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Anna Roberts

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ARRESTS AS GUILT

Anna Roberts

INTRODUCTION ................................................................................................................ 988

I. ARRESTS ≠ GUILT ........................................................................................................ 990
   A. Arrests ≠ Factual Guilt .......................................................................................... 990
   B. Arrests ≠ Legal Guilt ............................................................................................ 994

II. THE FUSION OF ARREST AND GUILT .................................................................. 997
   A. Consequences of Arrest ....................................................................................... 997
   B. “Recidivism” ........................................................................................................ 1000
   C. Risk-Assessment Tools ....................................................................................... 1007
   D. Linguistic “Slips” ............................................................................................... 1009
   E. “Everyone Pleads Guilty” ................................................................................... 1010

III. POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS .................................................................................... 1012
   A. “A System of Pleas” .......................................................................................... 1013
   B. The Costs of Diversion ...................................................................................... 1015
   C. Fusion of Act with Crime .................................................................................. 1016
   D. Media Influence ............................................................................................... 1018
   E. Self-Comforting ................................................................................................. 1019

IV. WHY THIS MATTERS ............................................................................................. 1022
   A. Defense Representation ...................................................................................... 1022
   B. Preadjudication Suffering .................................................................................. 1025
   C. Police Reform .................................................................................................... 1026
   D. Prosecutorial Reform ........................................................................................ 1028

CONCLUSION ............................................................................................................... 1029
ARRESTS AS GUILT

Anna Roberts*

An arrest puts a halt to one’s free life and may act as prelude to a new process. That new process—prosecution—may culminate in a finding of guilt. But arrest and guilt—concepts that are factually and legally distinct—frequently seem to be fused together. This fusion appears in many of the consequences of arrest, including the use of arrests in assessing “risk,” in calculating “recidivism,” and in identifying “offenders.” A re-examination of this fusion elucidates obstacles to key aspects of criminal justice reform. Efforts at reform, whether focused on prosecution or defense, police or bail, require a robust understanding of the differences between arrest and guilt; if they run counter to an implicit fusion of the two, they will inevitably fail.

INTRODUCTION

Approximately eleven million arrests are made in this country per year.1 Some arrests lead to prosecutions, some do not;2 some prosecutions lead to convictions, some do not.3 Some arrests—let us assume—correspond to crime commission, some do not.4 Thus, an arrest does not connote legal guilt.

* Associate Professor, Seattle University School of Law; Visiting Associate Professor, St. John’s University School of Law (2018–2019); Professor of Law, St. John’s University School of Law (2019–).


2. Surell Brady, Arrests Without Prosecution and the Fourth Amendment, 59 Md. L. Rev. 1, 3 (2000) (“[I]n a number of large jurisdictions, the majority of criminal cases at the state level, both misdemeanors and felonies, are dismissed without prosecution.”).


4. See infra Subpart I.A.
2019] A rrests A s G uilt

or factual guilt, nor is it supposed to. It is supposed merely to be supported by “probable cause,” a standard that is relatively low\(^5\) and that does not require an adjudication of guilt.\(^6\) This standard is applied on the assumption that things like exculpatory information and defenses are for a later time.\(^7\)

And yet, in a wide range of ways, in a wide range of contexts, and in the assumptions of a wide range of people, arrests appear to be fused with guilt. The stage that is supposed to lie between arrest and adjudication—that period of diligent investigation, zealous representation, exploration of defenses, and possible dismissal—has too often collapsed in our implicit, and sometimes explicit, understandings of the criminal legal system. This fusion appears in consequences of arrest; discussions of “recidivism” and assessments of “risk” that seem to treat an arrest as equivalent to guilt; and linguistic and statistical “slips” that confuse “offenders” with arrestees and “crimes” with alleged crimes.

Given the many differences—factual and legal—between arrest and guilt, such a fusion demands explanation and critique. In addition, its potential consequences need to be identified and resisted.

Part I lays out key ways in which arrests are distinct from guilt, whether factual guilt (commission of the crime charged) or legal guilt (conviction for the crime charged). Part II identifies a number of manifestations of an apparent fusion of arrest and guilt. Part III explores how the fusion of arrest and guilt might have come about, discussing the influences of plea-bargaining, diversionary programs, and media, as well as the desire to comfort ourselves that our criminal legal system makes sense and does justice—or at least isn’t unjust nonsense.

Part IV identifies one crucial set of reasons why such a fusion matters. Vital reform of the criminal legal system relies on a robust understanding of the

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5. See Kenneth J. Melilli, Prosecutorial Discretion in an Adversary System, 1992 BYU L. Rev. 669, 680–81 (“Probable cause is little more than heightened suspicion, and it is not even remotely sufficient to screen out individuals who are factually not guilty.”); Alexandra Natapoff, Misdemeanors, 85 S. Cal. L. Rev. 1313, 1349 (2012) (describing probable cause as “a standard which demands less than a preponderance of the evidence, and which ‘means less than evidence which would justify condemnation’” (quoting Illinois v. Gates, 462 U.S. 213, 235 (1983))); id. (“[A]n innocent person can be legally arrested, sail through the weak screening processes of the prosecutorial and public defender offices, go to jail, and succumb to the pressure to plead guilty, all based on no more than a probability (less than a fifty-fifty chance) of guilt. It is precisely by rolling back the evidentiary checking mechanisms which ensure both accuracy and transparency that the system effectively permits criminal convictions on such thin bases.”); William Ortman, Probable Cause Revisited, 68 Stan. L. Rev. 511, 559 (2016) (“Probable cause to arrest . . . ‘does not require the fine resolution of conflicting evidence that a reasonable-doubt or even a preponderance standard demands.’ While some states use a stricter formulation of probable cause, many others accord with federal law. When a 1981 survey of judges asked respondents to reduce ‘probable cause’ to a specific probability, moreover, the average was 45.78%.” (footnote omitted) (quoting Gerstein v. Pugh, 420 U.S. 103, 121 (1975))).

6. See Krause v. Bennett, 887 F.2d 362, 372 (2d Cir. 1989); Natapoff, supra note 5, at 1349 (describing the probable cause standard as requiring “less than a fifty-fifty chance[] of guilt.”).

7. See Finigan v. Marshall, 574 F.3d 57, 63 (2d Cir. 2009) (rejecting the idea that “an officer must have proof of each element of a crime and negate any defense before an arrest”).
difference between arrest and guilt. If this distinction has indeed collapsed, even for those committed to criminal justice reform, an array of perhaps otherwise puzzling failures of reform—in areas that include defense representation, prosecutorial conduct, police conduct, and preadjudication suffering—may make more sense. Exposing this fusion is a necessary first step toward a new stage of reform.8

I. ARRESTS ≠ GUILT

Whether one is concerned primarily with “factual guilt” or with “legal guilt,” an arrest is, of course, quite distinct from guilt. While definitions of both “factual” and “legal” guilt are myriad,9 this Part lays out a working definition of each, before discussing the multiple ways in which each differs from arrest.

A. Arrests ≠ Factual Guilt

While alternative definitions will be discussed below,10 this Article describes someone as “factually guilty” regarding Crime X if she committed Crime X.11 In other words, to be factually guilty of Crime X, each of the elements of Crime X must be satisfied (including actus reus and mens rea requirements), and there must be no defense that negates guilt.12 While selecting this definition removes some complications,13 it leaves one large one. Since there is sometimes no definitive answer to the question “Did she commit the crime?”, it will sometimes be impossible to resolve the question of factual guilt.14 For example, there may be no definitive answer to the question of

10. See infra Subpart III.C.
11. See John Lawrence Hill, What Does it Mean to Be a “Parent”? The Claims of Biology as the Basis for Parental Rights, 66 N.Y.U. L. REV. 353, 362 n.28 (1991) (“[T]he term ‘guilty’ is used to denote both individuals who have committed a crime, whether or not they are convicted—this is ‘factual guilt’—and those who are convicted of a crime, even if they did not in fact commit the crime—‘legal guilt.’”).
12. See, e.g., Shapiro, supra note 9, at 44 (“For me, factual guilt embraces the questions whether the accused committed the acts with which he is charged and whether he committed them with the requisite mens rea and without legal justification.”).
13. See infra Part I.B.
14. Or, as John Mitchell puts it, “[t]here are cases where factual and legal guilt merge. You may know all the facts in a self-defense case, but whether the defendant was ‘reasonable’ or not in employing the force he did will be a conclusion of the trier of fact. On the other hand, whether he was ‘reasonable’ will be central to the question of his factual guilt.” The Ethics of the Criminal Defense Attorney–New Answers to Old Questions, 32 STAN. L. REV. 293, 297 n.12 (1980); see also Gary Goodpaster, On the Theory of A merican Adversary Criminal Trial, 70 J. CRIM. L. & CRIMINOLOGY 118, 130 (1987) (“[T]he kind of historical fact with which the law is concerned may not even exist in any meaningful way independent of the method of
whether someone was “reasonable” in using force in self-defense.15 This caveat does not alter the fact that there are several reasons why an arrest does not equal factual guilt.

First, an arrest is at its core a governmental act, rather than the act of a suspect;16 its occurrence, therefore, cannot in and of itself establish that a suspect is guilty of anything.17 (Of course, an arrest is generally claimed to be made in response to a suspect’s act, but that is a different thing.) While this point may seem obvious, that it needs to be made is suggested by the many contexts—discussed below18—in which an arrest is portrayed as the act of a suspect.

Second, even if we view an arrest as a response to a suspect’s alleged act, an act is rarely sufficient to establish factual guilt.19 Recall that factual guilt is defined here as commission of a crime, and recall that in our legal system crimes generally require, in addition to particular acts (or omissions), other elements such as mental states,20 and also require the absence of successful defenses. An arrest may speak to law enforcement’s assertion vis-à-vis an alleged act (and allegations about alleged acts may suffice to establish probable cause),21 but that falls far short of a demonstration of factual guilt.22
Third, factors other than a belief in guilt incentivize police officers to arrest. Law enforcement officers may experience pressure—external and/or internal—to increase the volume of their arrests for job advancement (or job preservation). Arrests can also bring other financial benefits, whether by allowing officers to claim overtime pay or to seize property by means of civil forfeiture, or by increasing agency revenue. In addition, arrests may offer a passing is the clearest example. Usually, if the defendant is innocent, it is because she had permission to be at the location, not because another individual trespassed.

23. See Alicia M. Hilton, A Narrative to the Exclusionary Rule for Hudson v. Michigan: Preventing and Remediating Police Misconduct, 53 VILL. L. REV. 47, 70–71 (2008); K. Babe Howell, Prosecutorial Discretion and the Duty to Seek Justice in an Overburdened Criminal Justice System, 27 GEO. J. LEGAL ETHICS 285, 293 (2014) (“The pressure on police to exercise discretion to make arrests for minor offenses, such as enjoying a beer on one’s own stoop on a summer evening, has significantly increased the number of individuals in the lower criminal courts that the public might deem to be normatively innocent.”); id. at 318 n.181 (discussing pressures on police to meet quotas).

24. See Gershowitz, supra note 21, at 1532 (“Police sometimes make worthless arrests for their own benefit. Police departments track arrest statistics to prevent officers from ducking work and wasting their shifts. Officers therefore might arrest an individual to improve their arrest numbers.” (footnotes omitted)).

25. See id. at 1532–33 (“In some jurisdictions, because police officers are paid overtime for appearing in court, they have an incentive to make arrests that will lead to court pay. One prosecutor (who wished to remain anonymous) explained that some police officers are more prone to arrest if they think they will be paid overtime to testify in court, even if the case is weak.” (footnote omitted)); Rachel A. Harmon, Why A rew? 115 MICH. L. REV. 307, 360 (2016) (stating that police departments “use arrest numbers as a measure of productivity and a basis for overtime pay”).

26. See Jain, supra note 8, at 819 (“Arrests can . . . give police officers the opportunity to respond to incentives that have little to do with crime control—such as seizing property through civil forfeiture laws or responding to arrest quotas.”). Note that forfeiture can occur even when there has been no arrest, see Scott Rodd, Should Police Be Allowed to Keep Property Without a Criminal Conviction?, PEW CHARITABLE TRS. (Feb. 8, 2017), http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2017/02/08/should-police-be-allowed-to-keep-property-without-a-criminal-conviction, but an accusation of criminal wrongdoing may serve to justify such forfeiture, see Vida B. Johnson, Bias in Blue: Instructing Jurors to Consider the Testimony of Police Officers Wisely in Caution, 44 PEPP. L. REV. 243, 289–90 (2017).

