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Race, Place, and Effective Policing

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Abstract

The police need public support and cooperation to be effective in controlling crime and holding offenders accountable. In many disadvantaged communities of color, poor relationships between the police and residents undermine effective policing. Weak police–minority community relationships are rooted in a long history of discriminatory practices and contemporary proactive policing strategies that are overly aggressive and associated with racial disparities. There are no simple solutions to address the complex rift between the police and the minority communities that they serve. The available evidence suggests that there are policies and practices that could improve police–minority community relations and enhance police effectiveness. Police departments should conduct more sophisticated analysis of crime problems to ensure that crime-control programs are not indiscriminate and unfocused, engage residents in their crime reduction efforts by revitalizing community policing, ensure procedurally just police contacts with citizens, and implement problem-solving strategies to prevent crimes beyond surveillance and enforcement actions.

> When any part of the American family does not feel like it is being treated fairly, that's a problem for all of us….It's not just a problem for some. It's not just a problem for a particular community or a particular demographic. It means that we are not as strong as a country as we can be. And when applied to the criminal justice system, it means we're not as effective in fighting crime as we could be.
>
> —Remarks made by former President Barack Obama when establishing the Task Force on 21st Century Policing, December 18, 2014

INTRODUCTION

Policing communities involves a delicate balance (Meares & Kahan 1998). On the one hand, research suggests that the police benefit from the general willingness of community members to cooperate with them to report crimes, identify offenders, assist in open investigations, and address persistent social conditions that might facilitate crime (Reisig 2010, Tyler & Fagan 2008). On the other hand, effective policing invariably involves proactive strategies that bring frontline officers into close and regular contact with community residents. The nature of this contact matters. Frequent contact under zero-tolerance order-maintenance strategies—an aggressive policing strategy that uses misdemeanor arrests to attempt to disrupt disorderly social behavior in the hope of preventing crime (Natl. Acad. Sci. Eng. Med. 2018)—can be viewed by residents as intrusive and unwarranted, leading citizens to doubt whether the police respect their rights and genuinely care about their well-being (Carr et al. 2007, Brunson & Miller 2006, Brunson & Weitzer 2009). Whether or not individuals have personal contact with police officers, their perceptions of officers' legitimacy have important consequences for police effectiveness (Tyler 2003, 2006). Simply put, policing is far more difficult without public support. Therefore, police effectiveness and legitimacy are powerfully influenced by the consequences of specific tactical and policy choices.

Policing policies, practices, and strategies vary across places. For instance, stop, question, and frisk (SQF) encounters are sometimes used by police departments as person-focused crime reduction strategies (Natl. Acad. Sci. Eng. Med. 2018). SQF encounters are grounded in constitutional laws that allow police officers to stop citizens based on reasonable suspicion—rather than the higher standard of probable cause—that they have committed, are in the process of committing, or are about to commit a crime (*Terry v. Ohio* 1968). If officers reasonably suspect that stopped citizens may be armed and possibly dangerous, they may frisk citizens for weapons. Research consistently finds that SQF encounters are disproportionately carried out in communities of color—particularly socioeconomically disadvantaged places—even after controlling for levels of crime and other social characteristics (Fagan & Davies 2000, Fagan et al. 2016, Gelman et al. 2007). Communities of color also struggle with the consequences of delicately balancing their desire for effective crime-control solutions while simultaneously being unsure that the police are truly interested in resolving these problems due to fundamental concerns about the toxic nature of police–minority citizen contact (Bell 2016, 2017; Brunson 2007; Pattillo-McCoy 1999).

Recent events in Ferguson, New York City, Chicago, and elsewhere in the United States have exposed longstanding rifts in police–minority community relations. Some scholars suggest that too many urban police departments engage in excessive surveillance and enforcement practices, contributing to mass incarceration and racial disparities throughout the criminal justice system (see, e.g., Epp et al. 2014, Young & Petersilia 2016). One-dimensional and overly broad police surveillance and enforcement strategies do little to change the underlying dynamics that drive serious urban violence (Braga 2016). Inappropriate police focus on ambiguous people and places—one where the police, in isolation from the community, identify the areas of focus and where entire neighborhoods are defined as trouble zones—can contribute to racial disparity and mass incarceration problems that further exacerbate disadvantaged neighborhoods. This is particularly true

when such an approach is coupled with a crime numbers game managerial mindset that promotes yearly increases in arrests, summons, and investigatory stops as key performance measures (Eterno & Silverman 2012). To restore effective working relationships with minority communities, police must renew their efforts to develop, implement, and sustain crime-control policies that are both fair and effective.

This review begins by summarizing race differences in crime and in the criminal justice system to frame a more focused discussion on race, place, and policing. We then review the existing scientific evidence on specific policing policies and practices with an eye toward their efficacy in controlling crime as well as how communities experience and view these efforts. While certain studies analyze national data sets, studies of policing in urban contexts represent the bulk of the existing research base on the racially disparate impacts and crime-reduction effects of specific police strategies. The fundamental lesson learned from our review is that it greatly matters how the police approach crime problems in places. By coupling problem-oriented crime-control efforts with complementary attempts to increase community engagement and enhance procedural justice in their interactions with the public, police can simultaneously enact effective crime-control practices that minimize harmful racial disparities and improve their legitimacy in disadvantaged minority neighborhoods. The review concludes with a discussion of the current paradox of policing communities of color—that they are simultaneously over- and underpoliced—as well as the critical questions of why police departments have chosen their current policies and practices and what it might take to change them.

