

**“The Officers Are Run by the City”:
How South Side residents respond to police misconduct in
the Chicago Police Department**

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Abstract. Police misconduct has long been a problem for residents of communities like Chicago’s majority-black South Side, but little research describes how these communities work towards solutions. This paper evaluates strategies that South Side residents use to address misconduct in the Chicago Police Department. These strategies were categorized using the exit, voice, and loyalty framework first proposed by economist Albert O. Hirschman, which describes how individuals respond when they are part of an organization that is in decline. Data was collected from twenty-seven interviews with South Side residents, local community organizers, and legal experts. Findings indicated that while some approaches to resolving the problem of police misconduct were focused on prompting Chicago’s municipal government to reform the police department (voice), many people responded to their experiences with police misconduct by avoiding the police altogether (exit). The paper concludes with a proposal that identifies city government as the root of South Side residents’ dissatisfaction with the Chicago Police Department and lays out a path towards decentralizing the police department to give communities in different parts of the city control of law enforcement in their area.

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Introduction. Harith Augustus, known as Snoop by the neighborhood, was leaving work at his barbershop Saturday afternoon on July 14, 2018 when he was stopped by a police officer. They were on the South Side of Chicago, in a lakeside neighborhood called South Shore. Snoop spoke to the officer. He had been carrying his holstered gun beneath his shirt, and Snoop took his Firearm Owner’s Identification card out of his wallet and showed it to him.

Snoop was then surrounded by three other police officers without warning, one of whom tried to grab his arm from behind. Unlike the first officer, these three were new to the job, new to the neighborhood, younger, and white. Snoop ran away from the officers and out into the street, where he spun behind a passing police car. As he turned around, his hand went towards his waist, and one of the white officers, Dillan Halley, shot him five times, killing him. He fell to the ground with his gun in its holster and his card in his hands, and police arrived to handcuff his body.¹ Over the next three days, hundreds of South Shore residents came out to protest Snoop’s killing, some clashing with police.²

¹ Kalven and Weizman, “How Chicago Police Created a False Narrative After Officers Killed Harith Augustus.”

² Guarino, “Protests in Chicago Continue after Officials Release Video of Police Shooting.”

For decades, Chicago Police Department (CPD) officers like Halley have been credibly accused of unfairly using their power in acts of police misconduct, defined as the use of police authority for “job-specific malpractice.”³ Not only does their behavior violate their victims’ human and civil rights, but it robs them of procedural justice,⁴ which researchers have found to increase legal cynicism⁵ and reduce the legitimacy of law enforcement⁶ even when the behavior is legally permitted.⁷ A police department that lacks legitimacy loses the trust of the communities it is tasked with serving⁸ when residents would have otherwise welcomed their help.⁹ And distrust of the police can increase crime.¹⁰ In the case of Chicago, it may already have.¹¹

³ Kane, “The Social Ecology of Police Misconduct.”

⁴ Tyler, “What Is Procedural Justice?”

⁵ Gau, “Procedural Justice, Police Legitimacy, and Legal Cynicism.”

⁶ Gau and Brunson, “Procedural Justice and Order Maintenance Policing”; Tyler, Fagan, and Geller, “Street Stops and Police Legitimacy.”

⁷ Meares, Tyler, and Gardener, “Lawful or Fair?”; Meares and Neyroud, “Rightful Policing.”

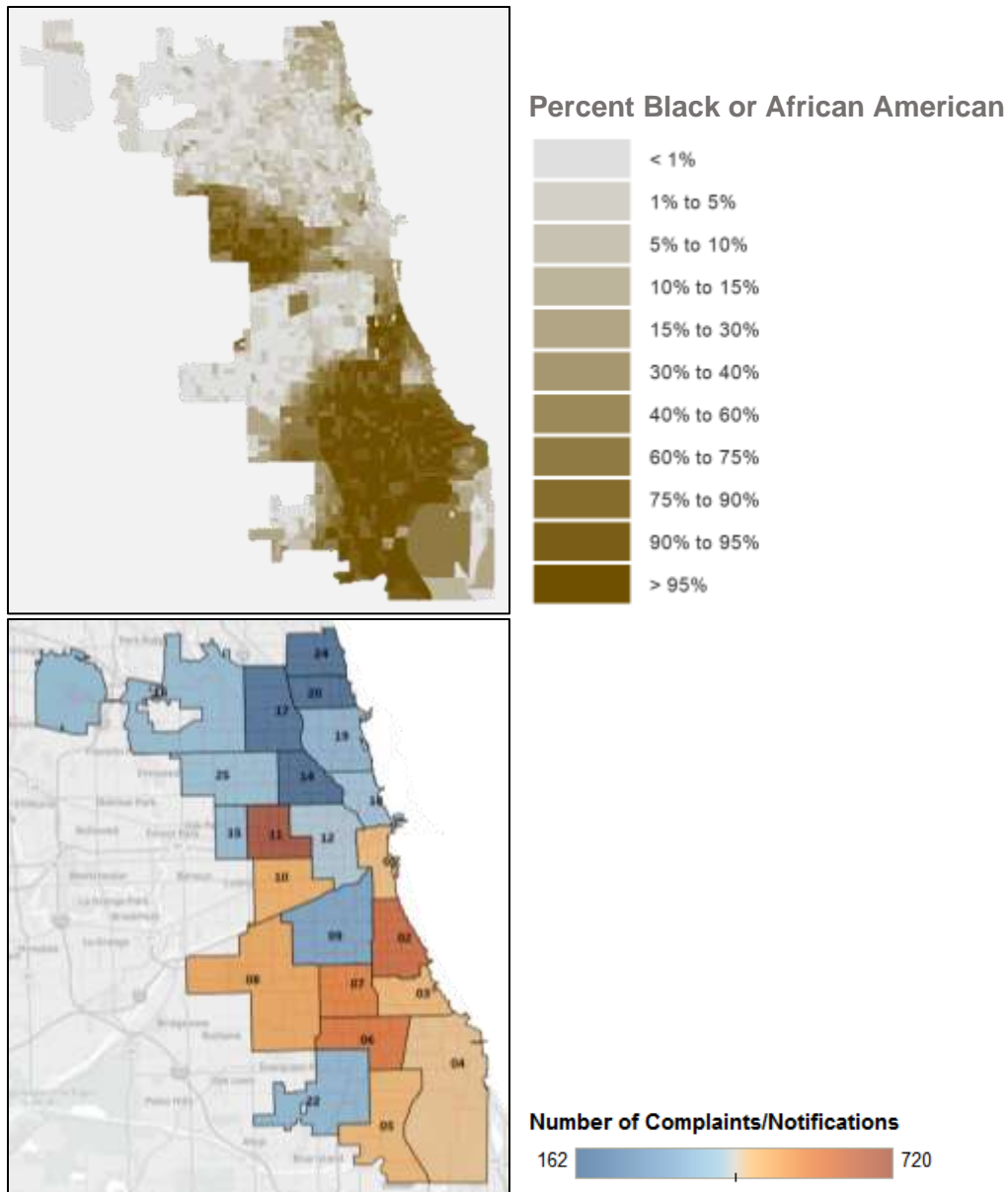
⁸ Carr, Napolitano, and Keating, “We Never Call the Cops and Here Is Why”; Board, “When Chicagoans Don’t Trust Police, the City Suffers”; Gallup, “The State of Opportunity in America: Understanding Barriers & Identifying Solutions 2019”; Desmond, Papachristos, and Kirk, “Police Violence and Citizen Crime Reporting in the Black Community.”

⁹ Weitzer and Tuch, “Race and Perceptions of Police Misconduct,” 306; Carr, Napolitano, and Keating, “We Never Call the Cops and Here Is Why.”

¹⁰ Kirk and Matsuda, “Legal Cynicism, Collective Efficacy, and the Ecology of Arrest.”

¹¹ University of Chicago Crime Lab, “Gun Violence in Chicago, 2016.”

On the city’s South Side, police misconduct is neither uncommon nor new. But if it has been a problem for so long, how do residents of the South Side of Chicago respond to police misconduct in the CPD? This research demonstrates how citizens’ attitudes towards Chicago’s police department and responses to misconduct by its officers can shape the future of government in Chicago because they are informed by its past.



Police complaints are concentrated in Chicago’s South and West Sides.

Top: Percent Black or African American by census block. Source: American Community Survey 2018 (5-year estimates). Visualization made with Social Explorer.

Bottom: Number of complaints filed with the Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA) by police district, between the date of COPA’s formation on October 6, 2016 and February 11, 2019. Source: Office of Inspector General Information Portal.

Historical context. Chicago’s black population was established by an influx of southerners during the Great Migration,¹² and discrimination by white residents and city government soon followed. Racial tensions grew and eventually erupted on July 27, 1919, when CPD officer Daniel Callahan refused to arrest a white man who had murdered Eugene Williams, a black teenager who had been rafting on then-segregated Lake Michigan.¹³ When black residents confronted other police officers, an officer shot and killed one of them.¹⁴ Over the next several days, twenty-three black people were killed in a race riot, seven by police,¹⁵ many of whom were pressured by local political bosses to allow white gangs to riot without consequence.¹⁶ The CPD also arrested and criminally charged more black citizens than white ones,¹⁷ although most of the casualties of the rioting had been black.¹⁸

Over the next decade, Chicago’s black community gained power through the local Republican Party. City Council member Oscar De Priest built a political organization on the South Side¹⁹ that helped him become the first in a ninety-year line of black politicians to represent Illinois’ 1st

¹² Abu-Lughod, *Race, Space, and Riots in Chicago, New York, and Los Angeles*.

¹³ Tuttle, *Race Riot*, 6–7.

¹⁴ Tuttle, 8.

¹⁵ Tuttle, 64.

¹⁶ Balto, *Occupied Territory*, 34.

¹⁷ Balto, 37.

¹⁸ Tuttle, *Race Riot*, 64.

¹⁹ Balto, *Occupied Territory*, 49.

Congressional District. Black workers gained economic power through a multibillion-dollar gambling ring that employed thousands.²⁰ Black police officers tripled their numbers in the CPD,²¹ although they were still only 2% of the department and were often mistreated by white officers.²²

The black community lost this weak political foothold when Chicago’s last Republican mayor was defeated in 1931 by Democrat Anton Cermak. Cermak stacked the police department with political allies,²³ ordered officials to break up the gambling ring, and tripled arrests.²⁴ When black aldermen intervened on behalf of their constituents, Democratic leadership told them, “The minute you people find out there's something besides the Republican Party, come back and talk to us.”²⁵ The City similarly used the CPD as a tool to repress activism by eviction protesters and labor strikers over fears of Chicago’s Communist Party.²⁶

Starting in the forties, the Second Great Migration tripled Chicago’s black population over the next two decades, growing it from 8% to 23% of

²⁰ Drake et al., *Black Metropolis*, 492–94; Biles, *Big City Boss in Depression and War*, 90.

²¹ Gosnell, *Negro Politicians*, 250.

²² Gosnell, 253–58.

²³ Gottfried, *Boss Cermak of Chicago*, 268–69.

²⁴ Biles, *Big City Boss in Depression and War*, 89–90.

²⁵ Cohen and Taylor, *American Pharaoh*, 38.

²⁶ Cayton, *Long Old Road*, 178–80; Dennis, *The Memorial Day Massacre and the Movement for Industrial Democracy*.

the city’s population. A more diverse Chicago also experienced an onset of white flight, capital flight, deindustrialization, and economic retrenchment that left many of its black residents in unskilled labor or below the poverty line.²⁷ The crime rate increased,²⁸ but when the local NAACP went to the CPD for help, Commissioner John Prendergast turned its representatives away.²⁹ Later, in May 1946, when a civic organization of business leaders called the Chicago Crime Commission released its own report on crime in the city, Commissioner Prendergast sent special CPD squads into a black police district,³⁰ beginning an era of aggressive, quota-based, racially targeted policing that ultimately failed to reduce crime. That same year, City Hall increased the CPD’s budget by \$5 million and continued to divert public funds to law enforcement over the next eight years.³¹

When the opioid crisis hit postwar Chicago, the CPD went on to use these funds to crack down on drug addiction in black neighborhoods. In one year, officers arrested over a thousand people for drug use.³² The police commissioner created a South Side narcotics detail that would arrest suspected drug dealers and charge them as “vagrants” if police could not

²⁷ Drake et al., *Black Metropolis*, 214–17, 507, 513.

²⁸ Balto, *Occupied Territory*, 127.

²⁹ Balto, 138.

³⁰ “Chicago Police Begin Cleanup.”

³¹ Balto, *Occupied Territory*, 130–31.

³² Doherty, “TELLS HOW WAR ON DRUGS CUTS S. SIDE’S CRIME.”

prove that they sold narcotics.³³ The next commissioner, Timothy O’Connor, expanded this unit and made so many arrests that a new narcotics court had to be created³⁴ to process the stream of disproportionately black³⁵ defendants to drug cases. At the same time, white arrests sharply declined.³⁶

In 1951, the Civil Rights Congress, a national civil rights organization, sent a petition to the United Nations Genocide Convention, accusing the CPD along with state and local governments across the United States of intentionally inflicting violence on black Americans.

“We submit that the evidence suggests that the killing of Negroes has become police policy in the United States and that police policy is the most practical expression of government policy.”³⁷

— *Civil Rights Congress, We Charge Genocide*

Chicago’s government exerted more control over its police when conflicts over racial integration hit the city. As black people moved into white neighborhoods, local party bosses directly instructed CPD captains to

³³ Doherty, “COURTS, POLICE, PROSECUTOR AID NARCOTIC DRIVE.”

³⁴ “Final Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Organized Crime in Interstate Commerce.”

³⁵ Balto, *Occupied Territory*, 154.

³⁶ Balto, 145.

³⁷ Civil Rights Congress (U.S.), *We Charge Genocide*, 8–9.

keep them out.³⁸ The Cook County Democratic Party forced out Chicago’s racially liberal mayor.³⁹ And in 1953, when the first black family moved into white Trumbull Park, the community erupted into weeks of riots.⁴⁰ While black residents carrying weapons for self-defense were arrested on multiple occasions,⁴¹ the CPD⁴² and city politicians⁴³ often failed to protect black residents from harassment and violence by white racists.

