

# **RESOURCES, SELECTION & TRAINING ESSAYS**

By

Julius Wachtel

As originally published in  
**POLICEISSUES.ORG**

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Posted 3/22/09

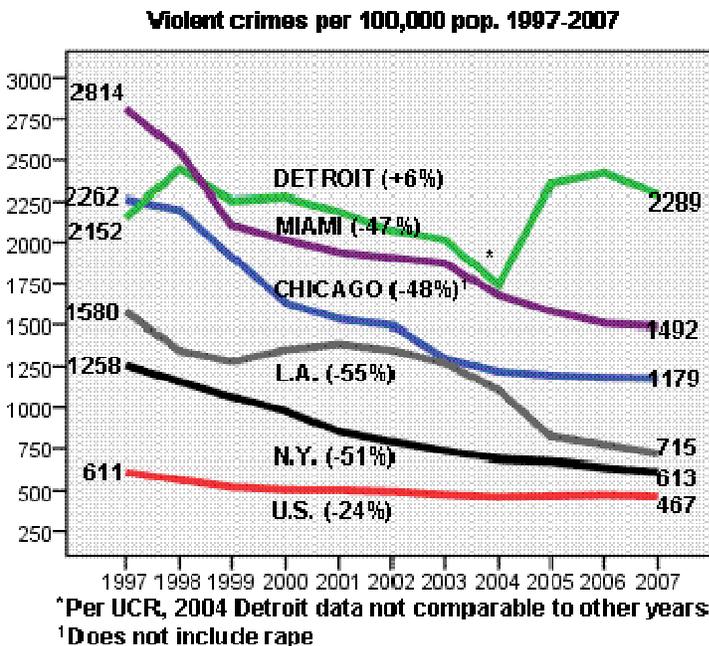
## A LARGER FORCE, BUT AT WHAT COST?

*As crime falls, LAPD's growth threatens other city services*

By Julius Wachtel, (c) 2010

Even as he pushes a \$74 million deficit into the next fiscal year, when the shortfall is predicted to rise to \$433 million, recently-reelected Los Angeles mayor [Antonio Villaraigosa](#) is sticking to a long-standing campaign promise, made well before the financial meltdown, of adding 1,000 cops to the city's payrolls. Other than for a few minor adjustments, public safety is off the table.

Yet what's left over is pitifully small. Police and fire together consume seventy percent of revenues, so balancing the budget on the backs of other departments might call for as many as four-thousand layoffs, affecting key services including sanitation, public works, libraries and parks. It's why City council members Greig Smith and (former police chief) Bernard Parks suggest putting the brakes on LAPD's expansion until the economy improves.



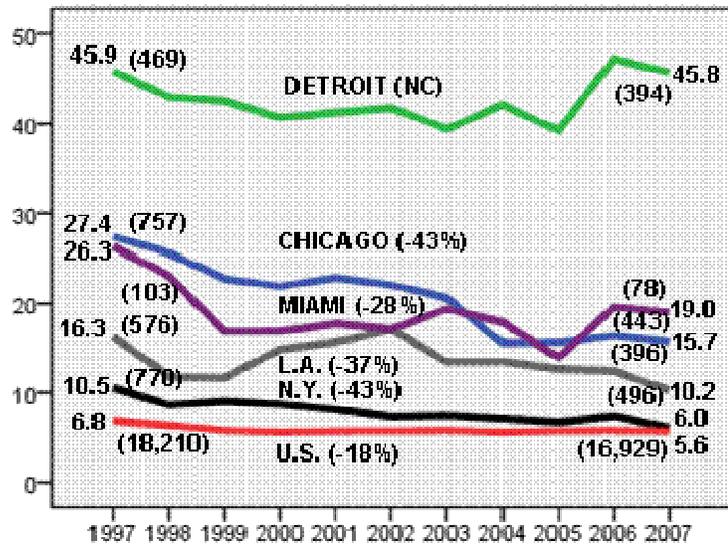
But Hizzoner won't hear of it. "Let me make something clear," Villaraigosa said. "I am not talking about the slowing down of our police recruitment effort. These numbers are irrefutable; L.A. is safer than at any time since the 1950s." Police Chief Bratton quickly chimed in, saying that throttling back on police hiring wouldn't solve things, and that in any case the city council had already signed off.

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Everyone knows that crime in the City of Angels has been dropping for years. Only question is, did the number of cops have anything to do with it? Poring through a decade's worth of [FBI crime statistics](#) yielded some tantalizing clues.

Overall, violent crime fell twenty-four percent between 1997 and 2007. Many large cities experienced dramatic declines: forty-seven percent in Miami, forty-eight percent in Chicago, fifty-one percent in New York and a stunning fifty-five percent in Los Angeles. Murder (including non-negligent manslaughter) also fell, with Chicago and New York enjoying plunges of forty-three percent.

**Murders<sup>1</sup> per 100,000 pop. 1997-2007**

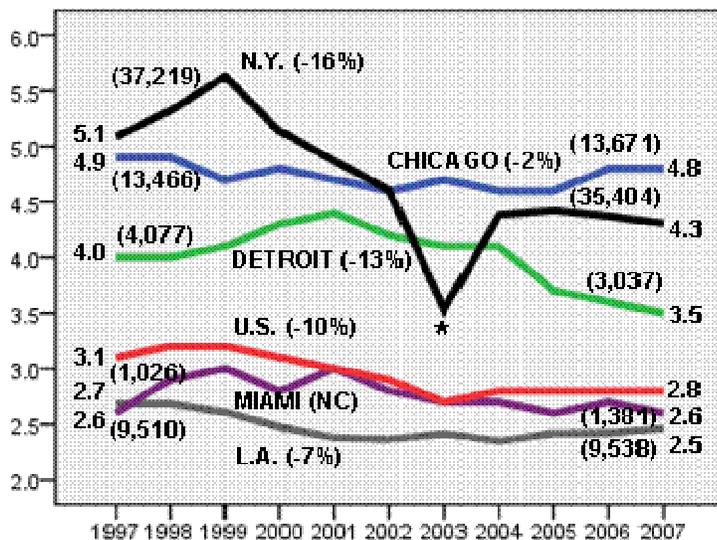


**Actual numbers in parentheses. Change based on rates. <sup>1</sup> Includes non-negligent manslaughter**

What accounts for the remarkable improvement? Most criminologists point to socioeconomic factors. Some also credit the incapacitative effect of so-called “three-

strikes” laws, which imposed substantially longer prison terms on violent felons and recidivists. And yes, the police probably played a role. But it wasn't because of numerical strength.

**Officers per 1,000 pop. 1997-2007**



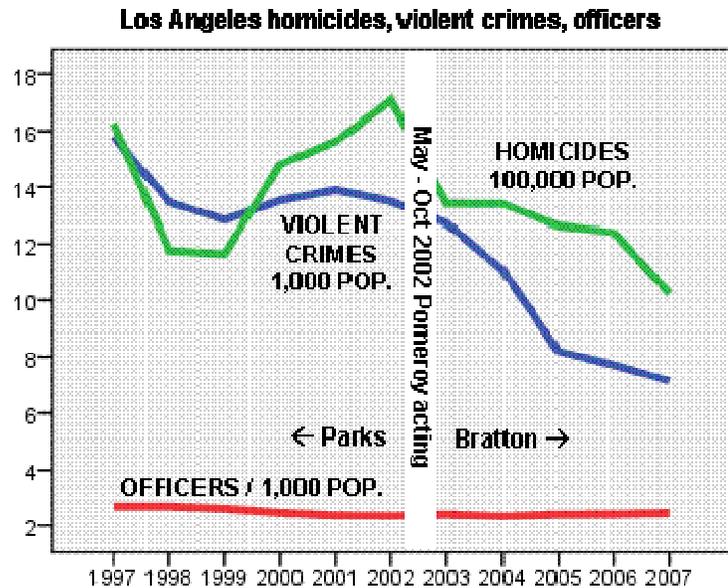
**Actual numbers in parentheses. Change based on rates. \* NY 2003 UCR data entry error assumed**

Indeed, police staffing has receded most everywhere. As NYPD lost sixteen percent of its cops (it's down nearly 2,000 officers, and still shrinking) murder also declined, by a full forty-three percent. In sunny L.A., where the officer/population ratio fell by seven percent, murder tumbled an impressive thirty-seven

percent.

If we believe City Hall and Parker Center, L.A.'s improvement is mostly due to Chief Bratton and his vaunted Compstat. But as the chart below demonstrates, violent crimes peaked in 2001, so the decline was already underway when Bratton took over in October 2002 (he replaced Acting Chief Martin Pomeroy, an LAPD retiree who stepped in after Parks left.) The homicide free-fall did start in 2003; however, its previous path was very unstable, so attributing the drop to a change in command -- it was Bratton's first year -- is highly questionable.

While police around the U.S. are simply trying to keep the cops they've got -- NYPD recently reduced its force by 1,000 and canceled an academy class -- Mayor Villaraigosa seems determined to proceed. Already underway, the hike of 1,000 officers will increase coverage about eight percent, from 2.5 to 2.7 per thousand, a boost that in a



city as as large and spread out as Los Angeles can't yield a visibly increased police presence. As we mentioned in an earlier posting, LAPD's relatively generous salary and benefits schedules make it impossible to reach the far higher levels of coverage that citizens in the eastern U.S. enjoy (depicted in the above chart, it's nearly twice L.A.'s per capita.) Anyway, what would be the purpose? Their rates of violence are no better.

Short of tripling or quadrupling the number of officers, something that no one's suggesting, adding cops will have little effect on crime. Sure there will be more arrests, but those that really count require solid evidence -- which in stranger violence often means catching someone at or near the scene -- and cooperating witnesses. How a marginally larger force will accomplish these ends no one's said. What it will do is further erode other city services. Villaraigosa didn't mention this tradeoff during his 2005 campaign, but things were different then. Now that we're all a bit poorer surely he would be forgiven a midcourse correction. After all, a civil society requires more than police.

Posted 2/8/21

## A RISKY AND INFORMED DECISION

*Minneapolis P.D. knew better. Yet it hired an applicant, then kept him on.*

|                               | True | False |
|-------------------------------|------|-------|
| I like gardening magazines    |      |       |
| I am unhappy with my sex life |      |       |
| No one understands me         |      |       |
| I would enjoy teaching        |      |       |
| I can sleep through anything  |      |       |

For *Police Issues* by Julius (Jay) Wachtel. Say you're a...police chief. Your agency, like many others, requires that officer applicants take the [MMPI](#), a popular psychological assessment test that uses several hundred yes/no questions to screen persons for mental problems. Responses are compared against a 2,000-officer national sample. If they're too far from the norm, it's time for second thoughts!

Here's how [prosecutors retrospectively summarized](#) a certain police applicant's results on the MMPI (specifically, the MMPI-II-RF):

...he reported disliking people and being around them...[T]he test results indicate a level of disaffiliativeness that may be incompatible with public safety requirements for good interpersonal functioning. His self-reported disinterest in interacting with other people is very uncommon among other police officer candidates...he is more likely to become impatient with others over minor infractions...He is also more likely...to exhibit difficulties confronting subjects in circumstances in which an officer would normally approach or intervene....

Knowing all this, would you have hired him? Minneapolis did. After interviewing the would-be cop, a psychiatrist told human resources not to worry. While Mohamed Noor's MMPI scores did seem extreme, they didn't jibe ("correlate") with positive information that came from other sources. And there was no indication that the applicant was mentally ill.

Thus reassured, Minneapolis police hired Mr. Noor in 2015. Fast-forward to February 1, 2021. That's when the Minnesota Court of Appeals affirmed his conviction for third-

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degree murder in the death of Justine Rusczyk. Officer Moor shot her dead on July 15, 2017, when he had about two years into the job. [We wrote about this horrific episode](#) soon after the tragedy. Little was then known about the officer's temperament and suitability for policing. Since then, the laborious, revealing process of trial and appeals has bridged that gap. And that's what brings us here.

First, let's briefly recap the incident. While at home, Ms. Rusczyk heard a woman screaming outside. It sounded like a sexual assault, and [she promptly dialed 9-1-1](#). Other citizens had apparently done the same. She then noticed that a police car was parked nearby. (Having seen nothing, its officers were about to drive away.) Ms. Rusczyk approached the vehicle and apparently slapped its trunk to draw attention. That startled its two occupants. Officer Harrity, the driver, drew his gun and supposedly pointed it at the floor. But his partner, Officer Noor, promptly fired, inflicting a fatal wound.

Officer Noor was suspended, then fired. Eight months later [prosecutors charged him](#) with second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter. [They accused him](#) of behaving unreasonably and demonstrating "extreme indifference to human life":

The defendant failed to sufficiently investigate a series of 911 calls in the area that night...showed no interest in investigating the circumstances that were potentially dangerous to the subjects of the 911 calls or the public in general...took no time at all to make any inquiry into who approached his squad car and wholly failed to determine whether she actually posed a danger to him or anyone else...rather than try to deescalate the situation or slow it down in any way, the defendant went right to his gun and intentionally shot and killed the 911 caller outside his car.

Those words were part of a request to introduce as evidence Noor's pre-employment psychological test, the commonly-used [MMPI](#) (Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory). While the court denied the motion, [it let two policing experts](#) take the stand. They testified that Noor's performance that evening had been "contrary to generally accepted policing practices" and that his use of lethal force was "objectively unreasonable" and "violated police policy, practices, and training."

But prosecutors weren't satisfied. They were eager to paint a broad picture of Noor's unsuitability as a cop:

The defendant...proved to have trouble confronting subjects in situations where an officer is supposed to intervene, controlling situations, and demonstrating a command presence. The defendant's work history proves that he overreacts,

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escalates benign citizen contacts, does not safely take control of situations, and, in the most egregious situations, uses his firearm too quickly, too recklessly, and in a manner grossly disproportional to the circumstances.

This required they go beyond what happened on one fateful evening. During his brief career Noor had been the subject of [three formal citizen complaints](#). There was also an active lawsuit alleging that he needlessly injured a citizen during a routine call. These episodes were apparently admitted (Noor's lawyer reportedly brought them up first.) But [the court refused](#) to allow a wholesale recounting of the defendant's work history. Here are examples of what *didn't* get in (click [here](#) for a news account):

- During a traffic stop about two months before he shot Ms. Rusczyk, [Noor pointed his gun at the head of a driver](#) who made a crude gesture at a bicyclist with whom he apparently nearly collided. The driver contested the citation; Noor failed to appear at the hearing and the ticket was dismissed.
- About a year earlier, as Noor finished his probationary period, one of his field training officers (FTO) expressed strong reservations about the rookie's fitness for duty:

He was in the final ten days of training...On the eighth day...the defendant's FTO wrote that the defendant did not want to take calls at times. While police calls were pending, the defendant drove around in circles, ignoring calls when he could have self-assigned to them.

- Another FTO reported that Noor had promised a 9-1-1 caller that he would look for a possible burglar who was knocking on residents' doors. But he didn't:

...instead of doing that [Noor] got back into his car and left the area. The FTO later stated that it mattered to her that the defendant said one thing and did another because police should "do our due diligence on this job, so it's important that you at least try to look around. You never know if that person's in the area." She also said 911 callers tend to believe the police when the police say they are going to look for somebody.

- FTO's also mentioned that Noor exhibited "tunnel vision" and had serious problems managing stress, to the point "that he sometimes missed radio communications from dispatch."

For the jurors it was mostly about that one night. In an [in-depth, post-verdict interview](#), a panelist said that the jury wasn't convinced that Noor wanted to kill. So it

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acquitted Noor of second-degree murder, which requires that specific intent. In fact, until nearly the conclusion of the trial they were also split on the other counts:

Until they put it at the end with their two expert witnesses, I didn't really find the prosecution to be beyond a reasonable doubt. Their two expert witnesses really resonated. Just the fact two police officers, even though they don't work in the Minneapolis Police Department, are testifying against another police officer, I think that resonated pretty well. I don't know if everyone in the jury room had the same opinion, but we definitely felt that there is a blue wall of silence in some sense.

What ultimately sold them? Noor's recklessness in opening fire:

It was unanimously concluded that Harrity [the driver] was dangerously close to being shot as well. Combined with the fact that Noor failed to properly identify a threat lead us to decide that the entire act was so reckless to everyone in that line of the bullet there really wasn't any way to say it wasn't. It's such an egregious use of firearms at such a basic fundamental level that you wouldn't even think of ever doing that except in the case of the most absolute dire circumstances in which you would have no other choice.

Jurors convicted Noor of third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter on April 30, 2019. One week later [he was sentenced to twelve and one-half years imprisonment](#) (maximum on the murder count is twenty-five years.) As for the appeal, the two prevailing justices let the convictions stand as-is, while the third only affirmed for manslaughter. Noor's case is on appeal to the state Supreme Court, and we'll keep track. But we're not trying to split legal hairs. Considering that MMPI, should Noor have been hired? And considering his performance, should he have been retained?

Ms. Ruszczuk's killing generated attention from the mental testing community. Within a few months *American Public Media* [published a comprehensive analysis](#) of MPD's psychological screening process. Its assessment was far from favorable:

There is no way to know whether Noor's psychological makeup played a role in the shooting, or if so, whether any screening could have detected such a tendency. But the screening protocol the city put Noor and 200 other officers through during the past five years is less extensive than the battery of tests used in comparable cities. It's also less rigorous than national best practices and the screenings Minneapolis administered for more than a decade before.

