FROM POLICY BATTLES TO POLITICAL DEFEAT

The "Defund the Police" Movement's Struggle to Challenge the Dominant Discourse on Public Safety 2020-2023

By

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, Nikolaos Tzimas, candidate for the MA degree in Political Science, declare herewith that the present thesis is exclusively my own work, based on my research and only such external information as properly credited in notes and bibliography. I declare that no unidentified and illegitimate use was made of the work of others, and no part of the thesis infringes on any person's or institution's copyright. I also declare that no part of the thesis has been submitted in this form to any other institution of higher education for an academic degree.

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ABSTRACT

In February 2021, Svante Myrick, mayor of Ithaca, N.Y., announced his intention of implementing a radical policy plan of replacing the existing police department with a "Department of Community Solutions and Public Safety", that was expected to significantly reduce the interactions between citizens and armed police officers (Nast 2021). During the same year, an "Alternative Response Model to Armed Law Enforcement" was established in Oakland, along with the reallocation of financial resources from law enforcement towards social services (BondGraham 2021).

Those attempts to provide policing alternatives were a part of a much wider public debate about the relation between race and policing in US after the murder of George Floyd by a white police officer in May 2020. The nationwide movement that emerged demanded the "defunding" of police, along with the reallocation of recourses towards social services. But while the equilibrium of public discussion seemed to shift towards very radical approaches regarding policing in US, three wears later, not much seems to have changed.

By focusing of different aspects of what constitutes success and failure in social movement studies, as well as the importance of the cultural elements for political change, this project compares the public safety policy changes after 2020 with the corresponding debate about policing in the public discourse and the battle over political meanings. By focusing on the "bottom-up" process of frame formation, it becomes possible to see that the new policies were not enacted despite the popularity of radical frames, but because of them.

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In one of his most famous works, the book "No Name in the Street", prominent American writer James Baldwin writes that "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced". This excerpt, consisting of just 17 words, could successfully caption the history and struggles of contemporary social movements: always attempting to change things that seem incapable of changing, and most of the time, continuity prevails change. However, the underlying structure of this "new" continuity is different: full of small transformations, inside of whom lies the capacity of radical change. My scholarly aspiration is to shed light on those transformations at play when a "new" continuity is consolidated.

To do so, I have to undergo to my own transformations. The intellectual experience that Central European University offered was so full of potential for that: it offered an environment of unbounded academic freedom, constant intellectual stimulation and pushed me to become acquainted with the theoretical and methodological toolbox that I attempt to utilize for something that I hope is a small contribution to the study of an under-researched topic.

Those transformations had agents, without whom I could never produce a thesis worth of standing behind. When this project was a very premature idea and anxiety was consuming me, Béla Greskovits provide me with what every good supervisor should: the proper balance between helping me structure my work and letting me do it my own way. At the same time, his course on Social Movements was the best toolbox of resources, from helping rethink about framing to introducing the work of Albert Hirschman. Thank you.

Undoubtedly, the one who constantly pushed me towards those transformations is Elisavet. Thank you, for without your endless support and incredible ability to put my mind back on track, I would still be the boy that started crying when he realized that he had moved to Vienna.

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PART 1: INTRODUCTION

In February 2021, Svante Myrick, mayor of Ithaca, N.Y., announced his intention of implementing a radical policy plan of replacing the existing police department with a "Department of Community Solutions and Public Safety", that was expected to significantly reduce the interactions between citizens and armed police officers (Nast 2021). During the same year, an "Alternative Response Model to Armed Law Enforcement" was established in Oakland, along with the reallocation of financial resources from law enforcement towards social services (BondGraham 2021).

In light of the wave of local-scale policy experimentations attempting to "rethink public safety" across the US, Great Britain's New Labour prominent figure Tony Blair responded that "Defund the police may be the left's most damaging political slogan since the dictatorship of the proletariat" (Blair 2021). While the above provide only a fragment of the ongoing public debate about police brutality that sparked in the US in the aftermath of African American US citizen George Floyd's death at the hands of a white police officer in 2020, it is clear that, as Pierre Bourdieu argues, a crisis changes the structure of the field in a way that previously ignored oppositional discourses are now capable of drawing attention (Wodak 2017). In other words, what was previously inconceivable, is now open for debate.

The killing of George Floyd by police officer Derek Chauvin in Minneapolis, Minnesota in 2020 led to mass protests against institutional racism and racialized policing in the United States, comparable in scale only to those seen during the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s (Lum, Koper, and Wu 2022). The Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement played a pivotal role in these demonstrations, and emerged as probably the most influential movement against racial injustice in contemporary history of the United States (Buchanan, Bui, and Patel 2020; Bowman

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Williams, Mezey, and Singh 2021; D. R. Woodly 2022). The movement's demands included calls for paradigm shifting reforms on policing and public safety in general, along with recognition of institutionalized racism against Black Americans and other marginalized communities and reparations of this injustice through a framework of "transformative justice" (Abdullah 2021).

Among the movement's demands, the much-debated call to #DefundThePolice stands out as a prominent mobilization effort, with the meaning of defunding constantly being subject to debate, leading to controversy around the movement and its goals (Craig and Reid 2022). Drawing from the important theoretical tradition of "abolition studies" (Davis 2003; Gilmore, Bhandar, and Toscano 2022), the argument at the heart of "Defund the Police" movement is the idea that reducing policing resources and personnel and reallocating those resources towards institutions that treat not the "symptoms", but the set of factors that are perceived as the causes of crime is the only truly effective way to reform public safety institutions. According to several abolition theorists, reducing those financial, human and organizational resources that are part of what is in more general terms considered as "state capacity" (Gilmore, Bhandar, and Toscano 2022; Gilmore 2007; Schoenfeld 2018) would result to a structural change of the intervention of those institutions to society.

However, after three years of widespread policy experimentation, police funding now appears to be increased and public discourse seems to be shifting towards more police-friendly positions (Blow 2022). The "Defund the Police" movement played a crucial role to budget changes and other types of law enforcement reforms in several states, but after three years from its emergence, the movement's results on shifting the paradigm of public safety policies in the United States seems mixed at best.

This research project does not seek to answer neither the interesting and much-debated normative question about whether police should be defunded or not (Beck et al. 2023; Lum, Koper, and Wu 2022; Beardall 2020; Bernier 2021), nor focus strictly on the ways that media depict the movement's demands (Craig and Reid 2022). Rather than focusing on those topics, the empirical question that arises from the above is another one: how can a movement contribute to several policy changes and still "fail" to accomplish its stated goals? Or, in other words, what it takes for a social movements to win and what are the different dimensions of this victory? To answer this question I rely on Deva Woodly's argument that "changing politics requires… an ongoing struggle that shapes political meanings in the public sphere" (D. R. Woodly 2015, 1). Thus, this research project attempts to provide an explanation about the "Defund" movement's contrasting outcomes in several dimensions by analyzing the movement's impact on policy making, as well as the meaning-making impact of "Defund" on public discourse.

By comparing the movement's outcome on different dimension, I attempt to shed light on the partiality behind movement success and failure. To do this, the current study uses a mixed-method approach that is composed of positioning the movement's emergence into the historical context of protests against the racialized state and policing in America, along with a descriptive analysis of the current policy changes in public safety, followed by a quantitative analysis of the movement frames, as they appear in the public sphere through mass media.

PART 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND CONCEPTUALIZATIONS

When facing the troubling question of what constitutes success (and subsequently, failure) for a social movement, researchers provide different and often contrasting answers. The role of this theoretical debate is not so much one of a standalone central theme of discussion, similar to the Marxist debates about the role of the state in 1970s, but is rather indirectly embedded in other central points of theoretical and empirical discussion in social movement studies, such as the debate over the primacy of structure or agency as the main analytic category, as well as the role of the state and the persistent question of an theoretically and empirically fruitful conceptualization of culture in political analysis.

Over the next chapters, I proceed to an overview of the different and contrasting conceptualizations of movement success in social movement studies. I begin with the studies of revolutions, as they act as an analytic parallel which appears to be embedded with the same theoretical debates, and I proceed to the "challenger – incumbent" model of contention that is commonly found in studies utilizing the Resource Mobilization Theory as well as the "Political Opportunity Structure" theory. Special focus is given to the "Cultural Turn" in social movement studies and the emergence of research on framing and its critiques. Finally, the focus will be shifted towards the more "relational" paradigms, which would provide the main concepts and analytical categories for the empirical part of this study, along with some more specific topics, such as the role of media in social movements, definitions of culture and a brief discussion over the concept of "public sphere".

2.1 Conceptualizing "Success" in Revolution Studies

Research on revolutions acts as a great introduction to the discussion around what constitutes success for a social movement, as certain debates that have influenced this discussion come in in similar forms to both disciplines. Revolutionary events have been examined mostly from a macro-social perspective, focusing on the larger historical forces at play that made their outcomes possible (Goldstone and Ritter 2018, 682). On the contrary, research on social movements was deeply influenced by the 1960s wave of protest, focusing mostly meso- and micro- levels. Where the goal of revolutions was to destabilize and replace the existing political power and eventually fully transform the socioeconomic structure of a (usually) authoritarian regime, social movements were more focused on either specific policies or social, political and cultural inclusion of previously marginalized groups (McCarthy and Zald 1977).

While the intersection between the two disciplines became more common after the "colored revolutions" and Arab Spring protests (Aminzade et al. 2001; Goldstone and Ritter 2018; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001), the focus here is not on the similarities between repertoires of action, but rather two aspects of the traditional debates about the definition of success in revolutions. Specifically, the Tilly-Skocpol debate (Tilly 1978; Skocpol 1979) sheds light to a tension between defining success as political change or a more systemic, structural change. Tilly focused on the inclusion of the challenger to the polity, broadening the scope of what counts as a revolution and putting analytical emphasis on political conflict, whereas Skocpol's approach was more structure-oriented, emphasizing on the "Great" revolutions.

The second important aspect of this debate is the inclusion of *how* success is achieved (Useem and Goldstone 2022), which deepens the distinction between short-term and long-term outcomes of revolutions. The acknowledgement that revolutions can bring at the same time elements of both success and failure (Arendt 2006) provides room for fruitful theoretical and empirical examinations of this partiality.

2.2 From Movement Benefits to Impact on Policy: The Challenger-Incumbent Model

Based on the concept of "political social movements" as actors and organizations with the purpose of altering power deficits and effecting social transformations through the state with citizen's mobilization (Amenta et al. 2010), Tilly (Giugni and Tarrow 1999, 253–70) focused on the inclusion of the challenger to the polity and Gamson (1990) assessed social movement success based on whether new benefits or acceptance were obtained. Despite the differences between Gamson and Tilly, both their models share a common conceptualization of the procedure towards a movement success that has been defined as "the challenger – incumbent" model (Rojas and King 2018), a binary conception of the process of political contention as one that is strictly between a new movement that acts as challenger and the state that has the role of the target. The use of this conceptual scheme leads to emphasizing on a movement's ability to mobilize, influence, perceive and take advantage of the available political opportunities that disempower the target, or its failure to do so.

