers must be reassured that this new system and training will make their job easier and safer and is designed to be supportive rather than punitive.

From an evidence-based perspective, procedural justice training has shown considerable promise for improving on-the-job behavior (Antrobus et al., 2019; Wood et al., 2020; Weisburd et al., 2022; Wheller et al., 2013; Mazerolle et al., 2012; Rosenbaum & Lawrence, 2017; Sahin et al., 2017; Weisburd et al., 2022). However, the most effective procedural justice training requires adult learning methods with lots of practice time and feedback loops, similar to how officers are trained to use lethal and non-lethal weapons. BWCs can be used to provide

constructive feedback during practice sessions.

Officer Recruitment and Selection: Today, as we face a shortage of police personnel, cities should rethink their hiring process. Advertisements should focus on the role of the guardian/public servant, not the warrior cop. Also, psychological testing should extend beyond efforts to identify personal deficiencies (e.g., proneness to violence, drug abuse, dishonesty, stress) and identify candidates with good communication skills and high levels of emotional intelligence. Research clearly indicates that some individuals score much higher on emotional intelligence than others, meaning they can perform well in social settings because they are aware of their own and other people’s emotions, they understand the complexity of emotions, and they are skilled at managing their own and other people’s emotions to improve performance and achieve desired goals (Mayer et al., 2000; Petrides et al., 2016).

Summary and Conclusion

Police agencies are facing a new “crisis of legitimacy,” and the problem extends far beyond the excessive force and fatal shootings that explode on social media. Many people have expressed disappointment with the local police and for good reason. Protected and vulnerable populations have been mistreated, especially people of color, the LGBTQ+ community, persons with mental illness, and youth. The new contact survey proposed here, when combined with AI analytics for BWC data, will give voice to these communities and others with lived police experience. Based on strong scientific evidence, these new systems will “measure what matters” for achieving police legitimacy, namely, procedural justice. When the new data have been properly translated, for the first time, into police management and accountability systems, police-community interactions should improve, along with police legitimacy.

If implemented with integrity, I expect these reforms will have significant benefits for all parties. The program will incentivize a new definition of good policing, encouraging the police to “serve and protect” in a procedurally just manner.

As a result, **community members** should experience:

- more positive, less conflictual, and more satisfying encounters with the police;

“Based on strong scientific evidence, these new systems will ‘measure what matters’ for achieving police legitimacy, namely, procedural justice. When the new data have been properly translated, for the first time, into police management and accountability systems, police-community interactions should improve, along with police legitimacy.”

- greater trust and confidence in the police and support for their decision making;
- less cynicism about the law and greater willingness to obey the law;
- stronger partnerships with police organizations to prevent crime;
- less desire to file complaints and lawsuits;
- increased public safety as a result of these changes; and
- fewer taxpayer dollars spent on lawsuits against police officers.

As a result of these procedural justice reforms, the **police** should experience:

- more successful criminal investigations as a result of more cooperative witnesses, victims, bystanders, callers, and suspects, thus producing greater justice and deterrence;
- fewer use of force incidents because of their new communication skills and more cooperative community members;
- fewer misconduct complaints and investigations;
- fewer officer safety and mental health problems;
- greater job satisfaction and less cynicism toward their agency and the community;
- less “de-policing,” resulting in more crime prevention and increased public safety; and
- greater agency legitimacy, resulting in fewer protests, negative social media, lawsuits, and defunding campaigns.

Imagining the Future

My hope is that someday, we will introduce a national system of procedural justice metrics where the cost and benefits are shared among participating cities. In the meantime, we need to see a proof-of-concept



demonstration with multiple police agencies. To bring this to fruition, I envision a working partnership among enlightened police leaders, policing scholars, and community leaders. The final products should include a standardized set of metrics and dashboards, along with a range of organizational plans for translating this knowledge into effective, fair, and compassionate policing.

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