

Article

# Do Police Officers in the USA Protect and Serve All Citizens Equally?

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**Abstract:** Survey research has clarified the extent to which racial minorities and majority white Americans disagree about whether police should be trusted. Racial minorities are generally far more suspicious of the police officers who serve their communities. Other forms of evidence would appear to corroborate the views of minority citizens in the USA. This requires scholars and others interested in policing to think about reforms that may create a fairer system of law enforcement.

**Keywords:** policing; minorities

## 1. Introduction

The United States appears at times to have two separate policing systems. Journalist [Hayes \(2017\)](#) captures this apparent reality with the title of his recent book, *The Colony in a Nation*. Racial minorities, Hayes argues, are treated as a subordinate community or colony that must be ruthlessly controlled. Police in these communities are instruments of social control. By contrast, Anglo or white citizens are treated respectfully by police, as though they were part of the nation. Police officers in these communities do “protect and serve” the citizens who pay their salaries. Minority citizens, however, may feel that police subjugate and oppress them. This paper provides evidence that largely confirms Hayes’s thesis.

This paper has six sections. First, a brief comparison of the USA with several other countries makes clear that the issue of bias in policing is a pervasive problem. Second, a brief description of the historical context of policing in the USA leads us to wonder whether contemporary police treatment of minority communities has changed over time. The third section of the paper reviews some of the survey research that examines the degree to which attitudes toward police are shaped by one’s race or ethnicity. The fourth section presents findings from an original dataset that represents a sample of students taken from a large U.S. university in the Southwest. The fifth section provides a review of some of the research efforts that have explored the issue of bias in policing in the USA by employing “objective” data such as arrest rates. The final section reviews the most important conclusions and offers suggestions for future research.

## 2. Global Comparisons

Racial bias appears to influence police practices in numerous countries. Understanding these patterns in other countries illuminates crucial issues in the USA. It should be noted that “race” is thought by biologists and anthropologists to lack scientific meaning. It does, however, have a cultural significance that seems to shape how police officers interact with their fellow citizens. Nevertheless, some scholars believe that the term “ethnicity” is a more scientifically meaningful term. For our purposes, “race” can be thought of as a social construct that depends on one’s skin color while ethnicity refers to one’s country of origin. “Hispanic,” for example, can be construed as a racial category because it has a cultural meaning for many Americans. A comparison of the USA with several other

English-speaking countries illustrates the point that many (perhaps most) other countries struggle with perceptions that their police systems are unfair.

Minority and majority communities frequently perceive their law enforcement communities in quite different ways. This pattern appears in Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom. [Oliveira and Murphy \(2015\)](#) analyze survey data that complicate the general consensus that race or ethnicity is the principal variable distinguishing respondents' perceptions of police bias. Using a sample of Australian adults, they discover that a respondent's strength of identification with different groups in society, rather than her ethnicity, predicts her attitudes toward police. [Murphy et al. \(2008\)](#) provide survey evidence from a medium-sized Australian city that shows that cities will help police officers when they view the police as legitimate. A survey of Australian Muslims found that adherents of the Islamic faith perceived that they were viewed as potential terrorists after the attack on the USA on 11 September 2001 ([Madon et al. 2017](#)).

Canada is also debating its legacy of racism. [Chan and Chunn \(2014\)](#), for example, find that racial bias is still prominent in policing in Canada. Black Canadians make up 8% of the federal prison population, though they are only 3.5% of the overall population. Lana MacLean, a Nova Scotia social worker, gave a cultural impact assessment to the sentencing court following the second-degree murder conviction of a black Canadian man in 2016 ([Bascaramurty 2018](#)). She argues that the overrepresentation of black people in the criminal justice system is a consequence of this racial bias, although critics have called the MacLean statement an attempt to get black offenders a "race discount." Nova Scotia has begun incorporating cultural impact assessments into its sentencing practices. Bias against people of color appears to begin in childhood. During the 2015–2016 school year, for example, 22.5% of the students suspended by the Halifax Regional School Board were black, even though black students only make up 7.8% of the total population ([Bascaramurty 2018](#)). This has led to discussion of race in other regions. How would the background of a first-generation Somali immigrant in Edmonton be considered? A second-generation Trinidadian in Toronto? A Moroccan international student in Quebec City?