As Amenta (Amenta et al. 2010, 290) notes, the focus of social movement scholars shifted away from Gamson's view of benefits or acceptance towards two different levels. At the intermediate level, , a large body of literature ascertained success in terms of the impact that movements

have on policy-making (Rimmerman and Wilcox 2007; Swarts 2003; Mucciaroni 2008). Defining movement success solely as an impact on policy-making does not come without empirical and theoretical problems. Specifically, such a definition misses the fact that new policies do not have a guaranteed lasting impact (Useem and Goldstone 2022; D. R. Woodly 2015), or the fact that even if a movement fails to fulfil its stated goal, the movement outcome may be more subtle or indirect, but equally or even more important than a policy change in the long run (Amenta 2008). Finally, movements may not reach their stated goal, but that does not mean that they may not have unintended consequences, such as repression or the rise of counter-movements (Giugni and Tarrow 1999; David A. Snow and Soule 2010).

At the macro level, social movement studies followed more closely political sociology, focusing on a set of more structural changes. As Amenta et al note:

> "the greatest sort of impact is the one that provides a group with continuing leverage over political processes and increases the political returns to the collective action of a challenger. These gains are usually at a structural or systemic level of state processes and constitute a kind of meta-collective benefit. Gains in the democratization of state processes, such as winning the right to vote by a nonfranchised group, increase the productivity of future state-directed collective action by such groups. Many of the most prominent social movements have sought this basic goal, including movements of workers, women, and, in the United States, the civil rights movement" (Amenta et al. 2010, 290)

Those paradigms bear a resemblance to the Tilly-Skocpol debate, as they share the same tension between a conceptualization of movement success more oriented towards the political procedure, and another one that focuses more on the more lasting, systemic aspects of change. But at the same time, both of those paradigms share the same focus of a conception of political contention as one strictly between a challenger movement and a state that acts as the target.

2.3 The "unfinished" Cultural Turn

The critique of political process and resource mobilization theories for "structural bias" and inability to utilize culture and meaning-making processes (Goodwin and Jasper 1999; Jasper 2014) led to the emergence of the "Cultural Turn", a large body of actor-oriented research, usually focused on micro-social level with particular emphasis on cognitive and meaning-making aspects of protest (David A. Snow, Soule, and Kriesi 2018, 63–78, 482–98). As Goodwin and Jasper argue:

> "The bias lurking beneath these problems is that "structural" factors (i.e. factors that are relatively stable over time and outside the control of movement actors) are seen and emphasized more readily than others—and nonstructural factors are often analyzed as though they were structural factors.... A number of factors have been added to political opportunities in recognition of the influence of nonstructural variables—but without being accurately theorized as nonstructural. These include strategy and agency, which have to do with the active choices and efforts of movement actors as well as of their opponents and other players in the conflict, and cultural factors that deal with the moral visions, cognitive understandings, and emotions that exist prior to a movement but which are also transformed by it." (Goodwin and Jasper 2004, 29)

For this body of literature, success lies in the ability of movements to reshape meanings and identities with "Collective Action Frames" (Benford and Snow 2000; D. Snow et al. 2014; David A. Snow, Vliegenthart, and Ketelaars 2018; van Dijk 2016a). Following two leading scholars on framing, Benford and Snow, a frame can be defined as "an interpretive schemata that simplifies and condenses the 'world out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one's present or past environment" (D.A. Snow and Benford 1992, 137). In this way, frames have the ability to be utilized in order to create determinations regarding diagnosis and prognosis of a problem (Benford and Snow 2000), promoting "a particular problem definition, casual interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation" (Entman 1993, 52).

Framing opens the way to conceptualizing the process of political contention in more constructivist terms, as collective action frames, as explained by Gamson (1992), are not merely

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the sum of individual attitudes and perceptions, but are negotiated through a shared meaning-making process. These frames can take on different forms such as metaphors, protest slogans, or even social media hashtags, and serve as a means of channeling both strategical and ideological elements. For a framing process to be successful it has to be resonant, an attribute which goes beyond the interplay between dominant culture and dissent, and is influenced by a variety of factors, according to Snow and Benford (D.A. Snow and Benford 1992).

While "framing" is a step towards integrating culture to research, and thus widening the scope of what is considered as a success, it is not without limitations. One of the main deficits of the most commonly used "framing" approach is the fact that it focuses solely on "collective action frames" that are used to mobilize movement participants (D. R. Woodly 2015, 136–38). When discussing meaning-making in social movements, Sydney Tarrow argues that the three components of movement solidarity are framing of contentious politics, reshaping of emotions and construction of collective identities in order to mobilize (Tarrow 1998, 142–43). As participants are the most valuable resource for social movements, the heavy focus on frames that intend to mobilize them is understandable. Nevertheless, the priorities of framing research fully reflect the "challenger-incumbent" conception of political contention, leading to inability of recognizing the fact that there is a much wider political world, a whole "movement field" (Useem and Goldstone 2022; Diani and McAdam 2003) composed of different actors that need to be exposed to movement's frames in order for the movement to be successful. One of the most important "actors" of the movement field is the general public, with the "challenger-incumbent" model of framing ignoring the interplay between movement's discourse and public "common sense" (D. R. Woodly 2015, 136–42).

Another assessment of the limitations of framing research can be found in the form of circular reasoning regarding framing resonance. For the most part, the process through which a frame

becomes resonant remains a "black box", despite several empirical investigations (D. Snow et al. 2014; David A. Snow, Vliegenthart, and Corrigall-Brown 2007). Although there are hints towards the importance of the cultural landscape (Johnston and Noakes 2005), the focus is oriented more towards movement "entrepreneurs" than dominant culture and public "common sense". Finally, a critique rooted in methodological and epistemological aspects of framing (van Dijk 2016a; 2016b; 2016c; 2021) challenges the extend to which the "cultural turn" actually utilizes a more constructivist framework, as most work on framing has a deductive orientation (Della Porta 2014). According to this critique, despite attempts to further engage with discursive aspects of social movements (Johnston and Klandermans 1995) for the most part framing researchers force predetermined analytical categories on the data, failing to fully utilize the complete analytical and methodological toolbox of studies on discourse.

2.4 Towards a Relational Conception of Movement Outcomes

As it becomes evident from the above, when trying to find a theoretically and empirically fruitful conceptualization of success (and failure) in social movement studies, researchers face two important challenges. The first challenge is a tension between a definition of movement success strictly as a case in which a movement achieves its stated goal (usually measured in terms of impact on policy-making) versus a definition focusing on the macro-level, mainly the long-term, systemic social and cultural change. In the first instance, researchers are in danger of failing to take into consideration a set of dimensions in which the movement's impact needs to be empirically examined, while at the same time they are significantly narrowing the scope of cases worth studying, as the number of movements that have actually fully achieved their stated goals is limited.

The second challenge is rooted in the conception of political contention as a process strictly revolving around a "challenger" social movement and a "target" authority. The implications of having this model as the point of departure at a conceptual level has the risk of missing the interplay of effects on a wider political arena consisting of various actors. This risk remains, even if the analytical focus is shifted from more structure-oriented to more culture-oriented perspectives: framing is concerned with frames that guarantee the mobilization of a minimal winning coalition against the target authority, while political opportunities revolve around a "top-down" process in which coalitions and splits at the elite level dictate the outcome of the movement. In either case, the most important actor in contemporary democracies, that is the general public and the public sphere, is absent from the analysis.

A third body of literature acknowledges the partiality of movement success and failure, opening the road for research projects that attempt to mend the deficiencies described above. Armstrong and Bernstein (2008) argue for an approach that sheds light to the multiplicity of institutions that are affected by movements, while Amenta (2008) examines the movement's impact beyond its official target. Drawing from a Bourdieuan framework, Goldstone distinguishes between immediate movement victories (organizational or policy-related) and success as a more durable form of change that comes from changing the power relations at the "movement field" that consists of other groups, institutions and the public, without necessarily proceeding to structural changes (Useem and Goldstone 2022; Goldstone 2004).

Drawing from the cultural paradigm, Woodly (2018) argues that the crucial condition for a movement to be successful is the extend of its impact to the conflict over political meanings. Thus, the focus must shift towards the interaction of movement's frames with public discourse. By comparing movements for marriage equality to those of living wages, she convincingly argues that the factor determining the successful outcome is the level of each movement's

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integration of meanings in public *doxa*. While she provides an excellent theoretical and analytical framework, she ultimately fails to utilize it in the case of Black Lives Matter (2022) as her study was written while the movements was still "in process".

2.5 Culture, Public Discourse and Relations in the Movement Field

Between models that define movement outcomes based on either strictly their stated policy goal or a deeper structural change lies the relational conception of political contention, according to which:

> "Social movements should therefore not be seen as simply a matter of repressed forces fighting states; instead they need to be situated in a dynamic relational field in which the ongoing actions and interests of state actors, allied and counter-movement groups, and the public at large all influence social movement emergence, activity, and outcomes" (Goldstone 2004, 333)

In that sense, the "movement field's" composition is not only multi-institutional, but also contains extra-institutional actors such as counter-movements, along with the wider public, as well as "symbolic and value orientations available in society that condition the reception and response to movement claims and actions" (Goldstone 2004, 357). It is the relations between those elements that seem to provide a convincing answer as to what shapes the complex movement dynamics. According to this framework, movements are elements in this complex field of players in politics and society that are seeking advantages by using a variety of tactics (Goldstone 2004, 359; Diani and McAdam 2003; Rojas and King 2018; McAdam and Boudet 2012; Crossley and Diani 2018).

In addition, if the movements do not engage in a "challenger-target authority" model of political contention, but instead take part in a competition over the reshaping of a wider sociopolitical field, then it is possible to distinguish between two different conceptions of movement success (Useem and Goldstone 2022): the movement *victories* as favorable policy outcomes over the

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target authority or various other types of relational shifts between the movement and one of the actors of the field, and the movement *success* as an outcome that is more durable in time that can only come from "changing the alignments in that field to produce a new, stable, and favorable equilibrium can bring lasting success" (2022, 36).

The analytical categories described above may seem to provide only a slightly changed reformulation of what has been described as a tension between "certain policy changes versus wider systemic change". This is the point where Woodly's view of "frame resonance" (2015) and Goldstone's "relational" framework (Useem and Goldstone 2022; Goldstone 2003; 2004) share common theoretical ground: in order for the field equilibrium to change, leading in lasting success of a movement, the change does not necessarily have to be systemic. This is particularly the case in the cultural level, with Frank Baumgartner's et al. (2008) study of the decline of death penalty in US since the mid-1990s showing that the explanation lies not in the change in the fundamental beliefs of Americans about the morality of death penalty, but rather in the rise of a new "innocence" frame in the debate about death penalty in the public sphere. This reformulation of an old debate with new elements did not lead to a slow, systemic change of core American cultural values, but rather to a attention shift of the public understanding regarding what is at stake in the death penalty, resulting to faster, but also lasting, political change.

While every element of the movement field is important in determining success, in contemporary democracies the political actors that do not have sufficient institutional resources need to resort to the public sphere and engage in the conflict over the political meanings that constitute a public "common sense". The public sphere acts as the ground in which new political meanings emerge, resonate with the wider public, gain support and in some cases, lead to lasting political change. The "public sphere", originally a concept of Habermas under a process of

constant reformulation, is a public arena where discourses and political meanings are expressed and debated, a place separated from the state and official economic institutions (Habermas 1996; 2003; 2011; 2007). It is not entirely unified, but composed of several subaltern counter-publics acting as parallel discursive arenas where members of marginalized social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses, permitting them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs (Fraser 1990; Warner 2002). But even if not completely unified, "the official public sphere… is-the prime institutional site for the construction of the consent that defines the new, hegemonic mode of domination" (Fraser 1990, 62).

