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# Guest editorial: Policing in the aftermath of the 2020 protests: Lessons learned and evolving strategies for reform

Guest editorial

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The policing protests that occurred around the globe during the summer of 2020 represent a rekindling of centuries-old concerns about the formation of formal government-sponsored policing mechanisms [1]. These concerns have generally centered on the use and abuse of their authority [2]; the capacity of the general public (as opposed to social and political elites) to dictate the parameters of their social engagement [3]; and questions about the fundamental role of the police in society, especially within societies that claim allegiance to democratic principles [4]. Non-discrimination and government accountability are two-mainstays of such principles. The actual or perceived failure of police agencies to adhere to these two tenets of democracy and human rights has fueled policing protests since, at least, the 17th century. This special issue is focused on policing in the aftermath of the 2020 protests, the lessons learned from those protests and how they can influence or inform current and future police accountability policy and practice.

## Policing before the 2020 protests

There is no greater threat to police legitimacy than disagreement over the use of deadly force (Fagan and Campbell, 2020; United Nations, 2020) [5]. Legislation, judicial rulings and police policies and strategies that authorize increased police contact with the public, for enforcement purposes [6], increase the likelihood that contact will occur. In the absence of effective restraints, increased contact increases the risk of encounters that can culminate in lethal force, especially for those who have routinely been the subject of criminal suspicion and coercive authority (Alexander, 2020; Davis, 2018; Fagan and Campbell, 2020; Muhammad, 2010; United Nations, 2020). By the summer of 2020, modern concerns about police legitimacy had been brewing for more than three decades. Most notably, these concerns were related to the increased adoption of policing strategies referred to as “proactive” within policing and crime control jargon (NASEM, 2018). Some forms of proactive policing not only authorized more enforcement contact between police and the public but demanded that such contact occur as proof that the police were doing their job (Bratton and Knobler, 1998; Haldipur, 2019; Silverman, 1999). Stop, question and frisk (SQF) in the United States and stop and search in the United Kingdom were the subject of considerable political and empirical debate over their effectiveness as techniques to reduce, prevent and control crime (NASEM, 2018, see also Delsol and Shiner, 2015; White and Fradella, 2016). The focus on crime control over-shadowed complaints that their deployment resulted in hyper-surveillance and increased coercive police contact for people of color (POC) [7], especially those who were or were perceived to be low income (Fagan and Ash, 2017; Fagan *et al.*, 2012). Statistical evidence from both countries document that this increased public scrutiny of POC, by police, repeatedly occurred in the absence of substantiated criminal activity (Delsol and Shiner, 2015; White and Fradella, 2016) [8], and in the US, was ultimately deemed by state and federal authorities to have produced persistent constitutional violations [9].

Similarly, in the quest to control both crime and disorder, order maintenance policing, also known as broken windows policing (BWP), enjoyed considerable approval and adoption by urban law enforcement agencies around the world, based on evidence from New York City



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(Bratton and Knobler, 1998; Silverman, 1999; Zimring, 2011). According to reports and statistical data released by the New York City Police Department (NYPD), from 1994 to 2000, the deployment of BWP led to unprecedented reductions in crime and substantial improvement in the quality of life experienced by New Yorkers across varying social strata (Bratton and Knobler, 1998; Zimring, 2011) [10]. This front stage story of success garnered considerable support for formal policing as *the* mechanism to keep cities safe and orderly. The backstage story revealed a connection between police policy and practice that increased police contact and exacerbated poverty-related collateral consequences [11] for residents in low income neighborhoods where the strategy was used the most (Fagan *et al.*, 2012; Howell, 2009).

Though academics across multiple disciplines cautioned against solely crediting the police with the declines in crime evidenced through government sponsored crime statistics (see Karmen, 2000), a political and empirical consciousness solidified—one that prioritized crime fighting as opposed to broader public service and peacekeeping – as *the* metric by which effective policing would be judged [12]. The 2020 protests revealed or reconfirmed that policing solely or primarily focused on coercive authority comes at a cost [13], including demands that individual police officers be criminally prosecuted and that formal police agencies be abolished or defunded.