RACE DIFFERENCES IN CRIME AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Some observers suggest that disproportionate police contact with minorities is simply a function of their increased involvement in criminal behavior (e.g., MacDonald 2016). However, racial differences in criminal offending do not exist for most crime types, with the exception of serious violent crimes. In 2015, for example, just over 13% of the US population was black, but of those murders for which the race of the offender was reported to Uniform Crime Reports, 53% of offenders were black (US Dep. Justice & Fed. Bureau Investig. 2016). Similarly, 53% of race-identified murder victims were black (US Dep. Justice & Fed. Bureau Investig. 2016). The vast majority of these murders were intraracial: In cases where the race of the offender and victim were both known, 91% of black victims were killed by black offenders (US Dep. Justice & Fed. Bureau Investig. 2016). Serious but nonfatal violence also disproportionately affected black citizens. In 2015, black citizens were 40% more likely than non-Hispanic white citizens to be the victims of a rape, robbery, or aggravated assault (Truman & Morgan 2016).

Research on racial differences in violent offending suggests these differences appear rooted in the very different neighborhood contexts in which members of those different racial groups tend to live (McNulty et al. 2013, Sampson & Wilson 1995, Sampson et al. 2005). Serious violent crime is most common in areas experiencing concentrations of socioeconomic disadvantage, where—due to historical and contemporary discrimination and segregation—communities of color and other marginalized groups disproportionately reside (e.g., Peterson & Krivo 2010). Among the multiple ecological mechanisms by which community context matters, empirical evidence suggests that the capacity of neighborhood residents to achieve a common set of goals and exert control over youth and public spaces, termed collective efficacy, protects against serious violence (Sampson et al. 1997). The presence of community-based organizations, drawing membership from individuals within and outside specific neighborhoods, predicts collective efficacy and collective civic action (Sampson 2012). Concentrated disadvantage in urban neighborhoods, which are often populated by black residents, undermines local collective efficacy and gravely limits the ability of residents to

address serious violent crime problems (Sampson et al. 2002). As a result, urban homicides, largely committed with guns and perpetrated by and against young black men, tend to concentrate in disadvantaged communities of color.

Theoretical work has made several core claims about why neighborhood context matters in explaining racial differences in offending. One argument is that the environmental causes of crime are identical for both black and white people (e.g., Sampson & Wilson 1995, Shaw & McKay 1942). The available evidence suggests that there is nothing fundamentally different about people based on race and implies that members of more advantaged racial groups living in the same conditions of less advantaged groups would experience similar levels of criminal offending. However, a major critique of this line of reasoning is its inattention to the basic fact that black and white Americans do not, on average, live in the same kinds of neighborhoods, and this reality is not a mere accident or happenstance (Massey & Denton 1993). Instead, a racial order structures the socioeconomic conditions of black versus white communities in fundamental ways (Peterson & Krivo 2010). Some scholars even suggest a direct role of racism in the causation of crime, whether from racial disparities in police practices or through the influence of racial oppression and injustice on a unique African American worldview (DuBois 1899, Unnever & Gabbidon 2011).

Differential offending and victimization rates feed a misperception that crime and violence are pervasive in black communities. Careful within-city research facilitates a deeper understanding of the situations, dynamics, and relationships associated with elevated rates of violent crimes committed by black offenders against black victims. For instance, in Boston, gun violence is driven by gang conflicts and is highly concentrated among a small number of high-risk places and people (Braga 2003). Roughly 5% of Boston's street block faces and intersections generated about 74% of fatal and nonfatal shooting incidents between 1980 and 2008 (Braga et al. 2010). These gun violence hot spots were in and around gang turf and drug market areas, comprising very small geographies within disadvantaged neighborhoods. In 2006, only 1% of Boston's population between the ages of 15 and 24 were members of street gangs involved in gun violence; however, gang-related disputes generated half of all homicides, and gang members were involved as offenders, victims, or both in nearly 70% of nonfatal shootings (Braga et al. 2008). The patterns observed in Boston parallel distributions seen in many other cities (Howell & Griffiths 2016, Weisburd 2015, Wolfgang et al. 1972).

Research generally finds that racial disproportions in the criminal justice system exceed racial differences in offending (e.g., Crutchfield et al. 2010, Rosich 2007). African Americans are overrepresented in every stage of contact with the criminal justice system, among those arrested, sentenced, on probation, in prison, and put to death. These disparities begin early in life: In 2013, the arrest rate for black juveniles was 2.4 times higher than the arrest rate for white juveniles (Puzzanchera & Hockenberry 2016). Particularly strong disparities exist in incarceration. In 2010, black imprisonment rates were 4.1 times higher than white imprisonment rates (Natl. Res. Council 2014). Exposure to incarceration is particularly high at the intersection of race, class, gender, and age (Pettit & Western 2004, Western 2006). In 2010, more than 35% of black men between the ages of 20 and 39 who did not finish high school were incarcerated—the equivalent number for white men was around 12%, and the number for white men with a college education was close to zero (Natl. Res. Council 2014).

RACE, PLACE, AND PROBLEMATIC POLICING

The American public has grown progressively interested in attending to allegations of widespread, racially disparate policing practices. This is unquestionably a troubling matter for a nation that tirelessly promotes a commitment to the equitable treatment of all its citizens. Age-old patterns

of discriminatory policing, however, strike an especially raucous chord with people of color, who possibly view contemporary policing strategies through historical lenses. For example, historians have uncovered that, in addition to functioning as slave patrols, surveilling and limiting blacks' physical movement, early law enforcement officers were instrumental in a wide range of illegal activities: mob action, torture, and countless killings of freed blacks.

While Southern blacks' experiences with lynching are well-documented in American history (see, e.g., Royster 1997), the general public knows considerably less concerning a myriad of Latino victims. For instance, Richard Delgado (2009, p. 298) noted, "recent research by reputable historians shows that Latinos, particularly Mexican Americans in the Southwest, were lynched in large numbers during roughly the same period when lynchings of blacks ran rampant." Blacks' and Latinos' experiences with lynching are an undeniable and permanent stain on the legacy of early American law enforcement. Moreover, these past atrocities may also serve as the backdrop against which many people of color view contemporary policing practices, holding remnants of horrific misdeeds accountable for continuing police–minority community tensions.

