



ILLINOIS YOUTH SUMMIT

Constitutional Democracy Project



2021 Curriculum

Major Sponsor

ROBERT R.
MCCORMICK
FOUNDATION



Chicago-Kent College of Law
ILLINOIS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY
Constitutional Democracy Project

What Does “Defund the Police” Mean? is a publication of the Constitutional Democracy Project of Chicago-Kent College of Law, Illinois Institute of Technology. The Youth Summit format was originally developed by the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago, which transferred the program to Chicago-Kent in 2019. These materials can be used for educational purposes.

Author acknowledgement: Laurel Singleton, Education Consultant and Dee Runaas, CDP Project Director.

Funding for the Constitutional Democracy Project Illinois Youth Summit is provided by the Robert R. McCormick Foundation and generous CDP donors.

What Does “Defund the Police” Mean? Should We Adopt Policies to Achieve Its Goals?

Overview

In the summer of 2014, police killings of two African American men, Eric Garner in New York City and Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, sparked widespread protests and calls for changes in policing. Over the next six years, however, there were more instances of African Americans being killed by police. Many of the deaths that occurred in this period were recorded by bystanders or by police officers’ body cams. Other deaths were not recorded. In still other cases, recordings were not made public for many months, such as in the killing of 26-year-old Breonna Taylor in March 2020. Ms. Taylor was shot in her apartment during a botched raid by Louisville, Kentucky, police officers. Whether all the video in that case has been released is still disputed.

Then, on May 25, 2020, a killing that would prompt a summer of worldwide outrage took place in Minneapolis, Minnesota. George Floyd, a 46-year-old African American, was stopped by police outside a convenience store. An employee of the store suspected Mr. Floyd of paying with a counterfeit \$20 bill. Seventeen minutes later, Mr. Floyd was dead; police officer Derek Chauvin had pinned Mr. Floyd to the ground, with his knee on Floyd’s neck. Bystanders captured the killing on video, which quickly went viral. The video was viewed more than 1 billion times.

Protests began in Minneapolis the next day and quickly spread around the world, as activists demanded that all levels of government address racial justice and systemic racism, particularly police misconduct and brutality. The slogan “Defund the Police” gained popularity during these protests. People reacted strongly to the slogan, both favorably and unfavorably. Advocates say the phrase lets them control the narrative about police and the community. Other people say the phrase alienates people who would support the reforms being sought if they were presented differently. Some research suggests that negative responses to the phrase may have cost the Democrats some votes in the 2020 election.

But what does the phrase really mean? Does it mean doing away with the police? Or does it mean using funds devoted to policing in different ways? Or does it mean something else entirely? Once we have a clear idea of the goals of people who advocate defunding the police, should we adopt policies to achieve the goals? Those are the questions students seek to answer in this unit.

They pursue these questions by taking part in the following activities:

- Comparing their responses to the phrase, as well as their ideas of what it means, with their classmates’ thoughts.
- Learning about the problem that advocates of “defunding the police” are addressing.
- Working in small groups to consider different approaches for addressing the problem and presenting their work to the class

- Through discussion, developing a shared definition of “defund the police” and choosing strategies they think will meet the reform goals inherent in their definition or identifying other goals that they do not define as “defund the police.”
- Returning to what they wrote in the opening activity to assess how their feelings and thinking have changed and then writing a brief position statement as a ticket into the Summit.

Focus Questions

What does “defund the police” mean? Should we adopt policies to achieve its goals?

Objectives

- Use primary and secondary sources to gain background knowledge on police use of force and inequality in the criminal justice system.
- Evaluate strategies for reforming the criminal justice system.
- Discuss divergent views on the meaning of “defund the police.”
- Develop a definition of “defund the police” and select strategies aligned with that definition or identifying other goals that they do not define as “defund the police.”
- Take and defend a position on reforming the criminal justice system.

Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science, 9-12

This unit addresses the following Illinois learning standards (Inquiry Skills and Civics Standards):

- SS.IS.4.9-12: Gather and evaluate information from multiple sources while considering the origin credibility, point of view, authority, structure, context, and corroborative value of the sources.
- SS.IS.6.9-12: Construct and evaluate explanations and arguments using multiple sources and relevant, verified information.
- SS.IS.7.9-12: Articulate explanations and arguments to a targeted audience in diverse settings.
- SS.IS.9.9-12: Use deliberative processes and apply democratic strategies and procedures to address local, regional, or global concerns and take action in or out of school.
- SS.CV.4.9-12: Analyze the impact of constitutions, laws, and agreements on the maintenance of order, justice, equality, and liberty.
- SS.CV.9.9-12: Evaluate public policies in terms of intended and unintended outcomes and related consequences.

Common Core State Standards

This unit addresses the following Common Core State Standards:

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.2: Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.4: Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines *faction* in *Federalist* No. 10).

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.11-12.1: Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11-12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.WHST.11-12.1: Write arguments focused on discipline-specific content.