### **Policing in the aftermath of the 2020 protests**

The call for abolition of government-sponsored police agencies or their partial or complete defunding has produced a moral panic that divides largely along ideological and political lines (Riley, 2021). The global reach of the George Floyd/Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests from the US to Canada, England (and throughout Europe), Brazil, Portugal, Argentina, South Africa, Australia, China (Hong Kong), Israel, Japan and other nations illustrated that concerns about police behavior extend beyond Western democracies (NBC News, 2020). Despite the highly publicized broad-based protests, recognition of how to sustain and address legitimate concerns about the exercise of police authority, particularly with regard to encounters with Black people, continues to be a challenge. Currently, political and media sources forcefully attribute reports of rising crime to a lack of financial and moral support for policing agencies [14] occasioned by the 2020 (and prior) reform-focused protests. Such messaging is counterproductive to meaningful change.

In the view of some politicians, media sources and members of the public, actions that question police behavior embolden criminals to engage in violent crime and disorder. This over-simplified understanding of the causes of crime, and how best to control it has stymied the momentum for police reform or transformation built through the George Floyd/BLM protests. It also threatens to nullify the efforts at social change embodied by the sustained efforts of multi-racial and multi-ethnic protesters who saw the lethal assault on George Floyd as excessive, inhumane and far outside the legitimate exercise of police authority [15]. Whether the protests that continued for weeks in locations like Portland, Oregon—where Whites make up a substantial majority of the residential population (Burch *et al.*, 2020) – can counter long histories of government sanctioned racial criminalization and public support for punitive treatment of POC, particularly Blacks (Hetey and Eberhardt, 2014, 2018) [16], is called into question by the US Congress' failure to pass the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act. The Act contains a comprehensive array of proposed reforms to enhance individual and agency-wide accountability; but, has not received the bi-partisan political support necessary to become law. This failure raises serious concerns about the nation's commitment to non-discriminatory policing and policing that is subject to broad-based [17] public oversight. Though George Floyd was killed in the United States, the papers in this special issue help build our understanding of how intersecting global social dynamics both, internal and external to police agencies, lead to and can lead away from the next incident that will fuel serious calls for sweeping change to the policing profession.

## Lessons learned

The policing protests during 2020 took several forms (Reid and Craig, 2021). In the US, there were armed, mostly White, men who assembled outside of state capitals to contest the enforcement of government mandates designed to curtail the spread of the Coronavirus. There were also mostly unarmed, individuals from a broad range of racial and ethnic backgrounds who assembled in cities and small towns to contest the police killing of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Rayshard Brooks, Andre Hill, Manuel Ellis, Daniel Prude, Atatiana Jefferson and Elijah McClain [18] and the near fatal shooting of Jacob Blake in front of his child. In the US, there are no reports of serious police violence against the protestors associated with the Coronavirus protests, but investigations have revealed considerable complaints of police use of force against individuals who engaged in peaceful protests against the killing of Black men, women and children (Amnesty International, 2020) – deaths that extended back several years and with perpetrators that included police officers and civilians claiming to act in a law enforcement capacity [19].

In this special issue, contributions by Baker and by Owusu-Bempah and Wortley document that police use of lethal force, in general, and disproportionately against individuals of Black racial identity, is a matter of significant concern outside the United States; and, that such concern was a likely contributor to participation in the George Floyd/BLM protests in England and Wales and Canada, respectively. In “Accountability in the aftermath of police related deaths in the US and England and Wales: processes and outcomes,” Baker specifically notes that while police agents in England and Wales kill civilians far less often than American police, the exercise of lethal authority has come under considerable scrutiny, has been the subject of reform efforts, but has resulted in little in the way of improved outcomes or accountability.

In their contribution, “Race, police stops, and perceptions of anti-Black police discrimination in Toronto, Canada over a quarter century,” Owusu-Bempah and Wortley present compelling evidence that while police leaders report a reduction in racial bias within Canadian policing as the result of various reforms, survey data over a 25-year period and instances of police violence against Black civilians, help explain why people across Canada rallied in support of BLM and calls to defund formal policing.

In “Criticism does not constrain: testing evidence of de-policing following the killing of George Floyd,” Koslicki utilizes time series analysis and use-of-force data from the City of Minneapolis to empirically examine whether police disengage from proactive policing in response to intense public scrutiny. Measuring de-policing as variance (expected reduction) in police use of force generally and against Black civilians specifically, she found that between January 1, 2019 and June 30, 2021, police use of force increased rather than decreased [20]. Her findings are inconsistent with current public assumptions that reports of increased crime are due, in significant part, to police withdrawal from proactive practices. They also raise serious questions about the ways in which de-policing rhetoric – claims of a *Ferguson Effect* – intentionally or implicitly impede the implementation of meaningful police reform.

