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OVER-POLICING AND UNDER-PROTECTING IN AMERICAN CITIES

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Submitted in Partial Completion of the  
Requirements for Departmental Honors in Criminal Justice

Bridgewater State University

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## Introduction

In recent years there have been numerous protests all over the United States focused on the over-policing of African Americans by law enforcement. Those involved are protesting against a term known as over-policing, the blatant brutality and senseless murders, that have taken place for decades but have been made ever more visible by our modern media channels. “Over-policing allows police to use excessive force and brutalize disenfranchised neighborhoods and target people of color indiscriminately. Ironically, as politicians take a “tough on crime” stance, violence has actually gone down, but police budgets and presence have increased. The American criminal justice system was never based on rehabilitation but punitive and on capitalism” (Lee, 2020). Furthermore, over-policing tactics have been rampant in this country for centuries, “Police brutality is nothing new. In the 1960s, police attacked civil rights protesters with dogs and water hoses in the name of “law and order.” In the 1970s and 80s, it was well-known that the Chicago Police Department engaged in torture tactics. Under Police Commander Jon Burge, over 100 black men were tortured into confessing to crimes they never committed under the guise of a traffic-violation pullover. The lynch mobs of the south were replaced by a law enforcement system that targets and profiles black people for no reason or minor infractions (jaywalking, failure to signal while turning) that result in their injury, incarceration, or death” (Lee, 2020). While these horrible incidents act as a catalyst for powerful movements, they fail to acknowledge the fact that the lack of police presence in African American communities is, just as, if not more harmful than these scattered incidents of police brutality.

This lack of police presence is obversely known as under-protecting. While there is no formal definition for this increasingly important term, it can be summarized as people of color feeling unsafe and helpless in their interactions with police coupled with feeling unsafe from crime in their own communities. Police officers often do not respond as quickly to the cry for help from people of color, downplaying their victimization, etc. In urban communities such as Baltimore, Minneapolis, or Chicago; cities with billions of dollars at their disposal, one would struggle to believe that certain residents of those very cities lack the same basic access to assistance that others take for granted. However, studies done by reputable publications such as the Washington Post, or the No Boundaries Coalition have shown this to be a common occurrence. In some cases, fewer than 30 percent of homicides result in an arrest, while that number is upwards of 70 percent in more racially homogenous communities (Bennet, 2019). For example, “In the past decade, nearly 26,000 murders have gone without an arrest in major American cities. Of those, more than 18,600 of the victims — almost three-quarters — were black. In many cases, there is a distrust between the police officers trying to solve these murders and the communities where they happen” (Bennet, 2019). Under-policing leaves African Americans feeling unsafe and unprotected by the police officers in their communities. These residents relay stories of generations of ineffective policing. Under-policing can look like officers disrespecting citizens, responding slowly to calls for help, and lack of sympathy for victims of crimes. At the same time, they see their families, friends, and themselves constantly under the scrutinizing eye of a police officer. But what happens when a person of color needs help? Or deserves justice? Many police officers do not want to answer the call, and this feeling comes from deep-rooted racist ideologies that are planted in the very beginning of police forces in the United States.

With each passing incident of police brutality that consumes the thoughts and prayers of the masses for a fleeting second, these studies into the juxtaposition of under and over-policing become increasingly important. Each examination into the causes of these issues will help increase the ammunition for change in the policing of these communities, in turn helping to prevent any future incidents of police brutality. For example, Almost all of the cities have racial disparities in arrest rates. In 48 of the 52 cities where victims' race was reliably recorded, homicides with a white victim resulted in an arrest more often than homicides with a minority victim. In Baltimore; "out of 2,827 homicides tracked over 11 years, 65% went without an arrest" (Rich, et al. 2018). Furthermore, "black people are incarcerated at more than five times the rate of white people, where Black people are given harsher sentences for the same offenses, where Black people are more likely to be held on bail pretrial, and where Black people are dying not only at the hands of police but because of an unequal health care system" (Cullors, 2020). These statistics are glaring in society. Black lives do matter, and they matter in all stages of life; not just when dealing with police brutality.

## Methods

This method of research is both theoretical and conceptual. The coinciding terms of over-policing and under-protecting are used often but are rarely defined. By examining the practices of police departments in these three cities as well as looking at how protests have accumulated in response to these practices give better insight into what these juxtaposed terms mean and look like.