Materials

Activity: What Does “Defund the Police” Mean to Us?

Visual: Responses to “Defund the Police”

Visual: Focus Questions

Activity: What Issue Is “Defund the Police” Addressing?

Reading: Identifying the Issue and What Has Been Done

Activity: What Does “Defund the Police” Mean to Other People?

Handout: What Does It Mean to Defund the Police? Viewing Guide

Activity: How Should the Problem Be Addressed?

Handout: Researching Policy Proposals

Handout: Change the Way Calls Are Handled

Handout: Address the Root Causes of Community Problems

Handout: Reduce Over-policing

Handout: Reimagine the Police Department

Activity: What Does “Defund the Police” Mean to Me and Do I Support Policies to Achieve Its Goals?

Handout: Answering the Focus Questions

Activity: What Does “Defund the Police” Mean to Us?

Overview

This lesson is designed to activate students’ preexisting ideas and feelings about the term “Defund the Police” as a precursor to delving more deeply into the goals and proposed strategies of people who use the phrase to call for reform.

Procedures

- Create a large T-chart on the board or on posting paper:

Defund the Police	
How do you feel when you hear this phrase?	What do you think this phrase means?

[If you are teaching remotely, create a shared document in a similar format.]

- Tell students that “Defund the Police” is a phrase some activists have used in response to police killings of African Americans. The phrase provokes many different reactions from people.
- Give each student two colors of self-adhesive notes. Ask them to use one color to record their emotional response to the phrase “Defund the Police”—when they hear the phrase, do they feel excited, scared, angry, indifferent, hopeful, depressed, etc.? Ask them to write a brief definition of the term on the other color note—what do they think the phrase actually means? They do not need to sign their notes. Have students place their notes on the T-chart.

If you are teaching remotely, have students add their responses to the shared document you have created for this purpose.

- Read some of the responses to the question of how the phrase makes students feel, looking for different emotional responses. If student responses tend to be similar, you may want to use the **Visual: Responses to “Defund the Police”** to illustrate the varying responses to the phrase. Ask: Why do you think people feel differently when they hear this phrase? (*They have different life experiences, different political views, different understandings of what the phrase means.*)

- Building on the idea that what we think a phrase means will influence how we feel about the phrase, read some of students' ideas of what the term "Defund the Police" means. Ask students to identify similarities and differences they see among the definitions.
- Show the *Visual: Focus Questions* and let students read the two questions. Then ask: Based on our class's responses, what questions do you have about the phrase "Defund the Police"? Think about questions whose answers will help you decide if you would support policies to achieve the goals of people who advocate defunding the police? If necessary, give students an example of a supporting question (e.g., Who supports defunding the police?). Record students' questions on the board or, if teaching remotely, in a shared document.
- Close the activity by asking each student to choose a question they find particularly interesting and commit to answering it as they study the issue.

Visual: Responses to “Defund the Police”



Defunding the police is one of the most dangerous proposals to surface in my lifetime. Americans need more police. Americans need more men and women who run towards danger and not away from it.

John Kavanagh, Arizona legislator and retired police officer

Defunding police is one step we can take to free up resources and public imagination for more just and humane approaches to community safety and shared well-being. It's time to defund the police.

Mary Zerkel, American Friends Service Committee

If we say “defund the police,” not just white folks, but Michelle’s mom might say, “If I’m getting robbed, who am I going to call and is somebody going to show up?”

Former President Barack Obama

To folks who complain protest demands make others uncomfortable... that’s the point.

Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, New York

Activity: What Issue Is “Defund the Police” Addressing?

Overview

Before students can try to agree on a definition of “defund the police” and consider whether they would support any of the policies that advocates of “defunding” propose, they need background on the issue defunding the police is designed to address and the history of responses to that problem. This activity is designed to provide that foundational knowledge. This activity and the one that follows both involve group work—specifically, work in four groups. You will want to plan the groups in advance, particularly if you are teaching remotely, as you will need to create a breakout room for each group.

Note: Discussing the issue of police violence may be challenging for students, for two different reasons. First, it is likely that some of your students have had experiences with the police that are representative of the problem discussed in the handout. Acknowledging students’ experiences is important; you may want to set up a mechanism for dealing with these experiences outside of the activity structure. One possibility is to set up a section of the classroom wall labeled “Our Experiences with Police,” on which students can post their own experiences (good or bad). You can then use students’ stories as the basis for a class discussion. Second, some students may have affiliations with police officers and will find the emphasis on police misconduct troubling and hurtful; for these students, it is important to acknowledge that many police officers do their best to serve the community and treat all people fairly.

