




## Special Edition on Racism in America

The Special Edition on Racism in America provides scholarly information on the insidious nature of racism and offers solutions in an effort to eliminate it from society.

# Reimagining Public Safety In the Aftermath of George Floyd


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## Abstract

Following the murder of George Floyd, the U.S. Congress called upon the National Organization for Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE) to play a role in the reimagining of policing in America and a transformation of policing from a warrior to a guardian mentality. In turn, NOBLE partnered with the Institute for Polarities of Democracy (also referred to as the Institute) to conduct an analysis of the 21st century policing report. In this article we summarize the results of a year-long Phase 1 analysis carried out by the Institute and NOBLE. The Phase 1 analysis was conducted with support from the Walden University Center for Social Change through its strategic alliance with the Institute. The purpose of the analysis was to apply the polarities of democracy to a comprehensive approach to organizational and systems anti-racism methodologies and reform efforts that are compatible with NOBLE's focus on the transformation of policing cultures. Through the analysis, we generated recommendations that might be used to address racism in America through our comprehensive Anti-Racism Initiative. This will encompass not just policing, but organizations, institutions, and systems that include, but are not limited to, mental health, employment, the social economy, public education, healthcare, social work, housing, and the environment as part of a social change effort to advance healthy, sustainable, and just communities.

**Keywords:** *Reimagining policing, Black Lives Matter, George Floyd, Democracy, 21st Century Policing Report*

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## Introduction

Following the emergence of the Black Lives Matter movement, President Barack Obama established the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing in December of 2014. The *Final Report of the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing* (hereafter referred to as either the 21st Century Policing Report or just The Report) was issued in May of 2015. The Report was one of several broad efforts carried out by citizens and government that were dedicated to reimagining policing in America. Some efforts specifically touched on police and community relations, while others grappled with the excessive use-of-force incidents that galvanized people across the nation. The focus of these cumulative efforts was to seek changes in the criminal justice system to alleviate the racial disparities operating in America.

Unfortunately, vigorous pursuit in implementing The Report was shelved during the succeeding administration. Then, with the murder of George Floyd in May of 2020, there was a renewed effort by citizens groups and the Congress to pursue the transformation of policing in America. The National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives took a role in these efforts. One of the efforts pursued by NOBLE is an Anti-Racism Initiative being carried out through a strategic alliance with the Institute for Polarities of Democracy (also referred to as the Institute). This article reports on the year-long Anti-Racism Initiative Phase 1 analysis carried out by the Institute and NOBLE with the support of the Walden University Center for Social Change through its strategic alliance with the Institute.

In the rest of this article on the Phase 1 analysis of the Institute's Anti-Racism Initiative, we summarize the theoretical foundation, the methodology, and the findings. The Theoretical Foundation section describes the Institute for Polarities of Democracy approach to social change, which guided development of the *Anti-Racism Initiative Phase One Analysis* (Benet & McMillan, 2021). The Methodology section describes (a) the Phase 1 analysis participants, including the Anti-Racism Initiative Leadership Team, the 21st Century Policing Report Pillar Analysis Teams, and the Critical Race Theory (CRT) Analysis Team; (b) the four components of the Anti-Racism Initiative; and (c) the steps pursued in carrying out the Phase 1 analysis. The Findings section presents summaries of (a) the results generated through the Leadership Team's efforts, NOBLE's membership surveys, the 21st Century Policing Report pillar analyses, and the application of the CRT analysis; and (b) the recommended social change strategies to be implemented through future phases of the Institute's Anti-Racism Initiative.

## Theoretical Foundation

The Institute for Polarities of Democracy is a nonprofit social change think tank launched in 2017. Headquartered in Washington, DC, the Institute incorporates the decades of work by Dr. Bill Benet and Dr. Barry Johnson to bring about organizational, community, and societal changes that address the racial, gender, societal, economic, and environmental disparities that prevent the promise of democracy from becoming a reality for all people. The Institute was founded by Benet, Johnson, and Cliff Kayser, dean of the Mastery Program for Polarity Partnerships, LLC. The Institute is now headed by Retired Lt. Col. Dr. Nicole Hayes, president.

The Institute believes that democracy should be a solution to the problem of oppression. That it has failed to achieve that promise has been laid bare across America and around the globe in the wake of the murder of George Floyd. This tragedy has brought into greater focus the racial, social, economic, and environmental disparities that democracy has yet to solve. Yet the public awareness generated by this tragedy also has created an opportunity, willingness, and commitment to finally confront these disparities. We believe the Institute for Polarities of Democracy has the capacity and experience to address the structural and systemic racism underlying these vast racial disparities and inequities and to make the promise of democracy a reality

for all people. In this section, we review the philosophical underpinnings of the Institute for Polarities of Democracy approach and how that approach informs the Anti-Racism Initiative's Phase 1 analysis that the Institute has engaged in with the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives.

