

Malcolm K. Sparrow served ten years with the British Police Service, rising to the rank of Detective Chief Inspector. He has conducted internal affairs investigations, commanded a tactical firearms unit, and has extensive experience with criminal investigation. He is currently professor of the Practice of Public Management at Harvard’s John F. Kennedy School of Government and faculty chair of the school’s executive program—Strategic Management of Regulatory and Enforcement Agencies. A mathematician by training, he is a patent-holding inventor in the area of automated fingerprint identification systems (AFIS). He holds an MA in mathematics from Cambridge University, an MPA from the Kennedy School, and a PhD in applied mathematics from Kent University at Canterbury.

The current crisis in American policing brings a strong sense of déjà-vu. Reform agendas that seemed so promising in the 1980s and 1990s have failed to deliver. What is it that holds policing back, and what now needs to be done?

We need a clear vision of where policing in America is headed. We surely need a broader view of what it means to succeed in the vital but enormously complex enterprise of policing. Sparrow provides rich and very timely help. Every police chief will find ideas here they can use, and their communities will be better served as a result.

—**Charles Ramsey, Cochair, President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing, and Former Commissioner, Philadelphia Police Department**

Hardly anyone writes more thoughtfully and perceptively about policing than Malcolm Sparrow. He argues here that American law enforcement has lost its way by failing to follow through on the core commitments of community and problem-oriented policing.

Anyone who cares about the state of American policing should read this book.

—**David Alan Sklansky, Stanley Morrison Professor of Law, Stanford Law School**

Malcolm Sparrow, one of the nation’s leading scholars on policing, provides timely and penetrating analysis. He brushes aside, with refreshing candor, much of the contemporary superficial treatment of the field’s ills, challenging claims and assumptions that clutter popular reform agendas. He proposes more profound and ambitious change, drawing heavily on his work with other regulatory agencies—a body of experience very comparable to local policing, but rarely tapped for its relevance. This book “points the way” and ranks among the most valuable resources available during this crisis.

—**Herman Goldstein, Professor of Law Emeritus, University of Wisconsin Law School, and author, *Policing a Free Society and Problem-Oriented Policing***

America’s police, still trying to recover from the “Great Recession,” now face the crisis resulting from Ferguson and subsequent events. In *Handcuffed* Malcolm

Sparrow makes an enormous contribution, clarifying the underlying challenges and showing how police can increase both effectiveness and community confidence.

This book reinforces Sparrow’s decades-long advocacy for problem-oriented policing.

—**Darrel W. Stephens, Executive Director, Major Cities Chiefs Association**

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HANDCUFFED
SPARROW

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Handcuffed

What Holds Policing Back, and the Keys to Reform



MALCOLM SPARROW

The police shooting of an unarmed young black man in the St. Louis suburb of Ferguson, Missouri, in August 2014 sparked riots and the beginning of a national conversation on race and policing. Much of the ensuing discussion has focused on the persistence of racial disparities and the extraordinarily high rate at which American police kill civilians (an average of three per day).

Malcolm Sparrow argues that other factors—critical flaws in the more general development of police theory and practice over the last twenty-five years—have substantially contributed to the current crisis in American policing.

Sparrow shows how the reform ideas of community and problem-solving policing, adopted as conventional policing wisdom by the 1990s, have failed to thrive. Many departments give these ideas mere lip-service and still define their success by narrow quantitative metrics—tallying up traffic tickets issued, or arrests made for petty crimes. They focus closely on official but unreliable crime statistics while exercising inadequate control over policing tactics and style.

Sparrow says police must escape their narrow focus and perverse metrics and turn back to making public safety and public cooperation their primary goals. Police departments, he argues, are fundamentally in the business of risk-control and harm-reduction, with profound implications for policing strategy, methods, measurements, analysis, and the nature of community interactions.