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APM's reviewer objected to the agency's sole use of the MMPI (most agencies employ a battery of tests) and the qualifications of the psychiatrist in charge of the process, who supposedly knew little about policing. His firm, in fact, was soon let go, supposedly because it had consistently disqualified a disproportionate number of minority applicants. But *APM* had little positive to say about his replacement.

Still, as MPD's then-psychiatrist noted, [there was plenty of "positive information"](#) about Mr. Noor. He had a B.A. in business administration and had been gainfully employed for years. What's more, Noor was a Somali immigrant and spoke the language fluently. Minneapolis has a large and vibrant Somali community, and MPD hosts a [Somali-American police officer association](#) that seems well-known throughout law enforcement circles (for news articles about its work click [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).) So Noor's presumed ability to relate to minority citizens was undoubtedly welcome.



Indeed, the new rookie's arrival at his first post, the Fifth Precinct, was celebrated with a party. Here's Minneapolis Mayor Betsy Hodges' [Facebook post](#) commemorating the occasion. But a brief two years later, the warmly-received cop's downfall

caused great consternation and soul-searching. (For news accounts click [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).)

Had Noor's promising ethnic background nullified concerns about his MMPI score? Did it push aside misgivings about deficiencies in his attitude and performance? It's possible. Yet attributing poor hiring and retention decisions to ethnicity is a fraught undertaking. Check out one of our very first posts, "[What Should it Take to be Hired?](#)" Skip to "Officer 3." Although as an applicant he conceded having a lousy temper and repeatedly striking his wife, his selection was approved by the department psychologist. Same-o, same-o, "Officer 4." Once they were on the job both became key players in LAPD's notorious "[Rampart](#)" [misconduct scandal](#) of the late nineties. (Most of those cops were White. At the time LAPD used the MMPI and the [California Personality Inventory](#) to screen applicants. For LAPD's report click [here](#).)

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Problem is, some agencies have seemingly granted cops a virtual license to abuse. Grab a look at “[Third, Fourth and Fifth Chances](#)” and related posts. Don’t skip “[Punishment Isn’t a Cop’s Job](#),” our account about another Minneapolis tragedy, the death of George Floyd. His antagonist, nineteen-year MPD veteran Derek Chauvin, started accumulating citizen complaints in 2003, two years into the job. By the time he leaned on Mr. Floyd’s neck [there had been \*eighteen\*](#). Only two led to discipline, both minor slap-downs for “using demeaning language.” Had MPD’s managers been more attuned to their officers’ conduct, and more willing to impose correctives, Mr. Floyd and Ms. Ruzczyk would still be alive.

And our troubled, deeply polarized land might feel like a different place.

Posted 4/13/08

## **AT LEAST THEY'RE CONSISTENTLY LOUSY**

***Using sworn deputies for custodial work  
makes for poor cops and lousy jailers***

By Julius Wachtel, (c) 2010

Who's steering the ship? That's what inquiring minds want to know. After an exhaustive investigation prompted by the death of a 41-year old inmate, the Orange County District Attorney issued a [report](#) calling vigilance at the Theo Lacy jail, a large complex that houses more than 3,000 prisoners, "the exception as opposed to the rule." On the same day a judge overruled County lawyers and granted motions by the [Los Angeles Times](#) and [Orange County Register](#) to release transcripts of Grand Jury testimony about jailhouse practices. These described a stunning culture of sloth and unconcern, with deputies falsifying logs, watching T.V., text messaging and sleeping while inmates known as "shot callers" roamed the facility on their behalf, keeping the peace and administering punishment at will.

Among those called to testify was recently dethroned Sheriff Mike Carona, who took the Fifth when asked if he was the Sheriff when the killing took place (he was, but wouldn't say so), a deputy who allegedly precipitated the killing by telling inmates in advance that the victim was a "child molester" (he denied it), and another who admitted sharing grand jury testimony with the accused deputy after twice saying she didn't. If that wasn't enough, then-undersheriff Jo Ann Galinsky, whom former Sheriff Mike Carona appointed to head the department while he fought Federal corruption charges, admitted altering a key document, leading grand jurors to incorrectly believe that the Sheriff's Department, rather than the District Attorney, was the lead investigative agency when prisoners died. (The particular incident that led to the inquiry was the first of 129 in which Sheriff's officials did not call in D.A. investigators.)

Once the newspapers blew the whistle, acting Sheriff Jack Anderson suspended six deputies and called in the FBI to investigate possible civil rights violations. Against vociferous opposition from the deputies' union, Anderson also renewed his call to replace sworn jail deputies with correctional officers, arguing that civilian jailers are more likely to act professionally as they would be hired for that purpose only. At present new deputies must work at the jails for as many as six years before going on patrol, a delay that is projected to double once a large, new correctional facility is opened. Not only are jail deputies compensated the same as those on patrol, who have a far more

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complex and dangerous work environment, but they can earn huge amounts of overtime (a [2007 Grand Jury report](#) revealed that nearly 600 Theo Lacy inmates are guarded by officers on overtime.)

Unlike most other Sheriff's Departments, those in Los Angeles and Orange counties use sworn deputies as jail guards. Thirty years ago new deputies worked at the jail for only a year. However, as jail populations climbed and soaring salaries and benefits brought SoCal [officer/population ratios](#) to levels half that of New York, an increasing proportion of deputies have been assigned to jail duty. Aside from being costly, inefficient and, perhaps as Sheriff Anderson implies, ineffective, the shift had a profound impact on the experience level of Sheriff's field personnel.

Patrol and investigation are complex, demanding tasks that cannot be learned while working in a jail. While police officers are "on the road" from their first day out of the academy, L.A.-area deputies must now wait years to hit the streets, meaning that most are still learning to be cops after as long as a decade of wearing the badge. Worse, once they promote they are likely to go right back to the jail, leaving many who attain high rank with little field experience to fall back on. It's a no-brainer to conclude that citizens are far more likely to get quality patrol and investigative services from a police department than a Sheriff's office whose deputies spend the bulk of their careers doing custody work. An [anecdote](#) that illustrates this point is the out-of-control behavior by a contingent of L.A. County deputies who fired on a drunk driver 120 times after he led them on a slow-speed chase through a Compton neighborhood. (The scared deputies mistakenly thought that the man was armed. He was recently awarded more than \$1 million by a civil court jury.)

Union influence and an abiding suspicion of outsiders make law enforcement agencies impervious to criticism, and even more so when headed by an independent elected official. In Orange County, though, we presently have only an "acting" Sheriff, whose selection to complete the remaining years of the previous Sheriff's term is up to the Board of Supervisors. For the first time in recent memory the possibility of real change is in the air. Let's hope it's not just another Santa Ana wind.

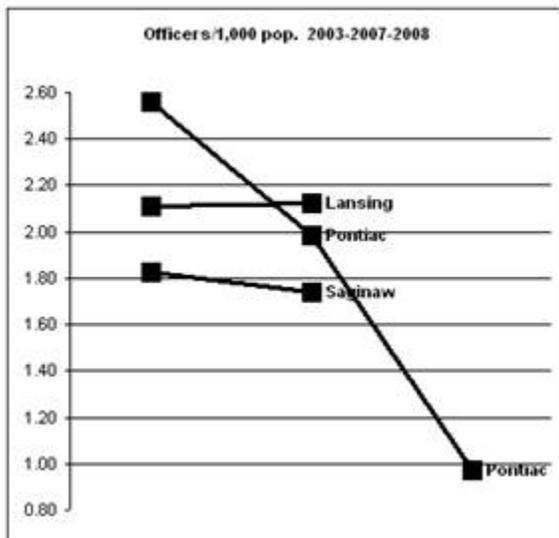
p.s. If you don't get the pun, and would like to, please feel free to e-mail.

Posted 10/19/08

## COPS MATTER

### *Sharp cuts in police threaten community safety*

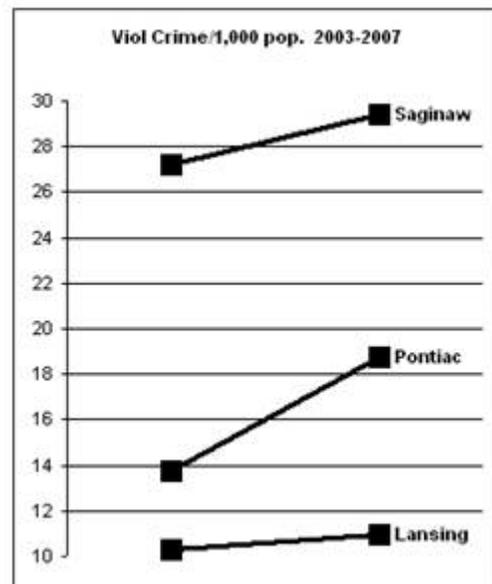
For *Police Issues* by Julius (Jay) Wachtel. Do cops really matter? Just ask Pontiac (Mich.) resident [Larry Trammell](#), who says that with choppers hovering and bullets flying living in the besieged city is like being in Iraq. Or ask police chief Valard Gross, who's trying to protect 66,000 citizens with a grand total of *sixty-five officers*. That comes out to 0.98 officers per 1,000 population, less than half the [national average](#) of 2.4/1000.



It wasn't always like that. As recently as four years ago the working class community fielded 170 sworn officers. But as industrial employment collapsed severe budgetary shortfalls beset cities across the Northeast. Pontiac responded with layoffs. By the end of 2007 police headcount had dropped to about 100, and when citizens refused to pass special levies dozens more were let go in the following months. This November voters will get a chance to raise taxes and bring back 15

officers. If that doesn't work, [it's been reported](#) that the Chief will resign.

It's usually difficult to isolate the impact of any individual factor on crime. Here, though, we have a "natural experiment." During the past few years, while population remained about the same, Pontiac's police force was slashed by *sixty-two percent*. While we can't know what crime would have looked like had these cops not vaporized, we can compare crime trends in Pontiac with communities that didn't experience large changes in population or police staffing. We chose

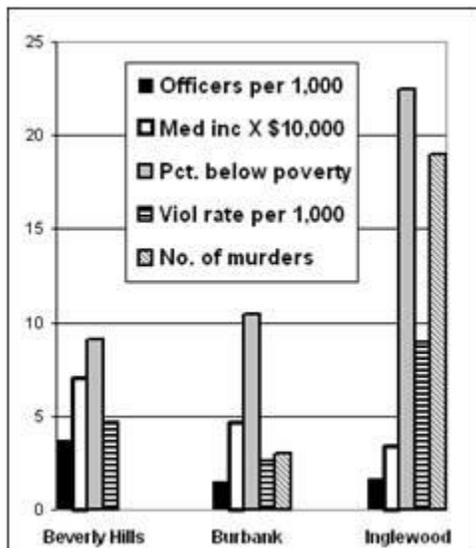


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two Michigan cities: the larger and more affluent Lansing, and the slightly smaller and less affluent Saginaw.

Between 2003-2007 officer/population ratios in the most well-to-do community, Lansing, nudged up from 2.11 to 2.12 per 1,000. In Saginaw, the least prosperous, an already low ratio of 1.83 fell moderately, to 1.74. But in Pontiac it plunged, from a relatively healthy 2.56 in 2003 to 1.98 in 2007 and an abysmal 0.98 in 2008 (current data for the other cities is not available.) Violent crime tells a similar story, trending up slightly in Lansing from 10.3 to 11 per 1,000, increasing somewhat more steeply in Saginaw, from 27.2 to 29.4, but rocketing from 13.8 to 18.8 in Pontiac. Homicides this year in Pontiac already exceed the 2007 total, so it's likely that this trend will continue. (FBI officer data [2003](#) [2007](#); FBI crime data [2003](#) [2007](#).)

In brief, the data support the conclusion that sharp cuts in police staffing in Pontiac contributed to a dramatic increase in violent crime. Keeping in mind that this is an extreme example, it does suggest that cops are a good thing. But affording them is something else again. During 2003-2007 the richest city, Lansing ([1999](#) median income \$34,833, percent below poverty level 16.9) enjoyed the best police coverage, while the poorest, Saginaw ([1999](#) median income \$26,485, percent below poverty level 28.5) had the worst.



You can thank decentralization. In America police are controlled and funded by municipalities, whose budgets for everything from street maintenance to schools, fire and police come almost exclusively from local sources such as sales, property and city income taxes. Consider the writer's home state of California. Using [2000 Census](#) and [2007 FBI](#) data, we compared police staffing and violent crime in the working class city of Inglewood (pop. 115,223, median income \$34,269, 22.5% below poverty level) with the middle to upper-middle class community of Burbank (pop. 104,871, median income \$47,467, 10.5% below poverty level) and, for fun, the disgustingly rich enclave of Beverly Hills (pop. 35,133, median income \$70,945, 9.1% below poverty level).

First the good news. Inglewood (190 officers, 1.65/1,000) actually enjoys a somewhat higher officer ratio than Burbank (154 officers, 1.47/1,000). Now for the bad news. In 2007 Inglewood had 1,036 violent crimes and 19 murders, while Burbank had 274 and

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3. That's right, Inglewood had nearly four times more violent crime than Burbank. Correcting for population, Inglewood's violent crime ratio, 8.9/1,000 is more than three times Burbank's 2.6. Inglewood may have a few more cops, but its crime problem is far more severe.

With Beverly Hills the contrast is even starker. Inglewood has three times the population, twice the violent crime rate and infinitely more murders (it had nineteen, while Beverly Hills had zero.) But its officer/population ratio is less than half that of the city known as "90210," whose 130 cops yield a stratospheric ratio of 3.7 officers per 1,000.

Decentralized police and regressive funding have created terrible inequities in police services, with the impact falling most severely on the usual victim: the working-class American. One solution might be to create State-controlled pools to subsidize localities such as Pontiac and Inglewood that are beset by violent crime. No matter their station in life, citizens have a right to equal protection under the law. That should mean equal police protection as well.

Posted 9/27/22

## HARD TIMES IN “THE BIG EASY”

*In New Orleans, poverty and crime go together like, well...*



*For Police Issues by Julius (Jay) Wachtel.* Louisiana’s largest city occasionally draws our attention over the behavior of its cops (click [here](#) and [here](#)). As former mayor Mitch Landrieu [noted](#) when the Justice Department stepped in over a decade ago, “I have inherited a police force that has been described by many as one of the worst police departments in the country.” DOJ soon issued [a massive report](#) that upbraided officers for making unwarranted stops and arrests, using excessive force, and demonstrating bias against women and minorities. Managers weren’t ignored. They drew considerable scorn for a preoccupation with numbers, which “diverts attention and resources from quality arrests, community engagement, and more considered problem-solving.” In 2018 the city entered into an elaborate [consent decree](#) that required NOPD fundamentally change its way of doing business, both within *and* on the streets.

We’ve cautioned about the consequences of pushing numerical productivity. Indeed, *Police Issues* has a special section on “[Quantity and Quality](#).” So was *that* the cause of NOPD’s alleged dysfunction? Or is something more fundamental at work? DOJ’s slap-down offered an intriguing clue:

Some argue that, given the difficulty of police work, officers must at times police harshly and bend the rules when a community is confronted with seemingly intransigent high levels of crime. Policing is undeniably difficult; however, experience and study in the policing field have made it clear that bending the rules and ignoring the Constitution makes effective policing much more challenging.

As it turns out, those “intransigent” levels of crime have beset The Big Easy for a very long time. Unfortunately, our recent probe of Louisiana (“[But is it Really Satan?](#)”)

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altogether ignored the State’s largest city. So imagine our despair when we recently came across the *Wall Street Journal’s* splendid (and deeply sobering) piece, “[New Orleans Has America’s No. 1 Murder Rate. ‘We’re in a Crisis.’](#)” Based on [data recently published](#) by the Major Chiefs Association, it reports that New Orleans’ homicide rates aren’t just in the pits – they’re the worst in the land!

We decided to check for ourselves. MCCA published violent crime numbers for the first six months of 2021 and 2022 for seventy major U.S. cities and metro areas. Using 2021 population estimates from the Census (click [here](#) and [here](#)) we computed homicide rates (per 100,000 pop.) for every place surveyed by the Chiefs. And the results definitely bear out the Journal’s despair. On the left are the most murder-ridden areas, rate-wise. On the right is a comparo between the nation’s murder capital (New Orleans) and five major cities that frequently appear in our posts. Really, if being worst counts, The Big Easy “easily” earns the trophy.

| Rank /70 | City        | Pop    | Hom 2022 | Rate 2022 |
|----------|-------------|--------|----------|-----------|
| 1        | New Orleans | 376971 | 155      | 41.1      |
| 2        | Baltimore   | 576498 | 179      | 31.0      |
| 3        | St. Louis   | 299310 | 86       | 29.3      |
| 4        | Detroit     | 632464 | 133      | 21.0      |
| 5        | Memphis     | 628127 | 121      | 19.3      |
| 6        | Milwaukee   | 569330 | 109      | 19.1      |

| Rank /70 | City          | Pop     | Hom 2022 | Rate 2022 |
|----------|---------------|---------|----------|-----------|
| 1        | New Orleans   | 376971  | 155      | 41.1      |
| 9        | Philadelphia  | 1576251 | 257      | 16.3      |
| 10       | Washington DC | 670050  | 104      | 15.5      |
| 18       | Chicago       | 2696555 | 311      | 11.5      |
| 44       | Los Angeles   | 3849297 | 186      | 4.8       |
| 56       | New York City | 8467513 | 207      | 2.4       |

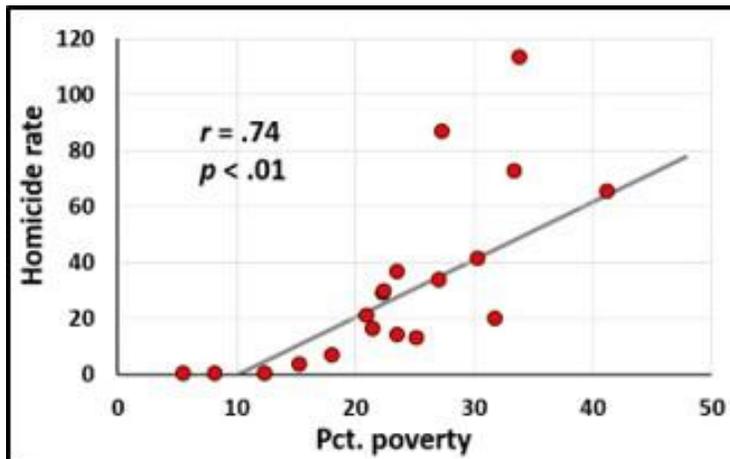
Full stop. For the past decade, essays in our [Neighborhoods](#) special topic have warned that results of such comparisons may not be as meaningful as one assumes. After all, cities *are* artificial constructs. New York City brags about its safety. According to the table, its homicide rate does seem benign. But as we pointed out in “[Fix Those Neighborhoods](#)”, the Big Apple’s peaceful character doesn’t extend to its poorer districts. Say, Brownsville (pop. 86,000), which sports a deplorable murder rate of 29.1.