27. See Leonard v. Texas, 137 S. Ct. 947, 948 (2017) (Thomas, J., dissenting from denial of certiorari) (observing that many states, and the federal government, allow law enforcement to keep 100% of the value of forfeited property); Karenia Bahlal, The Green to Blue Pipeline: Defense Contractors and the Police Industrial Complex, 36 CARDOZO L. REV. 1785, 1800 n.103 (2015) (stating that certain federal grants were awarded to police departments “based entirely on the number of drug arrests made by each department and drug arrests skyrocketed as a result”); Michelle Alexander, Opinion, Why Police Lie Under Oath, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 2, 2013), http://www.nytimes.com/2013/02/03/opinion/sunday/why-police-officers-lie-under-oath.html (“In the war on drugs, federal grant programs like the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program have encouraged state and local law enforcement agencies to boost drug arrests in order to compete for millions of dollars in funding. Agencies receive cash rewards for arresting high numbers of people for drug offenses, no matter how minor the offenses or how weak the evidence.”); Derek Drapin & Kahlron Riley, Opinion, ‘Innent Until Proven Guilty’ Should Mean ‘What it Says’, USA TODAY (Mar. 10, 2017), https://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2017/03/10/civil-asset-forfeiture-michigan-police-column/9852526/ (noting, regarding civil asset forfeiture, that “[i]n most states allow law enforcement to keep at least 45% of the value of forfeited property, while in Michigan police get to keep up to 100%”); Shelby Grad, Ferguson, Mo’s, A Leged Revenue Stans E cho in Southeast L.A. County, L.A. TIMES (Mar. 5, 2015, 9:11 AM), http://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-ferguson-missouri-abuses-echo-southeast-los-angeles-county-20150305-story.html (describing the Ferguson Police Department’s use of arrests as a “revenue-generating scheme”).
way to control a situation, conduct searches, give new recruits experience and training, or collect pedigree information for future investigations. Perhaps, one might respond, these incentives exist but have no impact; after all, for them actually to bring about arrests might require police officers to lie. Unfortunately, however, it does appear that police officers sometimes lie, even or especially about important things like probable cause, and that such lies may be encouraged or enabled by the work environment, and legal system, in which they operate. A police statement can be sufficient support for an arrest; evidence of police falsity helps to undermine the notion that an arrest establishes factual guilt.

Finally, while it is impossible to quantify the number of people who have been arrested in the absence of factual guilt, we know that there are at least some. We also know that many arrests do not lead to convictions. Indeed,
as Issa Kohler-Hausmann puts it, in some contexts “arrest without conviction is not only possible, but is the norm.” Legal guilt is an imperfect proxy for factual guilt, but it is the primary proxy that we have, as the next Subpart will discuss.

B. Arrests ≠ Legal Guilt

Legal guilt is defined in this Article as a procedurally valid conviction. Our system for determining legal guilt, which sets up various processes and protections that must be honored in order to permit a valid declaration of legal guilt, is the primary proxy that we have for factual guilt. For all its imperfections, it is the best that we currently have. Only an all-seeing, all-knowing, all-seeing, all...

37. See Brady, supra note 2, at 3 (“[I]n a number of large jurisdictions, the majority of criminal cases at the state level, both misdemeanors and felonies, are dismissed without prosecution.”); Gary Fields & John R. Emshwiller, As Arrest Records Rise, Americans Find Consequences Can Last a Lifetime, WALL ST. J. (Aug. 18, 2014), https://www.wsj.com/articles/as-arrest-records-rise-americans-find-consequences-can-last-a-lifetime-1408415402 (stating that 47% of those arrested are not convicted).


39. Bowers, supra note 28, at 1170–71 (“Courts have allowed defendants to plead guilty to daytime burglaries to satisfy lesser charges, even when the crimes indisputably occurred in dark of night. Courts have upheld pleas to ‘hypothetical crimes’ that exist in no penal code and require impossible mens rea.” (footnote omitted)); Research Working Grp., Preliminary Report on Race and Washington’s Criminal Justice System, 35 SEATTLE U. L. REV. 623, 671 (2012) (“Arrest and conviction rates do not correlate precisely with criminal behavior rates and cannot serve as a proxy for criminality.”); Irene Merker Rosenberg & Yale L. Rosenberg, Guilt: Henry Friendly Meets the MaHaRaL of Prague, 90 MICH. L. REV. 604, 613 (1991) (“Factual guilt has always seemed elusive. The best one can do in a criminal trial is to approximate truth, and only rather grossly at that.” (footnote omitted)); Carla Spivack, Killers Shouldn't Inherit from Their Victims—Or Should They?, 48 GA. L. REV. 145, 204–05 (2013) (“Plea bargaining is commonly acknowledged to be a flawed proxy for actual guilt.”).

40. See William J. Genego, The New Adversary, 54 BROOK. L. REV. 781, 844 (1988) (under the concept of “legal guilt,” a person “is deemed to be guilty only after the state establishes this fact by meeting all the procedural demands of the system”); William S. Laufer, The Rhetoric of Innocence, 70 WASH. L. REV. 329, 331 n.4 (1995) (“If convicted, whether factually guilty or not, one is legally guilty.”); Stefano Maffei & David Sonenshein, The Cloak of the Law and Fruits Falling from the Poisonous Tree: A European Perspective on the Exclusionary Rule in the Gäfgen Case, 19 COLUM. J. EUR. L. 21, 24 n.11 (2012) (“A person may be factually guilty, in that he actually committed the crime, but at the same time not be legally guilty, because the conviction was obtained in violation of the law.”); Mykola Sorochinsky, Prosecuting Torturers, Protecting “Child Molestors”: Toward a Power Balance Model of Criminal Process for International Human Rights Law, 31 MICH. J. INT’L L. 157, 166 (2009) (“The pronouncement of legal guilt is only possible where there is not only a factual finding supporting the guilt, but where this finding is also made through proper procedures.”).

knowing entity could speak with absolute accuracy and authority on factual guilt;\(^{43}\) and as mentioned earlier,\(^ {44}\) even she would be unable to provide a definitive answer regarding certain charges that have an inescapably subjective component.\(^ {45}\) As with factual guilt, there are several ways in which an arrest is distinct from legal guilt.

First, a finding of legal guilt requires different—and more elaborate—process than does an arrest. At trial, a declaration of legal guilt comes from a guilty verdict reached by judge or jury.\(^ {46}\) Far more commonly, it is declared by a judge, as a result of a guilty plea.\(^ {47}\) Arrests, by contrast, are typically effected by police officers and typically require advance approval by neither judges nor prosecutors.\(^ {48}\)

These different processes bring with them different standards. An arrest is not supposed to occur unless law enforcement has probable cause to be-
lieve that the suspect committed a crime.\textsuperscript{49} This standard is a relatively low one.\textsuperscript{50} Those applying it, for example, may disregard exculpatory evidence.\textsuperscript{51} Arrests differ still further from legal guilt in that many arrests fail to meet even the relatively low standard of probable cause.\textsuperscript{52}

By contrast, trial convictions are not supposed to occur unless the fact-finders are convinced of the defendant’s guilt beyond any reasonable doubt; at trial, the defense has the right not only to challenge the prosecution’s ability to prove one or more of the elements but also to mount affirmative defenses. As for the guilty plea, while it does not require proof beyond a reasonable doubt,\textsuperscript{53} it requires more than an arrest does. For example, a court is not supposed to accept a guilty plea unless it is “supported by a factual basis and . . . the defendant’s waiver of her right to trial is voluntary and knowing.”\textsuperscript{54} A guilty plea also typically involves an admission of guilt.\textsuperscript{55}

This difference in process and standards corresponds to a difference in permissible consequences: punishment can follow a finding of legal guilt but cannot follow a mere arrest.\textsuperscript{56} After arrest, there are necessary precursors to a


\textsuperscript{50} See sources cited supra note 5.

\textsuperscript{51} See Criss v. City of Kent, 867 F.2d 259, 263 (6th Cir. 1988) (“A policeman . . . is under no obligation to give any credence to a suspect’s story nor should a plausible explanation in any sense require the officer to forego arrest pending further investigation if the facts as initially discovered provide probable cause.”); Fisher, supra note 32, at 30 (noting, during a discussion of his examination of police reports, that none of the training materials that he examined addresses “the importance of investigating, reporting, or recording exculpatory facts” and that instead they “reflect a psychological set in which the arrestee’s guilt is presumed, and the only use of notes and reports in the criminal process is to ensure conviction”); Givelber, supra note 34, at 1374 (“Police investigations and reports are incomplete and, generally, police do not consider it their obligation to discover, investigate and record exculpatory matters.”). But see Bigford v. Taylor, 834 F.2d 1213, 1218 (5th Cir. 1988) (“As a corollary . . . of the rule that the police may rely on the totality of facts available to them in establishing probable cause, they also may not disregard facts tending to dissipate probable cause.” (footnote omitted)).

\textsuperscript{52} See Harmon, supra note 25, at 341 (“[T]he vast majority of arrestees . . . are arrested for petty offenses en masse, often without probable cause.”); Natapoff, supra note 5, at 1331 (“A growing literature indicates that urban police routinely arrest people for reasons other than probable cause, that high-volume arrest policies such as zero tolerance and order maintenance create a substantial risk of evidentiarily weak arrests, that mechanisms for checking whether arrests are based on probable cause are sporadic, and finally that, if those mechanisms do kick in, police sometimes lie about whether there was sufficient evidence for an arrest.”).

\textsuperscript{53} See Shapiro, supra note 9, at 43.

\textsuperscript{54} Gold et al., supra note 42, at 1622 n.57 (citing Fed. R. Crim. P. 11); see also Gregory M. Gilchrist, Plea Bargains, Convictions and Legitimacy, 48 AM. CRIM. L. REV. 143, 165 (2011). Note that some states have not adopted the “factual basis” requirement. See Shapiro, supra note 9, at 42 & n.72.

\textsuperscript{55} See Ortman, supra note 5, at 564 (“In a typical guilty plea, the defendant solemnly admits in open court that he is guilty of the crime charged, and a judge finds a ‘factual basis for the plea.’” (footnote omitted)); id. at 564 n.302 (“A third plea, in which the defendant pleads guilty without confessing guilt, are an uncomfortable exception.”).

\textsuperscript{56} See Erica K. Beutler, A Look at the Use of Acquitted Conduct in Sentencing, 88 J. CRIM. L. & CRIMINOLOGY 809, 843 (1998) (“When the legislature statutorily classifies specific conduct as criminal, it can only punish that behavior by recourse to the criminal justice system established by the Constitution. A conviction is a necessary prerequisite to punishment based on that conduct. While not always an accurate barometer of factual guilt, conviction symbolizes legal guilt, thereby legitimizing the government’s authority
finding of legal guilt, and thus to the imposition of punishment: a prosecutor must first decide to file a charge; if a prosecution begins, defense is supposed to follow, ideally involving effective defense counsel, as well as things like defense investigation, defense strategies, and the possible mounting of defenses. 57

II. THE FUSION OF ARREST AND GUILT

If it seemed obvious that an arrest is distinct from guilt, whether legal or factual, then it may be surprising that the concepts of arrest and guilt often appear to be fused. The extent of this fusion demands explanation and merits concern. This Part lays out a variety of indications of such a fusion before Part III suggests some explanations and Part IV addresses one particularly urgent set of concerns.

A. Consequences of Arrest

An arrest brings what Adam Gershowitz calls “a huge litany of consequences for the arrestee.” 58 Many of them appear to rely on an assumption of criminal guilt, and this Subpart presents several of these, including consequences imposed through law by the government, consequences imposed privately, and stigma imposed through both governmental and private acts.

The legal consequences of arrest that appear to rely on an assumption of guilt (or an assumption that one’s likelihood of guilt is far higher than the low threshold that probable cause represents) are numerous. They include a permanent record that is accessible to the police and to others, 59 violations of to deprive a person of his life, liberty or property.” (footnotes omitted)); Michael Edmund O’Neill et al., Past as Prologue: Reconciling Recidivism and Culpability, 73 FORDHAM L. REV. 245, 268 (2004) (“The American criminal justice system presumes innocence, not guilt. It is therefore abhorrent to base punishment merely upon the existence of an arrest, without more.”).

57. See Jain, supra note 8, at 820 (“Criminal procedure is intended to place important safeguards between a police officer’s decision to make an arrest and its subsequent consequences. Defendants in criminal cases have the right to constitutionally adequate counsel, the right to suppress evidence that was illegally obtained, and the right to cross-examine witnesses, including testifying police officers.” (footnotes omitted)).

58. Gershowitz, supra note 21, at 1530 (mentioning “incarceration, the need to post bail, internet-accessible arrest records, mug shots, immigration and housing consequences because agencies track arrest records, the prospect of job loss because of incarceration, and difficulty in finding new work because of arrest records”). Harmon points out that an arrest can also “affect child custody rights, it can trigger deportation, and it can get a suspect kicked out of public housing.” Harmon, supra note 25, at 314. Jain notes that an arrest can subject students at schools and universities to discipline. Jain, supra note 8, at 812.

59. See Jain, supra note 8, at 823 (“Absent robust sealing laws, police departments and others may widely disseminate criminal records, including arrests that did not result in conviction.”); id. at 824 (“Every state now either requires or permits criminal histories to be released to noncriminal justice agencies, such as those that grant licenses and provide social services. Commercial vendors also collect, store, and search arrest information. A number of states make arrest information publicly accessible, and some allow anyone who pays a fee to access an arrested individual’s criminal history. And the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s
probation and parole, occupational license suspension, civil asset forfeiture, bars on public benefits, and threats to child custody. An arrest on one’s record can make one ineligible for jury service. It can also make one ineligible for legal relief, as exemplified by a New York case in which a judge dismissed misdemeanor charges in the interests of justice for those defendants who had no arrest record, but declined to dismiss for those who had such a record. Referring to the arrest records as “record[s] of prior unlawful activity,” the judge explained his dichotomous decision: dismissal was appropriate where the defendants had previously led “a law abiding life,” but in cases “where a defendant previously has had or exercised that opportunity, but has thereafter again disregarded the law, a different matter is presented. Defendants whose criminal records or records of prior unlawful activity thereby present a history of disregard of the law, will not be permitted to benefit” from dismissal.

Privately imposed deprivation that appears to stem from an assumption of guilt following arrest includes adverse employment consequences. These consequences can include refusals to hire, disciplinary actions, suspensions, and the FBI’s fingerprint database—which was designed to provide law enforcement officials with the criminal histories of arrested individuals—has long been used outside the criminal justice system, such as by employers who conduct background checks. (footnotes omitted)).

