Patrolling the Police: Experimental Evidence on Police Executives' Support for Oversight

Ian T. Adams* Joshua McCrain† Daniel S. Schiff‡
Kaylyn Jackson Schiff‡ Scott M. Mourtgos†

August 24, 2023

Word count: 9,851

Abstract

The accountability of police to the public is imperative for a functioning democracy. The opinions of police executives—pivotal actors for implementing oversight policies—are an understudied, critical component of successful reform efforts. We use a pre-registered survey experiment administered to all U.S. municipal police chiefs and county sheriffs to assess whether police executives' attitudes towards civilian oversight regimes are responsive to 1) state-level public opinion (drawing on an original n=16,840 survey) and 2) prior adoption of civilian review boards in large agencies. Results from over 1,300 police executives reveal that law enforcement leaders are responsive to peer adoption but much less to public opinion, despite overwhelming public support. Elected sheriffs are less likely to support any civilian oversight. Our findings hold implications for reformers: We find that existing civilian oversight regimes are largely popular, and that it is possible to move police executive opinion towards support for civilian oversight.

Keywords: democratic policing, civilian review boards, police reform, police executives, chiefs and sheriffs

*Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, USA
†Department of Political Science, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT, USA
‡Department of Political Science, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, USA

There is a legitimacy crisis in law enforcement today, resulting partly from highly-publicized use of force incidents and arguably inadequate institutional responses to them (McLean and Nix, 2021). In response, attention has turned to identifying reforms and oversight institutions that might shed light on and ultimately reduce police officers' use of force and potential misconduct. While these renewed calls for oversight highlight a particular policy goal, the importance of police accountability to democratic principals is not a new concept. For the principal-agent relationship between the public and domestic security forces to function (Brehm and Gates, 1999), there must be meaningful oversight mechanisms. Yet the extent to which law enforcement agencies are effectively subject to public control or responsive to public input remains an important open question.

As street-level bureaucrats in a federalist system, police are agents to multiple principals, including citizens along with local, state, and federal officials (Lipsky, 1980). In most of the United States, monitoring of police has almost exclusively occurred through "fire alarm" oversight, in part due to substantial informational asymmetries between police and their principals. This (nearly exclusively) ex-post oversight manifests when instances of police misconduct rise to the level of, for instance, gaining media attention. This is in contrast to "police patrol" oversight, a more regularized form of information sharing and interaction ironically rarely witnessed between police and their principals (McCubbins and Schwartz, 1984). We argue that establishing this type of oversight faces a difficult challenge when applied to police: It must simultaneously operate effectively under the multi-layered federalist hierarchy of government while also granting enough independence and discretion to garner buy-in from police leadership (Cook and Fortunato, 2022).

This paper implements the largest experiment to date of policing executives—police chiefs and sheriffs, collectively serving more than 44 million Americans—to understand what, if anything, can induce these pivotal actors to support democratic oversight regimes. We specifically focus on civilian review boards (CRBs), an established oversight mechanism that allows civilians to investigate, and in some cases impose discipline upon, officers and

agencies. Reformers have argued that CRBs are necessary to promote fair and transparent investigations, ensure accessible complaint processes, improve public trust and perceptions of procedural justice, and ultimately deter police misconduct through public accountability (De Angelis, Rosenthal and Buchner, 2016*a*; Ferdik, Rojek and Alpert, 2013; Worden, Bonner and McLean, 2018).

While various actors (e.g., unions, municipal and state government leaders) may influence reform efforts, it is police executives who arguably play the most critical role in determining whether a CRB will be established or discouraged in a given community: Their decisions set the priorities, culture, and behavior of their agency and the employees within (Ingram et al., 2022). Indeed, twentieth-century police reforms have been most successful when spearheaded by cohorts of police executives rather than by Progressive-era reformers (Uchida, 2020).[1] Baseline preferences amongst police executives thus present significant obstacles to CRB adoption; however, these barriers may not be insurmountable and overcoming them may be necessary.

Our pre-registered experiment uses two realistic sources of information that police executives might use to form opinions on CRBs. In one arm, we provide respondents with state-level public opinion estimates of support for civilian oversight (from an original $n = 16,840$ survey commissioned for this purpose); in the other, we inform respondents that major police agencies have in fact already established CRBs. We find that police executives' opinions are movable on the topic of civilian oversight. While the public opinion treatment does little to move respondents' support, information about peer agency adoption of CRBs as an oversight mechanism has a significant impact on police executives' opinions. We also find two important sources of heterogeneity. First, sheriffs are the least responsive to all treatments, especially public opinion information. Second, agencies with currently-functioning CRBs

[1]Historically and notably, unions have been more skeptical of CRBs than police executives. Consequently, efforts to invite civilian review of departmental policy and outcomes have largely been enabled (ultimately) by chiefs and sheriffs (Juris and Feuille, 1974; Walker, 2000).

report an increased willingness to expand the scope of their CRB's oversight powers.

A contribution of this paper is that we devote attention to the significantly under-studied concept of policy learning in the context of policing—that is, how police executives learn about and evaluate possible policing policy reforms. Police executives' knowledge of and willingness to implement oversight reforms is important because for oversight institutions to be effective, they must first be established. While the effectiveness of CRBs is an open empirical question, there are strong *a priori* reasons to think that local oversight regimes are net improvements over the status quo, especially given the complicated federalist structure that currently (and largely ineffectively) monitors most local police. CRBs function as institutions that are arguably closer to these street-level bureaucrats than any others. They are knowledgeable about the communities in which police operate and about idiosyncrasies of their local environment. Notably, CRBs can both "patrol" police behavior through regularized oversight as well as sound the "alarm" on misconduct or agency loss when more stringent state intervention is needed, modifying behavior through heightened scrutiny (McCubbins and Schwartz, 1984). We believe our experimental findings suggest a productive avenue for citizens, reformers, and scholars interested in studying and strengthening the democratic accountability of police.

Institutional Background of Police Oversight

As public officials, police executives—whether elected directly or appointed by an elected politician—have a responsibility to incorporate public input and public needs in their decision-making (Maguire, 2003). This principal-agent relationship between the public and police is not dissimilar from other principal-agent relationships in bureaucratic governance (Brehm and Gates, 1999; Soss and Weaver, 2017). Arguably, however, agency loss in policing—when police act contrary to the wishes of the public—has worse ramifications for public welfare than such agency loss in other institutional settings. If the public begins to view the police

as independent from oversight, there are worrying implications for whether the public continues to support the institution (Davis et al., 2018) or sees undemocratic alternatives as increasingly legitimate Foa and Mounk (2016).

However, police executives serve as agents to a variety of other principals as well, including local government officials such as mayors and city managers, unions, and professional organizations. The criminology literature understands this problem as one in which police executives act as "intermediaries" (Maguire, 2003) between their agency and a variety of actors, including serving a set of "sovereigns" (Matusiak, 2016) who may each maintain distinct policy agendas. When police executives make determinations about reform, they are thus responsible for weighing considerations such as pressures from political elites, policy advocates, peers, and the public (Matusiak, King and Maguire, 2017); evidence of policy effectiveness (Telep and Winegar, 2016); bargaining with police unions (Rad, Kirk and Jones, 2023); and technical feasibility and financial constraints. This produces a complex institutional environment in which police executives make decisions and determine policy, one that is understudied in the political science context despite the applicability of conventional theories that can regard police as government actors (Soss and Weaver, 2017).

Despite nearly thirty years of scholarly complaints that "Not much is known about police chiefs" (p. 3) (Hunt and Magenau, 1993)[2], research on policing executives lags far behind research on line officers and supervisors (Matusiak, 2016). That is, while scholars have produced evidence that police executives' policy beliefs are shaped by their political ideology and social attitudes (Farris and Holman, 2017, 2015) and also generally shift in response to changes in the institutional environment (Matusiak, King and Maguire, 2017), little is known about how police executives learn from or are accountable to different principals and institutional arrangements. These principals and institutional arrangements provide competing pressures on police executives when they make choices in contested policy contexts

[2]Bittner (1990) famously claimed police were the "best known and least understood" (p. 285) of governmental institutions, and this remains even more true for those at the elite levels of the institution.

(Matusiak, 2016). Exploring police executives' responsiveness to these competing influences (Bennett and Howlett, 1992; Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996) is necessary for understanding police accountability and how policy learning, transfer, and diffusion of policy innovations, such as those surrounding CRBs or other oversight mechanisms, occur in the context of policing.

Moreover, a growing literature examines the consequences of the current equilibrium under which agency loss in policing can produce sub-optimal outcomes for citizens and communities. Taking advantage of the lack of transparency existing oversight regimes offer, policing institutions have exaggerated crime clearance rates (Yeung et al., 2018), gained leverage in public budgeting outcomes (Coe and Wiesel, 2001), and represented crime metrics in favorable and sometimes misleading ways (Eckhouse, 2022). Cook and Fortunato (2022) have recently shown that institutional variation in the capacity of the state legislators, an important principal when it comes to police oversight,[3] leads to variation in the response to official data requests and in the accuracy of reported data on killings by police officers. It is possible to think of these excesses as rents extracted from state and local government (Anzia and Moe, 2015), a consequence of lack of meaningful and regular "police patrol" oversight (McCubbins and Schwartz, 1984) of policing institutions themselves. While such a form of monitoring may not be a panacea to these problems, CRBs are arguably especially well positioned for regularized oversight. A further potential benefit is that more patrol-style oversight of police through CRBs might also trigger more frequent fire alarms through alerting higher-up principals of shirkage, particularly when more extreme state-level intervention is needed. Through these interrelated oversight strategies then, states and public principals (i.e., CRBs) may be able to change the incentive structure of their police agents even in difficult-to-monitor relationships, altering behavior in the public interest.

[3]For example, states are responsible for certifying officers, setting the minimum standards to retain the certification, and decertifying officers upon findings of significant misconduct. More fundamentally, states extend the power to manage policing to localities and are ultimately the primary source of policing power within their borders.

Civilian Oversight of Policing

In line with core principles of democratic policing, such as accountability and transparency (Bonner, 2020; Hope, 2021), one commonly-proposed reform is the creation of more civilian review boards (CRBs) to enhance civilian oversight of law enforcement activities (De Angelis, Rosenthal and Buchner, 2016*a*; Prenzler and Ronken, 2001; Fairley, 2020). Importantly, CRBs are "based on the premise that although the public has relinquished to the police the authority to enforce the law, the public retains the right to control the police bureaucracy externally, if the need arises" (Terrill, 1988, (p. 199)). A central motivation for the adoption of CRBs is a concern that police-led investigations into misconduct complaints are neither fair nor effective, whether in fact or in the eye of the public (Savage, 2013). However, the dominant view within law enforcement is that police-led investigations are sufficient.

Civilian oversight through CRBs may operate as either police patrols, fire alarms, or both. The 'patrolling' mode includes more routine activities of CRBs found across various models, such as reviewing external complaints, recommending discipline for offending officers, and advising the chief or sheriff on policy matters. These are the traditional, and notably limited, powers considered by those implementing CRBs. Another arguably undertheorized role of the CRB is that of raising alarms, specifically to bring state and federal attention to the locality. The fractured, federalist nature of US policing means that its 18,000 agencies operate through a dispensation of state power. The fragmentation and sheer number of agencies means that police misconduct may remain relatively unknown outside a locality for many decades before effective external oversight can be instilled (Winston and BondGraham, 2023). Along these lines, a fire alarm role for CRBs involves heightening the visibility of police excesses and shirkages, with the goal of convincing a strong external actor to impose control (or to continue control) over the local police department.

This function may extend even beyond state oversight to federal-level scrutiny. In the case of Oakland PD, for example, civilian oversight has been a relatively permanent feature of a city working under a federal consent decree since 2003 (Choi, 2022). Buttressed

by civilian oversight, external investigations had proved successful in challenging internal administration decisions at Oakland PD, eventually leading to the recent dismissal of the police chief (BondGraham, 2023) and public admonition by the oversight monitor. After the monitor indicated that federal oversight of the agency was set to end in 2023 (Choi, 2022), one attorney directly linked civilian and federal oversight, offering enhanced civilian review in the form of a commission as a proxy: "If the federal oversight is going to end, [we need] a really robust police commission with the power to subpoena and the power to investigate" (Hanson, 2022, para. 20). CRBs may thus fulfill the role of signaling to external monitors when stringent reform measures are needed, as well as determining whether those reforms are working (Duara, 2022).

Despite the ostensible benefits and frequent public calls for the establishment of CRBs, uptake in law enforcement has been slow and scattered, confined to only the largest agencies (Fairley, 2020; Finn, 2001; Vitoroulis, McEllhiney and Perez, 2021; Walker and Bumphus, 1992). Among approximately 18,000 policing agencies in the United States, there are currently fewer than 200 with active CRBs (Vitoroulis, McEllhiney and Perez, 2021), heavily concentrated amongst the largest metropolitan police agencies (Fairley, 2020). Notably, this lackluster adoption cannot be attributed to the novelty of the proposal, as calls for CRBs significantly predate the current reform efforts by over 70 years. Indeed, the first civilian-led police oversight body in the U.S. was established in 1948[4] to oversee the Metropolitan Police in Washington, D.C. (Walker, 2000), and calls for CRB-style bodies have been echoed every decade since (Terrill, 1988; Walker and Bumphus, 1992). In light of this sizable history of calls for reform, there is a striking mismatch between demand for reform and the supply of CRBs.

Notably, while resistance to CRBs from police executives stretches back to the earliest reform proposals (Times, 1964), professional organizations for executives such as the Inter-

[4]Some authors take an expanded definition of civilian review, and put the earliest iterations as far back as 1861 in St. Louis, MO, and 1865 in Milwaukee, WI (Fairley, 2020).

national Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) have softened their opposition. Evolution in the preferences of police executives in particular has also occurred in recent years in the case of body-worn cameras, another popular oversight mechanism (Smykla et al., 2016; Nix, Todak and Tregle, 2020). Thus, while scholars have suggested that chiefs and sheriffs might be initially opposed to CRBs due to concerns over power-sharing and the risk that external oversight could impede effective management (Chanin and Espinosa, 2016), these attitudes may similarly be movable. Below, we consider two potential pathways through which police executives' attitudes may be moved: public opinion and peer practices within professional networks.

Democratic Accountability and Responsiveness to the Public

Decades of research indicate that the attitudes and behaviors of elites in the criminal justice system generally are responsive to public opinion, and that public opinion is a determinant of key outcomes such as the incarceration rate, sentencing in criminal trials, capital punishment, and expenditures (Enns, 2014; Pickett, 2019). For example, research has linked changes in elected judges' behavior to public views as retention elections draw closer (Aspin and Hall, 1993), and shown that judges and prosecutors are sensitive to public preferences when making decisions in death penalty cases (Canes-Wrone, Clark and Kelly, 2014; Baumgartner, Boef and Boydstun, 2008). Thus, there are both theoretical and normative reasons to expect police executives, especially those who are elected, to make decisions or develop policy preferences in line with public opinion. We therefore hypothesize that:

Public Influence Hypothesis: *When exposed to information on public support for CRBs, law enforcement leaders will be more supportive of CRBs.*

Still further factors might affect the role and salience of public opinion for police chiefs and sheriffs (Tregle, Nix and Pickett, 2022), for example, whether the nature of their selection (appointed or elected), their partisanship, or agency size condition their attention to public concern leading to reduced agency loss (Farris and Holman, 2017; Thompson, 2020*a*). We

therefore examine how these characteristics impact responsiveness.

Professional Incentives and Influence

Even when public opinion matters, we do not know how it might be weighed in comparison to other sources of influence for police executives. Another such key influence is elite-level peer influence, namely socially-oriented policy learning that occurs through participation in professional networks and epistemic communities, known to function as a powerful conduit for policy learning generally (Shjarback, 2022; Rose, 1991). While peer influence is known to have a significant effect on line officers (Quispe-Torreblanca and Stewart, 2019; Ouellet, Hashimi and Vega Yon, 2022), less is known about how (or whether) that influence operates at the executive level.