The clash between opposing political meanings in the public sphere is conducted through mass-mediated communication, which is essential for democratic politics, as it "serves as a necessary function in the transmission and interpretation of political information" (D. R. Woodly 2015, 21). It is through mass media that specific political arguments and framings find their way to acceptance of vast majorities or are considered not worth of public discussion. The literature on social movement studies considers mass media mainly as an "enemy" of the movements due to their function as ideological apparatuses (Gitlin 2003), the elite bias (D. R. Woodly 2015) and the overall misrepresentation of specific movements (Craig and Reid 2022). Despite the above, a pragmatic view of mass media acknowledges the fact that even thought elite positions may differs from movement positions, they often do not differ on which public issues they consider as worth discussing (D. R. Woodly 2015, 131). At the same time, traditional mass media are "forced" to adopt issues that are heavily debated in the "semi-competitive" sphere of social media, while at the same time there are instances where media organizations ally with movements and other political challengers. Thus, despite the critical considerations over the role of mass media, they remain the main arena through which the conflict over political meanings takes place.

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In order to examine the interaction of social movements with the public sphere and mass media, one needs to have a concrete definition of "culture". Following the argument of Woodly, who utilizes theoretical concepts from Arendt (1998; 2005), Swidler (2000), Wedeen (2002) and Bourdieu (1977):

> "Culture… is not something inside people's heads, the essence of which they come to embody, or even a set of deeply held, more or less stable values and beliefs. Instead, it is a set of public practices that organize patterns of understanding and (inter)action among self-acknowledged collectivities such as families, associations, regions, and nations. Culture is not static and fixed, but dynamic and flexible. It is not about inchoate values, but about the tools (skills, habits, and repertoires of action) with which people design the "strategies of action that they use to navigate the world they share with others. This means that culture is in no way ephemeral, amorphous, or invisible. "Culture in action" can be observed in discourses'". (D. R. Woodly 2015, 20)

Following from the above, "culture in action" can be observed through the examination of discourses on the public sphere, which reveal hegemonic and subaltern ways of political understanding and interpretations of reality in a wider public. If the discourses on the public sphere are transmitted and accessed through mass mediated communication, then it is possible to proceed into an inductive examination of the mediated public discourse in order to trace which movement framing and political arguments are treated as worth discussing, accepted or neglected in the wider public, beyond the participants that they intent to mobilize.

For Woodly "persistent shifts in political discourse can change politics because they entail changes in public meanings and political understandings, thereby altering what we take to be political, what issues are generally considered problematic and in need of solution, who we think is responsible, and what we think it is feasible and/or desirable to do in response" (2015, 23). Thus, successful framing of a political problem, or "altering cultural coding" (Swidler 2000, 33) is one of the main components of lasting political change. Resonant frames bring together old ideas about "the way things are" and new purposes regarding "what is to be done" in a harmonious "discursive package" that is easily comprehensible, combining established beliefs and logics with new perspectives on significance and action.

Prominent American political scientist E.E Schattschneider argued that "the outcome of every conflict is determined by the extent to which the audience becomes involved in it" (1975, 2). This "socialization of conflict" in the public sphere is also needed for social movements, as it helps their political argument get wider attention and integration over public-policy debates. The socialization of conflict also creates conditions for political acceptance. Political acceptance is based on the idea that public authority is a resource for political challengers, allowing them to broaden the scope of the conflict and gain an effective hearing from both the wider public and elites (Schattschneider 1975). The broader a public debate about policy-making is, the better for movements, as the decision makers are held more accountable. Thus, the combination of a resonant frame and a widely socialized conflict is able to shift the balance of power and force decision-makers to justify their positions, providing the opportunity for the weaker challenger to further engage in the contention over political meanings.

Frames and framing processes play a crucial role in inserting new meanings, perspectives, values, and policy alternatives into the political arena, leading the wider public to care about the issues and motivating elites to pay attention. When a resonant frame is consistently repeated in the media, it can have a "framing effect" that doesn't change people's fundamental beliefs, but instead alters their perspective when making decisions or taking positions on a specific issue. Over time, if the same framing effect persist, the issue becomes associated with the prevailing frame and is perceived as inherently connected to the principle invoked by that framing. This shift in perception is not guaranteed in any way, but requires public contention over political meaning and policies.

Moreover, it becomes evident from the above that there is a new analytical distinction needed when studying new social movements that are "still in process", one beyond the relational conception of "policy victory versus lasting success". This is the distinction between   a

movement's acceptance to the public sphere and a wider public agreement with the movement's political arguments. This is because public acceptance does not mean complete acceptance of the movement's proposed solution to the identified problem, but acceptance of the movement's framing as worth discussing in the public sphere, leading to further stages, such as the "accommodation" of the movement's issue in terms of policy solutions (D. R. Woodly 2015, 155–60). Thus, when studying a movement "in process", it's framing may still not be hegemonic, but it may be persistent due to the fact that it has been accepted as worth debating in the public sphere.

PART 3: RESEARCH DESIGN

2.1: Research Question

There are four notable works focusing on the impact of BLM in the public sphere after the 2020 protests. Dunivin et al (2022) examine the extent to which the movement's concepts have been injected into the public discourse from a large-scale quantitative perspective, while Craig and Reid conduct focus on the depiction of "defund" in media (2022). Cobbina (2022; 2023) examines the ways that activists understand the demand of "defunding".

This project aims to fill a gap that exists in the intersection of those works, by challenging their basic claims: that is, without underestimating the importance of the popularity of a frame or its depiction in mass media, the capacity of a frame to contribute to political change lies in its ability to "cluster" together with aspects of public "doxa", as well as contrasting ideas of what is at stake, thus shifting the position of numerous actors of the broader movement field. This "discursive coalition" lies behind political change. Thus, acknowledging the often paradoxical co-existence between movement success and failure, I intend to examine the different dimensions of them in a within-case examination of the "Defund the Police Movement" between 2020 and 2023. The research question is: are there different outcomes regarding the movement's impact in policy-making and the conflict over public political meanings? And if so, why?

2.2 Data, Methods, Conceptualizations

To answer the above question, a comparison of the movement outcomes is conducted through a two-part research design. To examine the movement's impact on policy-making, as well as

the basic concepts behind the movement's discourse, the first part provides a historical overview of the movement's emergence, accompanied by a descriptive analysis of the federal and state policy changes in law enforcement and public safety after George Floyd's death (May 2020 - April 2023). The data used for the descriptive analysis comes from the "State Bill Tracking Database" of the National Conference of State Legislatures.

To examine the interaction between movement frames and the public discourse, content analysis was conducted to 209 articles from the online edition of the newspapers New York Times, Washington Post and Wall Street Journal from May 2020 to April 2023. These newspapers were chosen based on their agenda-setting character, their popularity in terms of both circulation and online visits, as well as balance between ideological diversity ("AllSides Media Bias Chart" 2019) and level of trust among both supporters of the Democratic and Republican party (Sanders 2022). The articles consist of news, opinion pieces, long-reads and letters to the editors.

The articles were chosen based on their content's relevance with "Defund", BLM and Police reform after the murder of George Floyd. The first round of collection was based on whether the term "Defund the Police" was on the title or abstract of the articles. The second round was based on whether the term was on the body of the article. This process was repeated for every 10 days between May 2020 and April 2023, resulting to a database consisting of one article per almost 5 days.

The coding was purely inductive on the entire article at the level of paragraph using Atlas.ti, a process that is both extremely labor-intensive and time-consuming, requiring extensive and repeated reading of the pieces. Every argument and theme that was mentioned over three times in the entire database was coded. During the reading process of each piece, every specific theme consistently reiterated throughout the article without significant variations or additional

supporting evidence, was coded just once. This approach can help streamline the coding process and prevent redundancy, particularly when the same argument is reiterated in a repetitive or redundant manner, something that is very usual on newspaper articles. Furthermore, the focus of the analysis is not on the total number of appearances of each code, but the ways in which they co-occur together, creating discursive "packages". Thus, coding the same theme multiple times in an article would result to distortion of the structure of data. After combining similar codes and eliminating repetitive ones, this process generated 57 unique codes, such as "racialized policing" and "reform makes policing difficult".

The goal of this project is to shed light to the process in which different political arguments "combine" with different policy recommendations. That makes it different than most works on movement frames, as one has to conduct a "bottom-up", close investigation of framing formation, rather than presuppose what the frames are based on expertise or theoretical expectations. To do so, in similar projects, Woodly (2018) and Baumgartner (2008) utilized exploratory statistical analysis techniques such as Factor and Principal Component Analysis, searching for clustering of arguments in large datasets. But these techniques are ideal for very large datasets: both of their databases consisted of thousands of articles spanning through decades of debates of well-established issues. As a result, the use of such techniques in a relative small dataset, along with a coding process that eliminated redundantly appearing themes and a new debate under public discussion (meaning that arguments are not well-established and the variation between them is greater) would give results that failed to provide an accurate picture of the discursive patterns that are emerging.

The need for a data exploration approach more sensitive to subtle differences led to a strategy that will be described as a thematic analysis based on the co-occurrence of political arguments, an empirical technique that allows for a closer look in the patterns emerging from the coded

data, while maintaining the same "bottom-up" approach regarding the formation of frames. Specifically, the codes that are generalized from data are considered not frames, but political arguments in a broad sense. After the coding process, these arguments are classified into four categories:

- The "Diagnostic" arguments, consisting of different positions regarding what is the main issue at stake.

- The "Prognostic" arguments, consisting of different positions on "what is to be done" about the issue, acting as policy recommendations to the public sphere.

- The "Commonplace" arguments, consisting of appeals to the common sense, the public Aristotelian "doxa" of issues that receive wider acceptance.

- The "Movement Field" arguments, consisting of positions of various actors participating on a wider movement field, such as the public opinion, political parties and other institutions.

The terms "diagnostic" and "prognostic", originally used by Snow (2018), while retaining the same meaning, are used to classify arguments, and not frames. The "motivational" aspects of Snow's model aren't utilized, as the focus is on the interplay between frames and the wider public, not just the actors that mobilize. Different diagnostic arguments can be either opposite, or even complementing one another.

After the arguments are classified, a co-occurrence matrix is created with the use of Atlas.ti. By using the matrix, the arguments are first compared for their strength, which is their frequency on the data. Following, the prevailing prognostic arguments are compared in terms of their co-occurrence with prevailing diagnostic, commonplace and movement field arguments. That way it is possible to have a "bottom-up" view of how various conceptualizations of what is at stake are connected with a proposal of "what is to be done". The combination of arguments from all the categories that have the highest rate of co-occurrence form frames. A frame is salient if there is a high level of co-occurrence of a prognostic argument with many strong arguments from the other categories. Furthermore, a frame is resonant if the prognostic argument not only co-occurs

highly with prevailing frames from other categories, but is also "cutting through" opposing arguments of each category, thus forming a "discursive coalition" that consists of different understandings of the problem and different movement actors leaning towards the same policy recommendation.

By utilizing this technique it is possible to see not the theorized, but the actually existing frames that are "naturally" emerging in the public discourse in their full complexity. Due to the purely inductive approach of the research project, it is not possible to provide a concrete hypothesis, although, based on the theoretical framework and concepts described above, a preliminary expectation is that for frames that were eventually successful, their success does not come despite the policy changes, but because of them, meaning that they were able to combine both calls for change and arguments against change in a policy recommendation.