60. Id. at 825.
61. See id. at 840 (“As a matter of due process, a licensee may be entitled to a hearing before a license is revoked, but not necessarily before an unpaid license suspension. Until 2006, New York City taxi drivers, for instance, had their licenses automatically suspended for a wide range of arrests, including misdemeanor welfare fraud or forgery.” (citing Nnebe v. Dause, 644 F.3d 147, 159 (2d Cir. 2011) (“[W]e think that in any given case, an arrest for a felony or serious misdemeanor creates a strong government interest in ensuring that the public is protected in the short term, prior to any hearing [for an arrested taxi driver].”))).
62. See id. at 819 (“Arrests can . . . give police officers the opportunity to respond to incentives that have little to do with crime control—such as seizing property through civil forfeiture laws or responding to arrest quotas.”).
63. See id. at 825.
64. See Dobyne v. State, 672 So. 2d 1319, 1330–31 (Ala. Crim. App. 1994) (not plain error to excuse a prospective juror on the basis of an arrest, where state’s exclusion statute requires that one be “generally reputed to be honest and . . . esteemed in the community for integrity, good character and sound judgment”).
65. See, for example, New York’s Adjournment in Contemplation of Dismissal (ACD), which permits delayed dismissal (and sealing) as long as one is not arrested in the interim. See Kohler-Hausmann, supra note 3, at 648.
68. Ross, supra note 71, at 260 n.140.
Arrests As Guilt

Finally, arrests can lead to stigmatizing acts by both governmental and private entities. These acts include publication of arrests in print and electronic media, including the distribution of “mug-shots” and the phenomenon of the “perp walk”: the parading of an arrestee by law enforcement, frequently in coordination with members of the media. “Perp” is, of course, short for “perpetrator,” and both the act and the terminology used to describe it suggest an assumption that an arrest equals guilt. As JaneAnne Murray puts it, “[t]his walk is an embodiment of the presumption of guilt, and the criminal justice system’s faith in the screening role police officers play in separating the culpable from the innocent.”

In light of these consequences, one may wonder about the extent to which the doctrinal prohibition on pre-conviction punishment is honored. Indeed, the law sometimes seems to acknowledge that the criminal process can inflict punishment in advance of adjudication. Thus, for example, when New York established its groundbreaking standards for judges to apply when

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74. See Jain, supra note 8, at 815 (“Employers may suspend or fire an arrested worker, even when prosecutors or judges determine that a rogue police officer made a false arrest.”).
75. See id. at 812.
76. See id. at 840 (“Some employers suspend or terminate at-will employees based on the arrest.”).
77. See Shayna Jacobs et al., Hate-fueled Baltimore Man Saw First Victim As “Practice” To ‘Kill A Different Black Man’ in Times Square, N.Y. DAILY NEWS (Mar. 23, 2017), http://www.nydailynews.com/new-york/white-supremacist-killer-planned-carnage-times-square-article-1.3006719?cid=bitly (“Jackson was led into court wearing a white Tyvek suit for a second straight day, with his hands cuffed and his feet shackled.”).
78. See François Quintard-Morénas, The Presumption of Innocence in the French and Anglo-American Legal Traditions, 58 AM. J. COMP. L. 107, 147 (2010) (referring to a New York Post front page showing “an accused in shackles with the headline ‘Monster in Chains,’” and noting that “the distinction between accused persons and convicted offenders has become staggeringly blurred in the United States”).
80. See JaneAnne Murray, A Perfect Prosecution: The People of the State of New York Versus Dominique Strauss-Kahn, 8 CRIM. L. & PHIL. 371, 373 (2013) (“Strauss-Kahn experienced the presumption of guilt in the early stages following his arrest, most memorably in a humiliating ‘perp walk,’ the prosecutors’ opposition to bail, and the swift decision to indict.”); id. at 378 (“There are . . . few countries that subject high-profile arrestees to the humiliation of the ‘perp walk.’ Rightly condemned worldwide as abhorrent to the ethos of the presumption of innocence, the images of Strauss-Kahn paraded in handcuffs carried enormous potential to sear him in the public’s imagination as guilty. These events are not accidents; they are orchestrated as a reward to the investigating officers.” (footnote omitted)).
81. See Ryan Hagglund, Constitutional Protections Against The Harms To Suspects In Custody Stemming From Perp Walks, 81 Miss. L.J. 1757, 1767 (2012) (“Perp walks are a natural outgrowth of the symbiotic relationship between law enforcement and the media. Accordingly, the police often assist the media’s efforts to obtain images of a suspect in custody.” (footnote omitted)); id. at 1769 (“In the most egregious instances, the police will stage a perp walk, moving a suspect for a short distance and returning him to the place where he is being held, for no reason other than the creation of an opportunity for the press to observe the suspect being moved while in custody.”).
83. Murray, supra note 80, at 378.
deciding whether to dismiss prosecutions in the interests of justice, one of the factors for them to consider was the “punishment already suffered by the defendant.” Even when the statutory language changed, the factor maintained its relevance in the case law of that state and others, with courts freely using the term “punishment” to refer to preadjudication harms, including harms from and related to arrest, such as postarrest confinement. Thus, these consequences of arrest, and the ways in which the case law portrays them, hint at a regime in which the arrest represents the adjudicative moment, and punishment follows therefrom.

B. “Recidivism”

The legal definition of “recidivism” is relatively straightforward. It means a return to criminal conduct. How to measure recidivism is a much bigger issue, particularly given the importance of the concept. Experts view recidivism as crucial to both the study of individuals and the study of policy.
choices; indeed, it has been called “an existential test of the criminal justice system generally.” Its importance stems in part from the variety of prescriptions that may be inspired by recidivism data. These include prescriptions about whether, how, and how long society should punish; what if any rehabilitative or reentry programs should be funded or offered; how probation and supervised release should function; how bail and pretrial detention should be used; whether “diversionary and treatment programs” are working; how policing should happen; and so on.

Certain knowledge of recidivism can be as elusive as certain knowledge of factual guilt—indeed, more so, because one would need to know about at least two instances of criminal conduct per person ((1) the initial criminal conduct, and (2) the return to criminal conduct). Therefore, those wishing to

95. Petersilia, supra note 91, at 382 (“Reducing recidivism . . . is one of the most important goals of the criminal justice system.”); Laura Ravinsky, Reducing Recidivism of Violent Offenders Through Victim-Offender Mediation: A Fresh Start, 17 CARDOZO J. CONFLICT RESOL. 1019, 1026 (2016) (“Recidivism analyses serve a critical societal role by allowing researchers to determine whether resources are being used efficiently and appropriately.”).


97. See U.S. Sentencing Comm’n, The Past Predicts the Future: Criminal History and Recidivism of Federal Offenders 2 (2017) (“Recidivism information is central to three of the primary purposes of punishment as described in the [Sentencing Reform Act]—specific deterrence, incapacitation, and rehabilitation—all of which focus on prevention of future crimes through correctional intervention.”); id. (“Considerations of recidivism by federal offenders were also central to the [Sentencing] Commission’s initial work in developing the Guidelines Manual’s criminal history provisions . . . and continue to be a key consideration in the Commission’s work today. Recent developments, particularly public attention to the size of the federal prison population and the cost of incarceration, have refocused the Commission’s interest on the recidivism of federal offenders.” (footnote omitted)); id. (“Recidivism measures can provide policy makers with information regarding the relative threat to public safety posed by various types of offenders, and the effectiveness of public safety initiatives in (1) deterring crime and (2) rehabilitating or incapacitating offenders.”).


99. See Nora V. Demleitner, How to Change the Philosophy and Practice of Probation and Supervised Release Data Analysis, Cost Control, Focus on Reentry, and a Clear Mission, 28 Fed. Sent’g Rep. 231, 232 (2016) (describing “reduction of recidivism” as “the apparent goal of the efforts to improve supervisory mechanisms”)

100. See U.S. Sentencing Comm’n, Recidivism Among Federal Offenders: A Comprehensive Overview 7 (2016) (“Recidivism measures are used by numerous public safety agencies to measure performance and inform policy decisions and practices on issues such as pretrial detention, prisoner classification and programming, and offender supervision in the community.”).

101. Nora V. Demleitner, Judicial Challenges to the Collateral Impact of Criminal Convictions: Is True Change in the Offing?, 91 N.Y.U. L. REV. ONLINE 150, 164 (2016) (“Recidivism has become the hallmark of release decisions and of judging the success of diversionary and treatment programs.”)


103. See John Pfaff, @JohnFPfaff, TWITTER [June 21, 2017, 10:58 AM] ("None of our recidivism stats actually measure it, whatever 'recid' is. They measure CJ contacts (arrests, etc.), not actually offending.")
measure recidivism rely on proxies. Conviction and incarceration are commonly used as proxies for criminal conduct in the recidivism context. Conviction and incarceration are commonly used as proxies for criminal conduct in the recidivism context. So too, at least in this country, is arrest.

While this Article focuses on the complexities of using arrest, it is worth noting that each proxy has flaws. Conviction, for example, might seem like the best candidate, given that it denotes legal guilt. However, the usefulness of conviction rates to signify rates of “reoffending” is complicated by the influence of disparities in law enforcement. Convictions may also be an overinclusive measure of factual guilt, thanks to, for example, the coercive pressure to take a guilty plea, rules that chill defendants’ trial testimony, bias among jurors (and others), the inadequacy (including inadequate re-

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104. See Rose, supra note 98, at 348–49.
105. See Demleitner, supra note 99, at 236 (“Many U.S. recidivism data sets are based on re-arrest rather than re-conviction[,] . . . but] European recidivism rates, for example, measure only convictions for a new offense, though in some countries violations of conditions of supervision amount to a new offense.”).
106. See Klingele, supra note 98 (manuscript at 15–16) (“While the criminal justice system purports to measure recidivism, what recidivism data usually measure are rates of re-capture—outcomes that turn as much on luck and policing patterns as they do on deviant behavior.”); id. (manuscript at 14) (stating that longitudinal studies are the “most effective” way of measuring behavior, and adding that “[i]n such settings, researchers follow subjects over long periods of time—often decades—periodically surveying, interviewing, and gathering third party data about subjects' behavior.”).
107. See Daniel P. Mears et al., Recidivism and Time Served in Prison, 106 J. CRIM. L. & CRIMINOLOGY 83, 100 (2016) (“A focus on felony conviction ensures that more serious offending is examined and reduces, but does not eliminate, some of the problems associated with using arrest, such as the greater likelihood that recidivism in such instances includes situations where no offense occurred or measures both reoffending and differential police responses.”).
108. See id. This means that “recidivism” data that relies on convictions could be doubly overinclusive, since it uses both a first conviction and a second conviction as proxies for factual guilt.
109. See Lucian E. Dervan, Overcriminalization 2.0: The Symbiotic Relationship Between Plea Bargaining and Overcriminalization, 7 J.L. ECON. & POL’Y 645, 652–53 (2011) (“Even innocent defendants can be persuaded by the staggering incentives to confess one’s guilt in return for a bargain. . . . [O]vercriminalization, the phenomenon that initially created swelling dockets and the need for plea bargaining, makes creating the incentives to plead guilty easy by propagating a myriad of broad statutes from which staggering sentencing differentials can be created.”); Jain, supra note 8, at 822 (“A 2013 study of low-income defendants facing misdemeanor charges relating to petty marijuana possession in the Bronx, New York, depicts a setting in which defendants routinely take plea agreements because it is too costly to contest charges at trial.”).
111. See Jerry Kang et al., Implicit Bias in the Courtroom, 59 UCLA L. REV. 1124 (2012) (analyzing the numerous stages within criminal case trajectories at which biases can have an effect, including the police encounter, the charge and the plea bargain, the trial, and sentencing); Justin D. Levinson et al., Guilty by Implicit Racial Bias: The Guilty Not Guilty Implicit Association Test, 8 OHIO ST. J. CRIM. L. 187, 190 (2010) (demonstrating that mock jurors “hold strong associations between Black and Guilty, relative to White and Guilty, and [that] implicit associations predicted the way mock jurors evaluated ambiguous evidence”); Jonathan A. Rapping, Implicitly Unjust: How Defendants Can Affect Systemic Racism Assumptions, 16 N.Y.U. J. LEGIS. & PUB. POL’Y 999, 1007 (2013) (“[E]ven where people of color exercise their right to go to trial, there is a greater chance that the fact-finder—whether a jury or a judge—will interpret the facts in a manner consistent with guilt because of the defendant’s skin color. Therefore, defendants of color are more likely to plead guilty and to be found guilty at trial due to forces independent of their own culpability or the merits of the case.” (footnote omitted)); Ronald J. Tabak, The Continuing Role of Race in Capital Cases, Notwithstanding President Obama’s Election, 37 N. KY. L. REV. 243, 256–57 (2010).
sources and excessive caseloads of much defense representation, and restrictions on investigation and discovery. The risk of overinclusive encompasses applies to trial convictions; it may apply still more forcefully to guilty pleas. Convictions are also often said to be an underinclusive measure of factual guilt, as in this discussion by Joan Petersilia of important precautions to be taken by “those undertaking recidivism research, reviewing it, or comparing or reporting it”:

112. See William J. Stuntz, The Pathological Politics of Criminal Law, 100 Mich. L. Rev. 505, 570 n.242 (2001) (“Legislatures . . . fund appointed defense counsel at levels that require an enormous amount of selectivity—counsel can contest only a very small fraction of the cases on their dockets, and can investigate only a small fraction of the claims their clients might have.”).

