

# Improving Relationships between the Police and the Public

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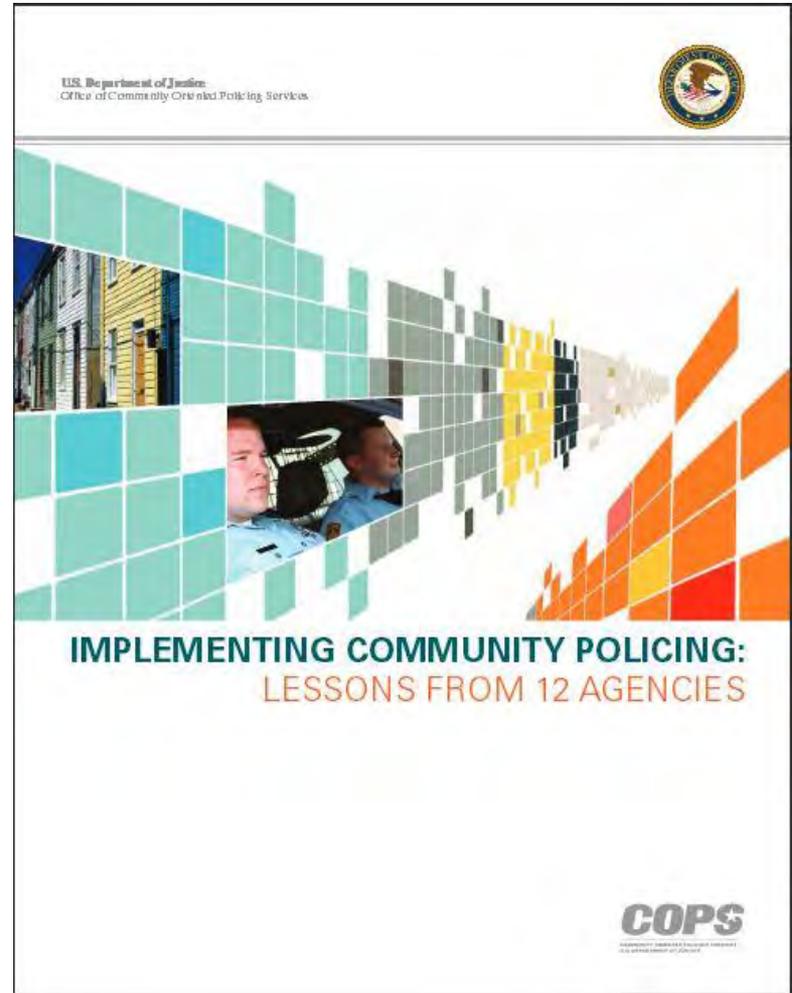
# Roadmap

1. Introduction
2. Community policing
3. Procedural justice and legitimacy
4. Responding to civil disturbances
5. Conclusion

# 1. Introduction

## 2. Community Policing

*Implementing  
Community  
Policing:  
Lessons from  
12 Agencies*



Available here: <https://cops.usdoj.gov/RIC/Publications/cops-w0746-pub.pdf>



Birmingham, Alabama, 1963



Birmingham, Alabama, 1963



Chicago, Illinois, 1968



Washington, DC, 1968

# A legitimacy crisis for police

The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (1968) found that “deep hostility between police and ghetto communities” was a primary determinant of the urban riots that it studied.

# What is community policing?

“Community policing is a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies which support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime.”

Source: U.S. Department of Justice

<http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/default.asp?item=36>)

# Elements & expected outcomes

## Elements

- Organizational Adaptation
- Community Partnerships
- Problem-Solving

## Outcomes

- Lower crime
- Lower disorder
- Lower fear
- Higher trust

# Organizational adaptation

- Structure
- Management
- Budgeting
- Supervision

- Training
- Personnel Assignments
- Performance Evaluation
- Hiring and promotion

# Community partnerships

- Providing information to the community
- Gathering (and listening to) feedback from the community
- Incorporating community feedback into operations
- Engaging the community

# Problem-solving

- “Problems” should be the basic unit of work, not incidents, cases, or calls (Goldstein, 1990).
- The principal aim of the police should be to address problems, especially chronic ones.
- Police should developing creative solutions to these problems that rely on a wider range of tools than just arrest and prosecution.