Research in the United Kingdom generally detects a disparity in how minority and majority communities perceive police in their community. [Patel \(2012\)](#) use qualitative analysis to find that ethnic hostility is evident in how "brown" (i.e., those who appear to be from South Asia or the Middle East) residents of Great Britain are treated. "Brown bodies" are marked as suspicious even if they have done nothing to warrant scrutiny. This fear was heightened by Islamophobia and xenophobia after the 9/11 attack in the USA. A related research effort ([Barrett et al. 2014](#)) uses a qualitative sample from 2010 to assess how black minority residents interact with a North of England police force. [Giles et al. \(2014, p. 198\)](#) noted that the Macpherson Report of 1999 was the first official acknowledgement of how deeply engrained racist attitudes were in English policing. Stop and search data indicate the disproportionate impact on BMEs (black minority ethnics). The authors, in contrast to much of what is written about the USA, however, conclude that data suggest that BMEs are becoming more satisfied with the police in their region as communication improves. Curiously, however, [Bradford et al. \(2017\)](#) use the Crime Survey of England and Wales to report that immigrants are actually more trusting of English and Welsh police than are natives. The authors speculate that this may be because new immigrants see British police as more professional than the police in their country of origin.

### 3. The Historical Context of Police Bias in the USA

Studying policing is especially timely given the current national controversy in the USA, but it important to recall that there have long been debates about policing in the USA. Many scholars have argued that the whole criminal justice system has historically been used to maintain racial hierarchies. Robert Perkinson's *Texas Tough: The Rise of America's Prison Empire* ([Perkinson 2010](#)), for example, makes the case that Texas police and prisons have been used to suppress ethnic minorities since the era of the Republic of Texas in the 1830s. Slavery ended in 1865, but segregation persisted in the state and

across the South for another century. The defeat of the Confederacy did not end bias in the criminal justice system. The chain gangs were used to break the spirits of the incarcerated, who were then and now disproportionately African American. Police, prosecutors, and courts continued to be profoundly hostile to ethnic minority communities. The Civil Rights Cases of 1883 held that the Civil Rights Act of 1875 was unconstitutional because it had said that private businesses could not be prohibited from discriminating against private individuals. "Pig laws" unfairly penalized African Americans for crimes such as stealing an animal. "Black codes" sharply limited the civil rights and liberties of African Americans after Reconstruction ended in the 1870s.

As the book *Flames Past Midnight* made clear, extrajudicial violence reinforced institutionalized oppression of the regular criminal justice system in places like Texas. The Kerner Commission of 50 years ago lamented that institutionalized racism in police practices had alienated non-white communities (Logan and Oakley 2017). Byington et al. describe the vicious murder of James Byrd in 1998. Byrd was tied to the back of a truck by three men who were members of the Ku Klux Klan and dragged to his death. The execution of Lawrence Brewer in 2011 marked the first time in Texas history that a white person was executed for killing a black person. The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act, a federal law, expanded hate crime legislation to include crimes motivated by gender, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability. However, federal prosecutors have pursued fewer than 100 cases since then.

While it is likely that the criminal justice system in the USA has been biased against ethnic minority communities throughout the nation's history, recent debates have attracted unprecedented national attention. Black Lives Matter called attention to the frequency of police officer shootings of sometimes unarmed citizens. These victims have been disproportionately minority. The activists who guide this effort call for fairness in policing and the criminal justice system. President Barack Obama organized the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing in late 2014. Scholars, the media, and political leaders are increasingly interested in the issues raised during this period. Controversy over athletes in the National Football League who have kneeled during the national anthem to protest police abuse has attracted critical commentary from the U.S. president. Defenders of the existing criminal justice system argue that in most cases these actions are justifiable. Blue Lives Matter has organized to respond to the issues raised by the civil rights activists. As Worden and McLean (2017) note, a consensus on how to measure and define legitimacy in policing has yet to emerge. As the authors explain, police must accomplish vague and conflicting goals, and there is difficulty in evaluating the effects of their work given the ambiguous measures of legitimacy.