Relatedly, police executives typically belong to strong and active professional organizations including the Major Cities Chiefs Association (MCCA), which collects and distributes information for police executives, such as how many of the largest policing agencies have adopted specific policies (Stephens, Scrivner and Cambareri, 2018). Evidence indicates that professional networks marked by high levels of interpersonal trust, hierarchy, and homogeneity may foster heightened policy learning (Benz and Fürst, 2002; Lee and van de Meene, 2012). These features may accurately characterize policing networks, deriving from the nature of the profession itself. That is, in addition to the reliance on hierarchy in policing, shared experiences of external scrutiny and job difficulties foster high levels of in-group trust and homophily (Waddington, 1999). Diffusion of practices through networks is well-documented in policing, as evidenced by the spread of crime mapping techniques (Chamard, 2003), professional accreditation (Doerner and Doerner, 2009), and the use of body-worn cameras (Young and Ready, 2015; Nix, Todak and Tregle, 2020). Thus, attitudes toward CRBs may be shaped as police executives in these networks learn from early adopters or imitate police agencies in larger cities, mechanisms known to matter for government entities such as transportation and health care agencies (Shipan and Volden, 2014). This leads to

our second hypothesis:

Elite Diffusion Hypothesis: *When exposed to information indicating that CRBs have diffused in elite peer institutions, police executives will be more supportive of CRBs.*

Experimental Design

To examine the impact of these potential public and peer influences on police executive preferences for CRBs, we conducted a pre-registered experiment embedded in a survey distributed to 13,287 U.S. police chiefs and sheriffs via email between February 1 and March 7, 2022. 1,331 individuals completed the survey (a 9.98% response rate), and respondents are representative of the broader population of chiefs and sheriffs in the United States, and also representative of chiefs and sheriffs who did not take our survey (Appendix Tables A3 and A2). As part of the experimental design, we provided respondents with current evidence regarding either state-level public attitudes or peer adoption of CRBs in major policing agencies. To provide state-level public opinion data, we partnered with a national polling firm to survey 16,840 individuals about their support for CRBs both with and without independent disciplinary power, an essential distinction in the scope of CRB powers (De Angelis, Rosenthal and Buchner, 2016*b*; Prenzler and Ronken, 2001). To provide data on peer adoption, we drew on information curated by the MCCA.

We randomly assigned police executives to a control condition or one of three informational treatments: 1) state-specific public support for CRBs *without* disciplinary power, 2) state-specific public support for CRBs *with* disciplinary power (e.g., firing officers), and 3) MCCA information about peer adoption of CRBs.[5]

We measure impacts on general feelings toward CRBs, willingness to adopt CRBs, and preferences regarding appropriate powers for CRBs. As agency size is a proxy for the juris-

[5]Given that our peer treatment merely shares whether peers have adopted CRBs—not the success or outcomes of that adoption—the mechanism is arguably closer to policy imitation rather than more robust policy learning.

dictional context, including factors such as the population, density, political environment, crime concerns, and union participation, we include agency size as a covariate in our models to increase precision.[6] Moreover, we also explore whether support for CRBs is conditioned on other factors such as police executive position (chief versus sheriff), prior implementation and experience with a CRB, and partisanship. Through comparison to a control group, experimentally providing respondents with accurate and up-to-date public and peer information allows us to investigate how police chiefs and sheriffs engage in policy learning regarding this critical question of civilian oversight.[7]

Sample and Representativeness

Our data come from an experiment embedded in a survey distributed to 13,287 U.S. police chiefs and sheriffs via email between February 1 and March 7, 2022.[8] Our sampling frame was drawn from a database containing the individual contact details of law enforcement leaders in the U.S. across all levels of government. We created a subset of that larger dataset to include only municipal police chiefs and sheriffs with agencies larger than one officer and with a listed email address. In total, 1,331 respondents completed the survey, providing a 9.98% response rate. The appendix includes additional information on power (Appendix Section A.1.5), as well as ethical considerations (Appendix Section A.1.6), for our study that

[6]Additional details about our sample, treatments, outcomes, national polling on CRBs, and analysis strategy are provided in the appendix. Details about each pre-registered hypothesis are also included in the appendix.

[7]As we discussed in the institutional background section, state-level public opinion is also important because state policymakers exercise substantial authority over local police and sheriffs. We discuss other potential methods for providing relevant public opinion estimates, and the robustness of our results to those methods, in Appendix Section A.3.

[8]The survey was fielded using Qualtrics for approximately five weeks, with three reminder emails sent after the original recruitment email.

was approved by multiple Institutional Review Boards.[9]

While police agencies take on many varied forms, they are led by a fairly homogeneous group. Among the surveyed sample, the average police executive is a white, male chief with 30 years of total law enforcement experience and has held his current position for just over seven years. This average respondent is likely to have at least a bachelor's (33%) or master's degree (30%) and oversees an agency with fewer than 25 sworn officers (56%). Descriptive statistics for the sample are reported in Appendix Table A1, where we also further discuss the sample's representativeness. As the sample was randomly assigned to different treatment conditions, we report balance across the treatment groups for key covariates of interest in Appendix Tables A4 and A5.

In Table 1 we report the sample descriptive statistics for our sample. We compare our sample description against select other nationally representative data, such as that from the Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) survey (Hyland and Davis, 2019), and the Police Executive Research Council (PERF) (PERF, 2022). In addition, we provide sample information from other recent survey research on the police executive population (Matusiak, King and Maguire, 2017; Nix, 2015; Seo, Kim and Kruis, 2021). We also include a working paper (Ba et al., 2022) that examines the demographic description of approximately 220,000 police officers from the 100 largest US agencies. While the latter study does not directly look at police executives, it is helpful in that it provides an estimate of the population of *non-executive* officers to contrast with our sample of policing executives.

Note that our sample and reporting are robust enough to serve as the benchmark for future research on policing executives. For example, many national surveys are restricted to data on members (as in the case of PERF), or only look at municipal policing (as in the case of LEMAS). The closest in terms of design comes from a dissertation (Nix, 2015), but in

[9]The pre-registration can be found here: [link removed for anonymity; included as supplemental material in this submission]. This document also discusses the survey procedure, which included an opt-in consent form. Participants were told this was for research purposes and no deception was used in the survey.

that survey, respondents include non-chiefs and non-sheriffs (construing "police executive" more broadly than we do here). In terms of understanding the demographic description of chiefs and sheriffs in the US, we believe our sample is the most robust available to date. We are able to report on partisan identification, for example, which other researchers have suggested should be associated with key behavioral outcomes of interest (Ba et al., 2022).

We also investigate the representiveness of our sample of policing executives that responded to our survey compared to the executives that did not respond. We find that for both chiefs and sheriffs, responding and non-responding agencies appear similar in terms of their community characteristics, such as population, racial composition, education, employment, income, and 2020 vote shares (see Appendix Tables A2 and A3). We also report the results of a linear model used to predict agency response (Appendix Table A4). The model suggests some differential response, with more populous agencies slightly more likely to respond, and municipal departments slightly more likely to respond compared to sheriff's departments, but overall the difference in predicted probability of response is small.

Public Support Estimates from a National Poll

From August 25 to October 11, 2021, we worked with the polling firm Data for Progress to conduct a national survey of over 16,840 US adults and polled them on their support for CRBs.[13] Within the survey, we asked two questions. First, we asked about support for establishing CRBs with the "power to independently investigate police officers accused of inappropriate use of force or other misconduct."[14] We found that, on average, 68% of the public support, and 24% oppose, creation of a CRB with these powers. In the second

[13]Section A.1.1 in the Appendix includes more detail about this sample.

[14]For a concrete example of such a policy, the St. Louis PD Civilian Oversight Board's policy states its responsibilities include the right to: "Investigate, analyze, solicit input and make recommendations to the Board and the SLMPD related to issues or complaints affecting the community." See for more information: `https://www.stlouis-mo.gov/government/departments/public-safety/civilian-oversight/civilian-oversight-board/about.cfm`

Table 1: Comparison of Samples of Chiefs and Sheriffs

		Current Study (NDLEA Chiefs)	Current Study (NDLEA Sheriffs)	Current Study (NDLEA Combined)	Ba et al., 2022 (Largest 100 Police)	Nix 2015 (NDLEA combined)	LEMAS 2016 (Chiefs)	Matusiak, 2017 (TX Chiefs)	PERF 2021 (Chiefs)	Tregle et al., 2020 (NDLEA Chiefs)	Nix et al., 2020 (NDLEA Command)[10]	Seo et al. 2021 (PA Chiefs)
	Female %	4.26	4.35	4.28	16.8	5.8	2.9	3.3	9.3	3.7	–	1.6
	Tenure (Years)	6.84	8.77	7.2	–	–	–	–	4.8	–	–	9
	Experience (Years)	29.35	30.81	29.62	–	27	–	26	29.2	30	–	30
Race	White %	87.98	91.13	88.56	56	94.2	89.6	79	73.4	87.1	–	98.9
	Black %	3.86	5.42	4.14	16	–	4	–	14.3	3.3	1.3	0.5
	Hispanic %	3.42	2.46	3.24	21	–	3.1	–	6.4	3.1	1.8	0.5
	Asian/Pacific Islander	0.88	0	0.72	4.9	–	–	–	1.5	0.83	–	–
	Other %	3.86	0.99	3.33	–	–	2.4	–	4.4	1.6	–	–
Education	PhD/JD %	3.87	2.94	3.7	–	–	–	–	5.5	0.42	–	–
	Masters %	33.3	14.71	29.87	–	–	–	–	72.3	40.96	26.7	37.4
	Bachelors %	32.96	30.88	32.58	–	–	–	–	20.1	30.98	–	33.2
	Associate %	18.14	29.9	20.31	–	–	–	–	–	8.94	–	19.5
	High School %	11.73	21.57	13.54	–	–	–	42.6[11]	–	12.68	–	10
Age (years)		–	–	–	44	–	–	–	–	–	–	56
Age (bucket) %	25-34	0.77	0.49	0.72	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
	35-44	10.47	8.25	10.06	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
	45-54	48.07	40.29	46.63	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
	55-64	33.3	37.38	34.05	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
	65-74	7.17	12.62	8.18	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
	75+	0.22	0.97	0.36	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
Partisan ID	Republican %	58.2	71.07	60.56	37	–	–	–	–	–	53.9[12]	–
	Democrat %	9.45	16.24	10.7	36	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
	Independent %	32.35	12.69	28.74	0.31	–	–	–	–	–	–	–
	n	1040	243	1331	218,041	643	2135	912	347	675		190

[10] Nix et al. (2020) Approximately 27 percent of respondents were not the chief of their department, but over 80% of non-chiefs were command level (lieutenant and above).

[11] Matusiak 2017 - education calculated from in-text statement that 57% of respondents had an associates degree or higher.

[12] Nix et al. (2020) Reported "Trump voter" which we include here as Republican partisan ID.

question, we ask about support for adding additional disciplinary power to the CRB: "with the power to independently investigate and discipline (such as firing) officers." Figure 1 displays the state-level public support rates for CRBs without disciplinary power provided to respondents in the associated treatment group. Figure 2 displays the state-level public support rates for CRBs *with* disciplinary power provided to respondents in the associated treatment group.

The addition of disciplinary powers caused a drop in overall expressed support, with 60% supporting, and 32% opposing, the formation of CRBs with independent powers to both investigate officers and impose discipline. With a large number of respondents across the United States, we constructed pooled state-level estimates of public support and opposition to CRBs.[15]

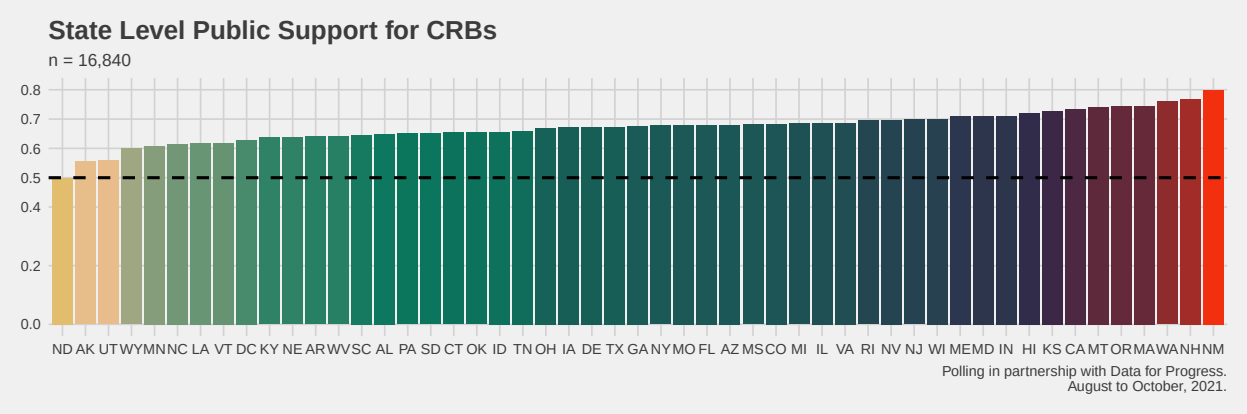


Figure 1: State-level Support for CRBs

State versus Local Opinion Estimates

Another set of questions surrounds how our survey participants—chiefs and sheriffs—interpret the treatments of public support and peer adoption, informing how researchers should interpret our study design and results in turn. Notably, the public support treatments are both provided at the state level, while police executives operate within smaller jurisdictions at the county and municipal levels. This raises the question of to what extent police executives view

[15]See Appendix Section A.3 for a discussion of other options for measuring relevant public opinion.

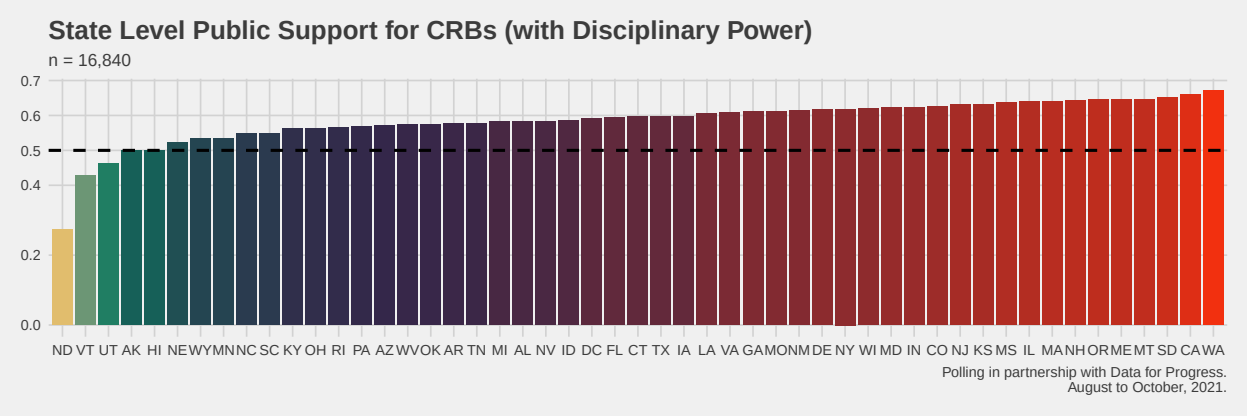


Figure 2: State-level Support for CRBs with Disciplinary Power

state-level public opinion as a relevant or appropriate proxy for the kind of public opinion that could conceivably matter to them.[16] Yet chiefs and sheriffs are unlikely to have access to quality public opinion polling for their jurisdictions generally, let alone on specific policy options they may be weighing. We provide accurate state-level public opinion in regard to CRBs. We believe the related treatments form a conservative lower-bound for the impact of public opinion on shifts in policing executives' policy beliefs. In other words, if we had local opinion data, it is likely it would have a stronger impact on local officials.

Further, there is some reason to believe that state-level estimates may be *more* appropriate than local ones in the context of US policing. This is because police powers are derived at the state level, and evaluations must therefore account for state-level differences (Stoughton, Noble and Alpert, 2021). The chiefs and sheriffs in our sample all maintain their legitimate police power through their respective states, interact in state-level professional organizations, enforce state laws passed by state legislatures, and so on.

From a methodological perspective, it would have been impossible to create reliable local-level estimates for most of the sample. While new survey weighting techniques, such

[16]For example, one possibility is that police executives dynamically adjust the expected baseline of public support for their jurisdiction (e.g., correcting for their perception that their jurisdiction is more conservative or liberal than the state broadly), before updating on the public support information. While this possibility is intriguing, we expect it is less likely and leave this question for future research.

as multilevel regression with post-stratification (MrP Caughey and Warshaw, 2019), enable fairly precise measures of subnational public opinion, these are usually confined to congressional districts or large counties – and even then, this technique usually aggregates over years of available survey data.