Hannah-Jones (2019) has argued that the beginning of racism and white supremacy in America should be traced to the arrival of over 20 slaves to our shores in 1619. She noted that this arrival in August of 1619 occurred 15 months before the Mayflower brought the Pilgrims to America with their Mayflower Compact that sought to create a rudimentary democracy, at least for some. From those points forward, the struggle for freedom, justice, equality, and human rights in America has confronted obstacles erected through racism and white supremacy. Racist ideas were used to justify the enslavement of people from Africa and deny them the benefits of democracy. Kendi (2016) has traced the emergence of these racist ideas to the early years of the 15th century. Yet, it is not until 1691 that the concept of "white" appears in the colonial laws of Virginia. In *The Invention of the White Race*, Allen (2012) traced this first legal definition to argue that this whiteness was invented in order to separate Whites from Blacks; to convince poor Whites that they were superior to Blacks so as to gain White support for the continuation of slavery.

From that point forward, this theme of those who hold power cynically promoting white supremacy in order to convince poor people that they are superior to Black people can be found throughout the history of America. As Lyndon Johnson observed in 1960, "if you can convince the lowest white man he's better than the best colored man, he won't notice you're picking his pocket. Hell, give him somebody to look down on, and he'll empty his pockets for you" (The Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, 2020, p. 408).

As Kendi (2016) argued, America has seen two competing themes struggling from the beginning. Racism and white supremacy seeking to maintain racial oppression confronted by those who pursued an anti-racist belief in equality. The Institute's polarities of democracy approach provides a theoretical framework for anti-racist work designed to make the promise of democracy a reality for all people.

The polarities of democracy approach combines the tools and processes developed through decades of polarity management practice with the basic principles of democracy drawn from centuries of literature about overcoming oppression. The Institute uses this unifying approach to catalyze social progress through leveraging the positive aspects of democratic values at all levels of society. The Institute supports social change activists, nonprofits, NGOs, researchers, policy makers, and government entities with training and services to use our tools and thinking as nonpartisan solutions for addressing oppression, discrimination, injustice, and related policy challenges.

The polarities of democracy theory was developed by Benet (2006, 2012, 2013, 2021) based on his 30-year career in politics and nonprofit management and his doctoral and postdoctoral research at the University of Toronto. In constructing the polarities of democracy approach, Benet applied the either/or thinking and both/and thinking concepts that underlie Johnson's (1992, 2020) Polarity Thinking.

According to Johnson (1992, 2020), although some problems can be solved through either/or thinking, there are other problems that are unsolvable because they consist of polarity dilemmas with two interrelated poles. These polarity dilemmas go on forever, existing as unsolvable tensions. Because each pole has both positive and negative aspects, you must use both/and thinking to manage these tensions by leveraging the polarities to maximize the positive aspects of each pole while minimizing the negative aspects.

Benet's (2006, 2012, 2013, 2021) research supported the finding that democracy should be an either/or solution to the problem of oppression in both the workplace and in society. It should provide a system of governance that (a) overcomes oppression (our deepest fear), (b) achieves human emancipation (our highest aspiration), and (c) develops healthy, sustainable, and just organizations and communities. But the challenge

in achieving and sustaining democracy as an either/or solution to oppression is that it also requires both/and thinking.

Although Benet's research concludes that democracy requires 10 values, each of which is essential, but none of which are sufficient by themselves, both/and thinking is needed because these 10 critical values exist as five polarity pairs. Thus, these pairs must be effectively leveraged to maximize the positive aspects of each pole and minimize the negative aspects of each pole to realize the promise of democracy as a solution to oppression. The 10 essential values are arranged as the five pairs (see Figure 1) that underlie the polarities of democracy approach.



**Figure 1.** *The Five Pairs of Values Comprising the Polarities of Democracy*

Further, each of the polarities of democracy pairs is interrelated with the other pairs, creating a *multarity* (a system of two or more interdependent polarity pairs). To seek greater democratization, we must effectively leverage each pair of values by maximizing the positive aspects and minimizing the negative aspects of each pole. Because the pairs are interdependent, failure to successfully leverage any one pair of values negatively impacts the other pairs.

In addition to Johnson's (1992) *Polarity Management* serving as Benet's conceptual framework, three other foundational works underlie the polarities of democracy: Blake and Mouton's (1964, 1985) *Managerial Grid*, Butts's Decalogue of Civic Values (1980, Chapter 5), and Hall's (1975) *Participatory Research*.

Finally, the polarities of democracy draw from concepts that span Western, Eastern, African, and Indigenous literature and wisdom. This suggests that the principles of democracy may have universal applicability to all cultures and time periods. These principles allow people to pursue positive social change by overcoming the forces of power and privilege that sustain systemic forms of racial, gender, social, environmental, and economic oppression and violence.

When examining the 21st Century Policing Report's concept of police being viewed as warriors or guardians, we see the importance of the values contained within the polarities of democracy approach as well as the need for both/and thinking to effectively leverage polarities. By using both/and thinking, police can embrace the guardian mentality through which they can effectively serve the community, while still retaining the legitimate authority police need to protect the community even as they move away from the warrior mentality.