# A complex reform movement

- Community policing has been implemented in different ways by different police agencies
- With a wide mix of different elements and intended outcomes, it is difficult to evaluate
- Other reform movements overlap with it
- Difficult to evaluate its overall impact; easier to evaluate its components.

*“Community policing without a clear focus on crime risk factors generally shows no effect on crime.”*

-Sherman (1997), p. 8-1

*“Community policing has become one of the most widely implemented approaches in American policing... we could find no consistent research agenda that would allow us to assess with strong confidence the effectiveness of community policing”*

-Weisburd and Eck (2004), p. 59

*“Because community policing involves so many different tactics, its effect as a general strategy cannot be directly evaluated...”*

-Skogan and Frydl (2004), p. 232

# Impact of organizational adaptation

- Organizational adaptation efforts are internal to the organization.
- Necessary for the implementation of community policing because they establish the supportive framework within which it can thrive.

# Impact of organizational adaptation

- These activities are not expected to have direct effects on crime, disorder, or fear.
- Their effects are indirect, operating through community partnerships and problem-solving.
- Thus, we should not look here for evidence of effects on crime, disorder, and fear.

# Impact of community partnerships

- Can improve relationships with the community
- Most efforts do not produce direct crime reduction benefits
- Can produce indirect crime reduction benefits through procedural justice and legitimacy