We don’t look on economic conditions as the ultimate cause of violence. Poverty rates, though, seem to function as a surrogate for an unholy alliance of factors (e.g., unemployment, lack of child care, ill-behaved peers) that can collectively make life miserable. And get folks killed. So instead of simply wagging our finger at The Big Easy, let’s look *within*. Our main source, New Orleans P.D.’s “[Electronic Police Report 2022](#)” provides basic information on “all Police Reports filed by NOPD officers”. To align our results with the Major Chiefs data, we focused on the first six months of 2022, from

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January 1 through June 30, selecting every entry coded as “HOMICIDE” and where victim status was “FATAL.”

That process yielded 101 homicide victims. For step 2 – *where* in New Orleans? – we queried the incidents’ street locations in Google. That yielded sixteen ZIP codes (the city has nineteen principal ZIP’s, but three – 70121, 70123 and 70124 – had no homicides during our timeframe.) We then turned to the [Census](#) and gathered 2019 ACS estimates for each ZIP’s population and percent in poverty: cumulative, “White alone” and “Black or African American alone.” (And yes, we share. Click [here](#) for the data.)

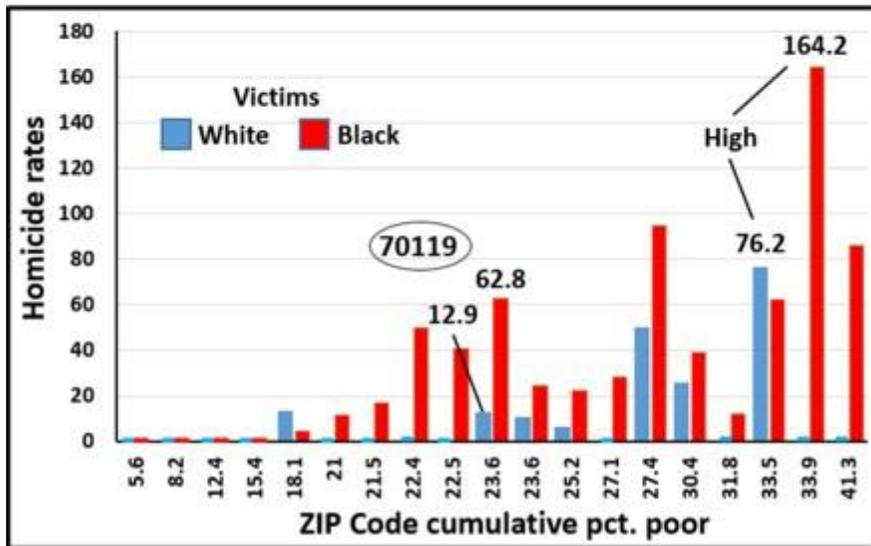
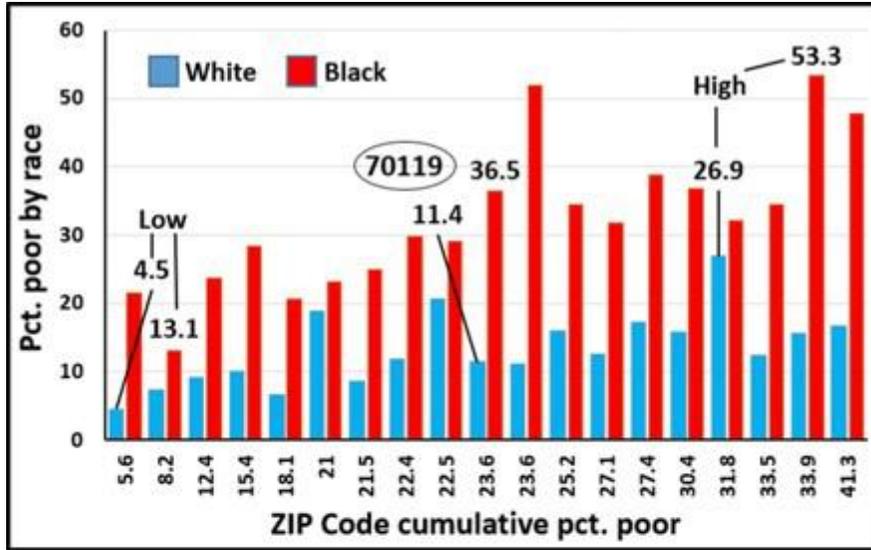


Our first order of business was to look for a relationship between ZIP code poverty percentages and murder rates (per 100,000 pop.) As our graph indicates, their correlation was in the expected direction (more poverty, more murder) and *very* robust. In fact, the “*r*” statistic of .74 turned out to be virtually identical to the .73 “*r*” yielded by our 2021 comparison of poverty and

violence rates for New York City’s 59 Districts (“[Woke up, America!](#)”).

And just like in New York City (and everywhere else we’ve ever looked) the consequences fell hardest on the racial and ethnic groups that disproportionately inhabit the city’s poorer areas. [According to the Census](#), New Orleans’ population of 376,971 is 33.4 pct. White and 59.2 pct. Black. Overall poverty is 24.8 pct., with Black poverty (33.2 pct.) nearly three times that of Whites (12 pct.) Check out these graphs, which arrange New Orleans’ nineteen regular Zip codes by percent of residents in poverty, with the wealthiest Zip (5.6 pct. poor) on the left and the most economically deprived (41.3 pct. poor) on the right:

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|              | Pop. White | Pop. Black | White Pov. | Black Pov. | White Vict. | Hom Rt White | Black Vict. | Hom Rt Black |
|--------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
| <b>70119</b> | 15535      | 15935      | 11.4       | 36.5       | 2           | 12.9         | 10          | 62.8         |

Black residents are doubly disadvantaged. As ZIP Code poverty rates worsen, their share of the population (top graph) and rate of homicide victimization (bottom graph) substantially increase. Consider, for example, Zip 70119, with a mid-ranked 23.6 pct. cumulative poverty score. Although it has about the same number of White and Black residents, the latter were *three times* more likely to be poor and *five times* more likely to be murdered.

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So are economics entirely to blame for New Orleans' travails? Maybe not. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, and to [a recent article](#) in *The Lens*, the consent decree, and the elaborate internal controls it produced, led many cops to leave. It's also reportedly hampered recruitment, which is in the dumps across the U.S. Specialized NOPD units were stripped to augment depleted patrol ranks, and 9-1-1 responses are interminably delayed. So much so, that many citizens and businesses have taken up arms. Or simply left. Meanwhile the Federal judge overseeing the consent decree announced that, contrary to her recent suggestion, [the end is not exactly in sight](#). According to U.S. District Judge Susie Morgan, problems with "crime reporting data, calls for service and response time" require an "innovative" response. Given [NOPD's severe staffing shortage](#), though, that definitely seems a stretch.

But maybe not. Perhaps that coach-person can pull out a solution from their top hat. So we'll see.

Posted 10/3/10

## IS THE SKY ABOUT TO FALL?

***Chiefs warn that police cutbacks will lead to a resurgence of crime. Are they right?***

*By Julius (Jay) Wachtel.* Police layoffs were once unheard of. So when communities as hard-hit by crime as [Oakland](#) trim their sworn ranks – eighty cops, about ten percent of the force, were let go in July – everyone takes notice. [At a recent Washington meeting](#) worried police executives from across the U.S. discussed the impact of public safety cuts and exchanged information on how best to proceed. Chiefs from Sacramento to Massachusetts [complained](#) that plunging tax revenues were threatening to reverse hard-fought gains against crime by forcing them to freeze hiring, disband specialized units and return detectives to patrol.

Dealing with cutbacks has certainly led to some interesting solutions. Desperately looking for ways to close a \$128 million gap the Los Angeles County sheriff's department is having detectives [don uniforms one day a week](#), saving on patrol salaries and overtime but making already substantial investigative backlogs even worse. And in a move [revealed only recently](#), in July the FBI assigned six agents to LAPD homicide and funded an undisclosed amount of detective overtime, enabling the beleaguered department to clear an “unheard of” twenty-seven murders in three months.

During the past two years Congress has set aside a portion of recovery act funds to help police departments pay for more cops. Administered by DOJ's community policing office, [the program](#) just disbursed its second set of grants, amounting to \$300 million. [Sacramento County](#), which laid off more than one-hundred deputies in 2009, got \$21 million, which it will use to bring back fifty.

With only so much money to go around applicant agencies [must prove](#) that their financial circumstances and crime problems are unusually grim. Unable to meet that requirement, NYPD and LAPD have been repeatedly turned away. That's ruffled feathers. “This formula makes absolutely no sense,” complained Sen. Charles Schumer (D – NY). “Punishing New York City and other municipalities for their success in keeping crime down and people safe sends the wrong message to law enforcement agencies.”

Senator Schumer's anger is understandable. Chuck Wexler, executive director of the Police Executive Research Forum, the organization that hosted the Washington

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conference, pointed out that New York City had 2,200 murders in 1990 but only 466 in 2009. “For the longest time, people thought that the police didn’t matter, didn’t affect the crime rate. Now we’ve seen that’s not true.” What happens, he asked, when proactive strategies are out of reach?

Violent and property crime are now about 40 percent lower than in 1990-1992, when the so-called “Great Crime Drop” began. Except for slight upticks in violence in 2005 and 2006, the offense count (actual numbers, not just per capita) has fallen each year. Just-released figures indicate that this trend has continued through the present, with violent crime down 5.3 percent and property crime down 4.6 percent in 2009.

Why the drop? As we’ve previously posted, academic assessments have given credit to a variety of factors, including improvements in the economy, the graying of the population, increased incarceration and vigorous policing (see Blumstein and Wallman, “The Crime Drop in America”, Cambridge, 2000).

Economic arguments don’t seem all that compelling. To be sure, with recessions in 1960-61, 1969-70, 1973-75, 1980, 1981-82, 1990-91, 2000-2001 and 2007-2009 there is lots of room for speculation. One could surmise, for example, that the relative prosperity of the mid-1980’s set the stage for the crime drop, and that the economic expansion of the mid-1990’s kept it going. Yet we also know that crime increased during prior periods of growth, such as in the 1960’s.

A better answer, many say, is that the American population has been aging out of the crime-prone years. It’s true that the median age has increased – for males, it climbed from 28.9 to an estimated 35.3 between 1980 and 2010. But it’s also true that between 1990-1999, a time when violent crime plunged 28 percent and property crime decreased 26 percent, the size of the most criminogenic male age group, 15-29, increased by 12 percent.

On the other hand there’s no question but that imprisonment prevents crime. One can’t commit burglaries while locked up. In his widely quoted (and often reviled) 2003 book about the great crime drop, “Why Crime Rates Fell,” Tufts sociologist John E. Conklin credited up to half the improvement to increased incarceration. Naturally, it’s up to police to serve up worthy targets. So to the extent that proactive strategies contribute to the incapacitation of dangerous offenders, slashing police budgets does give reason for concern.

Budgetary constraints also affect the form that punishment can take. The crack-fueled crime spike of the 1980’s generated a severely punitive response, which persisted

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in somewhat diminished form to the present. But with corrections budgets under the gun, states have started experimenting with liberalized release policies. Naturally, should recidivists get out early, there are consequences.

Incidentally, a seldom-mentioned factor that likely contributed to the crime drop is the stabilization of the crack marketplace, which brought the bloody battles between competing gangs to an end. Peace in the 'hood (we know, a relative term) may be one reason why the murder count has plunged.

Doubts have also arisen about the true magnitude of the crime drop. [A criminologist](#) recently recounted an episode when, as a cop, he was asked to help document the city's need for new streetlights. "We wanted a grant to do that, and we were told to go out and find every broken window we could. You know how many broken windows there are...? We led the nation that year in vandalism. And guess who got the grant?"

In the bad old days, when it seemed that crime could only go up, your blogger recalls that departments were often anxious to remind everyone that crime was getting worse so funding would increase. But once things turned the corner it ceased being in a chief's best interests to point out that crime in their city was up. As we mentioned in [Liars Figure](#), the need to demonstrate continual improvement, generated in part by Compstat, has led to widespread cheating. Under pressure from superiors, officers have discouraged citizens from reporting crimes, ignored and undercounted what was reported, and downgraded offenses (e.g., from aggravated to simple assault) to keep them from appearing in the FBI's yearly crime counts. It's impossible to estimate the effect of such shenanigans, but it's likely significant. Bottom line: the "great crime drop" may not be so "great" after all.

Posted 11/9/07

## **JUST HOW THIN IS L.A.'S THIN BLUE LINE?**

***How many cops does L.A. need? How many can it afford?***

*For Police Issues by Julius (Jay) Wachtel.* Determined to make good on his pledge to add a thousand cops post haste, Los Angeles Mayor Antonio V. ridiculed Councilman Bernie Parks' call to limit this fiscal year's hiring to no more than 226. But Parks, a member of the Council's budget committee, insisted that his number is all the budget allows, and even took a swing at his arch-nemesis, Chief "Hollywood" Bill Bratton, for chronic over-spending. Maybe it was only Bernie being Bernie; after all, it's pretty obvious that he's still nursing a grudge for only getting one term at the department's helm. The ex-Generalissimo has been particularly hard on his replacement, criticizing him, among other things, for adopting the three-twelve plan, pulling senior lead officers off the street, relaxing hiring standards, bullying the homeless and, perhaps the most bitter pill of all, taking credit for the plunging crime rate -- a rate that was going down during Parks' tenure.

Ego battles aside, is Hizzoner right? Is our line *that* thin? Comparing Los Angeles and New York yields some tantalizing clues. Bill Bratton's former stomping ground boasts an officer/citizen ratio *nearly twice as high* as Los Angeles' (35,690 officers: 44.1/10,000 v. 9,393 officers: 24.6/10,000.) Since its residents are also stuffed into a much smaller geographical area, New York's effective police presence is *more than five times L.A.'s* (321 sq. mi. = 111 officers/sq. mile v. 469.1 sq. mi. = 20 officers/sq. mile). So that's why cops seem so ubiquitous in the Big Apple! If we believe that a visible police presence helps deter crime, the fact that New York's 2006 violent crime rate was *twenty percent lower* than L.A.'s makes perfect sense (637.9/100,000 v. 786.8/100,000). NYPD's arguable officer surplus also makes it far better positioned to staff specialized crime-fighting units and shift officers around in response to evolving crime patterns.

But can we really afford more cops? Raising L.A.'s trash rates might eventually get us over the 10,000 officer hump...but twice as many? How *does* New York pay for its army of blue-suits? That's easy: they pay them less -- a lot less. Believe it or not, NYPD officers start at (don your breathing gear) \$25,100 per year. That's right -- twenty-five thousand one-hundred, and not a nickel more! But wait: after completing a six-month academy they're bumped to...\$32,700, which should at least get those without dependents off food stamps. After five and one-half years NYPD patrol officers make

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\$59,588, maybe as much as \$70,000 including overtime. Does that sound better? It's only a hair above what an LAPD rookie *starts at*.

Given Southern California police salaries, substantially changing L.A.'s police/citizen ratio would require huge infusions of cash. (Since population density is low, greatly increasing police visibility is virtually a non-starter.) Where would the money come from? You guessed it: social services, trash collection, road repairs, park maintenance, etcetera. For those old enough to remember, it was precisely the robbing Peter to pay Paul dilemma that led LAPD Lieutenant-turned-Mayor Tom Bradley to put the kabosh on the department's expansion during the seventies and eighties. Instead, we started paying officers better -- a lot better. And now we're caught in the horns of another dilemma.

Is Parks just another ex-cop turning against the police? Or does he recognize that L.A. can't afford many more cops? Goals like "a thousand" might make for a great soundbite, but unless L.A. wants to wind up in a San-Diego-like financial meltdown it must come to grips with the short and long-term financial consequences of expanding the police.

Quietly, rationally, just like Joe Friday would have done.

Posted 3/16/07

## **KEEPING OUR EMPERORS CLOTHED**

***What did we know about Eliot Spitzer and Mike Carona? Very little.***

By Julius Wachtel, (c) 2010

When a bad boy gets his due we hardly notice. It's far more interesting when someone who pretends to be trustworthy gets caught with his hands in the cookie jar. And if it's a celebrated do-gooder, a real-life Dudley Do-Right, it's positively newsworthy.

