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Abstract

Exploring the role and function of American policing: A historical and qualitative study

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The institution of American policing is at an inflection point. While most Americans connect the police with safety, highly publicized police killings of unarmed people of color have brought racial disparities to the forefront of the American consciousness and pushed many people to question the fundamental role and function of the police. The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze the institution of American policing, starting with its historical origins, to develop theory on the role and function of police in an attempt to identify strategies for safety. Combining historical analysis with qualitative data collected from police officers and community members in a mid-sized American city, this dissertation identifies new insights into how deeply rooted racial divisions are to the establishment and structure of American policing, the centrality of communication to the role and function of police and how police use communication as a strategy to create and maintain safety, perceptions of safety for community members, and community-based strategies for safety. Findings from the historical analysis indicate that police violence persists because it is operating within larger systems of structural violence exerted against racialized and marginalized groups. Additionally, findings from the qualitative research signify the importance of communication for police officers and community residents and the central connections between communication and safety for both groups. Taken together, these findings can inform policy intended to create greater safety, both for police officers and community residents.

Chapter 1: Introduction

At the same time, the institution of American policing has consistently been brought into question by racial disparities in police use of force and deadly violence--persistent disparities that more recent data collection has quantified as it has attempted to explain. An exploration of these two tensions--police as an essential component to safety and police as enactors and enforcers of violence and abuse--is at the center of the research that informs this dissertation.

Why were the police created? What is it that the police are doing? And, how else might the role and function of policing be done? While these questions are not new to the study of policing, they have most often been asked in the absence of an analysis of racial dominance and oppression, which is essential to understanding the creation of American institutions, including policing. The purpose of this dissertation is to analyze the institution of American policing to develop theory on the role and function of police in an attempt to identify existing and new strategies for safety. Through a qualitative research and analysis process, this dissertation identifies new insights into the deeply racialized origins of American policing, identifies police communication strategies, and explores community perceptions of safety both with and without police involvement. Taken together, these new insights support a platform upon which to begin to rebuild social mechanisms for safety.

The dissertation is structured around three papers. The first paper is a deep historical analysis of the institution of police, with a focus on the origins of the characteristics that give rise to persistent racial disparities in policing. It brings together theories of economic exploitation and structuralized racial dominance--settler colonialism and critical race theory, two important but infrequently combined theoretical frameworks--to explore how deeply racial divisions are rooted into the origins of U.S. policing. The second paper focuses on police-civilian contact, identifying communication strategies police use when engaged in contact, and it attempts to situate those strategies within the larger power dynamics of policing. The third and final paper focuses on community residents' perceptions of the role and function of police and their understandings of safety. The second and third papers rely on data collected by me from a series of semi-structured interviews with police officers and residents, respectively, in a mid-sized city in the Western U.S. The research used a constructivist paradigm and a grounded theory methodology for the interviews and qualitative analysis. Interviewing police officers and residents and contextualizing this knowledge within the larger history of American policing provides insight into the functions of American policing and theory on the possibilities of creating new pathways for collective safety.

Study Goals

The institution of American policing is at an inflection point. Highly publicized police killings of unarmed Black, Indigenous, and other people of color have once again brought racial disparities in policing to the forefront of the American consciousness and pushed many people to question the fundamental role and function of the police. Recent data shows racial disparities in police stops, searches, and use of force (Charbonneau & Glaser, 2020; Fagan & Geller, 2020; Glaser, 2015; Geller et al., 2021; Knox, Lowe, & Mummolo, 2020; Pierson et al., 2020). In many parts of the United States, policing is seen as brutal, biased, and engaged in unjust practices. But this racial violence in policing is not new, and a growing number of organizers, activists, and academics are articulating the ways this violence is not an aberration but intrinsic to the institution of policing (Heatherton, 2016; Kaba & Ritchie, 2022).

Understanding if and how the historical origins of policing impact present-day racial inequalities and the way police and residents understand the role and function of policing today can help illuminate new solutions for community violence and collective safety. Much has been written on the role and function of police; however, the theorizing in this area has not typically explored police and community understanding directly, nor has this work been situated in the larger historical and racial context of the United States. An ahistorical and a-racial analytical understanding of policing will ultimately yield incomplete and inadequate insights. Through a qualitative and inductive process rooted in a deep understanding of history, the research in this dissertation explores how policing and safety are understood and experienced in order to fill gaps in theorizing on the role and function of policing and safety.

Overview of Structure and Design

The dissertation is structured around three papers, and includes an Introduction and a Conclusion. The Introduction outlines the general topic of the dissertation, frames the research problem, and situates the work within the larger historical and theoretical domains. The first paper (Chapter 2), explores the history of policing with a focus on the time period before policing histories traditionally begin. The second paper (Chapter 3), focuses on communication, a central theme that arose in police officer interviews. The research in this chapter has been published in a special issue of Group Processes and Intergroup Relations (Oxholm & Glaser, 2023). The third paper (Chapter 4), focuses on conceptions of safety that emerged from interviews with community residents. Finally, Chapter 5 pulls together the findings across the three papers.

Chapter 2 uses a social historical analysis of the institution of policing to explore persistent racial divisions and contextualize present-day U.S. policing. The social historical approach includes an emphasis on social structure and forces as well as the

lived experience of individuals and groups as a framework for analysis. The unique contribution of this paper is the application of the theoretical frameworks focused on the creation and institutionalization of racialized divisions in the United States--specifically, critical race theory and settler colonialism--with the military and political fields encompassed in social history to identify a new and essential component in the creation of social control mechanisms like policing: ranging. While the link between slave patrols and policing has become well established, ranging remains an understudied aspect to American policing. This paper begins to fill this gap by showing how many early policing practices originate in ranging and linking these origins to on-going and present-day racial disparities in policing.

Chapters 3 and 4 use a constructivist grounded methodology, which is commonly used to generate theory. A constructivist approach assumes that reality is subjective and based on individual experiences and perceptions, conceptual and theoretical frameworks, society, culture, and history. Constructivism focuses on the experiences of people according to their reality as they describe it, weaving together experiences to create theory that emerges from the data (Charmaz, 2006). Chapter 3 builds on the theoretical insight in social psychology that how people make sense of their social situations and personal identity helps in predicting their behavior (Walton & Wilson, 2018). Using a thematic analysis of data collected from interviews with 22 police officers, communication emerged as a central theme. Chapter 3 then identifies and explores core narratives, which combine both views of the self and the subjective interpretations of the social situation to explain behavior, in police officer communication and situates these narratives within the large context of policing, specifically the historical context and present-day power dynamics. The unique contribution of this paper is the empirical identification of the centrality of communication to policing as well as identifying core narratives in police communication. Further, this paper then situates this new, evidence-based knowledge within the larger social milieu of American policing. This paper was accepted for publication. It has been included in this dissertation, edited so it sits within the larger argument that threads through the whole dissertation.

Chapter 4 sought to generate theory, rooted in the historical, on enduring racial inequalities in American policing as well as pathways for safety outside of policing. This chapter uses data collected from semi-structured interviews with 47 community residents on the role and function of police and strategies for safety with and without police. This paper fills a gap in existing literature by providing research evidence on perceptions of safety among a large cross section of community residents. Little research exists on how community residents experience safety either in connection to or distinct from police. The major findings in this paper provide a unique contribution to the fields of sociology, community psychology, and police practice and research.

More specific details about the design of each study are included in each chapter.

Importance of the Research

Safety is central to the functioning of a healthy society and to our fundamental civil liberties. In the United States, police have become the primary institution for ensuring public safety, often depicted as a “thin blue line,” representing the wall between “the lawless and the innocent,” (Schults, n.d.). The strong connection between the police and safety obscures the ways police in the United States have been used in the maintenance of social hierarchies and to control and harm targeted groups. At the local level, which is where policing happens, police command a large percentage of public funding, making police departments one of the most powerful government agencies of local municipalities. In 35 of the 50 largest cities in the United States, police department appropriations were the largest line item of budget (Sullivan & Baranauckas, 2020). It is estimated that $155 billion is spent on policing every year in the United States (Vera Institute, n.d.). The outsized funding for and power of the police make it important to ensure such large public investments are deployed effectively.

The relationship between police and safety is not clear cut. Traditionally, safety has been measured by crime rates and research evidence on the impact of police on crime is mixed (Bump, 2020; Chalfin, et. al, 2022). Furthermore, given the disproportionate and on-going rates of police violence in communities of color, in particular the high rates of police brutality experienced by Black people (Buehler, 2017; Morrow, White, & Fradella, 2017; Hoekstra & Sloan, 2022), an increase in the number of police does not mean residents will feel safer. Developing theory on the role and function of police, rooted in the racial history of the United States, to explore and uplift strategies for collective safety, provides multiple benefits to society. It recenters the focus on policing on safety and explores how policing has or has not met that goal. It provides a path for the individuals, families, and communities harmed by police misconduct and abuse to contribute their voices and experiences to begin to build new methods of community safety, so that the tragedy and harm done to them can be addressed and righted systematically and structurally. Lastly, it allows local governments, and the large public investments they apportion to police, to be better informed by deeper knowledge of the relationship between policing and safety. By exploring the role and function of police through time, and informed by those most directly impacted by the institution, we can begin to build systems that truly create safety and security, long-term.

Frameworks: Historical and Contextual

The theoretical frameworks used in this dissertation vary among the three research papers included. Each paper provides specific details on the theoretical frameworks

used in the analysis. This section will provide an overview of the most common perspective on policing history as well as an overview of the police abolition movement to bookend the wide spectrum of the historical and social context this dissertation sits within.

History of the U.S. Police: The Popular Perspective

Like much of the history of American governmental institutions, an analysis of United States policing appears to show the institution in a repeating swing from allegations of corruption to attempts at reform (Greene, 2000). In traditional historiographies, the origins of modern-day American policing are rooted in the middle nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with a particular focus on urban areas in the northeast--cities like Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. This history traces policing through three eras: Political (approximately 1840 to 1930), Professional (approximately 1930 to 1970), and Community (approximately 1970 to present) (Kelling & Moore, 1988; Monkkonen, 2004; Gaines & Keppeler, 2011). As a form of social history, policing historians tend to also include major social, political, and economic forces that shaped and changed the U.S. during each era to explain the creation and evolution of U.S. policing. This section will offer a brief overview of the traditional history of policing within each era along with the larger social forces shaping the creation and evolution of American governmental institutions.

Traditional policing histories typically begin with what is called the Political Era (1840-1930), so named because the decentralized nature of police departments at this time entrenched law enforcement in parochial politics and often tied police to local political machines and patronage systems (Kelling & Moore, 1988). The formalization of the first police departments is sometimes described as “uniforming,” because it was when existing informal police structures (e.g., day and night watches) were officially employed by the city government and given uniforms (Monkkonen, 2004). The decades preceding the formal uniforming of police departments in large metropolitan regions in the northeast provide the context for their creation.

Towards the end of the 18th century and into the early 19th century, the United States experienced a massive wave of immigration from north and central Europe and associated large-scale social unrest. British rule had limited immigration to the United States. After the Revolutionary War and American independence, the new nation experienced an enormous influx of European immigrants, primarily from Ireland and Germany. American cities, particularly in the Northeast, grew at phenomenal rates during this time. For example, New York City grew from 33,000 residents in 1790 to 150,000 residents in 1830 (Uchida, 1997) and Boston grew from 18,000 residents in 1790 to 93,000 residents in 1840 (Boston University, n.d.). Irish and German immigrants

accounted for nearly 80% of the immigrants during this time. These immigrants competed with American-born residents for employment and, as a result, American-born workers often viewed Irish and German immigrants as social and economic threats (Uchida, 1997). Immigration, anger over competition for jobs, and a growing anti-slavery abolitionist movement triggered riots in New York City in 1834, in Boston in 1834, 1835, 1836, and 1837, and in Philadelphia in 1838, 1839, 1844, and 1849 (Uchida, 1997; Gaines & Kappeler, 2011). Social unrest and public fears about a rise in crime demanded for a new kind of police force.

At the time of this unrest, proto-policing systems in the northeast still operated informally, mostly through night watch systems with few municipal resources dedicated to police-type practices during daylight hours. The primary objectives of night watches varied depending on location, but most existed to issue an alert through the “hue and cry” system, modeled after the English, and rally able bodied men to pursue a criminal offender until caught (Monkkonen, 2004; Gaines & Kappeler, 2011). Night watches existed with limited authority and in many places were composed of minor offenders sentenced to the watch as a form of punishment. Because of this, night watches were often perceived as inept and ineffective (Gaines & Kappeler, 2011). The night watches in metro regions were not prepared to address the civil unrest and rioting that was occurring at the turn of the 19th century.

Yet, the social unrest was not enough to push the residents of the new nation to create a formal police force in their cities. As a newly independent nation, average Americans were suspicious of the role of any governmental institution that sought to limit individual liberty and personal freedom. The inability of existing proto-police models to address social unrest and riots provided an opportunity for proponents of the new American police. To address civil liberty concerns, these proponents introduced a new idea: crime prevention (Monkkonen, 2004). Instead of responding once a crime had occurred, like the existing watch models, the new American police officer would act as a deterrent to criminal activity. But, as Monkkonen (2004) points out, the “notion of deterring potential offenses implied a new attitude toward social control, diverting attention from the illegal behavior to the potential actors, from the act to that actor” (pg. 41). Continuing, Monkkonen writes, the idea “of preventing criminal behavior found [a] means of implementation in the concept of an identified crime-producing “dangerous class;” for only by focusing on crime producers could criminal behavior be prevented” (pg. 42). Building on the economic and social anxiety many existing Americans felt towards the newly arriving immigrants and abolitionists, crime prevention and order maintenance became the driving forces for the adoption of a formal policing model. The newly arrived Irish and German immigrants, along with abolitionists of slavery, provided advocates of the new, formalized model of policing a necessary political tool, the dangerous class,

which they leveraged to create a formal police force (Lundman, 1980; Monkkonen, 2004).

Duties of the new police forces varied by location and included crime prevention, crime control, dealing with the dangerous class, maintaining public order, economic regulation, and riot control (Kelling & Moore, 1988; Gaines & Kappeler, 2011). Police also provided housing and meals to the destitute and homeless and care for lost children (Kelling & Moore, 1988; Monkkonen, 2004). As the most direct representative of local government--something that remains true in many locations to this day--police officers were often seen by locally elected officials as a mechanism for maintaining and expanding their power, either by controlling adversaries or garnering votes through the provision of social services (Gaines & Kappeler, 2011). American political systems at this time were highly decentralized, with political power vested mostly at the local level. The new policing models followed the same decentralization of local and municipal governments. Decentralization allowed for political patronage to be used freely and this became a period of rampant corruption. Police officers were directly recruited and selected by political leaders from particular wards or precincts and it was not uncommon for individuals to pay precinct and ward bosses for police officer positions (Gaines & Kappeler, 2011). Therefore, officers were often beholden to and used as an extension of different political actors, rather than an extension of the larger city government (Uchida, 1997). The legitimacy of police rested on local public and political support for police, rather than on abstract ideas of impartial law enforcement or procedural justice (Kelling & Moore, 1988; Uchida, 1997).

The Political Era was followed by the Professional Era (1930 -1970), a period of large-scale reform and transformation for police departments. By the end of the 19th century, police departments had become totally entrenched in local politics and political machines, and social and government reformers began a campaign to reform police departments and remove the police from the political establishment. Reformers also pushed to centralize and professionalize police departments. After a failed first attempt, reformers rode a wave of larger professionalization in government services and successfully separated police from political party patronage systems. This reform mirrored a larger national trend to professionalize all public and municipal services (Monkkonen, 2004). Social services were also removed from police practices at this time. This period of policing focused on improving the skills and qualifications of policing, a distancing from local communities, a movement towards centralization of command and control within police departments, expanding a military style of administration, and an effort to hold police legally accountable (Greene, 2000; Oliver, 2000). Much like the previous era, this depiction of policing tends to focus on major

cities in the Northeast. By the end of this era, the elements of contemporary policing models would merge.

At the start of the Professional Era, the Northeast had become increasingly urbanized and industrialized. Industrialization helped create an urban middle class that had grown accustomed to a police presence and was starting to make demands of police departments (Monkkonen, 2004). This pressure from the new middle class created the coalition necessary to remove partisan politics from policing and put in place a professional police force requiring special training and skills (Monkkonen, 2004; Travis & Langworthy, 2008). The primary function of police shifted away from crime prevention towards crime fighting. Serious crime—e.g., robbery, assault, rape, murder, burglary, and theft—became the focus of police while the victimless "disorder" crimes, policed heavily in the previous era, became less important (Kelling & Moore, 1988). The pivot away from disorder crimes was also influenced by the end of Prohibition, ending a period of policing characterized by high rates of police corruption and citizen opposition to police enforcement brought about by unpopular liquor laws.

By reframing what types of crime to focus on, and narrowing the focus of policing to crime fighting, police departments repositioned themselves in relation to the communities they served. Police were to become a highly disciplined, paramilitary-type organization independent of local political parties. To ensure independence, police forces were organized along functional rather than geographic lines, police officers would receive special training, personnel procedures were to become meritocratic rather than political, and police duties would be narrowed to focus on property and violent crimes (Kelling & Moore, 1988; Uchida, 1997). Major technological advancements also contributed to the professionalization of police departments. Police officers began using police cars, two-way radios, and implementing scientific practices like fingerprinting, toxicology, and evidence collection during this time period (Travis & Langworthy, 2008; Gaines & Kappeler, 2011).

The changes of professionalization came with consequences to policing. First, the focus on crime fighting helped demonstrate how little an impact police departments can have on crime. Research on this period found that crime and fear of crime are not substantially affected by officers patrolling in marked cars (Kelling, et al., 1977; Schnelle, et al., 1977), that the rapid response of police officers did not substantially increase arrests of criminals (Bieck & Kessler, 1977), and that police investigations are unable to solve crimes without major assistance from victims and witnesses (Chaiken, et al., 1976).

A large number of previously emphasized police functions—maintaining order in public, resolving disputes, disciplining non-criminal juvenile behavior, preventing public drug and alcohol use—had kept police in regular and close contact with the community (Kelling & Moore, 1988). Crime fighting functions and technological advances pulled police off the street and away from routine contact with the communities they served. This change created a disconnection between officers and communities that ironically, resulted in less effective policing (Kelling & Moore, 1988). Lastly, police professionalization created a hierarchy within police departments that had not previously existed. An emphasis on education and the formation of a leadership structure created social and class divisions within the police. These divisions contributed to line officers' feelings of alienation, self-conscious views held by line officers as an oppressed minority group were formed, and subcultures developed within the institution of policing (Lipset, 1969; Uchida, 1997; Kelling & Moore, 1988).

By the end of the Professional Era, police departments across the country had converged on a single model of policing and police faced perhaps its greatest challenge to its legitimacy up to that point. The Civil Rights Movement and the Vietnam antiwar movement confronted police departments across the country in new and challenging ways. Additionally, high profile police incidents roiled tensions on college campuses and in impoverished Black and Brown communities across the United States. In response to the public unrest, police too often leaned on military confrontation, worsening the conditions of larger social conflict (Stark, 1972). Riots broke out throughout the 1960s, in cities, on college campuses, and later at the 1968 Democratic National Convention. Three federal reports that were commissioned in response to the riots, civil unrest, and high profile incidents of police brutality—The Kerner Commission (1968), the 1967 Task Force Report on Police, and the Challenge of Crime in a Free Society (1967)—found police officer behavior often instigated or contributed to rioting and violence, and that Blacks in the United States were subject to a separate, unequal form of criminal justice.

The rioting of the 1960s that brought police practices and reform back to the national agenda happened within a larger confluence of social forces in the United States. The 1920s to the 1960s saw major changes to racial dynamics across the United States. The Great Migration, which began in the first decade of the 20th century, moved massive numbers of Black Americans out of the South and into towns and cities in the North, Midwest, and West. The massive internal movement of Black people placed many White Americans in the North, Midwest, and West into closer proximity with their fellow Black Americans for the first time. This new relationship resulted in new attempts at maintaining the racial status quo in these regions. State and federal policies of redlining concentrated Black Americans migrating out of the South into areas denied access to public resources, creating areas of intense poverty (Hillier, 2003). Redlining

and White flight concentrated newly formed and growing Black communities into places with limited access to resources or opportunities that were available to White Americans and left Black communities politically and economically gutted.