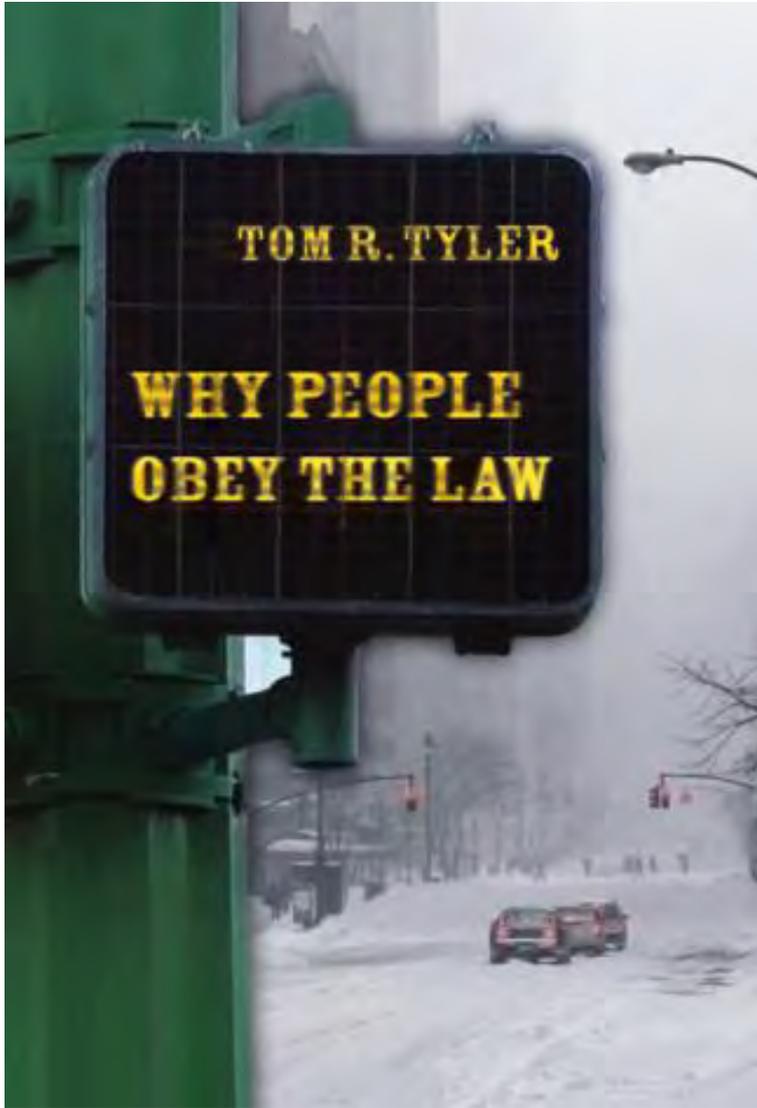
# The impact of problem-solving

- A systematic review of rigorous studies found that problem-solving reduces crime and disorder.
- There is “a strongly significant effect in favor of problem-oriented policing strategies” (Weisburd, et al., 2008, p. 25).

# Implementation issues

- Research has documented serious implementation failures since the birth of the community policing movement. Symbolic reform is common.
- These issues are not yet well-understood and have not yet been overcome.
- Implementation is a serious challenge for any agency considering the adoption of community policing.

# 3. Procedural Justice & Legitimacy



Social psychologist Tom Tyler argues that procedural justice has a strong influence on why people comply with or defy law and legal authorities.