So it is with Eliot Spitzer. Whether Governor "steamroller" is simply an extreme example of an Alpha male, and his downfall the product of a voracious appetite for risk and excitement, seems hardly the point. Pop psychology doesn't cut it for an insanity defense. And a defense he will need, as allegedly soliciting a prostitute to cross State lines and allegedly structuring cash transactions to circumvent reporting requirements are both Federal felonies, crimes that when committed by a man who was until recently a State Attorney General seem awfully hard for authorities to ignore.

Not that our Easterner friends would notice, but those of us on the opposite coast had someone to brag about only last year, when an illustrious member of very our crime-and-justice nobility, Orange County Sheriff Mike Carona, once crowned by Larry King as "America's Sheriff," brought his long-suffering wife and alleged mistress along for his perp-walk. (Carona was Federally indicted for allegedly selling special favors. His missus and mistress were also charged. Whatever we do in the Golden State, we do it together.)

Perhaps in the big picture -- what social scientists call the "aggregate" -- psychological factors *do* matter. Science will one day reveal what made Dustin Hoffman like "mature" women, and we could then market the powder to Alpha males. In the meantime, what's to be done? If as "control theories" suggest we're all incurably selfish, getting us to do the right thing requires that we strengthen the forces that prevent or inhibit the behavior we'd like to extinguish.

How would that apply here? First, let's look at the supply side. Exactly what did we know about Eliot Spitzer when he ran for New York State Attorney General? About Mike Carona when he ran for Orange County Sheriff? Other than being good Party boys -- ahem, meaning *political* party -- very little. Since both are elective positions, neither endured the detailed vetting required of prospective street cops or assistant D.A.'s.

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Neither had to provide references, reveal their credit history, give authorization for criminal and civil records checks, or state whether they had ever been investigated or discharged for unethical or criminal behavior. Their background was left for reporters to check, or not, as they saw fit.

Not that there weren't some worrisome signs. In 1994, four years before winning the race for Attorney General, Spitzer [publicly denied](#) that his first, failed attempt at his Party's nomination was financed by a secret multi-million dollar loan from his father. It was, as he was later forced to admit, a lie, one that could have resulted in prosecution. Carona's [entire work experience](#) before being elected Sheriff was as a Marshal, in effect a bailiff. His political connections helped him rise to the top of an obscure agency that however grandly named was nothing more than a guard service and process server for local courts.

Had either Spitzer or Carona sought an equivalent appointive position, their applications would have had to pass the scrutiny of a board of qualified experts, not a room full of cigar-chomping political hacks. That lack of process, as New York just discovered, is a gift that keeps on giving. During his term in the State Senate, Spitzer's replacement, Lieutenant Governor David A. Paterson, [allegedly funneled](#) hundreds of thousands of dollars of State funds to a hospital that hired his wife as its lobbyist. As the *New York Times* recently bemoaned, the new Governor "is about to face something new: serious scrutiny of his legislative record, political connections and handling of government money over two decades." That comes a bit late for those who "hired" him, don't you think?

Spitzer faced little "control" while in office. Once praised for taking on Wall Street abusers, the crusading A.G.'s record is being tarnished by complaints that he not only bullied and threatened his targets but anyone else who stood in his way. Spitzer's aggressive ways clearly infected his Governorship. Only weeks after he was sworn in his staff got caught using the State Police to smear their boss's political arch-nemesis, Republican State Senator Joseph L. Bruno. Needless to say, the Guv's take-no-prisoners approach alienated his supporters and left him virtually without friends in the legislature. No going-away party there.

Carona's on-the-job record is hardly more reassuring. Moments after being sworn in he introduced a local cop with a questionable work record as his number-two man. He then started deputizing wholly unqualified contributors as sworn, gun-carrying reservists, going so far as to elevate one to Assistant Sheriff. (Oh, yes. That one also got indicted.)

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As things stand elected officials usually get a “pass” from oversight. With rare exception, when allegations of misconduct surface no one other than the press investigates. But it doesn’t have to be that way. One of the most promising models for monitoring the conduct of elected officials is [California’s Commission on Judicial Performance](#), which investigates allegations of ethical lapses and makes its findings public for everyone to see.

When selecting candidates for positions like top cop or A.G. we need to know -- a *lot*. And just as soon as someone’s elected active oversight must take over. Without a watchdog, being answerable to everyone is the same as being answerable to no one.

Posted 05/01/11

## NEW JERSEY BLUES

***How is the Garden State responding to increased violence? By shedding cops.***

*By Julius (Jay) Wachtel.* New Jersey's disturbing uptick in homicide reportedly began last summer, when [thirty-five persons were murdered](#) in Newark in three months. New Jersey's largest city (pop. 279,203) wound up with 85 murders in 2010, a disheartening rate of 30.4 per 100,000 population. That's nothing new. In 2009, the most recent year for which national data is available, its homicide rate (28.7) was nearly [six times the U.S. mean of 5.0](#).

Beset by gangs, drugs and guns, Newark is in deplorable shape. But it doesn't hold a candle to Camden. [Second only to St. Louis in serious crime](#) among the nation's 400 largest cities, the troubled community (pop. 79,980) closed 2010 with thirty-six homicides. Its murder rate of 45.0 was nearly half again Newark's. One year earlier Camden's rate was 43.0, *nearly nine times* the U.S. average.

Compared to its brethren, Trenton (pop. 82,609) seems like a safe place. After all, [it had "only" 15 killings in 2010](#); its murder rate, 18.2, actually fell from 2009, when it was 20.6. That's still more than *three times* the national average and plenty sufficient to earn New Jersey's capital a spot along with Camden and Newark in the most crime-ridden seven percent of American cities.

In 2010, following three years of improvement, New Jersey reported a [thirteen percent increase in homicide](#), from 320 to 363, as murder trended up in a majority of counties. And things may be getting worse. Although optimists point out that violence in Camden hasn't reached the levels experienced last summer (well, it's not summer yet) [it's still up 17 percent](#) when compared to the first quarter of 2010.

It's a similar story in Newark, where [twenty murders occurred during January-March](#), double the number (10) for the equivalent period last year. Aggravated assault increased two percent and robbery 11 percent. Burglary is up eight percent and auto theft jumped about a third.

So what's being done? They're laying off cops.

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[Bloodletting in the police ranks began in earnest last year](#) when Atlantic City laid off 60 officers, 16 percent of its force. In December Newark PD lost 13 percent of its strength with a stunning 167-officer cut. This January [Camden let go 163](#), slashing the troubled department by nearly half. (Forty-five superior officers were also demoted and put on patrol. A Federal grant has since let the city rehire fifty-five cops, but the funds are only expected to last a year.) And that's not all. Only last month, just as a national police organization announced it was honoring Camden's chief for innovating his way through the chaos (don't ask), [the city of Paterson cut 125 cops](#), one-quarter of its force.

All in all, it's estimated that [New Jersey has trimmed about 3,000](#) from its law enforcement ranks. [With the state in dire financial shape](#), few are expected to be replaced anytime soon. Unemployment, the loss of well-paying manufacturing jobs, sharp drops in property values, burgeoning public pension costs, declines in investment income and a host of other factors have brought the Garden State to its knees. And the problem may be getting worse. In March Governor Chris Christie announced that the lifelines traditionally extended to the state's poorest cities – a stunning eighty percent of Camden's budget comes from Trenton – [would be cut \\$275 million](#), a full 17 percent.

You see, there's urgent need for the loot elsewhere. Only days ago [New Jersey was ordered to reimburse](#) the U.S. \$271 million in Federal tax funds that the state expended on a tunnel project it has since refused to complete. Interest on the debt, which New Jersey is contesting, amounts to a tidy \$50,000 per week. Gov. Christie is refusing to raise taxes or restore prior tax cuts and suggests de-unionization and givebacks as a solution. Lacking that, letting public servants go is the only option.

When America's founders chose to keep government close to the people they inadvertently set into motion a process that would inevitably consign poor citizens to poor public services. Wealth is unequally distributed. Local governments rely on property and sales taxes, and when economic downturns strike less affluent communities are hit the hardest. Paradoxically, they're also the ones with the far greater need for police services in the first place.

New Jersey's cities may be an extreme example, but they're not alone. We've all heard what's been taking place in Detroit. Is it any wonder that the Motor City appears right next to Camden on CQ's list? [Scan the most crime-ridden municipalities](#) and you'll see one impoverished community after another. Flint, Michigan ([100 officers laid off](#)); Compton, Richmond and Oakland, California ([80 officers laid off](#)); Cleveland, Ohio ([66 cops laid off](#)); Gary, Indiana; Baltimore, Maryland. And yes, Washington, D.C. Then look at the opposite end of the list, where the safest cities are. Try to find a poor place, or any where a substantial number of cops have been let go.

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Just try.

Posted 3/22/10

## NOT ALL COPS ARE BLUE

### *Internal strife besets two well-regarded police departments*

*For Police Issues by Julius (Jay) Wachtel.* Nestled against foothills northeast of Los Angeles lie the twin cities of Burbank and Glendale. Home to cadres of upwardly-mobile young professionals, the communities – Burbank hovers at slightly over 100,000 population; Glendale is nearly twice the size – are in most respects similar. Bordering Southern California’s largest urban park, sporting ultramodern shopping complexes and miles of shady, tree-lined streets, both are desirable places to live, enjoying good school systems and crime rates well below the national average.

Alas, both also have police departments that are verging on meltdown.

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On October 29, 2009 [Burbank Police Sergeant Neil Gunn, Sr.](#) called his superior. Assigned to work from his residence while the department’s internal affairs unit investigated reports that he and other officers had abused suspects, the 22-year veteran and former SWAT commander got permission to leave. He then drove his truck to a quiet place, grabbed his shotgun and blew himself apart.

According to department sources the use of force became a problem after a rookie’s killing in 2003. Currently as many as a dozen officers are targets of an [FBI civil rights investigation](#). One of the allegations, a 2007 incident in which an officer supposedly jammed a gun barrel against a robbery suspect’s head, came to light when a detective who said he witnessed this and other instances of abuse belatedly came forward. Suspended for originally lying to investigators, Detective Angelo Dahlia wound up suing the department, complaining that officers had intimidated him into keeping quiet and that then-chief Tim Stehr (he resigned after Gunn’s suicide) had “encouraged the beatings.”

Dahlia isn’t the only cop with a gripe. In another lawsuit, Burbank Police Captain Bill Taylor alleges that he was demoted from deputy chief after complaining to the former chief about police misconduct, including instances of discrimination against recently-hired minority officers.

Racial and ethnic tensions within the ranks have propelled even more litigation. [The original suit](#), filed in May 2009 by a Hispanic lieutenant and four officers – a female

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Hispanic, a male Hispanic, an Armenian and a Black – characterized the department as “an insider’s club where if you aren’t white, male and heterosexual you had better keep your mouth shut and play along with the bigots or suffer the consequences.” White cops and the former chief were accused of subjecting minority officers to slurs and slights, passing them over for desirable assignments and promotions and unfairly disciplining them. According to the lieutenant he was harassed for hiring a qualified, openly gay female and was busted back to patrolman for reporting officer misconduct, with the chief going so far as to arrange his demotion with the police union.

[A sixth officer](#) filed a separate but nearly identical suit four months later. Excepting one of the original plaintiffs, whose [cause of action was recently dismissed](#) on technical grounds, the cases remain on track.

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Burbank is known for its movie and television studios. Glendale’s fame, on the other hand, comes from hosting the [largest Armenian community](#) in the U.S., comprising between a third and a half of the city’s population. [At last count](#), though, its police force of 257 officers has only nineteen of Armenian descent, with none holding ranks higher than sergeant. According to lawyer Carney Shegerian that’s not nearly good enough. “How come they’re not lieutenants yet?” he demanded. “Officers are going to explain and will testify that they should have been lieutenants by now.”

The angry advocate was referring to a lawsuit he filed on January 20, 2010 on behalf of four current and one former Glendale police officers of Armenian ancestry, including two of the department’s four current sergeants. Like their Burbank counterparts, the Glendale litigants allege a [pattern of hostile treatment and discrimination](#) resulting in “humiliation, emotional distress, and mental and physical pain and anguish,” making their lives miserable and depriving them of the opportunity to freely exercise their profession and advance in the ranks.

Instances of bias include the removal of one of the plaintiffs from his position as the department’s chief spokesperson, allegedly because he testified for another of the plaintiffs, who had been fired and was suing for reinstatement. There are also examples of derogatory comments and of failed attempts to gain transfers and promotions. A lot of emphasis is placed on statistics. If Glendale really doesn’t discriminate, why do they have so few Armenian cops?

That, argues the City, isn’t on purpose. Relatively few Armenians apply to join the force, and with few vacancies and little turnover it’s unreasonable to expect more.

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Glendale also insists it's trying to do more. It [posted an announcement](#) for an Armenian-fluent officer several months before the lawsuit was filed, helping earn the new chief a commendation from the local branch of a national Armenian organization. Yet the lawsuit recently doubled in size to an astounding ninety pages, and with two out of four of the department's highest-ranking Armenians suing their own agency one must wonder whether reconciliation is within reach.

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Policing has traditionally been a white man's game. Your blogger recalls that when he joined ATF in 1972 the official job description specifically excluded female applicants because of the position's physical risks. When Federal law finally forced much-needed changes much of the resistance went underground. Bias remained so evident that qualified women and minorities were discouraged from applying, inadvertently furnishing a ready excuse for their continued absence from the ranks.

In time things did improve. Changes are most apparent in large agencies such as New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, whose ethnic (and to a lesser extent, gender) mix approaches that of the communities they serve. But substantial imbalances persist elsewhere. As [Glendale's chief explained](#), "we do not have people retiring or leaving in hordes. It's been very piecemeal over the years. So your opportunity for growth [more Armenians in leadership positions] is minimal."

In fact, in a department that's 92.7 percent non-Armenian, promoting an Armenian is likely to raise eyebrows. Was it done fair and square or is it an example of reverse discrimination? That's not an idle question. Last year [the Supreme Court ruled](#) that discarding the results of firefighter promotional exams because results favored whites violated the Civil Rights Act. Police officers have won reverse discrimination cases around the U.S., often gaining substantial settlements. In February 2008 [San Francisco](#) agreed to pay nine whites, two Hispanics and one Asian officer a total of \$1.6 million because they were passed over for promotion to lieutenant in favor of lower-scoring black applicants, all of whom were promoted.

In the end, it's not just about the money or who gets to wear the stripes, bars or stars. To the extent that officers don't consider all their colleagues to be equally "blue" everyone suffers. Policing is stressful enough without letting nonsensical distinctions about race, ancestry and what-have-you get in the way. It's the same issue that's bedeviled our land since a small contingent of religiously oppressed pilgrims made their way across the Atlantic. Regrettably, it doesn't seem to be going away.

Posted 7/23/21

## RACIAL QUARRELS *WITHIN* POLICING (PART II)

*In San Francisco, White cops allege that color and gender do count*



*For Police Issues by Julius (Jay) Wachtel.* In [Part I](#) we discussed a Federal lawsuit filed by Black and Hispanic police officers who serve in a Maryland county nestled against the nation’s capital. As it happens, their action, which accuses officials of “fostering a climate of discrimination against non-White officers and retaliating against those who dare object,” has a counterpart on the opposite shores.

Its plaintiffs, though, are sixteen White, Asian and Assyrian cops. Filed in April 2020, [the newest \(third\) version of their complaint](#) (the first, in June 2019, had thirteen accusers) alleges that their superiors have for years engaged in “a pattern of promoting lower-scoring candidates” in Sergeant, Lieutenant and Captain exams. In contrast with Prince George’s County, the “primary beneficiaries” of the City of San Francisco’s bias are Blacks and females.



An interesting aspect of the complaint is that its introductory section leans on two prior studies: one by the city, another by the Feds, examining allegations of racism and homophobia at SFPD. Those inquiries were prompted by the discovery that White officers (yes, *White*) [had exchanged text messages](#) berating Black persons, including fellow cops, as well as members of the city’s vibrant LGBT community. In 2016, San Francisco’s “[Blue Ribbon Panel](#),” formed by then-D.A. George Gascon, issued its report.

While its tone was decidedly reform-minded, it did note that White officers’ chances of advancement had been on a years-long downtrend (p. 58). Concern was also expressed

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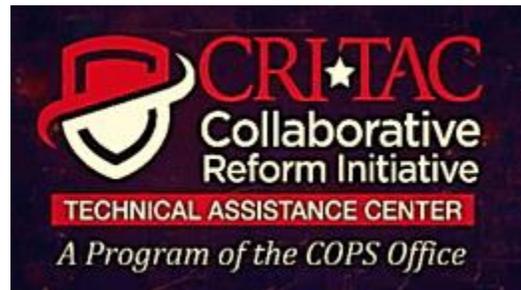
about the potential for favoritism; test results notwithstanding, moving up in rank seemed essentially at the Chief's pleasure:

“The absence of rules governing the selection of promotional candidates and the discretion held by the Chief, along with the lack of programs offering support to those seeking promotions, raises the likelihood of bias or favoritism in promotion decisions.” (p. 57)

Two correctives were suggested:

- “The SFPD should institute a high-level hiring committee to sign off on the Chief of Police's final hiring decisions, including deviations from the standard hiring and training process.” (p. 60)
- “The Police Commission should create and implement transparent hiring and promotions processes and criteria, including a requirement that every candidate's disciplinary history and secondary criteria be considered.” (p. 60)

San Francisco also asked the [COPS technical assistance center](#) to come in. Aside from examining allegations of racial bias, it also looked into the use of deadly force. On first glance [its conclusions](#) don't seem particularly favorable for the plaintiffs. COPS pointed out that White officers constituted 49 percent of the force in 2015. Yet they represented 59 percent of Sergeants, 51 percent of Lieutenants and 67 percent of Captains (p. 187). Still, it noted that during 2013-2015 the proportion of Whites being promoted receded, while the share of minorities moving up increased (p. 194). At the same time, a lack of “transparency” in the promotional process, which had also been noted by the Blue Ribbon panel, “created a level of distrust” (p. 202). So COPS recommended that SFPD “clearly outline the qualifications required to advance.”