2.3 Limitations

Concluding, both parts of the research design come with their limitations. On the first part, the descriptive analysis of policy change takes into consideration only the type of policy change, but not the actual context. That means that while the analysis is able to provide a bird-eyed view of policy changes all over US, it misses the fact that some changes are more progressive (or even radical) than others, even if they are both on the same category. At the same time, the second part offers a way of focusing on subtle differences in the co-occurrence of arguments, as it examines a public debate "on the making", that is, as it still takes place. Consequently, the results cannot be generalized.

PART 4: HISTORICAL (DIS)CONTINUITIES OF BLACK RESISTANCE

This chapter presents a historical overview of the movement's emergence. By doing so, it provides the necessary context for understanding the gradual formation of the movement's discourse, and more specifically, the movement's current demand for defunding the police. The historical overview is neither complete nor extensive, but rather focuses on two aspects, that is the gradual ideological shifts and organizational changes on the movement against racialized police and social control in US. The overview of those changes will be provided in three different time periods: from the end of civil rights movement until the second half of 2000, the emergence of Black Lives Matter in Fergusson in 2012 and the events after George Floyd's death in 2020. In the last part of the chapter, a descriptive overview of the reforms in policing between 2020 and 2023 nationwide is provided. This macro-level overview of policy changes, based on official data from the National Conference of State Legislatures, offers a bird's-eye view of the movement's impact on policy-making.

4.1 Between Revolutionary and Institutional Road

Movements of African Americans for racial equality in US have a long, celebrated history. Among those, resistance against racialized policing, mass incarceration and violent repression of black communities has a long tradition of both violent and non-violent tactics, as well as strategic debates (Steinberg 2007; Taylor 2019; Oliver 2020). And while the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s is mostly known for its non-violent orientation, it is the varying political tendencies of the Black Panther Party between 1966-1974, eventually leading to their schism,

that offer a better view of how the "different roads" towards black liberation were conceived at the time. Specifically, while the party started as a black nationalist revolutionary group that emphasized on armed self-defense against the police, it soon became evident that in order for the party to survive there was a need for a new organizational paradigm, capable of engaging the "undisciplined" party militants with the wider black community (Alkebulan 2007, 40). The introduction of the party's programs for community support, including free health clinics, a "black liberation" school, campaign for community control of the police and most notably, the breakfast program for schoolchildren of the black communities, was a pragmatic response to those needs, but also had ideological consequences. In the words of the party's leader, Huey Newton:

> "All these programs satisfy the deep needs of the community but they are not solutions to our problems. That is why we call them survival programs, meaning survival pending revolution. We say that the survival program of the Black Panther Party is like the survival kit of a sailor stranded on a raft. It helps him to sustain himself until he can get completely out of that situation. So the survival programs are not answers or solutions, but they will help us to organize the community around a true analysis and understanding of their situation. When consciousness and understanding is raised to a high level then the community will seize the time and deliver themselves from the boot of their oppressors." (Newton and Morrison 2009, 119)

The programs changed the ideological model of the party by introducing socialist elements to revolutionary black radicalism, while the party became deeply rooted to the black communities of over sixty-nine cities. Until 1971, there was balance between survival programs and self-defense (Jeffries 2007; 2010; 2018), but eventually the tension between two different strategies for black liberation took the form of an open and violent conflict between Huey Newton and Eldridge Cleaver (Bloom and Martin 2016; Cleaver and Katsiaficas 2001). With Newton's side prevailing, the party completed its ideological transformation between 1971-1974, now focusing exclusively on social programs, along with a renewed interest in institutional politics (Alkebulan 2007). The ideological transformation of the Black Panthers, along with the violent repression of other revolutionary groups, shifted the strategical paradigm of the black liberation

movement towards institutional and electoral politics during 1980-1990s (Johnston and Oliver 2021, 133).

Despite the reformist turn in movement strategy, the ideological implications were more complex. The blending between black radicalism and Marxism was followed by the introduction of theoretical schemata originating from gay and lesbian liberation activism around HIV during the 1990s (Ransby 2018, 12), along with the emergence of black feminism. The result was the formation of ideological tendencies that focused on the intersection between race, class and gender, even though they were not a hegemonic ideological force in the movement for black liberation. But it was the organizational shifts of the 1990s that led to an ideological diffusion across the movement: as black mobilization against racial policing and repression was rising again during early 1990s (Oliver 2020, 108), the formation of three organizations played a crucial role in shaping the movement's character.

In 1997, Black activist scholars Angela Davis and Ruth Wilson Gilmore, along with Rose Braz founded Critical Resistance, launching the group a year later at conference attended by with 3500 people in Berkeley, California. Critical Resistance is a mixed-race prison abolitionist organization that popularized the phrase "prison industrial complex", arguing that "more policing and imprisonment will not make us safer. Instead, we know that things like food, housing, and freedom are what create healthy, stable neighborhoods and communities". In 1998, the Radical Black Congress (RBC) was formed by 3000 people in Chicago, a coalition of several organizations and activists of the black movement, demanding, among other things, a social policy agenda and civilian control of the neighborhoods instead of policing (Radical Black Congress 1998, 71–73). In the words of one of its founders, Barbara Ransby, the RBC achieved to create a "Black left pole", distinct from mainstream black left politics, that:

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> "managed to bring together the three large, contentious, and sometimes overlapping streams of the Black radical tradition in the US context: Black socialist and communist forces of various stripes, radical Black feminists, and revolutionary nationalists and pan-Africanists." (Ransby 2018, 14)

Lastly, Incite! was founded in 2000 by women of color and addressed issues such as intimate partner violence, police repression, imprisonment, and medical industry's abuse to marginalized communities. The formation of those organizations reshaped the black movement: Critical Resistance provided the "prison-industrial complex" framework that remains extremely popular until today (Dunivin et al. 2022), BRC created a culture of networking between local organizations, activists and intellectuals of diverse militant traditions, while Incite! acted as a bridge between the black movement and other marginalized groups, such as women, trans and gender non-conforming people.

4.2 Fergusson and the re-invention of black mobilization

With the exception of a temporary stop during the years after the terrorist attack of September, 2001, mobilization against racial policing continued to grow strong in the beginning of the 21st century. The main difference comparing to the 1990s movement was the composition of actors: the now older, experienced activist from groups such as BRC and Incite! were now accompanied by a large number of young, black, college educated activists, highly concentrated within social service and criminal justice institutions. Pamela Oliver (2020) shows that this composition of actors, along with intellectuals and black churches worked together towards the creation of policy proposals, attempting to shift the paradigm in public-safety policies: "the most effective policy proposal was the Justice Reinvestment initiative focused on saving states money by reducing incarceration by providing community service… Nevertheless, regardless of ideology, the main activities of all groups in the field involved persuasion and report-writing

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and collaborative rather than conflictual relations between state and non-state actors." (2020, 112–13).

The killing of Michael Brown in August of 2014 sparked the events that led to the creation of Black Lives Matter. What was originally an uprising no different than various local-scale riots of the 1990s in response to police repression, became a nationwide movement (Lebron 2017). What changed was the fact that protests were able to build in each other through the pre-existing community organizing and social movement networks (Oliver 2020, 114). Black Lives Matter rides were organized, based on the freedom rides of the civil rights movement, through which activists from cities such as om Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, Detroit, Houston, L.A, and Portland (Solomon 2014). The shared experiences and networking between the activists resulted to the creation of Black Lives Matter, first in New York in 2014, following with the formation of the Movement for Black Lives in Cleveland in 2015, along with local branches in many cities (D. R. Woodly 2022, 35–38).

One year later, the movement released an official platform, dedicated to develop policy alternatives to public safety. Deva Woodly describes the process:

> "The document was produced in stages, first through a large convening of people with expertise in public policy, law, and communication to gather ideas and prioritize issues called the Black Lives Matter Policy Table. The policy table was assembled after the convening and worked for a year soliciting "feedback from hundreds of people through surveys, national calls, organizational membership, [and] engaged dozens of other organizations, researchers, and other individuals for their insights and expertise to begin developing a framework for shared policy priorities." (2022, 43)

Concluding, it becomes evident that the current form of Black Lives Matter movement draws from the organizational and ideological shifts of the black mobilization between 1970s-1990s. Those shifts led to a coalition of previously distinctive tendencies, while the newest generation of activists contributed to the deepening of the existing movement networks.

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4.3 Black Lives at Constant Struggle

When Angela Davis described the impact of Fergusson for the future of black mobilization, she concluded that "the political consciousness in so many communities is so much higher than people think" (Davis and Barat 2016, 41). At the same time, M4BL completed the process towards formatting a rigid structure, consisting 50 new and old organizations nationwide, both movement organizations and policy-oriented think-tanks, including the Black Lives Matter Global Network Foundation, PolicyLink, BY100 and more.

The organizational diversity, that does not come without tensions (Incite! Women of Color Against Violence 2017), is followed by an ideological diversity, that after the 2020 protest wave, has now come closer to more mainstream ideological tendencies too. In the words of Pamela Oliver, "those ideologies included Black nationalism, various types of race-conscious socialism/Marxism, liberal Democrat, various religious or communitarian traditions, and race-conscious conservativism" (2020, 120).

The movement was even more oriented towards electoral and policy-making strategies during the Trump era, with multiple published reports regarding local police budgets and proposals for reallocation of police resources towards social services (Anspach 2018), when in May 2020, a new wave of protests took place. The 2020 protest wave was the largest in US history (Buchanan, Bui, and Patel 2020). As seen in the Table 1, using Alisa Robinson's database (2023) of BLM mobilizations from 2010 to 2023, from the total of 6,819 demonstrations during the span of 13 years, the 51.45% of them took place during the summer of 2020. The evidence becomes even more astonishing when comparing to either Fergusson protests (166 in four months), "pre-Floyd" protests (2272 in six years), or "post-Floyd" protests (431 in almost 3 years).

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Movement Period	Number of BLM Demonstrations
Total (2010-2023)	6,819
Fergusson Riot (August 2014-December 2014)	166
Post-Fergusson (January 2014-April 2020)	2,272
"Floyd" protests until today (May 2020-May 2023)	3,940
Summer 2020 "Floyd" protests (May 2020-Sept.2020)	3,509
Post-"Floyd" protests (October 2020-May 2023)	431

Table 1: BLM Demostrations 2010-2023

While the protests went beyond demands about policing of black community, the centrality of public safety remained. New groups, such us MPD1500, published reports about police departments and the prospect of defunding (MPD150 2021), while new broad coalitions emerged, such as Anti Police-Terror project, consisting of nearly 50 organizations demanding deunding the police (APTP 2021). "DefundPolice.org" is a website coordinated by organizations such as M4BL, Critical Resistance, PolicyLink and BLM Canada, acting as a "resource toolkit" for community organizers attempting to make the case for defunding the police in local communities nationwide.

With the demand for "defunding" officially backed by the most impactful, both activist and policy-oriented, nationwide and local organizations, "re-imagining public safety" became one of the most prominent topics of 2020 protests (Cobbina-Dungy and Jones-Brown 2023). Jennifer Cobbina, a scholar who interviewed many activists in Fergusson (2019), argued that 2020 protesters had grew disillusioned with previous attempts of police reform such as racially diversifying the departments (Stanton 2020). She continues to argue that:

> "the main interpretation is centered on reimagining what public safety looks like. And, so, there are calls for cities to divest from policing and to instead invest in resources that create safety for black people and people of color—including investing in high-quality public schools, clean and affordable housing, mental health care, livable-wage jobs with health care and other benefits. And so that's really at the heart of the term "defund the police": divest from the police and invest in marginalized individuals and communities." (2020)

This "non-reformist reform" (Bonsu 2020) conception of sociopolitical change is what distinguishes the Black Lives Matter movement. Far from being "a militant expression of racial liberalism" (Johnson et al. 2022, 13), the ideological diversity of the movement, product of decades of blending between different ideological and organizational traditions, equilibrates in a "pragmatist", policy-oriented version of black radicalism that addresses systemic injustice (D. R. Woodly 2022, 49–88).

