

Measuring and Understanding What the Police Do

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How to close a discussion of evidence about what the police do and with what effect?

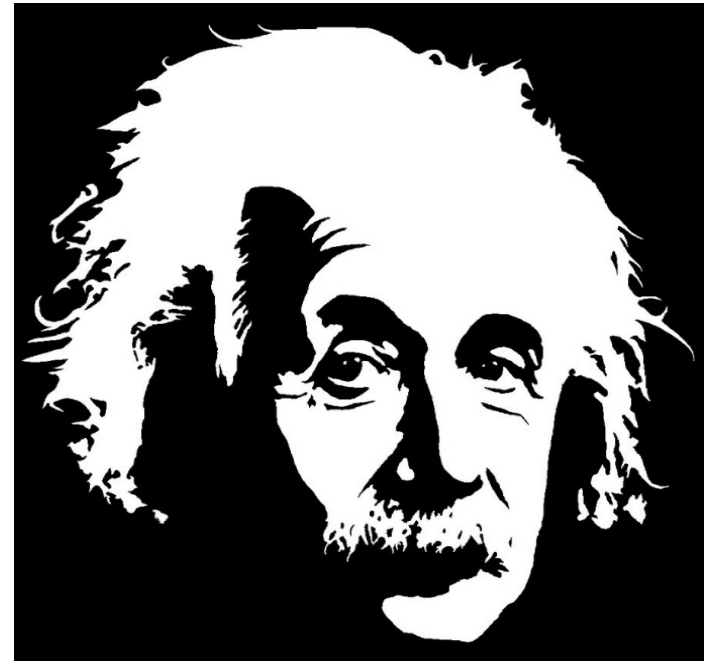
- This CEPOL Conference has covered much ground from local to federal policing, from neighborhood crime, domestic violence and disorder to money laundering and terrorism
- Obviously each of these issues is important for the police and involves many measurement schemes and levels of government
- This presentation is focused on local policing, but it is important to recognize that while crime, money laundering, internet fraud, and globalized crime have their origins from all over the globe, they are felt and first reacted to locally.
- Like environmentalism – **“Think Globally but Act Locally”!**

Current Themes

- The police do more things than are accurately measured, understood and rewarded
- While policing has come a long way, we may be retreating from fully understanding of what the police do and why it matters
- Current “what works schemes” coupled with government emphasis on selected outcomes, can lead to misunderstanding the capacity and responsibility of local police
- Conceptual schemes of how police interventions work also needs attention
- In broadening our measurement of the police we can improve police effectiveness as well as their civic attachment.

Not everything that can be
counted counts, and not
everything that counts can
be counted.

— Albert Einstein

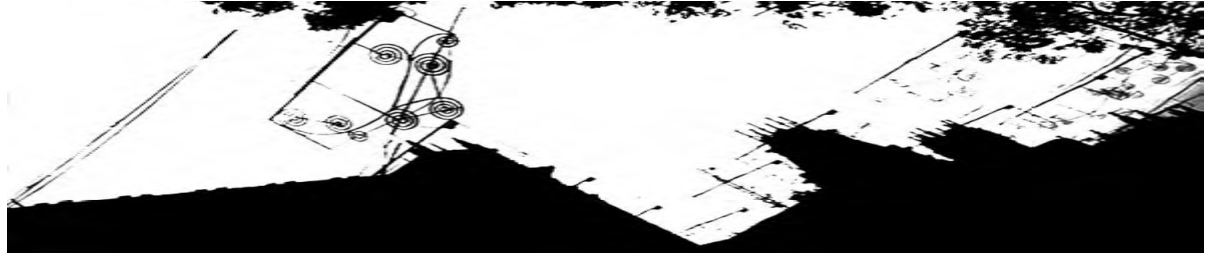


Policing and Police Research Have Come a Long Way

- Police Education and Training have improved immensely
- The police are better managed
- What we know about crime has also improved considerably
- Certainly what we know and understand about the police has come a long way due in part to increased scientific attention to the police and a willingness on the part of the police to open themselves to review and critique.
- Much of what we know about the police and crime comes to us through many research lenses – evidence has many parents



Yet the Trials and Tribulations of the Police Remain



- What to do in the face of competition for crime prevention and crime control, at a time of dwindling resources?
- What to do when crime declines, or new crimes emerge?
- How to shed the centrality of the “crime attack” approach?
- How to improve accountability and transparency?
- How to build and sustain institutional legitimacy?