Of course, if the city presses for the advancement of women and minorities, while the promotional process remains opaque, White prospects could indeed become victims of discrimination. That possibility, which lies at the core of the White officers' lawsuit, wasn't addressed by neither the Blue Ribbon panel nor by COPS.

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This isn't the first time that San Francisco's cops have sued. [In 1973 Black officers filed a Federal lawsuit](#) alleging that race and gender discrimination hindered their hiring and promotion. Six years later, after considerable litigation, the city entered into [an elaborate consent decree](#) that set goals for hiring women and minorities and directed that efforts be made to promote them "in proportion to their representation in the qualified applicant pool."

Unfortunately, Blacks didn't succeed in adequate numbers. Accordingly, in 1984 SFPD adjusted the relative weights of its promotional exams (there are several, written and oral) so that minorities and women would qualify for a greater share of vacancies. Notably, that happened *after* the scores came in. White officers sued. While a Federal district judge discounted their objections, in 1989 [the Ninth Circuit held](#) that the post-facto rebalancing was unlawful. San Francisco agreed that tweaking things after-the-fact was wrong and promised to stop.

But when SFPD resumed administering exams, minorities again wound up under-represented. So with approval from the Feds [the city adopted a "banding" process](#). Exam scores were grouped into ranges, and within each promotions were awarded using secondary criteria such as commendations and awards. A modest number of slots were also set aside for women and minorities. Again, White officers sued. This time, though, the city prevailed. In November 1992 the Ninth Circuit called banding a "unique and innovative" way of "addressing past harms to minorities while minimizing future harmful effects on nonminority candidates" and gave it its blessing.

According to the current plaintiffs, that "flexibility" became a smokescreen for a complex and opaque promotional system whose overriding objective is the advancement of women and minorities. In their view, things promptly went downhill. In 2003 and 2004 twelve White sergeants [filed three Federal lawsuits](#) alleging illegal discrimination in the 1997 lieutenant's exam. Their actions [were ultimately settled in 2008 for \\$1.6 million](#).

In 2007 disaster supposedly struck White prospects again [when the city administered](#) a "multi-part" Captain's exam comprised of "a series of written and oral exercises." But instead of simply promoting applicants according to their scores, SFPD adopted a "Rule of Five" approach:

"...the eligible list would consist of the officers with the five highest exam scores ["Rule of Five"] plus an additional officer -- that is, the next highest scorer -- for each additional vacancy that the City sought to fill...Thus, if the City were seeking to fill three vacancies during a given round of promotions, the seven highest-scoring officers would be placed on the eligible list."

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That gave decision-makers considerable flexibility. And that wasn't all. Once an officer made the list, the promotional criteria changed:

“Any vacancies that arose at the captain position during the next thirty-six months would be filled by candidates selected from that list by the Chief of SFPD (or his or her designee) based on a variety of ‘secondary criteria’...These criteria would include the candidate’s past ‘assignments, training, special qualifications, commendations/awards, bilingual certification, and discipline history’...”

Neither was the “Rule of Five” a sure bet. From the start, the city cautioned that “if there is adverse impact under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 resulting from the Rule of Five Scores, then a broader certification rule shall be used...” And once exam results were in, things did change:

“In January 2008, the City...announced that it no longer planned to use the Rule of Five Scores to fill all of the captain vacancies that arose over the next thirty-six months...Rather, it would use the Rule of Five Scores to fill the first eleven vacancies and, for all subsequent vacancies, would use a different process known as ‘banding’...Banding places less emphasis...on an applicant's score ranking by treating all exam scores that fall within a ‘statistically derived confidence range’ [the band] as functionally equivalent...”

That “band” was of substantial width:

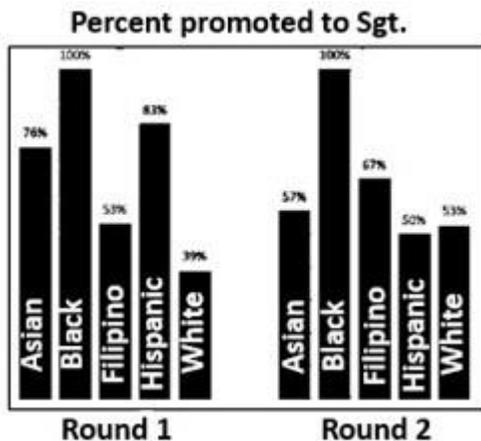
“For the 2007 captain's exam, the City elected to use a ‘band of 45 points . . . starting with Rank 16’ to fill any vacancies that arose after the first eleven vacancies...This band included the fourteen officers who achieved the sixteenth through twenty-eighth highest scores on the exam...In addition to these officers, the City would also continue to consider the applications of the four higher-ranked officers who were not selected for one of the first eleven promotions under the Rule of Five...”

Two White candidates, Lieutenants Heinz Hofmann and Thomas Buckley, earned “the sixteenth and twentieth highest scores” on the exam. So “neither was eligible under the Rule of Five Scores for any of the first eleven vacancies.” Problem is, once they became eligible, both got passed over under “banding.” In 2011 the list expired, and they sued. In 2015, a Federal judge denied both sides summary judgment. [San Francisco eventually settled](#) for \$200,000.

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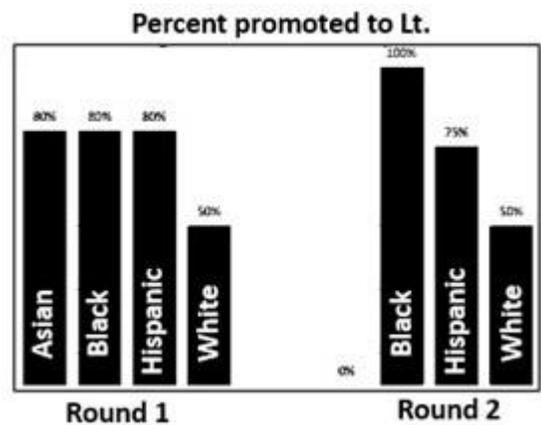
Back to the present. What's alleged in the current lawsuit?



- Seven patrol officers claim they are being denied promotion to Sergeant because they are White males; an eight because he is an Assyrian male; and a ninth because he is an Asian male. [According to the complaint](#), the 2017 list invoked a “Rule of 10,” allowing decision-makers to skip ten scores below that of the last successful candidate. So far, every Female officer and every Black officer

on the list have been promoted. But only 46 percent of White officers have succeeded, and that's held true despite the fact that they comprise 63.5 percent of the candidate pool (the graph on the left appears on the complaint.)

- A Rule of 10 is also being used to fill vacancies from the still-current 2017 Lieutenant's list. While only one Black applicant scored among the top thirty, and the top-ranked female was 52nd, every Black candidate and every female has succeeded. However, only half of the White officers on the list have gained promotion. Four sergeants claim that they have been denied advancement because they are White males, and a fifth “because she is a White lesbian” (the graph on the right appears on the complaint.)



- That Rule of 10 is also being applied to the (still active) 2015 Captain's list. Two Lieutenants claim they are being denied promotion to Captain because they are White males. One, whose score placed him twelfth, claims that he was passed over in favor of Black, Asian, Hispanic and female candidates whose scores were as many as twenty-six places lower.

Full stop. There can be valid race and gender-blind reasons for passing over applicants no matter their test scores. For example, one of the current plaintiffs,

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Lieutenant Ric Schiff, [was once disciplined](#) for insubordination and neglect of duty. That, according to then-police Chief George Gascón, explains why he skipped over Schiff for Lieutenant over a decade ago. Schiff and others nonetheless sued. And as mentioned above, the city settled. ([Schiff reportedly got a tidy \\$200,000](#) after lawyer's fees. )

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San Francisco is undeniably a very “woke” place. Politics and ideology likely affected the work of the Blue Ribbon Panel. They’ve certainly characterized the career of its convener, George Gascón. A former San Francisco police chief, later its chief prosecutor, his criticism of “[vast racial disparities in arrests and prosecutions](#)” likely helped him win the D.A.’s race last year in another progressive burg, the “City of Angels.” A staunch opponent of long prison terms, [Gascón quickly prohibited deputies](#) from using sentence enhancements. That set off an unprecedented revolt by assistant D.A.’s who recoiled at the thought of going easy on violent offenders. It also sparked a recall campaign. And while Gascón [has drawn support from LAPD chief Michel Moore](#), in these violence-impacted times his future is far from assured.

So is manipulating the promotional process the only way to help minorities succeed? We think not. [Thomas Boone](#), the Black Lieutenant who leads the charge in the Prince George’s County lawsuit, once observed that White officers are more likely to occupy specialized assignments where they gain the “skills, training and experience” that helps them score well on promotional tests. Race aside, how can street cops land a specialized slot? In our law enforcement experience, that often comes from doing quality work, and particularly by cranking out great reports that catch the eye of superiors, who often only know employees from what they read. To be sure, improving one’s written expression can take time and effort, but the payoff is invaluable.

Still, in these ideologically fraught times, when many cops feel compelled to line up by race and gender, solutions that emphasize quality work may seem a touch blasé. So by all means, keep fighting against bias. But don’t forget about the [craft of policing](#). In the end, that’s what *really* counts.

Posted 7/11/21

## RACIAL QUARRELS *WITHIN* POLICING (PART I)

*In Maryland, Black and Hispanic cops complain that color does count*



*For Police Issues by Julius (Jay) Wachtel.* Tucked against the District of Columbia, Prince George's County, Maryland ([est. 2019 pop., 900,327](#)) is one of the more affluent majority-Black counties in the U.S. With a population that's 64.4 percent Black, 19.5 percent Hispanic and 12.3 percent White, its median household income of \$84,920 is more than a third higher than the nation's \$62,843, while its poverty rate of 8.7 percent is substantially lower than the nation's 10.5 percent. These economic blessings are reflected in the county's relatively modest crime rates. [According to the UCR](#), in 2019 (the most current year) Prince George's violent crime and homicide rates (220.3 and 5.6) were substantially lower than [Maryland's](#) (454.1 and 9.0) and compared favorably with the [U.S. overall](#) (379.4 and 5.0.)

| UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT<br>DISTRICT OF MARYLAND   |   |
|--|---|
| HISPANIC NATIONAL LAW<br>ENFORCEMENT ASSOCIATION NCR<br>P.O. Box 766<br>Cheltenham, MD 20623 |   |
| UNITED BLACK POLICE<br>OFFICERS ASSOCIATION<br>P.O. Box 766<br>Cheltenham, MD 20623          | CIVIL ACTION NO.: 18-cv-03821                                     |
| MICHAEL ANS<br>7600 Barlowe Rd<br>Landover, MD 20785   | COMPLAINT FOR DECLARATORY<br>AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF AND<br>DAMAGES |
| MICHAEL BROWN<br>P.O. Box 1434<br>Bowie, MD 20717  | DEMAND FOR JURY TRIAL   |
| THOMAS BOONE<br>601 Crum Hwy.<br>Upper Marlboro, MD 20774                                    |   |
| DANITA INGRAM<br>7600 Barlowe Rd<br>Landover, MD 20785                                       |   |
| PAUL MACK<br>7600 Barlowe Rd<br>Landover, MD 20785   |   |
| JOSEPH PEREZ<br>7600 Barlowe Rd<br>Landover, MD 20785  |   |
| TASHIA GATIS<br>PO Box 8532<br>Oxbridge, MD 21075  |   |

Would that Prince George's relative tranquility extend to its cops! On December 12, 2018 the Black and Hispanic police officer associations and twelve officers, each Black or Hispanic, filed [a Federal lawsuit](#) accusing the County, the police chief, two deputy chiefs and the commander of the police department's internal affairs unit of fostering a climate of discrimination against non-White officers and retaliating against those who dare object. White officers, who form the majority of the agency, were also accused of using improper and excessive force against citizens and of stealing department funds and property with impunity.

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According to the highly detailed, sixty-five page complaint, White officers habitually engage in “vicious racist acts” and use racial slurs and racist imagery to create a “hostile work environment” for Blacks and Hispanics. But whenever victimized officers of color dare raise an objection, their complaints are either ignored or lead to undeserved discipline, undesirable assignments or lost promotional opportunities. For example:

- **Captain Joseph Perez**, who leads the Hispanic officers association and “has been an outspoken critic of discrimination and retaliation within the PGCPD” complains that “bogus charges” have kept him from advancing in rank to Major. Meanwhile, “less qualified White Captains” have been promoted.
- **Lieutenant Thomas Boone**, who leads the Black officers association alleges that he was involuntarily transferred from a specialized assignment to patrol as “retaliation for his involvement in filing the complaint.”
- **Sergeant Paul Mack**, vice-president of the Black officers association, asserts that he was involuntarily transferred when he complained of being cursed at by a White Lieutenant. His promotion to Lieutenant was also denied although he was just as qualified as White applicants who successfully advanced in rank.

Police chief Hank Stawinski, a veteran White officer who served his entire law enforcement career at Prince George’s County [resigned in June 2020](#). His departure coincided with the plaintiffs’ announcement that they would soon release specific, detailed accounts of actual instances of discrimination. These weren’t long in coming. Retired Los Angeles County Assistant Sheriff Michael E. Graham, a plaintiffs’ expert witness, soon filed [a 100-page-plus report](#). Taking PGCPD to task for investigating fewer than fifteen percent of complaints, he furnished numerous examples of racial harassment, names and all. Here are three (we edited them for brevity and left out officer names):

- “A complaint was filed against officers Police Officer---, Sergeant--- and Sergeant--- for exchanging racist text messages and saying things like “we should bring back public hangings,” and making misogynistic comments about female Black officers. There is no indication...that this matter was investigated...”
- “Corporal--- made a series of negative comments about Black people, including that ‘at least slaves had food and a place to live’ and referring to President Obama as a ‘coon.’ Cpl--- also defended the Ku Klux Klan and equated the Black Lives Matter Movement with the KKK...there is no indication...that this matter was

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investigated...”

- “In response to a communication to the Department announcing the establishment of the United Black Police Officers Association in August 2016, numerous senior white officers sent derogatory responses, including Lt.--- and Major---. There is no indication...that any of these officers were ever investigated.”

According to Mr. Graham, even when inquiries take place they're half-hearted. Hampered by a lack of confidentiality or other protections, complainants are routinely exposed to retaliatory transfers, denials of promotion and baseless counter-charges. For example:

- “In 2015, Cpl.--- [a Black male] filed several complaints against his [White] supervisor, Lt.---. One such complaint alleged that Lt.--- had called a civilian a ‘project n\*\*\*\*’. In October 2016, Cpl.--- was suspended with pay and transferred...without any explanation. His request for a hearing was denied. Cpl.--- subsequently learned that his transfer was a result of Lt.--- filing an IAD [Internal Affairs] complaint against him for allegedly interfering with an [unrelated] investigation...IAD does not appear to have investigated Lt.--- for retaliation, and there is no evidence Defendants opened an investigation into Cpl.---’s complaints about Lt.---’s racist conduct.”

Even in the rare instances when violators are held to account, the penalties are laughable. For example:

- “...an African-American training instructor showed a slide depicting a white police officer pointing his gun at a Black man while a citizen recorded the incident. When the instructor asked the officers what the slide depicted, Cpl.--- responded...‘that’s that Black Lives Matter crap.’ Plaintiff [a lieutenant] took offense to this comment [and] was ordered to leave the classroom, and he complied. Following this, Cpl. contacted her superior officers with false statements about the incident and filed a charge alleging that [the plaintiff] charged towards her...The Department notably did not require Cpl. to complete any racial sensitivity training, nor did the Department charge her with using discriminatory language or repeating the same false statement to other [officers].”

Mr. Graham also reported that Black officers are more severely disciplined. Although they comprise 42.8 percent of the force, they account for 54 percent of punishments and 71.4 percent of terminations or resignations. For example:

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- “While on duty [a Black female officer] returned to her vehicle and found that her firearm had been stolen. She was suspended pending investigation, fined \$500 and received a written reprimand...The discipline records produced by PGCPD contain several instances in which white male officers reported their firearms lost under similar or worse circumstances—none of them were disciplined as severely [or] suspended pending investigation.”

[Lieutenant Boone’s declaration](#) uses data collected by the county’s [Police Reform Working Group](#). It noted that while there are about the same number of Black cops (661) as White (653), the latter are vastly over-represented in the upper ranks. In 2020 there were fifty-six White lieutenants versus twenty-five Black; twenty-five White captains vs. six Black; and thirteen White majors vs. only nine Black. (Deputy Chiefs were evenly split at two each, and the interim police chief was Hispanic.) Lt. Boone feels that this lopsided distribution creates “a self-perpetuating cycle where white officers have become entrenched in more powerful, more prestigious, and higher paying jobs.” White cops, he notes, are far more likely to be assigned to specialized units where they gain valuable “skills, training and experience” that helps them advance in rank. These assignments also give them “far more time to study for promotional exams” than working patrol, which is where most Black cops wind up.