Further, Benet's research strongly suggested that social change projects that adopt community-based participatory research methods are the most appropriate forums for effectively leveraging the positive aspects of each of the polarities of democracy values. Several strands of community-based participatory research have emerged over the past 80–100 years, including (a) participatory research, (b) action research, (c) participatory action research, and (d) popular education. Consistent with the polarities of democracy theory, these strands emerge from a broader perspective than that found in just Western thought and literature.

In addition to the works already cited and those included in the discussion of CRT in the Findings section below, Benet's polarities of democracy theory has been drawn from a wide and deep body of literature that may be incorporated within adult education transformational efforts. They include Barber (1984/2003), Chang (2011), Freire (1970/1997), Gardell (1991), Hartmann (2002), The International Council for Adult Education (2001), Klein (2007), Kelly (2001), Lerner (2006), Loewen 1995), Marable (2002), Pateman (1970), Ransom and Baird (2010), the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948), Waring (1988), West (2004), and Young (2002). All of these works provide powerful messages that support human emancipation and building healthy, sustainable, and just organizations and communities. They help us to understand the human condition, reveal specific obstacles we face to overcoming oppression, and contribute answers to our search for a better world. Appropriately, the Institute employs these vast, interrelated concepts to provide experiential and participatory approaches in real-world settings to make democracy a reality for all and not just a slogan for some. This polarities of democracy approach provides the philosophical underpinnings for the Institute's Anti-Racism Initiative being carried out in strategic alliance with NOBLE and informs the methodological design used for this Phase 1 analysis of that initiative.

## Methodology

### Initiative Timeline

Conceptualization of the Anti-Racism Initiative began shortly after the murder of George Floyd. On May 29, 2020, Benet (as senior fellow and coordinator of the Institute for Polarities of Democracy Learning Community) issued a call to action to respond to the outcry over George Floyd's murder. Dr. Joseph McMillan, a past president of NOBLE and a fellow of the Institute, immediately proposed a joint initiative between the Institute and NOBLE. A conference call was held on June 2, 2020, with McMillan, Benet, and Chief Cerelyn "CJ" Davis, the current president of NOBLE. President Davis then arranged a conference call on June 7 with the past presidents of NOBLE. McMillan proposed the joint initiative, Benet described the polarities of democracy approach, and the presidents supported proceeding with the development of a formal agreement.

Following the support of the NOBLE past presidents, McMillan and Benet conferred with the Institute for Polarities of Democracy president, Dr. Nicole Hayes, and the managing director, Suzanne Rackl. We developed the overall structure for the Anti-Racism Initiative and drafted a memorandum of agreement (MOA) between the Institute and NOBLE that was presented on June 10. We then requested volunteers for the initiative from the Learning Community on June 22, 2020. Finally, following a legal review of the MOA by both parties, the agreement was formally signed on November 12, 2020.

### Personnel

Ultimately, a total of 22 practitioners, activists, and academicians took part in conducting this Phase 1 analysis. All of these efforts, including those of the initiative co-chairs, were carried out on a pro bono basis. These volunteers were all affiliated with either NOBLE, the Institute, or Walden University. The overall methodological approach of the Anti-Racism Initiative and the Phase 1 analysis was designed by the initiative co-chairs. The remaining volunteers then conducted their efforts in teams under the guidance and with the participation of the initiative co-chairs as described below. Recruitment of Walden faculty and graduates was coordinated through the Walden University Center for Social Change and the efforts of Dr. Bill Schulz (director of the Center) and Molly Raymond (doctoral candidate and Institute fellow). In addition, the Center for Social Change constructed and administered the Institute/NOBLE surveys described below. A listing of all Phase 1 analysis participants is presented in the analysis (Benet & McMillan, 2021).



## **Initiative Core Leadership Team**

Following the methodological design of the Anti-Racism Initiative, the Core Leadership Team began meeting weekly on August 14, 2020, to plan and oversee the entire process. The Core Leadership Team was comprised of McMillan, Benet, Hayes, and Rackl, joined by Institute Senior Fellows Johnson and Kayser. The Core Leadership Team was joined monthly by up to eight NOBLE leaders who represented NOBLE in this process (Benet & McMillan, 2021).

## **Structure of the Anti-Racism Initiative**

The design of the overall Anti-Racism Initiative was finalized and announced on September 26, 2020. The initiative consists of four components as described below. McMillan and Benet serve as co-chairs for the initiative. McMillan also serves as the lead for Component 1 and Benet serves as the lead for Component 4 (as described below). Component 2 is led by Rackl (Institute Fellow and Managing Director) and Component 3 is led by Hayes (Institute President).

Component 1 of the Anti-Racism Initiative draws on the expertise and capabilities of the Institute for Polarities of Democracy to engage with and support NOBLE's efforts to transform policing cultures from a warrior mentality to one of guardianship through transformational reforms particularly related to the tenets of the 21st Century Policing Report and the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act. The Phase 1 analysis focused primarily on Component 1 of the Anti-Racism Initiative but also with planning for how Components 2, 3, and 4 will be integrated into future phases of the initiative.