4.4 "Defund's" Impact on Policy Change: a descriptive overview

Jennifer Cobbina distinguishes between two distinct issues with policing in US that result to a "two-tier problem": the process of militarization and warrior-style, proactive policing and the function of policing as a form of racializes social control (2023, 2–7). This creates the need for two-tier reforms: policies addressing both the "everyday" policing as well as the model of public safety in general. "Defunding" the police seems to address both issues, as the minimizing of available resources for police stops the process of militarization, while the reallocation of those resources towards institutions centered around preventing crime instead of punishing it acts as a way of "reimaging" public safety. In the words of Cobbina, "positioned between reform and abolition is transformation" (2023, 9). Far from it being a sole intellectual's position, this conceptualization of defunding is deeply rooted both in movement organizations and protest participants. Specifically, the "Defund.org" coalition around policing reform, pivotal in providing organizations with organizing and legislature resources, states that:

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> #DefundPolice means divesting from institutions that kill, harm, cage and control our
> communities, and investing in violence prevention and interruption, housing, health care,
> income support, employment, and other community-based safety strategies that will produce
> safer communities for everyone. (Defund.org 2021)

At the same time, despite the way that media depicts the movement's demands (Craig and Reid 2022), research on participants in 2020 protests with different level of engagement with the movement showed that they perceive the concept of "defund" in the same way as both the organizations and the intellectuals, as reallocation from policing towards social services (Cobbina-Dungy et al. 2022).

The responses to the movement's demand in the level of policy-making were both at the federal and the state level. At the federal level, president Donald Trump signed the "Safe Policing for Safe Communities" executive order (Executive Office of the President 2020). In section 2, the executive order calls for the formation of independent credentialing bodies, certified by the Attorney General, that review certain topics regarding training of the police force and use-of-force standards. In section 3, the order calls for the creation of databases for incidents of police misconducts and excessive use of force, as well as the investigations of those incidents. Section 4 calls for the creation of social service bodies complementing the police in instances of mental health, homelessness and addiction. Finally, section 5 of the order offers recommendations for improving relationships between police departments and local communities.

The executive order has been criticized as an attempt to reform policing that not only does fail to address the issues highlighted by the 2020 protests, but also utilizes the same "law and order" approach to public safety that led to the events of May 25, 2020 (Ravenell 2020). Nevertheless, one of the consequences of the executive order is the creation of the "Legislative Responses for Policing" database (National Conference of State Legislatures 2020), a database containing policing bills introduced as of May 25, 2020 that are in response of those events.

By utilizing the "Legislative Responses for Policing" database, it is possible to have a fairly accurate overview of the character of the policing reforms that acted as response to the movement demands nationwide. The different themes of reforms in the database are "Investigations and Discipline" for regulations regarding critical incidents and disciplinary procedures, "Oversight" regulating police oversight and reviewing bodies, "Data and Transparency" for data collection, tracking and reporting, "Policing Alternatives and Collaboration" for legislation authorizing and funding alternative responses for law enforcement, "Technology" for regulations in the use of technology for law enforcement purposes like police-worn body cameras, "Standards" for departmental adoption of policies, along with "Training", "Use of Force" and "Other Issues".

As seen on the figure 1, the impact of 2020 protests was very significant, as between the May 25 and the end of the year 162 policy reforms have been enacted. But it is the spike that follows on 2021 that makes the impact of the movement more evident, as 475 policy reforms regarding policing have been enacted throughout the year. When compared to 2022, with the number of enacted policies falling to 209, the data on policy resembles the fall of the protest activity in the post-Floyd era, as seen in table 1, while the evidence from 2023 (119 until February) is inconclusive.
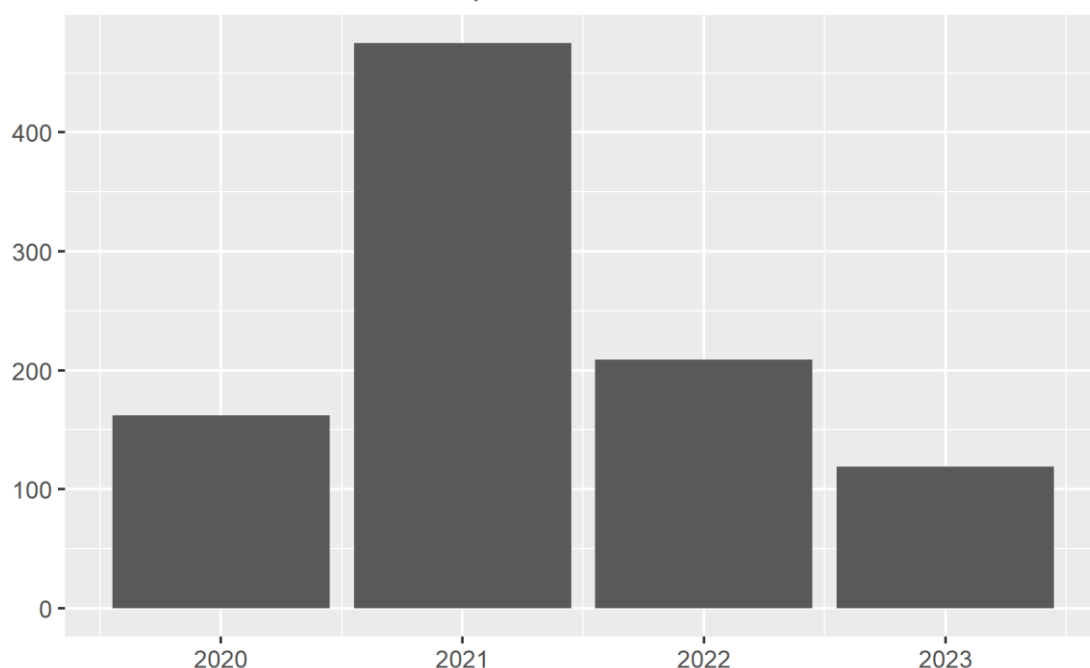
Total Number of Reforms per Year

Figure 1: Enacted Police Reforms 2020-2023

When exploring the data further, it becomes evident that while states that voted for Democratic party generally proceeded into more reforms, the alignment between political geography of voting and political geography of policing reforms is not so clear. More specifically, as seen in figure 2, between the ten states with the highest number of reforms are traditional strongholds of the democratic party such as the states of the west (Washington, Oregon, California) and east coast (New York, District of Columbia). At the same time, Virginia, the state with the highest number of reforms is governed by a member of the Republican party, while the state with the second highest number of reforms, Utah, is a traditional Republican stronghold of the "mountain states".
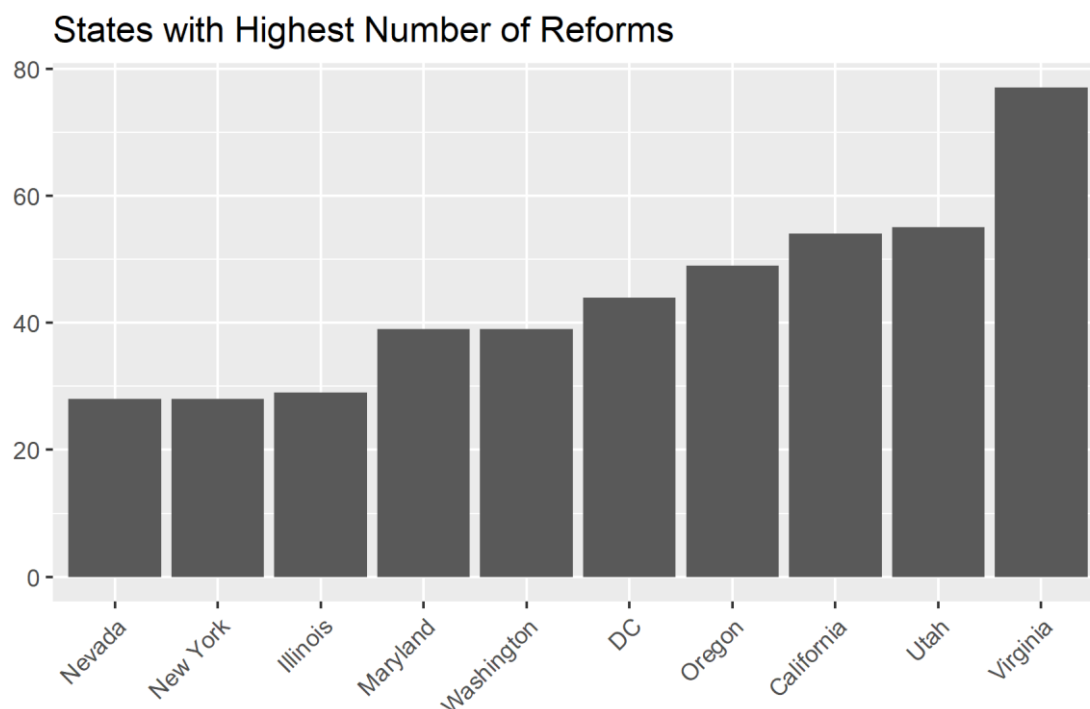
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Figure 2: US states with the highest number of enacted police reforms 2020-2023

The figure 3, showing the states with the lowest number of reforms, tells almost the same story. The list is composed of mostly midwestern states, like Missouri, Ohio, Nebraska, North Dakota, Michigan and Kansas, traditionally leaning towards the Republican party. At the same time, Massachusetts, a state included in the "blue wall" of democratic party strongholds, is also among the states with the lowest number of reforms. Density of black population is another factor that fails to explain the policy-making impact of the movement. By drawing data from the world population review (2023), it becomes evident that among the states that have over 20% of black population, only DC (49.36%) and Virginia (20.27%) make it to the list for high numbers of reforms. Similarly, Oregon (2.96%) and Washington (5.44%) a disproportion between number of reforms and percentage of black population.
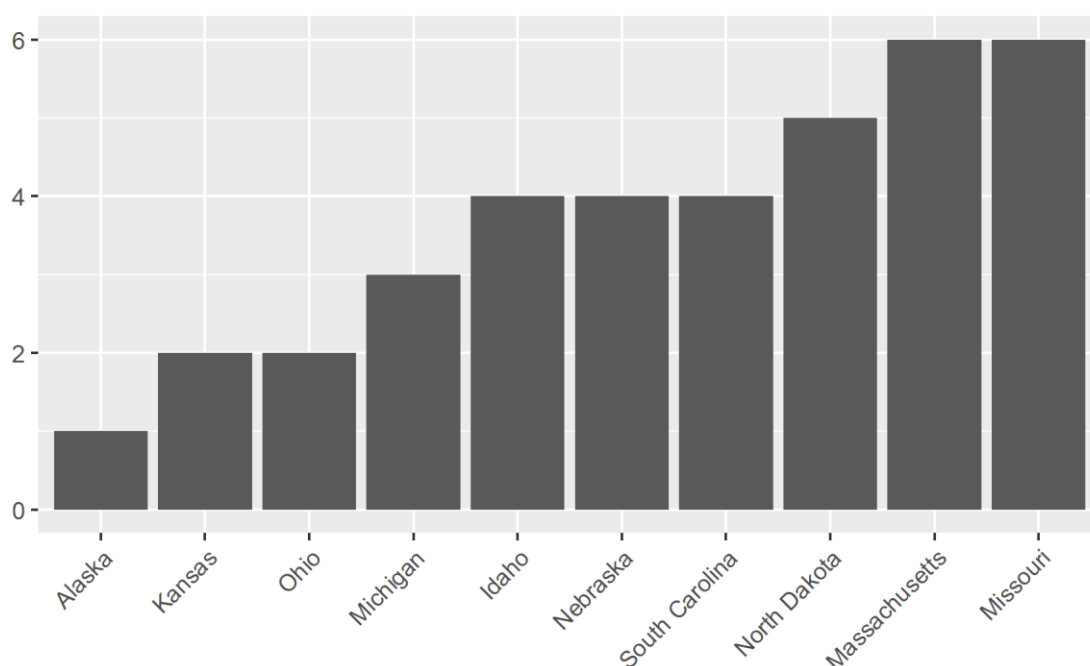
34

