

Police Unionism & Protectionism in the US: Origins, Correlates, and Mechanisms



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ABSTRACT

In 2024, there were over 1,300 incidents of police violence, the highest number since data has been collected on police killings of civilians (Campaign Zero 2025). While police violence across the U.S. persists, there is significant variation in fatal violence applied by police agencies, an institution that plays a critical role in preserving racial authoritarianism in the U.S. While scholarship has identified a myriad of factors to consider when examining variation in police violence, one understudied institution is police unions. This dissertation develops a novel, scalable index of police protectionism, capturing the presence and type of officer protections embedded in collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) and Law Enforcement Officers' Bills of Rights (LEOBORs). This is the first large-N tool designed to evaluate long-standing theoretical claims about how police protections contribute to violent outcomes. Using this index, I first examine what correlates with higher levels of police protections and find that racial segregation and violent crime are significant factors. I then illustrate how the index can be used to assess whether protections correlate with fatal police violence. Across the 100 largest U.S. metropolitan areas, each additional protection category is associated with a 10% (9.9%) increase in police killings. These models are not causal but demonstrate the index's analytic value and provide support for the theory that protections may facilitate police violence.

Finally, to understand the broader police union mechanisms that may contribute to police violence beyond protections found in CBAs and LEOBORs, I conduct a paired case study of unions in Chicago, IL, and Dallas, TX. While police protections may have a relationship with police violence outcomes, police union activities beyond protections, such as those in the political dimension (i.e., campaign contributions), are critical to our understanding of the role police unions play in preserving the institution which is necessary to achieve meaningful public safety reinvention.

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“The way to right wrongs is to turn the light of truth upon them.”
— Ida B. Wells

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

In 2024, law enforcement officers in the United States killed more than 1,300 civilians—the highest number recorded since the beginning of modern data collection on police violence (Campaign Zero, 2024). While these numbers reflect a persistent and devastating crisis of police violence, they obscure a critical pattern: not all police departments engage in lethal violence at the same rate. Indeed, across the 100 largest metropolitan areas, the number of civilians killed by police each year varies significantly. Scholars and activists alike have struggled to explain this variation. Common explanations point to differences in crime rates, demographic profiles, or training regimes. Yet one powerful and understudied institution has received comparatively little attention—police unions. Law enforcement unions have long been prominent actors in shaping police policy, practice, and accountability mechanisms. While the primary role of labor unions in American Political Development is often understood as advancing worker rights and democratic inclusion, police unions complicate this narrative. In contrast to traditional unions, police unions often work to entrench systems of unaccountable violence, resist transparency, and combat external oversight. Through legal protections, political advocacy, and cultural framing, police unions serve not only to defend individual officers but also to shield the broader institution of policing. Their activities have profound implications not only for public safety but also for democratic governance.

This dissertation investigates the mechanisms through which police unions influence accountability, violence, and institutional preservation in the United States. Though structured as separate but interrelated studies, each empirical investigation contributes to a throughline: that police unions, through distinct mechanisms, act as central actors in sustaining the status quo of U.S. policing and are critical players in the preservation of racial authoritarianism (Weaver and Prowse 2020).

Chapter two offers a historical and empirical review of police unionism and accountability, examining the origins and evolution of law enforcement union power and identifying the mechanisms used to resist change. The third chapter introduces a novel contribution: a large-N, scalable index of police protectionism, constructed from provisions embedded within collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) and law enforcement officers' bills of rights (LEOBORs). While theories linking police protections to impunity and violence are long-standing, they have rarely been tested at scale. This index creates a new empirical measure to examine those claims. Using the index, I assess the correlates of police protections across jurisdictions, identifying race, political ideology, and crime rates as significant indicators.

The fourth chapter explores how the new index of protectionism can be used to assess the relationship between police protections and fatal police violence across the 100 largest U.S. metropolitan areas. While the models do not attempt to establish causal relationships, they illustrate important associations that speak to theoretical claims. Specifically, each additional category of police protection is associated with a modest but nontrivial 9.9% increase in police killings. These findings offer early, indicative support for the notion that police protections may be implicated in producing or enabling violence—particularly those that shield officers during investigations or protect them financially.

The final empirical chapter shifts the analytic lens beyond formal protections, drawing on a paired case study of the Chicago Fraternal Order of Police and the Dallas Police Association. Through mixed methods—including interviews, archival research, and campaign finance data—this chapter explores how police unions act as political institutions, resisting police reinvention and sustaining racialized systems of power that continue “frontlash,” punitive policies disproportionately impacting non-white communities, particularly Black residents (Weaver 2007). The study reveals how unions use electoral influence, legal challenges, and media campaigns to thwart oversight and

preserve the ideological and demographic composition of the police force. In turn, defending the institution that preserves the status quo.

Together, these studies contribute to sociological understandings of institutional persistence, labor politics, and racial authoritarianism. They also provide new insights into the mechanisms by which police unions operate as defenders of a status quo that has significant implications for the study of organized labor, state power, and the reinvention of public safety. Specifically, given the explicit and visible rise of other forms of authoritarianism in the U.S., police unions may play a critical role in sustaining and furthering authoritarian agendas.

CHAPTER 2: A REVIEW OF SCHOLARSHIP EXAMINING POLICE UNIONISM, ACCOUNTABILITY, AND MISCONDUCT

Co-Authors: David S. Kirk and William P. Jones¹

1. INTRODUCTION

On December 2, 2013, the Chicago Police Department (CPD) received a civilian complaint against Jason Van Dyke, a white officer hired in 2001, alleging excessive use of physical force and verbal abuse during an incident the previous day. In fact, according to official complaint data distributed by the Invisible Institute (2022), Van Dyke received 20 use-of-force complaints between 2004 and 2014, many more than most CPD officers. Nevertheless, he remained on the police force, and soon his use of force turned lethal. On October 20, 2014, Van Dyke shot Laquan McDonald, a 17-year-old Black male, 16 times. Many of the rounds struck McDonald after he was nearly lifeless on the ground (Corley 2022).

The role of police unions in protecting officers and shielding them from accountability became increasingly clear as the saga of Laquan McDonald's tragic death played out over the ensuing years. For instance, the media and political tactics employed by Van Dyke's union, the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), were critical in providing a distorted narrative of the incident by asserting that McDonald had "lunged" at officers despite video footage, released 13 months after the killing, clearly showing McDonald walking away as Van Dyke repeatedly fired his weapon (Pilkington 2015).

¹ Co-Author Declaration forms can be found in Appendix A.

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The labor agreement between the FOP and the city of Chicago provides for delays in officer interrogations after an officer-involved shooting, allows officers to access witness interview transcripts prior to their own interrogation, allows officers to amend statements after viewing incident videos, and expunges officer misconduct history, thereby making it difficult to establish patterns of abuse (Emmanuel 2015). With the protections granted to police in Chicago, Van Dyke and other officers at the scene of the McDonald killing, including three later prosecuted for conspiracy associated with allegedly covering up facts about the shooting, reassembled at a police station in the hours after the shooting to discuss the case, before being interviewed by investigators (WBEZ Chicago 2018). Hence, rather than being separated as independent witnesses of the incident, Van Dyke and the other officers were permitted by union contract provisions to meet and allegedly concocted the aforementioned narrative about McDonald lunging at officers.

The protections afforded Van Dyke are not isolated benefits for a select few officers. Approximately 75% of police officers in the United States are unionized (DeLord and York 2016). Moreover, our analysis of weighted 2016 Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) data from the Bureau of Justice Statistics reveals that approximately 46% of law enforcement agencies in the United States, which employ 67% of all sworn officers, are authorized to collectively bargain, a key tool of union influence. Hence, union protections and mechanisms serve to potentially insulate a large swath of U.S. police should they similarly engage in misconduct or excessive force. Thus, the main questions animating this review include whether police unions facilitate police misconduct and excessive use of force and, if so, by which mechanisms.

Building on the foundation of earlier reviews (Cunningham *et al.*, 2020; Juris and Feuille 1973; Walker 2008), our review starts by examining the historical origins of police unionism and the racial animus underlying its development. We then explore three broad mechanisms and arenas of union influence—collective bargaining, legislative lobbying and electoral politics, and the courts and legal

actions—and how these mechanisms are employed to reduce disciplinary consequences of misconduct and excessive use of force, undermine oversight of the police, and limit police transparency.²

Much of the research on police unions consists of legal scholarship and qualitative studies describing and examining, for instance, the content of union contracts and the mechanisms that unions employ to facilitate better pay, benefits, and working conditions for their members. Recent quasi-experimental studies have added an important quantitative dimension to this research domain by focusing on the implications for downstream police behaviors.

We conclude the review by discussing the potential and future avenues for investigation needed to better understand the relationships among police unionism, negative policing outcomes, and the possibilities for police reform and reinvention efforts. Building off the work of Levin (2020), we are mindful of the need to distinguish between the effects of police unionism and those related to the broader institution of U.S. policing.

Before proceeding, we offer a qualification, perhaps best articulated by Hardaway (2019, p. 142) in her discussion of police unions:

Policing in America is a unique institution for which there are no real parallels or comparisons. No other employee, public or private, is empowered to lawfully infringe on the life and liberty of free citizens in the manner in which law enforcement officers are. Rather than a blanket indictment of unions, this Article only explores issues related to law enforcement.

To the extent that police unions facilitate detrimental outcomes such as police misconduct, that finding does not imply a blanket indictment of all types of unions or the strategies they employ.

² Whereas our focus in this review is on these primary mechanisms of police union influence—that is, collective bargaining, legislative lobbying and electoral politics, and courts and legal action—one of the potentially powerful instruments that unions can employ to influence and pressure politicians are slowdowns, also sometimes referred to as work delays (Cheng & Long 2022, Pyrooz et al. 2016, Rushin & Edwards 2017, Shjarback et al. 2017; but see Chandrasekher 2016, Sullivan & O’Keefe 2017). Because most police unions lack the power to strike, slowdowns are often viewed as the next best option.

2. HISTORICAL ORIGINS OF POLICE UNIONISM

Historically, police unions have been defined by the paradoxical social position of police as workers employed by the state to discipline and disempower other workers. Law enforcement officers have formed unions since the creation of modern police departments in the late nineteenth century. Yet, until the latter half of the 20th century, union effectiveness was limited by opposition from other workers and the broader union movement and by legal barriers to collective bargaining by public employees. Early efforts to unionize police were rebuffed by labor leaders who viewed police as “too often controlled by forces inimical” to organized labor and complicit with violent attacks on working people. Although labor leaders became friendlier toward police unions during the First World War, a strike by police in Boston in 1919 convinced many public officials that unionizing any public employees would lead to strikes that could threaten public health and safety, thereby hindering the progress of police unionism for several decades (Jones 2021).

The prospects for police unionism shifted in the 1940s and 1950s, as federal law facilitated the expansion of a large and influential union movement in the private sector. Public employees were excluded from federal laws, but they joined unions in growing numbers and pushed state and local governments to recognize their unions and bargain for better wages and working conditions. Ironically, police played little role in these efforts and focused on lobbying elected officials informally for better wages and professional status. However, when states began granting collective bargaining rights to public employees, starting with Wisconsin in 1959, police unions emerged quickly, among the largest and most influential sectors of a growing public sector union movement (Bekemeyer 2021, Levi 1977, Levine 1988, Slater 2004). This rise in unionism among police and other domains of the public sector stands in stark contrast to unionism in the private sector. Indeed, the broader labor movement in the United States has witnessed a long-term decline in union

influence, particularly in the private sector, with union membership now at historic lows (Rosenfeld 2019).

Juris a Feuille's (1973) foundational study provides further insight into the development of police unionism in the twentieth century in the context of increased crime, evolution in urban policing, an expansion of collective bargaining rights, and the early years of the war on drugs. They argue that the rise in cohesion among police officers in the late 1960s and early 1970s, described in more detail below, played a critical role in advancing police unionism. This rising cohesion coincided with increasing demands for better wages and working conditions and opposition to oversight by elected officials.

Another key contributor to cohesion among the police and the rise of police unionism was racial animus and resistance to the Civil Rights Movement (Fisk and Richardson 2017; Hardaway 2022; Juris and Feuille 1973; Kearney and Carnevale 2001; Levine 1988; Walker 2008). For instance, Juris and Feuille (1973) cite widespread police support for Alabama governor and presidential candidate George Wallace, whose appeal rested in large part on his racist rhetoric and opposition to civil rights, as a source of cohesion among police officers (Juris and Feuille 1973, Levi 1977). They also assert that the rising police cohesion and resulting militancy was a response to the perceived threat and influence of the Black Panthers, which formed to counter police violence in Black communities. Just as today a pro-police response to "Black lives matter" is to trumpet that "blue lives matter," a sign of police cohesion and identity of the civil rights era was the championing of "Blue Power" as a retort to "Black Power" (Hardaway 2022). Hardaway (2022) argues that police unions of the 1960s garnered their political power to secure protections and install "law and order" mayoral and local election candidates by fighting against the Black liberation movement (Hardaway 2022). Thus, the surge in police militancy, organized union membership, and public support for police cannot be understood or separated from the backlash to racial progress and the calls for civil

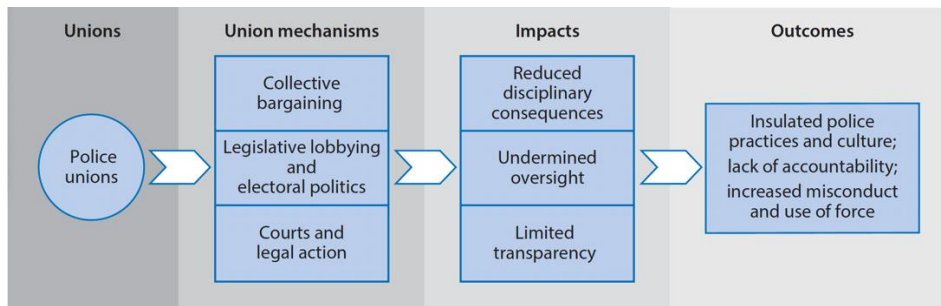
rights as well as the corresponding demands for restraints on police discretion (Juris and Feuille 1973, Levi 1977, Serrin 1969). Like the development of any American institution, race has been central to the rise of police unionism in the United States (King and Smith 2005).

The history of police unionism is important because it reveals why there are immense barriers to reform or reinvention in modern policing. As Hardaway (2022, p. 11) argues, police unions are not “self-empowering entities,” rather they are very much a product of, and embedded within, an anti-Black sociopolitical climate that continues to this day. In contrast to other public sector unions, police unions of the civil rights era and the decades thereafter were successful in forging hard-on-crime political alliances and remaking urban politics through those alliances. These alliances have provided cover for the police and their unions in the face of demands for change. Bekemeyer (2021) argues that attempts to remake policing will be successful only if the broad-based law-and-order coalition that has arisen over the past 60 years can be dismantled.

3. EXPLORING POLICE UNION MECHANISMS

Police unions, like any other special interest, work to protect and advance their members’ vested interests (Moe 2015). The research that we discuss below touches on how these unions employ different mechanisms to protect and further their members’ interests, which includes shielding them from accountability, where accountability means “that in a democratic society the police should treat all people with respect, fairness and equal treatment and at the same time should be required to answer for their conduct, particularly in cases of alleged misconduct” (Keenan and Walker 2005, pp. 190–91). Union protections often free police officers from accountability and help to maintain a “culture of impunity” inside police departments: “a collective sense among officers that they do not have to be held fully accountable for misconduct” (Walker 2015, p. 8).

Figure 2.1 A conceptual framework of police union influence: the mechanisms and potential impacts that contribute to police misconduct and a lack of accountability.



Whereas police unions have a range of strategies and tactics they employ to further the interests of their membership, this review focuses on mechanisms for which there has been sufficient empirical attention paid to matters of accountability, misconduct, and violence: collective bargaining, legislative lobbying and electoral politics, and courts and legal actions. Although we show that each of these mechanisms contributes to misconduct and a lack of accountability, some scholars suggest that the political dimension of union influence, which includes different types of lobbying and electoral politics, is more important than any other sphere of police unionism. Indeed, DeLord *et al.*'s (2008) “playbook” for police unions offers a prescriptive guide for how union leaders should employ these mechanisms to achieve their goals and expand their power (Keller and Barker 2021).³ How exactly do union mechanisms such as collective bargaining and legislative lobbying ultimately contribute to an environment or situations in which police violence becomes more likely and accountability is absent or minimized? Figure 1 presents a conceptual framework for understanding

³ Please note that that the playbook was updated in 2008. The original version which is also referenced is *Police Association Power, Politics, and Confrontation: A Guide for the Successful Police Labor Leader* by John H. Burpo, Ron DeLord, Michael Shannon, 1997.

the role of unions, common mechanisms of influence, and the corresponding impacts and outcomes.

4. DEFINING IMPACTS OF POLICE UNION MECHANISMS

As can be seen in Figure 2.1, the three broad mechanisms—collective bargaining, legislative lobbying and electoral politics, and the courts and legal actions—are employed in ways that reduce disciplinary consequences of misconduct and excessive use of force, undermine oversight of the police, and limit police transparency. In turn, these impacts contribute to the preservation of the status quo in policing, facilitate misconduct and use of force, and inhibit accountability.

4.1. Reduced Disciplinary Consequences

Through the collective bargaining process, police unions often negotiate over matters pertaining to management rights, working to establish barriers in the investigatory and disciplinary processes related to misconduct and use of force (Hardaway 2019, Rushin 2019a). The advantages provided to officers in disciplinary investigations create a system that makes it difficult to hold them accountable (Huq and McAdams 2016). Rushin (2017, 2019a) argues that union-negotiated protections can lead to the manipulation of evidence against officers and even the harassment of complainants. *The Washington Post* (Kelly *et al.*, 2017) provides examples of nearly 1,900 officers who were terminated from police departments in major U.S. metro areas in the preceding decades, but, unsurprisingly, hundreds of these terminations were subsequently overruled and officers reinstated following appeals by their police unions. In many cases, officers were reinstated even when the misconduct

was undisputed. Hence, police unions have considerable power to shield officers from the disciplinary consequences of their actions.⁴

4.2. Undermined Oversight

Police unions often negotiate provisions into contracts that prevent cities from implementing oversight entities such as civilian review boards or limit the power of those entities by restricting independent review and monitoring of police misconduct and outcomes. The resulting lack of external oversight, or oversight efforts in name only with little authority, may help ensure the maintenance of a system lacking in accountability, where officers need to respond only to their department and not to the communities they serve (Walker 2001, 2008). Moreover, police officers may be less accountable for their actions when they are investigated by a panel of their peers because department leaders have an incentive to protect the department's reputation (Keenan and Walker 2005).

4.3. Limited Transparency

The lack of transparency with respect to police misconduct takes several forms, from purging of officer misconduct records to closed-door misconduct investigations (Walker 2015). A lack of transparency protects officers who engage in continued misconduct and prevents the public and other entities from identifying which officers could be encouraging or facilitating misconduct among other officers, which is important to know because research reveals that misconduct may be contagious behavior (Ouellet et al., 2019; but see Simpson and Kirk 2022). As scholars and

⁴ In 2020, the District of Columbia adopted a range of police reforms, most notably preventing the police union from being able to negotiate police disciplinary rules and procedures through collective bargaining (Iafolla 2022). As of this writing, the DC Circuit Court is considering a challenge by the FOP to the law. Nevertheless, the law reflects a recognition of the detrimental impacts of union mechanisms on disciplinary practices and ultimately police accountability and misconduct.

policymakers have argued, increasing this transparency is a critical step in transforming police departments and empowering communities (Off. Community Oriented Polic. Serv. 2015).

4.4. Additional Impacts

While in the interest of brevity, our review focuses on the strategies police unions employ to reduce disciplinary consequences of misconduct and violence, undermine oversight, and limit transparency, there are additional impacts with potential implications (positive or negative) for misconduct.

Compensation. Research reveals that police unions help secure significantly better wages, benefits, pensions, and shorter working hours than police officers would otherwise receive (Anzia and Moe 2013, Bartel and Lewin 1981, Brunner and Ju 2019, Feuille and Delaney 2016, Frandsen 2016, Trejo 1991). Becker and Stigler (1974) argue that better compensation may deter police misconduct to the extent that it represents an opportunity cost. With more to lose, officers may be less likely to engage in actions that could risk their livelihoods. Also, recent research on the intersection of misconduct and compensation has found a relationship where police violence against Black individuals increased for unionized agencies that increased salaries, but an inverse relationship between police violence and improved pay for non-unionized agencies (Johnson *et. al.*, 2024).

Recruitment and diversity. Police unions, which are typically dominated by white male officers, have long resisted diversification of policing by race and gender and have engaged in legal battles, including reverse discrimination suits, against recruitment policies intended to diversify police departments (Hardaway 2022, McCormick 2015, Sass and Troyer 1999, Walker 2008).

Union efforts to thwart the diversification of policing are consequential because they undermine attempts to ensure that the police descriptively represent the public they serve. The lack of representativeness is potentially problematic for the functioning of democratic governance because the police are the face of the government in many communities. Indeed, Ba and colleagues

(2022) show that police officers tend to skew whiter, male, high-income, and Republican than the jurisdictions where they work.

Union resistance to diversity is also pertinent because of the implications for officer use of force. For instance, path-breaking research by Ba and colleagues (2021, 2022) reveals that Black and Hispanic officers are much less likely to use force than similarly situated white officers (i.e., after accounting for the fact that the nature of patrol assignments tends to vary substantially by race and ethnicity), and female officers are less likely to use force than male officers in similar contexts and situations. Ba and colleagues (2022) also find that officers who identify as Republican are more likely to use force than Democrats. Hence, unions may indirectly facilitate misconduct and use of force by resisting efforts to diversify departments with the types of officers less prone to misbehavior.

Community–police alignment. Police unions have been shown to hold adverse attitudes toward reforms aimed at improving police–community relations, and to focus on maintaining the law enforcement rather than the service function of policing (Magenau and Hunt 1996). When placed into historical context, this reinforcement of the status quo tends to protect a police institution that has disproportionately overpoliced and brutalized historically disinvested communities of color and combated efforts to create equitable practices. This situation essentially allows police cultures of misconduct to persist and thrive.

4.5. Summary of Impacts

Returning to the conceptual framework displayed in Figure 2.1, we have already alluded to one theoretical tradition linking union impacts and outcomes: deterrence (Pogarsky and Piquero 2004). When the expected costs of engaging in police misconduct and violence exceed the benefits, then, in theory, the behavior becomes less likely (e.g., Becker 1968). Yet the aforementioned impacts of police unions may undermine deterrence by reducing the likelihood that an officer will be caught for

engaging in misconduct (i.e., through limits on transparency and oversight) or sanctioned even if caught (i.e., by reducing the disciplinary consequences).

Having provided a base description of police union mechanisms and their corresponding impacts, we next assess the empirical literature examining the relationship between police union mechanisms—collective bargaining, legislative lobbying and electoral politics, and court and legal actions—and police accountability, misconduct, and violence.

5. COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Collective bargaining refers to the negotiation of contracts governing the terms of employment with respect to wages, benefits, working conditions, and worker rights for a particular group of employees. When an employer has a “duty to bargain,” it is required to negotiate with employee representatives. Collective bargaining has been fundamental to the growth of police union influence, given that the unionization of police officers has often occurred only after state laws required jurisdictions to bargain with employee representatives (Ichniowski 1988). This obligation to bargain created fertile ground for the rise of organized unions to fill this negotiating role. In several states, including Texas and Wisconsin, police have more collective bargaining rights than other public employees, and only in four states (Georgia, North and South Carolina, and Tennessee) is collective bargaining by police prohibited (Sanes and Schmitt 2014). Virginia is the latest state to authorize collective bargaining by public employees, including police, through legislation adopted in 2020 (Virginia General Assembly 2021).

Although most collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) in general address rules for investigating and disciplining employee misconduct, including due process protections, these have been a particularly important focus for police unions. Indeed, law enforcement CBAs in the largest U.S. cities have created procedural protections that severely limit investigations and discipline of

misconduct (Rushin 2017). Nevertheless, we note again that CBAs necessarily involve negotiation, and public officials are often inclined to grant disciplinary protections in lieu of even higher wages and benefits (Jones 2021).

As Cunningham *et al.* (2020) note, in contrast to the private sector, governments are not profit-maximizing institutions but work to maximize social welfare in the face of economic and political constraints. Because the police are providers of public services and are, in theory, accountable to the public, for them, collective bargaining is more a political process than the type of economic negotiation process found in the private sector (Cunningham *et al.* 2020; McCormick 2015). Indeed, research reveals that collective bargaining rights tend to yield enhanced political power for unions and increases in union strength and expenditures (Anzia and Moe 2013). Moreover, research also finds that collective bargaining increases public safety spending (police and fire) by local governments (Anzia and Moe 2013). Accordingly, efforts to reinvent and restructure funding for law enforcement agencies—for example, by “defunding” the police—must understand that a significant portion of funding is influenced by police unions and tied up in collective bargaining agreements.

5.1. Collective Bargaining and Officer Misconduct

Among the few studies examining the relationship between collective bargaining and police misconduct, Dharmapala *et al.* (2022) examine the impact of collective bargaining rights in the context of a Florida Supreme Court decision that granted sheriff's offices the right to collectively bargain. Leveraging variation induced by the court ruling, Dharmapala *et al.* (2022) apply a difference-in-differences design and estimate that the right to collectively bargain results in a 40% increase in violent incidents of misconduct, as measured by state-level allegations of misconduct. Their robustness checks drop potentially unverifiable complaints of misconduct and still yield highly similar inferences. Although the specific union mechanism that may have led to the increase in

misconduct is not identified or tested in the study, the authors point to union contract provisions that reduce accountability. For instance, unions may bargain to secure the expungement of previous misconduct records after a fixed time, which may thwart the likelihood of deterring repeat misconduct.

Looking beyond Florida and attempting to understand scale, Cunningham *et al.* (2021) examine the rollout of collective bargaining rights nationwide between the 1950s and 1980s. The authors employ an event study design, leveraging discontinuities in collective bargaining rights across states. They find that counties within states with collective bargaining rights experienced a significant increase in police killings of non-white civilians compared to white civilians. In fact, they estimate that the adoption of collective bargaining accounts for 10% of all non-white civilian deaths by police between 1959 and 1988. The authors are careful to emphasize that the effect of collective bargaining rights occurs over the medium- to long-term (three-plus years) because changes in police behavior following the granting of collective bargaining rights are not instantaneous.

Although the Cunningham *et al.* (2021) study is impressive for the historical endeavor to tease out the causal relationship between increased violence and the granting of bargaining rights, like the work by Dharmapala *et al.* (2022), it does not identify which union mechanism(s) may be responsible for increases in violence and misconduct. Rad (2018) makes a first attempt at exploring specific union mechanisms that create advantages in the disciplinary process, undermine oversight, and limit transparency. Rad's study codifies both CBA and legal protections through the creation of an index of police protections and finds that union-secured procedural protections are positively associated with subsequent police killings of civilians (Rad 2018). In another recent study, unionization and improved pay is associated with a higher level of police violence against Black individuals (Johnson *et al.*, 2024). In other words, there is a significant positive relationship between

police protections generated through CBAs and other union mechanisms and levels of police violence at the city level.

Also relevant to our discussion of collective bargaining and misconduct is Chandrasekher's (2017) research on the consequences of prolonged contract negotiations between New York City and different ranks of New York Police Department (NYPD) officers. Leveraging the occurrence of NYPD officers working on expired labor contracts, the study finds that incidents of police misconduct increase with the amount of time officers spend out of contract. In particular, abuse of authority and discourtesy become more likely when police are working on expired contracts, whereas use of force is no more or less likely.

Among the extant quasi-experimental research, Goncalves (2021) is the lone study that does not find evidence of significant increases in police violence following police unionization. However, in contrast to the other studies described in this section, it is important to note that the Goncalves study looks at unionism in general, not collective bargaining specifically.

5.2. Reduced Disciplinary Consequences

As noted, unions often negotiate provisions in CBAs that create advantages for officers being investigated for misconduct (Rushin 2019a). Indeed, among the intensive work examining CBAs in policing, Harris and Sweeney (2021) review 48 cities and find that every union contract had some impediment to accountability. In addition, Rushin (2017) reviews 178 police union contracts and reveals that most CBAs have provisions that hinder disciplinary procedures and thereby thwart accountability.

More specifically, building on a framework for analyzing police union contracts developed by Campaign Zero (<https://campaignzero.org/>), a criminal legal reform and advocacy organization, Rushin (2017) observes the following contract provisions as common tools to undermine police disciplinary processes: (a) delaying interrogations or interviews of officers suspected of misconduct;

(b) providing access to evidence against an officer before they are interrogated; (c) excluding disciplinary records to not impact future employment or promotion consideration, or destroying disciplinary records after a set period; (d) placing limits on the length of time by which an investigation must conclude or a disciplinary action can occur; (e) placing limits on the filing and consideration of anonymous complaints against officers; (f) limiting civilian oversight of officer conduct; and (g) permitting or requiring the arbitration of disputes related to disciplinary actions. Finally, some CBAs also include provisions requiring the department or municipality to indemnify officers accused of misconduct (Schwartz 2014). Indemnification clauses are not rare and are found in state statutes in addition to CBAs (Rushin 2017). Schwartz (2014) looks at 9,225 civil rights claims made between 2006 and 2011 against police officers in major U.S. police departments that resulted in a payment to plaintiffs. She finds that officers were fully indemnified in all but 40 of the cases. In other words, in only an extremely small fraction of cases, 0.4%, were officers required to contribute to the claim's payment, and even then, the contribution was generally minuscule compared to the total amount awarded to the plaintiffs. Hence, indemnification arguably creates a moral hazard in policing.

5.3. Undermined Oversight

Related to police oversight, CBAs include provisions that prohibit anonymous civilian complaints, limit the precise ways by which complaints can be formally made, and create arbitrary statutes of limitations on filing complaints (Keenan and Walker 2005, Rushin 2017). These front-end obstacles can create underreporting issues, which can yield misleading data on the total volume of grievances and complaints against a police department or a particular officer (Ba 2020, Holmes and Smith 2014).

CBAs have also been successful in preventing or constraining external oversight entities from having tangible authority to investigate officer abuses or sanction officers. An illustrative case

is Austin, Texas. In Austin, before the current CBA (agreed upon in 2018), the civilian oversight board was largely toothless because the CBA active at the time prevented it from independently investigating officer misconduct complaints and denied the board subpoena powers (McMahon and Moore 2019). This case illustrates that jurisdictions that have tried to hold police accountable through the creation of civilian oversight boards have been constrained from granting those boards real authority because of the nature of CBAs with police unions.

Consistent with our focus on CBAs and their detrimental influence on oversight, Goncalves (2021) draws upon historical data from Florida (1973–2017) on union certification elections as well as national data (1987–2013) on the staggered rollout of police unionization across the country and finds evidence that police unions undermine civilian oversight efforts and enhance legal protections for officers. Hence, both descriptive and quasi-experimental evidence reveal the detrimental consequences of CBAs, and unionization more generally, on civilian oversight of the police.

5.4. Limited Transparency

Limited transparency in policing is another key impact generated by collective bargaining. Tellingly, the collective bargaining process that ultimately undermines transparency in police misconduct investigations is itself a process hidden from view (Katz 2021, Rushin 2017). Most states do not have laws mandating public access or input during the bargaining process (Abraham 2015, Rushin 2017). Scholars have argued that the lack of transparency in the bargaining process itself allows for the creation of obstacles to police accountability and transparency (Katz 2021, Rushin 2017, Walker 2015).

Katz (2021) asserts that the lack of public input has a “profound” impact, specifically on historically disinvested Black and Brown communities. He explains that “for communities that are most impacted by aggressive policing, there is little possibility for meaningful participation when the agenda for that week’s city council meeting includes ratification of a CBA and an attachment of an

already negotiated collective bargaining agreement” (Katz 2021, p. 438). Viewed another way, this lack of transparency reduces community knowledge and power to transform policing.

Beyond the lack of transparency in the process itself, police unions create obstacles to transparency in police behavior and performance through CBAs, including erasing police disciplinary records and denying the public release of information concerning the disciplinary process (Rad 2018; Rushin 2017; Walker 2008, 2015). By comparison, Walker (2015) notes that many, if not all, U.S. states release the disciplinary records of workers in other professions that pose a safety risk (e.g., medical professionals).

Even when access to disciplinary records may be permitted, union-negotiated protections may make harassment of civilian complainants and data requestors possible. The 2020–2022 union contract in Minneapolis illustrates how harassment might occur. Compared to the 2017–2019 labor agreement between the City of Minneapolis and The Police Officers’ Federation of Minneapolis, the 2020–2022 agreement added the following provision: “When a data practices request has been made for an Officer’s public personnel data, the MPD will notify the Officer via email of the data requested and the requestor” (Harper 2022; see also Navratil 2022). Hence, even after the intense scrutiny of the Minneapolis Police Department in the wake of George Floyd’s murder by police officer Derek Chauvin in 2020, the city subsequently agreed to police federation demands for a contract provision requiring the disclosure of requestor names for those seeking information about police records, such as their disciplinary history.

Furthermore, a contemporary debate focused centrally on the question of transparency in policing is the use of body-worn cameras (BWCs). In contrast to Morabito (2014), who suggests that police unions may actually be vehicles of “innovation” in certain domains, Nowacki and Willits (2018) find that agencies with collective bargaining are less likely to use BWCs. They suggest that

bargaining power provides the leverage critical to resisting changes, including technological solutions such as BWCs, which are designed to increase transparency and limit discretion.

5.5. Legislative Lobbying and Electoral Politics

Beyond collective bargaining, scholars have also identified lobbying and other political activities as union mechanisms that frustrate accountability and reduce police transparency (Bies 2017, Walker 2008). Indeed, even in cities that do not negotiate contract protections, unions continue to be influential by introducing legislation beneficial to their causes or, conversely, by blocking laws intended to improve equity in policing, accountability, and behavior. For instance, in 2018 California police unions successfully blocked a bill that would have restricted officers' discretion to use deadly force (Damien 2018).⁵

Law enforcement officer bills of rights (LEOBOR) may be the most visible and salient type of legislation that has been a focus of union lobbying efforts (Cunningham *et al.*, 2020, Keenan and Walker 2005). LEOBORs are state laws designed to protect due process and restrict the investigation and prosecution of police officers charged with misconduct while performing their duties. As Keenan and Walker (2005, p. 186) explain, “no other group of public employees enjoy equivalent legislation related to disciplinary matters, and the provisions of some LEOBORs grant police officers more specific protections than are provided other public employees.” As of this writing, there are 19 LEOBORs across the United States, and they often include protections that mirror the provisions within CBAs (Rushin 2019a, Walker 2008).⁶ In 2021, Maryland, which was the

⁵ However, another use-of-force bill was introduced and passed in 2019 and implemented in 2020, the first change in the state's use-of-force policy since 1872.

⁶ The 19 states are Arizona, Arkansas, California, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Minnesota, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia. Versions of LEOBORs also exist in Georgia and Wisconsin but are not termed as such (Rad 2018). Some LEOBORs also have unique stipulations and exemptions; for instance, in Texas, the LEOBOR applies more rigorously to cities like Houston, based on population size, but is not applicable to sparsely populated areas.

first state to pass a LEOBOR, also became the first state to repeal its LEOBOR in a broad effort to instill accountability in policing and reform laws around use of force (Wiggins 2021, Wiggins and Cox 2021).⁷

Quasi-experimental research by Cunningham and colleagues (2022) finds no significant relationship between the passage of LEOBORs and police killings. The study’s research design lever- ages the staggered timing of the adoption of LEOBORs across states and employs a stacked event study design. The study finds that although the introduction of LEOBORs has led to a significant increase in financial bargaining and expenditures on the police, it does not find a substantial impact on the use of lethal force in either the short- or medium-term. The authors suggest that collective bargaining, as opposed to LEOBORs, could have played a larger role in influencing officer use of lethal force (Cunningham *et al.*, 2022). However, although the study examines the influence of LEOBORs in aggregate, it does not consider variation in the actual content of the LEOBORs. Some “rights” in LEOBORs may facilitate police use of force and misconduct even if in aggregate there is little overall effect of LEOBORs on police violence. In other words, LEOBORs in some states may be quite influential with respect to police violence and misconduct, but in other states they may be of little consequence. Hence, in the discussion to follow, we unpack the potential impacts of LEOBORs and other mechanisms of lobbying and electoral politics.

5.6. Reduced Disciplinary Consequences

Like some CBAs, LEOBORs have been found to provide officers accused of misconduct with several advantages during investigations, including delaying officer interviews, providing officers

⁷ Text of the now repealed LEOBOR in Maryland can be found at <https://law.justia.com/codes/maryland/2020/public-safety/title-3/subtitle-1/>.

under investigation access to investigative materials, preventing the consideration of past records of discipline in investigations, and limiting the length of investigations (Keenan and Walker 2005, Rushin 2017). Beyond LEOBORs, police unions have been active in lobbying at the federal level against the introduction of legislation to end qualified immunity for law enforcement, which protects officers from financial liability when they violate a person’s constitutional rights. Unions have also been working at the state level to resist efforts to end existing qualified immunity provisions (Kindy 2021).

Other legislatively related union activities include lobbying against legislation to expand state decertification programs. Decertification helps prevent what Grunwald and Rappaport (2020) call the “wandering officer.” It allows for a police officer’s license to be revoked after certain disciplinary actions and prevents decertified officers from being reemployed at a different police agency (Goldman and Puro 1987, Grunwald and Rappaport 2020). California was the first state to decertify police officers who committed misconduct, but police unions were successful in 2003 in ending the state decertification process. Only recently has the state been able to revive the decertification process after being dormant for many years (Freivogel and Wagman 2021).

5.7. Undermined Oversight

Like CBA provisions, LEOBORs include impediments to oversight. For instance, LEOBORs in Illinois, New Mexico, and Rhode Island limit the filing of anonymous complaints against the police, creating problems on the front end of the oversight process (Keenan and Walker 2005, Rushin 2019a). And in Maryland, the now-repealed LEOBOR prohibited investigations by nonsworn officers (Keenan and Walker 2005). Indeed, one common tactic of civil rights activists has been to lobby for the creation of civilian review or oversight boards, but the Maryland LEOBOR dramatically undermined the role and authority of such boards by mandating that officers suspected of misconduct could only be interviewed by sworn officers, not by civilian board members.

Whereas political alliance building is a common tactic among police unions, unions have started directly endorsing politicians who provide rhetorical support for policies that limit transparency, restrict oversight, increase police protections, and insulate the police from accountability (Greenhouse 2020, Hardaway 2019, Levin 2020, Rushin 2019a). Perhaps the most visible example of this includes the endorsement of federal candidates, including the backing of Donald Trump by the Patrolmen’s Benevolent Association of New York and the FOP during his 2020 re-election campaign. These endorsements may have been an implicit reciprocation for the scaled-back federal efforts during his presidency to investigate and monitor police departments.

5.8. Limited Transparency

In terms of transparency, LEOBORs are often designed to limit the release of police disciplinary records. Some LEOBORs also stipulate requirements to purge officer misconduct histories even from internal personnel files (Keenan and Walker 2005).

Yet union legislative tactics extend beyond the implementation of LEOBORs to limit police transparency. For instance, there are several examples of unions successfully lobbying against legislation intended to repair accountability and increase transparency, such as “sunshine” bills that require greater transparency in government (Bies 2017). Two recent examples of these bills, however, reveal there are limits to the extent to which police unions can thwart legislation designed to enhance transparency. In 2019, unions in California unsuccessfully fought against State Senate Bill 1421, the Right to Know Act, which requires law enforcement agencies to make available their investigative records of use of force (BondGraham 2020).⁸ A similar example occurred recently in

⁸ Drawing on the records released to the public following the passage of California Senate Bill 1421, the NPR podcast On Our Watch (<https://www.npr.org/podcasts/510360/on-our-watch>) provides a revealing exposé of the typically opaque police investigative processes following incidents of misconduct and brutality.

New York, where in 2020 police unions unsuccessfully fought against the repeal of section 50-a of the New York Civil Rights Law, legislation passed in 1976 that prevented officer misconduct records from being released.

6. COURTS AND LEGAL ACTIONS

Legal action, within and beyond the courts, is another key tactic police unions use to protect and insulate their members from public scrutiny and discipline. For instance, Fisk and Richardson (2017) identify several instances in which unions filed lawsuits to undermine police reform efforts and accountability by battling consent decrees and fighting against the influence of police monitors. One recent example is a lawsuit by the Philadelphia Lodge of the FOP that seeks to thwart implementation of a law that would curtail pretextual police stops, which are stops done as a pretext to search a vehicle (Lauer 2022). Such stops have contributed to numerous high-profile killings by the police in other jurisdictions, including the deaths of Sandra Bland, Walter Scott, and Daunte Wright in recent years.

6.1. Reduced Disciplinary Consequences

With respect to legal action to undermine the discipline of officers, attempts by the city of Chicago to reform the Chicago Police Department in the wake of the fallout of the murder of Laquan McDonald by former officer Jason Van Dyke provide an example of the legal measures police unions take to thwart reforms to disciplinary practices. In this case, the city sought to standardize punishments for police misconduct, similar to how sentencing guidelines operate to provide more uniformity and certainty in punishment of convicted offenders (Hinkel 2017). However, the Chicago FOP has sought to block such changes in disciplinary procedures, asserting that such changes should have been negotiated through the collective bargaining process.

Binding arbitration is a key legal tool used by police unions to undermine disciplinary punishments. Arbitration is a legally binding form of dispute resolution held outside of formal courts. Rushin (2017) provides a detailed exploration of binding arbitration clauses found in union contracts in many cities across the United States. He argues that these clauses limit the ability of police departments to hold officers accountable.

Moreover, Rushin (2017, 2019a) notes that the requirement for arbitration in disputes is consequential because arbitrators typically rule in favor of officers, thereby undermining the ability of departments to hold officers accountable. The tendency for arbitrators to side with officers is likely due to the fact that police officers and unions in more than half of police departments in midsized and large cities in the United States have some level of influence over the selection of arbitrators (Rushin 2019a). For instance, in Chicago the selection of arbitrators is a point of negotiation during the collective bargaining process between the city and the FOP. Even when arbitrators rule in favor of a city in a dispute, arbitrators may be limited in the severity of sanctions they can impose on officers. For instance, Rushin (2017) provides the example of Burbank, California, in which a memorandum of understanding between the city and the police union specified no limit to how much arbitrators could reduce a disciplinary punishment against an officer, but the memorandum of understanding imposed limits on how much a punishment could be increased by the arbitrator.

6.2. Undermined Oversight

In addition to using legal action to reduce the disciplinary consequences of misconduct, police unions have been found to fight oversight efforts through lawsuits. For example, 2017 legal action by the Chicago FOP, although ultimately dismissed, attempted to prevent the replacement of the Independent Police Review Authority with the Civilian Oversight of Police Accountability, the latter of which afforded more comprehensive police oversight (Fraternal Order of Police, Chi. Lodge No.

7 v. City of Chicago 2017). Legal action to block, delay, or otherwise constrain civilian oversight authorities has occurred in many other cities as well (Bekemeyer 2021, Fisk and Richardson 2017).

Although our discussion in this section has focused on civilian oversight, union influence has also been used to thwart federal oversight. Unions have been found to file grievances stating that U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ) consent decrees alter working conditions, which tends to delay reform efforts given that most DoJ consent decrees include language stating that the reforms can only be implemented if they do not conflict with the respective CBA (Fisk and Richardson 2017). To reiterate, given the importance of the point, consent decrees specify that police union contracts and CBAs take precedence over consent decrees, so a central tool for fostering police reform can be rendered impotent if decree requirements are inconsistent with police protections guaranteed in union contracts and CBAs (Emmanuel 2016, Rushin 2017, Rushin and Garnett 2017, Schanzenbach 2021).

6.3. Limited Transparency

Police unions pursue legal action to limit transparency in a variety of ways, including by fighting the release of police misconduct records. One recent example includes legal action by the Chicago FOP requesting the courts to seal or destroy police complaint files (Berg 2015). A second example includes lawsuits filed by the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association in New York to thwart both the implementation of BWCs and the release of body camera footage (Southall 2018). A third example, in Philadelphia, is a successful suit against the city blocking the enactment of an ordinance that required a public hearing process for future contract negotiations (D'Onofrio 2021).

Moreover, even when legislation blocking transparency of records has been repealed, such as New York Civil Rights Law section 50-a, unions have been successful in using the courts to challenge and delay the release of misconduct records (Kelly 2020). In other words, the courts pro-

vided another arena for unions to block the release of misconduct records despite changes in state legislation allowing for their release.

7. FUTURE AVENUES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Scholars and journalists have long stressed the lack of sufficient literature on the role of police unions (e.g., Walker 2008). While acknowledging the merits of recent work, including the clever quasi-experimental designs employed by Chandrasekher (2016, 2017), Cunningham *et al.*, (2021, 2022), Dharmapala *et al.*, (2022), and Goncalves (2021), there remain significant gaps that constrain our understanding of law enforcement unions and their relationship with accountability, increased police violence, police protectionism, and race. In what follows, we identify several timely research questions within and beyond the various mechanisms of police union influence and associated impacts we have discussed throughout the review.

7.1. Police Union History and Dynamics

While acknowledging the comprehensive and critical historical scholarship of, among others, Bekemeyer (2021), Jones (2021), Levine (1988), and Slater (2004), continued historical investigations that explore the expansion of police unionism and organized police membership as a response to racial progress and civil rights would provide further insight into police unionism and its growth. The role of race in the historical origins of police unions need to be centered to appropriately contextualize union actions (Bekemeyer 2021, King and Smith 2005). It would also be useful to examine the historical relationships among police unions, other public sector unions, and the broader labor movement. When have police unions allied with other unions, and what factors have led those alliances to break down? We would particularly encourage the research community to examine the historic and contemporary role of minority police unions, as suggested by Fisk and Richardson (2017). What conditions fostered the development of minority police unions? In which

cities have they been most effective at securing wages and protections for minority officers and why? Is the influence of such unions on the rise or decline in the United States?

Relatedly, except for unions specifically created along racial lines, the leadership of police unions in many cities tends to be dominated by white officers. For instance, the Chicago FOP, which represents the rank and file of the CPD, has had only white leadership since its inception in 1963 (Evans and Emmanuel 2021). An important avenue of future research is to examine the extent of racial diversity among union leadership nationwide and the relationship between a diverse leadership and outcomes such as accountability.

Despite the fragmented and decentralized system of policing in the United States, with some 18,000 law enforcement agencies across federal, state, county, and local levels of government, research cataloging the hundreds of police union contracts nationwide reveals considerable similarities in protections afforded to the police (e.g., Rad 2018, Rushin 2017). Although there has been some attention paid to how labor organizing has facilitated the diffusion of police union strategies nationwide (Keller and Barker 2021), we would encourage further work detailing and explaining the isomorphism in police union strategies and contract provisions.

7.2. Collective Bargaining

The quasi-experimental analyses described earlier in the review addressed the specific roles of collective bargaining rights in facilitating police misconduct. However, the considered quasi-experimental studies do not explore which elements associated with collective bargaining, or unionism more generally, may be associated with misconduct and violence. Hence, additional work is needed in this area, particularly to further pinpoint which police protections derived through collective bargaining contribute to misconduct and deter accountability and which contract provisions may be most detrimental to fair and just policing.

At a higher level, it is worthwhile to revisit Walker's (2008) assertion about the role of unions in creating a "culture of impunity" among police. To the extent that the influence of police unions ever weakens, it would be worthwhile to examine if and how long it would take to observe shifts in police behavior. The code of silence among police officers may continue to insulate officers from accountability and sanctions for misconduct even if, for example, it becomes easier for citizens to file anonymous complaints against officers or if civilian oversight boards are given real authority to investigate police misconduct.

Following up on our discussion of the quasi-experimental studies suggesting evidence of a causal relationship between collective bargaining and police misconduct (Cunningham *et al.*, 2021; Dharmapala *et al.*, 2022), a worthwhile line of inquiry is to consider what might be viewed as the unintended costs of collective bargaining. More specifically, if collective bargaining facilitates police misconduct and violence, which may come at a huge financial cost to cities through civil lawsuits (Alexander *et al.*, 2022, Rozema and Schanzenbach 2019). Accordingly, beyond considering the costs of union influence in terms of compensation, another category to consider is payouts from civil lawsuits.

Another area of future inquiry related to CBAs is the question of whether it is possible to increase accountability in policing without sacrificing collective bargaining rights, both within policing and beyond. Simply put, is there a suitable way to hold police accountable for misbehavior without dismantling or weakening unions and collective bargaining rights for police and other workers? Similarly, while there are examples of case studies in the literature with, for example, comparisons of relatively strong versus weaker union municipalities (Rad 2018), an important area of inquiry is the identification and understanding of negatives cases—i.e., strong union municipalities that nevertheless have meaningful levels of accountability as well as weak union cities that still manage to ensure strong police protections.

7.3. Legislative Lobbying and Electoral Politics

The effectiveness of unions in blocking reforms and maintaining the status quo can be better understood in relation to both the American political development and special interest group literatures. These literatures examine the ways in which the design of the American state benefits special interest groups, including how the system favors hard-on-crime stances that tend to lend support to law enforcement (Baumgartner and Jones 1993, Baumgartner *et al.*, 2006, Pierson 2000). In contrast to many types of unions, including most public sector unions, police unionism benefits from politicians on both sides of the U.S. political spectrum. Rushin (2019b, p. 535) asserts that since they situate themselves as “protectors of public safety,” police unions can attract Republican support despite the tendency of conservative politicians to promote an antilabor agenda. Further exploration of the ways police unions have built bipartisan “law and order” coalitions is a profitable avenue for future research. Indeed, efforts to reimagine policing in the twenty-first century need to understand the ways in which unions have built political coalitions that have not only guaranteed the police enormous protections but also stymied progress on police reform.