Law enforcement in the USA is decentralized. Federal law enforcement is limited to the FBI, CBP, ICE and a few other federal agencies. States have primary responsibility for most aspects of the criminal justice system. Local governments, in turn, hire most police officers. Sheriffs are often elected and lead county government law enforcement. Cities have their own departments. There are about 3000 county governments and about 19,000 municipal governments. The NYPD has about 40,000 officers; other police departments are often quite small. The country's nearly 1 million licensed police officers are employed by roughly 19,000 police departments. By contrast, Australia has just nine police departments: one federal and eight regional departments. County sheriff departments in the USA tend to have broader responsibilities than city law enforcement agencies. Among other things, sheriffs have responsibility for jails. This decentralization results in substantial differences in policing styles across the USA. The American tradition of federalism permits enables subnational governments to be "laboratories of democracy," but it also means that there can be wide variations in how fairly and professionally police departments perform their social roles.

It is important at this moment in American history to assess the claims of scholars like Perkinson that the criminal justice system is an instrument for the repression of ethnic minorities. A variety of types of evidence can be useful as we analyze these claims. Survey data can shed insight on how police and other components of the criminal justice system are perceived by different ethnic communities.

Are police officers perceived as professional and fair? In addition to these data, we can examine a variety of other data that may reinforce the impressions that we gain from survey data.

#### 4. Survey Research

Two research strategies promise to enable us to assess the degree to which policing in the USA is biased against racial minorities. The first strategy is to assess the perceptions of different racial groups. Many scholarly analyses of survey data consistently illustrate the chasm between how white majority and ethnic minority citizens view their criminal justice systems. [Peck \(2015\)](#) provides a helpful and exhaustive assessment of the current state of research on minority perceptions of the police. Status as a racial minority is consistently significant as a predictor of trust in police. While the list of articles that reach this conclusion is long, a few of the representative research efforts include [Brunson and Weitzer \(2009\)](#), [Cochran and Warren \(2012\)](#), [MacDonald et al. \(2007\)](#), and [Wu \(2014\)](#). [Brunson \(2007\)](#) makes the helpful point that we should understand young African American men's experience of harassment by police as something that accumulates over time. He used in-depth interviews to gain insights into minority perceptions of the police. As other scholars have found, citizen distrust of the police is common among African American young people. It is important to remember that a citizen who has had an unpleasant encounter with a police officer will share her experience with friends and neighbors. Brunson recommends that compliance review processes be opened up to civilians in order to improve the image of the police in minority communities. [Gabbison and Higgins \(2009\)](#) use Gallup survey data to find that blacks are less positive than whites about the police.

[Smith and Alpert \(2007\)](#) argued that harsher police treatment cannot be explained by higher levels of minority group criminality. Instead, they theorize that this disparity is caused by stereotypes that result from social conditioning. Hispanics, for example, are stereotyped as gangsters. President Trump, for example, claimed that many Mexican immigrants are rapists. Social identity theory accounts for the power of this discriminatory behavior. [Feinstein \(2015\)](#) interviewed 30 male juveniles who resided in a correctional facility in Minnesota and found that youth of color were less likely to be treated fairly by police or to be given a second chance. She points out that police officers are still disproportionately white males, despite efforts to diversify policing in the USA. She argued that the USA has a double system of justice.

Although some studies of Hispanics reported null findings, the most common finding is that Hispanics also share a negative view of the police. [Nuno \(2018\)](#) makes the important point that few existing studies examine the perceptions of Hispanics toward the police. She finds no difference between Hispanic and white perceptions of police legitimacy in Maricopa County. Other scholars find instead that Hispanics are less positive about the police. [Garcia and Cao \(2005\)](#) found that Hispanics had the lowest satisfaction with the police, while whites had the highest satisfaction in a small northeastern U.S. city. [Wu \(2014\)](#) compares the views of Asian, black, Hispanic, and white Americans toward the police. Her survey of Seattle residents concludes that all three minority groups hold more negative views toward police than majority whites. Unfortunately, it appears that more research will be needed before we can confidently generalize about the attitudes of Hispanics toward police officers.

[Epp et al. \(2014\)](#) use survey and interview data to make a convincing case that race significantly affects investigatory police stops. About 12% of motorists are stopped per year; this percentage is 24% for ethnic minority drivers. They emphasize that this disparity is not necessarily the result of conscious racism. Instead, police officers are trained to stop individuals whom they believe are most likely to commit crimes. Those who are stopped by these investigations are deeply offended even when the officers involved are professional and polite.