All of these questions have implications for what we choose to measure for the police.

What Matters in Policing?



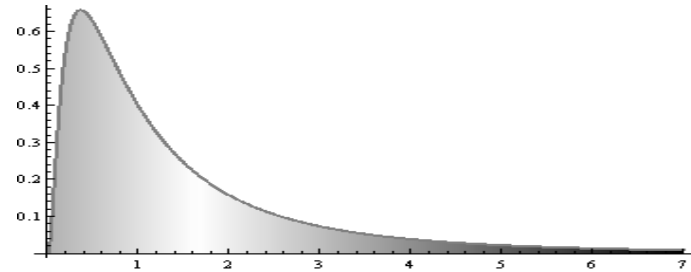
- Depends on who you ask
- For years the police have focused on **effort** (we made lots of arrest here) while the public focused on **outcomes** (okay, but we still feel unsafe?)
- The measurement processes in policing fostered by ideas like Broken Windows, Zero Tolerance, Compstat, Hot Spots and their progeny single out deterrence as the *raison d'être* of the police-- this has significant measurement implications
- Yet crime went down in many places including places where these approaches were not central? So what does work?
- In recent years we have witnessed the distrust these approaches have produced, particularly in marginalized communities
- **Reopens the question of to whom does policing matter?**

Some Propositions Concerning Measurement of What the Police Do



- At times police, academics and the community often have a distorted sense of what the police actually do in and for society
- Risk eclipsed harm as the medium of social control and police strategy
- Deterrence and “crime attack” policing have dominated for many years, most recently being challenged as discriminatory and unaccountable
- Recent trends in the police science movement tend to reinforce narrow conceptions of policing and “what works” – where and for what?
- Broadening the measurement of what the police do and rewarding a broader definition of police work is essential if the police are to regain their public footing

The Skewed Sense of What the Police Do and What it Means



- The police produce instrumental and symbolic public goods
 - Instrumental goods include, crime and social disorder responses, the movement of vehicles and people in public spaces, protection of the vulnerable, medical and other emergency services
 - Symbolic goods include public sense of safety, support of the police, police individual and institutional legitimacy
- For a number of reasons the police and ultimately the academic community are more focused on the instrumental– easier to measure?
- Police agencies do not measure very consistently or well police non-instrumental activity and its results; nor are they much rewarded in police agencies

What do the police actually do?



- Any number of studies suggest that, while the police crime response has increased, at least half of police workload is not crime focused.
- Crime activity is temporally and spatially distributed such that often many police have little crime control contact
- The police help many people by providing medical and other emergency services, mediating small disputes, protecting the homeless and other publically vulnerable populations often with little recognition – here the police are focused on harm not risk
- When police move away from large urban populations centers the amount of crime control policing generally recedes

You Get What You Measure

- Police have drifted to a rather narrow definition of what they do, and what matters to the community
- Measuring what matters is not the same as measuring ALL that matters in policing
 - To whom does it matter?
 - What is its' instrumental and symbolic importance?
 - How does measurement drive behavior in policing?
 - How do current measurement systems highlight or detract from a complete picture of what the police do?
- In some ways policing has taken the easy way out by only measuring crime and major disorder issues



Deterrence and Crime Attack Utilitarian Approaches



- Mask the complexities of modern life
- Ignore the equifinality of social problems including crime and disorder
 - Many roads to community problems
 - Yet we still have one-size fits all policing
- Now the product of a police-pragmatic-academic-intellectual complex, which could be much more robust
- These approaches fail to recognize that the crime “attack model” has failed (Eck and Maguire, 2006) and actually produces more negatives than positives for the police and the community

