

Reimagining American policing

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We are living in a time of crisis and reforming policing is one of a set of pressing national problems. There are large-scale protests about the current model of American policing and unfortunately such unrest has been part of a recurring cycle of questionable police conduct followed by public outrage, leading to promises of reform which do not happen, leading to another questionable use of force and more outrage. It is unclear how much change of any type can be accomplished in the current climate.

At such a time it might seem counterproductive to question a focus on any form of police reform and trying to hold police officers more effectively accountable for their actions is a way forward. Some of the reforms being pushed to address accountability---a national database for bad officers, changing the qualified immunity standard and requiring body worn cameras---are good ideas and their widespread adoption would be a valuable reform. My goal here is to suggest that it is important to think beyond these immediate changes to talk about how to make basic cultural change.

The problem of the police use of force is not simply an issue of a few rotten apples among police officers. As a first step it is important to have effective mechanisms for responding to instances of the police use of force, and officers who behave with excessive force should be sanctioned and, when appropriate, fired or even jailed. However, it is equally important to recognize that the issues shaping problems in American policing are deeper. While the lethal use of force under questionable circumstances catches the attention of the public, these events reflect the most extreme examples of problems that flow from the organization of policing in America, i.e. its goals, strategies, policies and practices. They influence how the police deal with everyone in the community even when they do not lead to the lethal use of force by police officers. These deeper underlying issues need to be recognized and addressed. We need to change the way the

police define their jobs: what they view their missions as being. The few bad actors that are the focus of public outrage are outliers in being examples of a style of policing that involves most police officers and impacts on most Americans. We need to change that style. Our focus should be on organizational and cultural changes that influence all officers.

Consider the immediate issue of the police use of force. Studies show that most complaints are centered around a few officers who are repeat offenders. Raising legal standards for the use of force, making officers accountable (changing qualified immunity), and keeping a national database of fired officers are valuable reforms for beginning to address the challenge of problem officers. If these changes are adopted, is the policing problem in America addressed? I would argue no.

The issue in American policing today is that officers are generally trained in one skill set. They deploy force to compel compliance. This skill set is a mismatch to many of the problems officers deal with. It is not helpful in many settings and can make problems worse because it introduces tensions into many situations in which de-escalation is the most desirable course of action. Situations are defined as involving dominance through controlling people and settings, something which provokes anger and resistance. This is especially true in minority communities where trust is low, but is broadly true of policing interactions. There are many situations which do not result in the police use of lethal force but which are not managed as well as they might be because the police do not have a skill set suitable for the issues involved.

In addition to contributing to difficulties within particular interactions the force based policing style is problematic because it does not build trust in the police. Studies indicate that a substantial number of Americans distrust their local police department and that that this distrust is much higher in minority communities. The actions of the police have not generally built trust

and, in fact, are often found to lower police legitimacy both among those they deal with and in the community more generally. Low trust is a problem because research suggests that distrust promotes criminal activity and undermines cooperation. Leaving the current model of policing in place does not address this issue. The current style of policing will always be self-justifying because it does not create the type of community climate that requires force based policing, one in which people do not voluntarily follow the law and cooperate in maintaining social order.

An extension of this argument is that the current style of policing does not promote community development. America is in a period of low crime. This is the perfect opportunity to shift toward a focus upon addressing the underlying community problems of which crime is a symptom, e.g. problems such as inadequate job opportunities, poor schools, poverty, and poor health care. Central to addressing these problems is encouraging residents to engage in their communities socially, economically and politically. Studies show that the police can contribute to such efforts by helping to create a climate of safety and reassurance. However, the current style of policing does not do that. Police leaders say that “you cannot arrest your way out of crime”, recognizing that the long-term solution to crime is more viable and vital communities. Current models of policing do not effectively pivot the police toward supporting efforts at engaging people in communities, so police resources are not being deployed in ways that facilitate this long-term goal. Again, this style of policing is self-justifying in that substandard social and economic conditions are incubators for crime, leading to the need for the police to control that crime.