Figure 3: US states with the lowest number of enacted police reforms 2020-2023

An exploration of the prevailing themes of the policing bills that have been enacted sheds further light to the character of the reform. To the extend in which "defund" means not only an economic reallocation of resources towards social services, but a total paradigm shift of public safety towards a model that relies more on local communities and institutions designed to prevent crime and less on conduct between civilians and police, it is safe to assume that the movement's demands in terms of legislative action revolve mainly around the thematic of alternatives to policing. As it becomes evident in figure 4, this is not the case for the policy response from the authorities. The thematic of policing alternatives is ranked as sixth out of the nine themes, with 80 enacted bills, bellow other issues (187), standards (164), training (125), use of force (121) and oversight (97). But what is more important than just a quantitative comparison is the pattern that emerges from the combination of prevailing reform themes. By prioritizing regulations of use of force, standards and training, it becomes evident that the paradigm of the reform is more oriented towards treating police violence as "instances in which

some officers have misused their authority" (Executive Office of the President 2020) rather than a function of institutions rooted in systemic injustice. Thus, the proposed remedy is an attempt to limit those instances of misused authority through strict standards of day-to-day policing and training. In this framework, the policing alternatives' purpose is not antagonistic to the police, as the movement for Black Lives argues, but rather complementing, and even if a reallocation of resources towards institutions of alternative intervention takes place, it is under the assumption that those institutions expand the toolbox of police, rather than minimize it.
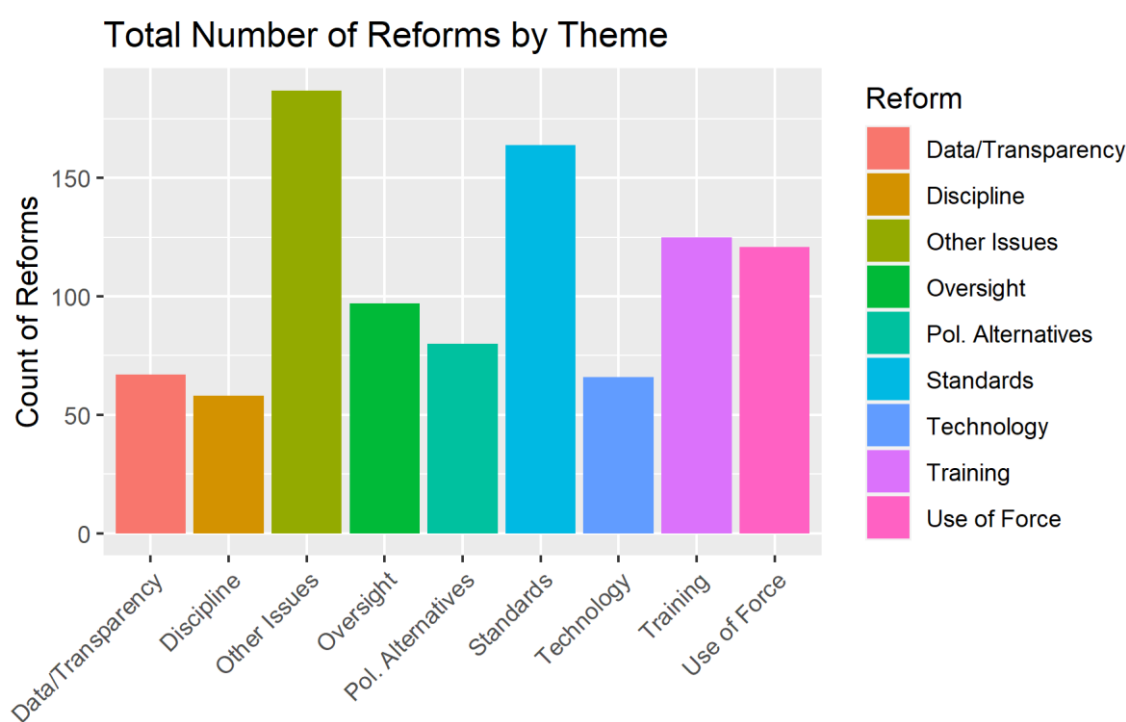

Figure 4: number of policing reforms by thematic 2020-2023

The economic aspects of the authorities' response to the demands of the movement remain unclear until today, as the United States Census Bureau does not provide official data about changes in funding of institutions at federal or state level for 2021-2022 yet. However, by drawing data from the local level, researchers Andy Friedman and Mason Youngblood (2022)

studied changes in the budget of over 400 municipal police departments between 2018 and 2022. What they found is that while the police budget of some cities dropped even by 32.5% from 2020 to 2021, as is the case for Austin, not only was almost all of the budget recovered in 2022, but the general trend actually reveals that the shifts in the police budget have the same pattern with the changes in the overall municipal budget. As figure 5 reveals, police budgets grew or shrank following the exact same pattern as overall city budgets, while their percentage over the overall budget remained the same.
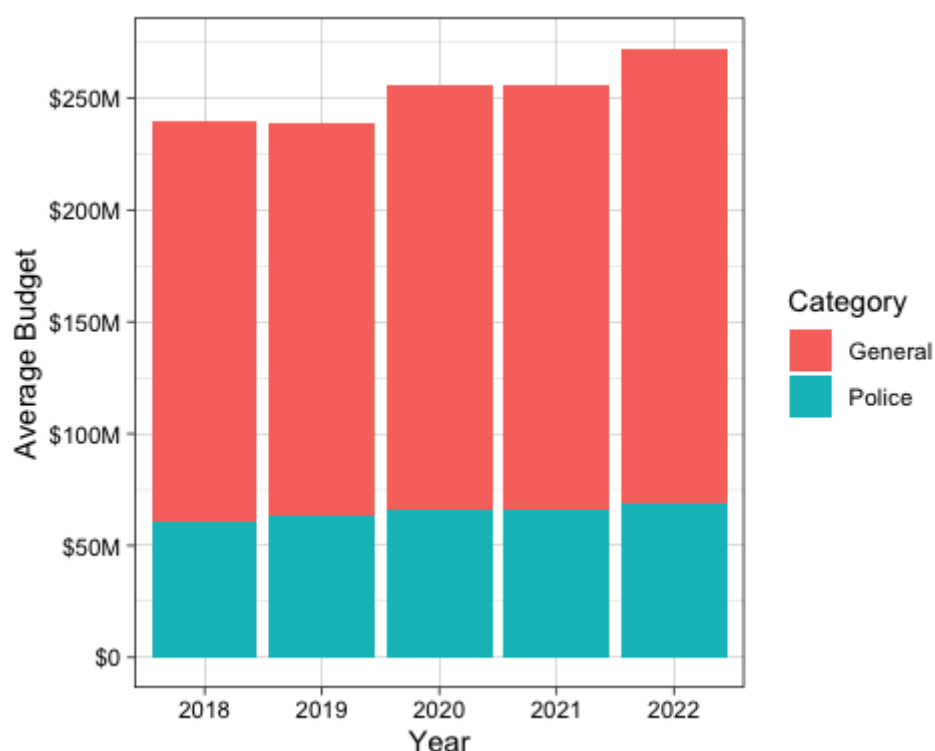

Figure 5: proportion of police budget over overall city budget 2018-2021

Overall, there seems to be a gap between the proposed policy changes on behalf of the defund movement and the 2020 protests and the response from the authorities. While the response included policy changes on the federal and state level, those changes were based on a different conception regarding the root of the problem, thus resulting to different prioritization of policy changes.

PART 5: THE PUBLIC DISCOURSE OF POLICE REFORM

This chapter provides a thematic analysis of the public discourse on police reform after the murder of George Floyd. The analysis is focused on the co-occurrence between difference political arguments and policy recommendations. In every part, the prevailing policy recommendations are compared based on their co-occurrence with a different thematic category of arguments: "diagnostic", "commonplaces" and "movement field".

5.1 Prognostic and Diagnostic Arguments

The different understandings of "what is at stake" after the murder of George Floyd consist of arguments that have positive or critical orientation towards policing in US. Among the most frequently occurring arguments, four of them are supportive towards policing, while seven of them are critical. The strongest argument is the concern about the rise of crime rates after the last quarter of 2020, which is usually complemented with less popular arguments about the impact of reforms to the street presence the police or the morale of the officers.

However, more important than the strength of a sole argument is the pattern that emerges when examining the ranking in its entirety. Specifically, the way that strong critical arguments have "clustered" after the worries about rising crime is accordant with the argument stated on the previous chapter: that is, the fact that the movement had a significant impact in how policing is perceived, resulting to a public critique that is not only popular, but also multidimensional, as different perceptions of the problem include the general character of policing (racialized), the "root" cause (institutional racism), a historical overview (old approaches) as well as policing as an everyday practice (need for alternatives that reduce the interaction between police and civilians).

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Argument	Position on Policing	Frequency
Crime on the rise	Positive	63
Racialized Policing	Critical	59
Police reform is essential	Critical	58
Need of policing alternatives	Critical	49
Systemic/institutional Racism	Critical	47
Old approaches to policing have failed	Critical	46
Danger of becoming Baltimore/anti-cop stigma	Positive	39
More Police = Less crime	Positive	34
Reform makes policing difficult	Positive	32
(Almost) Nothing has changed	Critical	29
Police is defended from accountability	Critical	26

Table 2: Strongest Diagnostic Arguments

As the table 2 shows, there are three prevailing prognosis arguments, with relatively small differences in terms of frequency. The argument closer to the demands of the "defund" movement about reallocation of resources from police towards social services, in line with the movement's discourse, shows that successful framing is not (only) a matter of accurate depiction in mass media. The other two arguments are the "invest rather than defund", calling for further moral and material support to the police, as well as the stronger "both safety and justice", calling for a mixture of police reform and policing alternatives.

