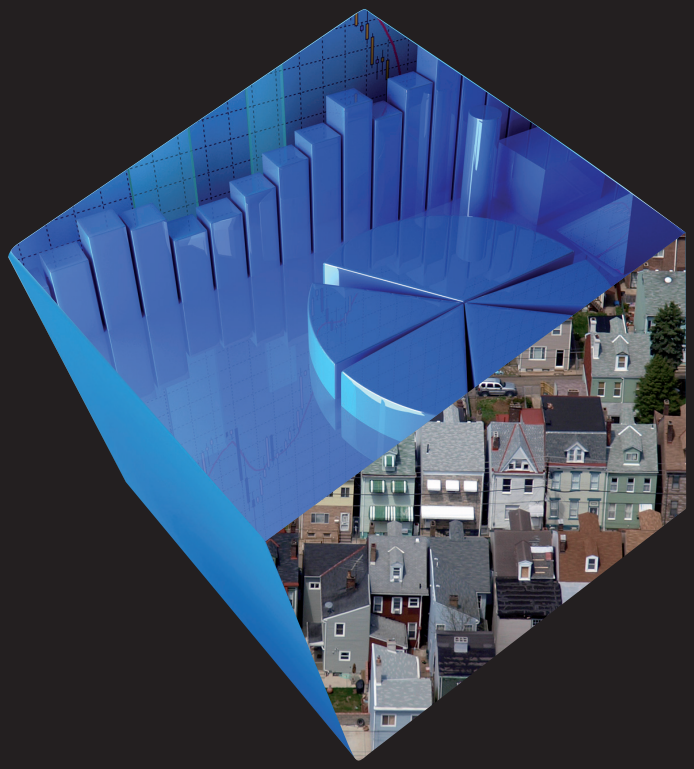

FIRST-LINE SUPERVISION UNDER COMPSTAT AND COMMUNITY POLICING

Lessons from Six Agencies

Prepared by James J. Willis

Center for Justice Leadership and Management, George Mason University

COPS

COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

First-Line Supervision under Compstat and Community Policing

Lessons from Six Agencies

A Report Submitted to the
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

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COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

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, and tribal law enforcement agencies through information and grant resources. The community policing philosophy promotes organizational strategies that 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. In its simplest form, community policing is about building relationships and solving problems.

The COPS Office awards grants to state, local, 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. The COPS Office funding also provides training and technical assistance to community members and local government leaders and all levels of law enforcement.

Since 1994, the COPS Office has invested more than $16 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. More than 500,000 law enforcement personnel, community members, and government leaders have been trained through COPS Office-funded training organizations.

The COPS Office has produced more than 1,000 information products—and distributed more than 2 million publications—including Problem Oriented Policing Guides, Grant Owners Manuals, fact sheets, best practices, and curricula. And in 2010, the COPS Office participated in 45 law enforcement and public-safety conferences in 25 states in order to maximize the exposure and distribution of these knowledge products. More than 500 of those products, along with other products covering a wide area of community policing topics—from school and campus safety to gang violence—are currently available, at no cost, through its online Resource Information Center at www.cops.usdoj.gov. More than 2 million copies have been downloaded in FY2010 alone. The easy to navigate and up to date website is also the grant application portal, providing access to online application forms.

Letter from the Director

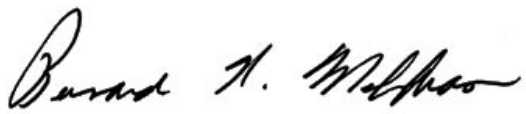
Dear Colleagues,

COMPSTAT AND COMMUNITY POLICING have become two of the most influential policing reforms taking place in the United States. Whether used together or separately, they have contributed significantly to how police business is conducted and understood. Both Compstat and community policing show promise in transforming police organizations radically, particularly in terms of making them more strategic.

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—the third of three—describes what was learned from six on-site focus groups that were conducted with front-line supervisors, most of whom supervised patrol or community policing officers.

Although the experiences of these six police agencies cannot necessarily represent those of all departments that have implemented both reforms, they do suggest that the role of first-line supervision is underdeveloped. The focus groups indicated a pattern of common practices that do not readily fit with the idealized models of either Compstat or community policing, which suggests there is considerable value in figuring out alternative approaches to these reforms in order to improve their strategic focus. This report also addresses the tendency of police agencies to think of these reforms as separate approaches rather than as reforms whose structures and practices might provide an opportunity for a more integrated policing approach. We hope that you give thoughtful consideration to the benefits these reforms—implemented and working together—would bring to your agency, and we encourage you to please provide us with feedback on your experiences and reactions in implementing them.

Sincerely,



Bernard K. Melekian, Director
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services

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We would also like to thank the following points-of-contact for facilitating our site visits: Officer Nina Preciado (LAPD), Gerry Tallman (OPPD), Sergeant Greg Stephenson (MPD), Sergeant David Stuckmeyer (SLC), Lieutenant Terrence Pierce (MCPD), Assistant Chief Todd Everly (CCPD), and Sergeant Howard Black (CSPD). We were able to conduct focus groups at six sites thanks to their considerable efforts.

A special note of appreciation goes to those first-line supervisors who agreed to participate in focus groups and were willing to share their experiences about how they made strategic decisions under Compstat and community policing.

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Finally, we would like to thank Dr. Matthew Scheider, our grant monitor at the COPS Office. His patience, guidance, and encouragement have been a source of constant support.