The fact that the police are not organized in ways that facilitate community development combines with the reality that large chunks of the municipal budget of many cities are devoted to

supporting the police department. Although crime rates have dropped to historically low levels, but police budgets have not generally declined.

What is to be done? There are several possibilities. One is repurpose the police so that they are more effective in building communities. The other is to downsize the police and reallocate municipal resources. To address these changes we need to rethink policing.

It is sadly ironic that the United States, which claims to be devoted to democratic governance through the rule of law, has a long tradition of policing through force. The shape of that policing is not the product of a conscious and deliberate articulation of what Americans believe the connection between the police and the community ought to look like. Instead, the police have evolved through a series of informal arrangements for managing immediate problems of disorder. Today American policing is a patchwork of city, county, state and Federal authorities. American policing is composed of around 18,000 local police forces, most of which have only a small number of officers. And, as has been true historically, these forces are under the local control of community and state authorities (mayors; town councils; city managers; governors).

The current crisis is an opportunity. It can raise fundamental questions about the meaning of democratic policing. This is also potentially a pivotal moment in criminal justice because the crime rate is at historically low levels. This has led to greater openness to reexamining our models of policing. People disagree about what is good or bad and what changes should be made, but there is broad recognition that policing needs to be reconsidered. Because people feel lower levels of fear of crime, they are more open to addressing the need for police accountability.

What makes this a particularly important moment for policing is the lack of a crisis. During the period 1960-1980 America experienced a crime wave. It led to both widespread fear

of crime victimization and to concerns about the damaging impact of crime and disorder on American cities. This crisis centered around serious violent and drug related crimes. As a response American police forces built up their numbers and concentrated their mission on fighting violent crime.

Since that time the violent crime rate has consistently declined. Today the crime rate much lower than what it was in 1980. If we consider the rate of two representative crimes – murder and burglary—we see that there was a peak in crimes around 1980 and the crime rate today has dropped down to levels found in the 1960’s. This is true across major cities and even cities such as Chicago which continue to be in the news for violent crimes have much lower rates than they did in the 1980’s.

Declines in crime are important because they mean that fear of crime is not a core issue on the public’s mind. Appeals to the goal of crime reduction to rally the public are less compelling when crime is low and people are more open to considering changes in the criminal justice system. As an example, the ACLU Campaign for Smart Justice conducted a national survey in 2017 and found “near consensus support for criminal justice reform, including reducing the prison population, reinvesting in rehabilitation and treatment, and eliminating policies like mandatory minimums”. Further, only one in three Americans indicated that they believed that Black people receive fair treatment from the criminal justice system. In the case of the police, a PEW survey conducted in 2016 found that 60% of Americans think that police fatal shootings of Blacks reflect a “bigger problem”, while a 2020 Washington Post poll of Americans (June, 2020) found that this proportion had grown to 69% of Americans who thought the George Floyd death was a symptom of broader problems in law enforcement. The Washington Post survey found that 74% of Americans favored public protests about policing. The June 2020 PEW

survey found that 66% of Americans believe that members of the public should be allowed to sue the police for the excessive use of force (i.e. favored changing qualified immunity).

This may be a time when change is possible. A July 2020 PEW survey found that 93% of Americans believe that the police should be trained in nonviolent techniques, 89% that there should be a Federal database of officers accused of misconduct, 75% favor civilian oversight boards and 74% favor banning chokeholds/strangleholds. These are all valuable reforms that address the immediate issue of police misconduct that have led to the demonstrations which have been occurring in America today. However, this analysis will argue that it is equally important to think beyond these immediate fixes toward a more fundamental reconceptualization of policing in America.

What is the current policing style?

In the period 1970-1990 America had very high crime rates. This included both murder and property crimes, such as burglary. During these crime wave decades all of the criminal justice system was dominated by a focus on controlling crime by command and control models. These models concentrate resources in the police and push it out across communities through a projection of force and by creating the perceived risk of being caught and punished for wrongdoing. In particular, the police monitored suspect communities in an effort to stop violent crimes and arrest and punish criminals.