We also consider the robustness of our results to alternative measures of public opinion. Appendix Section A.3 demonstrates similarities between the state estimates and local MrP estimates and we report in Appendix Table A15 that higher levels of public support do not seem to produce significantly different effects. That is, we do not expect that public support is greater than police executive support in some jurisdictions, while the reverse is true in others, complicating the interpretation of how police executives update. Buttressing this understanding, at least 50% of members of the public are in support of CRBs with investigatory powers across all states. While the public support measure for CRBs with disciplinary powers admits to some more variation, given the low levels of baseline support for CRBs amongst police executives, we expect our public support treatments to serve as consistently positive signals compared to baseline attitudes.

We think the story of how police executives respond to public opinion is thus generally simple overall, in that they are broadly (un)responsive to a unidirectional positive signal of public support. For the reasons stated above then, we are confident in our decision to seek out and build state-level public opinion estimates in every state in the US, and use them as informational treatments.

Informational Treatments

Our survey experiment randomly assigned participants to either a control condition or one of three treatment conditions. Respondents assigned to the control condition received no information about public support for, or peer adoption of, CRBs. Responses from the control group thus represent baseline preferences for CRBs among chiefs and sheriffs. One treatment condition, which we call "Public Support CRB", provides respondent with accurate, state-

specific public support and opposition data, drawn from our national survey described earlier. Prior to responding to any of the outcome questions, respondents assigned to this condition were provided with the informational vignette below, with the relevant bracketed information representing a coded field that automatically populated the relevant state-level data:

> "Civilian review boards (CRBs) can take many potential forms, with varying powers. In late 2021, we conducted a survey of 16,840 Americans on their support for various forms of CRBs. In your state, [STATE CODE], we found that [CRB SUPPORT PERCENT] of residents support, and [CRB OPPOSE PERCENT] oppose, the formation of a CRB with the power to independently investigate, but not impose discipline (such as firing), in cases where police officers are accused of inappropriate use of force or other misconduct."

In the next treatment condition, which we call "Public Support CRB + Firing", we provide similar public opinion information, but for CRBs with additional disciplinary powers. We include this condition because independent powers of discipline are often considered the most threatening to police executives, in terms of their own perceptions of appropriate power sharing and ability to manage their agencies. Moreover, CRBs with disciplinary power also represent a distinct, although less frequent, type of CRB structure (De Angelis, Rosenthal and Buchner, 2016*b*; Fairley, 2020). The informational vignette for this condition mirrors that of the previous treatment condition, replacing the phrase "but not impose discipline" with "and impose discipline (such as firing)."

Finally, the last treatment condition, which we call "Peer CRB Adoption", tests the impact of information about elite peer practices. We provide respondents with information regarding how CRBs have diffused throughout other policing agencies, using data collected from the Major Cities Chiefs Association (MCCA) by the Community Oriented Policing program (COPS) at the Department of Justice (DOJ). The MCCA, COPS, and DOJ are all well-regarded professional organizations that collect and distribute peer-level information to police executives, such as how many of the largest policing agencies have adopted certain

policies. The informational vignette for this condition is similar to the Public Support CRB condition in that it references CRBs *without* the independent power to discipline. The informational vignette for this condition reads:

> "Civilian review boards (CRBs) can take many potential forms, with varying powers. The Community Oriented Policing Services (DOJ) recently surveyed members of the Major Cities Chiefs Association. They found that over 60% of U.S. law enforcement agencies surveyed have CRBs with the power to independently investigate complaints, but not impose discipline (such as firing), on officers."

Outcome Measures

We use three outcome measures to identify three dimensions of police executive support for CRBS: generalized feelings, support for implementation, and powers deemed appropriate. To measure generalized feelings, we asked respondents, "In general, what is your feeling towards civilian review boards?" measured using a five-point Likert scale from "Extremely negative" to "Extremely positive." While police executives' general perceptions of CRBs are valuable, chiefs and sheriffs sometimes implement policies that run against their personal preferences. To measure support for implementation, we asked respondents about their willingness to establish a CRB in their own agency: "Would you support the creation of a CRB for your agency?"

The creation of a CRB inherently demands power sharing. The contours of which powers are shared, and how they are shared, define the relationship between the police executive and the CRB. Our third outcome measure explores police executives' preferences regarding that power-sharing relationship. The outcome question asks respondents to advise a hypothetical peer police executive: "Imagine you have been contacted by the chief or sheriff of a neighboring jurisdiction currently establishing a CRB. They are seeking advice. In providing advice, which of the following (if any) do you think are appropriate powers for the CRB?

(Select as many or as few as you believe apply)."

Respondents selected as many or as few powers as they deemed appropriate from the following list: Conduct independent investigations of complaints, Subpoena witnesses, Subpoena records, Recommend disciplinary actions, Impose disciplinary actions, Review disciplinary actions, Hear citizen appeals, Hear officer appeals, or None of these powers are appropriate. This outcome measure allows us to conduct two distinct types of analysis. First, we identify treatment effects on support for granting CRBs each *individual* power, based on the idea that different powers present differing degrees of power-sharing concern. Second, we identify treatment effects on the *total* number of powers that participating chiefs and sheriffs were willing to grant CRBs.

Identification of Treatment Effects

We use the following general model specification to identify treatment effects of interest:

$$\begin{aligned} Outcome = \beta_0 + \beta_1 &Public\ Support\ CRB + \\ \beta_2 &Public\ Support\ CRB\ +\ Firing + \\ \beta_3 &Peer\ CRB\ Adoption + \gamma\mathbf{X} + \epsilon \end{aligned}$$

where *Public Support CRB*, *Public Support CRB + Firing*, and *Peer CRB Adoption* correspond to the three treatments providing public opinion data on support for CRBs with investigatory powers, public opinion data on support for CRBs with investigatory and disciplinary powers, and data on CRB implementation across MCCA agencies, respectively.[17] We identify treatment effects on the three outcome variables of interest described above, and $\mathbf{X}$ refers to the vector of covariates that we include, namely whether respondents are chiefs or sheriffs, whether respondents currently have a CRB for their agency, police executive

[17]For non-fully-specified models (i.e., models testing pooled conditions), the treatment indicator variables shown above are replaced with indicators for the corresponding pooled treatments.

partisanship, and police agency size.[18]

Results

Police Executive Responsiveness to Public Support and Peer Diffusion of CRBs

We find that police chiefs and sheriffs are highly responsive to information about peer adoption of CRBs but much less responsive to public support regarding CRBs. Table 2 reports the results of regressing standardized versions of our outcomes of interest—feelings toward CRBs, willingness to establish a CRB, and number of powers deemed appropriate for a CRB— on individual treatment indicators and covariates.[19] With standardized outcome measures, coefficients can be interpreted as standard deviation changes, and treatment effects can be more easily compared across outcomes. Across outcomes, we find that information about the diffusion of CRBs across peer law enforcement agencies—the Peer CRB Adoption treatment—increases police executives' feelings toward CRBs, willingness to establish a CRB, and support of more expansive CRB powers (such as the right to subpoena officers or review disciplinary actions). In particular, the Peer CRB Adoption treatment increased feelings toward CRBs by 0.18 standard deviations, perceptions of appropriate powers by a sizable 0.24 standard deviations, and willingness to establish a CRB by 0.16 standard deviations. These treatment effects are all statistically significant, except for the CRB establishment outcome. This suggests that police executives' opinions on CRBs can be meaningfully shaped by the

[18]For all models, the reference category represented by the intercept corresponds to chiefs without a current CRB in the control condition who are Democrats, new to their position, and serve an agency with fewer than 25 officers.

[19]We include in the appendix alternative modeling specifications, specifically results using non-standardized outcome measures, without covariates, and with only the pre-registered covariates. Results do not differ substantively from what is presented in Table 2.

practices of peers, even if such a change is driven by 'mere' policy imitation rather than more substantive policy learning.

As for the public support treatments, effects are much more modest. Information about public support in chiefs' and sheriffs' own states[20] for CRBs with merely investigatory and with disciplinary power—the Public CRB Support and Public CRB Support w/ Firing treatments—*does not increase police executives' feelings toward CRBs nor willingness to establish a CRB.*[21] However, public support does increase perceptions of appropriate CRB powers by 0.18 standard deviations (0.34 powers) and 0.30 standard deviations (0.56 powers) in the support and disciplinary treatments respectively. The fact that this signal of public support for particularly empowered ("disciplinary") CRBs substantially and significantly increased the number of powers that police chiefs and sheriffs deem appropriate for CRBs is striking. This suggests that, while perhaps unyielding in their general affect and overall support of CRBs, police chiefs and sheriffs may be movable on some policy dimensions, constituting some evidence of policy bargaining or moderation of preferences in line with public opinion. (The next section devotes attention to the question of *which* individual powers police executives supported at greater rates following treatment.)

Table 2 also reveals a few noteworthy associations between police executive characteristics and attitudes toward CRBs. Of interest, sheriffs are marginally less willing to establish a CRB and are significantly and substantially less supportive of ceding power to CRBs.

[20]We discuss alternative approaches to measuring local public support for CRBs in the appendix. Results indicate that presenting (potentially biased) local estimates of public support would not change the outcome of this treatment.

[21]With at least 50% of members of the public in support of CRBs with investigatory powers in all states, the Public CRB Support treatment serves as a consistent positive signal of public support for CRBs. The treatment is also consistently positive relative to police executives' low baseline support. Moreover, we find that higher levels of state-level public support do not produce significantly different responses from police executives, as presented in Appendix Table A7. As public support for CRBs with disciplinary power is more varied, the Public CRB Support w/ Firing treatment is not a ubiquitous positive signal. Nonetheless, we again find in Appendix Table A7 that higher levels of support do not produce significantly different effects.

Additionally, police executives in areas *with an existing CRB* are much more positive in their feelings toward CRBs—by nearly one standard deviation—and are more supportive of granting power to CRBs by about half a standard deviation. However, we caution that these results are not causal and may instead reflect underlying police executive characteristics associated with the establishment of the CRB in the first place. Finally, Republican executives hold consistently less positive and supportive attitudes toward CRBs.[22]

Individual Powers Deemed Appropriate for CRBs

Given the sizable increases in the number of powers that police executives deemed appropriate to grant to CRBs following treatment, we explored *which individual powers* experienced the greatest movement in support. Table 3 reports treatment effects on each proposed CRB power—powers to investigate complaints, subpoena witnesses, subpoena records, recommend discipline, impose discipline, review discipline, hear citizen appeals, and hear officer appeals.[23] The coefficients in the first nine columns of Table 3 can be interpreted as percentage point changes in support for the appropriateness of CRBs holding the associated power. The last column reports effects on the total number of powers deemed appropriate, corresponding to the last column of Table 2, although unstandardized here.

We find heterogeneous effects of the treatments on individual powers.[24] The Peer CRB Adoption treatment increased support for CRB powers to: investigate complaints (12 percentage points), hear citizen appeals (17 percentage points), and hear officer appeals (12 percentage points). Similarly, the Public CRB Support treatment increased support for

[22]We return to these characteristics in a subsequent section in which we discuss results for our pre-registered hypotheses regarding treatment heterogeneity.

[23]These powers included in our study design are based on the list of CRB powers identified and investigated in a study by the Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) within the U.S. Department of Justice (Stephens, Scrivner and Cambareri, 2018).

[24]Note that we did not pre-register hypotheses regarding the effects of our treatments on particular powers. Therefore, the results presented in this section should be considered exploratory.

Table 2: Effects of Informational Treatments on Police Executive Attitudes Toward CRBs

	Feeling	Establish	Approp. Powers
Treatment			
Public CRB Support	0.114	−0.043	0.181*
	(0.082)	(0.093)	(0.084)
Public CRB Support w/ Firing	−0.094	0.033	0.297***
	(0.082)	(0.093)	(0.084)
Peer CRB Adoption	0.181*	0.164+	0.240**
	(0.081)	(0.092)	(0.084)
Covariates			
Sheriff	−0.063	−0.193*	−0.253**
	(0.078)	(0.088)	(0.080)
Current CRB	0.960***		0.549***
	(0.083)		(0.086)
Independent	−0.448***	−0.117	−0.388***
	(0.104)	(0.120)	(0.107)
Republican	−0.433***	−0.282*	−0.419***
	(0.095)	(0.110)	(0.099)
FTE 25-49	−0.056	0.099	−0.210**
	(0.075)	(0.084)	(0.077)
FTE 50-99	−0.022	0.447***	−0.102
	(0.087)	(0.100)	(0.090)
FTE 100-499	−0.243*	0.490***	−0.257*
	(0.110)	(0.131)	(0.113)
FTE 500-999	0.238	1.053+	−0.195
	(0.338)	(0.574)	(0.349)
FTE 1000+	0.025	1.785***	0.035
	(0.360)	(0.495)	(0.371)
Years in Position	0.000	0.002	−0.001
	(0.005)	(0.006)	(0.005)
N	1071	905	1069
R2	0.15	0.06	0.09
R2 Adj.	0.136	0.052	0.077
F	13.984	5.136	7.817

Survey February 1 to March 7, 2022.

Reference categories: Chief; Democrat; Sworn Personnel < 25

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

CRBs to: investigate complaints (8 percentage points), hear citizen appeals (13 percentage points), and hear officer appeals (10 percentage points). Note that treatment effects are concentrated on the more modest exercises of power, i.e., involving investigating and hearing complaints.

However, results are more striking for the Public CRB Support with Firing treatment, which again emphasized public support for CRBs with investigatory *and* disciplinary power. While this treatment did not increase support for granting CRBs the power to impose or review discipline, it did significantly increase support for granting CRBs the power to *recommend* discipline (14 percentage points) and to subpoena witnesses (6 percentage points). Movement on these especially controversial powers may again constitute evidence of implicit policy bargaining wherein police chiefs and sheriffs update their policy preferences more forcefully when responding to especially *distant* public opinion.

Heterogeneity by Position, Current CRB Status, and Partisanship

Drawing on interactive model specifications, we ask whether additional characteristics of police executives and their agencies are associated with different responses to information about public support for and peer adoption of CRBs. We first hypothesized that sheriffs, who are almost all elected, would respond more strongly to information about public support for CRBs than appointed police chiefs. That is, we expected that the nature of sheriffs' selection and their resultant concerns regarding elections (Thompson, 2020*b*; Mughan, Li and Nicholson-Crotty, 2020; Farris and Holman, 2017) would lead them to update more strongly in favor of CRBs when presented with information about public support. We find no support for this hypothesis. As depicted in Figure 3a, police chiefs and sheriffs responded similarly to the informational treatments: neither public CRB support treatment produced differences in chiefs' and sheriffs' feelings toward CRBs, willingness to establish a CRB, and