The best operating definition of over-policing is aggressive, hostile, and often times violent tactics used by police when dealing with a person of color. The best definition of under-

policing is neglect on the part of law enforcement when it comes to giving the citizens they serve a sense of safety and protection. The juxtaposition of these two concepts existing at the same times is socially significant as it leaves people of color to feel completely helpless and untrusting of law enforcement as a whole. They do not trust police to treat them with respect or to protect them when they are in need. The ideals that law enforcement are meant to “protect and serve” seemingly does not apply to people of color. Rod K. Brunson who is the Thomas P. O’Neill Jr. professor of criminology and criminal justice at Northeastern University offered more insight to these definitions, point out that under-policing left residents with feelings of being, “underserved and unsafe” (Brunson, 2020). Brunson goes on to summarize the juxtaposition of over-policing and under-protecting saying, “many black and brown communities now suffer from the worst of all worlds: over-aggressive police behavior in frequent encounters with residents, coupled with the inability of law enforcement to effectively protect public safety” (Brunson, 2020).

I chose these three locations because they are some of the cities in this country that have had repeated news coverage of cases involving blatant police brutality and misconduct. Baltimore, Minneapolis, and Chicago have all been epicenters of protests from people of color. All three of these cities have had decades of civil unrest due to the over-policing and under-protecting that has occurred. The people of color in Baltimore, Minneapolis, and Chicago have been loudly and publicly unhappy with police misconduct in their cities. They share similar sentiments of fear and mistrust; of wanting police in their areas to provide protection and safety of police interactions come with only hostility and potential violence. People in these cities feel their problems, their crises are not heard or even cared about by law enforcement. Looking at the issues in the three cities offer a beginning insight into what over-policing and under-protecting look like.

## Baltimore, Maryland

Baltimore has a checkered history when it comes to its police force and its treatment of African Americans and other people of color. It is a notoriously racist city where generations of black people were, and continue to be, suppressed and brutalized. It is well known that “Baltimore has a reported history of power abuse from officers whose duty should be to protect and serve all...with many residents, being black and the majority of reported misconduct coming from them, these citizens likely feel targeted and regard legal authority figures with distrust and fear” (Redkar, 2015). One of the many examples of the power abuse that police officers exhibit is the senseless killing of 25-year-old Freddie Grey. Freddie Grey was arrested for possession of a switchblade on April 19, 2015; where he was thrown into a police van after being shackled. It is stated by the Department of Justice that, “The officers did not seat belt Gray. One of the officers later testified that they did not do so for reasons of officer safety, given the gathering angry crowd” (*The United States Department of Justice, 2017*). The police officers assisting in Grey's arrest made 4 stops with Grey in the back of the police wagon, restrained and unbuckled. During stop 4, Grey is alleged to have said, “I cant breathe” (*The United States Department of Justice, 2017*). Grey also requested to be brought to a hospital. This request was not fulfilled. According to the Department of Justice, “[Officer] Porter suggested that [Officer] Goodson take Gray straight to the hospital. However, at that moment, at approximately 9:07 am, Lieutenant Rice radioed a request for available police units and a police wagon to respond to a different location. In response, Porter left the wagon, got back into his car, and responded to Rice’s dispatch. Goodson responded to Lieutenant Rice’s request as well and did not take Gray to the hospital...neither officer seat-belted Gray“ (*The United States Department of Justice, 2017*).

After six total stops with Grey in the back of the police wagon. He was brought before paramedics. The state of Freddie Grey was horrific. It was observed that “Gray was not breathing, had a small amount of blood coming from his nose, and had frothy vomitus discharge around his mouth. Gray also smelled of feces, indicating incontinence” (*The United States Department of Justice, 2017*). Once in the hospital, Freddie Grey remained, “comatose for days. During that time, he underwent multiple rounds of surgery. CT and MRI scan revealed that he suffered from a fractured neck and pinched spinal cord” (*The United States Department of Justice, 2017*). Grey died because of the injuries he sustained while being thrown about in the back of a police wagon, restrained and unbuckled. He died at the hands of the police officers present during his arrest and they failed to provide him with the same treatment that they had given the countless others before him who survived the ride to jail. They failed to buckle this man into the police wagon, they did not care that he was restrained to the point where he was unable to move. They let him slide around in the back, they let him die.

Because of growing concern that Baltimore police departments were using the problematic stop and frisk tactic in their city improperly, the ACLU of Maryland gathered alarming stop and frisk data which stated, “Baltimore Police Department made over 123,000 stops in 2012. These stops resulted in 494 searches, and only 20 of those stops led to the discovery of any illegal contraband. In other words, 123,000 stops led to the confiscation of 9 guns, 10 illegal forms of drugs, and one knife” (Kasravi, 2014). These statistics lead to the conclusion that the tactic of stop and frisk does not effectively prevent crime from occurring, as the majority of the time these aggressive searches do not yield any illegal or dangerous contraband.



