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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

Understanding Police Reform:
A Case Study of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD)

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Social Ecology

by

Matt Barno

Dissertation Committee:
Professor Mona Lynch, Chair
Professor Emeritus Kirk Williams
Professor Richard McCleary

2023

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Understanding Police Reform:
A Case Study of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD)

by

Matt Barno

Doctor of Philosophy in Social Ecology

University of California, Irvine, 2023

Professor Mona Lynch, Chair

In the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder, two broad camps have emerged in debates about the possibilities and limitations of police reform. Reformists maintain that theoretically and empirically supported reforms can improve police outcomes, for example by reducing uses of force, reducing complaints against police, and/or reducing racial disparities in enforcement. Abolitionists counter that the fundamental purpose and ultimate function of policing is racial and economic subordination, and consequently any attempts to meaningfully address asymmetric police harm are doomed to failure. These conflicting perspectives on police reform are undergirded by conflicting conceptions of police culture. As virtually all police observers acknowledge, when it comes to shaping officer behavior, “culture eats policy for breakfast.” Reformists do not view police culture as an insurmountable obstacle for reform. To the contrary, reforms are often targeted specifically at police culture in the hopes of producing lasting change. Abolitionists, however, assert that discrimination and violence are intrinsic features of police culture by virtue of policing’s role in maintaining social hierarchy, and thus these features cannot be eradicated through the sort of technocratic fixes advocated by reformists.

This study seeks to surmount the reformist-abolitionist divide by providing an alternative perspective on police culture grounded in a sociohistorical analysis of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). The LAPD is widely regarded as the catalyst for two of the

most violent and destructive racial uprisings in U.S. history. Yet, at multiple points over the previous century, the department has also been identified as a model of successful police reform. By tracing LAPD culture through these periods of scandal and reform, the study illustrates how the fundamental logic at the core of the department's organizational culture has remained fixed over time. However, because the key cultural categories embedded in this logic are inherently fungible and polysemic, the operative meanings of these categories have shifted in the course of reform, resulting in concomitant shifts in LAPD practices that most reformists would identify as meaningful improvements. The study concludes by illustrating how this empirically grounded understanding of cultural change and continuity in the context of reform can make sense of *both* the possibilities for improved outcomes cited by reformists *and* the persistence of racialized police harm cited by abolitionists.

Introduction

This is a study of police reform. In the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder, two broad camps have emerged in debates about the possibilities and limitations of police reform. Reformists maintain that theoretically and empirically supported reforms can improve police outcomes, for example by reducing uses of force, reducing complaints against police, and/or reducing racial disparities in enforcement. Abolitionists counter that the fundamental purpose and ultimate function of policing is racial and economic subordination, and consequently any attempts to meaningfully address asymmetric police harm are doomed to failure. These conflicting perspectives on police reform are undergirded by conflicting conceptions of police culture. As virtually all police observers acknowledge, when it comes to shaping officer behavior, “culture eats policy for lunch.”¹ Reformists do not view police culture as an insurmountable obstacle for reform. To the contrary, reforms are often targeted specifically at police culture in the hopes of producing lasting change. Abolitionists, however, assert that discrimination and violence are intrinsic features of police culture by virtue of policing’s role in maintaining social hierarchy, and thus these features cannot be eradicated through the sort of technocratic fixes advocated by reformists.

This study seeks to surmount the reformist-abolitionist divide by providing an alternative perspective on police culture grounded in a sociohistorical analysis of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). The LAPD is widely regarded as the catalyst for two of the most violent and destructive racial uprisings in U.S. history. Yet, at multiple points over the previous century, the department has also been identified as a model of successful police reform. By tracing LAPD culture through these periods of scandal and reform, the study illustrates how the fundamental logic at the core of the department’s organizational culture has remained fixed over time. However, because the key cultural categories embedded in this logic are inherently

¹ President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing, *Final Report of the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2015), 11. https://cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/taskforce/taskforce_finalreport.pdf.

fungible and polysemic, the operative meanings of these categories have shifted in the course of reform, resulting in concomitant shifts in LAPD practices that most reformists would identify as meaningful improvements. The study concludes by illustrating how this empirically grounded understanding of cultural change and continuity in the context of reform can make sense of *both* the possibilities for improved outcomes cited by reformists *and* the persistence of racialized police harm cited by abolitionists.