During World War II, Black soldiers experienced a form of freedom and equality while stationed abroad that they had been denied in America. As these soldiers returned home, many were unwilling to continue to accept the established racial orders. State level implementation of the New Deal denied many WWII Black veterans access to education and housing benefits awarded to other veterans (Katznelson, 2005). The Civil Rights Movement and civil rights advances, like Brown v. The Board of Education, challenged racial oppression and created opportunities for greater equality among Whites and Blacks. While these changes were undoubtedly improvements for the nation, they also triggered backlash. Black communities were subjected to excessive policing and police brutality. By the 1960s, this systematic violence boiled over into riots, national unrest, and a powerful coalition of civil rights leaders engaged in a movement to promote racial justice in America.

The riots of the 1960s forced police departments to reexamine existing policing strategies and to begin to experiment with ways to move police into closer interaction with the communities they served (Greene, 2000). This transition and the period of policing that followed is described as the Community Era. Policing in the Community Era is characterized primarily by what has become known as community-oriented policing (COP), which, contrary to the previous era, assumes the function of police is more than crime fighting and law enforcement and that many of the non-law enforcement functions of policing are important for the positive impact they can have on a community including the potential to reduce crime (Goldstein, 1987). Trends in COP emphasize greater interaction with the community in resolving persistent crime and neighborhood disorder problems (Goldstein, 1987; Kelling & Moore, 1988; Greene, 2000). The philosophy behind COP is relatively simple: police take on a more community-focused role and the community becomes more involved in assisting police (Oliver, 2000). Despite the simplicity of the definition, it remains unclear how police departments have evolved in the community era or how COP practices have been implemented. Implementation is best characterized by disparate and punctuated application across police departments. This section will review the evolution of community policing, focusing specifically on COP, then use CRT to reflect on some of the outcomes we see in policing today.

Within the short history of COP, two very different approaches emerged: 1) a tough on crime and “Broken Windows” approach of the 1970s through the late 2000s, and 2) a more recent movement towards procedural justice. COP strategies were first

implemented during the War on Drugs, a series of federal policies and law enforcement initiatives advanced by the Nixon Administration aimed at the use and sale of drugs and that emphasized more traditional methods of punishment and control. The intent of the War on Drugs and the strategies it advanced was not fair-minded or legitimate policy. Rather, the War on Drugs was a political tool used by the Nixon administration to marginalize their political opponents. John Ehrlichman, a top Nixon advisor, was quoted in Harper's magazine:

> *The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people…We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did. (Baum, 2016)*

In 1982, Kelling and Wilson published an article in the Atlantic titled, "Broken Windows: The police and neighborhood safety." In it, the authors use an analogy to explain why a foot patrol experiment reduced community residents' fear of crime and improved residents' perceptions of police —a broken window, left unattended, would signal that no one cared, which would lead to more disorder and crime. The analogy evolved into a philosophical approach to COP, which emphasized maintaining order by policing minor crimes and low-level offenses, ostensibly to prevent more serious crimes. It is not clear how police departments have evolved in the Community Era. However, it is clear that the community-oriented policing of the 1970s and 1980s was different from the community-oriented policing of the first decades of the 21st century. Because of the major shifts in policing strategies that characterize the community era thus far, this era has been described as consisting of three generations of community-oriented policing: innovation, diffusion, and institutionalization (Oliver, 2000). As it is unnecessary for this level of analysis, this section will not go into the details of the divisions in community-oriented policing beyond pointing towards a formalized evolution of the model.

Furthermore, while it has not yet been formally accounted for, it is likely the institution of policing has evolved through at least one, if not two, additional policing eras. The attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City on September 11, 2001 likely ushered in a new era of policing best characterized by a focus on the collection and deployment of data. Then, in the summer of 2020, the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer accelerated the Black Lives Matter movement, perhaps the largest protest movement in United States history (Buchanan, Bui, & Patel, 2020), and

reignited movements to defund and abolish the police, which have undoubtedly permanently changed the institution of policing. Exactly how policing has changed and will change is still unfolding.

Police Abolition

Abolition is an old idea. It has roots in the abolition of slavery, which later shifted to prison abolition and to the abolition of the entire prison industrial complex (PIC), including the institution of police. Despite its long history, abolition, especially in its newer iterations, remains a relatively unknown and not well understood concept. This section lays out the framework for the abolition of police as part of the PIC, which has been structured by activists, organizers, and academics.

There is no single, agreed upon definition of abolition. This study uses the description expressed by Mariame Kaba (2021):

> *abolition is a political vision, a structural analysis of oppression, and a practical organizing strategy…[it] is a vision of a restructured society in a world where we have everything we need: food, shelter, education, health, art, beauty, clean water, and more things that are foundational to our personal and community safety. (p.2).*

What is especially important in this definition is the forward-looking vision of abolition. Abolition is often thought of as a movement focused exclusively on dismantling institutions like policing without alternatives or profound transformations to existing systems and structures. In fact, abolition is rooted in the creation and rebuilding of institutions, as much as it is rooted in the dismantling of policing and the prison industrial complex. This positive vision is guided by the work of Angela Davis and Ruthie Wilson Gilmore (2022), among many others, which has outlined the ways existing systems are failing and underscored the central importance of reimagining and building in abolition. Angela Davis (2003) writes, “the creation of new institutions that lay claim to the space now occupied by the [PIC] can eventually start to crowd out the [PIC] so that it would inhabit increasingly smaller areas of our social and psychic landscape,” (pp.108). Mariame Kaba (2021) writes, “abolition is a positive project that focuses, in part, on building a society where it is possible to address harm without relying on structural forms of oppression or the violent systems that increase it” (p.2).

For abolitionists, focusing on building new institutions is an essential to the work because of the “organized abandonment” of the state—i.e., governing through purposeful neglect that positions people and the planet as subservient in political and economic systems that favor the accumulation of private wealth and capital (Gilmore,

2022). In the United States, organized abandonment has left many vulnerable communities--low-income communities, immigrant communities, Black, Latinx, and Indigenous communities, transgender communities, etc.--with police as the primary option available when they are in need. The shrinking of public investment in services like mental healthcare, education, transportation, and affordable housing has expanded the precarity of certain communities, while the simultaneous expansion of funding for police has heightened the exposure of these same communities to interactions with the police and the larger PIC.

The argument for police abolition has three central elements, which will be explored in greater detail: 1) police do not support safety, 2) police reform efforts will not work because the violence found in the institution of policing is inherent to the institution, and 3) safety is something that can be created without police (Kaba & Ritchie, 2022). Importantly, these central elements rely on a strong understanding of the history of police, particularly the way race was used in the creation and structuring of the institution. Police abolition also has a few central principles. They include the elimination of the core aspects of the PIC (policing, surveillance, and imprisonment) as well as a rejection of any expansion or legitimization of the core aspects of the PIC (Kaba & Ritchie, 2022). In the context of policing, expansion of the core aspects of the PIC will include things like additional funding or shifts in funding for community-oriented policing programs. While legitimation can include efforts like community accountability boards and procedural justice reforms. Police abolition is inextricably linked to ending the PIC by building and rebuilding systems of collective care thereby ending the need for the existing PIC.

The first central element of abolition, police don't support safety, seeks to disentangle the relationship between police and safety. For police abolitionists, the police are not connected to safety because police cannot address the root causes of crime, nor do they prevent violence. The antecedents and root causes of crime and violence--things like poverty (Hsieh & Pugh, 1993), substance use (Mumola & Karberg, 2006; Kim, et. al., 2019), and mental health issues (Ridley, et. al., 2020) are not factors the police can address. Moreover, for abolitionists, the institution of policing exacerbates issues of violence and crime by pulling resources which could otherwise be used to develop and support anti-poverty, mental health, and substance abuse programs, among other social supports.

The second element central to police abolition is that police reforms are not effective. Police reforms are not effective because the origins of police are rooted not in safety but in mechanisms of social control used and created to support economic, racial, social, and class hierarchies (Lundman, 1980; Crime and Social Justice Associates, 2006).

Both the first and the second elements of police abolition are rooted in history. The second element in particular asks that we look backward, to the history of innumerable police investigations, oversight boards, reforms, and commissions origins as well as the deeper origins for the creation of police. The first paper (Chapter 2) of this dissertation provides research evidence that aligns with and supports the second core element of abolition.

Finally, the third central element of policing abolition is that safety can be created without police. The central element sits squarely within the positive vision, forward-looking component of abolition. Abolition seeks to create safety by eliminating the causes of crime and by building systems of collective care. Care is an important part of the positive vision in abolition. In his book, “We Keep Us Safe: Building Secure, Justice, and Inclusive Communities,” Zach Norris, former Executive Director of the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights writes, “the care-based approach asks how do we care for ourselves and each other so that we all can be safe,” (pg.10) and continues, “safety is not tied to our capacity to watch our neighbors, but rather based on our capacity to truly look out for one another,” (pg.11). This third central element to abolition is perhaps the aspect of abolition where research on the safety strategies being developed and implemented in communities is most limited. The final paper (Chapter 4), provides research evidence on community-based strategies for safety.

Research Questions

There are three primary research questions for this dissertation, each associated with a chapter included in this larger study. The first research questions is:

Research Question 1 (RQ1): What is the role of the police?

This question informed an exploration on the origins of American policing which led to the findings articulated in the first paper (Chapter 2) as well as guided the qualitative explorations of police and community in Chapters 3 and 4.

Research Question 2 (RQ2): How do police understand their role and function?

This question informed the exploration of policing from a police perspective. This exploration included a series of semi-structured interviews with 22 police officers. The officer interviews explored two purported mediators of the effect of intergroup contact on intergroup relations: anxiety and empathy. The goal was to hear first-hand from police engaged in regular contact with the community they serve how they experienced community contact encounters. Communication emerged as an early and primary theme in this work and was explored in detail in Chapter 3.

Research Question 3 (RQ3): How do community residents understand the role and function of police and how is safety related to and separate from the police?

Like RQ2, this question was explored through a series of semi-structured interviews. A wide cross section of residents were asked about the role and function of police as well as safety, both as it related to police and safety outside of policing. Findings from this research question are outlined in Chapter 4.

Chapter 2: White Settler colonialism and the History of U.S. Policing

Introduction

Scholars and police historians seem to have settled on a "rule of three" for the history of policing in the United States. There are three distinct regions (New England, the South, and the Frontier), three phases of development (informal/avocational, transitional, and formal/vocational), and three eras (Political, Professional, and Community) of policing (Lundman, 1980; Travis & Langworthy, 2008; Gaines & Kappeler, 2011). Tucked into the subtext of the threes is one area where policing scholars and historians agree: police are a product of the context in which they develop. There has never been a single unified structure for police in the United States. There are approximately 14,700 law enforcement agencies employing over 1 million people including approximately 708,000 full-time, sworn personnel, in the United States (Goodison, 2022). Policing in the United States developed locally, with each approach influence by geography, larger national forces, and a policing era. Despite the diversity of conditions under which the police developed, and despite the lack of a centralized governing agency for police, modern-day police forces have evolved into very similar models. The convergence of police departments, which originated in varied geographies and evolved from distinct institutions, into a similar model, points towards the strong influence of external forces in shaping police institutions (Monkkonen, 1981).

The forces shaping US policing are varied and vast. Unarguably, one of the most influential forces impacting the development and practice of policing is race. An understanding of policing in the United States would be incomplete without connecting it to the racial history of the United States. Indeed, many race scholars and scholars of police history have included particular racial histories in their histographies of U.S. policing (Travis & Langworthy, 2008; Gaines & Kappeler, 2011; Camp & Heatherton, 2016), making explicit links between early forms of policing and slave patrols, for example (Reichel, 1988). While less common, race scholars and policing historians have also explored the impact of colonialism on the development of US policing (Ture & Hamilton, 1992; Steinmetz, Schaefer, & Henderson, 2017). Despite the established and

growing body of work exploring the role of race and colonialism in the development of American policing, these two social forces and their impact on policing have largely been theorized separately. Little has been written on the impact that white settler colonialism--the type of racialized colonialism found in the United States--has had on the creation and development of policing in the United States.

Using a social analysis of history, this paper begins to fill the gap in the existing scholarship of U.S. police history by offering insights into how the institution of policing in the U.S. developed. It does so by starting well before the official formalization of police departments, which occurred primarily in the northeast, in the mid 19th century -- the time period when most traditional policing histories begin. Instead, this paper begins with the social control mechanisms and enforcement practices established by the earliest settlers in North America in the first decades of the 17th century. It also takes an explicitly race-conscious lens in understanding the formation of these methods in order to draw connections between how these earliest racialized conceptions of social control and enforcement are still present in the practices of policing today.

Using two of the central tenets of critical race theory (CRT), white racial dominance and the normality of racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017), which are theorized collectively as white supremacy (Mills, 1997), and the historical and on-going process of white settler colonialism, this paper explores the history of US policing in the time period before traditional policing histories begin, a time period I refer to as the “Colonial Era.” This paper asserts that the Colonial Era provides a missing chapter at the origin of American policing, and that the events that occurred in this missing chapter laid the foundations for a racial divide in the systems of social control enforced and enacted by police, and that these racial divides have become etched into the DNA of American policing systems. Many of the seemingly intransigent disparities in policing today are a product of the racialized practices that originated during the Colonial Era. To be effective, any effort to fundamentally change policing must contend with these origins of American policing history.

Critical Race Theory & White Settler Colonialism

Critical Race Theory

Critical race theory is a theoretical framework and an intellectual movement developed by legal scholars (Dixson & Rousseau, 2018). CRT originated in legal studies programs, in particular in the Critical Legal Studies (CLS) movement that emerged in the late 1970s. CLS was established by leftist law professors, teachers, students, and practitioners dedicated to challenging the view that legal reasoning was neutral, value-free, and unaffected by economic, social, political, and cultural relationships, and CLS

was committed to exposing the ways American law acts to legitimize oppressive social orders (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995; Brown & Jackson, 2013). Where CLS laid the foundation for a large-scale critique of the role of law in building and rationalizing an unjust social order, it failed to seriously engage the role of race as central to these processes (Crenshaw, 2010; Carbado, 2010). Driven by progressive legal scholars of color, critiques of Critical Legal Studies led to the development of Critical Race Theory--an intellectual movement dedicated to understanding the interconnection between law and racial power and to changing the unjust social relationships created and maintained by white supremacy and racial subordination (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995).

Critical race theory is 'critical' because, like critical legal studies, it uses a branch of political philosophy known as critical theory that focuses on power and dominance in social structures. Critical theories seek to both understand and fundamentally undo systemic oppressions and social structures rooted in dominance and injustice. As a discipline rooted in critical theory, CRT explores the reality that theory develops out of and through history (Bronner, 2017). Combining a deep skepticism of conventional understandings (e.g., of concepts like “equality,” and “objectivity,”) with an ethical imperative to transform unjust, racialized social orders, CRT seeks to develop alternative, emancipatory frameworks for social transformation. In this way, CRT is grounded in an analytical and ethical duality--i.e. it focuses both on how things are *and* on how they should be, with a clear commitment to justice (Calhoun, 1995; Bronner, 2017; Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Unlike traditional theories, but in line with other critical theories, CRT is dedicated to moral action and is designed to reimagine and reconstruct our social systems to include greater equity and justice. While founded in legal studies and law programs, CRT has expanded far beyond its origins in law into fields as different as education (Dixon & Anderson, 2018), geography (Aoki, 2000), and music (Kajikawa, 2019), among many others, including the scholarship of a large and growing group of social scientists.

Critical race theory is not a single theory but a collection of theories. Within the framework of CRT there are a number of more narrow theoretical concepts (e.g., interest convergence) that act as central tenets scaffolding the larger field of study. This paper draws on two central tenets of CRT. The first is that racism is so fundamental to American systems that it is an ordinary, normal aspect of social functioning (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Indeed, racism is so normal to the operations of American social systems that it is invisible to many. The second central tenet is what is described as the “white-over-color ascendancy” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017; p. 8), which can be understood as a racial hierarchy with white people at the top. For this paper, these two central tenets of CRT are taken collectively as white supremacy, which Charles Mills

(1997) describes as “the unnamed political system [that is] taken for granted; it is the background against which other systems, which we *are* to see as political, are highlighted” (p.1-2). A recognition that white supremacy is a political system moves us beyond more common interpretations of racism and white supremacy as personal ideologies, primarily interpersonal or inter-group in nature, to the structural and systematic nature of American racism.

Settler Colonialism

Settler colonialism is a form of colonialism where indigenous societies are wiped-out or permanently displaced by colonizing settler societies. Unlike more characteristic forms of colonialism, where colonizing groups claim land and plunder resources for a parent state, the goals of settler colonialism are also motivated by a desire to create a new permanent homeland for the colonizing settlers. The desire of colonizing settlers not to return to their home country, but to stay and create for themselves a new and permanent home in the land they are colonizing, shapes a set of motivations and goals for the settler colonial project. As part of this project, settler colonialism seeks to remake and reimagine the colonized land (Mar & Edmonds, 2010), and in so doing settlers develop a new identity for themselves and create a prevailing narrative to support their process of permanent settlement and remaking of the land (Berger, 2008; Mar & Edmonds, 2010). In this way, settler colonialism is more than a historical event, rather it is like white supremacy in that it is a structure that has shaped and continues to shape contemporary life (Glenn, 2015; McKay, Vinyeta & Norgaard, 2020).

The United States is a white settler colonial nation. According to historian Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, white settler colonialism in the United States is built upon three fundamental features: 1) the genocide of indigenous peoples and theft of indigenous lands, 2) the theft and enslavement of people from the African continent, and 3) an ideology of white supremacy (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). These three key features, taken together, shape the structure of white settler colonialism in the United States. Importantly, the racial divisions that characterize white settler colonialism were not random or unintentional. As Charles Mills (2008) writes in *Global White Supremacy*, “race was absolutely central to the justificatory ideology of the period. It was precisely *because* of alleged white superiority to other races that whites saw themselves as entitled to rule over them” (pp. 120).

The ideology of racial superiority held by the white settlers fueled a logic of elimination (Wolfe, 2006), with white settlers seeking to eradicate the indigenous populations, through genocide, removal, and finally through on-going and forced assimilation of Native Americans into the dominant white majority. As a part of the first phases of this process, Native Americans became the foil for the development of a white racial identity

already deeply rooted in racial dominance and superiority. People indigenous to what would become the United States became a racialized other to the settlers, characterized as savage and uncivilized, juxtaposed against the formation of a white settler identity characterized as advanced and civilizing. This characterization was used as justification for the elimination of the indigenous peoples and the brutal process of exterminating the Native people became central to the newly forming white identity of the settlers (Grenier, 2005). In, *The First Way of War*, historian John Grenier (2005) writes, "successive generations of Americans, both soldiers and civilians, made the killing of Indian men, women, and children a defining…part of a shared American identity," (p. 12). Encounters with the Native peoples shaped the first formations of whiteness in the new nation (Glenn, 2015), and the racialized violence against Native Americans rooted in white settler colonialism created the early contours of racism and white supremacy in the United States (McKay, Vinyeta & Norgaard, 2020).

The processes of white settler colonialism enacted in the United States created a kind of recursive process in the racial formation (Omi & Winant, 2014) of the white settlers, one rooted in and reinforcing white racial dominance. The process of settler colonialism was sanctioned by the supposed superiority of white Europeans, and the anti-indigenous violence of settler colonialism also worked to produce a new racialized national identity for the settlers, one that helped create and mythologize whiteness and white racial dominance in the United States (Grenier, 2005; Glenn, 2015; Berger, 2008). As will be discussed in greater detail later, ranging, one of the early policing practices of the white settlers, is especially salient to the creation of an American identity and the development of a narrative for the new nation.

Grounding the U.S. as a white settler state is crucial to understanding the history of American policing because it interconnects two essential and emerging frameworks in policing--colonialism and white supremacy--in ways that, up to this point, have been theorized separately. Combining critical race theory with U.S. settler colonialism helps us hold the logics of colonialism together with the roots of racial dominance, both of which are central to understanding the formation of the United States and its institutions, specifically policing. Combining these two frameworks also helps us see that white settler colonial logics are part of a larger structure of social control (Glenn, 2015; Steinmetz, Schaefer, & Henderson, 2017), which extend far beyond any single institution.

