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ABSTRACT

In part via skillful use of social media, Black Lives Matter (BLM) has become among the most influential social movements of the past half century, with support across racial lines, and considerable financial backing (Fisher, 2019). Will this translate into public policy reforms which save Black lives? After all, higher education is a key institutional backer of BLM, and a considerable literature dating back decades (e.g., Lindblom & Cohen, 1979) casts doubt on the effectiveness of social science in solving social problems, for numerous reasons. Often, the best social science is simple counting. This paper makes two unique contributions. First, using scholarly citations, we show empirically that social scientists focus far more attention on research regarding BLM related *activism* than on research regarding how to improve policing in ways that might save Black lives. Second, to encourage more research regarding *saving* Black lives, we update and enlarge a prior peer reviewed study (Bearfield, Maranto, & Wolf, 2020) which ranks big city police departments by their effectiveness in keeping Black (and non-Black) citizens safe. We conclude with ideas for future research and policy reform. Police commissioners and other policymakers need to be asked the right questions to drive reform and enact better policies to enable reforms to succeed. Currently, social science is failing to contribute much to either.

We are working for a world where Black lives are no longer systematically targeted for demise.
https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/

I. INTRODUCTION

Unless you have avoided COVID-19 by living under a rock for the past two years, you know that a series of police killings of Black men, culminating in the murder of George Floyd by Officer Derek Chauvin, gave rise to a major social and political movement called Black Lives Matter (BLM). In addition to the problem of police killings of civilians, Black males compose a disproportionate number of murder victims. In the U.S. in 2020, Black males composed just 6.5% of the population but were the victims in 47.7% of the 17,754 murders committed that year (Statista, 2022). Clearly the violent deaths of African Americans, especially males, is a crisis in our country.

Marrying de Tocquevillian decentralization, social media, legacy media, institutional support, and extensive financial backing, BLM is by any measure among the most successful social movements of the past half century, having collected massive sums of money and gained an organizational presence in dozens of states and multiple countries (Fisher, 2019). Per the most recent data we have available, all BLM affiliated causes and organizations had taken in roughly $11 billion by the end of 2020, with the prominent Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation alone receiving more than $90 million (Reilly, 2022).

Will Black Lives Matter save Black lives?

This question is neither theoretical nor rhetorical. There is, after all, an extensive literature indicating that populist movements, whether left or right, usually fail in their stated aims, often due to limited elite backing or a flawed theory of change (Hofstadter, 1964; Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017).

Among BLM's key sources of institutional support is higher education. Scholarly journals increasingly solicit BLM related research. BLM banners often fly on campuses, where movement critics have at times suffered violent opposition, as when police defender Heather Mac Donald attempted to speak at Claremont McKenna College in 2017 (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018, 88-90). Anecdotes compiled by intellectuals like John McWhorter (2021) and large N survey research collected by Eric Kaufmann (2021) indicate that many professors and students have been penalized for questioning Progressive narratives regarding race (and sex).

This reality affects social research. For example, award-winning Harvard economics professor Roland Fryer (2019) published a sophisticated quantitative article, preceded by a 2016 working paper, finding that controlling for behavior, police did *not* shoot disproportionately large numbers of African Americans. Taylor (2019) and Loury (2019) make strong cases that Fryer's findings motivated a questionable Title IX investigation, overseen by superiors whose work he

had criticized, that led to his faculty suspension. Likewise, prominent journalists including editors at the *New York Times* and *Philadelphia Inquirer* lost their jobs after approving commentaries or headlines which some observers considered critical of violence inspired by BLM activism. It is difficult to find any media commentary acknowledging the extreme rarity of police killings of civilians, a fact which BLM activists do not seem eager to have disseminated (Maranto & Bradley-Dorsey, 2020). Rare exceptions include Jason Riley's (2022, A19) opinion piece in the *Wall Street Journal* reminding us that police shootings of unarmed civilians in all of 2021 nationally included "eight whites and six blacks."

In theory, support from elite higher education should help BLM succeed, given higher education's significant resources, role in training future elites, and influence over legacy media and local business (Labaree, 2017). Add to these sources of influence higher education's prominence in social media and role in producing bureaucratic elites who manage such matters as Title IX investigations (Redstone & Villasenor, 2020). In the 21st Century, particularly regarding race and gender, postmodern ideas which began on campus spread rapidly to reporters, bureaucratic elites, and to some degree the mass public, influencing policy and its implementation (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018; Melnick, 2018; Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020). Such influence provides targets for populist opponents of reform, who decry the power of insulated "ivory tower" elites (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017; Rauch, 2021). Perhaps more importantly, if elites reach policy consensus too quickly, intimidating their reasoned critics into silence, they may put in place policies which have counterproductive results.

Generally, social science's record of solving social problems leaves much to be desired. In part this reflects the incoherence of state power in a liberal polity (Lowi, 1979). Yet it also reflects at least four limitations of social science. First, as Lindblom and Cohen (1979) show, social science is rarely conclusive. Critics believe, correctly in many cases, that key questions are not asked, that certain variables are left out, that samples are nonrepresentative or that statistical relationships are overstated, understated, or ignore long term impacts.[1] Traditional social scientists, including many from the Heterodox Academy movement, thus maintain that science works best not when it claims value neutrality, but rather when pursued by communities of social scientists with *diverse* values (Duarte et al. 2015; Tetlock, 2018). Currently, a wealth of data show that, ideologically, social scientists lean overwhelmingly to the left and relatively few have applied experience (Lukianoff & Haidt, 2018), which limits our ability to ask the right questions in the right ways to tackle real-world problems.