In the current climate that calls for policing that is data driven, Kosliski’s study highlights the need for more police agencies to make data about their activities (traffic stops, searches, use of force incidents, etc.) available for public review and in a format that is readily accessible for analysis by community organizations and academic researchers who are external to police organizations. Such transparency is a significant part of current calls for reform that counter calls for abolition; and can serve to more accurately inform the public about police performance than do media representations and public speculation.

In their article, “Progressive or problematic? A comparative analysis of media depictions of demands to defund the police,” Craig and Reid document the role of media representations in structuring public response to the 2020 movement that included demands to defund the police. Through a content analysis of news reports published in the UK and the US, they

compare media framing of the defund movement across four media outlets categorized as either conservative or liberal. A key focus of their research was whether the media descriptions accurately defined the movement as envisioned by its founders. Though overall each media type recognized the goal of the movement as the reallocation of public resources away from law enforcement to other public services, the expected impact of such reallocation was represented differently in media across the two nations UK media included contrasting police perspectives on the topic, while US media more readily associated demands for reallocation with a rise in crime. The researchers conclude by discussing how inconsistencies in media depictions affect the level of public support for social justice movements and perpetuate strained relations between police and communities of color.

### **Evolving strategies for reform**

This special issue was ambitious and sought to gain new insights from a wide range of empirical input about existing or proposed innovative policing reforms. Four of the articles in this issue address practices that were already in place within some police agencies at the time of George Floyd's death. Two examine the efficacy of police body-worn camera (BWC) usage. Another examined the impact of implementing a duty to intervene requirement on officer involved deaths. The fourth provides a model for studying and improving the potential impact of civilian oversight commissions as mechanisms for effective police accountability to a broad-based public. Each of these articles provides valuable empirical knowledge about the strengths, weaknesses and complications involved with these popular accountability structures.

The work of both Roche *et al.* and Gaub *et al.* provide important information about BWC use. In "But did they get it 'right'? Deadly force, body-worn camera footage, and hindsight bias," Roche and colleagues found that the interpretation of BWC footage can be manipulated by primes. In their research, the primes were written scripts (including falsities) describing what the suspect was ultimately found to be holding during a recorded police encounter (a gun, knife, smartphone or nothing at all). This randomized experimental design, involving 943 young American adults, produced findings that respondents were more likely to conclude that the officer's actions in the video were justifiable, reasonable and necessary when they were primed with information stating that the suspect held a weapon (even when that information was not factually accurate and no weapon was visible within the video footage). The researchers reported that a substantial number of respondents inaccurately claimed to see a weapon in the suspect's hands when primed with information stating that the suspect was armed. These findings substantially contradict claims that BWCs, an expensive and sometimes controversial police intervention, are "worth it" because they provide objective evidentiary accounts of police-civilian interactions. More research is needed to determine whether hindsight bias can be corrected or addressed. Research by social psychologists Eberhardt *et al.* (2004) and Goff *et al.* (2014) confirm that adults and children of Black racial identity are most frequently the subjects of this dangerous and inaccurate perceptual bias.

In "Investigating the prevalence and utility of police body-worn cameras in the George Floyd protests," Gaub and her colleagues examine the use of BWCs and the value of BWC footage during the summer 2020 protests. Members of police agencies that received funding from the Bureau of Justice Assistance BWC Policy and Implementation Program were surveyed about their experiences. The purpose of the study was to examine how often BWCs were used, the civility of the protests and the strengths and weaknesses of using BWCs during these constitutionally protected activities. They found that three-quarters of the agencies that received funding for BWCs deployed them during the protests. They also found that most survey respondents identified the majority of protests as civil; and, viewed BWC recordings as having significant evidentiary value. Their study also revealed considerable

inconsistency in BWC policy across agencies and specifically with regard to their potential use during peaceful protests.