Executive Summary

Over the last 25 years, Compstat and community policing have emerged as powerful movements in U.S. police reform. Despite their importance, there are virtually no studies on how they work *together* when implemented in the same police organization. This report, the third in a series studying this co-implementation issue, focuses on front-line supervision. Patrol sergeants play a key role in what the police organization does and how it does it, yet little is known about how this rank has adapted, if at all, to the co-implementation of Compstat and community policing.

Both reforms are heralded for being strategic—that is, they are designed to help heighten the police organization's capacity to identify problems in its environment, detect any changes, reallocate resources, and respond effectively. Presumably this "big picture" approach to handling an unstable and uncertain environment should materialize in the kind of guidance that first-line supervisors receive from their superiors, in how they make decisions about what crime and disorder problems to focus upon, and in the kind of direction they give to the organization's largest resource—its patrol officers.

We conducted focus groups at six police agencies, differing in size and organization that reported fully implementing Compstat and community policing, to learn how sergeants made decisions and offered guidance on crime and disorder problems. This report describes how these reforms have affected supervisory practices unevenly. This finding can be explained by the fact that each department continues to stress features of police organization that are most consistent with goals that have long been embraced by police managers: fighting crime, centralizing decision-making authority, and responding to calls for service. The particular elements of these reforms that represented the greatest departure from past management and supervisory ideals—community involvement in the production of police priorities and of responses to crime and neighborhood problems, devolving decision-making authority to the rank and file, and innovative problem solving—remained the least developed. More specifically, we found:

- Patrol sergeants were *most* likely to receive guidance from their superiors and from crime analysts on serious crime problems, particularly when and where they were occurring. But this rarely included instructions on how best to respond.
- Patrol sergeants were *less* likely to receive guidance on problems identified by the communities they served. This is unsurprising, given that sophisticated data systems and channels of information between the police and the community were not in place for routinely identifying and prioritizing community concerns and minor crimes and disorders.
- Unlike sergeants assigned to specialist community policing units, patrol sergeants tended to think of community policing in terms of "service-style" policing rather than strategic problem solving.
- Sergeants' capacity for problem solving was undermined by several factors: the demands of each department's 911 system; performance evaluations more focused on measuring quantity than quality of police work; the significant administrative burdens on patrol sergeants; and constraints on their authority to reallocate resources.

In sum, Compstat's contribution to a data-rich environment helped sergeants identify emerging crime (but not community) problems and focus patrol resources, but it had done little to promote innovative responses to those problems. Regarding community policing, sergeants expressed strong support for addressing the needs of community members and providing high quality service, but they viewed their primary obligation as answering calls for service. The absence of specific reform structures designed to facilitate close working relationships between sergeants, their officers, and local residents and to buffer patrol from the 911 workload, made it difficult for patrol sergeants to engage in the kind of in-depth problem solving activities supported by community policing advocates. Rather, this approach fell to a relatively small number of community policing specialists.

This is only the first step in understanding how these reforms affect first-line supervisors, but in light of our findings and consistent with our other reports, we suggest there is considerable value in envisioning alternative configurations for these reforms in order to improve their strategic focus. Although the experiences of these six police agencies cannot necessarily represent those of all departments that have implemented both Compstat and community policing, they do suggest that the role of first-line supervision is underdeveloped. The challenge to policymakers and researchers is to consider how first-line supervision in co-implementing departments could be restructured to the mutual benefit of both reforms.

I. INTRODUCTION

Over the last quarter century, American police have experienced two major reform efforts designed to shape what the police do and how they do it: community policing and Compstat (Bratton 1998; Rosenbaum 1994; Silverman 1999; Skogan 2006; Weisburd, Mastrofski, McNally, Greenspan, and Willis 2003; Willis, Mastrofski, and Weisburd 2007). Compstat is a highly focused strategic management system concentrating 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 police organization's capacity to identify, understand, and monitor responses to crime problems (Henry 2002; Weisburd et al. 2003). Community policing is characterized by a variety of justifications: strengthening public support for the police, building social capital, achieving a more equitable distribution of police services, and of course, reducing crime, disorder, and fear of crime (Mastrofski 2006). Its methods are similarly diffuse, frequently including community partnerships, problem solving, and the delegation of greater decision-making authority to patrol officers and their sergeants at the beat level (Moore 1992; Skogan 2006).

Both innovations have diffused rapidly throughout the United States (Skogan 2006: 5; Weisburd et al. 2003) and researchers are still trying to determine what the effects of each of these reforms have been as well as their prospects (Dabney 2009; Weisburd and Braga 2006). However, it is also important to know just how well these two reforms operate *together* in the same police agency. According to a national survey conducted in 2006, 59 percent of large police agencies are pursuing both Compstat and community policing simultaneously (Willis, Kochel, and Mastrofski 2010), suggesting how they work together has significant implications for how policing is done in the United States.

This is the third report from the first national assessment of this co-implementation issue funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (the COPS Office). One report used data from a national survey to illuminate the current state of implementation of each reform in the United States and the nature and extent of compatibility problems (Willis, Mastrofski, and Kochel 2010). The other used observations and interviews from short site visits to seven police agencies to learn how co-implementation worked "on the ground." The report's main conclusion that Compstat and community policing operated largely independently, each having little effect on the other, provided an empirical basis for making recommendations for these reforms' integration—possibilities for reconfiguring them in ways that were mutually beneficial (Willis, Mastrofski, and Kochel 2010a). This final report describes what we learned from six on-site focus groups we conducted with front-line supervisors,[1] most of whom supervised patrol or community policing officers.