After the brutal killing of Freddie Grey, the outcry for justice and reform weighed heavily on policymakers, police, and politicians. The city of, “Baltimore was put under a consent decree, where the federal government assigned a monitor to insure reform” (*The Washington Post*, 2020). This consent decree was met with heavy backlash from several groups, especially law enforcement; for instance, “members of the department undermined every new policy in an open revolt. Some cops decided that if the city didn’t have their back, they’d stop working hard and allow chaos to reign, showing how important they were. Others, particularly plainclothes officers, took the opposite approach: They doubled down on harassing citizens, violating their constitutional rights, and even fabricating probable cause to maintain “law and order.” And some cops seized on the moment to rob and steal, creating more disorder” (*The Washington Post*, 2020). This reaction to the consent decree by Baltimore police officers showed shameless disregard for the very reason the decree was being implemented. They felt personally attacked. They saw nothing wrong with their actions or the actions of the officers involved in the Freddie Grey murder. Even under the scrutiny of a magnifying glass, police officers continued and even increased their abuse of power, proving they did not want to change their ways. For example, Natalie Finegar, a defense attorney, remembers driving around the neighborhood where Freddie Gray was killed. She recalls, “We saw cop car after cop car after cop car with the cops just parked and they were just leaning back in their seat...it was very much this, ‘I’m not touching anybody, I’m not doing anything, I’m not arresting anybody.’” (*The Washington Post*, 2020). Police were not going to protect anyone, they were not going to do their job, due to the fact they were met with scrutiny. The main idea behind this police defiance was, “what the police chief in Ferguson dubbed the “Ferguson effect.” If cops don’t act aggressively when they suspect malefactors, crime supposedly will skyrocket. With a sharp increase in murders, Baltimore

seemed a perfect illustration. In truth, the dynamic was more complicated. There was a sharp decline in arrests, but it was predominantly because the patrol officers weren't responding to citizen complaints" (*The Washington Post*, 2020). Law enforcement ignoring the calls of the citizens they are sworn to protect is an example of purposeful under-policing and in this case a direct response to the reforms that were put in place, by popular demand. This type of counter protesting on the part of police officers is another form of under-policing, and is a political weapon they use regularly when they disagree with reforms brought in front of them.

Freddie Grey's death was not the only incident where an African American was slain at the hands of Baltimore's police officers. His death proves that not every death comes from a knee to the neck, excessive force, or a deliberately aimed bullet. Every death, however, does come from a blatant disregard for black lives.

The masses have shown that they have had enough of these acts, through large protests and online campaigns. These movements are positive in nature but have come under fire when they take the occasional turn toward anarchy. Christal-Joy Turner, psychology senior and NAACP president for the Texas A&M chapter points out an important juxtaposition, "when people are upset about sports games, they go trash the streets, set things on fire, but 'they're just having fun". "When people are upset about racial injustice and turn to the streets, they are labeled as destructive thugs and monsters" (*The Battalion*, 2015). One is seen as harmless while defacing public and private property, while the latter is destructive and a threat to social harmony because it primarily involves people of color. It is imperative to look at this through a racial lens. Those who are marching for change and to the end of needless murders are seen as the troublemakers of our society, and those who are upset after a home game loss are let off the hook and are often made into humorous memes for the internet to enjoy.

Associate sociology professor Wendy Moore said. “The people of these communities are very under-resourced [and] have limited to no access to jobs, good education and transportation. The conditions of these protests and the anger come along with extreme deprivation and poverty”. Moore continues on to say, “Police have shown they are willing to see blacks as violent threats immediately...They respond to really anything — any actions — from blacks with violent force, often resulting in injuries and deaths” (*The Battalion, 2015*). People of color, as far as much of law enforcement is concerned, are threats to social peace and prosperity. Black people are being attacked for being black. To law enforcement, it does not matter their actions, it does not matter their words; black people are aggressively policed for being black.