In “The plurality of police oversight: a method for building upon lessons learned for understanding an evolving strategy,” anthropologists Karpiak *et al.* begin by acknowledging that racism and sexism among police have been concerns of oversight commissions for several decades; but, there continues to be a dearth of empirical research on the success and operations of these oversight structures. These researchers seek to fill this gap by using a multi-site ethnographic model to examine the structure and function of civilian-led oversight commissions at the county level across three states (Wisconsin, California and Michigan). A striking finding from their study was that while the adoption of civilian-led oversight commissions receive substantial community support as a tool for enhancing police transparency and accountability, the use of racial vernacular during commission convening may undercut participation and input from people who are most impacted by police actions. Community recognition of this flaw in the operation of oversight commissions runs the risk of fueling calls for police abolition rather than reform. However, advance recognition of this problem creates space for corrective action and avoidance of this dynamic in future commission activities.

In “Officer-involved deaths and the duty to intervene: assessing the impact of DTI policy in New York City, 2000–2019,” Dawson and colleagues use a nonequivalent dependent variable research design to assess the impact of duty to intervene requirements on officer use of lethal force. Their research is particularly relevant as the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD) had a DTI policy in place at the time of George Floyd’s death. In the analysis of data from New York, the researchers compared fatal incidents, where multiple officers were involved (MOIDs), in the five-year period before and after the implementation of the NYPD DTI policy (2016). They found an initial reduction in such deaths after the policy was implemented but that the reduction did not hold throughout the full five-year post-implementation period. Their study exposes the difficulty in determining how best to affect desired change in police behavior and suggests that written policy alone is not enough (see also Jones-Brown *et al.*, 2021).

In “Finding good cops: the foundations of a screen-in (not out) hiring process for police,” Terpstra *et al.* suggest that police behavior might be changed by altering the focus of the recruitment and hiring process. The researchers administered an online survey to sworn personnel of all ranks in a police department in the state of Arizona. The respondents ( $n = 166$ ) identified 811 desired qualities of an exceptional police officer. The top 10 most frequently reported characteristics were honesty, integrity, compassion, humbleness/humility, maturity, self-motivation, good communication skills, courage, work ethic and physical fitness. Respondents suggested 201 distinct processes to identify candidates with the sought-after qualities, but many were identical to methods currently used to screen applicants out (e.g. background checks, physical fitness testing, psychological evaluations and written exams). In our view, Terpstra *et al.* correctly identify their study as foundational to a viable police reform that can potentially transform some elements of police culture, but their research provides insights from the law enforcement perspective only. Administering a similar survey to a broad sample of community residents would be an important next step.

## Discussion and conclusions

Although mistreatment of Blacks by police in the US is not a new phenomenon, the year 2020 became a pivotal point for raised awareness about this recurrent problem and the threat that it represents to Black lives *and* to the legitimacy of the policing profession. As in the period before George Floyd’s deadly encounter with the Minneapolis police, crowdsourced data from the research group, Mapping Police Violence, show that one year after his death, Black people

still represented a disproportionate share of incidents in which police used deadly force. According to that national data, individuals who were Black accounted for “18.7% of all police related deaths, but make up only 13% of the population; while whites accounted for 37% of the deaths and comprise 76.3% of the US population” (Fung, 2021, para. 2–3).

Through aggregate analyses, statistics like these have been (mis)interpreted in ways that mask the central problem exposed by the 2020 deaths and the George Floyd/BLM 2020 protests. Claims are made that there is no systemic racism in policing because more Whites than Blacks are killed by police or that Black disproportionality in police deadly force incidents is explained by Black disproportionality in criminal offending. However, disproportionality analyses do not tell the whole story, but do raise important questions: Are Blacks and Whites being killed by police under similar circumstances? What proportion of the deaths was legally justified in contrast to the numbers that raise serious questions about whether the use of deadly force was necessary? [21]. Perhaps most importantly, which incidents involve factual circumstances where the death was preventable if police consciously chose a safe and available non-lethal alternate response?

With these questions in mind, we are hopeful that the articles in this special issue can help break the stalemate between those who believe that policing is irreparably broken and those who believe that reform or transformation of current policing practices and structures is possible. We are particularly hopeful that they will help better inform those who believe that there is nothing wrong with policing policies and practices as they currently exist. To that end we offer the following observations about the George Floyd and Breonna Taylor fatalities that helped spark the global 2020 policing protests.