113. See, e.g., Nat’l Ass’n of Criminal Def. Lawyers, Minor Crime, Massive Waste: The Terrible Toll of America’s Broken Misdemeanor Courts 9 (2009) (“In Chicago, Atlanta and Miami, defenders carry more than 2,000 misdemeanor cases per year. With these massive caseloads, defendants have to resolve approximately 10 cases a day—or one case every hour—not nearly enough time to mount a constitutionally adequate defense.” (footnote omitted)).

114. See Strickland v. Washington, 466 U.S. 668, 710 (1984) (Marshall, J., dissenting) (“Seemingly impregnable cases can sometimes be dismantled by good defense counsel.”); Mary Sue Backus & Paul Marcus, The Right to Counsel in Criminal Cases, a National Crisis, 57 Hastings L.J. 1031, 1036 (2006) (“We now have evidence that overworked and incompetent lawyers contribute to wrongful convictions and that truly well-prepared defense lawyers, with adequate support services, can attack the other causes of wrongful convictions, such as mistakes in eyewitness identifications and insufficient investigations.”); William S. Geimer, A Decade of Strickland’s Tin Horn: Doctrinal and Practical Undermining of the Right to Counsel, 4 WM. & Mary Bill RTS. J. 91, 93 (1995) (“In 1984, Strickland v. Washington effectively discarded Gideon’s noble trumpet call to justice in favor of a weak tin horn. Directly contrary to its rhetoric in Strickland, the Court has effectively ensured that Gideon guarantees little more than the presence of a person with a law license alongside the accused during trial.”) (footnotes omitted).

115. See Andrew D. Leipold, Why Grand Juries Do or Don’t Protect the Accused, 80 Cornell L. Rev. 260, 277 (1995) (“A defendant who lacks the resources to investigate or to hire experts and consequently doubts his ability to establish an affirmative defense or rebut the prosecution’s evidence may prefer whatever benefit is offered in a plea bargain over the risks of trial.”).

116. See, e.g., Murray, supra note 80, at 384 (“[S]uppression or late disclosure of Brady material is a recurrent problem nationwide and in New York State courts.”); B. Michael Dann, Free the Jury, 23 Litig., Fall 2016, at 5, 6.

117. Cf. Givelber, supra note 34, at 1386, 1396.

118. See John H. Blume, The Dilemma of the Criminal Defendant with a Prior Record—Lessons from the Wrongfully Convicted, 5 J. Empirical Legal Stud. 477, 496 n.70 (2008) (“There are many reasons to question whether many defendants are in fact guilty of the underlying offense. For example, due to jail overcrowding and large criminal dockets in major metropolitan areas, many defendants plead guilty in order to obtain their immediate release or to get to a less restrictive custodial environment rather than spending a substantial amount of time in a local jail awaiting a trial date.”); Mayson, supra note 3, at 556 (“[S]ome number of defendants plead guilty only because they are detained.”); Zeigler, supra note 42, at 689 (“[D]efendants plead guilty for many reasons not related to guilt, and the charge pled to may not be the crime actually committed.”) (footnote omitted); id. at 689 n.297 (“Guilt pleas may be coerced by threatening lengthy incarceration or high bail if a defendant asserts her innocence, while offering a short sentence or even probation if the defendant pleads guilty.”).

119. See Mia Bird & Ryken Grattet, Realignment and Recidivism, 664 Annals Am. Acad. Pol. & Soc. Sci. 176, 183 (2016) (“Recognition is a conservative measure of recidivism because it omits criminal activities for which there is insufficient evidence or any number of reasons for abandoning a prosecution.”).

120. Petersilia, supra note 91, at 384–85 (offering a kind of “checklist” for those “undertaking recidivism research, reviewing it, or comparing or reporting it,” which involves “specifying exactly the dimensions that will be used in calculating the recidivism rates,” including the “type of recidivism event”).
It is critical that the particular type of recidivism event be specified, although there is no agreement on which type of event is the best measure of recidivism. Some have argued that recidivism is best measured closest to the event (at arrest), since later events take us further away from the offense itself and so many arrests fail to result in conviction—leading to an underestimation of recidivism. But others argue that convictions are a more appropriate measure, since many arrests are unfounded and the definition of arrest differs so widely from one jurisdiction to another.121

In work that uses rearrest as a proxy for recidivism, one does sometimes find the kind of careful and explanatory approach that Petersilia recommends. Some authors acknowledge the imperfections of arrests as a measure of recidivism, compare those imperfections to the flaws that are inherent in other measures,122 and then explain their decision to use arrest rates (perhaps in conjunction with other measures), with caveats attached.123

But in other instances, one finds references to recidivism that suggest the same kind of unquestioned fusion of arrest and guilt that is described elsewhere in this Article. Sometimes this fusion appears in explicit (but unsupported) assumptions. In a report on “Federal Child Pornography Offenses,”124 for example, the Sentencing Commission defined “known recidivism” to include arrests, even where the disposition of the case is unknown.125 The Commission stated that its study, “like other studies, assumes that false arrests are exceptional and that the typical arrest of an offender on supervision reflects recidivism (including ‘technical’ violations of the conditions of supervision).”126

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121. Id. at 384.
122. See Laura M. Baber & Mark Motivans, Extending Our Knowledge About Recidivism of Persons on Federal Supervision, 77 FED. PROBATION 23, 23 (2013) (justifying decision to use rearrest as a primary outcome measure in part because “unlike convictions, arrests are more available in automated criminal history records”).
123. See, e.g., U.S. SENTENCING COMM’N, supra note 100, at 7 (“Recidivism is typically measured by criminal acts that resulted in the rearrest, reconviction, and/or reincarceration of the offender over a specified period of time. These are the three recidivism measures used in this report. . . . Many rearrests do not ultimately result in a reconviction or reincarceration for reasons relating to procedural safeguards (e.g., the suppression of evidence for an unconstitutional search or seizure), lack of sufficient evidence to convict or revoke, and prosecutorial or judicial resource limitation. . . . Even using the least restrictive measure, rearrest, does not count the full extent of offender recidivism, as many crimes go unreported to police or, if reported, do not result in an arrest.” (footnote omitted)).
125. Id. at 296 n.17.
126. Id. “Technical’ violations of supervision encompass a wide range of behavior, including absconding from supervision, refusing to participate in mental health or substance abuse treatment, and failing drug tests. In addition, sex offenders typically are subject to additional restrictions, such as prohibitions on associating with minors or frequenting places where minors regularly appear, and accessing the Internet without permission.” Id. at 297. Note that recidivism figures on arrest often include not only arrests for alleged crimes, but also “arrests for alleged violations of supervised release, probation, or state parole.” U.S. SENTENCING COMM’N, supra note 100, at 7. A parole violation is “generally something that is not a crime for anyone who is not on parole—things like going to a bar or visiting a friend who’s also an ex-felon.” Ira Mark Ellman & Tara Ellman, “Frightening and High: The Supreme Court’s Crucial Mistake About Sex Crime
More often, an assumption that an arrest equals guilt goes unstated in sources that refer to rearrest as recidivism without caveat, despite the differences between arrest and both factual and legal guilt. This can occur in primary research or in secondary sources that fail to mention the fact that the recidivism data being discussed is based in whole or in part on arrest. When viewed in combination with the other data that this Article describes, this apparent lapse in careful sourcing and critical analysis may be explained by an underlying pull to fuse arrest with guilt, such that the need to identify and describe the underlying data is overlooked.

Since recidivism consists of criminal behavior followed by further criminal behavior, arrests can be—and are—used as a proxy for either initial criminal behavior or subsequent criminal behavior, or in some instances both. Arrests appear fused with initial criminal behavior in assertions that judges considering whether to set bail—on a legally innocent defendant—need to consider the risk of “further offenses,” or in assertions that those diverted from the criminal justice system (before guilt is determined) may “recidivate,” or in language that lumps “arrestees” into the family of “offenders”; in the words of one article, “in terms of offenders’ likelihood to engage in future criminal conduct, it makes little sense to separate those offenders who have only arrests from those who have convictions.”

Arrests appear fused with subsequent criminal behavior when those arrested after prison are described as “recidivists.” These sources equate arrests with “criminal acts,” “antisocial behavior,” “misbehavior,” or “misconduct.”

Statistics, 30 Const. Comment. 495, 501 (2015). Arrests based on alleged violations, as opposed to alleged crimes, are beyond the scope of this Article.


129. See, e.g., Virginia Aldige Hiday et al., Effectiveness of a Short-Term Mental Health Court: Criminal Recidivism One Year Postixit, 37 Law & Hum. Behav. 401 (2013) (discussing “recidivism”—that is, arrest—of participants in a mental health court, into which participants are diverted preadjudication); Jennifer L. Simek et al., Correction Policy for Offenders with Mental Illness: Creating a New Paradigm for Recidivism Reduction, 35 Law & Hum. Behav. 110, 113 tbl.1 (2011) (including within a category labeled as “Contemporary program[s] for offenders with mental illness” a “jail diversion” program, in which participants with mental illness are diverted from jail into treatment, either pre- or postbooking, and in tracking the “recidivism” rates of its participants, stating that there is “no difference between groups in re-arrests over one year” (emphasis added)).


131. O’Neill et al., supra note 56, at 268 (emphasis added).


133. See U.S. Sentencing Comm’n, supra note 100, at 7 (“Recidivism is typically measured by criminal acts that resulted in the rearrest, reconviction, and/or reincarceration of the offender over a specified period of time.”).

duct,” despite the many factors that can lead to an arrest in the absence of crime commission. One article even talks about arrests being “committed.” In these sources, record-of-arrests-and-prosecution sheets (“RAP sheets”) are given credence as accurate indicators not only of arrests but of criminal conduct lying behind those arrests. Indeed, the words “arrest” and “crime commission” are sometimes used interchangeably, as in this article on “recidivism of prisoners”: “Some released prisoners crossed State lines and committed new crimes. For example, some of the prisoners released in Delaware in 1994 were arrested for new crimes in Pennsylvania in 1995…” Arrests appear fused with both initial and subsequent criminal behavior in sources that detect “recidivism” in the scenario where participation in diversionary programs (absent a conviction) is followed by rearrest.

Thus, in numerous writings on recidivism, one sees arrests being used, without caveat or analysis, as equivalent to guilt. The concepts seem to be fused despite their distinctness and despite the particular need for precision.
when addressing a topic of this importance.

Some notice this. Some seem annoyed by it. But none seem to have posited an explanation or tied this phenomenon to the other manifestations of an assumption that an arrest equals guilt. This assumption, while always problematic, may be particularly problematic in the recidivism context, given the fact that once one has a criminal record one is particularly vulnerable to rearrest.

C. Risk-Assessment Tools

Risk-assessment tools are used both to help decide whether to detain or set bail on a defendant preadjudication and to help decide what sentence to impose. In both settings, defendants are vulnerable to fusions of arrests with guilt. And in both settings, the tools are gaining significant popularity. Risk-assessment tools in the preadjudication context are found in about forty jurisdictions and in the sentencing context in more than twenty states.

As Jessica Eaglin points out, most risk-assessment tools used at sentenc-
ing “rely on arrest as the measure of recidivism.” Similarly, in the preadjudication context, Sandra Mayson notes that what is described as an assessment of the risk of “new criminal activity” usually equates to an assessment of the risk of arrest. Treating arrest as synonymous with criminal activity is one example of a fusion of arrest and guilt, and Mayson lays out some of its weaknesses:

Risk assessment tools should stop measuring crime risk in terms of the likelihood of arrest for anything. “Any arrest” is an overbroad proxy for harm. Some eleven million people are arrested each year; their charges range from unpaid traffic fines to murder. One-third of arrests lead to dismissal or acquittal. And members of poor communities of color are disproportionately arrested for low-level crimes.

Hannah Jane Sassaman echoes some of these concerns, emphasizing the key point that to predict risk in the form of arrest is actually to predict law enforcement activity: “Almost all risk-assessment tools use criminal justice data as proxies for crime. Most forecast future arrest, which is actually predicting law enforcement behavior.”

The fusion of arrest and guilt appears with respect to past arrests, in addition to future (anticipated) arrests. In the sentencing context, past arrests are sometimes factored in to the risk calculation. In the bail context, risk-assessment tools may also consider past arrests as indicative of future risk.

