

**PROBLEM-ORIENTED POLICING  
AND CRIME PREVENTION**

**2nd edition**

by

**Anthony A. Braga**

Criminal Justice Press  
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2008

In memory of Joshua D. Christian –  
a good friend, brother, son and uncle

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Cover photo courtesy of the Boston Police Department (BPD). This picture shows Deputy Superintendent Nora Baston interacting with community members as part of the BPD's Safe Street Team initiative. The initiative assigns officers to engage in problem-oriented policing in gun violence hot spots in Boston.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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# FOREWORD TO THE SECOND EDITION

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In his introduction, Anthony Braga describes this book as “a modest attempt to enrich the practice of problem-oriented policing” – but it is the author that is modest, not the book, which in fact is quite ambitious. The first edition published six years ago was the first systematic attempt to spell out the relevance of environmental criminology to the practice of problem-oriented policing. Unlike most other branches of criminology, environmental criminology focuses on studying crime not criminals, and its literature contains a wealth of findings about the highly specific forms of crime and disorder that comprise the core business of policing. It helps police understand the ways that offenders set about their business and the choices they must make in committing and getting away with their crimes. It explains why crime is heavily concentrated at particular “hot spots” and on certain kinds of “repeat victims,” and why it ebbs and flows with the hour of the day, day of the week, and season of the year. This information, together with the mapping and other analytic techniques that environmental criminologists have helped to develop is of great assistance to police who undertake problem-oriented policing.

Though an academic field, environmental criminology is ultimately concerned with identifying and removing the situational conditions that give rise to specific crime problems. One of its branches, situational crime prevention, is explicitly focused on this objective – the same one that is served by problem-oriented policing. However, because situational prevention was developed by the British Home Office Research and Planning Unit, a policy research department, its evidence-base is more extensive than that of problem-oriented policing. In particular, its literature contains many case studies in which situational temptations and opportunities have been deliberately reduced and the results have been evaluated, including examination of so-called displacement effects. Anthony Braga was one of the first to recognize that this body of research was of direct relevance to

## Foreword to the Second Edition

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problem-oriented policing and to understand that the different enterprises of the two groups – police and environmental criminologist – could be enriched by greater collaboration and understanding between them. It was no accident that he recognized this. He was exposed early in his career to environmental criminology and he made good use of this knowledge in his dissertation research, which was concerned with policing of violent hot spots in Jersey City. Subsequently, he became a core member of the team responsible for the Boston Gun Project, one of the best known and most successful police crime prevention efforts. He now straddles the worlds of academia and policing. He is a senior research associate in Harvard University's Program in Criminal Justice Management and in the University of California's Berkeley Center for Criminal Justice, and he serves as the Chief Policy Advisor to the Boston Police Commissioner.

The first edition of this book was published comparatively recently and one might question whether the small worlds of problem-oriented policing and environmental criminology have developed sufficiently in the interim to justify a new edition. This concern is quickly dispelled by a close look at the book. It is considerably longer than the first edition, though thankfully it is written in the same clear style. It covers some topics addressed only briefly or not at all in the first edition (including disrupting illegal firearms markets, analyzing criminal networks and identifying "near repeat" victimization), and it includes about 40 percent more references than the more than 300 references in the first edition.

Even if longer than the first edition, the book is still comparatively short, which is in keeping with its main purpose: to have provided anything more than an introduction to environmental criminology would have required a much longer work. For example, while it includes some case studies, the book does not attempt to summarize the wealth of studies on specific kinds of crimes and disorder, the details of which are only likely to be of interest to police officers when they are dealing with the crimes in question. To fill this need, the Center for Problem-Oriented Policing, with the support of funds from the Office of Community-Oriented Police Services (COPS), is now producing individual "Problem-Specific Guides" that summarize the research on specific problems and on efforts to control the problems. Some 50 of these guides are available on the Center's web site, [www.popcenter.org](http://www.popcenter.org), the three most recent of which deal with bank robbery, robbery of convenience stores, and traffic congestion around schools. Some specially written guides on common police responses to problems, such as crackdowns and street closures, and some problem solving "Tool Guides"



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on topics such as analyzing repeat victimization and interviewing offenders, can also be found on the web site. Other sections of the web site include a repository of several hundred submissions for the Goldstein and Tilley problem-oriented policing awards, an extensive library of publications relating to problem-oriented policing, and a “learning center” that includes a model college curriculum for a course on problem-oriented policing. The first edition of this book is the only recommended text for all modules of the curriculum, and surely the second edition will replace it.

As a founding member of the Center for Problem-oriented Policing, I find it particularly gratifying that much of the material for this new edition book is drawn from the Center’s web site, which was designed specially for the police. Indeed, this serves one other purpose of the book, which Braga identifies at the end of his Introduction: to “help theoretical criminologists think about what concepts are useful for police at the practical level.” This shows how the traffic in ideas and influence is not simply one way: just as environmental criminology can assist practical policing, so can the practice of policing help criminological theorizing to become more rooted in reality.

Ronald V. Clarke  
Rutgers University, Newark  
October 29, 2007



# FOREWORD TO THE FIRST EDITION

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From among the many developments in the past two decades relating to the improvement of policing and, more broadly, the prevention of crime and disorder, two clusters of activity hold special promise. One is the movement within policing to analyze the specific behavioral problems that the police are called on to handle in the community, and to use the results of these analyses as a basis for developing more effective responses to those problems. The other is the progress made by researchers, almost all of whom are located outside police agencies, in gaining new insights into the nature of crime and disorder and in producing findings about the effectiveness of different preventive strategies.

The two developments are obviously interrelated. They are, in many respects, interdependent. But in practice, they are not sufficiently connected. The major contribution of this book is in the effort the author makes to strengthen that connection; to build bridges between the initiatives of the police and the work of the researchers.

Much of the effort within policing has been accomplished under the umbrella of problem-oriented policing. That concept calls for the police to examine, anew and in-depth, groups of similar incidents to which they most likely have responded in a generic, routine manner in the past; to explore alternatives for responding to these grouped incidents or problems (with a priority on preventive action); and to test the relative value of these new responses. We now have a substantial collection of work, largely the product of individual police officers, that demonstrates the value of adopting this inquiring posture. But fuller development of the concept has been limited by a number of factors. Chief among these has been our failure to build an institutional capacity within policing to engage in in-depth research that could then be used to inform police practices. Part of that effort would require that the police become more knowledgeable about relevant research, much of which has not been easily accessible to them.

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In the research field, the relevant development has been in the emerging field of environmental criminology. Building on routine activity theory, rational choice theory, and situational crime prevention, researchers have produced a substantial body of findings – not previously available – that are relevant to the police. These studies provide new insights into common problems of crime and disorder and evaluate the effectiveness of various preventive strategies. But while the volume, quality, and relevance of this research has increased rapidly, the studies are rarely used by the police. Moreover, further advances in this type of research – in both volume and refinement – require a greater number of people with the requisite research skills. They also require closer collaboration between researchers and the police. Researchers need to take advantage of the untapped insights of operating police personnel and the vast amount of data that they acquire.

Thus, while the accomplishments to date with regard to both developments – the initiatives of the police and those of the researchers – are significant and substantial, they are just evolving. They are uneven in their quality. And they are relatively small compared to the ultimate need and, excitedly, the potential. Speeding them up will require a greater investment of resources and skills, and an intensified commitment of both police practitioners and researchers. But progress also requires connecting the two developments – especially by making already available research findings accessible and comprehensible to police personnel. It is to that need that the author of this volume has addressed himself.

Having completed a comprehensive review of the relevant literature, Anthony Braga synthesizes that literature in a way that communicates clearly to police practitioners and to other interested parties. He is well positioned to bridge the existing gap. Braga has an in-depth understanding of problem-oriented policing. He is thoroughly familiar with recent developments in criminology – enabling him to explain clearly how each research effort is grounded in current criminological theories. He knows the literature on crime prevention. And he has the direct experience of having had a key role in one of the most ambitious efforts to bring police practitioners and academic researchers together in an extended collaboration aimed at addressing a specific problem – youth gun violence in Boston.

Given the substantial accumulation of research, the author faced a major challenge in deciding on how best to organize his synthesis of it. He neatly solved this problem by grouping his descriptions of relevant research findings under the three dominant focuses that have emerged in that research: (1) preventing crime at *problem places*; (2) controlling high-activity

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*offenders*; and (3) protecting *repeat victims*. His three central chapters – the essence of the book – correspond to this grouping. Each of the three terms – and the research findings and methods they embrace – will have meaning to the police. Presenting the material in this way itself has the potential for positively advancing the way in which police think about their work.

The more police practitioners and researchers can join in thinking productively about the specific problems that constitute police business and the more they join in testing the value of different preventive strategies, the greater is the likelihood that they will acquire the evidence to support good practice. And ultimately, it is such evidence that will enable the police to resist being pressured to resort to traditional, but questionable methods of operating; to resist being buffeted about by trends and fads. They will have a more solid basis on which to appeal for a more enlightened form of policing – a form of policing that is effective, and also achievable within democratic constraints.

Herman Goldstein  
University of Wisconsin, Madison  
August 15, 2002



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Anthony A. Braga





# 1. INTRODUCTION

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Society has long looked to police departments to deal effectively with crime. Our ideas about how the police should go about dealing with crime have evolved over time. For a long time the public was content with police departments whose primary role was to apprehend offenders, so society could hold law breakers accountable for their crimes (Wilson and McLaren, 1977). Their primary technologies to fulfill this goal were preventive patrol, rapid response, and retrospective investigations (Sparrow et al., 1990). As the limits of these approaches are by now well known, the police became more interested in preventing crime through more aggressive preventive tactics and hoped this thicker response would deter crime.<sup>1</sup> These aggressive tactics included directed patrols and patrols targeting particular individuals (Pate et al., 1976), field interrogations and searches (Moore, 1980), decoy operations (Moore, 1983a), and sting operations (Klockars, 1980; Marx, 1988). Although these differed from past tactics – in other words, the new tactics were now focused on anticipating crimes rather than simply reacting to crime – they were primarily intended to produce deterrent effects through arrests.