Through Component 2 of the Anti-Racism Initiative, the Institute will develop an action agenda that applies the polarities of democracy approach to research and social change initiatives across a broad spectrum of both organizational, institutional, and community concerns designed to address racial disparities in America. This agenda will seek to ensure appropriate investment and commitment to societal systems including, but not limited to, mental health, employment, the social economy, public education, healthcare, social work, housing, and the environment. The Institute's action agenda will embrace a bold vision designed to address racial, social, economic, and environmental disparities through such policies as guaranteed living wage jobs, universal healthcare, affordable housing, a green New Deal, and progressive forms of income and wealth taxes to make the promise of democracy a reality for all.

Recognizing that reimagining policing will not be sufficient to address systemic racism in the United States, Component 3 of the Institute and NOBLE's Anti-Racism Initiative will include a comprehensive effort that applies the polarities of democracy approach to organizational and systems transformation methodologies that are compatible with NOBLE's focus on the transformation of policing cultures from a warrior mentality to one of guardianship. We will apply these reform efforts across organizations, institutions, and systems that include, but are not limited to, mental health, employment, the social economy, public education, healthcare, social work, housing, and the environment. Through this comprehensive approach we will address the Institute's commitment to positive social change and dedication to advancing healthy, sustainable, and just communities.

Through Component 4 of the Anti-Racism Initiative, the Institute will leverage its strategic alliance with the Walden University Center for Social Change to seek at least one lead volunteer faculty member from each school or college to identify completed, current, or future research studies related to specific social change initiatives consistent with addressing racism and racial disparities through the application of the polarities of democracy approach. The lead volunteer faculty members will promote the Institute's strategic alliance with NOBLE and will help identify additional faculty, graduate assistants, doctoral students, and postdoctoral alumni from their respective schools who will engage in transdisciplinary research that supports the Institute and NOBLE's Anti-Racism Initiative.

## **Regional Presentations**

McMillan and Benet held a series of recorded virtual presentations with NOBLE's membership in each of the six NOBLE Regions. These sessions were used to introduce the polarities of democracy approach and the Anti-Racism Initiative, respond to questions about the initiative, inform the participants about the forthcoming surveys (described below), and disseminate information about the initiative to the broader NOBLE membership in each Region.

## **NOBLE Key Terms Surveys**

In preparing for completion of the Phase 1 analysis, it was discovered that the original 21st Century Policing Report had been completed without providing definitions for the terms used in The Report. As a result, McMillan reviewed The Report and identified key terms that would be useful to understand as to how those terms are defined by the policing community. From that identification of key terms, McMillan worked with Schulz to prepare a survey that was deployed by Walden University for two cohorts. The first survey was sent to approximately 1,656 NOBLE CEOs and a second survey of approximately 2,500 was sent to the NOBLE general membership during the period of November 2020 and January 2021. A total of 224 surveys (a 13.52% return rate) were completed for the first cohort and 233 (a 9.32% return rate) for the second cohort. The results of these surveys can be found through the Institute for Polarities website (Benet & McMillan, 2021).

## **The Pillar Analysis Teams**

The 21st Century Policing Report consisted of analysis, recommendations, and action items across six pillars of law enforcement. NOBLE requested the Institute to focus on four specific pillars (Pillars 1, 2, 4, and 5) as described in the Findings Section. McMillan recruited and supervised the four pillar analysis teams. A series of strategy sessions led by McMillan and Benet were held with all the volunteers regarding the scope and intent of the Institute and NOBLE's engagement relative to the initiative. From these conversations, three volunteers were assigned to each specific pillar analysis team. McMillan was able to obtain copies of notes and transcripts from the various listening sessions held in preparation of the original 21st Century Policing Report. All obtained information was placed into an Institute-owned virtual drop-box for ultimate retrieval purposes and made available to the pillar analysis teams as appropriate. The teams were then able to review the notes and transcripts from the original listening sessions to determine if there were any important themes or concepts that were not included in The Report and/or if there were important concepts that needed to be more prominently identified. The results of the pillar analysis team reviews are contained in the Findings section below.

## **Application of the Polarities of Democracy to the Pillars**

Following completion of the transcript reviews by the pillar analysis teams, McMillan and Benet conducted a Level 1 analysis for each of the 21st Century Policing Report recommendations and action items contained in each of the four pillars reviewed. Through this Level 1 analysis, they determined which polarities of democracy pairs are readily associated with each specific recommendation and/or action item of The 21st Century Policing Report. In addition, a more detailed Level 2 analysis was performed to explore how the polarities of democracy impacted four specific action items, one from each of the four pillars.

## **Application of CRT**

The CRT Assessment Team consisted of Dr. Bruce Strouble, Dr. Sophie Charles, and Dr. Sandra Harris. Strouble was asked to lead the CRT Analysis Team because of his doctoral research noted below. Charles and Harris are familiar with CRT through both their academic and practitioner roles. Charles teaches at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, is a retired police officer with the NYC Police Department and serves as the chair

of NOBLE's Education and Training Committee. Harris is the director of academic review at Walden University.

