PRESS RELEASE

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Special Issue of *Criminology & Public Policy* Examines the Effects of the George Floyd Protests on the Criminal Justice System

The 2020 murder of George Floyd while in the custody of Minneapolis police spurred more than 20 million people to demonstrate, the largest social protests in U.S. history. In a series of studies, criminologists assess the impacts of the protests on the criminal justice system. The studies focus on two aspects of the protests: 1) the policy changes to policing and public safety that resulted from the protests, including police turnover, police institutional change, and public safety, and 2) public attitudes and discussions about the protests, including the protests' impact on public opinion, media accounts of the protests, and protesters' perceptions about defunding the police and related matters.

The studies were conducted by scholars from the American Society of Criminology (ASC) and appear in a special issue of *Criminology & Public Policy*, the flagship policy and practice journal of the society, edited by Cynthia Lum and Christopher Koper at George Mason University.

"High-profile events like the George Floyd murder and resulting protests provide areas for new scholarly inquiry from multiple disciplines," suggest Joshua D. Freilich, professor of criminal justice at John Jay College, and Steven Chermak, professor of criminal justice at Michigan State University, editors of the special issue, in the introduction. "Criminologists have joined this effort, trying to make sense through research of Floyd's murder, the existing criminal justice system that helped contribute to it, and the ensuing protests."

The special issue is a start to these inquiries, Freilich and Chermak note, but more is needed. "Studies indicate widespread support for efforts to reform the police but it is less clear what specific actions should be taken to do so, how to overcome bureaucratic inertia, and to what extent protests affect public opinion or police reform," they say. "The discussions in this issue are just the beginning of paying attention to these crucial questions."

The special issue features the following seven articles:

- "News Media and Public Attitudes Toward the Protests of 2020: An Examination of the Mediating Role of Perceived Protester Violence" investigates the association between news consumption and support for policies to address protest violence. Viewers of online news were less likely to support law-and-order policies, though perceived protester violence enhanced support for such policies. A slight majority of respondents backed solving problems of racism and police violence, suggesting the public is open to reform.

- "Regulatory Intermediaries and the Challenge of Democratic Policing" examines a model for achieving democratic governance over police departments. Researchers looked at regulatory intermediaries, which empower nonstate actors with regulatory authority over public institutions. They found that the voices—including those of the public—that such democratic processes seek to incorporate can sometimes undermine the changes envisioned.

- "Defund the Police": Perceptions Among Protesters in the 2020 March on Washington" assesses how protesters with varying levels of commitment to the Black Lives Matter

movement perceived the slogan, "Defund the Police." Most saw it as a two-step process that begins with reducing police budgets, then reallocates resources to much-needed services in the communities the police departments serve.

- "Ferguson as a Distal Crisis: Chief Assessments of Changes in the Police Institutional Environment" explores how the widely publicized 2014 killing of Michael Brown and the resulting protests affected police in Texas. Police chiefs rated local and national media as less impactful for their agencies. Increased animus between the media and police may threaten the media's effectiveness as watchdogs and impede cooperation.

- "Elevated Police Turnover Following the Summer of George Floyd Protests: A Synthetic Control Study" assesses the impact of the protests on police resignations. The study, of a large U.S. police department, looked at 60 months of employment data, finding that voluntary resignations rose nearly 280% relative to a control group, but retirements and involuntary separations did not change significantly.

- "The Effect of the Seattle Police-Free CHOP Zone on Crime: A Microsynthetic Control Evaluation" examines the effect on crime of an autonomous zone operated by the Capitol Hill Occupation Protest (CHOP) in Seattle from June 8 to July 1, 2020. Crime increased significantly in the CHOP zone and in nearby areas.

- "Mass Support for Proposals to Reshape Policing Depends on the Implications for Crime and Safety" assesses public interpretations of movements to reform, defund, and abolish the police. While there was strong support for police reform, efforts to defund or abolish generated opposition to both slogans. Proposals like defunding and abolishing the police are unlikely to succeed nationally; police reform may require proposals that target changing how police operate rather than reducing budgets or police involvement in responding to crime and calls for service.

The special issue also includes the ASC Vollmer Award address, presented by distinguished policing scholar Lawrence Sherman. His lecture, entitled, "Goldilocks and the Three T's": Targeting, Testing, and Tracking for 'Just Right' Democratic Policing," explores how evidence-based policing is essential in policing reform in democracies. Professor Sherman will deliver this public lecture online on February 9, 2022 (see https://cebcp.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Sherman-Vollmer-Address-Flyer.pdf) for more information.

The articles in the special issue are:
- "News Media and Public Attitudes Toward the Protests of 2020: An Examination of the Mediating Role of Perceived Protester Violence," by Andrew J. Baranauskas, assistant professor of criminal justice at the State University of New York, Brockport
- "Regulatory Intermediaries and the Challenge of Democratic Policing," by Tony Cheng, assistant professor of criminology, law, and society at the University of California, Irvine, and Jennifer Qu, an undergraduate in sociology at Yale University
- "Defund the Police": Perceptions Among Protesters in the 2020 March on Washington," by Jennifer Cobbina-Dungy, associate professor of criminal justice at Michigan State University, Soma Chaudhuri, associate professor of sociology at Michigan State University, Ashleigh LaCourse, a doctoral student in criminal justice at Michigan State University, and Christina DeJong, associate professor of criminal justice at Michigan State University
- "Ferguson as a Distal Crisis: Chief Assessments of Changes in the Police Institutional Environment," by Alicia L. Jurek, an economist at San Diego Workforce Partnership, Matthew C. Matusiak, associate professor of criminal justice at the

University of Central Florida, and William R. King, professor of criminal justice at Boise State University

- "Elevated Police Turnover Following the Summer of George Floyd Protests: A Synthetic Control Study," by Scott M. Mortgos, PhD candidate in political science at the University of Utah, Ian T. Adams, PhD candidate in political science at the University of Nebraska, and Justin Nix, associate professor of criminal justice at the University of Nebraska
- "The Effect of the Seattle Police-Free CHOP Zone on Crime: A Microsynthetic Control Evaluation," by Eric L. Piza, associate professor of criminal justice at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, and Nathan T. Connealy, assistant professor of criminology and criminal justice at the University of Tampa
- "Mass Support for Proposals to Reshape Policing Depends on the Implications for Crime and Safety," by Paige E. Vaughn, assistant professor of sociology and criminology at Spring Hill College, Kyle Peyton, research fellow in political science at Australian Catholic University, and Gregory A. Huber, professor of political science at Yale University