Scholarship exploring how unions navigate lobbying should be further investigated. One difficulty in understanding the nature of union political influence, as discussed in Rad (2018), is that there is a great deal of informal and “backdoor” lobbying and meetings that remain undocumented and therefore largely invisible to researchers due to the nature of city politics. A worthwhile avenue of research, if possible, is to examine both the formal and informal means by which unions influence and navigate local politics.

One key dimension of electoral politics that has received scant attention in the research literature on police unionism is campaign finance. Yet political contributions may be a significant mechanism by which unions influence elected officials. Future research on the intersection be-

tween campaign finance and police unions may be facilitated by data on campaign contributions collected by Campaign Zero (<https://nixthe6.org/contributions/>).

We have noted research by Cunningham *et al.* (2022) on LEOBORs, which failed to find an association between the passage of LEOBORs and police killings. Nevertheless, we suggest that further research is needed to understand whether and in what ways LEOBORs may be consequential to police behavior beyond police misconduct, including productivity indicators. Similar to the design of Cunningham *et al.*, (2022), the enactment, but also the repeal, of LEOBORs could be leveraged to conduct such analyses.

7.4. Courts and Legal Actions

We would recommend that researchers prioritize a comprehensive review of the different legal actions and the legal landscape to better understand how the courts are employed to potentially hinder police accountability. Work by Schwartz (2014) on civil lawsuit settlements can be used as a starting point. Research should also leverage the variation and timing of lawsuits requiring disclosure of records to examine the effects of transparency on different policing outcomes. Additionally, as suggested by Fisk and Richardson (2017) and Hardaway (2019), union legal challenges around consent decrees should be further investigated to understand how legal actions and processes impact officer behavior. Finally, we concur with suggestions by Rushin (2017, 2019a) about the need to further explore the impact of arbitration on police accountability.

7.5. Compensation

Earlier we noted Becker and Stigler's (1974) assertion that better compensation is a potential deterrent to police misconduct because existing officers may be less inclined to risk termination from a well-paid job. Wage levels may also influence misconduct and police violence by attracting better job candidates to the profession (i.e., ones less inclined toward aggression). Accordingly, we suggest that

more research should be done to test these hypotheses related to the responsiveness of police misconduct to union-negotiated wage increases.

7.6. Police Protection

A key aim of police unions is to protect the interests of the police, and the ultimate interest is survival. Indeed, much has been written about the “warrior” mentality of the police and the “danger imperative” that permeates the culture of policing (Sierra-Arévalo 2021, Stoughton 2015). Surviving a shift is the primary goal each day. That begs the question of whether police unionism makes police more or less safe. In other words, the evidence presented in this review suggests that police unionism may make the public less safe because of a heightened risk of police violence and misconduct, but is that a trade-off done to make police officers safer?

Given the dangers to police officers induced by firearms (Crifasi *et al.*, 2016, Sierra-Arévalo and Nix 2020, Swedler *et al.*, 2015), we suggest that work be done, building on the groundbreaking work by Carlson (2020) on policing and the politics of gun control, to examine the influence of police unions on the gun control debate. Indeed, whereas the International Association of Chiefs of Police (2018) supports a range of gun control measures, police unions such as the FOP (2022) arguably support only the most modest of proposed gun policies. Hence, there appears to be a contradiction in that a central aim of police unions is to improve the working conditions of officers, which includes their safety, yet the pursuit of protections for police officers does not generally extend to the realm of gun control even though the foremost goal among police officers is to make it home each day. Further exploration of the role (or lack thereof) of police unions in the politics of gun control is a worthwhile area of future inquiry.

8. CONCLUSION

In his essay *A Report from Occupied Territory*, James Baldwin (1966) recounts,

I have witnessed and endured the brutality of the police many more times than once—but, of course, I cannot prove it. I cannot prove it because the Police Department investigates itself, quite as though it were answerable only to itself... This arrogant autonomy, which is guaranteed the police, not only in New York, by the most powerful forces in American life—otherwise, they would not dare to claim it would indeed be unable to claim it—creates a situation which is as close to anarchy as it already, visibly, is close to martial law.

The accountability crisis in policing that Baldwin wrote about six decades ago endures, and in this review, we have sought to examine one potential culprit of this inertia: police unions. Indeed, a backlash against the civil rights gains in the 1950s and 1960s contributed to the rise and proliferation of police unions across the country, further entrenching the lack of accountability in policing, despite efforts to professionalize the institution.

Any effort to reimagine policing in modern America must confront the realities and influence of police unions and the corresponding impediments to change. The preservation of the status quo is a fundamental attribute of union influence. And as with the prospects for police reform more broadly, the decentralized nature of policing in the United States means that efforts to curtail police union protections or to negotiate with unions for more accountability are likely to be piecemeal.

Inhibiting reform is just one of the many impacts of police unionism. In this review, we have devoted specific attention to understanding how police union mechanisms, such as collective bargaining and lobbying, have been employed to reduce the disciplinary consequences of police misconduct, undermine oversight, and limit transparency in policing. As uncovered through recent quasi-experimental research (e.g., Cunningham *et al.*, 2021; Dharmapala *et al.*, 2022), by reducing accountability in policing and undercutting the potential deterrent effects of sanctions against misconduct, union mechanisms contribute to an increase in police misconduct, including violence. It is important to note that we do not wish to indict unionism in general. Unions work to protect members' interests by securing better wages, benefits, and working conditions. They have also played important roles in fighting for social welfare and egalitarian policies with benefits far beyond

union members. We see great value in these aspects of unionism. Where the complexity of police unionism arises is when these pursuits for worker protections undermine rather than contribute to public safety. But is a trade-off between worker safety and public safety inevitable in policing? We think not.

Consider the two general strategies to obtain obedience to the law: forced compliance and normative compliance. Forced compliance refers to the use of sanctions and punishments to incentivize obedient behavior and is the foundation of deterrence-based crime control. The “warrior” mindset and the “us versus them” mentality at the root of the forced compliance model, combined with the inherent unpredictability of many police–public interactions and the necessity of quick decision-making, may produce situations (or fail to de-escalate them) where the risk of injury and death to both officers and the public is all too prevalent.

In contrast, normative compliance fosters obedience to the law based on the belief that those making the law have a right to do so and that the law is “just” (Tyler 1990). The normative model, by definition, suggests that societies can regulate themselves more efficiently and effectively through normative compliance (Bell 2017, Tyler 1990). However, when individuals perceive that the law is unjust and illegitimate, normative compliance breaks down, and individuals are more likely to disobey the law and less likely to cooperate with it (Desmond *et al.*, 2020, Kirk and Papachristos 2011).

The palpable cynicism of, and estrangement from, the law in James Baldwin’s words above reveals that the lack of transparency and accountability in policing is undermining the legitimacy of the law. Yet the pursuit of normative rather than forced compliance could foster obedience to the law without sacrificing the safety of officers. Doing so will require an embrace of transparency and accountability in policing rather than a resistance to it, which happen to be two features of policing that unions can measurably influence.

CHAPTER 3: EXAMINING POLICE PROTECTIONISM: AN EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS OF COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENTS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICER BILL OF RIGHTS IN THE U.S.

1. INTRODUCTION

On May 25, 2020, Derek Chauvin, a white Minneapolis police officer, responded to a call about the possible use of a counterfeit \$20 bill. Chauvin and other responding officers encountered and arrested an unarmed Black man, later identified as 46-year-old George Floyd. Floyd was handcuffed, thrown face down on the ground, and Chauvin pressed his knee into Floyd's neck for more than nine minutes. When Chauvin finally removed his knee from Floyd's neck, Floyd was unconscious and would soon be pronounced dead. Dr. Andrew Baker, Hennepin County's chief medical examiner, testified that Floyd's cause of death was lack of oxygen from the "subdual, restraint and neck compression" (Forliti, Karnowski, and Webber 2022).

At the time of the incident, a *New York Times* investigation examining complaints found that Chauvin had a much higher number of complaints compared to other Minneapolis police officers—22 in total—with only one resulting in discipline (Barker and Kovaleski 2020). Despite a clear history of use-of-force complaints, questions emerged about how he was able to avoid disciplinary consequences. In the aftermath of the killing George Floyd, labor experts argued that police protections, such as the purging of complaint history, preventing review boards from rendering patterns of abuse, and investigative buffer periods, all of which were embedded within the Minneapolis Police collective bargaining agreement, could in part explain the lack of consequences for Chauvin's past actions (Sachs 2020).

From a deterrence framework perspective, police abuse, particularly among persistent perpetrators like Chauvin, can potentially be explained by the lack of consequences for officers who engage in serious forms of misconduct (Nagin 2013; Manski and Nagin 2017). If so, why do some police departments appear to minimally sanction police misconduct, even among repeat offenders? What factors work to insulate police officers from the consequences of their actions? This chapter introduces a novel contribution to the study of police accountability: a new empirical index that captures protections embedded in collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) and law enforcement officers' bills of rights (LEOBORs). These protections are one of the most visible ways police unions have been theorized to shield officers from accountability yet have rarely been measured systematically across jurisdictions. CBAs are locally negotiated labor contracts, while LEOBORs are state level statutes; both contain procedural protections that can insulate officers from oversight.

The ensuing investigation begins with a review of literature on police unionism and protectionism to establish the theoretical claims that this new measure helps evaluate, where police protectionism refers to union-secured protections that combat police accountability and transparency found in CBAs and LEOBORs. Next, I will discuss the development of the framework for developing the index to measure the police protections contained within CBAs and LEOBORs.⁹ Whereas in the next chapter I consider the consequences of police protections for police behavior, in this chapter I seek to understand this new measure and identify correlates of police protections by empirically examining variation in protections across a sample of the primary police agencies in the largest 100 U.S. metropolitan areas.

⁹ Examples of a CBA and a LEOBOR can be found here: [Oregon Law Enforcement Officer Bill of Rights](#); [Chicago Police Department FOP Rank-And-File Collective Bargaining Agreement](#).

2. BACKGROUND ON POLICE PROTECTIONISM

Understanding obstacles and impediments to accountability and transparency in U.S. policing is of critical importance for scholarship, which argues that the lack of disciplinary consequences for the police can, in part, explain continued police misconduct and cultures of abuse (Nagin 2013; Ouellet, Hashimi, Gravel, and Papachristos 2019). Impediments to accountability and transparency have been found across several dimensions at both the local (e.g., Department Policy Manuals, MOUs, CBAs, etc.) and state level (e.g., LEOBORs, Qualified Immunity, etc.), which can be altered unilaterally by elected officials and/or agency executives (Katz 2021). Given that nearly 70% of U.S. law enforcement is unionized and/or represented by some professional association, exploring how and where unions and associations install impediments to accountability and transparency is an important endeavor (Cunningham, Feir, and Gillezau 2021; Rad, Kirk, and Jones 2023).

Until recently, literature on police unionism has been relatively scarce (Walker 2008; Rad, Kirk, and Jones 2023). However, foundational legal scholarships have continued to identify the different types of police protections that create obstacles for accountability and transparency. Research has found that such protections are often embedded within CBAs, labor agreements executed at the local-level between municipalities and law enforcement associations to further law enforcement interests, and LEOBORs, which is state level legislation to protect law enforcement officers' rights in several areas, including discipline (Keenan and Walker 2005; Rushin 2017; Huq and McAdams 2016; Rushin 2017; Rushin 2019; Harris and Sweeney 2021). Further, legal scholarship has been critical for defining the several categories of police protectionism that have been argued to frustrate accountability, such as interrogation delays, purging of misconduct complaints, or preventing civilian oversight of the police (Keenan and Walker 2005; Huq and McAdams 2016; Rushin 2017; Rad 2018; Harris and Sweeney 2021). Again, police protectionism is

one way that allows law enforcement to reinforce and sustain status quo policing practices, further underscoring the importance of understanding their correlates.

2.1. Contributing Factors to Police Protectionism

Given the unique intersection between law enforcement and labor, it is important to consider the different factors that could interact to produce police protections embedded in CBAs or LEOBORs. To explore how and what factors contribute to securing police protections, both public sector labor and criminological literature will be discussed.

2.1.1. Public Sector Unionism

Public sector labor scholarship suggests that stronger CBAs are found in states and cities with more progressive labor laws, higher public expenditure, and larger union membership (Moe 2015; Marlow and Orzechowski 1996; Hacker and Pierson 2010). However, while police unions benefit from progressive support vis-à-vis strong labor laws at the state level, they are also known to have a membership holding conservative viewpoints (Juris and Feuille 1973; Mark and Tufts 2019). Specifically, they have been found to “...support tactics that reproduce racialised ‘othering’ ... discriminate against racialised workers and communities...” (Thomas and Tufts 2019, p. 70). This naturally raises questions surrounding how variables capturing different racial theories may interact, which will be discussed in length below. Consequently, political ideology at either the local or state level could also play a role in producing protections in different ways. This is particularly true for state-level factors, such as LEOBORs, which are among the most visible manifestations of police protectionism (Rushin 2017).

Similarly, it is reasonable to expect that local governments with higher public expenditure per capita have stronger protections since police unions could wield more political capital for negotiations (Marlow and Orzechowski 1996). In other words, if there is more public expenditure, we can suspect that more expenditure is going towards public sector employees, and in turn, it

would be plausible to suggest that unions have more power to negotiate additional protections. It is important to acknowledge, however, that "stronger" CBAs in the public sector literature typically refer to financial strength (i.e., salaries, fringe benefits, etc.), not specifically to provisions involving "management rights," which help shield members from accountability. Thus, public sector labor literature theories may help explain police protectionism, assuming that traditional CBA strength, in the sense of financial strength, is related or connected to police protectionism.

Though literature on public sector unionism may shed light on the parameters and the ability for law enforcement groups to secure protections against accountability, it does not necessarily provide insights into why law enforcement unions would want to secure procedural protections for police officers that don't necessarily relate or pertain to furthering their financial interests. In other words, unions function to protect the interests of their union members, but why blocking accountability is deemed an important protection could provide further insights into the purpose or perceived intent of the protections.

2.1.2. Social Context, Crime, and Police Protectionism

This section reviews key theories that help explain why protections for police may have emerged and have persisted, particularly in the context of labor relations, crime, race, and political development. These frameworks—while rich—have rarely been systematically examined across jurisdictions. This chapter begins to lay the groundwork for exploring whether patterns in police protectionism align with these long-standing theoretical claims.

Management

One theory for the advocacy and securing of protections could be surrounding management. Specifically, police vested interests may push for more protections due to perceived employment insecurity. This could be due to several reasons, ranging from continued misconduct or internal management issues, such as discrimination from supervisors towards officers. The latter could be

plausible given changes in the racial composition of police forces occurring during the period in which protections and LEOBORs emerged (Juris and Feuille 1973).

Violent Crime

Another explanation for the growth and retention of police protections is the perceived threat posed by violent crime. High levels of violent crime may reinforce the belief among officers and their unions that protections are necessary, given the expectation that enforcement activities may more frequently result in violent encounters (Epp *et al.*, 2014; Gordon 2022). Even when threats are not immediate or substantiated, the perception of constant danger—particularly to officer safety—can motivate demands for procedural safeguards. This logic aligns with Michael Sierra-Arévalo’s (2024) concept of the *Danger Imperative*, which shows how police culture embeds a persistent sense of risk into daily operations and justifies insulation from oversight. In related work, Sierra-Arévalo and Nix (2021) find that although actual firearm victimization in the line of duty is rare, it significantly shapes officers’ worldviews and reinforces their orientation toward risk and defensiveness. This framing may help explain why protections are pursued even in contexts where actual risks to officers are declining. For instance, U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ) data finds that 89 officers were killed in 2019. Of the 89, 48 were killed feloniously and the remaining passed accidentally (U.S. Department of Justice 2020).

Importantly, this perceived threat operates within a broader political context that has historically justified punitive policy responses. As Weaver (2007) argues, rising crime and public disorder were not only framed as safety concerns but also used as vehicles for reasserting social control and reconfiguring civil rights gains into punitive crime policy. In this light, protections may be viewed not simply as defensive tools but as institutional manifestations of a broader punitive logic that links perceived disorder with the need for more aggressive—and shielded—forms of policing.

Racial Context and White Protectionism

Like the threat of violence, minority threat theory suggests that the perceived threat posed by non-white populations can motivate institutional responses to maintain control, including protections for police (Blalock 1967). As noted in the empirical review of literature in Chapter 2, this logic is particularly salient given the historical backdrop: police unionism gained traction in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement and in direct response to Black liberation struggles (Hardaway 2022; Rad, Kirk, and Jones 2023). In resisting emerging demands for civilian oversight, unions actively lobbied for law enforcement officers' bill of rights and contractual protections designed to shield officers from accountability (Riggs 2012).

Recent work has linked social control through policing to patterns of racial residential segregation and the spatial distribution of racial groups (i.e., Siegel *et al.*, 2019; Gordon 2022). In areas with higher concentrations of Black or Hispanic residents—or where racial groups live in close spatial proximity—officers and unions may perceive a heightened threat, fueling support for additional protections (Krivo, Peterson, and Kuhl 2010; Gordon 2022). This aligns with prior studies showing that both the size and spatial configuration of racial groups predict police misconduct and protectionism (Holmes and Smith 2014; Schwartz and Jahn 2020).

Both minority threat and spatial threat can be resituated within the emerging American Political Development (APD) scholarship on “White Protectionism” (Smith and King 2020). This framework highlights how institutions—including police unions—serve as another vehicle for preserving racial hierarchies and white dominance in the political order. Protections for police, then, may not only stem from fears of interpersonal danger but from efforts to suppress perceived racial disorder and maintain the legitimacy of punitive systems that disproportionately target non-white communities.

To summarize, theories across labor economics, criminology, sociology, and political science (specifically, American Political Development) offer critical perspectives on the conditions under which police protections may take root. These literatures guide the exploration that follows, which examines the extent to which variation in protections aligns with broader patterns of race, ideology, and crime across jurisdictions. By incorporating this literature (Rushin 2017; Epp *et al.*, 2014; Walker and Archbold 2014), we can better understand or identify structural mechanisms that may have a relationship with police protections.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN

In this investigation, I address two key gaps in the literature. First, I construct an approach and framework for identifying and quantifying police protections across levels of government, developing several measures of protectionism at the local level (via CBAs), the state level (via LEOBORs), and through a combined index. Second, I explore the correlates of police protectionism to assess whether political, racial, and social factors—previously theorized as shaping these protections—are associated with their distribution across U.S. jurisdictions. I do not make causal claims; rather, I present these measures as tools through which theoretical expectations can be explored and future research supported. To accomplish these aims, I draw on a database of police union contracts and multiple administrative sources. The sections that follow describe how I acquired and coded the data, constructed the protectionism measures, and carried out the statistical analysis of city- and state-level correlates.

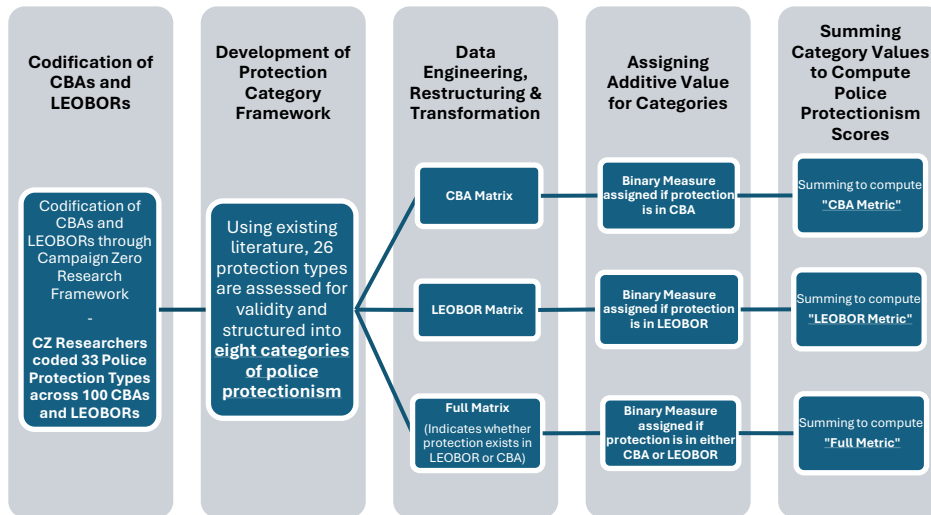
3.1. Dependent Variable(s) Development: Measure(s) of Police Protectionism

The objective of this study is to assess, through quantitative methods, the correlates of police protections embedded within CBAs and LEOBORs. The first task involves the development of a framework that allows for consistency in measuring protections that are designed to shield officers

from oversight and accountability. This approach is adapted from a framework initially developed in an MPhil thesis (Rad 2018).

The acquisition and qualitative coding of CBAs were undertaken through a co-produced research process carried out during my tenure as a senior research advisor at Campaign Zero (CZ), an advocacy organization focused on harm reduction and public safety reform. As part of this role, the research methodology for CZ’s “Nix the 6” project—an initiative aimed at highlighting accountability barriers within CBAs and LEOBORs—was revised and standardized. Once formal arrangements were made to use the data for empirical purposes, a revised research framework was implemented, emphasizing the importance of consistent coding. A comprehensive researcher training protocol was implemented, along with multiple quality assurance mechanisms, which are described in greater detail below. The steps taken to construct the protectionism measures are summarized in Figure 3.1.

Figure 3.1 Process for Developing Index of Police Protectionism



First, I used the databases constructed for Campaign Zero’s “Nix the 6” initiative to inform the development of the research framework for aggregating and grouping police protections. Campaign Zero developed two datasets of coded provisions of protectionism across 26 categories,

one of CBAs and another LEOBORs. Subsequently, I merged the 26 variables from both CZ “Nix the 6” datasets (i.e., the data on LEOBOR provisions and on CBA provisions), dropped coded provisions that did not pertain to accountability or had not been argued in scholarship to impede accountability, and collapsed the remaining provisions into the eight broad categories (described to follow). I then transformed the data to introduce three binary matrices that indicate whether any of the eight categories of protections exist within the CBA, LEOBOR, or either of the two. Finally, to compute a score for each metropolitan area, I took the sum of the total number of categories (i.e., from none to all eight covered to indicate the level of police protectionism at three different levels: (1) CBAs (2) LEOBORs (3) either LEOBORs or CBAs.

3.1.1. Acquisition of Data

The CZ datasets used to develop the measures of police protectionism are from CBAs between police agencies and their local government as well as LEOBORs enacted by state legislatures. Raw CBAs and LEOBORs data, typically in a PDF format, were acquired through a combination of web scraping and Freedom of Information Requests (FOIA) by CZ researchers to local and state governments and law enforcement agencies.

3.1.2. Codification of CBAs and LEOBORs

Advancements in technology and methods have revealed the benefits of using content analysis for large-scale text classification (Seawright 2016). Content analysis and other tools used for text categorization on a large scale are well-suited for the classification of the CBA provisions of interest (Grimmer and Stewart 2013). For context, there were 853 coded CBAs and LEOBORs reviewed by myself and CZ researchers at the time of the writing. CBA contracts ranged from 1 to 492 pages in length; the median CBA contract was 51 pages. To facilitate coding this volume of text, I used the content analysis and text categorization tool Kira, a software typically employed by law firms for document review to allow researchers to efficiently review and code the different provisions within

the contracts appropriately. Appendix C provides further discussion of the training protocols and the benefits of the Natural Language Processing (NLP) capacities of the Kira platform in assisting with provision identification.

Once the documents were obtained, the text of the CBAs and LEOBORs were uploaded systematically into Kira.¹⁰ A team of nearly two dozen researchers coded the data through a framework I co-produced with CZ researchers; this is discussed in further detail below.

3.1.3. *Development of Police Protectionism Framework*

Table 3.1 lists the 26 types of protections found in CBAs and LEOBORs that were coded by CZ researchers, categorized into eight broad categories of police protectionism.¹¹ These 26 provisions were identified by myself, with feedback from CZ researchers and research advisors, over the course of pretesting of coding and through reviews of relevant literature on police unionism (Walker 2001; Keenan and Walker 2005; Schwartz 2014; Walker 2015; Huq and McAdams 2016; Rushin 2017; Rushin 2019; Harris and Sweeney 2019). The eight-category framework draws upon components of police protectionism described in the work of Campaign Zero (2016), Rushin (2017), and Harris and Sweeney (2019).

Table 3.1 Categories of Police Protectionism¹²

Category	Provision Subcategories
Disqualifying complaints	Disqualifying Complaints and/or Reducing Accessibility to Filing Complaints (Keenan and Walker, 2005)
	1. Statutes of limitations on filing complaints.
	2. Limiting length of investigations.
	3. Preventing the filing of anonymous complaints.
Restricts/Delays investigations	4. Reducing the scope of what actions or violations can constitute a complaint.
	Controlling Interrogation Parameters vis-à-vis waiting periods, delaying interrogations, and/or providing subjects with more advantages civilians under

¹⁰ The data for additional contracts will be made available for public release on Github in addition to a program that users utilize to create their own indexes.

¹¹ While there were more than provision category types coded, they were ultimately excluded because they did not infringe on accountability or transparency.

¹² The discussion in Appendix D provides a detailed breakdown of the above provision categories accompanied with scholarship justification and examples from contracts.

	<p>investigation would not receive (Huq and McAdams, 2016; Rushin 2017; Walker 2015).</p> <p>5. Restricting number and type of interrogators (i.e., only sworn officers).</p> <p>6. Restricting interrogation conduct and what questions or language can be used during interrogation.</p> <p>7. Delaying interrogations with formal waiting periods or deferring to the subject’s timeline.</p>
Gives officers access	<p>Giving Officers Unfair Access to Information (Rushin, 2017; Keenan and Walker, 2005).</p> <p>8. Providing officers with evidence obtained before and during investigation prior to making a statement.</p> <p>9. Giving officers unfair access to information, including information against them.</p> <p>10. Allowing officers to review photos, audio, video, or body worn camera video related to the incident prior to interrogation. (Body-Worn Camera specific)</p> <p>11. Provides officers with the name and information of the complainant.</p>
Limiting oversight	<p>Limiting Oversight (Walker, 2001; Rushin, 2019; Rushin, 2017; Walker, 2015; Hardaway, 2019; Harris and Sweeney, 2021).</p> <p>12. Limiting the power of civilian oversight by either explicitly narrowing the role of civilian oversight in how/what they investigate and or implicitly by preventing civilian/external oversight from investigating complaints.</p> <p>13. Limiting the power of other external oversight including federal interventions by either explicitly narrowing the role of oversight in how/what they investigate.</p>
Limiting transparency and disciplinary consequences	<p>Limiting Transparency and disciplinary consequences, and advantages in the process (Walker 2001; Rushin, 2019; Rushin, 2017; Harris and Sweeney, 2021).</p> <p>14. Preventing the use of past misconduct to be used or considered by investigators.</p> <p>15. Limiting transparency and disciplinary consequences of misconduct</p> <p>16. Limiting transparency by preventing the release of officer information or data to the public.</p> <p>17. General advantages in the disciplinary process which are not offered to civilians such as preventing confessions from being used in future investigations, being judged by an entity of peers, etc.</p>
Requiring city to pay	<p>Requiring city to pay for officer time during investigations or pay legal costs associated with officer misconduct (Schwartz, 2014; Walker, 2008).</p> <p>18. Allows officers to continue getting paid during the course of an investigation or a suspension.</p> <p>19. Allowing officers to use Paid Leave in lieu of suspension days.</p> <p>20. Requires city to pay legal costs associated with a civil suit including legal fees and settlements.</p>
Erases misconduct	<p>Allows departments or officers to erase investigations and records of misconduct (Keenan and Walker, 2005; Rushin, 2017).</p> <p>21. Department will automatically purge or expunge all sustained officer misconduct files after a period of time.</p> <p>22. Department will automatically purge or expunge all unsustained officer misconduct files after a period of time preventing the public and department from identifying patterns of practice.</p> <p>23. Allows officers to request purging files of any type from their personnel record via a request to the department. Department will make determination.</p>

Arbitration	Allowing officers to appeal terminations and/or disciplinary through a grievance process that involves arbitration (Rushin, 2019; Grunwald and Rappaport, 2020; Iris, 1998)
	24. Allowing officers to appeal terminations and/or disciplinary through a grievance process that involves binding arbitration.
	25. Allowing officers to appeal terminations and/or discipline through a grievance process that involves arbitration.
	26. Selection of arbitrators.

3.1.4. Data Cleaning, Restructuring, and Transformation

Prior to starting any rigorous data cleaning and transformation, the sample of the dataset was reduced to CBAs and LEOBORs covering the largest 100 police agencies in U.S. metropolitan areas. This was done in large part due to concerns about missing data around other key covariates and policing outcomes data in smaller cities. Additionally, I only examine rank-and-file police CBAs, excluding other types of law enforcement (e.g., county sheriffs), due to differences in jurisdictions and scope, most notably Sheriffs who have correctional responsibilities (i.e., Sheriffs typically manage local jails in the U.S. whereas local police typically do not).¹³ Rank-and-file police capture more than half of all police officers in the U.S. (Rad, Kirk, and Jones 2023). The dataset used in my subsequent analyses is structured such that the rows are records for the 100 largest police agencies in U.S. metropolitan areas and the columns consist of 26 binary variables corresponding to different provisions indicating if the provision is found in either the CBA or LEOBOR, or in either.

3.1.5. Computing the Index Score

Given existing scholarship, there has yet to be a quantification or weighting to which CBA provision categories matter most for accountability and transparency. While employing an additive approach for the development of an overall index of police protections effectively gives each of the eight provision categories equal weight in creating an overall index of police protectionism, I argue it is

¹³ The one exception to this rule is Jacksonville, FL, which went through a consolidation process in which it is the primary agency responsible for both law enforcement responsibilities and corrections.

sufficient for foundational purposes of an initial exploration. A simple additive index, commonly referred to as a “summative” index, assigns equal weights to each provision and then takes the sum to create the total score for each city. Thus, the additive index score will be the sum of how many protection categories are covered, where each category equals to one. The range of the additive score is 0-8, in accordance with the eight categories described in Table 3.1. A given category will be given a score of 1 if the CBA or LEOBOR for the police department has any of the sub provisions falling within the broader category.

3.1.6. Accounting for State and Local Differences

Since police protections identified in this framework are found both in CBAs (local-level) and LEOBORs (state-level), three different indices (or measures) were constructed. Moreover, given mixed findings between police unionism, collective bargaining, LEOBORs and police misconduct outcomes in prior research (i.e., Cunningham *et al.*, 2022; Goncalves 2021; Dharmapala *et al.*, 2022), providing measures capturing different concepts may be helpful for future investigations. Based on the eight overarching possible categories of protectionism, I sum up the scores of the provision categories that exist in either the CBA (*CBA Metric*), LEOBOR (*LEOBOR Metric*), or either (*Full Metric*):

1. The *CBA Metric* represents the police protection score at the agency level and excludes state-level protections (i.e., protections secured through CBAs).
2. The *LEOBOR Metric* represents the police protection score for police departments that are in states with a LEOBOR (21 of 50 states as of this writing). In other words, it specifically focuses on protections granted to the police through state legislation, whereas the CBA metric focuses on protections granted by local municipalities.
3. The *Full Metric* represents the police protection score of whether the provision exists at either the state or local level.

3.2. Independent Variables

As noted earlier, this study seeks to explore the correlates of police protectionism. Table 3.2 provides an overview of data sources and years used to construct these hypothesized correlates of police protection, and Table 3.3 presents descriptive statistics of the correlates as well as the dependent variables.

Table 3.2 Data Sources and Datasets

SOURCE	DATASET NAME	VARIABLE(S)	YEAR(S)
U.S. Census Bureau	American Community Survey	Total Population % Black Population % Hispanic Population Median Household Income	2010
	Census of Governments	Local Public Expenditures	2010
Census Scope <i>Derived from U.S. Census</i>	Segregation: Dissimilarity Indices	Black-White Dissimilarity Hispanic-White Dissimilarity	2010
Federal Bureau of Investigation – U.S. Department of Justice	FBI – Uniform Crime Reporting	Average Yearly Violent Crime Rate per 10,000 population. Violent Crime Rate only included Part I Index Crimes (Homicide, Robbery, Rape, Felony Assault)	2013-2019
	Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS)	Number of Sworn Law Enforcement Officers per 10,000 residents	2013
Campaign Zero	Nix the 6 – Law Enforcement Contract Database	Indices of Police Protectionism (CBA Metric, LEOBOR Metric, Full Metric)	2013-2020
American Ideology Project	Municipal Ideology Scores	Municipal Ideology Score 2008 Presidential Vote (State-Level) for Obama	2016

A first hypothesized contributor is political ideology at the state and/or local (i.e., city) level. I measure political ideology at the city-level with an ideology score from the American Ideology Project, which derives ideology scores vis-à-vis survey responses (2006-2021) to the Annenberg National Election Study and the Cooperative Congressional Election Study (Tausanovitch and Warshaw 2014).

To account for the role of state-level ideology as a correlate of police protections, I include the 2008 presidential vote share at the state level for Barack Obama (i.e., Democratic party candidate).

Next, I consider the role of economic influences as contributors to police protections by exploring the relationship with local public expenditures, with data sourced from the 2007 U.S. Census of Government (Tausanovitch and Warshaw 2014). It is plausible that the direction of the association between public expenditures and police protections may be positive or negative; I do not have a clear hypothesis on the matter. Anecdotally, this happened in Chicago, where the union traded away fiscal benefits (e.g., even higher wages) in exchange for retaining protections that are captured in this index (Chase and Heinzmann, 2016). Thus, it is plausible that governments that spend less money may be more likely to provide protections in lieu of fiscal benefits to save funding for other budgetary considerations.

Another correlate of police protections I consider is the violent crime rate averaged between 2013 to 2019.¹⁴ This was computed from FBI Uniform Crime Report data by taking the total number of violent crimes from 2013-2019, dividing it by the number of years (N=7), and turning it into a per capita rate per 10,000 population. Additionally, given that we would expect more police interactions and, in turn, more opportunities for police to engage in abusive practices, it is also important to control for the number of officers per capita.

Perceived minority threat hypotheses related to the percentage of non-white populations, specifically in the Black or Hispanic populations (also referred to as “Racial Threat”), could predict levels of police protectionism due to officers’ fears and prejudice (Holmes and Smith 2014). Accordingly, I measure city/metro area racial and ethnic composition with data from the 2010 U.S. American Community Survey (ACS). To measure spatial threat, I employ the Dissimilarity Index, a

¹⁴ While number of law enforcement officers killed was considered, it was ultimately excluded due to the significant range in variation and the significantly low number of incidents in the period examined in this study (2013-2019). For example, in 2019, there were fewer than 100 incidents, and more than half were training related).

measure developed by Census Scope that is derived from ACS data. The Dissimilarity Index is a proxy for segregation, for both Black-White and Hispanic-White segregation. The Black-White Dissimilarity Index measures segregation between two groups and is better suited to capture historical disinvestment and race than a simple aggregate-level population percentage (Massey and Denton 1988). Specifically, it measures the percentage that one population would need to relocate to create a similar distribution as the other group. Therefore, it is important to consider police protectionism in the racial context and how it intersects with policing outcomes. As noted earlier, it's plausible that high levels of segregation and high level of police protectionism could indicate support for “White Protectionism” (Smith and King 2021). For example, cities with higher levels of segregation could be giving officers more protections to give the perception that officers have more police discretion in subjugating non-white populations.

Table 3.3 Descriptive Statistics

	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
DEPENDENT VARIABLES					
<i>Index of Police Protectionism</i>					
Full Metric	5.13	5.50	2.31	0.00	8.00
LEOBOR Metric	2.99	4.00	2.50	0.00	6.00
CBA Metric	3.47	4.00	2.44	0.00	8.00
INDEPENDENT VARIABLES					
Violent Crime Rate per 10,000	68.10	62.15	406.74	5.17	200.10
Municipal Ideology Score	-0.21	-0.16	0.31	-0.99	0.41
State Ideology Score	0.04	0.05	0.09	-0.55	0.25
Public Expenditures in \$ per 10,000	2161.60	1771.80	12.71	772.20	14053.3
Median Household Income	40.47	39.23	10.59	23.48	78.72
% Black Population	19.96	14.80	17.27	0.30	78.30
% Hispanic Population	24.97	16.65	20.92	2.60	96.10
Black-White Dissimilarity	0.56	0.59	0.16	0.21	0.87
Hispanic-White Dissimilarity	0.46	0.45	0.13	0.17	0.72
Population [Scaled]	667.5	394.70	971,582	224.80	8523.20
Number of Officers per 10,000 Residents	21.01	18.50	9.41	7.60	54.20
Observations – 100					

Finally, while acknowledging the limitations with employing median household income for cross-sectional studies given it is an aggregate measure (combining high and low income), it is still a critical measure to include given the literature on neighborhood effects finding strong correlations

between criminal legal outcomes and socioeconomics indicators capturing concentrated poverty and historical disinvestment (Sampson, Morenoff, and Gannon-Rowley 2002; Sharkey 2013).

4. EXPLORING POLICE PROTECTIONISM

Having demonstrated my methodology for measuring police protectionism, as secured through CBAs or LEOBORs, I now turn to an analysis of the frequency of those protections, in Figure 3.2, across the 100 largest police departments in U.S. metropolitan areas.

While prior work has documented specific provisions in select jurisdictions, this analysis offers one of the first opportunities to examine their distribution using a standardized, scalable index across the 100 largest police departments in U.S. metropolitan areas. Figure 3.2 presents how the eight protection categories are distributed across the study. When examining the distribution of provisions secured in CBAs exclusively (3.2 A), the most common provision type is “Limiting Transparency and Disciplinary Consequences”, followed by “Requiring the City to Pay.” When considering protections secured through either CBAs or LEOBORs, Figure 3.2 (B) reveals that the provision categories that are the most salient across the sample are “Restricting/Delaying Interrogations”, followed by “Limiting Transparency and Disciplinary Consequences,” and “Giving Officers Access to Information” (see Table 3.1 and Appendix D for detailed descriptions of these provisions). Officers in more than half of the top 100 police departments in the country are granted these protections through CBAs or LEOBORs which can be viewed in Appendix B.

As noted by Huq and McAdams (2016), provisions that create delays are a serious concern for the fidelity of an investigation into misconduct. Another salient category provision is related to limiting transparency and disciplinary consequences covers a range of different types of police protections. For example, the Mesa, AZ, CBA includes the following provision:

Any documented performance or discipline resulting in written or verbal counseling, or written or verbal reprimand, older than three (3) years shall not be considered when determining transfers, assignments or promotions (Mesa, AZ, CBA, 2018).

Figure 3.2 (A) Frequency of CBA Provision Categories Across 100 Largest U.S. Police Agencies

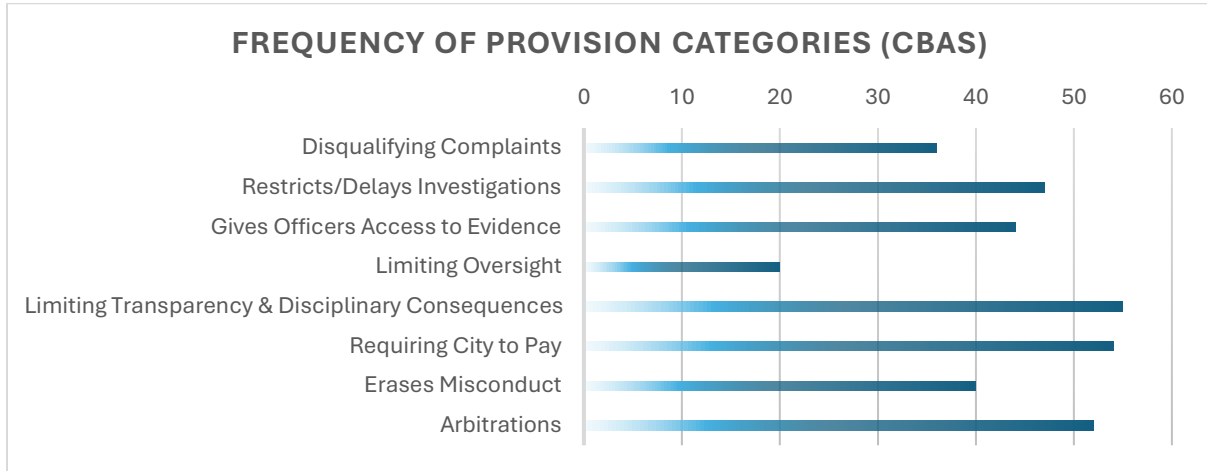
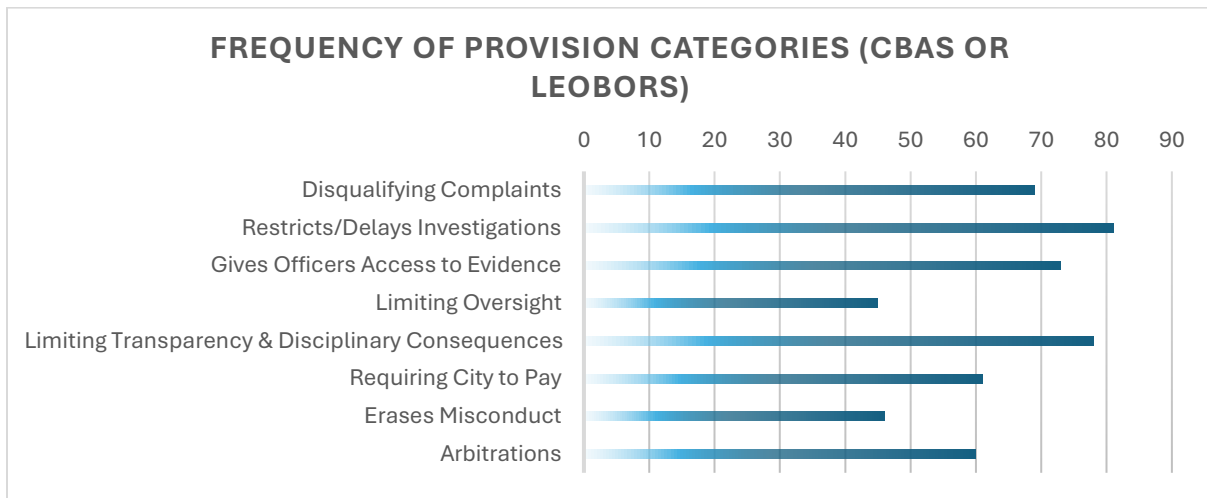


Figure 3.2 (B) Frequency of CBA and LEOBORs Provision Categories Across 100 Largest U.S. Police Agencies



This provision suggests that any form of misconduct that results in counseling or a reprimand, is essentially expunged, automatically, from an officer’s record after three years for the purpose of promotion or new assignment consideration. From a deterrence perspective, if the consequences of misconduct are short-lived, then this theoretically should weaken the deterrence capacity of a

department's disciplinary system. Appendix D includes additional examples and discussion about the different categories in the framework.

It is important to note that 23 cities in the sample did not have any protections in the CBAs and/or LEOBORs across the eight categories. Further, 13 of the 23 observations are in states that do not allow collective bargaining for law enforcement unions, such as Georgia and North Carolina.¹⁵ However, this does not necessarily indicate that these protections are not offered to officers through other mechanisms, such as municipal codes or department policy manuals. For instance, it's possible that some of the disciplinary delays are codified in the department policy manuals. In sum, while there are municipalities in the study that do not have the protections embedded in CBAs or LEOBORs, and effectively have an index score of zero for the purposes of the analysis in this chapter and the next, it does not necessarily mean that police have no forms of protections whatsoever. While it is not feasible to comprehensively search for police protections in every single piece of federal, state, county, and city policy, regulation, code, and labor agreements, I'd argue that data on CBAs and LEOBORs provide a reasonably comprehensive measure of police protections. Further, I argue it better represents and captures union interests. Nonetheless, in-depth qualitative analysis of the Chicago and Dallas police departments in Chapter 5 will return to this point by examining protections granted through mechanisms besides CBAs and LEOBORs.

4.1. Bi-Variate Relationships

Figure 3.3 presents Pearson's Correlogram Matrix for all non-binary variables of interest discussed above. The shading represents the direction of the relationship (blue for positive and red for negative), and the size of the circle indicates the size of the correlation (larger circles indicate a

¹⁵ In 2020, the state of Virginia passed legislation allowing law enforcement unions to collectively bargain. However, the scope of this study extends from 2013-2019 and does not impact the development or design index.

stronger relationship). The matrix provides an initial descriptive look at how key contextual factors relate to the level of CBA protections, as captured by the newly developed index. The violent crime rate, the number of officers per 10,000 residents, and the Black-White Dissimilarity Index all have a positive and significant relationship with the level of CBA protections. Interestingly, other expected correlates of police protectionism such as public expenditures per capita and ideology score are not significantly correlated.

Figure 3.3 Pearson Correlogram Matrix

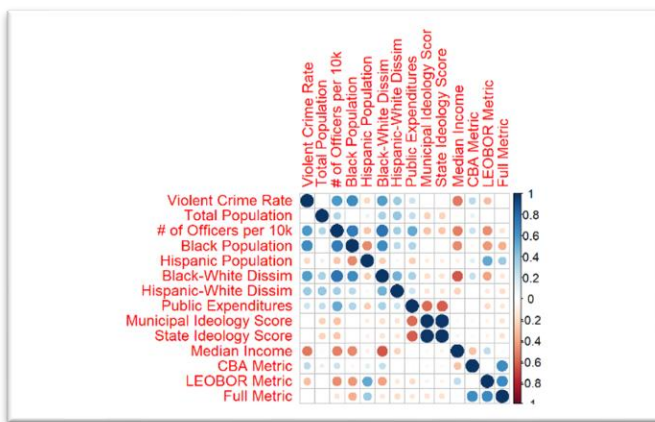
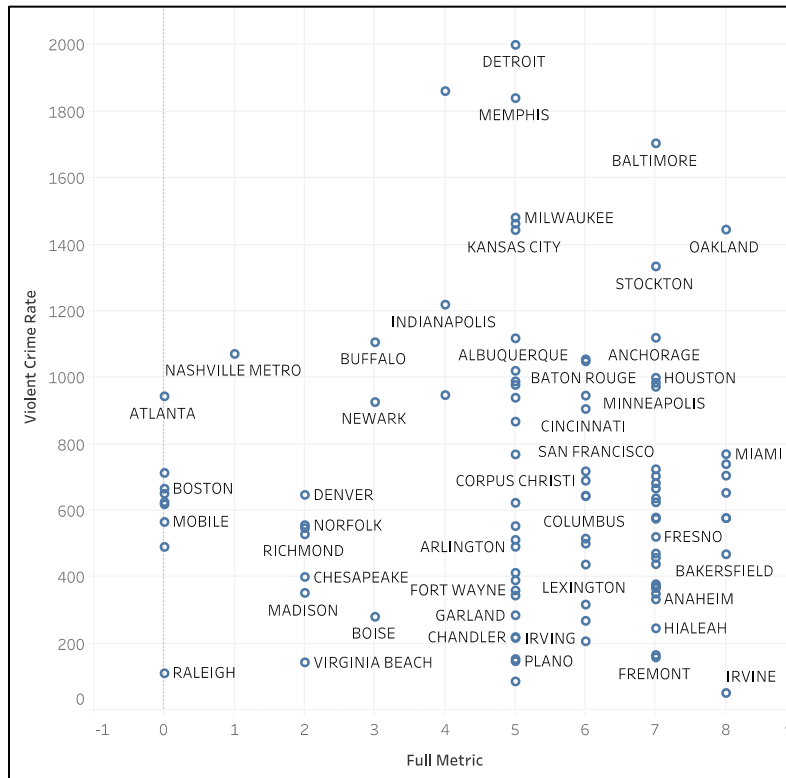


Figure 3.4 provides a visualization of the positive bivariate relationship between the police protections index and the violent crime rate. For example, Baltimore, one of the cities with the highest levels of violent crime in the U.S., provides its police several protections through their CBA, including the purging of misconduct records and allowing officers to get paid while suspended (Rushin 2017). In contrast, Kansas City, another city experiencing high violent crime rates, has a level of police protectionism closer to the average of 5.13. Several factors could explain this difference, including state labor laws, historical legacies around race relations, demographics, and economic explanations, which warrant further exploration.

Figure 3.4 Violent Crime Rate and Police Protectionism



The LEOBOR metric, which measures state-level protections, has notable differences in predictors in comparison to the CBA metric, which measures local-level protections. Prior to moving to the multivariate models, it is important to recognize that several covariates have a significant and positive relationship with one another. To ensure there are no concerns with multicollinearity, I conducted a variance inflation factor (VIF) test, which can be found in Appendix G.

4.2. Exploring Correlates of Police Protectionism: Multivariate Analysis

Before proceeding to the multivariate results, it is important to clarify that the empirical models in this investigation are not intended to establish causal relationships. Rather than making causal claims, the aim here is to examine associations between various city-level characteristics and the presence of police protections. The models are intended to illustrate how the newly developed index can be used to explore theoretical expectations regarding police protectionism. This exploratory

approach is designed to generate hypotheses and guide future research that may employ causal designs. The analysis is further limited by the cross-sectional nature of the data, which prevents tracking the origins or evolution of protections over time. While I have made efforts to preserve temporal ordering where possible, many jurisdictions have had some form of police protectionism in place for years, complicating any temporal assumptions. Thus, this chapter serves as an initial attempt to describe which characteristics are associated with higher levels of police protectionism, recognizing that omitted variable bias and endogeneity remain possible threats.

Model 1 in Table 3.4 demonstrates that while the violent crime rate shows a positive association with police protectionism, it does not reach statistical significance. Both population size and the number of officers per 10,000 residents also do not have a statistically significant relationship with the level of police protection.