An important change in policing occurred at this time. The police developed an increasingly proactive orientation toward crime, trying to prevent it rather than solving crimes that had already occurred. This change was supported by the use of metrics such as information about where crime was occurring, which allowed to the police to rapidly deploy officers in ways that addressed real time crime issues. the police have increasingly adopted the mission of

proactively preventing crime. Policing favor a multitude of preemptive policing models—variably labelled “proactive policing,” “community policing,” “quality-of-life policing,” “broken windows,” “problem- solving policing,” “focused deterrence,” and increasingly, algorithm-based “predictive policing” or “hot- spot policing”. Implementing these has meant that police have had an intensified presence in many urban communities of color (e.g., Braga and Weisburd 2010; Fagan et al. 2010; Meares 2014). Today police chiefs are held to account for the crime rate, irrespective of whether they catch and punish those who commit crimes. Strikingly, today success is not measured by crimes solved, but crimes that occur.

When the police seek to prevent crimes they recognize the need to enhance policies through which they intervene proactively, something which has led to a series of ever broader policies for police initiated engagement with people in the community. New York City is a good example. The “broken windows” performance based model encouraged the police to proactively target community “deviants” to show responsiveness to community resident’s concerns about crime. This was transformed into a zero tolerance model of policing, in which the police broadened their target to those in the community committing minor life-style crimes. And finally, the police embarked on a general crime suppression model in which they stopped broad segments of the community seeking evidence of criminal activity, such as the possession of weapons or drugs. At each stage a greater proportion of those in the community had involuntary contact with the police, and the percentage of those involved who were committing a crime declined.

The misconception that has shaped much of modern policing, and criminal justice more generally is that by controlling the level of crime, the authorities build public trust. This has led the police to focus primarily on metrics of crime control. If, for example, the police stop 100

people on the street and find one gun, that is viewed as a crime control success. The fact that 99 people who were not breaking the law were stopped and searched is not relevant to that performance metric. The commonsense assumption the harm reduction via crime control builds popular legitimacy is not supported by evidence. This is illustrated by the finding that, while crime has dropped dramatically, police legitimacy has not risen. Studies show this as well, finding that people's views about police effectiveness in managing crime are not a major factor shaping trust in the police.

The acceptance of the performance model by police authorities makes sense psychologically. It concentrates power and resources in the hands of the police, reinforcing their conception of policing as involving professional skills. Recent psychological research on judgment and decision-making highlights how people exaggerate their competence and their moral superiority. This leads them to overestimate the capacity for making good decisions and managing problems. A top down command and control model connects well with these cognitive "illusions". And, research shows that these biases are heightened among those in positions of power, as is insensitivity to the concerns of those in low power positions.

Two things are true of this period. First, crime has steadily dropped. This is due to a combined effort of the police, private security forces, and groups within communities. Second, trust in the police has not risen as crime has declined.

What should be done?

One important step in changing policing is to change the conception of policing, moving away from officers defining themselves through a warrior image and based within a police force to officers who have a guardian image and who are housed in a police service. Central to this reimagining is changing from a force-based style to legitimacy-based policing.

Legitimacy is the property of an authority that leads people to accept and follow their directives and the laws they enforce. In the popular literature people often refer to legitimacy as trust and confidence.

The beginnings in a shift in thinking about policing are shown in a 2004 report from the National Academy of Sciences (Skogan & Frydl, 2004), which advocated the study of popular legitimacy as a key future focus for American policing. The review detailed a set of evidence suggesting that the police are increasingly professional and that there are more effective police departments. There are also more sophisticated policing practices ([Skogan & Frydl, 2004](#)). However the report noted that despite these changes in policing public distrust in the police remained high, especially in Black communities.

Around the same time the highly influential Kennedy School of Government Executive Policing Sessions held a national forum on legitimacy in policing in addition to developing reports advocating legitimacy-based approaches under the general rubric of community policing. Community policing strategies include a police focus on how the community views the police and police policies and practices and on building cooperative relationships with people in the community. At the core of the philosophy of community policing is the premise that effective policing is a result of developing strong and positive relationships between officers and the people in the communities they serve.

