



# American Policing at a Crossroads (again)

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Justin Nix, PhD

School of Criminology & Criminal Justice  
University of Nebraska Omaha

# Question #1

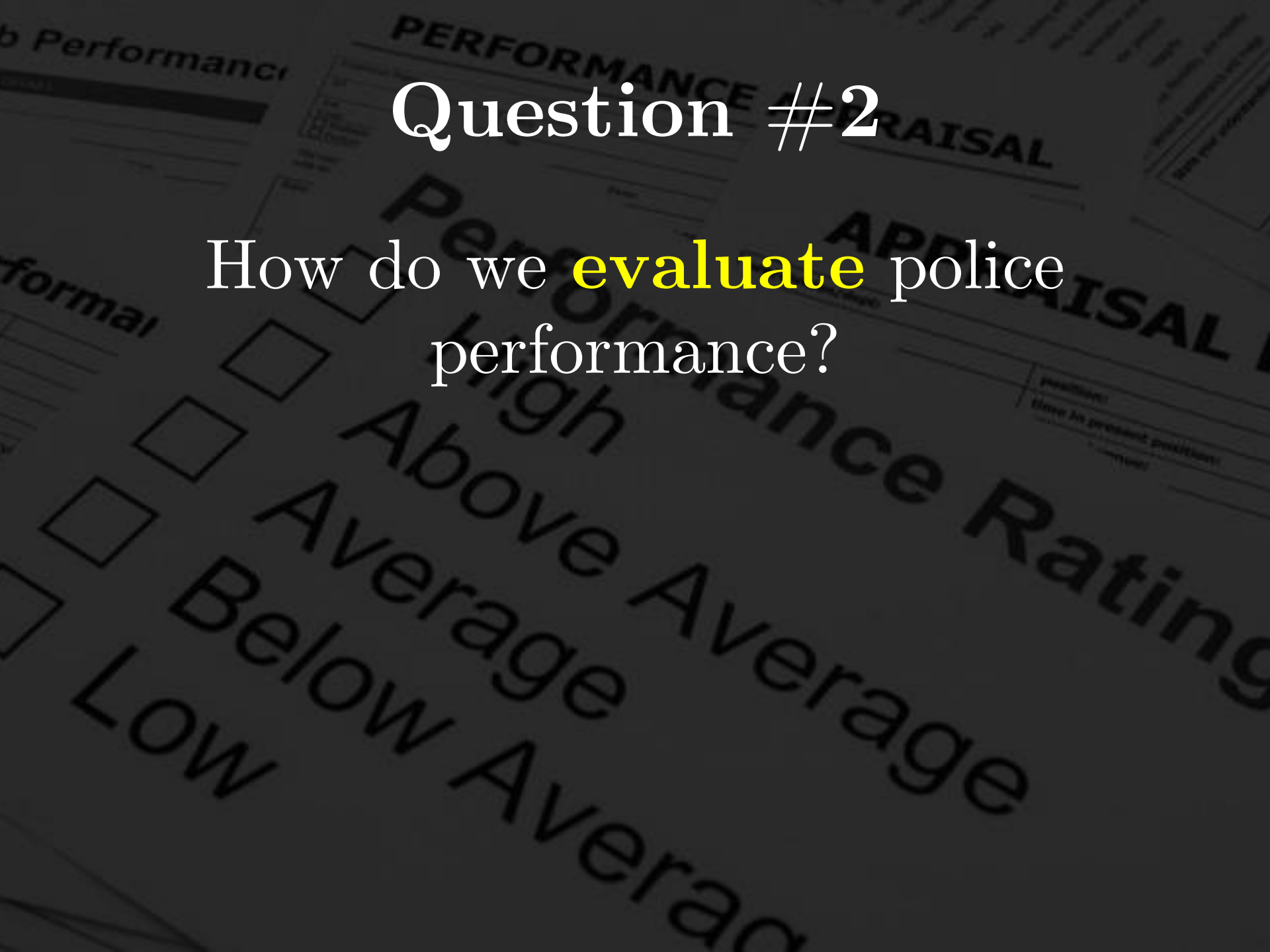
What is the **role** of police in American society?

