Tracking Public Satisfaction and Procedural Justice in American Policing: The Police-Community Interaction Survey:

Dennis P. Rosenbaum
Professor of Criminology, Law and Justice
University of Illinois at Chicago

with assistance from Daniel Lawrence

Presentation at the Chicago Forum on
Procedural Justice and Policing, Northwestern University
March 22, 2014
Goals and Objectives

Goals of the Platform:

- To advance knowledge of American policing at the individual, organizational and community levels
- To improve the quality of American policing through translational research and “learning organizations”

Research Objective:

- To develop, implement, and field test the National Police Research Platform
Quality of Policing inside and Outside the Organization

- **Internal** Quality of Policing: How are employees treated? (Organizational justice)

- **External** Quality of Policing: How is the public treated? (Procedural justice and more)
Problems with Existing Data

• Police management has weak data to judge the quality police-citizen contacts (citizen complaints? Police surveys?)
• Community surveys don’t tell us about recent police services
• Contact surveys (Bureau of Justice Statistics) provide only national estimates
Benefits of PCI Survey

• Provides local, jurisdictional data for police management purposes (Advancing practice with feedback and “reactive measurement”)

• Provides local, regional and national standardized data for research purposes (Advancing science by providing contextual data for explanation)

• Added benefit: Democratizes policing by giving the public a voice in evaluating police services
Survey Methodology

- Letter from Chief mailed to citizens with police contact in the past 10 days

- Letter Invites Citizens to Complete Satisfaction Survey by:
  - Web-based survey or
  - 1-800 automated telephone survey

- University collects data independently and provides feedback to the participating departments
Focus of the PCI Survey

• Overall satisfaction with the encounter
• Procedural justice – Quality of treatment and decision making
• Victim-focused measures: Empathy and emotional support, concern, explain, provide information
• Agency legitimacy – trust and confidence
• Agency performance overall – effective, responsive, etc.
• Intentions to cooperate, comply, obey the law
Known Groups Validation

Predictable differences in satisfaction by:
• Racial/ethnic group
• Age
• Type of incident (police-initiated or not)
• Agency
Preliminary Conclusion about Electronic PCI Surveys

• Feasible – It can be done
• Cost effective - $5 vs. $82 per survey
• Acceptable validity of responses
• Attractive to local agencies - feedback
• Provides external indicators of organizational and officer performance
• Provides database for advancing knowledge about factors that contribute to procedural justice in diverse settings
Next Steps with PCI Survey

• Roll out with national sample of agencies in Phase 2

• Test the potential utility for police management (Chicago)
Making the Most of PCI Survey Results: The Chicago Example (with Sup. McCarthy and Chief Tracy)

• Useful for developing legitimacy training for all Chicago PD employees
• Useful as a program evaluation too to measure the impact of training and other policing initiatives
• Useful as management tool for encouraging respectful behavior on the streets (From Compstat to “Respectstat”)
Ways of Utilizing PCI data for Internal Accountability ("Respectstat")

- Comparisons by District or Area
- Mapping “Hot spots”
- District trends over Time
- Hourly Trends
District trends in Procedural Justice (Hypothetical data)
Comments and Cautions

Potential paradigm shift in measuring what matters on the streets – attention to process and fairness

Potential limitations:
- Provides quarterly data, not weekly or monthly
- Challenge for commanders to balance crime fighting tactics with respectful policing
- PCI ratings can be influenced by factors other than police behavior during encounters...
- Data are sensitive and can be misused by the media and others

We encourage institutionalization of PCI survey – measure trends over the long haul, like crime rates
Conclusion for Agencies

“If you measure it, it will eventually matter. If you don’t measure it, it doesn’t matter, and by definition, it’s not important.”

(Rosenbaum, 2014 – Who, in their right mind, would quote themselves?)
Conclusion for Policing Scholars

• Procedural justice is best understood in the context of local police practices, police culture, and community characteristics.

• PJ is a strong predictor of citizen satisfaction with police contacts, controlling for agency size, community characteristics (e.g. poverty, crime, race/ethnicity) and decision making outcomes (citation in traffic stops).

• More work is needed to reduce costs, improve response rates, and test alternative survey modalities.

• Relative to the history of the Uniform Crime Report (UCR), we are living in 1929. National and local politics and competing research agendas stand in the way, but can be overcome!
Thank you!