This introductory chapter sets the stage for the study that follows. I begin by canvassing the reformist-abolitionist debate in the wake of George Floyd’s murder. Making sense of the competing claims and empirical findings of these conflicting camps motivates the primary research questions of the study, which are introduced in the next section. I then provide a review of literature in cultural sociology, which is used to build a theoretical model of what culture is and how culture operates in social life and organizations like the LAPD. The next section discusses the study’s methodology, or how the theoretical model of culture elaborated in the previous section informs the analysis of LAPD culture over time. I then discuss the study’s use of historical sources before concluding with an overview of the chapters and arguments that follow.

Problem Statement: Reformist v. Abolitionist Approaches to Police Reform

The murder of George Floyd in May 2020 by officers with the Minneapolis Police Department triggered large-scale protests across the U.S.² The ripple effects of these protests permeated national political discourse, as countless activists, political organizations, scholars, commentators, and politicians expounded recommendations for how to address problems with U.S. policing. Campaign Zero, a research and advocacy organization formed in the wake of the police killing of Michael Brown in 2014, was one of the most prominent organizations to weigh

² Derrick Bryson Taylor, “George Floyd Protests: A Timeline,” *New York Times*, November 5, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/article/george-floyd-protests-timeline.html>.

in.³ Campaign Zero’s stated goal is to “end police violence in America.”⁴ A month after George Floyd’s murder, the organization launched a campaign entitled “#8cantwait,” advocating for the immediate adoption of eight policies that the campaign claimed “could reduce killings by police by up to 72%.”⁵ These proposals included: (1) a ban on police chokeholds and strangleholds; (2) requiring officers to pursue de-escalation; (3) requiring officers to issue a warning before shooting; (4) requiring officers to exhaust all alternatives prior to shooting; (5) requiring officers to intervene when they witness misconduct by another officer; (6) a ban on shooting at moving vehicles; (7) requiring officers to use force that is strictly proportional to the threats they face (a “use of force continuum”); and (8) requiring comprehensive reporting of police uses of force (see Figure 1 below).⁶

Figure 1. #8cantwait Campaign Infographic⁷



³ Ernest Owens, “The Rise and Rupture of Campaign Zero,” *New York Magazine*, January 31, 2022, <https://nymag.com/intelligencer/2022/01/campaign-zero-rise-and-fall.html>.

⁴ “About,” Campaign Zero, accessed November 23, 2023, <https://campaignzero.org/about/what-we-do/>.

⁵ “#8cantwait,” Campaign Zero, Twitter, accessed November 23, 2023, <https://twitter.com/8CANTWAIT>.

⁶ “#8cantwait,” Campaign Zero, accessed November 23, 2023, <https://8cantwait.org/>.

⁷ Campaign Zero, “#8cantwait.”

The #8cantwait campaign attracted immediate attention and support from numerous politicians and celebrities. Julián Castro, Jack Dorsey, and Oprah Winfrey were among the many high-profile figures to publicly endorse the campaign on Twitter.⁸ Perhaps unexpectedly, the campaign also found support among many police departments. Several departments responded to the campaign by issuing statements pledging their commitment to the eight proposed policies.⁹ The campaign's policy tracker indicates that over 50 big city departments, including those in Los Angeles, New York, and Chicago, adopted at least one of the eight policies since the campaign was launched in June 2020.¹⁰

But the campaign also attracted vehement opposition from another unlikely source: fellow advocates opposed to police violence. Activists argued that the reforms proposed by the #8cantwait campaign were “toothless” and distracted from the more “transformative demands” of protestors advocating for defunding or abolishing the police and reinvesting the saved resources in programs and services for disadvantaged Black communities.¹¹ Human Rights Watch issued a press release stating that the #8cantwait campaign “proposes only minor and ineffectual changes,” and that focus should instead be on “meaningful reforms that...reduce the police footprint, investing saved resources into services that improve access to housing, education, employment, and health care to address structural racism in the United States.”¹²

Criticism of #8cantwait ultimately coalesced behind an oppositional campaign, #8toabolition.¹³ Imitating the style and design of #8cantwait campaign materials, #8toabolition

⁸ William Earl, “Oprah, Ariana Grande and More Champion 8 Can’t Wait, Project to Reduce Police Violence,” *Variety*, June 4, 2020, <https://variety.com/2020/biz/news/8-cant-wait-reduce-police-violence-oprah-ariana-grande-1234625314/>.