Relatedly, even when social science expertise is conclusive, it is rarely authoritative. Findings may not be accepted by relevant policy actors, including the public and bureaucrats charged with implementing policy (Lindblom & Cohen, 1979; Lipsky, 1980). Third, in part because social scientists have their own economic and ideological interests, they may simply be wrong about key causal mechanisms and the ways to influence those mechanisms. Improving schooling or reducing crime, after all, is not quite so simple as building roads or airports, though even the

[1] Even the natural sciences suffer some of the same flaws. See, for example, McAvoy (1999).

latter have complexities not easily fixed by additional doses of expertise (Ostrom, 1974; Pressman & Wildavsky, 1973).

Here, we identify a fourth, related factor borrowed from studies of education policy, as well as studies of flawed expert forecasts (Tetlock, 2018). Reflecting their own ideological or political interests, social scientists may simply choose to study the wrong things, avoiding topics which could improve social conditions, but not through the means that are ideologically appealing to intellectual peers and funders (Duarte et al., 2015). There is, indeed, a large literature on the tendency of academics and social analysts generally to ignore or deny successful means of addressing educational equity concerns such as closing achievement gaps (Dunn, 2008; Thernstrom & Thernstrom, 2003). Likewise, intellectuals and foundations often continue to support politically or ideologically attractive policies long after their conclusive failures (works in Greene & McShane, 2018), perhaps in part since such failures do not directly affect their lives.

This paper has five parts. First, in the introduction, we have broadly reflected on the relative (in)ability of social science to solve social problems. Next, we apply these observations to BLM, paying special attention to the understated role of social class in police behavior including civilian shootings. Third, since, in academia, citations are the coin of the realm determining tenure and promotions, we list the 25 most cited journal articles found on a Web of Science keyword search for "Black Lives Matter." Only *one* of the 25 offers research involving applied methods to reduce police killings of Black (and other) civilians. Fourth, on the assumption that increased transparency can drive improved policing, we rank cities based on the degree to which their police departments protect Black (and other) lives. Finally, we conclude with tentative recommendations regarding future research and reforms.

II. APPLICATIONS TO POLICING AND BLM

Surprisingly few intellectuals admit that policing matters. Both former New York Police Commissioner William Bratton (Bratton & Knobler, 1998, 289-91) and academic Franklin Zimring (2011) report that many professors and journalists insisted that 1990s crime declines in New York City reflected increased incarceration, changed demographics, reduced drug use, rumored gang truces, or even different weather patterns which somehow only affected New York. They largely refused to attribute the dramatic decline in crime to better policing, even though easily available data seriously undermined each of the alternative hypotheses.[2] Those other explanations fit dominant intellectual narratives regarding crime, which tend to discount the influence of policing.

[2] Zimring (2011) points out that New York's incarceration rate declined in the 1990s, and economic growth and demographic changes (fewer young people) likely to reduce crime came *after* rather than before New York's crime decline. Likewise, Bratton and Knobler (1998) report that drug use remained high, with the vast majority of those arrested failing drug tests. Further, DEA evidence gathered from thousands of wiretapped conversations found no evidence of gang truces. Moreover, after 1994 the numbers of police did not increase, but crime kept declining. Finally, the crime decline did not reflect national trends; rather, *nearly two-thirds of the national reduction in numbers of reported serious crimes came from the roughly 3% of the U.S. population living in New York City.*

These general observations have been applied to the BLM movement. Reilly (2020, 2021) makes a strong quantitative, though merely observational, argument using implicit social science modeling. The justifiable police killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson in 2014, and to an even greater the degree, a Minneapolis police officer's brutal murder of George Floyd in 2020, captured on social media, led to large protests, even riots.[3] The political system responded. Many cities cut police budgets and reduced the numbers of police.[4] These policy changes resulted in fewer patrols, fewer stops of suspects, and perceptions that police lost control of the streets. This "de-policing" in turn led to higher homicide rates, concentrated among African Americans.[5] Reilly estimates that these BLM initiated policy changes were followed directly by the *deaths of 2,874 more Black citizens nationwide, in a single year, than would normally be expected: 218 of these excess deaths occurred in Chicago alone.* Reilly (2020, 6-7) points out that in typical years roughly 25 times more Blacks die from (usually same race) civilian violence than from police violence, so any serious effort to make Black lives matter must consider the impacts of policy changes on homicide rates. Whether the bullet comes from the gun of a police officer or a gang-banger, the victim is equally dead.

This large increase in homicides, disproportionately cutting short the lives of African Americans, has received insufficient attention, in our view. Ideology is one reason for this oversight but social class inequities, which often trump racial inequities, is another. It is quite possible that the murders of three upper class University of Chicago students in calendar year 2021 received more local and national publicity (e.g., CBS, 2021) than the killings of any 100 impoverished or working class Chicago residents. The greater attention afforded crimes against elites is hardly a new story. In 1990 New York City had 2,245 reported homicides (Maranto & Wolf, 2013, 232). Arguably, the murder that year of a single affluent tourist, 22-year old Brian Watkins who was brutally stabbed in front of his family while in town to see the U.S. Open tennis championship, had more impact on improving New York City law enforcement than any other event, since it had serious implications for the business climate. William Bratton (Bratton & Knobler, 1998, 172), who then led the city's transit police, recalls getting an unexpected phone call shortly after the Watkins murder from one of Governor Mario Cuomo's chief aids, offering $40 million dollars to improve safety: "The governor understood the impact this killing could have on New York tourism…This was the turnaround I needed."