This issue also received national visibility around the 2009 arrest of Harvard Professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. at his home by Police Sergeant James Crowley of the Cambridge, Massachusetts Police Department. The incident drew national and international attention, in part because the entire event seemed unnecessary. It seemed that the dispute could have easily been resolved on the spot by the officer and the civilian, but that did not happen and a series of more

serious consequences ensued for both parties. Further, observers provided a variety of explanations for what had occurred so the “facts” were confusing. Because Sergeant is White and Professor Gates is Black, the arrest immediately raised questions about racial bias in policing, an issue that Professor Gates himself immediately raised. And in the face of the confusing facts studies suggested race based differences in public views about who was “at fault”.

Cambridge Police Commissioner Robert Haas responded to the incident in a way that suggested sensitivity to the concepts of legitimacy and procedural justice. An independent outside panel of experts was convened to identify the lessons that all might learn from the incident, including police agencies across the nation. The final report of the Cambridge Review Committee was filled with references to the concepts of legitimacy and one chapter explored how these concepts must, but can, be balanced with tactical and officer-safety issues (*Missed Opportunities, Shared Responsibilities: Final Report of the Cambridge Review Committee*, 2010).

The Cambridge Review Committee members believe that the encounter between Sergeant Crowley and Professor Gates resonated with many law enforcement officers and members of the public because it implicated the concept of “legitimacy” in the field of policing, criminal justice, and other institutions that exert authority over people. The report recognized that citizens inevitably form their own opinions about whether they view the actions of an officer as measured or excessive, as impartial or discriminatory, as fair or unfair. In short, they will ask: Did the officer exercise his or her discretion in a fair manner? And, as the evidence presented here indicates a key factor determining whether the public considers police enforcement legitimate is whether police treat people fairly.

The Gates incident was important because it reinforced research showing that even a simple and brief encounter can build legitimacy. For example, officers in one study built around a checkpoint with stops to detect drunken driving found that if officers followed a simple protocol that involved explaining their stop policies, soliciting input about police policies in the community through reactions to a police newsletter, expressing concern for the community (“We do not like to have to go to homes and tell people that members of their family have been injured in a drunk driving accident.”) and finding ways to communicate respect (“Thanks for your cooperation,” “Thanks for wearing your seat belt,” etc.), these enforcement encounters could be used to build police legitimacy in the community. These encounters lasted 2-5 minutes but still impacted views about the police in the person’s community.

This highly visible and influential report is one of the first discussions of legitimacy in policing on the national stage. also highlighted a key issue in implementation: the effort to balance concerns of legitimacy versus tactical and safety considerations. Once officers have assured themselves that someone with whom they are dealing is not a danger (for example, by searching them for weapons) or is not an active lawbreaker, they have an opportunity to build trust by explaining the reasons for their actions, showing appreciation for the citizen’s cooperation and generally trying to leave the citizen with a favorable view of the police and their actions. To quote former Chicago Superintendent McCarthy: “First secure the situation, and then sell the stop” (personal communication, March 21, 2014). The key point is that officers need to look beyond the immediate goal of making appropriate law enforcement decisions to include the more general issues of building public support as an element in being a professional police officer.

At the federal level, under the Obama administration the national Community Oriented Policing Solutions (COPS) agency held a series of meetings with police leaders advocating legitimacy-based policing. Last year, one national association of police chiefs (the Police Executive Research Forum) had a plenary session on legitimacy, while an international association (the International Association of Chiefs of Police, IACP) had panels on the topic. At the meeting of the IACP, Attorney General Holder gave a keynote address in which he said:

We can start by recognizing that compliance with the law begins not with the fear of arrest or even of incarceration, but with respect for the institutions that guide our democracy. A substantial body of research tells us that when those who come into contact with the police feel that they are treated fairly, they are more likely to accept decisions by the authorities, obey the law, and cooperate with law enforcement in the future—even if they disagree with specific outcomes. Across the country, countless IACP members and their colleagues are applying groundbreaking research in procedural justice, implicit bias, and truth telling to the jurisdictions they serve. I'm proud to report that the Justice Department is supporting this work through our COPS office and the Office of Justice Programs. In many places, these collaborative efforts to provide training on procedural justice, to promote reconciliation, and to improve interactions with police and young people of color are already showing tremendous promise.