Recently, police departments have been experimenting with a much broader idea of crime prevention. Proactive efforts to prevent crime were advanced by the publication of Herman Goldstein’s seminal article on problem-oriented policing (Goldstein, 1979). He argued that police departments were much too focused on how they were organized to do their work rather than on the crime problems they needed to solve. Goldstein further suggested that greater operational effectiveness could be accomplished through detailed analyses of crime problems and the development of appropriate solutions, rather than by effecting improvements in organization and management. The problem-solving process requires “identifying these problems in more precise terms, researching each problem, documenting the nature of the current police response, assessing the adequacy of existing authority and resources, engaging in a broad exploration of

alternatives to present responses, weighing the merits of these alternatives, and choosing from among them” (Goldstein, 1979: 236). Since Goldstein’s article, many police departments have experimented with this “problem-oriented” approach, and the available evaluation research suggests that problem-oriented policing is effective in dealing with a wide range of crime problems, including thefts and burglary (Eck and Spelman, 1987), street-level drug markets (Kennedy, 1993; Hope, 1994), and violent crime hot spots (Braga et al, 1999). Another example is in Boston, where an inter-agency working group crafted a problem-oriented strategy that has shown much promise in reducing a seemingly intractable problem – youth gun homicide (Kennedy et al., 1996a; Braga et al., 2001).

This book represents a modest attempt to enrich the practice of problem-oriented policing. As others observe (e.g., Read and Tilley, 2000; Eck, 2000; Clarke 1998), there are many avenues through which the practice of problem-oriented policing can be improved. These include creating better classification systems for problems, improving the capacity of police departments to analyze data on problems, and developing response guides that reveal the conditions that are necessary for interventions to be successful. This book attempts to contribute to improving practice by a) systematically assembling research and experience on successful problem-oriented policing and “situational crime prevention”<sup>2</sup> projects; b) linking the crime prevention mechanisms at work in these projects to theoretical concepts; and c) drawing out the lessons to be learned from these experiences so these insights can be more easily incorporated into the everyday practice of problem-oriented policing.

This book is also based on the idea that one often gets more inspiration and more useful ideas from looking at concrete examples of problem-oriented policing and situational crime prevention than from understanding the general principles of these processes. The development of effective crime prevention techniques depends on a great deal of creativity and imagination from police practitioners. The need for creativity may be partly due to the fact that the field has not developed an adequate knowledge of prevention methods. But it also could be true that the work of problem-oriented policing will never be entirely routinized. It is quite possible that even after we have had long experience with the techniques of problem-oriented policing, developed a high degree of self-consciousness about the methods, and even learned about how particular kinds of problems are best solved generally, effective crime prevention may still require a great deal of imagination and creativity to deal with the peculiarities of a new

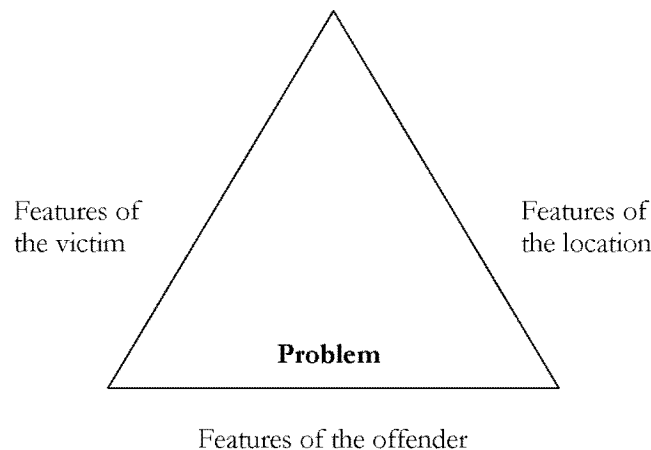
situation (Kennedy and Moore, 1995). As such, this book should be regarded not as a cookbook on effective crime prevention, but, hopefully, as a text that will help inspire creativity in dealing with real world crime problems.

***Organization of This Book***

The chapters in this book are organized around the well known problem analysis triangle (Figure 1-1), which breaks crime down into the features of places, features of offenders, and features of victims (see, e.g., Hough and Tilley, 1998; Leigh et al., 1996). This analytic device was intended to help analysts visualize crime problems and understand relationships among the three elements. Moreover, research suggests that crime tends to cluster among a few places, offenders, and victims. Spelman and Eck (1989) examined several studies and estimated that 10 percent of the victims in the United States are involved in 40 percent of victimizations, 10 percent of offenders are involved in over 50 percent of crimes, and 10 percent of places are the sites of about 60 percent of crimes. As such, these broad categories of crime problems are useful ways to think about focusing limited police resources. In practice, the underlying conditions that give rise to

**Figure 1-1. Problem Analysis Triangle.**

*Source:* Hough and Tilley (1998: 23). Reprinted with permission.



crime problems – and the resulting interventions to alleviate crime problems – are likely to overlap these areas and, quite possibly, not fit neatly into the three areas. For example, analysis of a gang violence problem may well reveal that much gang violence is retaliatory in nature (Decker, 1996) and that today's offenders are tomorrow's victims and vice versa. Analysis may also reveal that gang violence tends to cluster at particular places in the city (Block and Block, 1993; Kennedy et al., 1996a). As such, the resulting problem-oriented interventions to reduce gang violence may well address relevant features of places, offenders, and victims. Nonetheless, the crime triangle provides an easy-to-understand framework around which to organize examples of effective problem-oriented policing and situational crime prevention efforts.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5 begin with a few examples of effective crime prevention projects, which are followed by a discussion of criminological research and theory that provides some insight on why these measures were effective. Additional interventions and research are also discussed as each chapter unfolds. The final chapter in this book presents a few administrative arrangements in police departments that could facilitate effective problem-oriented policing. Since many of the projects included in this book were not designed explicitly to link particular theories to observed crime prevention gains, the discussions of crime prevention mechanisms at play are based to some extent on speculation. As such, this is not an exercise in theory testing, but an exercise in applying theoretical knowledge to the task of illuminating crime prevention processes that could enrich practice.

Readers who are familiar with the wide range of criminological theories will undoubtedly notice that certain theories and perspectives are privileged over others. Most criminological research focuses on why some people become persistent offenders (Felson and Clarke, 1998). However, as Eck (2000) observed, by the time a problem comes to the attention of the police, the questions of why people offend are no longer relevant. The most pressing concerns are why offenders are committing crimes at particular places, selecting particular targets, and committing crimes at specific times (Eck, 2000). While police officers are important entry points to social services for many people, they are best positioned to prevent crimes by focusing on the situational opportunities for offending rather than attempting to manipulate socio-economic conditions that are the subjects of much criminological inquiry and the primary focus of other governmental agencies. Theories that deal with the “root causes” of crime focus on inter-

ventions that are beyond the scope of most problem-oriented policing projects. Theories that deal with opportunities for crime and how likely offenders, potential victims, and others make decisions based on perceived opportunities have greater utility in designing effective problem-oriented policing interventions (Eck, 2000; Felson and Clarke, 1998).

### **The Police and Crime Prevention: A Brief Historical Overview**

The police developed as a mechanism to do justice by apprehending offenders and holding them accountable (Wilson and McLaren, 1977). Since their primary practical goal was to reduce crime victimization, police long believed that they were in the business of crime prevention (President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice, 1967). Police strategists relied upon two ideas to prevent crimes: deterrence and incapacitation. The imminent threat of arrest was their main strategy to generate *general deterrence*, which is the use of threatened punishment to dissuade the general public from contemplating crimes. The police attempted to generate *specific deterrence* by apprehending criminals with the intent of discouraging those particular individuals from committing crimes in the future. The police also believed that arrests would prevent crime by the *incapacitation* of criminals: their removal from the everyday world and subsequent confinement in jail or prison. In particular, the police sought to prevent repeat offenders from continuing their careers through specific deterrence, incapacitation, and, to some degree, *rehabilitation* (a change from illegal to legal behavior patterns as a result of their subsequent incarceration or community supervision). The police were reliant on the other parts of the criminal justice system to pursue these goals, but they could at least start the process by arresting offenders and building credible cases against them. As many observers have pointed out, these police crime prevention efforts were, in reality, reactive (see, e.g., Goldstein, 1979); they only began after a crime was committed.

In addition to preventing crime through deterrence and incapacitation, in U.S. policing circles prior to 1965, the term *prevention* also referred to the work of a unit handling juvenile cases (often referred to as the "crime prevention unit") or a unit of officers assigned to conducting educational "outreach" programs in the schools. These programs were neither department-wide nor large in size, but were significant in that they were often seen as segregating and compartmentalizing the "prevention" work of the police.

## Problem-Oriented Policing and Crime Prevention

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Since the early 1990s, the police have become much more interested in a broader idea of prevention and the use of a wide range of crime prevention tactics (Roth et al., 2000). The search for greater citizen satisfaction, increased legitimacy, and more effective crime prevention alternatives to the traditional tactics used by most police departments led to the development of problem-oriented policing and “hot spots” policing (see Chapter 3). The operational paradigms of many modern American police departments have steadily evolved from a “professional” model of policing to a community-oriented, problem-solving model (Roth et al., 2000; Greene, 2000). Growing community dissatisfaction and a series of research studies that questioned the effectiveness of the professional model’s basic tenets served as catalysts for the shift. Professional policing was, in turn, initiated as a reform of the deplorable policing practices prevalent before the 1930s during the so-called “political era.” Corruption, widespread abuse of authority, scandals, and a lack of professional standards were pervasive problems in this earlier period; these considerable shortcomings resulted in a public outcry for better policing.

Criminologists such as August Vollmer – the reform-minded chief in Berkeley, CA from 1905 to 1932 – and O.W. Wilson – the Chicago police chief in the post-World War II period – were pivotal figures in the development of “professional,” also known as “reform,” policing. These police leaders were the architects of the dominant paradigm, between the 1940s and 1960s, which remained influential through the 1980s. The professional model emphasized military discipline and structure, higher education for police officers, adoption of professional standards by police agencies, separating the police from political influence, and the adoption of technological innovations ranging from strategic management techniques to scientific advances such as two-way radios and fingerprinting.