Class divides among African Americans are increasingly reflected in differential exposure to serious crime. As William Julius Wilson (2015) writes:

[3] As discussed below, police killings of civilians are rare. In a given year roughly one in about 670 officers kills in the line of duty. The public likely perceives such killings as hundreds of times more common than they are, in part due to media and social media repetitions of singular tragedies, but also because of Hollywood depictions of warrior cops from Dirty Harry to Harry Bosch (Maranto, 2020a; 2020b).

[4] Reilly (2021) notes one particularly unfortunate casualty of police budget cutting in Los Angeles: the dissolution of the sex crimes unit which investigated disgraced Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein.

[5] As Brookings Institution researchers Reeves and Holmes (2015) point out, if young Black males were a nation, they would roughly tie Honduras as having the world's highest recorded homicide rate–a matter of indifference to most public officials. Concentrated among the young, gun deaths take about 11% of "all years of potential life lost" among blacks (82% homicide), compared to 6% among whites (77% suicide).

> Segregation by income amplifies segregation by race, leaving low-income blacks clustered in neighborhoods that feature disadvantages along several dimensions, including exposure to violent crime. As a result, the divide within the black community has widened sharply. In 1978, poor blacks aged twelve and over were only marginally more likely than affluent blacks to be violent crime victims—around forty-five and thirty-eight per 1000 individuals respectively. However, by 2008, poor blacks were far more likely to be violent crime victims—about seventy-five per 1000—while affluent blacks were far *less* likely to be victims of violent crime—about twenty-three per 1000…

In short, affluent Blacks were about 40% safer in 2008 than 30 years before, while impoverished Blacks faced 67% more danger. We suspect this within-race inequity has grown in the years since. Rising class inequity almost certainly reduced pressures on law enforcement to provide safe streets, enabling BLM initiated policies which in practice endanger *more* low income Blacks while having little effect on upper income Blacks and whites. We believe this development has received insufficient attention from journalists and social scientists.

Policies which transfer resources away from policing are often well intended, meant to ameliorate real problems. Using a large dataset, Williamson, Trump and Einstein (2018) find that BLM protests are more likely to occur in locales where more Black people have previously been killed by police. Some BLM oriented reformers like Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner argue that, over a few decades, gradually replacing many or most police services with investments in social services will make cities safer. Krasner won reelection easily despite a roughly 40% rise in homicide in the City of Brotherly Love, and significant opposition in both primary and general election contests (PBS, 2021). Philadelphia's mid-year homicides reached their highest level in 60 years in 2020; 94% of the victims were nonwhite (Sullivan, 2021). In some other cities the 2021 municipal elections suggested local political reactions against BLM inspired policies, which are seen as having increased crime and disorder. For example, in 2021, largely in reaction to rising crime, New York elected as mayor African American former police captain Eric Adams (Sullivan, 2021). Seattle did something it has not done in decades, electing a *Republican* City Attorney, who had endorsements from numerous Democratic state and local officeholders.

In short, the political system does respond to real problems of both police brutality and crime, albeit not always in effective or equitable fashion. We have less optimism regarding our fellow social scientists, who are supposed to do research informing political leaders and their constituents.

III. WHICH BLM RELATED RESEARCH GETS CITED

In academia, citation is the coin of the realm. Professors whose work is widely cited are more likely to be tenured, receive grants, and be promoted. The genesis for this paper came from a 2019 academic conference in which one of us (Maranto) presented a paper, later published in *Public Integrity* (Bearfield, Maranto & Wolf, 2020), which ranked 21 of the largest 25 U.S. police departments (data were missing for four) by their success in keeping homicide rates low

and *not* killing civilians, while adjusting for poverty rates, since high poverty makes policing more difficult. Maranto (2020a) describes his intent, and how other social scientists reacted:

> Identifying successful police departments could encourage better police practices, thus saving black (and other) lives…I explained my work to another political scientist, who couldn't understand why anyone would study such a thing. Instead, she researched how Black Lives Matter could increase progressive voter turnout. Alas, her mind-set is far more common than mine. By a quick search on Google Scholar, the five most cited research articles and book chapters with "Black Lives Matter" in the title include "a herstory of the #blacklivesmatter movement," an article on "the evolving role of social media," another on "mass struggle," a commentary on racism and public health, and a piece on environmental justice. Other widely cited works are about news coverage of the movement, youth activism, and the migrant crisis in Europe. Judging by their titles, none of the top twenty articles or chapters on Black Lives Matter appear to address directly how to reduce police killings of black civilians.

Similarly, as of May 5, 2022 there was just *one* Web of Science citation for Franklin Zimring's 2017 *When Police Kill*, a serious empirical analysis suggesting ways to reduce civilian deaths at the hands of law enforcement.[6] Maranto (2020a) argues that this (mis)allocation of research effort reflects the takeover of large sections of the social sciences by critical theory oriented activists seeking power (and grant funding), who appear to be relatively *uninterested* in seeking to understand and ameliorate social problems like violent crime and police brutality.[7]

Table 1. 25 Most Cited Academic Articles about BLM

Rank	Citations	Title	Journal	Year
1	137	Black Lives Matter: A Commentary on Racism and Public Health	AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH	2015
2	132	Police Are Our Government: Politics, Political Science, and the Policing of Race-Class Subjugated Communities	ANNUAL REVIEW OF POLITICAL SCIENCE, VOL 20	2017
3	113	A New Political Generation: Millennials and the Post-2008 Wave of Protest	AMERICAN SOCIOLOGICAL REVIEW	2017
4	103	TOWARD A CRITICAL ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE STUDIES: Black Lives Matter as an Environmental Justice Challenge	DU BOIS REVIEW-SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH ON RACE	2016
5	98	The migrant crisis as racial crisis: do Black Lives Matter in Europe?	ETHNIC AND RACIAL STUDIES	2018
6	89	Participation in Black Lives Matter and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals: Modern Activism Among Black and Latino College Students	JOURNAL OF DIVERSITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION	2016
7	76	The social media response to Black Lives Matter: how Twitter users interact with Black Lives Matter through hashtag use	ETHNIC AND RACIAL STUDIES	2017

[6] There were, however, 197 Google Scholar citations, about twice as many as in June 2020.