Procedures

- Read students the following quotation from James Baldwin: “Not everything that is faced can be changed. But nothing can be changed until it is faced.” Ask: How could you tie this quotation to the protests that took place in Chicago and around the world in the summer of 2020? (*Answers will vary, but probe if no one mentions that protests are—at least in part—an attempt to make people face a problem.*) What was the issue these protests focus on? (*Police killing of African American people or, more broadly, police brutality towards communities of color*) How knowledgeable are you about the issue, its history, and solutions that have been proposed in the past? (*Accept all answers; this might be a good point to introduce your strategy for acknowledging students’ lived experiences with police.*)
- Tell students in this lesson they are going to deepen their understanding of the issue and what might be done about it. They will be working in groups as they do this work. Introduce the groups, giving each group a number from 1 to 4. If teaching face-to-face, have students get into their groups; if teaching remotely, you will want to give all of the instructions before you send students to their breakout rooms.
- Make the ***Handout: Identifying the Issue and What Has Been Done*** available and go over the instructions with students. Each group will be reading one section of the handout and preparing to either ask or answer questions about that section.

- Give students time to complete the reading and preparation, then call the class back together. Have Group 1 pose their questions for Group 2 to answer; when they have asked all three questions, let Groups 3 and 4 ask any questions they have about the issue; Groups 1 and 2 can both answer at this point. Repeat the process with Group 3 posing their questions to Group 4 and Groups 1 and 2 asking any questions they have about solutions tried in the past.
- When all the groups have had a chance to ask/answer questions, debrief using such questions as the following:
 - What did you learn about the issue from this activity? Based on what you heard, is the problem more or less serious than you previously thought? What’s your evidence? *(This might be a good place to acknowledge that, while the problem is serious, there are many police officers who do their best to be guardians of the community and the conversation in your classroom should not impugn all law enforcement officers.)*
 - Were any of the solutions discussed in the reading successful enough to be worth considering for continued/future use? Use evidence to explain your answer.
 - Do you see any relationship between the solutions described in the reading and defunding the police? Explain the connection you see.
- Ask students: Now that you know more about the problem people were protesting about in the summer of 2020 and the ways the problem had been addressed in the recent past, imagine that you are the leader of an advocacy group working on issues related to law enforcement and race. What might prompt you to propose defunding the police? What would your overall goals be? What would you be hoping to achieve? Help students focus on overarching goals, such as stopping police killings of people of color and raising support for action. Post goals on the board and tell students they will be looking at ways to achieve these goals that some supporters of defunding the police back in the next lesson. Some students may want to propose solutions to address these goals that do not fall within the “defund the police” idea (e.g., more training for officers). Those ideas will be open for discussion as well.

Reading: Identifying the Issue and What Has Been Done

Directions

Each group will have a different assignment, as described below. Complete your assignment in preparation for a class report-out and discussion.

Group 1

Read the **Introduction** and **The Problem** sections. As you read, try to identify the problem and find evidence to support that the problem exists. Then work with your group to come up with three questions to ask Group 2, who will be reading the same section. The questions should bring out the most important information from the section.

Group 2

Read the **Introduction** and **The Problem** sections. As you read, try to identify the problem and find evidence to support that the problem exists. During the report-out, you will be answering questions from Group 1. As a group, try to anticipate the questions that might be asked to bring out the most important information and be prepared to answer them.

Group 3

Read the **Introduction** and **What Has Been Done** sections. As you read, try to identify the different solutions tried and find evidence of whether those solutions worked. Then work with your group to come up with three questions to ask Group 4, who will be reading the same section. The questions should bring out the most important information from the section.

Group 4

Read the **Introduction** and **What Has Been Done** sections. As you read, try to identify the different solutions tried and find evidence of whether those solutions worked. During the report-out, you will be answering questions from Group 3. As a group, try to anticipate the questions that might be asked to bring out the most important information and be prepared to answer them.

All Groups

You will have a chance to ask questions about the section you did not read after the question/answer presentation. Thus, you should listen carefully to those presentations.

Introduction

The protests that swept the nation—and eventually the world—in summer 2020 were set off by the killing of George Floyd on May 25, 2020. Mr. Floyd, a 46-year-old African American, was stopped by police outside a convenience store. An employee of the store suspected Mr. Floyd of paying with a counterfeit \$20 bill. Seventeen minutes later, Mr. Floyd was dead, killed by a police officer; a video of the killing was viewed more than 1 billion times.

But this was far from the first time police killings of African Americans had sparked protests. In the summer of 2014, police killings of two African American men, Eric Garner in New York and Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri, sparked widespread protests and calls for changes in policing. What has happened since? Read on.

The Problem

In the years since 2014, little changed in terms of the number of people killed by police. This was true despite reform efforts such as police use of body cams, increased media attention, and recordings made by bystanders.

