

**Strike up a Conversation, not an Interrogation:
The Respectful Engaged Policing (REP) Model**

Testimony before the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing

by

Dennis P. Rosenbaum, Ph.D.ⁱ
University of Illinois at Chicago

February 13, 2015

Dear members of the President's Task Force,

Thank you for this invitation to speak. Community policing has come a long way since 1994 when we published the book, *Community Policing: Testing the Promises*ⁱⁱ. The promise of this reform model lies in the potential to engage the community and give them a voice, to go beyond fighting crime to solving problems, and to give policing a local, neighborhood focus. We have made great strides since then, but we have failed to address the core problem of what goes on at the street level in the war on crime, drugs and guns. We have failed to acknowledge that the aggressive tactics for suppressing crime in hot spots (which has been quite effective by the wayⁱⁱⁱ) has caused significant collateral damage in minority communities. As a result of saturation patrols, proactive stop-and-frisks, and increased arrests, young people of color retain only one image of the police and receive only one message from them – “We’re tougher than you, we’re suspicious of you, we’re watching every move you make.”

Briefly, I will propose a solution to this problem that, if taken seriously, could have a transformative effect on American policing. I will call it Respectful Engaged Patrol, or REP policing. This is a new version of foot patrol that includes a complete program of behavior change. REP policing not only acknowledges the positive aspects of hot spots policing and broken windows policing, but incorporates the key elements of community and problem oriented policing. The REP model encourages community engagement/voice and problem solving, while going further to incorporate new research on procedural justice and social proficiencies. The beauty of this approach is that it should simultaneously reduce crime and build community trust, while reducing the number of arrests, use of force complaints, disorder,

and fear of crime. No doubt, REP policing is being practiced by many officers today, but we need to take a more systematic approach if we expect to achieve widespread implementation. Here are the basic components:

Training: The REP policing would begin by thoroughly training officers in the social competencies required for effective human communication and rapport building. This includes everything from social etiquette and procedural justice to resolving interpersonal conflict. But this training cannot be the usual “talking heads” – new officers and veteran cops need to practice these techniques the same way they practice on the firing range – repeating the behaviors over and over until they have reached a level of proficiency. (To be clear, this training does not exist today!) Also, when searches are needed, the training should include effective communication strategies to ease the intrusiveness, including explanations for why the search is being requested. The training should cover implicit and explicit bias regarding race, gender, sexual orientation, religious and social class to avoid insensitive words and actions that are perceived as derogatory, demeaning or provocative. A version of Crisis Intervention Training must be included to help officers respond appropriately to person having a mental health crisis. Finally, this is the perfect opportunity to train officers in problem oriented policing in small geographic areas, which has been lost somewhere along the road of reform.

Implementation: REP trained officers would seek out opportunities for positive contact with people on the street, under the supervision of experienced trainers. Officers would engage the public, especially young people, with no immediate intention of investigating particular crimes or discerning criminal activity. They will develop rapport by shaking hands, sharing stories, talking sports, discussing social problems, and opening up about themselves. There are no shortcuts to developing rapport – the REP officers must invest many hours walking the beat and talking to people before they will be respected or trusted.

But the payoff will be substantial. When trust and rapport have been established, the officer will be empowered to be helpful to individuals in need and to prevent future crime and disorder. The REP officer will know the social ecology of the neighborhood, including which youth are innocent bystanders, which are at-risk of trouble, and which are the repeat trouble

makers. The officer will also be ready to engage in problem solving, identify local resources for building partnerships, and play a vital role in creating self-reliant neighborhoods.

Evaluation and Feedback: Now, for the big missing link in most programs - Individual and organizational change requires strong feedback loops that continually shape behavior. First, I am proposing that REP officers, as part of training, wear body cameras. Trainers will review the videos and meet with the REP officers weekly. In addition to positive reinforcement, trainers will point out specific response patterns where improvement is needed. Second, REP officers will use smart phones to collect contact information (name, phone number, location, and type of interaction, and other details) to build a knowledge base about the community and to generate a brief online customer satisfaction survey that can be completed with either smart and dumb phones. The survey data will provide quarterly or semi-annual feedback to officers on procedural justice-like behaviors from the citizen's perspective.^{iv} These technology-based feedback systems will not only help to achieve the desired behaviors (e.g. interaction skills and problem solving skills) but offer a system of accountability for the department.

Closing Remarks: Foot patrol has been around since the beginning of organized policing in the United States. For more than a century, it was nasty and brutish exercise of authority. It was revisited in the 1980s as a form of community policing with some evidence that it could reduce fear of crime^v and recently, has shown promise in Philadelphia as a tool for reducing violent crime^{vi}. Now, in light of the Task Force's mission, we need to take foot patrol to the next level – going beyond aggressive enforcement to create more positive encounters with people on the streets. We need a more nuanced approach that offers different responses to different people, depending on the circumstances.

The potential benefits of Respectful Engaged Policing (REP) are numerous: First, we can begin the long process of restoring respect, trust, and police legitimacy in high crime neighborhoods by police actions “where the rubber meets the road.” Second, REP officers should be able to engage in serious problem oriented policing that is not possible inside the squad car. REP officers should be able to break through the “no snitch” culture to gather the intelligence needed for solving violent crime, disorder and fear problems. Third, stop and frisk

will be use more judiciously as REP officers learn which individuals deserve more or less enforcement attention. Youth in particular will feel they are being treated more fairly and respectfully. This will result in more cooperation, less resistance, greater willingness to obey the law, fewer arrests, fewer lawsuits, more officer safety and more positive media coverage. Also, fewer juvenile arrests will decrease the criminogenic effects of contact with the criminal justice system and will reduce the massive system costs. Finally, as REP officers become more integrated into the community and feel more efficacious when practicing this new style of policing, they will experience greater job satisfaction, which in turn, will increase productivity.

Please give serious attention to building the type of training and management program outlined here. As a capstone project, this effort could include a randomized control trial in several US cities to demonstrate the utility of the REP model of community policing. We would be happy to work with the President's task force to create a team of leading police executives and researchers who are capable of building this new program.

THANK YOU.

ⁱ Dennis P. Rosenbaum is Professor of Criminology, Law and Justice and Director of the Center for Research in Law and Justice at the University of Illinois at Chicago. He is also the Executive Director of the National Police Research Platform and Chair of the Division of Policing, American Society of Criminology.

ⁱⁱ D. P. Rosenbaum (1994). *The challenge of community policing: Testing the promises*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

ⁱⁱⁱ Braga, Anthony A. 2007. Effects of Hot Spots Policing on Crime. A Campbell Collaboration systematic review. Available at: <http://www.aic.gov.au/campbellcj/reviews/titles.html>

^{iv} Rosenbaum, D. P., Lawrence, D. S., Hartnett, S. M., McDevitt, J., & Posick, C. (in press). "Measuring Procedural Justice and Legitimacy at the Local Level: The Police-Community Interaction Survey." *Journal of Experimental Criminology*.

^v Cordner, G. W. (1994). "Foot Patrol without Community Policing: Law and Order in Public Housing." In D. P. Rosenbaum (ed.) *The challenge of community policing: Testing the promises*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

^{vi} Ratcliffe, J. H., Taniguchi, T., Groff, E. R., & Wood, J. D. (in press) "The Philadelphia Foot Patrol Experiment: A Randomized Controlled Trial of Police Patrol Effectiveness in Violent Crime Hotspots." *Criminology*.