The corrupt policing practices of the “political era” were slowly eliminated during the 1940s and 1950s as departments changed operational strategies to the reform model. The more rigorous standards and professionalism of the reform model successfully controlled much misbehavior and maintained policing as a viable profession. During the post World War II period, the police officer’s role as “crime fighter” was solidified (Walker, 1992). Policing focused itself on preventing serious crimes and advanced three operational strategies to achieve this goal: preventive patrol, rapid response, and investigation of more serious cases by specialized detective units.

## Introduction

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During the 1970s, researchers sought to determine how effective these policing strategies actually were in controlling crime. Preventive patrol in radio cars was thought by most police executives to serve as a deterrent to criminal behavior. Contrary to this consensus, an early British experiment concluded that, although crime increases when patrol is completely removed from police beats, the *level* of patrolling in beats makes little difference in crime rates (Bright, 1969). The well known Kansas City Patrol Experiment further examined the effectiveness of varying levels of random preventive patrol in reducing crime. This landmark study revealed that crime rates and citizen satisfaction remained the same no matter what the level of radio car patrol – whether it was absent, doubled, or tripled (Kelling et al., 1974). Replications followed and obtained similar results. In Nashville, Tennessee, a level of 30 times the normal amount of patrol for selected districts was found to be successful in reducing crime at night, but not during the day (Schnelle et al., 1977). However, permanent long-term increased preventive patrol in an entire district is neither cost-effective, economically feasible, nor practical for a department’s operations. Other studies revealed that preventive patrol’s inefficiency might be due to the fact that many serious crimes occur in locations (homes, alleys, businesses) not easily visible from a passing radio car (see Eck and Spelman, 1987; Skogan and Antunes, 1979).

In addition, police departments have placed a great emphasis on reducing response time in the belief that it would increase the probability of arrest. However, several studies found that rapid response had little effect on clearance rates (e.g., Spelman and Brown, 1984; Kansas City Police Department, 1978). Only about 3 percent of crimes are reported while in progress; thus rapid response to most calls does not increase the probability of arrest (Spelman and Brown, 1984). The problem is that police departments have no control over two key elements between the time a crime is committed and the time a police officer arrives on the scene: the interval between the commission of a crime and the time it is discovered; and the interval between discovery and the time the citizen calls the police (Walker, 1992). Most crimes are discovered after the fact, and even in most “involvement” crimes – i.e., where the victim is present (e.g., assault) – there is some delay between victimization and the subsequent call to the police.

The third component of the professional “crime fighter” model – successful investigations – rests on the reputation of detectives as possessing special skills and crime-solving abilities. However, this image is largely per-

petuated and romanticized by the media. Several researchers have described the reality that criminal investigations largely consist of routine, unspecialized work that is often unfruitful (Walker, 1992). Studies by the Rand Corporation (Greenwood et al., 1977) and the Police Executive Research Forum (Eck, 1983) documented that investigations involve mostly paperwork, phone calls, and the interviewing of victims and witnesses. Only 21 percent of all “index (more serious) crimes” are cleared, and patrol officers at the scene of the crime usually make these arrests. In fact, most crimes are solved through the random circumstances of the crime scene, such as the availability of witnesses or the presence of evidence such as fingerprints, rather than by any special follow-up investigations by detectives.

This series of studies, conducted in the 1970s and 1980s, challenged the three basic tenets of the professional model and raised many questions about proper crime control methods. An even more powerful harbinger of change was the growing community dissatisfaction with the activities of the police departments that served them. During the 1940s and 1950s, many reform-era police departments attempted to improve response times and clearance rates by moving police officers from walking beats into radio cars. This practice had the unfortunate effect of distancing the police from their constituencies. During the 1960s and early 70s, police officers were called upon to quell many conflicts that revolved around larger social issues, such as the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War. College students, minorities, and disenfranchised communities clashed with police departments, which symbolized and enforced the norms of a society that did not represent them. The police were viewed as part of the problem and not a solution (Weisburd and Uchida, 1993; U.S. National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968; U.S. President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Criminal Justice, 1967a, 1967b). The tactics used in law enforcement responses were viewed as draconian, and there was a public outcry over police forces that resembled and acted like “occupying armies” rather than civil servants (Kelling and Moore, 1988). Equally important, the crime rate soared and public satisfaction with the police decreased between the late 1960s and early 1970s; thus, the legitimacy of the police was deeply questioned (Kelling and Moore, 1988).

Other research in the 1970s and 1980s pointed the police in promising directions. Frustrated by the shortcomings of the professional model, police administrators tested different strategies designed both to control crime and to bring the police and the public closer together. The Newark Foot



## Introduction

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Patrol Experiment revealed that although foot patrol did not affect the rate of serious crime, citizens perceived their environments as safer and their opinions about the police improved (Police Foundation, 1981). In Houston, a multifaceted fear reduction project was implemented. The components of this project included community stations, citizen contact foot patrol, community organizing teams, and a victim re-contact program. The evaluation of the program found generally positive results. Although serious crime did not decrease, communication between police and citizens increased and fear of crime was reduced (Pate et al., 1986).

Another important finding of these projects was that a large gap existed between the serious crime problems that professional departments attacked and the day-to-day concerns of citizens. Frequently, the police officers who staffed these programs were called upon to deal with less serious complaints, such as abandoned cars, raucous neighborhood youth, and barking dogs (Trojanowicz, 1983). Disorder in the community was more of an ongoing concern for the average citizen than the risk of being the victim of a serious crime. Police agencies soon learned that social incivilities (such as unsavory loiterers, loud music, public drinking, and public urination), and physical incivilities (such as trash, vacant lots, graffiti, and abandoned buildings), had a definite impact on the quality of life in communities (Skogan, 1990).

A police focus on controlling disorder has been hypothesized to be an important way to reduce more serious crimes in neighborhoods. Wilson and Kelling's (1982) "broken windows" thesis suggests the link between disorder and serious crime (see Chapter 3). Signs of deterioration in a community indicate that no one in authority cares and that rules no longer apply; disorder signals potential or active criminals that offenses will be tolerated, and thus serious crime rates increase (Wilson and Kelling, 1982). Research has established that incivilities generate fear (LaGrange et al., 1992; Ferraro, 1995) and are correlated with serious crime (Skogan, 1990; but see Sampson and Raudenbush, 1999). Collectively, this body of research suggests that if the police want to be more efficient at controlling crime, police departments should redefine their role to become more involved in communities and improve the neighborhood environment.

### **Problem-Oriented Policing**

The reactive methods of the professional model are often described as "incident-driven policing." Under this model, departments are aimed at resolving individual incidents instead of solving recurring crime problems

(Eck and Spelman, 1987). Officers respond to repeated calls and never look for the underlying conditions that may be causing like groups of incidents. Officers become frustrated because they answer similar calls and seemingly make no real progress. Citizens become dissatisfied because the problems that generate their repeated calls still exist (Eck and Spelman, 1987). In 1979, Herman Goldstein, a respected University of Wisconsin law professor and former aide to Chicago police chief O.W. Wilson, proposed an alternative; he felt that police should go further than answering call after call, that they should search for solutions to recurring problems that generate the repeated calls. Goldstein described this strategy as the “problem-oriented approach” and envisioned it as a department-wide activity.

His proposition was simple and straightforward. Behind every recurring problem there are underlying conditions that create it. Incident-driven policing never addresses these conditions; therefore incidents are likely to recur. Answering calls-for-service is an important task and still must be done, but police officers should respond systematically to recurring calls arising from the same problem (see Figures 1-2 and 1-3). In order for the police to be more efficient and effective, they must gather information about incidents and design an appropriate response based on the nature of the underlying conditions that cause the problem(s). Goldstein (1990) said, as summarized by Eck and Spelman, (1987: xvi):

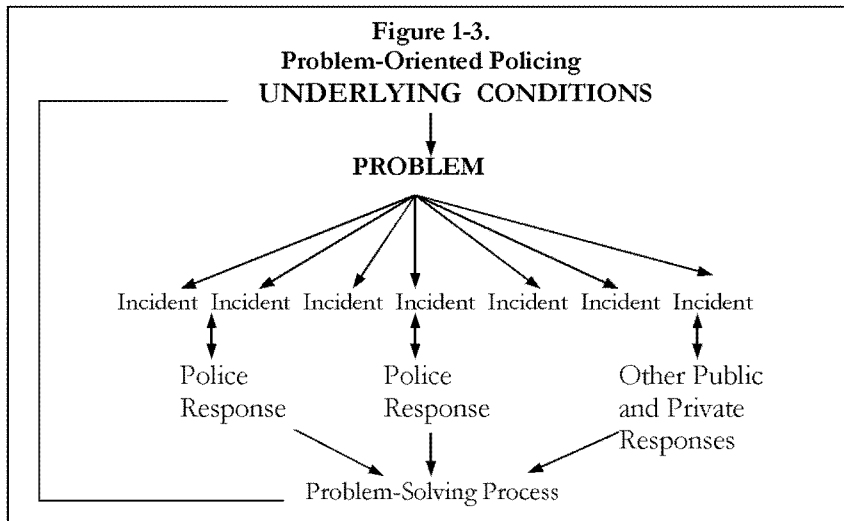
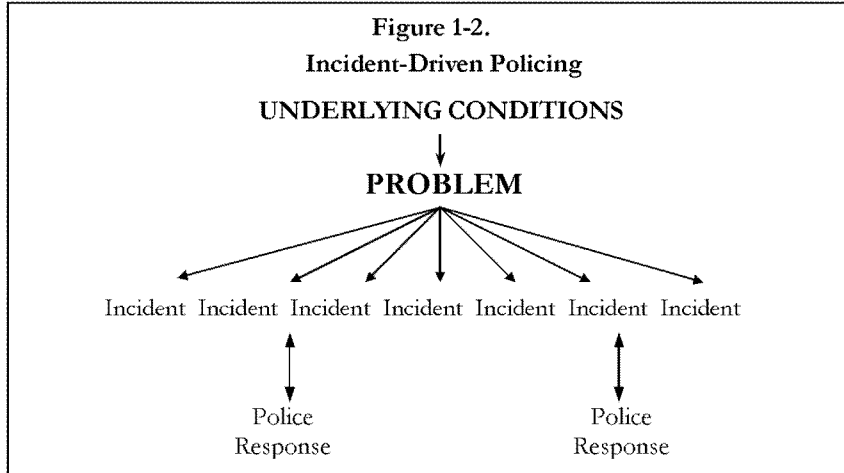
Underlying conditions create problems. These conditions might include the characteristics of the people involved (offenders, potential victims, and others), the social setting in which these people interact, the physical environment, and the way the public deals with these conditions. A problem created by these conditions may generate one or more incidents. These incidents, while stemming from a common source, may appear to be different. For example, social and physical conditions in a deteriorated apartment complex may generate burglaries, acts of vandalism, intimidation of pedestrians by rowdy teenagers, and other incidents. These incidents, some of which come to police attention, are symptoms of the problem. The incidents will continue as long as the problem that creates them persists.

