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From CompStat to RespectStat: Accountability for Respectful Policing

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Ideas & Insights

In the aftermath of the Ferguson, Missouri, incident and other highly visible force incidents, public trust and confidence in the police has been shattered in cities across the United States. As a result, many police departments have sought ways to restore police legitimacy through community policing initiatives, procedural justice training, and other strategies. In fact, many have turned to Chicago, Illinois, for direction, since the Chicago Police Department has been involved in such initiatives for several years. Yet surprisingly, the law enforcement community has no way to evaluate the success of these efforts. Are the police treating people respectfully or not? Is the department improving over time? How does one city compare with other cities?

As part of the National Police Research Platform, a team of researchers and practitioners developed the Police-Community Interaction (PCI) Survey to allow community members to evaluate their contacts with the police and determine whether officers were treating the public in respectful, fair, and compassionate ways.[1] After preliminary testing in Chicago and other cities, this methodology was rolled out in more than 50 U.S. jurisdictions in 2014.

A customer satisfaction survey not only gives police executives a mechanism for evaluating the success of their legitimacy initiatives, but also can be an important tool of innovation and reform. In the same way that CompStat is used to establish norms and expectations within the organization, surveys can be used to reinforce desired behaviors during police-citizen contacts. The Chicago Police Department plans to use this approach to increase accountability for police officer demeanor and procedural justice. In addition to holding district commanders accountable for using effective strategies designed to reduce serious crime (the CompStat process), why not use this approach to help strengthen accountability for respectful treatment of the public? Hence, a new approach—one called RespectStat—analyzes data on the quality of police-citizen interactions to provide constructive feedback to command-level personnel about performance in specific geographic areas.

There are several elements that make the RespectStat survey different than traditional community surveys. First, it focuses specifically on the quality of police-citizen contacts during traffic stops and crime reports, rather than the views of all community members (the average person has no knowledge about the quality of police services because they have no direct contact with law enforcement). Second, the survey focuses on procedural justice aspects of the encounter and police legitimacy—things that are important to the public. Third, the survey is independently managed by the University of Illinois at Chicago and, therefore, reduces public concern about giving the police negative feedback. Finally, the survey has the potential to be institutionalized as a core measure of police performance, rather than a one-time survey used to confirm the agency's legitimacy. It is this last advantage that is being explored in Chicago: building the survey findings into the operations of the organization, which is consistent with calls to integrate community policing and CompStat.[2]

The Survey Methodology

In Chicago, the survey is being used to collect data from citizens who have had a recent (within the past two weeks) contact with a Chicago police officer as a result of a traffic stop or crime report. A letter is sent from the police superintendent to the citizen, inviting him or her to complete the RespectStat survey either online or by calling a toll-free phone number. The survey respondents are a diverse cross-section of the community in terms of race and ethnicity (55 percent minorities), gender (45 percent female), income (43 percent under $50,000 per year), and age (average 47 years).

Using RespectStat Data for Training

The RespectStat survey results were initially used by instructors at the Chicago Police Education and Training Academy as they developed and implemented a new training program on police legitimacy as requested by the superintendent. The survey findings provided some context for procedural justice training, showing, for example, that "car-side manners" during traffic stops, specifically respectful treatment, can have a significant influence on the driver's overall satisfaction with the traffic stop. The message to officers is that writing a ticket will not automatically guarantee a low rating from the driver—and that respectful, fair treatment is a good way to deliver bad news.

Using RespectStat for Accountability

Now that the RespectStat data system is up and running, the Chicago Police Department is exploring different ways of utilizing the data collected, including some of the following possibilities.

District or area comparisons. Drawing on the CompStat approach, the survey findings can show similarities and differences between districts or between larger areas of the city. Figure 1 illustrates the use of PCI survey data to make comparisons between districts using the results from a six-month period in Chicago from September 2014 through February 2015. The data show the percentage of respondents who reported being "satisfied" or "very satisfied" with the way they were treated by the officer and reveal that there are substantial differences in overall citizen satisfaction across the districts, with satisfaction figures ranging from 46 percent to 92 percent.