Some data:

- About 1,000 people are shot by police every year. Native Americans are 3 times more likely than white people to be shot by police, Black people 2.6 times more likely than whites, and Latinos 1.3 times more likely than whites. Asian Americans are less likely than whites to be killed by police.
- Since the beginning of 2015, the Washington Post has been tracking the people shot and killed by police. Between January 1, 2015 and March 21, 2021, 1,465 Black people have been shot and killed by police; while African Americans make up 13 percent of the U.S. population, they are 32 percent of the people shot and killed by police.
- One study looked at 1.2 million 911 calls in an American city. White officers used their guns more often than Black officers and were more likely to use their guns when called to a predominantly Black neighborhood.
- Almost all (95 percent) people shot and killed by police are male. The average age for victims of police shootings is 30 for Black people, 31 for Native Americans, 33 for Latinos, and 38 for white people. Overall, nearly 32,000 years of life are lost annually in the United States due to police shootings. In addition, mental health suffers in communities where people are killed by police.
- Shooting is not the only way in which people die at the hands of police. Eric Garner died while in a chokehold. Natasha McKenna died after being restrained and Tased four times. Twenty-three-year-old Elijah McClain had a heart attack and died after being forcibly restrained and injected with the powerful tranquilizer ketamine. Freddie Gray died from a fatal spinal cord injury after being shackled, put in the back of a police van without a seat belt, and subjected to what is known as a “rough ride.” And George Floyd died after an officer knelt on his neck.

- According to the website Mapping Police Violence (<http://mappingpoliceviolence.org>), police killings have decreased in urban areas but increased in suburban and rural areas. This website also reports that the number of police killings in an area is not related to how much violent crime occurs in that area.
- Mapping Police Violence also reports that in over 98 percent of cases, police officers are not criminally prosecuted. When they are, they are not usually convicted.

Police violence has a long history, but modern technology has forced the public to pay attention. In the past, police brutality might be covered up. That was the case in Chicago when police officers led by Commander Jon Burge tortured African American men to get them to confess to crimes, often crimes they did not commit. This program of torture took place for 20 years, from 1972 to 1991.

Police violence did not start in the late 20th century. Historian Jeffrey S. Adler has studied use of deadly force by the Chicago Police between 1870 and 1920. Police often said they shot a person because that person was trying to escape. The person might be a thief, a purse-snatcher, or even just someone who was loitering. Sometimes police fired into a crowd and killed or injured innocent bystanders. And bias existed then as well: between 1910 and 1920, 3 percent of Chicago's residents were African American. Yet 21 percent of the people killed by police were Black.

What Has Been Done

Attempts to improve policing are not new. However, since the deaths of Michael Brown and Eric Garner in 2014, new attention has been given to assessing whether reforms actually work. The media, government, and researchers are all trying to gather data to figure that out. But police departments are not required to provide information about use of force by their officers, so information is still limited.

Some ideas for addressing police violence that have been considered in the past:

- Improving hiring. The police already have simulations that are used in training and can assess racial bias, a bad temper, and other individual characteristics that are connected with use of force. These simulations could be used in hiring. However, many police departments have trouble finding qualified candidates, so screening out more people could make this problem worse.
- Getting rid of bad officers currently on the job. In New York City, officers who had negative reports in their files were found to be three times more likely to fire their guns than other officers. Bad officers can also affect the people who work with them. However, getting rid of a bad officer isn't easy. Union contracts protect police officers from being easily fired. Police officers fired or forced out of one department may be hired by another. The officer who shot 12-year-old African American Tamir Rice in 2014 had been found unfit to serve by a police department where he previously worked. A study in

Florida showed that 3 percent of officers in the state had been fired or forced out of another department. These officers were more likely to be involved in misconduct at their new jobs than officers who had never been fired.

- Using body cameras. The use of body cams—cameras worn on the officer’s uniform—has increased dramatically since 2014. About half of police departments now use them. The idea behind their use was that if an officer’s interactions with people are recorded, the officer will be more careful about following appropriate procedures and less likely to use force. Early studies suggested body cams were effective in reducing use of force. But more recent studies have shown mixed results. Some show no reduction in use of force by officers wearing body cams. Others show some reductions, but the researchers ask whether the reductions are large enough to justify the expense of the cameras. Questions have also been raised about who should have access to the video. When departments don’t release the video, the public loses more trust in law enforcement.
- Teaching officers de-escalation skills. De-escalation skills are communication and negotiation tactics to be used to resolve situations in which officers might use physical force. The thinking behind teaching de-escalation is to help develop a guardian mentality among police officers, rather than a warrior mentality. Does it work? The use of such training has not been studied. Based on their own experiences, some law enforcement leaders say it works. Others aren’t sure it can work with everyone. Officers with a very strong warrior mentality may not be changed by training.
- Teaching principles of procedural justice. This strategy is also linked to developing a guardian approach. It involves teaching officers to listen to citizens, to be respectful and neutral, and to be transparent about their decisions. Implementing this kind of training in the Chicago Police Department reduced complaints against the police as well as the use of force.
- Better data collection. Having more information about the use of force could provide evidence of the effectiveness of various strategies. Knowing that they will be accountable for use of force may also change officers’ behavior. For example, one study showed that when officers had to file a report any time they pointed a gun at a person, gun deaths decreased. But this was a small study. More information is needed.

Activity: What Does “Defund the Police” Mean to Other People?