In Model 2, the Black-White and Hispanic-White dissimilarity measures are statistically significant, albeit in opposite directions. This model finds that protections are more likely in cities with higher Black-White segregation and lower Hispanic-White segregation. The Black-White Dissimilarity Index is both statistically and substantively associated with protections, indicating that cities which are more segregated spatially tend to have more police protections. In contrast, the Hispanic-White Dissimilarity measure reveals an inverse relationship between Hispanic-White segregation and police protectionism. This could be potentially explained by the common enemy theory, which suggests that Hispanic and white groups might unite against Black groups in areas with lower Hispanic-White segregation and high Black-White segregation (Bobo and Hutchings 1996). Furthermore, this can be conceptualized alongside the Black-White dissimilarity variable, suggesting that cities with higher Black-White segregation exhibit higher police protectionism scores (Krivo, Peterson, and Kuhl 2009). Nonetheless, this further underscores the racialized link at the local level with predicting police protectionism.

Table 3.4 Multivariate Models | Correlates of Police Protectionism

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	(1)	Full Metric (2)	(3)
Violent Crime Rate	0.010** (0.005)	0.022*** (0.007)	0.024*** (0.007)
Population	-0.010 (0.018)	-0.014 (0.021)	-0.010 (0.021)
Number of Officers per 10,000	0.006 (0.031)	0.029 (0.034)	0.044 (0.038)
Black-White Dissimilarity		6.371*** (1.838)	5.543** (2.232)
Hispanic-White Dissimilarity		-7.858*** (1.853)	-7.349*** (1.950)
% Black Population		-0.068*** (0.023)	-0.070*** (0.025)
% Hispanic Population		0.007 (0.007)	0.0004 (0.012)
Municipal Ideology Score			-3.945 (6.338)
State Ideology Score			2.117 (9.608)
Median Household Income			-0.003 (0.023)
Public Expenditures per 10,000			-0.003 (0.002)
Observations	100	100	100
R ²	0.245	0.471	0.490
Adjusted R ²	0.196	0.411	0.407
Residual Std. Error	2.073 (df = 93)	1.774 (df = 89)	1.781 (df = 85)

Note:

*p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

Turning to Model 3, the introduction of political, public-sector labor, and economic-related variables reveals interesting patterns. Notably, neither state-level ideology nor local-level ideology demonstrates a statistically significant relationship with police protectionism. This absence of ideological effects is striking and suggests that police protectionism does not follow conventional left-right political divisions. The null findings for both state and local ideology indicate that police protections have achieved a form of bipartisan institutional support or operate in a political space where traditional ideological positioning does not predict their presence or strength.

Findings also show that there is a negative but non-significant relationship ($p < 0.1$), between police protections and public expenditures per capita. This finding runs counter to the theory that police protectionism is stronger in cities with more public spending, due to increased crime rates which would provide support for more spending on policing (Greenwood and Wadycki 1976). One possible explanation is that municipalities with fewer financial resources may provide non-monetary benefits—such as protections—as a substitute for higher salaries. This could indicate that it's plausible that in areas with fewer resources, there's a preference for—or a greater likelihood of—securing protections through means other than direct fiscal investment.

The consistent null findings for the "% Black Population" variable across all three models also warrant attention. Unlike the dissimilarity measures, the share of the Black population does not show a statistically significant relationship with police protectionism in these models. This contrasts with the significant effect of Black-White spatial segregation, suggesting that it is the spatial distribution and isolation of racial groups—rather than their proportional representation in the population—that matters for police protectionism.

One narrative or plausible theory that helps interpret these findings is that cities with high levels of segregation (Black-White Dissimilarity), or spatial threat, result in more unrestrained policing when there is less political influence to push local governments for more accountable

policing policies. This theory, which I refer to as "Socio-Spatial Disenfranchisement," posits that when there are high levels of Black-White segregation, there are higher levels of police protectionism. This could be the result of several mechanisms such as growing racial threats or simply an electorate that has not had the political capital to push local governments towards more equitable and fair policies pertaining to policing and social investments. This theory represents an intersection between racial and spatial threat theories with American Political Development scholarship (Cohen and Dawson 1993; King and Smith 2005; Miller 2008; Lerman and Weaver 2014).

4.3. Exploring Police Protectionism across CBAs and LEOBORs

As noted earlier, though the primary focus of this investigation is exploring police protectionism broadly, understanding differences in correlations of protectionism at different levels can provide additional nuance and better inform policy discussions while exploring relevant theories to help better explain protectionism. Table 3.5 explores protectionism provided by CBA versus the Full Metric (protections embedded in CBAs or LEOBORs).¹⁶

There are several differences worth highlighting. The comparison between Model 1 (CBA Metric) and Model 2 (Full Metric) reveals that while certain demographic and crime-related variables operate consistently across both measures, the mechanisms driving CBA-secured protections appear fundamentally different from those shaping the broader landscape of police protectionism. This divergence is particularly important to understand given that the CBA Metric is a subset of the Full Metric, with the latter also incorporating state-level protections secured through LEOBORs.

¹⁶ This analysis does not include a separate model examining LEOBORs alone. Because LEOBORs are state-level legislation while the covariates in these models capture city-level characteristics, exploring correlates of LEOBORs using municipal-level data would be methodologically inappropriate. Future research examining LEOBOR variation should employ state-level predictors with appropriate multi-level modeling approaches.

Table 3.5 Multivariate Analysis | Exploring Police Protectionism
Correlates of Police Protectionism

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>	
	CBA Metric (1)	Full Metric (2)
Violent Crime Rate per 10,000	0.023*** (0.008)	0.024*** (0.007)
Population	0.001 (0.027)	-0.010 (0.023)
Number of Officers per 10,000	0.100* (0.052)	0.044 (0.044)
Black-White Dissimilarity	4.899* (2.824)	5.543** (2.419)
Hispanic-White Dissimilarity	-4.750** (2.212)	-7.349*** (1.895)
% Black Population	-0.091*** (0.027)	-0.070*** (0.023)
% Hispanic Population	0.007 (0.017)	0.0004 (0.015)
Municipal Ideology	-6.467 (8.478)	-3.945 (7.263)
State Ideology Score	9.318 (12.358)	2.117 (10.586)
Median Household Income	-0.025 (0.035)	-0.003 (0.030)
Public Expenditures per 10,000	-0.003 (0.002)	-0.003 (0.002)
Observations	100	100
R ²	0.384	0.490
Adjusted R ²	0.283	0.407
Residual Std. Error (df = 85)	2.079	1.781

Note:

* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

The most striking similarity between the two models is the consistent absence of ideological effects. Neither state-level ideology (measured by the American Ideology Project) nor local-level ideology demonstrates a statistically significant relationship with either CBA-secured protections or the Full Metric. This null finding across both models is noteworthy and suggests that police protectionism operates outside conventional ideological frameworks. While we might not expect more progressive or pro-labor environments to necessarily produce more protections (as opposed to better wages or benefits), the complete absence of any ideological relationship—whether at the state or local level—indicates that police protections have achieved a form of bipartisan institutional support or operate in a political space where traditional left-right divisions simply do not apply.

This pattern also suggests that what police unions secure at the bargaining table is not meaningfully constrained or enabled by political ideology at any level of governance. One plausible explanation is that police unions occupy a unique position in American politics, garnering support across the ideological spectrum—from progressives who support public sector labor rights to conservatives who support law enforcement. This cross-cutting political dynamic may insulate police protectionism from the ideological pressures that shape other policy domains.

The spatial segregation variables further illuminate the distinction between CBA and Full Metric correlates. The Black-White Dissimilarity Index is positively and significantly associated with the Full Metric, consistent with the "Socio-Spatial Disenfranchisement" theory discussed earlier. However, this variable shows no statistical relationship with CBA-secured protections. It is difficult to construct a plausible mechanism by which local-level segregation patterns in individual large cities would directly influence state-level LEOBOR adoption. More likely, there are state-level factors—such as broader patterns of state policies that both promote segregation and favor protective labor legislation—that mediate this relationship. The relationship between segregation and protectionism appears to operate at a different level of governance than collective bargaining.

Model 1 does identify one unique correlate: the number of officers per 10,000 residents is statistically significant for CBA-secured protections but not for the Full Metric. This finding points to an organizational dynamic specific to the collective bargaining context, where agencies with higher officer density may possess greater bargaining power or more sophisticated union infrastructure to negotiate comprehensive protections.

Taken together, these findings indicate that CBA-secured protections are primarily shaped by local demographic characteristics—particularly patterns of Hispanic-White segregation—alongside the organizational strength of police departments. The absence of ideological correlates in both models suggests that police protectionism operates in a relatively insulated political space, independent of the ideological pressures that shape other areas of public policy. This distinction has important implications for reform efforts: reducing police protections may require strategies that transcend traditional political coalitions, as neither progressive nor conservative ideology predicts the presence or strength of these protections.

5. DISCUSSION

Given discussions in the public surrounding police accountability in the aftermath of the 2020 protests, this investigation aims to fill a gap and provide a standardized empirical framework for identifying and comparing protections argued to frustrate accountability and transparency.

This investigation sought to shed light on a previously underexplored dimension pertaining to accountability and transparency: police protectionism. The contribution comprises two parts: first, the development of a novel index, based on CBAs and LEOBORs, to measure variation in police protections across major police departments in the US, and second, the exploration of patterns associated with police protections.

First, through qualitative coding and descriptive analysis, it reveals that there are over two dozen types of provisions found in CBAs and LEOBORs that infringe on accountability and transparency. Furthermore, there appears to be significant variation in the level and type of protections offered to officers across the 100 largest metropolitan areas. Next, when starting to explore the correlates of police protectionism, I start with the Full Metric, given that it's the most comprehensive measure, capturing whether protections are present in either the LEOBOR or CBA. When examining the Full Metric, racial (specifically spatial segregation patterns) variables emerge as associated with police protectionism, while neither state nor local ideology shows any relationship with protections.

To understand variation in correlates, given that the Full Metric is a combination and overlapping index of the other two sources of protections, I then assess correlates for CBA-secured protections versus the Full Metric. The findings reveal that demographic characteristics—particularly patterns of Hispanic-White segregation—and organizational capacity (measured by officer density) shape CBA-secured protections. Notably, ideology at neither the state nor local level demonstrates any statistical relationship with protections in either model.

To summarize, the absence of ideological correlates across both CBA and Full Metric models is perhaps the most striking finding. This suggests that police protectionism operates in a unique political space, insulated from the conventional left-right ideological divisions that structure most policy domains. Police unions appear to have secured protections through bipartisan support—drawing on both progressive support for public sector labor rights and conservative support for law enforcement—creating a political dynamic that transcends traditional ideological boundaries. The significance of racial covariates, particularly spatial segregation measures, provides continued support for the importance of exploring racial motivations for the development or retention of police protections. Furthermore, the divergence between models highlights that the

mechanisms driving CBA-secured protections may operate at a different level of governance than those shaping state-mandated protections, with important implications for how reform efforts should be targeted.

5.1. Limitations

When interpreting this study's findings, it is important to note the limitations. The analysis, while comprehensive, leans on legal scholarship, focusing on provisions believed to hinder accountability and transparency. The framework examines protectionism in CBAs and LEOBORs across various policing dimensions, from disqualifying complaints to erasing misconduct histories. Though this breadth may introduce ambiguity, it offers a holistic view of protections affecting deterrence. Future studies might benefit from using each framework category to measure specific outcomes, such as the number of civilian complaints. However, the framework's potential for misinterpretation and misuse, especially regarding union strength, should be noted. See Appendix F for a detailed discussion.

Understanding these connections can help inform policy discussions and further research on the factors shaping police accountability and transparency. Also, this measure provides insights into the protections that rank-and-file leadership attempts to retain or secure.

6. CONCLUSION

Given discussions in the public surrounding police accountability in the aftermath of the 2020 protests, this investigation aims to fill a gap and provide a standardized empirical framework for identifying and comparing protections argued to frustrate accountability and transparency.

This investigation sought to shed light on a previously underexplored dimension pertaining to accountability and transparency: police protectionism. The contribution comprises two parts: first, the development of a novel index, based on CBAs and LEOBORs, to measure variation in police

protections across major police departments in the US, and second, the exploration of patterns associated with police protections.

First, through qualitative coding and descriptive analysis, it reveals that there are over two dozen types of provisions found in CBAs and LEOBORs that infringe on accountability and transparency. Furthermore, there appears to be significant variation in the level and type of protections offered to officers across the 100 largest metropolitan areas. Next, when exploring the correlates of police protectionism, I examined the Full Metric. When examining the Full Metric, racial variables (specifically spatial segregation patterns) emerge as associated with police protectionism, while neither state nor local ideology shows any relationship with protections. To understand variation in correlates, I then assessed correlates for CBA-secured protections versus the Full Metric. The findings reveal that demographic characteristics—particularly patterns of Hispanic-White segregation—and organizational capacity (measured by officer density) shape CBA-secured protections. Notably, ideology at neither the state nor local level demonstrates any statistical relationship with protections in either model.

The absence of ideological correlates across both models is perhaps the most striking finding. Although this investigation is exploratory in nature, the findings provide suggestive evidence that police protectionism may enjoy bipartisan support. This suggests that police protectionism operates in a unique political space, insulated from the conventional left-right ideological divisions that structure most policy domains. Police unions appear to have secured protections through bipartisan coalitions—drawing on both progressive support for public sector labor rights and conservative support for law enforcement.

The significance of racial covariates, particularly spatial segregation measures, provides continued support for the importance of exploring racial motivations for the development or retention of police protections. The findings of this investigation suggest that police protectionism is

interconnected with neighborhood conditions (i.e., violent crime), race (i.e., segregation), and economics (i.e., public spending). One plausible theory is that pushes for protectionism by law enforcement may be driven by a desire to sustain the status quo through policies perceived to allow officers to continue existing policing practices, which is particularly more salient in cities with higher Black-White residential segregation.

In this context, police protectionism could be seen as another form of "White Protectionism," by reinforcing existing racial disparities and perpetuating a system that disproportionately disadvantages historically disinvested and marginalized communities. APD scholarship, paying particular attention to underlying racial motivations such as theories on "White Protectionism," specifically draws attention to the policies and practices designed to maintain the privileges and power of the white majority in society (Smith and King 2021). The findings presented in this study further our understanding of why police protections significantly vary across police departments in the U.S. As previous research (Rad 2018) and cases of police misconduct, such as Derek Chauvin's history before George Floyd's murder, have demonstrated, it is crucial to consider the sources of police protectionism, given that there have been several studies finding anecdotal evidence that these protections have been employed to shield officers engaging in some of the extreme acts of violence.

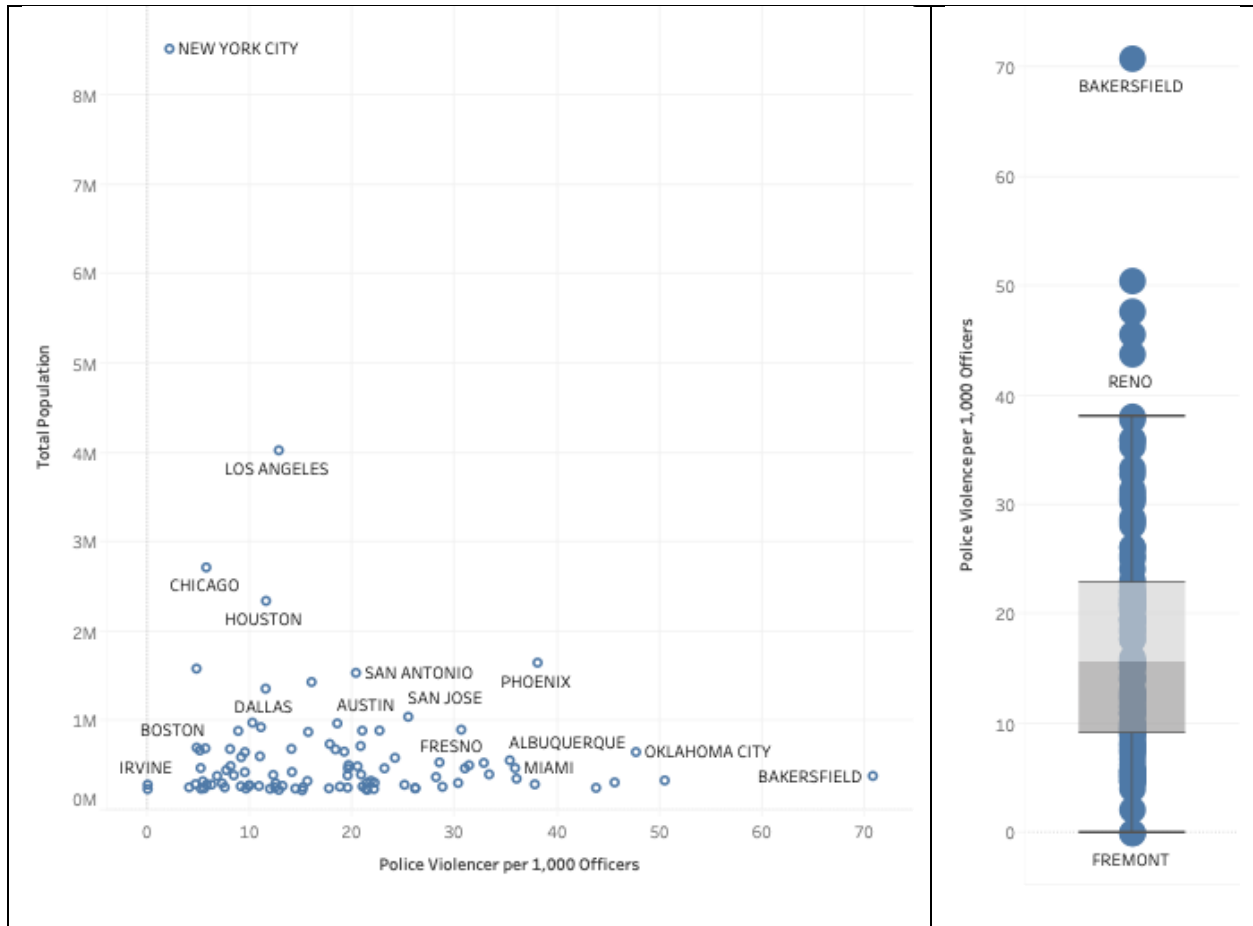
CHAPTER 4: POLICE PROTECTIONISM and POLICE VIOLENCE: EXPLORING POLICE UNION SECURED PROTECTIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

On average, more than 1,100 civilians have been killed by U.S. law enforcement each year since 2013 (Mapping Police Violence 2023). U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ) investigations (e.g., Ferguson Report 2016) have frequently found police departments struggling to hold their officers accountable, often citing crippled accountability systems and disturbing patterns of police excessive force, particularly against non-white populations (Kelly, Childress, and Rich 2015). While the steady stream of police violence on social media may render the impression of widespread brutality, it is nevertheless true that there is vast variation across police departments in the frequency of lethal behavior resulting in civilian fatalities.

For instance, as shown below in Figure 4.1 and in Appendix G, across the 100 largest police agencies in U.S. metropolitan areas, the number of civilians killed by police between 2013-2019 varies substantially from 0 (e.g., Riverside, CA) to nearly 71 civilians killed per 1,000 officers (Bakersfield, CA).

Figure 4.1 Variation in Police Violence per Capita Across 100 Largest Municipal Areas



These differences raise the question of why police departments in the U.S. vary greatly in their level of lethal force against civilians and comply with laws surrounding abuse against the communities they are sworn to protect and serve, particularly against communities of color. Asked more simply, why do U.S. police departments vary in fatal police violence outcomes? This has broader implications not only for public safety research but for democratic governance broadly. As noted by Huq (2017), the type of policing “... in a nation will necessarily influence the health of its democracy.”

Crippled accountability systems and limited transparency have often been cited as explanations for reducing the repercussions of misconduct and creating or insulating cultures of

abuse. Accountability systems aim to create deterrent effects on officers so that there are consequences when officers fail to comply with the law (Walker 2008). There are three primary dimensions for deterrence concerning police misconduct: administrative (i.e., officer disciplined or terminated), criminal (i.e., officer charged with a crime), and civil (i.e., officer is held financially liable). Administratively, the data available also paints a disturbing picture. One investigation found that even when officers were terminated for misconduct, nearly one-quarter of these terminations were reinstated (Kelly, Lowery, and Rich 2017). And when they were not reinstated, many officers were found to have been hired as law enforcement at other agencies (Kelly, Lowery, and Rich 2017; Grunwald and Rappaport 2020). The combination of these factors, or lack thereof, may help inform the findings of a *Washington Post* investigation, which found that police officers are rarely charged criminally for violent on-duty offenses (Berman 2021). According to the Bowling Green State University (BGSU) Police Misconduct database, between 2005 and 2015, only 72 officers were convicted of murder or manslaughter despite the number of fatal police killings averaging roughly 1,100 per year—an arrest rate hovering slightly over 1% (Lopez 2021). Finally, when examining the civil dimension, one study looking at data across 44 of the largest law enforcement agencies and 37 small and mid-sized agencies in the country found that officers are nearly always indemnified and that individual officers are rarely held financially liable for their misbehavior (Schwartz 2014). One potential culprit that influences or impedes all three mechanisms for deterrence (civil, criminal, and administrative) are law enforcement unions.

Emerging scholarship exploring police unionism has started to identify collective bargaining as a contributor to police violence and misconduct, yet the specific union mechanism responsible is unknown (Cunningham *et al.*, 2021; Dharmapala *et al.*, 2022). While acknowledging that there are several union mechanisms that could be responsible, this investigation aims to explore one of the

most salient police union mechanisms employed to shield officers from accountability—police protections embedded within collective bargaining agreements (CBAs) between municipalities and police departments and law enforcement officer bill of rights (LEOBORs) passed by state legislatures. To do so, I utilize the original index, developed and introduced in Chapter 3, that quantifies protections secured through provisions within CBAs and LEOBORs across the 100 largest U.S. cities. First, I investigate whether there is a relationship between police protections and police violence, using police killings of civilians by police officers as a proxy for violence. Subsequently, I investigate whether there are specific types of provision categories that have a relationship with police violence. These analyses are not intended to assert causal relationships but rather illustrate how the new measure can be used to explore empirical patterns consistent with existing theories and studies (i.e., Cunningham *et al.*, 2021; Dharmapala *et al.* 2022).

2. THE CORRELATES OF POLICE VIOLENCE

Variation in police violence has been a focal point in criminological research for decades, with explanations broadly categorized into individual-based or systemic theories (i.e., Sherman 1978; Ray *et al.* 2024). This dichotomy is often framed as the "bad apples" versus "rotten barrels/orchards" debate (Smith and Holmes 2014). Another important factor is situational characteristics such as the demeanor of the individual responding to the officer (Black and Reiss 1970). While individual-centric theories emphasize officer traits like education and temperament (i.e., Pogarsky and Piquero 2004; Nagin 2013), systemic perspectives highlight institutional factors such as authoritarian culture (Carlson 2019). A more recent hybrid view suggests that law enforcement agencies operate as ecosystems where police violence spreads contagiously (Ouellet *et al.*, 2019). Beyond these, ecological theories delve into the varied behaviors of police across neighborhoods, identifying factors like racial composition as influential determinants (Holmes and Smith 2014).

Building on the index introduced in the previous chapter, this chapter shifts the lens toward assessing its utility in understanding variation in police violence. The hypothesis is that such protections might undermine accountability, thereby potentially increasing the likelihood of police violence. My aim is to understand how these protections influence deterrence mechanisms, assuming officers are rational actors responding to mechanisms that undermine accountability (Pogarsky and Piquero 2004; Nagin 2013). Notably, scholars like Walker have postulated that a lack of accountability could foster a "culture of impunity," signaling to officers that engaging in routine violence is permissible (Walker 2008; Walker 2015).

Central to this exploration is the assertion that police accountability serves as a mediator between union influence and police violence. The protections embedded in CBAs and LEOBORs might diminish deterrence, creating an atmosphere conducive to violence due to negligible consequences. Although fatal killings of civilians are an extreme manifestation of such violence, other indicators, like excessive force complaints, could offer more nuanced insights. However, data constraints present challenges in adopting a more expansive approach (refer to Appendix H for further discussion). Rather than aiming to establish causality, the analysis is intended to demonstrate how the protectionism index can be employed and assess whether it provides evidence to support culture of impunity theories concerning accountability and violence. To do this, I first determine if the broader concept of police protectionism can help explain variation in police violence. Subsequently, I scrutinize specific provision categories and clusters, denoted in the last chapter, such as "limiting transparency and disciplinary consequences," to discern their influence on police violence dynamics.

2.1. Police Unionism and Police Accountability

The growth and emergence of police unions in the 1960s and 1970s were spurred by the passage of federal laws protecting workers' rights to form unions and bargain collectively in the private sector,

alongside the increasing unionization of public employees in transit, teaching, and health care (Rad, Kirk, and Jones 2023). The purpose of police unions, from a general standpoint, is to fight for their members' interests, such as better pay and working conditions. However, the vested interests of law enforcement may not be reflective of the community in which they serve, especially if their membership is not comprised of the communities being policed or experiencing the highest levels of over policing (Keenan and Walker 2005; President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015). Given recent scholarship, evidence suggests that the race of an officer plays a role in whether they arrest or use force on civilians (Ba *et al.*, 2022). Since the rise of police unions (also commonly referred to as police associations) and the formalization of police unions in the 1960s, police associations have often been observed taking actions that are, in principle, opposed to the democratic elements of accountability and transparency (Juris and Feuille 1973; Walker 2008). For example, they have fought against the release of public records of police activity and behavior, making it difficult to demonstrate if there is a problem of police misconduct or not (Invisible Institute 2016).

Past studies attempting to draw links between police unions and accountability have largely failed due to methodological flaws or the employment of unsubstantiated proxies for accountability and union power. For instance, Wilson and Buckler (2010) employ the existence of civilian oversight as a proxy for accountability despite mixed findings around their effectiveness and issues with the survey data itself. However, recent research leveraging quasi-experimental designs provides a better understanding of the link between unionism and police violence. Goncalves (2021) examines whether police unionism, not collective bargaining rights, may increase police violence and finds a small and statistically insignificant relationship between misconduct and unionism. Furthermore, Goncalves' results do not suggest that police violence is not associated with unionism, only that it cannot explain more than a 10% increase (Ibid.). One potential explanation for the result could be

that a police union may exist, but they do not have collective bargaining rights. The existence of a police association or union does not necessarily equate to securing collective bargaining powers. For instance, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department in North Carolina is represented by the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #7, but the organization does not have collective bargaining powers. In contrast, Dharmapala and colleagues (2022) exploit a difference-in-differences design and find that granting Sheriff offices in Florida collective bargaining rights increased police misconduct and excessive use of force (Dharmapala *et al.*, 2022). Similarly, Cunningham and colleagues (2021) examined the staggered rollout of collective bargaining rights nationwide from the 1950s to 1980s and found a significant positive relationship between the granting of collective bargaining rights and police killings (Cunningham *et al.*, 2021). While neither study specifically tests what specific aspect of collective bargaining produced the increase in misconduct, the authors suggest that protections embedded in CBAs could be one explanation (Dharmapala *et al.*, 2022; Cunningham *et al.*, 2021). In sum, recent quasi-experimental scholarship finds that collective bargaining powers granted to law enforcement have resulted in increases in police violence and misconduct outcomes, yet the specific collective bargaining mechanism is still unknown.

Dissecting the reasons CBAs may be a factor in producing police violence is aided by qualitative and legal scholarship. For instance, legal scholars have looked at how arbitration provisions undermine the discipline process (Rushin 2019) and how investigation delays create space and advantages to officers being investigated (Huq and McAdams 2016). In addition to CBAs, police unions work to achieve protections for law enforcement through lobbying and other legislative-related activity. For example, unions have played an instrumental role advocating for the passing of LEOBORs, which often include similar protections to CBAs (Keenan and Walker 2005). LEOBORs are state laws aimed at strengthening the rights of law enforcement officers and have

been found to include many CBA protections that have been argued to limit accountability and transparency (Ibid.).

While LEOBORs include similar protections to those found in CBAs, recent quasi-experimental research by Cunningham and colleagues (2022) finds a null relationship between LEOBORs and police killings. However, it's also plausible that the employment of a binary variable for a LEOBOR (i.e., a measure of the presence or absence of a LEOBOR) may mask important heterogeneity. For example, LEOBORs vary in the number of protections granted to officers. Furthermore, it is probable that some types of protections within LEOBORs have little influence (e.g., statutes of limitation on complaints) on police behavior as opposed to others (e.g., erasing misconduct history), which may still work to foster and facilitate cultures of abuse.

Taken together, prior research has suggested that protections embedded in collective bargaining agreements and LEOBORs may frustrate accountability and facilitate police violence. In sum, research is inconsistent on whether CBAs, unionism, or LEOBORs facilitate police violence, but this may also reflect that they all allow police to receive protections of some sort. Or there could be another mechanism altogether. Thus, there are several critical gaps worth exploring to better understand the efficacy of different union mechanisms.

3. DATA AND RESEARCH DESIGN

This investigation aims to fill a void in research on police violence and union influence by employing newly constructed measures capturing a previously underexplored area: police protections embedded within CBAs and LEOBORs. Given the role and influence law enforcement unions have on CBAs and the development of LEOBOR legislation, these protections are a sign of union influence. The dataset employed in this study examines the 100 largest police agencies in U.S. metropolitan areas, which encompass a significant range of variation in police violence, union structures, police force

size, and city characteristics. Because of the layers of U.S. federalism, the autonomy granted to law enforcement agencies at the local level inherently creates more variation in outcomes.

The variables from the dataset constructed for this study are drawn from many of the same sources as the data employed in the previous chapter, but with a few additional sources on police violence: Campaign Zero’s Police Union Contract and Mapping Police Violence Repositories (built through FOIA requests, web scraping, and publicly available data), U.S. Census Bureau, The *Washington Post*’s Fatal Force Data Repository, U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR), and the U.S. DoJ Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Survey (LEMAS).

Campaign Zero is an advocacy group focused on U.S. carceral harm and public safety, which created, funded, and maintains the Mapping Police Violence database (integrating data from two of the largest crowd-sourced police-related deaths databases)¹⁷ and the “Nix the 6” database (union contract database). Data from Campaign Zero, therefore, is used to measure police union mechanisms as well as the outcome measure of police violence, which has been employed in several notable studies (i.e. Olzak 2021).

3.1. Dependent Variable (DV)

Like Cunningham, Feir, and Gillezeau (2021) and Olzak (2021), the primary variable of interest, police killings of civilians, is used as a proxy for police violence. For this paper, while “abuse,” and “violence” capture similar concepts, I will be using the terms “violence” or “police killings of civilians.” For a detailed conversation on the limitations and explanation for the dependent variable, please see Appendix H.

¹⁷ Integrates data from three of the largest crowd-sourced police-related deaths databases FatalEncounters.org and The Washington Post’s “U.S. Police Shootings Database.”

Given that data on civilian deaths from the Mapping Police Violence only dates to 2013, the dependent variable will represent the aggregate number of police killings from 2013 through 2019 for each agency. Data from 2020 and later is excluded, given the additional noise produced in the data due to the political climate in the U.S., the COVID-19 pandemic, and events of 2020 concerning public safety reinvention. The limitations of using police killings of civilians as a proxy for the broader concept of police violence is further discussed in Appendix H.

Next, it is important to discuss and account for the variation in the number of police officers per agency. This is an important exposure to apply to the dependent variable, given that counts do not account for the number of officers employed by a department.¹⁸ The density of officers in a city is a crucial exposure that needs to be integrated into the model given that they represent the likelihood or risk group that is interacting with the population. Typically, the approach would be to transform the dependent variable to a rate. For example, I would transform the dependent variable into a rate of police killings per population (i.e. 10,000 residents) or rate of killings per police officers (i.e. per 1,000 officers) and run them through an ordinary-least-squares regression. However, as per Osgood and Chambers (2006) in their analysis of youth offense rates, it may be methodologically inappropriate to employ a rate as a dependent variable. Instead, following a similar approach as Osgood and Chambers (2006), I utilize a Poisson regression, which is better suited to investigate count events (count of police killings), and an offset or exposure term (number of officers per agency), which introduces the rate into the analysis. Thus, my exposure is a logarithm of the number of officers per agency to account for potential exposure to officer interactions.¹⁹

¹⁸ As noted earlier, employing police killings of civilians as a proxy for violence is admittedly an extreme metric, hence its limited range and variation across cities. Thus, while this may be viewed as an imperfect metric for reasons surrounding the relativity of how one classifies “police violence,” I argue that it is sufficient in testing the hypotheses but is likely severely underestimating the issue given missing data around fatal encounters and the lack of data around non-fatal encounters which would be better suited to capturing police violence and the theory being tested in this study.

¹⁹ For more explanation of this methodology, refer to Osgood and Chambers (2006) methodological note.

3.2. Independent Variable: Index of Police Protections

The central independent variable employed in this chapter is the index of Police Protectionism, developed and introduced in Chapter 3, which includes three different measures of protectionism. Below I provide a high-level discussion of the method developed to quantitatively measure the protections police are provided by CBAs and LEOBORs.²⁰

Table 4.1 provides the breakdown of the eight categories of police protectionism alongside the total number of observations in the study sample that include the protections. As outlined in the previous chapter, the index was developed by identifying 26 provision types relating to transparency and accountability, and aggregating them into broader categories grounded in prior legal and sociological scholarship. The qualification of whether they posed a threat for accountability and transparency was based on existing scholarship discussing protections embedded within CBA and LEOBOR (i.e., Walker 2008; Rushin 2017; Harris and Sweeney 2021). These provision types were then collapsed into eight categories that repeatedly emerged as central concerns across studies of police accountability. The index of police protectionism includes three different measures to allow researchers to explore differences in local and state-level protections:

- ⇒ The CBA metric represents the police protection score at the agency level, capturing protections embedded in CBAs exclusively;
- ⇒ The LEOBOR metric represents the police protection score of the LEOBOR in the city that are in LEOBOR states; and
- ⇒ The full metric represents the police protection score of whether a protection exists at either the CBA or LEOBOR level.

²⁰ Rad (2023) should be consulted for a comprehensive discussion of the development and rigor of the index, which includes a detailed accounting of the rigorous training, review, and quality control systems deployed for the acquisition and coding of CBAs and LEOBORs.

Although the eight categories of protections outlined in the table below may contribute to police protectionism to greater or lesser extents (i.e., may not be equally indicative of the concept of police protections) this investigation employs a simple additive index, effectively treating all categories equally in terms of their contribution to overall police protections. The additive structure allows the index to serve as an exploratory tool to identify whether broad correlations emerge between protectionism and police violence.

While Chapter 3 focused on developing and validating the index, this chapter applies it to examine whether cities with greater levels of police protectionism—as measured by the index—tend to have higher rates of police violence. While it's important to look at the overall protections in both CBAs and LEOBORs for this study, recent research suggests that LEOBORs haven't led to more police killings (Cunningham, Feir, Gillezeau, Harvey, and Rad 2022). In other words, I plan to examine the individual factors that make up the "Full Metric" to assess whether they can help us understand differences in violence outcomes, as suggested by Cunningham *et al.* in 2022. Importantly, the models that follow are not designed to establish causality but are meant to be illustrative of how the index can be used to examine empirical patterns that may be consistent with theoretical claims in the existing literature (i.e., Cunningham, *et al.*, 2021; Dharmapala *et al.*, 2022). Thus, the index scores for each agency were computed by summing up the number of protection categories covered (out of 8) for when the provision exists in the CBA, LEOBOR, or either of the two.

Table 4.1 Provision Categories

Category	Provision Subcategories ²¹	# of Agencies with this Provision (100 max)
Disqualifying complaints	Disqualifying Complaints and/or Reducing Accessibility to Filing Complaints (Keenan and Walker, 2005)	
	1. Statutes of limitations on filing complaints.	

²¹ Sub-categories that have not been cited in existing scholarship or were difficult to justify as impacting accountability or transparency from my reading of literature were excluded.

	2. Limiting length of investigations.	69
	3. Preventing the filing of anonymous complaints.	
	4. Reducing the scope of what actions or violations can constitute a complaint.	
Restricts/delays investigations	Controlling Interrogation Parameters vis-à-vis waiting periods, delaying interrogations, and/or providing subjects with more advantages civilians under investigation would not receive (Huq and McAdams, 2016; Rushin 2017; Walker 2015).	81
	5. Restricting number and type of interrogators (i.e., only sworn officers).	
	6. Restricting interrogation conduct and what questions or language can be used during interrogation.	
	7. Delaying interrogations with formal waiting periods or deferring to the subject's timeline.	
Gives officers access	Giving Officers Unfair Access to Information (Rushin, 2017; Keenan and Walker, 2005).	73
	8. Providing officers with evidence obtained before and during investigation prior to making a statement.	
	9. Giving officers unfair access to information, including information against them	
	10. Allowing officers to review photos, audio, video, or body worn camera video related to the incident prior to interrogation. (Body-Worn Camera specific)	
	11. Provides officers with the name and information of the complainant.	
Limiting oversight	Limiting Oversight (Walker, 2001;Rushin, 2019; Rushin, 2017; Walker, 2015; Hardaway, 2019; Harris and Sweeney, 2021).	45
	12. Limiting the power of civilian oversight by either explicitly narrowing the role of civilian oversight in how/what they investigate and or implicitly by preventing civilian/external oversight from investigating complaints.	
	13. Limiting the power of other external oversight including federal interventions by either explicitly narrowing the role of oversight in how/what they investigate.	
Limiting transparency and disciplinary consequences	Limiting Transparency & disciplinary consequences, and advantages in the process (Walker 2001; Rushin, 2019a; Rushin, 2017; Harris and Sweeney, 2021).	78
	14. Preventing the use of past misconduct to be used or considered by investigators.	
	15. Limiting transparency & disciplinary consequences of misconduct	
	16. Limiting transparency by preventing the release of officer information or data to the public.	
	17. General advantages in the disciplinary process which are not offered to civilians such as preventing confessions from being used in future investigations, being judged by an entity of peers, etc.	
Requiring city to pay	Requiring city to pay for officer time during investigations or pay legal costs associated with officer misconduct (Schwartz, 2014; Walker, 2008).	61
	18. Allows officers to continue getting paid during the course of an investigation or a suspension.	
	19. Allowing officers to use Paid Leave in lieu of suspension days.	
	20. Requires city to pay legal costs associated with a civil suit including legal fees and settlements.	
Erases misconduct	Allows departments or officers to erase investigations and records of misconduct (Keenan and Walker, 2005; Rushin, 2017).	46
	21. Department will automatically purge or expunge all sustained officer misconduct files after a period of time.	
	22. Department will automatically purge or expunge all unsustained officer misconduct files after a period of time preventing the public and department from identifying patterns of practice.	
	23. Allows officers to request purging files of any type from their personnel record via a request to the department. Department will make determination.	
Arbitration	Allowing officers to appeal terminations and/or disciplinary through a grievance process that involves arbitration (Rushin, 2019; Grunwald and Rappaport, 2020; Iris, 1998)	60
	24. Allowing officers to appeal terminations and/or disciplinary through a grievance process that involves binding arbitration.	
	25. Allowing officers to appeal terminations and/or discipline through a grievance process that involves arbitration.	
	26. Selection of arbitrators.	

Finally, it is important to note that Appendix F includes a review of all CBAs to ensure that all provisions with the protection categories were active during the period examined in this study (2013-2019).²²

3.3. Control Variables

In addition to the primary independent variables of interest (constructed measures of police protectionism)—several other independent variables used in the forthcoming models have been established in past studies as correlates of police violence.

Sociological research exploring police violence often references two key hypotheses: the 'Minority or Racial Threat (MT)' hypothesis and the 'Spatial Threat' hypothesis (i.e., Blalock 1967, Holmes and Smith 2014). Studies of MT theory find that cities with a larger percentage Black and/or Hispanic populations have a positive linear relationship with higher levels of use of force (Holmes and Smith 2014). Regarding Spatial Threat, research finds that cities that are more segregated experience higher levels of misconduct (Holmes and Smith 2014; Gordon 2022). For this investigation, I include a spatial threat measure given the concentration of policing in segregated neighborhoods (Lerman and Weaver 2013; Gordon 2022). Specifically, I employ a measure of Dissimilarity, an index developed by Census Scope (a dataset developed by the Social Science Data Analysis Network at the University of Michigan) from 2010 U.S. Decennial Census data, which is also commonly employed as a proxy for segregation.

Next, the violent crime rate per 10,000 is a particularly pertinent control variable, as it predicts both the number of protections afforded to the police, as noted in the preceding chapter, as well as

²² There were only a few exceptions, and most were minor. The only major exception worth noting is Austin, Texas, which weakened police protections by removing provisions that fall across two categories. The CBA changes were implemented in 2019, and this study scope is only 2013-2019. Further, there is likely a lag period for how long it takes for protections and collective bargaining to impact policing outcomes and culture. Given this, the study examined the pre-2020 contract, and thus the protections for the period of this study are static and do not vary temporally (Dharmapala et al. 2022; Cunningham et al. 2022; Walker 2008).

the likelihood that officers use lethal force in certain situations. The FBI UCR collects data from local agencies about crime, including violent crime reporting, which is most relevant to this study. Additionally, LEMAS, administered by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) and operating under the U.S. DoJ, contains survey data on 3,471 law enforcement agencies around the country (U.S. Department of Justice 2016). The survey is administered every several years, and this study utilizes the survey conducted in 2016 collected data from 3,471 law enforcement agencies, with 434 variables characterizing different aspects of each department, most relevant for this study is agency size.

Other relevant controls included are population size and median household, which are necessary to control for a range of different factors that, if omitted, would lead to concerns of omitted variable bias (OVB). These measures come from the 2010 American Community Survey administered by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Finally, given recent scholarship exploring the relationship with police violence and the political dimension (i.e., Olzak 2021; Reid 2024), I also include an ideology score, computed by the American Ideology Project and derived from voter preference survey (Tausanovitch and Warsaw 2014). The ideology score is measured on a -1 to +1 continuum where -1 represents the most progressive/liberal and +1 represents the most conservative.

While other covariates were considered, they were ultimately excluded due to concerns around the reliability of the variable, overfitting, or inappropriate fit for the study scope. For example, data on law enforcement officers killed may have been a more important variable in the past, but due to the study temporal scope, police officers killed is a largely rare occurrence and a significant portion are related to training accidents. In 2019, there was a total of 89 officers killed, 41 of whom died in accidents (U.S. Department of Justice 2019). To summarize, the Table 4.2 provides an overview of the variables that will also be included in the empirical models.

Table 4.2 Variables & Data Sources

SOURCE	DATASET NAME	VARIABLE(S)	YEAR(S)
U.S. Census Bureau	American Community Survey	Population Median Household Income	2010
	Census of Governments	Local Public Expenditures	2010
Census Scope <i>Derived from 2010 U.S. Decennial Census</i>	Segregation: Dissimilarity Indices	Black-White Dissimilarity Hispanic-White Dissimilarity	2010
Federal Bureau of Investigation – U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ)	FBI – Uniform Crime Reporting	Average Yearly Violent Crime Rate per 10,000 population (only includes the following Part I Index Crimes): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homicide • Robbery • Rape • Felony Assault 	2013-2019
	Law Enforcement Management & Administrative Statistics (LEMAS)	Law Enforcement Agency Size	2013
Campaign Zero	Nix the 6 – Law Enforcement Contract Database	Index of Police Protectionism	2013-2019
	Mapping Police Violence	Police Killings of Civilians	2013-2019
American Ideology Project	Municipal Ideology Scores	Municipal Ideology Score State Ideology Score	2016

4. EMPIRICAL MODEL

This analysis investigates whether there is a relationship between police protectionism and police violence, and whether specific protection categories are more predictive. The analyses take place at the city level and use the primary police agency in each city as the unit of analysis. This model employs a negative binomial regression from the “MASS” R package. While a state control was considered, regional controls are more appropriate given the limited number of states covered and the historical variation captured by region (Holmes and Smith 2014). Robust standard errors are also applied (White 1980).

1. **Model 1:** *of Police Killings of Civilians* = $X_c\beta + \beta_1(CBA\ Metric) + Offset(Total\ \#\ of\ Officers) + \varepsilon$
2. **Model 2:** *of Police Killings of Civilians* = $X_c\beta + \beta_1(LEOBOR\ Metric) + Offset(Total\ \#\ of\ Officers) + \varepsilon$
3. **Model 3:** *# Police Killings of Civilians* = $X_c\beta + \beta_1(Full\ Metric) + Offset(Total\ \#\ of\ Officers) + \varepsilon$

The first three models above (Table 4.5) explore the relationship between police violence, proxied by a count of total police killings between 2013-2019, and the three index scores representing different dimensions of police protectionism.²³ The primary difference between the three models is that each of them employs different police protectionism measures. Specifically, Model 1 explores secured protections at the local-level through the CBA (“CBA Metric”), Model 2 explores secure protections at the state-level through LEOBORs (“LEOBOR Metric”), and Model 3 explores protections secured at both the local and state level (“Full Metric”). There are several control variables at the city and agency level, including population size, violent crime rate, and region. Since we know that departments with more officers might naturally have more incidents of police violence because of the volume of contact, to adjust for variation in department size, the number of officers is included as an offset term in the model. This means I am effectively modeling the rate of killings per officer, not the total number. The term *Offset(Total # of Officers)* is the exposure for the rate to the number of police in a jurisdiction. Thus, the left-hand side of the model equation represents the actual counts of police killings, while the offset term on the right-hand side accounts for the number of officers (using the log of total police officers per agency).

The second set of models (Tables 4.6a and 4.6b) explore whether specific categories of police protectionism have a stronger relationship with police violence (i.e., the eight categories defined in the preceding chapter instead of protectionism broadly). They follow a similar structure as the first set of models but instead of employing one of the three indices of police protectionism, each model

²³ $X_c\beta$ represents a vector of control variables at the city and police agency-level, including population size, violent crime rate, and region. $\beta_{Full\ Metric}$, $\beta_{LEOBOR\ Metric}$, $\beta_{CBA\ Metric}$, are the coefficients for primary independent variables of interest; the Full Metric, LEOBOR Metric, and CBA Metric respectively. The error term is represented by ϵ .

substitutes one of the eight provision categories. An example of the first model examining the relationship between police violence and individual protections is below:

Police Killings of Civilians

$$= X_c\beta + \beta_1(\text{Disqualifying Complaints}) + \text{Offset}(\text{Total \# of Officers}) + \varepsilon$$

To summarize, the investigation will first attempt to explore whether police protections embedded within CBAs (“CBA Metric”), LEOBORs (“LEOBOR Metric”), or (“Full Metric”) can predict variation in levels of protections. Subsequently, I will explore whether specific categories of protectionism, if any, can predict levels of police protectionism.

5. POLICE PROTECTIONISM & POLICE VIOLENCE: ANALYSIS

5.1. Descriptive Analysis

The summary statistics of the key variables of interest are presented in Table 4.3. Appendix B presents a table with the police protections index score for all the observations in the sample of the 100 largest cities alongside the dependent variable, police killings of civilians. The descriptives below highlight the significant variation in the sample across several variables, notably the police killings of civilians, the violent crime rate, and the number of police officers.

Table 4.3 Summary Statistics

VARIABLE	Mean	Median	SD	Min	Max
Dependent Variable(s)					
# of Police Killings of Civilians <i>Pooled # of Police Killings between 2013-2019</i>	19.80	13.00	21.00	0.00	127.00
Independent Variable(s)					
Full Metric (<i>Index of Police Protectionism</i>)	5.13	5.50	2.31	0.00	8.00
LEOBOR Metric (<i>Index of Police Protectionism</i>)	2.99	4.00	2.50	0.00	6.00
CBA Metric (<i>Index of Police Protectionism</i>)	3.47	4.00	2.44	0.00	8.00
Violent Crime Rate per 100,000	681.0	621.47	406.74	51.73	2000.97
Black-White Dissimilarity (Spatial)	56.23	59.35	16.07	20.80	87.30
Hispanic-White Dissimilarity (Spatial)	16.60	45.35	12.71	16.60	70.90
Median Household Income (1,000s)	40.47	39.23	10.59	23.48	78.72
Municipal Ideology Score	-0.21	-0.16	0.31	-0.99	0.41
State Ideology Score	0.04	0.05	0.09	-0.55	0.25
Exposure Variable (Offset)					
# of Police Officers	1670.4	795.5	3915.3	181.0	36134.0

For the dependent variable, it ranges from 0 (i.e. Riverside, CA) to 127 (i.e., Chicago) police killings of civilians. The exposure term, number of officers per agency, also has significant variation where New York (New York) has nearly 36,000 officers and Fremont (California) has 181 officers. Finally, turning to crime rates, a city like Detroit (Michigan) experiences nearly 2000 violent crimes per 100,000 residents, whereas Fort Worth (Texas) experiences nearly 500 violent crimes per 100,000 residents.

5.2. Model Assumptions

Prior to presenting the empirical models, it is important to first conduct tests for outliers which could impede on the validity of the model results. Outliers are observations with an unusually high or low value on the dependent variable. Related, leverage refers to observations that have unusually high or low values on the independent variables. Combining outliers and leverage, we can get a sense for which points are influential, meaning that they distort the model in the sense that the prevailing linear patterns change measurably because of the point. It is not always the case that an outlier or a highly leveraged observation is influential. One way to assess the influence of outliers is through Cook's Distance test, which calculates how much results of a regression would change if a given observation (i.e., city) is removed. Appendix J includes additional sensitivity analyses and outlier tests with a Cook's Distance and finds that there is no need to remove any observations, given that they do not strongly influence the data (Cook 1977).