In addition, in the bail context, the existence of a charge in the current case is

149. Eaglin, supra note 16, at 76 (noting, however, that “some variation exists within this principle across tools”).
150. See Mayson, supra note 3, at 509 (“Existing pretrial tools assess the risk of two outcomes: failure to appear (FTA) and rearrest.”).
151. Id. at 562 (footnotes omitted). Rather than repudiating altogether the use of arrest in this context, Mayson reaches the conclusion that “arrest for a serious violent crime” is currently “the best measure available,” and thus proposes its use: “Pretrial risk assessment tools should instead measure crime risk in terms of the likelihood of rearrest for a serious violent crime in the pretrial phase. This measure does not avoid all difficulties. The harm is the actual commission of violent crime. Many people are wrongfully arrested, and many people who commit violent crimes escape arrest. So, arrest for a serious violent crime is still both over- and under-inclusive as a proxy for the commission of violent crime itself.”
152. Hannah Jane Sassaman, Debating Risk-Assessment Tools, MARSHALL PROJ. (Oct. 25, 2017), https://www.themarshallproject.org/2017/10/25/debating-risk-assessment-tools (adding that “[w]e know that certain communities, especially communities of color, are disproportionately over-policed, more likely to be over-charged by prosecutors, and forced into pleas that result in convictions”).
153. See Eaglin, supra note 16, at 97 (“[R]isk tool developers often choose to estimate recidivism risk as chance of arrest based upon factors like prior arrest.”); id. at 98 (arrest data is, thus, used “as both a predictor and an outcome”).
154. See id. at 82–83 (describing a number of tools that use past arrests).
155. See Mayson, supra note 3, at 509 (“Having been arrested before age eighteen might be three points, for example . . . .”). Some, however, have rejected this as a predictor. See, e.g., Schuppe, supra note 146 ("[T]he [Public Safety Assessment’s] developers excluded factors that were predictive but also likely served as proxies for race, such as a person’s arrest history and number of misdemeanor convictions.")
frequently taken as indicative of guilt.\(^{156}\) As Mayson puts it, judges assess the risk of “new criminal activity,” thus assuming that there has already been “criminal activity”\(^{157}\) and thus provoking due process concerns.\(^{158}\)

### D. Linguistic “Slips”

In at least some instances, “recidivism” is consciously chosen to denote the rearrest of someone with a criminal record; other terms that are sometimes consciously deployed in a way that fuses arrest and guilt include “criminogenic” (when referring to factors that appear to lead to arrest)\(^{159}\) and “sex offender” (when describing someone arrested for a “sex offense”).\(^{160}\) But there are also an array of terms that fuse arrest and guilt in a way that appears unintended. Thus, for example, one frequently finds the terms “offender,”\(^{161}\) “offense,”\(^{162}\) “reoffending,”\(^{163}\) and “crime,”\(^{164}\) where the legally correct terminol-

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156. Here, the fusion seems to be between charge and guilt rather than arrest and guilt. The relationship between these two fusions will be addressed further below. See infra Subpart II.E.

157. See Mayson, supra note 3, at 537.

158. See id. (“To invoke a defendant’s guilt as justification for pretrial restraint threatens fundamental due process values, which tend to run under the heading of the ‘presumption of innocence.’ Defendants, after all, have only been accused. Many are not guilty. Fewer than seventy percent of felony arrests nationwide lead to conviction. And the protection of accused people against false condemnation and punishment is a core commitment of the criminal justice system.” (footnote omitted)).


160. William Encinosa & Michael Roussis, An Empirical Analysis of California’s Assembly Bill 488: Access to Information on Registered Sex Offenders over the Internet Reduces Recidivism, 12 FLA. COASTAL L. REV. 429, 446 (2011) (“We identify a sex offender in the California Department of Justice arrest data as any person who has been arrested for a registrable sexual offense.”). The fact that “sex offender”—one of the most inflammatory and stigmatizing terms within the criminal lexicon—is used in this way helps to illustrate the strength of this fusion.

161. See Florence v. Bd. of Chosen Freeholders, 566 U.S. 318, 330 (2012) (“A tax does not address whether the Constitution imposes special restrictions on the searches of offenders suspected of committing minor offenses once they are taken to jail.”); Sanford H. Kadish et al., CRIMINAL LAW AND ITS PROCESSES: CASES AND MATERIALS 3 (8th ed. 2007) (“Because officers cannot possibly arrest all the offenders they encounter, they must decide which scuffles warrant an arrest for assault.”); Michael F. Caldwell, Quantifying the Effect of Juvenile Sexual Offense on Subsequent Criminal History, 22 PSYCHOL. PUB. POL’Y & L. 414, 414 (2016) (referring to juvenile sexual offense arrests as “juvenile sexual offenders”); Brian D. Shannon, Prescribing a Balance: The Texas Legislative Responses to Sell v. United States, 41 St. Mary’s L.J. 309, 339 n.117 (2009) (“Bexar County and the Center for Health Care Services have been leaders in efforts to create meaningful diversion programs for offenders with mental illness caught up in the criminal justice system.”).

162. Henry Gass, Meet a New Breed of Prosecutor, CHRISTIAN SCI. MONITOR (July 17, 2017), https://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Justice/2017/0717/Meet-a-new-breed-of-prosecutor (“From Texas to Florida to Illinois, many of these young prosecutors are eschewing the death penalty, talking rehabilitation as much as punishment, and often refusing to charge people for minor offenses.”).

163. See, e.g., Donna M. Bishop et al., Juvenile Justice Under A New U.S. and Impact of Recent Reforms, 10 U. FLA. J.L. & PUB. POL’Y 129, 146 (1998) (“We examined differences in the severity of rearrest offenses across the two groups. Ninety-three percent of the transferred youths who reoffended were arrested on felony charges.”); Enrique A. Monagas & Carlos E. Monagas, Prosecuting Teens in the Age of
ogy would be “alleged” offender/offense/reoffending/crime. Here, as often, language seems to serve as a “window to the unconscious”\(^{165} \) and, specifically, into an unconscious fusion of arrest and guilt.

E. “Everyone Pleads Guilty”\(^{166} \)

A final example involves a statistical error. Legal scholars, as well as others,\(^{167} \) commonly assert that 90 or 95% of criminal cases end in a guilty plea.\(^{168} \) It is unclear whether those making this assertion are thinking that a “criminal case” begins with an arrest or with a prosecution.\(^{169} \) Either way, these statements are inaccurate. They mistakenly characterize the percentage of convictions

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Social Media, 36 N. ILL. U. L. REV., Summer 2016, at 57, 75 (“[S]uspects likely to reoffend should be charged and prosecuted more aggressively, because those individuals pose the greatest risk to the community.”).

164. See, e.g., Dana Houle (@DanaHoule), TWITTER (Mar. 21, 2017, 6:51 AM), https://twitter.com/DanaHoule/status/844184770049392642 (attaching image of headline describing crimes followed by first paragraph describing arrests, and stating that the “[m]ost broke thing in US journalism is headlines, example infinity: headline says crimes, lede says alleged. BIG DIFFERENCE”).

165. See Peggy Cooper Davis, The Proverbial Woman, 48 REC. ASS’N B. CITY N.Y. 7, 16 (1993) (“When we are made to realize that, to take a simple example, we use the verb ‘to father’ to refer to impregnation but use the verb ‘to mother’ to refer to nurturing, we learn a great deal about the unconscious assumptions we unwittingly continue to make with respect to parenting.”); Richard Delgado & David Yun, The Neoliberal Case Against Hate-Speech Regulation—Lively, D’Souza, Gates, Carter, and the Toughlove Crowd, 47 VAND. L. REV. 1807, 1814 (1994) (“Thought and language are inextricably connected. A speaker who is asked to reconsider his or her use of language may begin to reflect on the way he or she thinks about a subject. Words, external manifestations of thought, supply a window into the unconscious. Our choice of word, metaphor, or image gives signs of the attitudes we have about a person or subject.” (footnote omitted)).


169. See John Pfaff (@JohnFPfaff), TWITTER (Oct. 18, 2017, 7:34 AM), https://twitter.com/JohnFPfaff/status/920659342201892866 (pointing out that when people assert that “95 percent of federal and state criminal cases end in a plea bargain,” it is unclear whether they are using “case” to mean “prosecution” or “arrest”); Adam Gershowitz (@AdamGershowitz), TWITTER (Oct. 18, 2017, 7:36 AM), https://twitter.com/AdamGershowitz/status/9206598862313152 (tweeting in response to Pfaff that “I think the average arrested defendant processed in a jail would think case means arrested”).
that are pleas as the percentage of cases that are pleas, and thus they erase something important. The erroneous statistics erase those cases that end in dismissal or acquittal.\footnote{David A. Sklansky & Stephen C. Yeazell, Comparative Law Without Leaving Home: What Civil Procedure Can Teach Criminal Procedure, and Vice Versa, 94 GEO. L.J. 683, 696 n.37 (2006) (“[T]his [95% figure] disregards all dispositions that were unilaterally terminated or that were otherwise dismissed.”).} That is a significant erasure. For example, Gershowitz points out that prosecutors “dismiss a huge number of cases with no conviction being entered.”\footnote{Gershowitz, supra note 21, at 1527 & n.6 (citing Bureau of Justice Statistics figures indicating that “prosecutors dismiss twenty-five percent of felony charges” and citing sources in support of the proposition that the rate “is much higher in some jurisdictions”). Cases may also be judicially dismissed. See Sklansky & Yeazell, supra note 170, at 696 n.37.}

Figures representing the percentage of cases ending in guilty pleas vary according to jurisdiction, but however one defines “cases,” they are less than 90%. So, for example, according to one recent study, a little under two-thirds of felony defendants arraigned in state courts in the seventy-five largest counties pled guilty.\footnote{In a 2009 study of large urban counties by the Department of Justice’s State Court Processing Statistics project, “[a]mong cases that were adjudicated within the 1-year study period, 66% resulted in a conviction,” and “[n]early all convictions were the result of a guilty plea rather than a trial.” \textit{Brian A. Reaves, U.S. DEP’T OF JUSTICE, BUREAU OF JUSTICE STATISTICS, FELONY DEFENDANTS IN LARGE URBAN COUNTIES, 2009 – STATISTICAL TABLES 22 (2013), https://www.bjs.gov/content/pubs/pdf/fdluc09.pdf.}} In D.C. Superior Court, 42% of all defendants pled guilty; 53% had their cases dismissed post-filing.\footnote{See U.S. DEP’T OF JUSTICE, UNITED STATES ATTORNEYS’ ANNUAL STATISTICAL REPORT 65 tbl.17 (2016), https://www.justice.gov/usao/page/file/988896/download.} In federal court, where there is a smaller drop-off between prosecution and conviction, the figures diverge less dramatically from the erroneous version, but they still diverge. In 2015, 88% of federal defendants ended their cases with a plea of either guilty or \textit{nolo contendere}; the percentage of convictions that involved a guilty or \textit{nolo contendere} plea was 97.5%\footnote{See U.S. COURTS, ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR: JUDICIAL BUSINESS OF THE UNITED STATES COURTS, Table D-4, at 1, https://www.uscourts.gov/sites/default/files/data_tables/D04Sep15.pdf.}.

Again, some have noticed this error.\footnote{See Sklansky & Yeazell, supra note 170, at 696 n.37 ("It is remarkably difficult to get robust statistics on the rate of civil or criminal consensual settlement. The most common mistake is to subtract the percentage of trials from the percentage of filings and thereby arrive at a figure of over 95% of settlements or plea bargains. That is an error because it disregards the circumstance that many civil cases end with dispositive adjudication before trial. Those cases end because of a judicial decision that concludes the case, not because the parties decide to control the risks of adjudication with an agreement. An analogous calculation on the criminal side would put consensual agreements at approximately 95%, but, again, this disregards all dispositions that were unilaterally terminated or that were otherwise dismissed. Our own estimates, for which we claim no great statistical sophistication, put both the rate of plea bargain and the rate of civil settlement at about 60–70% of filed cases—very high but not overwhelming." (citations omitted)); Adam Gershowitz (@AdamGershowitz), TWITTER (Oct. 18, 2017, 7:30 AM), https://twitter.com/AdamGershowitz/status/92068469596999668 (stating, in response to Jessica Fishko article, that “95% of criminal *cases* do not end in a plea bargain. 95% of convictions do. There is a difference between those two things!!!”); Carissa Byrne Hessick (@CBHessick), TWITTER (Oct. 18, 2017, 7:56 AM), https://twitter.com/} Some are annoyed by it.\footnote{No one}
appears to have posited a suggestion as to its cause. The frequency of this mistake—by people who understand the need for accuracy, precision, and appropriate sourcing and who are committed to exposing and deconstructing harmful assumptions about the criminal legal system—suggests that the error is allowed to slip through because it aligns with an assumption that is pervasive, albeit implicit: that a governmental act that requires only probable cause (whether an arrest or a prosecutorial charge) is in fact equivalent to guilt. If one is conditioned to think of a finding of legal guilt as following on from a finding of probable cause, then one may be less likely to double-check figures that suggest the same.

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As to several of these phenomena, one might proffer explanations such as inattention, sloppiness, or shorthand. Perhaps it could be said, for example, that it’s a little sloppy to refer to “recidivism” data without acknowledging that the metric is rearrest, or to make the plea rate error, or to use “offender” to mean “arrestee.” But sloppiness is more likely to occur when there is no resistance to it. This Article suggests that these many slips, mistakes, and elisions meet with little resistance because of the strength of an underlying assumption (namely, that arrest equals guilt) that facilitates them all. But how to explain that assumption? The next Part turns to that question.

III. POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS

To be sure, there may be some explanations for the fusion that are unique to a particular context mentioned above. For example, a partial explanation for widespread acceptance of “recidivism” rates that include arrests (and thus that lie on the expansive end of the spectrum) may be a widespread, if implic-
it, belief that certain people (or groups) have a propensity to commit criminal acts. There are also some potential explanations that have been thoroughly explored in the literature, including “tunnel vision” affecting law enforcement and others. This Part will focus on explanations that are more broadly applicable and less well explored.

A. "A System of Pleas"

It may be unsurprising that an arrest, whose core evidentiary requirement is an assertion of probable cause by law enforcement, has come to seem equivalent to guilt, given that our predominant means for declaring guilt—the guilty plea—has as its core evidentiary requirement an assertion of probable cause by law enforcement.

While of course there is a key distinction between an arrest and (the majority of) guilty pleas, namely that for the latter a defendant is required to make some sort of admission of guilt, various scholars have pointed out that in light of the coercive pressure to enter a guilty plea, the “admission” should be seen as little more than a formality, and indeed a formality that

179. See Roberts, supra note 110, at 2015 (suggesting that part of what sustains the practice of impeaching criminal defendants with their prior convictions is a societal belief in propensity); Ekow N. Yankah, Good Guys and Bad Guys: Punishing Character, Equality and the Irrelevance of Moral Character to Criminal Punishment, 25 CARDOZO L. REV. 1019, 1032–33 (2004).