One of the organizations that are striving to improve the city of Baltimore is the No Boundaries Coalition. Founded in 2010, the No Boundaries Coalition, “is a resident-led advocacy organization building an empowered and unified Central West Baltimore (cwb) across the boundaries of race, class, and neighborhoods... advocates safer streets, greater police accountability, more fresh, affordable produce in the neighborhood, and increasing opportunities for young people” (No Boundaries Coalition, 2016). NBC went door to door to hear directly from the residents of Sandtown-Winchester and determine what they needed and what they wanted to see happen in response to the death of Freddie Gray in 2015. In this door- knocking campaign, “250 residents of Sandtown-Winchester spoke with the No Boundaries Coalition’s volunteers...The decision to create the West Baltimore Community Commission on Police Misconduct... reconfiguration of policing strategies enacted to contain poor city residents to the “ghetto” (No Boundaries Coalition, 2016). The fragmentation of urban space into zones within which citizens would be policed and treated differently based on their class, race, and residency has become a fixture of post-industrial Baltimore (No Boundaries Coalition, 2016). An

organization such as the No Boundaries Coalition is making big strides in improving the streets of Baltimore, working with various community members to improve police-resident relations, upon a litany of other services.

The statistics and personal stories from the residents of Baltimore recorded and presented by the No Boundaries Coalition show the juxtaposition of the over-policing and under-protection of police officers in Baltimore. These findings show a clear pattern of mistrust entrenched in Baltimore's black communities. In the cases reported, a general consensus of residents showed, “69% of informants disclosed an experience of anxiety or fear; 94% experienced a sense of confusion or frustration; 59% experienced a sense of shame or humiliation; 39% experienced a sense of despair or hopelessness; 76% described a sense of fatigue or exhaustion; and only 4% expressed feeling a sense of happiness or satisfaction. More explicitly, 28% of informants reported long standing psychological distress as a consequence of their interaction” (No Boundaries Coalition, 2016). These statistics were explicitly in stances of experiences with police. A personal anecdote from one resident said, “we know all police ain’t bad...we know we need police,” but “one bad apple make them look all the same to us” (No Boundaries Coalition, 2016). This severe doubt leads many residents to conclude that they “can’t trust the people that the City of Baltimore hires to protect us” (No Boundaries Coalition, 2016). Another instance of the strained relationship between people of color and police in Baltimore can be shown from ‘Ms. R’s’ story, who, “had previously filed a formal complaint against an officer who harassed her son. She was later arrested by the same officer in her neighborhood for dropping a candy wrapper on the ground. During the arrest, the officer called her a “bitch” and physically hurt her” (No Boundaries Coalition, 2016). This is not a one-off story of police mistreatment of residents and disregard for their well-being. Of the many residents of Baltimore who were interviewed by

the No Boundaries Coalition, most of them relayed different stories but with the same blaring message: they were abused by police, they felt unsafe when interacting with police, they were harassed and belittled over trivial matters by police, and when they needed help, police officers did not answer the call to protect and serve. The physical and mental outcomes of these interactions between people of color and Baltimore police officers are ever-lasting, as shown in the statistics above. They are not easily brushed off by these residents. They stem from the generational trauma, cruelty, and brutality brought by police officers onto black communities. The deep-rooted and conflicting emotions of residents toward law enforcement stay with them. They want to trust the police, they want to feel safe, and they want to know they can rely on law enforcement to protect them when they need it, but they cannot. For example, “informants reporting incidents of police misconduct expressed a deep concern that their children should be safe when interacting with police. Similarly, informants articulated that they would caution their children against contacting police officers in the case of an emergency due to fear of misconduct against their children. The long-term consequences of this transgenerational impact cannot be understated or ignored” (No Boundaries Coalition, 2016). African Americans pass on this trauma and wariness of law enforcement to the next generation.

“The West Baltimore Community Commission recommends that Baltimore City, the Baltimore police department, and the Maryland General Assembly reform policy to increase civilian oversight of the Baltimore City police department, implement community policing models, and ensure that every Baltimore citizen and neighborhoods is police in an equitable, effective, and constitutional manner” (20).

The question remains: what does the West Baltimore Community Commission recommend Baltimore police departments do? Several methods of implementation have been

suggested to increase and strengthen law enforcement and resident interactions to lead to more positive relationships. The following proposals have been put forward:

- “1. Provide anti-racism training.
2. Provide de-escalation and community relations training...Officers should be trained in how to de-escalate tense situations...how to talk with residents and community members, how to build relationships with residents, and how to patrol on foot...how to interact with youth, people with disabilities, people with mental illness, women, and lgbtq community members. This commission recommends a de-escalation training modeled after best practices in Richmond, ca, and by the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission
3. Establish a community policing model...communities want to be familiar with their officers, see them “on the beat,”...police department should work with residents and community organizations to deter- mine where permanent foots posts should go
4. Redefine the policies that govern how and where officers are assigned...The department should create better models for staffing that prioritizes officers and command staff being able to build relationships with communities.
5. Meet regularly with local leaders and residents...patrol officers should meet the residents whose neighborhood they patrol. Neighborhood leaders, faith leaders, and activists should have clear mechanisms to give feedback to B.P.D.
6. Incentivize officers to live in the communities where they work
7. Reinstate relationship-building programs..Improve outreach efforts within neighborhood associations, schools, and community events. Focus on initiatives that build trust with children and youth
8. Fully fund the Baltimore Civilian Review Board...the crb should have enough funding for at least three full-time investigators and an attorney
9. Increase transparency
10. Increase civilian input into bpd reform, practices, priorities, and budgeting...Baltimore Police Department should have clear mechanisms in place for a diverse group of community stake- holders to be able to give input about depart- mental reforms and practices. The Commission recommends a stakeholder coalition modeled after Seattle’s Community Police Commission” (No Boundaries Coalition, 2016).

These recommendations will provide key stepping stone changes needed to mend the strained relationship between law enforcement and the community they serve. Making police officers more approachable and recognizable will undoubtedly lead to increased trust from residents. However, these recommendations will work only if law enforcement practice them. Without cooperation from both police officers and residents, these suggested solutions will never yield positive results.

### Minneapolis, Minnesota

Minneapolis is another city in which the relationships between law enforcement and residents are extremely strained. Much like the city of Baltimore, there is a long history of blatant racism in police departments. For example, “of the data available over 10 years; there were 366 homicides tracked in Minneapolis, and 51% of those homicides did not result in an arrest” (Rich, et al. 2018). Over half of the homicides in this city were never given proper justice. The center for Urban and Regional Affairs conducted a study that concluded with findings that showed the over-policed and under-protected juxtaposition that is glaring in Minneapolis. Researchers stated, “the North Minneapolis residents we spoke with often described feeling over-policed and under-protected, exposed both to community and police violence. Residents described frequent negative experiences with police, including racial targeting and harassment, slow or apathetic responses to calls for service, verbal and physical abuse, and trauma from high-profile cases of police killings. These concerns were greatest among Black or African American residents...the city (and state) are marked by stark racial disparities in housing, education, criminal justice, and other domains” (Phelps, et al. 2020). “When asked to rate their perceptions of “neighborhood safety,” a third responded with “Poor” and nearly half said “Fair”; just 20% of

respondents rated their neighborhood safety as “Good” or “Very Good.”(Phelps, et al. 2020).

Romando, a 35-year-old black man shared his thoughts, saying, “There is good cops out here and there is horrible cops...The thing that I can't stand with the police is that when the good cops see bad cops react the way they do, they don't, you know, stop 'em or, you know, help the people that need to be helped”” (Phelps, et al. 2020). These personal accounts from the residents of Minneapolis prove that negative or traumatic experiences with police are not rare. They occur all the time. The African American citizens of Minneapolis feel constantly over-policed by law enforcement through brutality and violence; while also simultaneously under-protected by the same officers as they don't feel safe in their neighborhoods; even where police presence is high.

<https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/GuP24/1/> - This link provides a table of a survey summarizing responses to a series of questions about the police. An image of the table is placed below. The first table shows a summary of respondents' attitudes towards police decision-making, respect for residents and their ability to listen to residents, and if they try to always do what is best. The second table shows respondents' attitudes toward police legitimacy and bias to arresting tactics, police judgment of residents, etc.