Figure 1 | Satisfaction with Traffic Stops and Crime Reports (from 9/1/2014 to 2/28/2015)
Percent "Somewhat" or "Very" Satisfied with Encounter
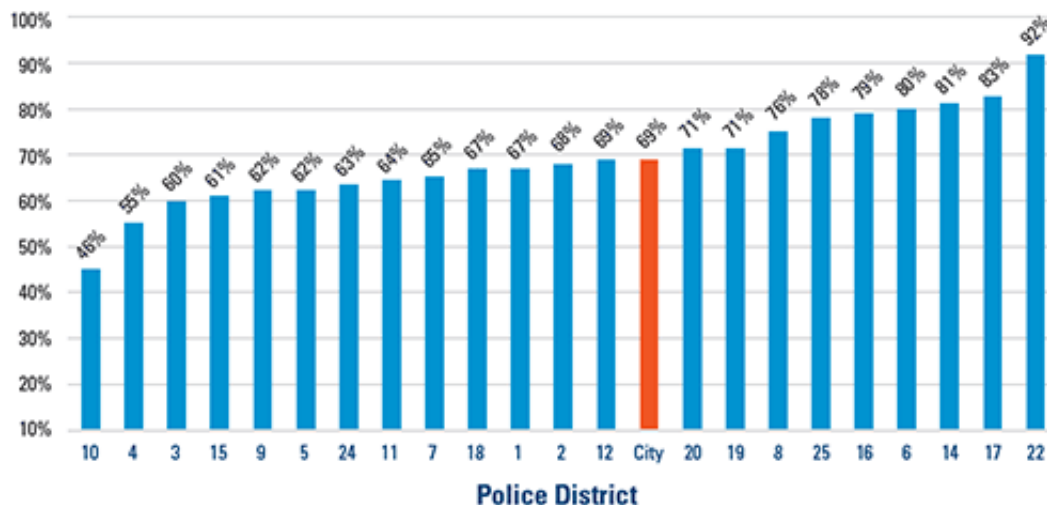
Within district trends. Police departments may want to look at district trends over time. This is a promising approach because it is free of the many constraints associated with district-by-district com-parisons. In cities like Chicago, there are sizable differences between districts in their levels of violent crime, concentrated poverty, racial and ethnic populations, and other variables that have been shown to significantly influence perceptions of the police. Therefore, the comparison

of a district against itself may be a better indicator of performance. Many commanders have been assigned to communities where the ratings of the police are historically low because of decades of negative experiences and historical discrimination from all sectors of society. These commanders have inherited these low ratings and should be judged on whether they can show improvement over time, not whether they can "catch up" with districts that do not have the same level of concentrated disadvantage or historical tensions with the police.

Mapping "hotspots" of dissatisfaction. Why not map public perceptions in the same way that crime patterns are mapped? Data analytics, typically applied to crime data, can be applied to public sentiment as well, allowing organizations to identify and visualize geographic areas where the public is most dissatisfied or concerned about procedural fairness by the police. Using RespectStat data, agencies have the capacity to map "hotspots" of public dissatisfaction or disrespect during police encounters. Hotspots may overlap district boundaries and help police departments target areas where additional work is needed to improve police-citizen interactions and restore public trust.

Differences by hour, shift, or unit. In larger cities, executives can drill down even deeper if they would like, looking at community satisfaction rating by shift, unit, employee, community demographics, or other factors.

For example, Chicago looked at differences in citizen satisfaction by time of day (see Figure 2). The color differences roughly reflect different shifts on a 24-hour clock. Overall, the data show that people are somewhat less pleased with the police on the midnight shift than at many other times, although it must be taken into consideration that the police are dealing with a different group of people who are awake and active late at night. In general, shifts start off strong and end fairly strong, with a dip in public satisfaction in the middle.