180. See, e.g., Keith A. Findley & Michael S. Scott, The Multiple Dimensions of Tunnel Vision in Criminal Cases, 2006 WIS. L. REV. 291, 292 (defining “tunnel vision” as “that ‘compendium of common heuristics and logical fallacies,’ to which we are all susceptible, that lead actors in the criminal justice system to focus on a suspect, select and filter the evidence that will ‘build a case’ for conviction, while ignoring or suppressing evidence that points away from guilt” (quoting Dianne L. Martin, Lessons About Justice from the Laboratory of Wrongful Convictions: Tunnel Vision, the Construction of Guilt and Informer Evidence, 70 UMKC L. REV. 847, 848 (2002))); id. (“This process leads investigators, prosecutors, judges, and defense lawyers alike to focus on a particular conclusion and then filter all evidence in a case through the lens provided by that conclusion.”).

181. See Murray, supra note 80, at 372 (“The presumption of innocence may be the foundational principle of the American criminal justice system, but the presumption of guilt is its operational force. The US Supreme Court acknowledged this reality in two notable criminal law decisions in 2012, Lafer v. Cooper and Missouri v. Frye, when it described the criminal process as ‘a system of pleas, not a system of trials.’”).

182. See Shapiro, supra note 9, at 43–44 (stating that a summary by law enforcement of evidence providing a “factual basis” for a plea is probably sufficient where it establishes probable cause).

183. See Menna v. New York, 423 U.S. 61, 62 n.2 (1975) (per curiam) (“[A] counselled plea of guilty is an admission of factual guilt so reliable that, where voluntary and intelligent, it quite validly removes the issue of factual guilt from the case.” (emphasis omitted)); North Carolina v. Alford, 400 U.S. 25, 32 (1970) (stating that pleas are typically accompanied by admission of guilt).

184. See John C. Jeffries, Jr., The Liability Rule for Constitutional Torts, 99 VA. L. REV. 207, 226 (2013) (“For all but the simplest crimes, prosecutors can pile up charges to the point where the incentive to plea bargain becomes overwhelming.”).

may make a mockery of a system that is often said to be interested in truth.\textsuperscript{186}

So perhaps it is not that strange, for example, to use “offender” to refer to someone (an arrestee) who might be guilty,\textsuperscript{187} given that in our system of pleas “offender” (used in the “proper” sense, i.e., to refer to someone who is legally guilty) itself only means that the person convicted might be (factually) guilty.\textsuperscript{188} This may be particularly true given the centrality of pleas within our legal system: ours is not just a “system of pleas” in the sense that defendants are permitted to (and in large numbers do) take pleas,\textsuperscript{189} but also a system that, given the current rate of charging and resourcing, relies on pleas in order to continue to operate.\textsuperscript{190} If this standard and mode of “proof” establishes guilt in the plea bargaining context, it does not seem surprising that it has the same effect earlier in the process. If our system of plea bargaining “short-circuits” the process of determining guilt,\textsuperscript{191} then perhaps it is unsurprising if we in our assumptions do the same.

\textsuperscript{186} See Albert W. Alschuler, The Changing Plea Bargaining Debate, \textit{69 Calif. L. Rev.} 652, 705 (1981) (“It . . . may seem strange suddenly to seek the virtues of consent at one stage of a stigmatizing, misery-producing, and involuntary proceeding. Indeed, in most nations of the world, although civil disputes are compromised as freely as here, American plea bargaining apparently is regarded as a reductio ad absurdum of our nation’s commercial mentality.”); Bowers, supra note 22, at 1153 (mentioning critics who find that the propensity of defendants facing weak charges to “plead guilty to cheap pleas” has the effect of “under-mining] the system’s central truth-seeking function”); id. at 1171 (“[The criminal justice system] finds something sacrosanct and inviolable— even magical— in the bottom-line accuracy of the defendant’s admission that she behaved (in some fashion) illegally. Institutional actors (who should know better) hold on to this last vestige of an antiquated truth-seeking ideal.” (footnote omitted)); Arthur Rosett, The Negotiated Guilty Plea, \textit{374 Annals Am. Acad. Pol. & Soc. Sci.} 70, 75 (1967) (“In many courts, the guilty-plea process looks more like the purchase of a rug in a Lebanese bazaar than like the confrontation between a man and his soul.”).


\textsuperscript{188} See Albert W. Alschuler, Straining at Gnats and Swallowing Camels: The Selective Morality of Professor Bibas, \textit{88 Cornell L. Rev.} 1412, 1413-14 (2003) (“The plea bargaining system effectively substitutes a concept of partial guilt for the requirement of proof of guilt beyond a reasonable doubt. It is marvelously designed to secure conviction of the innocent.”); Alschuler, supra note 186, at 703 (“Adjudication is designed to answer the question of which side is correct on a case-by-case basis. Settlement is not designed to answer this question but to produce an acceptable middle ground.”); Talia Fisher, Conviction Without Conviction, \textit{96 Minn. L. Rev.} 833, 851 (2012) (noting the probabilistic nature of pleas, and stating that “plea bargains, by and large, adjust sentencing to the level of proof regarding culpability”); Michael Tonry, From Policing to Parole: Reconfiguring American Criminal Justice in \textit{Reinventing American Criminal Justice} 3 (Michael Tonry & Daniel S. Nagin eds., 2017) (conducting a comparative review and concluding that “[n]owhere else is a guilty plea enough by itself for a conviction; a judge must determine the facts, decide whether the defendant is guilty and of what, and impose a sentence”).

\textsuperscript{189} Lafler v. Cooper, 566 U.S. 156, 170 (2012) (“[Criminal justice today is for the most part a system of pleas, not a system of trials.”).

\textsuperscript{190} See Ortmann, supra note 5, at 554.

\textsuperscript{191} See Alschuler, supra note 186, at 692 (“A prosecutor or defense attorney whose primary concern is to cut corners probably would find a regime of plea bargaining ideally suited to his goals.”); Packer, supra note 42, at 38 (“[A] decision that the defendant will remain in custody once he has been charged may itself induce him to plead guilty, thereby short-circuiting the part of the process concerned with guilt determination and moving directly to the question of ultimate disposition.”).
B. The Costs of Diversion

The hardships caused by the criminal process, including convictions, are so grave that numerous innovators have created mechanisms that aim to avoid some of those hardships. A variety of such innovations, such as diversionary programs, “alternative” courts, and “problem-solving” courts, have been developed, and a significant component of many of them is that participation can ward off the imposition of a criminal conviction and its manifold consequences.

For all the relative advantages that participation in such programs may offer, one trade-off for this escape from some aspects of the criminal process appears to be that certain hardships can be inflicted without what the criminal legal system would (at least in theory) first require—some sort of finding or acknowledgment of guilt. Thus, to be in such a program—even if one has not pled guilty as a condition of participation—is often to be classed as an “offender” and a possible “recidivism” risk and to be seen as in need of “accountability,” rehabilitation, and penance. Thus, by leaping over any

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193. See Whitney C. Wootton, Diversion Not Deportation: Mitigating the Harsh Immigration Consequences of Minor Crimes, 16 SEATTLE J. SOC. JUST. 217, 236 (2017) (“[Pretrial diversion programs] lead to lower recidivism and allow individuals to avoid the long-term negative consequences of a criminal conviction, such as difficulty in finding housing and employment.”).

194. See id. at 242 (“[P]re-file diversion programs do not require participants to stipulate to the charges against them to qualify for diversion.”).

195. See generally, e.g., Hiday et al., supra note 129 (using the term “offenders” to describe participants in a mental health court, into which participants are diverted preadjudication).

196. See, e.g., Cory R. Lepage & Jeff D. May, The Anchorage, Alaska Municipal Pretrial Diversion Program: An Initial Evaluation, 34 ALASKA L. REV. 1, 8–9 (2017) (“Impact on future criminality (also known as recidivism) is important. Approximately one-third of the participants were rearrested for any offense between two years and four and one-half years after they were admitted into the program, mirroring the recidivism rates in other states’ pretrial diversion programs.”).

197. See Jillian M. Cavanaugh, Helping Those Who Serve Veterans Treatment Courts Foster Rehabilitation and Reduce Recidivism for Offending Combat Veterans, 45 NEW ENG. L. REV. 463, 471 (2011) (“Drug courts operate on the principles of treatment and accountability. Eligible offenders are taken before the drug court immediately upon arrest or apprehension . . . .” (footnotes omitted)).

198. See Jerome Hall, Objectives of Federal Criminal Procedural Revision, 51 YALE L.J. 723, 728 (1942) (“The presumption that to be charged means to be guilty has been tenaciously, if unconsciously, entertained by well-intentioned reformers lulled into complacency by humanitarian motives to substitute ‘treatment’ for punishment, and enlightened by negligible insight into the functions of criminal procedure.”).

199. See King County, Washington’s “Theft 3 and Mall Safety Pilot Project,” in which young people, suspected of shoplifting, but formally accused of nothing, write letters of “apology.” KING CTY., WASH., REG’L LAW SAFETY & JUSTICE COMM., JULY 27, 2017 MEETING SUMMARY (2017), http://www.kingcounty.gov/~/media/depts/executive/performance-strategy-budget/documents/pdfs/RLSJC/2017/July27/RLSJ-C-072717.ashx?la=en (“[A] young person gets picked up by a loss prevention specialist, calls [Tukwila Police Department], who walks them down to a community resource area staffed by [Glover Empowerment Mentoring (GEM)], GEM calls the parents and explains that the child has an opportunity to participate in a program. The youth is referred to a geographically and culturally specific group for case manage-
requirements that guilt be established by means of evidence, these programs may help to support a notion that guilt is established at the time of arrest.

The Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program in Seattle, for example, holds iconic and influential status, in part because it diverts so early—postarrest but pre-booking—in an effort to whisk one away as quickly as possible from certain harms that the criminal process imposes. And yet, this innovation may bring a cost: reinforcement of the fusion of arrest and guilt. LEAD’s website, for example, describes the program like this: “LEAD is a pre-booking diversion program that allows officers to redirect low-level offenders engaged in drugs or prostitution activity to community-based services instead of jail and prosecution.”

C. Fusion of Act with Crime

As mentioned above, proving the commission of an act is typically not enough to prove the commission of a crime. Our criminal codes have been set up to include additional elements, such as mens rea elements, and to provide for numerous defenses. Yet in the assumptions of the police and the pub-
lic and sometimes of legal scholars, establishment of an act (or even an assertion thereof) frequently seems to be taken as establishment of a crime. This phenomenon may contribute to the tendency to equate an arrest with guilt, since the assertion most easily made in support of an arrest is that the defendant committed a particular act.

One commonly sees the act-crime fusion in public discourse. Thus, for example, only some homicides are crimes, and only some criminal homicides are murders. It is not unusual, however, for reporting of homicide rates to betray the assumption that they are crime rates and indeed to refer to them as “murder rates.”

One sees this fusion creeping into legal scholarship, too. For example, among the various definitions given for “factual guilt,” a popular one assigns factual guilt where the defendant “committed the act.” It is noteworthy that this definition has gained so much currency, given that, in and of itself, commission of the act is typically not enough to establish guilt. It is as if there is a concept of crime, for which an act suffices, that is in a constant tussle with our societal decision, via statutory law, to say that more is needed.

If one looks for explanations of this explanation, one can perhaps speculate about the influence of the “innocence movement.” In its first cases, this movement focused on situations in which DNA could establish that law enforcement had the wrong person. The person seeking exoneration was able to say, “That wasn’t me,” “I wasn’t there,” or “I didn’t do it.” This became the emblematic form of a “wrongful conviction” and may have created a corollary risk that the conviction of someone who was there and did appear to

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206. See Joseph A. Colquitt, Rethinking Entrapment, 41 AM. CRIM. L. REV. 1389, 1400 (2004) (“For the police and the public alike, the problem is explaining that a difference exists between the fact of the bad act and the finding of guilt necessary to establish culpability.”).


208. See, e.g., Genego, supra note 40, at 845 (an individual is “factually guilty” when she “performed a given act”); Craig Haney, Exoneration and Wrongful Condemnations: Expanding the Zone of Perceived Injustice in Death Penalty Cases, 37 GOL DEN GATE U. L. REV. 131, 135 (2006) (“[Factual guilt] is the actus reus, the physical or behavioral component of the criminal act.”); id. at 136 (“[F]actual guilt is what most laypersons mean when they talk about whether someone is guilty—or in the case of miscarriages of justice and subsequent exonerations, whether an ‘innocent’ person has been wrongly convicted . . . .”); Paul J. Mishkin, Foreword: The High Court, the Great Writ, and the Due Process of Time and Law, The Supreme Court, 1964 Term, 79 HARV. L. REV. 56, 81 n.84 (1965) (“As used throughout this paper, the term ‘factual guilt’ or more simply ‘guilt’ refers to the individual having done the acts which constitute the crime with which he is charged.”).

209. See, for example, the common usage of phrases like “unsolved crimes,” or “unsolved murders.” If we were to be true to legal definitions of crimes and murders, there could be no such thing as an unsolved crime or murder, since it is only in the “solving” that we determine whether there was a “crime” or a “murder.”


have done something would be assumed to be rightful.212 Thus, the variety and potential robustness of all the many ways of saying that I may have done the act alleged, but I did not commit a crime, are easily obscured. Larry L. Archie, a defense attorney from North Carolina, provoked some chuckles when his billboard advertisement—“Just Because You Did It Doesn’t Mean You’re Guilty”213—hit social media, with one commentator stating, “That can’t be real!”214 But it is real, and his work of reminding us of this reality is valuable.