In 1955, the chairman of the Cook County Democratic Party, Richard J. Daley, became mayor and further enlarged the CPD and its budget, partly to fulfill a campaign promise.⁴⁴ CPD Commissioner O’Connor expanded the department’s juvenile unit⁴⁵ along with Commissioner Prendergast’s special squads.⁴⁶ In doing so, the commissioner gave more officers more authority as he sent them to more parts of the city they were not familiar with. On October 29, 1958, a cadre of these officers broke into the home of a black resident, James Monroe, without a warrant, verbally and physically abused

³⁸ Balto, *Occupied Territory*, 102.

³⁹ Biles, *Big City Boss in Depression and War*, 147–48; Hirsch, “Massive Resistance in the Urban North,” 539.

⁴⁰ Hirsch, “Massive Resistance in the Urban North.”

⁴¹ Hirsch, 533; “Arrest Figure in Trumbull Park Dispute”; Balto, *Occupied Territory*, 111.

⁴² “Cops, Rioters, Merchants Hit In Trumbull Suits.”

⁴³ Balto, *Occupied Territory*, 115–16.

⁴⁴ Cohen and Taylor, *American Pharaoh*, 83.

⁴⁵ “Police Juvenile Unit Gets 40 More Men.”

⁴⁶ “POLICE ‘FLYING SQUAD’ STARTS WAR ON CRIME”; “Police ‘Flying Squadron’ Tracks Crime in Chicago”; “Task Force Preys On Racial Districts.”

him and his family, and falsely arrested Monroe for home invasion and murder.⁴⁷ Monroe filed a civil rights lawsuit against the City of Chicago and the officers, fighting for years against the City’s lawyers before he won in the Supreme Court case *Monroe v. Pape* (1961).⁴⁸

Reform would not come, however, until a much less severe incident of police misconduct hit two white neighborhoods. On August 1, 1959, an arrestee told the *Chicago Tribune* that he had spent a year in a burglary ring with eight CPD officers. The officers would keep lookout while he burglarized local businesses in two police districts on the largely white North Side.⁴⁹ Commissioner O’Connor resigned, and Mayor Daley appointed criminologist Orlando Wilson to head the CPD as its superintendent.⁵⁰ The City Council also passed an ordinance establishing a police board and giving it broad powers to run the CPD and review its decisions. Superintendent Wilson launched a wave of reform measures, moving his office away from the mayor’s, redrawing police district lines so

⁴⁷ Hughes, “Police Terror Raid in Home Told by Negro.”

⁴⁸ “COURT TO HEAR CHICAGO CIVIL RIGHTS APPEAL.”

⁴⁹ Chicago Daily Tribune, “MASTER THIEF TELLS HIS TALE--HOURS OF IT!”; Benzkofer, “A Police Scandal Breaks”; Chicago Daily Tribune, “HOW 8 COPS HELPED THIEF LOOT STORES.”

⁵⁰ Schreiber, “Council Adopts Changes, 45-1, After Uproar.”

they were not defined by political boundaries, and creating an internal CPD division to “root out police misconduct and corruption.”⁵¹

The Internal Investigations Division (IID), as it was known at the time, found no misconduct in its first five months of operation.⁵² Wilson took criticism from CPD staff, University of Chicago researchers, and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), all of whom claimed the agency was ineffective. In March 1965, the ACLU’s Bernard Weisberg wrote Wilson a private letter, telling him civilians could reasonably trust the IID “only if the public were given some means of ascertaining for itself that investigations of brutality complaints are in fact conducted with impartiality.”⁵³

Not only did Wilson continue to keep the IID’s investigations secret, but as the Supreme Court actively curbed police powers in *Mapp v. Ohio* (1961), *Escobedo v. Illinois* (1964), and *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966), he actively encouraged CPD officers to stop and search people without probable cause, a controversial practice known as stop-and-frisk. If they were sued, he said, he would protect them in court.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, Wilson and Mayor Daley lobbied the Illinois state legislature to explicitly legalize

⁵¹ Balto, *Occupied Territory*, 167.

⁵² Powers, “SPY UNIT FAILS TO FIND SINGLE DISHONEST COP.”

⁵³ Balto, *Occupied Territory*, 171.

⁵⁴ Balto, 160.

stop-and-frisk,⁵⁵ getting a bill passed in the legislature twice only to have the governor veto it each time. Wilson told officers to continue the practice anyway.⁵⁶ Later, the Supreme Court declared stop-and-frisk constitutional in *Terry v. Ohio* (1965) and a new governor signed it into law.⁵⁷

The CPD’s next superintendent, James Conlisk, created the department’s Gang Intelligence Unit, a “para-political force”⁵⁸ that undercut the organization of South Side gangs like the Blackstone Rangers by spying on them, pitting them against rivals, and harassing their members.⁵⁹ The CPD became political in other ways as well. Segregationist presidential candidate George Wallace delivered the keynote at the 1968 national convention of the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), its new union.⁶⁰ The same year, at the Democratic National Convention, CPD officers beat antiwar protesters in Grant Park. The department was sued for spying on local left-wing activists at the Alliance to End Repression⁶¹ and coordinating with a right-wing activist group, the Legion of Justice, to raid their office.⁶²

⁵⁵ Hughes, “Wilson Urges Revisions in Illinois Criminal Code”; “House Eyes ‘Stop, Frisk’ Law”; Kling, “STOP AND FRISK BILL FAILS TO PASS IN HOUSE.”

⁵⁶ Balto, *Occupied Territory*, 162.

⁵⁷ Howard, “STOP, FRISK LAW SIGNED BY SHAPIRO.”

⁵⁸ McPherson, “Chicago’s Blackstone Rangers (II).”

⁵⁹ McPherson, “Chicago’s Blackstone Rangers.”

⁶⁰ Balto, *Occupied Territory*, 210.

⁶¹ “Cops Admit Destroying Spy Records.”

⁶² Donner, *Protectors of Privilege*.

Chicago’s chapter of the Black Panther Party, a powerful combination of black organization and radical left-wing politics, was not welcome in this environment. On May 15, 1967, the Party released its Ten-Point Program, point seven of which stated, “We want an immediate end to POLICE BRUTALITY and MURDER of Black people [underlining and capitalization not added].”⁶³ In Chicago, the Black Panthers called for the CPD’s funds to be directed to community development and control of the department to be handed over to district-level civilian boards.⁶⁴

The special target of harassment from law enforcement was the chapter’s chairman, Fred Hampton. On December 4, 1969, Cook County State’s Attorney Edward Hanrahan coordinated with the FBI and the CPD to direct an early morning raid on Hampton’s West Side apartment, ostensibly searching for illegal weapons. A drugged Hampton and visiting Party leader Mark Clark were killed in a hail of bullets from a heavily armed team of fourteen police officers. The surviving Panthers were arrested, including Hampton’s pregnant wife.⁶⁵ Twelve years later, the City would settle a lawsuit by the Panthers and their families for nearly \$2 million.⁶⁶

⁶³ “WHAT WE WANT NOW! WHAT WE BELIEVE.”

⁶⁴ Balto, *Occupied Territory*, 229–30.

⁶⁵ Commission of Inquiry into the Black Panthers and the Police., Wilkins, and Clark, *Search and Destroy; a Report*.

⁶⁶ Franklin and Crawford, “County OKs Panther Deaths Settlement.”

Charges of police brutality came again in 1972, this time from Representative Ralph Metcalfe of Illinois’ 1st Congressional District. Over the course of a month, two well-known black community leaders and dentists Drs. Herbert Odom and Daniel Claiborne were abused by police at traffic stops.⁶⁷ Dr. Claiborne was detained while having a stroke, and later died from delayed medical treatment.⁶⁸ In response, Representative Metcalfe convened a blue-ribbon panel that took testimony from twenty-three black and Latino victims of police brutality across the city. The panel also criticized the Police Board for being weak and unrepresentative of Chicago’s black community.⁶⁹ Representative Metcalfe then set his sights on the city’s political leadership, founding a civic organization named Concerned Citizens for Police Reform and endorsing State’s Attorney Hanrahan’s Republican opponent to punish him for his role in the Hampton assassination.⁷⁰ After black neighborhoods rallied behind Metcalfe to unseat Hanrahan,⁷¹ he endorsed Mayor Daley’s primary opponent in

⁶⁷ Blue Ribbon Panel convened by the Honorable Ralph H. Metcalfe, Representative, First Congressional District of Illinois, “The Misuse of Police Authority in Chicago,” 82–84.

⁶⁸ Nolte, “Black Dentist, Held as Drunk, Dies of Stroke.”

⁶⁹ Blue Ribbon Panel convened by the Honorable Ralph H. Metcalfe, Representative, First Congressional District of Illinois, “The Misuse of Police Authority in Chicago,” 57.

⁷⁰ Balto, *Occupied Territory*, 247–50.

⁷¹ KIFNER, “Defeat of Hanrahan for Prosecutor Is a Stunning Blow to Daley’s Organization.”

Chicago’s 1975 election.⁷² Daley was reelected anyways, but failed at his own attempt to unseat Metcalfe the next year,⁷³ which encouraged other black politicians to turn against the city’s Democratic leadership.⁷⁴

Now-former Superintendent Wilson’s Internal Investigations Division, renamed the Internal Affairs Division (IAD), failed to discipline police officers after the deaths of Fred Hampton and Daniel Claiborne. Chicago’s political leaders eventually made more police accountability reforms, but it was because the public was upset that the IAD failed to discipline a different set of misbehaving officers on the North Side, even though they had committed smaller offenses.

In 1969, the FBI found that CPD commander Mark Thanasouras and his officers had shaken down thirty tavern owners in their district for a total of \$275,000 over two years.⁷⁵ Nineteen federal convictions, thirty-seven indictments,⁷⁶ and the unrelated double-murder conviction of a former CPD sergeant⁷⁷ forced Superintendent Conlisk to resign. While his successor,

⁷² Balto, *Occupied Territory*, 250.

⁷³ Balto, 250.

⁷⁴ “Richard Daley’s Plantation Revolt.”

⁷⁵ Wiedrich, “Perspective.”

⁷⁶ KING, “HEAD OF POLICE QUILTS IN CHICAGO.”

⁷⁷ “Former Chicago Policeman Convicted in Killing of Two.”

Superintendent James Rochford, promised reform, Representative Metcalfe and other black leaders opposed his appointment.⁷⁸

Rochford established the Office of Professional Standards (OPS), addressing criticisms that the IAD was too secretive by appointing a diverse set of three civilians to run the new office.⁷⁹ But while he expressly tasked OPS with the investigation of officer corruption and brutality,⁸⁰ Metcalfe and Metcalfe’s allies said that Rochford’s measures did not go far enough.⁸¹ A new string of brutality cases soon confirmed their fears, pressuring a new mayor to create a civilian review panel in September 1980.⁸² This panel was given no budget, and dissolved itself before the year ended without ever investigating a case.⁸³

Critics of the CPD went to court again, at the same time a new conservative Supreme Court was limiting the extent to which the law could help victims of police misconduct in *Newport v. Fact Concerts* (1981), *Harlow v. Fitzgerald* (1982), and *Los Angeles v. Lyons* (1983). In a federal discrimination suit by an organization of black police officers, the City was

⁷⁸ LONGMEYER and SCHUMAKE, “Top Cop Vows Fair Play.”

⁷⁹ “New Office Is Rochford Cure for Big Police Ills.”

⁸⁰ LONGMEYER and SCHUMAKE, “Top Cop Vows Fair Play.”

⁸¹ Griffin, “What Happened to Police Review?”

⁸² SHEPPARD Jr., “New Police Complaint Unit in Chicago Quits in Quarrel.”

⁸³ SHEPPARD Jr.

forced to admit it had been spying on them and other black organizations.⁸⁴ Rather than end the surveillance, the City responded to public outcry by creating a spy review board to report on its covert activities to the public.⁸⁵

In 1983, the ACLU sued the gang unit that Superintendent Conlisk had originally empowered. Its officers had arrested over eight hundred thousand black and Latino men for “disorderly conduct” with no intention of charging them, causing a federal judge to demand the City erase all of the men’s records.⁸⁶ In another suit that year, the first of what would be revealed to be over five hundred black and Latino torture survivors, Andrew Wilson, came forward with his case. While OPS originally ignored reports of this police brutality,⁸⁷ it would lead to the firing and federal conviction of CPD Commander Jon Burge, an official apology on the behalf of the City,⁸⁸ and a \$5.5-million reparations package.⁸⁹

At the same time, Mayor Jane Byrne brought the CPD deeper into local politics when she told police officials to fire all CPD employees who supported her political rival.⁹⁰ In the Democratic primary for her reelection

⁸⁴ Enstad, “Hundreds on Chicago Spy List.”

⁸⁵ Davis, “Bilandic Picks Five for Police Spy Review Unit.”

⁸⁶ Possley, “800,000 Arrests Voided.”

⁸⁷ Conroy, “House of Screams.”

⁸⁸ Dardick and Byrne, “Mayor.”

⁸⁹ Dardick and Byrne.

⁹⁰ Wiedrich, “Byrne.”

campaign, she had the superintendent of police appear in one of her commercials.⁹¹ But she would lose that primary to black community leader and police reformist Representative Harold Washington, who went on to become Chicago’s first black mayor. Entering City Hall as a progressive, Mayor Washington shook up CPD leadership and appointed its first black superintendent, Fred Rice.

His criminal justice record ended up being mixed. In his first year, Mayor Washington proposed to cut the CPD from 12,000 to 11,500 officers.⁹² He also piloted the Chicago Intervention Network, the city’s first community policing program.⁹³ But facing fierce opposition from white aldermen in City Council, he reversed his position and instead committed to enlarging the CPD and adding an extra \$1.2 million to its budget.⁹⁴ He then pledged to further crack down on gang activity by evicting all gang members from public housing.⁹⁵ The Chicago Intervention Network failed for lack of funds,⁹⁶ and gang activity increased in spite of the mayor’s war on it.⁹⁷ After Superintendent Rice retired, Washington appointed the city’s

⁹¹ Locin and Fegelman, “City/Suburbs.”

⁹² Shanker, “Mayor Rewrites Budget to Fund War on Gangs.”

⁹³ Betancur and Gills, “Community Development in Chicago.”

⁹⁴ Shanker, “Mayor Rewrites Budget to Fund War on Gangs.”

⁹⁵ Shanker.

⁹⁶ Betancur and Gills, “Community Development in Chicago.”