Social Control as the Context for the Development of American Policing

Historians and police scholars have identified three stages of development for police organizations: informal/avocational, transitional, and formal/vocational (Lundman, 1980; Klockars, 1985). Informal policing is characterized by the exercise of policing authority

done by individuals who hold no formal or legal authority. In this style of policing community members often share responsibility for maintaining social order. The frankenpledge system of medieval England is a common example of informal policing. In the frankenpledge system, a small number of families, known as a tything, jointly accepted guidelines for shared behavior and responsibility to alert others of criminal activity by initiating a “hue and cry,” (McGloin, 2003; Gaines & Kappeler, 2011). Transitional policing occurs as social groups grow beyond small communities sharing familial or cultural backgrounds. Transitional policing is often described as a bridge between informal and formal policing and occurs when a more formalized policing function is taken on or assigned to individuals on a voluntary or limited-time basis. In the transitional stage, policing includes unofficial and semi-official practices of social control as well as elements of what would become more modern policing procedures. Slave patrols have been described as a type of transitional police force (Reichel, 1988). Formal policing, the last stage, occurs when the exercise of police authority is done primarily by people who are identified and employed as law enforcement officers (Bacon, 1939; Lundman, 1980; Reichel, 1988; Travis & Langworthy, 2008).

At its most basic, policing developed as a formalized instrument of social control (Travis & Langworthy, 2008). In early English agrarian societies formal and even transitional forms of policing were not necessary because social control and order maintenance was an informal and collective responsibility. As societies grew from small, homogeneous communities into larger and more complex social networks, groups within a society or geography stratified, developing social classes and stratified social structures. Social stratification meant the new, more complex, and more diverse societies also contained more formalized power disparities. For powerful groups, including a ruling group, kingdom, or nation state, the preservation of the established social structure is both of central importance and within their ability to maintain—as those with the most power are also best positioned to create laws and law enforcement organizations (Lundman, 1980). The newly established governing authority (or powerful elite) manifests its power through exercise of coercive force—often through army, militia, or police forces (Fried, 1967; Newman, 1983). Throughout history, many police functions have originated in the military (Gaines & Kappeler, 2011). Within this context, police are formalized to create and maintain existing social orders (Robinson & Scaglion, 1987).

Policing, as it developed in the United States, built upon institutional and procedural knowledge and existing theories settlers carried over from Europe. When establishing the American colonies, settlers divided the exercise of social control into two approaches: 1) militia-like groups organized to exterminate and relocate indigenous populations, patrol the boundaries of stolen land, and, later, to control enslaved

populations; and 2) symbolic and largely powerless constable and constable-like positions used to maintain social order among European settlers within the colonies. This divide established a practice of two separate systems of policing—one for the non-white indigenous and enslaved populations, and one for the white European settlers—with distinct motivating and formalized logics. For non-white groups, the logics of policing center on containment and control, with the earliest practices rooted in military practices. For white groups, the logics of policing center on maintaining order and stability for the dominant white group. The legacy of this racialized division reverberates across policing history in the United States and continues to impact the practices and functions of policing today.

In the following sections I outline the origins of American policing in three distinct regions--the northeast, the south, and the frontier--focusing on the over two-hundred-and-fifty-year period beginning in the first decades of the 17th century and ending in the middle to late 19th century. I call this period the Colonial Era of policing. The largest of these three sections will focus on the northeast, where I will show how the practices of ranging, established in this region during this time period, remain a central and often overlooked component of contemporary American policing. Then, I turn to the southern United States. While slavery was legal across all the original colonies, the unique institution of chattel slavery forged in the United States was enacted primarily in the southern states. The institution of chattel slavery fundamentally shaped the development of the mechanisms of social control in that region, and those systems extended beyond the border of the South after the formal end of slavery. Thankfully, police historians and scholars have more thoroughly outlined this history. For this paper I will not restate this history. Rather, I will situate the existing history within the model of a racialized divide in the mechanisms of social control. Finally, I will touch on the frontier, those areas on the edges of the settler colonies representing the expanding border of captured land, again positioning the then established practices of ranging used in these areas into the model of racialized division in the mechanism of social control.

The Colonial Era

The Northeast

When forming the early mechanisms of policing, settlers divided the early practices into two approaches that reflected a racial divide in the goals and methods of the institution. The first approach was the creation of specialized militia units and organized groups known as “rangers,” created to engage indigenous populations in extirpative warfare and, later, removal and containment. The second approach were constable and night watch positions, which held limited formal power and were used mainly within larger

communities and among the white settler population. In creating this division in the early practices and institutions of policing, the American colonizers built a two-tiered enforcement system based on racial hierarchy and began laying the foundation for white supremacy in policing practices and in the larger society the settlers were establishing.

Contemporary concepts of race did not exist at this time; however, the settlers were by no means inattentive to racial differences between themselves and the Native peoples. Settler depictions of indigenous populations as “red,” as well as the practice of colonial governments in offering cash bounties for the scalps of indigenous men, women, and children (Adams, Dana, & Mazo, 2021), known as “redskins,” reflect the settler willingness to use race, specifically skin color, as a means of categorizing groups (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014).

The earliest practices of these militia units are genocide, not policing. Motivated by desires to seize land, control resources, and permanently establish a new home for themselves, settlers engaged in a set of military practices intended to eliminate the Native populations. To accomplish the goals of elimination, settlers created militia units for eradicating Native people and for claiming their land (Grenier, 2005), and much of these early conflicts are best characterized as warfare. In the over one-hundred-and-fifty-year period between early 1600 and the Revolutionary War, colonizers organized themselves into militia groups to fight outright wars with indigenous populations in the Anglo-Powhatan War (1610-1614), Pequot War (1634-1638), King Philip’s War (1675-1676), Tuscarora War (1711-1715), Yamasee War (1715-1717), and the French and Indian War (1756-1763), among countless smaller battles and skirmishes.

Importantly, the types of warfare the British settlers engaged in with native people was distinct from the types of warfare they engaged in amongst other European nations on American soil. At the time, Great Britain had explicit rules of war, guidelines for acceptable and unacceptable military practices which governed military actions. Among other things, these rules outlined the kinds of physical force and violence military men could engage in with noncombatants. However, the settlers did not extend these rules to the native populations. Instead, settlers established a separate practice of extirpative warfare that included the indiscriminate killing of Native combatants and noncombatants including women and children. In this way, British settlers created a framework for conflict with the indigenous populations that separated the kinds of physical force allowable for indigenous populations versus white settler populations. Military historian John Grenier (2005) describes the divide in his book, “The First Ways of War: American Warmaking on the Frontier, 1607-1814,” when he writes:

> *American methods of war occupied one pole in which soldiers discriminated between combatants and noncombatants, and by implication fought within state-sponsored armies. Indian ways of war occupied the opposite pole, in which all enemies, regardless of age or sex, were fair game.* (p. 19)

Formal military systems, to the extent they existed among the settlers during this time period, were limited in scope and structure. Therefore, the settlers organized themselves into these vigilante-like militia groups first to annihilate, then to contain indigenous populations. These militia groups most often did not operate extralegally, as was typical for vigilantism later in American history. Rather, these groups were the intentional creation of the military leadership of the settler colony. However, the earliest groups operated in much the same way as later vigilante groups, organizing in response to a need, in this case eliminating Native people, and disbanding after their purpose had been fulfilled (Brown, 1983; Grenier, 2005).

Mercenaries from the European Wars of Religion played a major role in the military leadership of the early American colonies (Philbrick, 2006; Grenier, 2005). These mercenaries include John Smith in Virginia, Myles Standish at Plymouth, John Mason in Connecticut, and John Underhill in Massachusetts (Grenier, 2005). Myles Standish is also credited with founding one of the oldest law enforcement agencies in the nation. The Plymouth County Sheriff's Office, a law enforcement agency that still exists today, traces its origins to the arrival of Myles Standish, who arrived on the Mayflower in 1620 and assumed responsibility for the colony's military, and later law enforcement, responsibilities (Plymouth County Sheriff's Office, n.d.). As a military leader, Standish was also known for his brutality with native populations (Philbrick, 2006).

It is not just the Plymouth County Sheriff's Office that has roots in early military groups organized to fight Native peoples. Across the country, many of what would become the first organized policing agencies in the United States were established in response to conflict with indigenous populations, and many of these policing agencies still exist today. The Guard, later named the Virginia Division of Capitol Police, the first organized police agency in the United States, was created in Jamestown, VA in 1618 to protect the Governor against attack from the indigenous populations (The Commonwealth of Virginia, 2016; Gaines & Kappeler, 2011). The Virginia Division of the Capital Police is still a functioning police agency today. The Texas Rangers, the first state-level police institution, was created to protect settlers and advance the western frontier border farther into Native lands and became legendary after the slaughter of the Comanche people (Graybill, 2007; Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). Like the Virginia Division of the Capitol Police, the Texas Rangers remain an operating police force today. Lastly, night watches that were created in the Northeast—which later evolved into police departments in many

cities including Boston, Philadelphia, and New York—were first formed as “Native constables,” who were appointed to alert white settlers of Native approach (Gaines & Kappeler, 2011).

As the settlers began to establish themselves and take larger and larger swaths of land from the indigenous people, their military practices shifted from elimination of native people to the protection of the land that was stolen, and to account for changes in the methods and approach Native Americans took to conflict. The concept of ranging dates back to the Middle Ages (Grenier, 2013), but the version being crafted in the northeast colonies by settlers borrowed heavily from Native American practices. Before the settlers began ranging, their forms of combat were rooted in the more traditional and ritualized practices carried over from Great Britain. American ranging practices included the creation of smaller militia units that engaged in scouting, patrolling, setting and avoiding ambushes, and close-quarters fighting with the goal of fighting the Native populations using Native practices (Grenier, 2005). These ranging practices were created less for direct warfare and used more as a kind of border patrol to protect lands taken from Native Americans from being reclaimed and to safeguard the settlers living on the stolen land. In this way, ranging included the transition of law enforcement practices from purely militaristic and genocidal purposes towards including some of the forms and functions later incorporated into American policing, specifically the policing and protection of racially segregated spaces (Bell, 2020).

American ranging created two features essential to settler identity and institutions. First, in practices that would evolve into modern-day policing, ranging established roots in militaristic force for non-white populations. Over time, ranging created a situation where extreme violence up to and including extermination became the preferred approach of American settlers with Native groups (Grenier, 2005). In other words, extreme violence and military engagement became the standard approach of white settlers with those racialized as nonwhite. Second, ranging and rangers became mythologized as heroic frontiersmen and this mythology became a central organizing feature of a white settler identity as settlers worked to establish themselves as a people separate from their European ancestry (Berger, 2008; Grenier, 2013). In writing about the first military practices used in what would become the United States, which included ranging, Grenier (2005) writes, “17th and early-18th century Americans made the first way of war key to being a white American (pp 12).” In other words, the extreme violence used against Native peoples, and the intentional divisions in the use and extent of violence between European and Native populations, became central to how early American settlers understood their white and American identity as something separate from their European ancestry.

While ranging is the earliest policing framework colonizers in the northeast used on the Native populations, it was not the framework that settlers established amongst themselves. The earliest settlers in this northeast region were driven to the new continent and united by their strong, shared religious faith. As a society founded on strong and shared religious beliefs, the creation of law enforcement among themselves was not a primary concern of the early settlers. These early settlers relied on their shared cultural and religious faith to enforce the processes of social control in the colonies (Philbrick, 2006).

The model of policing that would have been most readily available to the settlers would have been the Anglo-Saxon model (Mawby, 1990), primarily characterized by its decentralized structure, meaning that, to the extent that law enforcement existed, there was no central authority that supervised the individuals (McGloin, 2003). Borrowing from the British model, the earliest law enforcement model settlers in the United States used amongst themselves was a constable. The first constable position in the colonies was created in the Plymouth Colony in 1634 (Gaines & Kappeler, 2011). The constable in colonial times did not enforce laws or police the community in the sense we understand today. His role varied depending on the location, but broadly the position was charged with overseeing the effective flow of commerce within the colonies—checking weights and measures, surveying land, serving warrants, and occasionally administering punishments within these domains (Gaines & Kappeler, 2011). Conflict between settlers was often left to be resolved by those involved without intervention from the outside (Travis & Langworthy, 2008). Constables and constabularies were established in major cities throughout this time period. Simultaneously, a position called Indian night watches or Indian constables was formed. This position was essentially a night guard created to alert others and sound an alarm if they suspected an attack by Native Americans. The first night watches were formed in Boston in 1636 and in New York in 1658 (Gaines & Kappeler, 2011). Much later, night watches grew to include day watches. The first day watch was created in Philadelphia in 1833, and watches later evolved into police departments in Boston, Philadelphia, and New York (Gaines & Kappeler, 2011).

Starting in the first quarter of the 1800s a second large wave of European immigrants, primarily from Germany and Ireland, began to shift the social and cultural conditions established by the earlier British settlers. At this point, Native populations in the northeast had largely been corralled onto reservations (known then as plantations), which were policed by the United States military (Wakeling, et al, 2001), or forced westward. White settlers had fought and won a war of independence with Great Britain and the United States of America had been officially formalized as a unified nation, if not yet a unified people. In a fifty year period from 1820 to 1870, over seven and a half million European immigrants came to the United States. This was larger than the entire

population of the United States had been at the start of the 19th century. More impoverished Irish immigrants tended to settle in port cities along the east coast, while comparatively more affluent German immigrants pushed the frontier westward, settling in larger numbers in the Midwest.

This new wave of European immigrants created new social divisions that became an impetus for the formalization of police forces throughout the northeast. Their large numbers quickly and dramatically shifted the power dynamics of the established white population. First, unlike the earlier British settlers, most of the new immigrants were Roman Catholic. Second, these new immigrants, particularly the impoverished Irish, were willing to work for very low wages, alienating existing low-wage workers. Lastly, this new, large group of immigrants tended to support elected officials who would center the needs of low-income workers, which shifted political power dynamics in many places. This combination of religious and class differences, combined with the political destabilization created by such a huge wave of immigrants and a growing anti-slavery abolitionist movement, caused massive social unrest during this time period. Race, class, and religious riots broke out across virtually all major cities in the northeast at this time. Existing constables and watch programs were completely unprepared to manage this level and type of conflict. In response, localities across the northeast began to create formal, uniformed police forces to address the social and political conflicts arising during this time period.

In the earliest period of the Colonial Era in the northeast, the relationship with indigenous populations was primarily driving the creation and maintenance of the mechanism of control. The white settler population was not “policed” in the sense we understand it today. Further, the native populations were subjected to a much more militaristic regime of social control than we see present in policing today. However, the institutional logics that undergird the processes of coercion and social control, including a racialized division in the use of extremely violent, even militaristic tactics among non-white groups, were established in the northeast during the Colonial era, and these logics persist in policing institutions today. In other words, the socially constructed patterns and material practices of policing established during this period remain present and are reflected, for example, in the persistent racial disparities in police violence and abuse. By the mid 1800s, the end of the Colonial era in the northeast, when most large cities in the northeast officially created police departments, the racialized logics and practices established during this era became the basis upon which these early departments were founded.

The South

In the South, maintenance of social order and mechanisms of social control evolved out of a very different context: slavery. The first African slaves were brought to Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619, slightly over a decade after the colony was created. While slavery was practiced throughout all the original American colonies, both north and south, slavery was formalized most exhaustively in the plantations of the American south, and by the late 17th century slave labor had established the South as a dominant economic engine in America. While present, formal structures of authority and conceptions of the rule of law were rare and less enforced for the white population in the South than in the Northeast (Hindus, 1980). Constables and, more likely, sheriffs were found throughout the South, especially in larger municipalities.

Ranging was practiced in the South. Like in the Northeast, rangers were developed to exterminate and, later, remove and contain indigenous populations. However, the methods and practices used by southern rangers did not emulate Native practices to the same extent as rangers in Northeast did. Instead, rangers in the South used a cavalry model, borrowing from European dragoons (Grenier, 2005). Beginning in Virginia, the South began to develop its own ranging traditions, with rangers relying more on horse-mounted cavalries than the rangers in the densely forested north, and this was the model that moved westward into the American frontier (Prassel, 1972; Grenier, 2005). As the South grew in economic importance, dependent upon the institution of slavery, the need to control the growing slave population created the need for a specific type of formalized policing: the slave patrol (Reichel, 1988).

In the South, formal structures of authority and conceptions of the rule of law were often perceived as a threat to the autonomy of the plantation owners (Hindus, 1980). The mechanisms for social control were divided with different structures for white Southerners (from plantation owning elites to most destitute whites) and for enslaved Africans. The earliest enforcement of social control among the enslaved population was informal, with the responsibility for controlling the enslaved population falling upon all whites (Henry, 1914; Harris & Foner, 1976; Hindus, 1980). While informal, these responsibilities were not taken lightly. All whites were legally able and even obligated to approach and question any Black person seen off a plantation. In some states, whites could be fined for not taking action to question a Black person seen off a plantation and in 1705, Virginia made it legal for any white person to kill runaway slaves (Reichel, 1988).

The movement to transitional policing in the South was a response to the rapidly expanding number of slaves in the South and the threat of slave rebellion (Reichel, 1988). Slave patrols were created to address plantation owner concerns with slave rebellion, and assuage white fears at becoming the racial minority, while maintaining

much more informal systems of social control for Southern whites. Unlike most of the militia groups that engaged indigenous populations, slave patrols were governed by a set of legislative codes that outlined the duties of the slave patrol, including use of force (Reichel, 1988). The first Slave Patrol Act was established in South Carolina in 1704. By the middle of the 1700s every southern colony had enacted slave patrol legislation (Williams & Murphy, 1990).

As they developed, slave patrols typically functioned as a special enforcement arm of existing state military but with separate codes outlining the regulation of slavery (Reichel, 1988). Slave patrols watched over the lands between plantations and conducted periodic checks on plantations to inquire on owner safety and to enforce regulations on maintaining proper control of enslaved populations (Reichel, 1988; Travis & Langworthy, 2008). Original regulations stated that slave patrols were to be composed of private citizens, including the plantation owning elites. Over time, regulations were changed to allow plantation owners to purchase labor to fill their term of service on the patrol. As elite interests moved off of patrols, the citizen guards were often criticized for idleness or excessive abuse of enslaved individuals that were apprehended (Genovese, 1976). Legislation governing slave patrols experienced frequent changes, as slave states attempted to find the right balance of social control and enforcement. Slave patrols operated primarily in rural plantation areas, locations that did not have Southern sheriffs, yet these patrolmen came to be viewed as a police force similar to the sheriffs of larger towns and cities (Reichel, 1988).

For the white population living in the South, interaction with the mechanisms of social control was very different. For whites in the rural south, no formal police existed at this time. Plantation policing reduced the need and utility of a formal policing system (Hindus, 1980). When conflict occurred among white rural Southerners, white individuals or groups were left to settle the issue outside the loosely functioning justice system. The South did have a police position similar to the Northern constable, more commonly known as the “sheriff.” Again borrowing from the British model--although in the American version sheriffs are often selected by popular election rather than appointment--duties of the sheriff were closely linked to the needs of the local courts and included serving summonses, delivering subpoenas, arresting people, summoning jurors, and attending court (Prassel, 1972). The sheriff was found almost exclusively in more developed Southern cities (Travis & Langworthy, 2008). However, during this time, the vast majority of southerners lived in rural areas. In the antebellum south, upwards of 90 percent of the southern population lived in rural areas (Arrington, 2017). Given the predominantly rural nature of the south, the Southern sheriff had a limited power and influence over the majority of white southerners.

In the South, much like in the Northeast, a clear racialized divide emerges among the institutions of social control. Further, there is an entrenchment of the construction of racial difference—a deepening of the beliefs in biological difference between groups, with the white population elevated above other racial groups, particularly the Black enslaved and indigenous populations. This aligned the interests of the white plantation owning elites and the poorer, working-class Southern whites—advancing the interests of two white groups that had much to be in conflict over, at the expense of the enslaved Black population. Much like the stereotypes developed to justify the oppression of Native Americans, the stereotypes and myths around an idea of Blackness—e.g., idleness, criminality, and need for white control—created during this time were in large part to rationalize the institution of slavery and the need for systems of social control (Frederickson, 2002) and these myths helped to further entrench American institutions and white identity in white racial dominance. Especially strong conceptions of civil liberties and concerns over autonomy among the white population during this time period restricted the development of police forces in the South. However, in the first half of the 19th century, Southern states created a system of civilian guards in more rural areas that came to be viewed much like traditional police officers.

Policing in the Colonial era was largely informal in system and structure. In the first two centuries, settlers were divided primarily between the Northeast and the South, which had different contexts for the development of early policing practices. Despite variation based on regional differences, the mechanisms of social control in these two regions share similarities, specifically the divide between types of control and coercion used for the dominant white population and the non-white Native and enslaved Black populations. This divide laid the foundation for structures of social control and law enforcement in service of white supremacy. The containment of Native and Black peoples, the shift from more stationary watches to the patrol of segregated spaces, and the racialized distinction between modes of force all carried over into later practices of excessive militaristic force and the containment and removal involved in the policing of segregated spaces implemented by police forces all across the United States.