First-line supervisors play a key role in what the police organization does and how it does it (Skogan 2008), yet little is known about how this rank has adapted to the co-implementation of Compstat and community policing. These reforms are heralded for being strategic. That is, although there are elements where they are similar and where they differ (see Willis et al. 2010), both reforms are designed to help heighten the police organization's capacity to identify problems in its environment, detect any changes, reallocate resources, and respond effectively.

1. Our focus is on first-line supervisors in charge of patrol officers. We use the terms "first-line/front-line/patrol supervisors" and "sergeants" interchangeably in this report.

Presumably this "big picture" approach to handling an unstable and uncertain environment should materialize in the kind of guidance that first-line supervisors receive from their superiors, in how they make decisions about what crime and disorder problems to focus on, and in the kind of direction they give to the organization's largest resource—its patrol officers. The purpose of the focus groups was to learn more about how these features of first-line supervision, or what we think of here more generally as "strategic decision-making," operated in departments that reported fully implementing Compstat and community policing.

Front-Line Supervision in an Age of Reform

Before the emergence of community-oriented policing in the early 1980s, patrol supervisors were often described as performing traditional supervisory roles in organizations that were hierarchical and bureaucratic (Engel 2002: 52; Kelling and Moore 1988). They were expected by their superiors to engage in preventive patrol, to ensure that their subordinates responded quickly and appropriately to individual incidents and calls for service, to check crime reports for inaccuracies, and to discipline officers who violated department rules and regulations (Allen 1982; Manning 1977; Rubinstein 1973; Trojanowicz 1980). Additionally, they were expected to act as conduits of information from above and below in the chain-of-command. Within the strict organizational hierarchy, subordinates were "buffered" from those in upper management and respected those first-line supervisors who aided their careers by protecting them from the criticisms of higher ups (Allen 1982; Engel 2002: 52). The stress on internal control contributed to a supervisory system that was "essentially negative, relying primarily upon sanctions for non-compliance with police rules and regulations" (Weisburd and McElroy 1988: 31).

While it is always risky to generalize, the tenor of supervision during this time (1960s and 1970s) could be characterized as basically reactive and procedures-oriented. Because first-line supervisors were largely rewarded for minimizing disruptions to existing authority relations and bureaucratic routines, they were most likely to respond to a subordinate's violation of a general order (e.g., failing to write a report) (Brown 1988). Organizational efficiency was often equated with the willingness of subordinates to accept the power of others over them, with keeping reliable records, and with paying attention to formal and abstract rules (Kelling and Moore 1988).

Community policing and Compstat evolved in response to many of the bureaucratic pathologies associated with this traditional policing model (Bratton 1998; Moore 1992). Advocates for reform criticized police organizations for placing greater emphasis on "their organization and operation than on the substantive outcome of their work" (Goldstein 1979: 236), for creating elaborate hierarchies and rules, and for centralizing command and control (Eck and Spelman 1987; Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux 1990). These bureaucratic features combined to produce inflexible organizations whose management and line personnel were unresponsive to their clientele (Mastrofski 1998).

To help overcome these challenges, reformers stressed the importance of refocusing the organization's energies on reducing and preventing crime and responding to concerns identified by those outside of the department as worthy of police attention. In theory at least, this was accomplished by: (1) decentralizing decision-making down the chain-of-command; (2) increasing the organization's capacity to move resources to where they were needed most; (3) using data to identify and analyze a wide array of crime and disorder problems; and (4) selecting tactics that offered the best prospects of success (Mastrofski 1998, 2006). The effective implementation of these elements would seem to require significant changes in how first-line supervisors learn about crime and disorder problems and exercise their judgment in ways that are most likely to produce desired results. How, if at all, had first-line supervisors adapted to their major strategic elements?

II. RESEARCH METHODS

In 2006, we 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. Respondents were asked whether their departments had adopted Compstat and/or community policing and what form they took. To gain detailed knowledge on how Compstat and community policing worked "on the ground," we used our survey findings to identify seven large (>1000 officers), medium (500-999), and small (100-499) police agencies suitable for on-site fieldwork. The largest agency selected was the Los Angeles Police Department, CA, followed by the Montgomery County Police Department, MD. The two medium agencies were the St. Louis County Police Department, MO, and Colorado Springs Police Department, CO. The three smallest were Overland Park, KS, Marietta, GA, and Cape Coral, FL.[2]

These were selected because they had reported that they had fully implemented both reforms; they had experienced a wide variety of successes and problems in implementing them, and they were receptive to having a field researcher on site for a 5-day period. We also tried to achieve variety in size, organization, geographic distribution, and crime environment.

We conducted 5-day site visits between July 2006 and June 2007. The research activities were: (a) observing department activities, community meetings, and Compstat meetings at the department and district levels; (b) gathering documentation (including Compstat maps and reports, strategic plans, and press releases); (c) interviewing key decision-makers in the operational chain of command through a semi-structured questionnaire; (d) interviewing and observing patrol officers during ridealongs; and (e) conducting 90-minute focus groups with 6 (on average) first-line supervisors. Respondents were asked to describe how the organization had implemented community policing and Compstat, the substance of their programs, and their experiences of reform.