Table 3: Impacts on Individual CRB Powers Deemed Appropriate

	Investigate Complaints	Subpoena Witnesses	Subpoena Records	Recommend Discipline	Impose Discipline	Review Discipline	Hear Citizen Appeals	Hear Officer Appeals	No Powers	Total Appropriate Powers
Public CRB Support	0.078*	0.019	0.011	0.010	0.003	-0.006	0.130**	0.095*	-0.074+	0.341*
	(0.036)	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.036)	(0.014)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.159)
Public CRB Support w/ Firing	0.091*	0.055*	0.038	0.142***	0.006	0.012	0.108*	0.107**	-0.078+	0.559***
	(0.036)	(0.025)	(0.026)	(0.036)	(0.014)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.159)
Peer CRB Adoption	0.122***	0.040	0.017	0.022	-0.019	-0.020	0.166***	0.123**	-0.109**	0.452**
	(0.036)	(0.025)	(0.025)	(0.036)	(0.014)	(0.042)	(0.042)	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.158)
Sheriff	-0.089**	-0.049*	-0.058*	-0.051	-0.005	-0.086*	-0.085*	-0.054	0.093*	-0.478**
	(0.034)	(0.024)	(0.024)	(0.034)	(0.013)	(0.040)	(0.040)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.151)
Current CRB	0.018	0.092***	0.095***	0.130***	0.104***	0.217***	0.137**	0.243***	-0.227***	1.035***
	(0.036)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.037)	(0.014)	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.161)
Independent	-0.140**	-0.095**	-0.076*	-0.149**	-0.031+	-0.056	-0.112*	-0.073	0.134**	-0.732***
	(0.046)	(0.032)	(0.033)	(0.046)	(0.018)	(0.054)	(0.054)	(0.052)	(0.052)	(0.202)
Republican	-0.096*	-0.112***	-0.087**	-0.172***	-0.041*	-0.089+	-0.099*	-0.094*	0.142**	-0.789***
	(0.042)	(0.029)	(0.030)	(0.042)	(0.016)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.186)
FTE 25-49	-0.084*	-0.051*	-0.044+	-0.052	-0.015	-0.021	-0.050	-0.079*	0.071+	-0.396**
	(0.033)	(0.023)	(0.023)	(0.033)	(0.013)	(0.039)	(0.039)	(0.037)	(0.037)	(0.145)
FTE 50-99	-0.080*	0.026	0.022	-0.058	-0.019	0.064	-0.045	-0.101*	-0.029	-0.192
	(0.038)	(0.027)	(0.027)	(0.039)	(0.015)	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.170)
FTE 100-499	-0.128**	-0.049	-0.049	-0.022	0.014	0.025	-0.144*	-0.132*	0.154**	-0.484*
	(0.048)	(0.034)	(0.034)	(0.049)	(0.019)	(0.057)	(0.057)	(0.054)	(0.054)	(0.213)
FTE 500-999	0.116	-0.023	-0.032	0.039	-0.101+	-0.030	-0.100	-0.237	-0.088	-0.368
	(0.149)	(0.104)	(0.106)	(0.150)	(0.058)	(0.175)	(0.175)	(0.168)	(0.168)	(0.657)
FTE 1000+	0.051	0.176	0.180	0.298+	-0.058	-0.420*	-0.010	-0.151	0.124	0.066
	(0.158)	(0.111)	(0.113)	(0.160)	(0.062)	(0.187)	(0.186)	(0.179)	(0.179)	(0.699)
Intercept	0.311***	0.153***	0.153***	0.355***	0.063**	0.470***	0.430***	0.370***	0.258***	2.305***
	(0.050)	(0.035)	(0.036)	(0.050)	(0.020)	(0.059)	(0.059)	(0.057)	(0.057)	(0.221)
N	1069	1069	1069	1069	1069	1069	1069	1069	1069	1069
R2	0.04	0.05	0.04	0.06	0.07	0.04	0.04	0.06	0.07	0.09
R2 Adj.	0.029	0.035	0.027	0.045	0.054	0.029	0.030	0.049	0.055	0.077
F	3.467	4.013	3.254	4.899	5.731	3.443	3.560	5.246	5.769	7.817

Survey February 1 to March 7, 2022.
Reference categories: Chief; No Current CRB; Democrat; Agency Size < 25
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

number of powers deemed appropriate.[25] This lack of responsiveness of sheriffs to public opinion may be driven by the relative security of sheriffs' positions (despite being elected) due to uncontested elections, large incumbency advantages, and low turnout in local elections (Zoorob, 2022).[26]

Next, we conducted an exploratory investigation into whether police executives in areas with existing CRBs respond differently to the treatments about public support and peer adoption than police executives in areas without CRBs. Figure 3b presents results. We find that our informational treatments do not differently affect the feelings of police executives with and without current CRBs ($p = 0.28$ for Public CRB Support, $p = 0.67$ for Public CRB Support with Firing, and $p = 0.52$ for Peer CRB Adoption). However, police executives with current CRBs *do* deem more powers appropriate for CRBs as a result of treatment than police executives without CRBs. In particular, the Public CRB Support treatment increased the powers deemed appropriate by police executives with current CRBs by a sizable 0.57 standard deviations more than police executives without CRBs ($p = 0.02$). Additionally, the Peer CRB Adoption treatment increased the powers deemed appropriate by police executives with current CRBs by 0.52 standard deviations ($p = 0.04$). However, the Public CRB Support w/ Firing treatment had no differential effect ($p = 0.14$). Overall, these results raise the possibility that feed-forward effects may play a role in police accountability reform and institution-building. Once structures and procedures for civilian oversight such as CRBs are established, police executives may be more likely to support and invest additional power

[25] Although not directly the topic of interest for this hypothesis, we also find no difference in the responses of police chiefs and sheriffs to information about peer adoption of CRBs ($p = 0.66$, $p = 0.66$, and $p = 0.27$, respectively).

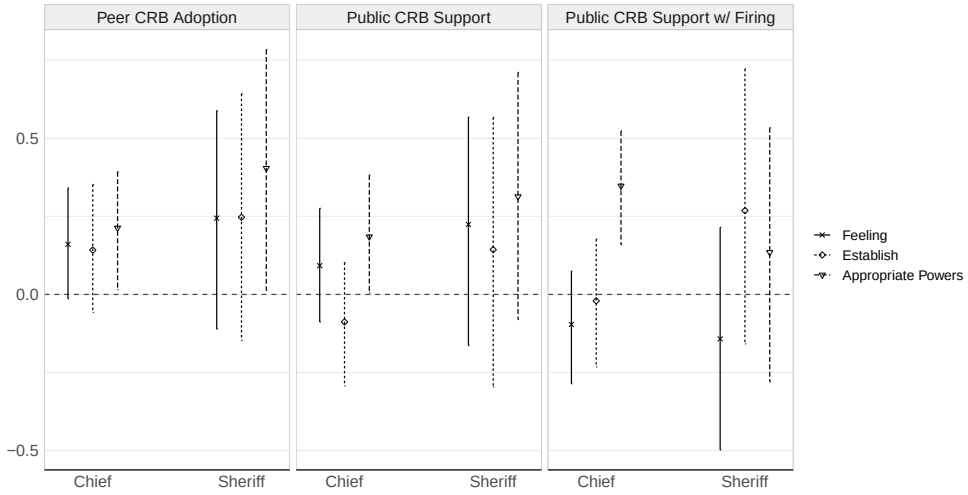
[26] In Appendix Section A.9 we present some open-ended responses in our survey from sheriffs suggesting this explanation – specifically, that they believe they are already responsive to their voters since they were elected by them. Interestingly, chiefs *also* report that the fact that they were appointed by elected officials is an extant oversight mechanism. Future research would benefit by examining differences in the electoral connection between chiefs and sheriffs.

into such institutions in the future. However, we again caution that these results are not causal and may instead reflect different underlying predispositions of police executives with and without current CRBs.

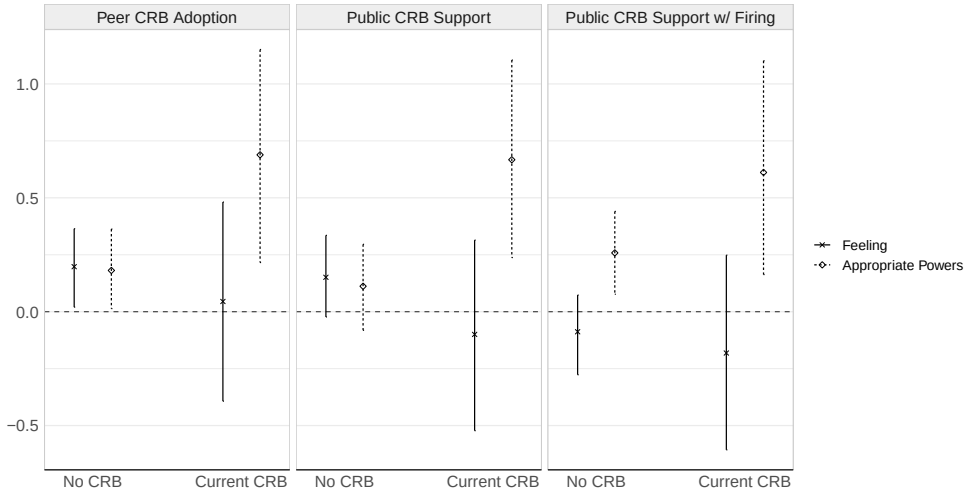
Finally, we investigated whether there were partisan differences in the impacts of the public opinion and peer adoption treatments on police executives. Figure 3c reports results. Compared to Independents, we find that Democratic police executives were more responsive to information about public support for CRBs: The Public CRB Support treatment increased Democratic executives' feelings by 0.60 standard deviations more ($p = 0.04$) and support for appropriate powers by 0.59 standard deviations more ($p = 0.05$) than it did for Independents. We do not find any differences between Republicans and Independents in responses to the public support treatments, nor do we find statistically significant partisan differences in response to the peer adoption treatment.

Discussion

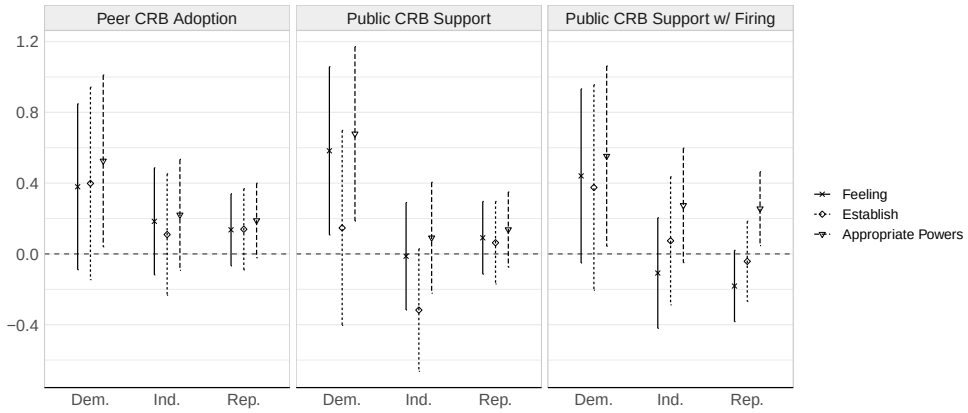
Given a relative lack of political science research on police as government agents (Soss and Weaver, 2017), the small (if growing) body of knowledge here has not shed much light onto the oversight institutions that might ameliorate the well-documented problems of police misconduct (e.g., Mummolo, 2018; Knox, Lowe and Mummolo, 2020; Cook and Fortunato, 2022). As an extension of existing theories of oversight in bureaucratic settings (McCubbins and Schwartz, 1984), we argue that civilian review boards are a promising institutional design with potential for welfare-improving outcomes through police oversight. In line with this argument, our results indicate that 1) police executives opinions are movable towards supporting CRBs, suggesting establishing CRBs in the first place is possible; and 2) agencies that already possess a CRB are supportive of expanding their power. Generating initial buy-in from police executives, as research recommends (Matusiak, 2016), should facilitate CRB adoption and expansion of powers—even if the initial version is relatively weak. Even weak



(a) Police Chiefs and Sheriffs



(b) Police Executives with and without Current CRBs



(c) Police Executive Partisanship

Figure 3: Heterogeneous Responses to Informational Treatments

The results used to create these figures are displayed in full in Appendix Tables A11 through A13.

CRBs might be a net improvement, as they may lead to additional police patrol (and perhaps fire alarm) oversight, and even encourage diffusion across additional agencies.

Our experiment demonstrates that police executives are willing to shift their policy beliefs, even on a contentious issue marked by low levels of executive support historically and in the present. Yet how and why these important decision makers shift their policy beliefs depends on which information they are exposed to and, critically, which actors are the source of that information. Overall, police executives are closely attentive to the behavior of large peer agencies adopting CRBs, but much less moved by public attitudes.

It is noteworthy that the respondents to our survey were largely unmoved by public support for CRBs, as these individuals may be the most willing to engage with the public as evidenced by their willingness to take our survey. We might therefore expect even greater reluctance to heed public opinion amongst the general population of police executives. In open-ended responses to our survey (Appendix Section A.9), we find that a number of respondents feel they are already responsive to public opinion – but an insulated version. As public appointees (specifically chiefs), open-ended responses highlight that they believe the fact that their city-level principals are elected is enough civilian oversight. These findings also begin to solve an important puzzle in suggesting why law enforcement agencies, enabled and supported by the broad public, are nonetheless difficult to popularly constrain. Ironically, chiefs' and sheriffs' preferences on democratic oversight in policing are not themselves especially shaped through the democratic mechanism of public opinion.

Regarding peer influence, we found that when presented with information on major city police agency adoption of CRBs, chiefs and sheriffs were more positive in their feelings about CRBs, more willing to establish a CRB in their own agency, and more willing to support granting CRBs independent powers, such as the ability to investigate complaints and hear appeals from citizens and officers. We also found that police executives who already had a CRB in their agency were significantly more likely to support CRBs and to recommend more power for CRBs following treatment. The patrol-type functions of CRBs—as represented in

our CRB powers analysis—are more acceptable to police executives who already work with a CRB. In fact, these executives are more likely to support increasing (7.1%) rather than decreasing (1.7%) CRBs' powers. An interpretation that demands further research is that police executives may recognize that the alarm functions of CRBs (such as exposing local police practices to federal oversight) are potentially more damaging and difficult to manage. In this way, an initial story consistent with our experimental results is that CRBs can operate not only as complements—but potentially also as substitutes—for external oversight by state and federal powers. When CRBs hold these powers, police executives may find it more palatable than when the same powers are wielded from outside.

Implications for Reform and Oversight

Taken together, these results suggest that the shortest path to policy reform may involve professional associations and concentrated attention to the largest agencies (such as those who make up the Major Cities Chiefs Association). The prospect of enacting national policy change through influencing the largest agencies may be good news for reformers who are frustrated by the fractured federalist nature of law enforcement in a country with 18,000 independent police departments.[27] As such, advocacy through professional associations and policy diffusion through major cities may serve as viable inroads for reform, constituting a simplified influence strategy as compared to separately targeting the many thousands of independent police departments. As large agencies continue to lead these policy shifts, reformers could then concentrate on extending those reforms to smaller and nearby agencies.[28] Potential avenues for this work include trade publications from professional organizations, such as *Police Chief*, and practitioner conferences such as the annual conference of the International

[27]Indeed, while just 3% of US police agencies serve jurisdictions of more than 100,000 people, these agencies employ 52% of the officers in the country (Hyland and Davis, 2019).

[28]We test for effect heterogeneity from agency size, and report results in Appendix Table A17. Results suggest that there is no treatment heterogeneity, although data sparsity in the interacted cells cautions against drawing strong conclusions from this test.

Association of Chiefs of Police.

Conversely and of equal importance, our results caution against reformers relying solely on appeals based on public opinion. Neither of our public opinion treatments were successful in moving chief or sheriff feeling towards CRBs, nor in their willingness to establish a CRB in their own agency. This finding is concerning because a movement towards democratic accountability in policing should be responsive to democratic means of influence, such as public opinion.[29] Yet, accurate state-specific public opinion information successfully shifted respondents' willingness to grant CRBs independent powers. Interestingly, the "strong" version of the public opinion treatment, which recommended more controversial disciplinary powers for CRBs, had a greater effect on policing executives than the weaker version of public opinion. Specifically, the weak version of public opinion shifted support for the same powers as the peer influence treatment. This similarity suggests that CRBs' powers to investigate complaints and hear appeals from citizens and officers are the most generally palatable to chiefs and sheriffs, another important note for researchers and advocates. Yet, the strong version of public opinion pushed chiefs and sheriffs even further, even leading them to support granting CRBs the power to recommend discipline. This suggests that, despite general reluctance to follow public opinion, exposing police executives to topics with *greater* distance between their preferences and public attitudes can generate windows for potential policy reform. However, understanding how police executives respond to divergent preferences of the public through bargaining or moderation is a topic for further investigation.[30]

[29]While the role of unions in democratic policing reform should be the subject of further study, we think police executives are at least as influential and less well understood. As a preliminary analysis, Appendix Table A16 evaluates whether states with state-level police union agreements are differentially influenced by our treatments. We find insubstantial and insignificant effects.

[30]In Appendix Section A.9 we include some open-ended responses we received post-treatment in our survey. These add some context to this question: particularly, many police executives are concerned about the people who will makeup these boards. Examining variation in board structure and, specifically, who serves on them is another topic worth future study.

Importantly, in no case did any treatment arm successfully encourage police executives to support a CRB power to *impose* discipline on officers. This finding suggests that there are limits to executive support of public oversight, even though this expansive power is a key focus of reformers worried about ineffectual CRBs. Further, it is important to note that increased civilian oversight does not necessarily correspond with specific policy outcomes, such as reformers' expectations regarding stricter discipline of officers. For example, a recent report points out that in cases where Los Angeles Police Chief Michel Moore fired officers for misconduct, a CRB overruled his decisions more than 70% of the time (Rector, 2021). In doing so, the CRB effectively led to 11 officers remaining active despite a highly respected executive with over 40 years of experience arguing they were not fit to continue serving. The relationship between oversight, accountability, and specific reform goals is not necessarily linear, an important fact for reformers and critics of CRBs to consider.