⁹⁷ Recktenwald, “DESPITE STRIDES, CITY LOSING GANG BATTLE, KEY POLICE OFFICIAL SAYS.”

second black superintendent, LeRoy Martin, in 1987. Martin called for even more aggressive tactics, frightening even other police officers when he declared a war on drugs and named the CPD the “toughest gang in town.”⁹⁸ But like his predecessor, Martin also failed to bring down gang violence.⁹⁹

The CPD’s first Latino Superintendent, Matt Rodriguez, appointed in 1992 under Mayor Richard M. Daley, had limited success at repairing the CPD’s image. In April 1993, he launched a new community policing program called Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy (CAPS). It would operate off of four principles: proactive problem solving, strong community involvement, the incorporation of other community agencies into police work, and a commitment to organizational change.¹⁰⁰ The program initially enjoyed a generous \$12.7-million budget and community support, but would later see its funding plummet to third of that amount, even as the CPD’s overall budget increased.¹⁰¹

After Rodriguez retired, public response to a new officer misconduct scandal rocked the CPD. Off-duty and drunk on February 19, 2007, CPD officer Anthony Abbate beat bartender Karolina Obrycka at an inn and was

⁹⁸ Blau, “Martin Marks Turbulent Year as Police Chief.”

⁹⁹ Blau.

¹⁰⁰ Police Forum, “Four Decades of Policing in Chicago.”

¹⁰¹ Salcedo, “The Rise and Fall of Community Policing in Chicago.”

fired the next month.¹⁰² Once Rodriguez’s successor resigned, OPS was replaced by a new agency, the Independent Police Review Authority (IPRA), that would report directly to the mayor and have subpoena power in cases involving (i) domestic violence, excessive force, coercion, and verbal abuse, (ii) use of weapons by police officers, or (iii) injury or death in custody.¹⁰³

The next year, a jury found that Officer Abbate had initially been protected by a “code of silence” within the Chicago Police Department, then run by Superintendent Garry McCarthy and Mayor Rahm Emanuel, who denied the charge.¹⁰⁴ Mayor Emanuel would retract that denial¹⁰⁵ after October 20, 2014, when a black teenager, Laquan McDonald, was shot and killed by Jason Van Dyke,¹⁰⁶ a CPD officer who had received twenty complaints from other citizens.¹⁰⁷ The next year, after City Council had approved a \$5-million settlement to McDonald’s family, a court order

¹⁰² Main and Herman, “City Moves to Fire Cop Seen Beating Woman on Video.”

¹⁰³ Chicago City Council, Independent Police Review Authority.

¹⁰⁴ Sweeney and Meisner, “Police Cover-up Found in Bartender Beating.”

¹⁰⁵ Peters and Barrett, “Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel Apologizes for Police Killing of Teen; Broad Reform of City’s Law Enforcement Promised, as Protesters Continue Street Demonstrations.”

¹⁰⁶ Crepeau, “U of C Professor.”

¹⁰⁷ Williams, “Chicago Rarely Penalizes Officers for Complaints, Data Shows”; Kaplan, “Chicago Police Officer Charged in Deadly Shooting Has a History of Misconduct Complaints.”

forced the City to release dash cam video of McDonald’s killing. When people saw the footage, there were protests across Chicago.¹⁰⁸

After State’s Attorney Anita Alvarez belatedly charged Van Dyke with first-degree murder, activists and politicians alike attacked her for the delay¹⁰⁹ and eventually voted her out. Mayor Emanuel fired Superintendent McCarthy and assembled a Police Accountability Task Force (PATF) to study police misconduct in the city and recommend reforms. A week later, the head of the then eight-year-old Independent Police Review Authority resigned as the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) launched an investigation into IPRA and the CPD. On the recommendation of both the PATF and the DOJ, the City reorganized IPRA into the Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA) on October 5, 2016. COPA had all of IPRA’s powers, including the power to investigate “officer-involved death,” “improper search or seizure,” and “denial of access to counsel.”¹¹⁰

Facing public pressure, on August 29, 2017, Illinois Attorney General Lisa Madigan filed a lawsuit against Chicago on behalf of the state. The result would be a consent decree that defined CPD standards for use of

¹⁰⁸ Elinson and Peters, “Chicago Police Officer Charged With Murder in Shooting Death of Black Teenager; Officer Jason Van Dyke Turned Himself into Authorities to Face First-Degree Murder Charge.”

¹⁰⁹ Pearson, Dardick, and Byrne, “McDonald Case Adds to Alvarez’s Challenges.”

¹¹⁰ Chicago City Council, Civilian Office of Police Accountability.

force, set 180-day investigation deadlines for COPA, and required an independent monitor to track the City’s progress on a number of reforms.¹¹¹ As for Mayor Emanuel, he canceled his plans to run for reelection,¹¹² one month before Van Dyke was found guilty of second-degree murder and aggravated battery on October 5, 2018.¹¹³ The next year, on April 2, 2019, Chicago elected former OPS administrator and Police Board member Lori Lightfoot to serve as the city’s second black mayor.

Present context. The Chicago Police Department (CPD) employed 13,156 officers in January 2020.¹¹⁴ Spending on the department was the single largest line item in the City’s 2020 budget at \$1.8 billion or 40% of the budget,¹¹⁵ a 6% increase from its 2019 appropriation.¹¹⁶ The increase was the most recent in a series of eight consecutive increases of CPD’s budget,¹¹⁷ although the city’s crime rate has halved. The CPD’s superintendent, David Brown, was selected by Mayor Lori Lightfoot in April 2020, becoming the CPD’s fifth black superintendent. The Cook County’s State’s Attorney and

¹¹¹ *Consent Decree*, 2019 U.S. Dist. LEXIS 15360.

¹¹² Babwin and Tarm, “Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel Abandons Quest for Third Term.”

¹¹³ Smith and Bosman, “Jason Van Dyke Sentenced to Nearly 7 Years for Murdering Laquan McDonald.”

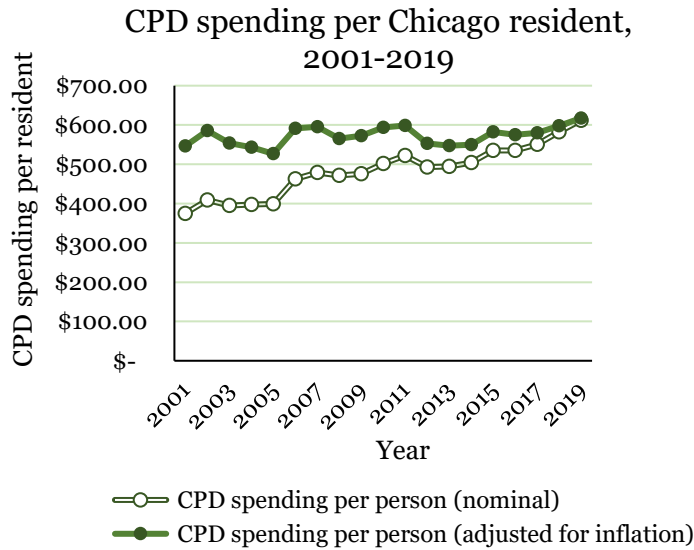
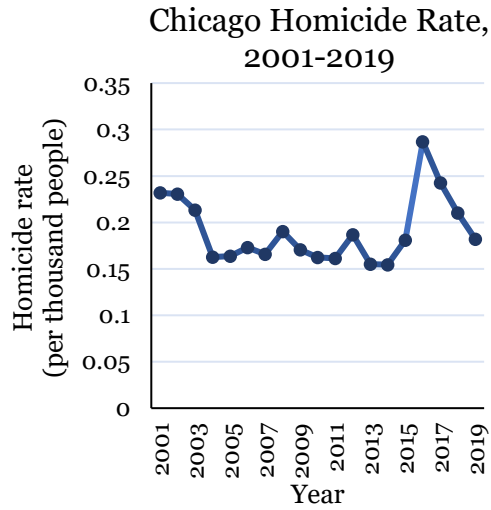
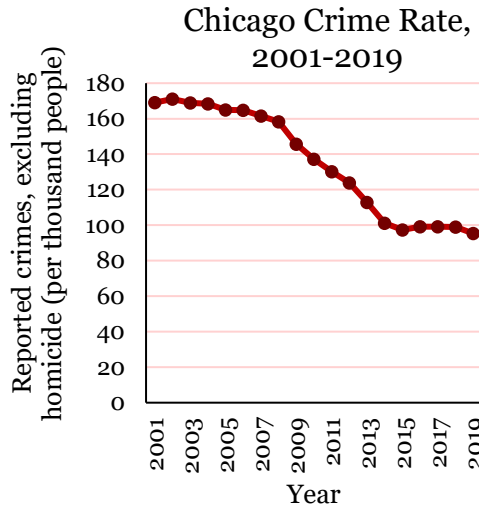
¹¹⁴ City of Chicago Office of Inspector General, “Active Sworn Officer Units Over Time.”

¹¹⁵ Chicago City Council, 2020 Budget Ordinance.

¹¹⁶ Chicago City Council, 2019 Budget Ordinance.

¹¹⁷ Hacker, “CPD Budget To Swell To Over \$1.7 Billion In 2020 Budget.”

Anita Alvarez’s successor, Kim Foxx, was first elected in 2016, becoming the county’s second black State’s Attorney.



Sources: crime data from City of Chicago Data Portal, homicide data from Chicago Tribune,¹¹⁸ population data from U.S. Census Bureau, CPD budget data from City of Chicago Office of the City Clerk Annual Appropriation Ordinances 2001-2019.

¹¹⁸ Rumore, “40,000 Homicides.”

In 2017, the Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA) was formed by the Chicago City Council to handle complaints from citizens who believed their rights had been violated by the police. Complaints that were judged not to be in COPA’s jurisdiction such as criminal misconduct, theft, or false arrest were sent to the CPD’s internal division, called the Bureau of Internal Affairs (BIA).¹¹⁹ At least two-thirds of complaints had been diverted to BIA every year since 2007, according to the Office of the Inspector General (OIG).¹²⁰ The OIG also reported a steady downward decline in complaints filed by year with 4,050 in 2018, less than half the number filed with IPRA in 2009.¹²¹ Of those complaints, 18% were still pending in 2020, and 4% of them were sustained.¹²²

Chicago’s main police union, the Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), had provisions in its 2017 contract with City Hall that required complainants to sign their names to affidavits, legally committing themselves to one version of their allegation.¹²³ The City used to require that

¹¹⁹ Civilian Office of Police Accountability, “Jurisdiction”; Fairley, Personal Interview.

¹²⁰ City of Chicago Office of Inspector General, “Complaint/Notification Trends”; Fairley, Personal Interview.

¹²¹ City of Chicago Office of Inspector General, “Complaint/Notification Trends.”

¹²² City of Chicago Office of Inspector General, “Complaint/Notification History – Information Portal.”

¹²³ Emanuel and McCarthy, AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF POLICE AND THE FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE CHICAGO LODGE NO. 7, 4; Fairley, Personal Interview.

these affidavits were signed in person at an administrative office, creating a barrier for complainants when that office was moved away from the South Side in 2017.¹²⁴ There are additional options available for individuals who cannot come to COPA’s office to sign an affidavit, but citizens are still unable to argue against challenges to their accusations, giving them little control over the complaint process.¹²⁵

Over the ten years between 2009 and 2019, at least 3,104 police misconduct lawsuits were filed in Chicago.¹²⁶ Many of these were likely federal civil lawsuits¹²⁷ filed under Section 1983 of the 1871 Civil Rights Act. The Supreme Court ruled that police officers had “qualified immunity” that usually protected them from being sued, depending on the circumstances.¹²⁸ A city like Chicago could not be sued either, unless a court found that it had an “unconstitutional policy, practice, or custom.”¹²⁹

¹²⁴ Ba, “Going the Extra Mile.”

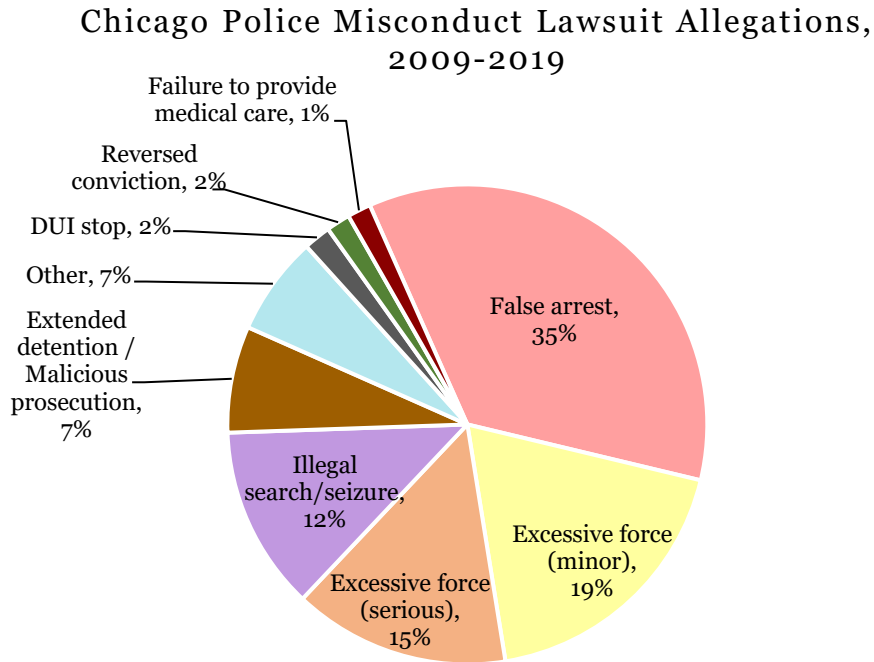
¹²⁵ Johnson, “Why Police Should Protect Complainant Autonomy.”

¹²⁶ City of Chicago Department of Law, “Quarterly Police Case Dispositions.”

¹²⁷ Toscano, Personal interview.

¹²⁸ Schwartz, “Police Indemnification,” 887.

¹²⁹ Schwartz, 888; Futterman, Mather, and Miles, “The Use of Statistical Evidence to Address Police Supervisory and Disciplinary Practices,” 2.



Source: City of Chicago Department of Law.

While federal courts have been kinder to misconduct victims than the City’s own investigatory agencies, individuals who seek to sue the CPD or its officers still face several barriers. Lawyers are often unwilling to take cases, especially for free, unless they involve particularly egregious offenses on the part of the CPD.¹³⁰ They have also been contractually forbidden by the city from using evidence from past settlements in new cases,¹³¹ although this practice has been phased out. And among the cases that have made it to court between 2009 and 2019, 46% of them ended without the plaintiff

¹³⁰ Toscano, Personal interview; Ervin, Personal Interview.