### Figure 1. Summary of Respondents' Attitudes Toward Police

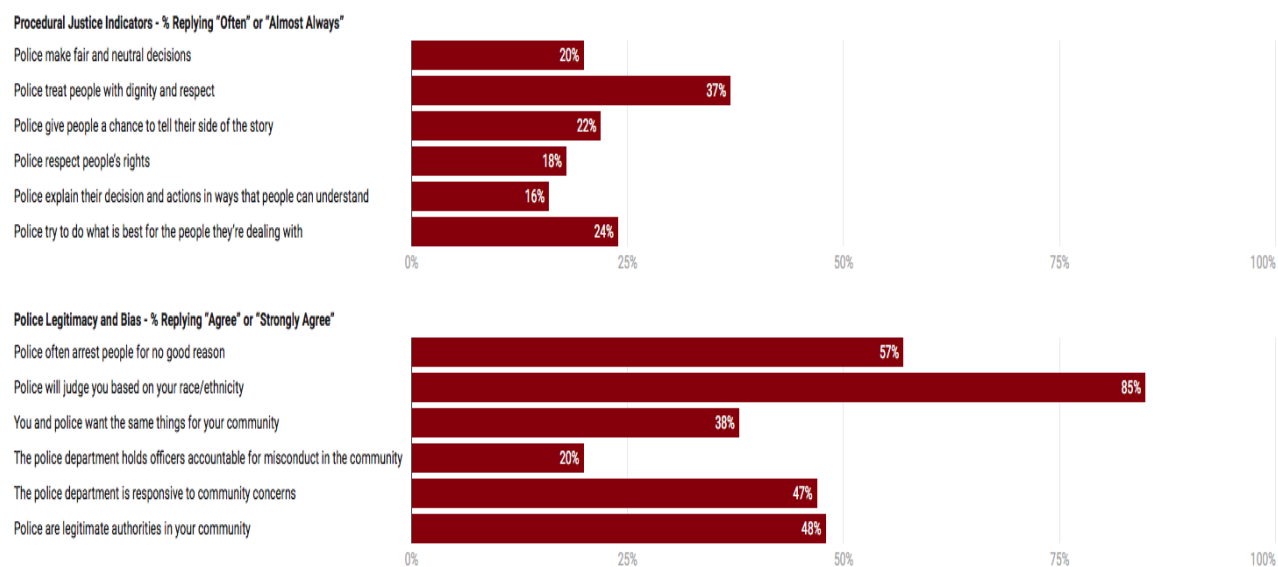


Chart: By Dr. Michelle S. Phelps, Associate Professor of Sociology, University of Minnesota; Amber Joy Powell, Ph.D. Candidate, Sociology, University of Minnesota; and Christopher E. Robertson, Ph.D. Student, Sociology, University of Minnesota - Embed • Created with Datawrapper

Figure 1

These findings were racially divided, with white residents of North Minneapolis more confident in the police than Black residents and other people of color. As will be shown below in the personal stories and statistics, these more condemning attitudes among Black residents were connected to negative personal and indirect experiences with police. One sentiment came from Darnell, a black man in his mid-20s. He explains, “You can’t go outside on the street or take your kids to the park without being harassed by the police. And when there was a serious crime, like a shooting or a murder, they wouldn’t show up...But any other day they’ll show up just to harass you and racially profile you...So, you know, I don’t really—I don’t know if they’re there to protect and serve...I don’t feel that. I wouldn’t call them for anything” (Phelps, et al. 2020).

Darnell highlighted sentiments of both under-protecting and over-policing. His feelings of distrust and rejection when it comes to police not being there to protect him in a time of need as well as fear during interactions with police showcase people of color's feelings of resentment towards law enforcement. Men of color felt particularly vulnerable to police stops and violence; reports of being stopped in cars, especially when young black men were riding together, were common. These reports are consistent with police stop data which showed black residents in Minneapolis have been disproportionately likely to be arrested and cited for low-level offenses. People of color in Minneapolis report higher police stops than white residents, showing they are routinely profiled for the color of their skin and are over-policed for more or less trivial matters. These reports come from hundreds of people of color who span across all of Minneapolis. "The criminology literature refers to this phenomenon as over-policing and under-protection, with residents wanting police to provide protection and safety in the community while knowing that police presence often came with harassment, potential violence, the threat of incarceration, and likely an inadequate response to their problems. As a result, some residents...described a beleaguered ambivalence toward seeing police in the neighborhood—both reassured and made anxious by their presence" (Phelps, et al. 2020). These contrasting attitudes toward law enforcement show people of color want to trust the police and rely on them to do their jobs in an unbiased manner; however, they feel continuously under-protected and belittled by police over and over again. "The recency of these experiences varied, with some interviewees talking about decades-old experiences while others had occurred in the past several months. Even long-ago events, however, could sharply influence how residents perceived policing today" (Phelps, et al. 2020). Generational trauma when it comes to how African Americans are policed is a stigma that we need to end to move toward a better society. Younger people of color develop a mistrust of

police because their parents, and their parents before them; warned them to be wary of law enforcement. Among white residents, the issue of police violence was more likely to come up in the context of media reports rather than personal and secondhand experiences. This disconnect cannot continue to be passed down. We must break the chain.

There are several recommendations that have been pushed in Minneapolis in order to improve the relationship between people of color and local law enforcement. In Minneapolis, a list of policy recommendations has been put forward, “

1. Build community resources for public safety beyond policing.
2. Accelerate efforts to reduce police misconduct and promote more justice for the victims of police violence.
3. Create “feedback loops” to empower the most impacted residents in deciding the future of public safety” (Phelps, 2020).