This particularly striking and salient period of history is far from the only problematic reference point for communities of color. The police—as well as the criminal justice system more broadly—have long participated in efforts to suppress and exploit black Americans, including enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act, Black Codes, Jim Crow laws, and the convict leasing program, as well as enforcing the so-called tough on crime laws that arose in the backlash to the civil rights movement. The police also played important and visible roles in suppressing civil rights activists and clashing with civil rights protestors, not just in the 1950s and 1960s but also in the modern era movement (e.g., Alexander 2010; Beckett 1997; Beckett & Sasson 2004; Blackmon 2008; Drakulich et al. 2017; Wacquant 2003, 2005; Weaver 2007). These moments of widespread visibility, however, represent only the most public and egregious face of the more routine problematic interactions faced by those living in communities of color.

The war on drugs that was initiated during the Nixon administration and expanded by the federal government during the 1980s provides another example of the police being used to tackle emergent crime problems in ways that disproportionately impact communities of color. During the 1990s, African Americans represented only 13% of drug users but accounted for 40% of individuals arrested for drug violations (Langan 1995). The US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) developed drug courier profiles that included race/ethnicity based on reports that Jamaican, Haitian, and black street gangs controlled interstate trafficking in crack cocaine (Tonry 1995, Harris 2002). The infamous DEA Operation Pipeline highway drug interdiction program trained federal, state, and local law enforcement officers to use the race/ethnicity of drivers as one indicator of drug trafficking. These kinds of drug enforcement initiatives fueled African Americans' concerns over racial profiling and driving while black—being stopped, questioned, and even searched based on a pretextual traffic offense when they had committed no crime (Harris 2010).

African Americans experience substantially more contact with police than do whites (e.g., Stewart et al. 2017). African Americans are significantly more likely to be stopped (Baumgartner et al. 2018, Crutchfield et al. 2012), searched (Baumgartner et al. 2015, 2017; Rojek et al. 2012), frisked (Gelman et al. 2007), and arrested (Baumgartner et al. 2017, Kochel et al. 2011, Lytle 2014, Mitchell & Caudy 2015) by police than similarly situated whites. Indeed, the US Bureau of Justice Statistics Police–Public Contact Survey reported black drivers (13%) were only modestly more likely to be pulled over than white drivers (10%); however, black drivers (12%) were much more likely to be searched than white drivers (4%), and a greater percentage of black drivers (5%) were arrested relative to white drivers (2%) (Langton & Durose 2013). In Boston, Fagan et al. (2016) found that neighborhoods with 85% black residents experienced 53 more street stop encounters per month relative to neighborhoods with only 15% black residents, controlling for

crime, police resources, and other factors; furthermore, during these encounters with Boston Police, black subjects were 12% more likely to be frisked and/or searched when compared to white subjects. Black suspects are also more likely to be mistreated by the police (Fryer 2016, Ross et al. 2018). Black victims of fatal police shootings are more than twice as likely as white victims to be unarmed (Nix et al. 2017), or via a separate estimate, the probability of being black, unarmed, and shot by the police is about 3.5 times greater than the probability of being white, unarmed, and shot by the police (Ross 2015).

Although establishing the motivations and exact mechanisms by which these disparities are produced can be methodologically challenging (Natl. Acad. Sci. Eng. Med. 2018, Ridgeway & MacDonald 2010), it is clear that they cannot be fully explained by differing rates of offending. Drug arrests, as noted above, are substantially higher among African American and Hispanic youth despite lower overall levels of drug offending (e.g., Mitchell & Caudy 2015). African American teens are more than twice as likely to report having had police contact, even after controlling for rates of criminal involvement (Crutchfield et al. 2012). Higher search rates for black citizens persist despite evidence that searches of white suspects appear more likely to yield contraband or lead to arrest (e.g., Gelman et al. 2007, Jones-Brown et al. 2010).

Experiences with the police differ not just by race but also by place. Communities of color—particularly those that are economically disadvantaged—disproportionately experience police contact and mistreatment (Fagan & Davies 2000, Kane 2002, Mastrofski et al. 2002, Petrocelli et al. 2003, Smith 1986, Terrill & Reisig 2003). Race can also condition the role of place—for instance, frisks of black suspects are more likely when those individuals appear out of place in predominantly white communities (Carroll & Gonzalez 2014, Stewart et al. 2009). In short, communities of color likely view the police through a combination of lenses, including their historical functions supporting slavery, lynchings, and discrimination; their role combatting civil rights protests; a series of highly visible incidents of police abuses of black citizens, both past and present; and the personal and vicarious experiences of interactions with the police.

Nationally televised broadcasts of civil unrest have cast unprecedented light on dubious and longstanding policing practices underway across several US cities. The release of unsettling details and airing of graphic video images capturing officer-involved killings of unarmed black suspects have shaken public confidence in the policing profession; this is especially the case within many communities of color (President's Task Force 21st Century Polic. 2015). In fact, studies examining citizen perceptions of police underscore that racial differences in attitudes toward police have been among the most robust findings in criminal justice research (see, e.g., Taylor et al. 2001). A sizeable body of scholarship finds that African Americans reliably report possessing lower levels of satisfaction with and trust in the police compared to their counterparts from other racial groups (Hurst & Frank 2000, Leiber et al. 1998).

Whites typically describe enjoying better relationships with the police, followed by Latinos and blacks. We caution, however, against assumptions that minority groups hold a uniform view of police officers. On the contrary, scholars have pointed to a racial hierarchy, signifying a descending, Asian/Latino/black scale (Weitzer & Brunson 2015, Weitzer & Tuch 2006). That is, among the three specified racial groups, blacks report having the most strained police relationships, Asians have the greatest likelihood of offering positive evaluations of officers, and Latinos occupy the middle position. The observed group differences are perhaps not surprising, however, when we consider historical differences concerning how certain minorities entered the United States, as well as their past and current treatment at the hands of the police (Solis et al. 2009).