### **Integration With Other NOBLE Initiatives**

The polarities of democracy approach serves to define the value sets and processes that communities can use to pursue two other initiatives embarked on by NOBLE. Those initiatives are the John Jay Future of Public Safety Report and NOBLE's Report of the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force. Analysis of the effectiveness of integrating the polarities of democracy approach with the John Jay and NOBLE Task Force reports was conducted by McMillan. A summary of the recommendations of the John Jay Report and the NOBLE Task Force Report are contained in the Implementation Strategies Section below. Full copies of these reports are available through the links provided in Benet and McMillan (2021).

### **Summary of the Findings**

The complete findings of the Phase 1 analysis was posted on the Institute for Polarities of Democracy website following presentation and release of the Phase 1 analysis at the NOBLE Annual Conference on August 2, 2021. One of the most striking takeaways from the analysis of The Report is how relevant its recommendations are today. In many if not most instances, its recommendations and action items could be drawn directly from current headlines. For example, in providing guidance for the types of training and education that are needed for reimagining policing, in their report, the President's Taskforce on 21st Century Policing (2015) stated:

The need for understanding, tolerance, and sensitivity to African Americans, Latinos, recent immigrants, Muslims, and the LGBTQ community was discussed at length at the listening session, with witnesses giving examples of unacceptable behavior in law enforcement's dealings with all of these groups. Participants also discussed the need to move towards practices that respect all members of the community equally and away from policing tactics that can unintentionally lead to excessive enforcement against minorities. (p. 52)

To provide local law enforcement agencies with the guidance that local training academies require, The Report stresses the need for collaboration among law enforcement and educational institutions, particularly with support and guidance from the federal government. For example, the President's Taskforce on 21st Century Policing (2015) reported "that law enforcement [should] partner with academic institutions ... organizations such as ... the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives ... and other sources of appropriate training" (p. 51). The Report goes on to state that, "The Federal Government should encourage and support partnerships between law enforcement and academic institutions to support a culture that values ongoing education and the integration of current research into the development of training, policies, and practices" (p. 55). Following are summaries of the key findings that will inform the future phases of the Institute's Anti-Racism Initiative to be carried out in strategic alliance with NOBLE.

### **Findings of the Pillar Analysis Teams**

As noted in the Methodology section, there were four pillar analysis teams established to review the 21st Century Policing Report along with the notes and transcripts that arose from the listening sessions and that were used in drafting The Report. The pillar analysis teams identified the key themes contained in The Report and determined if there were either additional themes or important concepts that were obtained through the listening sessions but not included in The Report.



Although the pillar analysis teams did not identify any additional themes not originally included in the 21st Century Policing Report, they did arrive at two important conclusions. First, the teams reconfirmed the importance and relevancy of each of the recommendations and action items contained in The Report. But secondly, they found that the recommendations and action items did not fully express the need to address the negative impacts of institutional and structural racism in carrying out the recommendations and actions.

Presented below are the major themes found in the four pillars analyzed by the pillar analysis teams. Following these themes, the need to address the negative impacts of institutional and structural racism will be discussed below in the findings regarding both (a) the application of the polarities of democracy to the pillars of the 21st Century Policing Report and (b) the findings of the CRT Analysis Team.

### **Pillar 1—trust and legitimacy**

The Institute's Pillar 1 Analysis Team identified six major themes required to address trust and legitimacy as set forward in Pillar 1:

1. Ensure procedural justice (also a cross-cutting theme to other pillars).
2. Create a culture of transparency and accountability.
3. Initiate positive nonenforcement activities to engage communities.
4. Ensure that local law enforcement agencies track and analyze the level of trust communities have in the police.
5. Create local law enforcement agencies' workforces that encompass a broad range of diversity.
6. Ensure that local law enforcement agencies build relationships based on trust with immigrant communities.

### **Pillar 2—policies and procedures**

The Institute's Pillar 2 Analysis Team found seven key themes related to policies and procedures that do not result in disparate treatment and reflect community values in ways that embrace police serving as guardians and in the best interests of the community:

1. There is a need for law enforcement agencies to collaborate with disproportionately affected communities regarding the deployment of police resources.
2. There is a need for law enforcement agencies to develop comprehensive policies encompassing training, use of force, de-escalation, and other tactical areas.
3. There is a need for independent criminal investigations in police use-of-force cases.
4. There is a need to collect police use-of-force data.
5. There is a need for law enforcement agencies to revamp mass demonstration policies and integrate de-escalation strategies.
6. There is a need for creation of civilian oversight review boards.
7. There is a need for greater police transparency during the execution of enforcement actions.

### **Pillar 4—community policing and crime reduction**

The Institute's Pillar 4 Analysis Team identified three major themes required for community policing that results in crime reduction:

1. Embrace interventions that focus on police operating with a community service mentality, with an intent on de-escalation and problem solving that shifts, alters, or redirects situations to a less hostile or risky outcome.
2. Develop collaborative partnerships wherein communities and local law enforcement agencies identify common goals and local needs and work together for solutions.
3. Generate public safety through total community engagement that views safety not as something imposed by outside or by law enforcement but developed as a strategy at the community level.