- Sociologist Egon Bittner:
  - “A mechanism for the distribution of **situationally justified force** in society”<sup>1</sup>
  - They deal with situations where “something-that-ought-not-to-be-happening-and-about-which-someone-had-better-do-something-now!” is occurring<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bittner (1970) *The functions of the police in modern society*; <sup>2</sup> Bittner (1974) “Florence Nightingale in pursuit of Willie Sutton”

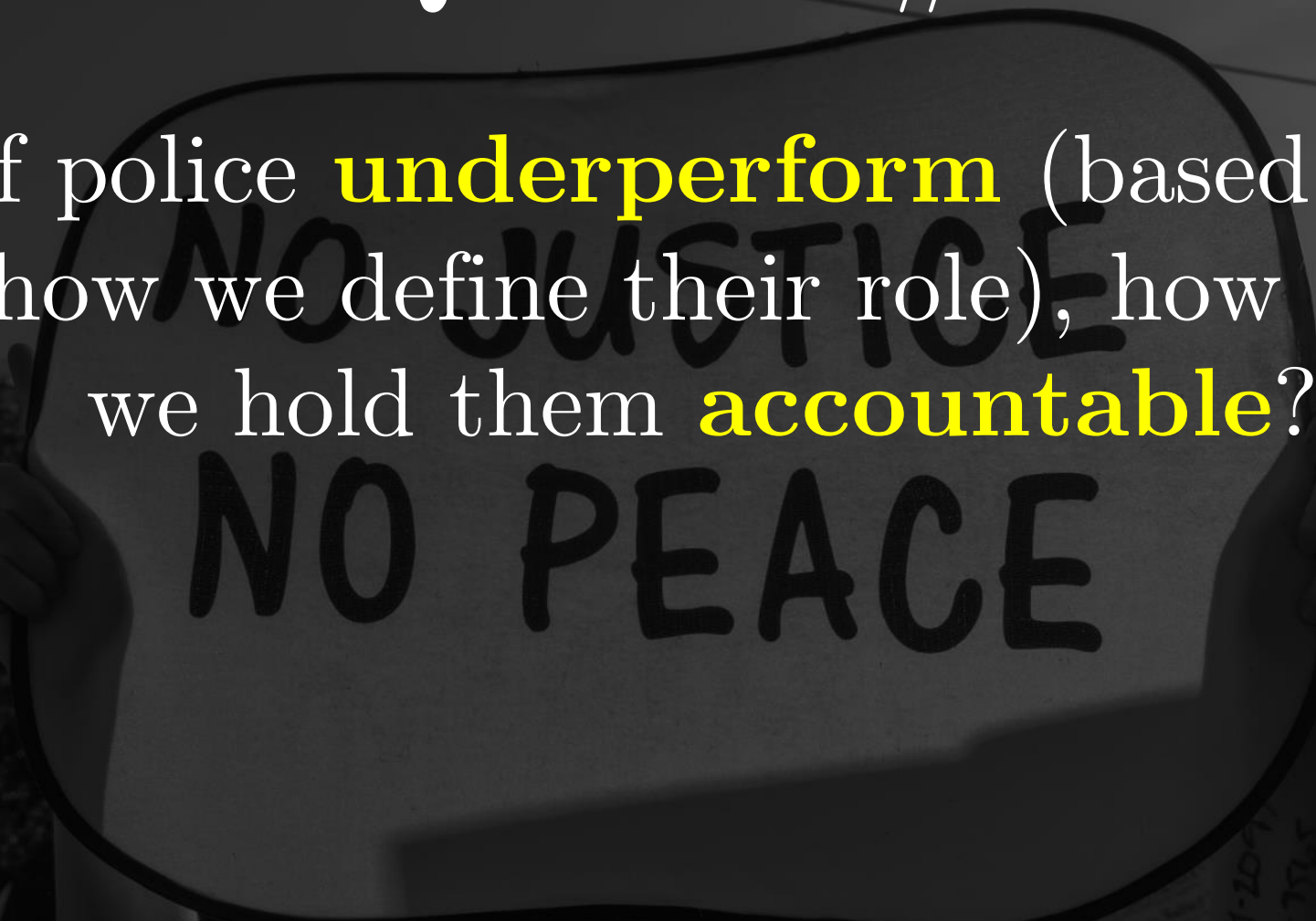
# Question #2

How do we **evaluate** police performance?