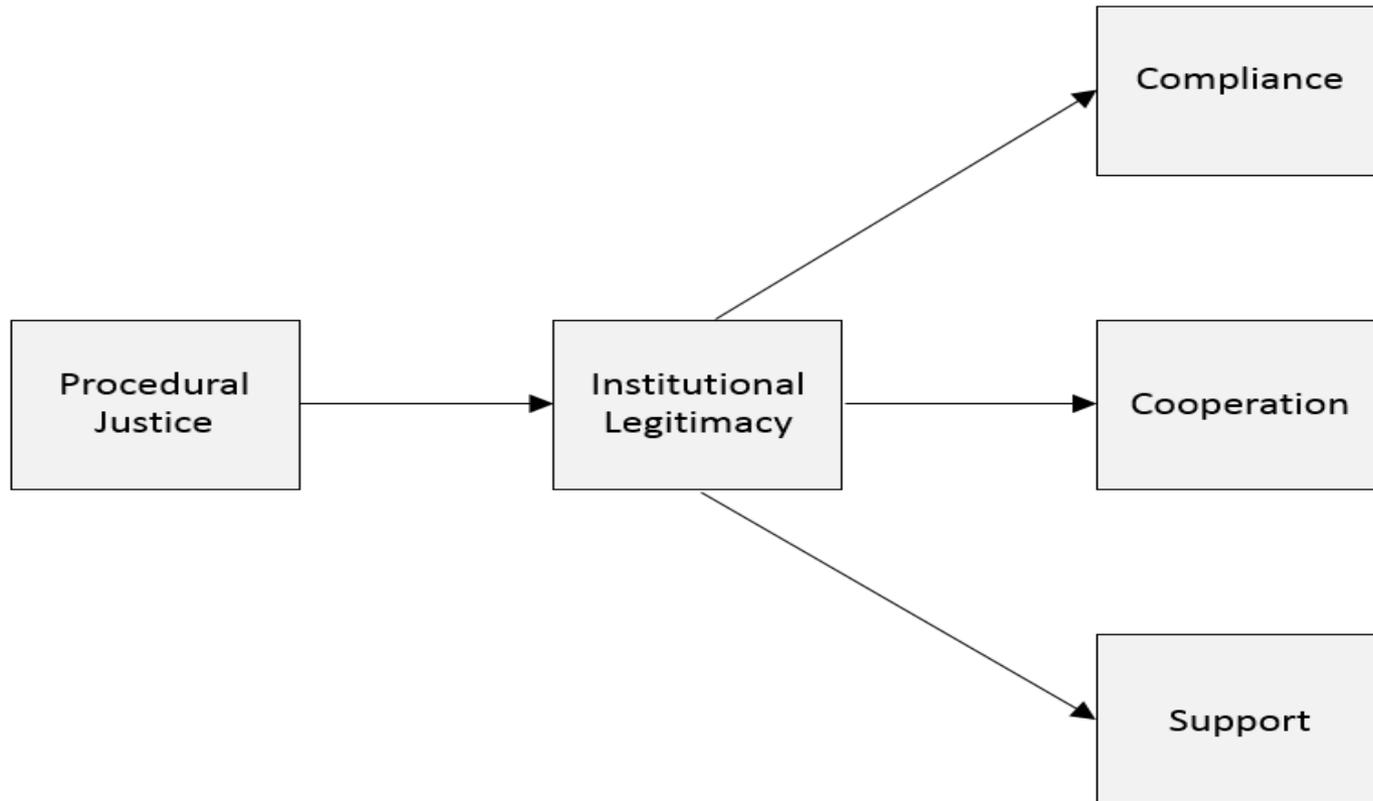
# Procedural Justice

- A judgment resulting from one or more encounters with an authority figure about whether the person treated you fairly and used fair decision-making processes.
- Often defined as quality of treatment and quality of decision-making.

# Institutional Legitimacy

- A general perception about an institution such as the police, the law, or the government.
- Often defined as the right of the institution to assert authority, to govern, or to be obeyed.

# Logic model

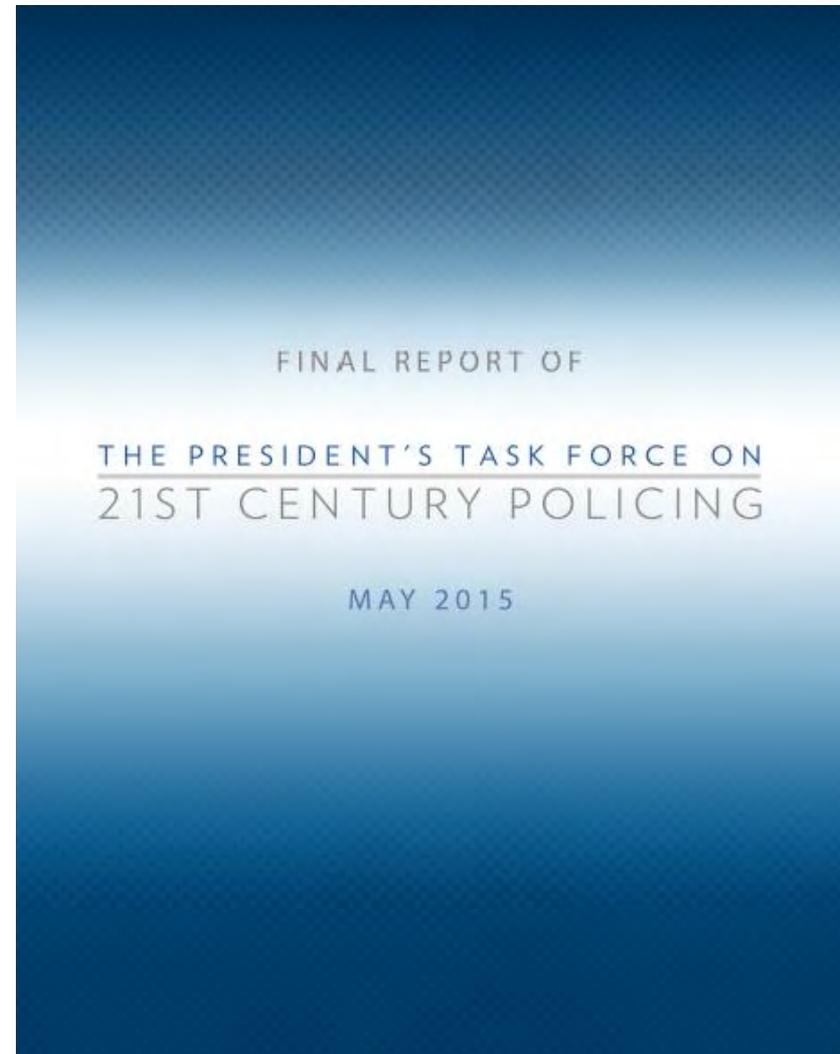


# Recent Research Findings

- In Washington, DC, the most important factor influencing people's attitudes toward the use of violence against police was procedural justice.
- In New York City, the most important factor was having experienced or witnessed police using unjust force against protesters.