Perhaps predictably, the defense’s four main experts vigorously endorse PGCPD’s selection and promotion practices:

- **Retired police chief J. Thomas Manger and Dr. Janet R. Thornton** strongly challenge assertions of bias in discipline and promotion. [Here’s an extract](#) from Mr. Manger’s rebuttal of plaintiff Perez’s assertion that the charges against him were “bogus”:

“Plaintiff Perez filed a request with the Circuit Court for Prince George's County requesting a ‘Show Cause’ hearing to determine whether Prince George's County Police Department's actions in the investigation were retaliatory...Prince George's County Maryland upheld the AHB's findings, stating that...‘any reasoning mind can find [Plaintiff Perez's conduct] to be intimidating.’ The court further found that Plaintiff Perez ‘use[d] the prestige of [his] office to gain access and ultimately to gain personal benefit....’ As a result of his actions, Plaintiff Perez received a

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demotion from Captain to Lieutenant, and was removed from the promotion cycle for one year.”

- **Dr. John J. Boland** [strongly disputes](#) that transfers and failures to promote caused actionable economic damage. He dismissed claims by Lt. Thomas Boone, who was promoted but transferred from specialized duties to patrol, and by Sgt. Paul Mack, who was on a promotion list that expired, that they were thus deprived of the opportunity to earn substantial amounts of overtime pay. Dr. Boland argued that being compensated for overtime “is not guaranteed, is subject to many factors, and is in no sense an entitlement. Any calculation of lost overtime pay is necessarily speculative.”
- PGCPD’s promotional process includes multiple-choice exams and skills assessment centers. **Dr. Toni S. Locklear** [fully supports their validity](#). She blasted the plaintiffs’ experts as lacking the background to evaluate the agency’s promotion and selection process and called their analyses of the PGPD’s “racial makeup” and “Corporal Exam Passing Rates” deeply flawed. Dr. Locklear also criticized her rivals’ failure to acknowledge a “voluminous case record” that, in her view, confirms the integrity of PGCPD’s methods.

Clearly, the final chapter is still being written. But PGCPD’s undeniable racial disparities within its upper ranks are tough to defend. To prevent continued injury to Black and Hispanic officers, this April the Court issued [a preliminary injunction](#) ordering that the agency appoint “an independent expert” to analyze the promotional process and recommend changes. Promotion lists generated under the old system cannot be used after August. (For its reasoning, which relies in great part on the disproportionate number of Whites in supervisory and management positions, click [here](#).)

Well, that’s (more than) enough for now. Next time we’ll switch shores to that notoriously liberal bastion of San Francisco. That’s where White cops have stood this story on its head. Yup, they’ve also sued, and for much the same reason as their Black counterparts in Maryland. We’ll then close out with a few words about the consequences of such quarrels on those who pay for – and presumably rely on – all that good police work. We mean, of course, the *public*.

Posted 12/14/08

## **SHERIFF BACA'S "POLICE ACADEMY"**

*TV reality shows and police training don't mix*

By Julius Wachtel, (c) 2010

"The show worked to the detriment of the trainees...they didn't have a real chance to say no to being televised...people called them out as they worked in the jails because they recognize them from TV..." That's what [Michael Gennaco](#), chief of L.A. County's [Office of Independent Review](#) recently said about "The Academy," a popular reality TV series that depicts the travails of rookies going through the Los Angeles County Sheriff's academy.

For reasons that we'll get into later Gennaco and his small team of lawyers had been asked by the Board of Supervisors to look into goings-on at the academy, and the reality show in particular. What they found out wasn't pretty. "[Nearly all](#)" the ex-cadets they interviewed -- about twenty percent of those in the two classes that were filmed -- would have preferred not to have cameras around. A few also said that they were deeply humiliated by having their screw-ups broadcast for friends, family and future coworkers to see.

Of course, not even the Sheriff can make appearing on TV a condition of employment. Still, while cadets could opt out, they would have been rescheduled for another class, an unpalatable delay considering that some if not most had quit their regular jobs and had no other source of income. Although Gennaco didn't mention it, cadets must have also worried about saying "no" at this early stage in their careers. As it turned out only two trainees sat out the first class; none did so for the second, when more advance warning was given.

So far there have been two seasons, a total of 21 half-hour episodes, aired in Spring 2007 and Spring 2008. All are available for viewing on [Hulu](#). Enjoy!

Police academies are much like conventional places of learning, with most instruction taking place in classrooms. Naturally, no TV audience could be expected to sit through lectures on law and procedure, and considering the average viewer's attention span sexier topics like shooting, arrest techniques and pursuit driving would also get ho-hum after a while. Desperate for the "dramatic arc" that even reality shows need, editors constructed narratives around recruits who were having trouble. Will Cadet Smith, a none-too-bright fellow on his second go-round (he already flunked out once for

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academic reasons) pass the final? Will Cadet Jones, who can't hold up a pistol long enough to place a well-aimed shot, qualify on the range? Will Cadet Williams ever get over that wall?

These are made-up names. But in the [episode summaries](#) posted on the show's website, everything was for real. Here are some examples from the second season:

Episode 2. Recruit Paez struggles as the first class sergeant, and Deputy Miley gives her an ultimatum. Recruit Villareal finds himself in hot water when the drill instructors learn he went out to a club rather than studying.

Episode 3. Recruit Villareal is on the hot seat as the new class sergeant. Then he leaves his locker unlocked with his newly issued gun inside.

Episode 4. Class 368's first trip to the shooting range is a disaster when Recruit Valladores can't figure out how to shoot his weapon.

Episode 5. Recruit Marquez worries that her cancer has returned; the staff confidently appoints Recruit Leos to the role of class sergeant, but the class doesn't follow her lead.

Episode 6. Recruit Santos is in a bind when she can't lead the group. The recruits have a big argument while the drill instructors figure out how to get them to work better as a team.

Episode 7. A few careless recruits are in hot water after their weapons are stolen from their vehicle. Santos fights for her job as she struggles with all aspects of the training.

Episode 9. Recruit Villareal continues to disappoint the drill instructors and Class 368. Recruit Turner and others face separation as they retake the final test...just days before graduation.

Happily for producers the L.A. Sheriff's academy follows the boot-camp "stress" model, so there was always a drill instructor available to holler at trainees. In one scene a towering D.I. who clearly loves being on camera ridiculed a plebe who dared mention that students felt too intimidated to ask questions. (That happens to be one of the many problems with "stress" academies.) Strutting down a row of her peers, all standing rigidly at attention, the D.I. demanded of each whether they felt free to ask questions.

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They left jobs and civilian life to become cops. Answering incorrectly would instantly land them in the bulls-eye. What could they say but “yes?”

While Sheriff Baca reveled in the show’s success, happily boasting that it offered an unparalleled view of the leading training program of its kind in the nation, the overseer of police training in California, the Peace Officers and Standards Training commission, was about to revoke the facility’s accreditation. For months its [inspectors had been loudly complaining](#), to no observable effect, that in its rush to process a large influx of rookies, many of whom seemed barely qualified to become peace officers, the academy was providing a poor learning experience.

The actual list of deficiencies is far too extensive to go into here. Among the more serious complaints were employing uncertified instructors, using confidential test materials as teaching guides (i.e., essentially “teaching to the test”), providing test questions in advance, and having academically challenged cadets retake exams until they passed. Indeed, one episode of “The Academy” depicted a trainee who was already on his second tour trying to make up several failed exams at one sitting. Not only did he fail again, but he was unbelievably brought back to the academy for a third try. Inspectors also criticized the TV show for distorting the training experience and depriving cadets of an opportunity to make goofs without fear of humiliation.

By May 2008 it was painfully clear that the State hammer was about to fall. When the second season’s filming was over [Sheriff Baca](#) took the extraordinary step of shutting the door, pushing back the start of the next training class by a month. A top manager was quietly reassigned. State officials mentioned that it was only the second such closure in memory. Worried that his nifty P.R. and moneymaking scheme (it earned \$250,000 for the department in its first two seasons) was corkscrewing, Baca struggled to put the best possible spin on the situation. That’s when the normally laid-back Board of Supervisors finally stepped in and [ordered the OIR](#) to study the root causes of the academy’s problems, including “whether and how the filming of a reality television show focused on Sheriff’s trainees at the Academy has impacted the quality of the training program.”

At this point it’s uncertain if there will *be* an “The Academy” Season Three. A far more important question is whether the Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department and Sheriff Baca have learned anything from the imbroglio. Yes, there *was* more going on at the academy than what following around a bunch of self-absorbed drill instructors could possibly reveal. Surely many positive things *were* happening. Yet, as POST pointed out, degrading cadets and filming their flub-ups hardly seems the best way to convey the skills of policing.

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Will the LASD continue along the “stress” path or adopt the more level-headed, collegiate training style favored by the LAPD? As they say in Hollywood, stay tuned!

Posted 7/6/18

## SHOULD EVERY TOWN FIELD ITS OWN COPS?

*Recent tragedies bring into question the wisdom of small agencies*

*By Julius (Jay) Wachtel.* With its roots in an 18th. century plantation owned by the King family, the municipality of [Kingsland, Georgia](#) cleverly bills itself as the “City of Royal Treatment.” Indeed, it seems quite a happy place. Incorporated in 1908, the town of 17,000 boasts a full-service city government and [its own police force](#). In 2016 its proportion of citizens living in poverty ([11 percent](#)) and violent crime rate ([265.1](#)) were substantially lower than comparable figures for both the state (18 percent and 522.5) and the twenty Georgia cities closest in population (26.5 percent and 646.7). Kingsland’s relative prosperity and peacefulness might help explain why its 2016 police staffing of about two officers per 1,000 pop. (it reported [33 sworn personnel](#) that year) was third lowest among nineteen Georgia communities of similar size with their own cops (range 1.7 to 4.0, mean 2.7; click [here](#) for the data file.)

Bottom line: when something bad happens in Kingsland, it’s a big deal. And it’s hard to imagine anything worse, cop-related, than what took place on June 21, when a white Kingsland police officer, Zechariah Presley, 26, [shot and killed](#) Anthony Marcel Green, a 33-year old black man. Green [had a minor history](#) with Kingsland police, the most serious incident being a misdemeanor arrest. As far as is known, he and officer Presley had only interacted once, when a citizen complained that Green trespassed (no one got arrested.) This occasion would turn out quite differently. For reasons as yet unknown, [officer Presley stopped a vehicle driven by Green](#), and for equally unknown reasons Green and his passenger bolted. After radioing in, then-officer Presley chased Green down. They apparently struggled, and Green slipped away. That’s when the cop opened fire, lethally wounding someone who was neither armed nor, according to what’s been officially released, suspected of a crime.

Justice moved swiftly. State investigators [promptly concluded](#) that the shooting met the standards of voluntary manslaughter, meaning that the officer acted “solely as the result of a sudden, violent, and irresistible passion.” Presley was indicted, arrested and fired within a week of the incident. Police also released his personnel records, opening the floodgates about his performance in Kingsland and offering tantalizing insights into his reportedly checkered past. (For three relevant news accounts click [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).)

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Indeed, with only one and one-half years on the force the young cop's file seems chuck-full of miscues, including several citizen complaints and a one-day suspension for a high speed, off-duty pursuit. More interestingly, Presley had a number of derogatory pre-employment "flags," including past marijuana use, fights with his wife, an arrest for reckless driving, and being rejected by another agency for allegedly lying during the job application process. Kingsland hired him anyway.

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Think "small." Then think a bit smaller. According to its [website](#) the tiny borough of East Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania ([pop. 1,844](#)) traces its roots to the turn of the 19th century, when it was formed to serve employees of nearby electrical plants. Incorporated in 1895, it's located about ten miles southeast of downtown Pittsburgh. Sadly, a considerable proportion of its residents – [twenty-six percent](#) by latest estimates – live in poverty. That figure exceeds Pittsburgh's twenty-two percent and is third worst among a group of eleven suburbs of similar population (poverty percentage 2.9 to 30.3; click [here](#) for the data file.) East Pittsburgh last conveyed its crime numbers to the FBI in 2013. At that time, it reported 58 violent crimes, yielding an unusually high rate of 3135 per 100,000. Comparable communities consistently reported much less violent crime. For example, Braddock, with a thirty percent poverty rate, registered eleven violent crimes in 2016, for a rate of 518.

Where does that leave East Pittsburgh, desirability-wise? Not in a particularly good place. While its crime reporting might have exaggerated things, the borough has [earned low livability marks](#) in multiple categories. Here's what one resident reported: "Children constantly throwing paint at my house and car, also not uncommon to hear gunshots."

Briefly put, East Pittsburgh is no Kingsland. Still, just like its Georgia big brother, the tiny Pennsylvania borough, less than a half-mile square, [also fields its own cops](#). According to its website there are presently a chief and eight patrol officers. However, the cop at the bottom of the list, officer Michael Rosefeld, is on leave. Like his Georgia counterpart, he's also under indictment for killing a resident. But in his case, the charge is homicide.

As one might expect, [the circumstances](#) that the East Pittsburgh officer faced were also far more serious. It began with a drive-by in a nearby borough that turned into a shoot-out and left a pedestrian seriously wounded. Officer Rosefeld soon pulled over the suspect vehicle in East Pittsburgh. It bore the visible scars of damage by gunfire. As he handcuffed the driver two passengers bolted. One, a juvenile, got away. But the other,

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Antwon Rose II, a black 17-year old, didn't make it very far. Although Rose wasn't visibly armed (he didn't have a gun), officer Rosefeld shot him three times.

Two loaded high-powered pistols were found in the car; one was positively linked to the wounding. That gun was tied to the juvenile who fled, and he was arrested the next day and charged in the shooting. No such evidence was forthcoming against the dead youth, who had apparently only been present for the car ride. In the end a potentially great piece of policing became another nightmare for a town that has seen more than its share of hard times. Citing witness accounts and reported inconsistencies in officer Rosefeld's statements (he apparently wavered between seeing something and nothing in the youth's hands) the D.A. charged the thirty-year old white cop with homicide, which under state law can range from murder to involuntary manslaughter.

Here's the rest of the story. Officer Rosefeld had been sworn in to the East Pittsburgh force, which hired him in May, only hours before the shooting. [He had several years' experience](#) as a part-time officer in two small departments and was most recently employed as a campus cop, [a job he reportedly left](#) over concerns about his truthfulness. East Pittsburgh hired him anyway.

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Policing has never been a popular profession. [When the economy is up](#) and potential candidates have lots of better-paying, less stressful options, recruitment lags. Small departments must compete with large-agency salaries and career opportunities and are doubly affected. Moreover, whether a community is small or large, it can take lots of cops to properly handle violent incidents. Being down "only" a couple of officers can substantially increase officer risk and reduce effectiveness while exhausting the cops who remain with unwelcome overtime.

In small departments, promptly filling vacancies is crucial. But there may be little time or money to fund recruitment campaigns, hire the most qualified, pay and wait for them to be trained, then wait again until they have enough experience to work alone. So bringing on pre-certified, minimally experienced applicants [is an appealing option](#). Small agencies can thus face the classic choice between a rock (critical cop shortage) and a hard place (risk of hasty or inappropriate decisions). Here's what a new small-town Chief had to say about his struggles to bring a troubled department up to snuff: "Unfortunately, sometimes there's not a lot of money to hire what you need, you just have to make do with what you have." What he already "had" included a cop who had killed one person and wounded three in multiple shootings. That officer was previously

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employed by other agencies: one had suspended him over a shooting, while another fired him for “misconduct.” But he was hired anyway.

Really, how many fire departments do we want? School and sanitary districts? But wait a minute, you say. Policing is different. In small communities with their own departments cops can really connect with the citizens they serve. Setting aside the fact that many if not most small-town officers literally “parachute” in to work, we’ll concede that smaller agencies might be more responsive, at least at the chief’s level. Perhaps local control can be advantageous in the more affluent, low crime burg’s. And, of course, poor hiring decisions can have horrific consequences regardless of department size. Consider, for example, [that notorious episode](#) several years ago when a rookie Cleveland cop shot and killed Tamir Rice, an innocent 12-year old who was playing with a toy gun. It turned out that Cleveland hired the officer after a suburban police department pressured him, for behavioral issues, to leave after only serving one month. That agency, in turn, had hired him despite his rejection by several other departments.

Still, given the economic and practical constraints of running small police departments, we’re skeptical that they’re *ever* a good notion. We’ll leave the final word to the editorial board of the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. Writing after the killing of Antwon Rose, here is how [their recommendations](#) begin:

First, while the spirit of parochialism remains firmly entrenched here, municipalities should consider merging their police departments into regional forces that could leverage economies of scale. Pooling resources could make for more efficient patrolling and free up time and money for training. A larger force potentially would be more attractive to prospective hires and enable a department to tap into a deeper talent pool.

Couldn’t have said it better ourselves.

Posted 7/15/11

## **“TEACHING” POLICE DEPARTMENTS? THAT’S RIGHT, *TEACHING***

*Medical education is advanced as an appropriate model for the police*



*By Julius (Jay) Wachtel.* The 2011 NIJ Conference was full of surprises, most good, a few not so much. But of the sessions attended by your blogger, none proved a bigger head-scratcher than “Teaching Rounds in Police Departments,” which promoted the notion that adopting the model of a teaching hospital would lead to great improvements in the practice of policing.

In the first two years medical school is like school anywhere, mostly lectures. Hands-on training takes place during the third and fourth years, when students rotate through departments at a teaching hospital. It’s by observing experienced physicians, participating in examinations and, later, discussing the cases that budding doctors learn their craft.

