Article

Broken Windows in the Cul-de-Sac? Race/Ethnicity and Quality-of-Life Policing in the Changing Suburbs

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Abstract
The racially disparate impacts of the carceral state are well studied, but most of the research has focused on large cities. Are suburban and urban policing similar? One trend suggests suburban policing might be in flux: U.S. suburbs underwent a dramatic demographic shift between 1990 and 2014. Their White populations declined sharply and their poor, non-White, and foreign-born populations all grew. During the same time, broken windows policing, with its aggressive enforcement of low-level quality-of-life crimes, gained popularity. Are suburban police departments adopting broken windows strategies or making racially disproportionate arrests in response to recent racial and economic changes? I use panel data (N = 1,038 suburbs and 50 cities, with eight observations 1990 to 2014) in fixed effects regression models to address these questions. Data are compiled from the Uniform Crime Reporting Program and the Census. Descriptive statistics show that while quality-of-life arrests are down overall, the White–Black disparity in suburban arrests remains extreme, especially in mostly White suburbs. Multivariate models indicate that increases in poor people in a suburb are associated with increases in quality-of-life arrests, while more Hispanic

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people are associated with fewer arrests. Results suggest that urban and suburban policing dynamics are quite different.

Keywords
policing, suburbs, race and ethnicity

With the adoption of broken windows policing strategies in the 1990s, many police departments turned their focus toward minor infractions like public drinking, vagrancy, public urination, and loitering (Harcourt, 2009; Kohler-Hausmann, 2013; Wacquant, 2009). These departments were spurred by the belief that aggressive enforcement of misdemeanors would decrease "disorder" and prevent more serious violent crimes (Wilson & Kelling, 1982). This shift in tactics has received extensive attention from researchers, but analysis has focused on policing in central cities to the exclusion of suburbs (see, for example, Beckett & Herbert, 2009; Fagan, Geller, Davies, & West, 2010; Greene, 1999; Kirk, 2008; Novak & Chamlin, 2012). At least half of all U.S. residents live in suburbs and more poor people live there than live in core cities (Kneebone & Berube, 2013). The numbers of non-White and foreign-born people in suburbia are also increasing (Alba, Logan, Stults, Marzan, & Zhang, 1999; Frey, 2014; Lacy, 2016; Puentes & Warren, 2006). Yet little is known about police practices there. The present study analyzes whether police have responded to recent demographic shifts in suburbs with more quality-of-life arrests[1] or with more racially disproportionate quality-of-life arrests and it compares urban with suburban policing.

Since its inception, broken windows has disproportionately affected the poor and non-White (DePinto, Dutton, Salvanto, & Backus, 2014; Fagan et al., 2010; Howell, 2009). Broken widows' proponents do not dispute that the strategy is racially and economically disproportionate. However, they attribute the disproportionality in enforcement to poor communities of color having greater amounts of disorder and violent crime. William Bratton, a pioneer of broken windows policing as the police commissioner of Los Angeles and New York City, and George Kelling, a progenitor of broken windows theory, explained, "[police] will necessarily target high-crime areas, and those tend to have a preponderance of African-Americans and Hispanics and are usually the poorest neighborhoods in the city" (Bratton & Kelling, 2015, p. 4). Bratton and Kelling's assertion is well-suited to quantitative testing. The present study will analyze whether quality-of-life arrest rates respond to changes in the Black and Latino shares of the population while controlling for crime rates.

During the years when many large cities were adopting broken windows, the demographics of U.S. suburbs increasingly resembled those of central cities. The Latino, Black, Asian, poor, immigrant, and elderly populations all grew during this time (Alba et al., 1999; Holliday & Dwyer, 2009; Kneebone & Berube, 2013; Logan, 2014). Though the demographics of suburbs were shifting, their postwar housing stock, sprawling transportation networks, and exclusionary zoning regulations remained (Puentes & Warren, 2006). There is not yet conclusive research as to what caused the out-migration of minorities, the working class, and the poor from cities. Gentrification, suburban housing construction, immigration, and population growth are likely influencers.

Although the effects on policing of these demographic shifts have not yet been closely studied, high-profile shootings of Black people by police provide anecdotal evidence that policing in the suburbs might be intense and racially disproportionate. Philando Castile was shot and killed by a police officer in a suburb of St. Paul, Minnesota, in July 2016. In the 13 years before his death, Castile had been stopped by police 49 times, mostly for minor infractions (LaFraniere & Smith, 2016). More famously, the 2014 shooting death of Michael Brown by a police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, drew attention to aggressive minor-infraction policing in the St. Louis suburb. A Department of Justice (DOJ) investigation found intense pursuit of quality-of-life arrests there. Although 67% of Ferguson residents were African American, police there brought 95% of charges for "manner of walking in roadway" and 94% of charges for "failure to comply" against African Americans (DOJ, 2015, p. 4). A DOJ report found that the racial disproportionality "cannot be explained by any difference in the rate at which people of different races violate the law" (DOJ, 2015, p. 5). In the present study, I ask whether Ferguson is an outlier or a typical suburb.

Suburban crime rates have been, and remain, slightly lower than city crime rates, though the two are converging. Between 1990 and 2010, crime rates were dropping in urban areas across the country (indeed, around the world), while crime rates in suburbs decreased less sharply or not at all (Kneebone & Raphael, 2011). Might the relative durability of crime rates in suburbs and the increase in the non-White population there lead middle-class Whites to demand broken windows policing, as their counterparts did in 1990s New York City?