*Final Report  
of the  
President's  
Task Force on  
21<sup>st</sup> Century  
Policing*

A heavy focus  
on procedural  
justice

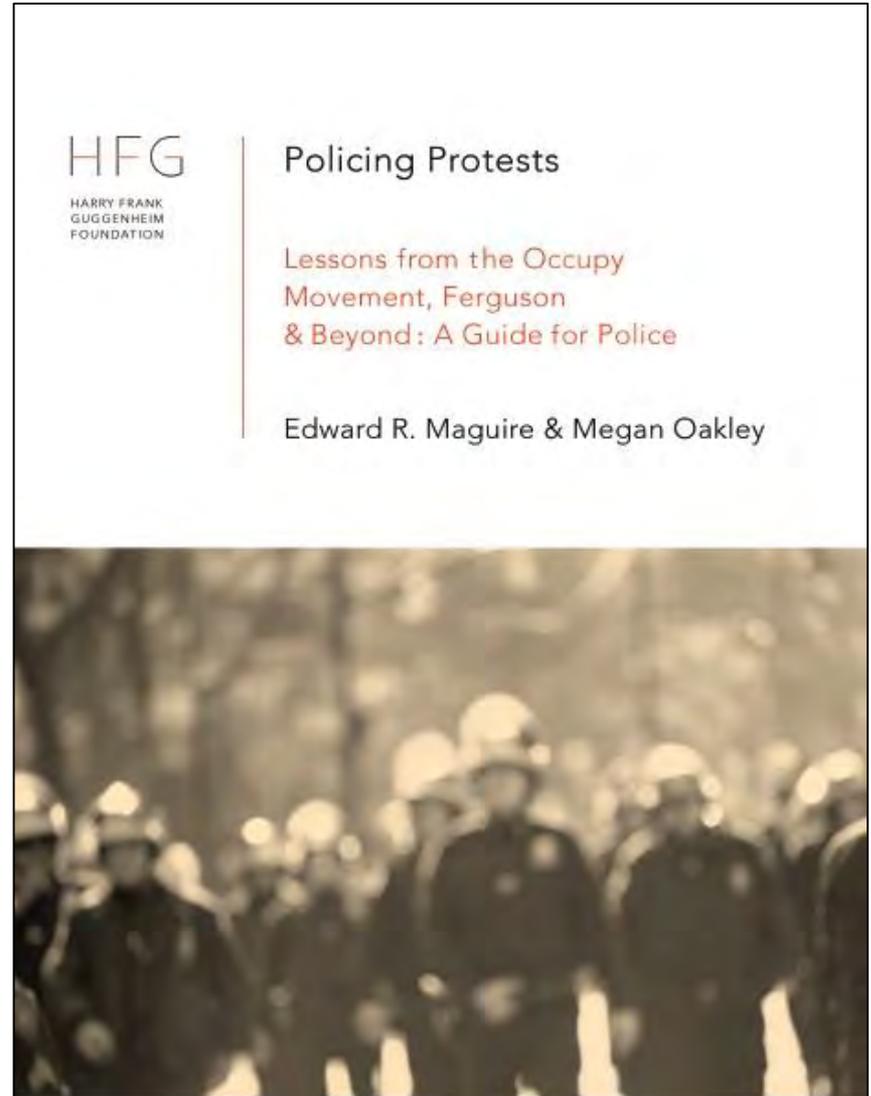


Available here: [https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/taskforce\\_finalreport.pdf](https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/taskforce_finalreport.pdf)

# 4. Responding to Civil Disturbances

*Policing Protests:  
Lessons from the  
Occupy  
Movement,  
Ferguson &  
Beyond*

<https://www.hfg.org/policingprotests.htm>



## Overarching theme

*Fair and effective protest policing strategies aim to secure voluntary compliance without instigating a sense of defiance or rebellion among protesters.*



Occupy Wall Street (2011)



Occupy UC-Davis



- Iraq war veteran Scott Olsen received a broken skull from a police beanbag round.
- An independent review found that the agency's crowd control tactics were "outdated, dangerous, and ineffective."