¹³¹ Futterman, Huber, and Petersen, “Settlements You Can’t Sign.”

being compensated, often because they were dismissed or the court ruled in favor of the police.¹³² Among the cases that did end in some form of payment to the victim, the median payout was \$30,000.¹³³ Those payouts were damages and settlements mostly paid by the City with public funds, not by the police officers being sued.¹³⁴

But while both complaints and lawsuits are available to victims of police misconduct, there is evidence that the vast majority take advantage of neither.¹³⁵

¹³² City of Chicago Department of Law, “Quarterly Police Case Dispositions.”

¹³³ City of Chicago Department of Law.

¹³⁴ Schwartz, “Police Indemnification.”

¹³⁵ Kane, “The Social Ecology of Police Misconduct.”

Literature review. Scholarly writings on police misconduct mostly focus on factors that may cause misconduct. These factors can be roughly divided into individual factors, organizational factors, and situational factors (Friedrich, 1980).

- i. ***Individual factors.*** Individual factors responsible for police misconduct are traits of individual officers that are associated with misconduct. For instance, in 1919, black newspapers called on the mayor of Chicago to add more black officers to the police department (Gosnell, 1967, pp. 245–246). But as early as 1945, Langston Hughes would counter that “colored cops” were even worse than white ones, joking that a black police officer had to hit a black citizen twice to make up for the fact that they could not hit a white one (Hughes, 1945). Quantitative research has also questioned whether black officers commit less misconduct (Cohen & Chaiken, 1972; Friedrich, 1980). Instead of focusing on race, other work has suggested that there are lower levels of misconduct among police officers who are female (Bergman et al., 2016; Brandl et al., 2001; Spillar et al., 2000), who are better educated (Cohen & Chaiken, 1972; Kane & White, 2009; Kappeler et al., 1992; Paoline & Terrill, 2007), or who

have higher levels of self-control (Donner et al., 2016; Donner & Jennings, 2014).

- ii. **Organizational factors.** These factors have to do with attributes of police departments that may contribute to police misconduct among the officers in those departments. They include police officer culture (Armacost, 2003; Chappell & Piquero, 2004; Terrill et al., 2003), the lack of an accountability board (Eitle et al., 2014; Huff et al., 2018), inadequate officer training (Eitle et al., 2014), a poor police-community relationship (Huff et al., 2018), and fewer reporting requirements (Jennings & Rubado, 2017).
- iii. **Situational factors.** Situational factors may involve the person directly affected by an act of police misconduct, but can also involve aspects of their “social setting” (Friedrich, 1980, p. 84). For example, high rates of police misconduct may be associated with social disorganization (Kane, 2002; Klinger, 1997). Another theory is based on the well-documented minority threat hypothesis, which holds that cities increase their investment in policing in response to increases in their non-white populations (Eitle et al., 2002; Fagan & Davies, 2000; Jackson & Carroll, 1981; Jacobs &

O'Brien, 1998; Legewie, 2016; Legewie & Fagan, 2016; Liska et al., 1981; Liska & Chamlin, 1984; Stults & Baumer, 2007). Even when there is no clear connection between cities' racial demographics and their spending on police, research has shown that government spending on police is determined by something other than crime rates (Greenberg et al., 1986). Inspired by the minority threat hypothesis, scholars have found evidence of a direct connection between the presence of racial minorities in an area and police misconduct in that area (Holmes, 2000; Kane, 2002; Smith & Holmes, 2014). Studies measuring the impact of various individual, organizational, and situational factors on rates of police misconduct have found that race best explains the occurrence of police misconduct (Kane, 2002; Smith & Holmes, 2003, 2014).

The minority threat hypothesis, however, does not explain how the mere presence of racial minorities could be responsible for police misconduct. Soss and Weaver fill this gap in their 2017 article “Police Are Our Government” (Soss & Weaver, 2017). The authors describe how, in a backlash against the civil rights movement, the federal government expanded the American criminal justice system, including law enforcement, to make it more invasive, controlling, and aggressive in low-income

minority communities with policies like stop-and-frisk. Under this new system, the police became a second face of the government.

Balto explicitly notes that Chicago, which has long had a large population of black residents, began using the aggressive policing practices that characterized the War on Crime and the War on Drugs well before the federal government implemented them in the sixties (Balto, 2019, p. 125). Since then, the City of Chicago has continued to run a well-funded police department whose officers receive a disproportionate share of complaints from black neighborhoods like the South Side. When the people in those neighborhoods tried filing complaints and lawsuits against those officers, City Hall’s policies and practices made it difficult for them to succeed.

To understand how black citizens on Chicago’s South Side respond to these policies, one can look to a more general example. Economist Albert Hirschman’s *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* (Hirschman, 1970), describes how consumers respond when the benefits they receive from an organization they belong to start to decline, whether they are customers of a business or members of a political organization. Consumers, he says, have three options: abandon the organization (exit), encourage the organization to change (voice), or wait for the organization to improve (loyalty).

Sociologist Ronald E. Weitzer and criminologist Rod K. Brunson used Hirschman’s framework in a study of black youth in St. Louis, Missouri (Weitzer & Brunson, 2009). In the paper, they acknowledged that it was impossible for St. Louis residents to exit the jurisdiction of their police department if they disapproved of its activities, since there was no alternative police department that could have served them. But in interviews, the researchers learned that when victims of police misconduct used voice and attempted to file complaints against police officers, they were at best ignored and at worst threatened by the authorities. And as far as loyalty went, interview participants reserved their allegiances for other community members, not the police. Black St. Louis residents were instead forced to make a “partial exit,” in which they routinely avoided contact with police (Weitzer & Brunson, 2009, p. 236).

But individuals who use this partial exit abandon more than the police because, as Soss and Weaver explain, the police are the closest and most visible representatives of the government in low-income minority communities (Soss & Weaver, 2017, p. 574). For instance, other researchers found that individuals who have negative experiences with law enforcement not only avoid calling the police when they need them (Gibson et al., 2010), but avoid requesting any other services from local government (Lerman & Weaver, 2014). People who interact with the criminal justice system in any

form are less likely to trust political institutions or vote (Weaver & Lerman, 2010), and could even be less likely to take on a job, use a bank, go to the hospital, or pursue a degree (Brayne, 2014).

Like in St. Louis, black citizens who live on the South Side can use voice to advocate for police accountability reforms instead of exiting, but it would not be the first time they have tried. Several black individuals, organizations, and communities have pressured the City to change the way it runs the CPD. The fourth iteration of Chicago’s police accountability system is better than any system that has come before it, and successful lawsuits have won millions of dollars for victims of police misconduct. But the Chicago Police Department is still the same institution that receives the same critiques it did decades ago (Bogira, 2016). If the police are the government then Chicago’s South Side, which has little control over Chicago’s government, has little control over the police.

Unless Chicago’s black communities can somehow gain greater control of the CPD, South Side residents’ best option may be to “exit” from the control of City Hall as much as possible. But if Chicago residents are indeed making some kind mass exit, their actions, and the conditions inspired them, could have larger consequences for the city.

Methods and data. Quantitative data on complaints filed against CPD officers by ward was collected from the City of Chicago Office of the Inspector General Information Portal. The data was meant to show how many complaints were filed in each ward in the six months leading up to the 2011, 2015, and 2019 mayoral elections. But no data was available from after February 10, 2019, two weeks before the 2019 general mayoral election, so only data for the 2011 and 2015 elections was used. Voter turnout data was collected from the Chicago Board of Elections database, and data on reported crime, excluding murders, was collected from the City of Chicago Data Portal. All of these resources were publicly available online.

Qualitative data was collected through interviews of Chicago residents. Eight research participants had ties to community organizations on the South Side that held views on policing. These participants, classified as activists, came from five different organizations: the Revolutionary Communist Party (Revcom), Care Not Cops, Black Youth Project 100 (BYP 100), the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression (CAARPR), and the #LetUsBreathe Collective.

Twelve research participants, who had no formal ties to community organizations, lived on the South Side within the boundaries of a single police district. They were classified as non-activist participants. They came from two neighborhoods where the overwhelming majority of residents

were black. Interviews with these participants were conducted in the morning once a week every week for two months. The interviews took place in a local church that served as a safe, semi-public environment where people from the neighborhood felt comfortable and regularly spent time.

Four academic researchers, two lawyers, an administrator with the Civilian Office of Police Accountability, and a CPD officer were also interviewed about their perspectives on police misconduct and accountability.

Besides some personal contacts, participants were contacted through snowball sampling, with each participant recommending other people who they believed would be able to speak on this topic. Information about the study was also available on a research website, CopsAndTheCourts.com. All individuals who did not give their informed consent to having their real names used were given pseudonyms. All participants were instructed not to offer any identifying information or mention any open or pending criminal cases, complaints, or lawsuits against the CPD. Non-activist participants were compensated with ten dollars in cash before the start of the interview and told that they could refuse to answer any question or end the interview at any time. They were then given consent forms to sign and offered blank copies for their personal use.

Interviews were thirty minutes long or less and recorded on a smartphone. The recordings were deleted from the device, encrypted using AES 256-bit encryption, and securely stored in a Box drive in a folder that only the researcher could access. Written notes were also taken during interviews. At the end of each interview, the participant was given a card with information about available legal resources.

The interview process for non-activists was open-ended. Each participant was asked about their occupation, the neighborhood, and their perception of local police and the local government. They were then asked about how they felt about their negative experiences with the police, if any, and how they responded.

As one activist participant, Xavier Ramey, noted, the formal definition of police misconduct may depend on a set of laws and regulations that may not account for everything that members of the public consider to be inappropriate behavior by police officers. Since this study is concerned with how people respond to police misconduct, people can respond to police actions they dislike even if those actions are legal, and the very legality of police activity is determined by governmental institutions that South Side residents may also dislike, the term “police misconduct” is used in this paper to describe any behavior by CPD officers that participants reasonably consider to be inappropriate.

Findings. For many participants, their concerns about the Chicago Police Department (CPD) had less to do with individual instances of misconduct and more to do with the way police officers did their jobs when they were on the South Side. Their experiences with CPD officers informed not just the way they responded after incidents of police misconduct, but the way they interacted with all police officers all the time.

Perceptions of Chicago police. Gabriel didn’t understand what the police were supposed to be doing. He had been born on the North Side, in Cabrini-Green, and worked the front desk at a church on the South Side until he could find a more stable job. In his opinion, it wasn’t that police officers didn’t do anything at all; it’s that when they did, they always seemed to be out to get him.

For instance, there was that time on the train. Some guys had hopped on while he was riding and were making a lot of noise, disturbing the other passengers. It wasn’t a big deal; after a little bit, the group decided to switch to another car. More likely than not, it was because of the police officers who entered Gabriel’s car right after, looking for the young men. They were too late, but the officers didn’t know that. At least that must’ve been why they approached Gabriel, standing on the train in his hoodie, and started yelling at him. Gabriel tried to keep calm, but it was more than he could take.

“Why do you think it was me?” he asked the officers. “Cause I’m black?”

The police left him alone after that. At least, those officers did, on that day. Later, Gabriel would be arrested.

He was driving down the street when another car sped past him, ducking between the lanes. CPD squad cars came rushing after, sirens blaring, but instead of continuing after the first car, the officers wanted *him* to pull over. Gabriel complied and stopped his vehicle. Officers grabbed him, pulled him out of the car, and roughly fastened a pair of very tight handcuffs to his wrists. They asked him his name. He told them. They asked him where he was coming from. He told them. Eventually, the police realized they had the wrong car. They took the handcuffs off and Gabriel was free to go. They never apologized.

Last summer, there was a murder in the neighborhood. A man had been shot and killed. The case was still open when Gabriel ran into the police again, this time because he was being pulled over for a broken taillight. Cops always had the resources to pull off traffic stops, he said, but had nothing to offer a community dealing with a murderer on the loose. To him, it just didn’t make sense.

“You’re not going to get no incentive for getting someone for a taillight, you know. But you will be getting a badge of honor if you find a killer.”

– Gabriel Vanderbilt, 25, receptionist

As of October 2019, Gabriel said he said police had still not solved the crime.

Mr. Sims had his own complaints about police officers who didn’t do their jobs, but for him, it was personal. Three of his friends had been killed last year, one of them less than a month before he was interviewed. Mr. Sims’ voice was low and quiet, but when he talked about the police, he became visibly upset.

“This shit is ridiculous. You got all of these new hired police doing nothing out here.”

– Arnold Sims, 54, unemployed

During their own interviews, activists echoed Sims’ concerns about police when they explained their disapproval of CPD. To them, however, ineffective police with bad priorities were not the root of the problem.

Paru was a community organizer with Black Youth Project (BYP) 100. When he was not organizing, he taught Chicago Public Schools staff about restorative justice at his old high school. He also wore button-down shirts to avoid attention from police officers.

In elementary school, when Paru was twelve years old, he was playing next to an expressway with his brothers when he picked up a rock and joked that he was going to throw it over the ledge into traffic. A police officer pulled up and started yelling at him from her car. The boys told her that they never meant to throw the rock, but that didn't stop the officer from getting out of her vehicle. She walked over and grabbed Paru by the collar. A black family passed by, and the officer turned Paru towards them, making sure to let other people know about the crime she had narrowly stopped this child from committing. Then, she got a call and headed back to her car, leaving Paru still holding the rock. He had been too afraid to let it go.

Paru and Mr. Sims both said that the police, for all the minor offenses they eagerly cracked down on, did little to prevent crime. The difference between Paru and Mr. Sims was that Paru went on to note that police officers did not behave like this in every neighborhood.

“When they're on the North Side or areas where the wealthy are, they're there to protect ... and here it's pretty much they let anything happen, and then they lock people up and fill the prisons.”

— Paru Brown, organizer, BVP 100

Four other activists from four different organizations also asserted that black communities were policed differently from white ones. In

explaining the racial disparity, each one noted that one of the first forms of law enforcement in the United States were nineteenth-century slave patrols.

One of those activists was Roma, a college student at the University of Chicago who volunteered with Care Not Cops, a campaign to “defund, disarm, and disband” the University of Chicago Police Department. The group sprung up in response to the 2018 police shooting of Soji Thomas, another student at the university. The police may claim to do good, they said, but are part of a system that does the opposite.