5.3. Police Protectionism & Police Violence: Analysis

To tease out similarities and differences in police protectionism at the local and state levels, I tested the relationship between police violence and the three developed measures capturing police protectionism: CBA Metric, LEOBOR metric, and Full Metric. Again, one major contribution of

this paper is intentionally breaking apart protections by LEOBORs and CBAs to determine whether there are differences that can help explain variation in violence outcomes.

5.3.1. Police Violence and Police Protectionism: Bi-Variate Analyses

Prior to introducing covariates that research has found to help explain variation in police killings, the first set of models attempts to explore the bivariate relationships with basic controls between police protections and police violence.

Table 4.4 includes all three models examining the relationship between police killings and the different police protections indices, which find the CBA Metric and the Full Metric to have a statistically significant relationship with police killings in both instances. Nevertheless, given that these models are limited by design and suffer from omitted variable bias (OVB), it is critical to understand the relationship when other relevant dimensions are considered.

For the CBA Metric, every unit increase in the police protections index is associated with 5.65% more police killings and 7.57% for the Full Metric.²⁴ Model 2, which examines the level of protections established through Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights (LEOBORs), does not find a relationship with lethal police violence. This finding aligns with recent research suggesting that LEOBORs, as currently implemented, may not be predictive of police violence outcomes (Cunningham, Feir, Gillezeau, Harvey, and Rad 2022). These results support the importance of examining local and state protections separately, as each may have distinct implications for how departments operate and respond to misconduct. This further underscores the utility of the police protectionism index in helping assess whether observed patterns in violence are consistent with

²⁴ Using the transformation $(e^{\beta} - 1) \times 100$, a coefficient of 0.055 for the CBA Metric corresponds to a 5.65% increase in police killings per unit increase, while a coefficient of 0.074 for the Full Metric corresponds to a 7.57% increase.

theoretical expectations around deterrence and institutional shielding (i.e., Cunningham, Feir, Gillezau, Harvey, and Rad 2022).

Table 4.4 Bivariate Analyses with Regional & Population Controls

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	<i>Police Killings of Civilians</i>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
CBA Metric	0.055** (0.022)		
LEOBOR Metric		0.038 (0.033)	
Full Metric			0.073*** (0.026)
Total Population per 10,000	-0.000*** (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)	-0.000*** (0.000)
Northwest	0.484** (0.189)	0.424** (0.199)	0.438** (0.188)
South	0.156 (0.150)	0.036 (0.161)	0.116 (0.146)
Southwest	0.625*** (0.137)	0.395* (0.210)	0.433*** (0.142)
Constant	-4.467*** (0.150)	-4.259*** (0.119)	-4.575*** (0.167)
Observations	100	100	100
Log Likelihood	-341.410	-343.534	-340.358
theta	5.111*** (0.965)	4.875*** (0.916)	5.234*** (0.990)
Akaike Inf. Crit.	694.821	699.069	692.716

Note:

*p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

5.3.2. Police Violence and Police Protectionism: Multi-Variate Analyses

Turning away from the preliminary analyses (with basic controls) to the multi-variate analyses which includes several dimensions which have been found to explain variation in police violence, both the CBA Metric and the Full Metric remain statistically significant, with minimal change in their

substantive effect sizes.²⁵ Nonetheless, the CBA metric's significance in Model 1 emphasizes the importance of understanding how protections, secured through law enforcement CBAs, could influence law enforcement behavior, particularly in lethal incidents. Specifically, a one-unit increase in the CBA Metric (one additional provision) is associated with approximately a 5.55% increase in police killings, adjusted for the rate of exposure (number of police officers), holding all other variables constant. This finding provides evidence that police protections could be one of the contributing factors in police violence. Specifically, the potential impact of these protections on the conduct and accountability of police officers, which may translate into variations in the rate of lethal police violence. Also, Model 1 reveals the significance of other covariates that scholarship has established as relevant such as spatial threat, violent crime, and notably, local-level ideology - which will be further discussed below. This provides additional evidence that police protections may contribute to violence by shaping accountability systems and institutional norms.

Model 2 explores whether the LEOBOR measure—capturing state-level statutory protections for law enforcement officers—has a relationship with police violence. The LEOBOR Metric shows a positive relationship with police killings. However, this relationship is only marginally significant at the .1 level ($p < 0.1$), suggesting weaker statistical evidence compared to the CBA and Full Metrics. This marginal significance may reflect the more diffuse nature of state-level statutory protections compared to jurisdiction-specific collective bargaining provisions, or it could indicate greater variation in how LEOBORs are implemented and enforced across different municipalities within states. While the effect size is comparable to the CBA Metric, the lower level of statistical confidence suggests that state-level statutory protections alone may have a less consistent

²⁵ Appendix J includes additional sensitivity analyses. The full metric finding remains robust when run with a regional fixed effects linear model with robust standard errors clustered at the regional level, but the CBA Metric findings do not remain consistent. Please refer to Appendix J for discussion.

relationship with police violence outcomes than negotiated contractual protections or the combination of both mechanisms.

Table 4.5 Negative Binomial Models | Police Protectionism and Police Violence

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	<i>Police Killings of Civilians</i>		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
CBA Metric	0.054** (0.024)		
LEOBOR Metric		0.055* (0.034)	
Full Metric			0.094*** (0.028)
Violent Crime Rate	0.001 (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)
Population	-0.00000** (0.00000)	-0.00000** (0.00000)	-0.00000** (0.00000)
Black-White Dissimilarity	-0.001* (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001** (0.001)
Hispanic-White Dissimilarity	-0.0004 (0.001)	-0.0005 (0.001)	0.0001 (0.001)
Median Household Income	-0.012 (0.007)	-0.013* (0.007)	-0.012* (0.007)
Municipal Ideology Score	1.635 (1.811)	0.913 (1.887)	1.589 (1.760)
State Ideology Score	-1.701 (2.759)	-0.445 (2.883)	-1.394 (2.683)
Northwest	0.486** (0.205)	0.477** (0.210)	0.422** (0.201)
South	0.119 (0.148)	-0.030 (0.160)	0.084 (0.142)
Southwest	0.626*** (0.170)	0.375 (0.246)	0.343* (0.189)
Constant	-3.191*** (0.547)	-3.129*** (0.545)	-3.461*** (0.541)
Observations	100	100	100
Log Likelihood	-338.050	-339.136	-334.892
theta	5.730*** (1.132)	5.573*** (1.096)	6.184*** (1.237)
Akaike Inf. Crit.	700.099	702.273	693.783

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Model 3 explores the Full Metric, which is a comprehensive measure capturing whether protections for police officers exist in either the collective bargaining agreements (CBA) or the law enforcement officers' bill of rights (LEOBORs). The Full Metric is statistically significant and is associated with a 9.86% increase in police killings for every additional protection.²⁶

5.4. Beyond Protectionism

While earlier sections established a consistent relationship between police protections and police killings of civilians, this section situates those findings within a broader set of factors shown to influence police behavior. Across all models, variables such as “Black-White Dissimilarity,” “Violent Crime Rate,” and the “Southwest” region demonstrate statistical significance.

5.4.1. Region

The Southwest region, particularly states like Arizona, which have a significantly sized Hispanic population, presents a unique context in the analysis. This region shows a higher level of police killings, as indicated by its significant and positive coefficients across the models (compared to the reference category of the West region). This pattern may reflect not only regional policing practices but also broader socio-political dynamics, including issues related to border security and immigration, which are particularly salient in this region (i.e., Miles and Cox 2013; Holmes and Smith 2014). The higher levels of police killings could be intertwined with these complex factors, suggesting a need for region-specific analysis in understanding police behavior.

²⁶ Using the transformation $(e^{\beta} - 1) \times 100$, a coefficient of 0.054 for the CBA Metric corresponds to a 5.55% increase in police killings per unit increase, while a coefficient of 0.094 for the Full Metric corresponds to a 9.86% increase.

5.4.2. Violent Crime

Interestingly, the violent crime rate per 100,000 residents does not have a statistically significant impact on police killings when examining the CBA metric and the Full Metric. Thus, the theory that killings are higher in cities with higher levels of violent crime is not supported by the sample and covariates in this model, although the lack of a significant association may reflect the fact that the model includes controls such as economic status, dissimilarity, and region.

5.4.3. Spatial Threat

Interestingly, the Black-White dissimilarity index, which is a proxy for segregation and spatial threat, has no relationship with police violence when accounting for other factors. This could be for several reasons, including the selection bias of examining the largest 100 metropolitan agencies and limitations with the data itself, noted in Appendix H.

5.4.4. Economics

In both models, median household income has an inverse relationship with police violence. In other words, municipalities with lower median household incomes have higher rates of police killings. This is not surprising and falls in line with theories that police are more commonly utilized as a response to social problems in jurisdictions that have higher rates of historical disinvestment (Vitale 2018; Muhammad 2019).

5.4.5. Political Ideology

Local-level and state-level political ideology, proxied by voter policy preferences, have a null relationship with police violence. However, given this investigation is examining local-level agencies, it is important to note that the impact of local-level preferences and voter preferences shaping local-level policing and future research should continue to integrate proxies for local-level ideology to further investigate this relationship (i.e., Thomas and Tufts 2019; Serwer 2021).

5.5. Interconnectedness and Complexities of Police Violence

In summary, the findings from these models contribute to a nuanced understanding of how comprehensive police protectionism measures relate to lethal police violence. Bringing these insights together, the study reveals that while controlling for variables such as violent crime rate, racial composition, segregation (spatial threat), and regional differences, the presence of police protectionism still emerges as a significant factor. The Full metric, representing protections in either the CBA or LEOBOR, is associated with an increase in police killings. Additionally, it suggests that despite accounting for various socio-demographic and regional factors, the degree of protectionism afforded to police officers through mechanisms like CBAs could influence the level of police violence at the local-level.

The central theory here is not that protections cause violence directly, but that they erode accountability over time—creating conditions under which misconduct may become normalized. Or, it's plausible that they work to insulate the preexisting culture. To reiterate, the Full Metric has a larger impact than the CBA (5.55% for the CBA Metric and 9.86% for the Full Metric). Finally, the local-level ideology and voter preferences seem to have a strong relationship with police violence outcomes and warrant further investigation in studies exploiting causal designs.

5.6. Exploring Categories of Protectionism

Building on earlier findings, this section examines which specific protection categories most strongly predict police violence. To pinpoint what categories may be more or less consequential components of police protectionism, Tables 4.6a and 4.6b present the relationships between the different protection categories and police violence.

Interestingly, four of the eight protection categories were significantly associated with police violence at the $p < 0.05$ level or better. From Table 4.6a, "Giving Officers Access to Information"

shows the strongest relationship with a coefficient of 0.415 ($p < 0.01$). "Limiting Oversight" demonstrates a coefficient of 0.294 ($p < 0.01$). From Table 4.6b, two additional categories show significant relationships: the first (Disqualifying Complaints) with a coefficient of 0.330 ($p < 0.05$), and the second (Restricting/Delaying Investigations) with a coefficient of 0.374 ($p < 0.01$).

These provisions represent the type of protections that may play a larger role in obstructing accountability. For example, giving officers access to information typically allows them to view evidence—such as body camera footage or witness statements—before providing their own account, which can compromise the integrity of investigations. Limiting oversight often refers to constraints on civilian review or oversight; while requiring the city to cover legal or settlement costs insulates officers from financial consequences. Thus, these findings suggest that protections which directly weaken investigative and financial accountability may play a role in enabling violence more than others. Further investigation is needed into cities that have these types of provisions to assess whether these protections strongly influence a key mediating factor—reduced accountability—which may in turn lead to higher levels of police violence.

Table 4.6a | Dimensions of Police Protectionism & Police Violence (Components 1-4)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	<i>Police Killings of Civilians</i>			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Disqualifying Complaints	0.148 (0.157)			
Restricting/Delaying Investigations		0.245 (0.157)		
Giving Officers Access to Information			0.415*** (0.140)	
Limiting Oversight				0.294*** (0.111)
Violent Crime Rate	0.002 (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)	0.0001 (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)
Population	-0.00000*** (0.00000)	-0.00000*** (0.00000)	-0.00000*** (0.00000)	-0.00000*** (0.00000)
Black-White Dissimilarity	-0.001* (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001* (0.001)	-0.001* (0.001)
Hispanic-White Dissimilarity	-0.0005 (0.001)	-0.0005 (0.001)	-0.0002 (0.001)	-0.0004 (0.001)
Median Household Income	-0.014* (0.008)	-0.014* (0.008)	-0.015* (0.008)	-0.012 (0.008)
Municipal Ideology Score	1.474 (1.818)	1.951 (1.980)	1.360 (1.940)	1.897 (2.061)
State Ideology Score	-1.447 (2.843)	-2.155 (3.073)	-1.277 (3.003)	-1.788 (3.206)
Northwest	0.503*** (0.182)	0.516*** (0.185)	0.465** (0.191)	0.534*** (0.191)
South	0.081 (0.166)	0.033 (0.154)	0.051 (0.150)	-0.006 (0.153)
Southwest	0.549** (0.214)	0.552*** (0.200)	0.402** (0.205)	0.534*** (0.194)
Constant	-3.015*** (0.525)	-3.117*** (0.540)	-3.158*** (0.525)	-3.139*** (0.506)
Observations	100	100	100	100
Log Likelihood	-339.988	-339.206	-336.331	-337.175
theta	5.473*** (1.075)	5.554*** (1.090)	6.133*** (1.252)	5.858*** (1.160)
Akaike Inf. Crit.	703.976	702.412	696.662	698.350

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 4.6b Continued | Dimensions of Police Protectionism & Police Violence (Components 5-8)

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>			
	<i>Police Killings of Civilians</i>			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Disqualifying Complaints	0.330** (0.166)			
Restricting/Delaying Investigations		0.374*** (0.132)		
Giving Officers Access to Information			0.193 (0.133)	
Limiting Oversight				0.033 (0.111)
Violent Crime Rate	0.001 (0.002)	0.0002 (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)	0.002 (0.002)
Population	-0.00000*** (0.00000)	-0.00000*** (0.00000)	-0.00000*** (0.00000)	-0.00000*** (0.00000)
Black-White Dissimilarity	-0.001* (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001* (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)
Hispanic-White Dissimilarity	-0.0003 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)
Median Household Income	-0.014* (0.008)	-0.010 (0.008)	-0.013 (0.008)	-0.014 (0.008)
Municipal Ideology Score	1.295 (1.799)	1.311 (1.464)	1.425 (1.709)	1.644 (1.923)
State Ideology Score	-1.302 (2.784)	-0.718 (2.305)	-1.243 (2.657)	-1.662 (3.006)
Northwest	0.525*** (0.183)	0.467*** (0.162)	0.511*** (0.173)	0.550*** (0.179)
South	0.088 (0.171)	0.096 (0.168)	0.136 (0.170)	0.071 (0.168)
Southwest	0.488** (0.200)	0.552*** (0.168)	0.634*** (0.179)	0.668*** (0.188)
Constant	-3.212*** (0.531)	-3.391*** (0.512)	-3.114*** (0.524)	-3.021*** (0.545)
Observations	100	100	100	100
Log Likelihood	-338.138	-335.710	-339.144	-340.456
theta	5.715*** (1.129)	6.109*** (1.227)	5.501*** (1.067)	5.412*** (1.060)
Akaike Inf. Crit.	700.276	695.420	702.287	704.911

Note:

*p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Limiting oversight often refers to constraints on civilian review or oversight; while requiring the city to cover legal or settlement costs insulates officers from financial consequences. Thus, these findings suggest that protections which directly weaken investigative and financial accountability may play a role in enabling violence than others. Further investigation is needed into cities that have these types of provisions to assess whether these protections strongly influence a key mediating factor—reduced accountability—which may in turn lead to higher levels of police violence.

6. DISCUSSION

Building on emerging scholarship finding a causal link between collective bargaining and increased police misconduct (i.e., Cunningham *et al.*, 2021; Dharmapala *et al.*, 2022), I sought to determine what particular aspects of police unionism and collective bargaining agreements are contributors to police violence. The focal point of this investigation has been on police protections, embedded in CBAs and LEOBORs, and their potential role in predicting levels of police violence.

Findings reveal that having higher levels of police protections via both the CBA Metric (i.e., CBA secured protections) and the Full Metric (i.e., protections in either CBAs or LEOBORs) explains variation in police violence outcomes, even when considering relevant predictors of police violence. The effects are significantly larger for the Full Metric. Violent crime rate has no relationship with police violence net of other covariates, but the local-level ideology do have a strong relationship with police violence, warranting further investigation.

Finally, when looking at which categories of police protectionism may be driving the relationship, four categories demonstrate significant associations: "Giving Officers Access to Information," "Limiting Oversight," "Disqualifying Complaints," and "Restricting/Delaying Investigations." Again, while the design of this investigation does not allow for any causal statements, evidence suggests that it's possible that protections afforded to officers during an

investigation, such as providing officers access to investigative files, reducing civilian oversight, disqualifying certain types of complaints, or restricting and delaying investigations, may have a stronger impact on reducing deterrence and accountability. Nonetheless, the findings warrant further investigation employing non-fatal data.

These findings suggest that the greater the level of police protections, the more likely there will be police violence. In line with the culture of impunity theory, the findings suggest protections may reduce consequences for misconduct, reinforcing a permissive environment (Walker 2008). Viewed differently, cities that have low levels of police protections are less likely to experience police violence. In turn, the lack of police protections potentially may generate a greater deterrent effect and sustain a climate where cultures of misconduct and violence are less acceptable and include more consequences. Therefore, as other scholars have noted (i.e., Walker 2008; Rushin 2017), it is plausible that this union mechanism—CBA and LEOBOR protections together—can potentially create an insular effect around police culture and should be further explored in the context of social contagion literature. Specifically, the size of the relationship indicates that one additional protection is associated with a 9.86% increase in police killings. These models illustrate possible associations and should be followed by causal designs to test whether removing protections reduces police violence.

As a next step, it is important to understand how police unions engage and operate beyond protections which only provides a glimpse into how unions may influence policing in the U.S. Understanding how rank-and-file leadership—who have a vested interest in preserving the institution of policing—can insulate their culture and institutions from change, disruption, and power shifts, is a critical step in returning power to communities and allowing for participatory governance around the reimagining of public safety.

This new measure offers a promising tool for examining how institutional structures contribute to harm and should be incorporated in future investigations examining policing outcomes interested in harm reduction. As other scholars have noted, even small reductions in police violence can have outsized social benefits (Sierra-Arévalo and Papachristos 2021).

7. CONSIDERATIONS & LIMITATIONS

There are several limitations and considerations to note.

First, endogeneity bias remains a concern in studies of this nature. While there has been speculation that heightened levels of violence could lead to more police protections, current data limitations preclude a thorough exploration of this potential endogeneity. Despite recent literature suggesting a reverse causal ordering---i.e., increased police violence may result in more protections (Cunningham *et al.*, 2021; Dharmapala *et al.*, 2022) ---the current dataset does not allow testing this relationship. Additionally, the potential omitted variable bias (OVB) from excluding key variables, such as state-level or other municipal-level police protections not covered in CBAs or LEOBORs, remains a limitation.

Next, as noted earlier, employing other proxies for misconduct, which are less rare than police killings, should be prioritized (e.g., excessive use of force complaints). Alternatively, it is worth noting that the protection category could be capturing another element of policing and a lack of accountability that is highly correlated with this protection category.

Third, the findings also invite several other future lines of inquiry. Given that this study only examines a limited sample of the 100 largest U.S. police agencies, what happens when we expand the sample to achieve more heterogeneity across the sample? Relatedly, this could also lead to another line of inquiry requiring further investigation into the history of LEOBORs and how they may have potentially shaped or influenced local-level protections.

Finally, while the central role of race in U.S. policing is undeniable (Lerman and Weaver, 2014; Bekemeyer, 2021), this investigation isn't designed to analyze bias or disparate outcomes. It focuses on understanding variations in extreme forms of police violence, such as fatal police killings, due to constraints on data and potential selection bias. Given these findings and limitations, future research avenues emerge. Expanding the sample to include a broader range of U.S. police agencies could yield different insights. Similarly, utilizing other proxies for police misconduct, such as excessive use of force complaints, might offer more nuanced understandings (Dharmapala, *et al.*, 2022). Also, does this theory extend to sheriff offices given research on collective bargaining and sheriff offices (Ibid.).

CHAPTER 5: DEFENDERS OF THE INSTITUTION: EXAMINING POLICE UNIONISM BEYOND PROCEDURAL PROTECTIONS

1. INTRODUCTION

Since the inception of organized law enforcement in the U.S., the core mission of the institution has remained consistent: to protect property and maintain social control (Alexander 2010; Vitale 2018; Muhammad 2019; Go 2023). While the definition of property and social order has evolved over time, policing has consistently served as a tool to uphold racial and economic hierarchies. In its earliest form in the U.S. context, slave patrols policed enslaved Black individuals considered property (Laguna *et al.*, 2010; Vitale 2018; Muhammad 2019; Weaver and Prowse 2020; Jones 2023; Go 2023). Later, metropolitan law enforcement agencies in the 19th century became central to protecting industrialists' property and quelling labor strikes (Ibid.). At the turn of the 20th century, law enforcement became critical to the criminalization of dissent in the Civil Rights Movement. This historical continuity reflects how the institution of policing has evolved, yet its underlying function—to protect capital and enforce social order—remains unchanged. As noted by Weaver and Prowse (2020), the institution of policing has remained the primary tool to ensure the continuity of “racial authoritarianism”—that is, a system in which state authority is used to preserve racial and economic hierarchies—in the U.S. This manifests in different parts of society. A recent manifestation is the growth of local law enforcement participating in U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement’s (ICE), a federal agency charged with immigration enforcement, 287(G) program, which deputizes local law enforcement to carry out immigration enforcement functions (Ingram 2025). Unsurprisingly, scholarship also finds that the membership of U.S. law enforcement

exhibits authoritarian and bigoted perspectives (i.e., McNamara 1967; Juris and Feuille 1973; Niederhoffer 1974; Laguna *et al.*, 2010; Thomas and Tufts 2019; Serwer 2021; Hardaway 2022).

Efforts to reduce police power and reinvent public safety in the aftermath of the 2020 police murder of George Floyd and the ensuing racial justice protests have largely failed to achieve deep structural transformation (i.e., Fegley and Murtazashvili 2023). Despite calls to restructure funding and decentralize police power, many municipalities that initially promised to reduce police budgets instead increased funding in subsequent years (Ibid.). Moreover, lethal police violence has continued to rise over the last decade, even when accounting for population growth (Campaign Zero 2025). The persistence of these trends raises a crucial question: how has the institution of policing, which reproduces and sustains racial authoritarianism, remained so resilient to calls for reinvention intended to curb lethal violence? While many factors contribute to this resilience, police unions have played a critical role in defending and expanding police power, ensuring that policing remains central to public safety governance. Although police unions are not the sole actors preserving the status quo, they have become some of its most visible and aggressive defenders.

As outlined in Chapter 3, police union scholarship tends to focus narrowly on procedural protections (i.e., CBAs and LEOBORs), yet these represent only one dimension of union activity (i.e., Huq and McAdams 2016; Rushin 2017; Harris and Sweeney 2021). While these procedural protections have been argued to be important for accountability, they constitute only one dimension of union activity. A narrow focus on procedural protections risks obscuring the broader strategies police unions employ to maintain power and stifle efforts to create more equitable and restorative public safety systems. This study seeks to move beyond procedural protections, mapping the range of mechanisms and actions police unions use to preserve the institution of policing and protect their members.

While police unions adapt their strategies to local contexts, police unions consistently aim to protect their membership and preserve institutional power. To explore how police unions pursue this objective, this study employs a paired case study of the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #7 (Chicago FOP) in Chicago, IL, and the Dallas Police Association (DPA) in Dallas, TX. By collecting and analyzing campaign finance records, public records, press coverage, and interviews with public safety stakeholders, this analysis reveals the various mechanisms through which these unions work to sustain the status quo, particularly beyond procedural protections. The central research question asks: how do police unions in these two distinct labor environments preserve the status quo in policing and public safety?

This study investigates how these mechanisms are employed by exploring two different case studies. First, I review historical scholarship tracing the evolution of police unions and their relationship with the broader labor movement to provide context on how police unions secured power. Understanding the evolution of police unionism provides critical insights to understanding the unique place they are situated at the intersection of policing and labor. Subsequently, I review the existing scholarship concerning different union mechanisms. Next, I provide an overview of the theory, methods, and design of the study. Specifically, I will discuss the case selection and the paired case study of the Chicago FOP and DPA. Then, I discuss the findings of the thematic analysis, stratified by the different union mechanisms. An examination of union actions across mechanisms produced themes that demonstrate union intent to preserve the status quo and protect a predominantly white membership and advance practices and rhetoric that can be described as another manifestation of “White Protectionism” (Smith and King 2021). Finally, I will discuss the unique political position that police unions occupy, naturally allowing them to benefit from both progressive and conservative policymakers and elected officials.

This paired case study reveals that the DPA and the Chicago FOP utilize a combination of mechanisms to preserve the status quo: while existing labor environments could be considered a critical factor in the DPA's and Chicago FOP's ability to defend their institutions, this analysis reveals themes that emphasize that not only do the DPA and FOP benefit from progressive labor laws, but they are also able to secure support and political power from politicians who share more conservative and authoritarian-leaning ideologies.

This investigation situates police unions within the broader framework of “racial authoritarianism” (Weaver and Prowse 2020) and American Political Development (APD) scholarship. Specifically, I argue that their actions—through gatekeeping of public safety processes and resources, preserving ideological homogeneity, and through support of hard-on-crime narratives—support the institutional practices which reinforce racial hierarchies and centrality of policing in public safety systems (Lerman and Weaver 2014; Weaver and Prowse 2020). In doing so, police unions in both cities employ a range of mechanisms—labor processes, politics, courts, and public engagement—to support stances that are aligned with conservative and authoritarian perspectives. As a result, by protecting their members, police unions and associations have inextricably linked their survival to the authoritarian ideology that promotes and preserves the institutional status quo.

2. Tracing the Evolution of Police Unionism

The U.S. criminal legal system has continued to be one of the primary institutions employed by local, state, and federal levels of government to reproduce systems of racial and economic exploitation, which continues second-class treatment of non-white groups, particularly the U.S. Black population (Lerman and Weaver 2014; Alexander 2010; Weaver and Prowse 2020; Muhammad 2019). This is both because of the legacy of racist policing practices, which target non-

white populations, and the compounded over-reliance on police as a default punitive response to social problems (Muhammad 2019). As discussed earlier, although organized law enforcement in the U.S. has evolved in form, its function has remained largely unchanged (Alexander 2010; Vitale 2017; Muhammad 2019). As historian Elizabeth Hinton (2021) notes regarding U.S. President Donald Trump’s embrace of law and order politics, “In with his embrace of ‘Law and Order’ politics, Trump continues a long tradition of seeking to manage the material consequences of socioeconomic problems with more police, more surveillance, and more incarceration.” This historical trajectory highlights the extent to which policing has been structurally aligned with maintaining racial and social hierarchies, a dynamic that continues to shape the strategies of police unions today.

The police rank-and-file, responsible for enforcing state laws and mediating interactions with the public, have remained a critical and neglected actor in understanding their role in democracy and the shaping of urban state-making (Weaver and Prowse 2020; Bekemeyer 2021). In this investigation, I start with the premise that police unions are no different than any other U.S. special interest groups, particularly in the context of public sector unions. Borrowing from labor economics and political science, police unions should be viewed as special interests with vested interests to protect and defend the institution. As Moe (2015) explains:

Vested interests have strong incentives to protect those institutions when faced with threatening reforms—and in the politics of change, therefore, they have the potential to be powerful forces for stability. This is a universal phenomenon that, when built into our theories, stands to tell us a great deal about the political dynamics of stability and change as they apply to all institutions in all nations. (Moe 2015, 277).

Police unions’ defense of the status quo and their membership do not make them unique among vested interests (Moe 2015). Police unions seek to insulate the institution of policing from reinvention, leveraging political, financial, and rhetorical strategies to resist change. Their efforts are not merely about protecting individual members but also defending the institution itself, an institution historically tasked with maintaining racial and social hierarchies. What distinguishes police

unions from other public sector unions is the institution they protect—policing. As noted by Thomas and Tufts (2019, p.129), “[police are] distinct from other workers in the public sector given their primary responsibility for the enforcement of laws, and in that they are subject to an authoritarian, command-and-control regime based on a military hierarchy, as opposed to a system of civilian managerial authority.”

While police are only one of the many actors of the U.S. criminal legal system, they are typically the first point of contact with the public. In the aftermath of the 2014 murder of Michael Brown, and again after the 2020 murder of George Floyd, the public began demanding changes to reduce harm and deep transformation to the institution. In both instances, police unions remained their staunch public defenders. Tracing the origins and history of police unions and their interactions with the broader labor movement is crucial to understanding the paradox of police unions and why they are distinct and different from other labor actors.

2.1. First Wave: 1897-1919

In 1897, police officers from the Cleveland Police Department applied for affiliation as a labor group with the American Federation of Labor (AFL), the largest and one of the fastest-growing labor organizations of the 20th century (Montgomery 1987). However, AFL leadership turned them away due to concerns by labor leaders that believed that police were “too often controlled by forces inimical to the labor movement” (Heustis 1958, 643; Slater 2004; Jones 2023).

After several failed attempts by other police employee groups to join the AFL, the AFL finally welcomed law enforcement into the labor movement in 1919 (Slater 1996). A mere few months after chartering 37 local police chapters, the infamous Boston police strike ensued. Then Massachusetts Governor Calvin Coolidge deployed the Massachusetts National Guard, resulting in several casualties, widespread disorder, and a premature end to the first wave of law enforcement unionism (Ray 1977). In the aftermath of the strike, labor leaders remained reluctant and cautious

with the prospect of police labor groups joining the labor movement. For instance, in 1925, AFL President Samuel Gompers reflected “on the terrifying scenes of police brutality against women and children who supported a labor strike” (Jones 2023, 8). Perspectives like Gompers were not surprising or unique, given the history between labor and police. As noted by labor historian William Jones (2023), “police unions have long been viewed as simultaneously antithetical to and emblematic of workers’ rights in the United States” (Jones 2023, 6).

Also, it is important to understand that in addition to policing the interests of industrialists, police unions during this same period played an active role in encouraging or permitting racial violence. In the summer of 1919, one of the periods with the highest levels of racial violence in the twentieth century, which was termed the “Red Summer” (Jones 2023). As noted by Jones:

The contrasting conflicts in Boston and Chicago reflected a broader shift in the focus of policing in American cities from breaking unions and controlling workers to disciplining Black, Brown, and Indigenous communities. Police had helped to impose and enforce racial segregation and disfranchisement in the Jim Crow South, typically in a supporting role to semi-private terrorist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan. (Jones 2023, p. 9).

While this was not the only instance where police were playing a contributing role in encouraging or permitting racial violence, these contrasting activities in the same year are critical to understand the origins of police unions.

2.2. Second Wave: 1930-1960

In contrast to the first wave, the second wave of police unionism (1939-1960) can be best described as police labor groups attempting to divorce themselves from the broader labor movement and starting to shift their affiliations to independent law enforcement affiliations, most notably the Fraternal Order of Police (Ray 1977). Union leaders termed this period as the “Fraternal Years” because of the rise of the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) (Burpo *et al.*, 1997). During this period, local governments were planning to deploy police to respond to working class militancy and the resurgence of the trade union movement (Ibid.). As noted by Ray, “The FOP capitalized on its anti-

trade union image and in most cities, police who desired the prestige, resources and support of an outside group turned to the FOP” (Ray 1977, 42).

It is critical to hold central that police unions and the institution itself benefit from authoritarian and conservative politics (i.e., McNamara 1967; Fielding and Fielding 1991; Juris and Feuille 1973; Laguna *et al.*, 2009; Thomas and Tufts 2019; Serwer 2021; Hardaway 2022). During the second wave of police unionism, police labor groups started to distance themselves from labor groups like the AFL and shifted their identity as a labor organization. By appealing to government and industrial interests, police labor crafted a new, distinct identity as a police organization rather than a labor organization. This shift from seeking support from the broader labor movement to recreating themselves as a tool to combat the labor movement during the second wave may have been one of the most understated and critical shifts that helped position unions for success in the third wave of police unionism.

2.3. Third Wave: Post Civil Rights Movement

Nearly half a century after the Boston Police Strike, fueled by racial animus and legislative changes to public sector unionism, a third wave of law enforcement unionism emerged, resulting in the strengthening of police unions and the beginning of collective bargaining rights for police unions (Ray 1977; Hardaway 2022; Rad, Kirk, and Jones 2023). The story of the resurgence of police unions and police militancy is not dissimilar from the recurring and cyclical U.S. phenomenon of racial backlash and racial priming discussed in American political development (APD) scholarship (i.e., Mendelberg 2008). Not surprisingly, union leaders termed this period “The Militant Years” because during this time, police union leaders were becoming more aggressive in how they were responding to public dissent and calls for changes to the institution (Burpo *et al.*, 1997).

In the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement and the rise of Black Liberation groups (i.e., The Black Panthers), there was increased public support for police response to socially maintain and

criminalize dissent (Hardaway 2022). The public support for policing dissent during the Civil Rights Movement coupled with economic shifts propelled today's manifestation of social control of non-white populations. Agyepong (2013) discusses the changes in the latter half of the 20th century and how police both sanctioning white violence and oppressing Black liberation movements for equality:

These actions by the police pushed relations between the police department and the African American community to the boiling point by the late 1960s. Chicago Defender writer Tom Picou echoed the views of many black residents at the time when he observed, 'To many . . . the cop in the ghetto is there for one reason. Not to preserve peace, but rather to keep black people in their place by any means necessary.' Their brutal treatment of black residents, as well as their clear sanctioning of white violence against nonviolent protestors, was evidence of racial hostilities. The police in African American neighborhoods saw their role not as protecting and serving the residents but keeping them under surveillance and controlling their movements. For many of the city's African Americans, police functioned primarily as the enforcers of a racist regime. (Agyepong 2013, 256).

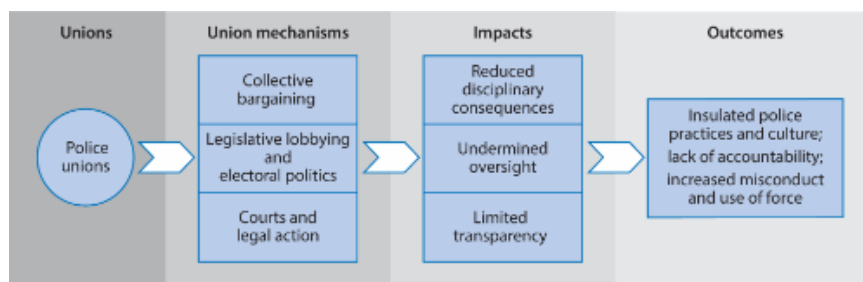
To summarize, police unions emerged as an established political force and recognized labor group through a combination of factors, most notably, their intentional departure from the labor movement as a distinct group in the 1940s, changes to public sector labor laws in the mid twentieth century, and the racial animus after the Civil Rights Movement, which fueled public support for the institution of policing, and in turn, the rank-and file.

3. AN OVERVIEW OF POLICE UNION MECHANISMS

Police unions occupy a unique space in the labor landscape. Not because they're a public sector union, but because they represent the interests of public sector employees who comprise the institution which has been designed to maintain social control and protect capital. Despite the criminal legal system controlling a significant percentage of local budgeting, particularly policing, police unions have been one of the most understudied actors concerning their critical role in shaping urban state making and the establishment of the status quo public safety coalitions that dictate the U.S. criminal legal system (Bekemeyer 2021; DiSalvo 2023).

It's important to understand the different mechanisms police unions can utilize to advance their interests and the related research. As noted in Rad, Kirk, and Jones (2023), scholarship has underscored three primary mechanisms police unions engage to reduce disciplinary consequences, undermine oversight, and limit transparency: (1) collective bargaining, (2) electoral politics and lobbying, and (3) courts and legal actions. Union leaders then use these mechanisms to advance their members' interests or what they believe to be their members' interests.

Figure 5.1 Police Union Mechanisms & Impacts



Rad, Kirk, et al. 2023
Annu. Rev. Criminal Justice

In addition to the three identified in Rad, Kirk, and Jones (2023), another mechanism, albeit not formally investigated, concerns how unions engage the public domain through narratives and media strategies (Juris and Feuille 1973; Burpo *et al.*, 1997, 2008). Building upon Rad, Kirk, and Jones (2023), I collect and analyze data on union activities engaging the following mechanisms:²⁷

1. Labor: Collective Bargaining & Labor Actions
2. Politics: Legislative Activities & Electoral Politics
3. Courts: Legal Actions & Arbitrations
4. Public Engagement: Media & Narrative Strategies

²⁷ For this investigation, despite the lack of scholarship on police union impacts on public engagement, I've also included public engagement as another mechanism, given the significance (Juris and Feuille 1973).

6.1. Labor: Collective Bargaining & Labor Actions

Emerging scholarship in the latter half of the last decade has started to identify a relationship between the granting of collective bargaining and different types of police misconduct outcomes (Cunningham *et al.*, 2021; Dharmapala *et al.*, 2022). As noted earlier, research shows that the granting of collective bargaining rights has increased police violence and different types of police misconduct, such as excessive force. Researchers have suggested that procedural protections, typically found in CBAs and LEOBORs, could be one explanation for the relationship between collective bargaining and police violence. Qualitative legal scholarship examines the threats procedural protections pose for accountability and transparency (i.e., Keenan and Walker 2005; Huq and McAdams 2016; Rushin 2017; Rushin 2019a; Rushin 2019b).²⁸

Also, it is worth acknowledging that there is scholarship that does not look at collective bargaining specifically but examines tangential labor actions such as police “slowdowns,” informal instructions for union members to follow to create operational inefficiencies and pressure on the government to change policies (Chandrasekher 2016).

6.2. Politics: Legislative Activities & Electoral Politics

The political dimension, while understudied, is arguably the most important mechanism police unions engage in to exert influence and pressure to achieve their objectives. As described in the “police union playbook,” written by and for a police labor leader audience, “...political action is the lifeblood of any police organization...” (Burpo *et al.*, 1997, 95).²⁹ They continue, “...[police

²⁸ Further, scholarship finds that the same types of protections found in local-level CBAs are also found in state-level legislation referred to as law enforcement officer bill of rights (Keenan and Walker 2005; Cunningham *et al.* 2022).

²⁹ Please note that that the playbook was updated in 2008 and was titled “Police Union Power, Politics, And Confrontation in the 21st Century,” by Ron DeLord, John Burpo, Michael Shannon and Jim Spearing, 2008. The original version, also referenced in this investigation was published in 1997 and titled “Police Association Power, Politics, and Confrontation: A Guide for the Successful Police Labor Leader” by John H. Burpo, Ron DeLord, Michael Shannon.

associations] must be masters at passing legislation and killing unfavorable bills at the state level by staying politically active” (Ibid.). In contrast to other public sector unions, most notably teacher unions, it has long been the case that police unions have not been as involved in lobbying and electoral politics at the federal level. Instead, the effectiveness and power of police unions are largely drawn from their activities at the local and state level (Juris and Feuille 1973; Keenan and Walker 2005; DiSalvo 2023). The design of the U.S. state and federalism, where police unions are more effective at the local level, likely has a part to play (Miller 2008).

While public-sector union scholarship has considered the impacts of police collective bargaining on public sector spending (i.e., Anzia and Moe 2013), there is a dearth of scholarship examining the political activities of police unions (DiSalvo 2023). There needs to be additional exploration and analysis of different qualitative data types, like union statements, political endorsements, and press documents relating to political statements and political activities. Without an analysis of the ways unions engage the political mechanism, scholarship will continue to neglect a mechanism, which police labor leaders see as one of the most, if not the most, important mechanisms, that allows them to preserve the status quo and continue to ensure that police remain central to public safety systems.

6.3. Courts: Legal Actions & Arbitrations

In contrast to the political dimension, there is considerable research employing qualitative legal methods examining how police engage the legal dimension; specifically, the focus is on arbitrations, indemnification of officers, and legal challenges to combat changes or decrees to reduce racial bias and misconduct (Schwartz 2014; Hardaway 2019; Rushin 2019a). While literature concerning indemnification and arbitrations underscores how union protections benefit individual officers accused of misconduct, legal activities beyond arbitrations and indemnifications are more focused on union activities to preserve their membership and combat changes to the institution.

Arbitrations have been argued by advocates and scholars to pose a threat to accountability because they favor officers who are accused of misconduct (i.e., Rushin 2021). Earlier literature about police arbitrations highlighted the concern with having a “neutral” arbitrator, who is typically selected by both parties and who is then assigned to rule on issues of officer termination and discipline (Iris 1998). Additionally, a more recent investigation found not only that arbitration provisions are one of the most salient types of provisions found in CBAs, but also that the decisions of arbitrators are more likely to favor police officers (Rushin 2017; Rushin 2021).

Turning to indemnification of officers, which infringes upon civil accountability, Schwartz (2014) investigates the financial indemnification of police officers. Schwartz (2014) finds that not only are officers indemnified in 99.8% of cases, but even in cases where they’re not, they are rarely financially liable to pay damages (Schwartz 2014). Another understudied activity of how police unions utilize the legal dimensions is the funding for legal defenses provided to officers, which police labor leaders argue to be one of the most important benefits and protections for unionized officers (DeLord *et al.*, 2008).

Finally, when it comes to legal activities beyond protecting individual officers, the actions are broad and can be generally characterized as combating reforms and changes (Fisk and Richardson 2017). The legal activities can range from fighting against changes in recruitment policies that are intended to improve the diversity of departments to legal challenges that undermine oversight or delay changes to consent decrees (Fisk and Richardson 2017; Hardaway 2019; Brady 2024).

6.4. Public Engagement: Media & Narrative Strategies

A less studied dimension of union influence is public engagement and narrative strategies that unions deploy to both reinforce union power and secure public support. Although the police union playbook emphasizes controlling public narratives, there is limited scholarship examining how unions engage with the public domain (Burpo *et al.*, 1997).

There have been several instances where unions have been found supporting narratives against the city, chief, or community advocates who are advancing policies that disrupt the status quo (Walker 2008; Fisk and Richardson 2017; Hardaway 2019). Furthermore, police union power becomes more salient when law and order politics become more prevalent, particularly crime (Burpo *et al.*, 1997). Thus, there is an interest in amplifying crime concerns or fabricating a crime increase despite the reality.

Also, crime narratives in the U.S. cannot be divorced from the pathological understanding and racialization of crime (Muhammad 2019). American fears of crime are deeply entwined with anti-Blackness and xenophobia (Ibid.). Thus, it is important to center this and contextualize the racial implications of perpetuating certain types of crime narratives. Moreover, understanding how police unions may leverage crime and other types of narratives that support police will provide additional insights into how unions operate. By polarizing public discourse, police unions and their allies entrench resistance to changes that challenge traditional practices, ensuring the continuity of their influence and reinforcing their authority (Bekemeyer 2021).

Thus, to conduct a thorough investigation of union and association efforts to preserve the status quo, there needs to be a comprehensive examination of all the different union mechanisms, not exclusively collective bargaining or other mechanisms related to procedural protections. Furthermore, when understanding the different impacts of police union activities, analyses must extend beyond exclusively examining matters of accountability and transparency and include broader efforts to insulate their membership and, in turn, the institution of policing.

7. DATA & METHODS

7.1. Case Selection: The Chicago FOP and the DPA

To investigate police union mechanisms, I conduct a paired case study of two police unions to examine how union dynamics materialize in practice: the Fraternal Order of Police Lodge # 7 (Chicago FOP) in Chicago, IL, and the Dallas Police Association (DPA) in Dallas, TX. By leveraging campaign finance archives, public records, and a range of original interviews with public safety stakeholders, the case studies seek to understand police union activities that secure and defend the institution. I present a thematic analysis of qualitative and quantitative data that illustrates the salient throughlines in how police unions leverage different mechanisms to achieve their overarching goal: preserving the status quo. Specifically, I address the core research question: beyond procedural protections embedded in CBAs and/or LEOBORs, what are some of the different union activities that work to maintain the status quo?

7.2. Framework for Case Selection

This paired case study offers a valuable opportunity to examine the resilience and adaptability of police unions by selecting two organizations situated in cities with distinct labor and political landscapes. While Chicago and Dallas both share notable similarities—such as comparable population sizes, urban demographics, and the presence of large municipal police departments, they differ significantly in their labor environments. Chicago’s robust collective bargaining rights contrast sharply with Dallas’s weaker labor protections, presenting an ideal opportunity to explore how police unions sustain their influence despite these divergent conditions.

Drawing on Small’s (2009) argument that case selection should prioritize logical inference over representativeness, this study intentionally avoids treating these two organizations as representative of all police unions. Instead, the selection reflects a strategic choice designed to

illuminate how police unions maintain institutional power across varying contexts—specifically, labor landscapes, which are a critical dimension in the study of labor organizations.

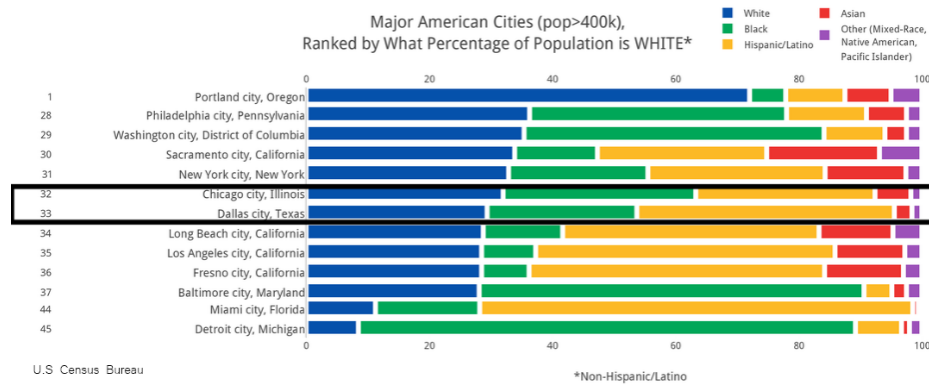
Rather than eliminate bias, I follow Geddes (1990) and Small (2009) in acknowledging that bias is inherent in case selection and that strong case studies rely not on statistical generalizability, but on producing “compelling empirical statements” (Small 2009, 19). As Small argues, “case study logic is probably more effective when asking how or why questions about processes unknown before the start of the study” (Small 2009, 265). Thus, this investigation treats each case as a meaningful case designed to illuminate the often-unseen strategies of police unions, which is ideal for the questions set forth in this investigation.

In sum, this investigation does not attempt to generalize about all police unions, nor claim statistical representativeness. Instead, it seeks to generate meaningful insights through carefully selected cases that allow for robust logical inference. By pairing Chicago and Dallas, this study illustrates how unions adapt to different environments while pursuing a shared goal: defending the institution of policing and resisting transformation.

7.3. Highlighting Similarities Across Cases

First, both cities are similar in terms of racial composition (Figure 5.2). This is an important characteristic, given the treatment of non-white populations in the U.S. and the focus of this investigation. As noted in Figure 5.2, both cities rank similarly when examining demographic similarities across the largest metropolitan areas in the U.S.

Figure 5.2 Racial Composition of U.S. Cities



Next, both cities are affiliated with the National Fraternal Order of Police, the largest and oldest police organization in the U.S., with local affiliates nationwide. However, it is important to note that the Chicago FOP has been part of the national FOP since its inception, but the Dallas Police Association (DPA) only joined the FOP as a local chapter in 2018 (Rajwani 2018). According to Michael Mata, then-president of the DPA, this was an effort to expand power within and outside of the state by aligning with the 2,200 other FOP chapters (Ibid.).

When examining changes to budgeting, neither city has had a reduction in the size of the law enforcement budget, and it has consistently increased over time. In Chicago, the budget increased 57% between 2014 and 2024, whereas in Dallas it increased 68.6% during the same period. Both agencies increased their budgets by at least twofold, with DPD increasing slightly more than CPD.³⁰

As per the index of police protectionism developed in Chapter 3, when examining the level of police protections provided to officers accused of misconduct, while Chicago and Dallas vary in the source of the protections but have similar level of protections offered to officers.³¹ In Chicago,

³⁰ Between 2014 and 2024, the Chicago Police Department’s budget increased from approximately \$1.28 billion to \$2.01 billion, reflecting a 57% increase (City of Chicago, 2014 Budget Recommendations; City of Chicago, 2024 Budget Summary). Over the same period, the Dallas Police Department’s budget rose from around \$426 million to \$719 million, an increase of approximately 68.6% (City of Dallas, FY2014-15 Proposed Budget; City of Dallas, FY2024-25 Adopted Budget).

³¹ Please refer to Appendix B to reveal the breakdown.

most of the protections are sourced and embedded in the CBA, and they have the highest level of protections offered, which is an 8/8 on the index of police protectionism (Ibid.). In contrast, the protections offered to Dallas police officers are a mix of municipal codes and the state-level LEOBOR. Thus, while DPD officers seem to receive no protections when exclusively examining their labor agreement (referred to as a “meet and confer”), examining protections at both the local and state levels, they have a score of 7/8 on the index of police protectionism (Ibid.).³² Said differently, most of the protections for police officers in Dallas are provided by state-level legislation.

Finally, turning to police violence, although Chicago may seem to have a more concerning problem with police violence when looking at raw volume, the rate of police killings is comparable to Dallas when examining the number of police killings per capita. For instance, data between 2013 and 2023 reveal that on average, CPD police officers kill 2.91 people per 100,000 residents, and DPD officers kill 2.94 people per 100,000 residents (Campaign Zero 2025). I was not able to secure the level of non-lethal violence for each city, given significant differences in the accessibility and structure for reporting of non-lethal violence. This issue is a major concern for any study examining data generated by the U.S. criminal legal system (i.e., Knox, Lowe, and Mummolo 2020; Li and Ricard 2023).