We address the George Floyd policing incident first, though it occurred two-months after the death of Breonna Taylor, because there seems to be considerable consensus around the galvanizing effect of the deadly assault that he experienced. His video-taped death gave the world a front stage view of a situation where an unarmed Black man died during a police encounter that did not require the police to make a split-second decision about taking his life [22]. Existing MPD policy included safeguards (language about de-escalation and the duty to intervene) that do not appear to have been attempted or effectively utilized by officers on the scene. Witnesses saw that the police use a life-threatening restraint technique for an underlying offense that did not involve a crime of violence, and saw the technique continue to be used even when George Floyd was not physically combative. This combination of known facts about the case likely played a role in the public reaction. The research by Dawson *et al.* (in this volume) presents evidence that DTI requirements have failed to consistently play their preventive role in New York City as well. This suggests that additional research is needed to build a better understanding of DTI and how to improve its effectiveness.

Similarly, the March 13, 2020 shooting of Breonna Taylor inside her home raised a number of police use of force issues that have been at issue and the subject of research for some time. The fact, that her death did not result in criminal charges against any officers and resulted in an acquittal of related charges for one raises several concerns for individuals with knowledge about police practice and procedure. For example, data about fatal outcomes in botched raids or during the execution of search warrants at private residences using SWAT teams and no-knock warrants have been addressed extensively by Balko (2014) and attributed to militarized training of police by Balko (2014), Vitale (2017), Stoughton (2015) and others (Kraska, 2007). These fatal outcomes have also been attributed to a trained warrior mentality routinely instilled through academy instruction (Stoughton, 2015). The danger of contagious shooting was prominently raised during the investigation of both the shooting of Amadou Diallo by the NYPD in 1999 and again by the shooting of Sean Bell in 2006. The incidents involved police shooting 41 and 50 bullets, respectively, at unarmed civilians, one of whom was in the vestibule of a multi-family residential building. White and Klinger (2012) describe contagious shooting as a situation where an initial officer’s shot results in repeat gunfire from

other officers who are present. Their research using data from the Philadelphia Police Department found no evidence of a contagion effect. But, in the Breonna Taylor case, the one officer who was charged with firing 10 bullets into an apartment that was not hers, admitted that he continued to fire once he began shooting because he mistook police gunfire to mean that he and his fellow officers were being fired at when they were not. In total, the police fired 32 bullets in response to a single shot from a legally owned firearm. This raises questions about police restraint, duty of care to uninvolved others, and the viability of gun ownership rights for Black civilians [23].

Joyner (2019) concedes the empirical existence of contagious shooting based on officer admissions like the one in the Breonna Taylor case. He also asserts that contagious shooting is observable during firearms training (see also Aveni, 2006). Given this knowledge, what have police agencies done to counter this dangerous effect? The adoption of the NYPD rules [24] that require officers take cover (if safely possible), shoot a limited number of times, then stop to reassess the threat before engaging in additional fire, seems particularly appropriate for incidents that occur in multi-family residential settings. In fact, the centuries-old legal principle The Castle Doctrine was designed to protect residents from unwarranted harm within their homes from both civilians and agents of the government (Balko, 2014). Finally, there is the question of the availability of BWC footage. The publicly available footage from the fatal incident seems only to exist for police behavior *after* the killing. Though the research by Roche *et al.* and Gaub *et al.* (in this volume) demonstrate that the use of BWCs is not a foolproof means of police transparency, in this particular case, it might have been helpful to resolve the important factual and legal [25] question of whether the officers announced themselves before breaking in Breonna Taylor's door.

Much has been written about the racial disparities inherent to drug enforcement and the War on Drugs. The fact that Ms. Taylor, a gainfully employed Black woman, was killed when she was not the target of the underlying investigation and there is no evidence that Ms. Taylor nor the person police were seeking were individuals specifically known to be violent, adds additional layers to the procedural injustice protestors likely felt in response to learning the details of the Breonna Taylor case (Costello and Duval, 2020). If true, reports that the actual target had already been taken into custody, in another location, before Ms. Taylor was killed, raises valid questions about police competence in handling certain situations, failed police communication and whether these are influenced by suspect race (Fagan and Campbell, 2020; Morrow and Shjarback, 2019).