Beyond our primary results, our study also draws attention to a lack of an institutional difference where theory would expect it. We find no evidence that *elected* sheriffs are more attentive to public opinion compared to *appointed* chiefs. This may suggest that both chiefs and sheriffs act as trustees rather than delegates, despite their very different paths to position, or may highlight the weakness of elections as a meaningful accountability check on sheriffs. This contradicts previous studies that find the elected status of sheriffs results in different policy choices (Mughan, Li and Nicholson-Crotty, 2020; Zoorob, 2022), but aligns with other scholarship showing that sheriffs from different political parties make broadly similar policy choices despite their partisan leanings (Thompson, 2020*b*).

Indeed, notwithstanding growing scholarly attention to the differences between police chiefs and sheriffs, our results point to a more nuanced picture. For the most part, both groups demonstrate similar responses regarding their feelings about CRBs and willingness to establish one in their own agency. However, when it comes to increased measures of power sharing with a CRB, sheriffs are significantly less likely than chiefs to support granting that shared power. In the context of the principal-agent problem facing police, this result is

particularly interesting: Chiefs, who are agents to more principals and further removed from voters, are unexpectedly *more* open to power sharing. Sheriffs, who are directly elected and report that their voters already constitute a form of civilian review, are less likely to respond favorably to the prospect additional oversight. While on its face, viewing elections as a form of oversight is sensible, in reality sheriffs face little electoral competition once they gain incumbency status, creating the conditions for significant agency loss (Farris and Holman, 2017). When and why chiefs and sheriffs attend to public opinion and are willing to relinquish power, enabling more robust democratic oversight, are rich and publicly-significant research questions for further study.

References

Anzia, Sarah F and Terry M Moe. 2015. "Public sector unions and the costs of government." *The Journal of Politics* 77(1):114–127.

Aspin, Larry T. and William K. Hall. 1993. "Retention Election and Judicial Behavior." *Judicature* 77(6):306–315.

Ba, Bocar, Jacob Kaplan, Dean Knox, Mayya Komisarchik, Rachel Mariman, Jonathan Mummolo, Roman Rivera and Michelle Torres. 2022. "Who are the Police? Descriptive Representation in the Coercive Arm of Government.".
URL: *https://jmummolo.scholar.princeton.edu/sites/g/files/toruqf3341/files/documents/ba_et_al_2023.p*

Baumgartner, Frank R., Suzanna L. De Boef and Amber E. Boydstun. 2008. *The Decline of the Death Penalty and the Discovery of Innocence*. Cambridge University Press. Google-Books-ID: jXSJ1jYWC8EC.

Bennett, Colin J. and Michael Howlett. 1992. "The Lessons of Learning: Reconciling Theories of Policy Learning and Policy Change." *Policy Sciences* 25(3):275–294.

Benz, Arthur and Dietrich Fürst. 2002. "Policy Learning in Regional Networks." *European Urban and Regional Studies* 9(1):21–35.

Bittner, Egon. 1990. *Aspects of police work*. Boston, MA: Northeastern University Press.

BondGraham, Darwin. 2023. "'Systemic failures' found in Oakland police investigations of officer misconduct." *The Oaklandside* .
URL: *https://oaklandside.org/2023/01/18/systemic-failures-investigations-officer-misconduct-2023-report/*

Bonner, Michelle D. 2020. "What democratic policing is . . . and is not." *Policing and Society* 30(9):1044–1060.

Brehm, John O and Scott Gates. 1999. *Working, shirking, and sabotage: Bureaucratic response to a democratic public*. University of Michigan Press.

Canes-Wrone, Brandice, Tom S. Clark and Jason P. Kelly. 2014. "Judicial Selection and Death Penalty Decisions." *American Political Science Review* 108(1):23–39.

Caughey, Devin and Christopher Warshaw. 2019. *Public opinion in subnational politics*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Chamard, Sharon Elizabeth. 2003. *Innovation-diffusion networks and the adoption and discontinuance of computerized crime mapping by municipal police departments in New Jersey*. Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey-Newark.

Chanin, Joshua and Salvador Espinosa. 2016. "Examining the Determinants of Police Department Transparency: The View of Police Executives." *Criminal Justice Policy Review* 27(5):498–519.

Choi, Hyeyoon Alyssa. 2022. "Oakland Police Department heads to court to try to end 19-year federal oversight." *Los Angeles Times* .
URL: *https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-04-26/oakland-police-department-heads-to-court-to-try-to-end-19-year-federal-oversight*

Coe, Charles K and Deborah Lamm Wiesel. 2001. "Police budgeting: Winning strategies." *Public Administration Review* 61(6):718–727.

Cook, Scott J and David Fortunato. 2022. "The politics of police data: State legislative capacity and the transparency of state and substate agencies." *American Political Science Review* pp. 1–16.

Davis, Angela J, Bryan Stevenson, Marc Mauer, Bruce Western and Jeremy Travis. 2018. *Policing the Black man: Arrest, prosecution, and imprisonment*. Vintage.

De Angelis, Joseph, Richard Rosenthal and Brian Buchner. 2016*a*. "Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement: Assessing the Evidence." *Office of Justice Programs* (250287):1–76.

De Angelis, Joseph, Richard Scott Rosenthal and Brian Buchner. 2016*b*. *Civilian oversight of law enforcement: A review of the strengths and weaknesses of various models*. Number 250265. publisher: OJP Diagnostic Center.

Doerner, William G and William M Doerner. 2009. "The diffusion of accreditation among Florida police agencies." *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management* .

Dolowitz, David and David Marsh. 1996. "Who Learns What from Whom: A Review of the Policy Transfer Literature." *Political Studies* 44(2):343–357.

Duara, Nigel. 2022. "From scandal to scrutiny: How intense citizen oversight reshaped Oakland police." *CalMatters* .
URL: *http://calmatters.org/justice/2022/04/oakland-police-citizen-oversight/*

Eckhouse, Laurel. 2022. "Metrics Management and Bureaucratic Accountability: Evidence from Policing." *American Journal of Political Science* 66(2):385–401.

Enns, Peter K. 2014. "The Public's Increasing Punitiveness and Its Influence on Mass Incarceration in the United States." *American Journal of Political Science* 58(4):857–872.

Fairley, Sharon R. 2020. "Survey says? U.S. cities double down on civilian oversight of police despite challenges and controversy." *Cardozo Law Review De-Novo* 2020:1–54.

Farris, Emily M and Mirya R Holman. 2015. "Public officials and a "private" matter: Attitudes and policies in the county sheriff office regarding violence against women." *Social Science Quarterly* 96(4):1117–1135.

Farris, Emily M. and Mirya R. Holman. 2017. "All Politics Is Local? County Sheriffs and Localized Policies of Immigration Enforcement." *Political Research Quarterly* 70(1):142–154. tex.ids= farrisAllPoliticsLocal2017.

Ferdik, Frank V., Jeff Rojek and Geoffrey P. Alpert. 2013. "Citizen oversight in the United States and Canada: an overview." *Police Practice and Research* 14(2):104–116.

Finn, Peter. 2001. Citizen review of police: Approaches and implementation. Technical report U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Program (NCJ 184430): .

Foa, Roberto Stefan and Yascha Mounk. 2016. "The danger of deconsolidation: The democratic disconnect." *Journal of democracy* 27(3):5–17.

Goerger, Samantha, Jonathan Mummolo and Sean Westwood. 2020. *Which Police Departments Want Reform? Barriers to Evidence-Based Policymaking.* Number ID 3497106 Rochester, NY: . tex.ids= Goerger2020Which.
URL: *https://papers.ssrn.com/abstract=3497106*

Hanson, Natalie. 2022. "Oakland police approach end of federal oversight, local organizations urge diligence to prevent corruption." *Courthouse News* .
URL: *https://www.courthousenews.com/oakland-police-approach-end-of-federal-oversight-local-organizations-urge-diligence-to-prevent-corruption/*

Hope, Kempe Ronald. 2021. "Civilian Oversight for Democratic Policing and Its Challenges: Overcoming Obstacles for Improved Police Accountability." *Journal of Applied Security Research* 16(4):423–455.

Hunt, Raymond G. and John M. Magenau. 1993. *Power and the Police Chief: An Institutional and Organizational Analysis.*
URL: *https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/power-and-police-chief-institutional-and-organizational-analysis*

Hyland, Shelley and Elizabeth Davis. 2019. *Local Police Departments, 2016*. Number NCJ 252835. tex.ids= Hyland2019Local.
URL: *https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetailiid=6706*

Ingram, Jason R., Eugene A. Paoline, Alexis R. Rockwell and Andia M. Azimi. 2022. "Police Chief Culture: A View From the Top." *Police Quarterly* p. 10986111221114332.

Juris, Hervey A. and Peter Feuille. 1974. *The Impact of Police Unions: Summary Report*. U.S. Government Printing Office. Google-Books-ID: 4lMQNlJ2Wj0C.

Knox, Dean, Will Lowe and Jonathan Mummolo. 2020. "Administrative records mask racially biased policing." *American Political Science Review* 114(3):619–637.

Lee, Taedong and Susan van de Meene. 2012. "Who teaches and who learns? Policy learning through the C40 cities climate network." *Policy Sciences* 45(3):199–220.

Lipsky, Michael. 1980. *Street-level bureaucracy: Dilemmas of the individual in public service*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Maguire, Edward R. 2003. *Organizational Structure in American Police Agencies: Context, Complexity, and Control*. SUNY Press. Google-Books-ID: $N_M EdrPtv4gC$.

Matusiak, Matthew C. 2016. "Dimensionality of local police chiefs' institutional sovereigns." *Policing and Society* 26(7):753–770.

Matusiak, Matthew C., William R. King and Edward R. Maguire. 2017. "How perceptions of the institutional environment shape organizational priorities: findings from a survey of police chiefs." *Journal of Crime and Justice* 40(1):5–19.

McCubbins, Mathew D and Thomas Schwartz. 1984. "Congressional oversight overlooked: Police patrols versus fire alarms." *American journal of political science* pp. 165–179.

McLean, Kyle and Justin Nix. 2021. "Understanding the Bounds of Legitimacy: Weber's Facets of Legitimacy and the Police Empowerment Hypothesis." *Justice Quarterly* 0(0):1–23.

Mourtgos, Scott M. and Ian T. Adams. 2019. "The rhetoric of de-policing: Evaluating open-ended survey responses from police officers with machine learning-based structural topic modeling." *Journal of Criminal Justice* 64(C):1–1.

Mughan, Siân, Danyao Li and Sean Nicholson-Crotty. 2020. "When Law Enforcement Pays: Costs and Benefits for Elected Versus Appointed Administrators Engaged in Asset Forfeiture." *The American Review of Public Administration* 50(3):297–314. publisher: SAGE Publications Inc.

Mummolo, Jonathan. 2018. "Modern police tactics, police-citizen interactions, and the prospects for reform." *The Journal of Politics* 80(1):1–15.

Nix, Justin. 2015. In the Eye of the Beholder: Exploring the Dialogic Approach to Police Legitimacy PhD thesis University of South Carolina Columbia, SC: .
URL: *https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/etd/3183*

Nix, Justin, Natalie Todak and Brandon Tregle. 2020. "Understanding Body-Worn Camera Diffusion in U.S. Policing." *Police Quarterly* 23(3):396–422.

Ouellet, Marie, Sadaf Hashimi and George G. Vega Yon. 2022. "Officer Networks and Firearm Behaviors: Assessing the Social Transmission of Weapon-Use." *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* .
URL: *https://doi.org/10.1007/s10940-022-09546-9*

PERF. 2022. *Police Chiefs Compensation and Career Pathways: PERF's 2021 Survey.*
URL: *https://www.policeforum.org/workforcesurveyjune2021*

Pickett, Justin T. 2019. "Public opinion and criminal justice policy: Theory and research." *Annual Review of Criminology* 2(1):405–428.

Prenzler, Tim and Carol Ronken. 2001. "Models of police oversight: A critique." *Policing and Society* 11(2):151–180.

Quispe-Torreblanca, Edika G. and Neil Stewart. 2019. "Causal peer effects in police misconduct." *Nature Human Behaviour* 3(88):797–807.

Rad, Abdul Nasser, David S. Kirk and William P. Jones. 2023. "Police Unionism, Accountability, and Misconduct." *Annual Review of Criminology* 6(1):null.

Rector, Kevin. 2021. "New civilian discipline panels more lenient on accused LAPD officers, review finds." *Los Angeles Times* .
URL: *https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-05-11/new-civilian-discipline-panels-more-lenient-on-accused-lapd-officers-review-finds*

Rose, Richard. 1991. "What is Lesson-Drawing?" *Journal of Public Policy* 11(1):3–30.

Savage, S. P. 2013. "Seeking 'Civilianness': Police Complaints and the Civilian Control Model of Oversight." *British Journal of Criminology* 53(5):886–904.

Seo, Chunghyeon, Bitna Kim and Nathan E. Kruis. 2021. "Police Response Models for Handling Encounters with People Suffering from Mental Illnesses: a Survey of Police Chiefs." *American Journal of Criminal Justice* 46(5):793–814.

Shipan, Charles R. and Craig Volden. 2014. "When the smoke clears: expertise, learning and policy diffusion." *Journal of Public Policy* 34(3):357–387.

Shjarback, John A. 2022. "An Examination of Professional/Trade Law Enforcement Publication Consumption and Sensitivity to the Ferguson Effect Among US Police Chiefs." *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology* .
URL: *https://doi.org/10.1007/s11896-022-09517-7*

Skogan, Wesley G. 2015. *Surveying police officers*. Springer p. 109–115.

Smykla, John Ortiz, Matthew S. Crow, Vaughn J. Crichlow and Jamie A. Snyder. 2016. "Police Body-Worn Cameras: Perceptions of Law Enforcement Leadership." *American Journal of Criminal Justice* 41(3):424–443.

Soss, Joe and Vesla Weaver. 2017. "Police are our government: Politics, political science, and the policing of race–class subjugated communities." *Annual Review of Political Science* 20(1):565–591.

Stephens, Darrel W., Ellen Scrivner and Josie F Cambareri. 2018. "Civilian oversight of the police in major cities." *Washington DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services* .

Stoughton, Seth W., Jeffrey J. Noble and Geoffrey P. Alpert. 2021. *Evaluating Police Uses of Force*. NYU Press. Google-Books-ID: lWwDEAAAQBAJ.

Telep, Cody W. and Steve Winegar. 2016. "Police Executive Receptivity to Research: A Survey of Chiefs and Sheriffs in Oregon." *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice* 10(3):241–249.

Terrill, Richard J. 1988. *Civilian oversight of the police complaints process in the United States: Concerns, developments, and more concerns*. Oxford: Clarendon Press p. 291–322. publisher: Oxford University Press New York.

Thompson, Daniel M. 2020*a*. "How Partisan Is Local Law Enforcement? Evidence from Sheriff Cooperation with Immigration Authorities." *American Political Science Review* 114(1):222–236.

Thompson, Daniel M. 2020*b*. "How Partisan Is Local Law Enforcement? Evidence from Sheriff Cooperation with Immigration Authorities." *American Political Science Review* 114(1):222–236.

Times, New York. 1964. "Police Chiefs' Head Urging Resistance To Review Boards." *The New York Times* .
URL: *https://www.nytimes.com/1964/10/29/archives/police-chiefs-head-urging-resistance-to-review-boards.html*

Tregle, Brandon, Justin Nix and Justin T. Pickett. 2022. "Body-Worn Cameras and Trans-

parency: Experimental Evidence of Inconsistency in Police Executive Decision-Making." *Justice Quarterly* 39(3):455–477.

Uchida, Craig D. 2020. *The Development of the American Police*. Eighth edition ed. Long Grove, Illinois: Waveland Press p. 11. publisher: Waveland Press.

Vitoroulis, Michael, Cameron McEllhiney and Liana Perez. 2021. Civilian oversight of law enforcement: Report on the state of the field and effective oversight practices. Technical report Washington DC: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services: .