The problematics of policing

If you find yourself in a hole, stop digging, Will Rogers

- **The cornerstones of post-modern policing**

- **Broken windows**
- **Zero Tolerance**
- ***Compstat***
- **Hotspots**
- **Evidence-based practice**



- **Are all variants of the same deterrence message**
- **Modern upgrades of longstanding utilitarian arguments**

Broken Windows, Zero Tolerance and other Criminological Myths

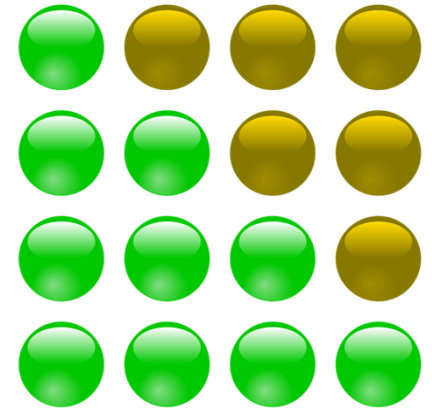
MYTH
OR
FACT

- **Broken windows – ideology in search of science**
 - Fits colloquial ideas about decay and crime
 - But as a causal chain of small crime->fear->civic withdraw ->more serious crime -> more fear -> more civic withdraw -> leading to serious crime, is largely untested, and where there are results they often conflict (Hinkle, 2014)
 - Recent research by Sampson et.al. 2015 suggests that neighborhood social relations not physical conditions lead to more or less violent crime
 - Most important we don't know if police action actually stems neighborhood decay, nor do we know what police actions are most appropriate and when.

Policing by the Numbers

A good decision is based on knowledge and not on numbers - Plato

- **Cops on dots is an old idea – computers just accelerated the dots**
- **Believe it or not good cops know where the problem people, families, bars, boarding houses, and congregation places are**
- ***Compstat* is the modern equivalent of scientific management coming to the police**
- **Much of the *Compstat* revolution is also a social construction – a tale of two cities in NYC**





NYC – 1990s City #1

- Single most important police innovation.
- Introduced accountability and scientific measurement to police management and deployment.
- *NY City Battles Crime: Innovative Strategies in Policing*(Silverman, 1999)



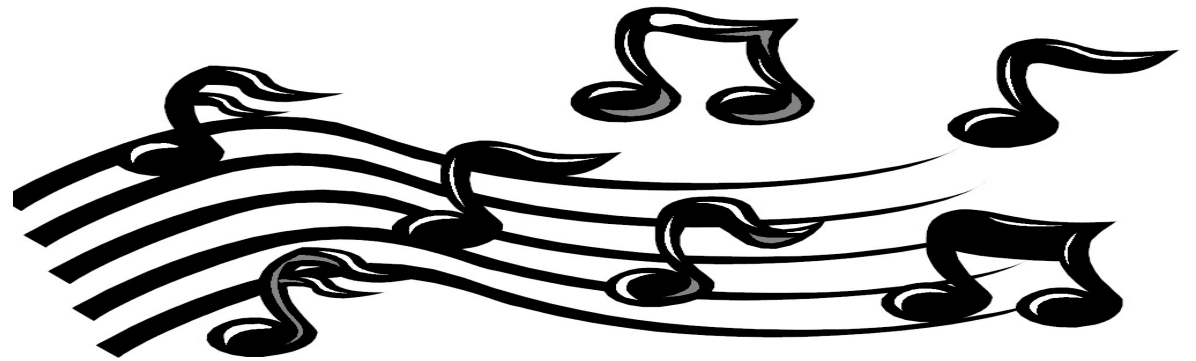
NYC – Revisited – 2012 City #2

- Wait a minute! On reflection and reanalyzing the crime narrative in NYC, it seems that commanders simply manipulated the numbers
- *The Crime Numbers Game: Management by Manipulation* (Eterno and Silverman, 2012)
- Michael Banton (1962) “crime represents whatever the constable writes down “.