Suburban and Urban Policing Compared

Suburbs' low population densities, car-centric transportation networks, high median incomes, and histories of racial exclusion have led some to theorize that police act differently and serve a different function in suburbs than in

cities. Suburbs are segregated and isolating, especially for poor people who lack cars (Jargowsky, Rog, & Henderson, 2014; Murphy & Wallace, 2010). Suburbs' detached housing, high homeownership rates, and conservative politics might produce residents who make stronger demands for security (Simon, 2010). Homeowners are more satisfied with and supportive of police than are renters (Reisig & Parks, 2000; Schuck, Rosenbaum, & Hawkins, 2008). It seems likely, then, that suburbanites might make greater demands for policing than urban residents in the form of increased 911 calls, more electoral support for large police budgets, and, central to this study, increased demand for quality-of-life arrests.

Some empirical research has indeed found intense and racially disproportionate suburban policing. Police in a 98% White suburb made more traffic stops of Black motorists who drove through it than they did of White ones (Meehan & Ponder, 2002). Black residents in the St. Louis suburb Meacham Park reported that their interactions with the police are exacerbated by the neighborhoods' poor roads and lack of public transport. Black youths there reported being stopped frequently just for walking in the car-centric suburb and Black motorists reported increased police activity at the road between the predominantly White and a predominantly Black suburb (Boyles, 2015). Race and place combined to intensify policing in Meacham Park. As mentioned above, the DOJ's (2015) report on Ferguson, Missouri, also found that "manner of walking in roadway" arrests was starkly racially unequal there. Latino newcomers to a Virginia suburb similarly reported heightened police scrutiny (Mendez & Nelson, 2016). Looking at incarceration, prison admissions rates were higher in the Boston suburbs than in the central city, though suburbs of other Massachusetts cities did not show higher prison intakes (Simes, 2017).

Despite these findings, some scholars expect lower levels of policing in suburbs. Law Professor Michelle Alexander predicts fewer quality-of-life arrests, especially drug arrests, in suburbs. "When police go looking for drugs, they look in the 'hood. Tactics that would be political suicide in an upscale white suburb are not even newsworthy in poor black and brown communities" (Alexander, 2012, p. 124). Alexander does not distinguish between effects of race and place. Rather, she sees them as congruent. Black and brown communities can not be in suburbs in Alexander's framing. Sociologist Simon Singer also suspects minimal policing in suburbs. In his study of a wealthy Buffalo suburb, Singer writes that "zero-tolerance policing is less likely to be present among middle-class youth in affluent communities" (Singer, 2014, p. 6). He notes a large difference between the legal system's involvement with urban and suburban delinquency. Notably, both the expectations of more or less suburban policing predict a difference from cities. The

present study will explore whether arrest patterns are similar or different across the county line.

Race, Place, and Quality-of-Life Arrests

Besides asking whether policing is different across metropolitan contexts, the present study also explores how suburban policing changes as suburbs' demographics shift. Broken windows' proponents and practitioners expect that arrest rates will vary only with crime rates. Three other theories: racial threat theory, benign neglect theory, and race and place theory, anticipate an association between a place's non-White population and its police department's arrest behavior, but the theories differ on the character of that association.

Racial threat theory views policing as a product of the threat perceived by Whites from subordinate minority groups (Blalock, 1967; Jackson & Carroll, 1981; Liska, 1992). The larger the non-White population, the more the dominant White group will rely on social control mechanisms like segregation, police, and prisons to maintain their position. This is likely a curvilinear relationship, with social control responses diminishing as the non-White share of the population approaches a majority (Eitle, D'Alessio, & Stolzenberg, 2002; Jacobs, Carmichael, & Kent, 2005).

An inverse theory, the benign neglect hypothesis, expects that as poor and non-White people move into an area, the dominant population will react, not with attempts to control, but with abandonment. Whites and the wealthy will either move away or decrease their demands that government provide services like police (Liska & Chamlin, 1984). In this conception, police will decrease low-level arrests as non-White people move into a place.

Race and place theory also expects police to decrease arrests in such a scenario but anticipates racial impacts. This school of thought analyzes how police officers' racial bias combines with their conception of "who belongs" to magnify racial profiling in predominantly White places (Boyles, 2015; Meehan & Ponder, 2002). This has led researchers to expect high numbers of racially disproportionate arrests when Whites are the majority and declining arrests and declining racial bias as non-Whites become the majority. The present study will test this relationship.

The balance of research has supported racial threat theory, a few tests have supported the benign neglect hypothesis, and only a couple have explicitly engaged race and place theory. Researchers have generally operationalized these theories by analyzing the percent of a place's Black or Latino population and its effects on either the overall number of arrests or the Black–White arrest disparity. Supporting racial threat theory, many separate quantitative studies of arrests in counties and major cities found that a neighborhood's Black

concentration (Beckett et al., 2005; Eitle et al., 2002; Eitle & Monahan, 2009; Mosher, 2001) or Latino concentration (Kirk, 2008) were strong predictors of arrest concentrations even when controlling for places' crime rates. When looking at race-specific arrest rates rather than overall rates, however, two studies found a significant and *suppressive* effect of the size of a place's Black population on its number of Black drug arrests (Chappell, MacDonald, & Manz, 2006; Parker & Maggard, 2005; Parker, Stults, & Rice, 2005) and the Black–White drug arrest disparity (Ousey & Lee, 2010). Although police increase their arrests in response to the number of non-White—especially Black—residents, they do not change the racial proportionality of those arrests.