Occupy Oakland (2011)



The shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri in August 2014



BLACK  
LIVES  
MATTER

Mladen Antonov/AFP via Getty Images



Photo Source: New York Times

Charlottesville, VA (Aug. 12, 2017)



Photo Source: Ryan M. Kelly / The Daily Progress via AP

Charlottesville, VA (Aug. 12, 2017)



Minneapolis, MN (May 28, 2020)

Photo credit: Kerem Yucel



Portland, OR (2020)

Photo credit: Nick MacDonald



Washington, DC (Jan. 6, 2021)

# Crowd psychology

- Crowds are heterogeneous and contain multiple subgroups, each with different norms and values.
- Most crowds contain a majority of “moderates” who are peaceful and lawful. Many crowds also have a minority of “radicals” who are destructive and/or violent.

# Crowd psychology

- When police treat people in a crowd unfairly, even moderates can begin to embrace an anti-police sentiment.
- Implication: Never take enforcement action against an entire crowd based on the actions of a subset. Treat the crowd as heterogeneous and target those who are violent for arrest.

# Crowd psychology

Winning the hearts and minds of the peaceful members of a crowd stimulates self-policing within the crowd. The moderates seek to keep the radicals in line.



# Recommendations

- My recommendations build on a framework developed by crowd psychology scholars.
- Four components: education, facilitation, communication, and differentiation.

# 1. Education

- Police must ***educate*** themselves about the social identities of the subgroups in a crowd, including their values, goals, and intentions.
- Gather criminal intelligence on protest participants with a history of violence or other criminal behavior as well as other participants who are potential allies.
- Understanding the composition of a crowd enables police to develop more nuanced policing strategies.

## 2. Facilitation

- Operate from the vantage point of *facilitating* peaceful protests rather than just controlling or regulating them. This improves relationships with protesters and minimizes the likelihood of conflict and violence.
- This is especially important when protests focus on the police, because efforts to block these protests will inevitably strengthen the perception that police are unjust or illegitimate.

# 3. Communication

- **Communication** enables police to discover the aims of event organizers and how to facilitate these aims. It also enables police to learn about potential public order / safety issues and to address these issues with event organizers.
- Even for more spontaneous events like flash protests or sports celebrations, police can usually identify informal organizers or influential participants with whom they can communicate.

## 4. Differentiation

In a ***differentiated*** approach to protests, police continue to facilitate peaceful expression even while taking enforcement action against those who are engaging in violence, property damage, or looting. This preserves police legitimacy and reduces defiance and rebellion.

# Other considerations

- Putting officers in riot gear prematurely can escalate violence.
- An alternative is to adopt a “**graded response**” plan in which officers in riot gear are staged out of sight in a nearby location where they can be deployed quickly.
- Staging officers in riot gear in full view of a peaceful crowd may stimulate the very conflict it is intended to prevent.

# Other considerations

- Overly restrictive barriers or other crowd containment methods should be avoided whenever possible.
- Reasonable containment measures are sometimes necessary to manage large crowds and preserve public safety.
- Unreasonable containment measures can limit movement unnecessarily, endanger the crowd, violate civil rights, and trigger defiance.

# The challenge

What measures are in place to deal with mostly peaceful protests containing a handful of troublemakers intent on violence, vandalism, or other criminal offenses?

# 5. Conclusion

# Implications for reform

- Improve police-community relations using community policing principles
- Build and sustain police legitimacy through procedural justice
- During crowd events, draw on crowd psychology principles to achieve voluntary cooperation and compliance with minimal use of force

# Thank you!

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