The Frontier

The Frontier was the last region of the United States where white settlers developed the structures and institutions that would evolve into contemporary American policing. This region, roughly the area stretching west of the Appalachian Mountains to the Pacific coast, is a huge portion of the continental United States. The relatively late stage of this region's development meant this large and expanding area could borrow from earlier policing practices previously established by white American settlers, specifically rangers, slave patrols, and sheriffs. Furthermore, as one of its first acts, the newly formed United States Congress created U.S. marshals, the first federal law enforcement

agents, who carried out duties and responsibilities issued from all three branches of the federal government. All of these positions and their practices--rangers, slave patrols, sheriffs, and US marshals--came together to inform what would eventually become the uniformed police departments of today.

Great Britain had placed restrictions on the westward movement of settlers. So, it wasn't until after the revolutionary war and into the first quarter of the 19th century that white American settlers began a more extensive push west of the Appalachian Mountains. This time of westward expansion intensified as the second large wave of European immigrants, primarily from central and northern Europe, began arriving in America and continued through the California Gold Rush and the end of the Civil War. By the end of this period, the last quarter of the 19th century, large cities in the Northeast had created formal police departments and the first era of policing, known as the Political Era, had begun. However, many locations in the south and west had yet to establish law enforcement agencies.

As American settlers pushed west, they again came into conflict with Native populations. In the central and southern parts of the nation, places like Oklahoma and Missouri, settlers were coming up against Native people who had been forcibly relocated to these areas from their ancestral homelands in the south and southeast, places like North Carolina, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, and Alabama. In the western and central frontier--places like Oklahoma, Missouri, Iowa, and Texas--American settlers used ranging practices they carried with them across the Mississippi. At this point, ranging practices were an established method for the elimination and containment of Native populations. The particular geographies west of the Mississippi made the cavalry ranging methods of the South the preferred method of the Frontier. Starting in East Texas in 1823, these frontier rangers began as a small group of armed militia taking land and protecting stolen lands from Native attack (Prassel, 1972; Graybill, 2007). Later, these rangers took on a more formal role as soldiers in the War with Mexico, then as an informal border patrol between Texas and Mexico, and finally they were formalized as the state police in 1873 (Prassel, 1972). Becoming a formalized police force did not put an end to the rangers' role as the enforcers of Native elimination, removal, and containment. In 1874, Texas created the Frontier Battalion of the Texas Rangers with the goal of eliminating Native people for white settlement along the periphery of the state's territory (Graybill, 2007).

The process of land theft and Native containment deepened the existing racial divisions between white settlers and the Native populations. Further, it strengthened and expanded the entrenchment of white supremacy and white racial dominance. As Native people were forced off their lands and contained, as the resources they depended upon

for survival--like the bison in the Great Plains--were decimated, these groups became less and less able to fend off white settler encroachment and conquest and more and more dependent upon the meager provisions provided by the U.S. government. Conversely, white settlers used the land and natural resources that had been stolen to grow in strength and power. This on-going project of white settler advancement and Native American decline became a justification for the oppression and exploitation of Native American peoples. In other words, white settler prosperity, built upon Native land theft and genocide, became a justification for the continued domination and abuse of Native peoples. Early American police, rooted in this racialized division in their practices and approach to social control and coercion, played an active role in the construction and maintenance of this form of American racism and white supremacy.

The Frontier also had local sheriffs. Many American settlers, especially in the south and western United States, were entering into regions that had already been colonized by the Spanish. The Spanish had created a law enforcement model similar to that of the sheriff and many settlements combined the Spanish and English elements when creating the local sheriff position (Prassel, 1972). Contrary to popular “Wild West” beliefs, law enforcement was one of the first functions frontier towns created as they established themselves (Prassel, 1972). Furthermore, the United States federal government had created U.S. marshals, official government agents who were to act as law enforcement and local administrators for the federal government in the expanding frontier (Calhoun, 1991). Like the sheriff’s link to local courts, the duties of the U.S. marshals were linked closely to the operations of the federal courts, including enacting convoluted and at times conflicting federal laws related to the enslavement of Black people. For example, U.S. marshals were required to enforce the ban on the African slave trade while also serving as slave catchers after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Acts. U.S. marshals also served as law enforcement on Native reservations and were involved in crimes between the white settlers and Native Americans but not with crimes that occurred among Native peoples, which was left to the internal affairs of the Native nations (Calhoun, 1991). Non-federal crimes among white settlers were handled by white settlers or by the local sheriff. With U.S. marshals, we see the racial divide in the roles and practices of law enforcement being enacted by the federal government.

The form of policing that took shape on the frontier blurred the previously more rigid divisions in the policing approaches of military, law enforcement, and ranging involved in Native American extermination, the containment of Native Americans, and the containment and exploitation of an enslaved Black population. Like in the Northeast and in the South, rangers led the way in the Frontier, eliminating Native people and securing the land for white settlement. However, where rangers and ranging practices disappeared or were absorbed into formalized law enforcement agencies in the

Northeast and the South, rangers and the practice of ranging was formalized into some of the first police departments in the Frontier. Furthermore, the creation of U.S. marshals, the first formal federal law enforcement agents, created another layer of consolidation in the formation of policing, as there was often movement between these three positions: rangers, sheriffs, and marshals. In, *The Western Peace Officer: A Legacy of Law and Order* (1972), Professor of Police Science and historian of frontier policing, Frank R. Prassel writes:

> *Thomas J. Smith, who maintained order Abilene [Kansas] with fists instead of guns, gained his experience on the Bowery with the police in New York City. Bill Tilghman, the chief officer for several Kansas and Oklahoma towns, came from the ranks of deputy federal marshals. James B. Gillett, who replaced Stoudenmire at El Paso in 1882 and later became a well-known rancher, had served for six years with the Texas Rangers.* (p. 52)

It is in this time period, in the first decades after police forces were formalized in the Northeast and after the end of the Civil War, that we begin to see the role of local law enforcement, one that included the racialized divisions and militaristic roots, cohere into the more standard form of policing found today. These racialized divisions are at the origins of the formation of American policing practices and the institution of American policing. The practices that were established and formalized during this Colonial Era, form a critical chapter at the origin of American policing. This chapter makes clear the origins of a racialized divide in American policing and shows how this divide has become etched into the DNA of the American policing systems. Many of the seemingly intransigent racial disparities found in policing today—excessive force, militaristic response, drug law enforcement, evictions, and deadly violence--are a product of the logics—material practices, social constructions, values, beliefs, and ideologies that produce and reproduce systems and institutions--that originated during this era.

Conclusion

Viewing the history and evolution of American policing through the lenses of settler colonialism and Critical Race Theory provides an opportunity to create a dialogue and generate questions not typically included as part of an analysis of policing in America. Perhaps the largest question from this analysis is around how historical phenomena identified through settler colonialism and CRT—racial hierarchy, the ordinariness of racism, and white supremacy—cause or result in the trends related to institutional neglect, over-policing, and excessive use of force we see in minority communities today.

Using the framework of white settler colonialism and focusing on the earlier time frame in US history, this paper attempts to begin to answer this question by allowing us to understand how deeply rooted race and power are within the context of American policing. This historically inclusive and geographically expansive analysis of policing illuminates the substructures of white supremacy, often elided in contemporary analysis of policing. Using a race-conscious lens to analyze formative events from the history of American policing, we develop a clearer understanding of how racial inequality has been structured and legitimized in policing institutions over time. Knowledge of the social, political, and economic forces impacting policing provides clarity on how the racial divides that have characterized police practices throughout American history are not the product of chance events but have been structured. White supremacy structured American systems of social control to systematically maintain white racial dominance at the expense of non-white groups. This awareness moves us beyond noting superficial racial differences in policing outcomes to an understanding of how such disparities have come to mean differentials in the risk for police brutality, incarceration, and death.

The institutions that have come to function as policing in America today were created as a means of social control, established as a tool for the creation and maintenance of white settler colonialism, and operationalized as a flawed and decentralized set of institutions. The roots of social control and white supremacy in the development of policing in America make the possibility of reforming, or even addressing, the persistent disparities and harms a formidable challenge. However, the possibility of reforming an institution so deeply rooted in white supremacy remains a question we must take seriously if we are to create a law enforcement institution that reflects the nation's deepest values. Fair and equitable policing is not an abstract theoretical objective or an idealistic impossibility but a fundamental responsibility at the core of what a healthy society must provide its citizens. To begin to build the systems we need, we have to go back to the origins of the institution, only then can we begin to reimagine something fundamentally different.

Chapter 3: Goals and Outcomes of Police Officer Communication

Introduction

Interactions between police and the communities they serve are primarily intergroup interactions (Giles, Maguire, & Hill, 2021), as the individuals involved in the interaction identify as and are identified as members of different groups (Charman, 2017; Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Intergroup communication happens when people in a social interaction communicate with each other based, at least in part, on their group membership rather than their personal identity (Dragojevic & Giles, 2014). Intergroup communication between police officers and the community is an inevitable and essential part of

policing. It is estimated that upwards of 98% of police work involves verbal communication with the public (Thompson & Jenkins, 2013).

Research has shown that the actions of officers during interactions have a major impact on how police are perceived (Tyler, 2004; Bolger & Walters, 2019). Research on police-initiated contact finds that fair and courteous treatment, providing reasons for being stopped, and explaining their rights to civilians all contribute to satisfaction with police-initiated encounters (Stone & Pettigrew, 2000; Quinton et al., 2000). For both citizen-initiated and police-initiated contact, perceptions of police behavior during a contact situation are the greatest predictors of civilian satisfaction with the encounter (Skogan, 2005). Furthermore, the use of fair procedures and citizen perceptions of fair treatment by police leads to improved perceptions of police (e.g., Tyler, 2001, 2005), the perception of fair treatment by police advances the mindset that police officers have a legitimate authority as agents of the law (Sunshine & Taylor, 2003; Tyler & Wakslak, 2004), and conceptions of officer behavior and of how a person was treated during interactions with authorities are linked to evaluations of officer legitimacy (Cox & White, 1988; Tyler & Huo, 2002). Lastly, poor communication skills, specifically disrespectful or antagonistic interactions, were found to be the biggest reported complaint regarding police behavior (Giles et al., 2006).

While officer behavior, specifically communication, is an important part of police work and a critical factor in how civilians feel about their experience with police, it is also clear that officers are often engaging in ways that are not conducive to a positive experience. Furthermore, these problematic behaviors have been more pronounced with certain groups. Researchers found a disparity in officer treatment of Latino and White individuals, as evidenced by differences in officer communication behaviors during traffic stops (Giles et al., 2012). A systematic analysis of transcriptions of audio from body-worn camera footage found that police officers spoke less respectfully to Black community members than to White community members during traffic stops (Voigt et al., 2017). Findings of racially disparate communications by police are complemented by a large body of rigorous research showing racial disparities favoring Whites in police stops, searches, and use of force (Charbonneau & Glaser, 2020; Fagan & Geller, 2020; Geller et al., 2021; Glaser, 2015; Knox et al., 2020; Pierson et al., 2020). These findings reveal that police officers tend to be influenced by attitudes and beliefs about themselves and the social context when interacting with community members from various racial and ethnic groups. However, we can only infer from officers' communications and behaviors what psychological sense-making processes are influencing officer actions. By interviewing officers, asking them directly about how they think about their community interactions, we seek to determine the extent to which

officers' thoughts about their roles interact with the situations in which they encounter civilians to affect how they act.

Understanding how people make sense of their social situations and personal identity helps in predicting their behavior (Walton & Wilson, 2018). A range of terms have been used to describe the psychological sense-making phenomena that can shape behavior, including core narratives (Wilson, 2011), subjective construals (Ross & Nisbett, 1991), and mindset (Dweck, 2008). Mindsets, which are views we adopt of ourselves (Dweck, 2008), are potentially powerful mechanisms guiding our thoughts and actions in everyday life. Some work has been done to explore the police officer mindset (see Giles, Maguire, & Hill, 2021). As a policing best practice, the President's Task Force for 21st Century Policing (2015) recommended that police officers embrace a "guardian," rather than a "warrior," mindset. A guardian mindset has been defined as prioritizing service and valuing the actions associated with positive contact (McLean et. al, 2020; Stoughton, 2014). While some research has been done to identify police officer mindsets toward their work (McLean et. al, 2020; Paoline III, Terrill, & Somers, et al., 2021), there is limited research on police attitudes broadly (Frank & Brandl, 1991; Worden, 1995), and no known research on police core narratives regarding intergroup interactions.

The book Redirect (Wilson, 2011), discusses core narratives and successful attempts to redirect core narrative when they create barriers to healthy living. For example, in a series of studies, researchers were able to identify and redirect core narratives about intergroup interactions from "[the outgroup] won't like me," to "we often get along better than I expect," which had a positive effect on the number of intergroup friendships among Black and White college students (Mallett & Wilson, 2008; Mallett & Wilson, 2010). In another study focused on personal wellbeing, researchers found that individuals who had core narratives related to meaning, purpose, and hope were better able to handle setbacks and negative life events (Wiggins et al., 1992). In this case, the core narrative shift would be from something like 'there is no meaning/life is meaningless,' to 'there is meaning (to my life or in this event).'

Distinct from mindsets, core narratives include interpretations people have constructed of their social world as well as personal views they have adopted about themselves (Wilson, 2011). Within the context of policing, guardian and warrior mindsets are views police officers adopt about themselves that are likely to impact their behavior. Similarly, subjective construals in the context of policing are the ways a police officer understands a social situation, and how that understanding is likely to impact behavior. Core narratives combine both views of the self and the subjective interpretations of the social situation to explain behavior. Because they involve both beliefs about the self and the

social environment, core narratives can play a useful role in understanding communication behavior, a central component in police-community relations. An investigation of core narratives offers promise to elucidate the nature of police-community interactions, which are laden with group identification and contextual factors.

This chapter examines one important implication for how police officers make sense of intergroup interactions: communication. Specifically, this research explores police officer interpretations of communication during encounters with community members. This chapter is based on a paper I co-authored with my advisor, Dr. Jack Glaser, and published in a 2023 special edition of Group Processes and Intergroup Relations.Using a qualitative interview process, I investigate how police officers understand and use communication, the impact of those interpretations on police-community encounters, and we begin to explore, empirically, police officer core narratives related to intergroup communication.

Methods

Data presented below are drawn from a larger qualitative study that explored factors influencing police officer core narratives in police-community interactions. A qualitative design using semi-structured, in-depth interviews was used to collect data. Preliminary analysis, a common practice in qualitative research (Miles & Huberman, 1994), indicated that communication, specifically narratives or interpretations connected to communication, played a central role in officer understanding of situations and behaviors. The purpose of this study is to generate insight, grounded in the interview data, into the characteristics shaping police officer understandings of communication in officer-civilian contact encounters and explore how those interpretations might be connected to officer behaviors and the overall outcomes of the interactions. Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to better understand the phenomena and identify coherent themes within the data.

Recruitment and Sampling

This research was approved by the institutional review board (IRB) of University of California – Berkeley. I recruited potential participants from a police department in a diverse, mid-sized city in California. The police department provided me with a list of the names, email addresses, precincts, districts, beats (if applicable), and shifts for all police officers involved in community-facing activities (N=435). This list included patrol officers as well as officers involved in special assignments (e.g., K9 units). Officers were randomly contacted from a list stratified by precinct. The list was stratified by precincts to account for the relatively rigid boundary that exists between the two precincts. While officers often leave their beats to respond to calls for service, they infrequently leave their precinct. The department maintains one station in each precinct, where officers

start and end their shifts, which creates an additional separation between officers in precincts. A total of 193 officers were contacted over a six-month period. In total, 22 officers, (11.4% of those contacted) accepted the invitation and were interviewed. There is no known research evidence on optimal participation rates for in-person interviews in qualitative research such as this. However, available research finds between 15 and 60 interviews is the norm (Saunders & Townsend, 2016) and suggests that between 20 and 30 interviews is optimal (Marshall et al, 2013). Twelve of the officers interviewed were from Precinct A, and ten officers from Precinct B were interviewed.

Data Collection

Data collection took place from February to September 2020. The lead researcher developed the semi-structured interview protocol used in this study. The protocol consisted of 23 open-ended questions plus follow-up questions across seven aspects of police work: role/duties, skills/values, control, impact of the job, community, contact, and safety/threat. An additional 8 open-ended questions were added to the survey at two separate time points, related to two specific events: 1) COVID-19, and 2) the murder of George Floyd by a police officer in Minneapolis, MN, and the resulting nationwide protests it sparked. Protest policing is a challenge unto itself (den Heyer, 2020; Glaser & Lim, 2020; Nassauer, 2019); with the 2020 protests being about policing itself, and widespread, there was good reason to expect this was highly salient to police and would affect their interactions with community members (Pryce & Gainey, 2022).

Results outlined below include officer responses across all nine aspects of police work. The first three interviews were conducted in-person; two at public cafes and one at a police station. After the COVID-19 pandemic ended the possibility of in-person interviews, the other 19 interviews were conducted over the phone. No substantial changes in officer willingness to be interviewed or in what they shared were noticed in the transition from in-person to phone interviews. Interviews ranged from 40 minutes to one hour and 41 minutes, with an average length of one hour and 9 minutes. For information on officer demographics, see Table 1, below.

Table 1. Officer Demographics		
	Study	**Department**
Race		
Asian	7	31.8%
Black	3	13.6%
Latino	4	18.2%
White	7	31.8%
Other	1	4.5%
Total	**22**	
Age		
20-29	8	
30-39	12	
40-49	1	
50+	1	
Precinct		
West	12	
East	10	
Shift		
Day	6	
Swing	11	
Night	5	

Data Analysis

Interviews were audio-taped with the consent of the officers, and the recordings were transcribed by the lead researcher with the assistance of transcription software. Participant names and all identifying information of the officers or others were removed in transcription. Pseudonyms are used in this paper to protect participant confidentiality. Using thematic analysis, the process was guided by two questions: 1) What is the role of communication in police-community contact experiences; and 2) What factors influence and are influenced by officer communication? All interviews were used in the analysis. Interviews were reviewed line-by-line and labeled with open codes as they emerged. For example, when asked about strategies used to gain control of a situation, one officer responded:

> *“A lot of times I just won't speak first. So, just let things unfold. I'll arrive, and sometimes there will be a pause of what's gonna happen next. And I won't say*

> *anything, just to see. Because that gives you a lot of information itself. Who might be the most dominant person in the scenario, and who might be the dominant aggressor in a fight, with things like that. And it lets you assess more. So for me, I might stay quiet."* (Interview A)

Using open coding, the passage above was labeled, "observing." The passage was also coded as "control." Open codes were then grouped into categories to the extent that codes showed a relationship or were interconnected. In qualitative analysis, categories answer the question, "What is going on here?" and represent central ideas in the textual data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In this analysis, the categories that emerged reflected the themes presented below.

Results

Five themes relating to the role of intergroup communication in community interactions emerged from the analysis. One overarching theme is *communication is central* to police-community interaction. Four additional themes, reflecting different purposes of communication, are: 1) *communication as advocacy*; 2) *communication as cover*; 3) *communication as withholding*; and 4) *communication as connection*. These four themes were abstracted into two dimensions: intentions and outcomes, yielding a two-by-two model with one theme in each cell (see Table 2, below). Dimensions reflect the range along which the general properties of the themes vary (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In the intentions dimension, thematic variation ranges from using communication as a means (to accomplish some other goal) to using communication as an end (communication is the goal). In the outcomes dimension, variation ranges from communication that bridges police-civilian intergroup relations to communication that breaks down police-civilian intergroup relations. *Communication is central* emerged as a fundamental organizing principle in police civilian intergroup interaction. Given its centrality for police work, communication as central stands outside of the intentions and outcomes framework.

Table 2: Dimensions of the police communication model

		Primary Outcome	
		Bridging	Breaking
Primary Intention	...Means	Advocacy	Cover
	...Ends	Connection	Withholding

Not all policing communication intentions and outcomes fall within this framework, which focuses on communication that intends to, or results in, improving or deteriorating police civilian intergroup interactions. For example, in responding to a car accident, an officer can collect statements and provide a written report of events without engaging any of the themes identified in this study. For this study, this type of encounter is

described as static with inert communication choices and these were not explored in detail during this study. To the extent that static encounters were shared by officers, it was most often in the context of their description of daily duties.