As with the selection and scheduling of our interviews, we depended heavily on our on-site liaison to select focus group participants. The on-site liaisons were also responsible for organizing when and where the focus groups were held. Since we wanted to elicit thoughtful and in-depth insights on the nature of first-line supervision under these reforms, we told our liaisons that we were interested in hearing a broad range of experiences from first-line patrol supervisors who were knowledgeable about Compstat and community policing. Because our sample was selected purposively, their views and impressions cannot be generalized to all sergeants in the agencies we visited. Given this approach, our findings should be approached with caution. This report is best thought of as an exploratory study of strategic decision-making by veteran first-line supervisors in co-implementing agencies.

In terms of our final pool of 34 participants, most (over 80 percent) had upwards of 15 years experience and 6 were assigned to specialist community policing units at the time of our visit.

2. A profile of participating departments is in the Appendix.

The number of patrol officers supervised by each sergeant also varied from as few as 5 to as many as 30 (although in this particular case, the sergeant was not in charge of a squad, but was a watch commander). The focus groups were conducted by a single on-site researcher, and, with participants' consent, were tape recorded. We requested that 6 to 10 first-line supervisors attend (more would have been unwieldy) and an average of 6 participated in the focus groups (Krueger 1994). Unfortunately, out of the seven original focus groups, one had to be cancelled due to scheduling issues[3] and one was not taped due to a technical problem. Regarding the latter, the on-site researcher immediately typed up his written notes from the meeting in order to recall as much of the discussion as he could. Thus, the data we present here are comprised of six focus groups.

We sought to encourage participation by stating that there were no "right answers" and that we were interested in hearing whatever insights participants cared to offer, including comments on the remarks of others. Although we could not guarantee confidentiality, we emphasized at the outset that "what was said in the room, should stay in the room," and as a token of appreciation for those who agreed to give us their valuable time, we provided refreshments.

We used an interview guide (see Appendix on page 23) to help structure the focus group meetings to facilitate comparisons across sites (Krueger 1994). However, we also encouraged participants to raise and discuss any issues they felt were important within the broader context of these reforms and the nature of supervision within the department. Each focus group tape was listened to at least twice and general themes were identified. Once this phase of the analysis was complete, the researcher looked for patterns, as well as any differences between them, in order to be sensitive to variations across sites. Because the policing literature has not given much attention to the relationship between Compstat and community policing, this analysis was mostly inductive. Working back and forth between the data and the patterns in responses, the focus was on identifying the clear and consistent themes that emerged from this analysis (Patton 2002: 466).

3. Colorado Springs Police Department, Colorado

III. FINDINGS

Guidance from Superiors to First-Line Supervisors on Crime and Neighborhood Problems

- Sergeants were most likely to receive guidance from their superiors and crime analysts on serious crime issues. These did not, however, include detailed instructions on how *best* to respond to these crime problems. What was most important was that sergeants were doing *something*—thus speed took precedence over quality of response.
- Sergeants were considerably less likely to receive guidance on minor crimes and social disorders, nor were mechanisms in place for the frequent and systematic identification of these problems and other community concerns.
- Unlike sergeants assigned to specialist community policing units, patrol sergeants were more likely to think of community policing in terms of "service-style" policing rather than strategic problem solving.

One of Compstat's principal objectives is to bend the performance of the organization to the chief executive's will, and to do that by empowering middle managers (who we refer to as district commanders or command staff) to respond to the chief's direction. Regular Compstat meetings can be a powerful means of clarifying what is most valued by top leadership (reductions in serious crime), and for holding district commanders accountable for how well they demonstrate they are accomplishing the organization's crime control mission. We would expect this pressure-for-results to show up in the kind of direction that first-line supervisors receive from their superiors. Because the crime reduction efforts of district commanders are being frequently monitored and assessed, it seems reasonable to assume that they would issue specific directives about how a particular crime or neighborhood problem should be handled effectively, and care about whether and how their commands were in fact being carried out at the street level.

From the perspective of community policing, which devolves decision-making authority further, we would expect supervisors to receive some direction about which problems were most important to address (and many of these should be concerns identified by community members), but also be given more autonomy than under Compstat. Community policing has tried to mobilize the knowledge, creativity, and skill of the lowest workers, expecting sergeants and patrol officers to develop strong, direct working relationships with citizen groups and to work with them to customize policing to suit them best (Skogan 2006).

There was a consensus among the focus group sergeants that the kind of guidance they received from above depended a great deal on a district commander's particular management style. However, the guidance they were most likely to receive routinely concerned the identification of a specific crime spike, trend, or pattern. On occasion, sergeants might also be told to address a community complaint, but this was less likely. Moreover, it was not customary to be given explicit instructions about how best to respond. One sergeant referred to patrol's knowledge and experience. He said that when the captain puts out a memo that says there has been a 43 percent increase in larcenies from autos:

> *[H]e is saying, O.K. guys, you have one hundred years of experience between the three of ya' let's fix it. That is what he is doing: it is not a direct, "this is what we are going to do." He throws this thing out there. Put your heads together and figure out how we are going to resolve this issue.*

In another focus group, a sergeant made a similar point about being left alone:

> *The directive we get from our commander…when he has specific things he wants dealt with, he tells a lieutenant and it is passed down and these are usually things that are generated as a result of a complaint that he has gotten or a crime trend he has seen that he wants to make sure we are handling.*