And in Goldstein’s words (1979: 236), the problem-solving process requires:

Identifying these problems in more precise terms, researching each problem, documenting the nature of the current police response, assessing its adequacy and the adequacy of existing authority and resources, engaging in a broad exploration of alternatives to present responses, weighing the merits of these alternatives, and choosing among them.

**Figures 1-2 and 1-3. Incident-Driven Policing versus Problem-Oriented Policing.**

*Source:* Eck and Spelman (1987: 4).



***Problem-Oriented Policing and Situational Crime Prevention***

The developing field of situational crime prevention has also supported the problem-oriented policing movement since its genesis in the British Government's Home Office Research Unit in the early 1980s (Clarke, 1992). Instead of preventing crime by altering broad social conditions such as poverty and inequality, situational crime prevention advocates changes in local environments to *decrease opportunities* for crimes to be committed. Situational crime prevention techniques comprise "opportunity-reducing measures that (1) are directed at highly specific forms of crime, and that (2) involve the management, design, or manipulation of the immediate environment in as systematic and permanent way as possible so as to (3) increase the effort and risks of crime and reduce the rewards as perceived by a wide range of offenders" (Clarke, 1992: 4). The situational analysis of crime problems follows an action-research model that systematically identifies and examines problems, develops solutions, and evaluates results (Clarke, 1992; Lewin, 1947). The applications of situational crime prevention have shown convincing crime prevention results to a variety of problems ranging from obscene phone callers (Clarke, 1990), to burglary (Pease, 1991), to car radio theft (Braga and Clarke, 1994), among many others. This simple but powerful perspective is applicable to crime problems facing the police, security personnel, business owners, local government officials, and private citizens. Indeed, Goldstein's (1990) formulation of problem-oriented policing shares many similarities to the action-research underpinnings of situational prevention (Clarke, 1992).

***Problem-Oriented Policing and Community Policing***

During the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, problem-oriented policing and *community policing* were both heralded as revolutionary alternatives to the professional model of policing. The two terms have become political buzzwords, and scores of books and articles have been written on these new strategic concepts.<sup>3</sup> The terms are sometimes referred to as essentially the same strategy (Walker, 1992; Kennedy and Moore, 1995), however others maintain a distinct separation between the two concepts (Goldstein, 1990; Eck and Spelman, 1987). Problem-oriented policing (POP) is typically defined as focusing police attention on the underlying causes of problems behind a string of crime incidents, while community policing emphasizes the development of strong police-community partnerships in a joint effort to reduce crime and enhance security (Moore, 1992). Indeed, community-

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oriented police officers use problem solving as a tool, and problem-oriented departments often form partnerships with the community.

The term “problem solving” is often conceptualized as what an officer does to handle small, recurring beat-level problems, and it is distinguished from problem-oriented policing based on its rudimentary analysis of the problem and lack of formal assessment (see, e.g., Cordner, 1998). In short, some observers suggest that the term “problem solving” does not adequately capture the substance of problem-oriented policing as envisioned by Goldstein (1990). Scott (2000) reports that Goldstein himself has been especially careful to avoid the term “problem solving” because many, if not most, problems the police confront are too complex for anything approaching a final solution; reducing harm, alleviating suffering, and/or providing some measure of relief are ambitious enough aims for the police.

*Summary.* The primary purpose of this book is to understand why problem-oriented policing interventions are effective, and, in doing so, to strengthen and enrich what is happening in practice. While examining promising problem-solving interventions, this book assembles selected theories and research findings in a manner intended to be useful to practitioners. By understanding the theoretical mechanisms at work, practitioners may be able to develop more robust problem-solving interventions when dealing with real-life situations in the field. Also, by linking policy to academic theory, this research review will help theoretical criminologists think about what concepts are useful for police at the practical level.

## NOTES

1. See Kelling et al., 1974; Spelman and Brown, 1984; Greenwood et al., 1977).
2. Situational crime prevention is defined on page 12 in this chapter, and further detailed in Chapter 2 (see Table 2-3).
3. For example, Rosenbaum, 1994; Greene and Mastrofski, 1988; Hartmann, 1988; Goldstein, 1990; Toch and Grant, 1991; Trojanowicz and Bucqueroux, 1990, 1994.

## 2. THE PRACTICE OF PROBLEM-ORIENTED POLICING

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The problem-oriented policing approach was given an operational structure in Newport News, Virginia. Researchers from the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF) and a group of officers selected from the various ranks of the Newport News Police Department crystallized the philosophy into a set of steps known as the SARA model (Eck and Spelman, 1987). The SARA model consists of these stages:

- *Scanning* – the identification of an issue and determining whether it is a problem;
- *Analysis* – data collection on the problem to determine its scope, nature, and causes;
- *Response* – the use of the information from the analysis to design an appropriate response, which can involve other agencies outside the normal police arena; and,
- *Assessment* – evaluation of the impact of the response on the problem it was supposed to solve, the results of which can be used to reexamine the problem and change responses or to maintain positive conditions (Eck and Spelman, 1987).

In practice, it is important to recognize that the development and implementation of problem-oriented responses do not always follow the linear, distinct steps of the SARA model (Capowich and Roehl, 1994; Braga and Weisburd, 2006). Rather, depending on the complexity of the problems to be addressed, the process can be characterized as a series of disjointed and often simultaneous activities. A wide variety of issues can cause deviations from the SARA model, including identified problems needing to be

reanalyzed because initial responses were ineffective, and implemented responses that sometimes reveal new problems (Braga and Weisburd, 2006). It is also important to remember that the SARA model is only one way of operationalizing problem-oriented policing; as Read and Tilley (2000) remind us, it is not the only way and perhaps may not be the best way for police to address problems. Problem-oriented policing is an analytic approach, not a specific set of technologies (Kennedy and Moore, 1995). Interventions implemented as part of the problem-oriented process can be multiple and may evolve over time if field conditions change or offenders adapt to the original response.

### **Scanning**

Scanning involves the identification of problems that are worth looking at because they are both important and amenable to solution. Herman Goldstein suggested that the definition of problems be at the street-level of analysis and not be restricted by preconceived typologies. As he suggested (1990: 68):

It is not yet clear what significance, if any, there may be to the way in which problems are naturally defined. Nor is it clear if, for the purposes of analysis, one way of defining problems is preferable to another. It may be that none of this matters: that the primary concern ought to be to define the problem in terms that have meaning to both the community and the police.

Goldstein specified what is meant by a problem as: “a cluster of similar, related, or recurring incidents rather than a single incident; a substantive community concern; or a unit of police business” (1990: 66). Eck (2003: 82) delineated three elements of crime problems:

First, problems are groups of incidents, not singular events. Second, the elements in this group are connected in some meaningful way, not random or arbitrary. These two elements suggest that the events that make up a problem stem from the same underlying cause. The third element requires that the incidents be disturbing or harmful to members of the public, not just to the police.

Eck and Clarke (2003) identified 6 behaviors and 11 environments to classify common police problems (Table 2-1). The “behaviors” dimension focuses on the way people act, the interactions among participants in a

Table 2-1. A Classification Scheme for Common Problems Facing Local Police<sup>a</sup>

ENVIRONMENTS	BEHAVIORS					Misuse of Police
	Predatory	Consensual	Conflicts	Incivilities	Endangerment	
Residential						
Recreational			A			
Offices						
Retail			C			B
Industrial						
Agricultural						
Educational						
Human service						
Public ways	G	F		E		D
Transport						
Open/Transitional				H		H

Source: Clarke and Eck (2005: Step 15).

<sup>a</sup>The table above shows the full classification. A problem is classified by putting it in the cell where the appropriate column intersects with the appropriate row. So, for example, the 2001 Tilley Award winner dealt with glass bottle injuries around pubs, a conflict-recreational problem (A). Officers in San Diego had to deal with repeat fraudulent calls of gang member threats at a convenience store (B). Notice how this differs from the 2003 Plano, TX Goldstein award runner-up addressing stores selling alcohol to minors (C). The 2002 Goldstein Award winner dealt with motor vehicle accidents involving migrant farm workers, an endangerment-public ways problem (D). The 1999 Goldstein Award winner dealt with litter and vagrancy, a public way/incivility problem (E). Consider the difference between a problem of street corner drug sales (F) and a robbery-retaliatory shooting problem stemming from drug rip-offs (G). These two problems overlap, but they are not the same.



problem, and their motivations. The “environments” dimension focuses on who owns the location and has control over people using the environment. Eck (2003) suggested that this classification scheme clarifies common problems by removing vague concerns that can’t be located in one of the 66 cells on the grid, such as “neighborhoods” (which often contain problems but are not problems in themselves) and status characteristics such as truancy, where there is no geographic focus or harmful behavior that ought to be the focus of police attention. Removing vague concerns and requiring specificity in problem identification enhances the subsequent steps of problem analysis and response development (Eck, 2003).

While this book mostly focuses on “crime” problems, it is important to note that a great deal of policing relates to non-crime problems, including regulatory problems (e.g., traffic), and very minor criminal matters. Problem-oriented policing, as a concept, is equally applicable to all of the community problems that the community looks to the police to handle. The research on “harder” crime problems described in this book has relevance, in the methodology, to the “softer” problems as well.