In addition to individual race differences, the racial composition of places appears to matter to views of the police as well. In Seattle, for instance, mistrust of the police is higher in communities of color, especially communities with larger numbers of black residents, but this effect is not exclusive

to those black residents (Drakulich 2013, Drakulich & Crutchfield 2013). In other words, white and other residents appear to have greater mistrust of the police when they have larger numbers of black neighbors. The race and class composition of places also conditions the relationship between perceptions of police bias and perceptions of police efficacy: When the police are viewed as biased on race, ethnicity, or class, they are also seen as particularly ineffective at policing those same communities (Drakulich & Crutchfield 2013).

Apart from racial and ethnic group membership, researchers have thoughtfully examined why some individuals hold less positive views of the police than others. For instance, several studies indicate that poor evaluations of the police may actually result from citizens' negative encounters with officers (Brandl et al. 1994, Deby 1980, Hagan et al. 2005, Weitzer et al. 2008). Therefore, the vast majority of research concerning people's appraisals of the police has focused on direct police experiences. Recently, however, scholars have begun to consider that individuals' perceptions of officers are also shaped by how they make sense of friends', relatives', and neighborhood residents' encounters (Brunson 2007). These indirect police interactions are typically referred to as vicarious experiences and have proven especially meaningful for those disproportionately suspected, stopped, searched, and shot by the police—young black men. With that in mind, Feagin & Sikes (1994, p. 16) explained that, "a black victim [of racial discrimination] frequently shares the account with family and friends, often to lighten the burden, and this sharing creates a domino effect of anguish and anger rippling across an extended group." There is also compelling evidence that black parents strategically forewarn their children about looming and inescapable racial animus, particularly in the form of police brutality (Brunson & Weitzer 2011). It is striking, however, that there are no corresponding indications that white elders also warn their youth about the likelihood of police violence.

Scholars have also consistently found that neighborhood social and physical conditions have important implications for understanding police–minority citizen relations (Kane 2002, Klinger 1997). Opponents of aggressive order-maintenance approaches warn that rounding up scores of low-level offenders who are associated with disorderly conditions only serves to exacerbate racial disparities in the ever-expanding criminal justice system, worsening already fragile police–community relations (Gau & Brunson 2010). It stands to reason then, that residents of distressed, high-crime, inner-city communities are more likely to bear the brunt of frequent, heavy-handed crime-control efforts (Boyles 2015). Ethnographic research on zero-tolerance policing in the Skid Row area of Los Angeles suggests that officers sometimes used threats of arrests and citations to coerce homeless citizens to take advantage of social services intended to help them reenter the labor market, secure housing, and improve their health; unfortunately, these services are in short supply, and these vulnerable citizens end up with insurmountable fines and criminal records that disqualify them from work and housing opportunities (Stuart 2016). Moreover, scholars have suggested that the aforementioned findings concerning race and place result from difficulty in separating race and neighborhood social conditions, such that indications of racial bias actually result from officers' tendencies to behave more aggressively in places that they consider more dangerous (Gaston & Brunson 2018, Smith 1986). Regardless of their root causes, however, aggressive policing strategies have been shown to erode police legitimacy in the eyes of community members.

Citizen confidence in the police is critical to sustained public safety; this statement also rings true among residents of impoverished, high-crime neighborhoods. Simply put, most individuals, regardless of race and socioeconomic status, are not antipolice. Many blacks and Latinos, however, disapprove of what they consider overpolicing, coupled with dehumanizing treatment. Research has shown that people are more apt to adopt a moral obligation to obey the law when they believe in the legitimacy of the police (Tyler 2003, 2006). However, adherence to the law is appreciably

greater when people genuinely believe in it as opposed to complying simply because they fear being arrested, prosecuted, and sanctioned.

Many of the same environmental conditions related to overpolicing also influence the level of dissatisfaction that residents of high-crime neighborhoods have with the police, leading to claims that certain kinds of neighborhoods are simultaneously over- and underpoliced, and confirming the complex nature of police–minority citizen relations. Allegations of underpolicing center around perceptions of poor service delivery (e.g., slow response times, discourtesy, displays of apathy) and a shared belief that the police are either unable or unwilling to control crime in disadvantaged, minority communities but are seemingly quite effective at doing so in more affluent neighborhoods (Anderson 1999, Bell 2017, Brunson 2007, Gau & Brunson 2010, Pattillo-McCoy 1999, Weitzer & Brunson 2009). Residents of distressed urban communities are sometimes inaccurately portrayed as tolerant of persistent crime and disorder (Drakulich & Crutchfield 2013, Sampson & Bartusch 1998). To the contrary, people of color living in challenging conditions often report feeling unprotected and unsafe, insisting upon more effective public safety initiatives. Moreover, in addition to reporting grave concerns about their own well-being, minority citizens are equally worried that those responsible for implementing crime-control strategies often fail to recognize their humanity, a dimension largely missing from the policing tradition. Indeed, analyses of interviews with black residents, police officers, and video recordings of police–civilian encounters suggest that race shapes police suspicion and bias during the earliest moments of police–civilian interactions, and encounters that begin over seemingly minor infractions, such as jaywalking, can sometimes end with police use of force (Jones 2016).

Unfortunately, the intentional association of blacks with dangerousness (i.e., criminality) has been an enduring feature of American life (Drakulich & Siller 2015). While it is unsettling to consider that everyday citizens might hold this view, it is perhaps even more troubling to consider that criminal justice system decision-makers might, unbeknownst to even themselves, hold racially biased beliefs (Banks et al. 2006). Moreover, because of their reprehensible nature, blatantly discriminatory acts receive considerable attention, allowing for public denouncing and corrective measures. On the other hand, implicit bias operates at a subconscious level, making it difficult to know when and under what conditions we are at risk of being swayed by our preconceived views about others. Because individuals, including police officers, are not aware of their implicit biases does not mean that unconscious prejudice is harmless.