There are fewer studies supporting the neglect theory expectation that police decrease arrests as the percent of non-Whites decreases. Liska and Chamlin (1984) examine 76 cities and find that the percent non-White is negatively associated with arrests and is "the most important variable" in equations estimating arrests of non-Whites (390). Rachael Woldoff (2011) found qualitative support for this in "Parkmont" a pseudonymous neighborhood in a northeastern city that underwent dramatic White flight after 1990. Police there stopped responding to Black residents' 911 calls and their demands for police, a change Woldoff attributes to the police's belief that social and physical disorders are normal and unremarkable in Black neighborhoods.

How can one parse whether a decrease in arrests is due to police neglect or due to police adjusting their expectations of who belongs as part of a race and place effect? One strategy is to consider both the number *and* racial proportionality of arrests. Meehan and Ponder (2002) found that arrests for African American motorists increased in Whiter areas and decreased when they got closer to predominantly Black communities. Novak and Chamlin (2012) found the same but for White motorists in Black areas of Kansas City. Arrests increased when motorists were "out of place" (Novak & Chamlin, 2012). Boyles (2015) interviewed Black residents of a St. Louis suburb and found that police treated them differently in White areas. Studies of the race and place effect are nascent. No study has yet examined more than one suburb or contrasted suburbs with cities. Yet the extant studies suggest changes in a place's demographic composition will affect both aggregate arrests and racial disproportionality. The present study will investigate these theories and extend race and place research to quality-of-life arrests and with broader time and geographical coverage than previous research.

Several of the studies cited above find an effect of crime on arrest rates (e.g., Chappell et al., 2006; Parker & Maggard, 2005). At first blush, this supports the dominant police theory: when arresting, police are merely responding to objective crime levels. It is important to stress, however, that broken windows' proponents suggest that it is *only* crime, and not demographic

characteristics, to which police respond. I include crime as a predictor in this study to evaluate the dominant police theory.

This study is among the first to analyze quality-of-life arrests specifically. I chose such arrests because their subjective definitions reveal discretionary police decisions and because such arrests are the primary mechanism of broken windows policing (Fagan et al., 2010). Rarely do victims or bystanders report offenses like vagrancy or drunkenness (Beckett & Herbert, 2009). Most often, police witness the behavior and decide whether it constitutes a crime (Bratton & Kelling, 2015). That police view the crime means an arrest is conditional on the coincidence of an officer's presence, a potentially criminal behavior, the officer's individual bias, and the demands placed on the officer by superiors. In addition, the ambiguity in whether someone's behavior qualifies as, for instance, disorderly conduct, allows police great latitude over whether and when to make an arrest, what to charge, and even allowing them to concoct an offense when no crime occurred (Department of Justice, 2015; Wilson, 1968). This discretion is greatest for the lowest level crimes (Black, 1980; Wilson, 1968). Furthermore, perceptions of neighborhood disorder may depend more on the racial and immigrant makeup of a place than on objective disorder (Sampson, 2012). For these reasons, I isolate quality-of-life arrests, rather than broader categories of "misdemeanor" or "part II" arrests. The high level of officer discretion means fluctuations in aggregate quality-of-life arrests will reflect police decisions (both immediate street-level decisions and higher level deployment and enforcement priority decisions) more than they reflect actual disorder.

Data

To test the effects of racial and metropolitan contexts on quality-of-life arrest frequency and racial disparity, I compile a data set from the Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program's "Arrests by Age, Sex, and Race" database, the UCR's "Offenses Known and Clearances by Arrest" database, the decennial Census, and the American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year estimates. I accessed the UCR data via the National Archive of Criminal Justice Data, and the Census data via the Bureau's American Fact Finder. I select Census-designated "places" with data on the relevant variables in 1990, 2000, and 2009-2014. The frequency of the Census and ACS determined the eight time periods. I use listwise deletion, excluding place-years with data for fewer than two time periods.

I construct two samples: suburbs and large cities. I define suburbs as places inside a metropolitan statistical area that are outside the principal city. I further limit them to places served by municipal law enforcement agencies,

not sheriffs' departments, to avoid spatial mismatching. I exclude places with fewer than 100 White or 100 Black people in 1990 to make the Black and White arrest rate comparison meaningful. This sample includes 1,038 suburbs. The average suburb had 7.3 years of nonmissing data, generating an *N* of 7,531 place-years. This sample encompasses suburbs that were home to 23.7 million people in 1990, or 10% of the total U.S. population.

The large city sample includes the 50 most populous principal cities with nonmissing data in 1990. They averaged 7.7 years of data totaling 384 place-years. These cities encompassed 36.6 million people, or 16% of the U.S. population in 1990. The largest city, New York City, did not report its arrest data to the UCR after 2002, so the sample does not include it.

Dependent Variables

Quality-of-life arrests is an aggregate count drawn from the UCR's "Arrests by Age, Sex, and Race" data. I included the offense categories most associated with broken windows policing: disorderly conduct, vagrancy, and drunkenness (Beckett & Herbert, 2009). Although drug possession offenses are sometimes included in measures of broken windows policing, I omit them here to isolate the offenses over which police have the most discretion. UCR data have come under criticism for inaccuracy introduced by interpolation and by reallocation to the county level (Maltz & Targonski, 2002). Although caution with UCR data is always advisable, these critiques are not germane here because I use agency-level data which do not require reallocation. Table 1 reports the descriptive statistics for this and each variable, and the appendix table reports the despcriptive statistics over time.