As the attorney general noted, these efforts have been supported by government-sponsored grants from the COPS agency, the Bureau of Justice Assistance, and the Office of Justice Program to design training curricula and conduct-demonstration programs. Those training curricula now include training for line officers, sergeants, and commanders. At this point, the psychological literature on legitimacy and procedural justice is the model being used in creating

the newest national-level model of policing. Most recently, the Department of Justice funded a six-city national initiative to implement these new models of training.

When a Federal judge in the US District Court for the Southern District of New York limited police stops in New York City the judge argued that:

While it is true that any one stop is a limited intrusion in duration and deprivation of liberty, each stop is also a demeaning and humiliating experience. No one should live in fear of being stopped whenever he or she leaves home to go about the activities of daily life. Those who are routinely subjected to stops are overwhelmingly people of color, and they are justifiably troubled to be singled out when many of them have done nothing to attract the unwanted attention. Some plaintiffs testified that stops make them feel unwelcome in some parts of the city and distrustful of the police. This alienation cannot be good for the police, the community, or its leaders. Fostering trust and confidence between the police and the community would be an improvement for everyone (U. S. Department of Justice, 2013, August 12).

The U.S. Justice Department filed a statement of interest arguing that overly aggressive policing tactics undermine public safety by reducing public willingness to cooperate with the police. The Justice Department statement said:

There is significant evidence that unlawfully aggressive police tactics are not only unnecessary for effective policing, but are in fact detrimental to the mission of crime reduction. Officers can only police safely and effectively if they maintain the trust and cooperation of the communities within which they work, but the public's trust and willingness to cooperate with the police are damaged when officers routinely fail to respect the rule of law. As systematic violations of civil rights erode public trust, policing

becomes more difficult, less safe, and less effective. Therefore, if the Court finds any constitutional deficiencies exist in NYPD's stop-and-frisk practices, the implementation of injunctive relief would promote, rather than hinder, NYPD's mission of safely and effectively fighting crime. (U.S. Department of Justice, 2013, June 12).

The culmination of these changes in conceptions of policing is the *Obama Task Force on 21st Century Policing* (2015). That report acknowledged this change in thinking about policing and suggested that building community trust in the police (i.e. police legitimacy) must be the first task of police forces (the 1st pillar of policing). Their report made building trust and legitimacy its first pillar of policing, calling it the "fundamental principle underlying the nature of relations between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve" (p. 1).

As the police often say, there needs to be a community trust bank, and rebuilding trust is a payment into that bank. This focus on popular legitimacy highlights a shift away from performance based policing and toward legitimacy based policing

Building and maintaining legitimacy: Procedural justice

A large body of evidence exists that can be drawn upon in efforts to build and maintain police legitimacy (Tyler, Goff & MacCoun, xxxx). Studies show that the primary issue that the public considers when evaluating the legitimacy of the police and courts is the fairness through which police officers and judges exercise their authority (i.e. procedural justice). This literature suggests strategies for police policies and practices. It also makes clear that it is possible to successfully organize policing around principles of public legitimacy.

Does it work?

The key question of concern in discussing the development and maintenance of legitimacy is whether procedural justice is a strong and consistent predictor of legitimacy.

Studies strongly support this suggestion.

A broad literature indicates that procedural justice shapes legitimacy and, either through legitimacy or directly, impacts on people's compliance, cooperation and engagement.

Sunshine & Tyler (2003) report the results of two surveys of New Yorkers. The first was conducted in 2001. A mail survey resulted in 586 respondents. The study found that both police legitimacy and risk estimates shaped compliance with the law. Legitimacy and evaluations of police performance in managing problems in the community influenced cooperation. Finally, he willingness to empower the police to manage responses to crime was influenced primarily by legitimacy. Instrumental variables had a secondary influence upon compliance, cooperation and engagement. However, legitimacy was somewhat more influential with compliance; much more influential with cooperation and the primary influence upon engagement. Legitimacy was most strongly responsive to procedural justice.