The research in this volume about BWCs, DTI and civilian over-sight commissions point to ways in which existing accountability mechanisms, that enjoy a reasonable degree of acceptance, may be in need of further reform. As we point out in our observations from the George Floyd and Breonna Taylor cases, there are also a number of potential lifesaving policies and practices that already exist in some departments but not others. The uniform adoption of the mentioned requirements can reduce the frustration of knowing that a particular fatal encounter *might* have turned out differently if the police-civilian interaction had occurred in a different jurisdiction. Having written mandates or prohibitions within departmental standard operating procedures narrows, though does not eliminate, officer discretion and creates clearer standards for determining whether officers have exceeded their authority (Jones-Brown and Shane, 2011). Clearer departmental boundaries may help police and the general public reach consensus around the social and legal appropriateness of a given use of force in context. In the US, departments can be incentivized to adopt uniform policies through state, federal or local funding, or through adherence to criteria needed to receive acceptance by respected policing accreditation boards (e.g. CALEA). Similar incentive structures may be constructed in other nations if they do not already exist.

Terpstra *et al.*'s research suggests that intentionally screening-in good officers, while continuing to screen-out bad ones, might make concerns over the control of inappropriate

discretionary use of force less prevalent. The potential promise of their suggestion must be strengthened by data that includes a broad-based community perspective on what constitutes a good officer and how best to recruit and retain more of them. Finally, the contributions by Craig, Reid and Koslicki remind us that despite considerable discussion and declared allegiance to community policing (see [President's Task Force Report, 2015](#)), research on how to engage with highly-policed communities, on *their* terms, is severely underdeveloped; and can be undercut by media messaging or false and unproven public claims about policing, protests and increasing crime. Positive engagement with highly-policed communities and welcoming their input about police service, crime and crime control is essential to countering demands that formal police agencies be abolished because of strongly held beliefs that they cannot effectively be reformed.

Current attitudes toward formal policing seem to be split across two polarized camps—one in which the police can do “no right” and one in which police can do “no wrong”. Despite this polarization, some jurisdictions in the US managed to make changes during and after 2020. The changes were responsive to demands made that year and during previous protests. They included: narrowing officer discretion regarding use of force (e.g. banning chokeholds and other life-threatening restraint techniques); imposing DTI and reporting requirements when officers observe their peers engaged in abusive behavior; and decertifying problem officers to prevent them from gaining future employment in the profession ([Subramanian and Arzy, 2021](#)). Other reforms included bans on the use of tear gas and no knock warrants, and the implementation of procedures to enhance police transparency ([Rummler, 2020](#)). Locally, cities and counties have modified their officer training and redirected calls for service that involve mental health situations, away from routine handling to handling by specialists, including non-police professionals ([Ray, 2021](#)). Future research can provide valuable empirical evidence about the impact of these efforts in reducing the number of officer-involved deaths related to mental health interventions.

Finally, despite its controversial reception, some jurisdictions have responded to demands to defund the police by reallocating municipal spending away from police budgets to other government-sponsored services instead. As already mentioned, in some departments this has meant considerable change to handling persons with mental illness. As another example, officials in Austin, Texas reduced the police budget by almost a third and spent part of the reallocated funds to operate a hotel to help people transition out of homelessness ([McGlinchy, 2021](#)). Advocates see this as one example of spending police money on something that will potentially reduce the need for law enforcement intervention in this area (see [Cobbina-Dungy and Jones-Brown \(2021\)](#) for information about successful community-based crime and violence prevention programs toward which formal police funding could be redirected). Redirecting some police resources does not need to mean that police officers lose their jobs. Their positions can be repurposed. For example, to address the opioid crisis, former drug enforcement Tactical Narcotic Team (TNT) members have been assigned to work with hospitals and overdose patients in partnership with treatment and education programs (see [Zeizima, 2017](#)). The goal is to prevent future overdose and death.

Understanding calls to defund the police requires public recognition of the significant amount of money being spent on policing, especially in urban spaces where many residents face food and housing insecurity, homelessness, under-education, unemployment and diminished access to quality healthcare and addiction services, all while being exposed to high levels of police contact. Since the police have no capacity to address these basic needs of city residents, community activists and others demand that budget priorities be reorganized. In 2020, one source notes that in Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston, Baltimore, Detroit, Atlanta and Minneapolis, municipal spending on policing comprised between a quarter to more than a third of total government expenditures ([Statista, 2020](#)). The amount spent ranged from \$1.73 billion in Los Angeles to \$163.2 million in Minneapolis [26]. In New York, the amount spent

was reported as \$5.61 billion (Statista, 2020). Karanikolis (2010) identifies 1982 as the starting point of substantially increased federal spending on law enforcement. The amount reported grew from roughly \$20 billion in 1982 to \$126.4 billion by 2012 (BJS, 2015; Karanikolis, 2010). The US spending on policing is significantly higher than either courts or corrections, though corrections is responsible for feeding, housing, clothing and providing healthcare for an incarcerated population of roughly two million people.