Communication is Central

Communication was not one of the specific 9 aspects (role/duties, skills/values, control, impact of the job, community, contact, safety/threat, COVID-19, and social unrest) included as focus areas in the interview survey protocol. However, communication quickly emerged as central to police work, with officers describing the numerous ways it was involved in their day-to-day duties: As an important value and an important skill; a method of creating positive contact experiences; a mechanism for improving community relationships; a tool for control and to create safety in contact situations; and a way for officers to feel more positive about their work. Often, when officers brought up communication, it was in a way that illustrated its centrality across various dimensions of the work. For example, when asked what values the best police officers have, one officer responded:

> *I think to communicate. I've seen some great officers that I respect a lot be excellent speakers and be able to -- there's this idea of talking people into handcuffs, or talking people out of arguments, or talking people out of longstanding feuds -- and I've witnessed some officers be able to do that, and I think it's a really, really, good value to have. You could be the smartest guy on the street, you could be the toughest guy on the street, but if you can't talk to anybody, [it] doesn't really matter.* (Interview I)

The officer makes clear that communication can be a method of mediation, problem solving, and creating safety, but does so within the context of a question on values, which conveys these characteristics are of central importance. The idea of “talking people into handcuffs,” reflects the use of communication as an alternative to the use of force. Using communication as an alternative to force is supported institutionally by many police departments through training in strategies like “verbal judo,” a form of tactical communication aimed at gaining compliance (Thompson & Jenkins, 2013). Tactical communication strategies appeared again when officers were asked about skills. For example, one officer said:

> *I tend to think of skills as more of a technical issue. So, that would be being able to drive well, various tactics, and procedures. If you’re really interested in doing your job well, you will learn how to be more adept in communications. That includes reading what kind of situation you have with both verbal and nonverbal communication, and trying to get at what's the real problem? Because oftentimes*

> *people will tell you what they want as opposed to telling you what the problem is, and you can't always give people what they want. That's where listening and discernment really come.* (Interview G)

Here again communication seems to be viewed as something with application across the roles and responsibilities of an officer. When asked about important skills, this officer took a step back and positioned communication as essential to the job, beyond the technical and tactical nature of most skills (e.g., driving well). Even among officers without a clear regard towards communication, there was an awareness of it as a tool for control and safety. For example, when asked how he gained control of a situation, one officer said:

> *You've got to use your big boy voice. If you come across as timid, scared, afraid or new they will eat you alive. So it's confidence and taking control, speaking in a clear direct voice, telling people what you want. When other officers get on scene, start delegating so you get things done. The cover officers are going to take witnesses, victims, or even suspects, separate everyone, and start talking to them. The quicker you can get this stuff done, the less time they have to lie to you.* (Interview C)

It was clear from the interview that, outside of issuing verbal commands, this officer was not inclined towards communication. However, this officer did view verbal commands as important in investigation and in gaining control, which they associated with personal safety. So, while communication choices were limited for this officer, they did situate communication across multiple aspects of their work, indicating its importance to the job more broadly.

Lastly, communication was seen as a central factor in creating positive contact encounters and positive contact is interconnected with officer wellbeing. When asked about a contact experience, one officer shared an encounter that began negatively but ended differently:

> *We ended up having a one-on-one conversation and I felt empathy [for her]. I was like, I wholeheartedly feel bad for you, and I'm sorry that you are in this situation, that you lost your job, and it's going to be hard to feed your kids, and now your car is getting taken away. This is not Officer Lee now, this is Lucas. We ended up having a conversation that started off with a citizen yelling profanities at me to her shaking my hand. It felt good.* (Interview Q)

Through a conversation, this officer was able to better understand the emotional distress a person exhibited upon their arrival. The additional context resulting from the choice to have a conversation transforms the encounter and facilitates the officer's positive emotional assessment of the event. Recent research supports the connection between positive contact and officer wellbeing, indicating positive interactions can improve officer wellbeing by mitigating distrust, cynicism, and detachment (Burke, 2020). In sum, communication is a core component that threads together various elements of the officer experience: values, skills, community relationships, contact, safety, wellbeing, and control.

Communication as Advocacy

The *advocacy* theme is communication as a means that often results in bridging. In advocacy, officers are using communication to influence the perspective of a person or group. In this form of communication, officers might use communication methods similar to *connection* (e.g., a conversation). What differentiates the two themes is the objective of the communication. Communication characterized as advocacy is motivated by a desire to improve perceptions of police. As Maguire (2021) makes clear, communication plays a central role in community policing and police officers involved in community-facing activities are de facto agents of public relations. Some officers in this study saw this type of engagement as a form of community policing. When asked about police-community interactions, one officer said:

> *I think that it would be reasonable under many circumstances for police officers to divulge a little information. [Residents] want to know and that's part of engagement. It's not just about having coffee with a cop at Starbucks. The only people who are coming to that are people who already like the cops. You can talk to somebody who doesn't have a strong opinion of police in their area. I've approached people and said, 'Hey, do you want to know what's going on here?' Invariably people say, 'Yeah, for sure.' I'll explain - this is what we have here. You're not giving up names. You're not divulging any personal information. You're not doing anything that's going to harm the investigation. You're just telling people what's going on in their neighborhood. It increases their engagement, even if just slightly.* (Interview J)

This officer makes a link between communicating and community engagement focusing on how communication can be a tool for improving police-community interactions and relationships.

One police officer talked about sharing information with an angry bystander who didn't understand why the police were arresting a person with a mental health problem. He said:

> *I tried my best to educate her and be transparent as far as tactics, why we were standing the way we were standing, and what the next step was as far as getting him assistance. We're trained to do a quick psychological evaluation based on observations. Then we wait on a more trained medical staff person to show up and give him more resources and the help he needs. I took that opportunity to break down different stereotypes and stigmas she had and be transparent and educate her on the situation.* (Interview T)

When asked if he thought his explanations affected the angry bystander, the officer responded:

> *She thanked me for talking to her. I was like, that's awesome. I felt maybe that's one person I got through to. Maybe she'll go tell her friends and spread the word [that] all cops aren't horrible people.* (Interview T)

Through engagement, this officer was able to overcome the anger of the civilian. We can also see from the officer's description that, as an opportunity to educate the bystander, the exchange had a directionality. For *advocacy*, the officers give and the civilian receives, and while there can be a back-and-forth, the police officer remains the authority and communication is an exercise of that authority.

Communication as Cover

The *cover* theme is communication as a means that often results in a breakdown of police community interactions. In communications characterized as cover, officer motivations for engagement remain intentionally obscured. If and when the officer's true motives become clear, the individual(s) involved in the incident often become upset and the situation deteriorates. When asked about a time a situation shifted from positive to negative, one officer said:

> *We're engaging somebody, we're waiting on the cover [i.e., police backup] before we attempt to put them in handcuffs because we know they're the person that was involved. So, we're talking to them. They're open, we're having a good conversation, then the cover unit comes. Now, [it's] turn around, put your hands behind your back. They don't understand the fact that from the get go that they were gonna be detained or placed under arrest and what we were doing was stalling.* (Interview F)

The sudden shift from ‘a good conversation’ to being put in handcuffs is surprising and confusing for the person in the exchange. This combination can and often does contribute to a breakdown. When asked about an encounter that deteriorated, one officer said,

> *For domestic violence calls we try to come in low. Unless it's an active fight, you talk to the person, you're establishing a connection. And you know, based on the call details, that this person is going to go to jail. It sucks because they feel like you betrayed them. You're talking to them, you're saying, I'm connecting with you, I agree with you, and then you put them in handcuffs. It immediately breaks that bridge. And now the person is swearing at you. How do you smooth that over? I don't know if you can smooth it over.* (Interview O)

Communication strategies that we categorize as *cover* position police in a difficult space. Many officers were aware of the dubious advantage of this strategy, and conveyed a sense that the advantage is double-edged. This strategy assists an officer in maintaining control and, to some extent, safety. However, communication strategies motivated by cover can lead to greater conflict in the contact encounter, to longer-term damage to police-community relationships, and to negative impacts on officer wellbeing.

Communication as Withholding

The *withholding* theme is communication as an end that often results in a breakdown of the police-community interaction. *Withholding* is characterized by intentionally not sharing information. Multiple officers made clear that there are situations where one cannot or should not share information because to do so would impede an investigation or could harm the individual(s) involved in the encounter. In these situations, officers make the conscious choice to withhold. For example, one officer said:

> *There are certain situations and conditions where you cannot tell the suspects why they're being detained. There are certain things that you cannot mention to suspects, because if they have a warrant or if they're wanted for a shooting, the investigators tell us do not Mirandize the suspects, do not mention the case to them at all. They're wanted. There are certain situations where we cannot be as transparent as we can. There are serious crimes that investigators would not want us to tell the suspect when they're being detained, which creates that situation where you cannot actually tell them what's going on.* (Interview K)

In *withholding*, officers make the choice to not share information, and this choice can lead to a breakdown of the encounter. When asked about the steps they take to

establish control, one officer shared a story of an incident where they arrested someone for a sensitive issue:

> *He steps out of the apartment and we arrest him on suspicion of felony child abuse. His brother and another relative lived next door. Next thing you know, they are challenging the legality of our arrest and demanding to know why we are arresting him. In a less incendiary kind of accusation, I might have told them exactly what was going on. But I'm not going to potentially slander someone by calling them a child abuser. So I told them that he was being arrested and that he was going to be taken downtown to the police department for an interview and that he would be able to call as soon as he was booked, so actually got to the jail. And that wasn't good enough. The bottom line is that I have to treat the suspect in an ethical manner, and I am not going to tell somebody, tell the neighborhood, tell a family member, that this guy's being accused of child abuse. I'm just not going to do that.* (Interview G)

This officer's response points towards a willingness to share information, but given the sensitive nature of the arrest, a conscious decision not to share. Officers can withhold information for a number of reasons. In this case, *withholding* reflects a communication decision that prioritizes ethical considerations, even at the expense of a breakdown in the encounter.

Communication as Connection

The *connection* theme is communication as an end that often results in bridging. For example, when asked to describe a situation that ended more positively than it began, one officer described an exchange that occurred while serving a search warrant:

> *Her mother had died earlier that morning. What a horrible day. She's screaming, saying that we're going to have to shoot her because she's trying to push her way through and we're trying to make sure she doesn't go back in the house. It started off that she's very upset, she's verbally aggressive, and at the end I was helping her pick out her mother's funeral outfit. She was like, thank you. I appreciate you. It's almost like she saw me outside of my uniform, like she saw me as a person. I think a lot of people are mad at your uniform, not necessarily you.* (Interview U)

When asked what happened to make the encounter shift, the officer continued:

> *Just talking, letting [the person] vent, letting out her feelings, and trying to talk to her on a personal level. So, she eventually calmed down and we're just having*

> *normal conversations. Search warrants take a long time, so we're just standing there staring at each other for a while. I might as well start a conversation--oh, what's this picture from? You kind of use whatever you have in front of you and start conversations and it ends up that she feels comfortable.* (Interview U)

Importantly, the officer's initial engagement could be seen as a form of de-escalation (communication with distinct ends). It is the engagement after the civilian calmed down that is characterized by *connection*. There is a mutuality to the second part of this exchange, where the officer listens and also engages. In this example, the conversation ended with the civilian feeling more comfortable, but it was clear from the officer that comfort was not their primary objective for engaging in conversation, rather, comfort is the outcome of a primary objective to have a personal conversation.

In another situation, an officer expanded on how, primarily through listening, they were able to build a connection with a person:

> *The citizen was distraught because his car had been stolen and was in a car accident. He was brought to tears because it was his work truck, so all of his tools were in it. He explained how he had run-ins with police, and how he was finally doing right for himself, and for this to happen was really upsetting. So, I was an ear for him. I said, 'Well, it's already a great thing that you've turned your life around.' I'm a firm believer that everything happens for a reason. I said, 'Something better will happen.' He said, 'I've been trying to reach out to my family but no one seems to be giving me a call back.' While I was at the computer processing his information for the report, he got a phone call that one of his family members had a spare car, that they were going to let him use it, and that his job was going to be replacing all of the tools. He said thank you [to me]. I said, 'For what, sir? I just took your report.' He said, 'For listening.' He went on and on and I didn't interrupt. I sat there and listened. They say we're not social workers, but sometimes people just need an ear to vent. (Interview V)*

In this encounter, the officer centers the experience of the civilian and listening is seen as part of the role and function of the job. The officer's incorporation of broader supportive aspects into their role points towards a willingness to expand the service role of police beyond traditional definitions.

Discussion

The interviews in this study centered on the daily experiences and role of police officers, with a focus on the meanings and inferences police officers form while communicating with members of the community they serve, their communication core narratives, and

how those core narratives shape behavior and outcomes. In this section, we discuss the results in the broader context of policing. The communication we examine in this paper is happening within a context of the capacity of police to use coercive force (Bittner, 1970). An important question to include then is: what are the constraints on communication, given the role and function of policing? A focus on communication in policing, absent the larger context of use of force, can decenter power and lead to erroneous or inaccurate exploration of the results.

An important concept that emerged from the analysis is the way the communication can preserve or disrupt existing power dynamics between police and the community. In three of the four communication themes identified in this paper (*advocacy, cover,* and *withholding*), communication maintains existing power dynamics between police and civilians. While *advocacy, cover,* and *withholding* are forms of communication – in that they involve the giving and receiving of information (or not, in the case of withholding) – in only one communication theme, *connection*, is communication able to disrupt existing power dynamics.

Connection communication disrupts power dynamics because the primary objective of the officer is a mutual and relational exchange. In connection, officers center the relational components of their role and do so in a way that attempts to build reciprocal pathways for intergroup interaction. The creation of a mutual and relational exchange balances the interaction between police and civilians, even within a context of policing. Of course, officers always maintain the option of coercive force. However, through *connection*, officers make a choice to build a social situation with civilians where power, and therefore force, is sidelined.

The context of policing requires power disparities, and power disparities are not conducive to the development of the kind of healthy, long-term relationships police officers need. Given the on-going community demands for police reforms, a focus on practices that build healthy, long-term relationships with the community is warranted. The disruption of power dynamics places *connection* in a unique position, as *connection* communication may have the greatest potential to transform police-community relationships in the long-term. While the inherent power disparities within policing cannot be erased, *connection* communication centers on relational aspects of policing, allowing officers to occasionally transcend their “uniform.” For officers who see their work as more than law enforcement, connection provides a method to enact those aspects of the job that can lead to more lasting and durable gains in police-community relationships.

That both connection and advocacy are on the bridging side of the outcome dimension means that officers are able to accomplish bridge building through communication while maintaining existing power dynamics. *Advocacy* is positioned in a communication-control space. *Advocacy* uses communication as a tactic with the goal of improving civilian perceptions of police. Unlike *connection*, the other bridging theme, the objective of *advocacy* communication is not to connect, although connection might occur. This is because *advocacy* communication builds relationships between police and community in a one-directional manner instead of a mutual or reciprocal manner. Here, police officers can and do listen to the people with whom they are interacting, but the objective to improve perceptions interferes with the ability to create a mutual exchange. *Advocacy* provides police officers an opportunity to share their perspective, inform, and educate people in intergroup interactions, and that process can feel good for both police officers and the civilians involved. Respectful engagement without an authentic commitment to reciprocity is a step in the right direction for many police departments. In fact, this is the basis for the procedural justice approach, which asks officers to adopt certain principles connected to building better relationships (Moe & Daniels, 2016). People want authentic engagement, even and perhaps especially with police officers. However, unless the officer also takes the steps to engage in reciprocal and relational communication, the engagement remains rooted in existing power dynamics.

Cover is perhaps the most problematic of the communication themes. A form of deceit, *cover* leverages police-civilian power disparities, very often leads to deteriorations in police-civilian interactions, and has the potential to have long-term negative effects on police-community relations. The intentional obscuring of objectives makes information asymmetries and, therefore, the power imbalances between police and the community apparent, and it can forge a kind of misrepresentation of their actions and intentions, creating distrust. A vicious cycle gets created. To the extent that civilians feel they have been deceived, they will be less likely to engage with officers, and disengagement makes it harder for officers to do their job and makes the role of policing less safe. Even if officers are unaware of the deceptive nature of the exchange, they may become discouraged by the negative reactions and the longer-term implications of the breakdown. So, while *cover* might help an officer maintain control or compliance in the immediate situation, it undermines long-term goals.

Most officers are not predisposed to manipulate the civilians with whom they interact. Rather, most officers express a desire for positive interactions and a concern when situations deteriorate. The complexity of policing means it is likely there will be situations where officers need to use deceit. However, given the unintended and harmful consequences of *cover* communication, these communication strategies should be assessed in greater detail and limited in their use.

Withholding is perhaps the most simple of the communication strategies police can employ. For many officers, decisions to withhold information are guided by knowledge of departmental policy or legal code – this externalizes the decision, making it easier for officers to make what might otherwise be a difficult decision. Despite the clarity of the choice officers have, *withholding* can and often does result in breaking down the encounter. Perhaps this is because, like *cover*, *withholding* reinforces the information asymmetries between police and community.

Information disparities are endemic to policing. However, there are actions that officers can take that attempt to acknowledge or redistribute power imbalances and thereby improve intergroup interactions. For example, an officer can share their reasons for not sharing information, informing civilians of the policy or law that prevents information sharing. This acts as an acknowledgement of a civilian's desire to know, and even if a civilian is not able to get what they want they are recognized by the officer. Additionally, officers can take steps to share what they can more frequently, which puts a decision to withhold in a different context and builds an atmosphere of reciprocity among police and the communities they serve. Sharing what they can when they can creates space for officers when they choose to withhold and have that choice be received with more understanding by members of the community. By making their process more transparent, officers extend respect and good will to community members, which they can leverage in future communication choices.

Limitations and Further Research

The findings from this study should be considered in the context of its limitations. The interviews were of a small sample of police officers from only one police department. While the number of interviews in the study is within the optimal range, only 11% of the officers contacted agreed to an interview. The characteristics of this (or, for that matter, any) police department and the community it serves are not necessarily representative of policing or police officers in other locales. Furthermore, the interview environment, which varied, can have a major influence on the quality and characteristics of the data collected. Three of these interviews were collected in-person. The remaining 19 interviews were conducted over the phone. The lack of face-to-face interaction and other interpersonal constraints of the phone interview process likely affected the quality of the interviews.

The use of the thematic analytic method allowed for relatively flexible and responsive exploration and analysis. However, subjective interpretations cannot be fully eliminated in thematic analysis. Nevertheless, given the lack of research in this area, we felt that qualitative methods – specifically, asking police officers to describe and explain a

variety of interactions and their subjective experience of them – offered the greatest potential at this stage to gain fundamental understanding of the undetermined ways officers construct and act on their attitudes towards community contact.

Much more research is needed to investigate, expand upon, and fully develop the communication framework outlined in this study. Specifically, more research that observes communication between police and community in the field or in naturalistic discourse is essential. The communication themes identified in this paper point towards central factors shaping how police officers understand and interpret intergroup communication. To the extent that we can understand how officers interpret communication, we can begin to map out the core narratives officers hold related to communication (e.g., communication is a way to maintain safety). Core narratives guide individuals' interpretations of events and their role in the social context. To the extent that we can understand police officer core narratives related to their work more broadly (e.g., "I create safety by controlling the situation"), we might be able to redirect officers towards more accommodative communication behaviors and more positive community relations through small alterations in core narratives.

Understanding the central nature of communication to policing can guide researchers and practitioners in the development and testing of methods for promoting effective officer-civilian communication and relations. It can also help guide research on the impact of communication changes to shifts in departmental culture and community perceptions. To that end, in the next chapter I outline the findings of in-depth interviews with community members to gain their perspectives on police and community relations. As the construals of communication during intergroup encounters are more fully fleshed out, researchers can link communication narratives to officer mindsets and policing outcomes like use of force and community perceptions to understand how changes in this central component of policing affect important policing outcomes. Further research should address how police-civilian communication dynamics moderate the potentially beneficial effects of intergroup contact. Specifically, police-community contact, like other forms of intergroup contact, holds promise to reduce intergroup misunderstanding and bias, especially if conditions for optimal contact are met (e.g., Pettigrew, et al., 2011; Pettigrew, 2021), but because group status matters (Tropp & Pettigrew, 2005), methods to minimize, if not neutralize, status differentials should be tested.

Conclusion

This research explores police officer approaches to communication during encounters with community members and how these approaches are shaped by officer beliefs about themselves and their social context. Five themes relating to the role of communication in community contact emerged from the analysis: 1) *communication is*

central; and communication can lead to 2) *connection*; 3) *advocacy*; 4) *cover*; or 5) *withholding*. Additionally, the communication themes were abstracted into two dimensions – intentions and outcomes -- along which the characteristics of communication varied. In the intentions dimension, communication varies by its objective -- communication as an end or as means. On the second dimension, the themes vary by the outcomes of the communication, where we differentiate between communication that builds versus breaks connections.