[Armeline et al. \(2014\)](#) use interviews to explore the degree to which police in Oakland, California are regarded as legitimate by young people of color. The respondents they authors interviewed believed that Oakland police consistently failed at the task of protecting their communities. In fact, the Oakland Police Department (OPD) was considered by minority respondents to be the "biggest gang

in Oakland.” This department was grievously lacking in legitimacy. The documented and persistent abuse of force left residents alienated from local law enforcement. Flexon et al. (2016) found that minority youth resented the likelihood that they would have negative interactions with the police.

## 5. Present Study

Because the issue of police bias has attracted such extraordinary recent attention, an exploration of current attitudes toward police in the USA is warranted. The author obtained survey responses from 264 undergraduate students at a large university in the Southwest in the spring and summer of 2018. The data are obtained from a convenience sample, although the ethnic composition of the respondents appears to be approximately representative of the student body as a whole. The university is designated as a Hispanic serving institution. Forty-four of the respondents are Hispanic; 45% of the respondents reported being non-Hispanic white; and 11% report being African American. Those who reported being Asian American or a member of some other ethnic group were excluded from the analysis because their numbers are so small. The student respondents answered a series of questions about policing. All survey data were gathered in classroom settings with pen and paper survey instruments. Table 1 gives the distribution of responses. Race is coded 1 for African American, 2 for Anglo; and 3 for Hispanic.

Table 1. ANOVA results.

Race (a)	Race (b)	N	Mean Diff. † (a-b)	95% CI	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Black vs.	Hispanic	120	−0.945 **	−1.333	−0.557
	White	115	−1.340 **	−1.730	−0.951
Hispanic vs.	Black	29	0.945 **	0.557	1.333
	White	115	−0.395 **	−0.640	−0.151

† Scheffe test of significance. \*\* Significant at  $\alpha < 0.01$ .

Given the previous discussion about racial minority citizens’ views of police officers, we hypothesize that minority racial groups will express more negative views about the police than majority white respondents. Analysis of variance is the appropriate statistical technique because the data are parametric and we are interested in examining the difference between mean responses to a series of questions about how the respondents view police officers. Four questions comprised the dependent variable. These are: (1) police are respectful toward people like me; (2) police officers are courteous and communicate well; (3) I do not believe the police are effective in controlling crime in my community; and (4) I do not have much trust in the police in my community. In combination, these questions explore the respondent’s assessment of police officers’ procedural fairness and effectiveness. The four questions were combined into a composite measure of police performance. The primary independent or explanatory variable is respondents’ racial identification.

The analysis reveals several distinctive patterns. Students who completed our survey do differ significantly in how they view police. Anglo students consistently express more positive views toward police than either Hispanic and African American students. Although the literature review suggested that Hispanics are not as consistently distrustful of the police as African Americans, our results indicate that both minority groups are less positive about the police than white students.

## 6. Research Using Objective Data to Assess Minority Perceptions of Police

Survey data provide important insights into the nature of policing in the USA today. They tell us that there is a disparity in how members of different communities perceive law enforcement in their communities. Improvements in our understanding of how different ethnic groups perceive law enforcement are surely invaluable in assessing the question of bias in the criminal justice system. However, a second type of research can complement the use of survey data. Other “objective” data can



be used to assess the question of bias as well. A variety of other research strategies can shed additional light on this debate. In combination, these approaches shine essential light on the question of whether policing system in the USA is fair toward all racial groups.