Figure 2 | Satisfaction by Hour/Shift (from 9/1/2014 to 2/28/2015)
Percent "Somewhat" or "Very" Satisfied with Encounter
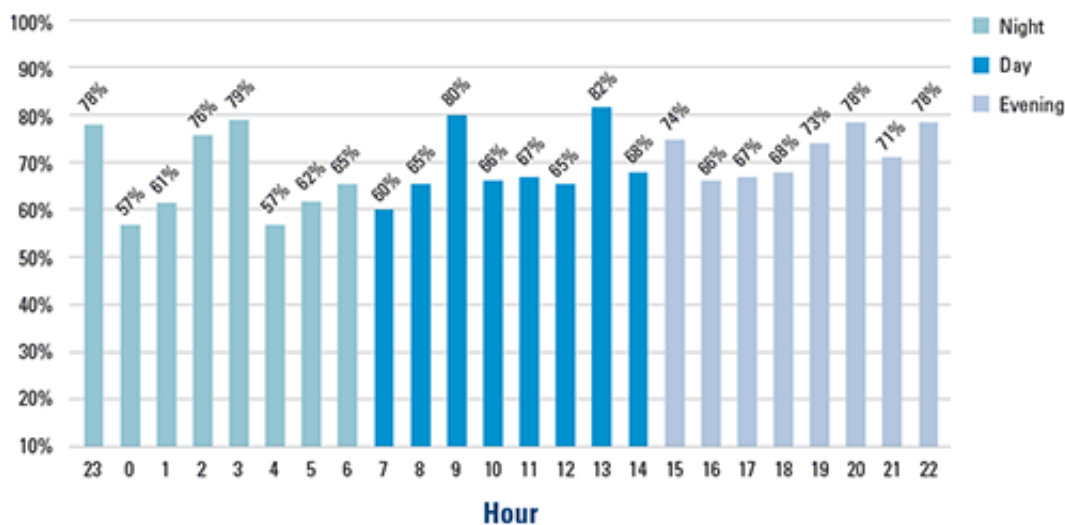
Closing Comments and Cautions

CompStat is a methodology that uses accountability, metrics, and crime analysis to successfully guide the implementation and coordination of multi-faceted crime control strategies. Building on this model, the law enforcement community can measure process, as well as outcome, to confirm that the profession values police officers interacting with the public in ways that are respectful, fair, and responsive to community expectations. RespectStat is a tool that uses metrics to assist police agencies in achieving this mission.

The RespectStat approach should be viewed with a few cautionary notes or restrictions. First, unlike CompStat, the RespectStat program will not generate enough data to provide weekly or monthly feedback to district commanders. Chicago is planning semi-annual reports at the district level. For smaller agencies, annual reports could be generated for the entire city or large areas of the city. The more breakdowns requested by management (e.g., by shift, by district, by type of assignment), the larger the required survey sample and the longer the period needed between

accountability meetings.

Second, introducing a new way of measuring performance places an additional burden on management and one that may present a challenge to daily operations. Specifically, some might argue that using the survey places conflicting demands on police commanders. In big cities, they are under pressure to reduce gang activity, eliminate drug markets, and get guns off the street. This is especially true in low-income, high-crime neighborhoods where officers are, on average, likely to receive lower scores under the RespectStat system. Thus, the challenge for commanders is to balance and integrate proactive policing with respectful and fair policing.

Over the past few years in Chicago, the superintendent and his command staff have responded to this challenge by introducing department-wide legitimacy training (now in phase 2), placing the right people in these critical command-level positions, and beginning to monitor the quality of police-citizen interactions via RespectStat. There is always room for improvement, and RespectStat is another avenue for enhancing organizational performance.

As CompStat has shown, when something is measured, it begins to matter—it takes on importance; it becomes a priority within the organization. For this same reason, police executives and community leaders should be encouraged to explore new systems of accountability like RespectStat that can supplement and balance the current emphasis on crime control effectiveness. ♦

> **Garry F. McCarthy** became the Superintendent of the Chicago Police Department on May 16, 2011. In his role as the superintendent, Garry McCarthy moves forward with evidence-based initiatives to reduce violence and improve the quality of life in the city of Chicago. Among these strategic initiatives, he has led the establishment of CompStat, a command accountability process he supported in New York and Newark to reduce crime through a methodological system. Superintendent McCarthy stresses the integral relationship between the community and beat officers to work together to report, solve, and prevent crimes.
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Notes:

[1]Dennis P. Rosenbaum, Daniel S. Lawrence, Susan M. Harnett, Jack McDevitt, and Chad Poscik, "Measuring Procedural Justice and Legitimacy at the Local Level: The Police-Community Interaction Survey," *Journal of Experimental Criminology* (February 2015): online.

[2]James J. Willis, Stephen D. Mastrofski, and Tammy Rinehart Kochel, "Recommendations for Integrating CompStat and Community Policing," *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice* 4, no. 2 (2010): 182–193.

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