The communication that we examine in this study – what occurs during police-civilian interactions -- happens within the context of unusual power disparities and, relatedly, the capacity of police to use coercive force. Accordingly, when doing the analysis, we strived to factor in the constraints on communication resulting from the role and function of policing.

Cover is perhaps the most problematic of the communication strategies that emerged from the analysis. This strategy leverages the police-civilian power disparities, very often leads to deteriorations in police-civilian interactions, has the potential to have long-term negative impacts on police-community relations, and can diminish the wellbeing of civilians as well as officers. An implication of *cover* is the fostering of a vicious cycle where civilians feel they might be lied to so will be less likely to engage with officers, and this disengagement makes it harder for officers to do their job and makes the role of policing less safe. Like *cover, advocacy* views intergroup communication as means to ends, albeit more positive ends. The use of communication as a means to an end, as in *advocacy* and *cover*, devalues the relational component of policing, even if it can, like *advocacy*, build bridges. While potentially sacrificing short-term goals, communication strategies that prioritize longer-term relationship building, will ultimately lead to lasting, more durable gains in police-community relationships. *Withholding* is the most simple of the communication strategies police can employ. A form of communication as ends, *withholding* can and often does result in breaking down the encounter. However, when withholding, if officers make their process more transparent, they can leverage the professionalism this theme often reflects (e.g., respecting privacy). Lastly, *connection* centers the relational components of the police role. Communication is central to intergroup relations and positive communication. *Connection* is the only form of communication that disrupts the power dynamics of policing by creating a mutuality between the officer and the civilian, which allows for more equal status, one of the conditions that optimizes the prejudice reducing effects of intergroup contact (Pettigrew et al., 2011). If police officers and police departments want to create long-term, healthy relationships with the community they serve, *connection* provides a strategy to move in that direction. Communication is central in all intergroup relations and communication plays an especially impactful role in policing. Despite its central importance,

communication in policing remains critically understudied. Ongoing analysis of the role of intergroup communication in law enforcement has considerable cross-cutting potential for researchers and practitioners focused on advancing interdisciplinary knowledge and practices in these essential, intersecting, and urgent societal domains.

Chapter 4: Community Perceptions of Police and Safety

Introduction

The uprisings after the murder of George Floyd sparked a national movement, decades in the making, to fundamentally transform the police. In the year following the uprising of the summer of 2020, there have been over 140 policing reforms enacted in 30 states (Eder, Keller, & Migliozzi, 2021), along with many collective efforts focused on reimagining public safety conducted by myriad agencies, organizations, and municipalities across the nation, including: the National League of Cities, the United States Conference of Mayors; the cities of Ithaca, NY, Richmond, VI, Columbus, OH, Austin, TX, and Oakland, CA, and the counties of Montgomery County, Maryland and Pittsburgh County, Pennsylvania. The creation of police reform groups focused on public safety focuses the discourse on safety and the connections between policing and safety. Little research exists on how communities--particularly Black communities and those communities that have been and remain vulnerable to police violence--conceptualize safety, both with and without the presence of police.

An exploration of safety both in relationship with and independent from policing is an important step towards building systems that create and sustain justice. This chapter begins to fill the gap on how communities conceptualize safety both with and without police. Through a series of interviews with civilians living in a diverse metropolitan region, this research begins to explore how communities think about policing and safety, focusing in particular on the perspective of Black residents, as Black individuals and communities have suffered and continue to suffer disproportionately from police violence and disparities in safety. This chapter provides early evidence of the way civilians conceptualize safety and the strategies for safety they develop both with and without police involvement.

Literature Review

Beyond physical security, understanding why or how people feel safe is not a straightforward question. A well-organized neighborhood is another important social factor for safety. Research has found that neighborhoods with higher rates of collective efficacy, defined as the transformation of social ties into collective action (Cullen & Wilcox, 2010), have lower rates of violence (Sampson, Raudenbush, & Earls, 1997). In this way, safety includes a sense of connectedness of the people who live in a particular location. In other words, safety is related to people and place. We know that place,

where someone lives is a powerful predictor of important safety-related outcomes (Bell & Rubin, 2007; Chetty, Hendren, & Katz, 2016). Where a person lives matters in terms of their likelihood of experiencing violent victimization and their likelihood of experiencing economic inequality (Sampson & Levy, 2022), which is also associated with higher rates of crime (Thorbecke & Charumilind, 2002; Kang, 2016).

Race is another important factor associated with policing, safety, and place. The legacy of policies creating and enforcing racial segregation in the United States means people of color, Black people in particular, are more likely to live in communities with higher concentrations of poverty (Creamer, 2020), which is associated with higher rates of crime (Harrell et al., 2014). The legacy of legalized racist segregation extended racial hierarchy into spatial aspects of race. Research has found that physical space is racialized (Bonam, Taylor, & Yantis, 2017), and the physical space of Black people in particular, is subjected to negative racial stereotypes (Bonam, Bergsieker, & Eberhardt, 2016).

Spatial racism (powell, 2005) provides a lens for the ways on-going racial segregation, driven and enforced by public policies, created and maintain the spatial aspect of racial hierarchy, one that "plays a large part in maintaining a way of racially distributing benefits and burdens," (pp. 29). While the on-going benefits and burdens of spatial racism stretch across all aspects of social life--education, health, transportation, housing, and employment, etc.--policing plays a central role as a tool in the maintenance of residential racial segregation (Bell, 2020), which is at the core of spatial racism. A brief history of policing and its connection to race is important to understanding how police became a central component of racial segregation and how, like racial segregation itself, this legacy continues in the present.

Racial Divisions and Strife: A Brief History of the United States

The origins of United States policing are rooted in a racialized division in the protocols and practices of social control. The earliest policing in the U.S. are the militaristic, vigilante-like practices of ranging use to exterminate and remove Native Americans, and the slave patrols formed to control and contain Black enslaved populations (Reichel, 1988)[1]. While the first British colonies were being established in North America in the early 17th century, law enforcement and military posts were often held by the same person (Grenier, 2005; Philbrick, 2006). British rules of war, which established appropriate action related to those deemed non-combatants, e.g., women, children, and, elderly, were not applied to the Native populations. Instead, the early military and law enforcement officials engaged in ranging, extirpative warfare to take land for white settlement and protect stolen lands from the Native populations (Grenier, 2005). While

[1] See chapter one of this dissertation for more details on this period of policing.

these earliest practices are best described as genocide, they established a racial hierarchy with white racial dominance, in the legal and social mechanisms of enforcement and control.

The practice of ranging expanded as the U.S. frontier expanded. Driven by ideas of Manifest Destiny, rangers and ranging practices were used to remove and contain Native populations for White settler expansion from the east coast to the west coast. Many of the nation's first law enforcement officials and departments--including Myles Standish who was the first law enforcement officer and military leader of the Plymouth Colony in present day Massachusetts to the Texas Rangers, the first state police force--originate in these early ranging practices. While these practices were reserved for conflicts with Native populations, like slave patrols, the lack of formalized policing during this time meant rangers often became a kind of transitional police force.

In the south, law enforcement and mechanisms of social control evolved from a very different context: slavery. The first African slaves were brought to Jamestown, Virginia, in 1619. While slavery was practiced throughout all the original American colonies, slavery was most extensive in the plantations of the South. By the late 17th century, slave labor had established the South as a dominant economic engine in America. As the South grew in economic importance, dependent upon the institution of slavery, slave patrols were created to control the growing slave population (Reichel, 1988). Slave patrols patrolled the spaces between plantations and conducted periodic checks on plantations to inquire on owner safety and to enforce regulations (Reichel, 1988; Travis & Langworthy, 2008).

For the white population living in the South, interaction with the mechanisms of social control was very different. For whites in the rural south, no formal police existed at this time. Plantation policing reduced the need and utility of a formal policing system (Hindus, 1980). When conflict occurred among white rural Southerners, individuals or groups were left to settle the issue outside the loosely operating justice system. Most southern cities had a sheriff, in the North this position was called a constable; however, nearly 90 percent of the antebellum south lived in rural areas (Arrington, 2017) so slave patrols became a kind of transitional police force (Reichel, 1988).

By the time the first police departments began to formalize in major cities in the northeast, a racialized division in the practices of social control was well established and fully incorporated into the creation of police. The first formal, uniformed police departments in the United States were created in major cities in the northeast (cities like Boston and New York) in the middle of the 19th century. Night watches, guards who were required to sound an alarm in the event of criminal activity or a fire, had been in

existence in these cities for at least 100 years before the formalization of these police departments. Just a few generations past the Revolutionary War, Americans during this time period remained distrustful of any instrument, like a standing police force, that could limit civil liberties. The catalyst that allowed proponents of a standing police force to finally formalize police departments was the massive social unrest, including riots, that happened during this time period.

This social unrest was the product of a convergence of two larger social forces: the growing national movement to abolish slavery, and a new, very large wave of European immigrants from northern and central Europe. Unlike the previous wave of immigrants, primarily from England, France, and Spain, this new wave of European immigrants came primarily from Ireland and Germany. This new group of White immigrants had noticeable differences from the existing White populations, primarily greater rates of economic desperation and Catholicism, which created conflict between the new migrants and established White populations. Further, the national abolitionist movement was growing in size and strength at this time. Their message, which was necessarily disruptive to the existing racial and economic hierarchies of the United States, made the movement a lightning rod for unrest. Existing watch programs were completely unable to address the widespread economic and social unrest that occurred during this period. Poverty stricken, willing to work for much lower wages, worshiping under a different denomination, and advocating for a fundamental reorganization of the nation, this diverse collection of individuals became a political tool, the first “dangerous class,” which allowed for the implementation of a standing police force for the first time in the United States (Monkkonen, 2004).

The end of the Civil War and Reconstruction created the catalyst for the formalization of police forces in the South. Few formal police departments existed in the antebellum slave states, and they existed only in major cities like New Orleans and St. Louis (Ingersoll, 1995; Reichard, 1975). After the end of Reconstruction, Jim Crow and the retrenchment of white supremacy in all aspects of southern social life motivated the formalization of police departments. As a response to the re-establishment of white supremacy and racial terrorism this process required, formerly enslaved Black people and their descendants began a mass movement out of the South to cities in the Northeast, Midwest, and West, which lasted over five decades in what became known as the Great Migration. During this time, an estimated 6 million Black folks left the south for other parts of the United States, making it the largest internal movement of people in U.S. history. This new, large wave of internal migrants, racially stigmatized and racially segregated, often with limited economic means and little education, presented a new “dangerous class” for police departments outside of the South (Monkkonen, 2004). By the end of the Great Migration, 42 percent of the New York Police Department was Irish

(MacGuire, 2017). The people who had been the original members of the dangerous class were now one of police departments' largest demographics.

The 1920s to the 1960s saw major changes to racial dynamics across the United States. During World War II, Black soldiers experienced a form of freedom and equality while stationed abroad that they had been denied in America. As these soldiers returned home, many were unable to accept racial subordination and the established racial orders. The Civil Rights Movement and civil rights advances, like Brown v. the Board of Education, challenged white supremacy and created opportunities for greater equality. State and federal policies of redlining concentrated the massive number of Black Americans migrating out of the South into areas that were denied access to public resources, creating areas of intense poverty (Hillier, 2003). State level implementation of the New Deal denied many Black WWII veterans access to education and housing benefits awarded to White veterans (Katznelson, 2005). White flight left Black communities politically and economically powerless. By the 1960s, this systematic racism boiled over into race riots, national unrest, and a powerful coalition of civil rights leaders engaged in a movement to reform racial injustice in America.

The 1960s closed with a wave of race riots across the nation which, in the reckoning of the 1968 Kerner Commission report issued by the United States government, were directly attributed to racism and racist policing practices. In response, many police departments began to experiment with ways to move police into closer interaction with the communities they served through community policing strategies (Greene, 2000). The shift of local police departments towards more explicit forms of community policing coincides with a national shift spurred by President Nixon to the War on Drugs and a series of "tough on crime" federal policies and law enforcement initiatives that emphasized practices of punishment and control. The intent of these strategies was not crime control or public safety. Rather, the War on Drugs and associated practices were a continuation of the use of police in service of white supremacy. In 2016, Harper's Magazine reported an interview with John Ehrlichman, a top Nixon advisor, who told a reporter:

> "*The Nixon campaign in 1968, and the Nixon White House after that, had two enemies: the antiwar left and black people…We knew we couldn't make it illegal to be either against the war or black, but by getting the public to associate the hippies with marijuana and blacks with heroin, and then criminalizing both heavily, we could disrupt those communities. We could arrest their leaders, raid their homes, break up their meetings, and vilify them night after night on the evening news. Did we know we were lying about the drugs? Of course we did."*

The tough on crime approach to community policing expanded in the 1980s through the early 2000s. In 1983, Kelling and Wilson published an article titled, “Broken Windows,” which eventually became an approach to community-oriented policing that emphasized maintaining order by policing minor crimes and low-level offenses to, ostensibly, prevent more serious crimes. In 1994, President Clinton shepherded into law the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act, which was the largest crime bill in the history of the United States, providing nearly $10 billion in federal funding for the expansion of the criminal legal system, including 100,000 new police officers.

The last twenty years of policing have seen a shift towards data collection and statistical analysis while the entrenchment of racial divisions has continued. Today, the institution of policing is facing perhaps its greatest ever challenge to its legitimacy. Evidence of racial discrimination, reports of police abuses, video footage of police violence, mounting data, and protests have again forced police departments to take a deeper look at the impact of race and racism on the institution of policing. Many communities are questioning the fundamental role of policing, the allocation of public resources, and they are developing alternatives to policing rooted in conceptions of safety outside of policing.

Methods

The purpose of this study is to generate insight, grounded in interview data, into community conceptions of safety both in connection to and distinct from policing. I used a grounded theory methodology, commonly used in the development of theory, for the design of the study. In grounded theory, qualitative data are collected and analyzed in an iterative process which is used to create and refine the theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Little research exists on how civilians experience safety either in connection to or distinct from the police. In this study grounded theory guided the process of exploring how communities understand safety, related to and without the police.

Setting

This study focused on civilians who live or work in the same mid-sized, diverse city as the police officers in chapter 3. This city is segregated racially and economically, like many cities in the United States, with higher levels of racial and economic segregation than comparable cities in the region. Additionally, the city has a decades-long history of police violence and community organizing for police reform with numerous government and civilian organizations dedicated to police reform and accountability.

Data Collection

The researcher and a research assistant recruited potential participants through direct outreach. At the start of study recruitment, the researchers contacted individuals directly involved in police-adjacent activities with a request for an interview. Participants who agreed to be interviewed were involved in a broad range of professional activities including mental health crisis response, police accountability, violence prevention, youth diversion, and local government. A diverse set of participants were interviewed including one elected official and a person who lacked permanent housing. Interviews were divided into two groups. The first group of interviews, approximately 40 percent of all participants interviewed, was conducted primarily over the phone or a video conferencing platform. A second set of interviews was conducted in-person at two separate food pantry locations. Food pantry locations were included with the intent of interviewing participants who live in low-income communities of color. In the in-person, on-site interviews, participants included individuals who worked at or received food from the food pantry. The majority of the people interviewed on location were individuals who were at the food pantry to receive food.

Data collection took place from January to September 2022. Researchers engaged in a series of semi-structured interviews with 47 individuals over this time. The author developed the interview protocol used in this study. The original protocol consisted of a set of open-ended questions plus follow-up questions. The interviews were structured as a guided, casual conversation. The researchers did not conduct any repeated interviews. Key areas of interest were identified and used to structure the original interview protocol. These areas include police contact, the role of police, and safety. During interviews, emerging topics were explored to gain a deeper understanding of the community considerations related to policing and safety. For example, one topic that emerged and became a central theme is the role of location in relationship to policing and safety. Over the course of data collection, new questions were incorporated and outmoded questions were adapted or eliminated. Broadly, the interviews covered three topics--the role of police, safety (both with and without police involvement), and relationships (both with police and with other community members) --with emerging areas, e.g. location, woven throughout the exploration of these topics. Results outlined below include all interview data. A total of 19 interviews were conducted over the phone or video conferencing, and an additional 28 interviews were conducted in-person at two food pantry locations.

Data Analysis

Interviews were audio-taped with the consent of the participants, and the recordings were transcribed by the author and a research assistant with the assistance of transcription software. Participant names and all potentially identifying information were

removed in transcription. Participant names and location names have been removed to protect confidentiality.

The first stage of the analysis was an open coding process used to identify preliminary codes (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1998), which consisted primarily of short phrases. In the second stage of analysis, the open codes were used to uncover and outline relationships in the data and to create core categories (Charmaz, 2006). Finally, the core categories gave rise to themes and are used in the generation of theory. The major themes and important features are presented in the Results section of the chapter. In the Discussion section, I interpret the results and report on the theoretical findings.

There is no known research evidence on optimal participation rates for in-person interviews in qualitative research such as this. However, available research finds between 15 to 60 interviews is the norm (Saunders & Townsend, 2016) and suggests that between 20 to 30 interviews is sufficient (Marshall et al, 2013). This research was approved by the University's institutional review board (IRB).

Results

Participant demographics reflect the racial diversity of the city and the racial make-up of the locations where in-person interviews were conducted. Demographic information was not required for participation in the study. Participants were asked demographic information but if they did not provide certain information the interview was still conducted. For most demographic questions, there is missing data. Race was the only demographic characteristic that was collected for all participants. Researchers did not ask for participant gender. Including all those who responded, study participants were predominantly Black, older, and had lived in the city for more than 15 years. Nearly two-thirds of study participants were Black, and people of color made up the vast majority of the people who took part in the study. Most study participants had lived in the city for more than 15 years and nearly 30 percent of the participants that responded reported living in the city for their whole life. That study participants skewed older will likely impact the results. Research evidence suggests older people tend to have more favorable perceptions of police (Brown & Benedict, 2002). However, race is consistently the most powerful predictor of police perceptions, even after controlling for things like age and socioeconomic status (Brown & Benedict, 2002). For information on participant demographics, see Table 3.

Table 3: Community Demographics

	Study		Whole City
Asian	5	11%	16%
Black	30	64%	23%
Latino	2	4%	27%
Multi	3	6%	8%
Native	1	2%	1%
White	5	11%	29%
MENA	1	2%	--
Age			
20-29	2		
30-39	8		
40-49	9		
50-59	11		
60+	15		
Tenure			
< 5 years	5		
5-9 year	2		
10-15 years	5		
15 years+	30		
Whole Life	14		
Geography			
East	12		
West	22		

Major findings

There were three main findings that emerged from the analysis:

1. Police are rarely seen as a source of safety, if not for individual participants, for the larger population of the city where they live.

2. Location is a central component to safety and policing. Location and racial identity interact to influence the type of policing people receive, the type of policing people want, and perceptions of safety.

3. Strategies for safety are happening at the street or block level, and most often involve some form of engagement with neighbors.

Police Are Not a Source of Safety

Many participants expressed this idea through what appeared, at first, to be contradictions or tensions in their statements. These tensions were not opposing views held by different participants, although that certainly occurred throughout the study. Rather, these were tensions held by the same person. For example, one idea that appeared was the expectation that police provide safety, but the reality that they often do the opposite. When asked about the connection between police and safety, one participant said:

> *I don't feel like the police I have experienced, or most of the people I know have experienced, have done what the job of a police officer should be, which is that safety piece. I think that their role is the opposite. When you see police you are more scared than before you saw them because it's like, 'oh, no, what if this police officer pulls me over and it's my last time ever being pulled over because the police officer decides that I should be killed because I'm a Black person.' So I think that it actually does the opposite for me and a lot of other Black people I talk to and hang out with. You don't want to interact with the police at all, because ... you can be another name on the T-shirt.* (Participant 14)

Importantly, this idea was race specific. It was primarily people of color, speaking as a person cognizant of the racial disparities in policing, who expressed the perspective that police were not providing safety. Participants who identified as White were far more likely to express the perspective of this participant:

> *I'm also keenly aware that as a White person, I don't experience the sense of dread and risk in having a daily connection with a police officer. I don't have to necessarily worry that I'm going to get shot.* (Participant 9)

Again, the theme that police do not provide safety expressed as a tension between what people need versus what they actually receive from police, was shared by another participant:

> *We need people to protect the community. Unfortunately, the reality is not the same. So, there's so much police brutality, so much corruption within the police department. The real, actual role of the police is not at all in line with what is supposed to be.* (Participant 16)

For this person, the community needs people to provide protection. However, the police as they are do not provide protection. That police don't provide what communities need is reinforced and expanded by another participant:

> *[Police] don't know how to deal with emergencies, so I don't know what they're there for. They don't know how to deal with trauma. They don't know how to deal with mental health. They don't know how to deal with none of that. So...why are they even there? They don't solve crimes very well. They lock up people.* (Participant 10)

For this participant, the primary role they see police engaged in is arrest, and arrest is not associated with safety. Relatedly, when asked about the relationship between police and safety, another participant said:

> *It depends on what they're trained for. They're not trained for safety. They're there to show that they have a gun and that I'm the boss. Why? Because I have a gun and a license to kill. That's what they do in the Black community, period.* (Participant 43)

Like the previous comment, this participant believes safety is not a part of the primary role of a police officer. Rather, for Participant 43, the role of police officers is primarily some form of threat and control. For both Participant 10 and Participant 43, what police provide, a gun or an arrest, is fundamentally not what is needed. And again, Participant 43 makes it clear there is an expressly racialized component to police actions.