⁹ “Search: #8cantwait and ‘police department,’” Search Bar, Twitter, accessed November 23, 2023, https://twitter.com/search?q=%238CantWait%20and%20%22police%20department%22%20&src=typed_query&f=top.

¹⁰ “Compare Cities,” #8cantwait, Campaign Zero, accessed November 23, 2023, <https://8cantwait.org/compare/>.

¹¹ Shani Saxon, “What Went Wrong With the #8CantWait Police Reform Initiative?” *Colorlines*, June 18, 2020, <https://www.colorlines.com/articles/what-went-wrong-8cantwait-police-reform-initiative>.

¹² Human Rights Watch, “US: Reject #8CantWait Policing Program,” press release, June 9, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/06/09/us-reject-8cantwait-policing-program>.

¹³ #8toabolition, accessed November 23, 2023, <https://www.8toabolition.com/>.

offered eight alternative policy proposals focused on “build[ing] toward a society without police or prisons”: (1) defunding the police; (2) demilitarizing communities; (3) removing police from schools; (4) freeing people from prisons and jails; (5) repealing laws criminalizing survival; (6) investing in community self-governance; (7) providing safe housing for everyone; and (8) investing “in care, not cops.” Summarizing the campaign’s critique of #8cantwait, the organizers stated, “We believe in a world where there are zero police murders because there are zero police, not because police are better trained or better regulated—indeed, history has shown that ending police violence through more training or regulations is impossible” (see Figure 2 below).¹⁴

Figure 2. #8toabolition Campaign Infographic¹⁵



Condemnation of the #8cantwait campaign by fellow activists fractured Campaign Zero’s leadership team. One co-founder resigned within a week of the campaign launch.¹⁶ Another

¹⁴ “Abolition can’t wait.” #8toabolition, accessed November 23, 2023, <https://www.8toabolition.com/why>.

¹⁵ #8toabolition.

¹⁶ Owens, “Campaign Zero.”

issued an apology on Twitter, acknowledging that, “the roll-out of the campaign and the messaging around it were flawed and detracted from the broader, transformative conversation happening in this moment.”¹⁷ The organization itself added an apology to the #8cantwait website, stating that, “the #8CANTWAIT campaign unintentionally detracted from efforts of fellow organizers invested in paradigmatic shifts that are newly possible in this moment. *For this we apologize wholeheartedly, and without reservation.*”¹⁸ By the end of 2020, only one of the four Campaign Zero co-founders remained with the organization.¹⁹

The rift exposed by the #8cantwait campaign is indicative of the two camps that have developed with respect to police reform in the wake of George Floyd’s murder and subsequent police protests. The *reformist* camp, exemplified by the #8cantwait campaign, generally takes the position that evidence-based or theoretically informed reform efforts can improve policing outcomes, for example by reducing uses of force, reducing complaints against police, and/or reducing racial disparities in enforcement.²⁰

Much of the academic and policy-oriented work on policing falls in the reformist camp. The report issued by President Obama’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing provides a quintessential example. Formed in 2014 in response to the police shooting of Michael Brown in

¹⁷ Samuel Sinyangwe (@samswey), “My statement,” Twitter post, June 9, 2020, <https://twitter.com/samswey/status/1270538875283398656>.

¹⁸ “#8cantwait.org: 3 June 2020 – 2 November 2023,” Wayback Machine, Internet Archive, accessed November 23, 2023, <https://web.archive.org/web/20200620194433/https://8cantwait.org/>. See also Saxon, “What Went Wrong.”