This model is the basis for the [Teaching Police Department Initiative](#), or TPDI. It’s planned that the Providence Police Department will become a “teaching police department,” akin to a teaching hospital, where managers from PPD and exchange students from other agencies will collaboratively develop “innovative police department organizational designs, operating policies/procedures, and performance measurement tools.” Roger Williams University’s [Justice System Training and Research Institute](#) will direct the program and provide academic support with assistance from two partners, the Brown University Medical School and the John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

How Providence PD and Roger Williams came to be chosen we’ll come to later. But it’s clear that this is an exceptionally ambitious program. [COPS Director Bernard Melekian](#), whose office will oversee the study, feels that the medical model is an excellent fit for getting police not just in Rhode Island but around the country to adopt “values-driven” and “evidence-based” cultures. As a former police chief, he is convinced

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that case studies and a “problem-based” learning approach will create “communities of practice” in which collaboration and experimentation are the norm.

Not everyone at the session seemed equally convinced. Technological and medical advances have come a long way in helping physicians diagnose ailments and prescribe and evaluate treatments. Police, on the other hand, still wallow in the subjective. Fixed rules and approaches often prove useless or counterproductive. Time and information, the two critical prerequisites for making good decisions, are in pitifully short supply. Hostile “clients,” uncertain settings and the absence of peer support may be strangers to a teaching hospital, but they’re a routine component of everyday policing.

Academies do what they can to prepare cops for the real world. One of the most ambitious and long-standing approaches is that of the [Federal Law Enforcement Training Center](#), which uses elaborate scenarios and paid role players to simulate field conditions. But even the best exercises can’t start to approach the realism of a teaching hospital, where students administer to real patients under the watchful eyes of medical faculty. Police academies try to bridge the gap between theory and practice by sending students on ride-alongs. It’s only superficially like doing “rounds,” but it’s as close to it as pre-service officers are likely to get.

Police management training much more closely resembles the approach that TPDI favors. Courses for law enforcement managers and executives are offered by state and regional police academies, the [FBI](#), universities including [Northwestern](#) and [Michigan State](#), the IACP’s [Center for Police Leadership and Training](#), and PERF’s [Senior Management Institute for Police](#). Case studies and collaboration have been core aspects of such programs for decades. There are also plentiful police groups at the local level. One example from Los Angeles, the South Bay Police Chiefs Association, hosts regular get-togethers where police managers explore issues of mutual concern. A countywide [Criminal Justice Coordinating Committee](#), with representatives from local, state and Federal agencies serves essentially the same purpose.

Police training and interagency collaboration have reached a high level of maturity. As the NIJ sessions made perfectly clear, deep thinking and experimentation are very much alive and well in policing. Indeed, now that proposed cutbacks in Medicare and Medicaid [threaten the viability of teaching hospitals](#), one could return the favor and offer the cops as a model for, say, medicine.

Excepting, of course, that the environments of policing and doctoring *are* different. While the ultimate law enforcement metric, the incidence of crime, resembles a medical outcome, there is no unique, agreed-upon path to curing social ills. American policing is by purpose and design an intensely local enterprise that’s carried out by upwards of

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twenty-thousand agencies. As James Q. Wilson pointed out in his seminal volume, [Varieties of Police Behavior](#), agencies might share similar goals, but it's communities that determine how officers go about doing their job. Norms differ, and what's acceptable in one place may be deemed excessively intrusive in another.

It's on such shoals that TPDI ultimately runs aground. To designate a police department as a "teaching" site elevates it above its peers and gives it great leverage to set the agenda. That can present a problem for other agencies, if for no other reason than the values, concerns and political climate of their communities may differ. Police chiefs ignore who they work for to their peril.

That lesson was recently driven home in, of all places, Providence. On June 22nd., only two days after the NIJ "teaching rounds" session, Providence police chief Dean Esserman [abruptly announced his resignation](#). He was leaving, he said, due to fallout from allegations that minors drank alcohol at his daughter's graduation party. To some his explanation rang hollow. Last fall three mayoral candidates announced that if elected they would fire him. He managed to hang on, but without a contract. Miffed by his brusque style (he recently got a day off without pay for berating a sergeant) and a generous compensation package (it was reportedly worth \$331,154) officers returned a vote of no confidence. Esserman's unenviable situation was summed up in [a pithy headline](#) a few days after his departure: "Outside the Providence Police, Dean Esserman was the idea man. Inside, he found little acceptance."

Esserman *was* full of ideas. No less authoritative a source than [Roger Williams University](#) described TPDI as his "brainchild." Interestingly, TPDI wasn't funded in the usual manner but through [a \\$750,000 earmark](#) (some might call it *pork*) courtesy U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D – RI). Apparently the university will actually get \$474,000, so it's assumed that DOJ, which is responsible for writing the checks, will retain a chunk and share the rest with its partners.

Your blogger, a retired Fed, is loath to criticize anyone for accepting Federal bucks. After all, it was only yesterday that taxpayers bought him a frozen yogurt (orange 50/50, his favorite.) But a jinx seems to have accompanied Roger Williams' loot. In May it was announced that a budgetary shortfall could force America's first "teaching police department" to [lay off as many as 80 officers](#), or 17 percent of the force. So far, though, the only hammer that's fallen is on the chief.

Well, the Colonel may be gone, but his three-quarter million dollar kid is still around. Joan Sweeney, TPDI's co-director, emphasized that for the program to work Providence cops must be full partners. Sounds good, but considering just how irritated they must

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be with their ex-chief and all his notions, we're not sure we'd like to be in that patrol car when it leaves the station.

## **THE NEXT CHIEF OF POLICE SHOULD BE, FIRST AND FOREMOST, A COP**

*Published in the Los Angeles Times, 9/12/02, p. B-15*

*For Police Issues by Julius (Jay) Wachtel.* As the Times recently noted, “over the last 10 years, the LAPD has had three chiefs, all of whom left under fire.” Each time, community leaders winnowed through a pool of candidates, looking for that one charismatic leader who could single-handedly negotiate L.A.'s political and social minefields, boost officer morale and lift a supposedly foundering agency from its quagmire. All without costing an additional cent.

Again, we're playing the same tune. Again, will it hit a sour note?

Forget policing. Can the mess of health care, the shutdown of clinics, the unconscionable overcrowding of hospital emergency rooms be fixed by enlightened leadership alone? At the woefully underfunded LAPD pressures of business are so intense that doing a good job as a patrol officer is measured by how quickly one "clears" calls for service. Many detectives cannot remember the days when "investigation" meant something more than picking up the telephone. After decades of chronic short-staffing, time and attention are luxuries reserved for the most aggravated crimes. Worse, with sergeants tied up on citizen complaints and paperwork, and senior lead officers distracted by other tasks, supervision – a difficult enough thing to accomplish in the decentralized atmosphere of police work – has for all purposes disappeared.

When essential resources are seriously lacking attributing difficulties to poor "morale" or weak leadership is simply ridiculous. Lacking the money or political will to fix the real problem, exasperated officials have turned to an endless stream of remedies. One of the better known is "community policing", an appealing but frustratingly vague strategy that has generated volumes of rhetoric, supported the careers of many academics and created a fat bureaucracy in Washington. Still, as its implementation would require a great deal more police, not less, it is hard to see how this expensive fix could play in cash-strapped L.A.

Reforming "police culture" is another enticing, feel-good fixative. Stripped to its essence, it promises something for nothing: that we can produce the equivalent of more police cars simply by having their present occupants recline on a couch. Who wouldn't want a kindler, gentler force, better attuned to public needs? But occupational "cultures" do not spring up in a vacuum. Police are shaped by their surroundings.

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Humans might carry PDA's in their pockets, but they are Cro-Magnons at heart. Want nicer cops? Breed nicer citizens. Naturally, achieving that end calls for a dynamic social and economic agenda, something far beyond the ability of even the most enlightened police leader to implement.

Still, if the money can't happen, morale is important, if for no reason other than to keep the few cops we have left. LAPD officers have always been in demand by smaller agencies, which offer less stress, shorter commutes and the luxury and autonomy of single-officer patrol cars.

So we return to the question: who should be Chief? To earn the respect of the line, it must be someone who is deeply invested in the craft of policing. Moving through the ranks of larger agencies takes so long that ambitious employees often spend little time on the street. Those who rapidly promote to administrative sinecures have sent a clear message – that they are not that interested in the real work of the police.

Microsoft was created and continues to be led by talented engineers with an intimate knowledge of product and place. There is no difference here. A Chief is that one government executive who must know what makes cops tick. To energize a police organization and nudge it in the appropriate direction requires someone who understands the sensibilities of officers and the environment in which they operate. These characteristics are most likely present in candidates with a strong background in patrol and detectives, both as a line officer and first- and second-level supervisor.

Policing is an honorable occupation. Its troubles are fundamentally troubles of the street. We need a Chief attuned to its many nuances, who knows enough to be skeptical of easy solutions, who can make a distinction (as the last Chief apparently could not) between working mistakes and willful misconduct.

LAPD has many experienced Captains and Commanders who could rise to the occasion. Don't look for a big name. Look for a big heart.

## A TOWN WITHOUT PITY

### *Seattle lures police candidates from other cities*

*How can we keep love alive  
How can anything survive  
When these little minds tear you in two  
What a town without pity can do.*

© Gene Pitney

“The Emerald City.” Sounds enticing, doesn’t it? But don’t let that fool you. Neither software giant Microsoft nor coffee king Starbucks got where they did by being nice to competitors. Why should the community that hosts their world headquarters, Seattle, be any different?

It’s not. That huge [billboard](#) isn’t in Seattle or, indeed, anywhere in the Pacific Northwest. It’s on the opposite side of the continent, in New York City, not far from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice, a branch of the City University of New York that educates the cops and corrections officers of the Eastern metropolis.



Why would Seattle be looking for cops in the Big Apple? Why would the yuppie kingdom dispatch recruiters three-thousand miles to give a full range of entrance exams and chat up potential candidates? Maybe it’s because the sharks smell blood. In a June 2005 tussle with the police union, New York cut the [salaries](#) of academy rookies forty percent, to the pitifully low level of \$25,100. Meanwhile, [Seattle’s officers](#), whose cost of living is a full *twenty percent lower*, start at nearly twice as much, \$47,335, with a [plan](#) to increase that to \$64,000 by 2010.

But wait a minute. Are New York’s finest secretly rooting for the bad guys, hoping that Seattle proves their point? If so, they’re playing a dangerous game. Slumping city revenues caused by problems in Wall Street make salary hikes unlikely in the near term. In the meantime NYPD has been hemorrhaging so many officers and recruits that its authorized strength was recently [reduced](#) by one-thousand. And why not? The department is already short more than twice that many, with no relief in sight.

Seattle PD isn’t the only agency probing the ends of the Earth in pursuit of warm bodies. When not prowling L.A. college campuses Phoenix PD has been [chatting up prospects](#) at the University of Toledo (yes, in *Ohio*.) According to a PPD spokesman,

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"The quality of candidates [in Toledo] is fantastic. This is a goldmine for people like us...There is an abundance of people here looking for jobs. It's a perfect marriage."

What's the difference, you ask? Plenty. Seattle is shamelessly taking advantage of salary differentials to steal away recruits from a city beset by a shortage of police. On the other hand, Phoenix, one of the fastest-growing metropolitan areas in the U.S., has targeted an area of high unemployment. Hard-hit by a decline in manufacturing, Toledo isn't gaining residents; it's losing them. Its police aren't hiring. Unlike Seattle, Phoenix isn't bleeding a community dry: it's doing it a favor.

Is the "Emerald City" embarrassed? Au contraire. As recruiter [Monique Avery](#) bragged to a *New York Daily News* reporter, "We get people who go, 'Whoa! It's going to take me a long time [in the NYPD] to get to even your beginning salary.' And our cost of living is a lot less." It turns out that this isn't Seattle PD's first crack at Gotham. Last year a smaller mission proved so successful that they couldn't wait to return to steal more candidates. And that's not all: this time around they're also going for *in-service* officers. "We are not coming to New York to specifically target NYPD officers," Monique said. "I pray that they get a huge raise. They are definitely welcome to apply, but we are encouraging everyone who is interested to apply."

Coming to New York but *not* targeting the NYPD? Praying that NYPD officers get a *raise*? Instead of hustling for Seattle, Monique ought to be in politics. She seems amply qualified!

What to do? According to the Seattle city [website](#), Mayor Greg Nickles wants to hear from you. So don't disappoint him! Tell him exactly what you think of this thoughtless, opportunistic behavior. While you're at it be sure to remind him that cities aren't like Microsoft and Starbucks: they're public trusts, whose behavior is measured by a different yardstick.

Just in case that while using Windows™ and sipping a Pike Place Roast™ he might have forgot.

Posted 9/21/08

## WHAT SHOULD IT TAKE TO BE HIRED?

### *Loose hiring standards and City Hall interference produce inferior recruits*

Pity poor Chicago PD Chief [Jody Weis](#). Hired seven months ago to take control of a department beset by allegations of corruption and brutality, the former head of the FBI's Philadelphia office vastly expanded the unit that investigates officer misconduct. Weis now faces a work slowdown by officers who complain that his penchant for severe discipline makes them reluctant to be proactive lest their actions draw citizen complaints.

Weis doesn't even have the final word on discipline. As we reported [last week](#), that's the responsibility of an external citizens' board, which regularly turns down the Chief's attempts to fire misbehaving officers. In one noteworthy example they refused to terminate a cop who had been convicted of misdemeanor assault for beating up a handcuffed citizen. (Weis then had the officer charged with Federal civil rights violations, enraging officers who said their colleague had been punished enough.)

What about hiring? Weis doesn't have the final word there, either. That's the province of the "[Human Resources Board](#)," comprised of three citizens appointed by the Mayor. Although board members admit that nothing requires them to consider appeals by rejected applicants, they've done so by the hundreds, reversing nearly forty percent of the department's decisions. Those who got a break include gang associates, drug users, spouse beaters and general-purpose thugs. Chicago's infamous aldermen even got the board to OK a (supposedly, former) drug dealer. Many reinstated applicants had been turned away elsewhere, threatening to make Chicago PD a dumping ground for rejects.

As Los Angeles City council member (and former LAPD Chief) [Bernard Parks](#) can attest, Weis' travails are not unique. Stern, humorless and prone to impose heavy-handed discipline, Parks constantly butted heads with the union and the rank and file. Like in Chicago, crime rose while arrests and field interviews declined. Then [Rampart](#) broke, and nothing's been the same since.

Rampart came to light because an officer got caught stealing cocaine. Otherwise it was mostly about police using evil means to go after bad guys. Officers lied, planted evidence and brutalized suspects to get them to talk. LAPD's final report describes the pre-employment records of four of these cops:

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Officer 1. “Sold marijuana to two other students on one occasion while he was in high school. At age 15, the police detained him for investigation of tampering with vehicles on a car sales lot...the Police Department recommended his disqualification, but it was overturned by the Personnel Department.”

Officer 2. “...had been arrested as an adult for grand theft. The incident occurred when he struck a public bus driver during a dispute over a transfer. When the driver's watch fell to the ground, the officer picked it up and began walking away, which resulted in his arrest. The Department did not recommend his disqualification.”

Officer 3. “...admitted losing his temper during arguments with his wife and pushing her on six different occasions. He was psychologically eliminated due to "temperament/impulse control. However, he was eventually cleared for hiring by the Personnel Department psychologist.”

Officer 4. “...had been arrested three times before he became an officer at the age of 24. As a juvenile, he was arrested for stealing hubcaps. As an adult, he was arrested and convicted of driving under the influence (DUI). One year before his hire, he was cited for having an open container of an alcoholic beverage in his car and was arrested for driving on a suspended license (suspended from the earlier DUI) for which he was sentenced to ten days in jail. In the military, he was disciplined for disobeying a lawful order. His background investigation disclosed that he ‘loses his cool very easily’ over minor incidents, and acted like a ‘big macho man.’ The psychological examiner advised the Personnel Department that there was not enough negative information to warrant his disqualification.”

Here is what the report said about the decisions to hire these four:

“While it is impossible to substantiate completely, it appears that the application of our hiring standards was compromised when these officers were hired during periods of accelerated hiring in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This is not to say that anyone intended to do so. But, one need only look at the pre-employment histories of these four people to see that something was seriously wrong when they were approved for hire. We must recognize that [erosion of standards] has occurred and commit ourselves to never sacrificing quality for the expediency of numbers.”

[Parks](#) didn't get a second term. In 2002 he was replaced by Bill Bratton, a New York transplant made famous by his much-ballyhooed *Compstat*. Two years later, facing an

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officer shortage, Bratton quietly relaxed hiring standards, taking on cops with [credit issues](#) and other “gigs” that would have disqualified them in earlier days. Applicants could even admit that they experimented with [cocaine](#). It took the City Council two years to find out. Irate to have been left out of the loop, three council members, Parks, Dennis Zine (a reserve officer and former Sergeant), and Greig Smith, another reservist, bitterly criticized the Chief for lowering the standards.

What was “Hollywood Bill’s” reaction? He shrugged it off, claiming that it’s never been tougher to get hired on. After all, every applicant now has to take a polygraph! What he didn’t say (maybe because he didn’t know) was that the [National Academy of Sciences](#) found polygraphs unreliable for screening employees.

Loosening rules has been tried elsewhere, with predictable consequences. Burned by poorly-educated applicants and lax hiring practices, the [Washington D.C Metropolitan Police](#) now require either 60 college credits, three years military service or five years prior police experience. According to a [spokesperson](#), “it does make recruiting harder [but] in the long run, it’s supposed to make for a better officer and a better department.” [Chicago PD](#) also requires two years of college or a combination of college and military. Meanwhile the famous [LAPD](#) doesn’t even ask for a high school diploma: all that’s necessary is either a GED or passing the California High School Proficiency Examination, which any reasonably bright 16-year old can do. How might this affect the agency’s ability to field a literate, analytically-skilled workforce? Gee, let’s think...