There are many ways a problem might be nominated for police attention. A police officer may rely upon his or her informal knowledge of a community to identify a problem that he or she thinks is important to the well-being of the community. Another possibility is to identify problems from the examination of citizen calls-for-service coming into a police department. This approach is implicitly recommended by those who advocate “repeat call analysis” or the identification of “hot spots” (Sherman, 1987; Sherman et al., 1989). The notion is that citizens will let the police know what problems are concerning them by making calls as individuals. By analyzing these calls, and grouping them in ways that point to common causes or common solutions, the police may be able to develop a response that ameliorates the problem that is generating the calls. With the recent proliferation of computerized mapping technology in police departments, there has been a strong movement in police departments to use these techniques in the identification of crime problems (Weisburd and McEwen, 1997).

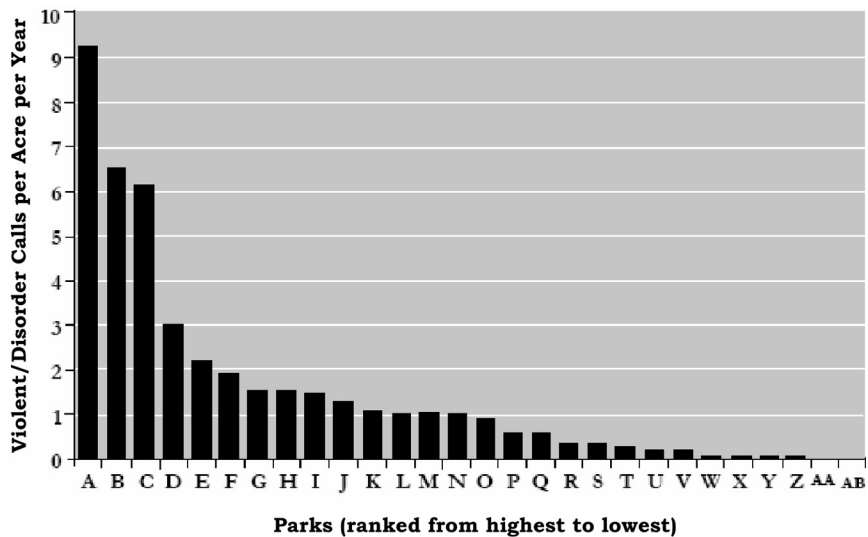
Problems can also be identified by examining the distribution of crime incidents at specific public or private places such as stores, bars, restaurants, shopping malls, ATM locations, apartment buildings, and other facilities. For example, crime analysts in Chula Vista, California, ranked all parks

over two acres from the most crime to the least (Clarke and Eck, 2007). A simple bar graph revealed that three parks had far more crime than the rest, and most parks had very little crime (Figure 2-1). The obvious implication is that the police need to understand why crime is clustering at these three parks so they can develop appropriate crime prevention strategies.

Another approach to identifying problems is through consultation with community groups of different kinds, including other government agencies. This differs from analyzing individual calls-for-service because the demands come from groups, rather than individuals. If the police are interested in forging partnerships with groups as well as individuals, then it is important to open up channels through which groups can express their concerns, such as community advisory councils or regular meetings held by the police to which all members of a community are invited (Skogan and Hartnett, 1997). This approach has the advantage of allowing the community's views about what is important to shape police views about

**Figure 2-1. Crime in Chula Vista Parks (over 2 acres).**

*Source:* Clarke and Eck (2007: 9).



what is important, rather than leaving the nomination of problems to police analysts. Obviously, the best approach to identifying problems would be to combine these efforts.

### **Analysis**

This phase challenges police officers to analyze the causes of problems that lay behind a string of crime incidents or substantive community concern. Once the underlying conditions that give rise to crime problems are known, police officers develop and implement appropriate responses. The challenge to police officers is to go beyond the analysis that naturally occurs to them, which involves finding the places and times where particular offenses are likely to occur, and then identifying the offenders who are likely to be responsible for the crimes. Although these approaches have had some operational success, this type of analysis usually produces directed patrol operations or a focus on repeat offenders. The idea of analysis for problem solving was intended to go beyond this. Goldstein (1990: 98-99) described this as the problem of “ensuring adequate depth” in the analysis, and offers the following as an example of what he means:

A study of the problem of theft from merchants by shoppers illustrates the need. It is easy, accepting how we have commonly responded to shoplifting to become enmeshed in exploring new ways in which to increase the number of arrests – including more efficient processing by the police. If one digs deeper, however, it becomes apparent that shoplifting is heavily influenced by how the merchandise is displayed and the means used to safeguard it. The police often accept these merchandising decisions as givens and are resigned to processing as many shoplifters as a store chooses to apprehend and deliver into their hands. More in-depth probing raises questions about the effectiveness of arrests as the primary means to reduce shoplifting and the propriety of delegating to private interests the judgment of who is to be arrested. The police may then focus on ways to curtail theft and on use to be made of arrest, including criteria to be employed in deciding who to arrest. If the analysis of the shoplifting problem had been superficial, limited to exploring ways to increase the number of arrests, the whole purpose of the enterprise would have been lost.

Situational crime prevention has further developed the methodology of analyzing problems, and provided important examples of how crime problems may be closely analyzed. Situational crime prevention measures are tailored to highly specific categories of crime. As Clarke (1997) described, distinctions must be made not between broad crime categories

such as burglary and robbery, but between the different kinds of offenses that comprise each of these categories. For example, in their analysis of domestic burglary in a British city, Poyner and Webb (1991) revealed that cash and jewelry burglaries tended to occur in older homes near the city center, while burglaries of electronic goods, such as TVs and VCRs, generally occurred in newer homes in the suburbs. Analysis further revealed that offenders on foot committed cash and jewelry burglaries. In the burglaries of electronic goods, offenders used cars that had to be parked near the house, but not so close that they would attract attention. The resulting crime prevention strategies differed accordingly. To prevent cash and jewelry burglaries in the city center, Poyner and Webb (1991) recommended improving security and surveillance at the burglar's point of entry; in contrast, to prevent electronic good burglaries in the suburbs, they suggested improving the natural surveillance of parking places and roadways in the area.

In her review of bank robbery problems, Deborah Lamm Weisel (2007) suggested that distinguishing between amateur robbers and professional robbers is critical in selecting crime prevention strategies that are most likely to be effective. Amateur bank robbers are usually solitary offenders who tend to rob banks around midday when branches are full of customers; professionals often work in teams and prefer to operate when there are fewer customers, such as opening time, which increases their control of the crime scene. Lamm Weisel (2007: 14) reported that, “. . . although discouraging an amateur robber is much easier and the approach different than thwarting a team of professionals, the measures that might deter an amateur may well increase the likelihood of violence by professional robbers.” In-depth analysis is obviously important in understanding the nature of bank robbery problems and developing an appropriate response that would prevent crime rather than increase the potential for violence. Table 2-2 gives an example of the key elements that an adequate problem analysis would need to consider in distinguishing between professional and amateur bank robbers.

Environmental criminology explores the distribution and interaction of targets, offenders and opportunities across time and space (see Chapter 3). Beyond providing important theoretical and conceptual insights on the dynamics of crime problems, environmental criminology has developed a number of data collection methodologies that can greatly enrich the understanding of crime problems and, in turn, result in more effective responses (Clarke, 1998). Most police agencies usually don't analyze data beyond the information contained in their official systems – typically arrests,

crime incidents, and citizen calls-for-service. These alternative data collection methods include (as discussed in Clarke, 1998: 324):

- Victimization surveys, which provide more detail about the impact of the problem on people's everyday lives;
- Crime audits, where interviewers walk around a neighborhood with people who live there or around a park with regular users, and record where they report being afraid; and,
- Structured interviews with offenders to find out more about their motives and their methods of committing crimes.

Police agencies must make investments in developing problem analysis skills, such as training in research methodology, data collection and analysis, and relevant criminological theories, for one or more individuals on their staff (Goldstein, 2003). Improving crime analysis techniques is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6. The Center for Problem-Oriented Policing ([www.popcenter.org](http://www.popcenter.org)) recommends that problem analysis phase should include the following key elements:

- Identifying and understanding the events and conditions that precede and accompany the problem.
- Identifying relevant data to be collected.
- Researching what is known about the problem type.
- Taking inventory of how the problem is currently addressed and the strengths and limitations of the current response.
- Narrowing the scope of the problem as specifically as possible.
- Identifying a variety of resources that may be of assistance in developing a deeper understanding of the problem.
- Developing a working hypothesis about why the problem is occurring.

### **Response**

After a problem has been clearly defined and analyzed, police officers confront the challenge of developing a plausibly effective response. The development of appropriate responses is closely linked with the analysis that is performed. The analysis reveals the potential targets for an intervention, and in turn, ideas about the type of intervention may suggest important

The Practice of Problem-Oriented Policing

**Table 2-2. Distinguishing Professional and Amateur Bank Robbers**

	Professional	Amateur
Offenders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multiple offenders with division of labor</li> <li>• Shows evidence of planning</li> <li>• May be older</li> <li>• Prior bank robbery convictions</li> <li>• Travels further to rob banks</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Solitary offender</li> <li>• Drug or alcohol use likely</li> <li>• No prior bank crime</li> <li>• Lives near bank target</li> </ul>
Violence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aggressive takeover, with loud verbal demands</li> <li>• Visible weapons, especially guns</li> <li>• Intimidation, physical or verbal threats</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Note passed to teller or simple verbal demand</li> <li>• Waits in line</li> <li>• No weapon</li> </ul>
Defeat Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uses a disguise</li> <li>• Disables or obscures surveillance cameras</li> <li>• Demands that dye packs be left out, alarms not be activated, or police not be called</li> </ul>	
Robbery Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hits multiple teller windows</li> <li>• Larger amounts stolen</li> <li>• Lower percentage of money recovered</li> <li>• More successful robberies</li> <li>• Fewer cases directly cleared</li> <li>• Longer time from offense to case clearance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single teller window victimized</li> <li>• Lower amounts stolen</li> <li>• Higher percentage of money recovered</li> <li>• More failed robberies</li> <li>• Shorter time from offense to case clearance, including more same-day arrests</li> <li>• Direct case clearance more likely</li> </ul>
Robbery Timing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targets banks when few customers are present, such as at opening time</li> <li>• Targets banks early in the week</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targets banks when numerous customers are present, such as around midday</li> <li>• Targets banks near closing or on Friday</li> </ul>
Target Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Previous robbery</li> <li>• Busy road near intersection</li> <li>• Multidirectional traffic</li> <li>• Corner locations, multiple vehicle exits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Previous robbery</li> <li>• Heavy pedestrian traffic or adjacent to dense multifamily residences</li> <li>• Parcels without barriers</li> <li>• Parcels with egress obscured</li> </ul>
Getaway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Via car</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On foot or bicycle</li> </ul>

Source: Lamm Weisel (2007: 15).

lines of analysis. For example, the reason police often look at places and times where crimes are committed is that they are already imagining that an effective way to prevent the crimes would be to get officers on the scene through directed patrols. The reason they often look for the likely offender is that they think that the most effective and just response to a crime problem would be to arrest and incapacitate the offender. However, the concept of “problem-oriented policing” as envisioned by Herman Goldstein (1990) calls on the police to make a much more “uninhibited” search for possible responses and not to limit themselves to getting officers in the right places at the right times, or identifying and arresting the offender (although both may be valuable responses). Effective responses often depend on getting other people to take actions that reduce the opportunities for criminal offending, or to mobilize informal social control to drive offenders away from certain locations.