Social psychologists have produced an influential stream of research demonstrating how implicit bias potentially influences various criminal justice outcomes (e.g., SQF, police use of force, sentencing decisions). Jennifer Eberhardt and colleagues' (2004) research team discovered that after being exposed to words associated with violent crime, their study participants, one group composed of white male undergraduate students and another of police officers serving an urban area, were more apt to look at black as opposed to white faces. Furthermore, officers receiving the criminal behavior prime, and who incorrectly remembered black male faces, were inclined to select photographs of persons having more stereotypically black facial characteristics than the images of black faces that they were actually shown. Thus, the more stereotypically black an individual's face, the greater the likelihood that officers associated the image with crime. The results of these experiments, although produced in controlled settings, suggest that officers' decisions regarding who to watch, stop, arrest, and shoot might perhaps be influenced by the physical traits they tend to associate with criminality. Analyses of police body-cam footage also reveal evidence of implicit bias—in particular, that officers treat black community members less respectfully than whites during everyday traffic stops (Voigt et al. 2017).

The ability to lawfully detain suspicious persons is the hallmark of several order-maintenance policing strategies (Fagan & Davies 2000, Spitzer 1999). While undeniably an important tool

for officers, these tactics also have the potential to expose law-abiding citizens to frequent and unwelcome police contacts. SQF stops require merely that police have reasonable suspicion that "criminal activity may be afoot" (*Terry v. Ohio* 1968, p. 30). However, a higher legal standard, probable cause, is needed before an officer is justified in making an arrest. Thus, reasonable suspicion provides officers legal standing to temporarily disrupt suspicious persons' movements and, if warranted, conduct protective frisks, despite not yet having probable cause to make an arrest. While officers might be acting within the confines of the law when they decide to detain, interrogate, and search individuals that they deem suspicious, police administrators should be very mindful of the potential for widespread abuse. In fact, the indiscriminate and unbridled use of SQF tactics has consistently been found to undermine citizen confidence (Brunson 2007, Gau & Brunson 2010, Weitzer & Brunson 2009). Irrespective of whether aggressive policing initiatives are legally permissible, citizen views of unequal treatment at the hands of police have dire consequences for already weakened police–minority community relations.

These problematic practices and the mistrust they engender may make crime problems worse. First, they may make citizens less likely to report crimes or cooperate with the police. For instance, when black citizens see the police as racially biased, they are far less likely to expect that their calls for help will elicit quick responses or be taken seriously (Bobo & Thompson 2006). Similarly, after the assault of an unarmed black man in Milwaukee received media attention, residents of local black neighborhoods were far less likely to call 911 to report crimes (Desmond et al. 2016). Second, mistrust of the police may harm other tools that otherwise help control local crime. A lack of faith in the police makes people feel less safe in their own communities (Drakulich 2013)—something that leads residents to withdraw from neighborhood social life or even flee the neighborhood altogether (e.g., Miethe 1995, Skogan 1995)—both of which harm the area's capacity for social capital and collective efficacy, important tools for controlling crime (Coleman 1990, Sampson et al. 1997). This effect may also be more direct: A lack of confidence in the ability of the police to control crime makes residents believe that other informal social controls are also less effective—in fact, this helps explain lower capacities for informal social control in neighborhoods with more black residents (Drakulich & Crutchfield 2013; see also Kirk & Matsuda 2011). Finally, a lack of faith in the police may lead directly to crime. Vulnerable residents of high-violence areas may feel the need to take responsibility for their own personal safety by developing a tough reputation, picking fights, and carrying a gun (Anderson 1999). Recent work describes this as legal cynicism—a cultural orientation in which the law and its agents of control are viewed as ineffective and illegitimate—something that makes people feel freer to violate the law (Kirk & Papachristos 2011).

Communities of color want effective policing; many face real dangers from crime and do not have other places to turn for help (Bell 2016, Hagan et al. 2018). However, these communities—like all communities—also want to be taken seriously; treated with respect rather than suspicion; and not subjected to aggressive, harsh, and seemingly indiscriminate policing tactics (e.g., Bobo & Thompson 2006, Brunson 2007, Weitzer & Brunson 2009).

REDUCING RACIAL HARMS IN POLICING

There are no simple answers to the complex, multilevel problems outlined above. The available scientific evidence suggests that the relationship between race and violent offending varies substantially across ecological contexts. Within disadvantaged neighborhoods, serious violence is highly concentrated among a very small group of highly active offenders who largely commit their crimes at very specific locations. Unfortunately, popular discourse on race and crime differences tends to be poorly conceptualized and highly reactionary. Indeed, some compelling evidence suggests that racial disparities in the administration of justice involve political responses to community

and national constructions of moral panics. As Tonry (1995) suggests, the politically charged war on drugs in the late 1980s and early 1990s can be viewed as racially discriminatory in its intent and consequences given its legislative and budgetary emphasis on a specific type of drug (crack cocaine), largely associated with disadvantaged black neighborhoods. As conflict theorists argue, close attention to how crime is defined and how crime problems are socially constructed is essential in the study of racial differences in crime and understanding the nature of racial disparities in criminal justice (Chambliss 1995, Goode & Ben-Yehuda 1994).

The Need for Better Data on and More Sophisticated Analyses of Crime Problems

Poor analyses and inappropriate descriptions of urban violent crime problems can lead to the adoption of problematic policing policies and programs that exacerbate racial disparities in the criminal justice system and diminish confidence and trust in its institutions. Moreover, careless discussions of the nature of urban violence can further alienate law-abiding black residents who need and desperately want to partner with the police and other governmental institutions to create safer communities. For instance, as Braga & Brunson (2015) suggest, the term black-on-black violence, while statistically correct, is a simplistic and emotionally charged definition of urban violence that can be problematic when used by political commentators, politicians, and police executives. To most urban black residents who are not involved in violence or criminal behavior, the term invokes visions of indiscriminate and aggressive police enforcement responses applied to a broad range of black people. The term also seems to marginalize serious urban violence as a black problem that, in the minds of some black residents, may only receive a cursory response or, worse yet, be ignored by police departments entirely.