[7] See also Pluckrose and Lindsay (2020) on this general theme.

8	76	Quantifying the power and consequences of social media protest	NEW MEDIA & SOCIETY	2018
9	76	Historically White Universities and Plantation Politics: Anti-Blackness and Higher Education in the Black Lives Matter Era	URBAN EDUCATION	2018
10	68	Black Lives Matter and the Paradoxes of US Black Politics: From Democratic Sacrifice to Democratic Repair	POLITICAL THEORY	2016
11	66	TOWARD A RADICAL IMAGINATION OF LAW	NEW YORK UNIVERSITY LAW REVIEW	2018
12	63	The anti-Blackness of global capital	ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING D-SOCIETY & SPACE	2019
13	60	Urban geography II: Urban geography in the Age of Ferguson	PROGRESS IN HUMAN GEOGRAPHY	2017
14	57	Scaling Social Movements Through Social Media: The Case of Black Lives Matter	SOCIAL MEDIA + SOCIETY	2018
15	53	Black Lives Matter: A Call to Action for Counseling Psychology Leaders	COUNSELING PSYCHOLOGIST	2017
16	52	The New Racism of K-12 Schools: Centering Critical Research on Racism	REVIEW OF RESEARCH IN EDUCATION, VOL 41: DISRUPTING INEQUALITY THROUGH EDUCATION RESEARCH	2017
17	47	Decolonizing energy: Black Lives Matter and technoscientific expertise amid solar transitions	ENERGY RESEARCH & SOCIAL SCIENCE	2017
18	45	Black Lives Matter: Claiming a Space for Evidence-Based Outrage in Obstetrics and Gynecology	AMERICAN JOURNAL OF PUBLIC HEALTH	2016
19	44	Preventing the Use of Deadly Force: The Relationship between Police Agency Policies and Rates of Officer-Involved Gun Deaths	PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REVIEW	2017
20	44	Black lives matter: Differential mortality and the racial composition of the US electorate, 1970-2004	SOCIAL SCIENCE & MEDICINE	2015
21	43	Whites for racial justice: How contact with Black Americans predicts support for collective action among White Americans	GROUP PROCESSES & INTERGROUP RELATIONS	2018
22	42	Implicit and Explicit Racial Attitudes Changed During Black Lives Matter	PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY BULLETIN	2018
23	40	Beyond Allyship: Motivations for Advantaged Group Members to Engage in Action for Disadvantaged Groups	PERSONALITY AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY REVIEW	2020
24	40	Towards a radical digital citizenship in digital education	CRITICAL STUDIES IN EDUCATION	2019
25	40	Challenging the dialogic promise: how Ben & Jerry's support for Black Lives Matter fosters dissensus on social media	JOURNAL OF PUBLIC RELATIONS RESEARCH	2018

Note: These rankings were generated by conducting a general search on Web of Science for "black lives matter" and sorting by publications with the most citations.

Here we repeat Maranto's 2020 analysis in a somewhat different way, focusing not on titles but, instead, on generating rankings by conducting a general keyword search on the Web of Science Core Collection for "black lives matter" and sorting by publications with the most citations as of April 20, 2022.[8] The Web of Science is far more restrictive than Google Scholar, yielding over 95% fewer citations, in our experience.

Table 1 includes the 25 most cited works we identified, which have a combined total of 1,704 citations. The vast majority of citations on Web of Science seemingly have little to do with either studies or commentary likely to save Black lives. At least from their titles, the top five works, those with 98 or more Web of Science citations, resemble (and often *are*) the most influential publications of 2020 using Google Scholar, involving public health, millennial activism, and the migrant crisis in Europe. In addition, the second most widely cited piece discusses how political science as a field treats marginalized communities of color. As the authors explain in the abstract: "Focusing on policing, we seek to unsettle the mainstream of a subfield that rarely inquires into governmental practices of social control and the ways 'race-class subjugated communities' are governed through coercion, containment, repression, surveillance, regulation, predation, discipline, and violence." Such analyses seem unlikely to decrease either homicide or police violence against civilians, and thus are unlikely to help make Black lives matter in any foreseeable time frame.

Generally, the highly cited articles listed in Table 1 explore immigration and migrants (2), social media use and activism (4, including one piece involving Ben and Jerry's ice cream and BLM), racial activism and white attitudes (3), anti-Blackness in higher education, "democratic repair," radically re-imagining law, anti-Blackness of global capital, urban geography, counseling psychology, research on k-12 schools, BLM and "technoscientific expertise amid solar transitions," BLM and "evidence based outrage in obstetrics and gynecology," and BLM and differential mortality in the electorate. Again, we see little evidence in works that frequently get cited of author intent to save Black lives.