Craig and Reid (in this volume) describe the definition and goals identified by the founders of the defund the police movement. Though it has produced considerable resistance across many sectors, it is a call that looks to be responsive to those who are most directly impacted by the root causes of crime and police activity. Resistance to the call suggests an unwillingness to redefine community policing and public safety and will bolster the call for police abolition. It is in the best interest of the policing profession to find the middle ground that builds community trust and collaboration, creates legitimacy, promotes mutual safety, empowers and respects community self-determination and dignity, especially among those who experience policing most.

The contributions to this special issue and the 2020 protests are evidence that policing in the 21st century is far more complex than prior dichotomous models of “crime control versus due process” (Packer, 1964), “proactive versus reactive” (NASEM, 2018), “guardian versus warrior” (Stoughton, 2015), “good cop versus bad cop,” “us versus them,” “good people versus bad people,” or even “armed versus unarmed” framings can explain. As the racial wealth gap grows around the world and opportunity structures shift with technology, law enforcement personnel must be more mindful of the limits and challenges of coercive authority and respond effectively to public demands for police accountability, especially as they relate to actual and perceived discriminatory treatment against Black people. The 2020 protests have made a broad spectrum of people politically aware of systemic racism within the fabric of police culture and structures. For many reasons, to do nothing different should be unacceptable to police, those who they police and those whose primary police contact comes through observing police behavior from a distance.

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## Notes

1. Bohm and Haley (2014) (citing Williams, 1979) note that the London Metropolitan police, established in 1829, was modeled after the Paris police department. They point out that:

Several efforts to establish a central police force for London had been opposed by the people who believed that police of any kind were a throwback to the absolute power formerly wielded by English Kings. They were also fearful that a central police force for London would resemble the police of eighteenth-century Paris . . . notorious for its extensive network of police spies and . . . intrusion into the lives of Parisian citizens . . . (p. 130).

In the US, the roots of formal policing have been traced back to the establishment of Southern slave patrols in the 1700s (Reichel, 1988; Williams and Murphy, 1990). The reach of the authority of those patrols into the North and the danger this presented is addressed in an 1851 poster warning Blacks: . . . to avoid the Watchmen and Police Officers of Boston, . . . For since the recent order of the Mayor and Alderman, they are empowered to act as kidnappers and slave catchers . . . if you

value your liberty, and the fugitives [slaves] among you, shun them [watchmen and police officers] in every possible manner. An 1851 poster warning read as the “colored people of Boston” about policemen acting as slave catchers Stock Photo – Alamy.