Hiring cops is a complicated issue and we don’t propose to have all the answers. Let’s give L.A. City council member [Dennis Zine](#), a career LAPD officer, the last word:

“I understand that the pool of people who want to be police officers is limited, but if you look at the history of the department, and the scandals we have had, we don’t want to add to that problem.”

Enough said.

Posted 9/2/16

## WHERE SHOULD COPS LIVE?

### *Officer-citizen conflicts stir renewed interest in residency requirements*

*By Julius (Jay) Wachtel.* “Today’s Supreme Court decision was both right and just. It made clear that Wisconsin municipal employees share the same right enjoyed by all other Wisconsin citizens to reside where they desire.” [That’s how the Milwaukee police union reacted](#) to a June 2016 state court ruling that nullified a long-standing requirement that municipal employees reside in the cities where they are employed.

Not everyone was pleased. Mayor Tom Barrett lamented the decision:

I want this to be a community where the residents can work with and respect the police and the police and work with and respect the members of the community. That’s what I need to have as mayor. But I can’t have an occupying force in this city.

A regulation requiring that city workers live within fifteen miles of Milwaukee remains in effect.

Supporters of residency requirements believe they enhance officers’ commitment to the citizens they serve, attuning them to the local culture and making it more likely they will act (and react) appropriately. It’s why in 2013 New Orleans [reinstated residency requirements](#) that were suspended eight years earlier, in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

Alas, the reset was short-lived. Struggling to rebuild a depleted police force (it was about 150 below strength) and battle increased crime, New Orleans discovered that the residency requirement severely limited the quantity and quality of the recruitment pool. Despite a bitter riposte by councilmember James Gray, who insisted that “to walk down my street with a stick and a gun, you need to be living in my neighborhood,” [public safety positions wound up being exempted](#).

It wasn’t New Orleans’ first encounter with the residency/recruitment paradox. Months before Katrina, police chief Eddie Compass [complained that residency rules were discouraging](#) many well-qualified applicants, the implication being that he was being forced to bring on less-than-stellar candidates. A June 2011 retrospective in New Orleans Magazine suggests that the consequences of such decisions, if they were indeed made, were easily predictable:

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In the past few months we have seen cops sent to prison for murder, rape, cover-up, theft and fraud...Had the department been able to cast that wider net and search uninhibited for the best and brightest, some of those who are now in jail wouldn't have likely qualified for the force in the first place...There are some lessons to be learned from this. One is that cities shouldn't have to pass laws requiring people to live in them and the other is that there should never be restrictions to searching for the best.

([More than a dozen NOPD cops were indicted](#) on Federal civil rights charges for killing innocent persons during Katrina and covering up the crimes. Although not every conviction survived appellate scrutiny, [five cops ultimately pled guilty](#) to Federal charges and are serving prison terms.)

There has been little scientific research about the effects of police residence requirements. A rare study on point found that citizens living in large cities with residency rules were significantly *less* likely to feel that police could protect them from harm (see "Residency requirements and public perceptions of the police in large municipalities," *Policing, an International Journal*, vol. 22, issue 3, 1999.) Its authors speculated that these surprising findings might reflect the consequences of "poor personnel choices and a less qualified commissioned officer corps" brought on by limited hiring pools.

Residency rules came into vogue in the late twentieth century, during the heydays of police reform. In time their popularity waned. By 2002 [restrictions were reportedly in place](#) in only twenty percent of jurisdictions. More recently, [an analysis of 2010 census and EEOC data](#) by website FiveThirtyEight revealed that sixty percent of officers employed by the 75 largest police departments lived outside their cities.

Where residency requirements remain in effect, they're now usually permissive. [New York City](#), a notoriously expensive place to live, merely requires that officers either settle in the city or in a neighboring county within thirty days of employment. [Chicago's rules](#) are stricter, requiring that outside applicants become residents when appointed. At the most restrictive extreme is [Atlantic City](#), which requires that applicants for police and fire positions have lived in the city for at least four years.

Atlantic City used financial incentives to get two dozen officers to move into distressed areas. Its approach was devised in 1994 as part of a community policing program developed jointly with the Police Foundation (click [here](#) and [here](#).) Whether outcomes met expectations isn't known. But when the Police Foundation's current president, Jim Bueermann [was interviewed about a recent, thus far unsuccessful effort](#)

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to institute similar rules in another troubled city, Baton Rouge, his skepticism was striking:

Every person in Baton Rouge deserves a competent police officer in their neighborhood and a competent police force, and when you diminish their recruiting pool you greatly reduce the odds that you're going to get the qualified people you need.

Although Bueermann endorses giving preference to otherwise well-qualified applicants who are residents, his nuanced views are unlikely to placate the long-suffering residents who must deal with crummy neighbors and rude cops on a daily basis. A reporter who attended a raucous Baton Rouge city council hearing [neatly summarized the dilemma](#):

Throughout the emotional and racially charged debate Wednesday, mostly black members of the public pleaded with Metro Council members to understand the racism they feel in their daily lives and said having a police force whose officers live in their parish would make them feel safer.

By "live in their parish" citizens probably don't mean on the other side of town. But asking officers to live in close proximity to where they work can be a tough sell. Most cops don't want to be "on" 24/7 and may have concerns about personal and family safety. Consider [Erie, Pennsylvania](#), a mid-sized community with an area of 19 square miles and a population of about 100,000. Officers and firefighters used to have to live in the city, but [may now reside within a 15-mile radius](#). [According to the former head of the police union](#), the relaxation was negotiated, in part, to quell concerns about harassment and retaliation:

It was especially a problem with officers with kids in school who were going to school with the kids of the guy the officer had arrested the night before. Erie really isn't that big of a town.

There were other reasons as well. Whether or not one wears a badge, freedom to choose always matters. "Police and firefighters just wanted the same thing as everyone else, they wanted the same opportunity. They wanted to be able to live where they wanted. Taxes were a factor, and schools."

Residency requirements have proven divisive within city government. Police unions, which reflect the views of working cops, usually line up in opposition. (For the FOP's comprehensive arguments against, click [here](#).) On the other hand, many police chiefs have promoted such rules, and city leaders are especially likely to view them favorably.

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Here's what Mayor Rahm Emanuel had to say about proposals to do away with Chicago's:

I understand it's their desire, but to the city, they are more than police and fire. They are anchors in the neighborhood. They're the Little League coaches, the hockey coaches, the volunteers at the place of worship. They are anchors in not just their block but in their community, and that's an investment I'm not ready to turn my back on.

Fine enough. But was hizzoner speaking from the heart? Or from the perspective of his role as guardian of the city purse? Public safety salaries eat up a large chunk of the municipal budget. Shouldn't city workers return the favor by spending their bucks in the city and paying local property taxes? Milwaukee Mayor Tom "occupying force" Barrett readily conceded that his battle for residency requirements was as much about finances as about insuring officer diversity:

It actually makes the potential for both of those problems to get worse. You're going to have more middle-class incomes leaving the city....

Boston's applicants, in turn, can't test for a police job until they've lived in the city for a year. Why? Here's how an official who helped write the rules (they require that all Boston employees live in the city) justified them: "...we needed to ensure that those solid middle class folks who worked in the city lived in the city."

Sometimes it really is, at least in part, about money.

Police residency requirements carry considerable intuitive appeal. However, their actual benefits are uncertain. What's for sure is that their one known effect – limiting the hiring pool – can have undesirable consequences on the quality of police candidates.

Yellow light. Proceed with caution.

Posted 2/3/11

## WHICH WAY, C.J.?

### *Two John Jay scholars propose that Criminal Justice programs emphasize methodology*

*By Julius (Jay) Wachtel.* Normally we avoid quoting at length, but in this case it seems appropriate to let [John Jay College's](#) Evan Mandery and David Kennedy have their uninterrupted say.

Students who seek careers as [criminal justice] practitioners must be familiar with the history and operation of the institutions they aim to serve. Aspiring policy makers must also be familiar with these institutions, but this knowledge is important not as an end in itself, but rather as a focal point to develop their analytical skills. For policy makers require a distinct skill set. They are increasingly demanded to have greater quantitative analytical capacity and, most importantly, to solve problems. Humanely educating aspiring police, correction and probation officers will always remain a core, and arguably the most important, function of criminal justice programs. But we believe in the coming decades, the burgeoning demand will be for critics, critical thinkers, original thinkers, problem solvers, innovators, curmudgeons, and reformers. Currently, this need is not met. (For the full article click [here](#).)

What the authors seek is a “new sort of undergraduate” whose preparation will emphasize analytical skills rather than factual knowledge. Thus “empowered to think beyond the status quo,” students will sail forth to generate “original and ethical solutions to vexing social problems.” John Jay apparently intends to meld this alternative vision of criminal justice education into a bachelor of arts program. It will be offered alongside the college’s extant bachelor of science degree, which the authors describe as fulfilling the “historical mission of CJ education.”

There is no question that criminal justice education has significantly evolved. Your blogger’s undergraduate degree from Cal State Los Angeles, awarded in 1971, was in “Police Science and Administration.” Although the coursework had academic components, policing and corrections were taught by retired practitioners with master’s degrees. At a time when civil rights disputes and unrest over Vietnam threatened to unravel the social fabric, their preoccupation with the nuts-and-bolts of policing seemed beside the point. (For a remarkable 1969 report about conflicts between police and the public see “[Law and Order Reconsidered](#)”)

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Your blogger and other students petitioned for a change. Our grievances were well received by some faculty, and in time the curriculum was transformed. Similar changes were happening elsewhere. By the late 1970's baccalaureate criminal justice programs were abandoning narrow vocational orientations in favor of a more comprehensive, diagnostic approach. Students examined interactions within the criminal justice system and between the system and outside forces, studied the social, psychological and economic causes of crime, and explored the proper role of police in a democracy. Among the classic titles of the era are Herman Goldstein's *Policing a Free Society*, William Muir's *Police: Streetcorner Politicians*, and Peter Manning's *Police Work*. These deeply analytical works addressed policing from a variety of perspectives, offering observations that hold true to the present day.

In 2005, after years of debate, the [Academy of Criminal Justice Sciences](#), a national organization of criminal justice educators, established a [process for certifying criminal justice programs](#). Requirements were set out in six content areas:

- Administration of Justice: Contemporary criminal justice system, major systems of social control and their policies and practices; victimology; juvenile justice; comparative criminal justice
- Corrections: History, theory, practice and legal environment, development of correctional philosophy, incarceration, diversions, community-based corrections, treatment of offenders
- Criminological Theory: The nature and causes of crime, typologies, offenders, and victims
- Law Adjudication: Criminal law, criminal procedures, prosecution, defense, and court procedures and decision-making
- Law Enforcement: History, theory, practice and legal environment, police organization, discretion, and subculture
- Research and Analytic Methods: Quantitative - including statistics - and qualitative, methods for conducting and analyzing criminal justice research in a manner appropriate for undergraduate students

These guidelines and the accompanying standards purportedly represent the state of the art in criminal justice education. Yet they weren't mentioned in the article by Mandery and Kennedy, which appeared in a publication of the [American Society of Criminology](#), a competitor organization (Dr. Mandery has advised that he and Dr. Kennedy referred to and discussed the ACJS guidelines in detail but that the editors of *The Criminologist*, the ASC publication where the article appeared, unfortunately cut the material.) Your blogger, who referred to the ACJS standards while acting as outside reviewer of a local CJ program, found them clear, comprehensive and simple to

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articulate and defend. Actually, he had nowhere else to turn, as the ASC has not promulgated an equivalent.

To be sure, the ACJS guidelines do not articulate Mandery and Kennedy's vision in its entirety. For example, there is nothing in ACJS about "teaching skills and critical thinking rather than facts" or the need for "intellectual discovery." So what *does* ACJS favor? Here's standard B.9:

The purpose of undergraduate programs in criminal justice is to educate students to be critical thinkers who can communicate their thoughts effectively in oral and written form. Programs should familiarize students with facts and concepts and teach students to apply this knowledge to related problems and changing situations. Primary objectives of all criminal justice programs include the development of critical thinking; communication, technology, and computing skills; quantitative reasoning; ethical decision-making; and an understanding of diversity.

Well, that sounds pretty good. Actually, the one clear distinction between ACJS standards and John Jay's proposed baccalaureate is in the latter's overarching emphasis on crunching numbers. While ACJS calls for instruction in quantitative and qualitative research "in a manner appropriate for undergraduate students," Mandery and Kennedy emphasize the acquisition of statistical skills, with a capstone independent research project at the program's conclusion.

Mandery and Kennedy briskly track the evolution of police strategies during the past decades:

New York City's historic crime decline, and the perceived significance of its police force's new operational approaches, gave credence to the ideas that police could reduce crime and should be held accountable for doing so. CompStat drove responsibility for crime outcomes down to geographic commands and raised the salience of data. As other police agencies adopted these innovations, and the Department of Justice sought to enhance the mapping capacity of police departments, the importance of data analysis was raised further. Soon it became more practicable to address hot spots, refine officer deployment, and identify crime trends.

If advanced data analysis really is that crucial, the need for a new curriculum should be self-evident. Yet the evidence that Mandery and Kennedy offer is hardly compelling. Mentioning Compstat and hot-spots in the same breath as New York City's crime

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decline, part of a national trend for two decades, encourages the reader to assume that the former caused the latter. That's a fallacy that should be evident to anyone versed in basic methodology. What's more, crediting these "innovations" for bringing home the long-standing notion that police ought to be held accountable for crime is simply audacious.

As we said in [Too Much of a Good Thing?](#), it's not as though cops have been waiting for academics to come around to suggest the obvious. Once one peels away the rhetoric, "problem-oriented" and "hot spot" policing are nothing new. Open-air drug markets, street robberies ("muggings"), vehicle burglaries ("car clouts") and other types of location-based offending were being addressed by special squads, directed patrol and covert surveillance well before your blogger joined the law enforcement ranks in 1972. Using data is also old hat. Pin-maps, then IBM punch cards and, finally, personal computers have tracked the incidence and place of crime for decades.

Yes, it's become easier to collect, analyze and display information. But the benefits claimed by advocates of newfangled number-crunching techniques seem vastly overblown. "Putting a patrol car close to the action," as a [predictive policing](#) experiment in Minneapolis seeks to do, sounds like a great idea, at least until it [turns out in practice to mean within a mile](#) of the next predicted crime. Even if the accuracy is increased, the chances that a patrol car will be available at the right time and place are slight. Reporting isn't instantaneous, and unless a cop is perfectly situated offenders may be long gone. In cities of any size patrol officers already have a full plate. Beat cops constantly exchange information and are always on the lookout for known evildoers with whom to have a chat. Detectives, parole agents and probation officers also frequently pass down requests to watch for suspects, wanted persons and absconders from supervision.

Over-emphasizing numbers isn't just beside the point – it can be a really bad idea. In [Predictive Policing: Rhetoric or Reality?](#) we discussed complaints by NYPD officers that pressures to look good under Compstat transformed measures into goals, forcing cops to make needless stops and arrests on pain of keeping their jobs. As we pointed out in the text and updates section of [Liars Figure](#), a preoccupation with crime statistics reportedly led cops in various cities, including New York, Cleveland, Dallas, New Orleans, Baltimore and Nashville to not take reports or purposely downgrade offenses to make the numbers look good.

Since retiring from law enforcement your blogger has taught courses in research methods and policing. There is less crossover than one might think. Many pressing issues – misuse of force, lying to superiors, lying in reports and in court, mistaken

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arrests and other shoddy work, inadequate hiring standards, poor training, the lack of meaningful supervision, proliferation of guns, and so on – are not amenable to quantification other than in its crudest form; for example, by counting the number of officers fired for misconduct or killed by assailants each year. Others, such as racial profiling, present methodological complexities that can make it impossible to draw firm conclusions. Where numbers inarguably help – describing the incidence of crime, allocating and deploying resources – usually involves rudimentary techniques that should be readily comprehended by any reasonably bright undergraduate.

Except in its most trivial manifestations, quantitative research into policing has proven far less useful than what its proponents claim. One reason, we're certain, is that researchers often fail to identify the proper variables or to develop accurate measures. "To cultivate creative and original thinking about one of the most challenging social problems of our time," to borrow Mandery and Kennedy's apt phrase, requires that everyone who wants to play in the sandbox – future practitioners and budding researchers alike – be exceptionally well informed about the environment of policing in its full, sausage-making complexity.

And where would this knowledge come from? As we mentioned in [R.I.P. Community Policing?](#), many scholars have published profound, illuminating descriptions of the police workplace. Alas, deeply probing, ethnographic research seems out of favor. (Yesterday I asked students in one of my classes whether anyone had read *Varieties of Police Behavior*. No one had.) Getting undergraduates to pore through the many great works sitting on library shelves may seem like a tall order. But if we're really serious about preparing future cops *and* researchers that may be the best approach.

p.s. Here are a few classic titles:

Egon Bittner, *Aspects of Police Work* and *The Functions of Police in Modern Society*

Anthony Bouza, *The Police Mystique*

Herman Goldstein, *Policing a Free Society*

Peter Manning, *The Narc's Game* and *Police Work*

John Van Mannen and Peter Manning, *Policing: A View From the Street*

Gary Marx, *Undercover*

William Ker Muir Jr., *Police: Streetcorner Politicians*

Albert Reiss, *The Police and the Public*

Larence Sherman, *Scandal and Reform*

James Q. Wilson, *The Investigators, Thinking About Crime* and *Varieties of Police Behavior*