“I think that [the police] do more harm to communities that they say that they are trying to protect than actual protection.”

— Roma Linares, member, Care Not Cops

Lucha was familiar with the system Roma talked about. Lucha was a member of the Revolutionary Communist Party (Revcom) and worked out of a small office on the South Side with her fellow organizers and revolutionaries. Together they tirelessly advocated for a revolution that would end that system, handing out flyers and denouncing social ills on street corners and in front of college campus buildings. In doing so, Lucha had had her fair share of run-ins with police officers. It made sense to her, since the role of the police was to suppress attempts by people like her to

disrupt the social order that empowered them. Part of that order was the capitalism that held down communities like those on the South Side.

“How do you maintain a society with so much oppression and so much inequality? Well, there’s a police force that keeps it that way.”

— *Lucha Bright, organizer, Revcom*

Another part of that order was American militarism, said Damon. An artist from the southwestern part of the city, Damon estimated he had been stopped by CPD officers between seventy-five and a hundred times in his life. After the 2014 police killing of Michael Brown in Missouri, Damon, his friend Xavier Ramey, and some others donated water bottles, first aid kits, and gas masks to protesters locked in deadly clashes with Missouri police. Together, they created the #LetUsBreathe Collective, named after a song they had been working on at the time. Since then, #LetUsBreathe had supported police brutality protests on a national level as well as in Chicago, where Damon believed City Hall’s generous financial support of the police was connected to the country’s heavy spending on the military.

“In the same way Chicago’s budget is violated by 40% of our resources being invested in the Chicago Police Department, 40% of our federal discretionary budget is also going to militarism and violence globally.”

— *Damon Williams, co-founder, #LetUsBreathe*

Frank Chapman maintained that police brutality was part of policing. At seventy-eight years old, Chapman had joined the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression (CAARPR) from prison, and now he ran the organization. To him, the problem with the police was clear: they were part of “the state,” and the state had been and was being used to oppress black communities.

“When the race riots occurred back in 1919, [the police] were leading the mobs, you know. And if race riots occurred today, I would suspect they would still be doing that because it's all about keeping the black person in their place.”

— Frank Chapman, executive director, CAARPR

None of this analysis was lost on Paru. For all his complaints about the police, he felt regular people could never hold them accountable because the CPD was not accountable to the community. It was only accountable to the city government.

“The officers are run by the City and the City is corrupt. The City doesn't care about its own.”

— Paru Brown, organizer, BYP 100

Responses to CPD misconduct. Scholarly literature and commentary by interview participants like Paru suggested that police misconduct is a problem because Chicago's government does not run the police department the way South Side residents would like it to be run. To

apply Hirschman’s framework of exit, voice, and loyalty, concerned citizens could have responded to police misconduct by evading City Hall’s control (exit), pressuring the government to reform the CPD (voice), or accepting the CPD’s flaws out of allegiance to the city (loyalty).

In practice, as in Weitzer and Brunson’s study, no participants indicated that their loyalty to Chicago kept them from responding to police misconduct. Instead, their strategies fell into the categories of voice and exit. Here, their strategies are described in terms of whether they could meaningfully improve South Side residents’ relationship with the CPD. The voice strategies discussed are voting, civil disobedience, filing complaints, and filing lawsuits.

The most popular strategy appeared to be an exit strategy. Weitzer and Brunson described this strategy as “partial exit” because, as it did not involve physically leaving the city, it kept the city government’s formal authority intact. But community organizations laid the groundwork for a policy that would remove City Hall’s power to control the police department altogether. While advocating for this policy could be described as another form of voice, some participants described their work as the public choosing to be protected from crime by one organization over the other. By eliminating the city government’s monopoly on law enforcement, individual communities could choose whether to make a full exit.

Voting as a form of voice. Hirschman defined voice as the “political” response to an organization’s decline,¹³⁶ and at first glance, traditional electoral politics appeared to be the most obvious response to widespread disapproval of the police. If Chicago residents were dissatisfied with the CPD and the CPD was run by City Hall, there were democratic mechanisms that people could use to voice their concerns about the government and, if necessary, entirely replace the members of that government with new people who would address those concerns.

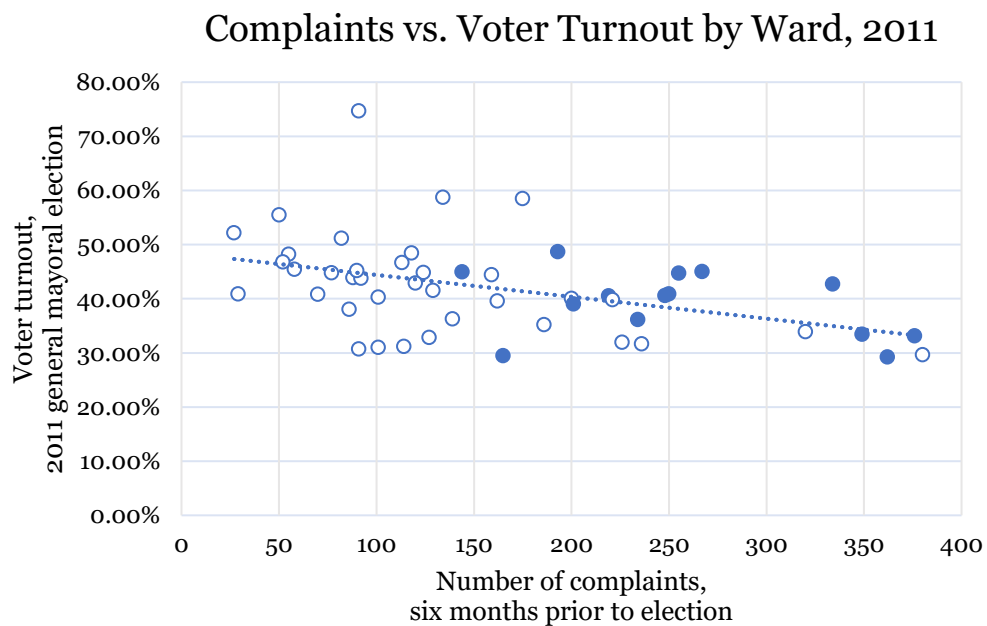
Chicago is governed by a mayor and a fifty-member City Council. Together, they have near-complete control of the Chicago Police Department, doing everything from appointing its superintendent to setting guidelines for its disciplinary agencies. The City Council’s members, known as aldermen, represented Chicago’s fifty political subdivisions, or wards.

Every four years, on the last Tuesday in February, the aldermen and the mayor are elected to serve four-year terms. Campaigns for those positions typically launched in the summer of the year before, partly because of the large number of signatures candidates needed to qualify to be on the ballot. Voters who lived in wards that experienced police

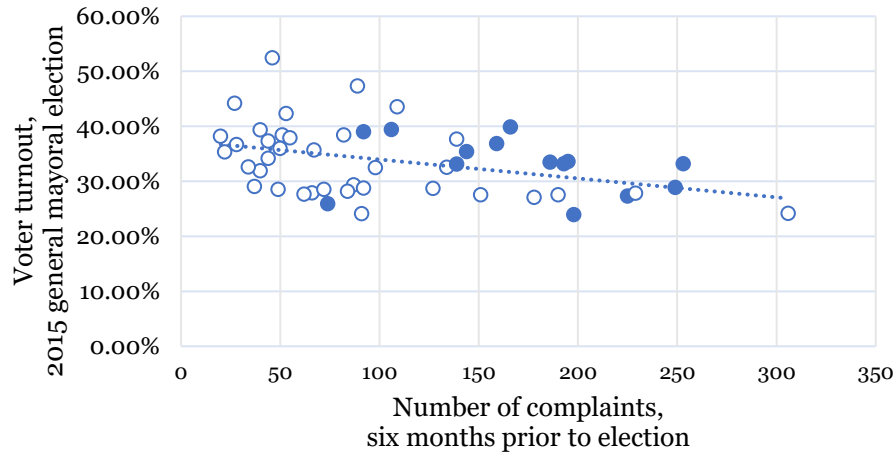
¹³⁶ Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*.

misconduct could have used those elections to either elect candidates who they believed would solve the problem or punish incumbent politicians who had failed to solve it.

Below is a graph of the number of complaints filed against Chicago police officers in each ward in the six months before the 2011 and 2015 mayoral elections and turnout among registered voters in those wards in those elections. Solid-colored dots represent the fourteen majority-black wards on the South Side.



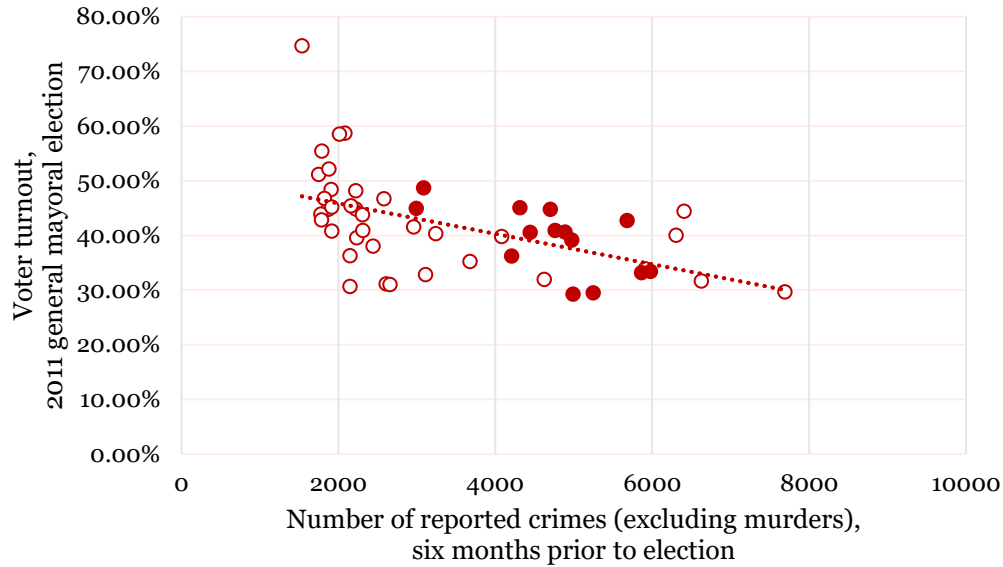
Complaints vs. Voter Turnout by Ward, 2015



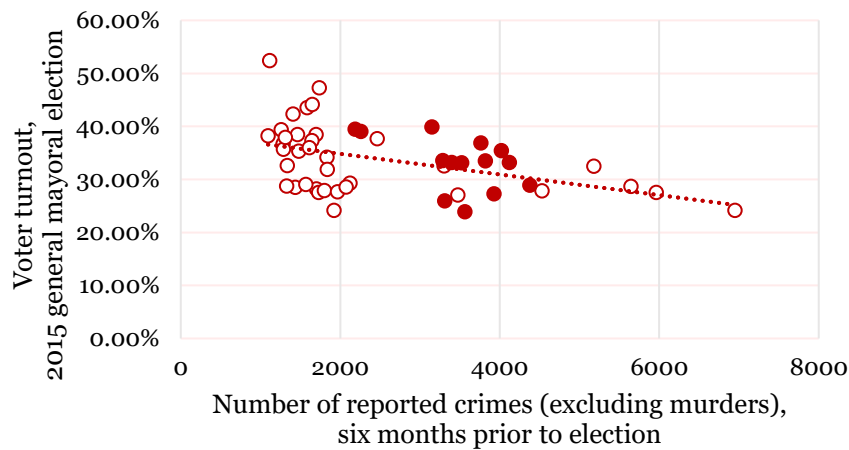
Majority-black wards on the South Side filed more complaints against CPD officers, but they had lower turnout rates than the wards with less complaints (see Appendix, Figure 1). The relationship completely disappeared considering the crime rate in each ward, which also has a negative relationship with voter turnout (see Appendix, Figure 2).

Below is a graph of the number of crimes reported in each ward in the six months before the 2011 and 2015 mayoral elections and voter turnout in those elections. Solid-colored dots represent majority-black wards on the South Side.

Crimes vs. Voter Turnout by Ward, 2011



Crimes vs. Voter Turnout by Ward, 2015

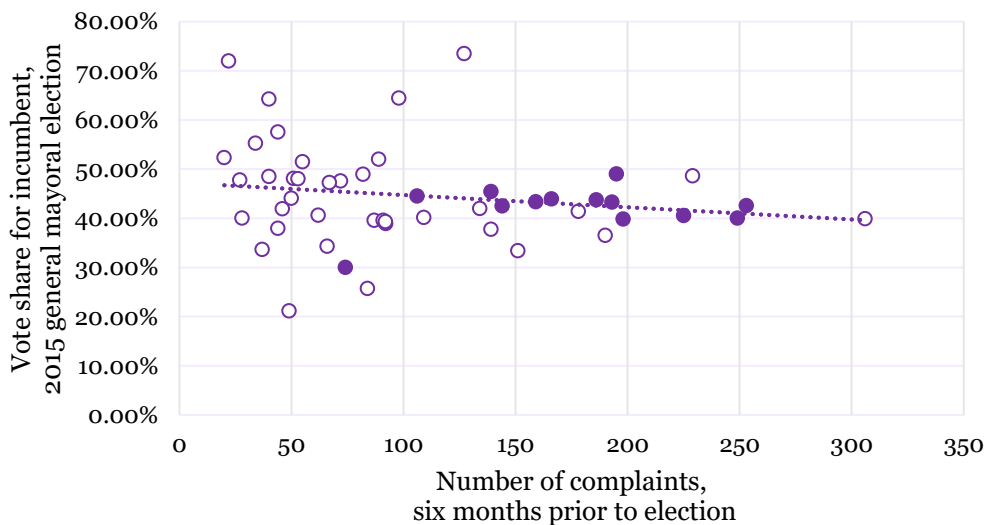


Another way to determine whether residents responded to police misconduct by voting was by measuring who those voters who did turn out chose to vote for. In wards where there were more complaints about police

misconduct, residents could have voted against an incumbent official like the mayor.

Below is a graph of the number of complaints filed against Chicago police officers in each ward six months before the 2015 mayoral election, when former Mayor Rahm Emanuel was running for a second term, and the percentage of the vote he received there. Solid-colored dots represent majority-black wards on the South Side.

Complaints vs. Vote for Incumbent by Ward, 2015



Again, South Side wards filed more complaints, but in this case, they did not show significantly less support for Emanuel than the other wards (see Appendix, Figure 3). If South Side voters responded to police misconduct, they did not do it at the ballot box.