The scholar might begin with the [U.S. Department of Justice \(2017\)](#) scathing critiques of police practices in Baltimore and Chicago 2017. After federal investigators reviewed police procedure statements, conducted interviews, and observed police on the job, they concluded that poor and ethnic minority communities are overpoliced but underserved. The Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 prohibits discrimination based on race, but the DOJ investigators found little reason to believe it was being honored. [Rector \(2017\)](#) offers an account in the *Baltimore Sun* of a city troubled by allegations that its police are racist. DOJ investigators discovered racial disparities in rates of searches, seizures and arrests. Citizens in minority areas of their cities routinely had their civil liberties violated. The Fourth Amendment ban on unreasonable search and seizure was regularly flouted. Training of the police was poor; oversight of their work was generally limited. Sex crime victims were ignored or even told that they had not suffered a “real” crime. Police would sometimes fire into moving vehicles without knowing whom they might hit. The Community Collaboration Division in the BPD was ineffective. They found that police officers engaged in unnecessary and dangerous foot and vehicle pursuits. Freddie Gray was arrested for having a knife in 2015 and died while in police custody. The six officers who were transporting Gray were acquitted of criminal charges. Beyond the introduction of four “Transformation Zones” in the city, which pair policing resources with those from other city departments to support communities devastated by violence, there is no overarching, well-articulated crime-fighting strategy to address the problems. The current spike dates to Gray’s death and the riots of April 2015. There were 342 homicides in Baltimore in 2017, 56 per 100,000 people ([Tkacik 2018](#)). Before 2015, Baltimore had not broken 300 homicides in a year for decades. At the same time, arrests have dropped, continuing a years-long trend. In absolute numbers, Baltimore trailed only Chicago in homicides. Per capita, Baltimore is deadlier. Mayor Catherine Pugh, Johns Hopkins University President Daniels, and Police Commissioner Kevin Davis have led discussions in Baltimore, but little has been achieved.

The Chicago Police Department has attempted to implement a series of reforms agreed to in a consent decree agreed to during the presidency of Barack Obama, but progress has been slow ([Ruthhart 2018](#)). For example, Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan wants Chicago police officers to document every instance in which they draw their gun and point it at someone. She argues that this is needed to ensure that officers are properly using the threat of a gun, given the department’s history of excessive force and mistreatment of racial minorities. Chicago Mayor Rahm Emmanuel and his police superintendent Eddie Johnson suggested that this proposal shows a lack of confidence in Chicago police officers and may put their lives at risk by making them hesitant to respond appropriately in potentially dangerous situations. The gun-pointing debate follows a heated discussion about police reform that began when Laquan McDonald was fatally shot in 2015. The Department of Justice, under U.S. Attorney Eric Holder, documented severe bias against ethnic minorities. Lori Lightfoot, a Chicago mayoral candidate in 2018, chaired the Police Accountability Task Force and has called for the inclusion of the gun-pointing policy. She and Madigan argued that including the provision in the consent decree would not compromise officer safety.

[Balko \(2018b\)](#) published a recent review of scholarly research on policing in the *Washington Post* and concluded, “There is overwhelming evidence that the criminal justice system is racist.” Balko mentioned that even African American U.S. Senator Tim Scott (R-S.C.) reported being repeatedly pulled over by police. Balko notes that just 3% of stops of minority group citizens who are pulled over produce any evidence of a crime. Only 2% of white but 6% of black drivers and 7% of Hispanic drivers are searched by police. Similar patterns occur in study after study. Police are far more likely to solve homicides involving whites than minorities ([Fagan and Geller 2018](#)).

[Smith and Petrocelli \(2001\)](#) use data from 2673 traffic stops conducted by police in Richmond, VA in 2000. Richmond officers used mobile data computers that recorded each stop. Minority

drivers comprised 63% of all persons ticketed or criminally arrested during the data collection period. The authors also note that African Americans outnumber whites as victims of police gunfire by a ratio of 3:1 (Smith and Petrocelli 2001, p. 5). Prosecutors are more likely to decline to prosecute African Americans than whites, suggesting that they were arrested under conditions that could not be used in court to secure convictions (Hepburn 1978). The Florida Highway Patrol (2000) reported that Hispanics constituted 18% of traffic stops even though they were just 12% of the state's population. Smith and Petrocelli (2001) report that racial bias is evident in traffic stops. Their evidence is substantiated by the case of Philando Castile, a 32-year-old black American, who was shot in a suburb of Minneapolis on 6 July 2016. While his girlfriend videotaped the encounter, Castile was fatally shot. The video of the encounter was viewed more than 2 million times on YouTube. The officer was acquitted of all charges. Castile had been stopped for traffic violations on 52 occasions by police before the final, fatal encounter.