Overview

In this lesson, students learn what various individuals, from police officers to President Joe Biden to community activists think about defunding the police and some of the reform proposals associated with defunding the police. Students watch a documentary, looking for different perspectives and complicating their understanding of the problem they gathered background information about in the previous activity. They take part in a class conversation using the documentary as a text.

Procedure

- Remind students that, in the last activity, they looked at the “Why” of “Defund the Police”—the goals advocates hope to achieve. In this activity, they will look at different people’s ideas about the problem, the idea of defunding the police, and the “How”—what reforms or policy proposals advocates think should be put in place to achieve their goals. Not everyone agrees on the reforms they want to see happen, so there may be some controversy in this activity.
- Show students the CBS documentary *What Does It Mean to Defund the Police?* (<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/defund-the-police-meaning/>). The documentary presents different policies that might be pursued as part of defunding the police; it also presents the viewpoints of leaders of police associations/unions and confronts the issue of racism. The entire documentary is just over 26 minutes, but you could shorten by starting at 3 minutes 41 seconds and ending at 24 minutes 30 seconds. Students can use the *What Does It Mean to Defund the Police? Viewing Guide* to take notes during the viewing. Note that there are ads midway through the video, which would be a good time to turn down the volume and let students catch up on their note-taking or raise questions the documentary has sparked.
- At the end of the video, allow time for students to complete their notes. If you are teaching the lesson face-to-face, organize student chairs/desks into a circle so they can make eye contact during the discussion. If you want to have a smaller group engaged in discussion at any one time, a fishbowl arrangement can work. Arrange the chairs in concentric circles; one group will sit in the outer circle and observe as the other group sits in the inner circle and discusses. Halfway through the discussion, the groups can switch. For online discussion, it may be advisable to use a “virtual” fishbowl by having half the students turn off their video so that the students engaged in the first half of the discussion are visible and can see each other easily; again, groups can switch halfway through the discussion.
- Tell students they are going to discuss their ideas about what was presented in the documentary. Encourage them to refer to scenes from the documentary in making their points. Then stimulate discussion by asking students to pose some questions they had after watching the video or by using such questions as the following:
 - What was the most interesting “how” you heard for reforming law enforcement to address the problem of police violence? Why did you find this idea interesting?

- If funds are to be reallocated from the police to other uses, where do you think these funds should go? Explain your answer.
- What would it mean to you to “reimagine” the police? Could reimagining the police help deal with the systemic issues that Lt. Raymond discussed?
- Do you agree or disagree with the remarks by the two police association/union officials?
- Did the video complicate or deepen your understanding of the problem? In what way? How does your understanding of the problem affect your response to possible reforms?
- What questions do you have about the “how” of police reform after watching the documentary?
- Explain that, in the next activity, students are going to try to answer some of those questions by looking more closely at four possible reform strategies that some supporters of defunding the police advocate. They will work in the same four groups they worked in in the last activity to learn about the costs and benefits of each approach, plan a presentation to the class to help everyone understand the pros and cons of the reform, and make a recommendation on whether to back the reform.

Handout: What Does It Mean to “Defund the Police”? Viewing Guide

As you watch the documentary, you will hear many different points of view on what it means to defund the police. You will hear from some people who think it’s just a bad idea. Use this viewing guide to take notes as you watch the documentary.

Commenter	For/Against Defunding the Police	Their Ideas for Reform (If Any)
President Joe Biden		
Arjun Singh Sethi		
John C.P. Goldberg		
Patrick Yoes		
Councilwoman Alicka Ampry-Samuel		
Kawanza Williams		
Lt. Edwin Raymond		
Patrick Lynch		
Chief Gabe Rodriguez		
Commissioner Louis Cappelli, Jr.		

Did you learn anything new about the problem?

What did you learn about strategies for addressing the problem?

What did you disagree with in the documentary?

What did you agree with?

What questions do you have after watching the documentary?

Notes:

Activity: How Should the Problem Be Addressed?

Overview

In this activity, students will work in groups to learn more about four reform strategies that are sometimes associated with defunding the police. What they learn and their recommendations on whether to support the strategies studied will be presented in a simulated meeting of a neighborhood association trying to decide what position to take when the city council considers the police budget for the coming year.

Procedure

- Tell students that they are going to be taking the roles of members of a neighborhood association that is trying to decide what position to take when the city council considers the police budget for the coming year. To prepare, the association has given four groups the job of researching some of the different policies people have suggested as a way of addressing the problem of police violence. Each group will identify arguments for and against one policy approach, prepare a presentation to the group, and decide if they would recommend this policy proposal.
- Explain that students will work in the same groups from the earlier group activity. Make the *Researching Policy Proposals* handout and go over the directions and assignments with students.
- Call the groups back together to conduct the simulated neighborhood association meeting. You can facilitate the meeting or ask a student to do so. If you are teaching face-to-face, have the groups create a square, with one group on each side. If you are teaching remotely, suggest that the groups who are not presenting turn off their cameras so that the presenting group will move to the top of the screen. Depending on the time available, you may want to allow questions at the end of each presentation or hold questions for the whole-group discussion.
- When all groups have presented, the entire class should discuss the policy options (remote students should turn their cameras on at this point), also considering the option of not endorsing any change. At the end of the discussion, take a vote on which policy options, if any, your neighborhood association will support in the city council.