"Handling" could be as simple as the sergeant making sure that "fires were being put out," or working toward a more specific goal: "We've got 32 larcenies from autos, I want to see 18 next week." In both cases it was up to the sergeant to resolve the issue. The emphasis on addressing crime rather than disorder problems within the context of measurable results is certainly consistent with Compstat. However, the disinclination of district commanders to exert control over *how* first-line supervisors chose to respond is less consistent with Compstat doctrine, which seeks to harness the organization more tightly to top management's objectives. Strengthening accountability for results is a key part of Compstat's design and how it was implemented at most of these sites. So, for example, almost all sites had regular Compstat meetings where district commanders were expected to know the major problems in their beats and could be called upon to explain what they were doing about them. According to Compstat doctrine, such a forum should help promote brain-storming and creative problem solving, but research on how Compstat works in practice suggests significant slippage from this ideal. Because of the pressure to perform "on the spot" in a public setting, district commanders felt compelled to implement and report on timely responses to crime problems, but top management was less concerned with the *quality* of those responses (Willis, Mastrofski, and Weisburd 2007). Allowing sergeants to address crime problems any way they saw fit, was consistent with these previous research findings. Our focus group sergeants were expected to respond to the concerns transmitted from above, but district commanders did not provide them with a carefully crafted plan about what to do because this was not a key feature of each department's Compstat program as it had been implemented.

As for community policing, sergeants should be granted considerable discretion about how to mobilize, but in ways that are structured to accomplish this reform's desired goals. The fact that community policing is distinguished by several objectives and approaches would seem to place an additional burden on district commanders to provide their sergeants with manageable choices, including instructions on how to judge which objectives or considerations were most important. We did not hear of such an approach, and expectations for community policing were much more diffuse than under Compstat (one sergeant exclaimed that he wished someone would tell him how community policing was actually defined). Sergeants' comments suggested they were generally aware of the need to respond to community concerns, but they received little direction on the more strategic elements of this reform (e.g., problem solving and mobilizing local neighborhood resources) and their specific relationship to an overarching community policing philosophy. Consequently, sergeants generally understood community policing as their having to demonstrate a commitment to the needs of the community and behaving courteously during individual encounters.

One of the most likely explanations for this rather limited conception was every department's decision to create specialist community policing units rather than assigning community policing responsibilities to all of uniformed patrol. Across sites, these specialist units comprised only a very small proportion of all officers assigned to patrol (approximately 5–10 percent in our assessment based on department records). Freed from answering 911 calls, community policing officers were expected to respond to a wide range of minor crime problems or quality-of-life issues, thus freeing up patrol officers to respond to calls for service. Separate interviews with community policing sergeants suggested they were much more familiar with the overall philosophy of this reform, particularly the idea that it was an organizational strategy that went beyond the kind of community relations described by the generalist patrol sergeants.

Although district commanders generally eschewed giving sergeants specific instructions on how they should mobilize, data were fundamentally important to shaping the decision of *where* and *when* to mobilize. Most important in this regard were officer reports on individual crime incidents, with crime analysts paying particularly close attention to Part I crimes (which include homicide and non-negligent manslaughter, robbery, forcible rape, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny/theft, and motor vehicle theft). Information on these data was generally disseminated electronically through reports, spreadsheets, and maps. Sergeants then used these to identify which crimes were up or down and where they seemed to be concentrated. For example, one focus group member said:

> *Our mall has been getting hammered pretty bad with larcenies. And just trying to remind people [her patrol officers] that this is out there, that we are getting hit pretty hard, that they are occurring between 1 and 4 o'clock in the afternoon…get descriptions and pretty much set them on their way to go out and fight crime.*

Because none of these departments had implemented similarly sophisticated data systems to support community policing, sergeants did not mention receiving information that helped them systematically identify community problems, determine priorities, and document results. Consequently, sergeants tended to learn about those issues on a more ad hoc basis, such as through communication with their district commanders and community policing units, and by asking their patrol officers and individual citizens.

Guidance from First-Line Supervisors to Patrol Officers on Crime and Neighborhood Problems

- Each department's traditional 911 response system undermined the ability of sergeants to engage in problem-solving efforts with their officers; patrol focused on responding to individual crime incidents and engaging in traditional law enforcement activities at "hot spots" or locations where crimes were concentrated.
- Problem-solving initiatives were further undermined by performance evaluations more focused on measuring the quantity rather than the quality of police work, the significant administrative burdens on sergeants, and constraints on their capacity to reallocate resources.
- Sergeants assigned to community policing units focused on community concerns and engaged in problem solving, but the proportion of officers assigned to these units and not uniformed patrol was comparatively very small.

Because first-line supervisors are the "transmission belt" for translating policy into practice, we were also interested in how decisions flowed down the chain-of-command (Skogan 2008: 25). One of the powerful forces shaping Compstat's inception as a crime control approach was the concern that many patrol officers were too young and inexperienced to make decisions about how to tackle complex crime problems (Bratton 1998: 199). In contrast, community policing recognizes that the vast majority of police work is conducted by the rank and file who are regarded as a vital knowledge resource for rapidly identifying locally-defined problems and helping develop local solutions (Skogan 2006a: 38). What was the nature of the guidance that first-line supervisors offered to their patrol officers?