### **Pillar 5—training and education**

The Institute's Pillar 5 Analysis Team identified five major themes related to preparing law enforcement for the requirements of the 21st Century:

1. Create consistent national training infrastructure.
2. Training needs to increase officers' knowledge of bias and the skills for producing a culture of bias-free behavior and cultural competency that builds trust and empathy across race, gender, immigrants, LGBTQ, and other lines.
3. The science, tools, and methodology of training should draw on institutions of higher education for relevant, current, evidence-based research on training and policing.
4. Officer Education Standards should include both minimum standards and opportunities for attaining higher educational levels.
5. Training should continue beyond the academy, create communities of learning, and integrate citizens whenever possible.

## **Findings Regarding Application of the Polarities of Democracy to the Pillars of the 21st Century Policing Report**

### **Level 1 analysis of polarities of democracy associations**

Following completion of the reviews by the pillar analysis teams, McMillan and Benet conducted a Level 1 analysis of all recommendations and action items contained within the 21st Century Policing Report pillars that were reviewed for this analysis. They examined the extent to which The Report's recommendations and action items are supported by the research and evidence underlying the polarities of democracy approach. In this Level 1 analysis, they also examined the extent to which implementation of the recommendations and action items requires effectively leveraging at least two or more of the polarities of democracy pairs.

This Level 1 analysis confirmed that in every instance the various recommendations and action items contained within The Report are supported by the research and evidence underlying the polarities of democracy approach. Further, also in every instance, implementation of the recommendations and action items will be positively or negatively affected depending on the extent to which the police and community effectively leverage at least two or more of the polarities of democracy pairs.

### **Level 2 analysis of polarities of democracy associations**

In addition to the Level 1 analysis, a Level 2 analysis provided a detailed examination of how the polarities of democracy pairs are associated with one identified recommendation and action item from each of the four pillars reviewed. These four examples of Level 2 analysis on how the polarities of democracy approach supports the recommendations and action items of the 21st Century Policing Report can be found in the full Analysis on the Institute for Polarities of Democracy website (Benet & McMillan, 2021).

## Findings of the CRT Analysis Team

As noted in the Methodology section above, the CRT Analysis Team was established to examine (a) the extent to which effectively leveraging the polarities of democracy can address the institutional and structural racism identified through the application of CRT and (b) if there are effects of the institutional and structural racism identified that cannot be addressed through effectively leveraging the polarities of democracy. Part of the Institute's analysis of several pillars of 21st Century Policing was to identify gaps and missed opportunities that could correct poor, punitive, and fatal policing practices in serving communities of color. It is important to highlight for the NOBLE Community that the 21st Century Policing Taskforce did an exceptional job of identifying key elements for police reform.

Further, the 21st Century Policing Report (2015) contains this statement: “the problem is a widespread one that arises from history, from culture, and from racial inequalities that still pervade our society and are especially salient in the context of criminal justice” (p. 10). Using CRT in conjunction with the polarities of democracy stresses this point and allows the NOBLE Community to “connect the dots” and emphasize the need to infuse this historically specific information into all educational platforms for law enforcement officers. When the history of institutional racism as a fundamental pillar in law enforcement operations is omitted from the education of police officers, fatal flaws in serving Black and Brown communities will persist.

However, while there has been increased use of both CRT and the polarities of democracy as constructs to identify and address institutional and systemic racism, only one study (Strouble, 2015) is known to have examined the utility of CRT through the lens of polarities of democracy. Strouble (2015) conducted case studies of two majority African American communities, one urban and one rural, to assess the extent to which the institutional and structural racism identified through the application of CRT negatively impacted those communities, specifically in terms of developing social capital. Strouble then assessed the extent to which polarities of democracy might be used to mitigate the negative effects of the institutional and structural racism identified through the application of CRT. For his detailed review of CRT see Strouble, 2015, pp. 18–25. For his findings regarding the ability of polarities of democracy to mitigate the negative effects of racism identified through the application of CRT, see Strouble (2015, pp. 182–188).

Both the polarities of democracy and CRT fall within the broader critical theory paradigm of pursuing positive social change by overcoming the forces of institutional oppression and violence (racial, gender, social, environmental, economic, militaristic, etc.) that threaten the survival of the human species. While critical theory encompasses many versions, Bohman (2012) concluded that the various iterations always focus on promoting positive social change by overcoming oppression and that, “a theory is critical to the extent that it seeks human emancipation ... decreasing domination and increasing freedom” (para. 1).

The CRT Analysis Team found that CRT provides a lens for viewing social interaction in the United States from the perspective of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Its primary purpose is to investigate the role of racism in society. In addition, CRT serves as a praxis for the development of anti-racist programs and policy. Some have articulated CRT as an outgrowth of the application of critical theory in legal studies. Various works have credited the origin of CRT to the 1980s and 90s works of Bell (1980, 1992) and other scholars, which critiqued the slow-paced racial reforms as well as rollbacks of many advances from the 1960s civil rights movements (Delgado & Stefancic, 2013; Harris, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2011).