These recommendations that have been made will only be helpful and effective with the cooperation of law enforcement. There have been countless examples of the police being unwilling participants to better their policing tactics. Without amicable partnerships, relations between citizens and police will not improve. People of color will still be fearful and untrusting of the people who are meant to protect them.

Chicago, Illinois

Chicago is yet another American city that frequently makes news headlines with stories of police misconduct and violence against African Americans. Chicago has deep-rooted racist ideologies entrenched in its law enforcement system. The African Americans of this once great city have undergone decades of abuse at the hands of their police officers. Chicago has had one of the most consistently high murder rates in the country for years which would lead you to believe that police presence has gone up. However, “fewer than 30% of homicides resulted in an arrest...out of 5,534 homicides tracked in Chicago over 11 years, 74% went without an arrest: (Rich, et al. 2018). Unfortunately, it doesn't end there. There is documented history of this blatant under-policing dating back as far as the 1920s. The Red Summer of 1919 where race riots resulted in the deaths of dozens of African Americans shows just how deep the roots of over-policing are, in Chicago. Chicago also has a history of over-policing, such as its torture tactics used against Black Chicagoans in the 70s and 80s. Since its very foundation in 1853, the Chicago Police Department has shown a blatant disregard for members of their city that do not adhere to their racial bias. This has continued to this day and will only begin to change when the government and the community no longer tolerate this behavior.

It is important to look at historical parallels when comparing how police forces have evolved since their origins. University of Iowa assistant professor and University of Wisconsin alum Simon Balto explains that “When people are talking about the awful, traumatic and horrifying things happening with the police in 2015-2020, it looks virtually identical in a lot of ways to the experience of being policed in 1960s Chicago,” (McLean, 2020). The way law enforcement in Chicago treats black American citizens today contains the historical undertones of their previous police forces. These patterns are not exclusive to Chicago, cities all over the

United States have to face the realities of abusive and racist law enforcement. Balto goes on to explain the origin of police in Chicago, noting, “the city began to build up a police force in the mid-1800s. Balto said Chicago did not create a police force simply to protect everyday Americans. Rather, the police served to keep tabs on the ever-increasing population of immigrants” (McLean, 2020). The beginnings of police forces were not simply to protect every citizen, they were implemented to control people of color. The manner in which these police forces were created is frightening yet indicative of why they continue to display racist policing tactics. Albeit in less explicit ways, police officers are trained to control and suppress people of color. Not to protect them or their rights.

Police forces in Chicago and the rest of the United States were created to control people of color and suppress any rumblings of protests, and labor unions, and generally, protect and serve the wealthy white people of this country. Black Americans and other people of color were seen as a threat to both social elites and blue-collar workers. Police forces were instructed to contain and squash any people of color from becoming successful. Since the very beginnings of policing in America, African Americans were seen as a threat and were treated as such, these negative sentiments have since carried on into today's policing.

It is all-important to know specific historical events that highlight how abusive and traumatic the relationship between police officers and people of color was in Chicago in past centuries and continue today. CPD was formally founded in 1853, at a time when local economic and political elites were eager to control the city's growing population of immigrants who they believed to be unruly and immoral. As labor leaders and progressives organized for better working conditions and economic security throughout the mid-to-late nineteenth century, the

police were a tool to suppress these movements and keep people from questioning the socioeconomic and racial status quo—a function that the police continue to serve today” (Vanecko, 2020). A major incident to look at is the Red Summer. The Red Summer was a period of 1919 where numerous race riots occurred in Chicago and the rest of the country, resulting in several deaths. Simon Balto used the phrase, “overpoliced and under-protected” to describe how Black Chicagoans felt during Red Summer and how many Black Americans continue to feel to this day” (McLean, 2020). The Red Summer was a product of World War I intensifying the Great Migration of African Americans out of the southern parts of the country into the more industrious north and west. African Americans were fleeing in large numbers in an attempt to escape the Jim Crow laws of the south. And as more African American soldiers returned from battle, they were not met with the same respect and admiration as their white comrades. Many, “Black veterans were mistreated, and in some cases, attacked while in uniform. Lynching increased from 64 in 1918 to 83 in 1919. Membership in the revived Ku Klux Klan, reborn after D.W. Griffith’s 1915 film *The Birth of a Nation*, skyrocketed into the millions by the early 1920s” (Red Summer). These conditions caused civil unrest and unnecessary violence between white and African American civilians. A riot ensued in Chicago on July 27 when “a Black teenager drowned after being hit with stones when he and friends drifted near a de facto whites-only beach. Violent rioting across Chicago’s South and West sides and into the downtown lasted days. Eventually the state militia was deployed to restore order. Though records vary, the final Chicago casualty count listed 38 fatalities (23 Black, 15 White), 537 injured and upwards of 1,000 Black families made homeless by the burning and rampant destruction of African American neighborhoods” (Red Summer).