An important step in enhancing society's ability to diagnose, understand, and respond to race differences in crime and racial disparities in policing would involve the improved collection of race and ethnicity data. Throughout this essay, we focus largely on black and white comparisons. This crude categorization stems from a lack of crime data that consistently classify information for Hispanics and non-Hispanics as well as for Asians and Native Americans (Lauritsen & Sampson 1998). Investments need to be made in criminal justice data collection systems that facilitate our understanding of differences across a more refined set of race and ethnicity categories. More nuanced theoretical and policy-relevant insights on race and crime differences have been developed by the limited data that do exist. Immigrants have long been accused of disproportionate involvement in criminal and disorderly behavior. However, a growing body of research suggests that neighborhoods characterized by larger concentrations of immigrants, such as Latinos and Asians, tend to have lower levels of violence, controlling for other factors (see, e.g., Kubrin & Ishizawa 2012).

Policing policy debates could be better informed by more careful consideration of the connections between race and underlying ecological variations in neighborhood contexts. The extant research on the nature of urban crime problems suggests effective policing requires a focus on particular people and places. Thus, police departments should pursue strategies that are artfully tailored to specific risks such as hot spots, repeat victims, high-rate offenders, or gang hostilities (Braga 2008). However, how police departments choose to address these recurring problems may either improve or worsen their relationships with minority residents. Police departments can adopt crime prevention strategies that seek to engage the community in changing the underlying conditions, situations, and dynamics that cause violence to recur. Alternatively, police departments can simply put cops on dots through directed patrols or carry out enforcement blitzes aimed at potential offenders in high-violence areas. Unfortunately, these kinds of initiatives sometimes become

unfocused in practice, as entire neighborhoods can be defined as hot spot locations and young minority males simply enjoying public spaces can be regarded as would-be criminals (Brunson & Gau 2014).

Careful analysis can lead to clarity in describing urban violence patterns and thus improve police–minority community relations in at least two important ways (see Braga & Brunson 2015). First, police executives can better frame and communicate to constituents the true nature of serious violent crime problems. Second, careful analysis can lead to the development and implementation of effective and appropriately focused crime reduction strategies. The type of crime analysis work described above is well within the reach of most inner-city police departments. Inappropriate framing of urban criminal violence problems and the policies and practices that result constitute substantial obstacles for police departments and for minority communities struggling to solve these critical issues.

Problem-Solving to Reduce Enforcement and Surveillance in Proactive Policing

The US National Academies' Committee on Proactive Policing (Natl. Acad. Sci. Eng. Med. 2018, p. 1) defines proactive policing as referring to "all policing strategies that have as one of their goals the prevention or reduction of crime and disorder and that are not reactive in terms of focusing primarily on uncovering ongoing crime or on investigating or responding to crimes once they have occurred." The Committee concluded that proactive policing strategies do not inherently lead to officer misconduct. However, the Committee did identify specific proactive policing strategies as being at greater risk of possible violations of Fourth Amendment protections against illegal stops, searches, and seizures as well as violations of the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause prohibition against discrimination based on race, religion, national origin, and other personal characteristics. The risks of unconstitutional police practices were identified as especially relevant for SQF strategies that attempt to deter illegal gun carrying by supposed high-risk people, broken windows policing programs that increase misdemeanor arrests to control disorderly conditions associated with more serious crime problems, and hot spots policing interventions that use an aggressive practice of searches and seizures to deter criminal activity in specific places. As described above, numerous quantitative and qualitative studies have identified concerning racial disparities associated with these kinds of efforts.

The existing body of scientific evidence on proactive policing programs generally does not consider how these crime reduction and community perception impacts might vary with the racial composition of communities, the police, and police leadership. Future research studies need to consider how these kinds of racial variations might influence the effectiveness of proactive policing programs. There are a few exceptions, however. During the mid-1990s, an evaluation of the Chicago Police Department's community policing program found that attendance rates at police community meetings were highest in high-crime neighborhoods heavily populated by African Americans and that citizen perceptions of the police grew more positive for white and African American residents but did not change for Hispanic residents (Skogan & Hartnett 1997). The proactive policing programs described here tend to be implemented in disadvantaged minority communities suffering from serious crime problems, and as such, any harm reduction benefits or negative impacts would be experienced by the residents most directly exposed to these policing strategies.

Communities expect the police to control violence, and ineffective strategies will undoubtedly undermine police legitimacy (Tankebe 2013). Effective police crime prevention efforts are characterized by changing the perceptions of potential offenders of apprehension risk and modifying criminal opportunities (Nagin et al. 2015). While arrests are inevitable, the police should be oriented toward preventing crimes from happening in the first place. The adoption of

problem-oriented policing principles in designing and implementing proactive crime prevention strategies can help safeguard against the use of overly harsh and indiscriminate enforcement tactics. Problem-oriented policing is a proactive crime prevention strategy that seeks to identify the underlying causes of crime problems and to frame appropriate responses using a wide variety of innovative approaches (Goldstein 1979). The approach challenges police officers to analyze the causes of problems 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. Importantly, problem-oriented policing encourages police officers to think about alternative approaches to crime prevention rather than simply relying on increased surveillance, arrests, and the prosecution of offenders. The available evaluation evidence suggests that problem-oriented policing is an effective crime reduction strategy in its own right (Weisburd et al. 2010) and may enhance the crime-control efficacy of broken windows policing and hot spots policing strategies.