The Complexities of Measuring and Meaning

“It would be possible to describe everything scientifically, but it would make no sense; it would be without meaning, as if you described a Beethoven symphony as a variation of wave pressure.”

— Albert Einstein



So what does Public Policing in a Democracy Stand for and with What Implications for Measurement?

- Primacy of the “rule of law”
- Creating “public value” (Moore, 1995)
- Policing as a “collective good” – non-rival, non-excludable (Samuelson, 1954)
- Upholding the social contract -- protection and social facilitation -- Hobbes and Locke



Institutional Legitimacy and the New Police Order

- The legitimacy of the police has been a subject of concern for many years
- The history of policing worldwide has been one of “scandal and reform”
- The legacy of the police, particularly in newly immigrated or minority communities remains tenuous – these are the largest growing segments of the population, often rife with problems like violence and terrorism
- Public policing requires public support, otherwise the police are an occupying force



Building Blocks of Community Frustration with the Police

- Over and under policing – over policing in terms of surveillance and order control activities –under policing in terms of responses to calls for assistance and victimization
- Disrespect of residents – conflating dangerous places with dangerous people
- Movement toward aggressive street tactics – the “dolphin problem”

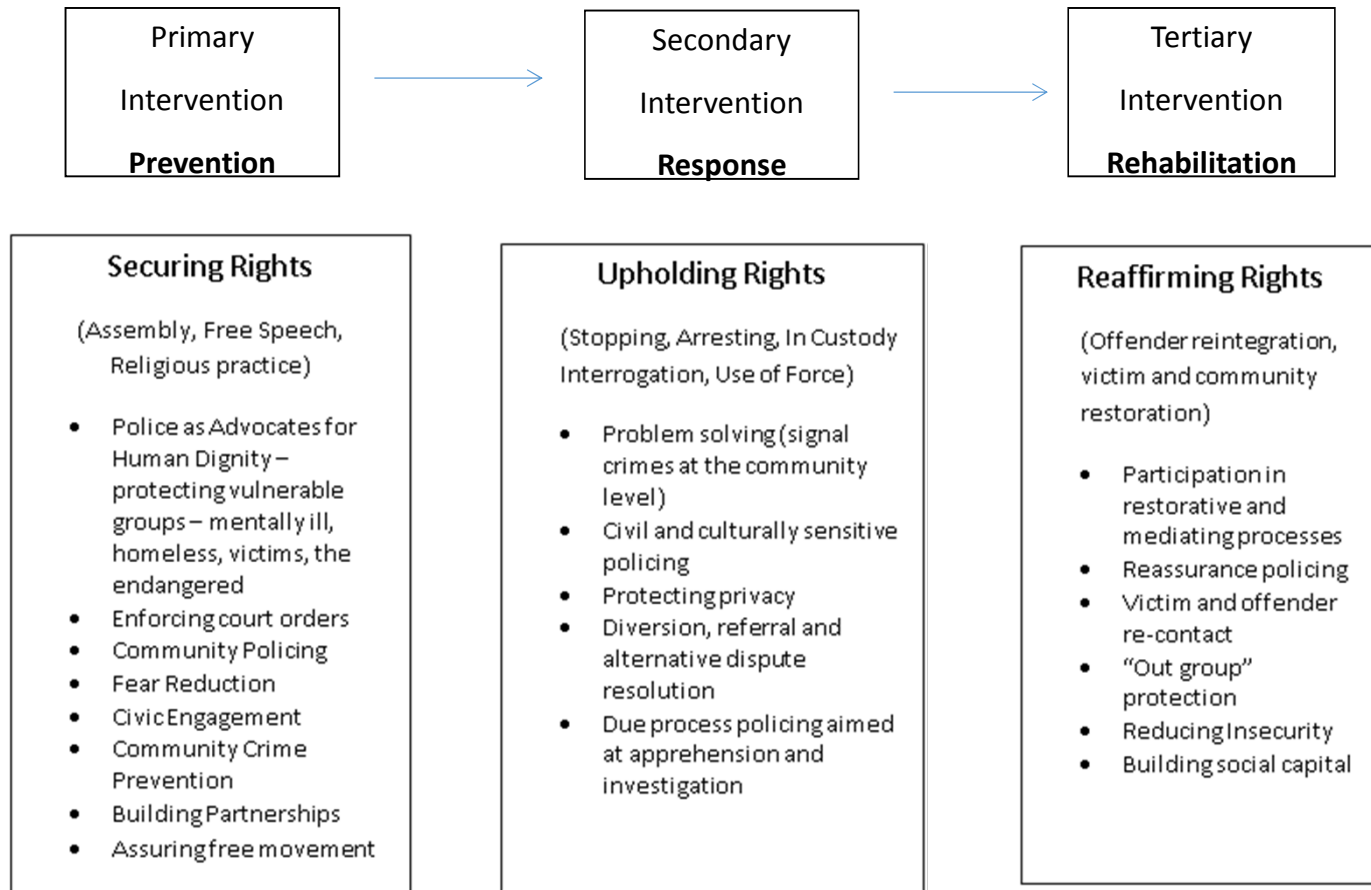
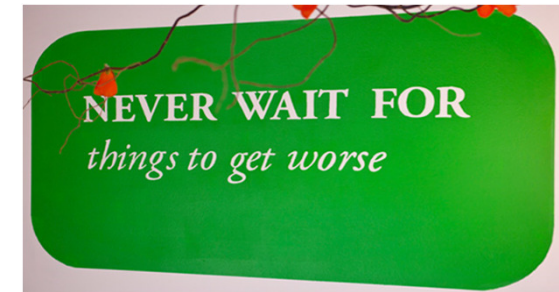