The most common theme that arose was how any form of strategic decision-making among the lower ranks was strongly hindered by the demands of each department's 911 response system. Almost universally, focus group members stated that calls for service undermined their capacity to give strategic guidance to their patrol officers. As one sergeant said:

> *Unless there is a specific problem that has to be tackled at a particular time in a particular way, it is a matter of getting to deployment assignments when you can and between calls for service.*

In response to a follow-up question, a sergeant in a different department said, "There is only so much you can do; you are tied to calls for service."

Estimates of how much time the officers they supervised spent answering calls varied (approximately 40-50 percent of their time). Engaging in reactive or preventive patrol while responding to calls to intervene in those individual situations—where "something-ought-not-to-be-happening and about which someone had better do something NOW!"—are core features of the traditional policing model (Bittner 1990: 249). Both reforms challenge this model by attempting to reallocate resources to those problems that are the most pressing. Rather than devoting substantial time and effort to dealing with all manner of citizen requests as they arise, officers

should be targeting specific problems (Skogan et al. 1999: 3, 35). Research in the 1970s and 1980s largely discredited the crime control benefits of this approach, but it remains a mainstay of American policing because citizens want to see patrol cars in their neighborhoods and receive timely service from police when they are summoned (Mastrofski and Willis 2010).

We have already commented on how Compstat's emphasis on rapid responses to crime problems did little to promote creative solutions from district commanders or sergeants. This finding was reaffirmed when we asked sergeants to describe what kinds of approaches they expected their officers to adopt in response to crime and neighborhood problems. First-line supervisors did not mention using data to analyze problems and propose creative or innovative solutions. Rather, they wanted their officers to show that they were active or doing "something" to address crime problems and to stay busy. Just as district commanders wanted sergeants to show they were addressing the crime spikes or trends that they had identified, sergeants wanted the same from their officers.

While it was possible that sergeants would encourage their officers to come up with creative problem-solving solutions, their comments suggested that it was more important that they engaged in activities that could be easily measured, such as generating tickets and making arrests. When we asked sergeants what they wanted to see from their officers in terms of addressing specific crime problems, the responses we invariably heard were selected from a standard law enforcement toolkit, including location-directed patrol, traffic enforcement, and arrest. For example, in response to what he expected his officers to do to address his city's crime problems, a sergeant replied:

> *Typically, I mean when you are talking about bar problems, construction area thefts, they don't demand an enormous amount of creativity in how you approach them…you either want to be seen or you don't want to be seen. If you want to be seen, you want to patrol to increase visibility, do traffic enforcements, do bar checks.*

This response is indicative of many we heard, but the context in which it is mentioned is also interesting because it reveals that these departments' focus on productivity to assess individual officer performance did little to promote problem solving. One of the challenges to community policing is that, unlike calls for service and reported crime, its accomplishments are not easily measured (Skogan 2008a). In the focus groups, sergeants tended to emphasize traditional indicators of officer performance that were easily captured by existing databases. Community policing approaches can require that officers make artful judgments (e.g., resolving a long-standing neighborhood dispute), but, as one of the community policing sergeants told us, these are rarely documented and recorded and rarely show up at Compstat.

As mentioned earlier, from a community policing perspective, traditional information systems of the kind used by Compstat are in many respects inadequate for the purpose of identifying and learning about a lot of issues that concern citizens most. One means of learning about these issues and mobilizing accordingly is for officers to attend community meetings and work with local residents, business owners, and other neighborhood organizations to focus proactively and creatively on problems (Skogan 2006).

Not one of the sites expected generalist patrol sergeants and their officers to attend community meetings and collaborate closely with community members or organizations to address neighborhood problems: this was the domain of community policing units. As a result, first-line supervisors may have encouraged their officers to surface and respond to community problems, but this was only likely to occur on a desultory, rather than a routine, basis. Innovative problem solving was undermined by two additional factors: sergeants' many other responsibilities and the reluctance of each department to allow first-line supervisors to make key decisions about reallocating patrol resources.

Sergeants had to juggle their responsibility for ensuring public safety with myriad supervisory and administrative tasks. These included approving reports, cultivating morale, and helping officers advance their careers. These essential functions of first-line supervisors has not been lost on scholars or on sergeants themselves (the "boss" in John Van Maanen's evocative terminology) (1983, 275). There was consensus among participants that sergeants were indispensable, with one capturing this sentiment when he said, "A sergeant is probably the most important position in the whole department." At the same time, these administrative burdens meant sergeants did not have time to innovate by drawing upon knowledge gained in other departments or develop innovations in theory and research about crime control and prevention.

Another essential element of the problem-solving process is increasing a department's capacity to move resources to where a problem is and to change or disrupt department routines to do this. While sergeants acknowledged that they had significant autonomy in deciding how to respond to problems in their beats, they also mentioned that this was not as extensive when it came to the reallocation of resources. While they may have been allowed to approve over-time, any "special" or unusual requests (e.g., putting an officer in plainclothes, asking officers to work on their days' off), or those that demanded a change to how resources were routinely allocated (e.g., coming up with an operational plan that required freeing several officers from answering calls for service), required approval from the district commander.

In summary, at these sites a variety of factors conspired to limit the capacity of sergeants to engage in the kind of innovative problem-solving that is regarded as a hallmark of both Compstat and community policing. Some of these were related to features of the programs as they had been implemented, such as Compstat's focus on rapid responses to crime and the absence of structured problem-solving partnerships with community members, but other factors were features of general police organization. Across the sites, the traditional 911 service and existing performance systems did little to support innovation.

