

I'm honored to be here, and thank you to the committee for all the days, nights, and weekends you have dedicated to this important responsibility. For the past decade, my work as a researcher and president of the Center for Policing Equity has sought to bridge gaps between social science laboratories and the laboratories for democracy that American citizens and law enforcement negotiate daily. Today, I want to talk with you about the need for a stronger evidence base in policing and for further incorporation of social science in using that base to ensure fairness in criminal justice, particularly in the area of race.

As a scientist, it bothers me when there is an important question that lacks a satisfactory answer. And I have never felt more bothered by it than I did late night in September of 2008 while writing a piece on racial disparities in policing. I was searching for statistics on racial disparities in police use of force, hoping to use them as examples. So, I checked the usual places. Not finding data there, I tasked the staff researchers at the Russell Sage Foundation with helping me. Eventually, I did what many of us do when we are stuck on a problem. I called my mother. A reference librarian for more than two decades, neither she, nor I, nor anyone else I turned to could find national data on police use of force. All of us here now know that the reason for this is that such data are neither gathered nor reported. There are no national data on police stops. There are no national data on police use of force. There are no national data on police behavior.

What bothered me about this episode, however, was not only the embarrassing lack of information on something as important as the number of people police stop in a given year. It was also that the data we were missing were data on human behavior—something that social scientists know far more about than most policy-relevant domains. So, today, as

I argue that social science can aid in building an evidence base for a more just law enforcement, I want to give at least three examples of areas we would treat differently in police reform if we took social science insights about human behavior seriously.

First, social science reveals that the ways we engage with others are often more about how they make us feel about ourselves than about how we feel about them. In close relationships research, this means that we are more likely to commit to someone who makes us feel good about ourselves than to someone we initially find attractive. And in the work of Jennifer Richeson, Nicole Shelton, Jacquie Vorauer, and myself, we see that concerns with appearing prejudiced are often more predictive of negative interactions than actual prejudice. What that would mean, if we took it seriously in policing, is that our trainings and policy recommendations would not only consider procedural justice from the perspective of community response—but also from the perspective of officers. That is, officers' need to feel legitimate is a critical component of positive community interactions, and police/community policies should reflect that.

Second, social scientists have known for nearly a century that attitudes predict about 10% of behaviors—at best. This means that neutralizing racial prejudice, whether implicit or explicit, would never neutralize the problem of discriminatory behavior. Addressing the other 90% of behavior is no less important. But how can this be done?

This brings me to my third social science insight: often situations are far more powerful predictors of behavior than character. For instance, simply changing the number of people in a room, the conversation topic, or the amount of time individuals feel they have to finish a task can fundamentally change the quality of an interaction. What this means if

we take it seriously in policing is that policy matters at least as much as training. That means we need to identify the policies that provoke situations conducive to fairness and the ones that permit bias. And it means we need to adjust policies accordingly.

At the CPE, our goal has been to take these insights seriously and provide law enforcement and the communities they protect with tools to create an evidence base to promote fairness in policing. In cities from Las Vegas to Denver, from Toronto to San Jose, we see that working backwards from behavior, it is possible to use social science methods to create metrics capable of tracking objectionable inequality and to use social science collaborations as levers for social change. In other words, when done properly, research collaborations can produce both actionable information and an opportunity for traditional adversaries to establish common ground.

The most notable success of this model to date is the problem that led me here. The National Justice Database is an initiative designed to measure police stops, use of force, and psychological profiles across North America. With early commitments from departments that service more than 25% of the United States—and with the number of departments expected to grow—this database will be the largest collection of information on police behavior in our nation’s history. It will allow for researchers to ask basic questions of “how much, how often, how well, and how severely?” And it will allow for the translation from science labs to the labs of our democracy.

However, just as important as the research and practice insights the Justice Database promises to reveal is the way it came about. Despite over a quarter century of effort by legislators and civil liberties organizations dedicated to creating national

benchmarks, even progressive voices in law enforcement have often pushed back against federal efforts to collect data on police behavior. This stemmed, in part, from executives' reasonable concerns that they would be blamed for the results of data analyses before being given an opportunity to improve upon them and that the best analyses would not be conducted. However, armed with a few protections and objective scientists, it was those same chiefs that asked CPE to put the database together in the summer of 2011. This demonstrates the ways in which researchers can play the honest broker that law enforcement, communities, and advocates have long demanded.

So what, concretely, would I ask this Task Force to recommend in light of these promising observations? Again, I would ask them to consider three things. First, I would ask that the Task Force encourage federal funding agencies such as the National Science Foundation, National Institutes of Health, and Department of Justice to expand support for national data collection efforts on fairness in policing such as the Justice Database. As Attorney General Holder recently said, it is "unacceptable" that we do not have the data, and we cannot ensure our values without it. Second, I would ask the Task Force to encourage federal stakeholders to facilitate more opportunities for law enforcement and communities to learn from social scientists and vice versa as the field is growing rapidly. We have seen far too little racial and policing literacy in our nation's public dialogue these past six months, and the public hunger for action can be fed—in part—by sharing information on how we move forward. Third, and finally, I would ask the Task Force to recommend expanding technical and financial assistance to law enforcement departments that want to benefit from the growth of evidence-based approaches to fairness, but lack the means to follow through on their intentions. CPE does not accept money from our policing

partners. Even still, we frequently receive queries from departments that cannot afford to task an officer with the responsibilities of a project liaison. If we expect law enforcement to take leadership towards justice, I would hope we can provide the necessary support once they have identified the will and the means to do so.

I began by saying that, as a scientist, an important question without a satisfactory answer is anathema. I do not believe that social science is the satisfactory answer to America's questions about policing in a democratic society. But I do believe it offers a means of identifying many of those answers—both in substance and in process. I hope the Task Force will see fit to provide more opportunities for us to keep working towards them together.

Thank you for your time.