One of those voters was Olivia, longtime member of Care Not Cops at the University of Chicago. She was fluent in abolitionist theory and had contacts in several politically active organizations, but struggled to recall the last election she had voted in.

With some prompting, she remembered that she voted in the 2019 municipal elections. An activist group opposing then-candidate Lori Lightfoot organized an event at a local coffee shop that year, and she got a sticker from them there. Olivia would take the organizers’ advice and vote for Lightfoot’s opponent, although her vote did not stop Lightfoot from becoming mayor. Still, Olivia did not consider elections to be very important to her organizing work.

“I just feel like voting is just like one little blip, you know, in terms of the work that needs to be done.”

— *Olivia Lee, organizer, Care Not Cops*

Perhaps activists knew a different way to deal with the police.

Civil disobedience as a form of voice. Rev’d Da Barber lived in Elkhart, Indiana for eleven years before he came to Chicago. He appeared as “Dionell Hill” twice in the *Elkhart Truth* for his anti-violence community work from when he lived there. Rev’d was inspired by figures like the Reverends Jesse Jackson and Al Sharpton when he took on his new name,

even though he never went to a seminary. The only thing higher a reverend, he said, was a barber. Below both of those were the police.

On July 3, 2018, at around 3:00 p.m., Rev’d was cutting hair at the shop where he rents space, Sideline Studios. At his side was fellow barber, Snoop, “finishing up a head” before he went home for the day. When he was done, Snoop cleaned up, took the patron’s money, and walked out the door. That would be the last time anyone saw Snoop besides the four police officers he met next.

Rev’d remembers the people who stopped by the barbershop with cash to pay their respects and the people who came to the vigil. He also remembers the people who blocked the streets with their protests for days after the killing. When community organizers weren’t on his block talking to the press, they were getting beat up by police officers. Local activist Will Calloway called on the CPD to release video of the shooting, and Revcom organizers demanded an end to the socioeconomic order that had created police brutality. But to Rev’d, none of it was worth his time.

“Martin Luther King protested for 368 days for that bus boycott ... after Snoop got shot? Shit, that was just a week.”

— Rev’d Da Barber, 38, barber

In his view, community organizations had gotten weaker since the days of the civil rights movement, and there was no point supporting them if they were going to keep losing. He used the 2015 hunger strike to keep Dyett High School open as an example. The hunger strikers, including future 20th Ward alderman Jeannette Taylor, successfully kept the City from shutting the school down, but did not stop the several other school closings that went on as planned.

Revcom was especially unimpressive to Rev'd. When he thought of revolutionaries, he thought about the Black Panthers. They were at least were enough of a threat to have the federal government come after them. And by giving their communities food, clothing, and jobs, the Panthers were able to fight poverty, which Rev'd saw as a bigger immediate problem than whatever Revcom was working on.

Revcom organizers Lucha and Michael had a reverse set of priorities. There were too many neighborhoods struggling with poverty to solve it all. Either way, poverty was just a symptom of the social and political repression that the police were there to enforce.

“If everybody got a new house and food to feed their whole families, you know, for however long period of time ... the problems are all still there.”

— Lucha Bright, organizer, Revcom

There have still not been any consequences for the officers involved in Snoop’s death, let alone significant changes to Chicago policing. Whether that is because activists have failed to meet the community’s immediate demands or need time to deliver on larger promises, mass action alone has far from solved the South Side’s police problems, and many people like Rev’d do not participate in it. Perhaps Will Calloway conceded that protests alone would not bring change when he ran to unseat the local alderman three months later. But taking activists off the streets and putting them in City Hall wasn’t going to work either, Rev’d warned.

“You can't be the alderman in City Hall and be an advocate in the community because politics and advocacy don't run together.”

— Rev’d Da Barber, 38, barber

Calloway lost the 2019 5th Ward aldermanic election in a runoff.

Complaints as a form of voice. One problem with elections and mass demonstrations is that they require multiple people to act collectively in order to have an effect. If individual actions were the key to systemic changes in the CPD, those changes could have come about through the citizen complaint process. Individuals who experience police misconduct could file complaints against the officers responsible, and if enough of them did so, they could pressure City Hall to improve the police department.

One issue with this approach was that filing complaints could only affect policy if many people were able and willing to go through the complaint process. Some South Side residents never knew it was an option.

One of those people was Fred. One night, he had been sharing drinks on his friend’s back porch when he left to go home. As he was crossing the park, police cars jumped the curb and pulled up next to him, sirens wailing and lights flashing. The officers wanted to know where he was coming from, where he was going, and if he had any drugs on him. When Fred told them he didn’t have any drugs, they put his body up against the car and searched him. A minute later, Fred was face-to-face with a police officer holding thirteen bags of heroin.

“That ain’t mine, man,” Fred told the officers. “I ain’t had that.”

“Well,” the officer replied, “it’s yours today unless you tell us something we want to know.”

This was not Fred’s first experience with police. He had sold drugs before and been to jail. And since he didn’t have any information to offer the officers for his freedom, he would spend another eight months there.

The CPD’s version of the story was that their officers spotted a known drug dealer in the park past midnight, and when the man saw them, he

panicked and threw his heroin to the ground. The judge believed the police, and Fred spent over a year in prison.

Three years after getting out, Fred said that if he had known he could've filed complaints against police officers who harassed him, he would've done it every time it happened.

Unlike Fred, Dashawn had never been to prison, but had had his fair share of encounters with the police, especially when he was younger. In the summers, officers would stop and frisk him every day. Most recently, Dashawn and a friend had been walking too close to the University of Chicago's campus when they were immediately stopped by the University's police officers. The officers were looking for a young black man with a backpack who had been breaking into cars, but when they saw that Dashawn had worked with AmeriCorps, they let him go.

Dashawn said the kids he grew up with didn't usually report it when they saw someone breaking the rules, including police officers not following department regulations. But now that he was older, he was worried that people in the neighborhood like him were not using the complaint-filing process enough.

“You shouldn't feel like this is normal, you know what I mean?”

— Dashawn Oliver, 27, church staff

Mr. Owens’ concerns were similar to Dashawn’s. When people had problems with the police, he wanted them to file complaints with the CPD. For instance, Mr. Owens’ friend once got into an argument with an officer who he felt was racially profiling him. It got heated, and when the conflict became physical, he was charged with assault on a police officer. When Mr. Owens’ friend came to him and told him about the incident, Mr. Owens begged him to file a complaint. If enough people took his advice, Mr. Owens said, maybe there would be less to complain about.

“I think they should do the complaints. Maybe they could wake the administration up a little bit, you know what I mean? [mimicking “the administration”]: ‘Hey, why is all these complaints coming in here like this? Is something going on? ... Somebody needs to go undercover just to see what’s going on.’”

— Abraham Owens, 58, carpenter

Jay Westensee would have liked to see more complaints filed as well. He was the deputy chief investigator at the Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA), the agency that took and processed complaints about CPD officers. Part of Westensee’s job was deciding which incoming complaints fell under COPA’s jurisdiction and referring the others to the CPD’s internal investigation agency. He said COPA representatives were going into communities on the South Side trying to demystify the citizen complaint process. The more complaints being filed, the better it was doing.

But Westensee also recognized that COPA’s main problem was not that people didn’t know what enough about it, but that many people knew it too well. The agency represented the fourth wave of police accountability reform to sweep Chicago, the third of which did not last ten years. He said that police misconduct would only go down once people saw COPA as a fair, and therefore legitimate, authority.

There was little reason to believe Mr. Owens was one of those people, no matter how badly he wanted his friends to report police misconduct to COPA. Like the friend he told to file the complaint, Mr. Owens had himself had multiple tense encounters with police officers who had stopped him. But when it had been his turn to file complaints about them, he didn’t think it was worth it.

“I just looked at it like this: ain't nobody going to hear me, you know. They'll never get the paperwork.”

— Abraham Owens, 58, carpenter

His friend ended up not filing a complaint for the same reason.

Like Mr. Owens, Isaiah was a person who said he valued the complaint system. He said it potentially could save lives. Also like Mr. Owens, however, when Isaiah had an opportunity to file a complaint of his own last summer after police searched him at the store, he declined. He cited a worse experience with the CPD from when he was fifteen years old.

Isaiah had been harassed by some CPD officers and wanted to file a complaint against them. And he would've, he said, if the police hadn't called his mom on the phone and threatened to kill him. Isaiah's mother, terrified, wouldn't let her son go forward with the complaint. After that, he learned to brush it off when the police treated him badly.

Gabriel, the one who was almost falsely arrested for speeding, did the same. He felt going to COPA and filing a complaint wasn't just a waste of time; it was physically dangerous.

“As a black man, to have any encounter with the police and still be allowed to live and talk about it, that's enough for me.”

— Gabriel Vanderbilt, 25, receptionist

To him, it was only a risk worth taking if the stakes were higher, like if the police did something to a loved one. Another resident, Neil, would not consider complaints unless the police inflicted some kind of bodily harm, like in the case of Laquan McDonald. But while these people set clear boundaries for what kinds of behavior they would and would not tolerate from the police, if police officers crossed those lines, it was unclear whether they would just shift the goalposts further and further until they never filed a complaint about anything.

Lawsuits as a form of voice. There is something of an inherent conflict in the fact that City Hall controls the system that citizens use to report wrongdoing by the its own police officers. That conflict does not appear in the federal court system, where judges are selected by the president, not the mayor. However, individuals who would have otherwise taken police officers to court to demonstrate their dissatisfaction with the CPD still hold back from doing so, citing a reason others gave when they declined to file complaints: they did not consider it to be an option.

Mr. Garner was one of those people. Many years ago, he had been hanging around a building known to be a drug house. CPD officers came by to search it without a warrant, and after inspecting the house, they found cocaine. They began to search the people in the building, including Mr. Garner. The officers asked him to pull his pants down so they could look for drugs, but he refused and asked the be taken to the police station instead. An officer hit him in the mouth.

Mr. Garner was arrested along with the landlord and someone else, but his brother-in-law was able to hire a lawyer to represent them. At trial, the judge found that the officers had no probable cause to arrest the three men, and Mr. Garner was free.

Although the officers’ behavior was inappropriate, Mr. Garner said that at that point, going on to sue them wasn’t on his mind. Like the people who had to decide whether to file complaints with COPA, he chose getting back to his normal life over figuring out how to voice dissatisfaction with the CPD through a complex process he knew little about.

“I didn't think about it. I was just happy to be out.”

— Samuel Garner, 63, barber

Mr. Garner’s story highlights another barrier to filing lawsuits against the CPD or its officers. As he spoke about the time he was arrested, Mr. Garner made a point of how lucky he was to be represented by the private lawyer his brother-in-law hired and not a public defender. Finding a lawyer and filing a lawsuit cost time and money, so plaintiffs with neither were at a great disadvantage if they wanted to beat the well-funded legal teams the City of Chicago had hired to defend its police officers in court. Those expenses added a new problem for potential plaintiffs; for all the problems with filing a complaint, at least it was free.

Instead, individuals who had been unfairly arrested by CPD officers but lacked the resources to hire a private lawyer had to rely on public defenders, who served more clients for less pay, if they wanted to contest

the police’s actions. And even then, there was no guarantee a court would ever hear what they had to say.

At 63, Mr. Irving had spent half of his life in prison and was trying to get disability benefits for his lung disease. When he was first arrested, he worked for the City of Evanston, Illinois, directly north of Chicago, and had two kids. After waiting over a month in jail to see a judge, he asked his public defender to file a motion for a speedy trial to tell the court that the police were holding him for longer than they were legally allowed to. She did not.

Part of the problem, Mr. Irving said, was that in order to get a different public defender, he would have had to notify the attorney disciplinary board and get approved for a new lawyer. Being incarcerated, the process was very difficult, and could’ve taken so much time that he could’ve gotten his freedom before he got a new attorney. He said it was as if the system was rigged against him.

“A public defender, they get paid by the state too, just like the police do ... It’s kind of hard to win cases like that.”

— Arthur Irving, 63, landscaper

The system that kept Mr. Garner and Mr. Irving from getting justice did not stop Mr. Roberts, however. Also in his sixties, but without a house or a job, Mr. Roberts had a history of unfair arrests as well. But then he got

in touch with the law office of Kenneth N. Flaxman, P.C. By taking a portion of whatever settlement the City offered their clients, the firm’s lawyers were able to offer their services for free. Mr. Roberts said he used to shy away from the idea of lawsuits before heard about Kenneth N. Flaxman and had an epiphany.

“I just wanted to happily get away, but over the course of time I learned that I’m not going to keep being the punching bag.”

— Terry Roberts, 61, unemployed

From then on, Mr. Roberts was invincible. One day, he had been standing in a parking lot when the CPD arrested a man for selling drugs. The officers then arrested Mr. Roberts, alleging he was the person buying drugs from him. Mr. Roberts spent twenty-eight days in jail. With his lawyers’ help, Mr. Roberts got the charges against him dropped, and the City paid him \$6,000 for falsely arresting him. In another case, Mr. Roberts spent sixteen days in jail and was awarded \$3,000.

He attributed his better fortunes to getting better informed about his rights and encouraged others who were having problems with the police to do the same, including the man he was arrested with. If people didn’t use the law to protect themselves, he said, that was on them.

Meanwhile, at the law office that represented Mr. Roberts, attorney Joel Flaxman was happy his work was making an impact on an individual level, but was careful not to say it was a systemic one. Part of his reasoning was that, for all his court victories, the City still had no real incentive to avoid being sued in the future.

“If you're suing car companies, there's an incentive for them to make things more safe and to avoid having to pay money for their lawsuits. When you're suing the government and it's defend everything and no consequences for the officers who caused this, that's not going to make change very rapidly.”

— Joel Flaxman, attorney, Kenneth N. Flaxman

At Parsons Law Group, LLC, attorney Thomas Toscano also represented individuals filing police misconduct lawsuits. As to whether those lawsuits created meaningful policy changes in the CPD, his answer was sometimes. His first example was a court case he fought not as an attorney, but as a defendant. In 2003, the police arrested Toscano and hundreds of others for an antiwar protest. The City had given them a permit to march, but the CPD immediately revoked it after demonstrations began. Eight years later, the U.S. Court of Appeals decided the police were wrong, and since then, Toscano hadn't seen anything like the mass arrests the CPD conducted that day.