Of the 25 most cited scholarly articles, only *one*, from *Public Administration Review* ("Preventing the Use of Deadly Force: The Relationship between Police Agency Policies and Rates of Officer-Involved Gun Deaths") presents research likely to save Black lives in ways which are relatively immediate and related to law enforcement. This fascinating article uses cross sectional data from 1,107 law enforcement agencies over a 15-year time period, standardized by population. The authors, Jennings and Rubado (2017), find no evidence that either community policing or having police officers who demographically resemble their cities reduce the numbers of fatal police shootings of civilians. In contrast, roughly half of departments require that officers file a report whenever they point their guns without shooting. Empirical evidence indicates that

[8] See https://www.webofscience.com/wos/woscc/summary/f4d6c225-76bc-419a-8d14-eb663ae236e4-326fa58f/times-cited-descending/1. We thank James Paul for undertaking this task for us.

this simple reporting requirement substantially reduces police shootings of civilians, without increasing shooting deaths of officers.

All science is tentative, and sometimes reforms have unintended consequences. That said, this article empirically evaluates practical ways to save Black (and other) lives, prescribing a reform with great potential to do so. This article accounts for just 44 (2.6%) of the 1,704 Web of Science citations of the 25 most cited articles found in the "black lives matter" keyword search. The Bearfield, Maranto, and Wolf (2020) ranking of large police departments to identify those most successful at protecting Black (and other) lives has so far been cited just twice by Google Scholar and not at all in the Web of Science. We doubt this article will ever rank among the top 1,000 cited BLM related studies!

To demonstrate how considerations of individual police conduct and organizational responses are vital, not hypothetical, consider the murder of George Floyd. Derek Chauvin, the Minneapolis police officer who murdered Floyd, had a notably uneven record. Long before killing Floyd, Chauvin had been involved in *three* police shootings, one of them fatal. The officer reactions were found to be justified, and indeed Chauvin received a medal for valor for being one of several officers who fired on a suspect pointing a shotgun at police. Consider that police shootings of civilians are very rare. In 2015 roughly one in 670 officers killed a civilian (Maranto, 2020a); yet Chauvin had been involved in at least three uses of potential (and in one case, actual) deadly force *before* killing Floyd. Chauvin also had 18 complaints on his official record, two of which resulted in discipline. Yet Chauvin remained on the Minneapolis force, carrying a weapon. During the incident in which he killed Floyd, Chauvin was the designated field training officer. The Minneapolis Police Department showed sufficient trust in Chauvin to choose him to train rookie officers.

In contrast, the New York Police Department (NYPD) has an internal affairs division which each year pushes dozens of officers to resign, retire early, or move to routine administrative duties in which they are *unarmed*. Others are prosecuted (Campisi, 2019). An NYPD source indicates that about 300 officers, nearly 1% of NYPD, are on internal watch lists. When told that NYPD should feel satisfied having so few problematic officers, the source retorted that they had trouble sleeping at night since every one of those officers presented a "potential" George Floyd or Freddie Gray "situation." In retrospect, Minneapolis and Baltimore would be better off had more of their police administrators thought this way. Two years after the Floyd murder, observers believe that, along with civil service rules, the Minneapolis police union contract still poses undue burdens on the ability of managers to hold officers accountable (Navratil, 2022).

If anyone in higher education intends research to save Black lives rather than promote radical causes and the careers of professors, then we need a major reorientation of social science research.

IV. RANKING POLICE DEPARTMENTS: Which ones save Black (and other) lives?

Updating Bearfield, Maranto, and Wolf (2020) we propose that, particularly in high poverty communities, police are "street level bureaucrats" with difficult jobs (Lipsky, 1980; Wilson,

1968). Some defenders argue that police already perform very well, needing little or no reform (e.g., Mac Donald, 2016). As a matter of course, as the article titles in Table I make clear, dominant narratives within academia propose that without "disrupting" existing systems with critical theory inspired revolutionary social and political changes, Black lives will remain undervalued. The records of existing and past Marxist regimes regarding minority rights, and rights generally, call such views into question (e.g., Courtois et al. 1999).

We take a very different approach, more akin to scholars from the reinventing government movement like Behn (2014) and Maranto and Wolf (2013), as well as practitioners like Bratton (Bratton & Kobler, 1998; 2021), Maple (2000), Timoney (2010), and Campisi (2019). Policing is indeed a difficult profession. Like any profession, some individuals and whole organizations do policing better than others. Statistics should never be used without careful thought; yet some inputs and outcomes can be measured in ways which allow us to distinguish more from less successful practices, people, and whole organizations. Indeed, this approach is central to U.S. federalism, in which voters routinely compare their own mayors, county executives, and governors to others. This approach holds lessons for policing: by copying more successful officers, precincts, and whole departments, policing generally can be improved over time. If we really want to make Black lives matter, rather than merely virtue signal about it (Redstone & Villasenor, 2020), then we must *compare* different police departments, to bring attention to more successful departments and their practices. We must also bring attention to *less* successful departments, and to their policies and procedures which need reform.