¹⁹ Owens, “Campaign Zero.”

²⁰ The #8cantwait campaign itself relied on an unpublished study by a Campaign Zero co-founder (Sinyangwe 2016). Using a sample of 91 large municipal police departments in the U.S., the study regressed total policing killings in 2016 by each department, standardized by city population size, on a scale tallying how many of the eight policies the department had in place, controlling for additional factors such as the number of officers in the department, the number of arrests made by the department, and economic conditions in the city. The study ultimately concluded that, “Police departments that implement all eight use of force policies would kill 72% fewer people on average than departments with none of these policies in place” (3) —hence use of the 72% reduction figure in campaign materials. Samuel Sinyangwe, “Examining the Role of Use of Force Policies in Ending Police Violence” (September 2016), available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2841872>. Amid the backlash against the #8cantwait campaign, the methodology of this study was heavily criticized. See, e.g., Cherrell Brown and Philip V. McHarris, “#8cantwait is Based on Faulty Data Science,” *Medium*, June 5, 2020, <https://medium.com/@8cantwait.faulty/8cantwait-is-based-on-faulty-data-science-a4e0b85fae40>.

Ferguson, MO—which, like the murder of George Floyd, sparked large-scale protests across the country—the President’s Task Force represented the most widely publicized federal investigation into the state of U.S. policing since the Kerner Commission in 1968. The Task Force described its “mission” as follows: “to examine ways of fostering strong, collaborative relationships between local law enforcement and the communities they protect and to make recommendations to the President on ways policing practices can promote effective crime reduction while building public trust.”²¹ The Task Force ultimately provided over 50 recommendations, primarily centered on promoting procedural justice, community policing, and a shift from a “warrior” to a “guardian” mindset among police officers.²² The Task Force stated that the principles of “building trust and legitimacy between law enforcement agencies and the communities they serve underlie all questions of law enforcement policy and community oversight.”²³ In emphasizing reforms that enhance community engagement and trust in police, the Task Force recommendations echo recent recommendations from a variety of leading organizations on police policy and practices.²⁴

The procedural justice literature, on which the President’s Task Force relied heavily in its report, is among the most widely cited strands of reformist academic research on policing. Tom Tyler initially popularized the notion of procedural justice in his seminal book, *Why People Obey the Law*.²⁵ The underlying principle of the procedural justice literature is that, “the legitimacy of authorities and institutions is rooted in public views about the appropriateness of

²¹ President’s Task Force, *Final Report*, 5.

²² President’s Task Force, *Final Report*, 85-99.

²³ President’s Task Force, *Final Report*, 19.

²⁴ See, e.g., U.S. Department of Justice, *Law Enforcement Best Practices: Lessons Learned from the Field* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2019), <https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/resourcecenter/ric/Publications/cops-w0875-pub.pdf>; Police Executive Research Forum, *Community Policing: The Past, Present, and Future* (2004), https://www.policeforum.org/assets/docs/Free_Online_Documents/Community_Policing/community%20policing%20-%20the%20past%20present%20and%20future%202004.pdf; “Our Mission,” Policing Project, accessed November 23, 2023, <https://www.policingproject.org/our-mission>; Phillip Atiba Goff *et al.*, *Re-imagining Public Safety: Prevent Harm and Lead with the Truth* (Center for Policing Equity, 2019), https://policingequity.org/images/pdfs-doc/reports/re-imagining_public_safety_final_11.26.19.pdf.

²⁵ Tom R. Tyler, *Why People Obey the Law* (Princeton University Press, 1990).

the *manner* in which the police exercise their authority,” rather than “judgments about the effectiveness, valence, or fairness of the *outcomes* of those activities” (emphasis added).²⁶ Four components are viewed as key in shaping perceptions of how police go about their work: (1) voice or participation, (2) dignity and respect, (3) neutrality, and (4) trustworthy motives.²⁷ The theory holds that when police interact with the public in ways that allow people to voice their views and concerns, treat people with dignity and respect, and are viewed as neutral, unbiased, and in the public’s best interest, the public is more likely to view the police as legitimate and comply with the law, regardless of the outcomes of police activity.²⁸ As the President’s Task Force report demonstrates, procedural justice is a key component of many recent recommendations for improving police-community relations, and it has also become a key component of police training in cities across the country.²⁹

The procedural justice literature falls under the broader umbrella of “evidence-based policing” (EBP), a scholarly program that seeks to use empirical research to identify policies, programs, and practices that can improve police outcomes.³⁰ The EBP movement has traditionally focused on the effects of various enforcement strategies on crime rates.³¹ More

²⁶ Tom R. Tyler, "Enhancing Police Legitimacy," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 593, no. 1 (2004): 91.