As to whether he believed work like his would ever reduce police misconduct across the board, it depended on how optimistic he was feeling that day.

Partial exit. Instead of using voice to urge the City to improve its police department, many participants appeared to be most satisfied with responding to police misconduct in a way that had nothing to do with changing the CPD. In fact, police officers did not have to be aware of it at all. By being in places and situations where there were no police present, participants were able to, in a sense, exit the CPD’s jurisdiction.

Different people used different strategies to avoid attention from law enforcement. For Mr. Owens, it meant holding back from filing complaints against police officers. When he failed to get his friend to file a complaint about his own case of police misconduct, it was because the friend resolved to “stay out of their way” instead, just as Mr. Owens had been doing.

“People see a lot of things in this city and won't say nothing due to the fact the Chicago P.D. sometimes don't wanna hear what we have to say about one of theirs.”

— Abraham Owens, 58, carpenter

Mr. Sims’ strategy was to keep as much distance between him and the nearest police officer as possible. He had been arrested many times when he was young, and after going to prison on false drug charges, Mr.

Sims decided he never wanted to go back. Now that he spent most of his time at a nursing home, he said, it was easier to avoid the CPD, and he liked that. The police terrified him.

“I’m not around to do anything for the police to fuck with me. Excuse the language.”

— Arnold Sims, 54, unemployed

Fred was also harrowed by his experience being framed by the CPD. Since the time police arrested him in the park, he said he hadn’t had any bad encounters with police officers because he had been avoiding that area. In his words, he didn’t “put himself in that type of situation” anymore.

For Fred and many participants, individual citizens were responsible for preventing themselves from becoming victims of police misconduct. When the police hurt or took advantage of someone, the most reasonable conclusion was that it was that person’s fault. Mr. Sims, for instance, noted that some of his friends often got in trouble with the CPD, and felt that they probably deserved it. For Gabriel, who had been repeatedly stopped by CPD officers for offenses he did not commit, the key to not getting harassed by police officers was to avoid hanging around people who did. He was proud to say that he did not spend time with these “troublesome people.”

The behavior of troublesome people made people like Andre very upset. He had gotten to know some, many of them young, from his time as

a security guard at a local high school. He believed their disrespectful attitudes towards law enforcement were getting them killed.

“Police brutality don't have to happen if you just do what they tell you to do. Don't be stupid, man.”

— Andre Thompson, 57, security guard

CPD officer Steve Lamar was not surprised to hear that there were people who avoided police officers. He had encountered many of them back when he patrolled a beat in a particularly rough part of the South Side. A good share of them, in fact, were the young people that Andre claimed were so troublesome. The problem, as he saw it, was partly the media, which devoted so much coverage to police misconduct cases that regular citizens were afraid of people like him. The other part came from simple misunderstandings between him and people in the neighborhood.

Officer Lamar gave an example from when he was on the beat. He was in his patrol car when a man came up to him and told the officer that he had been robbed at gunpoint, showing Lamar a case report of the incident. This man knew where the person who had robbed him lived and wanted Lamar to go arrest him. Officer Lamar told the man to get in the car, and together they drove to the address. As they pulled up, the man identified the suspect standing outside, and Officer Lamar put him under arrest. But as Lamar went to handcuff him, the suspect pulled away. Lamar went to

grab him and soon the two were wrestling. At the same time, three young women started screaming from a nearby window. They had just seen a CPD officer pull up on a stranger and start fighting with him. Meanwhile, the man who had asked that police officer to make the arrest, being a witness to a crime, sat hidden in the police car behind tinted windows.

Now, Officer Lamar worked an administrative job at CPD headquarters. On his Instagram, he scrolled through pictures of him in uniform giving haircuts to little boys in the neighborhood. When the CPD was put under a consent decree after the Laquan McDonald shooting, he sat through public meetings to gather community input on how the police department should be reformed. He believed the outcomes of those reforms have put police accountability is at an all-time high in Chicago, even though he knew a lot of officers had much less glowing reviews of the new system. Police-community relations were strained, and had been strained for a long time, but there was a way to change that, and Chicago was on the right track.

Activists were also looking forward to a world where people didn't hide from the police. Unlike Officer Lamar, however, they did not believe the City was making much progress. While mostly non-activists talked about partially exiting to protect themselves from the CPD, activists also shared their concerns and used their strategies. One of them was Paru from BYP 100, who drove a Toyota Camry so that when he was on the road, police

officers would not immediately assume the car was being driven by a young black man. What made activists different from non-activists was that they had plans for a Chicago where the South Side, if it was ready, could take the next step and make the true exit.

Full exit. In an ideal system, citizens who did not like their police department and could not force it to change would have the opportunity to pick a new one, shopping around between different police departments until everybody had one that best suited them. Most individuals, however, were not in a position to move out of the city solely to avoid its police. Even if they could, there was little guarantee they would find much better.

Activists were not interested in stopping police misconduct through technical changes to the Chicago Police Department. They were disenchanted with the entire institution and the government that ran it. And if they could not escape City Hall’s control, they would have to eliminate the instrument of that control, the CPD, as people knew it.

For Damon at #LetUsBreathe, eliminating the CPD meant abolishing the police department. But he acknowledged that achieving police abolition would require a radical shift in the way the public thought about the legal system, and like many activists who had struggled to abolish slavery, he did not expect to see his work come to fruition in his lifetime. Similarly, Revcom

organizers believed they would have to wait until their movement ended capitalism before they could replace the CPD with a fundamentally different institution. But when they did create this new world, free from racial or socioeconomic inequality, the police would finally treat everyone fairly.

At Care Not Cops, Olivia also believed social inequality was the underlying issue, but said that people could still act today to render police officers obsolete.

“I know some people call the police when there's like a noise complaint ... Maybe the alternative to that is that you know your neighbors and you'll think twice before having a party, or you'll figure out something with that neighbor.”

— Olivia Lee, organizer, Care Not Cops

In the meantime, if communities could not end the CPD's power, they could challenge it, said Paru of BYP 100. One way to do so was through traditional protests after incidents of misconduct. Another was by participating in cop watches.

A different organization, Assata's Daughters, came up with the cop watch after an incident in 2018. On Halloween, some high school students from the neighborhoods of Kenwood and Woodlawn had been egging and toilet-papering property in the wealthier Hyde Park neighborhood when they were confronted by the police. CPD officers arrested many of the

teenagers. The following year, members of Assata’s Daughters went to the streets to monitor the police. The cop watchers would keep their distance but try to deescalate if a situation became volatile. If there was an arrest, they were prepared to film aggressive police officers on their phones. Some members of Care Not Cops came out to help them, including Olivia. She said that it was a particularly scary experience for her, noting that filming the officers did not make them more friendly.

“Cops don't care. They're shoving everyone back. It was like five, six, seven cops on this like just one kid and they're all pinning him down to the floor.”

— Olivia Lee, organizer, Care Not Cops

Paru, who had also taken part in a cop watch, said that they could either be exhilarating or anxiety-inducing. Police officers had even attempted to take his phone away a few times. Their work was confrontational because, unlike the forms of voice, their immediate goal was not to ask police officers to make better decisions. Instead, cop watches used citizens’ power to film the police to strip CPD officers, and by extension City Hall, of their power to hide their activities from the public.

“Cops know they're being watched. They know that whenever they do, people were here and seeing what you're doing, the world is watching.”

— Paru Brown, organizer, BYP 100

While these groups used informal strategies to undermine the City’s authority, some were also part of a multiyear political campaign to put City Hall’s policing powers into a Civilian Police Accountability Council (CPAC). CPAC would be an elected, representative body of eleven officials who would appoint the CPD’s superintendent, set its rules, and approve its budget. In doing so, it would take complete control of the CPD away from the mayor and the mayor-appointed Police Board.

Activists had been fighting for CPAC since 2016, when they tried to include it in the City’s new set of policing reforms. Instead, they got a new police oversight agency, COPA, in what Paru called a cynical attempt by the government to block their proposal. Since then, an ordinance to establish CPAC had gained nineteen sponsors in City Council, but was still seven supporters short of passage and did not have Mayor Lightfoot’s approval.

The organization leading this campaign, the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression (CAARPR), was run by Frank Chapman, who believed CPAC would make policing more democratic.

“We wanted complete community control of police taken out of the hands of City Hall, taken out of the hands of the police department, and put directly into the hands of the people.”

— Frank Chapman, executive director, CAARPR

Community control of the police was not a goal that Chicago organizers started fighting for in 2016, he said, but in 1973, when CAARPR was founded, to fulfill one of the main objectives of the Black Panther Party. Controlling law enforcement, Chapman believed, was the key to controlling the resources that the City had long denied to communities on the South Side. Instead of helping these communities, politicians had catered to the needs of the rich and powerful in the city's white North Side neighborhoods, creating the economic and social disadvantage that defined non-white communities. But when activist groups from those neglected neighborhoods organized to secure resources for places like the South Side, they had been suppressed by the police.

With CPAC, Chapman said, those groups could lobby the City to reduce the size of the CPD. For organizations in the pro-CPAC coalition that believed in police abolition, their neighborhoods could decide that they no longer needed the CPD's services and develop alternative methods of crime control. Then activists could work together to demand the City invest in the South Side, free from fear of racist or political repression.

To achieve that goal, CAARPR members made phone calls to every ward in the city, counting CPAC supporters and encouraging them to call their aldermen to tell them to vote to make CPAC a reality. Every month, CAARPR organizers also went to public meetings of the Police Board, where

Board members deliberated on ongoing police misconduct cases. Towards the end of these meetings, when the members of the public could make comments, CAARPR delegates told the Board that the only way to truly solve police misconduct was through CPAC.

When presented with this proposal, Officer Lamar thought it was a “horrible” idea. The public holds the mayor and City Council responsible for the state of crime in Chicago, he said. CPAC members would be able to make all the decisions about how the police department is run and never have to deal with the consequences.

“If [CPAC officials] don't have any accountability, what do they have to lose? If they have nothing to lose, then then they have no skin in the game.”

— Steve Lamar, CPD officer

Officer Lamar was not, however, opposed to community control of police, the principle behind CPAC. Residents of the city's component neighborhoods, it could be argued, had “skin in the game” when it came to how the police operated in their areas. And when the conversation turned towards the idea of a CPD where each locality controlled its own police, he started to nod.

Discussion.

Analysis. Interestingly, many non-activists used rhetoric that could be ascribed to people with conservative views on law enforcement. They were quick to assert that not all police officers were “bad,” but that some maybe had emotional or psychological issues that explained their abuse of power. The solution, they said, was to either weed these “bad apples” out of the CPD or help them become better police officers. At the same time, these individuals held other views and reported experiences that scholars and activist participants used to demonstrate the opposite: that police misconduct was a systemic problem within police departments that the government intentionally left unsolved.

For instance, non-activist participants reported choosing not to report police misconduct to the police department, out of fear in some cases. But if a small number of misbehaving officers are responsible for police misconduct in Chicago, presumable any well-meaning citizen should have no problem reporting one of these officers to a bureaucracy of well-intentioned officials who are as concerned about police misconduct as they are. Instead, most people acted like they believed the police department and the city government systemically enabled misconduct to happen. If that were the case, there was no point going to a government agency like COPA with police complaints if the government was the police.

As another example, non-activists complained that police officers were quick to punish them for minor offenses but did little to keep South Side neighborhoods safe from criminal activity. This phenomenon, known as being overpoliced and under-protected, has been described by multiple scholars to demonstrate that governments like Chicago’s do not run their police departments with the best interests of black citizens in mind.

In response to their fundamental concerns about Chicago policing, non-activists and activists alike often relied on avoiding contact with law enforcement. As one individual put it, they knew how to “stay out of their way.” It was phrased almost as if one was doing a favor to the police by avoiding them. There has rightly been great concern over what police and the communities they serve lose to police misconduct, but this comment calls to attention something that both sides gain from the status quo: citizens who avoid the police may not be harassed by the police, and police officers who are feared by victims of their misconduct do not get reported. This perverse police-community relationship could explain why this status quo has persisted in communities like the South Side.

Perhaps another phenomenon that kept this status quo in place was that some non-activists appeared to have little sympathy for others who had also had problems with law enforcement. But perhaps what these individuals thought of people who had also been harassed by the police was

not a question of sympathy. Perhaps these they wanted to be fair to police by assuming they harassed most people for good reason, like when they said only a few officers were “bad apples.” Although of course, doing anything to anyone for a good reason is not harassment, and not misconduct.

Another reason these participants may have declared that only “troublesome people” were victims of police misconduct is that experiencing police misconduct can often be a traumatic experience that is impossible to prepare for or prevent, and by choosing to believe in fair rules for how it happens, interview participants could reclaim some of the control over their lives that the police had taken away.

Limitations. As with any interview data, opinions held by interviewees may not be representative of the wider communities they are being used to represent. However, the wider community non-activist participants represented was one police district on the South Side, and participants often made references to friends or other community members who shared their beliefs about and experiences with the CPD.

All non-activist participants were male, and although men are more likely than women to have violent encounters with law enforcement,¹³⁷ it is

¹³⁷ Davis, Whyde, and Langton, “Contacts Between Police and the Public, 2015,” 16.

still very important to learn to what extent women’s views on Chicago policing may differ from men’s, and regrettable that that was impossible to do with this data. Non-activist participants also skewed older, leaving out younger Chicago residents who are also more likely to be threatened by law enforcement.¹³⁸ Younger participants may not have significantly changed the tone of the findings, however, as some research suggests that older citizens have less cynical views of the police,¹³⁹ and their opinions of CPD as expressed in these findings were not very flattering to begin with.

To the extent that activist and non-activist views on policing differed, there is no reason to believe that either group had a better-informed or more sophisticated understanding of Chicago policing or how to improve it. Individuals who have dedicated large portions of their time and, in many cases, lives to solving the problem of police misconduct were more primed to think in terms of that work. That the activist community had ideas for how to respond to police misconduct beyond the partial exit was a reflection of that difference. Unfortunately, non-activists were not available to take part in follow-up interviews where they could give their opinions of proposals like CPAC. It is worth noting, however, that the community

¹³⁸ Davis, Whyde, and Langton, 16.

¹³⁹ Kirk and Papachristos, “Cultural Mechanisms and the Persistence of Neighborhood Violence.”

organizations that advocate for these ideas enjoy support from many people in South Side neighborhoods aside from their members.