Waddington, PAJ. 1999. "Police (canteen) sub-culture. An appreciation." *The British Journal of Criminology* 39(2):287–309.

Walker, Samuel. 2000. *Police Accountability: The Role of Citizen Oversight*. 1st edition ed. Austarlia; Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing.

Walker, Samuel and Vic W. Bumphus. 1992. "The effectiveness of civilian review: Observations on recent trends and new issues regarding the civilian review of the police." *American Journal of Police* 11(4):1–26.

Winston, Ali and Darwin BondGraham. 2023. *The Riders Come Out at Night: Brutality, Corruption, and Cover-up in Oakland*. Simon and Schuster. Google-Books-ID: GJKhEAAAQBAJ.

Worden, Robert E., Heidi S. Bonner and Sarah J. McLean. 2018. "Procedural Justice and Citizen Review of Complaints Against the Police: Structure, Outcomes, and Complainants' Subjective Experiences." *Police Quarterly* 21(1):77–108. publisher: SAGE Publications Inc.

Yeung, Bernice, Mark Greenblatt, Mark Fahey and Emily Harris. 2018. "When it comes to rape, just because a case is cleared doesn't mean it's solved.". ProPublica.
URL: *https://www.propublica.org/article/when-it-comes-to-rape-just-because-a-case-is-cleared-does-not-mean-solved*

Young, Jacob TN and Justin T Ready. 2015. "Diffusion of ideas and technology: The role of networks in influencing the endorsement and use of on-officer video cameras." *Journal of contemporary criminal justice* 31(3):243–261.

Zoorob, Michael. 2022. "There's (rarely) a new sheriff in town: The incumbency advantage for local law enforcement." *Electoral Studies* 80:102550.

A Supplementary Information for "Patrolling the Police: Experimental Evidence on Police Executives' Support for Oversight"

Contents

A.1 Additional Information about the Sample

A.1.1 Public Opinion Poll

As discussed in the manuscript, to construct the state level public opinion treatment we commissioned a national poll from private polling firm Data for Progress. Our questions on this poll were part of a larger survey. Data for Progress uses a third party sample generation firm for its online surveys. The respondents are paid for their participation in the sample through points which can be exchanged for various monetary awards. The participants in this sample, as reported by Data for Progress, consent to the survey through a double opt-in procedure. The participants are broadly representative of the national population. No deception was used in this survey.

A.1.2 Descriptive Statistics

Table A1 reports the descriptive statistics for the full sample. Additional tables reporting sample descriptives are reported for balance across treatment in Table A5, and balance across position in Table A6.

Table A1: Sample Descriptive Statistics

		N	Pct.
position	Chief	1040	81.0
	Sheriff	243	18.9
age	≤ 34	8	0.6
	35 - 44	112	8.7
	45 - 54	519	40.4
	55 - 64	379	29.5
	65 - 74	91	7.1
	75 +	4	0.3
gender	Male	1074	83.6
	Female	48	3.7
race	Asian/Pacific Islander	8	0.6
	Black	46	3.6
	Hispanic	36	2.8
	Other	37	2.9
	White	983	76.6
political	Democrat	115	9.0
	Independent	309	24.1
	Republican	651	50.7
fte	Fewer than 25	637	49.6
	Between 25 and 49	230	17.9
	Between 50 and 99	153	11.9
	Between 100 and 499	98	7.6
	Between 500 and 999	8	0.6
	More than 1000	7	0.5
condition	Control (No information)	307	23.9
	Public Support CRB	324	25.2
	Public Support CRB (with firing)	325	25.3
	Peer Diffusion	323	25.2

Survey conducted February 1 to March 7, 2022.

Table A2: County Sheriff Response Comparison

Average	Non-Response Sample	Response Sample
Population	152463	156241
Percent White	0.82	0.84
Percent Black	0.09	0.07
Percent College	0.32	0.36
Income Below 50k	0.47	0.43
Income Above 100k	0.22	0.25
Employed Percent	0.58	0.61
2020 GOP Vote	0.65	0.62
2020 Dem Vote	0.33	0.36

Table A3: Municipal Police Response Comparison

Average	Non-Response Sample	Response Sample
Percent College	0.34	0.37
Employed Percent	0.57	0.59
Median Income	59215	62298
Total Population	18996	21269
Percent White	0.74	0.75
Percent Black	0.10	0.08

A.1.3 Response/Non-response

We are also interested in the relative balance between respondents and non-respondents, across chiefs and sheriffs. Table A2 shows balance across respondents and non-respondents in the county sheriff pool, while Table A3 does the same for police chiefs. In Table A4, we report the results of a linear model to predict whether an agency responded to the survey based on their population traits and the number of officers in their departments. This table shows that municipal police departments (i.e., not county sheriffs) were more likely to respond to the survey. It also shows on average slightly departments in slightly more populous and educated areas responded, though the difference in predicted probability is small. We believe these tables improve the generalizability of the overall results.

Table A4: Predicting Survey Response

	Pooled	Municipal	County
log Officers	−0.001	−0.010+	0.018*
	(0.004)	(0.006)	(0.007)
log Population	0.015***	0.024***	−0.009
	(0.004)	(0.004)	(0.006)
Percent White	0.035	0.031	0.146*
	(0.022)	(0.024)	(0.062)
Percent Black	−0.031	−0.029	0.012
	(0.025)	(0.028)	(0.065)
Percent College Degree	0.073***	0.056**	0.188**
	(0.020)	(0.022)	(0.067)
Municipal Dept.	0.045***		
	(0.008)		
Trump Vote 2020			−0.083
			(0.054)
N	12 067	9092	2975
R2	0.01	0.01	0.02
R2 Adj.	0.009	0.009	0.015
F	19.737	18.307	8.418

Outcome is a binary variable indicating the police department executive completed our survey.
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

A.1.4 Balance

Table A5: Balance Table Across Treatments

		Control (N=307)		**Support (N=324)**		**Support (firing) (N=325)**		**Peer Diffusion (N=323)**	
		N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Position	Chief	246	80.1	267	82.4	267	82.2	256	79.3
	Sheriff	61	19.9	57	17.6	58	17.8	67	20.7
Age	≤ 34	2	0.7	1	0.3	3	0.9	2	0.6
	35 - 44	21	6.8	25	7.7	27	8.3	39	12.1
	45 - 54	126	41.0	128	39.5	131	40.3	134	41.5
	55 - 64	96	31.3	102	31.5	93	28.6	88	27.2
	65 - 74	24	7.8	22	6.8	25	7.7	20	6.2
	75 +	1	0.3	0	0.0	2	0.6	1	0.3
Sex	Male	262	85.3	269	83.0	275	84.6	268	83.0
	Female	11	3.6	11	3.4	8	2.5	18	5.6
Race	Asian/Pacific Islander	1	0.3	1	0.3	3	0.9	3	0.9
	Black	13	4.2	12	3.7	7	2.2	14	4.3
	Hispanic	16	5.2	5	1.5	12	3.7	3	0.9
	Other	8	2.6	9	2.8	12	3.7	8	2.5
	White	233	75.9	251	77.5	246	75.7	253	78.3
Partisan	Strong Democrat	4	1.3	1	0.3	1	0.3	1	0.3
	Democrat	14	4.6	13	4.0	16	4.9	13	4.0
	Lean Democrat	14	4.6	14	4.3	8	2.5	16	5.0
	Independent	65	21.2	85	26.2	74	22.8	85	26.3
	Lean Republican	64	20.8	57	17.6	54	16.6	65	20.1
	Republican	77	25.1	78	24.1	88	27.1	74	22.9
	Strong Republican	26	8.5	21	6.5	26	8.0	21	6.5
Size	Fewer than 25	147	47.9	159	49.1	174	53.5	157	48.6
	Between 25 and 49	54	17.6	54	16.7	59	18.2	63	19.5
	Between 50 and 99	43	14.0	38	11.7	28	8.6	44	13.6
	Between 100 and 499	23	7.5	29	9.0	23	7.1	23	7.1
	Between 500 and 999	5	1.6	2	0.6	1	0.3	0	0.0
	More than 1000	2	0.7	0	0.0	2	0.6	3	0.9

Survey conducted February 1 to March 7, 2022.

Table A6: Balance Table Across Position

		Chief (N=1040)		Sheriff (N=243)	
		N	Pct.	N	Pct.
age	≤ 34	7	0.7	1	0.4
	35 - 44	95	9.1	17	7.0
	45 - 54	436	41.9	83	34.2
	55 - 64	302	29.0	77	31.7
	65 - 74	65	6.2	26	10.7
	75 +	2	0.2	2	0.8
gender	Male	876	84.2	198	81.5
	Female	39	3.8	9	3.7
race	Asian/Pacific Islander	8	0.8	0	0.0
	Black	35	3.4	11	4.5
	Hispanic	31	3.0	5	2.1
	Other	35	3.4	2	0.8
	White	798	76.7	185	76.1
political	Democrat	83	8.0	32	13.2
	Independent	284	27.3	25	10.3
	Republican	511	49.1	140	57.6
fte	Fewer than 25	556	53.5	81	33.3
	Between 25 and 49	179	17.2	51	21.0
	Between 50 and 99	119	11.4	34	14.0
	Between 100 and 499	63	6.1	35	14.4
	Between 500 and 999	6	0.6	2	0.8
	More than 1000	2	0.2	5	2.1
condition	Control (No information)	246	23.7	61	25.1
	Public Support CRB	267	25.7	57	23.5
	Public Support CRB (with firing)	267	25.7	58	23.9
	Peer Diffusion	256	24.6	67	27.6

Survey conducted February 1 to March 7, 2022.

A.1.5 Power

We used power simulations to estimate the sample size that we would need to evaluate our main hypothesis regarding differences between control and treatment conditions with 80% power. With possible standardized effect sizes of 0.1 and 0.2, we anticipated that we would need about 4,200 respondents (30% response rate) or 1,600 respondents (12% response rate), respectively. Figure A1 presents results from these simulations. We achieved a sample size of 1,331 (10% response rate) and thus may have been underpowered to evaluate some hypotheses.

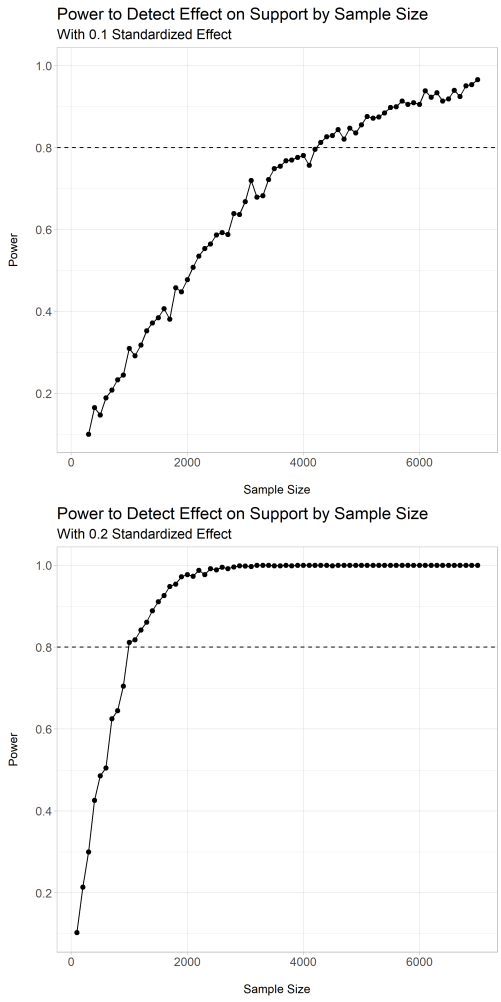


Figure A1: Power Analysis with Two Estimates of Effect Size

A.1.6 Ethical Considerations

This study was approved by Institutional Review Boards at [redacted], [redacted], and [redacted], the authors' home institutions at the time we fielded the study. Police chiefs and sheriffs provided their consent to participate in the research on the first page of the survey, and the survey did not involve deception. Importantly, we sent a report on the results of the survey to respondents, providing a clear and concrete benefit to participation in the research study.

A.2 Cheap Talk?

We thank the readers who have brought up the question of 'cheap talk.' In short, this question asks: Are respondents simply complying with some perceived social desirability or researcher demand, thus producing a bias in our results? We do not think so, for several reasons.

First, defining social desirability and researcher demand in this context is quite easy. Given the high public support, the 'desirable' response is one that expresses a) strongly approves of CRBs, b) a willingness to establish a CRB in the respondent's own agency, and c) approval for investing a CRB with a high number of independent powers and (logically) a high total sum of powers. However, on average, we do not see this type of aggregate response. For example, among our control group, approval for CRBs is $\bar{x} = 2.66$ (indicating a neutral range), only 7% indicated a willingness to establish a CRB, and on average, they only grant CRBs 1.41 powers. Taken together, these are not the responses one expects if social desirability is the goal of the respondents.

Further, we believe our respondents are giving thoughtful (rather than cheap) answers because of the quantity and quality of open-text responses the respondents provided during the survey. Responding to an open prompt is much more demanding than responding to traditional survey questions (Mourtgos and Adams, 2019). However, in our sample ($n = 1331$), 77.3% of respondents took the time to provide an open-text response regarding their views on CRBs. This type of investment is not what we would expect in a cheap talk environment. While we do not engage with the open responses in this paper, parallel investigations will pursue this study avenue.

Finally, police are famously distrustful of academics (Skogan, 2015), so the argument for researcher demand bias is unclear in this context. While it might be generally true that academics are likely to support the implementation of CRBs (though the current authors have mixed priors on that question), it is not self-evident that policing executives would bow to that pressure and engage in cheap talk. However, there may be a slightly different

threat here, in terms of selecting into the survey. For example, when researchers offer to collaborate with agencies in order to assess agency performance, policing executives are less likely to respond affirmatively to that offer, even when the agency is already high-performing (Goerger, Mummolo and Westwood, 2020). This type of selection could bias results and threaten generalizability. However, a separate analysis shows that correlates are balanced across responding and non-responding police executives, which buffers against such a threat. Our results for that analysis are shown in Tables A2 and A3.

In sum, while we remain sensitive to the threats that cheap talk (and other sources of bias) pose to survey-based research designs, we do not find evidence, or see reasonable and logical paths, for that particular threat in the current study.

A.3 Multi-level Regression and Post-Stratification of Public Support Estimates

To further allay concerns that the state public opinion estimate is misleading to respondents, we create multilevel-regression and post-stratification (MrP) estimates of public opinion for CRB support and CRB support with firing power. As described by Caughey and Warshaw (2019)(Caughey and Warshaw, 2019): "MRP entails two steps. First, a multilevel regression model is used to estimate opinion in population cells defined by the crossclassification of geographic and demographic variables (e.g., state, race, and gender). Second, opinion in each subnational unit is estimated by poststratifying (i.e., weighting) the cell estimates in proportion to their share of the subnational population. Because the multilevel model regularizes each cell estimate by 'shrinking' its estimate towards observably similar cells, the model increases the estimates' precision at the expense of some increase in bias." This procedure allows us to estimate CRB support at the county level.

We estimate county-level support by poststratifying the Data for Progress survey data by gender, education, and race, and include as county covariates percent urban, poverty rate, and college enrollment. Figure A2 compares the distribution of the county estimates to the state estimates we used in the survey experiment to police executives. Importantly, on average these estimates are very similar to the state estimates. The mean of the state estimate for CRB support is 68% while the county estimate is 64%; the mean of the state estimate for CRB support with firing power is 60% while the county estimate is 56.5%. However, it is important to note a weakness of MrP estimates that are particularly relevant for our purposes: many counties did not have any survey respondents, so the MrP estimate is highly model dependent. These counties, like much of our sample of police executives, are from less populous, more rural areas. Thus, we felt it important to present as a treatment the

more accurate (i.e., less biased) estimate of public support (the state level) than a potentially biased estimate at the county level.