A recent systematic review of rigorous program evaluations suggests that the types of broken windows strategies used by police departments to control disorder seem to matter (Braga et al. 2015). Zero-tolerance order-maintenance strategies that target enforcement actions on individual disorderly behaviors did not generate significant crime reductions. In contrast, community problem-solving approaches that seek to change social and physical disorder conditions at particular places produced significant crime reductions. These findings suggest that, when considering broken windows policing approaches, police departments should adopt a community coproduction model rather than drift toward a zero-tolerance policing model, which focuses on a subset of social incivilities, such as drunken people, rowdy teens, and street vagrants, and seeks to remove them from the street via arrest (Taylor 2001). In devising and implementing appropriate strategies to deal with a full range of disorder problems, police must rely on citizens, city agencies, and others in numerous ways. Disorder reduction is rooted in a tradition of stable relationships with the community and responsiveness to local concerns. A sole commitment to increasing misdemeanor arrests stands a good chance of undermining relationships in low-income, urban communities of color, where coproduction is most needed and distrust between the police and citizens is most profound.

Furthermore, evaluation evidence finds that hot spots policing programs do generate crime reductions and that these crime-control benefits diffuse into areas immediately surrounding targeted areas (Braga et al. 2014). What is more, Braga and his colleagues (2014) found that problem-oriented policing interventions generated larger crime reduction impacts when compared to interventions that simply increase levels of traditional police actions in crime hot spots. Police presence in crime hot spots can change offender perceptions of risk without generating mass arrests or subjecting large numbers of people to unwarranted stops. While in these places, police can engage problem-oriented strategies to change the physical and spatial characteristics, such as poor lighting, abandoned buildings, disorderly bars, and the like, that attract potential offenders. These kinds of preventive strategies can reduce the number of young minority men ensnarled in the criminal justice system and, in turn, could diminish the harms associated with mass incarceration in these vulnerable communities.

Problem-oriented policing concepts can also be applied to economize on the use of enforcement in crime-control strategies targeting repeat offenders, gangs, and other kinds of criminally active groups. Focused deterrence strategies are firmly rooted in the problem-oriented policing model and use analysis to ensure that interventions are focused on the small number of high-risk people who generate the bulk of urban crime problems (Braga et al. 2001). Evaluation evidence suggests that focused deterrence is effective at controlling violent crime problems (Braga et al. 2018b). These strategies seek to change offender behavior by understanding underlying

crime-producing dynamics and conditions that sustain recurring conditions and implementing an appropriately focused blended strategy of law enforcement, community mobilization, and social service actions (Kennedy 2011). Direct communications of increased enforcement risks and the availability of social service assistance to target groups and individuals are defining characteristics of focused deterrence strategies. Following the focused deterrence model, high-risk people, such as gang members, can be warned of the enforcement consequences associated with continued violent behavior and advised to take advantage of the services and opportunities being offered to them. In the eyes of community members, there is an inherent fairness in offering targeted offenders a choice and providing resources to support their transition away from violent behavior rather than simply arresting and prosecuting them.

Police Legitimacy, Community Policing, and Procedural Justice

Police legitimacy is generally regarded as a view among community members that police departments play an appropriate role in implementing rules governing public conduct. Police depend heavily on the public to execute their law enforcement duties successfully (Meares & Kahan 1998, Tyler 2006). Multiple factors, such as the fair distribution of police resources, police crime-control effectiveness, and procedural fairness, have been shown to be associated with citizen perceptions of police legitimacy (Bottoms & Tankebe 2012, Jackson & Bradford 2009). Procedural justice focuses on how the police treat citizens in their everyday encounters. When citizens view the police as trustworthy, they are more likely to support officers having a wider range of discretion, defer to officer authority, and comply with requests (Sunshine & Tyler 2003, Tyler 2006). The process-based model of police legitimacy suggests that when police are perceived to make fair decisions and treat people with respect, they will be viewed as legitimate authorities (Tyler 2003). As a result, the police will enjoy enhanced citizen cooperation and compliance with the law. A series of studies have found support for key components of the process-based model of police legitimacy (see, e.g., Mastrofski et al. 1996, Mazerolle et al. 2013, Tyler & Wakslak 2004). Police officers should embrace procedural justice principles in their interactions with all citizens.

Community policing should be the foundation of any police-led violence reduction strategy. Community policing strategies attempt to address and mitigate community crime and disorder problems by working with the community to build resilience, collective efficacy, and social infrastructure for the coproduction of public safety (Natl. Acad. Sci. Eng. Med. 2018). While community policing programs have not been found to be effective in reducing crime, they have generated positive effects on citizen satisfaction, perceptions of disorder, and police legitimacy (Gill et al. 2014). Moreover, community engagement strategies implemented as part of community policing initiatives can provide important input to help focus problem-oriented policing, hot spots policing, and focused deterrence approaches, which do seem to reduce violence (Natl. Acad. Sci. Eng. Med. 2018). Developing close relationships with community members would help the police to gather information about crime and disorder problems, understand the nature of these problems, and solve specific crimes. Community members can also help with key components of strategies tailored to specific problems by making improvements to the physical environment and through informal social control of high-risk people. In this way, police strategies focusing on particular people and places would cease to be a form of profiling and instead become a generator of community engagement projects. Indeed, a central idea in community policing is to engage residents so they can exert more control over situations and dynamics that contribute to their own potential for victimization and, by doing so, influence neighborhood levels of violence.

Preventing violence by addressing underlying violent crime–producing situations and dynamics reduces harm to potential victims as well as harm to would-be offenders by not relying solely

on arrests and prosecution actions (Braga 2016). Community engagement in developing appropriately focused strategies would help to safeguard against indiscriminate and overly aggressive enforcement tactics and other harmful policing activities, which erode the community's trust and confidence in the police and inhibit cooperation. Collaborative partnerships between police and community members improve the transparency of law enforcement actions and provide residents with a much-needed voice in crime prevention work. Ongoing conversations with the community can ensure that day-to-day police–citizen interactions are conducted in a procedurally just manner that enhances community trust and compliance with the law.

