American Policing at a Crossroads (again)

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Question #1

What is the role of police in American society?

- Sociologist Egon Bittner:
  - “A mechanism for the distribution of situationally justified force in society”¹
  - They deal with situations where “something-that-ought-not-to-be-happening-and-about-which-someone-had-better-do-something-now!” is occurring²

Question #2

How do we evaluate police performance?
Question #3

If police underperform (based on how we define their role), how do we hold them accountable?
VARIOUS PROPOSED REFORMS (AND IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS)
“Defund the Police”

What % of Americans would you say support “defunding the police?”

* SOURCE: PRRI American Values Survey (2020)
“Re-imagine the Police”

• Currently, policing is overwhelmingly a social service

• Very little time spent responding to community violence

• Should we be asking the police to do all of this?

H/T Jerry Ratcliffe
Co-responder Programs

• Mental health crises
  – e.g., CAHOOTS in Eugene/Springfield OR

• Other calls for service?

• Some considerations…
  – Does city have adequate resources in place?
  – 911 calltakers and dispatchers
Improve Training

- Communication/De-escalation
  - Does appear promising
  - Procedural justice
  - T3: Tact, Tactics, Trust

- Bias Awareness
  - Can increase awareness, but hard to change behaviors
Increase Transparency & Accountability

• **Body-worn cameras**
  – Reduce complaints, may save money
  – May reduce use of force under some circumstances

• Citizen oversight

• **Early intervention systems**
  – Caution re: “flags”

• Publish timely data
  – How can we manage what we don’t measure?
Takeaways

• Policing has come a long way.

• Is there still work to do? Absolutely.

• Resist knee-jerk reactions & follow the evidence.
  – We absolutely cannot take science out of policing.