D. Media Influence

Media can, of course, both reflect and shape public perceptions.215 When media outlets equate an arrest to guilt, they risk reinforcing this fusion. In one recent example, a Univision headline stated that “Trump publishes list of crimes committed by immigrants: the majority are Latinos who haven’t been convicted.”216 This headline provoked at least some pushback, on the basis that the list reflected not crimes but arrests.217

Two recurring media practices seem likely to fuel the fusion of arrest and guilt. The first involves the “perp walk,” which is a coordinated effort between media and police218 in which images of a legally innocent suspect being marched from place to place are published, broadcast, or both. Other nations find this practice abhorrent,219 as they do our other methods of identifying and stigmatizing arrestees.220

A second example involves the common media practice of reporting the


215. See Anna King & Shadd Maruna, The Function of Fiction for a Punitive Public, in CAPTURED BY THE MEDIA: PRISON DISCOURSE IN POPULAR CULTURE 16 (Paul Mason ed., 2006) (explaining ways in which media constructs punitive public attitudes, which, in turn, encourage punitive constructions of “offenders” and increasingly punitive policy approaches).


218. See supra notes 78–81 and accompanying text.

219. See Murray, supra note 80, at 378.

220. See JAMES B. JACOBS, THE ETERNAL CRIMINAL RECORD 194 (2015) (“From an international perspective, publicly accessible arrest records are even more exceptional than publicly available conviction records.” (emphasis omitted)).
content of police accounts as if it were the truth. This includes presenting police accounts of what suspects are alleged to have said as if those accounts were fact, despite documented examples of false police claims about what suspects are alleged to have said and of police mendacity more generally.

This media choice echoes, and may fuel, common assumptions about the truthfulness and accuracy of police accounts and of law enforcement more generally. If a police account is seen as the truth, and if acts are commonly assumed to equal crimes, then the police account of an alleged act, which can suffice for the purposes of an arrest, may also be taken as sufficient to establish guilt.

E. Self-Comforting

Assertions and assumptions that serve a self-comforting purpose are


222. See, e.g., Jacobs et al., supra note 77 ("A hate-fueled white supremacist told cops his killing of a random black man was merely a practice run for a racist mass murder spree."); James C. McKinley, Jr., A Question Hangs Over a Trial: Why Did a Nanny Kill 2 Children in Her Care?, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 11, 2018), https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/11/nyregion/nanny-murder-trial-insanity-defense.html; N.Y. Times (@nytimes), TWITTER (Mar. 22, 2017, 3:48 PM), https://twitter.com/nytimes/status/844682114901721088 ("A white veteran with a hatred of black men told the police that he killed a homeless man to make a statement.").


224. See supra notes 32–35 and accompanying text.


226. See Anna Roberts, Casual Ostracism: Jury Exclusion on the Basis of Criminal Convictions, 98 MINN. L. REV. 592, 628 (2013) (mentioning empirical indications that jurors put "unjustified stock in the credibility of governmental employees").

227. See supra Subpart III.C.

228. See Gershonowitz, supra note 21, at 1526–27.

229. See Packer, supra note 42, at 12 ("If there is confidence in the reliability of informal administrative factfinding activities that take place in the early stages of the criminal process, the remaining stages of the process can be relatively perfunctory without any loss in operating efficiency. The presumption of guilt, as it operates in the Crime Control Model, is the expression of that confidence.").
more likely to prosper than those that do the opposite, and they may prosper even in the absence of empirical support. Thus, for example, law professors commonly assert that “law professors have the best job in the world.”

In a system in which arrests are disproportionately visited upon poor people of color, and in which arrests lead to stringent and permanent consequences, some of which appear even to judges to resemble “punishment,” it might be self-comforting to assume that those arrested are guilty. (Otherwise, one might have to conclude that we are stymying the life...
chances of, stigmatizing, and stripping away the liberty of people on the basis of their race and poverty.)\textsuperscript{236} If a desire to self-comfort is indeed operative, then perhaps those people who are erased from the common plea-bargaining statistical error—people whose cases ended without a finding of guilt—are erased because dwelling on their existence and numerosity is troubling. Similarly, a view of the police that associates them with truthfulness and accuracy may be more comforting than the opposite.\textsuperscript{237} A view of arrests as acts of the suspect,\textsuperscript{238} and thus within the suspect’s control, may be more comforting than the view of arrest as a threat that may be incentivized by factors other than evidence,\textsuperscript{239} and that may be visited upon you no matter how you behave.

An additional self-comforting assumption that might be at play is the assumption that there exists a clean binary of “guilty” and “innocent,” “offender” and “not an offender.” Under this binary, guilt is revealed by conduct—the arrest—and thus it exists before the lawyering begins and is not subject to the vagaries of resources or skill. It would be—for some, it is—highly disturbing that one’s chances of being found legally guilty are deeply influenced by the quality (and often the resources) of one’s defense counsel.\textsuperscript{240} It may also be unsettling to acknowledge that in some cases factual guilt does not exist in a definitive sense,\textsuperscript{241} and that the only real answer one can get on that question is what a factfinder concludes (thus again implicating the quality/resources differential). Some may be tempted to substitute this “maybe-maybe not” or “let’s see what your lawyer can do with that” world—a world in tension with the Supreme Court’s declaration that “[t]here can be no equal justice where the kind of trial a man gets depends on the amount of money he has”\textsuperscript{242}—for a world of a nice, clean binary, in which it is not money, chance, or legal skill...
that determines your guilt, but rather your misconduct, embodied by your arrest.243

IV. WHY THIS MATTERS

There are various reasons why one might be concerned by a fusion of arrest and guilt.244 This Article highlights just one set of such reasons, selected because of the breadth of its impact. It focuses on a variety of components of our criminal legal system that require urgent reform, and as regards to which the slowness of reform may be a puzzle.245 It posits that reform in these areas requires a robust understanding of the difference between arrest and guilt, and that the depth and breadth of those concepts’ fusion might provide at least a partial explanation of the obstacles to reform.

A. Defense Representation

If guilt is commonly seen as something revealed by an arrest—if, in other words, the relevance of the entire part of the criminal process between arrest and adjudication has fallen out,246 and if the law is viewed less as a means by which guilt can be constructed and more as a construct that can be used by defense attorneys to “get their clients off”247—a variety of failings in the area

243. See Erin Murphy, Indigent Defense, CHAMPION, Feb. 2002, at 33, 33 (“In the short time that I have been a public defender, I have learned that most people who ask the ‘how can you’ question have already divided the world into neat categories of ‘us’ and ‘them.’ They assume that ‘those people’ are in fact guilty criminals and therefore undeserving of constitutional protections. Sometimes the ‘us’ and the ‘them’ is simply the speaker’s distinction between the lawless and the lawful, the good citizen and the bad. Often race or economic privilege bolsters the speaker’s confidence that he or she will always be counted among the ‘us.’ Regardless of how the division is justified, however, the ‘them’ is always a group to which the speaker cannot relate, or to which the speaker is confident he or she will never belong. It is also always a group comprised only of the guilty — as though our laws and procedures were just impediments to the efficient adjudication of guilt, rather than the engine through which we determine whether guilt exists at all.”); U.S. DEP’T OF JUSTICE, OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS, NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM ON INDIGENT DEFENSE 2000: REDEFINING LEADERSHIP FOR EQUAL JUSTICE vii (2000) (“In the end, a good lawyer is the best defense against wrongful conviction . . . .”).

244. See supra Subpart II.B, for example, for the many potential effects of recidivism calculations that are maximized through the choice to use arrest as a metric.

245. See Andrew M. Siegel, Moving Down the Wedge of Injustice: A Proposal for a Third Generation of Wrongful Convictions Scholarship and Advocacy, 42 AM. CRIM. L. REV. 1219, 1230 (2005) (“The rules and structures of which I speak—indigent defense systems, prosecutorial incentive structures, plea bargaining procedures, docket control mechanisms, etc.—are over-determined candidates for reform campaigns in that they both impose unfairness up front in all criminal cases and lead to the incarceration of innocents on the back end.”).

246. See Ion Meyn, Why Civil and Criminal Procedure Are So Different: A Forgotten History, 86 FORDHAM L. REV. 697, 725–26 (2017) (highlighting the thinness of the center of criminal, as compared to civil, procedure).

247. Entman & Gross, supra note 221, at 96 n.8 (“The defense attorneys, the contending side, are likely viewed as more biased than prosecutors—their job is to try to get their clients off—and thus their claims are likely to be viewed more skeptically.”).
of defense representation may become less surprising. These include government-funded defense resources,\textsuperscript{248} the standards and policing of attorney performance,\textsuperscript{249} the incentive structures operating on defense attorneys,\textsuperscript{250} defender caseloads,\textsuperscript{251} and—resulting from these—the inability of defense attorneys to meet their ethical obligations.\textsuperscript{252} James Forman Jr. has commented on the apparent tension between the dire state of public defense and the “scant attention” focused on it in some quarters.\textsuperscript{253} A fusion of arrest and guilt may make the phenomenon that he notes more understandable because if factual guilt is viewed as something established by arrest, then many or all of the functions of defense counsel may be seen as a waste of money. Who wants to support those who are trying to get people off on a technicality?\textsuperscript{254}

\textsuperscript{248} See James Forman Jr., Opinion, Justice Springs Eternal, N.Y. TIMES (Mar. 25, 2017), https://www.nytimes.com/2017/03/25/opinion/sunday/justice-springs-eternal.html?smprod=nytcore-iphone&smid=nytcore-iphone-share&ref=rso (“[N]o aspect of our criminal justice system is as overworked and underfunded as public defender services. Of the more than $200 billion that states and local governments spend on criminal justice each year, less than 2 percent goes to public defense. Yet improving indigent defense gets scant attention in the conversation about how to fix our criminal justice system.”); see also Adele Bernhard, Take Courage: What the Courts Can Do to Improve the Delivery of Criminal Defense Services, 63 U. PITT. L. REV. 293, 311 (2002) (“Judges are not likely to order the expenditure of funds to hire lawyers and support staff when convinced of guilt and worried that additional support will only slow the process of adjudication not change results.”).

\textsuperscript{249} See Bernhard, supra note 248, at 311 (“Courts may have been dissuaded from taking action on Sixth Amendment right to counsel claims by the acknowledged but pervasive belief that anyone who has been arrested is guilty—a belief which inevitably minimizes the significance of all else in the criminal justice system besides the swift resolution of cases. The presumption of guilt is a ‘core belief shared by virtually all personnel who work within the criminal justice system’ and a major hindrance to improving criminal defense services. If judges suspect that everyone arrested is guilty, it is hard to convince them to strike as unconstitutional state-funded criminal defense systems that rush pleas or discourage legal research and creative investigation.”) (footnotes omitted) (quoting Givelber, supra note 34, at 1329)); id. at 312 (“The presumption of guilt helps to explain why the Supreme Court formulated an almost insurmountable standard of review for ineffective assistance claims on appeal.”); Rodney Uphoff, Convicting the Innocent: Aberration or Systemic Problem?, 2006 WIS. L. REV. 739, 741–42 (describing assistance of counsel as often involving “little more than counsel’s help in facilitating a guilty plea”).

\textsuperscript{250} For defense attorney incentives in our system that militate in favor of performing the “minimum amount necessary to convince clients to plead guilty as quickly as possible,” see Tigran W. Eldred, Prescriptions for Ethical Blindness: Improving A Daycare for Indigent Defendants in Criminal Case, 65 RUTGERS L. REV. 333, 351 (2012).


\textsuperscript{252} See Eldred, supra note 250, at 335 (“Underfunded and overworked public defenders ‘are constantly forced to violate their oaths as attorneys because their caseloads make it impossible for them to practice law as they are required to do according to the profession’s rules. They cannot interview their clients properly, effectively seek their pretrial release, file appropriate motions, conduct necessary fact investigations, negotiate responsibly with the prosecutor, adequately prepare for hearings, and perform countless other tasks that normally would be undertaken by a lawyer with sufficient time and resources.’” (quoting NAT’L RIGHT TO COUNSEL COMM., JUSTICE DENIED: AMERICA’S CONTINUING NEGLECT OF OUR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHT TO COUNSEL 7 (2009), http://www.constitutionproject.org/pdf/139.pdf)); Irene Otsiweyimmi Joe, Systematizing Public Defender Rationing, 93 DENV. L. REV. 389, 396 (2016).

\textsuperscript{253} Forman, supra note 248.

\textsuperscript{254} See Jodi F. Bouer & Elizabeth Ortecho, Book Review, 6 B.U. PUB. INT. L.J. 377, 378 (1996) (“Rothwax does not view the defense attorney’s role as any better than the defendant’s since she also serves
Who wants to fund smoke and mirrors?255

To the extent that problems exist with defense lawyering that are within defense attorneys’ power to ameliorate, the fusion may again have some explanatory weight. Thus, Abbe Smith finds that attorneys’ assumptions of guilt underlie “the bad lawyering at the root of many wrongful convictions: feckless or beleaguered lawyers feeling that their client is guilty anyway, so what the hell?”256

A final example concerns the very provision of defense counsel. To some, the failure to provide defense counsel at stages of the criminal process that include arraignment257—and during the guilty plea process that arraignment may encompass258—is a disgrace.259 But those who fuse arrest with guilt may reject the idea that defense counsel needs to be provided at such points.260 And, where defense counsel is provided, those who fuse arrest and guilt may view the model of “meet ‘em and plead ‘em” not as a monstrosity but rather
2019] A rrests A s Guilt 105

as an efficient way of proceeding. The phrase nicely encapsulates a system in which the period between arrest and adjudication is largely seen as pointless filler, and thus one in which a lack of funding and support for vigorous defense becomes understandable.