Finally, one of the clearest ways to understand whether there have been any changes or similarities in police reinvention is by determining whether the police budget is being reduced or increased over time. Both municipalities have continued to increase the size and spending of the department over the last decade.

³² This was validated by a DPD officer who discussed that, because of the different labor groups involved, particularly fire, the meet and confer only touches upon the areas where the interests of both groups meet: “fiscal matters pertaining to salary, fringe benefits, and tenure” (DPD 4, Interview, [March 1, 2018]).

7.4. Understanding Differences in Labor Landscapes

There are several differences between the two cities as they relate to labor. In terms of population and size, Dallas has a population of 1.30 million and nearly 3,600 officers, whereas Chicago has a population of 2.63 million and nearly 11,720 officers (U.S. Census 2023; Dallas Police Department; Chicago Police Department). However, the primary differences between the two unions, and most pertinent to this study, are the varied labor landscapes between the DPA and the Chicago FOP. For instance, when examining the strength of labor laws according to Oxfam's labor index, Illinois has been ranked in the top 10 states for employees in terms of wages and protections, particularly for lower-wage workers (Oxfam Best States to Work Index 2024). In contrast, Texas has been ranked in the top 10 worst states for employees (Ibid.). Ideologically, the policy preferences of citizens in Texas contrast with the preferences of citizens in Illinois, and these preferences strongly influence the different types of state laws that influence local-level policy (Tausanovitch and Warsaw 2014).

Furthermore, even at the municipal level, the policy preferences of residents in Chicago and Dallas are contrasting, indicating variation in the types of policies in place (Ibid.). This varied labor landscape cannot be examined without the political context and unique labor histories. Specifically, political landscapes at the state-level (i.e., right-to-work laws) play a critical role in shaping labor environments (i.e., Fortin, Lemieux, Lloyd 2022).

Chicago represents a case of entrenched union power since the early 1980s. FOIA requests revealed that the Chicago FOP Lodge #7 (FOP) has been the recognized and the exclusive labor representative group for the Chicago Police Department rank-and-file for CBA negotiations since the first CBA in 1981 (see Appendix L with response to FOIA). Since 1981, there have been 10 agreements executed between the city and the Chicago FOP. While there have been significant additions, many of the procedural protections argued to reduce accountability and transparency were present in some form since the first CBA, as noted in Appendix F.

In contrast, Dallas illustrates how police union influence can become fragmented due to weaker bargaining rights and a fractured labor landscape with competing unions. Despite the variation, both cities have been able to provide officers with similar types of protections, and they experience similar levels of police violence per capita.

Given that both organizations operate in vastly contrasting political and labor landscapes, another critical difference worth noting, which is the product of the labor environments, is the existence of competing unions. The DPA competes and is required to negotiate both with different sector (i.e., Dallas Fire Fighters Association) and within-sector ethnic police unions (i.e., Black Police Association of Greater Dallas [BPAD]), which naturally fractures the power of the DPA. While the DPA is forced to retain strong relationships with labor counterparts, according to one DPD officer, a Chicago officer/FOP member described the contentious relationship between the fire and police unions (DPD 3, Interview, [March 1, 2018]; CPD 2, Interview, [August 16, 2017]). Despite the DPA representing the largest share of DPD's rank-and-file, it is not the exclusive bargaining entity for DPD officers. In Dallas, the separate labor process of "meet and confer" is legally weaker than a CBA and will be discussed in more detail below. The meet and confer process includes the DPA along with five other unions that collectively negotiate through a single meet and confer process:

- ⇒ Dallas Black Firefighters Association
- ⇒ Dallas Hispanic Firefighters Association
- ⇒ Dallas Fire Fighters Association
- ⇒ Black Police Association of Greater Dallas
- ⇒ National Latino Law Enforcement Organization

In contrast to the DPA, the Chicago FOP has exclusive bargaining rights with the city of Chicago for all the CPD rank-and-file. CPD officers do not have an option to select another union, given that the Chicago FOP has exclusive bargaining rights.

Again, it is important to acknowledge that the intention of this investigation is not to develop a universally generalizable theory. Instead, it is intended to illustrate that when examining the influence of police unions on different outcomes, it is important to examine all the different mechanisms they employ comprehensively to properly distinguish which mechanisms may have a relationship with different outcomes, not just the most visible or salient, such as procedural protections. In sum, both DPA and the Chicago FOP have been effective in preserving the status quo and have continued to remain central to the public safety apparatus in both cities.

8. DATA

To better render the activities of the DPA and the Chicago FOP, this investigation draws on several data sources. Three general data types are used for this investigation:

1. Documents & archives
2. Public safety stakeholder interviews
3. Lobbying/contribution data
 - a. Campaign finance contributions
 - b. Lobbying disclosures
 - c. Tax records & financial reporting

8.1. Documents & Archives

Most of the documents and archives that were analyzed for this investigation were publicly available. However, there were several public record requests filed through city portals to retrieve the following types of information. Additional information on the language and type of request can be found in Appendix L. The following types of documents were examined:

1. Historical collective bargaining agreements
2. Press/journalism
3. Lawsuits & arbitrations

4. Police union resource & strategy guides
5. Public statements & communications

One example of a police union resource that is employed and examined under the fourth category above is “Police Union Power, Politics, And Confrontation in the 21st Century,” (herein referred to as the “playbook”), which is a handbook and guide for police labor leaders (Delord *et al.*, 2008).³³ It is a critical resource to understand police union strategies and perspectives (Keller and Barker 2021). The playbook was written by Ron DeLord, John Burpo, Michael Shannon, and Jim Spearing, all former police union leaders or political/media consultants for police associations/unions throughout the country, on a range of matters, including but not limited to media engagement, political affairs, and labor agreement bargaining. The authors make known that the intention of the text is to inform police union leaders of “what it takes for a police association and the leader who guides that group to make the organization a winner in the many battles that lie ahead” (Burpo *et al.*, 1997, p xii). This resource provides insight and validates the different strategies that unions employ to achieve their interests.

While I took efforts to ensure that the investigation was as thorough as possible, including by filing Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests, there may be a great deal of non-captured information that is relevant to this study, such as “back room” conversations or other types of relevant activities.

³³ Please note that that the playbook was updated in 2008 and was titled “Police Union Power, Politics, And Confrontation in the 21st Century,” by Ron DeLord, John Burpo, Michael Shannon and Jim Spearing, 2008. The original version, also referenced in this investigation was published in 1997 and titled “Police Association Power, Politics, and Confrontation: A Guide for the Successful Police Labor Leader” by John H. Burpo, Ron DeLord, Michael Shannon.

8.2. Public Safety Stakeholder Interviews

I conducted 23 interviews with stakeholders. These interviews began during my 2017 MPhil investigation on police unionism, which initially focused on police officer perspectives. However, as the investigation evolved in my DPhil, there was a clear need for interviewing stakeholders beyond police. Furthermore, while the police perspectives helped provide a backdrop of what qualitative data needed to be collected, additional interviews by other critical public safety stakeholders were needed to triangulate and validate the data (i.e., Lusthaus, van Oss, and Amann 2022).

To protect the identities of all participants and encourage more open contributions, throughout this text I employ randomly chosen pseudonyms that are not connected to each subject's real name, and also make use of a code to signify each person. The first part of each code lists the city where the participant is based. The second part identifies the participant's organizational role or affiliation. The final part of each code is the number of the participant type in chronological order. For instance, Chicago CPD 3 represents a Chicago Police Department officer who was the third CPD participant interviewed. As shown in Appendix K, the organizational designations include: CPD (Chicago Police Department), DPD (Dallas Police Department), FOP (Fraternal Order of Police), DPA (Dallas Police Association), BPAD (Black Police Association of Dallas), Elected/Appointed (elected or appointed city representatives), U.S. DoJ (U.S. Department of Justice), and CSA (Community Member/Organizer). The occupation/rank column provides additional context about each participant's specific role, such as Police Officer, Detective, Sergeant, Major, or Former Cook County State Attorney. Interview modalities are also noted in the appendix, with some conducted in-person, by phone, or via Zoom, and location specifications indicate whether interviews took place on-site or remotely.

My interpretation of interviewee responses guided the qualitative data analysis. I recognize that readers may take issue with facts and/or the interpretation of the data as they read this work.

My personal and professional background, especially my work on similar matters concerning policing and the criminal legal system—both provide benefits and limitations to how interviewees may respond to questions.

The interviews were semi-structured and tailored to each participant category and city, given their background, experience, nature of job, and geography. As a result, the interviews were not uniform in their style and formatting, which is why the findings were not presented in a visual format. Furthermore, the number of interviews stratified by participant type and city would not provide any meaningful visuals or insights when broken down by response.

8.2.1. Consent, Structure, and Interview Validity

To ensure participant cooperation and minimize risks, anonymity was guaranteed to all participants. This was particularly important for elected officials who feared political backlash and for police officers concerned about professional consequences. Interview participants are referred to using generalized identifiers (i.e., “an elected/appointed city representative”) to preserve their anonymity. While this introduces inherent limitations in terms of transparency, these safeguards were necessary to secure candid insights.

Interviews were conducted in person before 2020 and virtually via Zoom afterward. All interviews were recorded with participant consent. Before performing content analysis and qualitative coding to identify themes, I used Fathom AI for transcription. The interviews were then analyzed, and themes were developed inductively. I then revisited the transcripts to identify any missing language that should be coded to the different themes developed.

8.2.2. Set of Interviews & Selection of Participants

The framework for participant selection and analysis aligns with Small’s (2009) emphasis on maximizing insights through intentional selection of participants. Participants were selected via snowball sampling, with referrals guiding additional interviews. Consistent with Small’s (2009)

method of case selection, I conceived of the participants interviewed as a “set of cases,” not a sample of interviews. Efforts were made to secure additional interviews until saturation was reached—when interviews ceased revealing new insights—further reinforcing the methodological rigor of this study. While I aimed to continue recruitment until reaching saturation—defined as the point at which additional interviews no longer reveal novel insights—it is important to acknowledge that full saturation was not reached across all stakeholder categories. In particular, limited participation from rank-and-file law enforcement officers constrained the diversity of perspectives included. Additionally, practical constraints—including the end of fieldwork funding, scheduling barriers, and respondent fatigue—shaped the stopping point for data collection. Nevertheless, the interviews conducted yielded rich and varied insights that inform the key themes presented in this chapter, while also pointing to areas where future research can deepen and expand these findings.

Each interview is treated as an independent case contributing to the broader understanding of union strategies and activities. Through “literal replication,” interviews with similar participants (i.e., public officials in both cities) aim to reveal consistent mechanisms across cities (Small 2009). Through “theoretical replication,” interviews with divergent participants (i.e., police officers versus community advocates) allow the study to test whether differences emerge where theory predicts they should. Hence, this investigation applies logical inference rather than statistical inference to ensure robust and meaningful insights. Furthermore, while this set of interviews is not meant to be representative of the different groups they represent, their careful selection and alignment with Small’s framework ensures the investigation’s findings provide a compelling account of the mechanisms employed by police unions to resist transformation. Table 5.1 includes an overview of the 22 participants by professional category. Please note that while some participants may have had experiences in more than one of the participant categories, they were only asked questions and were

asked to respond to the questions from their perspectives and experiences with the participant type they identified with:

Table 5.1 Participant Information

Participant Type	Format	Number of Interviews	# of Hours	Scope
Police Officers	Hybrid	10	14	2017-2024
Elected/Appointed Officials	Hybrid	7	10	2017-2025
U.S. DoJ Investigators	Hybrid	2	4	2017-2024
CSAs	Hybrid	4	5	2023-2024
		23	33 Hours	

1. Police Officers

Police officers offer critical insights into how union mechanisms function internally to protect officers and preserve the status quo. Interviews with current and former officers revealed firsthand accounts and internal insights into how union activities operate to protect members and, in turn, the institution from the perspective of members. Further, their proximity to union processes ensures that their perspectives offer a grounded understanding of how unions insulate police departments from reforms aimed at transparency and accountability.

All CPD (N=5) and DPD (N=5) officer interviews were completed during the summer of 2017. While extensive efforts included recruiting additional participants and attempting follow-up interviews, police officers did not feel comfortable being on the record or were not interested in participating. This could be for several reasons. First, the post-2020 climate could have made officers weary of researchers. Second, it's plausible that my background and professional experiences, which are more visible now, may have raised concerns for officers who were considering discussing their work, given that I had no publicly visible research or public profile when I interviewed officers in the summer of 2017. To provide further context, my professional career over the last decade has been focused on public safety reinvention efforts and harm reduction efforts to reduce harm caused by the U.S. criminal legal system. Finally, as revealed in a participant interview, CPD created a stricter policy considering external researchers, where officers are instructed that they cannot engage with researchers without the researcher getting approval and consent from CPD.

2. Elected/Appointed Local Government Officials

Elected and appointed officials serve as key stakeholders who must balance public demands for change with police employee demands. Their insights shed light on how unions engage in legislative lobbying, electoral influence, and media strategies to counter accountability measures. These officials' perspectives are indispensable in understanding the broader political dynamics at play in union resistance to reform. This category is left intentionally broad to protect the identities of current and former staff, who range from elected city council persons/alderpersons to city administrators, such as former city managers.

3. Federal U.S. DoJ Investigators (“Federal Investigators”)

The U.S. Department of Justice (DoJ) under the Obama administration took a more active role in investigating abuses by local law enforcement agencies across the U.S. The most

significant efforts were conducted by the civil rights division of the DoJ during the Obama administration. This investigation included interviews with two senior U.S. DoJ officials who served in senior roles in the Civil Rights Division from 2010 to 2016, overlapping with the tenure of the Obama administration. Specifically, they were responsible for “investigating law enforcement agencies across the country” (U.S. DoJ 1, personal communication, [September 7, 2017]). Notably, this included investigations such as Ferguson, MO, in the aftermath of Michael Brown and Chicago, IL, in the aftermath of Laquan McDonald.

DoJ investigators were one of the most important federal actors involved and tasked with understanding the landscape, inequities, and changes needed to disrupt the status quo in policing (Ibid.). There is a hazard to generalizing from two interviews; however, the unique role of these participants, coupled with their proximity to investigations and seniority, should supply credibility to the evidence presented. Additionally, given the decentralized design of the U.S. state, the DoJ Civil Rights Division plays one of the most critical, if not the most critical, roles in the investigation of local law enforcement agencies.

4. Community Safety Advocates (“CSAs”)

Community Safety Advocates (CSAs) refer to organizers, non-profit leaders, and advocates working to advance restorative justice. Restorative public safety includes all public safety models that do not center punitive and carceral responses to social problems.

CSAs offer a critical perspective that is often neglected or excluded from research concerning public safety and policing. This investigation centers on CSAs who prioritize restorative safety approaches instead of focusing on interacting with and interviewing system actors exclusively. Interviews with CSAs illustrate how unions leverage media narratives and legislative lobbying to undermine alternative safety approaches and maintain their centrality

in public safety governance. These interviews also shed light on the exclusionary dynamics of police unions.

8.2.3. Positionality & Reflexivity

Rather than wholly excise the role of researcher in the hope of insinuating enhanced empiricism, ethnographic and qualitative inquiry increasingly emphasizes "reflexivity" and the need for researchers to examine how their presence, identities, and actions shape their research (Sierra-Arevalo 2024). In this study of police unionism, I sought to maintain transparency about my role while centering how union members, elected officials, and community organizers themselves understood their institutional landscape. Unlike researchers embedded within police departments or other settings being studied over extended periods, my access came through semi-structured interviews conducted across multiple years and cities, creating distinct challenges in building trust and eliciting candid responses from stakeholders with competing interests in police reform debates. Access to participants varied considerably across groups. In 2017, during my MPhil research, a personal connection introduced me to a Chicago Police Department officer who provided workspace at a district station and facilitated introductions to fellow officers. In Dallas, I cultivated a relationship with a DPD officer who served as a gatekeeper for additional law enforcement interviews. All police interviews occurred during summer 2017, alongside interviews with elected officials and U.S. Department of Justice personnel. After 2020, I secured additional interviews with elected officials and community safety organizers—a stakeholder group I added to better understand how non-law enforcement actors engage with police unions. However, I conducted no additional police officer interviews after 2017.

This temporal gap reflects structural and institutional barriers that emerged as my professional profile evolved. By 2020, my senior leadership role at Campaign Zero, a harm reduction

and police accountability organization, likely deterred officers from participating. As one Chicago community safety organizer noted, CPD policy prohibits officers from speaking with external researchers without departmental approval—a bureaucratic obstacle compounded by my public association with police reform advocacy. Conversely, my organizational affiliation facilitated access to high-profile community organizers and public officials who viewed my professional background as evidence of substantive engagement with criminal justice issues rather than a liability.

My identity as a South Asian/Middle Eastern straight man in my twenties and early thirties during the study period shaped interactions in ways both visible and opaque. My name signals a Muslim background, which may have created additional identity barriers with some law enforcement participants. During 2017 interviews with police, officers appeared cautious but not overtly guarded—perhaps because my public profile was minimal before that year. My background growing up on Long Island familiarized me with NYPD culture, and my prior work at the Queens County District Attorney's Office, where I regularly collaborated with NYPD officers, provided experiential common ground. I strategically invoked this prosecutorial experience when building rapport with law enforcement participants. With elected officials, I referenced my work experience working in different government roles. With community organizers, I emphasized harm reduction work and civil rights advocacy, including my time at a civil rights law firm investigating police misconduct—experience that likely enhanced credibility with reformers while potentially raising red flags for police.

There were moments when participants made assumptions about my political orientation or stake in reform debates. I typically redirected these inquiries back to interview questions, maintaining focus on participants' perspectives rather than my own.

Power dynamics differed markedly across participant groups. Police officers were notably cautious, particularly at the start of interviews, though many became more forthcoming as

conversations progressed. While I attempted to make contact with police unions, conversations ultimately resulted in conversations being off-the-record. In contrast, community organizers appeared more relaxed and less guarded. U.S. Department of Justice officials and elected or appointed city officials demonstrated polish and deliberation, carefully managing what they disclosed. Certain topics proved difficult to illuminate. When asked about union legislative activities, many participants acknowledged limited understanding or visibility into these processes—a knowledge gap corroborated by one Chicago elected official who described the city's political culture as defined by "backroom dealings." This opacity itself became an empirical finding, revealing how police unions operate with limited public scrutiny even among stakeholders who interact with them regularly.

The most significant evolution in my research occurred around 2020. The addition of community safety organizers reflected recognition that understanding police unionism requires examining how unions interact with—and are perceived by—diverse public safety stakeholders. This methodological adaptation was driven by empirical necessity: the 2020 uprisings and subsequent reform debates foregrounded community organizers as central actors in contestation over police power. Remote versus in-person interviews likely affected data quality, though assessing this impact is difficult given the temporal correlation with my changing professional role and post-2020 heightened sensitivity around police research.

My racial and ethnic identity, gender presentation, and institutional affiliations undoubtedly shaped interactions in ways both discernible and hidden. As a straight male-presenting researcher, I likely benefited from gender alignment with the overwhelmingly male police union leadership I studied, though my South Asian/Middle Eastern background and Muslim name complicated assumptions participants might make about shared identity. University affiliation conferred legitimacy with some groups while potentially reinforcing stereotypes about academic liberalism with

others. Notably, Dallas participants provided more detailed accounts of union activities compared to Chicago participants, suggesting either genuine differences in union visibility or variation in participants' willingness to discuss internal politics.

It bears emphasizing what I likely did not observe or hear. Officers probably withheld information about the most contentious union tactics or internal disagreements. Elected officials may have understated their dependence on union political support. The absence of such data does not invalidate my analysis; rather, it underscores that all interview-based research captures partial truths shaped by the social distance—and perceived political distance—between researcher and researched. Scholars must interrogate how their identities and affiliations open certain doors while closing others, and consider how participants' strategic disclosures and silences themselves constitute data worthy of analysis. The burden of such reflexive consideration should not fall disproportionately on scholars of color, women, or those with minoritized identities who study predominantly white or male-dominated institutions. The value of research should be judged by its theoretical rigor, empirical grounding, and contribution to understanding—not by whether a researcher's identity matches that of their subjects.

8.3. Lobbying & Campaign Finance Data

Lobbying and campaign finance expenditure data were obtained from different sources, given different reporting systems for different states and different levels of government (i.e., local, state, and federal). Although both are critical tools of political influence, lobbying and campaign contributions serve distinct purposes: lobbying involves direct efforts to persuade policymakers on specific legislation or regulatory decisions, while campaign contributions are financial donations aimed at supporting candidates or committees, often to maintain access and foster long-term relationships that can shape future policy outcomes (Anzia 2019). While FOIA requests were filed

with agencies in both cities, neither city responded to the FOIA request with any relevant documents or failed to produce any materials (see Appendix L). As a result, I turned to public records at the local, state, and federal levels to source contribution and expenditure data. Table 5.2 includes an overview of the sources about lobbying and campaign finance data.

Table 5.2 Lobbying & Campaign Finance Data Sources & Variables

	DATA TYPE	DATA SOURCE(S)	YEARS	VARIABLES
Federal	Lobbying	Pro Publica Non-Profit Explorer (Source: Internal Revenue Service – Form 990)	2018-2023	Total Lobbying Expenditures
	Campaign Finance	Open Secrets Gov	2018-2024	Total Contributions for Federal-Level Elections
State	Lobbying	Pro Publica Non-Profit Explorer (Source: Internal Revenue Service – Form 990)	2018-2024	Campaign Contributions to State Elections
	Campaign Finance	Dallas Board of Elections; Illinois Board of Elections	2018-2024	Total Contributions for State-Level Elections
Local	Lobbying	City of Dallas (Campaign Finance Disclosures)	2018-2024	Total Contributions to Local Elections
	Campaign Finance	Illinois Board of Elections (Campaign Finance Disclosures)	2018-2024	Total Contributions for Local-Level Elections

9. DEFENDERS OF THE INSTITUTION: A THEMATIC ANALYSIS OF CHICAGO FOP AND THE DPA ACTIVITIES BEYOND PROCEDURAL PROTECTIONS

In 1967, Alabama Governor George Wallace, a notorious segregationist, praised police for their violent responses to civil rights protesters: “‘Police are a beleaguered group,’ Wallace said in an

interview republished by The New York Times. They deserved ‘praise’ for beating civil-rights marchers in Selma—or, as he put it, for shutting down the ‘unlawful assembly,’” (Serwer 2021).

Nearly 50 years later, U.S. President Donald Trump echoed a similar sentiment at a press conference with a backdrop of Suffolk County (Long Island), NY, police officers:

When you see these thugs being thrown into the back of a paddy wagon ... I said, ‘Please don’t be too nice ... When you guys put somebody in the car and you’re protecting their head you know, the way you put their hand over [their head]... You can take the hand away, OK?’ (Saric, 2017).

Such rhetoric reveals the authoritarian underpinnings that foster a mindset among police that frames the public as adversaries rather than individuals they are sworn to protect. This dynamic is also reflected in scholarship investigating the ideology and leanings of members of law enforcement (i.e., McNamara 1967; Niederhoffer 1967; Laguna *et al.*, 2009; Thomas and Tufts 2019). This mentality perpetuates impunity and aggressive “law and order” approaches (Serwer 2021). This is for several reasons, including the nature of their work and the fact that the membership of unions, which are predominantly white and male, has a conservative and authoritarian leanings (McNamara 1967; Fielding and Fielding 1991; Juris and Feuille 1973; Laguna *et al.*, 2010; Serwer 2021; Hardaway 2022). However, recent research finds that republican political affiliation does not have a relationship with increased enforcement (Ba *et al.*, 2025).

Beyond supporting authoritarian policies and punitive approaches to public safety, police unions’ ideological membership composition also reinforces their role as defenders of the institution. As predominantly white, male, and conservative organizations, police unions align closely with authoritarian political ideologies and punitive approaches to public safety (Juris and Feuille 1973; Serwer 2021). Research has shown that police officers are more likely to favor authoritarian figures and endorse punitive and violent responses to social problems, especially in the context of youth crime (Andersen, Papazoglou, and Collins 2018; Shafiq, Ohlsson, and Mathias 2016; Chen and

Einat 2014). This ideological alignment enables police unions to forge alliances with conservative political actors while simultaneously benefiting from progressive labor protections.

Through the review of quantitative contribution data, participant interviews with public safety stakeholders, and textual documents, several themes emerged concerning how the DPA and Chicago FOP secure and retain their power. These themes demonstrate that both unions engage in actions beyond securing procedural protections. Union actions examined at the macro-level demonstrate how, by sustaining the status quo, they play a critical role in defending an institution that reinforces racial hierarchies and the legacy of second-class treatment to non-white populations, particularly Black populations.

Drawing on a range of data sources, this analysis highlights the different ways in which the Chicago FOP and DPA leverage various mechanisms to achieve their objectives. The following discussion will explore the implications of these themes for authoritarianism and how they reflect broader strategies aimed at preserving the institution of policing.

9.1. Gatekeeping Public Safety Processes & Resources

Since the 1970s, the percentage share of public expenditures on policing increased 19%, while expenditures on social services decreased by 12% (Beck 2024). As noted earlier, municipalities have failed or reversed decisions on reducing law enforcement (i.e., Fegley and Murtazashvili 2023; Beck 2024). This has happened despite a corpus of research and evidence finding that investments in social services are effective in reducing crime and have fewer “collateral consequences” and harm that is caused by punitive police responses (Beck 2024). However, demands across the U.S. to transform public safety have instead been framed as direct threats to the institution of policing. Specifically, law enforcement interests, including unions, have been successful in advancing narratives that investments to social services impede their financial power and are a threat to public safety. This was also the case in Chicago and Dallas. By framing the 2020 protest movement as a

threat to public safety while crime was continuing to rise because of the devastating economic and social consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, unions and pro-police advocates were able to capitalize on fear-driven narratives.

In 2024, in a speech delivered to the Republican National Convention (RNC), Dallas Mayor Eric Johnson, a former Democrat, publicly declared he was leaving the Democratic Party and officially joining the Republican Party. He attributed his decision to a “defund” protest that took place outside his personal home in the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd. His brief speech was focused exclusively on policing, and he explained his transformation from lifelong Democrat to Republican:

They [activists] asked me to defund the police, I said no...I knew we needed to increase our support for our police department...democrats in power, demonstrate that they don't care about the killers and the thieves...and they don't care about dangerous homeless encampment...Today, I'm the proud Republican Mayor of Dallas. (McKaskill 2024).

Mayor Johnson's rhetoric equates any efforts to shift resources from policing with leading to public disorder, a strategy that was and continues to be employed by defenders of the institution to curtail public support away from reinvention. Any alteration in the distribution of financial resources for public safety away from policing was one of the most salient narratives during the 2020 protests, most visibly “defund the police.”

Police comprise a large percentage of public safety budgets, leaving little room for community members to participate and shape public safety policymaking (Beck 2024). Given that most police budgets are tied up in salary lines and other types of fringe benefits (i.e., pension plans), police unions have considerable influence from a financial perspective (i.e., salary lines, fringe benefits, etc.). Police unions actively maintain the centrality of policing within public safety systems by resisting efforts to include non-carceral stakeholders in public safety decision-making and preventing any efforts that may fracture their financial power. Notably, through labor, politics, and

public engagement mechanisms, unions create structural and narrative barriers that exclude restorative public safety perspectives that threaten police centrality.³⁴

9.1.1. Labor: Collective Bargaining & Labor Actions

Scholars investigating unionism in its infancy posed a critical question that is still resonant today:

“One of the major problems in policing today is...how to be responsive to the majority interest in the community while protecting the rights of minorities?” (Juris and Feuille 1973, 184). One Chicago CSA interviewed validated that the actions of the Chicago FOP rarely align with community interests: “The FOP leadership is seen as protecting officers at the expense of building community trust” (Chicago CSA 2, Interview, [October 4, 2024]). The deliberate exclusion of non-carceral voices from public safety discussions and decision-making finds a structural foundation in labor agreements.

Labor agreements are a foundational tool for police to both secure financial power and embed provisions that prioritize officer interests over community accountability. By ensuring that policing remains the dominant recipient of public safety funds, these policies sideline investments in community-driven alternatives that could address the root causes of social harm and reduce crime more effectively in the long run (Beck 2025). While labor actions and agreements are framed as necessary for officer safety and operational efficiency, the percentage share of public budgeting allocated to policing impedes efforts to establish alternative approaches to public safety. The amount of political and financial power that labor agreements wield is largely the result of the different political actions taken, which amplify the power of the agreements. By securing financial resources

³⁴ Also, unions can utilize different labor strategies to pressure city leadership for financial security. For example, an appointed city representative that I interviewed explained that the FOP instructed members to avoid volunteering for overtime shifts during critical periods, disrupting city operations and effectively forcing concessions favorable to the union (Chicago Elected/Appointed 2, Interview, [March 16, 2018]).

through labor agreements, unions limit the capacity for cities to invest in restorative public safety measures that address systemic inequities and historical disinvestment.

9.1.1.1. Excluding Non-Carceral Stakeholders & Reducing Transparency

Excluding almost all police officers interviewed, a common theme raised across all participants interviewed for this investigation was that there is either little or no access to the labor agreement process for community advocates. One elected/appointed city official in Chicago responsible for public safety noted the unique political dynamics of Chicago. They noted that conversations and any negotiations with the Chicago FOP happened in closed-door meetings. They described it as a city driven by “backroom dealings” and emphasized the prevalence of “more behind the scenes machinations” (Chicago Elected/Appointed 2, Interview, [March 16, 2018]).

The sentiment captured by one Chicago CSA characterizes how the Chicago FOP gate-keeps and relies on these backroom discussions concerning the labor agreement: “The FOP is very powerful and influential, though their views are not always aligned with the broader community. They focus more on pressuring top city officials than engaging with public opinion” (Chicago CSA 2, Interview, [October 4, 2024]).

Even though Dallas does not have a formal or legally mandated collective bargaining process for law enforcement, CSAs similarly highlighted a concern around the lack of transparency in the meet and confer process. Specifically, one CSA describes the opaque and inaccessible nature of the labor negotiation process:

I'm not gonna lie, the way those meetings [referring to meet and confer] are so hidden that they're buffered from the community... So there are parts of meet and confer that, you know, a regular citizen like me can be a part of, but those important ones we have little to no window into that ... (Dallas CSA 1, Interview, [May 21, 2024]).

As validated by the CSA, the lack of transparency and access to the process leaves no formal avenues for community groups and non-carceral stakeholders to participate in shaping public safety policies.

9.1.1.2. Renewal of Labor Agreements

Police labor agreements frequently include clauses for overtime pay, pension protections, and minimum staffing levels, which constrain city budgets and limit resource reallocation. It's critical to note that these labor agreements legally mandate a significant portion of Chicago's police budget to overtime and other compensation structures, leaving little flexibility for alternative investments in public safety. Thus, efforts or strategies to expand the CBA will inherently preserve the status quo and, in turn, the institution. This includes provisions in the current CBA, which allow the FOP to renegotiate pay if pension costs increase and annual wage increases, which will increase overtime earnings (FOP CBA Article 26.1) Another example of how the FOP benefits the status quo includes Article 28.2 in the current FOP CBA, which permits overtime to continue despite the status of the CBA: "This Agreement shall remain in full force and effect after any expiration date while negotiations or Resolution of Impasse Procedure are continuing for a new Agreement..." (FOP CBA Article 28.2).

While the agreements themselves ensure preservation of the financial status quo through automatic raises or a minimum number of officers, there are also different types of provisions embedded that allow the agreements to continue past their time (Ibid.). For instance, the Chicago FOP contract, section 28.1, includes an "evergreen" clause, allowing the CBA to remain in effect from year to year without a new negotiation, which naturally benefits the Chicago FOP:

This Agreement shall be effective from July 1, 2012 and shall remain in full force and effect until June 30, 2017. It shall continue in effect from year to year thereafter unless notice of termination is given, in writing, by certified mail, by either party no earlier than February 1, 2017 and no later than March 1, 2017. The notices referred to shall be considered to have been given as of the date shown on the postmark. Written notice may be tendered in person, in which case the date of notice shall be the written date of receipt. It is mutually

agreed that the Articles and Sections shall constitute the Agreement between the parties for the period defined in this Section (Chicago FOP Contract 2012)

While the Dallas meet and confer has a clause that seems similar (Article 24), it would not qualify as an “evergreen” clause since it specifically provides a fixed termination date.

9.1.2. Politics: Legislative Activities & Electoral Politics

Evidence presented below underscores unions’ capacity to leverage political power for financial and institutional gain by engaging in electoral politics and legislative activities to remove financial threats to the status quo.

9.1.2.1. Impeding Accountability through Electoral Politics

Both the DPA and Chicago FOP have demonstrated their ability to influence elections to protect politicians or support candidates that financially and politically favor police centrality in public safety decision-making. As one elected/appointed Dallas city official observed, “It’s a love-hate relationship. Council members need their endorsement but fear their retaliation if they question police practices” (Dallas Elected/Appointed 2, Interview, [January 15, 2018]). These dynamics included a range of tactics, from informal organizational tactics impacting city operations to more formal types of pressures on elected officials. Notable examples from both cities are included below:

⇒ **Chicago:** In 2021, Chicago passed the Empowering Communities for Public Safety (ECPS) ordinance, which created 22 district councils and a community commission for public safety and accountability. One appointed/elected city official noted that the objective of the ordinance was “...largely about amplifying community voices into policy making and other public safety spaces where community is not engaged ...” (Chicago Elected/Appointed 4, Interview, [October 11, 2024]). In Chicago, the Chicago FOP started to become electorally involved in getting Chicago FOP-endorsed candidates elected to the newly created district councils. According to the same participant, the Chicago FOP routinely engaged in issuing

endorsements, providing financial support, and running their own candidates (Ibid.; WBEZ Chicago 2023). Hence, arguably, the FOP thwarted efforts to expand community participation in public safety by stacking these distinct councils with individuals favorable to reliance on the police for public safety. This raises important implications about the potential for the FOP to undermine reforms intended to democratize public safety governance.

⇒ **Dallas:** In Dallas, union leaders advocated against specific community representatives who provided more critical perspectives on policing on the oversight boards. One CSA described their experience of being targeted by the DPA president: “Just recently the president of the DPA before he retired ... was lobbying with the council to get me and an attorney removed from the police oversight board. ... when I was appointed by a council person, he went on a campaign to get myself and a civil rights attorney that’s on the board as well.” (Dallas CSA 1, Interview, [May 21, 2024]). This is just one example that captures a broader and common strategy by police unions to exclude safety stakeholders that are advancing accountability and public safety reinvention efforts.



Figure 5.3. DPA Political Ads

One example that demonstrates the extent and influence of union actions to gate-keep resources was captured by an accounting of a Dallas city council election, where the DPA started to campaign against a city council member who questioned the financials of the DPA pension fund. The elected/appointed Dallas official recounted their experience with the DPA and prefaced the conversation by acknowledging that they sought the endorsement from the DPA when they initially ran for office: “it is important to obtain the endorsement of the union to run” (Dallas Elected/Appointed 1, Interview, [December 8, 2017]). After securing the DPA

endorsement and sitting as a city councilor for a term, the council member raised concerns about the mishandling of the police and fire pensions, which prompted union retaliation: "...I was critical of the mismanagement of the pension plans and all of the tax payer money which they lost... this is when they turned on me and recruited a candidate to run against me..." (Ibid.).

In retaliation to the council member, they described the different strategies the DPA would take:

They actively campaigned against me. The police and fire guys were in the neighborhoods canvassing, putting flyers everywhere, knocking on doors and telling voters to vote for the other candidate, they did all of this in uniform (Ibid).

A Dallas CSA validated this accounting when they identified other political races where the DPA would engage in similar canvassing tactics (Dallas CSA 2, Interview, [October 11, 2024]). The Dallas CSA emphasized that it is very difficult for an average resident, including themselves, to distinguish the activities between an on-duty or off-duty officer when they were canvassing because of how they were dressed and how they portrayed themselves (Ibid.). Texas union leaders have also encouraged other unions to lend union members for different types of work that can save the campaign money, ranging from canvassing to security services: "Obvious areas where volunteers can make a difference are door-to-door canvassing...stay in uniform by providing free security at campaign events. The use of police association members to serve in a security capacity will save the campaign a significant amount of money" (Burpo *et al.*, 1997, p. 110).

Additionally, they specifically noted the different types of visuals they would post that further added ambiguity and made it difficult to distinguish the DPA endorsement from DPD. One example they raised can be seen in Figure 5.3. where "Dallas Police" is in large font with "Association" in considerably smaller font underneath (Dallas CSA 2, Interview, [October 11, 2024]). Again, this ambiguity benefits the DPA and creates the perception that the police, not the police union, is endorsing a candidate.

9.1.2.2. Reducing Civilian Access and Power

The FOP has historically lobbied for laws that limit public oversight, such as provisions requiring sworn affidavits to file complaints against officers (Donahue 2005). This tactic discourages civilian oversight, and recent research finds that Black complainants are more likely to experience adverse consequences for filing complaints (Kraft and Newman 2023). Then-FOP President Mark Donahue argued that the intent was to reduce the number of complaints and emphasized that it had been effective: “The intent of this legislation was to limit the number of frivolous complaints...The legislation appears to have had the desired effect...” (Donahue 2005). By requiring sworn affidavits for complaints, these laws disproportionately deter vulnerable populations, including undocumented immigrants, from reporting abuse.

Another common theme noted by a U.S. Department of Justice investigator investigating police departments across the U.S. is how they’ve engaged in legislative activities to reduce civilian power: “They’ve fought any legislation that gives real power to community-led safety boards. Their argument is always about maintaining discipline and control within the force” (U.S. DoJ 1, Interview, [9/7/2017]). Federal perspectives underscore how unions deploy lobbying efforts to resist oversight and preserve their centralized role in public safety, and local perspectives highlight other political mechanisms beyond efforts to block or advance legislation that gatekeep non-police actors away from public safety.

9.1.2.3. Preserving & Expanding Financial Budgeting

To further strengthen its abilities to control both the finances and the process, the DPA has been successful in expanding and preserving its power through legislation. For instance, at the state level, the DPA has been particularly active in lobbying for state laws that prevent cities from reallocating funding away from policing. One CSA explained the racial backlash in Texas in the aftermath of the 2020 protests, where “They [the DPA] pushed for laws that lock in police funding and make it

harder to shift resources to alternatives like mental health programs” (Dallas CSA 2, Interview, [October 11, 2024]). Then-DPA president Mike Mata insinuated that the effort to pass the legislation banning the defunding of law enforcement agencies was done in collaboration with several other Texas police associations: “It was a collective work from law enforcement administrations, police organization associations with the legislature to do the right type of legislation to correct the big problems that are within policing” (Rabb 2021). In coalition with other Texas police unions, Texas Governor Gregory Abbott signed HB 1900 into law that penalizes and hurts cities that have been determined to “defund the police” by the Office of Public Safety. Governor Abbott did not mince words or disguise the motivation for passing the bill:

Texas remains a law-and-order state and we continue to make it abundantly clear that we support our law enforcement officers who put their lives on the line every day to keep communities safe...My office's adoption of these new rules will prevent cities from making reckless and downright dangerous decisions to defund the police, ensuring a safer future for Texans all across the Lone Star State (Abbott 2022).

The legislation punishes municipalities that have reduced the law enforcement budget and have a population larger than 250,000 by financially hindering their financial powers, such as deducting tax revenue from sales tax or preventing the municipality from increasing property taxes or rates (Munce 2021).

9.1.3. Public Engagement: Media & Narrative Strategies

Media strategies are another critical mechanism through which police unions reinforce their gatekeeping role. Whether through public declarations by political figures, targeted misinformation campaigns, or union-backed narratives, these strategies reflect a deliberate effort to preserve financial and political power.

9.1.3.1. Crime Narratives & Public Safety Budgeting

Public engagement strategies frame financial shifts away from policing as existential threats to public safety, equating these changes with rising crime and chaos. For example, in Dallas, the DPA perpetuated narratives that crime was increasing to discredit, delegitimize, or build pressure to

exclude non-police voices from accountability or push against efforts to decriminalize quality-of-life offenses. For instance, after John Creuzot, then-Dallas County District Attorney, announced changes to decriminalize different low-level offenses, including offenses associated with homelessness, then-DPA President Mike Mata argued that it would create concerns for public safety (Sarder 2019). Later that year, Mata echoed Dallas Mayor Johnson's sentiments that violent crime was rising and that there needed to be additional police strategies and resources to improve public safety (Ibid). Another example includes inflammatory rhetoric where the DPA official Twitter account expressed support for Texas Governor Gregory Abbott's defund bill: "Thank you @GovAbbott for always having our backs. There is much work to be done, but defunding police and letting violent felons free with low bail is not safe for anyone in our communities. @GLFOP" (DPA Twitter 2021).

This fear-based rhetoric not only deflects criticism but also reinforces the racialized public perception of crime, ensuring continued public and political support for police funding. However, public engagement and media narratives concerning defunding were received differently when comparing Chicago and Dallas. Returning to the conversation with the Dallas CSA, who was appointed to the community oversight entity and experienced backlash from the DPA: "He [DPA President] just went to all the council members, or he went to the council. He went to the media...he went to the assistant city manager," (Dallas CSA 1, Interview, [May 21, 2024]).

As noted earlier, Dallas Mayor Eric Johnson argued that his shift to the Republican Party was due to protests that emphasized the defunding of the DPD. As one CSA noted concerning Johnson's equivocation of resource shifts as dangerous: "He [Dallas Mayor Eric Johnson] stated that it was Black Lives Matter protesting his house that led him to turn to becoming a Republican because they wanted to defund the police and be soft on crime. And that's why he switched from being a Democrat to a Republican (Dallas CSA 2, Interview, [October 11, 2024]).

Johnson's framing positioned the movement to defund police not as a call for reimagining public safety, but as a threat to safety—a narrative frequently echoed by police unions and their allies to delegitimize calls for transformation. For instance, the National Fraternal Order of Police Treasurer, James Smallwood, stated in a Fox News interview on *Cavuto Live* that “Defund the police is a dangerous and reckless trend... it's bringing more crime...” (FOP 2021). The same argument has been made by both the DPA and the Chicago FOP:

⇒ **Dallas:** In Dallas, DPA then-President Mike Mata was most critical of Council Member Bazaldua, who proposed shifting \$7 million away from the DPD budget (Macon 2021). Also, in the most recent election of DPA President Jaime Castro, the DPA released a statement indicating Castro's staunch opposition to shifts in funding: “Officer Castro is a well-known advocate for safe neighborhoods and is a regular contributor to local media reports regarding law enforcement issues, often challenging the anti-police zealots that seek to defund or reduce funding for the Dallas Police Department” (Dallas Police Association 2024).

⇒ **Chicago:** In Chicago, FOP President John Cataranza Jr. expressed his opposition to any calls for defunding of CPD on several occasions (Levitt 2020). In “The Brotherhood's Last Stand,” a *Chicago Magazine* interview with Cataranza Jr. the interviewer notes, “Cataranza argues it is simply not an option [defunding]. It would be a disaster comparable to the defunding of the city's mental health clinics in 2012. And police officers can't be replaced by unarmed civilian professionals, like social workers or psychologists, he says... ‘It makes no sense whatsoever.’”

While Dallas Mayor Eric Johnson became polarized and shifted parties because of demands for public safety reinvention, the Chicago electorate responded by voting for a different Johnson—

Brandon Johnson. Brandon Johnson was elected mayor of Chicago in 2022 and ran on a platform of change, public safety reinvention, and a critical eye on accountability. The Chicago FOP utilized brash and inflammatory language in its unsuccessful opposition to then-candidate Brandon Johnson. For example, Chicago FOP President John Catanzara stated in an interview with the *New York Times* that if Johnson succeeds, there would be “blood on the streets” (NBC 2023). Catanzara has a long and documented history of statements where he has used racist, inflammatory, and controversial language encouraging or justifying violence (Cole 2021).³⁵

9.2. Retaining Racial & Ideological Composition of Membership

In 2016, federal investigators visited the FOP headquarters as part of a U.S. Department of Justice inquiry in the aftermath of the brutal killing of Laquan McDonald. McDonald, a 17-year-old Black teenager, was fatally shot 16 times by Chicago police officer Jason Van Dyke on October 20, 2014. Dashcam footage later revealed that McDonald was walking away from the officers and did not pose an immediate threat, contradicting initial police reports that claimed he had lunged at them with a knife. Then-FOP president Kevin Graham stated that “the state wanted to punish a police officer for doing his job” (Hinkel 2018).

A DoJ investigator working on investigating CPD practices, prompted by the brutal killing of Laquan McDonald, reflected on their experience with the Chicago FOP during their investigation and what stood out as different. They acknowledged that typically there was tension between the DoJ and the local police union. Nonetheless, unions would still make efforts to engage with the DoJ investigative teams. When DoJ investigators arrived at the FOP headquarters to meet with FOP

³⁵ With more than 50 civilian complaints filed against Catanzara during his time as an officer, he was finally suspended without pay in 2021 and subsequently retired, which has been argued was to avoid his termination (Ibid.; CBS 2021).

leadership, the federal investigator recalled that her colleague recognized the individual at the front desk to be Van Dyke (US. DoJ 2, Interview, [10/10/2024]).

Then-FOP president Dean Angelo Sr., hired Van Dyke as a janitor at the FOP headquarters despite his pending criminal case, demonstrating the FOP's unwavering support for officers accused of misconduct (Evans 2021). The federal investigator reflected, "They knew we were coming. They could have had him take out the trash that morning, but no, they put him front and center" (US. DoJ 2, Interview, [10/10/2024]). This action encapsulates how the Chicago FOP approaches public engagement with an unabashed approach that prioritizes protecting members accused of misconduct, even at the expense of public trust.

The DPA and Chicago FOP use a combination of mechanisms that include the labor negotiation process, politics, and the courts to retain the racial and ideological composition of the force. By retaining the ideological composition of their membership, police unions help preserve an institutional structure that reinforces white dominance and protects conservative, authoritarian ideals. Also, it is important to note that while racial composition may be related to the ideological composition, it's crucial that it is not perceived as synonymous.

9.2.1. Labor: Collective Bargaining & Labor Actions

Since the early infancy of the third wave of police unionism, the white-majority nature of police membership was a salient and critical issue concerning police unionism (Juris and Feuille 1973). Historical investigations discussed earlier demonstrate how policing has been predominantly composed of white male officers, even as societal and political pressures for equity and representation have grown (Jones 2023; Muhammad 2010; Juris and Feuille 1973). As noted by Agyepong (2013):

By the late 1960s policemen had come to represent a strong and dangerous bastion of white supremacy to many of the city's black residents. In fact, Chicago's Civil Rights and Black Power movements emerged partially in response to the acrimonious relationship between the police department and the African American

community. The Chicago Freedom Movement was met with brutal state-sanctioned violence (Agyepong 2013, p.54).

9.2.1.1. Protecting white Officers, Disciplining Black Officers

During the early diversification of police departments in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement, Black officers experienced severe discrimination by their white counterparts and supervisors (Ibid.). For instance, one study found that Black officers were more likely to experience formal discipline (Walter *et al.*, 2021). The persistence of these racial and ideological stances by the membership of the rank-and-file continues to be salient in police unionism today when examining the actions of the DPA and the Chicago FOP.³⁶ Alternatively, while police unions started to gain political power, they didn't seem to focus on improving labor conditions for non-white officers, and in the case of Chicago, they were active in advancing the interests of white members.

In 1968, the Afro-American Patrolmen's League (AAPL) was formed to support Black CPD officers who were experiencing employment discrimination internally. From the very start, the CPD was hostile to the formation of the AAPL and quickly retaliated against Black police officers who were part of the AAPL (Blythe 2017). One of the founders, Renault Robinson, who had a decorated background as a CPD officer before starting the AAPL, was “unjustifiably suspended over 100 times and subjected to subpar assignments as a form of ridicule...” (National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial Fund).

Another concern raised by the AAPL was concerning the CBA itself and how it was reversing racial progress. Specifically, the AAPL point to “seniority” provisions in the CBA, which the Chicago FOP framed as benign and “race neutral.” There is an extant provision in Section 13.1

³⁶ There are several reasons why advocates would like to increase diversity of the force. One case made by researchers and advocates is that it may lead to better outcomes. Despite decades of mixed research, recent research conducted in Chicago has found that Black and Hispanic officers are less likely to stop civilians, use force, or arrest individuals than their white counterparts (Ba, Knox, Mummolo, and Rivera 2021).

of the current CBA: “Probationary officers shall be laid off first, then Officers shall be laid off in accordance with their seniority. The Officers with the least amount of seniority... shall be laid off first, unless special qualifications dictate retention” (FOP CBA, p. 22). However, in practice, these provisions benefit senior officers, who are more likely to be white, which then exacerbates racial inequities within police departments. The Chicago FOP’s embedding of seniority provisions to protect long-standing members is not just an isolated case of labor favoritism—it reflects a broader strategy to maintain institutional power by ensuring that those with the most access to resources and protections remain. This strategy systematically disadvantages newer, more diverse recruits (*Afro-American Police League v. Fraternal Order of Police*, Chicago Lodge No. 7, 1982, accessed 20 May 2025).