Location Matters

Location was not a part of the original interview protocol, but participant responses quickly made clear that location, and the intersection of race-and-place, play a critically important role in policing and safety. Said differently, participants believe where they are and who they are (specifically their race) impacted policing and safety. Apart from asking participants to identify their race at the start of the interview, the researchers did not include any questions about race or racial identity. However, like location, race was nearly always included when participants described policing and safety.

When asked about contact with police, one participant, an active community member who had organized their block to address on-going drug and nuisance issues, recalled their first encounter with the local police:

> *There had recently been an altercation. The police were doing an investigation and they knocked on several doors, including mine. Now, there was a White officer and a Black officer. The Black officer took the lead, and the way he banged on my door really irritated me. He took his fist and, "boom, boom, boom." So, if you imagine, you're at somebody's house and they have a doorbell, or you take your fist and go "boom, boom, boom" [on the door]. To me, that's how you knock on somebody's door if you have an arrest warrant. That's not how you knock on somebody's door if you're trying to do an investigation. So when I answered the door the first thing I did was I asked the Black officer, "Why are you knocking on my door like that? This is not a drug house. There's a doorbell, ring it." I said, "If this was Oak Creek[2] [a nearby, wealthy, predominantly White suburb], would you have knocked on my door like that?" So I immediately picked up on that. The Black officer did apologize, and then we went into a conversation about the purpose of their visit.* (Participant 4)

This resident viewed the officers' behavior, specifically the choice to knock loudly instead of using the doorbell, as disrespectful. Importantly, the resident also believes that this disrespectful behavior is based, at least in part, on where they live. By asking the officer to consider if they would have behaved the same way in a wealthier, Whiter community, the resident made clear to the officer (and the researcher) they were aware that that location is an important factor in the kind of service responses police provide. From their first encounter with police, this participant sees that the racial and economic composition of their neighborhood impacts police behavior, and they make it clear that if they lived in a different place--a wealthier, White neighborhood--they would be treated more respectfully.

This race-and-place framework was found in a different context as well. When asked about relationships with the police, one participant said:

> *I have no complaints of my own. Let me just say this, I want the police to treat everybody like they treat White people. I have a great relationship with the police. I don't have any complaints at all. I really don't. When our house was burglarized, we had the phone number of the guy who at the time was the patrol officer, and we had somebody come to our house within a couple hours of when we called them. That is far different from what happens in the west side of the city [a much poorer, predominantly*

[2] All location names changed

> *Black neighborhood], far different. I want everyone treated the same.* (Participant 25)

In their response, the participant makes clear not only that they are very satisfied with the type of policing they receive, but who they are (a White person), and where they live (not living in the west side of the city), impacts the kind of policing they receive. The participant attributes the kind of service they receive from police directly to race, while also making clear there is a geographic component. This location and race-and-place framework is reinforced and expanded by another study participant. When asked about police in the city, they said:

> *Certain areas you live, you treated differently. Living and working in different areas, you see the police and they'll look at you and if you're not a person that predominantly live in that area--I don't live too far from Clayton Heights [a wealthier, predominantly White neighborhood] and sometimes I shop up there, and the way people are treated is much different than the way they are treated here.* (Participant 38)

For this participant, a Black person who moves around the city, their experience of policing is again based on where they are and who they are in a specific location. They live in a predominantly working class, Black neighborhood, but will shop in a wealthier, Whiter neighborhood. Where they live and shop are in very different parts of the city in terms of the levels of racial and economic composition, and these varying levels of racial and economic divisions influence the policing they experience, making the experience of policing capricious. Place and person interact in such a way that the same person moving throughout the city can be treated differently based on who they are, where they are, and who they are in relation to where they are. Much like the previous resident, this person is also aware that wealthier, Whiter communities, and the people in those places, get a different, better kind of service from police. And it’s not just police services that are better. Later, when exploring the variation in their experiences with police, this same participant shared:

> *If the [elected officials] cared more about our neighborhood and our areas that would make a difference. The schools are raggedy--no air conditioning, no ventilation. They don't have enough janitors to keep it clean. In other areas, they don't have that. When the city makes a difference in the way other races are treated, then quite naturally, it's going to trickle down to the police officers.* (Participant 38)

For this participant, police behavior and the quality of service they receive from police is the natural “trickle down” effect from the unfair treatment their community receives from

city government and elected officials. Again, the variation is linked to race and place. The participant begins by talking about their neighborhood, and ends by talking about the way racial groups are treated differently.

Some participants also talked about how where they lived influenced not only the kind of response they received from police, but the kind of response they needed from the police. One participant said:

> *There's two different cities. I've had debates where people say calling the police about somebody parking in your driveway and refusing to move, that's not a priority. Well, that is a priority in the community that I live in. It may not be a priority in another part of the city, but in the community I live in, it's a priority because when you ask, you can get shot. (Participant 2)*

This participant--who described their neighborhood as “very high crime” and “very under-resourced”--was aware that a phone call to the police about a blocked driveway was not going to be seen or labeled as a priority by the dispatch or the officers on duty. Further, they were aware that in many parts of the city, a blocked driveway was not something that required a phone call to the police or a police response. However, this participant wanted to make clear that because of where they lived, a different framework needed to be applied. By describing the situation in the context of “two different cities,” this participant indicates that policing needs to take into account location. Where a person lives also impacts the kind of policing they want, not just the police response they get. Moreover, even for the exact same situation, e.g. a car blocking a driveway, the context (including the location) of the situation influences the reasons for engaging police. Importantly, residents in many areas are requesting police involvement, even to a seemingly minor issue, within the context of a larger awareness that a police response might not bring greater safety to the situation, and all of this happens under the umbrella of large variations in racial and economic segregation throughout the city. This is stated clearly by another participant:

> *Police are not supposed to come into the situation and--oh, cause we're in this area with these types of people. That's how they deal with us. And we already know they're going to do that. So it's automatically negativity, as soon as you're starting off. We call 9-1-1, of course, if we need help that's the first people we call, but the first people we call we already feel like we're not safe. (Participant 23)*

This participant, a Black person, again makes clear that the police response is driven both by the location and the people at the location. Further, people in need are calling the police knowing that who they are and where they are will influence not just the

police response but their own safety. The need for an emergency response is universal, but a promise of safety with that response is not.

Solutions for Safety Are Hyper-Local & Interpersonal

The final major theme that emerged from the interviews was that strategies for safety, whether formal or informal, were often created among civilians and local residents at the street or block level. One participant shared an informal, and somewhat surprising way she felt her community stayed safe:

> *There is a role of the community in being out and keeping an eye on each other. My own neighborhood is incredibly safe, in part because of the bar down the street where people are hanging out until 2:00 in the morning outside smoking. I don't especially like the smoking or the noise, but nevertheless there are eyes on my street.* (Participant 6)

While it's certainly not true for every bar, the people on the street outside the bar created a sense of safety for this participant. This person was willing to accept the noise and smoking, even though they didn't like these elements, in exchange for what they believed to be a safer situation. Interestingly, this was created without much formal organizing or interaction. This participant didn't frequent this bar and they did not mention interacting with anyone at the bar. It was enough for there to be regular eyes on the street for this person to feel like their neighborhood was safer. In this way, community is interpreted less as people with a sense of cohesion or connectedness and more a sense of a kind of informal watch.

Most of the strategies for safety participants offered, again whether formal or informal, relied on some level of interaction between people. One participant offered a simple framework:

> *In our neighborhood, or at least on my block, it started with us doing one of the things that I learned as a kid, which is looking out for your neighbors. That's basically Biblical. It's almost out of the Ten Commandments. You look after your neighbors. You don't covet what they have, but at the same time you look out for them because they'll look out for you. I think one of the things that has to happen is you have to know who lives next door to you. And I widened the perimeter to a 360 perimeter. I need to know not just to my left and to my right. I need to know who's across the street and who's next to them. So it's almost like the 360. Imagine your house and then you draw a circle around your space, whether it's an apartment or whether it's a private house or a multi-family house. You got to know who lives next door. And that's to make*

> *sure not only do you know for your own personal knowledge, but it's also an anti-crime measure.* (Participant 4)

For this participant, safety starts at the micro level, knowing your neighbors, and knowing your neighbors helps keep the community safe. The simple framework they offer provides a starting point for people to begin to build community safety. Later, this participant brings in the value of communication in creating safe environments and expressly avoiding police engagement:

> *I don't call the cops. I want to see who people are first and having a conversation about what is crime, and this is what deserves the call to the police, versus what describes a conversation about community and public safety and how we balance the two.* (Participant 4)

For this person, safety involves a conversation with the larger community (at least the people on the block) about crime before escalating to engaging external interventions like the police. Further, while this participant avoids the police, they don't rule out their involvement altogether. Rather, they attempt to place the police within a larger continuum of responses. Later, they said:

> *If this is a ladder with ten rungs, at what rung is it alright for the cops to be engaged? Now you can engage them at rung one. I don't think that that's necessary. Because the community has to have a responsibility as well as the households themselves. So if your household is rung one, that's what goes on under your roof, rung two is your neighbors, and rung three is the community.* (Participant 4)

By attempting to create a shared sense of when to involve the police, this resident is prioritizing the role of individuals and community in creating safety. Another participant reiterates the role of communication, while also positioning a police response as one option among many possible options:

> *As a former Block captain, you talk to each other. You know what's coming into your neighborhood. You network, you look out for each other. That doesn't cost a whole lot. There are other security measures you can get that's not really expensive. [Cameras], what have you. If you see something, if you're afraid to get involved, what you're supposed to do is go call the authorities. Don't wait. Call. You can go inside and be anonymous. I have called.* (Participant 19)

Like many participants, Participant 4 and Participant 19 are not totally opposed to police intervention, but they don't necessarily start there. They start from a place of knowing and communicating with the people on their block. Another participant drills down even further on the value of communication:

> *As long as we are all in a position where we can communicate and allow ourselves to have understanding, then we can get where we need to be as a society, where a lot of harm is reduced. Where we can be safe. Ultimately, all the killings, all these homicides, it's because people don't know how to communicate. I think people don't understand what I mean when I say that we don't talk. I'll be like, 'Yo, the problem is, we don't talk,' and they be like 'What are you talking about? What are you saying, we don't talk.' And I'm like, 'Yo, if a person first goes to a gun to resolve something before even trying to understand that it's a miscommunication, that means you never even talk to each other'… If us as a society could learn how to communicate, invest in that portion, just how to communicate, have understanding, then we can get far.* (Participant 3)

This participant makes clear that strong communication is essential to safety, and that they believe if people had stronger communication skills a lot of violent crime would be eliminated. For this person, safety starts with the skills to communicate with the people around you.

Discussion

This chapter uplifts important findings related to policing and safety. The connections between policing and safety are divided, racialized, and geographic. In all community resident interviews, race was mentioned as a factor that influenced policing and safety despite the fact that race was not a question that was included in the interview protocol. Results point towards the way police response exists within a larger model of social dynamics that vary depending upon race and place. For many participants of color, Black participants in particular, police do not provide protection and can even present danger and create anxiety and fear. For this group, the absence of a viable policing protection model is only one part of a larger government model characterized by an absence of service. On the other hand, White participants by and large did not experience police as a threat. For this group, their experience with policing is characterized primarily by a service model. Furthermore, many White participants in this study made it clear they were aware that their experience, particularly as it relates to policing, was not universal.

The racialized division in perceptions of police and safety points towards a central contradiction present in the institution of policing, but also existing amongst the larger network of government and social services within which policing operates, a central tension that is rooted in the origins of U.S. policing as one institution built upon and used in service of racialized division. The central contradiction is a policing model characterized by service and protection for White individuals and coercion and punishment for non-White individuals.

The central tension of policing can be situated within jon powell's theory of spatial racism (2005). Racial segregation, driven by public policies and enforced by policing, creates and maintains spatial aspects of racial hierarchy that "[play] a large part in maintaining a way of racially distributing benefits and burdens," (pp. 29). Among White participants in this study, their racial identity and where they live are not in tension with safety. In this way, safety becomes one of the racially distributed benefits of Whiteness. Meanwhile, for people of color, Black participants in particular, their racial identity and neighborhoods mean they are not guaranteed service and protection from their government institutions and instead may be victimized by these institutions, including policing. In this way, Blackness becomes an impediment to safety.

Black feminist theory (Collins, 2009) provides a framework for situating the strategies for safety created and shared by participants in this study. Rooted in the standpoint, or group knowledge, of Black women (cis and trans), Black feminist theory illuminates "how subordinated groups create knowledge that fosters both their empowerment and social justice," (pp. 289). Participant strategies for safety are developed with a deep understanding of the central contradiction as well as a rich analysis of power. Strategies for safety are happening within this larger context of the central contradiction or an awareness of a punitive, lack of service model held together with the need for collective protection, and a desire for fairness in services as equal members of society. Like the standpoint theory of Black feminist thought, the knowledge and responses generated by participant strategies for safety are not theoretical, but rooted in the material realities of domination. In this way, they are knowledge and ideas deeply situated in political and economic realities.

The hyper-local and interpersonal nature of the strategies for safety articulated in this study reflect a set of experiences and ideas of a group of people within a larger society and social network. Like Black feminist standpoint, these behaviors and thought patterns reflect a particular perspective, that when taken together with the knowledge and methods of other group standpoints (e.g. White people), help create a more accurate picture of the whole of the institution of policing and the larger system of social services policing operates within. Understanding the situated and, for Black and other

communities of color, subjugated standpoint of these communities helps us develop a deeper (some might argue even more universal) perspective on policing and safety.

Conclusion

The research in this study makes clear that the solutions for safety are not only, or even primarily, found within the institution of policing. Rather, efforts to reimagine public safety that center police as a strategy for safety not only ignore the historical legacies still in operation within the larger structures of safety and protection, they fundamentally miss the way existing communities are working to shape their social conditions for greater safety and social justice. By bringing together the historical and racialized legacies of service and protection and combining that knowledge with the on-going strategies for safety being developed by communities of color, Black communities in particular, efforts to reimagine safety will get closer to the important particular and collective ideas inherent in the development of a safe and fair society.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Using a contemporary analysis of the racial and historical context of the United States, the aim of the research in this dissertation was to analyze the institution of American policing in an effort to theorize the role and function of police so as to identify strategies for safety. By analyzing historical and racial origins of U.S. policing, this dissertation has shown how deeply rooted racial divisions are to the establishment and structure of American policing. Qualitative analysis of interviews with police officers engaged in community contact identified the centrality of communication to the role and function of police and explored how police use communication as a strategy to create and maintain safety, among other alternatives. Qualitative analysis of community interviews identified important differences in how community residents understand policing as well as interpersonal, community-based strategies for safety. Taken together, the research calls attention to the centrality of communication in policing and safety, highlights key differences in police-community perceptions of safety, and provides research evidence for the small but growing academic study of police abolition.

Key Findings

Each chapter identified key findings from the research. This section provides a brief overview of the key findings that were analyzed in greater detail in chapters 2, 3, and 4.

History

A history of American policing is well established. However, the research conducted during this dissertation identified important gaps in the historical analysis of the institution of policing in the United States. These gaps are summarized as the main points in the history chapter. They include:

1. There is critical knowledge at the origin of American policing that is missing from traditional police historiographies and this knowledge is essential to understanding persistent racial disparities in policing.

2. The missing knowledge locates the origins of the racialized divide in American policing in the white settler colonialism origins of the nation and in its influence on the creation of American institutions, including policing.

3. Many of the persistent racial disparities in policing today are likely products of the practices that originated during this earliest era of American policing.

The chapter identifies the formative but lesser known practice of ranging as a method of policing rooted in white settler colonialism and as one of the earliest forms of policing in the United States. While it is a practice much older than the nation, ranging in the U.S. was a form of border patrol--policing and protecting the land that was stolen from the Native Americans as racially segregated space. Ranging as a practice is rooted in military traditions and was adapted by colonists to adjust for conflicts with the indigenous populations. Chapter 2 elaborates on the forces of white settler colonialism in the development of ranging and attempts to connect the first practices of ranging by groups organized to exterminate, fight, relocate, and contain Native Americans to contemporary practices in policing today. The chapter also attempts to trace how the practices of ranging moved throughout different regions of the United States and became foundational to contemporary policing practices across the nation. The chapter concludes that the origins of policing are rooted in racial divisions between those who thought of themselves as white and those who were deemed non-white.

Police Communication

This chapter focuses on police officers themselves. Using data collected from a series of semi-structured interviews with police officers involved in regular contact with community residents, communication emerged as a critical component to police officer process and practices. This chapter looked specifically at officer understandings and practices of communication to identify patterns in how communication was being used by police officers. The major finds include:

1. Communication is central to the role and function of policing.

2. In policing, communication can be used as a means to accomplish a goal or communication can be the goal itself; there is variation in the impact of these approaches on the contact encounter.

3. Police communication strategies can build stronger relations or break down relations with the people with whom they are engaged.

The paper uses research on core narratives -- interpretations people have created related to their social world as well as personal views they have adopted about themselves -- to guide the development of a set of communication core narratives for police officers that vary according to the intentions and outcomes of the contact encounters. The chapter ends with an analysis of the power dynamics of policing and how these dynamics influence and inform communications strategies as well as the intentions and outcomes of those strategies on community contact encounters.

Community

This chapter uses a series of semi-structured interviews with community residents focused on safety both in relation to and without police. The major findings include:

1. Police are not often seen as a source of safety, if not for an individual community resident, for the larger population of the city where a resident lives.

2. Location is a central component to safety and policing. Location and racial identity interact to influence the type of policing people receive, the type of policing people want, and perceptions of safety.
3. Strategies for safety are happening at the street or block level, and most often involve some form of engagement with neighbors.

Again, a major theme that emerged from the interview analysis, location, was not included in the interview protocol. Further, while the interview protocol did not explicitly ask about race, most participants spontaneously included some form of racial analysis in the perspective on policing and safety. The chapter ends with discussion that situates community strategies for safety within existing literature.

Summary of Findings

Each of the three chapters in the body of this dissertation was written with a specific focus--history, police officers, community residents--related to the institution of policing and safety. While the key findings are all linked through the research questions, the findings from each chapter have not yet been put in conversation with each other. This section discusses the key findings across all the three chapters in connection with each other and explores their implications for policing and safety.

In this research, a deep dive into the historical origins of U.S policing uncovers roots of the racial divisions within the institution but it also situates American policing within a larger context of racial dominance and economic exploitation that is central to the nation, and the creation and perpetuation of all institutions in the United States. The twin forces of white supremacy and settler colonialism were foundational in the creation of the institution of American policing, but they are socio-political systems with implications far beyond any single institution. Very often the only emergency response available, very often the only remaining direct contact between people on the street and their local government, and as individuals empowered to use force, including deadly force with the community they serve, police act as the most regular, routine, and dangerous reminder of the white supremacist and colonialist origins of the country, but the institution's origins are neither singular nor rare. Simply put, the history research makes clear there is a problem with policing, but it also makes clear the problem is much, much bigger than policing.

In many ways, the research in this dissertation supports the pillars of critical race theory and the claims of police abolitionists that the racial disparities found in American policing are not an aberration, but essential to the function and creation of the institution. However, Like CRT, the history research makes clear it is important not to end this analytical understanding at the institution of policing. While the research in this dissertation does not expand beyond policing, it attempts to situate policing within the larger context of the racialized development of the nation, and in so doing show how the ideologies and practices of white supremacy and settler colonialism shaped not only policing, but the larger political, social, and economic institutions of the United States. By situating an exploration of the origins of U.S. policing within the systems of white supremacy and settler colonialism, we are better able to identify the throughline that helps explain persistent racial inequalities in policing and see how that throughline expands from operating solely within a single institution to include the broader social systems in which policing was created and continues to operate.