The story of Red Summer and the Race Riots is a prime example of how a police officer's job at this time was not to protect and serve every citizen; their job was to protect and serve white people and to control and dehumanize black Americans. They blatantly did not answer the call to protect any of these Black Americans while they were being brutalized and murdered. They were left homeless and desolate because law enforcement refused to protect them. This is similar to how they are still treated to this day, albeit in less explicit ways. Law enforcement tactics today are still coated in the historical racism that created them. Under-protecting is still rampant in Chicago, as well as over-policing.

How Black Chicagoans are treated today can be seen in plain sight when looking at the number of traffic stops, the arrest rates, or the use of force by police officers. According to WTTW news, “Black Chicagoans were, “overwhelmingly disproportionately” stopped by Chicago Police officers across the city, including in parts of the city that Chicago Police consider to be “high crime” areas, according to the report issued by interim Inspector General William Marbeck” (Cherone, 2022). These ‘high-crime’ areas are predominantly minority neighborhoods and communities. WTTW news relays information that came from an audit from the city's office of Inspector General published in March of 2022 called ‘Race and Ethnicity-based disparities in Chicago Police Departments use of force. This report concluded that Chicago police officers often use more force against African American citizens of Chicago than white citizens of Chicago. Furthermore, “when a police stop results in an officer using force against a Chicagoan, 83.4% of those incidents involve a Black person, according to the report” (Cherone, 2022). When looking at these statistics, it is clear that the Black residents of Chicago are irregularly and unequally treated at the hands of police officers. Black people make up most of the targets in a forceful stop by law enforcement.

An extremely unsettling statistic is, “Officers used lethal force in 60 incidents analyzed by the inspector general’s audit. None of those incidents targeted white Chicagoans, according to the report. In addition, Black Chicagoans were 1.5 times more likely to be searched or patted down during an investigatory stop than Chicagoans of other races, according to the report. Cars belonging to Black people were 3.3 times more likely to be searched than cars belonging to white people, according to the report” (Cherone, 2022). Black people are routinely targeted by police officers for nothing more than the color of their skin. Being Black will always be suspicious according to law enforcement.

Even with these unsettling and disturbing statistics in the hands of the public, little has been done to actually stop this from occurring and prevent police departments from acting this way. Police officers in Chicago are over-policing the African American population of the city by disproportionately stopping them, arresting them, detaining them, etc. all the while they are under-protecting these same African American citizens, not answering the call when they need help or protection. According to the Washington post and a study they did focusing on homicide clearance rates, Baltimore had 2,827 homicides tracked over 11 years, 65% of those went without arrest. In Chicago, over the same number of years; 5,534 homicides were tracked with 74% without an arrest. In Minneapolis, with data available over 10 years, 355 homicides were tracked, and 51% of those homicides went without an arrest (Bennet, 2019). These are frightening statistics and shows how ineffective law enforcement can be in their investigations.

## Conclusion

Over-policing is confrontational and combative policing tactics for even minor offenses or transgressions that can often lead to violent outcomes. Under-policing is the neglect and



ineffectiveness of law enforcement when it comes to protecting and serving people of color.

These coinciding terms. As we've seen in the many quoted personal accounts from residents of these three cities, over-policing is not just police brutality, it is the constant harassment people of color face from law enforcement.

These statistics and these personal accounts prove time and time again that there are deeply rooted racist ideologies in our American justice system. At the very basis of the creation of our police departments in this country, they were designed to protect and serve white citizens, and to suppress, control, and dehumanize African Americans. African Americans are still fearful and wary of law enforcement, just as their parents are, their grandparents, and their ancestors were. African Americans are chronically over policed and under protected across the United States of America. American Society can only begin to change when the policy makers and government officials of this country wish to see an end to this systemic epidemic in our law enforcement system. Grand scale reforms will have to be implemented to begin this change. How we train our next generation of police officers will have to drastically change. A drastic change in funding needs to happen as well. Police departments all over the country get millions and millions of dollars in funding a year from the government, whereas other public services like education and health care usually fall by the way side. Funding needs to be allocated to these services in order for them to have far reaching effects, in turn reliving police officers from being the first responders in every crises, which they should never have been put in that position in the first place.

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