9.2.1.2. Retaining Ideological Leadership & Ethnic Unionism

A DoJ investigator noted that another unique feature of the Chicago FOP was the racial composition of the leadership, which, in their experience, was typically overrepresented by white officers. According to the City of Chicago, as of 2024, the CPD rank-and-file is approximately 33% white, 29.2% Black, and 28.6% Hispanic or Latino (Reiss and Tucker 2022). However, the FOP leadership has remained entirely white since its inception, which the DoJ investigator found puzzling. Interestingly, as of 2025, the Chicago FOP leadership has continued to remain white despite the majority of the active CPD being comprised of non-white officers (Evans 2021). The disconnect between union leadership and the rank-and-file officers underscores the union’s prioritization of maintaining the status quo, making it difficult for officers to openly dissent against leadership decisions. A CSA echoed the concerns and confusion of the federal investigator: “The FOP leadership is incredibly white, even though the department is majority minority” (Chicago CSA 1, Interview, [September 13, 2024]). One explanation surfaced by a CSA for continued white leadership was that retired members could influence the vote. Article 1, Section 2 of the Chicago FOP Bylaws confirms that retired members are also members:

An Active member is any person in good standing who is a sworn employee or on pension from sworn employment with the City of Chicago Police Department. The Board of Directors of Lodge # 7 may determine that the circumstances warrant acceptance of, or extension of, a qualified individual's active membership. Only Active members in good standing shall be permitted to vote, except that only those members in good standing below the rank of Sergeant, in a bargaining unit may vote on ratification of the collective bargaining contract and related matters affecting that bargaining unit.

This was also validated by a Former Cook County State's Attorney: "A significant portion of their voting members are retirees... so you have folks who are...the most active in the voting... They come from a different era. They come from the John Burges era" (Chicago Elected/Appointed 5, Interview, [May 27, 2025]). A former Cook County State's Attorney also raised that Black officers typically distance themselves from the Chicago FOP and are more concerned with typical labor concerns:

They [Black CPD officers] care about the nuts and bolts issues of like a labor organization... They are a labor union. They care about that.... But they also know it's racist as hell. They also know, they bear it. They bear the rhetoric. And I say this as someone who, as a baby prosecutor, would go into police stations and see and hear the way these folks talked about the people that they serve... And so I think for a number of [Black] officers who could ascend to the ranks there, who also appreciate that should they do so, that it would probably be perilous because it was a white man's organization, choose not to. And they will say that's the FOP. I'm CPD. And they will be very clear. That's them. I'm over here (Ibid).

The AAPL historically represented the interests of Black CPD, but its strength and visibility started to fade through time:

Although the league [AAPL] was successful in its goal of changing the composition of the Chicago Police Department, the group's membership changed over time. By the 1980s the AAPL's leadership reflected the government's repression of the league's activities, the firing of the group's most vocal activists, and the movement of some of its leaders to other community activities.... This had a devastating impact on the AAPL's relationship with the African American community. The league's loss of community support signaled the end of the AAPL's original mission (Agyepong 2013, p. 271).

Unfortunately, the AAPL's activism was short-lived. One Chicago elected/appointed official noted that the group exists "on paper" but is effectively defunct. Interviewees made no mention of the AAPL, confirming its limited role today (Chicago Elected/Appointed 2, Interview, [March 16, 2018]; Chicago Elected/Appointed 5, Interview, [May 27, 2025]). As a result, the Chicago FOP can

rally against the department and elected officials with no concern about a competing union contradicting or distracting from their actions.

In contrast, Dallas continues to feature ethnically pluralistic unions like the Black Police Association of Greater Dallas (BPAD), which continues to advocate for accountability and racial equity. While the DPA represents most officers, it is not the exclusive bargaining entity. One DPD officer noted that BPAD played a critical role in “investing in communities of color and reforming problematic policing practices” (Dallas DPD 5, Interview, [March 8, 2018]). This plurality reduces the DPA’s leverage and compels it to moderate its strategies. One Dallas official noted that BPAD helps facilitate officer discipline by publicly supporting the removal of officers with a history of racial bias (Dallas Elected/Appointed 2, Interview, [January 17, 2018]). For instance, BPAD pushed the department to investigate a DPD officer who expressed racist views on social media (Dallas DPD 3, Interview, [February 16, 2018]). Several white officers were found to be involved in a post showing a man in blackface with a noose around his neck, as others gave a thumbs-up (Ramirez 2016).

Pluralism creates a more dynamic and contested political arena. Both officers and elected officials in Dallas noted that competition among unions diminishes DPA dominance and offers elected leaders alternatives when engaging with police labor groups. One BPAD member stated: “BPAD has played an active role in investing in communities of color and reforming problematic policing practices” (Dallas Police Officer [Malik Al-Aziz], Interview, [02/16/2018]). While DPA must collaborate with BPAD, the two regularly diverge on major issues.

The absence of a strong ethnic or pluralistic union may have allowed the FOP to further consolidate power and resist diversification. While the Afro-American Police League (AAPL) once served as a counterbalance, its decline left a void that the FOP exploited to maintain its ideological and racial homogeneity. The lack of a competing ethnic union, exclusive collective bargaining rights,

and the strong Illinois labor landscape provide the FOP with significant political power to defend the institution.

9.2.2. Politics: Legislative Activities & Electoral Politics

Another way that unions have helped retain the composition of the police force is through political mechanisms, such as activities that block legislation promoting diversification or combating police accountability via elected officials.

9.2.2.1. Residency Requirements

One notable example of how the DPA uses this mechanism involves lobbying against residency requirements or efforts to incentivize officers to live within city limits. Residency requirements have historically been tied to efforts to ensure that public employees, including police officers, are reflective of the communities they serve—particularly in diverse urban centers like Dallas. Removing or weakening such requirements disproportionately affects recruitment demographics, opening departments to more suburban, predominantly white applicants while reducing pathways for city-based, often more racially diverse candidates.

One elected/appointed city representative noted that the DPA found ways to prevent policies mandating residency requirements or other programs that would incentivize officers to live within city limits by going through the state level, where stakeholders were more sympathetic to their efforts (Dallas Elected/Appointed 2, Interview, [January 15, 2018]). They also noted that when they were not successful at the local level, the DPA would work at the state level with other associations to influence legislation concerning officer residency and recruitment policies (Ibid.).

One organization referenced was the Combined Law Enforcement Association of Texas (CLEAT), led by Ron DeLord, a labor lawyer and one of the authors of the “police union playbook” (Dallas Elected/Appointed 1, Interview, [December 8, 2017]).

As noted by an elected/appointed city official in Dallas, “Less than 20% of the officers live in the city of Dallas... They come to ask for more money from taxpayers, but it has no impact on them when we have to raise taxes” (Dallas CSA 1, Interview, [May 21, 2024]). While there is no empirical evidence finding “residency requirements” to have a positive impact, practitioners and advocates have continued to recommend these requirements as best practice, including the President’s 21st Century Taskforce on Policing (Hauck and Nichols 2020). In other words, this is another way to preserve the membership of the police force.

9.2.2.2. Combating Accountability Through Legislature

Interestingly, residency requirements policies that require CPD officers to live in the city do exist in Chicago. A former Cook County State’s Attorney noted that “... a unique distinction with Chicago in particular is you know in order for you to be a Chicago police officer, you need to live in city limits” (Chicago Elected/Appointed 5, Interview, [May 27, 2025]). While advocates and policymakers have lauded residency requirements as an important step for changes in policing, Chicago provides an example of how residency requirements can directly impact politics. As noted earlier, there remains several Alderman who continue to staunchly defend the police and the Chicago FOP. Specifically, Chicago Aldermen in parts of the city where police officers reside do not have an option but to strongly support the FOP should they want to be re-elected in those districts:

There are few organizations except for the FOP that really support the status quo. The northwest part of the city, mostly white areas which have more police and firefighter support require union endorsement since they’re filled with stronger police support (Chicago Elected/Appointed 1, Interview, [February 2, 2018]).

Aldermen in wards where CPD officers reside have been found to provide a staunch defense of the Chicago FOP and have taken actions blocking or delaying accountability in the legislature. For instance, one Chicago elected/appointed representative noted that they “vote against police misconduct settlements and refuse to find any fault with police officers... even if it’s a federal judge showing that an officer broke every rule in the book” (Chicago Elected/Appointed 1, Interview,

[February 2, 2018]). Some of the Aldermen, such as Anthony Napolitano, representing wards with large CPD officer residency, will be discussed later.

In contrast, DPA endorsements seem to be more valuable across the board despite not having a strong electoral incentive. For instance, one DPD officer noted that every city councilor hopes to obtain an endorsement from the DPA. A lack of such endorsement could be harmful to their careers, a notion confirmed by an elected/appointed city representative who discussed how city councilors often seek union endorsements in Dallas: “It’s a love-hate relationship. Because councilors need their endorsement but hate it as well. When they don’t do what the associations want them to do, then they will get pummeled by them. You can see the ebb and flow of how council members at one level want their support, but they hate it at the same time” (Dallas DPD 1, Interview, [January 18, 2018]).

9.2.3. Courts: Legal Actions & Arbitrations

Interviews and documents reveal that both the DPA and the Chicago FOP rely on the courts as a reactive mechanism to sustain the status quo and prevent systemic changes that could diversify police ranks or promote equity in hiring and promotion practices.

9.2.3.1. Weakening Competition & Pluralistic Unionism

In 1973, the AAPL filed a discrimination lawsuit against CPD regarding hiring, promotions, and discipline. The court ruled in its favor. When the AAPL launched in 1968, only 15% of Chicago police personnel were Black. By 1975, that number had increased to 40%, a level reflecting the city’s Black population at the time (WWTW 2020).

In 1981, the city of Chicago negotiated its first CBA with the Chicago FOP as the exclusive bargaining entity for CPD officers. In 1982, the AAPL filed a legal complaint alleging that they were unfairly excluded from the collective bargaining process and that the CBA included provisions that

reversed progress made in the previous decade (Ibid.). For instance, the city did not include an option for officers to indicate membership to the AAPL: “As part of its first amendment claim, the AAPL asserts that the failure of the City to recognize a checkoff provision on behalf of the AAPL threatens the very existence of the organization...” (Ibid.). The exclusion of the AAPL from the process further disadvantaged the organization, and they argued that it was the Chicago FOP’s objective to “erode the league’s financial base”:

The assertion has been made that League members and other individuals who were not members of the FOP were unfairly excluded from meetings of the FOP concerning nonbargaining matters and that only FOP members were sent copies of the Agreement. The claim arising out of these facts is that League members were denied meaningful information concerning the Agreement and that, if they sought to learn how their futures were to be shaped, they would be forced to join FOP. ...The AAPL claims that as a result of being excluded from union meetings and as a consequence of the proliferation of the various misinformation, the “intended effect of eroding the League’s financial base” was achieved (Afro-American Police League v. Fraternal Order of Police, Chicago Lodge No. 7, 1982).

The complaint was ultimately dismissed, and the presiding judge argued that the city had no obligation to recognize the AAPL, although the judge acknowledged that the decision would have negative consequences and weaken the AAPL. Thus, it’s plausible to argue that the bargaining process and the first CBA solidified the white majority Chicago FOP, while weakening the AAPL, an organization that not only advanced the interests of discriminated Black officers but also fought police brutality against Black residents of Chicago.

9.2.3.2. Influencing Hiring & Practices

While both the DPA and the Chicago FOP have been found to use the legal process to insulate the membership and resist diversification, the DPA may be more reliant on the courts than the FOP, which can utilize both the courts and labor grievance procedures. This is likely a product of a stronger labor landscape in Illinois.

⇒ **Dallas:** In 1999, the DPA filed a lawsuit against the city claiming that the promotion of two Hispanic personnel was “racially discriminatory because only Hispanic personnel were interviewed for the position” (*Dallas Police Ass’n v. City of Dallas* 1999). Similar lawsuits have

sought to reverse recruitment policies designed to create a more inclusive department, illustrating the union's consistent resistance to diversification efforts. Another example of how the DPA insulates its composition is by retaliating against officers who attempt to combat discrimination. For instance, a 2011 legal complaint filed by a former DPD officer against DPD and the DPA argues that the DPA failed to pay her legal expenses during her appeal of a 2005 termination because she had previously testified in a racial discrimination case against the DPA (*Cooper v. Dallas* 2014).

⇒ **Chicago:** In 1996, the facts of a case involving the Chicago FOP revealed a pattern of the Chicago FOP filing legal grievances against the city's affirmative action policy, claiming that they were violating the CBA and discriminating against white officers. As a result, the affirmative action policy was changed, which resulted in a reduction in the racial quota for promotions, as noted in the case facts in *Majeske v. Fraternal Order of Police* (1998):

The FOP filed two grievances on August 21, 1990, claiming that the City had violated the non-discrimination clause of the collective bargaining agreement in the 22 promotions that had been made out of rank order and the 26 social med promotions... Arbitrator Anthony Sinicropi...issued a decision finding that the City had violated its collective bargaining agreement with the FOP by using race as a factor in promoting detectives out of rank order. ...On November 20, 1991, the FOP filed a third grievance, protesting the City's increase in the percentage of slots under the merit system... the decision directed the City to promote 20 officers in rank order...All peace officers promoted based on this settlement were white.

9.2.4. Public Engagement: Media & Narrative Strategies

The Chicago FOP advances narratives that help retain the racial and ideological homogeneity of police unions by opposing policies and changes publicly like racial quotas intended to improve diversification or by sending public messages staunchly defending officers accused of misconduct.

9.2.4.1. Diversity as a Threat to “Professionalism”

By framing diversity initiatives as threats to professionalism and public safety, union leaders cultivate a public narrative that positions white, conservative officers as the standard-bearers of effective

policing. These narratives not only undermine recruitment efforts aimed at diversifying the force but also serve to delegitimize voices calling for equity and inclusion.

In 1985, John Dineen, who served for more than 20 years as the Chicago FOP president, stated his opposition to racial hiring quotas and argued that “...citizens are not necessarily getting the best qualified individuals...” (Warren 1985). By framing diversity initiatives as threats to professionalism and public safety, they were able to discredit efforts to diversify the force and shift power dynamics within policing. In addition to publicly opposing policies intended to diversify the police force, Chicago FOP leadership has received more attention for making controversial and, at times, racist comments and defending officers who have inflicted violence, disproportionately impacting non-white populations (Chicago CSA 1, Interview, [September 13, 2024]). These statements may also serve to appeal to far-right-wing members and foster ideological alignment with conservative political movements, which was well documented during an investigation of Chicago FOP leaders since their inception (Evans and Emmanuel 2021).

In contrast, the DPA has not been found to use the media to make brash and controversial comments that may deter ethnic minorities from joining the department.

9.3. Supporting Punitive Practices & Hard on Crime Politics

In a 1967 speech to the national Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), then-presidential candidate and notorious segregationist George Wallace stated to the FOP national convention: “If the police of this country could run it for about two years, then it would be safe to walk in the streets” (Barker, Keller, and Eder 2021).

In September 2024, then-presidential candidate Trump echoed similar sentiments at a campaign rally, where he encouraged police to engage in more violent and aggressive forms of policing: “One rough hour—and I mean real rough—the word will get out and it will end

immediately” (Kinnard 2024). Earlier that month, the national FOP, representing more than 300,000 officers, released a press statement in September 2024 endorsing U.S. President Donald Trump:

During his first term, President Trump made it clear he supported law enforcement and border security...In the summer of 2020, he stood with us when very few would. With his help, we defeated the ‘defund the police’ movement and, finally, we are seeing crime rates decrease. If we want to maintain these lower crime rates, we must re-elect Donald Trump (Stokes 2024).

In 2017, President Donald Trump signed several executive orders, promoted and endorsed by the “Blue Lives Matter” movement, which expanded police powers (Thomas and Tufts 2019). Eight years later, President Trump has already started signing several other Blue Lives Matter-endorsed executive orders to expand police power and weaken accountability for law enforcement officers (Linly 2025). Most recently, President Trump followed up on his promises to strengthen law enforcement by taking steps to remove “legal and political handcuffs” that “make aggressively enforcing the law impossible” through an executive order titled “Strengthening And Unleashing America’s Law Enforcement To Pursue Criminals And Protect Innocent Citizens” (The White House 2025). Other executive orders passed in his second term included the disbanding of the federal law enforcement misconduct database and requiring the death penalty for any individual convicted of killing a law enforcement officer (Linly 2025). The hypocrisy of such executive orders is that President Trump pardoned January 6th offenders who assaulted approximately 140 Capitol police officers.

The actions of the Chicago FOP and the DPA illustrate how police unions participate in this broader framework by aligning with authoritarian figures, resisting efforts that shift the status quo, and using political and legal strategies to maintain their dominance within public safety systems. As one Chicago elected/appointed participant interviewed stated: “Few organizations, other than the FOP, supports keeping the Status Quo” (Chicago Elected/Appointed 1, Interview, [February 2,

2018]). The actions of the Chicago FOP and DPA illustrate how unions use legislative lobbying, litigation, and media narratives to preserve punitive policing practices.

9.3.1. Politics: Legislative Activities & Electoral Politics

As noted earlier, activities in the political arena—electoral politics, legislative activities, and lobbying—are among the most understudied yet critical mechanisms employed by police unions. By framing efforts to eliminate punitive practices as threats to public safety and supporting “tough on crime” politics, unions mobilize fear-driven narratives that reinforce the association of criminality with marginalized communities—what Weaver (2007) identifies as the logic of punitive crime policy. These narratives contribute to what she describes as the “frontlash”—a political strategy that redirects racial backlash into criminal legal policy, helping to sustain carceral control under the guise of crime prevention (Weaver 2007). Police unions, thus, play an instrumental role in preserving the very hierarchies these policies claim to dismantle. Moreover, unions benefit from bipartisan political alliances: they draw support from Democratic officials due to their status as labor organizations; while also aligning with Republican officials whose conservative values often reflect the law-and-order priorities of union membership.

9.3.1.1. Supporting or Defending Legislation Promoting Punitive Policies

In the aftermath of the killing of George Floyd, advocates of police reform pushed for local, state, and federal legislation that would reduce police power, repair wrongs of the criminal legal system, and support reinvention efforts. In response to the threat to the institution, both the DPA and the Chicago FOP found ways to fight legislation that was focused on curbing punitive and violent practices.

For instance, in a March 2020 letter to members, then-FOP President Kevin Graham noted that “much of our legislative success the past few years has been blocking bills from passing that, if signed into law, would make the job more difficult. We need to be on the block again as the session

speeds toward conclusion at the end of May...” (Evans 2021). Some of the types of legislation he references, such as Illinois HB3653, pertained to the filing of anonymous complaints against police, where the FOP opposed such anonymous complaints (Ibid.). However, it also includes examples beyond policing in Illinois HB3653, such as efforts to block legislation that would expunge criminal records of individuals who have served sentences (Ibid.). Efforts by the FOP to block bail reform served as another notable example. Cash bail reform laws are intended to mitigate the harm of the criminal legal system that is unduly felt by individuals without the resources to make bail. The Chicago FOP, albeit unsuccessfully, also fought against cash bail reform. As part of this effort, the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police, alongside other Illinois unions, released a public statement in 2020 following legislative efforts to reform cash bail. The statement was aimed at influencing public opinion and policymakers by framing bail reform as a threat to public safety:

When the safety of the citizens we spend our careers protecting is put in danger due to failed experimental criminal justice reform initiatives, such as the recent bail reform experiments, it becomes our responsibility to step up. We have to let the public know that their basic civil rights are perceived to be not as important as the civil rights of those who are arrested for having committed criminal acts (Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police 2020).

This coalition, which included both the Chicago FOP and law enforcement leadership, underscores the unique alignment of labor and law enforcement groups in preserving punitive practices, reinforcing narratives that equate non-punitive approaches with threats to safety. Specifically, the Chicago FOP and their allies perpetuate narratives that non-punitive approaches create difficulties for law enforcement officers to do their job, which will, in turn, increase crime. This was validated by a former Cook County State’s Attorney when discussing the political activities of the Chicago FOP: “I mean, no, the biggest example is bail reform. Yeah, we were trying to eliminate cash bail statewide...and we clashed there on marijuana legalization. We clashed on anything I was trying to do on the state level” (Chicago Elected/Appointed 5, Interview, [May 27, 2025]).

Similar sentiments were echoed and cited by the DPA and other Texas police unions as the rationale for opposing Texas House Bill 88 and Federal HB 1280, commonly referred to as the “George Floyd Act” (Texas Municipal Police Association 2020). While the legislation did not include policies that brought about deep transformation, such as budget reallocation, it proposed changes to use-of-force policies that would reduce the level of discretion and power of officers. Despite the modest proposed reforms in the legislation intended to reduce harm, they were heavily opposed by police unions in Texas, including the DPA, and the coalition was successful in gutting the legislation (Ament and Covington 2021).

9.3.1.2. Installing & Defending Hard-on-Crime Politicians

The recent spike in campaign contributions from both the Chicago FOP and the DPA signals the growing importance of political involvement and activity. This surge may reflect shifting political dynamics or be a direct response to the 2020 protests, during which calls for police reinvention prompted both unions to resist any legislative changes that threatened the status quo. Borrowing from union scholarship, the “politics of blocking,” which allows teacher unions to retain their power and preserve the status quo, may be a strategy that is being adapted by police unions, at least in the case of the DPA and Chicago FOP (Moe 2012). However, what’s different is that police unions secure support from both Republicans and Democrats. The police union playbook emphasizes and encourages police union leaders to capitalize on this unique dual support:

Police officers seem to be, for the most part, politically conservative. They tend to rant and rave about liberal politicians. However, liberals traditionally support the organization and majority of its goals. Conservatives tend to vote against economic and labor issues, while supporting law and order issues (Burpo et al., 1997, p. 101).

By engaging in electoral politics to support candidates who are aligned with preserving the status quo, both the DPA and the Chicago FOP are effective in preventing or combating non-carceral perspectives in public safety conversations that could transform policing. Both unions wield

campaign contributions as a tool to shape electoral outcomes, ensuring the election of pro-police candidates who align with their interests. As shown in Table 5.3, data examining campaign contributions highlights that there have been significant increases in electoral politics expenditures by both the DPA and the Chicago FOP (Transparency USA 2025).

Starting with FOP campaign finance data, it has continued to significantly increase its contributions in recent election cycles, reaching \$1,882,221 in 2024 for state-level elections. This represents a nearly 8-fold increase from 2020. More dramatically, contributions at the local level increased to more than \$400,000 between 2020 and 2024, a nearly 20-fold increase. This increase was a direct response to the changing political climate. In 2022, FOP President Catanzara, who later endorsed Donald Trump for the 2024 election, was asked why he decided to raise dues to allow the FOP to become more politically engaged: “Our profession is not going to stop from being under attack anytime soon. We need to let these politicians know that enough is enough” (Byrne 2022).

Table 5.3 Campaign Contributions by Election Cycle

LOCAL LEVEL					
Organization	2018	2020	2022	2023	'23 Per Officer
Chicago FOP Lodge #7	\$8,050	\$21,500	\$130,800	\$405,305	~\$33
Dallas Police Association	-	\$3,500	\$2,500	\$12,000	~\$4
STATE LEVEL					
Organization	2018	2020	2022	2024	Per Officer
Chicago FOP Lodge #7	\$39,900	\$239,155	\$903,472	\$1,882,221	~\$156
DPA	\$158,216	\$120,000	\$131,050	\$282,070	~\$109
Dallas Police Association PAC	\$347,102	\$160,119	\$244,782	\$110,352	
				<u>\$392,422</u>	

Public safety stakeholders interviewed have emphasized how these contributions influence local politics. “In Chicago, aldermen representing districts with a strong police presence are heavily reliant on FOP endorsements to retain their seats. This creates a dynamic where reform-minded candidates face significant barriers, even when their policies align with public interest,” explained

one elected official (Chicago Elected/Appointed 1, Interview, [March 16, 2018]). The FOP is seen as a politically active and conservative organization, often endorsing candidates who are former police officers or seen as pro-law enforcement (Chicago CSA 1, Interview, [September 13, 2024]). One example from a recent aldermanic election where the FOP supported a challenger is the following case:

⇒ **Barbara Bunville**, a former CPD sergeant who ultimately lost the race, received more than 50% (\$22,150/\$43,140.19) of contributions from the Chicago FOP (Illinois State Board of Elections). Contribution data for the 2023 election cycle revealed that the FOP contributed a total of \$405,630 to 21 aldermanic races (Illinois State Board of Elections; Dumke 2023).³⁷ Bunville encouraged residents to call 911 and to provide police access to private security cameras (Jones 2023).

Interestingly, two-thirds of the Chicago FOP's local-level financial contributions are given to incumbent candidates from across the political spectrum. Interviews with both CPD and DPD officers revealed that political alliances at the local level are irrelevant and that the union will endorse anyone who will support them, regardless of political affiliation (DPD 5, Interview, [March 8, 2018]; CPD 3, Interview, [August 16, 2017]). This strategy is not uncommon, given that research has found that contributions to incumbents are less risky and provide more access (i.e., Snyder and Lim 1992). For instance, the Chicago FOP supported Alderman Anthony Napolitano, a former CPD officer and incumbent representative for Chicago's 41st ward, who planned several pro-police rallies (sometimes referred to as "Back the Blue"). The Chicago FOP was the top contributor (\$34,225.00) to Napolitano, representing 25% of all contributions to his 2023 campaign.

³⁷ In Chicago, sourcing contribution data at the local level was complicated because it is compiled by the Illinois State Board of Elections, which includes both local and state-level contributions which includes some overlap.

In contrast, Dallas spends significantly less (\$4 per officer) on campaign contributions at the local level. According to data sourced directly from the City of Dallas Campaign Finances Database, the DPA contributed a total of \$7,200 between 2019 and 2023 to the Dallas Police Officer PAC (City of Dallas – Campaign Finance Database). The Chicago FOP contributes nearly double the amount per officer for local-level races. This may not be surprising given that the FOP represents all CPD officers. Though the DPA represents most members, there are still two other significant labor organizations. It is also plausible, then, that the DPA contributes less due to legal constraints and as a result of the fact that the DPA is not the exclusive entity representing all DPD officers due to the existence and recognition of other minority law enforcement unions. Nonetheless, the DPA also worked to endorse candidates who fit hard-on-crime stances under the guise of public safety. Then-DPA president Mike Mata expressed the organization’s endorsement strategy: “It really comes down to picking the best possible candidate for what’s best for the city and also the best for public safety” (DeGramo 2023).

⇒ **Amanda Schulz**, the daughter of a DPD officer, was supported by the DPA to challenge Council Member Paul Ridley (Wilkins 2023). In 2023, the DPA contributed \$2,500 to Schulz’s campaign (Dallas Campaign Finance 2024). Schulz reportedly claimed that Ridley was weak on public safety and that she would “...increase neighborhood community policing programs, strengthen the Dallas Police Department, and improve the department’s partnership with the Dallas Independent School District if elected” (Wilkins 2023).

Interestingly, the DPA departed from almost all their labor counterparts with whom they typically work on bargaining, except the Dallas Fire Fighters Association, which represents most white firefighters. Ridley was endorsed by almost all the ethnic law enforcement and firefighter labor organizations: Black Police Association of Greater Dallas, the Dallas chapter

of the National Latino Law Enforcement Organization, the Dallas Black Firefighters Association, and the Dallas Hispanic Firefighters Association (Ibid.).

⇒ **Monica Alonzo**, a former public servant and city council representative, decided to run for city council and challenge incumbent Omar Narvaez. Like Shulz, she secured the DPA endorsement and a \$2,500 campaign contribution in her 2023 race (Dallas Campaign Finance 2023). Like Ridley, Narvaez secured the endorsements of all ethnic fire and law enforcement unions but was opposed by the DPA and the Dallas Fire Fighters Association. (DeGramo 2023). Then-DPA president Mata noted that “We don’t need council members who are going to look at cutting the police budget” when discussing opposition to Narvaez (Vaughn 2023). Alonzo dedicated a whole section of her campaign website and platform to public safety where she expresses her support for more resources to law enforcement: “Mónica is dedicated to keeping Dallas families safe by ensuring first responders have the resources and training they need to protect the community. She will prioritize public safety investments so police, fire, and emergency personnel can respond quickly and effectively” (Alonzo 2023).

Turning to state-level contribution data, it is evident that both unions spend more on campaigns at the state level than on local city council or aldermanic races.

⇒ **Chicago:** In the most recent cycle, the Chicago FOP spent a total of \$1,882,221 towards state-level races, a 686% increase since 2020.

⇒ **Dallas:** The DPA expended less than the Chicago FOP, which is not surprising given the difference in agency size. Nevertheless, the DPA contributed a total of \$392,422 in the most recent cycle, a 40% increase since 2020.

The increase in the Chicago FOP spending can likely be attributed to the increase in union dues to create a \$2.5 million political action fund (Spielman 2022). In a video posted on social media, Chicago FOP president Catanzara explained his rationale for the increase in political activity:

..the firemen are not under attack like we are...our profession [policing] is not gonna stop being under attack any time soon and we need to let these politicians know that enough is enough...I can guarantee you, a \$2.5 million dedicated fund is going to really get some attention and movement and it's gonna make a difference in an election cycle (Spielman 2022).

Former Cook County State's Attorney confirmed that the Chicago FOP became not only more polarizing after the killing of Laquan McDonald, but that they started to take a more aggressive approach by engaging financially in electoral politics (Chicago elected/appointed 5, Interview, [May 27, 2025]).

9.3.1.3. Lobbying to Preserve the Status Quo

When examining lobbying data, there is a stark difference between the expenditure amounts per officer. The DPA significantly outspent the FOP every year since 2019 on lobbying expenditures, when analyzing the contributions per number of officers (see Table 5.4). While Dallas appears to spend significantly less on campaign contributions, their higher spending on lobbying results in their total expenditure being only slightly lower than Chicago's. This suggests that Dallas may rely more on behind-the-scenes lobbying while Chicago emphasizes campaign contributions more heavily—yet both unions invest comparable resources overall to maintain their influence.³⁸ Another possibility that could explain the strategy is that lobbying may be more effective in the Texas state legislature than campaign contributions.

Table 5.4 Lobbying Expenditures Data

³⁸ Here's the calculation for the total expenditure per officer, combining campaign contributions and lobbying costs: **Chicago** spends roughly **\$208 per officer** when combining campaign contributions and lobbying costs; **Dallas** spends roughly **\$179 per officer**.

ORGANIZATION	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Per Officer
FOP Lodge #7	-	\$117,340	\$120,580	\$26,395	\$212,386	~\$18
DPA	-	\$292,924	\$126,687	\$183,216	\$244,871	~\$68

Nonetheless, both organizations have taken different steps at the legislative level to block or weaken legislation intended to improve accountability, reduce police power, and terminate other punitive policies related to the U.S. criminal legal system. The political actions to combat changes to punitive policing practices are then further reinforced in the courts.

9.3.2. Courts: Legal Actions & Arbitrations

While there were no available public records or records responding to FOIA requests concerning DPA legal actions that endorsed punitive policies, the Chicago FOP has been more active in the legal domain. Legal actions are a key reactive strategy that police unions use to resist changes that aim to curb misconduct and rein in police power by restricting the use of force. Thus, while the DPA worked towards preventing changes to use-of-force policies through the political mechanism, the Chicago FOP, as noted above, benefits from the legal and labor landscape in Illinois, which allows it to reactively delay efforts to alter the status quo.

9.3.2.1. Insulating Officers Through Arbitrations

One of the most visible ways of defending officers beyond hiring practices is providing officers accused of misconduct with legal defense, advice, and support. Specifically, both unions have been found to leverage arbitration as a mechanism to contest disciplinary actions of officers who engage in punitive practices and violence. Data sourced from the U.S. Internal Revenue Service (IRS) financial reporting reveals that the Chicago FOP routinely engages in legal actions (see Table 5.5). This is not surprising given that FOIA requests filed for this investigation found that the FOP filed at least 63 lawsuits against the city of Chicago (see Appendix L); 46% (29/63) of complaints were related to arbitrations. In contrast, while the city of Dallas was not responsive to the FOIA request

filed for this investigation concerning an overview of legal matters with the DPA, a review of public cases revealed a much smaller number of legal cases, including three notable lawsuits filed by the DPA against the city of Dallas. This is also confirmed by a conversation with a Dallas Community Advocate who noted that the DPA does not routinely default to the legal process; the association holds off until it “get[s] to that level” (Dallas CSA 2, Interview, [October 11, 2024]).

Table 5.5 Reported Legal Costs to IRS

UNION	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
FOP Lodge #7	\$2,919,827	\$1,900,357	\$1,593,202	\$2,242,095	2,832,939
DPA	\$549,783	-	\$458,746	-	-

When examining the legal actions taken by the Chicago FOP, arbitration has been noted as an issue concerning police discipline at a national level, as noted in Rushin (2029a). This issue is also present in Chicago and Dallas:

⇒ **Chicago:** For instance, in Chicago, the FOP relies heavily on arbitrations to protect officers.

As one CSA explained, the FOP would argue “...that cases should not go to the police board but instead to arbitration, which is more favorable to officers. Officers almost always pick arbitration because it protects them” (Chicago CSA 1, Interview, [September 13, 2024]). This is further validated by a FOIA request filed for this investigation (see Appendix L), which revealed that nearly 50% (29/63) of legal actions taken by the FOP have been arbitrations.

⇒ **Dallas:** Similarly, in Dallas, the DPA employs arbitration not only to protect officers but also to delay or reverse disciplinary measures, creating significant barriers to accountability.

The DPA frequently utilizes arbitration to shield officers from the consequences of their actions. As one participant noted, “Even in cases of life and death, the DPA sticks by officers, ensuring the arbitration process stays behind closed doors” (Dallas CSA 2, Interview, [October 11, 2024]). One example that captures the lengths that unions would

travel to shield officers was revealed during the trial of DPD Officer Amber Guyger, responsible for killing Botham Jean. Botham Jean, a Black 26-year-old accountant, was in his own living room eating ice cream when Guyger entered the apartment thinking it was her own and discharged her firearm while off duty (Branham 2019). During the trial, it was revealed that DPA President Michael Mata instructed Guyger to turn off her in-car camera system before a private conversation, leading to allegations of evidence tampering (Ibid.). Mata was charged with evidence tampering but was ultimately not indicted.

While paying for legal defense and related activities (i.e., arbitrations) are some of the most visible ways that police officers benefit from union membership in the legal dimension, other legal actions that protect officers by combating oversight or limiting access to records are also critical in shielding officers from accountability. For instance, the Chicago FOP has been found to consistently obstruct civilian oversight entities from investigating policies or creating obstacles through different reactive legal actions. For instance, in 2017, the FOP sought a declaratory judgment and injunctive relief to prevent the replacement of the Independent Police Review Authority (IPRA) with the Civilian Oversight of Police Accountability (COPA) because there were no investigators qualified to carry out the investigations. The legal action was dismissed but resulted in a substantial number of delays and city resources being devoted to battling the lawsuit.³⁹

9.3.2.2. Combating Robust Use-of-Force Policies

The Chicago FOP has filed several lawsuits fighting against the change of use-of-force policies that would have ensured that those policies were more restrictive and aligned with best practices (Gorner

³⁹ As noted earlier, another problem with studies focusing on accountability in criminology has been the lack of attention in understanding independent review boards and how union contracts, lawsuits, and lobbying have made some external reviews or civilian review boards virtually powerless.

and Byrne 2017).⁴⁰ One federal investigator noted how unions across the country would utilize the courts to obstruct consent decrees: “Mostly what we would look at is what the unions were doing in arbitration. It was often about challenging disciplinary actions or policies passed under consent decrees...The union would always push back, undermining reforms” (U.S. DoJ 1, Interview, September 7, 2017).

The Chicago FOP is an example of challenging consent decrees, which has been a significant legal priority for the Chicago FOP during the last decade (Chicago Elected/Appointed 4, Interview, [October 11, 2024]). As one CSA noted, “they [the FOP] hate the consent decree” and found its efforts to change CPD practices as a threat to their legitimacy (Chicago Elected/Appointed 4, Interview, [October 11, 2024]). In the legal complaint filed with the Illinois Labor Relations Board, the Chicago FOP alleged that CPD and the City of Chicago violated the CBA by “implementing changes to its use-of-force policy without union approval,” which they argue places CPD officers “... at a disadvantage even when they are doing their job properly” (Gorner 2019; Evans 2021). While the complaint and other legal efforts were ultimately unsuccessful, the Chicago FOP’s legal actions against the consent decree and use-of-force policy changes illustrate how unions leverage the legal system as a reactive mechanism to obstruct or slow down accountability and maintain institutional power.

9.3.3. Public Engagement: Media & Narrative Strategies

The Chicago FOP often adopts a brash, unapologetic tone, using inflammatory rhetoric with little consequence for its broader political or institutional goals. For example, former FOP President John Catanzara compared Chicago’s vaccine mandate to Nazi Germany, stating: “This ain’t Nazi f-----

⁴⁰ While the evidence for more restrictive use of force policies as a harm reduction effort is not conclusive, there are several studies that suggest that more restrictive use of force policies is associated with less police killings (Fyfe 1979; White 2000; White 2001; Jennings and Rubado 2017).

Germany, [where they say], “Step into the f----- showers. The pills won’t hurt you” (Anthony 2021). He also defended the January 6 Capitol rioters as “individuals...[who] get to do what they want” (Spielman 2021). These comments reflect not only a rejection of reform but also an ideological alignment with far-right movements and “White Protectionism.”

The alignment of police unions with authoritarian and racist rhetoric is not incidental but, rather, reflects a deliberate strategy to protect their membership and defend the institution and its practices, which disproportionately harm non-white communities. In the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement, the Republican Party, particularly but not exclusively, has been associated with supporters and defenders of the institution of policing (Laguna *et al.*, 2009; McNamara 1967; Niederhoffer 1967; Juris and Feuille 1973; Serwer 2021; Hardaway 2022). Police unions not only promote but also actively defend punitive policing practices, particularly through public opposition to policy changes intended to reduce police discretion or curb aggressive enforcement tactics.

9.3.3.1. Falsifying & Distorting Narratives to Defend Officers

In addition to the mechanisms discussed above, unions typically combine those mechanisms alongside media narratives to protect officers accused of misconduct. By shaping public perception, unions sustain institutional power and normalize violence by defending officers. One of the unique advantages that police unions possess is the inability of the public to distinguish a police union spokesperson from an official police spokesperson, as noted by a Former Cook County State’s Attorney: “I mean, the nuance is in that, a lot of the general public doesn't know the distinction between police and the police union, right?” (Chicago Elected/Appointed 5, Interview, [May 27, 2025]). Most notable is the strategy of unions employing their communications teams to develop media narratives, at times false, to justify officers’ actions and discredit accountability efforts. There are notable examples of both the FOP and the DPA:

⇒ **Chicago:** According to one elected/appointed Chicago official, the FOP had a strong relationship and influence amongst the city council (Chicago Elected/Appointed 2, Interview, [February 28, 2018]). However, the public opinion of the FOP started to shift after the release of the video showing the police murder of Laquan McDonald (Ibid.). One elected/appointed city representative claimed that there was a strong sense among Aldermen (city councilors) that many of the police shootings were justified or that it wasn't as strong of a problem until the mayor released the Laquan MacDonalD footage (Ibid.). This sentiment was also shared by a former Cook County State's Attorney:

Yeab, I don't know that I paid much attention to the FOP per se while I was an assistant [Assistant Cook County State Attorney]. They used to have a spokesperson, Pat Camden, who anytime there was a shooting, Pat Camden would go out and speak. So that's everybody's view of the FOP was Pat Camden. If you saw Pat Camden, you knew that the suspect had a gun and the police had no choice but to fire. Like that, that's what you knew of the FOP... And until, you know, they murdered a kid and got caught, he was widely viewed as, you know, a credible source for policing. (Chicago Elected/ Appointed 5, Interview, [May 27, 2025]).

In the aftermath of the killing of McDonald, many city officials started to realize that Pat Camden, the Chicago FOP spokesman who would appear at police shootings and provide an accounting of events to the public, and the Chicago FOP were providing a false accounting of events. One Chicago Alderman provided their accounting of events in the aftermath of the killing of McDonald:

The release of the footage was a turning point. We saw the footage and that was when we all realized that the FOP was out of control and started to understand what they were doing. We didn't even know the guy, Pat Camden, who would show up to the police shootings was a police union spokesman and not a department spokesman. He would provide a different account to the press than [what] actually happened. The problem was that the Mayor [Rahm Emmanuel] hid the video tape of the shooting until after the election to protect the police department. All of a sudden, we started to question all of the police shootings and investigations. The law department was also covering for the police department and the FOP since the videotape was being held by the mayor. It was apparent that the FOP and the city were trying to perpetuate a false narrative after the release of the footage and when Mayor Emmanuel's top attorney quit and later came out saying that he knew the police shooting of MacDonalD was essentially a murder (Chicago Elected/ Appointed 1, Interview, [February 2, 2018]).

⇒ **Dallas:** There have been other notable cases of such media distortion in addition to the case of DPD Officer Guyger that I discussed earlier. For example, the DPA defended two officers accused of excessive force during the George Floyd protests. Following arrest warrants issued by the Dallas County District Attorney, then-DPA President Michael Mata stated, “When will this DA stop treating the criminal element in this city as a victim? When will he start treating Dallas residents and officers as the victims and protectors instead of as criminals?” (Pena 2022). Relying on crime narratives, the DPA was able to shift its attention away from the core issue of officers who engaged in misconduct. Another instance in the past was when the DPA defended DPD Officer Wilburn, who shot and killed an unarmed 19-year-old Black civilian, resulting in the Chief of Police firing the responsible officer (Heinz and Fine 2013). The union expressed public outrage and stated, “This ruling jeopardizes the safety of the citizens of Dallas, and all Dallas police officers.” Officers/union members became polarized against the city and the chief on this issue. One DPD Officer interviewed for this investigation said that the DPA’s defense of the officer created a rift with the Black Police Association (DPD 5, Interview, [March 8, 2018]).

Both the DPA and the FOP have gone to great lengths, even committing falsified accounts, evidence tampering, and removing threats to accountability in the blind defense of officers, despite the seriousness and brutality of the misconduct. Their rhetoric often mirrors the language used to describe victims of police brutality—terms like “unjustly targeted” and “persecuted” frame officers as victims of an unfair system.

9.3.3.2. Blue Lives Matter & Racial Authoritarianism

Like the national FOP, the DPA and the Chicago FOP also endorsed President Donald Trump in the 2020 campaign.

In response to the DPA endorsement, the President of the Black Police Association of Dallas, Terrence Hopkins, discussed how Black officers left the DPA following their endorsement for Trump (Lauer 2020). In a news interview, Hopkins discussed the frustration expressed by many of his fellow Black officers:

A lot of these officers feel like they aren't being considered. A lot of the issues that push them to that point border along racial lines...and it's not just here. I got a call from some Black officers in Kansas City, Missouri, who wanted to join my organization because they don't have any other outlet, and they don't feel like they are being represented... (Ibid.).

This is not surprising given that DPA leadership and membership exhibit right-wing ideological leanings. Interestingly, DPA members acknowledged the paradox of pro-union Democratic support while leaning conservative. One DPD officer and long-time DPA member noted: “We all lean to the right. We align with get tougher on crime. The Democratic side seems to be more friendly because of a pro-union stance” (Dallas DPD 1, Interview, [January 18, 2018]).

This rhetoric of deterrence reflects the logic of broken windows policing, which promotes aggressive responses to minor offenses under the assumption that visible disorder leads to more serious crime (Wilson and Kelling 1982). While framed as neutral crime prevention, broken windows policing has disproportionately targeted Black and Brown communities, reinforcing racialized stereotypes that associate poverty and nonconformity with criminality (Fagan and Davies 2000). As a result, calls for “tough” policing are not applied evenly, but are instead coded appeals for punitive crackdowns in already over-policed neighborhoods of color, which is but one manifestation of racial authoritarianism.

In addition to some of the examples noted earlier, the Chicago FOP, especially in the aftermath of McDonald, shifted to selecting leaders who started to become more unabashed and inflammatory and who routinely engage in racist rhetoric and actions. This has also included Chicago FOP members and leaders joining in on political marches and alliances with groups such as

the Proud Boys and white nationalist groups. For example, on April 1, 2019, the Chicago FOP organized a march on the Cook County Prosecutor's Office to protest the decision by the State Attorney to drop charges against Jussie Smollett, a Black actor who was charged with disorderly conduct and lying to police about the reporting of an anti-Black hate crime (Schuba and Hendrickson 2019).

The march, organized by the Chicago FOP, also attracted several white nationalist groups such as the Proud Boys and the American Identity Movement (Ibid.). A former Cook County State's Attorney shared their perspective and noted that John Catanzara, then-Chicago FOP member and later Chicago FOP president, also participated in the march:

They [the Chicago FOP] supposedly were pissed off about the deal that Jussie Smollett had gotten....Catanzara was not yet the head of the union, but he was there with a number of folks from QAnon, the Proud Boys, I think they had four different white nationalist groups that were out there and getting into it with some progressive folks who had heard that this was happening....I think this was the turning point for a lot of folks: Why is the FOP attracting people from white nationalist groups to a protest? Why is the FOP out here with Trump? (Chicago Elected/ Appointed 5, Interview, [May 27, 2025]).

The elected/appointed official noted that the transformation of the Chicago FOP from being the organization that was known for distorting narratives around police shootings via their union spokesperson to the unabashed and polarizing organization of today was because of the aftermath of McDonald and the waves of reforms that followed. They continued: "There actions during that march felt more than just an actual event, and more about an identity of who they were becoming" (Ibid.).

9.3.3.3. Crime & Public Safety

Arguably, the union's most employed tool to support punitive policies and practices is through perpetuating crime narratives that draw more attention and political capital to the DPA and the FOP through fearmongering. Crime narratives are inextricably racialized (i.e., Muhammad 2019), strengthening public support for police, which in turn provides more support and political capital

for police unions. Police union leaders argue that crime provides critical value for political endorsements of police unions in local-level politics:

As long as crime remains an issue in politics, the endorsement of police unions will continue to be highly valued. Opinion polls repeatedly indicate that the endorsement of a candidate or measure by a police union has a 60 percent to 75 percent approval rating...The conservative candidate wants the endorsement to certify that he is a law and order politician. The liberal candidate wants the endorsement in order to bring voter's perception of him to a position nearer the opposed to law and order. Both conservatives and liberals want support of the police (DeLord et al., 2008, p.101).

For instance, Chicago FOP has deployed narrative strategies in the public domain to fight against efforts to broaden the inclusion of non-carceral public safety stakeholders. One appointed/elected city official in Chicago, working on the Empowering Communities for Public Safety (ECPS) ordinance to bring community stakeholders into public safety decision-making, noted that the Chicago FOP would constantly speak publicly against the ordinance and appear in public forums to make comments against the ordinance. The Chicago FOP would claim that the ordinance would prevent police from doing their responsibilities and, in turn, increase crime (Chicago Elected/Appointed 3, Interview, [October 10, 2024]). Another example includes former FOP President Mark Donahue's opposition to reforms in the Chicago Police Department's vehicle pursuit policy, which aimed to limit pursuits to reduce risk to civilians and officers. Similarly, when pedestrian stop rates declined in the wake of policy changes aimed at reducing unconstitutional stop-and-frisk practices, former FOP President Dean Angelo Sr. blamed public scrutiny and accountability efforts. In response to media coverage, Angelo claimed that the decline was due to officers being "scared to do their jobs"—a familiar rhetorical strategy used by unions to stoke public fear and resist reform (Goudie 2016). These reactions demonstrate how union leaders leverage public narratives to legitimize continued use of aggressive, racially disproportionate policing practices under the guise of officer safety and public order.

10. CONCLUSION

To understand the political function of police unions, I draw on critical state and racial politics literature. This work situates police unions as key actors in preserving racial hierarchies and institutional stability.

As noted in the critical work of Lerman and Weaver (2014), the U.S. criminal legal system is a key mechanism for continuing and preserving a two-tiered society and citizenry. However, the institution of policing in the U.S. has long been the primary arm of the state employed to maintain racial and social hierarchies. As noted by Weaver and Prowse (2020): “Since the 1960s, policing has been the primary administrative tool of racial authoritarianism: One segment of the population effectively lives under a different set of rules and, as a result, experiences differential power and citizenship” (Weaver and Prowse 2020, p. 1176).

Thus, efforts to block transformations in public safety—particularly those designed to reduce police-civilian contact and address structural problems—are serious concerns for U.S. democracy, given they preserve racial authoritarian governance (Thomas and Tufts 2019; Weaver and Prowse 2020). Situating this investigation within APD scholarship, I argue that police union actions preserve racial authoritarian governance. Specifically, police unions are not just labor groups but active political actors defending the institution of policing. Police unions contribute to a broader racialized political project by preserving the institutional status quo and policing’s dominance in public safety governance. “White Protectionism,” as theorized by Smith and King (2021), refers to a political project that safeguards white dominance through institutional and ideological mechanisms. Like racial authoritarianism, “White Protectionism” reflects the political actions and coalitions that defend racial and ideological hierarchies, ensuring the persistence of racial authoritarianism, which employs the U.S. criminal legal system to apply disparate treatment to different sub-populations.

While research has consistently identified procedural protections embedded in collective bargaining agreements and state-level legislation as a driver of police violence (Cunningham *et al.*, 2021; Dharmapala *et al.*, 2022; Rad 2025), procedural protections are only one mechanism unions employ. Furthermore, while procedural protections may explain the lack of officer accountability, their removal would be expected to do little to support public safety reinvention efforts—optimistically serving as harm-reduction. In the aftermath of the Ferguson protests, which birthed the present-day “Black Lives Matter Movement,” a counter-political movement—“Blue Lives Matter”—was developed and driven by members of U.S. law enforcement. Blue Lives Matter “...constructs a reverse discrimination discourse to cast police as victims...” and their actions can be characterized as a way to “...suppress dissent related to struggles against anti-black racism and the racial ordering of American society...” (Thomas and Tufts 2019, 134). Thomas and Tufts (2019) find that Blue Lives Matter narratives and legislation, intended to expand police powers, significantly increased following President Donald Trump’s first term (Ibid.).