²⁷ Tyler, "Enhancing Police Legitimacy;" Steven L. Blader and Tom R. Tyler, "A Four-Component Model of Procedural Justice: Defining the Meaning of a "Fair" Process," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 29, no. 6 (2003): 747-58.

²⁸ Tom R. Tyler, "Procedural Justice and Policing: A Rush to Judgment?" *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 13 (2017): 29-53; Daniel S. Nagin and Cody W. Telep, "Procedural Justice and Legal Compliance," *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 13 (2017): 5-28.

²⁹ See, e.g., Lorraine Mazerolle *et al.*, "Procedural Justice and Police Legitimacy: A Systematic Review of the Research Evidence," *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 9 (2013): 245-74; Laura Kunard and Charlene Moe, *Procedural Justice for Law Enforcement: An Overview* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2015), <https://portal.cops.usdoj.gov/resourcecenter/RIC/Publications/cops-p333-pub.pdf>; Center for Illinois Politics, "The 3 Largest Police Forces: What Training and Oversight Look Like Today," press release, June 28, 2020, <https://www.centerforilpolitics.org/articles/the-3-largest-police-forces-what-training-and-oversight-look-like-today>.

³⁰ Lawrence W. Sherman, "Evidence-Based Policing," *Ideas in American Policing Series* (Washington, D.C.: Police Foundation, 1998). <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/evidence-based-policing>

³¹ Cynthia Lum, Christopher S. Koper, and Cody W. Telep. "The Evidence-Based Policing Matrix." *Journal of Experimental Criminology* 7 (2011): 3-26.

recent research, however, has focused on the impact of popular reform measures like body-worn cameras,³² de-escalation training,³³ implicit bias training,³⁴ early intervention systems,³⁵ and increased officer diversity³⁶ on outcomes such as uses of force, complaints against police, officer attitudes towards the public, and racial disparities in enforcement. The evidence base for these reforms is sparse and often mixed.³⁷ But they remain among the most commonly advocated reforms following the George Floyd protests,³⁸ and scholars remain committed to the use of empirical research to refine and improve such measures.³⁹

Much of the commentary on policing from lawyers and legal academics also falls in the reformist camp. Legal approaches to reform tend to focus on doctrines and policies related to accountability and incentives in policing, rather than police practices specifically. A recent four-

³² Cynthia Lum, Megan Stoltz, Christopher S. Koper, and J. Amber Scherer. "Research on Body-Worn Cameras: What We Know, What We Need to Know." *Criminology & Public Policy* 18, no. 1 (2019): 93-118.

³³ Michael D. White *et al.*, *Testing the Impact of De-escalation Training on Officer Behavior: The Tempe (AZ) Smart Policing Initiative* (Arizona State University: Center for Violence Prevention and Community Safety, December 2021), <https://www.smart-policing.com/sites/default/files/inline-files/Tempe%20SPI%20Final%20Report%2012-21.pdf>; Robin S. Engel, Nicholas Corsaro, Gabrielle T. Isaza, and Hannah D. McManus, "Assessing the Impact of De-Escalation Training on Police Behavior: Reducing Police Use of Force in the Louisville, KY Metro Police Department," *Criminology & Public Policy* 21, no. 2 (2022): 199-233.

³⁴ Robert E. Worden *et al.*, *The Impacts of Implicit Bias Awareness Training in the NYPD* (International Association of Chiefs of Police, July 2020). <https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/Research%20Center/NYPD%20Implicit%20Bias%20Report.pdf>

³⁵ Christi L. Gullion and William R. King, "Early Intervention Systems for Police: A State-of-the-Art Review," *Policing: An International Journal* 43, no. 4 (2020): 643-658.