The responses that problem-oriented police officers develop may be close to current police practices or, in some instances, quite different. It is very likely that another police agency may have tried to solve the kind of problem that an officer is addressing and, as such, it is particularly important to search the available literature (in a library or via the Internet) for what other communities with similar problems have done (Clarke and Schultze, 2005). Goldstein (1990: 102-147) offered the following suggestive list of general alternatives police may consider in developing responses to neighborhood crime problems:

- Concentrating attention on those individuals who account for a disproportionate share of the problem;
- Connecting with other government and private services through referral to another agency, coordinating police responses with other agencies, correcting inadequacies in municipal services, and pressing for new services;
- Using mediation and negotiation skills to resolve disputes;
- Conveying information to the public to reduce anxiety and fear, to enable citizens to solve their own problems, elicit conformity with laws and regulations that are not known or understood, warn potential victims about their vulnerability and advise them of ways to protect themselves, demonstrate to individuals how they unwittingly contribute to problems, to develop support for addressing a problem, and acquaint the community with the limitations on the police and to define realistically what may be expected of the police;

## The Practice of Problem-Oriented Policing

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- Mobilizing the community and making use of existing forms of social control in addition to the community;
- Altering the physical environment to reduce opportunities for problems to recur;
- Increased regulation, through statutes or ordinances, of conditions that contribute to problems;
- Developing new forms of limited authority to intervene and detain; and,
- Using civil law to control public nuisances, offensive behavior, and conditions contributing to crime.

Derek B. Cornish and Ronald V. Clarke (2003), working from the idea of situational crime prevention, develop a related but somewhat different list of techniques and specific programs including (Table 2-3):

- Increasing the *effort* that offenders must make by hardening targets, controlling access to facilities, screening exits, deflecting offenders, and controlling tools/weapons of criminal offending;
- Increasing the *risks* that offenders would face by increasing formal surveillance, reducing anonymity, utilizing place managers, extending guardianship, and facilitating natural surveillance;
- Reducing the *rewards* of criminal offending by removing targets, concealing targets, identifying property, disrupting markets, and denying benefits;
- Reducing the *provocations* of criminal offending by reducing frustrations and stress, avoiding disputes, reducing emotional arousal, neutralizing peer pressure, and discouraging imitation; and,
- Removing the *excuses* used by offenders to commit crime by setting rules, stimulating conscience, controlling disinhibitors, and facilitating compliance.

Obviously, these lists are partially overlapping and the prevention measures are presented in somewhat abstract language. Moreover, despite the obvious effort to be systematic and comprehensive, there is a somewhat ad hoc quality to the way the lists are developed and presented. It is important to recognize that these lists present methods and ideas that are still developing as the relatively young fields of problem-oriented policing and situational crime prevention move forward. The purpose of these lists is to



Table 2-3. Twenty-Five Techniques of Situational Prevention

Increase the Effort	Increase the Risks	Reduce the Rewards	Reduce Provocations	Remove Excuses
<p>1. <i>Target harden:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Steering column locks and immobilisers</li> <li>• Anti-robbery screens</li> <li>• Tamper-proof packaging</li> </ul>	<p>6. <i>Extend guardianship:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take routine precautions: go out in group at night, leave signs of occupancy, carry phone</li> <li>• “Cocoon” neighborhood watch</li> </ul>	<p>11. <i>Conceal targets:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Off-street parking</li> <li>• Gender-neutral phone directories</li> <li>• Unmarked bullion trucks</li> </ul>	<p>16. <i>Reduce frustrations and stress:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Efficient queues and polite service</li> <li>• Expanded seating</li> <li>• Soothing music/muted lights</li> </ul>	<p>21. <i>Set rules:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rental agreements</li> <li>• Harassment codes</li> <li>• Hotel registration</li> </ul>
<p>2. <i>Control access to facilities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Entry phones</li> <li>• Electronic card access</li> <li>• Baggage screening</li> </ul>	<p>7. <i>Assist natural surveillance:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved street lighting</li> <li>• Defensible space design</li> <li>• Support whistleblowers</li> </ul>	<p>12. <i>Remove targets:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removable car radio</li> <li>• Women’s refuges</li> <li>• Pre-paid cards for pay phones</li> </ul>	<p>17. <i>Avoid disputes:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Separate enclosures for rival soccer fans</li> <li>• Reduce crowding in pubs</li> <li>• Fixed cab fares</li> </ul>	<p>22. <i>Post instructions:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “No Parking”</li> <li>• “Private Property”</li> <li>• “Extinguish camp fires”</li> </ul>

- 3. *Screen exits:*
  - Ticket needed for exit
  - Export documents
  - Electronic merchandise tags
- 8. *Reduce anonymity:*
  - Taxi driver IDs
  - “How’s my driving?” decals
  - School uniforms
- 13. *Identify property:*
  - Property marking
  - Vehicle licensing and parts marking
  - Cattle branding
- 18. *Reduce emotional arousal:*
  - Controls on violent pornography
  - Enforce good behavior on soccer field
  - Prohibit racial slurs
- 23. *Alert conscience:*
  - Roadside speed display boards
  - Signatures for customs declarations
  - “Shoplifting is stealing”
- 4. *Deflect offenders:*
  - Street closures
  - Separate bathrooms for women
  - Disperse pubs
- 9. *Utilize place managers:*
  - CCTV for double-deck buses
  - Two clerks for convenience stores
  - Reward vigilance
- 14. *Disrupt markets:*
  - Monitor pawn shops
  - Controls on classified ads
  - License street vendors
- 19. *Neutralize peer pressure:*
  - “Idiots drink and drive”
  - “It’s OK to say No”
  - Disperse troublemakers at school
- 24. *Assist compliance:*
  - Easy library checkout
  - Public lavatories
  - Litter bins
- 5. *Control tools/weapons:*
  - “Smart” guns
  - Disabling stolen cell phones
  - Restrict spray paint sales to juveniles
- 10. *Strengthen formal surveillance:*
  - Red light cameras
  - Burglar alarms
  - Security guards
- 15. *Deny benefits:*
  - Ink merchandise tags
  - Graffiti cleaning
  - Speed humps
- 20. *Discourage imitation:*
  - Rapid repair of vandalism
  - V-chips in TVs
  - Censor details of modus operandi
- 25. *Control drugs and alcohol:*
  - Breathalyzers in pubs
  - Server intervention
  - Alcohol-free events

Source: Cormish and Clarke (2003: 90).

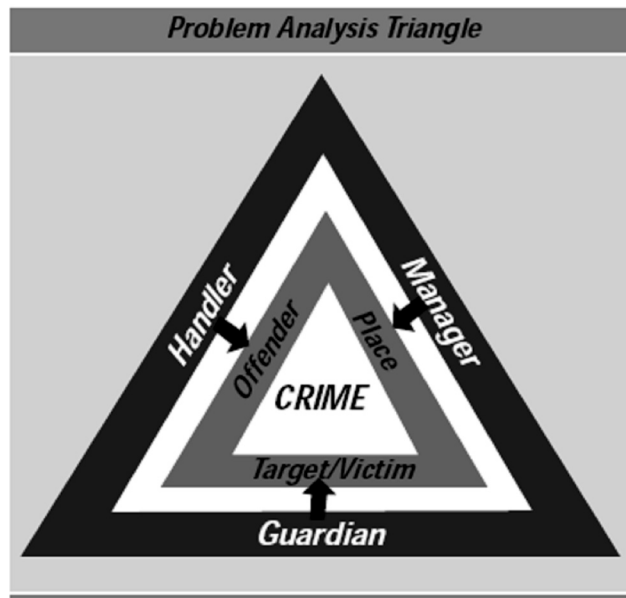
provide practitioners with useful abstract ideas and supporting concrete examples of alternative responses to crime problems that will help further their creativity in developing appropriate interventions.

The crime triangle described earlier in Chapter 1 was developed from routine activity theory (see Chapter 3), and it has been reformulated to help problem solvers think about the response as well as the analysis (Figure 2-2). The latest formulation of the crime triangle adds an outer level of “controller” for each of the original three elements; problems are created when offenders and targets come together and controllers fail to act (Eck, 2003):

- For the target/victim, the *guardian* is usually someone who protects their own belongings or those of family members, friends, neighbors, and co-workers.

**Figure 2-2. Revised Crime Triangle.**

*Source:* Clarke and Eck (2005: section 9).



- For the offender, this is the *handler*, someone who knows the offender well and who is in a position to exert some control over his or her actions. Handlers include parents, siblings, teachers, friends, and spouses.
- For the place, the controller is the *place manager*, a person who has some responsibility for controlling behavior in the specific location such as a bus conductor or teacher in school (adapted from Clarke and Eck, 2003: 9).