Recommendations for Integrating Compstat and Community Policing

Toward the end of our focus groups, we asked participants if they had any recommendations for how Compstat and community policing might be integrated. Just as we had experienced in our one-on-one interviews, very few respondents identified specific elements where these reforms overlapped (e.g., 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. Participants 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. Regarding improvements to either of these reforms, we heard a wide variety of comments that tended to focus on Compstat. For example, some sergeants mentioned that their Compstat program would benefit from better communication between ranks and units, a focus on long-term improvements in crime rates rather than monthly fluctuations in crime statistics, and the more active involvement of sergeants at regular Compstat meetings.

We have stated elsewhere that this tendency to think of these reforms as separate 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 and understood, 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 (Willis et al. 2010). This report provides further support of this tendency.

IV. DISCUSSION

Both Compstat and community policing promise to transform police organizations radically, particularly in terms of making them more strategic. Given the central role that sergeants play in interpreting the goals of these reforms and implementing them at the street level, we might expect to see significant changes in this layer of supervision. Our focus groups, however, indicated a pattern of practices that do not readily fit with the idealized models of either Compstat or community policing. Because our sergeants were purposively selected within departments that had assigned primary community policing responsibilities to specialist units, these sites cannot represent the experiences of all co-implementing departments. However, the patterns that we did observe provide some valuable insights into how these specific reforms operated and into police reform more generally.

The unevenness of co-implementation can be explained by each department continuing to stress features of police organizations that are most consistent with goals that have long been embraced by top police managers: fighting crime, centralizing decision-making authority, and responding to calls for service. The particular elements of these reforms that represented the *greatest* departure from past management and supervisory ideals—community involvement in the production of police priorities and of responses to crime and neighborhood problems, devolving decision-making authority to the rank and file, and innovative problem solving—remained the least developed.

The most noticeable influence of these reforms on sergeants' decision-making was guidance and the use of crime data on the rapid identification of serious crime problems. Sergeants were most likely to receive instruction from their superiors on crime trends and patterns. Moreover, sergeants also relied on these Compstat data to make decisions about where and when to focus patrol resources. Similar data systems were not in place for incidents of minor crime and social disorders, no doubt hampering sergeants' ability to conceive of community policing in more strategic terms. Rather, sergeants tended to think of community policing as synonymous with the kind of "service-style" policing first identified by James Q. Wilson in the late sixties (Wilson 1968).

We did not have the opportunity to observe these departments before Compstat and community policing were implemented, but based on what we heard during our site visits and on our experiences in other departments, these changes were significant. Crime analysis had come to play an integral role in police operations, particularly when it came to allocating resources to hot spots. Research shows that focusing patrol on areas where crime is concentrated can have significant crime reduction benefits (Braga and Weisburd 2010). In addition, increasing the responsiveness of the police to the communities they serve has long been a core goal of community policing, and sergeants seemed to value the kind of customer service approach that this evokes (Mastrofski 1999).

Despite the incorporation of these reform features into sergeants' decision-making routines, co-implementation had fallen short of its strategic promise. The reason for this is a mainstay of the literature on police organizational change (Maguire 1997; Mastrofski 2006; Mastrofski and Willis 2010; Skogan 2006). Significant change requires that police organizations go beyond programs and activities, by putting new organizational structures in place (Skogan 2006: 29). The sites here, however, were either unwilling or unable to do so, preferring to implement

a specialist community policing model which insulated them from making more radical changes. What form *could* these changes have taken? In a recent article, we make recommendations for integrating Compstat and community policing and we draw on them here, as many of its suggestions pertain to first-line supervision (Willis, Mastrofski, and Kochel 2010b).

Creating performance measures at the organizational level to systematically identify and prioritize community concerns may have helped reinforce the fundamental importance of community policing's strategic mission to key decision-makers, including sergeants. This approach could have been further supported by an individual performance evaluation system that put less emphasis on traditional police responses and provided more incentives to innovate. Moreover, assigning patrol officers to permanent beat teams supervised by patrol sergeants and delegating responsibilities to these teams and not to community policing units might have helped increase accountability for community policing and problem solving across the organization. These teams could have been made responsible for meeting with community members regularly, working with them to reduce crime and neighborhood problems.

Perhaps most important for the successful realization of a more strategic vision would have been for departments to reorganize how daily work was assigned and managed by making changes to their 911 systems. Chicago, for example, assigns a team of officers to handle low priority calls, thereby freeing up other officers to be reassigned to tackle persistent crime or disorder problems (Skogan 2006: 56–59). Such changes are costly and raise many other challenges, only one of which we can address here based on feedback from our focus groups. Would patrol sergeants have been interested in moving away from the specialist approach that characterized co-implementation in their agencies? Given that recent surveys of law enforcement organizations in the United States suggest that such a specialization approach is very popular, this is an important question (Reaves 2010: 27).