Further, the dissertation research makes clear that the history carries through to the lived experiences of everyday racialized and marginalized people today. For example, the community resident who expanded her critique of policing to the racial and economic conditions of her community and to the elected officials she felt did not provide neighborhoods like hers--primarily working class, Black neighborhoods--with the same level of resources that wealthier, White communities get, was also expressing an awareness that the social problems of her community do not originate in the institution of policing and, by association, a belief that police are only able to do so much, if anything, to ameliorate social problems driving issues like crime. This perspective was

also expressed by police. When asked about what police don’t have control over, one officer responded:

> Crime isn't going anywhere. You're not going to solve crime at all. You're not going to end crime. You're not going to end this specific crime. No one is. It has been here since the dawn of time. For example, prostitution has been around since the Bible days, if you believe in the Bible days, it's not going anywhere. (Officer Interview T)

A historical analysis of policing that includes a race-conscious lens allows scholars to position policing and policing outcomes within the larger systems shaping the social context of the United States. Situating police as such provides information on how the origins of the role and function of police are connected to on-going racial disparities, it positions policing within a larger context of institutions that bear responsibility for persistent social ills that contribute to racial disparities in policing, and it points towards the limitations of policing as a strategy for creating safety.

History also helps illuminate the central themes of race and place found in the research among the community residents, and how these themes are connected to safety. The historical focus on ranging as a form of early policing exposes origins of policing built upon the creation and maintenance of divisions built on race and place. Rangers were created as a tool of coercive force used to take and protect stolen land from Native Americans, and through that process of taking, rangers also served to develop the two themes we heard from community residents in interviews: a White-Non White racial division in the practices of use of force and enforced racial segregation of space. These disparities have persisted over time and continue in the shared experiences of residents with policing today.

The way the origins of policing show up in contemporary practices and experiences of policing also contribute to the scholarship of feminist, particularly Black feminist, standpoint theory, which asserts that knowledge is rooted in social position, that oppressed people can generate knowledge rooted in their own experiences of oppression, and create knowledge about the systems of oppression under which they suffer (Harding, 2004; Collins, 2009). In this research, the residents interviewed, most of whom were Black and working class, identified and discussed the ways race and place interacted to impact the kind of policing they received, the kind of policing they wanted, and their safety. Race was mentioned as a factor that influenced policing and safety in all community resident interviews, despite the fact that race was not a question that was included in the interview protocol. Furthermore, in nearly all interviews, place was also mentioned, directly or indirectly, as a factor that influenced policing and safety. These

strong themes of person and place are rooted in the historical origins of policing and support the scholarship that argues for the need to account for positionality (or an individual standpoint) and power differentials when attempting to understand the goals and outcomes of American institutions, including police.

Finally, a historical analysis brings the power dynamics of policing to the forefront. In the officer interviews, police officers were conscious of the central aspect of power differentials to their role and daily duties, and often described using communication as a way to navigate, reinforce, or mitigate power differentials in intentional ways. In the chapter on police officer communication core narratives, three of the four core narratives identified either leveraged or reinforced existing power disparities. Only when the goals and intentions of the communication strategy aligned--for communication I characterized as connection--were power disparities disrupted. Furthermore, communication that I characterize as connection was frequently described as having positive outcomes for the officer as well as for the individual engaging with the officer. This research finds that when police work to account for power disparities, they are creating the context for better police-community interactions. Given the history of policing, identifying how power operates in police communication with civilians and the ways successful police communication strategies leverage or disrupt power differentials is a valuable contribution to the existing literature on communication, intergroup contact, and community relationships related to policing.

Communication was a major theme in strategies for safety, both for police and community residents. Communication was so central to police officers describing their duties during community contact that the dissertation was able to focus an entire chapter on how police officers use communication and the core narratives they have developed around community. Safety is central to why police officers prioritize communication in their interactions with the community. Even among officers who did not express a sense of empathy for the people they serve, they still viewed communication as a tool for keeping themselves and other officers safe. Community residents also viewed communication as a way to create safety for themselves and their communities. Even as residents expressly stated that they did not think the police were a path to creating safety, they did say that communication, particularly with neighbors and people on their block, was a method for staying safe. Given the high value placed on communication in creating safety for both police officers and residents, communication is an area ripe for future research.

Implications for Research and Policy

Striving to engage in research with feasible near-term and long-term implications for positive social impact, particularly in policing and community safety, has been an essential driver of my work.

First, there are a few major implications for the history of policing research, particularly for the growing field of scholarship on abolition. The history research combines the scholarship from two related but infrequently associated areas of scholarship--critical race theory and settler colonialism--and applies this combined lens to the institution of policing. While policing has been explored through each field separately, this research is perhaps the first historical analysis to do so in combination. Furthermore, findings build on the scholarship in both fields, bridging the frameworks to create space for a more expansive exploration of racial inequalities in American institutions and structural functions. While police officers and the institution of policing are responsible for existing racial disparities in use of force and violence, this research suggests that police violence persists because it is operating within larger systems of structural violence exerted against racialized and marginalized groups. Furthermore, when police are positioned within the larger systems of structural violence, we can understand why strategies for safety often exist outside of the institution of policing itself. The findings align with the writings of abolitionists and suggest that safety is something that can and should be separate from policing.

Second, a key idea that emerged from the research was the importance of communication for police officers and community residents and the central connections between communication and safety for both groups. For police officers, specific findings suggest communication can reinforce or disrupt power disparities in ways that have meaningful impacts on the outcomes of contact encounters. For the community, findings on the informal communication pathways that residents built at the local level have implications for building safety both in terms of perceptions and outcomes. Across both groups, the findings suggest that communication can be an important and powerful tool for creating more safety.

Lastly, findings suggest that location is a major factor in policing and safety with deep roots in the historical origins of policing. Results hold implications for research on policing and policing practices more broadly. To the extent that policing varies by location, this variation should be considered in relation to the larger community being served by police, the history of that community with larger systems of structural violence, and the desires of the community.

For policy, findings can inform policy actions intended to create greater safety, both for police officers and community residents. For residents, existing scholarship by police

abolitionists has already identified areas to focus on for building beyond policing. For example, structural reforms that narrow the function of policing by removing police response for non-violent mental health crises are one essential path towards reimagining safety. Smaller-scale interventions that target officer communication and the psychological processes that drive engagement can also play an important role in reducing harmful policing-community engagement. One such intervention is included in the Appendix 1: Supplementary Materials of this dissertation.

Assumption & Limitations

This dissertation relied on qualitative methods for data collection and analysis. A major assumption that is part of qualitative research is that knowledge on the phenomenon being studied can be ascertained from the interview process. Furthermore, this assumption builds upon the concept that all interview participants were truthful with the interviewer. While bias is unavoidable and assumed in the qualitative process it is nonetheless still assumed that answers to questions will be truthful.

Interview participants were volunteers. Among police, officers were randomly contacted via email from a list of all officers involved in community contact stratified by the officer precinct. All officers who expressed interest in being interviewed were interviewed. Consequently, the sample overrepresents officers who are open to research. I and a research assistant reached out to community residents involved in police-adjacent activities, e.g. police accountability review boards, as well as recruited participants in-person at two separate food bank locations. This split process was to ensure a broad range of participant perspective as well as a large percentage of participants from low-income communities of color, places that are statistically more likely to have negative police contact. While I believe a meaningful cross section was created for both the police and community samples, the participants will not represent the perspectives of all police or the entire city where residents lived. A larger and differently diverse group might provide different insights. Findings may not be applicable to other police departments or other communities.

Future Research

Future research will follow the threads of history and safety identified in this research. I would like to build out the work on white settler colonialism and ranging in policing, developing this work into a book. Additionally, the original dissertation prospectus included a mindset intervention exercise designed to create recursive processes that can produce lasting, self-sustaining, and embedded personal and social change to be piloted with police officers. I was not able to conduct the research experiment. However, the intervention was created and is ready to be piloted when an opportunity becomes available. Through this research project, I was able to obtain community and police

perspectives which are complementary and provide the advantageous dimensions necessary for developing lasting police reforms. Lastly, the qualitative research on community-driven safety strategies is an area with, I believe, a very high potential for growth and impact in the coming years. Qualitative research more broadly is emerging in the academic study of public policy. Further, policy development and analysis is growing in its valuation of standpoint theory, or of looking to those most system-impacted when creating policy solutions to long-term social problems. I see qualitative research experience focused on safety as an opportunity to continue to do meaningful research through practices I enjoy with the potential to have positive impacts on policing and safety.

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Appendix 1: Supplementary Materials

Police Officer
Empathic Communication Exercise

Acronym Key:

EM = Empathic Mindset
AE = Affirmation Exercise
EC = Empathic Communication
SB = Saying is Believing
CT = Control Task

Wise Intervention Techniques to Change Meaning Making		
Activity	**Psychological Technique**	**Mechanism**
Empathic Mindset (EM) reading	direct(ish) labeling	providing clarity to ambiguous self and situation motivation to behave in accordance with label
Affirmation Exercise	structured & active reflection	mitigate psychological threat through connection to core values
Empathic Communication (EC) reading	implicit story revision	prompting new meaning
Saying is Believing writing	increasing commitment through action	take ownership over new mindset

Below, I provide detailed information regarding the content to include in the control and treatment conditions. In table 1, I first lay out the general flow of the RCT for each condition. Then, in Table 2, I provide detailed content for each stage of the RCT (with fully fleshed out language).

Table 1: Flow of exercise for each condition

Step	Control	Treatment
1	Introduction	
2	Informed consent	
3	Activity Framing	Activity Framing
4	--	EM reading
5		AE reading
6		AE activity
7		EC reading
8		EC task
9	SB reading	SB reading
10	SB task	SB task
11	Intro to situation	Intro to situation
12	Read about ambiguous situation 1	
13	Q's on ambiguous situation 1	
14	Read about situation 2	
15	Q's on situation 2	
	Read about situation 3	
	Q's on situation 3	
16	Post survey demographics	
17	Conclusion	

Table 2: Content for each condition

Step	Introduction: Control & Treatment
1	Thank you for participating in the Police Officers' Experience Exchange! We are a team of scientists at University of California, Berkeley who are collaborating with your Department to generate means to improve conditions for officers. Your responses will familiarize us and new officers with your perspective about the conditions of your job. Understanding your viewpoints about your daily experiences will allow new officers to get a valuable account of what to expect and how to best navigate the profession. It will also allow us to construct programs to tackle the issues that affect police officers. We hope that refining these programs with your input will better improve conditions for officers and training for new officers. Below, we will ask you to read some passages, write about some of your opinions, and answer a few questions.

2	**Informed Consent**

3	Control Frame	Treatment Frame
	Police officers are often looking for new ways to more efficiently and effectively do their jobs. As you know, one important part of being a police officer is making sure you use available technology. Our research team has been studying how people can make better use of technology at their jobs. This research explores how technology can help people better communicate and organize on the job. In this web module, we will share with you some of this research. Then, we will ask you for your input as a professional. We are particularly interested in your thoughts about how officers like you can and do use these ideas at work. Your input will be incorporated into a training program so other professionals can benefit from your experience and insights. Next, we would like you to read a brief article about teaching. Teachers use technology in a variety of ways. We hope it can spark some ideas for you to share with us how technology allows you to be more effective and efficient at your job. So later we will ask you for your thoughts. Thank you for your time and help.	Police officers are often looking for new ways to better serve their communities. As you know, one important part of being a police officer is good communication with residents to create safety and develop strong relationships. Our research team has been studying the role of police officer communication in creating safety and building trust and community relationships. This research suggests that how police officers communicate, especially the style and frequency, can have big effects on physical safety and can have long-lasting impacts on police-community relationships. In this web module, we will share with you some of this research. Then, we will ask you for your input as a professional police officer. We are especially interested in your thoughts about how officers like you can and do use these ideas to have better interactions with residents and to improve safety and build relationships. Your input will be incorporated into an officer training program so future teachers can benefit from your experience and insights. Thank you for your time and help.

4	Tx Only - Empathic Mindset Priming
	Please read the following passage about the critical role police officers can have in the lives and communities of the people they interact with.
	Almost every officer has a story about how they were able to positively impact a person at a pivotal point in their life. One officer shared their story:

	Story Research suggests that civilian relationships with police officers are important—and even more so than you might think. Neighborhoods that have regular, positive communication with caring, helpful police officers are safer places. Individually, a police officer who listens to a person and makes them feel heard, valued, and respected shows that the police are fair and that police can provide safety and understanding. On the block, a kind and communicative police officer shows a neighborhood that their community is safe and secure. Of course, creating positive relationships is not always easy—especially in some places. The ways some people and groups have been treated in the past can make some residents feel insecure and distrustful of police. Yet resident attitudes about police can and do improve when officers are able to helpfully and successfully communicate to build the safety residents need. This makes understanding resident perspectives very important to policing. The more police officers understand how residents perceive officer actions, the better equipped officers are to interact with residents in ways that nurture strong relationships and build community safety. Now is a time of new and intense worries and pressures. With rising crime rates and reduced police presence (will be specific to location), community residents have serious concerns and often feel they are unable to engage with the local police officers. As a result, community residents think a lot about how they are treated by police. They worry about being treated unfairly, and they are sensitive to any sign that others—especially authority figures, like police officers—are dealing them an unfair hand. These worries can cause residents to experience stress, to overreact, and sometimes to lash out. Some residents have additional reasons to worry if police will treat them fairly, which is another cause for concern for officers. For instance, residents from poor communities or from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds may hear distressing stories from friends, parents, or the media about how their group is treated by police. So it's reasonable for these people to be especially worried about how they will be treated when interacting with police officers. And this is an additional challenge for police officers when engaging in positive communication intended to build relationships and safety.

5	**Tx Only - Affirmation Reading & Activity**
a	In this writing task you will be answering several questions about your ideas, your beliefs, and your life. It is important to remember while you are answering these questions that there are not right or wrong answers. Please carefully read this list of reasons why people become police officers and think about each of the reasons. Then click the two reasons that are MOST

	important to you. Even if you feel that many of the reasons are important, please pick only at most TWO of them. ❑Helping people ❑Assisting people and communities ❑Improving community conditions ❑Preventing crimes ❑Making a meaningful difference in someone's life ❑Identifying and solving problems ❑Getting criminals off the streets
b	Look at the values you picked as most important to you. Think about the times when these values were important to you. In a few sentences, describe why the selected values are important to you and a time when these values were important. Focus on your thoughts and feelings, and don't worry about spelling, grammar, or how well written it is.

6	**Tx Only - Empathic Communication**
	Please read the following passage about the way officer communication can build strong relationships and create safety. After each passage, please briefly write about your own experiences.
a	"Resident story of positive police communication, 1" "Resident story of positive police communication, 2"
b	What are some of the ways that you try to engage in positive communication with the people you serve, or things that you would like to try in the future to improve your communication with the community and people you serve? Please illustrate your answer with examples from your own experience and of specific people you have known (please omit or change names). Consider especially circumstances when it is most important to reach out to certain people, for instance situations when people are struggling, in distress, or are in danger. The following are sample participating officer responses: "Police officer story of positive communication, 1" The following is a sample participating officer response: "Police officer story of positive communication, 2"

7	Saying Is Believing	
	Control	**Treatment**
	Transitioning to using technology more and more effectively can be hard, especially if you don't know what to expect. We think hearing from you will help give novice users a better idea of what to expect. We'd like you to write a letter to a new officer who will begin working in [the department] next year. He or she does not know about how technology can improve their job. Please tell the new officer some of the things you just learned so he or she can have a better experience. In your letter, please describe what you have read today about benefiting from technology-use. Please respond with at least three meaningful sentences to share. Don't worry about spelling or grammar; just try to describe your feelings and experiences. We think it will help others to hear your insights. NOTE: We encourage you to save your letter to the shared drive and print it from your workstation for your own records.	A police officer's position can be stressful and difficult, especially if you don't know what to expect. We think hearing from you will help give new officers a better idea of what to expect. We'd like you to write a letter -- at least three meaningful sentences -- to a new officer who will begin work in [the department] next year. Please tell the new officer some of the things you have done to be effective and satisfied as an officer. In your letter, please feel free to include things you shared elsewhere in this module. Try to use examples from your own experiences or examples of things you've seen. Use at least one of the following examples of things to talk about: police officers are pivotal in working to improve the safety of civilians and the greater community through helpful communication to build strong relationships. It is normal to feel stressed in this profession. So, it is important to remind oneself of the reasons he or she sought to become an Officer (e.g., to help develop relationships and make communities feel safe). The work of a police officer can come to feel impersonal. It is critical for officers to remember the humanity in their work and the people they work with. Please respond with at least three meaningful sentences to share. Don't worry about spelling or grammar; just try to describe your feelings and

		experiences. We think it will help others to hear your insights. NOTE: We encourage you to save your letter to the shared drive and print it from your workstation for your own records.

	Intro In this section, we want you to imagine the situations described and then answer questions about how you think you would act.	
	Situation 1 You respond to a call from a business owner. A man has been loitering outside a business and the business owner would like this person to move along. You arrive and make contact with a male who fits the description you were given. At first he ignores you, then he begins insulting you, saying rude and insulting things about you and your character.	
	Measure & Scale	
	Control	Communication
	Officers asked how important control items are. 1 = not important to 5 = very important	Officers asked how important are communication items 1 = not important to 5 = very important
	Items	
Items	Tell the subject to stop speaking	Explain the reason(s) you have made contact with the subject
	Raise your voice so it is louder than the subject, give the subject direct orders to follow	Listen to the subject and try to understand what's going on in their head
	Threaten the subject with detention or arrest if they don't stop	Tell the subject you have time to let them vent and wait
		Ask open-ended questions to gather more information
		Explain what you plan to do and what the subject can do

	Situation 2 In this section, we want you to imagine the situation described and then answer questions about how you think you would act.	
	While on patrol, you receive a call regarding a suspicious person in the parking lot of a busy strip mall at the corner of a busy intersection. You have little information, for example you do not know whether the subject has a weapon, but you arrive at the scene and make contact with a male who fits the description you were given. He appears to be angry, he is raising his voice, using profanity, and occasionally looking around the shopping area. The man continues to slowly back away from you despite your order to stop.	
	Measure & Scale	
	Control	Communication
	Officers asked how important control items are. 1 = not important to 5 = very important	Officers asked how important are communication items 1 = not important to 5 = very important
	Items	
Items	Tell the subject to stop speaking	Explain the reason(s) you have made contact with the subject
	Raise your voice so it is louder than the subject, give the subject direct orders to follow	Listen to the subject and try to understand what's going on in their head
	Threaten the subject with detention or arrest if they don't stop	Tell the subject you have time to let them vent and wait
		Ask open-ended questions to gather more information
		Explain what you plan to do and what the subject can do

	Situation 3 In this section, we want you to imagine the situation described and then answer questions about how you think you would act.	
	You respond to a call for service. The description you were given from dispatch was of a domestic violence situation in a neighborhood you know experiences higher crime. You are informed that one or more of the subjects is under the influence of alcohol or drugs. You do not know whether a weapon is involved. Upon arrival at the scene you notice the front window of the home is broken and glass is scattered on the front porch. You hear yelling from inside and see movement through a partially open front door. Standing on the front lawn, you call out, and a man exits the residence and stands on the front porch.	
	Measure & Scale	
	Control	Communication
	Officers asked how important control items are. 1 = not important to 5 = very important	Officers asked how important are communication items 1 = not important to 5 = very important
	Items	
Items	Tell the subject to stop speaking	Explain the reason(s) you have made contact with the subject
	Raise your voice so it is louder than the subject, give the subject direct orders to follow	Ask open-ended questions to gather more information
	Threaten the subject with detention or arrest if they don't stop	Listen to the subject and try to understand what's going on
		Explain what you plan to do and what the subject can do

	Post Survey Demographics Please select each of the boxes below that fit your race: [White] [Black] [Asian] [Hispanic] If you had to describe your race in one word, what would it be? [Qual] Please select each of the boxes below that fit your sex [Male] [Female] [Nonbinary]

	How long have you been a police officer? [Fill in the blank]

	Conclusion (do we need a debrief?) Thank you for participating in this research! This research will help us design programs to tackle the issues that affect police officers. We hope that building these programs with your input will improve conditions for officers and training for new officers. We really appreciate your help!