The *quality-of-life arrests* variable is likely an undercount of actual quality-of-life arrests. The UCR classifies many such arrests—including trespassing, failure to obey, and being a public nuisance—in the catchall "all other offenses" category (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2004). Since police departments have institutional incentives to classify any arrest in the major UCR categories, low-level crimes are likely the bulk of the "all other offenses" category which is itself the largest arrest category, accounting for 27% of all arrests in 2014. Unfortunately, as "all other offenses" also includes offenses like kidnapping, bribery, and perjury, I could not include it in the measure of quality-of-life arrests.

Log ratio of Black to White quality-of-life arrest rates is the natural logarithm of the number of arrests of Black people per 10,000 Black residents divided by the number of arrests of White people per 10,000 White residents. Ratio measures require component variables that are not highly correlated and Black and White arrest rates have a moderate correlation (in the suburbs

Table I. Descriptive Statistics for Indicators Used.

	Suburbs, N = 7,531 place-years			Large cities, N = 384 place-years		
	Overall M	Overall SD	Within SD	Overall M	Overall SD	Within SD
Quality-of-life arrests	124.4	170.8	77.1	3,356.2	4,295.3	2,267.6
Quality-of-life arrest rate (per 10,000 people)	61.0	78.8	41.7	51.2	47.3	30.0
Log ratio of Black to White quality-of-life arrests	1.4	0.7	0.4	1.2	0.4	0.2
Ratio of Black to White quality-of-life arrests	4.5	9.3	6.9	2.7	2.2	0.8
Violent crime rate (per 100 people)	1.2	1.0	0.4	2.2	1.2	0.5
Percent non-Hispanic Black	12.6	15.9	3.2	20.0	18.3	1.6
Percent Black	12.3	15.8	3.1	19.7	18.2	1.5
Percent Hispanic	12.8	16.1	3.8	25.7	19.5	4.0
Percent White	75.8	17.8	5.2	60.0	15.4	3.4
Percent Asian	4.2	6.3	1.7	6.6	6.7	0.9
Percent foreign-born	11.2	10.8	2.7	16.9	10.5	2.3
Population density (people per 0.01 sq. mile)	34.3	36.8	3.8	48.3	34.1	2.9
Percent families in poverty	9.9	7.0	2.4	14.9	5.1	1.7
Percent ages 18 to 24	24.7	7.3	2.4	28.7	3.1	1.6
Population	24,653	19,851	5,840	726,119	641,868	63,865

sample: $r = .39$, $p < .001$). As per Edwards' (2001) suggestion, I also analyzed the component measures (Black arrests and White arrests) separately and the main variables had coefficients consistent with the ratio measure coefficient.

Some have criticized measures comparing arrest rates to population figures because such measures do not capture differences in offending by Black and White people (e.g., Ridgeway & MacDonald, 2010). If Black people commit more crimes than White people, this approach says, they *should* have higher arrest rates, even after adjusting for population differences. Although an objective measure of quality-of-life crimes would be ideal, none exists, and I do not think one is possible. As discussed above, quality-of-life offenses are highly subjective, and the wide latitude police have in defining behavior as—and arresting someone for—disorderly conduct, vagrancy, and drunkenness prohibits objective measure of such crimes. In lieu of such a measure, population counts will have to be the limited but necessary benchmark.

Explanatory and Control Variables

The *violent crime rate* variable is a rate per 100 people of murder, manslaughter, rape, robbery, and felony assault crimes. The figures are from the Uniform Crime Report's "Offenses Known and Clearances by Arrest." As with the *quality-of-life arrests* variable, some caution is needed when using UCR data because of its noted unreliability (Maltz & Targonski, 2002). Although some UCR data have considerable error when compared with other metrics, this is less true for violent crime data after 1990 and data in nonrural areas like the data used here (Berg & Lauritsen, 2016; Lauritsen, Rezey, & Heimer, 2016; Lott & Whitley, 2003). This variable will test the claim by proponents of broken windows policing that quality-of-life arrests respond to crime rates, not to any racial or economic characteristics of the people being policed. If this is the case, this variable will be significant and the race and economic variables will not be.

I use the violent crime rate instead of the total crime rate to avoid, as much as possible, subjective classification decisions by police. Some researchers use number of murders as a proxy for objective levels of crime since homicides rarely suffer from underreporting or from misclassification (Lauritsen et al., 2016). Many suburbs in this study had zero murders; so I use the nearest option with few zeros, the measure of violent crime.

The following variables are drawn from the decennial Censuses and ACSs. *Percent Black, percent Asian, percent non-Hispanic Black*, and *percent non-Hispanic Asian* are the primary measures of race and ethnicity. Because UCR data indicate an arrestee's race but not their Hispanic origin, versions of the variables excluding Hispanics are used in analyses of aggregate arrests, but

versions including Hispanics must be used in analyses of racial disparity to match the arrest variable construction. Ideally, there would be Hispanic origin data in all the analyses since Latinos are disproportionately arrested by police compared with Whites (Kirk, 2008; Rios, 2011). Since most Latinos are racially identified as White, UCR's data structure likely inflates White arrests which will deflate the Black–White arrest disparity ratio. Although this introduces error, it is in the direction of underestimating disparity.