2. See [White and Fradella \(2016\)](#) for a contemporary example.
3. See for example the tendency of police organizations to be responsive to the needs of business owners, property owners, faith-based organizations and taxpayers as opposed to people who are low-income, renters or homeless, unemployed, etc. See this point made in testimony to the President’s Task Force (2015) available at: [https://www.changethenypd.org/sites/default/files/docs/Jones\\_Brown\\_Delores\\_Testimony.pdf](https://www.changethenypd.org/sites/default/files/docs/Jones_Brown_Delores_Testimony.pdf)
4. See [Rahr and Rice \(2015\)](#).
5. The Principles of Law Enforcement asserted by Robert Peel in 1829 recognizes this dynamic in principle number 6, which notes, “. . . police should use only the minimum degree of physical force which is necessary on any particular occasion for achieving a police objective.” retrieved from: <https://www.sjpd.org/home/showpublisheddocument?id=284>, April 23, 2022. See also, [Williams \(2003\)](#).
6. By this we mean police contact that is aimed at resulting in an arrest or issuing a summons.
7. During the 2020 protests the term BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and other People of Color) emerged as a new acronym used to describe those who are likely to experience police violence. In this introduction, we use POC but specifically emphasize the elevated risk for people of Black racial identity.
8. In New York City, for example, between 2003 and 2012, upwards of 80–90% of SQF stops did not result in an arrest or summons ([Jones-Brown et al., 2013](#)). In England and Wales, arrests from stop and search, from 1986 to 2013, ranged from a high of 17.6% to a low of 9.1% ([Delsol and Shiner, 2015](#), p. 87, Table 5.1). In both countries, persons of Black racial identity were disproportionately represented among individuals who were stopped.
9. See *Floyd et al vs. City of New York et al* (959 F. Supp. 2d 540) (S.D.N.Y. 2013), a US federal court decision against the NYPD for unconstitutional racial profiling. See also, [Schneiderman \(2013\)](#) finding that, even when controlling for demographics and crime rates, Blacks and Hispanics were stopped at disproportionate rates and that of the 2.4 million stops analyzed, only 150,000 resulted in arrest—of those, just 3% resulted in conviction and only 0.1% of those convictions were for a violent crime.
10. Though William Bratton left his position as NYPD Commissioner in 1996, BWP continues to be significantly credited with the crime decline reported during this time.
11. These consequences included loss of income to fines and fees; loss of employment and employability due to accumulation of a criminal record; loss of housing, student loans, immigration status and general loss of time due to repeat court appearances. Missed court appearances resulted in the issuance of warrants that subjected persons to custodial arrest, even if they had previously only been issued a summons ([Howell, 2009](#)). The aggressive use of SQF had similar collateral consequences. These two strategies, BWP and SQF, were deployed by two commissioners who served two terms each over periods totaling nearly 20 years. During this time, New York City experienced an uptick in lawsuits alleging constitutional violations; and in 2009, the NYPD had the largest legal settlements of any city agency ([Schneiderman, 2013](#)). Complaints of race and class discrimination were contested by claims that resource deployment was based on a computerized statistical system (originally known as CompStat) for collecting, analyzing and managing reported crime across the city. Because the system was computerized, policing based on it was presented as objective.
12. To some extent the focus on crime fighting co-existed with departmental claims about allegiance to community policing. See [Gascón and Roussell \(2019\)](#) for a discussion of why community policing is not the panacea for police violence and restoration of police legitimacy that many think.
13. The NYPD experienced backlash against its aggressive anti-crime units following the death of Amadou Diallo in 1999. The department’s “street crimes” unit was disbanded after protests over

- four of its members firing 41 bullets at the unarmed African immigrant in the mistaken belief that he was an armed rape suspect.
14. This messaging often uses race coded language and references to urban cities with significant Black populations.
  15. It is important to note that some police personnel also participated in BLM demonstrations.
  16. This history includes the surveillance, control and containment of Black Americans and immigrants through slave patrols, enforcement of Jim Crow laws, police repression during the 1960s Civil Rights Movement and police practices related to drug enforcement. It also includes three decades of aggressive use of proactive policing strategies.
  17. This is oversight that includes police outreach and collaboration with populations who are policed most.
  18. Atatiana Jefferson and Elijah McClain were killed in 2019 but their names were part of the 2020 protests.
  19. See, for example, the killing of Ahmaud Arbery in 2020 and the killing of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin in 2012. The acquittal of Trayvon Martin's civilian killer gave birth to BLM.
  20. The researcher questions whether the findings might have been impacted by a change in data recording methods that began in mid-September 2020.
  21. In the strictest legal sense, the unnecessary or excessive use of force is illegal and when it results in death should not be ruled justified.
  22. See *Graham v. Connor* (490 US 386, 1989) the United States Supreme Court case that is often cited for the proposition that timing is relevant in deadly force determinations.
  23. The death of Breonna Taylor, Philando Castile, Atatiana Jefferson and most recently, Amir Locke, suggest that police officers may automatically assume that an armed Black person intends to illegally use the weapon against them. This assumption renders gun ownership, a constitutionally protected right, highly dangerous for Black adults to exercise. It also, complicates research about officer-involved homicides that have focused merely on whether the victim was armed or unarmed.
  24. See NYPD Patrol Guide section 221-20, which also contains a number of other actions that can be taken to avoid unnecessary harm to officers or suspects.
  25. In some jurisdictions, failure to knock and announce would have provided a basis for a criminally negligent homicide claim against the officers but Kentucky homicide statutes do not authorize such a charge.
  26. Figures from 2017 were used for Minneapolis.

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Guest editorial

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