When considering the 21st Century Policing Report, the CRT lens may work to center racism, thus allowing for an intensive focus on its mitigation. To facilitate greater trust and legitimacy, law enforcement agencies must submit to public accountability from the people they serve. Also, community policing efforts must include an effort to meaningfully undo the negative impacts of historical abuses. This will require that voices of color are included and elevated in the shaping of policies and procedures used to police their communities.

Lastly, all education and training must be based in racial realism recognizing that racism is a root cause of negative relationships between law enforcement and BIPOC communities.

Both CRT and polarities of democracy identify racism as a core issue that impedes social progress for BIPOC (Strouble, 2015). Furthermore, many of the racial injustice problems in the American Criminal Justice system may be a consequence of the failure to effectively leverage the polarities of democracy. For example, justice and due process are both essential functions of a legitimate democracy and an essential role of policing. Failure to properly leverage this polarity would seemingly have disastrous effects for the social outlook of a community. In the Strouble (2015) study, several firsthand descriptions of police brutality and mistreatment by the legal system were interpreted to suggest that the members of the Black communities in the study were experiencing the downsides of the justice and due process polarity. The consequences of this experience include but are not limited to reduced trust in law enforcement and therefore limited participation in efforts to improve relations.

A prolonged failure to properly leverage the justice and due process polarity results in a cycle between the negative consequences of each polarity pole. When communities experience the downsides of a polarity, over time, there is normally an urge to shift to the opposite pole (Johnson, 1992). This urge may manifest as anti-police rhetoric, protest, vigilantism, criminal behavior, and complete contempt for the justice system. Johnson (1992) posits that the more intense the experience of the downsides of the pole the stronger the response. So, following this logic, it would be expected for oppressed BIPOC communities experiencing the downsides of the justice or due process pole to pursue moving to the positive aspects of the opposite pole. However, structural racism creates a power imbalance, which prevents the shift and causes oppressed communities to experience the downsides of both poles continuously (Strouble, 2015). This further exacerbates existing conflicts between law enforcement agencies and the communities in which they work making them less safe for both community members and officers.

This is why the polarities of democracy is an appropriate framework to facilitate anti-racism efforts that are able to reach their optimal level within the criminal justice system. The principles of the polarities of democracy require first the acceptance of the assumption that democracy is a solution for racial oppression. This is aligned with the CRT concept of racial realism. Thus, leveraging the five polarities appropriately may be critical for successfully mitigating structural racism issues in law enforcement. For example, incorporating and elevating voices of color would require effectively leveraging the participation and representation pair. Furthermore, proactively seeking to identify and dismantle oppressive structures corresponds with the authority and freedom, justice and due process, and human rights and communal obligations polarities. Effectively leveraging the diversity and equality pair would allow for mitigation of the sources of intersectional oppression. Lastly, seeking to redress the historical impacts of racism to improve relations between police and BIPOC communities would require effectively leveraging all five pairs identified in the polarities of democracy approach.

### **Findings Regarding Implementation Strategies**

Through the Phase 1 analysis, we identified four specific approaches that can be integrated into comprehensive transformation programs for reimagining policing. These findings can be used by those communities seeking guidance on how to use this analysis and the polarities of democracy approach to determine (a) which aspects of their current policing approach need to be retained and supported, (b) what changes need to be made to conform to the 21st Century Policing Report, and (c) the action steps that can be used to most effectively leverage the polarities of democracy in order to maximize the positive aspects of each value while minimizing the negative aspects.

### **Incorporate the 21st Century Policing Report and Implementation Guide**

Recognizing the myriad of challenges faced by communities embracing the 21st Century Policing Report, its

authors developed an implementation guide (also referred to as the Guide) to serve as the mechanism and resource for successfully implementing The Report's recommendations and actions. Threaded throughout the Guide were various themes that support moving from a warrior to a guardian mentality. The Guide was constructed to serve as a "blueprint" by which local governments, law enforcement, and communities could collaborate to "reduce crime and build trust and legitimacy" (Office of Community Oriented Policing Services [COPS] (2015, p. 5).

The Guide contains strategies that should be considered when implementing various approaches to address recommendations and actions contained in The Report. Critical to any successful implementation is the ability to listen and plan. As such, creating an environment to achieve success is paramount. Bringing together stakeholders across the community to work collaboratively on problems within that community strengthens the ability for success. The Guide suggests the necessity for communities to use The Report as a means to "strengthen police-community dialogue and collaboration" (COPS, 2015, p. 15).

### **Incorporate the John Jay Future of Public Safety Report**

The John Jay College of Criminal Justice Future of Public Safety Report, carried out in collaboration with NOBLE, specifically focused on the areas of public safety and accountability. This effort involved a series of listening sessions focused on the future of public safety in America. McMillan participated in each of the John Jay Listening Sessions and assessed how those efforts can be supported by the polarities of democracy approach. Following these sessions, John Jay and NOBLE developed a report with several recommendations addressing strategies that transcend electoral cycles and support long-term changes in the policing industry.

