Reinventing American Policing: A Seven-Point Blueprint or the 21st Century

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A Core Question for Policing in Democratic Society

How can police effectively prevent crime and keep citizens safe, while at the same time, maintain their trust, confidence, and satisfaction?
Certainty of Punishment & Deterrence

Certainty = \( P(A)P(C|A)P(I|A & C) \)
Risk of Apprehension & Deterrence

Good evidence of a deterrent effect
Risk of Conviction & Deterrence

No evidence on whether there is a deterrent effect
Risk of Imprisonment & Deterrence

Evidence does not support a deterrent effect
Revised Certainty Principle

- The certainty of apprehension, not the severity of the ensuing consequences, is the most effective deterrent

**Policy Implications**
- Harsh punishments are not effective deterrent
- Places police center stage in preventing
Police as Apprehension Agents
Police as Sentinels
“It is better to prevent crimes than punish them”
--Cesare Beccaria 1764
Two Principle

- **Principle 1: Crime prevention—not arrests—is paramount.** Crimes averted, not arrests made, should be the primary metric for judging police success in meeting their objective to prevent crime and disorder.

- **Principle 2: Citizen reaction matters.** Citizen response to the police and their tactics for preventing crime and improving public order matter independent of police effectiveness in these functions.
Outline for Remainder of My Remarks

- **Bringing the Perpetrators of Serious Crime to Justice**
- **The Role of Police in Preventing Crime and Disorder**
  - Broken Windows Policing
  - Cost of Arrest for Minor Crimes or Legal Infractions
- **Maintaining Citizen Trust and Confidence**
- **Race and Policing**
- **Seven-Point Blueprint**
Bringing the Perpetrators of Serious Crime to Justice

- Less than 20% of arrests are for felonies
- Clearance rates for Part I index crimes have been stable for four decades (Braga, Flynn, Kelling, & Cole (2011))
Trends in Homicides and Homicide Arrests

- Murder and nonnegligent manslaughter rate
- Murder and nonnegligent manslaughter arrest rate
Trends in Robbery and Robbery Arrests

Robbery rate

Robbery arrest rate x3
Trends in Burglaries and Burglary Arrests

![Graph showing trends in burglary and burglary arrest rates from 1980 to 2010. The graph plots burglary rate and burglary arrest rate x5 against years.

- Burglary rate: Decreasing trend from 1600 in 1980 to around 500 in 2010.
- Burglary arrest rate x5: Decreasing trend from 1200 in 1980 to around 300 in 2010.]
Implication

- Opportunities for major innovations in police effectiveness in bringing the perpetrators of serious crime to justice are limited
- Focus of blueprint is on advancing Principles 1 & 2
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Preventing Crime and Disorder

- Evidence that police can prevent crime and disorder is overwhelming **BUT:**
- Effects are heterogeneous
- Citizen reactions are sometimes decidedly negative
What Works?
Proactive Targeting of “Hot” Places or People
(Lum, Koper, & Telep, 2011)
What Constitutes Proactive Policing?

- Opportunity Mitigation
  - Changes in the physical environment
  - Regulatory authority

- Increased Police Presence
  - Visibility without an arrest focus
  - Zero-tolerance aka broken windows policing tactics
The Growing Share of Arrests for Less Serious Crimes (Part II Index)—1980 to 2012

Adjusted Part II Arrests per Part I Arrest
More on the Growing Prominence of Part II Arrests Since 1980

- Drug possession—102%
- Simple Assault—77.6%
- “All other offenses”—40.7%
What Do Know About the Effectiveness of “Broken Windows” Policing?

- NOT MUCH

- Does disorder breed serious crime?

  “Attacking public order through tough police tactics may thus be politically popular but perhaps analytically weak strategy to reduce crime” (Sampson and Raudenbush (1999))

  “I still to this day do not know if improving order will or will not reduce crime. People have not understood that this was a speculation” James Q. Wilson in Hurley (2004)

- Are misdemeanor oriented arrest tactics effective in preventing crime?
  - Don’t know because no studies account for the effectiveness of other police tactics that don’t emphasize arrest that routinely accompany the arrest-based tactics

- Why are these uncertainties so important?
  - Because arrests for minor crimes are costly
Costs of Misdemeanor Arrest

- Police time—equivalent of 2% of the sworn police force in 2013
- Jail population growth
- Cost to arrestees themselves
  - Bail/Pretrial detention
  - Time in hearings
  - Lost public benefits
  - Stigma
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What Does the Public Think of the Police?

- Nothing too surprising here
- Large racial divide on overall assessment
  - 59% of whites had a great deal of confidences and only 12% very little
  - For Blacks the respective figures are 37% and 25% (Gallup)
- Reactions to street stops—37.7% of blacks versus 77.6% of whites believe that police behaved properly
- Both races agree that blacks are treated less fairly by the police than whites
- Note Hispanic views are between the white/black views
Can Police Affect Citizen Perceptions?

- Maybe
- “Procedural Justice” literature concludes that how police treats citizens matters
- Mixed results from the community policing literature
- More research is necessary
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7. Strengthening national level research and evaluation