For the quantitative findings on the relationship between police complaints and voter turnout, turnout was measured among registered voters, not among all individuals eligible to vote. While police misconduct could have incited large numbers of people to register to vote, voter registration data showed that that did not happen. Also, there was no ward-level data on the number of eligible voters in Chicago. Even if one had assumed there were the same number of eligible voters in each ward, this would not have impacted the results either.

In the results that were presented, the relationship between complaints and voter turnout was not significant when controlling for crime reported in each ward. However, there was a very strong relationship between crime reported and complaints filed in each ward (see Appendix, Figure 4), which suggests that crime rates and CPD complaints are associated with lower voter turnout by ward. It also suggests that Chicago residents’ concerns about their police officers keep them from preventing crime in their neighborhoods.

Policy recommendations. Each form of response to police misconduct represented a potential solution to the problem of police misconduct on the South Side of Chicago. But many research participants noted that the city government was not only the root of that problem, but the largest obstacle standing in the way of that solution. An effective plan for addressing police misconduct would therefore have to address the reality that City Hall and the South Side may have different preferences for how CPD officers operate in South Side neighborhoods.

Chicago’s City Council is made up of representatives from all parts of the city, so understandably the policies it passes and implements are supposed to represent the will of the people in all regions of Chicago, not just on the South Side. But it is also understandable how South Side residents can feel that the City Hall is biased against them, considering the vastly superior economic power of Chicago’s North Side.

The idea of community control of the CPD, which motivates the current campaign for a Civilian Police Accountability Council (CPAC), seeks to resolve this issue. Instead of City Council controlling the CPD, South Side residents would be able to leverage control of the CPD through CPAC. But it is unclear how CPAC, an elected body of representatives from all parts of the city, would run the CPD much differently from City Council, which is also an elected body of representatives from all parts of the city. From the

current text of the bill, the only differences between a qualified candidate for City Council and a qualified candidate for CPAC are that CPAC candidates must have done some form of community advocacy for two years, must not have ties to law enforcement, and must only accept campaign contributions from within their district. It is unlikely a political candidate who met those three qualifications would have a radically different approach to police administration than any of the fourteen City Council members who currently represent black wards on the South Side. If the South Side’s current elected representatives have not forced changes to the CPD, neither would these new ones.

At the heart of community control of the police is the principle that regular citizens should be allowed to make decisions about how the police operate in their neighborhoods. But as long as one institution sets policy for the entire city, different neighborhoods with different views of law enforcement are going to have policy disagreements. A CPAC bill that acknowledged the different needs of different parts of the city could still divide Chicago along police district borders, but instead of each CPAC district voting to elect one representative to a citywide council, voters could elect officials to manage law enforcement exclusively in their part of the city.

This hyper-local approach to police administration, led by not one, but eleven CPACs, addresses a central concern about policing: that the

police treat people differently in different neighborhoods. Within individual CPAC districts, which would account for relatively small areas of the city, voters would live in more similar neighborhoods that have more cohesive views of the police. If these voters' shared attributes lead to fewer policy disagreements, each district would see its law enforcement improve for the people who lived there. Under this system, there would be at least three CPAC districts located entirely on the South Side whose police would be accountable only to South Side residents.

Decentralizing any public service makes it more difficult for different jurisdictions to coordinate, as is the case when police departments from different cities need to work together. None of these issues would be unique to decentralizing the CPD, but CPAC districts could still decide when it was best to share resources like equipment or data with other districts. They could also continue to receive funds from City Hall, provided there were no strings attached. For the purposes of preventing police misconduct, South Side CPAC districts would most benefit from not coordinating with other districts when they decided how many officers they hired, where they would hire them from, what weapons they used, and their disciplinary procedures.

Short of City Council passing an ordinance to formally decentralize the CPD, concerned citizens inside and outside the police department can still work to give their communities the final say in how they keep

themselves safe, with or without police. Civil disobedience, for instance, cannot singlehandedly usurp the mayor’s control over the police department, but it can show lower-level officials like aldermen that CPD policy approved by City Hall does not have the approval of all the city. Aldermen who do not appreciate that distinction must still face reelection every four years, at which point their constituents can replace them with people who understand their needs and will vote for a CPD that is responsive to them.

To an extent, City Hall already knows that one size of policing does not fit all, given that Chicago has twenty-two police districts. Since voters have no formal political control over these districts, each one follows the same rules, but that can change. The district where non-activist research participants were recruited, for instance, has monthly meetings that are open to the public. Perhaps if more people came to those meetings with their concerns about the CPD and more officers listened to them, Chicago would be closer to having a citizen-run police department.

Conclusion. Police misconduct has long been a problem in communities like Chicago’s South Side. Interviews with South Side residents, local activists, and lawyers highlighted that individuals and neighborhoods struggle to mount an effective response to the issue because officer misconduct is part of a larger problem. Police misconduct in the CPD is often a symptom of urban governance that allows law enforcement to violate the rights of low-income black citizens as it ignores their needs. Different strategies for curbing police misconduct either hoped that public pressure on City Hall to reform the CPD would succeed or planned for it to fail. Instead, one may need to be optimistic, and hope that Chicago’s government is pessimistic enough about its future ability to manage the CPD to offload the responsibility to local leaders selected by voters with clearer ideas for what they want law enforcement to look like.

In an essay for *The Atlantic*, writer Kentaro Toyama tells a story about working for a technology company that struggled to help a rural sugarcane cooperative report sales to its farmers, concluding that “TIPS” (technologies, institutions, policies, and systems) could only “amplify the intent and capacity of human and institutional stakeholders, but [not] substitute for their deficiencies.”¹⁴⁰ Chicago policing is a domain in which,

¹⁴⁰ Toyama, “Technology Is Not the Answer.”

over the past sixty years, City Hall has created numerous technologies, institutions, policies, and systems to solve a problem that may have more to do with the stakeholders making the decisions. A South Side with better policing is possible, but that can only happen if its officers are run by the community.

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Appendix



Top: A South Side bike shop with a sign that says “FINANCIAR ESCUELAS, NO POLICIAS,” which is Spanish for “Fund schools, not police officers.”

Bottom: A clipping from the Chicago Sun-Times at a barbershop in South Shore covering a memorial for Snoop, a barber there who was killed by CPD officers on his way home from work in 2018.



Top: *Sideline Studios, the South Shore barbershop where Snoop worked before he was killed by CPD officers in 2018.*

Bottom: *Rev'd Da Barber, who used to work at Sideline Studios, at his new shop in a different neighborhood.*



The downtown office of the Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression (CAARPR), an organization that fights police brutality.

Top left: Posters, including one of Harold Washington, Chicago’s first black mayor.

Top right: A political map of Chicago with each ward colored in to show how many people there support a Civilian Police Accountability Council (CPAC).

Bottom: Some pictures, including a drawing of Black Power activist Assata Shakur.

Coefficients:	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t)
(Intercept)	0.4843388	0.0226301	21.402	< 2e-16
complaints2011	-0.0004036	0.0001195	-3.377	0.00146

Residual standard error: 0.07938 on 48 degrees of freedom

Multiple R-squared: 0.192, **Adjusted R-squared:** 0.1752

F-statistic: 11.41 on 1 and 48 DF, **p-value:** 0.00146

Coefficients:	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t)
(Intercept)	0.3739847	0.0151285	24.721	< 2e-16
complaints2015	-0.0003437	0.0001163	-2.956	0.00482

Residual standard error: 0.05787 on 48 degrees of freedom

Multiple R-squared: 0.154, **Adjusted R-squared:** 0.1364

F-statistic: 8.738 on 1 and 48 DF, **p-value:** 0.00482

Figure 1: *Measuring the relationship between complaints filed against CPD officers and voter turnout by ward in the 2011 and 2015 mayoral elections. On average, for every twenty-five more complaints filed in a ward before the election, turnout was 1% lower in that ward.*

Coefficients:	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t)
(Intercept)	5.142e-01	2.494e-02	20.621	< 2e-16
complaints2011	2.163e-05	2.111e-04	0.102	0.9188
crimes2011	-2.886e-05	1.205e-05	-2.394	0.0207

Residual standard error: 0.07574 on 47 degrees of freedom

Multiple R-squared: 0.2798, Adjusted R-squared: 0.2492

F-statistic: 9.131 on 2 and 47 DF, p-value: 0.0004464

Coefficients:	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t)
(Intercept)	3.874e-01	1.701e-02	22.775	< 2e-16
complaints2015	-8.369e-05	1.965e-04	-0.426	0.672
crimes2015	-1.604e-05	9.860e-06	-1.627	0.110

Residual standard error: 0.05691 on 47 degrees of freedom

Multiple R-squared: 0.1991, Adjusted R-squared: 0.165

F-statistic: 5.843 on 2 and 47 DF, p-value: 0.005418

Figure 2: Measuring the relationship between complaints filed against CPD officers, reported crime, and voter turnout by ward in the 2011 and 2015 mayoral elections. Complaints had little impact on voter turnout compared to crime, but neither had a very strong relationship.

Coefficients:	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t)
(Intercept)	0.4722052	0.0258328	18.279	< 2e-16
complaints2011	-0.0002483	0.0001985	-1.251	0.217

Residual standard error: 0.09882 on 48 degrees of freedom

Multiple R-squared: 0.03156, **Adjusted R-squared:** 0.01139

F-statistic: 1.564 on 1 and 48 DF, **p-value:** 0.2171

***Figure 3:** Measuring the relationship between complaints filed against CPD officers and vote share for the incumbent mayor by ward in the 2015 mayoral election. There was no significant relationship between the variables.*

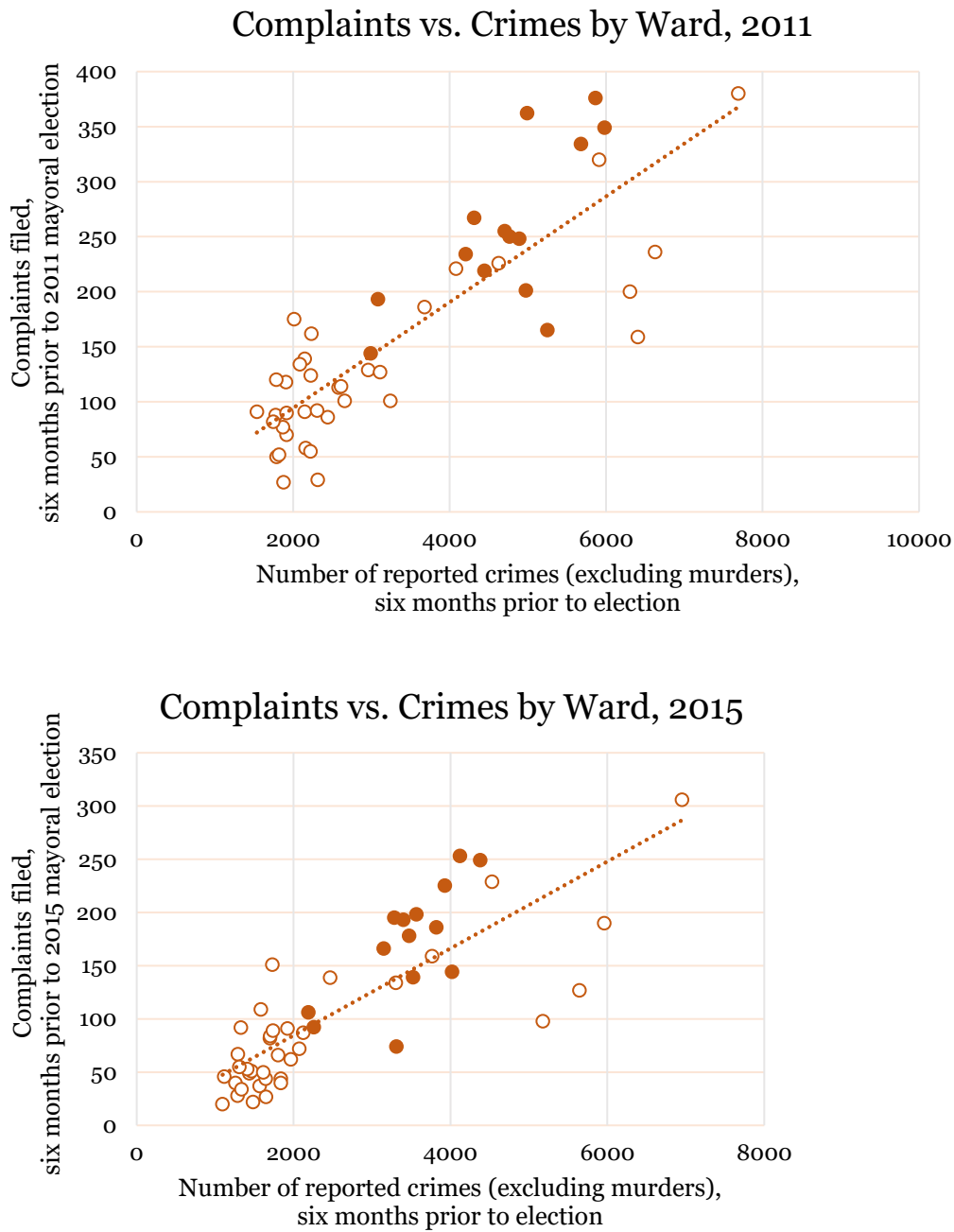


Figure 4: Measuring the relationship between reported crime and complaints filed in each ward before the 2011 and 2015 mayoral elections. Solid-colored dots represent majority-black wards on the South Side. The regression on the next page showed that, on average, for every twenty-five crimes committed in a ward during this time period, the people in that ward filed one more complaint against the CPD.

Coefficients:	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t)
(Intercept)	-1.754526	17.050026	-0.103	0.918
crimes2011	0.048060	0.004454	10.792	1.97e-14

Residual standard error: 51.79 on 48 degrees of freedom

Multiple R-squared: 0.7081, **Adjusted R-squared:** 0.7021

F-statistic: 116.5 on 1 and 48 DF, **p-value:** 1.972e-14

Coefficients:	Estimate	Std. Error	t value	Pr(> t)
(Intercept)	2.900099	12.489795	0.232	0.817
crimes2015	0.040817	0.004215	9.684	7.17e-13

Residual standard error: 41.81 on 48 degrees of freedom

Multiple R-squared: 0.6614, **Adjusted R-squared:** 0.6544

F-statistic: 93.78 on 1 and 48 DF, **p-value:** 7.171e-13