The second study in the Sunshine & Tyler (2003) paper was a telephone interview based sample of 1,653 respondents. The primary determinant of compliance was legitimacy, and neither risk estimates nor judgments about police performance were important. The same was trust for cooperation with the police. Empowerment of the police was primarily shaped by legitimacy and secondarily by evaluations of police performance. And, the primary factor shaping legitimacy was police procedural justice.

Tyler and Fagan (2008) collected data on a panel of New Yorkers. The first wave of interviews was in 2002 and involved the 1,653 residents discussed in Sunshine & Tyler (2003). A second wave of interviews was conducted one year later and created a sample of panel respondents (n = 830). Factor analysis distinguished compliance and cooperation. A panel analysis of cooperation indicated that legitimacy motivated helping the police and helping the

community. In the case of helping the police neither crime conditions nor risk of punishment motivated cooperation. Further analysis found that procedural justice was a central antecedent of legitimacy, with both quality of decision making and quality of interpersonal treatment showing distinct and significant influences.

Tyler and Jackson report upon the results of a 2012 national survey of Americans (Tyler & Jackson, 2014). This study is based upon a web-based questionnaire completed by 1,603 respondents. Legitimacy was an overall measure combining police, court and law and included measures of obligation; trust and confidence; and normative alignment. It was found that legitimacy; risk and police performance all shaped compliance; legitimacy shaped cooperation; and legitimacy shaped identification with communities (which impacted upon social; political; and economic engagement).

Tyler and Huo (1991) studied personal experiences and considered the antecedents of decision acceptance when people were stopped by the police and decision satisfaction with people called the police for help. In both cases the procedural justice of police actions shaped the willingness to defer to police authority and satisfaction with police responses to requests for assistance.

Tyler, Fagan and Geller (2015) conducted a similar study of the personal experiences of young men stopped by the NYPD. They found that procedural justice shaped legitimacy and influenced later law related behaviors. Tyler (xxxx) expanded this analysis using panel data and showed that even when you control for prior attitudes the procedural justice of experience influences post-experience legitimacy. This is true both for increases associated with procedural justice and declines following unfair experiences.

MacCoun (2005) notes that by now these findings “have been replicated [using] a wide

variety of methodologies (including panel surveys, psychometric work, and experimentation)” (p. 171). Donner, Maskaly, Fridell & Jennings (2015) review twenty-eight studies of the police and conclude that procedural justice during police interactions with the public positively influence public views of police legitimacy and trust in the police. Mazerolle, Sargeant, Cherney, Bennett, Murphy, Antrobus & Martin (2014) also conducted a meta-analysis on procedural justice effects. In reviewing community policing efforts that contain procedural justice elements, the authors found four studies exploring influence upon compliance/cooperation and report three significant relationships in the expected direction (p. 28). The authors conclude that procedural justice has positive effects upon perceived legitimacy, and that these jointly shape self-reported compliance/cooperation.

Two recent meta-analyses examine the procedural justice literature on the police and evaluate the impact of procedural justice on compliance (Walters & Bolger, 2018) and cooperation (Bolger & Walters, 2019). The studies found 196 effect sizes from 95 samples for compliance. These were correlational studies, some of which were longitudinal. The results suggest that procedural justice influences legitimacy, and legitimacy influences compliance. They also find that the direct link between procedural justice and compliance is weak. In the case of cooperation the studies reviewed 200 effect sizes from 88 samples. The results indicate that procedural justice influences legitimacy and cooperation. Legitimacy also directly influences cooperation.

In the case of assessing the impact of police contact on later willingness to cooperate with the police, Mazerolle and colleagues (2013) create a combined measure of self-reported behavior summarizing ongoing compliance and future willingness to cooperate. They evaluate five experimental studies that provide eight outcome measures.