Argument	Position on Policing	Frequency
Both public safety and justice	Critical	38
Invest rather than defund	Positive	34
Reallocation towards social services	Critical	33

Table 3: Strongest Prognostic arguments

The co-occurrence between prognostic and diagnostic arguments provides a way to examine the underlying structure of public discourse, showing how different and often contrasting conceptualizations of "what is at stake" form discursive packages with different policy proposals. As it becomes evident by figure 6, both the "safety and justice" and the "reallocation" argument have a high level of co-occurrence with diagnosis arguments that are critical towards policing. Interestingly, the "safety and justice" arguments has a consistently higher level of co-occurrence than the reallocation argument, although those small differences can be attributed to the fact that the "safety and justice" argument is slightly stronger.
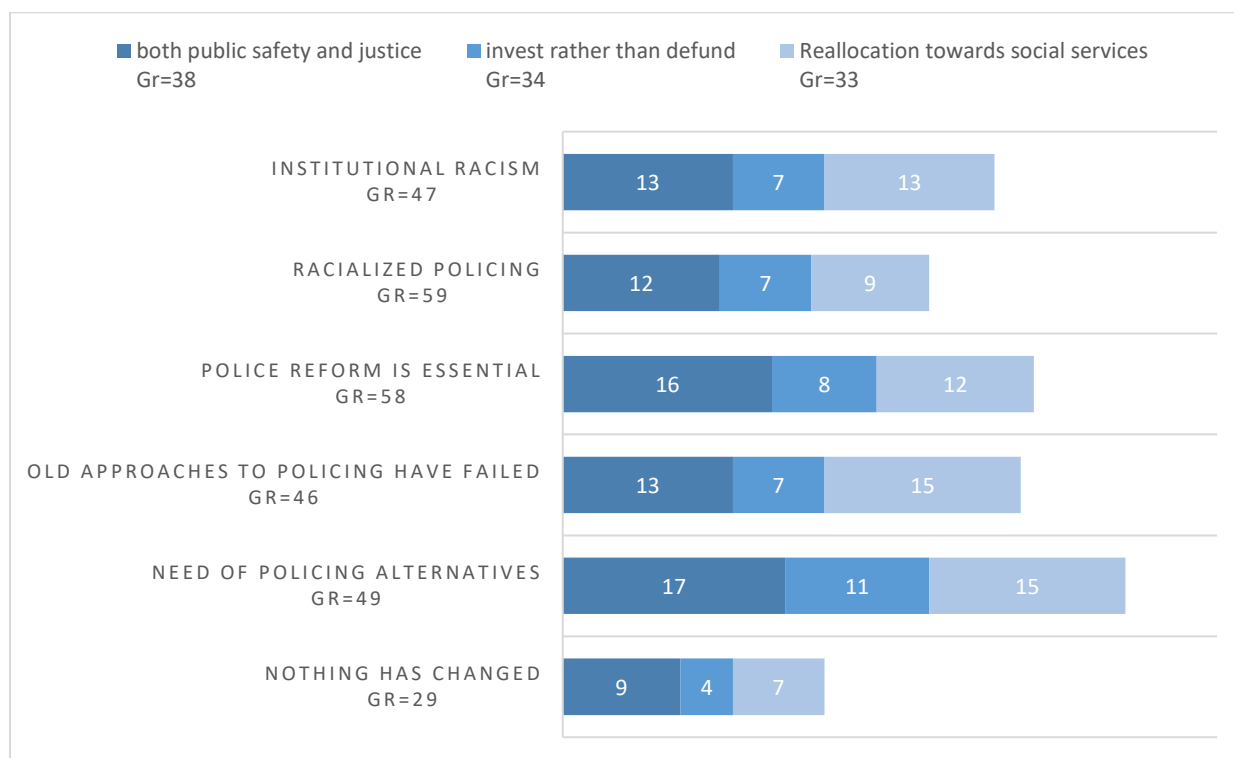

Figure 6:Prognostic and Diagnostic (Critical) arguments

The relationship between prognostic and pro-police diagnostic arguments, as seen in figure 7, is extremely illuminating. As expected, the "invest" argument has a higher level of co-occurrence with every pro-policing diagnosis. This combination results to discursive packages that act as a textbook application of what Albert Hirschman (1991) has defined as "rhetoric of reaction":

> Urban crime? The solution is more of the same failure: defund the police, deinstitutionalize prisons and pursue de minimis prosecution. Their promised replacements—psychologists and social workers—will never materialize. Today, urban neighborhoods are beset with the abandoned mentally ill and the unrestrained, conscienceless violence of young men in gangs. (WSJ, 2021)

In just a few lines one can find the elements of *jeopardy*, with failed reforms that endanger the accomplishments of policing, the *futility* of reforms that will never materialize, as well as the *perversity* of failing progressive policies that resulted to the rise of crime. All of those elements come in a small package in which most of the prevailing pro-police diagnoses cluster together, along with the less popular argument or "counter-effects of radical policies", forming an extremely coherent and salient argument.
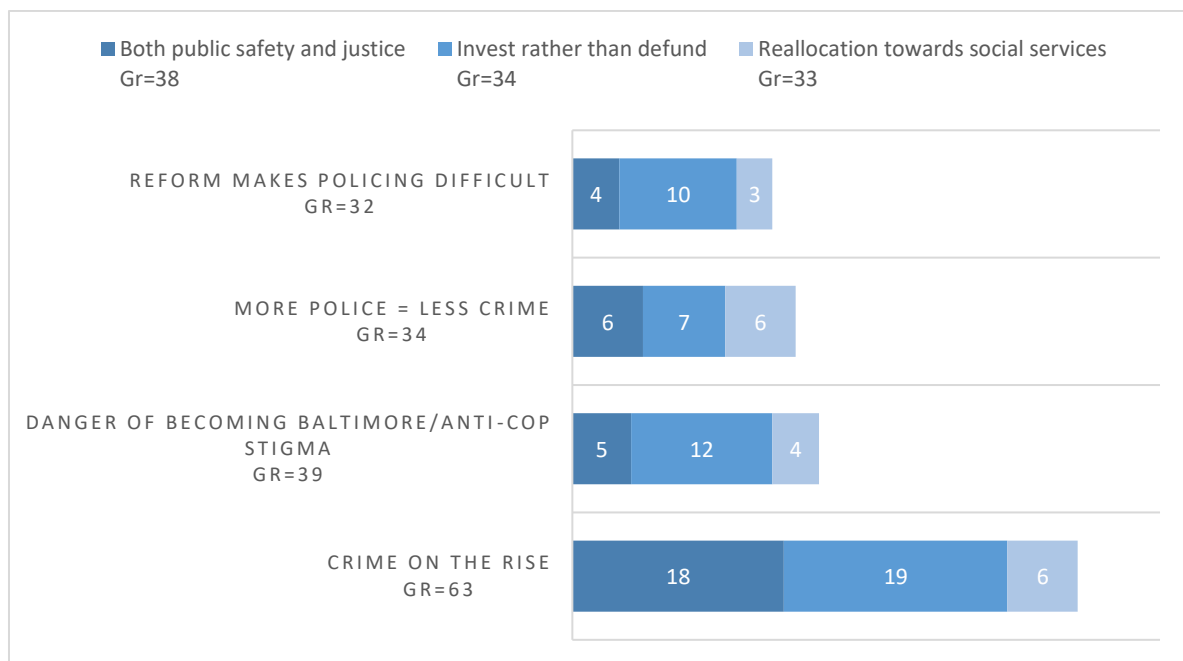

Figure 7: Prognostic and Diagnostice (Positive) arguments

However, as previously mentioned, it is not salience that makes a winning frame, but resonance. The arguments that are able to combine with different diagnoses of what is at stake offer discursive packages that not only appeal to wider audiences, but also appear very convincing, as a result of reflecting a dialectic relationship between stability and change:

> Many American cities are facing rising concern about crime and public safety, often from the same communities that are also concerned about police misconduct. This is a significant challenge, but cities should not see stricter conduct standards as antithetical to effective policing. Reform and investment can be complementary. (NYT, 2023)

It the above excerpt, the "safety and justice" argument combines the two most strongest diagnoses, that is crime rise and racialized policing, in a coherent discursive package. By doing that, it is able to "cut through" different, often contrasting concerns and demands, thus shifting the range of perceived possibilities. Where the "defund" could communicate with concerns about policing as a practice of racial injustice and a salient rhetoric of reaction could only connect with a certain "fear of change", the third argument managed to create a new understanding of what is at stake, in which both racial justice and protection from crime are fundamental elements of public safety.

5.2 Commonplaces

> One thing I'm clear about: The prerequisite to prosperity is public safety and justice.. And if we don't have them both together, it doesn't matter how many police officers you put on the street. We can't continue to respond to symptoms. It's time to respond to the underlying causes of violence in our city. (NYT, 2021)

As shown with above excerpt, the "safety and justice" arguments resonates perfectly with diagnoses about crime rise, critiques of policing as an everyday practice and the identified "root" causes. It does so by appealing to a commonplace, a concept that receives wider acceptance, that is public safety. Commonplaces are the public "doxa", a relative stable set of hegemonic beliefs, crucial in organizing patterns of understanding what is political and what

not, what is worth pursuing and what is not. At the same time, commonplaces are not fixed, but rather "culture in action" (Wedeen 2002) in the sense that they dynamic and flexible, able to form different combinations with political arguments on the public discourse, thus shifting our understanding of what constitutes "common sense".
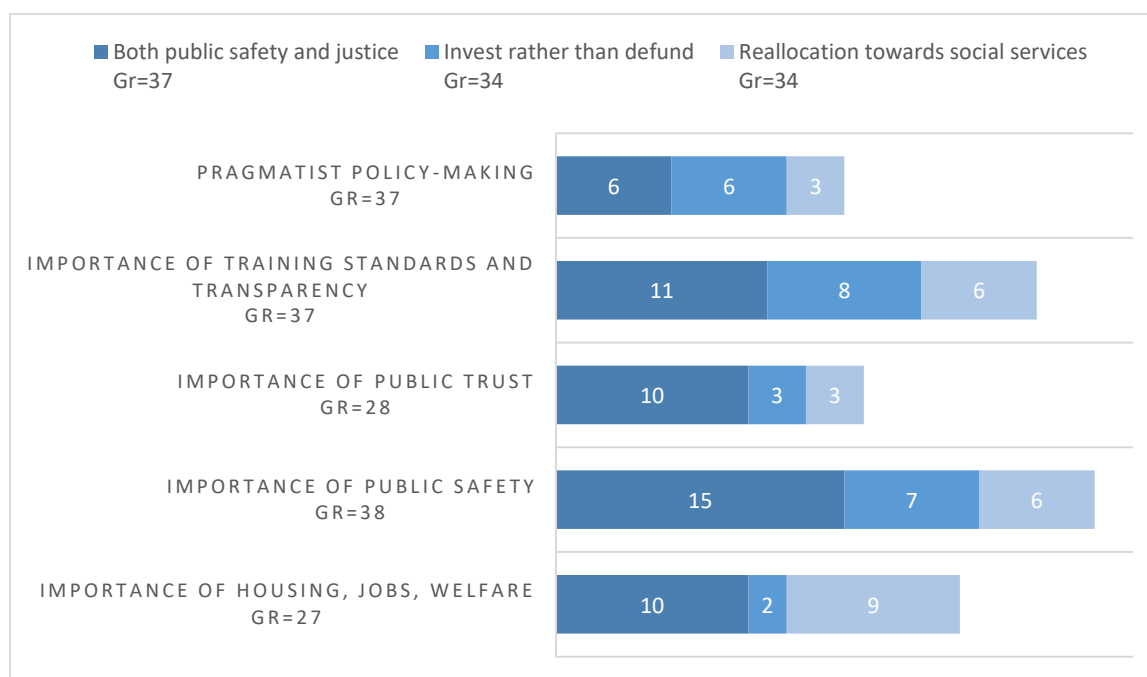

Figure 8:Prognostic arguments and Commonplaces

The importance of commonplaces becomes evident when examining the difference between resonant and salient frames. As seen in figure 8, there are five prevailing commonplaces: the appeal to pragmatism, the importance of police training and transparency, the importance of public safety and trust, as well as the importance of welfare. The "invest" argument is a coherent rhetoric of reaction with considerable success in uniting the discursive pieces that constitute a "law and order" agenda, popular in the years of Trump administration. But as the BLM movement emerged at 2020, it opened a "circle of contention" (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001) that at the same time acted as a "discursive opportunity" (Koopmans and Statham 1999) during which hegemonic interpretations of reality were open to change.