A Harm vs. Risk-Focused Police Agenda



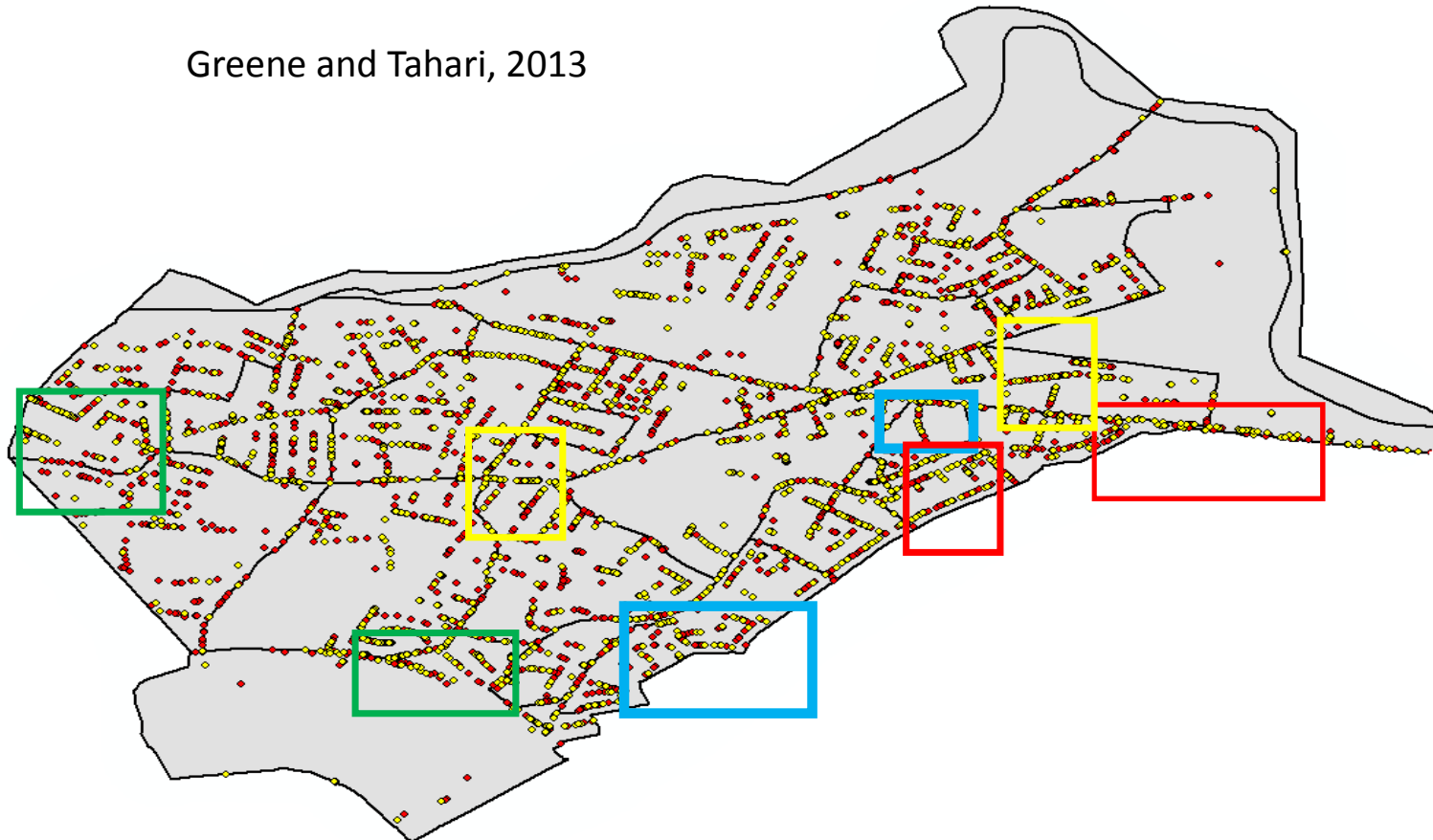
- Shift from Harm to Risk (Ratcliffe, 2014)
 - Harm yields a need to assist and protect, risk a need to defend and control – question is what is the balance?
 - Socially disorganized communities have more problems than crime
- Requires more knowledge about what harms the community (Maltz, 1995)
- Requires police advocacy for the community (Boydston and Sherry, 1975) – perhaps the real implementation of community policing

Medical Intervention Model Applied to Police (Greene, 2010)



Neighborhood Example – P,S,T and Part 1 & 2

Greene and Tahari, 2013



Primary Calls = 2,979 (18.4%)

**Secondary Calls = 5,471
(34.3%)**

Tertiary Calls = 7,520 (46.5%)

Preliminary Research Conclusions

- The tendency has been to separate crime from disorder and other police services, when both affect quality of life in residential and business settings
- In this preliminary undertaking, crime was down across the city, while quality of life calls for service were up, indicating either increased reporting, on-site actions taken by police, and/or differing underlying mechanisms
- There are city “hotspots” for serious crime and quality of life issues, and in some places they overlap, but in others they do not, indicating variations in linkages between order, lesser serious crime, and serious crime

So many questions, so little time

- What constitutes good policing? Medical professional and patient interaction. Wellness!
- How do the police embrace the medical admonition, “Do no harm”?
- How do we shift from risk to harm?
- What police interventions produce what results?
- How does more generalized police activity shape police legitimacy?
- How can we measure all the police do and sort out what matters and to whom?

A future agenda for criminology and policing



- Shift from risk to harm – re-sensitizing the police role
- Develop a positive criminology (Schuilenburg, et. al., 2014) – reducing insecurity comes in part from increasing belonging, caring, supporting and co-existing – not just risk management
- Measure (and Reward) what does matter – many things beyond crime and arrests – and more consistent with what the police actually do

Muito Obrigado!

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(references on request)