Numbers can mislead. High poverty communities tend to have more crime; thus, ratings of police units and whole departments should adjust for community poverty. Further, even though citizens often care more about "quality of life" misdemeanors (Bratton & Knobler, 2021; Wilson, 1968), when considering precincts and departments one should focus more on homicide rates, for three reasons. First, more serious crimes like homicide likely correlate with less serious crimes. Second, violent crimes like homicide are far more serious than property crimes since, ultimately, restitution can never be adequate. Third and more pragmatically, we *can* measure homicide rates with great accuracy, because police cannot easily fake or hide a dead body. Accordingly, Bearfield, Maranto and Wolf (2020) developed the *Police Performance Index* (PPI) to rank departments in 21 cities. For the variables used in our updated version, see Appendix I. The PPI is an intuitive and justifiable assessment of police performance, most clearly expressed as:

$$PPI = 10 - Ln((Homicide\ Rate * PRDC\ Rate)/Poverty\ Rate))$$

It is generated by first multiplying each city's annual homicide rate per 100,000 by its police related deaths of civilians PRDC per 100,000 over a five-year period rate[9] to produce a composite of the two rates. To account for poverty, that product is divided by the annual poverty rate so that cities with relatively high poverty rates have higher than average scores on the index even if their homicide and civilian shooting rates are average. The natural log of the result is applied to even out the distribution, and the product is then subtracted from 10 to ensure that higher-performing cities, which will have smaller products from the initial calculations, receive

[9] PRDC are, thankfully, rare. As a result, instead of measuring them annually, we average them across five years both to smooth the PRDC rates statistically and to effectively weight police related deaths of civilians five times more heavily than civilian homicides to account for the fact that people often view a PRDC as a greater violation of trust than a civilian homicide.

higher numeric scores. The resulting *Police Performance Index* (PPI) can be thought of as ranging from 0 to 10, with 10 representing a hypothetical (but implausible) city with a composite homicide-shooting rate of less than 1% of the mean rate despite a poverty rate of 100%.

Table 2. The 50 Largest U.S. Cities Ranked by Police Professionalism Index Score

Rank	City	Police Professionalism Index Score	2015 Police Professionalism Index Score	Homicides per 100,000 residents	Police killings of civilians per 100,000 residents	Poverty Rate
1	New York City	7.75	7.60	3.83	0.43	0.173
2	Boston	6.35		6.06	1.15	0.18
3	San Diego	6.09	7.11	3.51	1.68	0.118
4	Raleigh	6.01		6.25	1.02	0.118
5	Mesa	5.87		1.74	4.74	0.133
6	Virginia Beach	5.72		3.34	1.55	0.072
7	Austin	5.70	6.89	3.27	2.82	0.125
8	El Paso	5.65	7.46	5.87	2.47	0.188
9	San Jose	5.58	6.63	3.13	2.19	0.083
10	San Francisco	5.54	5.98	4.54	1.92	0.101
11	Arlington	5.50		4.26	2.99	0.142
12	Dallas	5.49	5.40	14.74	1.11	0.181
13	Seattle	5.42	5.87	4.59	2.16	0.102
14	Omaha	5.39		4.81	2.50	0.12
15	Nashville	5.39	6.41	12.37	1.91	0.234
16	Fort Worth	5.35	5.82	7.59	1.88	0.136
17	Los Angeles	5.32	6.43	6.48	2.81	0.169
18	Fresno	5.31		6.02	4.26	0.235
19	Portland	5.28		4.43	3.30	0.131
20	Tampa	5.26		6.25	3.19	0.175
21	Minneapolis	5.20		10.94	2.03	0.183
22	Sacramento	5.04		6.62	3.39	0.157
23	San Antonio	4.98	5.76	6.79	3.94	0.176

24	Philadelphia	4.88	4.67	21.84	1.77	0.231
25	Colo. Springs	4.86		3.97	4.85	0.113
26	Columbus	4.78	4.93	9.01	3.91	0.191
27	Chicago	4.75	4.86	18.27	1.80	0.173
28	Houston	4.71	5.36	11.85	3.27	0.196
29	Long Beach	4.70		7.35	4.42	0.162
30	Charlotte	4.70	6.50	11.63	2.05	0.119
31	Milwaukee	4.67		16.62	3.07	0.246
32	Indianapolis	4.46	4.88	17.46	2.46	0.169
33	Phoenix	4.43	5.22	7.79	5.45	0.162
34	Aurora	4.41		7.35	3.81	0.105
35	Tucson	4.31		8.58	7.17	0.208
36	Oakland	4.25		17.09	2.70	0.146
37	Memphis	4.15		29.34	2.92	0.246
38	Jacksonville	4.11	4.78	14.15	3.84	0.15
39	Detroit	4.08	4.22	41.04	3.02	0.332
40	Oklahoma City	3.98		11.45	5.47	0.152
41	Washington	3.95	4.52	23.52	2.78	0.155
42	Denver	3.94	5.76	9.21	5.53	0.119
43	Atlanta	3.76		18.74	5.26	0.192
44	Louisville	3.71		14.57	4.23	0.114
45	Tulsa	3.68		13.71	7.43	0.183
46	Miami	3.63		17.31	7.24	0.215
47	Albuquerque	3.39		14.27	8.35	0.16
48	Las Vegas	3.37		12.9	8.73	0.149
49	Kansas City	2.86		30.48	6.33	0.153
50	Baltimore	2.84		56.12	4.59	0.2

Here, we replicate the 2015 rankings in Bearfield, Maranto, and Wolf (2020), expanded from 21 of the largest 25 cities to all of the 50 largest U.S. cities. We do this to bring attention to police performance, ideally leading to serious discussions of which cities do and do not protect Black (and non-Black) lives. Indicative of the relative stability of police performance, for the 21 cities in both data sets, the 2015 and 2020 PPI figures correlate at .79. Not surprisingly, city poverty correlates highly with homicide rate (.55), but only slightly (.10) with police related civilian deaths.