When searching for appropriate responses, the revised crime triangle can help problem-oriented police think about what might be done to prevent offenders from reoffending by making better use of handlers, what victims can do to reduce the probability of being targets, and what changes could be made to the places where crimes occur (Clarke and Eck, 2003).

Finally, once an appropriate response has been identified, it has to be implemented. While this may seem obvious, implementing alternative crime prevention strategies can be very difficult in practice. Therefore, it is critically important to outline a response plan and identify responsible parties, state the specific objectives for the response, and carry out the planned activities (for more information on implementing responses, see [www.popcenter.org](http://www.popcenter.org)).

### **Assessment**

The crucial last step in the practice of problem-oriented policing is to assess the impact the intervention has had on the problem it was supposed to solve. Assessment is important for at least two different reasons. The first is to ensure that police remain *accountable* for their performance and for their use of resources. Citizens and their representatives want to know how the money and freedom they surrendered to the police are being used, and whether important results in the form of less crime, enhanced security, or increased citizen satisfaction with the police have been achieved. A second reason that assessment is important is to allow the police to *learn* about what methods are effective in dealing with particular problems. Unless the police check to see whether their efforts produced a result, it will be hard for them to improve their practices.

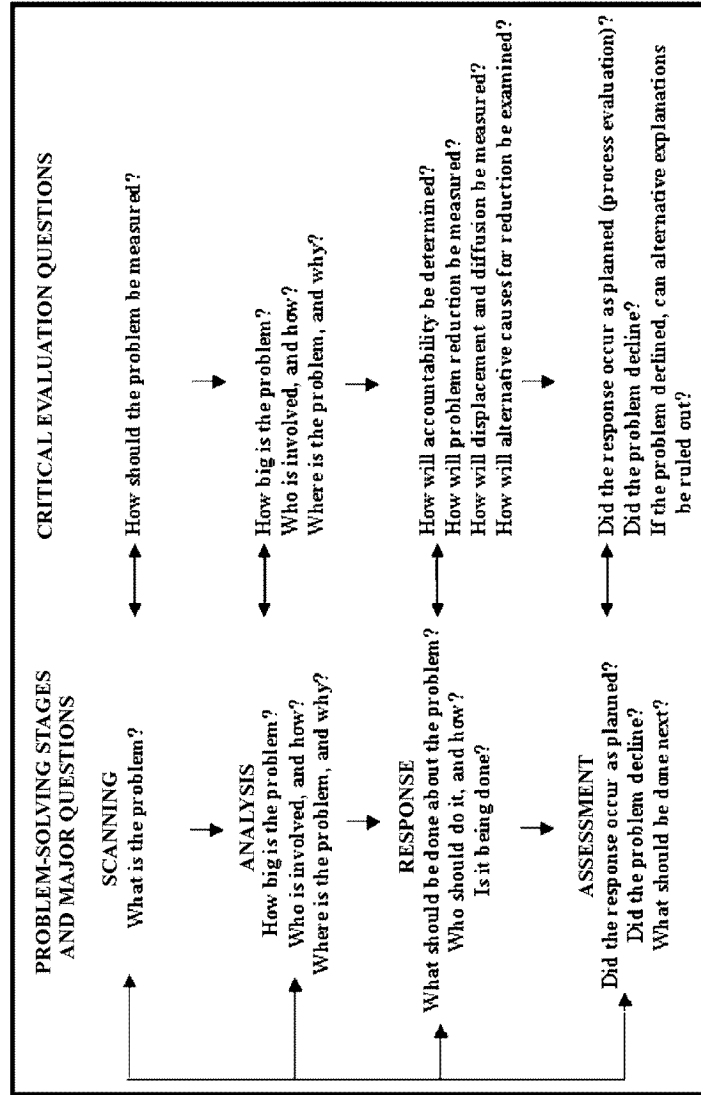
John Eck (2002) observed that it is important to distinguish between assessment and evaluation. Evaluation is a scientific process for determining

whether the implemented responses caused any observable decline in the targeted problem. It begins as soon as the problem-solving process starts and continues throughout the stages of the SARA model. An *impact evaluation* focuses on questions of crime prevention effectiveness (e.g., did the problem decline? if so, did the implemented response cause the decline?), while a *process evaluation* focuses on questions of accountability and integrity in response implementation (e.g., did the response occur as planned? did all the response components work?). Since impact and process evaluations are complementary, Eck (2002) strongly recommends that problem solvers conduct both. Figure 2-3 presents a list of critical evaluation questions that should be asked at each stage of the problem-solving process (Eck, 2002). Assessment is the culmination of the evaluation process and represents the final stage where it is determined whether the targeted problem changed as a result of the implemented responses and decisions are made about continuing the response, trying alternative responses, and applying an “effective” response to other places, people, and situations.

The assessment of responses is a key element in facilitating an active exchange of “what works” in crime prevention among police departments. As Clarke (1998: 319) suggested: “. . . if law enforcement agencies do not have a mechanism to learn from others’ mistakes and assist others to learn from their experiences, they will always be reinventing the wheel.” The degree of rigor applied to the assessment of problem-oriented initiatives will necessarily vary across the size and overall importance of the problems addressed. Serious, large and recurrent problems, such as controlling gang violence or handling domestic disputes, deserve highly rigorous examinations. Other problems that are less serious, or common, such as a lonely elderly person making repeat calls to the police for companionship, are obviously not worth such close examinations. To meet the demands of measuring accountability and performance, problem-oriented police should, at a minimum, describe the scanning, response, and assessment phases by measuring inputs (i.e., monetary and organizational investments made in the project), activities and outputs (i.e., police efforts to produce results), and, to the extent possible, the outcomes of their initiatives (such as reduced crime and enhanced security). In general, problem-oriented police should strive to conduct more rigorous assessments of their responses with due consideration to time and resource constraints. Depending on the availability of funds, police departments should consider partnering with independent researchers to conduct systematic evaluations of their efforts. In the absence of such partnerships, Clarke (1998) suggested that

Figure 2-3. The Problem Solving Process and Evaluation.

Source: Eck (2002: 6).



police should carefully attempt to relate any observed results to specific actions taken, develop evaluation plans while the project is still being developed, present data on control groups when available, and, as will be discussed below, measure crime displacement. While the degree of rigor applied to the assessment of responses may vary, what must *not* be sacrificed is the goal of measuring results. This will keep the police focused on results rather than means, and that is one of the most important contributions of the idea of problem-oriented policing.

The value of focused crime prevention measures, such as specific applications of problem-oriented policing and situational crime prevention, has been called into question by the threat of crime displacement. This is the notion that efforts to prevent specific crimes will simply cause criminal activity to move elsewhere, to be committed in another way, or even to be manifested as another type of crime; thus negating any crime control gains (Repetto, 1976). This perspective on crime prevention developed from dispositional theories of criminal motivations, and the views of these skeptics were supported by early studies of crime prevention measures that found evidence of displacement (see, e.g., Chaiken et al., 1974; Mayhew et al., 1980). Later studies, however, have indicated that the purported inevitability of displacement was very much overestimated. Several reviews of situational crime prevention measures have concluded that crime displacement was absent or never complete (Hesseling, 1994; Eck, 1993a). In fact, some researchers have suggested that focused crime prevention efforts may result in the complete opposite of displacement – that anticipated crime control benefits are often greater than expected and “spill over” into places and situations beyond the targeted opportunity. Generally referred to as “diffusion of benefits,” these unexpected gains have been reported by a number of studies on problem-oriented policing and situational crime prevention measures (see, e.g., Clarke and Weisburd, 1994; Weisburd and Green, 1995a). Although measurement of displacement and diffusion effects can be complex (Barr and Pease, 1990), both rigorous evaluations and simple assessments of problem-oriented policing intervention should attempt to assess the possibility of displacement and diffusion. This is an important step in learning the true impact of crime prevention efforts and determining whether the targeted problem should be reanalyzed and alternative responses implemented. Displacement and diffusion effects are discussed more fully in Chapter 7.

### **Current Issues in the Substance and Implementation of Problem-Oriented Policing**

Researchers have found problem-oriented policing to be effective in controlling a wide range of specific crime and disorder problems, such as convenience store robberies (Hunter and Jeffrey, 1992), prostitution (Matthews, 1990), and alcohol-related violence in pubs and clubs (Homel et al., 1997), among many others. Sherman's (1997) review of problem-oriented policing evaluation findings and methods suggested that this strategy is "promising" in preventing crime. The National Research Council's Committee to Review Research on Police Policy and Practices also concluded that problem-oriented policing has promise in preventing crime because it uses a diverse range of approaches tailored to very specific crime problems (Skogan and Frydl, 2004; Weisburd and Eck, 2004). Figure 2-4 presents a summary of the committee's findings that effective police crime prevention strategies generally have a high level of focus and involve a wide array of tactics. Much of this research is reviewed in Chapters 3, 4 and 5.