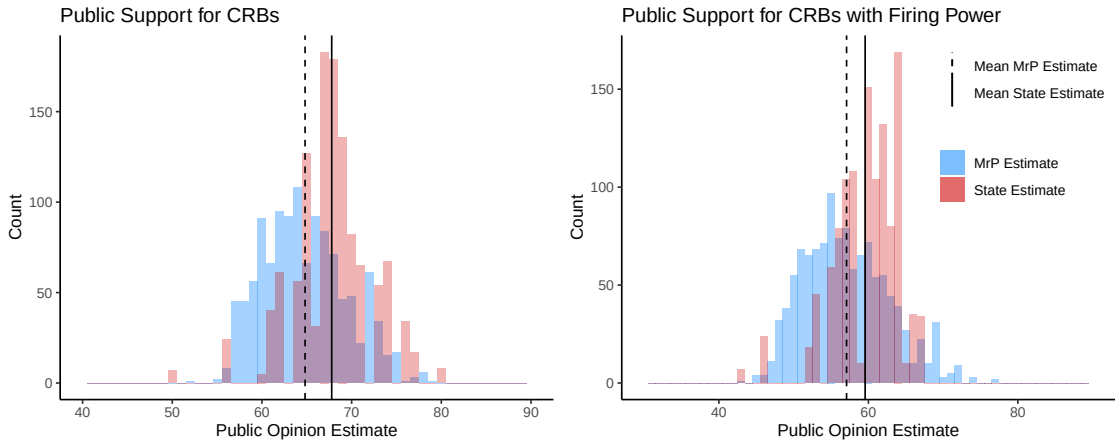


Figure A2: Comparison of State Public Support Estimates to MrP Estimates

Despite the potential shortcomings of the MrP estimate, we conduct a robustness analysis using these estimates on our main results. One potential story could be that our public opinion treatment did not work as intended in cases where the local public opinion (i.e., county level) differs substantially from the state-level public opinion. Simultaneously, police executives may be more attuned to the local public opinion, so in areas where this difference is large, the public opinion treatment did not update or inform police executives in the way we anticipated with our survey construction. If this is the case, we should see a difference in treatment effect for the public support treatments in areas where the MrP estimates differed the most from the state estimates. In Table A7 we interrogate this story, and find no support for this potential effect. We interact the difference between the state estimate with the MrP estimate with the public support treatment. We find no evidence that areas in which these two estimates differed that police executives systematically responded differently to our treatments.

A similar question surrounds how police executives respond to hearing information from the MCCA. The MCCA is generally respected amongst police executives. The MCCA regularly partners with other police executive professional organizations that cater to police organizations of all sizes as well as sheriffs' offices, such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), the National Sheriff's Association (NSA), and the Major County Sheriff's Association (MCSA). These professional organizations frequently host joint conferences, collaborate to influence national policy that affects policing, provide technical reports, promulgate joint resolutions for model policies, and sponsor research that advances the policing profession. However, while the MCCA is a

Table A7: County MrP Estimates Compared to State Estimates of Public Support

	CRB Feeling	CRB Establish	CRB Total Power
Public CRB Support	0.004	−0.063**	0.083
	(0.079)	(0.023)	(0.148)
MrP Estimate Diff. (Public Support)	−0.002	−0.003	−0.003
	(0.011)	(0.003)	(0.021)
MrP Estimate Diff. (Firing Support)	−0.005	−0.002	−0.002
	(0.009)	(0.003)	(0.017)
Public CRB Support x MrP Diff.	0.009	0.006+	−0.006
	(0.012)	(0.003)	(0.023)
Firing Support x MrP Diff.	0.015	0.0003	0.029
	(0.010)	(0.003)	(0.020)
N	1160	937	1176
R2	0.01	0.01	0.01
R2 Adj.	0.004	0.008	0.001
F	1.684	2.262	1.267

MrP estimation process is described in the text. The interactions are with the difference between the county MrP estimate and the state level estimate presented in the experiment.
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

prominent organization, it could be that chiefs or sheriffs with varied political orientations are differentially responsive to the behavior of significant cities. They could be prone to disagree with or dynamically adjust their responses to this adoption behavior. They may also be keener to emulate the behavior of nearby cities or prominent regional or national leaders. While we cannot test all of these hypotheses and associated diffusion or learning patterns, we perform a few additional checks, such as exploring treatment heterogeneity by agency size in Table A17.

A.4 Additional Tables of Results

Tables A11 through A13 display the results used to calculate the marginal interaction effects in Figure 3.

Table A8: Main Results - Non-standardized

	Feeling	Establish	Appropriate Powers
Treatment			
Public CRB Support	0.115	−0.012	0.341*
	(0.082)	(0.025)	(0.159)
Public CRB Support w/ Firing	−0.095	0.009	0.559***
	(0.082)	(0.025)	(0.159)
Peer CRB Adoption	0.181*	0.044+	0.452**
	(0.081)	(0.024)	(0.158)
Controls			
Sheriff	−0.063	−0.051*	−0.478**
	(0.078)	(0.024)	(0.151)
Current CRB	0.963***		1.035***
	(0.083)		(0.161)
Independent	−0.449***	−0.031	−0.732***
	(0.104)	(0.032)	(0.202)
Republican	−0.434***	−0.075*	−0.789***
	(0.096)	(0.029)	(0.186)
FTE 25-49	−0.056	0.026	−0.396**
	(0.075)	(0.022)	(0.145)
FTE 50-99	−0.022	0.119***	−0.192
	(0.088)	(0.027)	(0.170)
FTE 100-499	−0.244*	0.131***	−0.484*
	(0.110)	(0.035)	(0.213)
FTE 500-999	0.239	0.281+	−0.368
	(0.339)	(0.153)	(0.657)
FTE 1000+	0.025	0.476***	0.066
	(0.361)	(0.132)	(0.699)
Years in Position	0.000	0.000	−0.002
	(0.005)	(0.001)	(0.009)
N	1071	905	1069
R2	0.15	0.06	0.09
R2 Adj.	0.136	0.052	0.077
F			7.817

Survey February 1 to March 7, 2022.

Reference categories: Chief; Democrat; Sworn Personnel < 25

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table A9: Main Results - Pre-registered Controls Only

	Feeling	Establish	Total Powers
Public CRB Support	0.056	−0.017	0.260+
	(0.077)	(0.024)	(0.148)
Public CRB Support w/ Firing	−0.098	−0.007	0.563***
	(0.077)	(0.024)	(0.150)
Peer CRB Adoption	0.166*	0.042+	0.459**
	(0.077)	(0.023)	(0.149)
Sheriff	−0.109	−0.035+	−0.537***
	(0.070)	(0.021)	(0.134)
Current CRB	0.978***		1.022***
	(0.077)		(0.150)
Intercept	2.547***	0.078***	1.442***
	(0.058)	(0.017)	(0.111)
N	1214	1009	1215
R2	0.13	0.01	0.06
R2 Adj.	0.122	0.005	0.059
F	34.572	2.388	16.352

Survey February 1 to March 7, 2022.

Reference categories: Chief; No Current CRB

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table A10: Main Results - Uncontrolled

	Feeling	Establish	Total Powers
Public CRB Support	0.104	−0.016	0.321*
	(0.082)	(0.024)	(0.152)
Public CRB Support w/ Firing	−0.061	−0.006	0.614***
	(0.082)	(0.024)	(0.153)
Peer CRB Adoption	0.162*	0.041+	0.450**
	(0.082)	(0.023)	(0.153)
Intercept	2.646***	0.071***	1.461***
	(0.058)	(0.017)	(0.109)
N	1216	1009	1217
R2	0.01	0.01	0.01
R2 Adj.	0.005	0.004	0.012
F	3.024	2.255	5.775

Survey February 1 to March 7, 2022.

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table A11: Heterogeneous Effects: Chief vs. Sheriff

	Establish CRB (1)	CRB Feeling (2)	Appropriate Powers (3)
Constant	0.0941	0.2304**	0.3811***
	(0.1315)	(0.1163)	(0.1216)
Public CRB Support	-0.0854	0.0903	0.1847*
	(0.1026)	(0.0902)	(0.0949)
Public CRB + Firing Support	-0.0180	-0.0888	0.3467***
	(0.1032)	(0.0906)	(0.0950)
Peer Diffusion	0.1429	0.1629*	0.2113**
	(0.1038)	(0.0909)	(0.0956)
Sheriff	-0.3280**	-0.1078	-0.3014**
	(0.1610)	(0.1445)	(0.1520)
Independent	-0.1172	-0.4452***	-0.3711***
	(0.1204)	(0.1040)	(0.1094)
Republican	-0.2800**	-0.4300***	-0.4078***
	(0.1105)	(0.0954)	(0.1004)
FTE 25-49	0.0966	-0.0572	-0.2391***
	(0.0842)	(0.0748)	(0.0784)
FTE 50-99	0.4538***	-0.0225	-0.0998
	(0.1005)	(0.0877)	(0.0922)
FTE 100-499	0.4852***	-0.2471**	-0.2161*
	(0.1310)	(0.1097)	(0.1146)
FTE 500-999	1.010*	0.2522	0.1061
	(0.5764)	(0.3391)	(0.3542)
FTE 1000+	1.787***	0.0351	0.2068
	(0.4968)	(0.3611)	(0.3789)
Years in Position	0.0015	-8.62×10^{-5}	-0.0033
	(0.0055)	(0.0049)	(0.0051)
Public CRB Support × Sheriff	0.2246	0.1381	0.1462
	(0.2430)	(0.2120)	(0.2216)
Public CRB + Firing Support × Sheriff	0.2713	-0.0460	-0.2012
	(0.2411)	(0.2120)	(0.2229)
Peer Diffusion × Sheriff	0.0999	0.0885	0.1974
	(0.2240)	(0.2010)	(0.2114)
Current CRB		0.9579***	
		(0.0833)	
Observations	905	1,071	1,074

Reference categories: Chief; Democrat; Sworn Personnel ¡ 25. Survey February 1 to March 7, 2022.

Table A12: Heterogeneous Effects: Current CRB

	CRB Feeling (1)	Appropriate Powers (2)
Constant	0.2044*	0.3439***
	(0.1151)	(0.1187)
Public CRB Support	0.1505*	0.1092
	(0.0881)	(0.0908)
Public CRB + Firing Support	-0.0837	0.2540***
	(0.0879)	(0.0907)
Peer Diffusion	0.1992**	0.1761**
	(0.0866)	(0.0894)
Current CRB	1.100***	0.1649
	(0.1824)	(0.1882)
Sheriff	-0.0597	-0.2534***
	(0.0782)	(0.0804)
Independent	-0.4462***	-0.3784***
	(0.1039)	(0.1072)
Republican	-0.4286***	-0.4209***
	(0.0955)	(0.0985)
FTE 25-49	-0.0558	-0.2127***
	(0.0747)	(0.0770)
FTE 50-99	-0.0238	-0.0912
	(0.0876)	(0.0903)
FTE 100-499	-0.2473**	-0.2430**
	(0.1097)	(0.1132)
FTE 500-999	0.1882	-0.0378
	(0.3457)	(0.3566)
FTE 1000+	0.0121	0.0546
	(0.3623)	(0.3737)
Years in Position	-0.0002	-0.0010
	(0.0049)	(0.0050)
Public CRB Support × Current CRB	-0.2593	0.5659**
	(0.2380)	(0.2455)
Public CRB + Firing Support × Current CRB	-0.1028	0.3747
	(0.2433)	(0.2510)
Peer Diffusion × Current CRB	-0.1571	0.5206**
	(0.2467)	(0.2546)
Observations	1,071	1,072

Reference categories: Chief; Democrat; Sworn Personnel ¡ 25. Survey February 1 to March 7, 2022.

Table A13: Heterogeneous Effects: Partisanship

	CRB Feeling (1)	Establish CRB (2)	Appropriate Powers (3)
Constant	-0.0658	-0.1204	0.0418
	(0.1757)	(0.2065)	(0.1820)
Public CRB Support	0.5828**	0.1469	0.6788***
	(0.2426)	(0.2811)	(0.2513)
Public CRB + Firing Support	0.4409*	0.3754	0.5527**
	(0.2509)	(0.2961)	(0.2599)
Peer Diffusion	0.3796	0.3985	0.5256**
	(0.2392)	(0.2775)	(0.2477)
Independent	-0.1254	0.1507	-0.0891
	(0.2040)	(0.2389)	(0.2112)
Republican	-0.1098	-0.0955	-0.1253
	(0.1817)	(0.2140)	(0.1882)
Sheriff	-0.0603	-0.1907**	-0.2505***
	(0.0780)	(0.0885)	(0.0805)
Current CRB	0.9597***		0.5586***
	(0.0832)		(0.0861)
FTE 25-49	-0.0586	0.0883	-0.2185***
	(0.0749)	(0.0844)	(0.0775)
FTE 50-99	-0.0172	0.4532***	-0.0993
	(0.0873)	(0.1001)	(0.0904)
FTE 100-499	-0.2331**	0.4794***	-0.2512**
	(0.1100)	(0.1316)	(0.1139)
FTE 500-999	0.2783	1.137**	-0.1711
	(0.3391)	(0.5772)	(0.3512)
FTE 1000+	0.0660	1.775***	0.0728
	(0.3607)	(0.4952)	(0.3735)
Years in Position	0.0002	0.0019	-0.0008
	(0.0049)	(0.0055)	(0.0050)
Public CRB Support × Independent	-0.5959**	-0.4644	-0.5875**
	(0.2880)	(0.3322)	(0.2980)
Public CRB + Firing Support × Independent	-0.5489*	-0.3011	-0.2785
	(0.2972)	(0.3493)	(0.3078)
Peer Diffusion × Independent	-0.1956	-0.2891	-0.3048
	(0.2842)	(0.3279)	(0.2943)
Public CRB Support × Republican	-0.4917*	-0.0838	-0.5412**
	(0.2641)	(0.3053)	(0.2735)
Public CRB + Firing Support × Republican	-0.6221**	-0.4173	-0.2972
	(0.2707)	(0.3182)	(0.2804)
Peer Diffusion × Republican	-0.2434	-0.2591	-0.3368
	(0.2607)	(0.3012)	(0.2700)
Observations	1,071	905	1,072

Reference categories: Chief; Democrat; Sworn Personnel ¡ 25. Survey February 1 to March 7, 2022.

A.5 Additional Information about Pre-Registered Hypotheses and Results

Table A14: Pre-registered Hypotheses and Results

Hypothesis	Statement of Results
H1 Law Enforcement Learning Hypothesis: *When exposed to information about external support for CRBs from either the public or elites, police executives will be more supportive of CRBs.*	We find mixed results, where information about elite peers, but not public support, shifts police executive support for CRBs.
H2 Public Influence Hypothesis: *When exposed to information on public support for CRBs, law enforcement leaders will be more supportive of CRBs.*	We do not find general support for this hypothesis. The public opinion treatments were not associated with more approving feelings towards CRBs by police executives.
H3 Elite Diffusion Hypothesis: *When exposed to information indicating that CRBs have diffused in elite peer institutions, police executives will be more supportive of CRBs.*	We find support for this hypothesis. Police executives are more likely to approve of CRBs, be willing to establish a CRB in their own agency, and engage in more power sharing with CRBs, when exposed to information about how CRBs are used in large agencies.
H4 What's Mine is Mine Hypothesis: *Police executives will be more accepting of CRBs with limited powers of investigation, compared to CRBs with independent disciplinary power.*	We find mixed support for this hypothesis. In general, police executives did not move in response to public opinion of any type (i.e., they did not differentiate between the different forms of public opinion treatments). However, public support for CRBs with independent disciplining power *did increase* police executive willingness to share the power to *recommend discipline*. Further, the independent discipline public opinion treatment also produced a larger effect in how many total powers police executives were willing to share.
H1.1 The Electoral Effect: *The effect of public opinion on CRB policy preferences will be stronger for elected sheriffs compared to appointed police chiefs.*	Our results reject this hypothesis. Sheriffs did not display heterogeneous response to public opinion treatment compared to their chief colleagues.
H1.2 Give 'Em What They Want: *Stronger levels of public support will increase police executives' support for CRBs.*	Our results reject this hypothesis. Level of state-level public opinion did not significantly shift the effect of the public opinion treatments.
H2.1 Partisan Effects: *Police executives serving in jurisdictions with higher (perceived) percentages of Republicans will be less likely to support CRBs.*	We have not yet tested this hypothesis. Future work will continue to focus on this and other political effects.
H2.2 Race Effects: *Police executives serving in jurisdictions with higher percentages of Non-White members of the public will be more likely to support CRBs compared to those serving higher percentages of White members of the public.*	We have not yet tested this hypothesis. Future work will continue to focus on this and other demographic effects.

A.6 Does level of public support matter?