Percent foreign-born tests the extent to which immigrant threat is driving quality-of-life arrests. *Percent families in poverty* will measure economic threat. Young men commit more crimes than other demographic groups and are also more targeted by police, so I control for places' *percent 18 to 34 years old* and the *percent male*. I also control for the *year*.

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics for each variable.

Analytic Strategy

To estimate the relationship between a place's characteristics and its low-level police activity, I use conditional fixed effects overdispersion models to estimate (a) quality-of-life arrests and (b) the ratio of Black to White quality-of-life arrest rates. The main advantage of fixed effects models is that they control for unobserved, time-invariant differences in cases (Allison, 2009; Vaisey & Miles, 2014). The suburbs' proximity to the city center, its unique history, and its police departments' idiosyncrasies are controlled for in this model, provided they did not change between 1990 and 2014. A Hausman test produces a chi-square score of 0.000, indicating a fixed effects model, and not a random effects model, is appropriate. I then run the models in two contexts: suburbs and large cities.

For the models of arrests, I specify a fixed effects regression model of the following form:

$$y_{it} = \alpha_i + \beta x_{it-1} + \beta z_{it} + \upsilon_i + \varepsilon_{it},$$

where y_{it} is the dependent variable (quality-of-life arrests in place i at time t), x_{it-1} is a vector of exogenous covariates, z_{it} is a lagged endogenous variable (crime), υ_i is a place-specific fixed effect, and ε_{it} is the idiosyncratic error.

Studies of policing must deal with the simultaneous causation between arrests and crime rates. Arrests might affect crime rates, which in turn might change arrest patterns, which might change crime, and so on. One method to address this endogeneity is to include an instrumental variable to separate the association of the explanatory variable (in this case, crime) with the outcome variable (arrests) from its association with the error term. In panel data,

lagged or leading values of endogenous variables are a natural source of instrumental variables (Wooldridge, 2009). This is sometimes called a predetermined variable (ibid). I include a lagged measure of the violent crime rate as an instrumental variable to address simultaneity. The violent crime measure is available annually, so the lagged measure represents the previous year's measure, not the previous time period's for which there is Census data.

The suburbs and cities in the arrest analyses range widely in population size, requiring adjustment. I use three techniques to account for this. Each suburb has a different "exposure" to the number of possible arrestees depending on how many people live there. Including a place's population as a denominator, making the dependent variable a rate, can lead to incorrect probability distributions. So, in the models of arrests, I include, as a control variable, the log of the population with its regression coefficient constrained equal to 1, incorporating different population exposures (Long & Freese, 2006; Stata 2013). The models of racial disparity do not suffer from different exposures, so no correction was made in those. To further correct for large population differences, I include only places with more than 2,500 people in 1990. As robustness checks, the models were run with population cutoffs of 1,000 and 5,000, and the results did not substantively change. Finally, I conduct White's test for heteroscedasticity which confirmed that the population variance caused overdispersion in the error terms, violating the regression assumption of constant variance. I use a likelihood based, "observed information matrix" variance estimator to generate accurate standard errors in the quality-of-life arrest models and a Huber/Whites/sandwich estimator in the racial disparity models (Winship & Radbill, 1994).

For the arrest models, the distribution of the dependent variable and its overdispersion indicated a negative binomial form was required (Osgood, 2000). The distribution of the disparity ratio suggested a linear form, so linear regression was used for the racial disparity models.

Because the UCR data do not include Hispanic origin information, the racial disparity models with the dependent variable *ratio of Black to White arrests* include versions of the explanatory race variables that include Hispanics. The models of *quality-of-life arrests* use non-Hispanic versions.
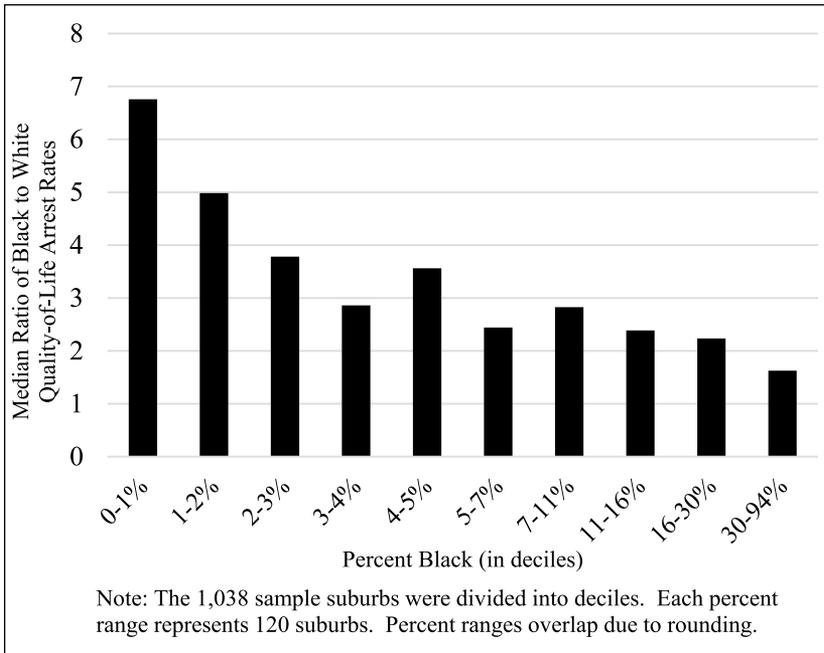
Results