Several recently published volumes of case studies provide a good sense of the work being done as well as the strengths and weaknesses of some of the better problem-oriented policing efforts (see, e.g., O'Connor Shelly and Grant, 1998; Sole Brito and Allan, 1999; Sole Brito and Gratto, 2000; Sampson and Scott, 2000). The concept seems to have survived what Gary Cordner (1998: 305) has identified as "first generation" issues, including:

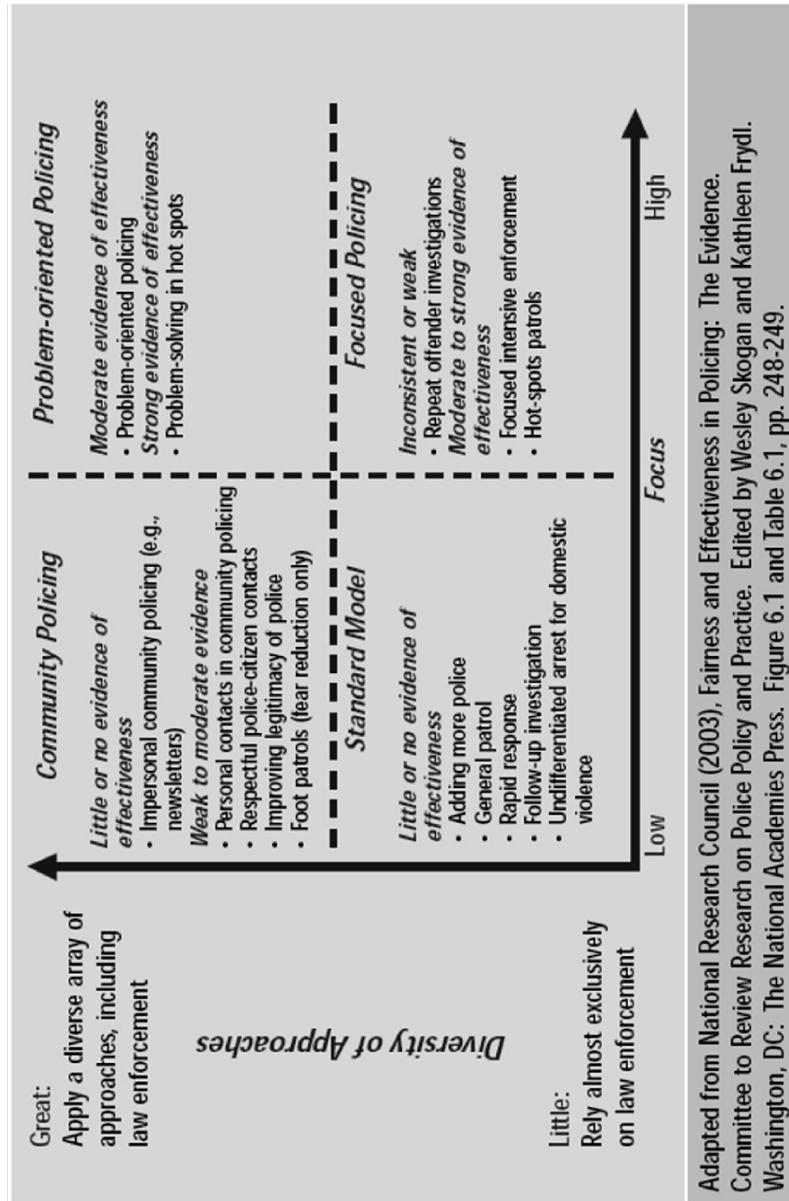
- the view that problem-oriented policing was not "real" police work;
- the view that problem-oriented policing was a fine idea but not practical because of limited resources (e.g., time and personnel);
- the question of whether ordinary police officers had the analytic ability to conduct sophisticated problem-solving projects;
- the question of whether other government agencies had the capacity to meet police halfway in solving chronic community problems; and,
- the danger of raising the community's expectations above what can actually be achieved.

While these issues have not been completely resolved, the implementation of the concept has gone forward as more police managers grew more and more intrigued by the approach (Cordner, 1998).



Figure 2-4. Effectiveness of Police Strategies.

Source: Clarke and Eck (2005: Step 3).



Although the problem-oriented approach has demonstrated much potential value in preventing crime and improving police practices, research has also documented that it is very difficult for police officers to implement problem-oriented policing strategies (Eck and Spelman, 1987; Clarke, 1998; Braga and Weisburd, 2006). Cordner and Biebel (2005) found that, despite 15 years of national promotion and a concerted effort at implementation within the San Diego Police Department, problem-oriented policing, as practiced by ordinary police officers fell far short of the ideal model. Cordner and Biebel suggested that it may be unreasonable to expect every police officer to continuously engage in full-fledged problem-oriented policing.

Cordner (1998) identified a number of challenging “second generation” issues in the substance and implementation of many problem-oriented policing projects. These issues include: the tendency for officers to conduct only a superficial analysis of problems and then rush to implement a response; the tendency for officers to rely on traditional or faddish responses rather than conducting a wider search for creative responses; and the tendency to completely ignore the assessment of implemented responses (Cordner, 1998). Indeed, the research literature is filled with a long history of cases where problem-oriented policing programs tended to lean toward traditional methods and where the problem-solving process was shallow.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in his review of several hundred submissions for the Police Executive Research Forum’s Herman Goldstein Award for Excellence in Problem-Oriented Policing, Clarke (1998) lamented that many recent examples of problem-oriented policing projects bear little resemblance to Goldstein’s original definition. Clarke suggested that this misrepresentation puts the concept at risk of being pronounced a failure before it has been properly tested.

Deficiencies in current problem-oriented policing practices exist in all phases of the process. During the scanning phase, police officers risk undertaking a project that is too small (e.g., the lonely old man who repeatedly calls for companionship) or too broad (e.g., gang delinquency), either of which destroys the discrete problem focus of the project and leads to a lack of direction at the beginning of analysis (Clarke, 1998). In San Diego, most problem-oriented policing projects arose out of specific observations or complaints rather than from analysis of data or any other elaborate scanning methodology (Cordner and Biebel, 2005). Some officers skip the analysis phase or conduct an overly simple analysis that does not adequately dissect the problem or does not use relevant information from

other agencies, such as hospitals, schools, and private businesses (Clarke, 1998). Based on his extensive experience with police departments implementing problem-oriented policing, Eck (2000) suggested that much problem analysis consists of a simple examination of police data coupled with the officer's working experience with the problem. Similarly, in their analysis of problem-oriented initiatives in 43 police departments in England and Wales, Read and Tilley (2000) found that problem analysis was generally weak, with many initiatives accepting the definition of a problem at face value, using only short-term data to unravel the nature of the problem, and failing to adequately examine the genesis of the crime problems. Cordner and Biebel (2005) also found that problem analyses conducted by San Diego police officers tended to be informal and limited. Officers rarely engaged in a discrete analysis phase during their projects; they gathered some information as they proceeded, integrating their analysis with the development of responses.

In the response phase, many problem-oriented policing projects rely too much on traditional police tactics (such as arrests, surveillance, and crackdowns) and neglect the wider range of available alternative responses. Read and Tilley (2000) found that officers selected certain responses prior to, or in spite of, analysis; failed to think through the need for a sustained crime reduction; failed to think through the mechanisms by which the response could have a measurable impact; failed to fully involve partners; and narrowly focused their responses, usually on offenders, among a number of other weakness in the response development process. Cordner and Biebel (2005) found that the most common method used by San Diego police officers to develop responses was "personal experience" (62%), followed by "brainstorming" (26%) and "informal discussions with other officers" (slightly more than 10%). Responses generally centered on enforcement – usually targeted enforcement by uniform patrol, directed or saturation patrol – and targeted investigations, plus one or two more collaborative or nontraditional strategies.

Finally, in the assessment or evaluation phase, Scott and Clarke (2000) observed that assessment of responses is rare and, when undertaken, it is usually cursory and limited to anecdotal or impressionistic data. In San Diego, Cordner and Biebel (2005) reported that the most common assessment measure, by far, was "personal observation" (51% of projects), followed distantly by analysis of radio calls (14%) and speaking to residents and businesses (13%).

Reflecting on these practical issues, Eck (2000) commented that the problem-oriented policing that is practiced today is but a shadow of the original concept. However, in their critical review, Braga and Weisburd (2006: 134) found value even in the imperfect implementation of problem-oriented policing:

Our main conclusion is that there is a disconnect between the rhetoric and reality of problem-oriented policing, and that this is not likely to change irrespective of the efforts of scholars and policy makers. Indeed, we take a very different approach to this problem than others that have examined the deficiencies of problem-oriented approaches. We argue that there is much evidence that what might be called “shallow” problem solving and responses can be effective in combating crime problems. This being the case, we question whether the pursuit of problem-oriented policing as it has been modeled by Goldstein and others, should be abandoned in favor of the achievement of a more realistic type of problem solving. While less satisfying for scholars, it is what the police have tended to do, and it has been found to lead to real crime prevention benefits.

Scott (2006a) observed that policing, at its core, is an action-oriented occupation that tends toward impatience with deliberate analysis in favor of immediate and dramatic action. The determining factor in whether problem-oriented policing projects, however true to the ideal process, are successfully or unsuccessfully implemented is police desire. As Scott (2006a: 31) suggested:

And, as with most human endeavors, desire is driven by individual or organizational self-interest, however determined. Problem-oriented policing is a promising means of enlightening that self-interest through rigorous analysis and careful weighing of alternatives, but the underlying desire to get problems solved through a new course of action would appear to be extrinsic to the concept itself. Accordingly, researchers and practitioners alike who are interested in advancing problem-oriented policing would do well to better understand why the best laid plans go oft awry.

Few police agencies have well established systems for ensuring that problem-oriented policing action plans are actually executed. Consequently, to the extent that action plans are implemented, it is usually due to the diligence, persistence, and perseverance of one or a few individuals (Scott, 2006a). This book is dedicated to these individuals and, hopefully, will inspire others to follow their lead.

**NOTES**

1. See Goldstein and Susmilch, 1982; Buerger, 1994a; Capowich et al., 1995; Eck and Spelman, 1984; Read and Tilley, 2000.

Problem-oriented policing shifts police efforts away from reactive policing to more proactive and preventive efforts. "By focusing more on problems rather than incidents, police address causes rather than mere symptoms and consequently have a greater impact" (Cordner and Biebel 2005, 156) on public safety. A challenge of crime prevention is to recognize which techniques are effective and which show little, if any, effectiveness despite their popularity. Though widely popular, Scared Straight and boot camps have not shown the type of effectiveness suggested by their popularity. Scared Straight was designed to take young offenders to a maximum security men's institution in hopes of frightening the juveniles into ceasing their criminal activities (Finkenbauer 1978). Problem-oriented policing is a departmentwide strategy aimed at solving persistent community problems. MacDonald notes that it differs from COP "through its focus on specific crime problems and achieving crime reduction results rather than on the means of policing" (2002, 598). Police identify, analyze, and respond to the underlying circumstances that create incidents. The theory behind it is that underlying conditions create problems (Goldstein 1979). Problem-oriented Policing is a theory of policing, but does not contain a theory of problems. Situational crime prevention is a theory of problems, but does not contain a theory of an implementing institution. The paper shows why without Situational Crime Prevention, problem-oriented policing would have difficulty working. An analogy is drawn to lichens and it is asserted that any useful theory of policing must be like a lichen. Discover the world's research.