10.1. Findings

By framing police unions as defenders of the institution, this investigation expands the scope to examine a range of union activities—including political lobbying, media narratives, and strategic alliances—that collectively reinforce the status quo and maintain racial authoritarianism.

The thematic analysis reveals how the Chicago FOP and the Dallas Police Association (DPA) employ a multifaceted strategy to preserve institutional power and resist transformation. Specifically, this chapter has shown how police unions engage in three core and overlapping practices: gatekeeping public safety processes and resources, retaining the racial and ideological composition of their membership, and supporting punitive practices and hard-on-crime political actors. Drawing on Smith and King (2021) concept of “White Protectionism,” police unions function as defenders of a racialized status quo, where exclusionary practices, protectionist policies, and political alliances

reinforce the power structure of policing. In turn, unions play a contributing—if not one of the most influential—roles in preserving and continuing racial authoritarian governance in the U.S. (Weaver and Prowse 2020).

In their structure, function, and political activity, police unions mobilize to protect not only individual officers, but also an institutionalized regime of racial control and state violence. In doing so, they help stabilize what Weaver and Prowse identify as racial authoritarianism: a system where institutions that should be responsive to democratic demands are instead mobilized to suppress them—particularly when they come from communities of color.

10.1.1. Gatekeeping Public Safety Processes & Resources

The first mechanism—gatekeeping public safety processes and resources—is a central method through which unions limit who has the authority to define, shape, and benefit from public safety policy. In both Dallas and Chicago, unions work to prevent the participation of non-carceral stakeholders in shaping public safety policy. These stakeholders, often coming from non-white and historically marginalized communities, advocate for non-punitive alternatives such as community investment, behavioral health responses, and restorative justice models. By leveraging their legal, political, and financial power, unions ensure these alternatives are marginalized. For example, they secure labor contracts that mandate staffing minimums, tie up city budgets through pension protections, and restrict layoffs even amid calls to reallocate funding. These contractual and legal mechanisms are used strategically to block reform, reinforcing policing as the primary—and often only—response to community harm. This deliberate exclusion serves to reproduce a racialized system in which police, and only police, are authorized to deliver safety.

10.1.2. Retaining Racial & Ideological Composition of Membership

Second, unions work to retain the racial and ideological composition of their membership, particularly defending the overrepresentation of white, conservative officers within their ranks. In

Chicago, the FOP has strategically insulated its leadership through legal protections and procedural mechanisms that prevent more progressive or diverse voices from gaining influence within the union. Even as the department's overall demographics have shifted, union leadership remains dominated by individuals aligned with right-wing political ideologies and a reactionary defense of traditional policing norms. In Dallas, although the presence of alternative ethnic police organizations complicates this picture slightly, the DPA still benefits from structural tools that reinforce similar racial and ideological boundaries. Across both cities, union protections disproportionately shield longer-tenured (often white) officers from disciplinary action, further preserving the internal culture and external political positioning of the union. Diversity initiatives are not only undercut—they are portrayed as existential threats to officer solidarity and institutional cohesion. The unions' ability to use labor law—created to protect marginalized workers—as a shield for entrenched racial and ideological homogeneity is a key contradiction at the heart of this analysis.

10.1.3. Supporting Punitive Practices & Hard on Crime Politics

Third, and perhaps most visibly, police unions actively promote punitive policies and align themselves with political actors who champion carceral solutions. Returning to the case of Dallas Mayor Eric Johnson who explained his decision to join the Republican party at the 2024 Republican National Convention, he concluded his speech describing a strong contrast to what the two major parties (Republican and Democratic) represented: “No, the heart of today’s Democratic party is with the criminals, not with their victims... And that’s because Republicans will not be silent about public safety” (Samuels 2024).

In both cities, unions have supported local and statewide candidates who advocate for aggressive policing, expanded budgets, and minimal oversight. They mobilize their membership to vote, fund campaigns, and release media statements that frame reformers as soft on crime or anti-police. These efforts are accompanied by rhetorical strategies that deploy racially coded language—

often portraying Black and Brown communities as dangerous, chaotic, or inherently criminal. In turn, these narratives justify continued state violence in the name of “public safety.” The unions’ promotion of hard-on-crime politics is not episodic; it is embedded in their institutional DNA. As Muhammad (2019) argues, these representations tap into longstanding racial tropes that have historically underpinned American policing. When police unions elevate crime fears, discredit reformers, and tie public safety to punitive enforcement, they are not just engaging in self-preservation—they are actively shaping public discourse and electoral outcomes in ways that protect a racialized carceral order.

Taken together, these three strategies—exclusionary gatekeeping, ideological and racial preservation, and alignment with punitive politics—constitute more than a defense of members’ rights or working conditions. They represent a broader project of institutional survival through racial domination. This work challenges the notion that police unions are conventional labor organizations. Whereas unions in democratic societies have traditionally been engines of worker empowerment and progressive reform (see Lipset’s classic work on democratic unionism), police unions function more like political organizations aligned with authoritarian interests. They mobilize to suppress dissent, protect the violent capacities of the state, and undermine democratic claims for racial justice and public accountability. In this sense, as Weaver and Prowse (2020) argue, they are not simply actors within the system—they are architects of a racial authoritarian regime.

In addition to the themes above, the thematic analysis uncovers how both unions achieve these ends:

1. Institutional Power over Worker Empowerment

Both organizations employ gatekeeping, ideological reinforcement, financial clout, and alignment with tough-on-crime agendas to entrench power. These mechanisms form a feedback loop that resists reform and oversight. Rather than promoting collective worker empowerment, they

consolidate institutional dominance—posing a fundamental threat to democratic accountability (Levitsky and Ziblatt 2018).

2. Different Paths, Shared Goals

Despite different labor contexts, both unions prioritize shielding members and preserving the institution. The Dallas Police Association (DPA) leverages political alliances and lobbying, while Chicago's FOP relies on collective bargaining, arbitration, and political networks. Their varying tactics reveal strategic adaptability but a shared commitment to resisting transformation.

3. Authoritarian Alignment Within a Labor Framework

Police unions embody a paradox: they benefit from progressive labor protections while advancing authoritarian, punitive agendas. Predominantly white, male, and conservative, their ideological orientation aligns with exclusionary public safety models. This enables them to build conservative alliances while distancing themselves from broader labor solidarity, as noted by Juris and Feuille (1973). Their political activity reinforces a status quo that marginalizes reform.

4. Escalating Political Spending Post-2020

Since the 2020 protests, both unions have significantly increased their campaign spending, signaling a more aggressive electoral strategy. This surge appears to be a response to perceived threats to policing's legitimacy and reflects broader post-2020 political polarization. Through intensified political engagement, unions aim to maintain institutional and financial control.

This analysis complicates mainstream understandings of labor politics by showing how police unions diverge from the broader trajectory of democratic unionism. Rather than advancing equity, police unions in these two cases can be argued to serve as institutional custodians of inequality, racial order, and authoritarian governance. As such, the findings from this chapter call for a fundamental rethinking of what police unions are and how they function—not as defenders of labor, but as defenders of racialized institutional power. This sets the stage for a deeper engagement

with the theoretical frameworks introduced at the beginning of this dissertation and builds toward a broader argument about the institutional role of police unions in democratic decline.

Both the Dallas Police Association (DPA) and the Chicago Fraternal Order of Police (FOP) exhibit core features of authoritarianism—rejecting democratic reforms, delegitimizing opponents, tolerating violence, and curtailing civil liberties—as outlined by Levitsky and Ziblatt (2019). But these actions serve as a deeper racial project. They preserve power by resisting multiracial democratic governance, protecting coercive state violence, and advancing the racialized status quo at the heart of American policing.

Since the Civil Rights Movement, police unions have been staunch defenders not only of the institution of policing but also of practices that disproportionately harm non-white communities and sustain racial authoritarianism in the U.S. What is often overlooked in literature is the broader range of mechanisms police unions use to maintain their power beyond procedural protections. Much of the existing scholarship, including other chapters in this thesis, has focused on procedural protections embedded in collective bargaining agreements and Law Enforcement Officers' Bills of Rights (LEOBORs) as tools for shielding officers from accountability (Rushin 2017; Dharmapala *et al.*, 2022). While these protections matter, they represent only one dimension of union activity. A focus on procedural protections minimizes the broader influence of how police unions not only obstruct accountability, but also how they defend the institution and status quo.

Through a paired case study of Chicago and Dallas—two cities with distinct labor environments—this study illustrates how both the Chicago FOP and the Dallas DPA adapt to local conditions while pursuing the same goal: resisting reform and preserving institutional dominance.

Rather than advancing worker solidarity or protecting marginalized communities, they often operate as reactionary institutions aligned with authoritarian politics. Their strategic deployment of legal, political, and media tools to entrench racialized hierarchies and suppress democratic

accountability distinguishes them from the broader labor movement. In doing so, I argue that police organizations may represent one of the most significant potential threats to democratic governance given the saliency of authoritarian leadership in the U.S. As such, calling them “unions” risks legitimizing their anti-democratic practices under the guise of worker representation. A more accurate term may be “police organizations”—entities whose primary aim is not collective uplift, but the preservation of an institution that continues to exercise punitive and coercive approaches that sustain racial authoritarianism in the U.S.

CONCLUSION

“When you look at modern-day policing, you have to look at the foundation in which law enforcement was built upon... It was built upon systemic racism and white supremacy, so when you look at police unions, they are there to maintain the status quo” (Evans and Emmanuel 2021)

Sgt. Shawn Kennedy (Ret – Chicago Police Department)

Information Officer, National Association of Black Law Enforcement Officers

While the institution of policing has changed and evolved through U.S. history, it has continued to be employed to reinforce racial orders and hierarchies. U.S. policing can trace its history to “slave patrols” that “protected property” and criminalized individuals who were escaping enslavement (Vitale 2018; Muhammad 2019). In the early 20th century, the institute of policing enforced Jim Crow apartheid laws, which established a different set of laws for Black populations in the U.S. These laws included criminalizing Black individuals who were in “white only” areas or engaged in interracial relationships (Muhammad 2019). During the Civil Rights Movement, Black individuals were criminalized for exercising their First Amendment rights to protest and dissent. In the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement, the “frontlash” resulted in the utilization of the criminal legal system to deploy punitive responses to social problems and low-level offenses, which has disproportionately impacted Black populations (Weaver 2007). As a result, non-white populations have had to reckon with devastating consequences, including entering the criminal legal system and

the normalized violence administered by the state via agents of the criminal legal system—most notably, police officers (Sierra-Arévalo 2024).

This is what happened to Eric Garner, an unarmed Black man selling loose cigarettes, who was choked by a New York Police Department officer and left unconscious for seven minutes before being pronounced dead. This is what happened to Laquan McDonald in Chicago, a Black teenager experiencing a behavioral health crisis, who was walking away from police with a small knife when he was shot 16 times by a CPD officer. And this is what happened to Tony Timpa in Dallas, a Black executive who called 911 for help during a mental health episode but was restrained, mocked, and suffocated by Dallas Police officers. These cases are among many others where police actions resulted in fatal outcomes. While this dissertation focuses on fatal violence, that focus is not meant to minimize the many harms of non-fatal contact with the criminal legal system—harms that have derailed countless lives in ways less visible but no less destructive. Highlighting these fatal encounters is one necessary step in ensuring that more lives are not taken at the hands of the state.

2024— 4 years after the 2020 racial justice uprisings sparked by the murder of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man, marked the highest level of police violence on record (Campaign Zero 2025). Across the more than 19,000 law enforcement agencies in the U.S., there remains significant variation in rates of lethal violence. While scholars have pointed to differences in crime, demography, and training, one influential institution continues to receive inadequate attention: police unions.

It is not uncommon for public-sector labor interests and organizations to defend the status quo, as noted by Moe (2015). However, what is unique to police unions is the system they're preserving and the critical role it plays in preserving the system of racial authoritarianism in the U.S. (Weaver and Prowse 2020). Furthermore, the devastation from the trauma and harm, both fatal and non-fatal, caused by the institution of policing to victims and victims' communities cannot be

understated, given the institution's normalization of violence and aggression, particularly against Black populations (Sierra-Arévalo and Papachristos 2021; Sierra-Arévalo 2024). Thus, police union efforts to defend the institution and expand its power have profound implications not only for public safety but also for democratic governance in the U.S.

This dissertation investigated the mechanisms through which police unions influence accountability, violence, and institutional preservation in the U.S. Through a set of interrelated but distinct studies, it contributes to a deeper understanding of police unionism's evolving role in sustaining carceral power. I began with a review of the historical and contemporary scholarship on police unionism, identifying how unions deploy legal, political, and cultural strategies to entrench power and resist reform. While earlier studies (e.g., Cunningham *et al.*, 2021; Dharmapala *et al.*, 2022) have established a general link between collective bargaining and increased police violence, they have not specified which mechanisms or protections may be responsible.

Chapter Three addressed this gap by developing a novel index of police protectionism—drawing from specific provisions embedded in CBAs and LEOBORs. This index represents a key contribution of the dissertation: it provides, for the first time, a scalable, comparative tool to empirically evaluate theoretical claims about how institutional protections shape accountability. This new measure is not only a descriptive tool—it fills a longstanding empirical gap. Scholars have long theorized that legal protections afforded to police officers shape accountability and discipline outcomes, but until now, these claims have been difficult to assess systematically across cities. This dissertation does not seek to causally determine the effects of each protection, but instead offers a scalable approach that allows future researchers to test these theoretical expectations at scale. The models presented illustrate how the index can be used to examine correlational patterns and generate hypotheses for further causal investigation. I used this index to assess which jurisdictions are more likely to have high levels of police protections and found associations with race and crime.

Chapter Four used this index to examine whether protections may be associated with fatal police violence. While not a causal design, the goal was not to definitively explain variation, but to assess whether the data align with key theoretical expectations. Across the 100 largest U.S. metropolitan areas, each additional protection category is associated with a modest but nontrivial 9.9% increase in police killings. Notably, three specific categories—giving officers access to information during investigations, limiting oversight, and requiring cities to cover costs of misconduct—emerged as particularly salient. These associations suggest that protections most directly linked to shielding officers from scrutiny or consequences may be especially consequential.

Recognizing that formal protections are only one dimension of police union power, the final empirical chapter turned to other mechanisms of institutional defense. Drawing on a paired case study of the Fraternal Order of Police in Chicago and the Dallas Police Association, I used interviews, archival materials, and campaign finance data to examine union strategies beyond contract protections. The analysis revealed three central themes across both organizations: (1) gatekeeping public safety processes and resources; (2) preserving the racial and ideological composition of police membership; and (3) supporting punitive practices and hard-on-crime politics. Despite different labor and political contexts, both unions employed similar feedback loops that resist reform and adapt to local political conditions. Both also ramped up political spending after 2020, signaling a strategic shift toward more aggressive electoral influence.

The paradox of police unionism in the U.S. is two-fold: these unions are labor organizations representing rank-and-file public workers, and they are simultaneously agents of racialized state violence. Given the rise of overt authoritarianism in the U.S., police unions should no longer be treated as conventional labor organizations. This dissertation does not claim that eliminating police unions is a panacea. Rather, it argues that no meaningful public safety reinvention can occur without fundamentally rethinking the role of police unions in local political life. In particular, the label of

“labor organization” obscures the distinct function that police unions serve: unlike any other union, they represent law enforcement officers who are empowered to use coercive force, and they consistently deploy political and legal strategies that protect that power. For these reasons, I recommend that we refer to them not as labor unions but as Police Defense Leagues. While the term is meant to provoke critical reconsideration, the core contribution of this dissertation is analytical: providing the tools, frameworks, and evidence needed to understand how police political organizations preserve their power and resist reform.

As a final word of caution: the findings of this dissertation suggest that the institution of policing and the rise of authoritarian politics in the U.S. are deeply intertwined. Police political organizations are not simply defenders of the status quo; they are potential accelerants of authoritarian transformation. Regardless of the stated values or policies of local elected officials, these organizations provide resources, messaging, and political support to agendas that entrench inequality and repress dissent. Thus, understanding the role of police unions is not simply a matter of labor politics—it is essential to safeguarding democratic accountability and resisting the spread of authoritarianism.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX A: CO-AUTHORSHIP DECLARATION

Co-Authorship Declaration Form

1. Student to complete:

Name: Abdul Nasser Rad

Thesis Title: Police Unionism & Protectionism in the US: Origins, Correlates, and Mechanisms

Title of Chapter which is co-authored: A Review of Scholarship Examining Police Unionism, Accountability, and Misconduct. Chapter was published over the course of the DPhil as:

Rad, Abdul Nasser, David S. Kirk, and William P. Jones. 2023. "Police Unionism, Accountability, and Misconduct." *Annual Review of Criminology* 6: 181-203.

<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-criminol-030421-034244>.

2. Co-Author to complete:

Name: David S. Kirk

Describe your contribution to this chapter: I was involved in a secondary role in article conceptualization. In terms of writing, my role was primarily editing.

"I hereby declare that this chapter is predominantly original work by the student named above"



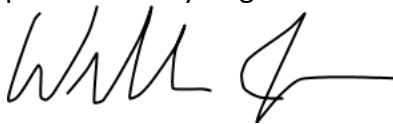
Signature & Date: 7 December 2023

3. Co-Author to complete:

Name: William P. Jones

Describe your contribution to this chapter: I provided feedback and editing on specific sections of the essay related to the history of policing.

"I hereby declare that this chapter is predominantly original work by the student named above"



Signature & Date: December 7, 2023

APPENDIX B: 100 LARGEST U.S. METROPOLITAN AREAS & INDEX OF POLICE PROTECTIONISM

(sorted by metro size)

AGENCY	STATE	POPULATION	CBA METRIC	LEOBOR METRIC	FULL METRIC
NEW YORK CITY	NY	8523171	2	0	2
LOS ANGELES	CA	4029741	4	6	7
CHICAGO	IL	2719151	8	2	8
HOUSTON	TX	2344966	7	5	7
PHOENIX	AZ	1653080	5	5	6
PHILADELPHIA	PA	1586916	4	0	4
SAN ANTONIO	TX	1539328	7	5	7
SAN DIEGO	CA	1436495	6	6	7
DALLAS	TX	1362465	1	5	6
SAN JOSE	CA	1047305	4	6	7
HONOLULU	HI	982019	6	0	6
AUSTIN	TX	973344	6	5	7
CHARLOTTE	NC	931235	0	0	0
JACKSONVILLE	FL	903213	6	5	8
FORT WORTH	TX	893756	4	5	6
COLUMBUS	OH	892576	6	0	6
SAN FRANCISCO	CA	889282	2	6	7
INDIANAPOLIS	IN	877584	3	2	4
SEATTLE	WA	742759	7	0	7
DENVER	CO	720745	2	0	2
WASHINGTON	DC	702455	6	0	6
BOSTON	MA	694673	0	0	0
EL PASO	TX	688442	6	5	7
NASHVILLE	TN	686492	0	1	1
LOUISVILLE	KY	683335	4	4	5
DETROIT	MI	671275	5	0	5
PORTLAND	OR	657260	6	4	7
OKLAHOMA CITY	OK	652936	5	0	5
MEMPHIS	TN	652226	5	1	5
BALTIMORE	MD	605436	7	5	7
MILWAUKEE	WI	595619	5	0	5
LAS VEGAS	NV	1644390	6	5	7
ALBUQUERQUE	NM	560235	5	2	5
TUCSON	AZ	537392	7	5	8
FRESNO	CA	531818	3	6	7

SACRAMENTO	CA	507037	5	6	8
MESA	AZ	504873	2	5	5
ATLANTA	GA	496106	0	0	0
KANSAS CITY	MO	493115	5	0	5
RALEIGH	NC	473765	0	0	0
MIAMI	FL	473047	6	5	8
COLORADO SPRINGS	CO	471124	0	0	0
LONG BEACH	CA	470445	2	6	8
OMAHA	NE	469351	5	0	5
VIRGINIA BEACH	VA	451001	0	2	2
OAKLAND	CA	430230	3	6	8
MINNEAPOLIS	MN	428261	6	4	7
TULSA	OK	403147	5	0	5
ARLINGTON	TX	400920	0	5	5
NEW ORLEANS	LA	396374	0	5	5
TAMPA	FL	392945	6	5	7
WICHITA	KS	391726	5	0	5
BAKERSFIELD	CA	385609	2	6	8
CLEVELAND	OH	384666	5	0	5
AURORA	CO	372824	2	0	2
ANAHEIM	CA	354743	4	6	7
SANTA ANA	CA	335403	1	6	6
RIVERSIDE	CA	331022	3	6	7
CORPUS CHRISTI	TX	328614	4	5	6
LEXINGTON	KY	325579	6	4	6
STOCKTON	CA	313158	3	6	7
ST. PAUL	MN	309756	3	4	6
HENDERSON	NV	309586	3	5	7
ST. LOUIS CITY	MO	306875	4	0	4
PITTSBURGH	PA	302544	7	0	7
CINCINNATI	OH	301952	6	0	6
GREENSBORO	NC	293298	0	0	0
ANCHORAGE	AK	291992	7	0	7
PLANO	TX	289897	0	5	5
LINCOLN	NE	288589	5	0	5
IRVINE	CA	288052	3	6	8
ORLANDO	FL	286679	8	5	8
NEWARK	NJ	282258	3	0	3
TOLEDO	OH	275023	6	0	6
CHULA VISTA	CA	274370	0	6	6

DURHAM	NC	273759	0	0	0
JERSEY CITY	NJ	270175	5	0	5
FORT WAYNE	IN	267634	5	2	5
ST. PETERSBURG	FL	265942	2	5	7
LAREDO	TX	264214	7	5	7
MADISON	WI	258455	2	0	2
BUFFALO	NY	258219	3	0	3
LUBBOCK	TX	257372	0	5	5
CHANDLER	AZ	255986	3	5	5
SCOTTSDALE	AZ	254961	0	5	5
RENO	NV	252341	4	5	7
GLENDALE	AZ	249799	3	5	5
GILBERT	AZ	247463	0	5	5
NORTH LAS VEGAS	NV	246951	3	5	5
WINSTON-SALEM	NC	246759	0	0	0
MOBILE	AL	245475	0	0	0
NORFOLK	VA	244347	0	2	2
IRVING	TX	243940	0	5	5
CHESAPEAKE	VA	242310	0	2	2
HIALEAH	FL	241778	6	5	7
GARLAND	TX	239577	0	5	5
FREMONT	CA	238024	2	6	7
RICHMOND	VA	229927	0	2	2
BOISE	ID	229265	3	0	3
BATON ROUGE	LA	224790	5	5	6

APPENDIX C: TRAINING RESEARCHERS AND CONTRACT CODING PROCESS

The CBA and LEOBOR coding process was standardized using the following steps:

1. **Development of a codebook.** I pretested and refined the researcher codebook in collaboration with CZ staff.
2. **Identifying researchers/contract coders.** After the development of a codebook, I led a research and operations team to recruit additional research staff, including paid staff and a pool of volunteers with research skills and experience.
3. **Training contract coders.** Prior to engaging paid and volunteer staff engaged in qualitative coding, I worked with staff to develop training protocols and procedures that would train researchers on the research framework, coding procedures, as well as the Kira software. The initial training was a 2-hour training which I led and then transitioned to CZ's lead researcher. The training included how to highlight the relevant text, assign the appropriate category using both the codebook and supplemental documents, and highlight the following descriptive information in addition to highlighting the relevant text and indicating the category:
 - Contract Type (e.g., Sheriff, Rank-and-File, Managers, etc.)
 - Start & Expiration Date
 - Subcategories
 - Miscellaneous Provisions
4. **Initial coder assessment.** Next, the training protocol and instruments which I worked to develop with CZ staff was deployed to assess the proficiency of the researchers post training. The assessment required at least an 89% pass rate to ensure that staff understood the coding process and how to properly identify and code different provisions within a police union contract. The assessment included 20 questions asking the coder to properly identify the appropriate categories with different sample provisions.
5. **Coding of contracts.** After training and the assessment, I worked with CZ staff to assign and review CBAs and LEOBORs, including recoding of any that were coded. For this to happen, researchers were provided with Kira credentials, the codebook, links to the training materials, and membership to a Slack channel where I and other CZ researchers would field any questions and provide further clarification on provisions that researchers needed support for reviewing (these materials can be found in Appendix E).
6. **Monitoring and reviewing of coders.** As part of the training protocol and procedures, researchers were initially assigned 20 contracts to code within the Kira system. Once completed, they would automatically be scheduled to meet for a 1-on-1 working session with myself or another CZ staff member to provide mentoring and discuss feedback. Following the 1-on-1 individualized sessions, researchers were then assigned additional contracts weekly for review on a regular cadence depending on their availability and bandwidth.
7. **Second and third-tier review.** After the initial coding of a document (i.e., CBA or LEOBOR) was completed, the project team would ensure there were at least two additional researchers, typically myself and CZ's lead researcher, to complete second- and third-tier of

reviews, respectively. This would include reviewing the tagged provisions and then proceeding to review the contract to identify any missing provisions. Experienced coders were defined as paid research staff who successfully completed 100+ reviews of contracts successfully in a one-month period. Thus, each contract underwent a three-tier review process. For the first few hundred contracts, only CZ leadership, myself, and CZ's lead police union contract researcher were allowed to be assigned as second or third-tier reviewer.

8. **Fourth-tier review and time frame check.** Apart from CZ research staff, I provided an additional layer of review to ensure that there were no inconsistencies with the coding and to ensure that the contracts were active during the period of investigation (i.e., not expired during the study scope). Essentially, I reviewed the initial coding again by reviewing all tagged provisions to ensure they fit the framework and then proceeded to search for identifying missing provisions. For example, I found a provision that had been missed in the initial coding and in the second- and third-tier reviews for Chicago. Also, Appendix F discusses contract time frame for the scope of this study to ensure that the provisions were all active and present for the period of analysis of this investigation (2013-2019). One notable change was that the city of Austin had significant changes to its CBA starting in 2019.

Kira Qualitative Coding Advantages

The Kira platform used for the large-scale text classification provided several additional features that made it easier to code beyond a typical qualitative coding program (e.g., Quirkos), which helped improve quality assurance and assisted in the identification of missed provisions. Some of the notable features include a built-in natural language processing (NLP) algorithm to assist in identifying problematic provisions, content management system to assign multiple researchers per contracts, and more which is described in further detail below.

Kira provides several advantages that are well suited for this research endeavor. Some of the notable features are included below:

- Automates the tracking of reviewers, thereby facilitating Campaign Zero's multiple-tier review process. Kira also had flagging features enabling researchers to flag errors with specific coders.
- Allows tagging of provisions, which allow additional granularity and the ability of coders to flag provisions of concern that need additional review.
- A built-in natural language processing (NLP) algorithm recommends missing contract provisions that should be coded conditionally on past and ongoing coding practices. However, given the limitations of the NLP algorithm, we instructed coders to read through the whole contract and exclude recommendations until the review is completed. We also instructed coders to use the NLP algorithm identified provisions to help supplement their coding as opposed to using them as a starting point given low F-Scores which require further. An F-Score is test that allows users to understand the accuracy of a system (i.e., accuracy rate of Kira NLP algorithm successfully identifying provisions).
- A snapshot of the Kira review system dashboard:

APPENDIX D: PROVISION DESCRIPTIONS

This codebook was the first step in allowing for the construction of the index of police protections.

Category 1: Disqualifying Complaints

Number of CBAs with Provision: 36

Number of CBAs or LEOBORs with Provision: 69

10.1.4. Limiting Length of Investigation

This provision places a time limit on investigations of civilian complaints or internal complaints such that missing the deadline can result in either an unfounded complaint or the department being prevented from administering discipline. For instance, the Hialeah, FL, CBA includes the following provision:

“Any internal investigation, except where criminal charges are being investigated, shall be completed within sixty (60) days from the date the officer is informed of the initial complaint. No officer may be subjected to any disciplinary action as a result of any investigation not completed within that time period.”
[Hialeah, FL, CBA, 2018]

10.1.5. Types of Disqualifying Complaints

This type of provision includes any restrictions on the type of complaints that can be filed, which may be defined by the level of misconduct, nature of the incident, who the incident can be filed with (e.g. the investigatory entity), or the level of information required. Also includes granting the chief of police or other designee authority to disqualify complaints; limitations on civilian complaints; and preventing video/audio footage being used to initiate a complaint. The following provision found in the Spokane, WA, CBA is one such example:

“The Chief or her/his designee will determine whether or not the complaint will be investigated, and if it will be investigated, what type of investigation including an IA Investigation, an Inquiry, a Shift Level investigation, or other type of investigation. IA will notify the OPO in writing of the determination as to whether or not the complaint will be investigated by the Department.” [Spokane, WA, CBA, 2016]

10.1.6. Statutes of Limitations on Filing of a Complaint

An example of provisions with a temporal constraint is found in the Columbus contract:

“The investigation of citizen complaints shall be concluded within ninety (90) days after the date the complaint was received by the City. This deadline may be extended by the Lodge upon written request from the City.” [Columbus, OH, CBA, 2016]

Rushin admits that, while there is a benefit to keeping temporal constraints on filing complaints, it can be problematic when approaching “egregious” incidents where information is discovered at a later period (Rushin 2017). An example of an “egregious” incident he cites is the “midnight crew,” a group of Chicago police officers who were active between 1972-1991. They were known to torture civilians and administer electric shocks and other torture techniques (Rushin 2017). Unfortunately, the

evidence did not surface until after the statute of limitations had passed, which prevented the police department from further investigating the officers involved.

10.1.7. Limitations on Filing an Anonymous Complaint & Other Types of Complaints

Another restriction involves restrictions on the type of complaint that can be filed or preventing the filing of anonymous complaints, which is often cited as a strong deterrent for civilians who are afraid to make themselves known (Keenan and Walker 2005). Specifically, complaints that involve police brutality are more likely to be associated with a fear of retribution and prevent civilians from coming forward.

Category 2: Providing Officers with Access to Information

Number of CBAs with Provision: 44

Number of CBAs or LEOBORs with Provision: 73

Provides officers with access to evidence before being interrogated, such as interviews of complainants and/or witnesses, investigative files, documents or objects, or access to previous cases of misconduct investigations.

10.1.8. Access to Investigative Materials

Rushin provides a hypothetical situation where a suspect has the same type of access to an investigative file that an officer has prior to an interrogation (Rushin 2017). He argues that most officers would view it as a constraint in carrying out a thorough investigation. Officers are likely to make a claim that such access “would make it unreasonably difficult to elicit [an] incriminating statement (Rushin 2017, p. 1224).” Moreover, this protection runs contradictory to what has been argued to be “best practices” for investigators (Keenan and Walker 2005; Walker 2008). The following provision was found in the Tampa Bay, FL, CBA:

“The officer who is the subject of the complaint may review the complaint and all statements regardless of form made by the complainant and witnesses and all existing evidence immediately before beginning the investigative interview.” [Tampa Bay, FL, CBA, 2016]

In some cases, such as in Chicago, the contract allows officers accused of misconduct to amend their statements after viewing the audio or video of the incident ([Emmanuel 2020](#)). Another example of the provisions is as follows:

“Prior to any PI-21 interrogation that could lead to discipline, demotion, or discharge, the subject of the interrogation shall be allowed to view any audio or video obtained from the subject’s body worn camera or squad video, which relates to the investigation.”
[Milwaukee, MN, CBA, 2020]

10.1.9. Access to Complainant Names

Another concern is that there is a possibility that police officers intimidate complainants from filing complaints or otherwise coerce them into withdrawing complaints (Collins 1998, p. 180.; Keenan and Walker 2005). Collins argues that complainants “may be dissuaded from filing a complaint by threats or other tactics (Collins 1998).” An example is found in the Anchorage, AK, CBA:

Where known, employees shall be advised of the name of the complainant.
[Anchorage, AK, CBA, 2020]

Category 3: Restricting/Delaying Investigations

Number of CBAs with Provision: 47

Number of CBAs or LEOBORs with Provision: 81

10.1.9.1. Restrictions on Non-Sworn Investigators & Number of Investigators

A restriction on non-sworn investigators or the number/type of investigators can be a serious impediment that can reduce deterrence. This protection overlaps with concerns related to civilian oversight and problems with officers being judged by their fellow peers, rather than by an independent member who is objective and has no history or loyalty to the police force. As discussed earlier, situations where officers may be pressured by peers to protect their fellow officers are more prevalent in these settings where there are no external members to review the decisions and conduct thorough investigations. Some cities like Baltimore prevent non-sworn investigators from having any voting power:

"No civilians other than an Administrative Law Judge may serve on a Departmental Hearing Board... The AU ... will not be a voting member of the panel during deliberations on verdict or sentencing. In no event shall an AU be appointed to a Departmental Hearing Board without the consent of the accused employee or his/her counsel of record" [Baltimore, MD, CBA, 2016]

This provision stipulates that the only non-sworn member is virtually powerless – ensuring that the officer who is being disciplined will only be judged by a panel of his/her peers.

10.1.9.2. Formal Waiting Periods that Delay Investigations

Formal waiting periods are considered by several criminologists to be one of the most serious impediments. Huq and McAdams (2016) dedicate a study solely to the impact of waiting periods, which they term “delay privileges,” and highlight the serious risk they pose. The San Diego, CA, CBA includes the following provision:

“Any officer or officers under investigation will receive at least three (3) working days’ notice prior to an interrogation except where a delay will hamper the gathering of evidence as determined by an Assistant Chief.” [San Diego, CA, CBA, 2016]

Keenan and Walker argue that “delays in investigations allow officers time to collude to create a consistent, exculpatory story” (Keenan and Walker 2005, p. 212). Similarly, Rushin (2017) highlights that the extra time permitted to consult with attorneys, in combination with other protections (particularly, full access to investigative materials) can impede efforts to on keep officers accountable (Rushin 2017).

10.1.10. Restricts Interrogation Conduct

Other provisions create obstacles or restriction on investigation parameters including length, scope of questioning, and preventing the use of techniques that police would use on civilians. Marysville, OH, CBA includes the following provision:

No polygraph examination may be given in an incident that could not amount to a violation of law, unless requested by the employee. No polygraph examination shall be given without the advance approval of the Chief of Police.
[Marysville, OH, CBA, 2020]

Category 4: Limiting Oversight

Number of CBAs with Provision: 20

Number of CBAs or LEOBORs with Provision: 45

10.1.11. Limiting Civilian or other forms of External Oversight

Provisions that reduce civilian oversight are frequently found in the contracts studies and are a serious burden to creating accountable police departments. These provisions can make oversight entities virtually powerless and ineffective. The absence of civilian oversight is self-oversight, where the board is composed of a body of peers. The lack of transparency or involvement of civilian actors in disciplinary investigations can make these boards vulnerable to peer pressure (Bobb 2003; Greene 2007). This is a common problem found in self-oversight, which critics have labelled as the “The Blue Wall of Silence” (Huq and McAdams 2016). Thus, strong and autonomous external bodies which have the power to conduct thorough investigations and issue recommendations are found to be more effective in improving police-community relations and forces departments to conduct thorough investigations of misconduct (Finn 2001; Philips and Trone 2002). This category includes oversight entities that are limited in their capacity to subpoena, interrogate officers, participate or are restricted from conducting a thorough investigation. Additionally, should the provision make the civilian review board essentially powerless or restrict participation, then the provision is categorized as a high-level protection. In this instance, the St. Paul union contract prevents the civilian oversight board from issuing a finding or disputing a complaint.

A provision which would constitute reducing or preventing any civilian oversight entity would constitute the following language found in the St. Paul, MN, CBA:

“A civilian review board, commission, or other oversight body shall not have the authority to make a finding of fact or determination regarding a complaint against an officer or impose discipline on an officer.” [St. Paul, MN, CBA, 2016]

Category 5: Limiting Transparency and Disciplinary Consequences

Number of CBAs with Provision: 55

Number of CBAs or LEOBORs with Provision: 78

10.1.12. Preventing the Release of Public Information

Protections that reduce transparency in department procedures are also worth including. These provisions, while reasonable, can involve crippling oversight. Alternatively, union leaders will argue

that this protection prevents investigators from taking advantage of officers. Unions will argue that transparent disciplinary procedures could reduce efficiency (Rushin 2017). Moreover, it can lead to the department “pandering to constituents during public hearings, rather than engaging in frank discussions about the complex array of issues at stake” (Rushin 2017, p. 1249). A Bakersfield, CA, CBA provision falls under this category:

“The mediator shall make no public recommendations nor shall there be any public disclosure of mediation discussions in further proceedings in the grievance procedure.” [Bakersfield, CA, CBA, 2016]

Provisions which limit transparency to the public inherently reduce accountability since they make it difficult to assess some of the problems that may plague investigations. It is important, in accordance with “best practices” of investigations, to conduct an open and transparent investigation (Walker 2008).

10.1.13. Limits Disciplinary Consequences

Provisions which restrict departments or oversight entities from administering discipline more than a certain time period or other types of protections such as creating delays between the end of investigation and discipline which helps mitigate the impact of unpaid suspension. The following provision found in the Vancouver, WA, CBA is one such example

In the event the Employer offers a police officer the option of resigning in lieu of discipline, the Employer will notify the Guild that the offer has been made and the Employer will allow the police officer up to seven days to consider the option.
[Vancouver, WA, CBA, 2020]

10.1.14. Preventing Use of Past Misconduct

Disallowing the consideration of an officer’s previous misconduct during investigations or preventing them from being used in subsequent disciplinary decisions. For example, the Mesa, AZ, CBA includes the following provision:

“Any documented performance or discipline resulting in written or verbal counseling, or written or verbal reprimand, older than three (3) years shall not be considered when determining transfers, assignments or promotions”
[Mesa, AZ, CBA, 2018]

10.1.15. Other General Advantages in Disciplinary Process

There are several different advantages that CBAs afford to officers during the disciplinary process including preventing the use of polygraphs for officers, preventing the interrogation of officers, or others such protections like preventing confessions or any evidence obtained in the internal investigation from being used in a criminal prosecution. The following provision found in the Tucson, AZ, CBA is one such example:

“The parties may not use any information presented and statements made at the mediation as evidence in any subsequent proceedings, and the mediator cannot be called as a witness in any subsequent proceedings.”
[Tucson, AZ, CBA, 2016]

Another such provision surrounding polygraphs can be found in the Memphis, TN, CBA:

“No employee will be ordered to submit to a polygraph (lie detector) test for any reason. Such test may be offered by the Police Administration or independently requested by the

employee. The refusal of an employee to take a polygraph test will not be grounds for disciplinary action..”

[Memphis, TN, CBA, 2017]

Category 6: Financial Protections & Liability Coverage

Number of CBAs with Provision: 54

Number of CBAs or LEOBORs with Provision: 61

Campaign Zero also codes for “Increases Police Spending/Restricts Police Reinvention” but due to the nature of this index, provisions such as prohibiting or restricting layoffs are not included into this index.

10.1.15.1. Requiring City to Pay for Legal Costs and Indemnification

Civil rights doctrine – 42 U.S.C. § 1983 – assumes that police officers are left with the responsibility to pay settlements at their own expense (Schwartz 2014, p. 890). This, in part, is intended to deter abusive conduct: an officer is less likely to commit misconduct or abuse their power if they are cognizant of the liability for the compensation.

However, one study found that between 2006 and 2011, officers personally contributed financially to 0.41% of the 9225 civil rights claims in the nation’s 44 largest police departments (Schwartz 2014). Schwartz (2014) argues that her findings “undermine assumptions of financial responsibility relied upon in civil rights doctrine.” Because of qualified immunity, an exception that is frequently used to place liability on the city, and union contracts, which mandate the city to pay for legal costs and settlements, there seems to be no financial pressure to create a deterrent effect on the officer. Thus, union contracts where the costs of settlements or legal fees fall onto the city are problematic and are a serious impediment in keeping officers accountable. An example is as follows:

“... indemnification will also be provided to any member of the unit who is made a defendant in litigation arising out of acts within the scope of his or her employment.” [Baltimore, MD, CBA, 2016]

10.1.15.2. Requiring City to Pay for Suspension/Fees

While this is a difficult provision to qualify, as many employers would be expected to pay for their employees’ time when they have not been proven guilty of any action, the lack of financial responsibility, as noted above, mitigates the deterrent effect. The following provision from the Milwaukee, WI, CBA constitutes an example:

“In addition, the member shall also be served with a notice informing them of their option to substitute discretionary time in place of any or all suspension days. Suspensions exceeding five days shall not be eligible for substitution” [Milwaukee, WI, CBA, 2016]

Category 7: Erasing Misconduct

Number of CBAs with Provision: 40

Number of CBAs or LEOBORs with Provision: 46

The next category discusses provisions which institute statutes of limitations on data retention and erasing misconduct.

10.1.16. Purging Founded Records

A high-level protection would include provisions that contain language which forces the department to erase sustained complaints or prevents the use of complaint history in newly opened investigations. The following provision is found in the Sacramento, CA, CBA:

“Documented disciplinary actions, or other related adverse documented comments entered in the employee's Office file, shall be removed from the Office file after one year from the date of documentation.” [Sacramento, CA, CBA, 2016]

These provisions should be of greater concern for its potential role in insulating police abuse. It is apparent the impact that such a provision can have on reducing deterrence and accountability. Moreover, Walker and Rushin argue that these limitations on data retention and use are hurtful to Early Intervention Systems (EIS), which Walker argues to be one of the most innovative and important accountability mechanisms (Rushin 2017; Keenan and Walker 2005).

10.1.17. Purging Unfounded Records

Some contracts and LEOBOR prevent departments from keeping or revealing officer discipline and complaint history. These types of provisions do not apply only to civilian oversight entities, but also to internal department investigations. This makes it difficult not only for civilian review boards but also for departments attempting to discipline or terminate officers. These provisions include actions which instruct the department or city to: (1) delete disciplinary history or complaints after a certain period; (2) delete disciplinary history or complaints upon discretion of a supervisory officer; or (3) delete sustained complaints and other actions of a similar nature.

A Hialeah contract provision would fall under this category of provisions:

“Any employee of this bargaining unit who is the subject of an internal investigation or review board will have the right to have all documents and reports purged from his personnel file if he is found to be not guilty.” [Hialeah, FL, CBA, 2017]

The erasure of sustained complaints is clearly problematic because it represents cases where officers were found guilty of wrongful conduct. However, erasing unsustained complaints is also problematic: the lack of a complaint history makes it difficult to establish patterns of bias or misconduct.

10.1.18. Request to purge

Other provisions which don't automatically purge officer misconduct history but allow officers to request expungement is also one that should be considered. The Baltimore, MD, CBA, includes the following provision:

“N. The Department agrees to establish a protocol for advising employees that three (3) years have elapsed since a finding by the Department or a Hearing Board that a formal complaint was either not sustained, exonerated, unfounded, or a Hearing Board acquitted the accused employee, dismissed the action, or made a finding of not guilty, and that the employee may

request expungement of such matter from any file containing the record of the formal complaint.
[Baltimore, MD, CBA, 2017]

Category 8: Arbitration

Number of CBAs with Provision: 51

Number of CBAs or LEOBORs with Provision: 60

Most CBAs include arbitration clauses, allowing officers to resolve disputes outside of the courtroom. The broader legitimacy of arbitration as an alternative dispute resolution mechanism is not in question (Rushin 2017; Rushin 2019). Rather, the use of arbitration, specifically as a disciplinary tool, has been documented and argued to be a serious impediment to accountability (Rushin 2017; Rushin 2019). This is primarily because it has been demonstrated that arbitration often leads to less disciplinary penalties (Armstrong 2000; Rushin 2017). Moreover, research has also cited concerns around the arbitrary nature of arbitrators and suggest that to retain their positions, need to make decisions that make them seem “impartial” to both parties (Iris 1998). Given that in some CBAs there are provisions requiring the city to select an arbitrator jointly with the union, the vested interests naturally become complicated. The Detroit, MI, contract includes the following provision:

“The disciplinary action must be appealed to arbitration by providing written notice to the Department within seven (7) days of the date of the decision resulting from the Chief’s Hearing. Any information requests shall accompany the request to arbitrate.”¹ [Detroit, MI, CBA, 2016]

Furthermore, the decisions reached in arbitration are final and cannot be overturned by a court, even if the arbitrator is “wrong on the facts and wrong on the law.” (Steelworkers v. Enter Wheel & Car Corp., 363 U.S. 593, 596). There are limitations with generalizing all provisions in this category under the same umbrella. While some arbitrations decisions are not binding, most states limit the judicial review of arbitration decisions on appeal, thus making them effectively binding. But some localities do make arbitration decisions fully reviewable by city managers, city councils, etc. (these options are normally available in places like California and Arizona, though, and they are admittedly a rarity). Additionally, Iris (1998) examines arbitration decisions and raises concerns around the arbitrariness of decisions and how it could be due to pressure to seem “impartial.”