Figure 1 displays, for the study period, the annual quality-of-life arrest rate per 10,000 people in the suburbs and large cities in the sample. The aggregate trend lines both decrease over time. Although suburbs and cities were subject to the same downward trend, suburbs' arrests did not decrease as steeply. At the beginning of the study period, in the 1990s, large cities made more per
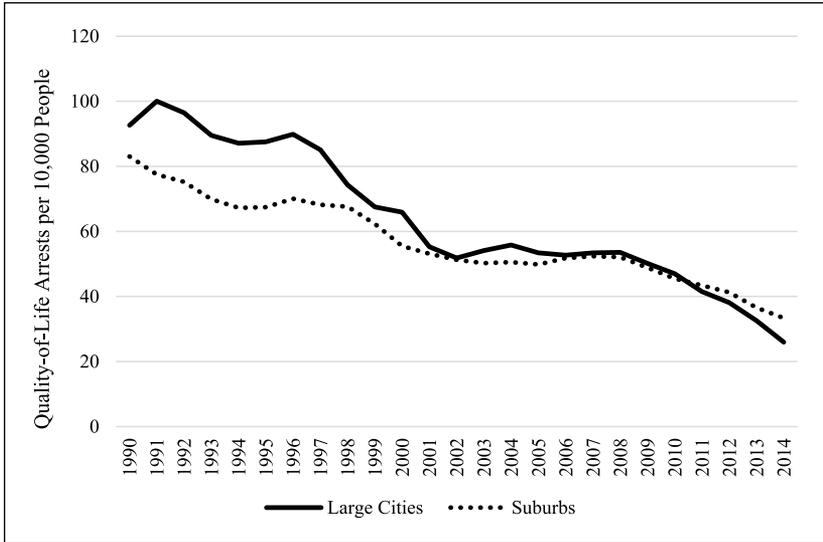
Figure 1. Quality-of-life arrests by location.

capita quality-of-life arrests than suburbs, but the two converged in the 2000s. In 2011, suburbs made more low-level arrests than cities for the first time, a trend that continued through 2014 when suburbs made 25% more quality-of-life arrests than cities. This finding of a 70% decline in cities and 60% decline in suburbs contrasts with other research findings that broken windows policing diffused and intensified over this period.

As shown in Table 1, the average suburb arrested Black people for quality-of-life offenses 4.5 times more often than White people nearly double the ratio in cities, 2.7 (*t* test *p* = .0002). Figure 2 further investigates the arrest disparity ratio by comparing it, cross-sectionally, with the share of suburbs' Black populations. For this figure, I divided suburbs into deciles based on the share of their population that was Black. The *y* axis indicates the median suburbs' ratio of arrests of Black people per Black resident to arrests of White people per White resident. The graph evinces a clear negative relationship. Suburbs with fewer Black people are more racially disproportionate in their quality-of-life arrests. No decile has an equal, one-to-one ratio, or a ratio of more numerous White arrests. The median suburb in the bottom decile (0%-1% Black) made 6 times more arrests of Black people per Black resident than White people per White resident. An analogous graph (not shown, available upon request) for 1990 shows a similar relationship and a graph for cities (not

Note: The 1,038 sample suburbs were divided into deciles. Each percent range represents 120 suburbs. Percent ranges overlap due to rounding.

Figure 2. Suburbs' ratio of Black-to-White arrest rates by percent Black in 2014.

shown, available upon request) shows no systematic relationship and lower overall ratios. These descriptive, bivariate results suggest that suburbs were more racially unequal in their arrests than cities, and suburbs with small Black populations were the most disproportionate.

Table 2 shows the results from the fixed effects regression models.

The first model estimates quality-of-life arrests in suburbs. This model suggests that increases in the contemporaneous violent crime rate were statistically significantly associated with an increase in quality-of-life arrests in suburbs. This would provide support for the dominant police theory that crime drives arrest rates except that demographic variables are also statistically significantly related to arrests. Suburbs with growing numbers of families in poverty would be expected to make more arrests. A suburb undergoing an average increase in its share of families in poverty (3.4%) would experience an increase of 0.03 arrests.

Both racial threat theory and race and place theory hypothesize that the strength of the association between non-White populations and arrests will diminish as the non-White share of the population approaches a majority. To

Table 2. Coefficients (and Standard Errors) for Fixed Effects Regression Models.