From PPI rankings, we note three key findings. First, even adjusting for poverty, U.S. police departments vary widely in their levels of effectiveness. Despite a somewhat high poverty rate (17.3%, compared to a mean 16.4% for cities generally), New York has the sixth *lowest* homicide rate among the 50 cities, 3.83 per 100,000 residents. Only Mesa (1.74), San Jose (3.13), Austin (3.27), Virginia Beach (3.34), and San Diego (3.51) have lower homicide rates, and each has less poverty than New York. New York has by far the lowest rate of police killings of civilians (.43 per 100,000 population over a five-year period), less than half the rates of the other three most restrained departments, Raleigh (1.02), Boston (1.15), and Dallas (1.11). Homicide rate and the rate of police killings of civilians correlate positively at .18, showing that, at least as regards deadly force, police need not be brutal to keep crime low.

Second, there are no obvious relationships between region and PPI, save for California and Texas cities doing better than average. Here, based on anecdotal evidence, we speculate that since both Texas and California have several large cities, their reporters, citizens and elected officials might compare the relative performance of cities inside the mega states, pressuring police to improve relative to in-state rivals. After all, when wooing businesses, (8^{th} ranked) El Paso officials are more likely to compare their police to those in (12^{th} ranked) Dallas than to (13^{th} ranked) Seattle. Future research should explore such possible competitive effects within states.

New York City does far better than any other city, with Boston second. None of the other 15 leading PPI cities, however, is from the Northeast. Four are from Texas (Austin, El Paso, Arlington, and Dallas, with Fort Worth just missing at #16); three are from California (San Diego, San Francisco, San Jose, with Los Angeles and Fresno just missing the top 15); and three are southern (Raleigh, Virginia Beach, Nashville). Mesa, Seattle, and Omaha also appear. Virginia Beach, San Jose, San Francisco, Seattle, Austin, and Omaha all have notably low poverty rates (12.5% or less); only #15 Nashville, among the top-rated cities, has particularly high poverty (23.4%).

Poor police performance seems even less linked to region than excellence is. Baltimore and Kansas City fall at the bottom in the overall PPI rankings. Baltimore has the nation's worst murder record by far, a remarkably horrible 56.12 homicides per 100,000 population per year, 37% higher than Detroit (41.04) and nearly twice as high as Kansas City (30.48) and Memphis (29.34). Among this bottom-dwelling group, even Memphis (29.34) has a homicide rate more than seven times that of safe cities like New York (3.83). Given that homicides are concentrated among young Black males, *in Memphis, Kansas City, Detroit, and especially Baltimore, Black lives do not matter to the extent they should.*[10] Yet these cities seem to receive far less negative

[10]Readers should know that the lead author is a Baltimore native, whose family has operated an industrial bakery in a low- income, high crime city neighborhood there since 1914. It pains him to write these lines.

attention than Chicago (18.27), which has only a third of Baltimore's homicide rate, likely due to Chicago's larger size and national profile.

Regarding police killings of civilians per 100,000 over a five-year period, Las Vegas is worst at 8.73, followed by Albuquerque at 8.35, Tulsa at 7.43, Miami at 7.24, and Tucson at 7.17. Of these relative hot-beds for police shootings, only Miami has a notably higher-than-average homicide rate, nearly half a standard deviation above the mean of 12.06, again suggesting few relationships between crime and police violence. Clearly, however, police professionalism matters. *Las Vegas and Albuquerque police kill civilians at a rate more than eight times higher than their counterparts in Raleigh; more than 19 times higher than NYPD.*

Of the 15 worst ranked PPI cities, nine are in the south or near south (Baltimore, Miami, Tulsa, Louisville, Atlanta, Washington, Oklahoma City, Jacksonville, and Memphis); four are in the West (Las Vegas, Albuquerque, Denver, and Oakland); and just two are midwestern (Kansas City and Detroit). Detroit has the highest poverty rate among the major cities ranked, 33.2%, with Memphis, Miami, and Baltimore all over 20%.

PPI does not always relate neatly to *perceptions*. Seattle and Portland are traditionally very safe cities which remain fairly safe based on recent data, ranking medium-high on PPI (13th and 19th respectively). Each still has low rates of homicide and police-related deaths. This reality is belied by massive disorder in certain sections of the cities including months of rioting in both cities (Reilly, 2021). That rioting involved heavy doses of disorder and property destruction but few deaths. Since the PPI focuses on deaths caused by civilians and police, disorder without deaths is not captured by the algorithm. To repeat, we believe the loss of life is uniquely important, and that further, over the long run minor and major crimes like homicide are likely to be related.

How did New York City reach the pinnacle of effective police performance? As recently as the early 1990s, non-New Yorkers belittled New York for its crime and disorder, which damaged the city's business climate. Some New Yorkers took a perverse pride in surviving the Big Apple. If you can make it (i.e. survive) there, you can make it anywhere. Though some progress came earlier, in a remarkably short 27-month period in 1994-96, New York's homicide rate fell by half under the leadership of NYPD Commissioner William Bratton, with further declines since (Bratton & Knobler, 2021, 196; see also Maranto & Wolf, 2013). New York became, as the title of Franklin Zimring's 2011 book put it, "the city that became safe." As Zimring explains, reducing crime largely protected low income minorities, who are vastly overrepresented both among crime victims and those imprisoned. As a result of NYPD's success in deterring crime and thus changing behavior, the city's incarcerated population fell substantially between the 1990s and 2010. Further, as Timoney (2010) and Campisi (2019) explain, over a much larger period from the 1970s through the 2000s, largely through improved training of officers and issuing of nonlethal weapons like tasers, NYPD's killings of civilians fell from 90-100 annually to about 10 annually. As our data show, proportionately, NYPD kills far fewer citizens than any other large police force.