Handout: Researching Policy Proposals

Your group will be researching one of the policy proposals made by advocates for defunding the police.

- **Group 1:** Change the way calls for help are handled so that more calls are handled by people with the skills needed for dealing with mental health issues, issues of homelessness, etc. To make this proposal work, more funding would need to go to social workers/psychologists/crisis managers, and less to police.
- **Group 2:** Address the root causes of community problems, specifically crime, by redirecting resources to affordable housing, trauma centers, loans to businesses in communities in needs, schools, etc.
- **Group 3:** Reduce over-policing in communities of color by eliminating school resource officers and using community policing techniques.
- **Group 4:** Reimagine the police department by reevaluating whether all officers should be retained, changing the culture of the department by improving training and eliminating structural issues that lead to problems with the community, and stopping the use of military equipment.

Complete these three steps in researching your policy proposal:

- Read the handout provided by your teacher. Do some additional Internet research to learn more. Use your research to make a list of the arguments for and against this policy.
- Plan how you will present what you have learned to the neighborhood association. Decide how you can make the presentation interesting for the group. Also decide who will speak during each part of your presentation. Don't leave one person to do all the work—make sure as many people participate as possible.
- Decide whether your group will recommend that the neighborhood association support or not support this proposal.

Handout: Change the Way Calls Are Handled

TV dramas about the police focus on serious and violent crimes. But the reality of policing is very different. Around 90 percent of all calls are for nonviolent or noncriminal issues. In some cities, that number is as high as 95 percent. These calls may be for crimes, such as shoplifting or vandalism. But they may also be for such problems as a mentally ill person in crisis, a homeless person with an addiction issue, or a complaint about potholes.

Police officers are not necessarily the best people to respond to these issues. Their training is oriented toward dealing with criminals, including violent criminals. Sometimes their response is not well-aligned with the needs of the situation. The result can be escalation and unnecessary violence. This can be a particular problem in cases involving people with untreated mental illnesses, who are 16 times more likely to be killed when encountering police than other people.

Other professionals—social workers, emergency medical personnel, crisis managers, psychologists—may be better able to deal with non-violent situations. Because they are trained to recognize mental health or addiction issues and to communicate with people in crisis, they may produce better results for the individual and the community, without violence. In addition, mentally ill, addicted, or homeless people will not be criminalized.

Reducing their workload and allowing police officers to focus on what they are trained to do—solve violent crime—may result in higher “solve” rates for serious crime like murder, rape, assault, and robbery. Currently, substantial percentages of these crimes go unsolved.

Denver (CO), Austin (TX), and Albuquerque (NM) have been working on programs to send emergency medical personnel, social workers, and psychologists on calls not involving violent crime. Eugene (OR) has had such a program in place for more than 30 years. Dispatchers can send a crisis worker and a medic to respond to calls they don’t think require a police response. In 2019, these teams responded to 24,000 calls, only asking for police backup in 150 cases. The program has been shown to save money at local hospitals because medical care and first aid are provided in the field.

One challenge of changing the way calls are handled is that situations can still turn violent. In addition, many social service agencies have a high turnover among their staff. Many of the positions are not well paid and involve considerable stress. As a result, people may not stay in their jobs for long. This could create problems if a more social service-based approach is adopted. Additional funding—beyond what might be reallocated from police budgets—could be needed. Funding would also be needed to set up the infrastructure for such an approach. Many police officers say they would support shifting nonviolent calls to social workers and others, but they don’t support paying for those programs with funding from police budgets.

Handout: Address the Root Causes of Community Problems

Policing in the United States is focused more on reaction to problems than prevention of problems. A study that looked at 60 years of data found that more police on the streets and more funding for police departments did not reduce crime. To reduce police violence, some advocates argue, funds should be reallocated to programs that could reduce crime. By doing so, they argue, the number of potentially violent police-community interactions could be reduced.

What kinds of expenditures would reduce crime? History shows that equal access to high quality education and good jobs reduces crime. Investing to improve the quality of schools for all children could have a huge payoff. Investing in the economy of communities with high levels of unemployment or underemployment could also help. Various kinds of youth development programs have shown promise in reducing violent crime. Affordable housing, loans for businesses in distressed communities, and trauma centers could also be effective in reducing crime and other problems the police are called to deal with.

Since the events of 2020, many cities have begun reallocating funding or discussing reallocation of funds from the police department. Los Angeles has taken \$100 million from the police department and is using it for programs in minority communities. San Francisco's mayor announced plans to work with community groups to figure out how to use funds in a way that would serve the community. Baltimore decided to take \$22 million from the police department to spend on recreational centers, trauma centers, and loans for Black-owned businesses.