B. Preadjudication Suffering

Preadjudication practices, such as bail, seem finally to be getting broad recognition as practices that not only resemble the "punishment" that is forbidden in advance of conviction but specifically punishment for the crime of poverty. But it took a long time.

If one is searching for explanations of how preadjudication practices of this nature have gone on so long and to such adverse effect, it may again be worth considering the assumptions of guilt attaching to those arrested. Jeffrey Manns, for example, notes that the "conventional wisdom of the culpability of anyone that the government has probable cause to arrest goes far towards explaining popular apathy to pretrial detentions and the dearth of remedies for detainees who are not convicted." This apathy makes sense if, as R.A. Duff suggests, "the defendant is seen as being in fact an offender, who awaits only the formal verdict of the court before receiving the punishment he deserves." And indeed, if punishment is deserved, one might as well get started as soon as possible, something that our system permits by folding "time

261. For the notion that the criminal justice system in America is "plagued by a . . . 'meet 'em and plead 'em' methodology," see Lahny R. Silva, Right to Counsel and Plea Bargaining: Gideon's Legacy Continues, 99 IOWA L. REV. 2219, 2230 (2014) (footnote omitted).

262. See Meyn, supra note 246, at 725–26.


265. See Simonson, supra note 89, at 608 (“Even a few days in jail are profoundly destabilizing: defendants experience declines in physical and mental health, and potentially lose wages, jobs, stable housing, and custody of their children.”).


267. Duff, supra note 128, at 120 (adding that “that is why it is so easy (and so revealing) to slide into talking about the danger that the defendant will commit, not ‘offences[,]’ but ‘further offen[s]es’ while on bail”).

268. See id. at 119 (“Now pre-trial detention is not (formally) punishment; it does not presuppose that the defendant is guilty of the crime for which he is to be tried (although if the defendant is convicted and sentenced to imprisonment, time spent on pre-trial remand can be counted towards that sentence as ‘time served’).”); Packer, supra note 42, at 39 (“[U]nder the Crime Control Model[,] [t]he vast majority of persons charged with crime are factually guilty[,] . . . [a]nd [f]or all practical purposes, the defendant is a criminal, just because the assembly line cannot move fast enough for him to be immediately disposed of is no reason for him to go free. If he does go free, he may not appear for trial, a risk that is heightened when he has a strong consciousness of guilt and a lively expectation of probable punishment.”).
served” into the formal sentence. As Human Rights Watch puts it, “[t]he time in pretrial detention (as well as in police lockup pre-arraignment)” can serve as “punishment paid in advance.”

A lack of concern about pretrial custody has ripple effects. Part of what justifies speedy trial guarantees is that a limit on the time spent to bring a case to trial necessarily means a temporal limit on pretrial custody. If those held in custody are assumed to be guilty, then we can see an explanation for the widespread failure to make speedy trial guarantees meaningful. Similarly, while one might be concerned that pretrial custody helps to bring about pleas if one assumes that those in custody are guilty, then that may appear to be not coercion but welcome efficiency.

C. Police Reform

If the kinds of assumptions mentioned in this Article—that arrests are tantamount to guilt, that police are truthful, and that police are essential as the primary mechanism for bringing the guilty to light—are indeed widespread, then it may be unsurprising how halting reform has been of policing problems, including racially disparate policing and arrests, widespread use of arrest, inappropriate incentives to arrest, police untruth, and the incen-

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269. See Duff, supra note 128, at 119.
274. See id. at 38 (“[A] decision that the defendant will remain in custody once he has been charged may itself induce him to plead guilty, thereby short-circuiting the part of the process concerned with guilt determination and moving directly to the question of ultimate disposition.”); id. at 39–40 (explaining the antipathy of the “Crime Control Model” to reducing the rate of pretrial confinement: “The main risk is that the increased consumption of time required to litigate cases that do not really need to be litigated would put an intolerable strain on what is already an overburdened process. That consideration alone argues against a policy that makes pretrial liberty the norm.”).
275. See Tammy Rinehart Kochel et al., Effect of Suspect Race on Officers’ Arrest Decisions, 49 CRIMINOLOGY 473, 498 (2011) (using a meta-analysis to reach the conclusion that, “[o]n average, the chances of a minority suspect being arrested were found to be 30 percent greater than a White suspect”); Michael Tonry, Legal and Ethical Issues in the Prediction of Recidivism, 26 Fed. Sent’g Rep. 167, 173 (2014) (“Black men are arrested at younger ages and more often than white men for reasons that have as much to do with racially differentiated exercises of police discretion as with racial differences in offending behavior. Racial profiling by the police targets blacks and Hispanics and exposes them proportionately more often than whites to arrest. Police drug enforcement policies target substances that black drug dealers sell and places where they sell them, resulting in rates of arrests for drug offenses that have been four to six times higher for blacks than for whites since the mid-1980s.”).
276. See supra note 1 and accompanying text.
277. See supra notes 23–31 and accompanying text.
Arrests As Guilt

If arrests are seen as tantamount to guilt, then those who bear the burden of making arrests—and thus of taking control of criminal wrongdoers—are likely to garner esteem and protection. The fusion of arrest and guilt thus may act as an obstacle to reform. Judges, for example, play a role in overseeing police conduct and testimony. But Rodney Uphoff and others have suggested that judicial assumptions of guilt may dilute that power. This Article also suggests that traveling along with an assumption that an arrest equals guilt is an assumption that a lack of arrest equals a lack of guilt. (It can be hard to make much sense of "recidivism rates" that rely on arrests, or "crime rates" that rely on arrest rates, unless this second assumption is in

278. See supra notes 32–35 and accompanying text.
279. See, e.g., Alexander, supra note 27.
280. See Rodney J. Uphoff, On Misjudging and Its Implications for Criminal Defendants, Their Lawyers and the Criminal Justice System, 7 Nev. L.J. 521, 543–44 (2007) (“In my view, the attitudinal blinders that many judges possess contribute significantly to the inadequacies of the criminal justice system. Most judges, especially those with prosecutorial experience, presume that most defendants are, in fact, guilty, even though some are, in fact, innocent. This presumption of guilt, pro-prosecution perspective not only affects the manner in which many judges rule on motions, evaluate witnesses, and exercise their discretion, but it also adversely affects the willingness of many judges to police law enforcement agents and prosecutors. Judges tolerate sloppy police work because they do not want to be viewed as micro-managing the police. Judicial reluctance to let the guilty go free has meant a decreased use of the exclusionary rule. Similarly, courts are hesitant to dismiss cases because of Brady violations or take other steps to reign in [sic] prosecutorial misconduct. Finally, even when courts find error, too many errors are deemed harmless. The expanded use of harmless error not only allows questionable verdicts to stand, it does little to discourage misconduct and sloppy practices in the administration of justice.” (footnotes omitted)); Bowers, supra note 22, at 1163 (“[T]here are strong reasons to doubt the efficacy of the exclusionary rule in policing the police. Judges are especially loath to discredit even incredible police testimony if it means razing evidence against defendants—especially recidivist defendants—whom judges may already believe are wasting judicial resources by not plea bargaining.”); Andrew E. Taslitz, Slaves No More!: The Implications of the Informed Citizen Ideal for Discovery Before Fourth Amendment Suppression Hearings, 15 Ga. St. U. L. Rev. 709, 764 (1999) (suggesting that the fact that “many judges believe that most defendants are guilty” provides one of five reasons why judges are “all too willing to ignore police perjury”).
281. Cf., e.g., Petersilia, supra note 91, at 382 (“[Criminal activity in the general population is assumed to be relatively rare.”).
282. See Linda S. Beres & Thomas D. Griffith, Habitual Offender Statutes and Criminal Deterrence, 34 Conn. L. Rev. 55, 60 (2001) (“[W]e have no direct measure of the crime rate, but must rely on either the Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reports (“UCR”) or the National Crime Victimization Surveys (“NCVS”). The UCR only shows reported crimes and the NCVS is dependent upon the memory of the individuals surveyed and the method of questioning.”); Jerome G. Miller, From Social Safety Net to Dragnet: African American Males in the Criminal Justice System, 81 Wash. & Lee L. Rev. 479, 481 (1994) (“Meanwhile, the FBI Uniform Crime Reports (UCR), upon which the media routinely base their official estimates of crime, inflated both the numbers and the seriousness of the types of incidents reported. Whereas most European nations report their crime statistics on the basis of convictions, the UCR reports are based on complaints or arrests. However, about thirty-eight of every one hundred individuals arrested for a felony either were not prosecuted or had their cases dismissed outright at their first court appearances. This had nothing to do with plea bargains; usually there was not sufficient reason to proceed with the cases.” (footnote omitted)). For spillover effects of these choices, see, for example, Tess Owen & Isabella McKinley Corbo, When Cops Commit Crime: Inside the First Database that Tracks America’s Criminal Cops, VICE NEWS (Sept. 12, 2017), https://news.vice.com/story/police-crime-database, for a discussion of the use of police arrests to populate a database of police “crime”: “We should also bear in mind that an arrest is not equivalent to a conviction. Just as with the general population, officers are presumed innocent until proven guilty.
play. This second assumption may serve to insulate the police from concerns about disparate enforcement, since it may mean that potential concern about failure to arrest is diluted, just as is potential concern about decisions to arrest.

D. Prosecutorial Reform

Commentators frequently lament a widespread failure by prosecutors to put much meaning into their constitutional and ethical mandate to “do justice.” This mandate all too often seems to be interpreted as a mandate to score convictions—in direct contravention of the Supreme Court’s indication in Berger v. United States that the interest of the prosecution “is not that it shall win a case, but that justice shall be done.” Paul Butler describes this statement, in the current system, as “just words on paper”; others despair of the idea that the “do justice” mandate can ever be made meaningful. One would need, for example, to set up an appropriate incentive system for prosecutors, and that has not yet been done.

An assumption regarding the guilt of those arrested may help elucidate some of these failures. If those arrested are assumed to be guilty, then (for

But Stinson [the creator of a ‘police crime database’] thinks looking at arrests is a fair way to examine cop crime, because that’s how law enforcement (including the FBI’s Uniform Crime Report) collects information on crime in general.”

283. See Anna Roberts, Impeachment by Unreliable Conviction, 55 B.C. L. Rev. 563 (2014) (discussing the question of whether a criminal record is not just a reliable indicator of culpability but also a reliable indicator of relative culpability).


285. See AM. BAR ASS'N, CRIMINAL JUSTICE STANDARDS FOR THE PROSECUTION FUNCTION § 3-1.2(b) (4th ed. 2015), https://www.americanbar.org/groups/criminal_justice/standards/ProsecutionFunctionFourthEdition/ (“The primary duty of the prosecutor is to seek justice within the bounds of the law, not merely to convict.”).


289. See Rachel E. Barkow, Organizational Guidelines for the Prosecutor’s Office, 31 Cardozo L. Rev. 2089, 2091 (2010) (“[C]onvictions are the lodestar by which prosecutors tend to be judged.”); Andrew D. Leipold, The Problem of the Innocent, A Guilty Defendant, 94 Nw. U. L. Rev. 1297, 1328 (2000) (“[E]ven in the absence of bad faith prosecutors have incentives to resolve nagging doubts about a suspect’s guilt in favor of prosecution.”); Siegel, supra note 245, at 1225 (noting “the failure of our system to develop an incentive structure for prosecutors that rewards the pursuit of justice rather than the pursuit of competitive advantage”).

290. See HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, supra note 270, at 31 (quoting Timothy Murray, then-Executive Director of the Pretrial Justice Institute, as saying that woven into the mindset of prosecutors across this country is “the idea [that] you should somehow ‘pay’ from the moment of arrest, that you owe the system something just by virtue of being accused . . . because they implicitly believe—and must believe—that people who are arrested are guilty”).
those who believe that guilt should be met with a conviction) justice might
well be seen as identical to the pursuit of convictions, and incentives that fur-
ther that pursuit might be seen as beneficial. In addition, if those arrested are
assumed to be guilty, then concerns about prosecutorial misconduct are likely
to lessen, given the tendency to worry less about misconduct when its victim
is thought to be guilty.291

Judges have a potential role in overseeing aspects of the prosecutorial role
and curbing its worst excesses.292 But if they too are liable to fuse arrest with
guilt, their relative inaction may make more sense.293 Prosecutors, in turn,
have a potential role in overseeing aspects of police conduct, screening its
output,294 and curbing its worst excesses.295 If they are liable to fuse arrest
with guilt,296 their relative failure to play this role may make more sense.297

CONCLUSION

Criminal justice reform is hard. However strong one’s commitment, one
faces obvious barriers, whether fear, financing, or resistance to change. This
Article has brought to light a less obvious barrier: a widespread fusion of ar-
rest and guilt. If even those committed to criminal justice reform are vulnera-
table to this fusion, the slowness of reform in areas that rely on a robust under-
standing of the distinction between arrest and guilt may make more sense.

Yet criminal justice reform is crucial. If, as this Article suggests, the fusion
of arrest and guilt is indeed a potent force, we must investigate its many pos-
sible explanations. Identifying the fusion, and attempting to understand it, is a necessary precursor to efforts to combat it.