At such times when a "discursive opportunity" opens in light of a wider circle of social contention, it is quite difficult for a rhetoric of reaction to be successful, as it a purely defensive discourse at times when there is a mass demand for change. During those times, subaltern political understandings enter the public sphere, connecting with aspects of the "common sense". To the extent that a rhetoric of reaction cannot resonate with those new political understandings, its ability to represent common sense is diminished. This is empirically proven in figure 8, where the "invest" argument consistently fails to co-occur with important commonplaces, such as public safety and trust. This is because the bonds between several communities and the police are seriously damaged:

> Americans continue to die at the hands of those charged with protecting their lives and liberty. Even one unnecessary death would be reason enough for reform, but Americans should not have to wait for more reasons. The rule of law is essential to our democracy, and the rule of law depends on public faith in law enforcement as an institution. It is up to those who lead law enforcement agencies, and the elected officials who choose them, to strengthen that institution. (NYT, 2023)

Here the pressing need for police reform forms a discursive package that includes public safety, public trust, as well as a less popular argument, that is the "danger to American democracy". Democracy is now dependent on whether policing can change, while "rule of law" is now considered the opposite of "law and order". At the same time, reform continues to include a certain level of investment to policing, in the direction of "both justice and safety":

> Yes, we need police on the streets, well equipped, but we need them to have the cooperation and trust of the community. These things are not in opposition — they are mutually reinforcing. (NYT, 2022)

5.3 The Movement Field

Given that the "safety and justice" argument resonates with both demands for change and fears of it, it is able to form a better connection with important commonplaces than "defund", to the

extent that it is considered a more "pragmatist" approach, better suited for the challenging realities of governing:

> a substantial portion of the Democratic Party has convinced itself that Americans are ready for a political revolution that transforms every aspect of their lives. This assumption has crashed into a stubborn reality: Most Americans want evolutionary, not revolutionary, change. They want more government in some areas but not all, and within limits. And they want government that respects their common-sense beliefs — for example, that defunding the police is not the path to public safety (NYT, 2022)

However, it is not just an appeal to pragmatism that makes "safety and justice" more capable of forming a resonant frame than "reallocation". The circles of contention contribute to the opening of discursive opportunities, but in order for the emerging meanings to become policies that change the national agenda, an agent on the political sphere is essential. As the political is not a battle between a challenger and the incumbent, but an arena of multiple actors with different interests and positions on the field, political change requires a coalition of actors, capable of shifting the balance of forces at a new equilibrium. In that sense, resonant frames are not just combinations of commonplaces, diagnoses and policy proposals, but dynamic "discursive coalitions" that reflect sociopolitical coalitions in the making.

Consequently, the "movement field" arguments reflect different position of actors. While the rhetoric of reaction relates with the Republican party's agenda, as well as the moderate democrats, and the "defund" argument relates mostly with divisions inside the Democratic party. The "safety and justice" argument resonates with both parties, as well as the majority of the voters, as seen in figure 9, thus the appeal on what voters want:

> On Tuesday, New York City's voters went to the polls in the Democratic mayoral primary. In post-pandemic Gotham this vote was about just one thing: crime. (WSJ, 2021)

At the same time, it offers an way out of the divisions between progressive and moderate democrats:

Mr. Biden is showing a desire to strike the same balance that Mr. Adams, a former New York City police captain, did in the primary — satisfying liberals on reform efforts but also demonstrating that he will do something about what the president called the "first responsibility of democracy: to keep each other safe." (NYT, 2021)

Similarly, it offers a compromise between calls for change and concerns for crime:

a community leader from East Oakland, where most homicides occur, said people in his neighborhood don't want fewer officers, just better ones. "They want the police to, number one, stop killing and harming us, and two, they want them to do their job. When bullets are flying through your home, when your house is being broken into, you want somebody to show up and respond," he said. (WSJ, 2022)
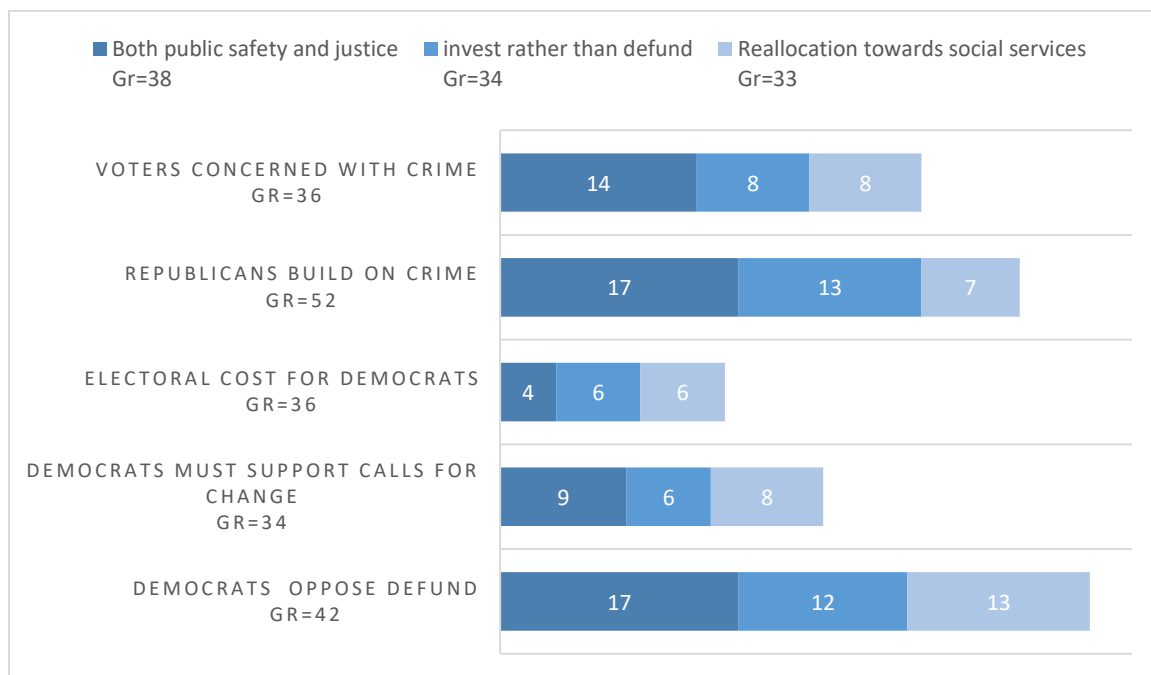

Figure 9: Prognosis and Movement Field arguments

To conclude, by highly co-occurring not only with many different arguments, but with the strongest arguments of each category, the "safety and justice" prognosis creates a frame of "evolutionary transformation" capable of aligning concerns over both crime and racial injustice, appeals to important aspects of the public "common sense", thus being able to construct a political coalition that not only cuts through the wider public and democratic party, but also appeals to the pragmatist side of BLM, which, as stated in chapter 3, is highly rooted in the movement and interconnected with other ideological and organizational forces. On the contrary,

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both the "law and order" frame and the "revolutionary transformation" one failed to resonate with either emerging cultural tendences, or contrasting concerns, thus failing to align wider sociopolitical forces behind their corresponding policy recommendations.

6: CONCLUSION

This is not a story about how reform wins over radicalism. At the same time, it not a story about how actual policies are different than the discourse surrounding them either. This is a story of how, in times of great upheaval, subalternate modes of political understanding are accepted to the public sphere and relate with familiar ideas about how the world should work. But it is also a story about how the acceptance of those subaltern ideas as issues worth discussing is not enough, but needs to be strongly aligned with political recommendations about "what is to be done".

The difference between "what is at stake" and "what is to be done" is precisely the point in which the results of social movements are often contrasting. In this case, the discourse of BLM and "defund the police" injected a truly radical dictionary regarding "what is at stake" to the public sphere. A dictionary that is extremely popular until today, largely resonating with the American "doxa" about policing. But what this research project argues is that movement frames are neither just ways of "capturing" certain aspects of reality, nor just meaning in the making, but rather discursive constructions of sociopolitical coalitions, the materiality of whom leads to political change.

The tension between diagnosis and prognosis reflects the different temporality at which the cultural and the political level function. A radical dictionary may lead to radical change only insofar as it can resonate with a coalition capable of changing the equilibrium in the political field. But even if that does not happen, this does not mean that the movement failed, as the new starting point at which the public sphere debates about the enacted policy is different.

To put it simply, after the deaths of Freddy Gray and Michael Brown, the public sphere debated mainly on the importance of stricter standards and individual racist police officers, resulting

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mainly to changes in training. What led to "defund" demands several years later is that the disillusionment with previous reforms paved the way for the emergence of more radical diagnoses and prognoses, resulting to a mixture of reforms regrading not only training standards, but also issues of transparency and several policing alternatives. In early 2023, after the death of another American citizen, Tyre Nichols, this time from the hands of five black police officers, an article on New York Times argued that "problems of race and policing are a function of an entrenched police culture of aggression and dehumanization of Black people more than of interpersonal racism. It is the system and the tactics that foster racism and violence… rather than the specific racial identities of officers" (McGrady 2023), essentially pointing to the same direction of the 2020 diagnoses, as a re-start of a public debate that seems no signs of being over.

The hegemony of one of a particular policy recommendation is never guaranteed, but always a result of dynamic realignments between varying actors, different interests and opposing interpretations of what is at stake, all interrelated in a dynamic process in which, the result is always something more than the sum of its parts. That is, in the words of Deva Woodly "the interplay between these levels of individual understanding, choice, innovation, and public constraint is what politics consists of: providing a field of action that is, at once, practically bounded and potentially infinite" (D. R. Woodly 2015, 210).

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CODE LIST

(almost) nothing has changed
America has been making progress regarding racism and police brutality
appeal to the political center
Biden/Obama/Democrats oppose Defund
both public safety and justice
chances for bipartisan agreement
citizens will pay the price of progressive posturing
covid impact on economy and society
crime on the rise
danger of becoming Baltimore/anti-cop stigma
Democrats are divided
Democrats needs to support calls for change
Democrats struggle to maintain a multiracial coalition
Democrats' fixation on polarising cultural issues
eliminating policing does not fix systemic issues
evidence about crime rates is inconclusive
excessive use of force
gun reform
high rate of gun ownership
importance of housing, jobs, welfare
importance of public safety
importance of public trust
importance of swing districts
Importance of training standards and transparency
invest rather than defund
legislative paralysis
less police = slower response
Majority opposes defund
More Police = Less crime
Most cops are good, some are bad
multiracial concern over crime
mythologized idea of Black criminality
need of policing alternatives (civilian interaction)
Old approaches to policing have failed
participatory policy-making
Police budget is very high - it can afford budget cuts
Police is defended from accountability
police reform is essential
Police resist reforms
Policy radicalism has counter-effects
Political/Electoral cost for Democrats
pressure from protesters
Racialized Policing

Reallocation towards social services
reform makes policing difficult
reform takes time
Republicans build on crime/criminal justice
Risk of fractured America
soft on crime
Supporting communities
Systemic/institutional Racism
US Democracy must be protected from Trump
Value oriented vs pragmatist politicy making
violence/looting during protests
voters concerned with crime rise
You get what you pay for

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