APPENDIX E: CODEBOOK & SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCES FOR CONTRACT CODING



Nix the 6 contract researchers were provided with the following resources to assist them following the training and assessments:

- [Codebook](#)
- Supplemental Resources
 - [Essential Terms: Kira & Police Contracts \(in Progress\)](#)
 - [Examples of Provisions to Code \(or not\)](#)
 - [Kira Coding for New First-Tier Coders \(in Progress\)](#)
 - [FAQs - Returning Kira Coders \(in Progress\)](#)
 - [FAQs - Kira Coders \(In Progress\)](#)

The project’s Open Science Framework site includes the following supplemental resources:

- Contract Coder Training
- Contract Coder Assessments
- Contract Coder Scores
- Codebook
- Supplemental Codebook & Clarification Documents

Police Contracts | Codebook

<p>Steps for Coding</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Read the entire contract and <i>not only the</i> provisions selected by Kira. 2. When a provision fits a Category, highlight it and click on one of the Categories. (Kira then pastes the highlighted text to that Category.) 3. Go to the provision and click the Add Tag icon  . Only use a Tag that belongs in the Category to which the provision has been added. 4. If Kira has mis-Categorized a provision, re-Categorize & Tag. Delete duds. 5. Highlight the bargaining unit (ranks) & click Contract Type. Tag rank. 6. Highlight the Start & Expiration dates & Tag each with the year. 7. Review the Worksheet: check that each provision is in the appropriate Category and Tagged correctly. 8. Click the grey check mark in the upper right corner to show Reviewed! 	<p>The Basics</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assign only one Tag to each highlighted provision (except the unique, rarely-found, two-tagger ). 2. Each Category can include only provisions with Tags from that Category. Tags can only be used in the Category to which they belong. 3. No overlapping highlights (except for ORI, City, & State). 4. Only use Tags from the Coding Key. 5. Leave the Summary text boxes blank. 6. Post questions or comments to Slack contract-coding channel!
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Coding Key for Kira

Categories & Tags	Keywords & Clarifications
<p>Disqualifies complaints Statutes of Limitations on Filing Complaints Establishes a statute of limitations of sixty (60) days or less for filing misconduct complaints that prevents civilians <i>or members of departments</i> from coming forward with complaints. ① Limiting Length of Investigation Places a time limit on investigations of civilian complaints or internal complaints such that missing the deadline can result in either an unfounded complaint or the department being prevented from administering discipline. <i>But</i> - If the provision says that investigations “are expected to take” or department/external review board “can continue” an investigation despite it being past the time period, do not code. ① Anonymous Complaint Disqualifies anonymous complaints by provisions such as requiring a signed affidavit, or establishing a time limitation to submit anonymous complaints. ① Disqualifies particular types of complaints Includes any restrictions on the type of complaints that can be filed, which may be defined by the level of misconduct, nature of the incident, who the incident can be filed with (i.e. the investigatory entity), or the level of information required. Also includes granting the chief of police or other designee authority to disqualify complaints; limitations on civilian complaints; and preventing video/audio footage being used to initiate a complaint. ①</p>	<p>Keywords: statute of limitations, anonymous, affidavit, investigation, completed within, sworn, does not exceed, exceed, not completed within, must be made within, citizen shall be, complaint of a citizen <i>Distinction:</i> Use Disqualifies Complaints/ Anonymous Complaints if the provision requires a sworn statement, complainant name, address, etc in order to be filed. <i>But</i>- If the provision requires that <i>information about the complainant</i> be provided to the officer then it would be a different Category and Tag: Gives officers unfair access to information/Complainant Names.</p>
<p>Restricts / Delays interrogations Restricts Number of Interrogators Excludes civilian investigators and/or limits the number of interrogators who can ask questions, be present, or investigate the case. ① Restricts Interrogation Conduct Restricts the structure and length of the interrogation, the scope of questioning, the use of technologies such as polygraphs, and/or prohibits any specified techniques, such as line-ups. ① Delays Interrogations Any expressed preference for when interrogations can occur, such as when an officer is on duty or during regular business hours; any provision to delay interrogations, such as for a given period of time or until all evidence has been collected. Includes prohibiting officers from being interrogated immediately after a use of force incident. ①</p>	<p>Keywords: interrogation, offensive language, question, interrogators, embarrassing, investigators, When polygraphs are prohibited, code Restricts / Delays Interrogations/ Restricts Interrogation Conduct. If the officer can refuse it, code as: Limits Oversight / Discipline/Advantages in Disciplinary Process <i>Code</i> Restricts / Delays Interrogations/Delays Interrogations for both formal waiting periods (i.e. 48 hour delay before interrogation) & informal, such as business hours. Code waiting for union/legal representation <i>only</i> if indicates specific time (e.g. 1 hour).</p>
<p>Gives officers unfair access to information Evidence Provides officers with access to evidence before being interrogated, such as interviews of complainants and/or witnesses, investigative files, documents or objects, or access to previous cases of misconduct investigations. ① Audio/visual Use this second Tag - only with the Evidence Tag - when the officers are granted access to BWC (body worn camera), video, and/or audio recordings. In this one instance only, a provision will get two Tags, both Evidence and Audio/visual. ① Complainant Names Provides officers with complainant names and/or identifying information at any time during the disciplinary process.. ① Interrogation Recording Provides officers to either access or request the recording or transcript of their interrogation immediately following the interrogation. ①</p>	<p>Keywords: evidence, affidavit, interrogation, complaint file, complaints, video recordings, investigative report, complainant name, all investigative files, <i>Distinction:</i> Use Gives officers unfair access to information/Complainant Names when the provision requires that <i>information about the complainant</i> be provided to the officer. <i>But</i> - If the provision requires a sworn statement, complainant name, address, etc. in order to be filed, use Disqualifies Complaints/Anonymous Complaints.</p>

Categories & Tags	Keywords & Clarifications
<p>Limits oversight / Discipline Appeal via Arbitration or Appeal via Binding Arbitration. Allows officers to appeal and potentially overturn any discipline, termination, or department actions to improve accountability. Reserve Appeal via Binding Arbitration for provisions that specify “binding” arbitration. ①</p> <p>Preventing Use of Past Misconduct Disallows the consideration of an officer’s previous misconduct investigations or sustained complaints (usually after a specified length of time) in subsequent disciplinary decisions. ①</p> <p>Limiting Power of Civilian Oversight/External Oversight Restricts the power of civilian oversight explicitly by preventing civilian oversight, reducing its scope and/or investigatory powers, or implicitly by specifying investigations cannot be initiated by any other entity beyond the department. Includes provisions which make the department the final actor in an investigation conducted by a civilian entity. ①</p> <p>Preventing Release of Information to Public Limiting the release of officer information, investigation information, sealing of files to the public, preventing disciplinary records from becoming public, preventing data from being released, and limiting transparency generally around departments processes, decision-making, and investigations. ①</p> <p>Limits Disciplinary Consequences Restricts suspension length; prevents/delays investigations until after criminal process; creates delay between the end of investigation and discipline; mitigates the impact of unpaid suspension, i.e. by allowing an officer to work at reduced pay for a period rather than an unpaid suspension; requiring that progressive discipline be followed for all offenses. ①</p> <p>Advantages in Disciplinary Process Allows officers to refuse to take polygraphs; prevents officers from being interviewed; prevents departmental investigations after reviewing BWC footage; prevents confessions/any evidence obtained in the internal investigation from being used in a criminal prosecution. Allows officers to be judged by entity of peers, or requires sensitivity in selection of investigators. ①</p>	<p>Keywords: Civilian oversight, external review, civilian entity, arbitrator, appeal, disciplinary review, civil service board, administrative officer, administrative hearing, hearing, recommend, Past Misconduct, Past Discipline, Delay, Waiting Period, sealed</p> <p><i>Clarification:</i> Appeal via Binding Arbitration. Look out for these clauses, <i>But</i> - code them only when they apply to conflicts between an officer and the department. An officer’s effort to overturn an imposition of punishment happens through the grievance procedure. Do not code arbitration provisions that <i>only</i> cover impasse issues, such as future bargaining contract discussions.</p> <p><i>Distinction:</i> Limits Oversight / Discipline/Preventing Use of Past Misconduct includes provisions which mandate that the department can’t consider or use past investigations or sustained complaints for new investigations. <i>But</i> - For records which are actually purged, use a Tag in Erases Misconduct Records.</p> <p><i>Distinction:</i> When the polygraph can be administered but the officer can opt-out of (refuse) to take it, code as Limits Oversight / Discipline/Advantages in Disciplinary Process. If, however, the use of polygraphs (or other techniques) is prohibited, code as: Restricts / Delays Interrogations/Restricts Interrogation Conduct.</p>
<p>Increases police spending / Restricts police reinvention Pays Officers Investigated or Suspended Any provision which prevents officer pay from being suspended immediately, such as requiring payment of salary (or placement on paid administrative leave) to officers during the investigation. Also, any provision that an officer can get paid back time following a misconduct investigation, even when the officer exonerated. ①</p> <p>Paid Leave Allows officers to use vacation time, Comp time. and/or sick leave to get paid during suspension/disciplinary period. ①</p> <p>Pays Legal Costs Requires the city (or other governmental entity) to pay liability insurance, lawyers’ fees and/or other legal costs for an officer accused of misconduct. ①</p> <p>Prohibits Layoffs Prohibits layoffs of officers.</p> <p>Restricts Layoffs Restricts layoffs to be by seniority order or other specified process. ①</p> <p>Restricts Civilian Alternatives Prevents department from creating civilian alternatives for police functions such as traffic control, mental health crisis response, welfare checks.</p> <p>Automatic Funding All across the board wage &/or benefits increases, such as negotiated salary increases or inflation adjustments; longevity salary increases. But - Do not code salary increases for different ranks (e.g. patrol, sergeant), step increases within ranks, or qualifications such as shooting rifles or earning a community college degree. ①</p> <p>Career payments Also called “terminal leave” payments. These clauses require the employer to give a retiring officer months of pay as a parting benefit. But - do not code provisions that compensate at retirement for unused vacation or sick time. ①</p>	<p>Keywords: arbitration, grievance (procedure), discipline, indemnify, legal fees, legal cost, legal defense, administrative leave, paid time off (PTO), compensatory time off (CTO), backpay, administrative leave without pay</p> <p><i>Clarification:</i> In Arbitration cases, use Increases Police Spending/Pays Legal Costs when the city or state pays the costs of Arbitration. Do not code when the costs are divided between the parties.</p>

Categories & Tags	Keywords & Clarifications
<p>Erases misconduct records</p> <p>Purging Disciplinary Records Schedules the removal of misconduct records from an officer's personnel file without requiring a request; prevents misconduct records from being retained. ①</p> <p>Purging Unfounded Records Removes unfounded misconduct investigations or prevents them from being retained; states that only sustained investigations will be placed into the file. ①</p> <p>Request to purge Allows officers to request the removal of misconduct records from their files; allows police chiefs or supervisors to remove misconduct allegations from their records. ①</p>	<p>Keywords: personnel file, adjudication, reprimand, disciplinary matters/files, expunge, remove, written request</p>
<p>Erases misconduct records</p> <p>Purging Disciplinary Records Schedules the removal of misconduct records from an officer's personnel file without requiring a request; prevents misconduct records from being retained. ①</p> <p>Purging Unfounded Records Removes unfounded misconduct investigations or prevents them from being retained; states that only sustained investigations will be placed into the file. ①</p> <p>Request to purge Allows officers to request the removal of misconduct records from their files; allows police chiefs or supervisors to remove misconduct allegations from their records. ①</p>	<p>Keywords: personnel file, adjudication, reprimand, disciplinary matters/files, expunge, remove, written request</p>
<p>Start Highlight & Tag the Year.</p>	
<p>Expiration Highlight & Tag the Year.</p>	
<p>Miscellaneous</p> <p>LEOBOR Provisions on the Law Enforcement Officers Bill of Rights, a list of protections for interrogation & more. Also called Police Officers' Bill of Rights & other titles. ①</p> <p>Preventing Civilianizing Any provision that prevents (or restricts) a department from hiring civilians to perform duties currently done by officers or that prevents (or restricts) the contracting out of work to private vendors or non-profit organizations. ①</p> <p>Extra Duty Department-organized short-term assignments paid for by outside employers. The department typically sets the hourly rate and charges a fee for administration. Officers can earn money beyond their salaries at a rate higher than their usual. ①</p> <p>Evergreen Clauses which state that the contract is automatically renewed, or stays in effect if there is no negotiation. ①</p> <p>Chilling Effect Civilians filing a complaint must be told of the criminal penalties and/or potential lawsuits for making false accusations against a police officer. ①</p> <p>Residency Clause permits officers to live or be hired from outside city limits. ①</p>	

Categories & Tags	Keywords & Clarifications
<p>Contract Type</p> <p>Police Officers All contracts (except Universities') whose bargaining unit includes rank-and-file police officers. There are three types: (1) police officers covered in a separate contract; (2) the police officers unit also includes Corporal and/or Sergeants; and (3) the unit includes all except top management (or has no exclusions). ①</p> <p>Sheriff's Contracts for the rank-and-file officers in Sheriffs' departments. Can be called Sheriff's Deputies, Deputy Sheriffs, or even just Sheriffs, or even Road Patrol. Use Sheriff's whenever the bargaining unit includes rank-and-file officers, even when it also includes higher ranks. ①</p> <p>University Police Bargaining units at colleges or universities that include police officers, whether or not they also include higher ranks. ①</p> <p>Managers Supervisors in their own bargaining unit, exclusive of police officers or Sheriff's deputies. May include only Sergeants, or Sergeants and other higher ranks. ①</p> <p>Executives Contracts covering Chiefs and Deputy Chiefs exclusive of other higher ranks. ①</p>	
<p>ORI No action needed. ORI explanation.</p>	
<p>City No action needed.</p>	
<p>State No action needed.</p>	

APPENDIX F: CONTRACT TEMPORALITY AND SELECTION

Contract Temporality & Selection

It is worth noting that the addition or removal of contract provisions in CBAs, specifically protections, are largely “a rare occurrence” (Walker 2008; Keenan and Walker 2005). Except for minor changes, all CBAs used for this study are active and static surrounding the provision types through 2020. Contracts that have been renewed since the completion of Campaign Zero’s database have been checked for the addition or removal of provisions pertinent to the construction of this index.

For the small number of contracts that have removed or added any provisions, I decided to keep with the older version of the contract since changes in contracts may take time to implement and get embedded with the culture. For example, one noteworthy change was the city of Austin which removed several provisions across the 8 categories. However, the changes did not take place until 2019 and I am treating that as a minor limitation given buffering periods. Thus, the protections for the period of this study are static and do not vary temporally. Due to significant changes in policing in 2020, contract data will only go through 2019.

Additionally, recent research examining police unionism and bargaining rights finds that changes take 1-5 years to set in (Cunningham, Feir, and Gillezau 2021). Cities that have experienced changes in provisions can be found below:

Provision Included and Excluded

Police protections that (1) have not been argued to create problems for accountability in existing scholarship or (2) police protections that are not found in CBAs or LEOBORs (i.e., they are only found in policy manuals) are excluded in the framework and index. This index specifically examines protections found in CBAs and LEOBORs. Thus, it fails to identify every provision that may impede police accountability that may be present in other areas such as department manuals. However, such an exhaustive approach is beyond the scope of this analysis and framework.

Justifying Provision Categories

The aim of the police protectionism measures is to understand police protectionism broadly. This analysis took a conservative approach by including the range of protections that scholarship argues or finds to be concerning accountability and transparency and are only found in CBAs or LEOBORs. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that all provision categories could be argued by unions to be a reasonable protection for officers (Levinson 2017). For example, protections such as allowing officers to utilize their own recording devices for interrogations are excluded.

Dimensions of Police Protectionism

The categories in the framework used in this analysis do not relate to one specific area of policing (e.g., civilian oversight). Instead, the protections discussed below provide a more comprehensive understanding of police protectionism found in CBAs and LEOBORs. In other words, the index encompasses provisions that impact a range of processes that relate to front-end protections (e.g., disqualifying complaints), mid-level protections during investigations (e.g., interrogation delays), and back-end protections (e.g., erasing misconduct). While this approach prevents the study from isolating the effects in a specific area and may create issues concerning conceptual ambiguity with creating one

construct to capture all of police protectionism, it also allows the study to better investigate the range of protections that can be coupled together to reduce deterrence or allow for unrestrained policing. Future investigations should also use each category to measure the appropriate outcomes.

Police Union Strength v. Police Protectionism

It is critical to acknowledge that the level of police protectionism does not necessarily indicate union strength, especially given that the size of a union was not relevant for the level of police protectionism, which is not the case in many areas for labor. For example, unions draw their strength from the size of their membership, yet this is not a determinant of the level of police protectionism. Thus, it is important to caution future researchers from employing this index to measure police union strength. Further scholarship is needed to make a claim that the level of police protections indicates the level of union strength, especially given that there may be the benefit of receiving state-level protections. Again, this index solely measures the level of protections secured through CBAs or LEOBORs. For example, a city could have a high police protection score but still have a weak union in other ways, for example struggling financially or organizationally. Alternatively, a department may have a low police protection score but have more capital and resources to focus on other efforts. It is difficult to measure union strength because of the many spheres of influence unions occupy, especially those which are more difficult to quantify (Juris and Feuille 1973; Rad *et al.*, 2023).

Contract Temporality

To ensure that the contracts used in the study were active, the table below includes the review of contracts included in the index and confirms that there are no significant changes during the period examined. Most noteworthy are the changes in Austin, TX, which occur in 2019 and come into place in 2020. Except for minor changes included below, all contracts employed for this study are active and relatively static surrounding the provision types through 2020. Contracts that have been renewed since the completion of Campaign Zero’s database have been checked for the addition or removal of provisions pertinent to the construction of this index. Cities that have experienced changes in provisions can be found below:

LOCATION NAME	CONTR ACT?	CHECKED?	CHANGED?	START	END	UPDATE
NEW YORK	1	CHECKED	NO			EXTENDED
LOS ANGELES	1	CHECKED	NO			EXTENDED
CHICAGO	1	CHECKED	NO			NO CHANGE
HOUSTON	1	CHECKED	YES			NO CHANGE
PHOENIX	1	CHECKED	NO	2016	2019	PROVISION ADDED
LAS VEGAS	1	CHECKED	NO	2019	2021	NO CHANGE
PHILADELPHIA	1	CHECKED	NO	7/1/2019	6/30/2014	EXTENDED
SAN ANTONIO	1	CHECKED	NO	9/1/2016	9/30/2021	NO CHANGE
SAN DIEGO	1	CHECKED	NO	7/1/2015	6/30/2020	NO CHANGE
DALLAS	1	CHECKED	NO	8/21/2016	9/30/2019	NO CHANGE
SAN JOSE	1	CHECKED	NO	1/1/2017	6/30/2020	NO CHANGE
HONOLULU	1	CHECKED	NO	7/1/2011	6/30/2017	NO CHANGE
AUSTIN	1	CHECKED	YES	11/15/2018	9/30/2022	SEVERAL PROVISIONS REMOVED IN 2019
CHARLOTTE	n/a	CHECKED	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
JACKSONVILLE	1	CHECKED	NO	10/1/2017	9/30/2020	NO CHANGE

FORT WORTH	1	CHECKED	NO	2017	9/30/2020	NO CHANGE
COLUMBUS	1	CHECKED	NO	6/1/2017	6/20/2021	NO CHANGE
SAN FRANCISCO	1	CHECKED	NO	7/1/2018	6/30/2021	UNKNOWN
INDIANAPOLIS	1	CHECKED	NO	1/1/2017	12/31/2020	NO CHANGE
SEATTLE	1	CHECKED	NO	2015	2020	NO CHANGE
DENVER	1	CHECKED	NO	2018	12/31/2020	NO CHANGE
WASHINGTON	1	CHECKED	NO	10/1/2018	9/30/2020	NO CHANGE
BOSTON	1	CHECKED	NO			NO CHANGE
EL PASO	1	CHECKED	NO	11/11/2014	8/31/2018	NO CHANGE
NASHVILLE	1	CHECKED	UNKNOWN	7/1/2009	6/30/2012	UNKNOWN
LOUISVILLE	1	CHECKED	NO	7/3/2013	6/30/2018	NO CHANGE
DETROIT	1	CHECKED	UNKNOWN	10/1/2014	6/30/2019	NO CHANGE
PORTLAND	1	CHECKED	NO	11/11/2016	6/30/2020	NO CHANGE
OKLAHOMA CITY	1	CHECKED	NO	2019	2020	NO CHANGE
MEMPHIS	1	CHANGED	YES	7/1/2017	6/30/2021	PROVISION ADDED
BALTIMORE	1	FIXED	NO	2019	2021	NO CHANGE
MILWAUKEE	1	CHECKED	NO	1/1/2018	12/31/2019	NO CHANGE
ALBUQUERQUE	1	CHECKED	NO	1/7/2018	6/30/2020	NO CHANGE
TUCSON	1	CHECKED	?	6/1/2011	6/30/2014	NO CHANGE
FRESNO	1	FIXED	?	6/1/2019	6/20/2021	Don't have updated contracts
SACRAMENTO	1	FIXED	?	2019	9/30/2021	Don't have updated contracts
MESA	1	CHECKED	NO	7/1/2014	6/30/2017	NO CHANGE
ATLANTA	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
KANSAS CITY	5	CHECKED				NO CHANGE
RALEIGH	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
MIAMI	1	CHECKED		10/1/2018	9/30/2021	n/a
COLORADO SPRINGS	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO CHANGE
LONG BEACH	1	CHECKED	UNKNOWN	10/1/2019	9/30/2022	n/a
OMAHA	1	CHECKED	NO	12/21/2014	12/26/2020	NO CHANGE
VIRGINIA BEACH	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
OAKLAND	1	CHECKED	YES	12/12/2018	6/30/2024	n/a
MINNEAPOLIS	1	CHECKED	YES	1/1/2017	12/31/2019	NO CHANGE
TULSA	1	CHECKED		7/1/2019	6/30/2020	<i>Recent Changes but not during study period</i>
ARLINGTON	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO CHANGE
NEW ORLEANS	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
TAMPA	1	CHECKED	NO	1/1/2019	9/30/2022	n/a
WICHITA	1	CHECKED	YES	1/1/2018	12/24/2022	NO CHANGE
BAKERSFIELD	1	CHECKED	NO	9/1/2019	6/1/2022	NO CHANGE
CLEVELAND	1	CHECKED	NO	4/1/2019	3/1/2022	NO CHANGE
AURORA	1	CHECKED	NO	1/1/2019	12/31/2020	NO CHANGE
ANAHEIM	1	FIXED	YES	6/28/2019	7/3/2025	NO CHANGE
SANTA ANA	1	FIXED	NO	7/1/2018	6/1/2021	PROVISION ADDED
RIVERSIDE	1	FIXED	NO	2018	2020	NO CHANGE

CORPUS CHRISTI	1	FIXED	NO	8/1/2015	9/30/2019	NO CHANGE
LEXINGTON	1	CHECKED	NO	7/1/2016	6/30/2020	<u>NO CHANGE</u>
STOCKTON	1	CHECKED	NO	7/1/2019	6/30/2022	NO CHANGE
ST. PAUL	1	FIXED	UNKNOWN	1/1/2018	12/31/2021	NO CHANGE
HENDERSON	1	FIXED	UNKNOWN	1/1/2019	12/31/2020	NO CHANGE
ST. LOUIS	1	FIXED	UNKNOWN	6/30/2014	6/30/2017	NO CHANGE
PITTSBURGH	1	FIXED	UNKNOWN	1/1/2010	12/31/2014	NO CHANGE
CINCINNATI	1	FIXED	NO	5/12/2019	5/1/2021	NO CHANGE
GREENSBORO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO CHANGE
ANCHORAGE	1	UPDATED	NO	7/1/2015	6/1/2018	n/a
PLANO	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	<u>NO CHANGE</u>
LINCOLN	1	FIXED	UNKNOWN	10/1/2019	8/31/2022	n/a
IRVINE	1	CHECKED	UNKNOWN	7/1/2019	6/30/2022	NO CHANGE
ORLANDO	1	UPDATED	YES	10/1/2019	9/30/2022	PROVISION ADDED
NEWARK	3	CHECKED				NO CHANGE
TOLEDO	1	FIXED	UNKNOWN	1/1/2015	12/31/2017	n/a
CHULA VISTA	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO CHANGE
DURHAM	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
JERSEY CITY	1	FIXED	UNKNOWN	1/1/2013	12/31/2016	n/a
FORT WAYNE	1	FIXED	UNKNOWN	1/1/2011	12/31/2012	NO CHANGE
ST. PETERSBURG	1	CHECKED	NO	10/16/2019	9/30/2022	NO CHANGE
LAREDO	1	CHECKED	NO	10/1/2016	12/1/2020	NO CHANGE
MADISON	1	CHECKED	UNKNOWN	1/1/2016	12/31/2017	NO CHANGE
BUFFALO	1		UNKNOWN	N	N	NO CHANGE
LUBBOCK	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO CHANGE
CHANDLER	1	CHECKED	UNKNOWN	7/1/2013	6/30/2015	n/a
SCOTTSDALE	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO CHANGE
RENO	1	CHECKED	NO	1/1/2019	6/30/2022	n/a
GLENDALE	1	CHECKED	NO	2014	2016	NO CHANGE
GILBERT	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO CHANGE
NORTH LAS VEGAS	1		UNKNOWN	2007	2012	n/a
WINSTON-SALEM	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO CHANGE
MOBILE	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
NORFOLK	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
IRVING	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
CHESAPEAKE	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a
HIALEAH	1	FIXED	NO	2018	2021	n/a
GARLAND	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO CHANGE
FREMONT	1	FIXED	UNKNOWN	2019	2021	n/a
RICHMOND	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	NO CHANGE
BOISE	1	CHECKED	NO	2014	2018	n/a
BATON ROUGE	1	FIXED	UNKNOWN	2015	2018	NO CHANGE

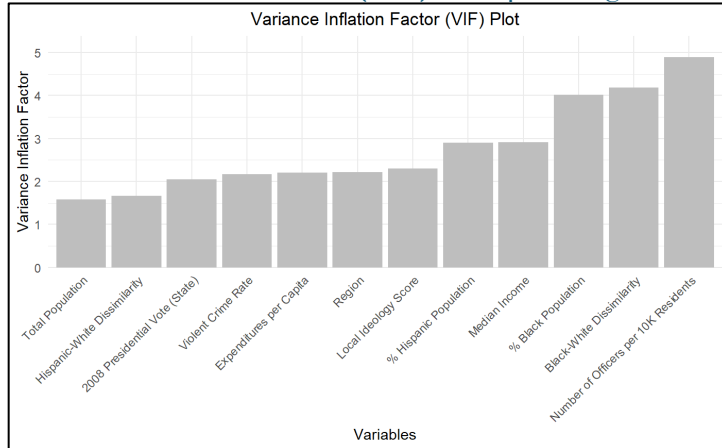
For the small number of contracts that have removed or added any provisions, I elected to keep with the older version of the contract since changes in contracts may take time to implement and get embedded with the culture. Thus, the protections for the period of this study are static and do not vary temporally. Due to significant changes in policing in 2020, data will only go through the end of 2019.

Moreover, it is worth noting that the addition or removal of contract provisions, specifically protections, are largely a rare occurrence (Walker 2008; Keenan and Walker 2005). Additionally, recent research examining police unionism and bargaining rights finds that changes take 1-5 years to set in (Cunningham, Feir, and Gillezau 2021).

APPENDIX G: TESTING FOR MULTICOLLINEARITY

Given the strong relationships between several of the co-variates, specifically the race-related variables and number of officers per capita and violent crime rate, a variance inflation factor (VIF) plot is presented below. VIF is a test that can help indicate the level of multicollinearity (how correlated the variables are) among the independent variables in a model. It's critical to test multicollinearity given it can create difficulties in the interpretation of regression coefficients and independent variables which have strong relationships with one another.⁴¹

Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) Plot | Testing for Multicollinearity



As presented in the figure above, while there are some independent variables with high VIF values, specifically with Black racial variables (% Black Population and Black-White Dissimilarity Index) and Number of Officers per 10,000 Residents, it does not reach extreme VIF values (i.e., VIF values > 5) that would signal issues of multicollinearity in the model (Kutner *et al.*, 2005). Again, high correlations between race-related and criminal legal social indicators should not be surprising and is a product of historical disinvestment, development of urban policing, and concentrated poverty (Muhammad 2010). Nonetheless, if there is significant multicollinearity, it is important to address given that it can skew the findings of the models.

⁴¹ Given that VIF is not suitable for Fixed Effects Linear Models, I ran a linear model with region as a dummy variable to account for the regional fixed effects which imitates the same effect for the purposes of running a valid VIF test for multicollinearity.

APPENDIX H: DEPENDENT VARIABLE LIMITATIONS

Accountability & Police Violence

I argue that given the current landscape of available data, research exploiting causal design to test outcomes across a large set of American cities is not feasible due to the varying nature of how the data is produced so differently across departments. This study's primary contribution is the development of the index of police protections and exploring its relationship with different policing outcomes to indicate its importance and consideration in future studies. The data being employed comes from several different sources and due to de-centralized federalism, data generated can vary simply based upon the autonomy allocated to departments on how they report and how the data is generated.

Moreover, while I acknowledge the merits of exploring the relationship between accountability and police protections, such a pursuit is neither suitable nor possible due to data limitations and lack of availability. First, there would need to be uniform data for accountability such as sustained and non-sustained cases of excessive force in both internal and external oversight entities across a large set of cities alongside officer terminations. Second, the investigation would have to assume that the reporting structures for civilians are similar in terms of structure, perception, legitimacy, and access. For example, civilians who view the entity as illegitimate may not see any value in submitting a complaint. As noted earlier, some states have made individual efforts to retrieve this data. Nevertheless, data is not available across states, making it difficult to carry out a comparative study. Second, officer-related complaints by fellow officers are likely to have their own biases, which may corrupt the accuracy of the complaint. Third, it is important to remember that some incidents of misconduct will never be reported because of fear of retaliation for filing a complaint which also is related to issues of accessibility. Finally, there are a string of unobservable variables that may be likely to better explain the lack of accountability, such as the prosecutor's decision not to prosecute or their inability to sufficiently provide the jury with a fair representation of the case (Wright 2010) or the departmental/chief's discretion in pursuing or not pursuing an investigation. Both internal and external (civilian oversight) investigation data needs to be retrieved alongside officer investigation outcome data to conduct a thorough study which can explain more about the variables involved with accountability. Police deaths of civilians, standing on their own, cannot be used as a proxy for accountability or lack thereof.

Thus, this paper does not view policing as an isolated occurrence that operates within its own institution nor solely within the criminal legal system; instead, it understands policing and police violence as the product of interconnected institutions that have engaged in historical disinvestment and continued disparate treatment of Black and Brown people in the US.

Dependent Variable: Police Violence

The dependent variable, police violence, is measured as the number of police killings of civilians for the purposes of this paper. However, police violence should not only constitute deaths of civilians; rather, violence is encompassing of minor incident of police misconduct, excessive use of force, non-lethal force, and disparities in policing outcomes. Disparate use in arrests and other types of abuse can

have devastating impacts on communities and civilians. Examples include but are not limited to the following:

- Disparities in low-level offenses by race;
- Civilian Complaints;
- Excessive Use of Force Complaints;
- Racial Composition of Police Forces;
- Lack of data availability (i.e., no public data accessibility); and
- Disparities in arrests generally.

Ideal data that would best test the theory around accountability and violence would be either officer complaint/termination data alongside investigation outcomes or uniform excessive use of force data alongside the disposition of the incidents (e.g., justified). While I acknowledge the merits of exploring the relationship between accountability and police protections, such a pursuit is neither suitable nor possible due to data limitations and lack of availability.⁴² Moreover, data collection and reporting vary significantly creating serious concerns with bias in the data.⁴³

Employing deaths as a proxy for violence is admittedly an extreme proxy, hence its limited range and variation across cities. Non-fatal incidents should be included as well, but this information is not uniformly available across cities; additionally, differences in categorization make it difficult to employ as a reliable variable. Thus, while this may be viewed as an imperfect metric for reasons surrounding the relativity of how one classifies police abuse or violence, I argue it is sufficient in testing the hypotheses and is suitable for the scope of this investigation, which is to introduce police protectionism and establish it as a relevant metric that should be considered or integrated in future studies exploring police culture and negative policing outcomes.

For the purposes of this study, I have used all police killings of civilians from Mapping Police Violence database for the following reasons:

- It is difficult to argue that a police killing of a civilian is not a form of police violence, which has been used in a several established pieces of scholarship (e.g., Desmond, Kirk and Papachristos 2016; Cunningham *et al.*, 2021);
- The Mapping Police Violence (MPV) dataset codifies police killings of civilians into “armed,” “allegedly armed,” “unclear,” “vehicle,” or “unarmed.”⁴⁴ For the purposes of this study, I have elected to focus on “all police killings of civilians.”

⁴² First, there would need to be uniform data for accountability such as sustained and unsustained cases of excessive force in both internal and external oversight entities across a large set of cities alongside officer terminations. Second, the investigation would have to assume that the reporting structures for civilians are similar in terms of structure, perception, legitimacy, and access. Third, it is important to remember that some incidents of misconduct will never be reported because of fear of retaliation for filing a complaint which also is related to issues of accessibility. Finally, there are a string of unobservable variables that may be likely to better explain the lack of accountability, such as the prosecutor’s decision not to prosecute or their inability to sufficiently provide the jury with a fair representation of the case (Wright 2010) or the departmental/chief’s discretion in pursuing or not pursuing an investigation.

⁴³ The only place where this could be possible is within California where the California DOJ mandates law enforcement agencies to report on excessive use of force incidents using the same reporting system which mitigates concerns of variation in what and how incidents are being reported. However, this would inherently limit variation of what this paper is exploring, police contract protections, since California has a rigorous law enforcement bill of rights. Nevertheless, an additional analysis of California will be included focusing on California to better understand variation in contract protections.

⁴⁴ Campaign Zero, “Mapping Police Violence” Dataset, 2016.

- Police killings of civilians in the MPV dataset are similar in number to other crowd-sourced datasets including Fatal Encounters (see below).
- I have not included other filters such as “allegedly armed” because there are data concerns around reliability. This is also the case for filters such as “justified” since there are cases, such as the death of Eric Garner, that have been categorized as such.

As data becomes more granular, accurate, and detailed, further analyses should be conducted to better test out the theory. However, police killings of civilians are a sufficient metric in understanding extreme forms of police violence and abuse.

APPENDIX I: LEOBOR & CITIES LACKING CONTRACTS

The primary policing agencies in the following cities do not have collective bargaining agreements for their rank-and-file:

Arlington, TX; Atlanta, GA; Charlotte, NC; Colorado Springs, CO; Durham, NC; Garland, TX; Greensboro, NC; Irving, TX; Lubbock, TX; New Orleans, LA; Norfolk, VA; Plano, TX; Raleigh, NC; Scottsdale, AZ; Virginia Beach, VA; Winston-Salem, NC.

The following states have a Law Enforcement Officer Bill of Rights (LEOBOR):

Arizona; Arkansas; California; Delaware; Florida; Georgia; Illinois; Indiana; Iowa; Kentucky; Louisiana; Maryland; Minnesota; Nevada; New Mexico; Oregon; Rhode Island; Tennessee; Texas; Virginia; West Virginia; Wisconsin

Notes on LEOBOR:

There are as many as 20+ LEOBORs, depending on how you defined the term LEOBOR (and at least 16-17 even if we use a narrow definition of the term LEOBOR). LEOBORs also exist in places like Georgia and Wisconsin but do not include the protections discussed in this study nor are they termed LEOBOR. Some of them also have unusual stipulations, like that in Texas which applies more rigorously to cities like Houston, but not others, based on population.

Additionally, police union contracts are only one of many possible avenues through which police officers and their associations have obtained these protections. Some have obtained identical protections through LEOBORs, others through municipal codes, and some through city ordinances. For example, St. Paul's contract does not explicitly provide many of these protections. But the contract refers to municipal code or departmental regulations, which do include some of these protections.

Thus, a more in-depth study is needed to categorize different state legislation, department regulations, protocols, internal procedures, and municipal codes that provide similar protections as contracts and LEOBOR. Unfortunately, these are beyond the scope of this thesis which is focused solely on union contracts and LEOBOR which are explicitly LEOBOR. Simply, contracts and LEOBORs allow for explicit protections to be more visible.

APPENDIX J: SENSITIVITY ANALYSES

The following analyses are presented below to provide more credibility and robustness to the models in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

Correlates of Police Protectionism

Exploring Police Protectionism | Negative Binomial Models

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	CBA Metric	LEOBOR Metric	Full Metric
Violent Crime Rate	0.008*** (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)	0.005*** (0.002)
Population	0.001 (0.008)	0.002 (0.011)	-0.003 (0.007)
Number of Officers per 10,000	0.023 (0.015)	-0.014 (0.019)	0.011 (0.011)
% Black Population	-0.030*** (0.008)	-0.003 (0.009)	-0.015** (0.006)
% Hispanic Population	0.0004 (0.005)	0.001 (0.005)	0.0002 (0.003)
Black-White Dissimilarity	1.553* (0.858)	0.860 (0.791)	1.249** (0.601)
Hispanic-White Dissimilarity	-1.553** (0.710)	-1.091* (0.636)	-1.585*** (0.495)
Municipal Ideology Score	-1.390 (2.303)	5.547* (3.175)	-0.714 (1.703)
State Ideology Score	1.944 (3.306)	-9.259* (4.803)	0.470 (2.478)
Median Household Income	-0.017 (0.011)	-0.0002 (0.009)	0.0003 (0.007)
Public Expenditures per 10,000	-0.0004 (0.001)	-0.0004 (0.001)	-0.001 (0.001)
Northwest	0.263 (0.265)	1.109*** (0.407)	0.241 (0.205)
South	-0.159 (0.228)	1.449*** (0.334)	0.032 (0.175)
Southwest	0.070 (0.257)	2.271*** (0.350)	0.577** (0.190)

Constant	1.264 (0.807)	0.066 (0.861)	1.230** (0.569)
Observations	100	100	100
Log Likelihood	-211.187	-181.641	-211.598
theta	11.704 (9.065)	17,473.470 (153,571.800)	100,661.900 (1,226,465.000)
Akaike Inf. Crit.	452.373	393.283	453.196

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Police Protectionism & Police Violence

- **Checking for Equal Variance, Linearity, and Normality.**

These tests allow for better understanding of outliers and distributions.

- **Linear Models.**

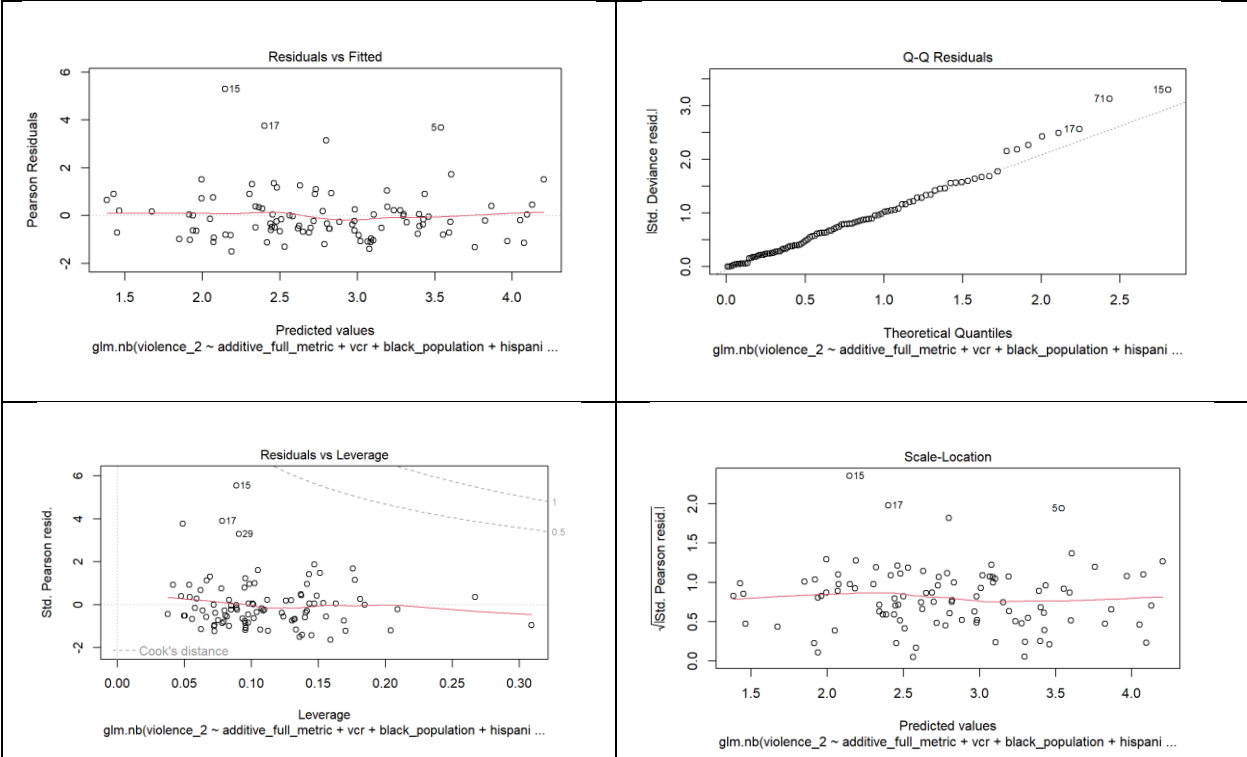
To test the robustness of the primary model in Chapter 4, I utilize a linear model with regional fixed effects and standard errors clustered by region. Also, in contrast to employing a count of police killings and an exposure term for the dependent variable, this sensitivity model employs a rate of police killings per 1,000 officers to test the robustness of the model.

Both model types include regional dummies and clustered standard errors. The negative binomial results are more stable, likely due to the count nature of the outcome and overdispersion. While the linear fixed-effects model attenuates significance—particularly for the CBA metric—the Full Metric remains substantively and marginally significant across both, supporting a consistent relationship.

Checking for Equal Variance, Linearity, and Normality

As indicated in the “Normal Q-Q” Plot, the data does not violate the normality assumption. It is worth noting that Phoenix and Los Angeles seem to be outliers.

Next, while examining the “Residuals v. Fitted” we can see that most of the observations are fairly scattered around horizontal line representing 0 which indicates linearity.



Fixed Effects Linear Models

Fixed Effects Linear Models | Police Protectionism and Police Killings of Civilians

	<i>Dependent variable:</i>		
	Police Killings per 1,000 Officers		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
CBA Metric	0.516 (0.501)		
LEOBOR Metric		0.641 (0.462)	
Full Metric			1.191* (0.485)
Violent Crime Rate per 10,000	0.004* (0.002)	0.005** (0.001)	0.004* (0.002)
Total Population	-0.00000 (0.00000)	-0.00000 (0.00000)	-0.00000 (0.00000)
Ideology Score	9.645*** (1.598)	9.631** (1.865)	9.876*** (1.136)
Black-White Dissimilarity	-0.136 (0.116)	-0.122 (0.142)	-0.176 (0.129)
Hispanic-White Dissimilarity	0.018 (0.049)	0.008 (0.068)	0.086 (0.067)
Median Household Income	-0.231*** (0.038)	-0.250** (0.054)	-0.240** (0.043)
Observations	100	100	100
R ²	0.300	0.298	0.328
Adjusted R ²	0.221	0.220	0.252
Residual Std. Error (df = 89)	9.781	9.791	9.583

Note:

* p<0.1; ** p<0.05; *** p<0.01

APPENDIX K: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION

The interviews conducted for this study were approved by the Central University Research Ethics Committee (CUREC). The Reference Number for the approval is the following: SOC_R2_001_C1A_23_25.

Name	Date	Location	Occupation/Rank
Chicago CPD 1	8/16/2017	Chicago, IL	Police Officer / FOP Union Member
Chicago CPD 2	8/16/2017	Chicago, IL	Police Officer
Chicago CPD 3	8/17/2017	Chicago, IL	Detective / FOP Member
Chicago CPD 4	8/17/2017	Chicago, IL	Police Officer / FOP Union Member
Chicago CPD 5	8/17/2017	Chicago, IL	Police Officer / FOP Union Member
Dallas DPD 1	1/18/2018	Dallas, TX (remote)	Sergeant / DPA Member
Dallas DPD 2	2/16/2018	Dallas, TX (remote)	Major / DPA Member
Dallas DPD 3	3/1/2018	Dallas, TX (remote)	Detective / DPA Member and Staff
Dallas DPD 4	3/2/2018	Dallas, TX (remote)	Sergeant / DPA Member
Dallas DPD 5	3/8/2018	Dallas, TX (remote)	Corporal / DPA Member / BPAD Member
U.S. DoJ 1	9/7/2017	Washington, DC	Former Chief, Special Litigation Unit – Civil Rights Division, U.S. DOJ
U.S. DoJ 2	10/10/2024	Washington, DC (Remote)	Deputy Chief, Special Litigation Unit – Civil Rights Division, U.S. DOJ
Dallas Elected/Appointed 1	12/8/2017	Dallas, TX (remote)	Elected/Appointed City Representative
Dallas Elected/Appointed 2	1/7/2018	Dallas, TX (remote)	Elected/Appointed City Representative
Chicago Elected/Appointed 1	2/2/2018	Chicago, IL (remote)	Elected/Appointed City Representative
Chicago Elected/Appointed 2	3/16/2018	Chicago, IL (remote)	Elected/Appointed City Representative
Chicago Elected/Appointed 3	10/10/2024	Chicago, IL (remote)	Elected/Appointed City Representative
Chicago Elected/Appointed 4	10/11/2024	Chicago, IL (remote)	Elected/Appointed City Representative
Chicago Elected/Appointed 5	5/27/2025	Chicago, IL (Remote)	Former Cook County State Attorney
Chicago CSA 1	09/13/2024	Chicago, IL (remote)	Community Member/Organizer
Chicago CSA 2	10/04/2024	Chicago, IL (remote)	Community Member/Organizer
Dallas CSA 1	05/21/2024	Dallas, TX (Remote/In-Person)	Community Member/Organizer
Dallas CSA 2	10/11/2024	Dallas, TX (Remote)	Community Member/Organizer

N = 23

10 Officer Interviews | 7 Elected/Appointed City Rep | 2 Federal Appointed
DPA = Dallas Police Association; FOP = Chicago Fraternal Order of Police;
BPAD = Black Police Association of Greater Dallas

All interviewees requested anonymity in exchange for participating for the interview because of fears of retaliation and/or other problems that could potentially emerge. Interview transcripts are not included because of length. Recordings can be produced upon request in accordance with CUREC regulations.

APPENDIX L: FOIA REQUESTS

Request for Collective Bargaining Agreements

Sample Request for Chicago

Dear FOIA Officer,

I am writing to submit an Open Records Request for copies and information regarding collective bargaining agreements between the City of Chicago and the Fraternal Order of Police, Chicago Lodge No. 7 representing Chicago Police Department's rank-and-file law enforcement officers:

1. Documentation and copy of the first collective bargaining contract executed between the City of Chicago and the Chicago Police Department's rank-and-file law enforcement officers.
2. Copies of all executed collective bargaining agreements executed between the City of Chicago and the Fraternal Order of Police, Chicago Lodge No. 7 from the earliest available date through 2023.

This request is for educational, non-commercial purposes. If the option is available, I would prefer to receive the information in an electronic comma delimited file or Excel file, which presumably could be emailed to me, secure file upload, or sent on a disc (instructions below).

Please notify me in advance of any copying and postage fees associated with fulfilling this request. Any questions about this request can be directed to me at the following email address abdul.rad@sociology.ox.ac.uk. Thank you for your assistance.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,

RECEIVING INSTRUCTIONS

- Electronic Mail: abdul.rad@sociology.ox.ac.uk
- Secure Upload: <https://wettransfer.com/upload> (to abdul.rad@sociology.ox.ac.uk)
- Large Upload: <https://bit.ly/3B7fkG8>
- Mailing: Abdul Nasser Rad, 555 Waverly Avenue, Apt. 8M, Brooklyn, NY 11238

Request for Legislative Lobbying Data

Sample Request for Chicago

Dear FOIA Officer,

I am writing to submit an Open Records Request for records relating to legislative lobbying and electoral politics involving the labor group (i.e. Fraternal Order of Police) representing the Chicago Police Department rank-and-file law enforcement officers.

REQUEST

I request all financial or lobbying disclosures by the law enforcement labor organization (Fraternal Order of Police, Lodge #7), including records of contributions to any city officials or elected officials from 2003-2023 (or earliest available convenient date). Each contribution should include the following:

- **Date of Contribution**: When the contribution was made.
- **Amount of Contribution**: The financial value of the contribution.
- **Contribution Recipient**: Name of the recipient of the contribution.
- **Contribution Type**: Whether it was a cash or in-kind contribution.
- **Recipient's Office/Position**: The office or government position held by the recipient.

- **Party Affiliation of Recipient:** Political party of the recipient (if known).
- **Purpose of Contribution:** Reason for the contribution (e.g., campaign, policy advocacy).

BACKGROUND

This request is for educational, non-commercial purposes. If the option is available, I would prefer to receive the information in an electronic comma delimited file or Excel file, which presumably could be emailed to me, secure file upload, or sent on a disc (instructions below).

Please notify me in advance of any fees associated with fulfilling this request. Any questions about this request can be directed to abdul.rad@sociology.ox.ac.uk. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

.....

Request for Correspondence

Sample Request for Chicago

Dear FOIA Officer,

I am writing to submit an Open Records Request for correspondence between elected or appointed Chicago Officials (Office of the Mayor, Office of the City Manager, Chicago City Council) and Fraternal Order of Police, Chicago Lodge No. 7 Leadership. Specifically, I am seeking the correspondence concerning the following matters dating from 2003-2023 (or earliest available convenient date):

1. Correspondence regarding Officer Disciplinary Matters
2. Correspondence regarding the support or opposition to proposed or enacted legislation in City Council
3. Correspondence regarding the support or opposition to proposed or enacted changes to Dallas Police Department policies
4. Correspondence regarding

This request is for educational, non-commercial purposes. If the option is available, I would prefer to receive the information in an electronic comma delimited file or Excel file, which presumably could be emailed to me, secure file upload, or sent on a disc (instructions below). As per the [Dallas Open Record Request Advisory](#), this should not exceed the \$100 charge for production, shipping, copying, etc. However, please notify me in advance of any fees associated with fulfilling this request.

Please notify me in advance of any fees associated with fulfilling this request. Any questions about this request can be directed to abdul.rad@sociology.ox.ac.uk. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

.....

Courts & Legal Actions

Sample Letter for Chicago

Dear FOIA Officer,

I am writing to submit an Open Records Request for records related to legal actions involving the labor group (Fraternal Order of Police) representing the Chicago Police Department rank-and-file law enforcement officers.

REQUEST

Specifically, all lawsuits filed by the Chicago Fraternal Order of Police (Lodge #7), representing rank-and-file officers, against the City of Chicago or any city officials from 2003-2023 (or earliest available convenient date) along with the following information:

- **Named Parties:** Names of plaintiff and defendant.
- **Nature of the Claim:** Brief description of the legal issue.
- **Year Filed:** Year the case was initiated.
- **Year Closed:** Year the case concluded.
- **Court/Jurisdiction:** Legal authority overseeing the case.
- **Outcome, Settlement, or Judgement:** How the case resolved.
- **Source of Settlement:** Who paid (insurance, public funds, etc.).

BACKGROUND

This request is for educational, non-commercial purposes. If the option is available, I would prefer to receive the information in an electronic comma delimited file or Excel file, which presumably could be emailed to me, secure file upload, or sent on a disc (instructions below).

Please notify me in advance of any fees associated with fulfilling this request. Any questions about this request can be directed to abdul.rad@sociology.ox.ac.uk. Thank you for your assistance.

Sincerely,

.....

APPENDIX M: INTERVIEW CODING, TRANSCRIPTION, & TECHNOLOGY

Pre-2020: In-Person & Phone

Interviews that were completed in-person occurred pre-2020. They were primarily completed in Chicago with police officers. Consent forms were secured before the interview, and a digital recording device was utilized. In Dallas, interviews were held via phone call pre-2020 given funding limitations for field research. In those instances, a digital recording application and device were used given the quality of audio being weaker.

Virtual Interviews

Interviews post-2020 were all completed via zoom and with Fathom AI support for recording and transcription. Consent forms were circulated and sent back electronically.

Fathom AI Privacy Policy

As of June 19, 2025 – Extract of Fathom AI Privacy Policy

Is Fathom secure?

Fathom is HIPAA, SOC2 Type II, and GDPR-compliant and has passed extensive security reviews by Zoom.

You can find more extensive information about our privacy and security in our [Privacy Policy](#) and [Trust Center](#).

Do you train AI models on customer data?

No! Neither Fathom nor any of our AI sub-processors (OpenAI or Anthropic) train AI models on customer data, including meeting recordings and transcripts.

Do you have an ISO certificate?

We don't have ISO27001, but we do have SOC2, which is similar! View more details in our [Trust Center](#).

Where do you store data?

All Fathom data is stored in the United States. For users located in the EU/UK, we are GDPR compliant and are happy to sign a DPA. Contact us at trust@fathom.video to initiate that process.

How is Fathom free? Do you sell our data to third parties?

No! We do not and will never sell your data to third parties. We provide the Fathom app free of charge because it drives usage and brand awareness which generates leads for our Team Edition product.

What happens to my data if I delete my account?

When you delete your account, all recording data and metadata are removed. After an additional 7 days, all data is also removed from our backups.

Interview Coding Procedure

All of the interviews for this project were recorded and transcribed by Fathom AI. Additionally, I captured notes on a separate screen or piece of paper following each key question. Given it was semi-structured, and each participant came with different experiences and background, not every question or subject areas was touched upon. The overarching questions and sequence of the semi-structured interviews were as follows:

1. Interviewee
2. Date
3. Contact Info
4. City
5. Role
6. Location
7. Relevant Affiliation
8. Active Years
9. Race
10. Gender
11. Age
12. Involvement/Background
13. First Involvement w/ Police Unions
14. Name of Police Union/Association
15. Police Union Perception
16. Police Union Allies
17. Police Union Messages/Narratives
18. Police Union Financing
19. Department Cohesion with Police Union
20. Police Union's Representation of Fiscal Officer Interests (i.e., Salaries)
21. Federal Intervention Perception
22. Contract Protections
23. Political Dimension to Police Unions
24. Police Unions Political Actions
25. Police Union Discussion re Political Party
26. Police Union Legislative Lobbying
27. Police Union Engagement with Electoral Politics
28. Police Union Impact and Changes
29. Legal Actions
30. Key Themes
31. Summary of Findings
32. Relevant Quotes
33. Notes