These programs are expensive, and more funding may be needed than political leaders are willing to take from police departments. In addition, in the past, government has invested in many programs that seemed promising but in the end had little effect. There will need to be careful study of investments to insure that they are having the desired outcome.

In addition, observers point out that while reducing crime is a worthy goal, some of the people killed by police have not actually committed a crime. Simply preventing crime will not prevent these situations, which will persist as long as police officers see communities of color as more criminal and violent than other communities.

Handout: Reduce Over-policing

Some advocates see the problem of police violence as a result of the over-policing of Black and other minority communities based on racist beliefs about African American and Latinx people. Thus, reducing this over-policing is one way of addressing the problem.

What are the signs of over-policing? One is the use of aggressive law-enforcement tactics, including stop and frisk, arbitrary arrests, and a “broken windows” approach to law enforcement. Broken windows is an approach to policing that holds that cracking down on minor crimes like vandalism, jaywalking, or jumping the turnstile on the El helps to create an environment of law and order and thus prevents crime. But research does not back up this approach. Instead, it suggests that a more effective approach is community policing, in which law enforcement officers work with the community to find out what they are concerned about, ask for their help in solving problems, and then work together to solve problems.

Community policing reflects the view of police as guardians of the community rather than warriors against crime. The warrior mentality is reinforced by police departments’ increased use of military equipment and the deployment of SWAT teams into communities. Police officers would have to be held accountable for adhering to the new policies and procedures, perhaps by a civilian review board.

Another sign of over-policing is the “school to jail” pipeline that has developed with the presence of more police officers in school. Students, advocates say, are too often arrested rather than having discipline issues handled within the school. And Black and Brown students are much more likely to be referred to the school resource officer than white students.

So what does reducing over-policing involve? Doing away with police officers in schools or retraining them to handle discipline issues differently. Adopting community-oriented policing and training officers in the skills they need to be successful in this approach. Reducing the use of aggressive policing tactics and military equipment.

Some experts point out that these changes would be expensive and difficult to achieve. Police officers would likely oppose many of these changes. In the past, departments have often opposed accountability measures, resisting calls to make information public. Money has been invested in military-style equipment, and officers steeped in a warrior mentality could have difficulty changing their entire approach to their work. In addition, the changes would be costly.

Handout: Reimagine the Police Department

Many advocates for reform think that making a series of small or even substantial changes will be ineffective in transforming policing in a way that will eliminate police violence involving communities of color. They believe that police departments need to be completely reimagined—taken apart and put back together or replaced with a new kind of agency with a different vision of safety and justice.

Camden (NJ) has taken the approach of reimagining the police department. Though it has taken time, the city has seen a drastic reduction in police violence complaints. In the wake of the George Floyd killing, the City Council in Minneapolis is considering allowing voters to decide whether to replace the police department.

What would be the vision of a new type of police force? It would likely include many of the ideas represented in the other three policy proposals:

- Having other professionals—social workers, emergency medical personnel, crisis managers, psychologists—deal with non-violent situations. Because they are trained to recognize mental health or addiction issues and to communicate with people in crisis, they may produce better results for the individual and the community, without violence. In addition, mentally ill, addicted, or homeless people will not be criminalized.
- Funding services that reduce crime and other community problems. Perhaps most important is providing equal access to high quality education and good jobs. Various kinds of youth development programs have shown promise in reducing violent crime. Affordable housing, loans for businesses in distressed communities, and trauma centers could also be effective in reducing crime and other problems the police are called to deal with.
- Reduce over-policing in minority communities. A key element of this proposal is introducing community policing, in which law enforcement officers work with the community to find out what they are concerned about, ask for their help in solving problems, and then work together to solve problems. Police officers would be held accountable for adhering to the new policies and procedures, perhaps by a civilian review board. School resource officers would be eliminated or retrained to handle problems without resorting to arresting students. The use of aggressive policing tactics and military equipment would be reduced or eliminated.

These changes could be costly and may be resisted by political leaders and police officers, who will claim that communities will fall into chaos without a strong police presence. Whether they will work is also debatable. Data to say for certain they will be effective in ending police violence is just not available.

Activity: What Does “Defund the Police” Mean to Me and Do I Support Policies to Achieve Its Goals?

Overview

This final lesson asks students to return to their original ideas about what “defund the police” means and apply what they have learned to crafting a definition of the term. A process for determining if the class can develop a consensus definition is provided, but students do not have to “buy in” to a group definition. After the discussion, students prepare their “tickets” for the Summit, which can be either a brief position statement or questions they have for the experts at the Summit.