Scholars have carefully studied the use of force by police to gain more understanding of the impact of race on policing. Paoline et al. (2018) reviewed police officer use of force records and discovered that white officers are more coercive toward black suspects. Black officers' use of force, however, is not affected by the race of suspects. Menifield et al. (2018) explored the recent shootings of civilians by police officers. They gathered data on every fatal shooting in 2014 and 2015. Unfortunately, the Death in Custody Reporting Act of 2013 began to report uses of police force only recently. When 18-year-old Michael Brown was shot by police in August 2014, the issue sparked both protests and scholarly attention. The authors show that African Americans are killed far out of proportion to their share of the population. Latinos are also killed more often than one would expect, while Asian Americans and Anglos are killed less than one would expect. Roughly 28% of all shooting victims are black even though African Americans comprise just 13% of the U.S. population. The authors argue that this fact is not the result of a few "bad apples" or racist white cops. Interestingly, civilians of color are as likely to be killed by African American police officers as by white officers, so simply diversifying police departments is not the solution. As the authors note, their conclusion is consistent with the survey data gathered by Epp et al. (2014). It is crucial to address these long-running racial disparities in the way force is applied or the trust between minority communities and law enforcement will continue to erode. As the authors mention, a variety of strategies should be considered. They suggest that the Dallas Police Department has improved public relations for the department by training its officers in emotion management in high-stress situations and in how to deal with suspects with mental challenges.

As mentioned above, the frequency of civilian deaths at the hands of police officers has provoked a crisis of legitimacy. The Black Lives Matter protests and the refusal of National Football League players to stand for the national anthem are efforts to draw attention to these deaths. The shooting deaths of five police officers in Dallas in July 2016 fueled the national controversy. What do the data tell us? Are police officers implicitly and perhaps unselfconsciously biased against ethnic minorities? Are they more likely to use deadly force against ethnic minorities as a result? Nix et al. (2017) found evidence of bias in their analysis of civilians killed by police in 2015. They analyzed 990 fatal police shootings in 2015 using data compiled by the *Washington Post*. They used two indicators of threat perception failure: (1) whether the civilian was not attacking the officer or other civilians just before being fatally shot and (2) whether the civilian was unarmed when shot. The results indicated that civilians from minority groups were more likely than whites to have not been attacking the officer and that black civilians were more than twice as likely as white civilians to have been unarmed. The authors make the undoubtedly valid point that the Department of Justice should publish a use-of-force database that provides extensive information about the circumstances in which officers fatally shoot civilians.

Militarized policing has been a striking development in contemporary law enforcement. Mummolo (2018) published a study in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* that examined this trend (Balko 2018a). The study looked at data from Maryland, where a state law required that police agencies in the state submit biannual reports on how and how often they used their SWAT teams. Mummolo performed a statistical analysis of the Maryland data and crime rates, officer safety data, and race. After controlling for variables such as local crime rates, Mummolo found that for every

10% increase in the black population of a given zip code, there was a 10% increase in the likelihood of that zip code being raided by a SWAT team. The data showed that 90% of the SWAT raids were to serve search warrants. Mummolo found no change in assaults or deaths of police officers after the introduction of SWAT teams. There was no statistical relationship between violent crime rates and SWAT teams over time.

## 7. Conclusions and Recommendations

Do police in the USA truly protect and serve everyone equally? Qualitative and quantitative social science research has improved our ability to answer this question. The answer seems to depend on one's race. The survey data consistently show stark contrasts between racial minority citizens and Anglo residents. Minorities frequently believe that the police oppress rather than serve them. The white majority may wonder whether their fellow citizens of color are too sensitive to perceived mistreatment. Law enforcement seems fair to white citizens. The disparity in perception is striking and has been persistent. There is simply no doubt that the police (as well as nearly every other major social institution) was substantially biased against people of color for most of American history. Martin Luther King's famous protest against racial segregation was just 50 years ago. But are some white citizens correct in believing that bias in law enforcement is entirely in the past?

Additional data appear to confirm minorities' perception of bias in policing. A variety of creative research efforts document the disparity in how different ethnic groups are treated. Data on officers' killing of civilians and other patterns of interaction of the police with the communities they serve are quite revealing. Future research should use mixed-method research strategies and expand the range of minorities that are the focus of the research. Countries outside the English-speaking world should also be examined. At present, however, the perceptions captured by survey data indicate that policing in the USA does protect and serve white communities, while often oppressing minority communities.