- Help citizens redefine the role and responsibility of law enforcement in their community;
- Identify appropriate services for effective public safety systems;
- Determine which resources are needed for community and social-based services and programs to replace police in responding to certain calls for service; and
- Measure the impact social investments have on decreasing the need for law enforcement services.

### **Incorporate the NOBLE Reimagining Public Safety Task Force Report**

A second NOBLE initiated effort involved formulation of a Task Force challenged to develop a framework to work with community organizations on how to "reduce the footprint of law enforcement in public safety, but to do so in a strategic way that does not reduce public safety" (NOBLE Reimagining Public Safety Task Force Report). McMillan coordinated the Institute's efforts with the Task Force Co-Chairs to ensure the appropriate situational awareness of both efforts. The recommendations of the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force consisted of a variety of measures necessary to reimagine policing in communities consistent with their unique needs. The Task Force Report's specific suggestions to substantively reimagine public safety included:

- Prioritize advocacy efforts for key federal, state, and local policy changes such as ending racial profiling and revisiting qualified immunity.
- Advocate for mandatory minimum standards in use of deadly force policies and review all use-of-force incidents.
- Ensure comprehensive retraining of officers focused on frequent, hands-on training.
- Advocate for citizen review and oversight.
- Provide special training and certification for school resource officers.



- Police departments should (a) reconsider the need for use of military-grade equipment; (b) disclose the possession of such equipment; and (c) properly train police officers who use military-grade equipment and hold them accountable for misconduct.
- Police culture should be adjusted to reflect a guardian rather than warrior mentality.

### **Incorporate the Polarities of Democracy Approaches for Social Change**

In addition to this Phase 1 analysis, the Institute for Polarities of Democracy has developed numerous resources that can be used by communities to support their efforts in incorporating the polarities of democracy approach along with the 21st Century Policing Report and Implementation Guide, the John Jay Report, and the NOBLE Task Force Report. Using the polarities of democracy's set of values provides opportunities for communities to work through a myriad of challenges arising from the tensions associated with the interdependent pairs.

Further, the foundational principles underlying the polarities of democracy have been used to address police community relations in numerous settings. For example, Johnson's (2020) polarity thinking has been used in Charlottesville, South Carolina (Mullen et al., July 5, 2017) for the Illumination Project and in Louisville, Kentucky (The Synergy Project, 2020).

A core tool of Johnson's approach is the SMALL process. The SMALL process can be used to bring stakeholders together to implement the 21st Century Policing Report's recommendations and actions consistent with the polarities of democracy framework. The following is a brief description of the five-step SMALL process:

1. **Seeing**—Appreciate the interdependent nature of past, present, and future values, competencies and strategic objectives. Differentiate Problem Solving from Polarity Leveraging and how and when to use both.
2. **Mapping**—Identify desired results to achieve and understand the negative consequences associated with an over or under focus on one pole of a Polarity to the neglect of the interdependent pole.
3. **Assessing**—Assess your current strengths and vulnerabilities for the key Polarities identified and mapped.
4. **Learning**—Deepen data-driven insights and qualitative connections among key stakeholders in the evaluation and meaning-making of Polarity Assessment results.
5. **Leveraging**—Developing dual strategy Action Steps and measurable Early Warnings that support achieving your preferred future faster and more sustainably. Retain what's worked from the past, attain what's needed for the future, and sustain the results over time.

In addition, projects have employed other underlying principles from the polarities of democracy for police transformation and community policing efforts in the United States and internationally. Examples of these include Blake and Mouton's Managerial Grid in Northern Ireland (Drennan, 2005) and participatory research projects in Israel (Geva & Shem-Tov, 2002), India (Rai, 2012), and Austin, Texas (La Vigne et al., 2018).

## **Conclusion**

As seen throughout this analysis, the various recommendations and action items contained within the 21st Century Policing Report are supported by the research and evidence underlying the polarities of democracy approach. In addition, the polarities of democracy approach provides local communities with a framework to

analyze and assess police culture and develop transformational reform efforts to ensure that all members of the community are treated with dignity and respect.

The polarities of democracy approach specifies the values and relationships that can guide local communities in their transformational policing reform efforts. When integrated with the 21st Century Policing Report itself, the 21st Century Policing Implementation Guide, the John Jay Future of Public Safety Report, and NOBLE's Report of the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force, the polarities of democracy approach can contribute to a community's collaborative efforts that "move the needle" in reimagining policing towards greater transparency and accountability.

The fracture in America between police and the public has been long in coming. The deaths of George Floyd, Brianna Taylor, Eric Garner, Tamir Rice and so many other black men, women, and children at the hands of the police cannot be healed through piecemeal or half-hearted efforts. The polarities of democracy approach can help both police and community embrace a guardian mentality through which the police can fulfill their mission to serve, while still retaining the authority they need to protect even as they move away from a warrior mentality.

Transforming policing alone will not be sufficient to make the promise of democracy a reality for all people in America. But the effort to achieve a true multiracial and multicultural democracy cannot occur without it. NOBLE and the Institute for Polarities of Democracy are committed to play our part in that long struggle to, in the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., bend the arc of history towards justice.

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