	Suburbs, N = 7,531 place-years				Large cities, N = 384 place-years			
	Quality-of-life arrests[a]		Log ratio of Black to White arrest rates[b]		Quality-of-life arrests[a]		Log ratio of Black to White arrest rates[b]	
Violent crime rate (per 100 people)	0.138*** (0.016)	0.139*** (0.016)	0.006 (0.012)	0.003 (0.011)	−0.058 (0.083)	−0.066 (0.086)	0.029 (0.022)	0.029 (0.023)
Lagged violent crime rate	−0.047** (0.017)	−0.048** (0.017)			0.006 (0.080)	0.041 (0.033)		
Percent Black	−0.001 (0.001)	−0.005* (0.003)	−0.022*** (0.002)	−0.043*** (0.005)	0.013* (0.007)	0.027*** (0.007)	0.002 (0.008)	0.002 (0.016)
Squared percent Black		0.000 (0.000)		0.000*** (0.000)		−0.000* (0.000)		−0.000 (0.000)
Percent Hispanic	−0.007*** (0.001)	−0.005 (0.003)			0.004 (0.008)	−0.005 (0.016)		
Squared percent Hispanic		−0.000 (0.000)				0.000 (0.000)		
Percent Asian	−0.015*** (0.003)	−0.016*** (0.003)	−0.001 (0.005)	0.001 (0.005)	−0.006 (0.016)	−0.004 (0.016)	−0.005 (0.014)	−0.005 (0.014)
Percent foreign-born	−0.005 (0.003)	−0.005 (0.003)	−0.015*** (0.003)	−0.015*** (0.003)	−0.002 (0.012)	0.001 (0.013)	−0.021** (0.008)	−0.021*** (0.007)
Population density (people per 0.01 sq. mile)	−0.001 (0.000)	−0.001 (0.000)	−0.001 (0.002)	−0.001 (0.002)	−0.005** (0.003)	−0.001 (0.003)	0.001 (0.006)	0.001 (0.006)
Percent families in poverty	0.009*** (0.002)	0.009*** (0.002)	0.009*** (0.002)	0.009*** (0.003)	−0.037* (0.015)	−0.040* (0.016)	0.014 (0.008)	0.014 (0.007)
Percent ages 18 to 24	−0.001 (0.002)	−0.000 (0.002)	−0.003 (0.003)	−0.003 (0.003)	0.013 (0.015)	−0.014 (0.015)	0.011 (0.011)	−0.011 (0.011)
Population			0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)			0.000* (0.000)	0.000* (0.000)
Year	−0.026*** (0.001)	−0.026*** (0.001)	0.007*** (0.001)	0.007*** (0.001)	−0.041*** (0.005)	−0.039*** (0.005)	0.007* (0.003)	0.011** (0.003)
Constant	43.50*** (2.07)	43.37*** (2.16)	−12.01*** (2.66)	−13.02** (2.71)	70.47*** (11.22)	66.74*** (11.76)	−12.81* (4.99)	−12.83* (5.56)

[a]Negative binomial model, log of population included as an exposure variable.
[b]Linear model.
*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

model this curvilinear relationship, the second model adds quadratic terms for percent Black and percent Hispanic. I run a Wald test of the joint association of the linear and squared coefficients on quality-of-life arrests to estimate the two terms' combined statistical significance. Percent Black and squared percent Black are not statistically significantly related to quality-of-life arrests ($p = .109$). Percent Hispanic and squared percent Hispanic are ($p = .0001$). The typical suburb's Hispanic population share is negatively related to its quality-of-life arrests and curves down for higher values of percent Hispanic. As the Hispanic share grows, its suppressive relationship with quality-of-life arrests gets stronger (more negative). A suburb moving from 6.6% to 14.6% Hispanic (the average change) would be expected to experience 0.05 fewer arrests. A larger than average increase in percent Hispanic would be expected to see a sharper arrest decline. The threshold value beyond which the coefficient flips to a positive relationship occurs outside the possible value range. This finding, along with the nonsignificant relationship for percent Black, contrasts with racial threat theory which expects more arrests for increases in minority groups.

The third model regresses the same independent variables as Model 1 on a ratio of Black to White quality-of-life arrests. Figure 2 already indicated that arrests are unequal across suburbs but does not address change over time. Model 3 tests change over time within suburbs. It suggests that an increase in African Americans in a suburb is statistically significantly related to a lower, more equal arrest ratio. Model 4 introduces a quadratic term. The squared and linear terms of percent Black are jointly significantly related to the arrest ratio ($p = .0000$). The positive coefficient of the squared term in Model 4 indicates that the negative relationship between percent Black and arrest disparity diminishes in intensity as the percent Black increases. This provides support to the race and place theory. Although benign neglect theory also anticipates the negative relationship between percent Black and arrests, only race and place theory anticipated that more Black people would be associated with a decrease in the disproportionality of arrests and that the intensity of the association would decrease for higher values of percent Black. These findings suggest that as Black people are more common in an area, police officers become accustomed and make less unequal (though still unequal) arrests.

Unexpectedly, more poor families in a suburb are positively related to more racially disproportionate arrests. In an alternative model (not presented here, available on request) an interaction term between percent Black and percent families in poverty was included. The interaction term was not significant, so it is not an influx of poor Black families that explains this. These

findings suggest that an increase in poor families of any race is associated with increasingly racially unequal arrests. Future research might investigate the role of class in policing to better understand this relationship.

Models 5 through 8 repeat the same specifications as Models 1 through 4, for the large city sample. There are large differences in the suburban and urban trends. Crime is not significantly related to quality-of-life arrests in cities. The relationship between percent Black and arrests is better explained by racial threat theory in cities, as the association is positive and significant. The negative quadratic term in Model 6 also supports racial threat theory: As the Black share approaches a majority, the positive effect diminishes, such that at 55.7% Black, the coefficient flips and increase in the Black population has a suppressive association with quality-of-life arrests. Also inverting the suburban trend, percent families in poverty is negatively related to arrests. None of the independent variables are significantly associated with the Black-to-White arrest ratio in cities.

Discussion and Conclusion

More people in the United States live in suburbs than in cities. Although some community and urban sociologists are documenting this shift, sociologists of punishment and criminologists are only lately catching up. In this study, I asked whether increases in non-White people and poor people to the suburbs are being accompanied by a corresponding policing shift and I asked how suburban policing differed from urban.