The sergeants in our focus groups were divided over whether primary responsibility for the implementation of community policing should fall to uniformed patrol or specialist officers. Thus we heard the following contrasting comments:

> *The most effective way of community policing that we have ever done, is to generate specialist units to deal with the problem; when there are one or two folks available, they join in to be part of it. . .If you have one or two officers free, do you feel like going off and tackling a problem by yourself…no…but if you have a group of officers, you kind of join in.*

And:

> *Retain traditional policing—clear chain-of-command, clear designation of supervision—couple that with specialized units to focus on problems: undercover teams, specialist assignment teams (emphasis in original).*

Alternatively, a sergeant in another department, one that had disbanded a community policing approach based on geographic decentralization, said:

> *What is lost is COPS [community oriented policing]. If I am deploying people out differently each day, there is no tie-in and development of relationships within the community, and ownership and even accountability to some degree.*

If these comments are any indication of the sentiments shared by others in these departments, as well as further afield, many officers' hearts and minds would have to be won for the successful implementation of a less specialized community policing approach.

V. CONCLUSION

In closing, we can speculate on whether what we heard and observed in our focus groups is truly a part of a larger trend in U.S. policing—where Compstat and community policing, despite the warnings of their supporters, are defined by their activities rather than as a fundamental transformation in how police departments operate. Future research might examine this issue further, perhaps comparing first-line supervision in co-implementing departments with Compstat-only or community policing-only agencies. If what we found characterizes U.S. policing more generally, reformers might consider whether it is possible to put structures in place that could simultaneously strengthen the strategic focus of both reforms. We have identified some recommendations here, but until they are tested there is no way to know if they would work as intended. What is clearer is that in the absence of changes designed to work to their mutual benefit, it seems likely that the strategic potential of co-implementation will remain more contingent upon the will and skill of individual sergeants than reformers might realize.

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VII. APPENDIX

Focus Group Instrument

1. Introduction
2. Goal: Learn from you—learn about how you make decisions and how you and your officers spend your time.

   We're using a focus group because this allows us to hear a variety of perspectives on decision-making within the PD—it also allows us to hear many opinions in a short time.
3. Logistics: Informed consent—voluntary, no benefit, won't be identifying you in the final report, and will be taping.
4. Helpful ground rules:
   a. Please contribute, even if your perspective differs from others.
   b. There are no right answers here, so please feel free to speak your mind.
   c. It is helpful to me if you can provide specific examples of your experiences.
5. **My role** is to facilitate discussion—keep it on track and encourage everyone to speak—I've got one shot at this, so my primary interest is getting as much information from you as possible.
6. **To get things moving**—would you complete the name tents by writing your name on one side and then writing your contact information on the back (e-mail, shift, phone).

   Once you have done that, perhaps we could go round the table and you could:

   - Introduce yourself
   - Tell us your shift
   - # of officers that work under your direct supervision
   - How long you've been with the PD
   - Percent of time on average shift that you estimate your officers spend on CFS

   I know you have numerous administrative tasks such as reading and signing reports, attending meetings, and giving advice to patrol officers, but here I am interested in how you spend your time when dealing with crime and neighborhood/quality-of-life problems.
7. Perhaps you could think about the last time you got guidance or direction from a superior on how to deal with a crime or neighborhood problem. What was the nature of that guidance?
   a. What do you think caused your superior to give you guidance in this case?
   b. How detailed was the guidance? (Priority or degree of importance? Time? Place? Location?)

8. Over say, the past week, perhaps you could talk about a specific crime problem that you have been working on. How was this identified? What kinds of things have you been doing to deal with it?
    - What kinds of activities have you asked your officers to do?
        a. How often?
        b. What spurs?
        c. How detailed? (Priority/degree of importance? Time? Place? Location? How to?)
9. When not responding to calls, what kinds of things do you expect your officers to be doing in response to crime and neighborhood problems?
10. To what extent is crime analysis helpful in how you deal with crime problems?
11. In your mind, how well do CS and CP work together? What are some of the challenges that have arisen? What about the benefits?
12. Finally, what recommendations do you have for improving how these programs work together?
13. To finish let me summarize some of the main points—is that accurate? Is there anything you would like to add or change?

Table 1. Profile of Participating Police Departments

		Police Officers[1]		Part I Crime Statistics[1]		Community Indicators			
Police Department	Population[1]	Sworn	Civilian	Violent Crime	Property Crime	Median Household Income[2]	% Unemployed[3]	CP Start Date	CS Start Date
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. FBI (2006). *Crime in America*.

* 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.

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

**2000 data- Marietta's 2006 data are unavailable.

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

Over the past few decades, community policing and Compstat have emerged as two of the most highly visible attempts to transform police organizations in the United States. Heralded as strategic reforms that increase the ability and capacity of police organizations to handle unstable and uncertain environments and to deliver public services more effectively, it is surprising that they are rarely implemented in a fully coordinated fashion. This report is the third in a series studying this co-implementation issue, focusing on how these reforms have affected supervisory practices unevenly. We used data from on-site focus groups at six police agencies, differing in size and organization that had implemented both community policing and Compstat. The main findings of this study showed that while Compstat helped the supervisors recognize emerging crime problems, it had little effect on encouraging innovative responses to those problems. Community policing was seen as a good idea by the majority of supervisors, but only once their primary obligation of answering calls for service was fulfilled. We realize that the experiences of only six police agencies cannot necessarily represent all of the departments nationwide who have implemented these reforms, but the findings help point out that the role of the supervisor under community policing and Compstat is underdeveloped. Effective co-implementation would seem to require significant changes in organizational structures and the guidance that first-line supervisors receive. Such changes could benefit the innovative problem-solving that is the hallmark of these reforms.

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