Many cities have adopted NYPD's COMPSTAT, the computerized system of reporting crimes in real time, tracking where and when they occur. Yet relatively few departments have deployed forces accordingly, putting "cops on the dots" (Bratton & Knobler, 2021, 147; see also Behn,

2014). This approach depends on precinct level leadership rapidly deploying officers to identify and stop crime hot spots, tactics lacking in most cities. NYPD had more success employing data-informed policing in part because of weekly COMPSTAT meetings in which senior police leaders grilled precinct commanders, encouraging less successful leaders to copy their peers, making NYPD a learning organization (Bratton & Knobler, 1998, 2019).

In the real world, public servants including police do not always want to learn. As we have argued elsewhere (Maranto & Wolf, 2013; Bearfield et al., 2020; see also Timoney, 2010), we see personnel systems as key to NYPD's success. As a result of reforms put in place by commissioner Benjamin Ward in the early 1980s, NYPD commissioners had unusual power over personnel, being able to bust back in rank precinct commanders and central office officials, demotions that would affect their pensions. In effect, the NYPD commissioner has the power to force into early retirement key managers *and select their replacements*. Bratton replaced about two-thirds of precinct commanders in just two years, fundamentally changing NYPD culture. Few other police commissioners have this kind of power over personnel, and fewer still want to use it to fight crime rather than reward supporters (Maranto & Wolf, 2013).

Likewise, NYPD has invested resources in a large and unusually professional internal affairs unit able to terminate unprofessional officers, or at least place them in posts where they cannot carry firearms, such as in vehicle impoundment (Campisi, 2019). Had the Minneapolis police chief had this sort of authority and the willingness to use it, George Floyd would almost certainly be alive today, as would roughly two dozen civilians killed in 2020's BLM inspired unrest.

V. NEXT STEPS

May 25, 2022 marks the second anniversary of the murder of George Floyd. In the months after Mr. Floyd's murder, many U.S. cities suffered violent civil unrest, as the U.S. commenced a mass movement, much of it broadly under the Black Lives Matter banner. As Reilly (2020, 2021) argues, so far, BLM-related activism has done more to take than save Black lives. Americans of all races deserve better from our leaders, and our cops.

In our view, social scientists have done shockingly little that might actually protect Black lives and property. Accordingly, we believe that, perhaps encouraged by funders, researchers must refocus research effort on practices likely to save Black lives, rather than promoting Marxist theories which have failed to improve life for anyone, including minorities (Courtois et al., 1999; Pluckrose & Lindsay, 2020). Such research need not be difficult. We offer an example here and in prior work (Bearfield et al., 2020), as do Jennings and Rubado (2017). That said, we do not pretend that our simple ranking offers sufficient light on the complexities of policing. Crucially, our data set lacks measures of policing resources including the number of officers per 100,000 residents, officer pay, and officer equipment. We also lack data regarding the degree to which police commissioners can control personnel, and thus shape their organizations. Future versions of this paper will explore these matters.

Second, we call on journalists and citizens to expect more from the city officials overseeing police, and ultimately from police themselves. We call on journalists to use the PPI or like

metrics to compare different cities, to see which protect Black (and non-Black) lives and which do not. We must honor the former and shame the latter. But shame is not enough. When mayors fail to take charge of their police to protect all citizens, regardless of party, voters must defeat those mayors when they run for reelection and replace them with others who might do better. Journalists and citizens must begin to ask, immediately, whether police commissioners have the power to terminate or otherwise hold harmless unsuccessful cops and their managers, and the power and resources to hire and promote better cops. These are questions all of us should ask our police leaders, every day. If they answer no, citizens must lean on legislators to rewrite civil service rules and collective bargaining agreements, and defeat at the polls politicians who refuse to do so. We must also stop reflexively disparaging or praising police; rather, we should praise departments that work well, and remake or even disband those that do not, as a warning to all underperforming departments.

Most of all, we must distinguish success from failure, to accentuate the first and discourage the second. Measures like the PPI can offer important data distinguishing the two. After all, as the old reinventing government saying goes, what isn't measured doesn't count. George Floyd, and the rest of us, deserve no less.

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Appendix (by Mattie Harris)

Ranking Cops: Here we rank the 50 largest U.S. cities, using our own index composed of homicide rates and police killing of civilian rates per 100,000 population, while adjusting for poverty. We show enormous variance in police effectiveness, even after adjusting for demographic characteristics, and suggest lessons for reform.

1. **List**: 1-50—most populated to least populated
2. **City**: name of city
3. **Pop**: population
4. **Poverty**: poverty rate for the city in **%**
    - Source: 2020 estimates from the American Community Survey 5-year estimates—census.gov
5. **Total Homicide**: number of recorded homicides for the year
6. **Homicide rate**: total homicide/population*100,000
    - source: 2019 Uniform Crime Report
7. **Minority:** Percentage of Black, Hispanic, & Asian of city population
    - Source: 2020 US Census
8. **Total PRCD**: total police related civilian deaths
    - Recorded from 2015-March, 2022
    - Source: Police shootings database 2015-2021 - Washington Post
9. **PRCD Rate**: (PRCD/population) *100,000
10. **PPI**: Police performance Index = 10 – Ln((Homicide Rate * PRDC Rate)/Poverty Rate)
11. **PPI2015**: Police Performance Index from 2015 as reported in Bearfield, Maranto & Wolf, 2020.