I find that low-level policing in suburbs diminished between 1990 and 2014, but such policing was more common and more racially disproportionate there than in cities by the end of the study period. Suburbs with few Black people were especially racially unequal. These findings support claims that low-level policing is as intense, if not more so, in suburbs as in cities. Longitudinal, multivariate model results suggest that this difference might be partly attributable to more durable violent crime trends in suburbs. Crime is far from the only factor, however, as suburbs that saw an increase in poor residents also increased their quality-of-life arrests. Notably, such arrests declined in places and times with growing Hispanic populations.

The differences in both descriptive and multivariate analyses of suburbs and cities suggest that our theories of policing, developed in large cities, will need to be tailored for contexts across the county line. Racial threat theory, which has been subjected to much attention, was supported in my analyses of cities but contradicted in the models of suburbs, where

race and place theory had the most explanatory purchase. Perhaps previous research on racial threat found a positive relationship because it focused on cities.

This study suffers from at least two limitations. First, the lack of information on ethnicity in the UCR arrest data prevented analysis of White–Latino arrest disparities. This is especially unfortunate considering the significant relationship between percent Hispanic and quality-of-life arrests. This inability to disaggregate Hispanic and non-Hispanic White arrestees might also have clouded some of the findings. The models of Black–White arrest disparities included Latinos in the White and Black arrest rates. Although Hispanics are usually policed more like African Americans than like Whites, they are more likely to be identified as racially White; so the bias tended to more conservative findings. Nevertheless, future research should seek out data that distinguish between race and ethnicity to avoid this problem.

A second limitation is the totalizing definition of "suburb" I use here. Suburbs are a heterogeneous group. Although I excluded especially small and especially racially homogeneous suburbs, there are large differences in my suburban sample. The inner ring suburbs of the Rust Belt and the McMansion exurbs of the southwest will likely display different policing patterns. Although the lack of specificity does not undermine the findings (the fixed effects methods captures place-specific characteristics like suburb type if they do not vary over time), future research would do well to incorporate more nuanced typologies of suburbs.

This project found a strong and statistically significant association between a suburb's share of families in poverty and its arrest rates. This suggests that future scholarship might grapple more with the role of poverty, fear of the poor, and economic crises in motivating policing trends. It will continue to be important to understand the role of racial bias in policing, as class and race can interact in sometimes surprising ways.

The Department of Justice report on Ferguson, Missouri, found pervasive quality-of-life policing there. The present study finds that Ferguson was not unique in its arrest practices. Demographic and economic shifts are changing quality-of-life policing in the typical suburb.

Appendix

Means and Standard Deviations for Indicators Used, Over Time.

		Suburbs, N = 1,038 places			Large cities, N = 50 places		
		1990	2014	Change	1990	2014	Change
Quality-of-life	M	179.5	96.3	−90.4	5,669.8	1,957.6	−3,724.5
arrests	SD	223.7	135.2	176.3	5,090.3	1,883.3	4,430.3
Quality-of-life	M	104.0	43.2	−64.5	101.9	31.7	−68.8
arrest rate (per	SD	111.7	55.2	94.6	67.2	28.7	63.8
10,000 people)							
Log ratio of Black	M	1.4	1.4	0.02	1.2	1.3	0.05
to White quality-	SD	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.4	0.4	0.3
of-life arrests							
Ratio of Black to	M	4.6	4.6	0.2	2.4	3.0	0.1
White quality-of-	SD	8.2	7.5	8.5	1.6	2.9	1.1
life arrests							
Violent crime rate	M	1.3	1.2	−0.1	2.8	1.9	−1.0
(per 100 people)	SD	1.2	1.0	1.1	1.4	1.1	1.5
Percentage of	M	9.4	13.5	3.7	18.7	19.5	−0.3
non-Hispanic	SD	13.4	16.4	9.0	17.5	18.3	4.8
Black							
Percentage of	M	9.6	15.0	3.9	29.0	20.0	−0.3
Black	SD	13.5	17.3	9.1	17.6	18.4	4.9
Percentage of	M	7.2	15.0	7.8	18.6	27.4	11.2
Hispanic	SD	12.8	17.0	8.5	17.5	19.8	6.3
Percentage of	M	2.5	4.9	2.4	5.2	7.2	2.2
Asian	SD	4.0	6.9	4.3	6.1	7.0	2.2
Percentage of	M	6.7	12.4	5.6	11.9	17.5	6.2
foreign-born	SD	8.0	11.2	6.1	11.0	9.9	3.6
Population density	M	32.8	35.6	2.3	43.8	49.3	3.4
(people per 0.01	SD	32.8	39.0	11.3	32.0	35.0	8.2
sq. mile)							
Percentage of	M	7.9	11.5	3.3	13.5	16.4	3.0
families in	SD	6.7	7.4	4.9	5.3	5.4	2.9
poverty							
Percentage of ages	M	28.8	24.2	−5.1	31.6	28.5	−3.6
18 to 24	SD	6.5	7.2	4.3	3.1	3.4	3.0
Population	M	19,072	27,390	8,178	620,202	767,013	136,727
	SD	11,609	23,548	17,389	564,640	666,763	176,153

Note

1. "Quality-of-life" arrests in this article include arrests for drunkenness, disorderly conduct, and vagrancy. I did not include drug arrests to isolate the crimes over which police have the most discretion. I use "broken windows policing," "quality-of-life," and "disorder" policing interchangeably here. It is worth noting that broken windows policing is different from stop and frisk, which has a lower legal threshold of police involvement (reasonable suspicion) compared with broken windows arrests (probable cause).

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