This reality makes it imperative that we explore reforms to make policing in the USA fair to all racial groups. Scholars and law enforcement administrators have explored a number of reforms to try to address some of the problems that have recently been identified. Policing reforms have attempted to achieve a variety of goals. Some seek to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the police. Others seek to improve the accountability, representativeness, or reputation of their police to promote effectiveness. The most fundamental purpose the police serves is to protect social order and begin the process of punishing those who commit crimes. Police officers are evaluated by several criteria. One is whether police officers are competent in their jobs. A second criterion is whether the officers have built trust with those whom they serve.

Several reforms hold promise. Patil (2018) describes one legacy of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, H.R. 3355, Pub.L. 103–322. Since 1994, the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) has committed more than \$14 billion of federal funds. The Trump administration is proposing a 50% cut to the COPS program in the 2019 budget. This is a mistake. By redirecting funding to developing protocols that are proven to work in real-life situations, COPS can truly live up to its mandate. Funds should be redirected to develop and test standard operating procedures that help officers make better decisions under pressure. The current administration's decision is likely to exacerbate, rather than ameliorate, the current crisis of legitimacy faced by policing in many communities.

At least 10 states have passed laws requiring their law enforcement agencies to collect data on the racial demographics of motorists stopped by police (Smith and Petrocelli 2001, p. 5). This increases transparency and the possibility of accountability. This is the first step towards helping us better assess the current fairness and professionalism of policing in the USA. We can begin to accomplish the goal of making police departments serve every race as we improve our understanding of the current experience of ethnic minority communities.

Problem-oriented policing (PoP) is an approach to policing in which discrete pieces of police business (each consisting of a cluster of similar incidents, whether crime or acts of disorder, that the



police are expected to handle) are subject to microscopic examination (drawing on the especially honed skills of crime analysts and the accumulated experience of operating field personnel) in hopes that what is freshly learned about each problem will lead to discovering a new and more effective strategy for dealing with it (Braga et al. 2014). Problem-oriented policing places a high value on new responses that are preventive in nature, are not dependent on the use of the criminal justice system, and engage other public agencies, the community and the private sector when their involvement has the potential for significantly contributing to the reduction of the problem. PoP carries a commitment to implementing the new strategy, rigorously evaluating its effectiveness, and, subsequently, reporting the results in ways that will benefit other police agencies and ultimately contribute to building a body of knowledge. PoP has the potential for improving contemporary law enforcement if minority concerns are incorporated into ongoing policing strategies.

Some strategies may pose the risk of worsening existing inequities in policing. Hotspot policing aims to concentrate police resources in communities with high crime rates. The difficulty is that this strategy may lead to problems similar to those caused by the much earlier broken windows theory developed by James Q. Wilson. The problem with broken windows—the idea that minor symptoms of disorder may lead offenders to commit more serious crimes because they think they can get away with it—is that officers too aggressively punished innocuous offenses. This leads us back to Hayes’s notion that ethnic minority communities are treated as colonies that need to be repressed.

Political mobilization may be the most effective way to make policing fair for all racial groups. Roughly 67% of the population of Ferguson, MO is African American, yet at the time of the police shooting of Michael Brown in 2014 just one of seven city council members was black. Electing more Black city council members promises to make future city managers and police chiefs more responsive to the concerns of Black and Hispanic citizens. Unfortunately, civil service protections in some U.S. communities may make it challenging to discipline racist or abusive police officers (De Soto and Castillo 1995). Since all police administrators must respond to democratically elected supervisors, civil rights leaders in the black and Hispanic communities and their allies must become politically active. Logan and Oakley (2017) show that antiracist policy achievements remain fragile. Current U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions has generally been hostile to efforts to remedy racial bias in policing. Among his first actions upon being confirmed to his position in 2017 was a review of agreements on police reform that had been agreed to under the Obama presidency. As these authors rightly argue, the only path ahead is to mobilize politically and to search for reforms that can make policing fair and just for citizens of every racial group. The evidence presented here makes it clear that these efforts are necessary.

Considering both the survey and other forms of evidence regarding the current state of policing in the United States leads to a clear but tragic conclusion: the hope for a completely fair and just system of law enforcement has not been attained. This reality brings to mind W.E.B. DuBois’s remark that the problem of the 20th century is the problem of the color line. Sadly, it appears to remain a problem even as the second decade of the 21st century draws to a close.

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