

11/13/14

To: Traffic Stop Data Task Force Members

The ***fundamental question*** facing the Task Force appears to be whether investigatory traffic stops as practiced by the UPD should continue or not. The following questions are pertinent to the Task Force.

Do investigatory stops actually serve the overall best interests of our community? Are investigatory stops as effective in reducing crime as once or currently believed? Have investigatory traffic stops unfairly targeted select populations with harmful consequences to police/community relations? Are there other policing strategies free of implicit racial bias that could replace investigatory stops that would be more effective in fighting and reducing crime?

Citing conclusions/studies/research from "*Pulled Over*" (references and documentation are footnoted on each page) we know the following about investigatory stops:

1. Investigatory stops are an institutionally supported practice under the control of police leaders, not isolated acts of individual officers. Pg. 16
2. African Americans are almost three times more likely than whites to be stopped in investigatory police stops. Pg. 155
3. African American drivers are five times more likely than white drivers to be subjected to searches of their cars. Pg. 105
4. The hit rate – the rate at which officers discover contraband in a vehicle search – for African American drivers is less than half that for white drivers. Pg. 105
5. An accumulating body of research suggests that intrusive police stops cause deep and lasting harm; they are a form of racial subordination. Pg. 135
6. The effect is substantial and likely reflects the pattern we have earlier observed: a large proportion of stops of African American are investigatory stops and, not surprisingly, the accumulation of experiences of these stops erodes trust in the police. Pg. 143
7. Investigatory police stops are the police activity that most directly contributes to the enduring racial dividing line in American society, they help define the meaning of "race". Pg. 150
8. The benefits of investigatory stops are modest and greatly exaggerated, yet their costs are substantial and largely unrecognized. Investigatory stops fail because they violate a widely shared norm of fair treatment. Pg. 153
9. Although police widely believe that investigatory stops help fight crime, the evidence supporting this belief is surprisingly thin. To be sure, officers sometimes seize guns and illegal drugs in these stops. But this occurs rarely; most people subjected to these stops are innocent and no weapon or contraband is seized. Pg. 153
10. It is increasingly clear that the most effective kinds of police enforcement are efforts that respect procedural justice norms. Police enforcement is most effective when it carefully targets serious criminals rather than stopping large numbers of people,

- many of whom are innocent. Police effectiveness is enhanced when the police work closely with community members and groups to identify serious violators. Pg. 154
11. The core of the problem is not individual racism among a few officers. It is, instead, an institutionally supported practice celebrated by police professional associations, leaders, and local departments. Pg. 159
  12. Even now, without any meaningful reform underway, our data suggest that smaller departments employ investigatory stops in more discriminatory ways than larger ones. Pg. 164

For ten years Urbana's traffic stop data similarly reflects the racial disparities of investigatory traffic stops discussed and described in "*Pulled Over*".

It seems appropriate and reasonable for the Task Force to invite the Chief and leadership of the UPD to join them in delving more deeply into examining Urbana's practice of investigatory traffic stops and to seek alternatives to this practice. Such a change would likely improve the effectiveness of reducing crime in a more fair and equitable manner, enhance public safety for all, and most importantly, eliminate the racial bias and negative impact that investigatory stops have long had on a significant segment of our community.

Respectfully,  
Durl Kruse