Given the powerful role of neighborhood conditions on race differences in violent behavior and victimization, one clear set of policy implications involves increased community social organization to prevent violence. The key idea here is to change places rather than people. Underlying social and structural characteristics of neighborhoods can be addressed through a variety of interventions such as diminishing economic deprivation through local investment incentives, rehabilitating deteriorating housing, promoting stable housing, ameliorating social and physical disorder, enhancing municipal services, dispersing concentrated public housing, and building human capital through neighborhood-based child development strategies (Sampson 2011). These kinds of community investments can help to reverse concentrated disadvantage and stabilize neighborhoods. The police can serve as key initiators and partners in stimulating these kinds of broader social policy changes.

Neighborhood violence can also be addressed by improving the social organization and capacity of residents to exert informal social control over public spaces. The presence of community-based organizations, which draw membership from individuals from within and outside specific neighborhoods, predicts collective efficacy and collective civic action (Sampson 2012). These organizations, which include community newspapers, family planning clinics, alcohol/drug treatment centers, counseling or mentoring services (e.g., Big Brother), neighborhood watch, and other local agencies, typically act to ensure the well-being of larger community areas. For instance, Sampson (2011, p. 226) suggested that the key to fostering informal social controls and collective efficacy "is to increase positive connections among youth and adults in the community" and recommends initiatives such as parent involvement in after-school and nighttime youth programs, adult youth mentoring systems, and organized supervision of leisure time youth activities. These community-based organizations can be potent crime prevention partners for the police.

CONCLUSION

More than 50 years ago, reflecting on the 1965 Watts riots, Municipal Judge Loren Miller cast light on the wellspring of mutual distrust between police and black citizens (Reddick 1965). An examination of events triggering the Watts riots offers keen insights for making sense of contemporary strained relationships between police and black communities. In particular, following the arrest and alleged beating of Marquette Frye, a 21-year-old black male motorist, several days of rioting resulted in dozens of deaths, hundreds of injuries, and property damage exceeding $100 million. While the historical significance of the Watts riots is clear, modern protests following questionable police actions involving black suspects demonstrate that black citizens' deep-seated feelings of mistrust persist. Some police administrators might question the extent to which communities of color also bear responsibility for repairing frayed relationships with the police. Disadvantaged urban neighborhoods, where blacks disproportionately reside, lack the immense social and political capital required to marshal change. Police departments, conversely, are formal organizations with established command structures, policies, and mechanisms that, if effectively leveraged, could be

geared toward strengthening police–minority community relations (Chevigny 1995, Mastrofski et al. 2002). Therefore, it seems fitting that American police departments should lead the way toward establishing a more equitable criminal justice system.

Looking toward the future, we believe that there are some reasons to be cautiously optimistic. The research evidence reviewed here suggests that so-called high-risk places, high-risk people strategies can actually improve police legitimacy when they are coupled with a strong commitment to community partnership. Community policing is a well-established guiding philosophy in police policy circles. Nevertheless, we believe that modern police departments need to reinvigorate their efforts to embrace the key principles of this important strategic orientation toward their work in all communities. In a community like Ferguson, where mistrust of law enforcement is deep-seated, it may be very difficult to establish strong police–citizen relationships that can lead to much-needed enhanced police legitimacy. Immediate reforms, such as a short-term unilateral reduction in investigatory stops (Young & Petersilia 2016), could be used to smooth the transition to community policing. While not a panacea for police–community relations problems, the introduction of body-worn cameras seems to reduce citizen complaints and reports of police use of force (Ariel et al. 2015, Braga et al. 2018a). The adoption of body-worn cameras should be accompanied by police department policies that facilitate the appropriate public viewing of captured video footage to generate the desired enhancements to transparency and police accountability (see Friedman 2017). Police executives should consider these approaches as possible means to initiate better working relationships in communities characterized by persistently low levels of trust and confidence in the police.

In sum, it matters how we police spaces, especially along racial lines. The path to changing how we police requires an answer to the question of why we have historically pursued the policing policies and strategies that we have. If current practices exist merely because of an innocent ignorance of the harms they cause and the availability of alternative strategies, then the clear identification of those harms and better alternatives—both of which have been accomplished by the work summarized in this article—will suffice.

On the other hand, the racially problematic history and contemporary practices of American policing suggest that the issues may be rooted in more than mere ignorance. In addition to the biased legal and police practices described above, communities of color are subject to an interlocking system of disparities and bias in a broader system, including schools; health care; and the labor, housing, consumer, and credit markets (e.g., Pager & Shepherd 2008), a phenomenon Barbara Reskin (2012) has referred to as uber- or metadiscrimination. If all of these policies and practices work together to help maintain the existing racial hierarchy (e.g., Peterson & Krivo 2010), then the path to implementing these police reforms is more complicated (e.g., Bell 2017, Vitale 2017) and requires a direct challenge to that hierarchy and the structures that preserve it.

While this work will be difficult, it is also urgently necessary. The policing paradox—that impoverished communities of color feel simultaneously over- and underpoliced—has and continues to produce tragic consequences. The central tragedy is that these communities that are subject to the most aggressive and harmful policing strategies, and who have the least confidence in the police, are also the most dependent on their services. Despite high levels of legal cynicism and estrangement, residents of racially isolated and disadvantaged places continue to call the police to seek help. This is true even when these calls expose partners and children to potentially harmful police contact (Bell 2016), and in fact, calls appear to increase as neighborhoods experience greater levels of racial isolation, incarceration, and economic stressors (Hagan et al. 2018). This overreliance on the police in the absence of alternative strategies highlights the moral imperative to better serve and protect the nation's most vulnerable populations.

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