Two of our treatment conditions rely on public opinion on CRBs. We pool public opinion data for both treatments at the state level. One interesting consideration is whether the *level* of public support interacts to produce variation in any of our outcomes. In other words, perhaps a police executive exposed to moderately positive public opinion (such as in South Dakota) would be less affected by public opinion compared to a colleague exposed to very high levels of support (such as in New Mexico). In Table A15, we report the results of that interaction. As seen, there is no evidence that variation in levels of positive support have significantly different effects by treatment.

Table A15: Interaction Model: Does Level of Public Support Matter?

	CRB Feeling	CRB Establish	CRB Total Power
Public CRB Support	−0.080	0.207	0.985
	(1.065)	(0.314)	(2.010)
Public CRB Support w/ Firing	−0.831	−0.226	−1.583
	(0.875)	(0.269)	(1.652)
Peer CRB Adoption	0.166*	0.045+	0.388*
	(0.082)	(0.024)	(0.154)
% Support	0.013	0.005	0.013
	(0.013)	(0.004)	(0.025)
% Firing Support	−0.010	−0.001	−0.006
	(0.011)	(0.003)	(0.022)
Public CRB Support x % Support	0.003	−0.003	−0.010
	(0.016)	(0.005)	(0.030)
Public CRB Support w/ Firing x % Firing Support	0.012	0.004	0.035
	(0.015)	(0.004)	(0.027)
Intercept	2.339***	−0.229	0.924
	(0.585)	(0.168)	(1.104)
N	1205	975	1221
R2	0.01	0.01	0.01
R2 Adj.	0.007	0.007	0.007

Survey February 1 to March 7, 2022.
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

A.7 Additional Analysis for State-Level Police Union Agreements

According to Ballotpedia, 26 states have state-level police union agreements. Given union resistance to CRBs, readers have raised the concern that union status in a state will affect police executives' views on CRBs. To test the effect, we include a dummy variable denoting states where a state-level police union agreement is in operation. Table A16 reports no effect of state-level union agreements on the outcomes.

A.8 Agency Size Treatment Heterogeneity

Police agencies in the U.S. have high variation in the number of sworn officers they employ, which is highly correlated (though not perfectly) with the population size the agency provides policing services. To some degree, agency size may correlate with a host of interesting variables, such as rural/urban/exurban status, political or partisan conditions, unionization, and population density. All of these are reasonable factors to consider when investigating the policy views of a policing executive. In Table A17, we report the results of a heterogeneity test, which looks at variation in treatment conditional on how many officers are employed by the agency. As seen, there are two significant effects to consider. First, the effect of the CRB Support (Firing) treatment on a respondent's willingness to establish a CRB is conditioned by the number of officers an agency employs. Second, the effect of the Peer Diffusion treatment on the total power granted to a CRB is also conditioned by the number of officers an agency employs. Both effects are very small, and we provide them while noting

Table A16: OLS Results with State Union Measure

	Feeling	Establish	Appropriate Powers
Treatment	-	-	-
Public CRB Support	0.121	−0.012	0.361*
	(0.083)	(0.025)	(0.160)
Public CRB + Firing Support	−0.089	0.011	0.581***
	(0.083)	(0.025)	(0.160)
Peer Diffusion	0.184*	0.044+	0.456**
Controls	-	-	-
	(0.082)	(0.025)	(0.158)
Sheriff	−0.071	−0.051*	−0.497**
	(0.079)	(0.024)	(0.152)
Current CRB	0.961***		1.027***
	(0.084)		(0.162)
Independent	−0.449***	−0.032	−0.754***
	(0.105)	(0.032)	(0.204)
Republican	−0.430***	−0.075*	−0.814***
	(0.097)	(0.030)	(0.188)
FTE 25-49	−0.054	0.025	−0.400**
	(0.075)	(0.023)	(0.146)
FTE 50-99	−0.021	0.118***	−0.198
	(0.088)	(0.027)	(0.170)
FTE 100-499	−0.232*	0.135***	−0.481*
	(0.111)	(0.035)	(0.215)
FTE 500-999	0.234	0.284+	−0.393
	(0.341)	(0.153)	(0.659)
FTE 1000+	0.036	0.466***	0.089
	(0.363)	(0.133)	(0.701)
Years in Position	0.000	0.000	−0.003
	(0.005)	(0.001)	(0.009)
Not a Union State	0.021	−0.019	0.056
	(0.059)	(0.018)	(0.115)
N	1064	898	1062
R2	0.15	0.07	0.09
R2 Adj.	0.135	0.052	0.077
F			7.340

Survey February 1 to March 7, 2022.

Reference categories: Chief; Democrat; Sworn Personnel < 25, Union State

+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

Table A17: Agency Size Treatment Heterogeneity

	Feeling	Establish	Total Power
Public CRB Support	0.194	0.055	0.435
	(0.233)	(0.071)	(0.450)
Public CRB + Firing Support	0.066	−0.054	0.756+
	(0.223)	(0.067)	(0.432)
Peer Diffusion	0.057	−0.067	−0.323
	(0.238)	(0.072)	(0.460)
Number of Full-Time Officers	−0.014	0.039*	−0.165+
	(0.049)	(0.015)	(0.095)
Sheriff	−0.069	−0.043+	−0.545***
	(0.079)	(0.023)	(0.152)
Current CRB	0.937***		1.089***
	(0.087)		(0.168)
Independent	−0.420***	−0.013	−0.730***
	(0.107)	(0.032)	(0.208)
Republican	−0.416***	−0.052+	−0.824***
	(0.098)	(0.030)	(0.191)
Years in Position	−0.001	0.001	−0.001
	(0.005)	(0.001)	(0.010)
CRB Support * (log)Number of Officer	−0.024	−0.023	−0.032
	(0.071)	(0.022)	(0.136)
CRB Support Firing * (log)Number of Officer	−0.073	0.022	−0.080
	(0.071)	(0.022)	(0.137)
Peer Diffusion * (log)Number of Officer	0.039	0.037+	0.251+
	(0.073)	(0.023)	(0.141)
N	1017	866	1015
R2	0.14	0.06	0.09
R2 Adj.	0.127	0.052	0.082
F			8.598

Survey February 1 to March 7, 2022.
Reference categories: Chief; Democrat; Sworn Personnel < 25
+ p < 0.1, * p < 0.05, ** p < 0.01, *** p < 0.001

that they should only be considered to be preliminary results.

Note that in our earlier models, agency size was using *self-reported* categorical numbers recorded by our participants in the survey instrument. However, because there are relatively few respondents from the largest agencies, an interaction effect between treatment and categorical agency size suffers from severe data sparsity. Therefore, in this table we use *externally reported* numbers to construct a measure of agency size, resulting in a continuous measure.

A.9 Policing Executives Qualitative Responses

Our results provide important context in the ongoing policy debates surrounding CRBs specifically and democratic reforms in policing more generally. However, the strongest results we present are necessarily limited to the method, and the central experiment excludes the voices of individual police executives in their own words. A full qualitative account of what motivates responses to our experimental treatments is beyond the scope of this paper. Aware of this limitation, in the post-treatment survey instrument we invited respondents to tell us about their thoughts on CRBs, in their own words, with the prompt: "In your own words:

What are your thoughts about civilian review boards?"

Police executives proved eager to share their thoughts. Of the 1,131 respondents who completed some portion of the survey, a total of 1,029 provided open-text responses (77.3%). As one respondent noted, closed-set questions do not allow for the nuance that some might feel is needed: "This is a large topic. Your yes or no questions do not hit into enough detail to give accurate answers. Who is eligible for the board, how are they chosen, what can they "investigate" and have access to, etc...". Note that a full exploration of these responses is part of a separate effort by the authors. Below, we share a small selection of quoted responses that flesh out the "story" of CRBs, through the eyes of police executives. Responses centered around five themes: bias concerns, acknowledgment of potential benefits, concern about the qualifications of CRB members to judge police decisions, a belief that proper executive leadership supplants the need for external oversight, and pointing to existent forms of oversight that make CRBs duplicative.

1. **Bias Concerns**:

- "In communities that do have problems an overzealous, misguided governing body may give too much power to a CRB and officers may get their right to due process trampled on or be terminated wrongly even though they acted appropriately. Having been on the receiving end of false complaints myself throughout my twenty-one years, this is a real problem."
- "I am sure their intentions are good, however, it seems those who sit on such boards have agendas they want to promote and choose to take position the police are bad, officers are bad and those to break the law are justified in breaking the law."
- "There are many civilians who develop perceptions from what they see on television and have no idea what goes on in the real world."
- "Civilian Review Boards should not be convened solely based on unfounded sentiment and/or for political purposes"
- "There is no room for political agendas. Members of review boards should be unbiased."
- "In NJ, CRBs have become politically charged and the ones in existence have allowed people with criminal records to be members of the CRB."
- "I have nothing against a review board. However I feel most are agenda motivated and not for the good of all involved."
- "Liberal biased."
- "I believe there is too much hatred going on for civilians to set in an officer's review board."
- "Civilian Review Boards are a great idea with bad execution. Too many people with a negative outlook of police want on these boards."
- "They are generally anti police and members generally have some personal reasons for participating rather than transparency."
- "I had one in my former position. Unfortunately, people with extreme anti-police bias tried to get on the board to further their personal agenda. If you can leave politics out of it, a review process is not a bad thing as we are naturally held to a higher standard."
- "Typically are comprised of politically appointed individuals who are partial and have an agenda to fulfill. They have very little, if any, knowledge of police culture, policy or procedures but are

attempting to impose their pre-conceived ideas into the formation of policy and the administration of discipline."

2. **Potential Benefits**:

- "When their roles are appropriately defined, they can provide valuable tranparancy, accountability, and legetimacy to an agency's use of force policy and procedure."
- "If you have citizens reviewing the complaints and they find the complaint is false then their voice in the community can help build citizen trust in police officers."
- "Using civilian review boards increases transparency, helps foster trust between the police and the community, and facilitates police/community communication."
- "A well rounded discussion can lead to opening eyes and everyone understanding some actions of officers."
- "The best review boards and oversight bodies work with law enforcement, seeking improvements that are meaningful and realistic."
- "It is always good to have an independent board looking at law enforcement actions from a non-law enforcement point of review."
- "Great tool for agency accountability and great opportunity for civilian input."
- "A transparent method to oversight of law enforcement."
- "I am in favor , can be a positive buffer between police and citizens."

3. **Unqualified CRB Members**:

- "I think they can serve an appropriate and vital purpose, but there has to be direction and policies in place as well as a vetting and training process for members."
- "Members of civilian review boards should have to participate in the recruit training, participate in FTO programs, participate in ride along programs, and complete the annual training requirements."
- "Any person who is going to participate in a process that determines the job duties of an officer, reviews the officers performance, or participates in disciplinary actions should have the above training and experience so they can make educated decisions."
- "I have concerns related to the authority of A CRB as well as validated training, if such exists, to have members of the board properly trained to understand the perspective of the officer as well as understanding of state laws, training officers receive, collective bargaining agreements stipulations as well as department policies and procedures."
- "I do not believe a civilian who has never had the training or the life experiences that a police officer has should be able to judge what an officer does."
- "I love the idea of getting the thoughts of how to police our community better from a civilian board. I don't like the thought of a person with little to no experience in law enforcement making decisions they are not qualified or educated to make."

4. **Outcomes of Police Executives Failures**:

- "Civilian Review Boards can be extremely effective when convened in jurisdictions with poorly managed law enforcement agencies that have demonstrated negative historic and systemic issues, such as bias-based policing, excessive use of force, unfair treatment of civilians, lack of accountability and transparency, and ineffective internal investigative and disciplinary processes."
- "CRBs are what Chiefs and leaders hide behind to take the pressure off of them when it comes to discipline and termination of officers who have done nothing wrong."
- "It is also the responsibility of department heads and supervision to better explain to the public and

teach THEM how to interact with officers. I find so often that Chiefs and Sheriffs are cowards when it comes to backing their people in controversial situations and throw their cops under the bus when things get hard."

- "It is also the responsibility of department heads and supervision to better explain to the public and teach THEM how to interact with officers."
- "They can be effective when a Chief or Sheriff doesn't have the fortitude to impose discipline in a fair and unbiased way."

5. **Duplicative Effort**:

- "MY position as an elected Sheriff is the public I serve and the voters in my county are the de facto civilian review board. Every 4 years the public decides if I am doing a good job. One of those jobs is policing my agency and holding people accountable when we error or make mistakes, small or large. We police ourselves very well, and will continue to. If the public doesn't agree or thinks we need to go in a different direction, I will likely be out of a job in 2024."
- "Coupled with the numerous levels of oversight already in place, they seem to create more of a politically motivated, rather than reality of life motived direction in law enforcement."
- "They also divert already limited resources away from day to day activities."
- "Another level of constant oversight is excessive and has caused law enforcement moral issues."
- "It is my opinion that these agencies should be built up and supported rather than creating a completely new citizen review group that would have significant overlap on the currently supported civil service laws."
- "I believe civilians should have a voice, which they do through their elected officials."
- "Our city is very small, but already has an elected mayor and twelve elected councilmembers (two from each ward). These are duly elected representatives for the citizens of the community and already have the power and duty to oversee the operations of the police department. I would have no objection to citizen advisory groups, but I do not feel appointed members of a panel or board should overrule the existing authority of elected officials."
- "They are unnecessary. Human Resources/City Management reviews discipline issues. County Prosecutor reviews criminal issues."
- "We currently have a Civil Service Commission that has some oversight with hiring, promotion, and disciplinary appeals. I don't see the advantage of another civilian oversight board; it's an unnecessary bureaucracy within our local government."
- "Officer conduct should be regulated by written policy from the Chief of Police. The Chief is hired by a citizen panel (City Council, etc) and serves as the person responsible for ensuring proper and accountable policing. If the City Council is unhappy with the conduct of the police department or its members, they should hold the Chief accountable. If citizens are not receiving the service they require from their police department, they should hold the City Council accountable. A police Chief should be hired to provide the level of policing and accountability that the community wants. Injecting a CRB into the mix causes confusion, distrust, and a lack of accountability (if you cannot hold a single person accountable, e.g. the Police Chief, then the responsibility and thus accountability gets diluted).."
- "As an elected official, civilians review my performance every 4 years. Although I was more supportive in the past, given the recent attack on the law enforcement profession, I fear that these boards will be composed of anti-law enforcement members who don't understand what we do for a living."

A.10 Pre-Registered Hypotheses

Note: this section includes only the hypotheses from our full pre-analysis plan. Due to the journal's space constraints on online appendices, we are unable to submit the full plan. The editors have access to the full pre-analysis plan and have stated that it is available to reviewers upon request.

H1 Law Enforcement Learning Hypothesis: *When exposed to information about external support for CRBs from either the public or elites, police executives will be more supportive of CRBs.* This hypothesis is informed by the literature indicating the policy diffusion in policing is typically in response to sovereign demands, including public opinion, and elite influence through professional peers, dynamics which have not been studied in the context of CRBs.

H2 Public Influence Hypothesis: *When exposed to information on public support for CRBs, law enforcement leaders will be more supportive of CRBs if they are supported by the public.* This hypothesis is informed by the literature indicating the policy shifts in policing are the result of satisfying sovereign demands, including public demands.

H3 Elite Diffusion Hypothesis: *When exposed to information indicating that CRBs have diffused in elite peer institutions, police executives will be more supportive of CRBs.* This hypothesis is informed by the literature indicating the policy diffusion in policing is driven by peer adoption, specifically emanating from the largest policing agencies with national visibility and influence.

H4 What's Mine is Mine Hypothesis: *Police executives will be more accepting of CRBs with limited powers of investigation, compared to CRBs with independent disciplinary power.* This hypothesis is motivated by considerations about the 'ideal' form that CRBs ought to take, the proper role of external civilian review in policing (Hope, 2021), and the role of power sharing in criminal justice contexts. Amongst cities with some extant form of external review, the majority of overseeing institutions are restricted to review-only, investigative powers. Police leaders may react to enhanced CRB independence and authority negatively, given that the power to discipline is a historical prerogative of the chief executive. Leaders might also suspect that CRBs lack the appropriate experience to mete out discipline at an appropriately low – or high – level. For instance, recent reporting indicates that civilian boards imposed more lenient punishment in 70% of the cases where LAPD Chief Michael Moore recommended firing the officer (Rector, 2021). How attitudes about CRB's appopriate form and authority extend to law enforcement elites broadly remains an outstanding question with important implications.