In three of eight cases there is a significant influence of police intervention upon compliance/cooperation. Mazerolle and colleagues (2013, pg. 261) conclude that the results suggest that the “interventions had [a] large, significant, positive association with a combined measure of compliance and cooperation.”

Mazerolle, et al. (2014) contains an extended meta-analysis on procedural justice effects. In reviewing community policing efforts that contain procedural justice elements, the authors find four studies exploring influence upon compliance/cooperation and report three significant relationships in the expected direction (p. 28). With restorative justice conferencing, they find four studies examining influence on compliance/cooperation and four significant relationships (p. 29). The authors conclude that procedural justice has positive effects upon perceived legitimacy, and that these jointly shape self-reported compliance/cooperation.

Community vitality

Perhaps the most important reason to value police legitimacy in reimagining policing is that when the police are legitimate people within communities more actively engage in their communities and work to promote the social, economic and political well-being of their neighborhoods. In the long-run neighborhood vitality is the best weapon against crime and, more broadly, the best way to promote individual and societal well-being.

Even in an era of low crime the police can play an important role in their communities. However, to play this role they need to be viewed as legitimate, something that occurs when people feel that they and others in their community are treated fairly when they deal with the police.

Kochel (2012) studies the police in Trinidad and Tobago through interviews with 2,969 people in thirteen police districts and finds that the nature of police-citizen interactions had an impact on collective efficacy. Collective efficacy is particularly strongly linked to judgments about the quality of police services, a combined measure which includes satisfaction with services, and judgments about whether the police are competent, respectful, and capable of maintaining order and willing to help citizens with their problems.

Several studies demonstrate that the police can play an important role in community development. Tyler & Jackson (2014) used data from a national survey in which 1,603 respondents completed an online questionnaire to examine the role of the police in motivating engagement in people's communities. Their results demonstrated that the legitimacy of the police/courts facilitated political, economic and social engagement. Legitimacy had a direct influence on community identification and social capital. It indirectly influenced political and economic activity through its impact on community identification.

Another example of this relationship is found in a survey of New Yorkers conducted by the Justice Collaboratory under the sponsorship of the Mayor's Office of Criminal Justice in New York City (Tyler & Meares, 2020). The results of this study of New Yorkers indicate that, as would be expected, higher perceived levels of neighborhood cohesion are connected with higher levels of economic, social and political activity by residents. And, when residents feel that their neighborhood is characterized by high levels of disorder that undermines cohesion. These are forces that are occurring within neighborhoods, among their residents, and do not directly involve government.

The legitimacy of the police is an external factor that may help or hinder development. The results show that police legitimacy is linked to neighborhood cohesion and through it to

desirable neighborhood activity. Why would this be true? High police legitimacy is linked to residents feeling reassured and secure, which leads people to be more willing to engage in their neighborhoods, working with each other and with local officials.

A core question about policing is whether it is, in fact, reassuring and supportive of the community. This depends upon how the police manage their relationships with the community. To facilitate development the police need to act in ways which not only manage crime but also build trust among the residents of the communities they police. If the police are trusted by people in the community, then policing is reassuring and is linked to identification with and engagement in the community. This engagement promotes economic, social and political engagement.

Conclusion

Fundamental reform in policing requires the type of changes that go beyond the current legislative on the police use of force. This is a moment for fundamental change. Why? First, because crime is low so the political climate is more open to change. Second, because municipal budgets are stressed and the costs of maintaining expensive police forces is salient, especially as evidence mounts that they may not be the only or even the best way to maintain social order. Finally, because evidence that there are viable alternatives has become strong. Although it might seem completely unrealistic to push for broad change in the current climate, it is important to recognize the need for fundamental changes in policing at least as an aspiration.

What does any of this have to do with public safety? It is important for people to feel secure. Reassurance is central to engagement in community. However, discussions about safety too often begin by assuming the traditional model of policing and asking what the police need. The argument presented here suggests that we need to be asking how the police can change so

that they provide security in a way that benefits communities through not only harm reduction by crime control but also by facilitating the growth of vital communities.