Procedure

- Ask students: Do you remember what you wrote when I asked you to write what “defund the police” means on a self-adhesive note? Has your thinking evolved since then? (Accept all answers.)
- Tell students that you’re going to see if students can come up with a class definition of “defund the police.” Ask: Why should we try to reach a common understanding of a controversial phrase in the news? (*Help students recognize that if we think we’re discussing the same thing but are really talking about two different things, reaching any kind of agreement will be difficult.*)
- Let students choose a partner to work with on the first step of this process. Provide access to the ***Answering the Focus Questions*** handout and go over the directions with students. Tell students how much time they will have to work on their definitions (around 5 minutes should be enough). When they have completed a definition, they should write it on the board or on sheets of posting paper that you have taped around the room.
- Call time and give students an opportunity to read all the definitions. Then ask: What commonalities are there across definitions? What are the differences? Are those differences we could resolve by choosing another word or do they reflect a deeper difference of opinion? Work with the class to try to develop a consensus definition. This may not be possible, but it is worth the effort. Depending on the outcome of this effort, ask students to reflect on:
 - What allowed us to reach agreement on a definition? How do you think this could help us in the future?
 - What prevented us from reaching agreement on a definition? How might this affect our conversations going forward?
- At the bottom of their handouts, ask students to do one of the following:
 - Write a brief position statement answering the second question: Should we adopt policies to achieve its goals?
 - Write two to three questions they would like to ask experts that will help them decide what policy proposals they should support.

What Does “Defund the Police” Mean? Selected Resources

Sources

Adler, Jeffrey S., *First in Violence, Deepest in Dirt: Homicide in Chicago, 1875-1920* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006).

Barefoot, Danny, “Here’s What Interviewing Voters Taught Me about the Slogan ‘Defund the Police,’” *The Guardian* (November 20, 2020), <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/nov/20/heres-what-interviewing-voters-taught-me-about-the-slogan-defund-the-police>.

“A Decade of Watching Black People Die,” Code Switch, NPR News (May 31, 2020), <https://www.npr.org/2020/05/29/865261916/a-decade-of-watching-black-people-die>.

“Fatal Force,” *The Washington Post* (March 21, 2021), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/investigations/police-shootings-database/>.

Ford, Sam, “Defunding the Police: A Police Chief, a Lieutenant and a Retired Chief’s Opinion,” *The Review* (December 9, 2020), <http://udreview.com/defunding-the-police-a-police-chief-a-lieutenant-and-a-retired-chiefs-opinions/>.

Novacic, Ines, “‘Defund the Police’ Made Headlines. What does It Look Like Now?” *CBS News* (March 11, 2021), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/defund-the-police-meaning/>.

Peeples, Lynne, “What the Data Say about Police Brutality and Racial Bias—and Which Reforms Might Work,” *Nature* (June 19, 2020), <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-020-01846-z>.

Ray, Rashawn, “What Does ‘Defund the Police’ Mean and Does It Have Merit?” *Brookings Institution* (June 19, 2020), <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/fixgov/2020/06/19/what-does-defund-the-police-mean-and-does-it-have-merit/>.

Scavone, Jason, “Reform, Defund or Abolish the Police?” *UNLV News* (June 10, 2020), <https://www.unlv.edu/news/article/reform-defund-or-abolish-police>.

Schumaker, Erin, “Police Reformers Push for De-escalation Training, But the Jury Is out on Its Effectiveness,” *ABCNews* (July 5, 2020), <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/police-reformers-push-de-escalation-training-jury-effectiveness/story?id=71262003>.

Van Ness, Lindsey, “Body Cameras May Not Be the Easy Answer Everyone Was Looking For,” *Pew Stateline* (January 14, 2020), <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2020/01/14/body-cameras-may-not-be-the-easy-answer-everyone-was-looking-for>.

Vasilogambros, Matt, “If the Police Aren’t Needed, Let’s Leave Them Out Completely,” *Stateline, Pew Charitable Trusts* (June 23, 2020), <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2020/06/23/if-the-police-arent-needed-lets-leave-them-out-completely>.

What Does It Mean to Defund the Police? Documentary, 26 minutes 12 seconds, CBS News (March 11, 2021), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/defund-the-police-meaning/>.

Organizations

American Civil Liberties Union, <https://www.aclu.org/>. A progressive perspective on criminal justice and racial justice issues.

Black Lives Matter, <https://blacklivesmatter.com/search/defund+the+police/>. African American activists examine what defunding the police means.

Criminal Justice Legal Foundation, <https://www.cjlf.org/>. A victim- and law-enforcement-oriented perspective on criminal justice issues.

National Conference of State Legislatures, Law Enforcement, <https://www.ncsl.org/research/civil-and-criminal-justice/law-enforcement-overview.aspx>. Detailed information about state laws and proposed laws in all 50 states.

National Police Association, <https://nationalpolice.org/>. Law enforcement perspective on policing issues.

Pew Research Center, Criminal Justice, <https://www.pewresearch.org/topics/criminal-justice/>. Studies of public opinion on issues related to criminal justice.

U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Use of Force. <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=tp&tid=84>. Extensive data on police killings and other use of force issues (including law enforcement officers killed or assaulted).

Court Cases

Graham v. Connor, 490 US 386 (1989).

Tennessee v. Garner, 471 US 1 (1985).