# Question #3

If police **underperform** (based on how we define their role), how do we hold them **accountable**?



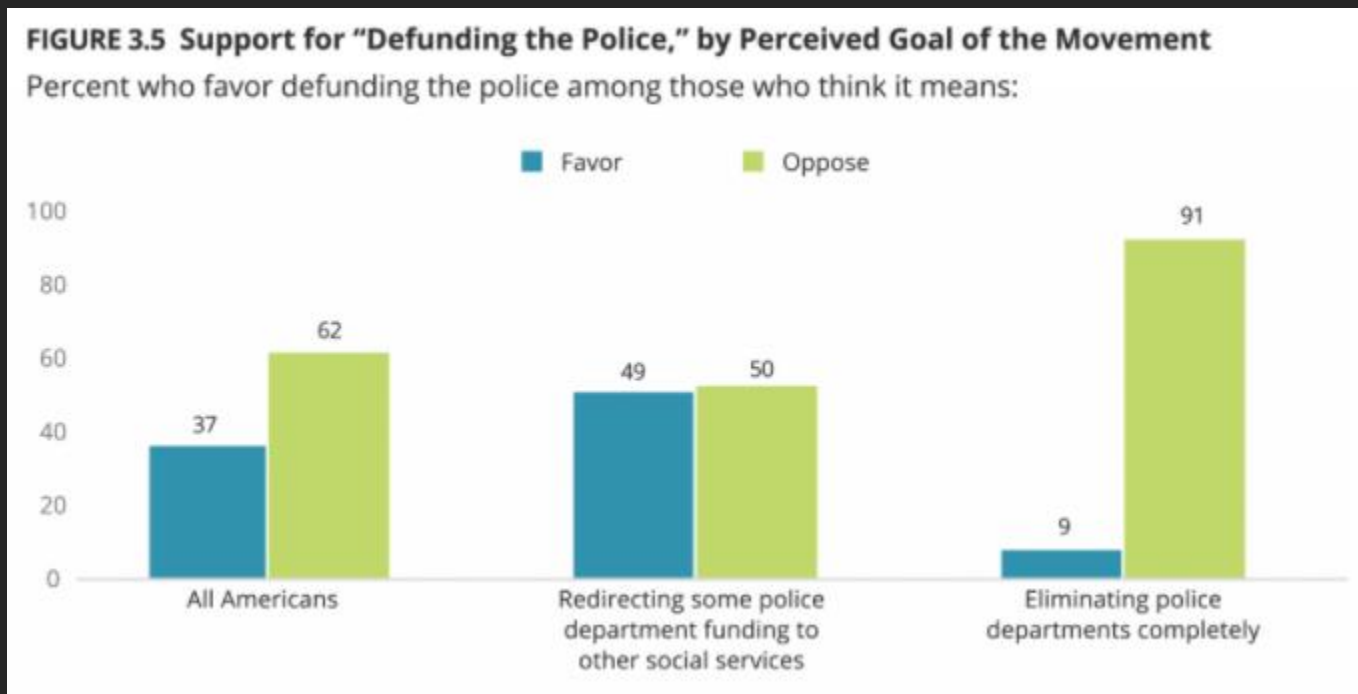


A black and white photograph of Barack Obama and other officials in a meeting. Obama is in the center, looking to the right. To his right, a man in a military uniform is reading a document titled "THE PRISON INDUSTRY 21ST CENTURY". Other officials are seated around a table, some looking at the document. The scene is dimly lit, with a focus on the participants.

**VARIOUS  
PROPOSED REFORMS**  
(AND IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS)

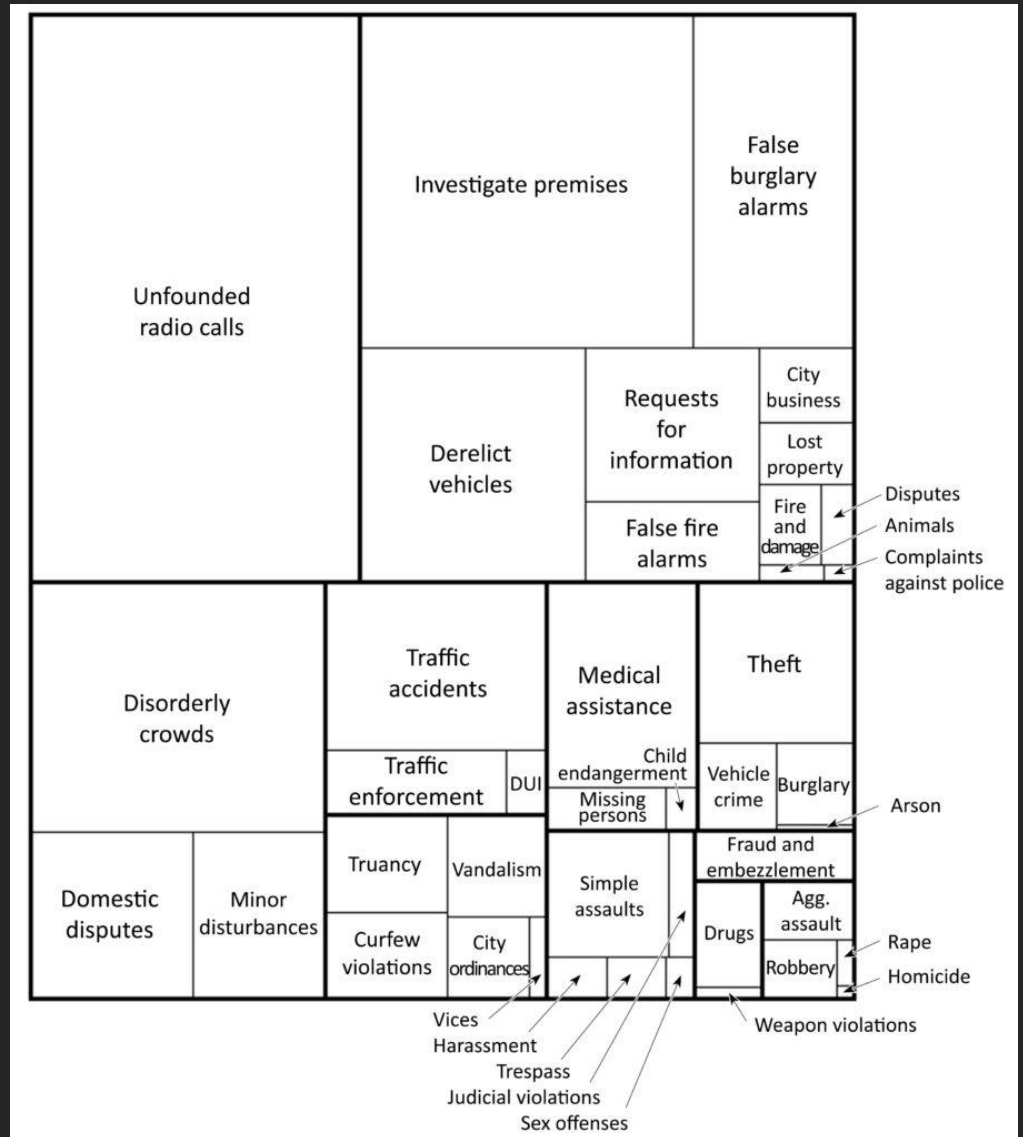
# “Defund the Police”

What % of Americans would you say support “defunding the police?”



# “Re-imagine the Police”

- Currently, policing is overwhelmingly a **social service**
- Very little time spent responding to **community violence**
- **Should** we be asking the police to do all of this?



# Co-responder Programs

- Mental health crises
  - e.g., CAHOOTS in Eugene/Springfield OR
- Other calls for service?
- Some considerations...
  - Does city have adequate resources in place?
  - 911 calltakers and dispatchers



# Improve Training

- Communication/De-escalation
  - Does appear promising
    - Procedural justice
    - T3: Tact, Tactics, Trust
- Bias Awareness
  - Can increase awareness, but hard to change behaviors

# Increase Transparency & Accountability

- Body-worn cameras
  - Reduce complaints, may save money
  - May reduce use of force under some circumstances
- Citizen oversight
- Early intervention systems
  - Caution re: “flags”
- Publish timely data
  - How can we manage what we don't measure?

# Takeaways

- Policing has come a long way.
- Is there still work to do? Absolutely.
- Resist knee-jerk reactions & follow the evidence.
  - We **absolutely cannot** take science out of policing.