³⁶ John Shjarback *et al.*, "Minority Representation in Policing and Racial Profiling: A Test of Representative Bureaucracy vs Community Context," *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management* 40, no. 4 (2017): 748-767; Bocar A. Ba *et al.*, "The Role of Officer Race and Gender in Police-Civilian Interactions in Chicago," *Science* 371, no. 6530 (2021): 696-702.

³⁷ Robin S. Engel, Hannah D. McManus, and Gabrielle T. Isaza, "Moving Beyond 'Best Practice': Experiences in Police Reform and a Call for Evidence to Reduce Officer-Involved Shootings," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 687, no. 1 (2020): 146-165.

³⁸ Linley Sanders, "What Police Reform Does America Support?" *YouGov*, June 1, 2020, <https://today.yougov.com/topics/politics/articles-reports/2020/06/01/police-reform-america-poll>; "Legislative Responses for Policing-State Bill Tracking Database," National Conference of State Legislatures, accessed November 23, 2023, <https://www.ncsl.org/research/civil-and-criminal-justice/legislative-responses-for-policing.aspx>.

³⁹ See, e.g., Christopher S. Koper and Cynthia Lum, "Editorial Introduction to the Special Issue on Policing," *Criminology & Public Policy* 19 (2020): 691; "Statement of the American Society of Criminology Executive Board Regarding the Deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery," American Society of Criminology, accessed November 23, 2023, https://asc41.org/wp-content/uploads/ASC_Executive_Board_Statement_Regarding_the_Death_of_George_Floyd_2020.pdf.

volume report from the Arizona State University College of Law brought together “leading scholars in criminal law and other disciplines...[to] describe the need for reform in particular areas of American criminal justice and suggest policy recommendations to achieve such change.”⁴⁰ The proposals presented in *Volume 2: Policing* are emblematic of how contemporary legal academics approach the issue of police reform. Harmon provides recommendations for how to increase police accountability despite limitations in current constitutional case law, for example by enhancing “local political accountability.”⁴¹ Fagan suggests that overly aggressive minor crime enforcement might be curbed by capping revenue that police can generate through fines and giving defendants a better opportunity to challenge minor charges in court.⁴² Harris contends that employment incentives—“promotions, plum assignments, and raises”—currently reward the proactive policing practices that facilitate racial profiling, and that these employment rewards should instead be based “on crime reduction and order restoration, and on community engagement and satisfaction.”⁴³ Richardson similarly argues for a shift in employment incentives away from proactive enforcement as a means of reducing police uses of force.⁴⁴ Several contributors advocate for improved data collection and transparency as a means of enhancing accountability.⁴⁵

When lawyers and legal academics make police practices the focus, rather than accountability and incentives, their proposals often center on reforming the standards that define the outer limits of legally acceptable police conduct. In the aftermath of the George Floyd

⁴⁰ Erik Luna, “Preface,” in *Reforming Criminal Justice: Volume 1: Introduction and Criminalization*, ed. Erik Luna (Phoenix, AZ: Arizona State University, 2017), xv.

⁴¹ Rachel A. Harmon, “Legal Remedies for Police Misconduct,” in *Reforming Criminal Justice: Volume 2: Policing*, ed. Erik Luna (Phoenix, AZ: Arizona State University, 2017), 49.

⁴² Jeffrey Fagan, “Race and the New Policing,” in *Reforming Criminal Justice: Volume 2: Policing*, ed. Erik Luna (Phoenix, AZ: Arizona State University, 2017), 83-116.

⁴³ David A. Harris, “Racial Profiling,” in *Reforming Criminal Justice: Volume 2: Policing*, ed. Erik Luna (Phoenix, AZ: Arizona State University, 2017), 152.

⁴⁴ L. Song Richardson, “Police Use of Force,” in *Reforming Criminal Justice: Volume 2: Policing*, ed. Erik Luna (Phoenix, AZ: Arizona State University, 2017), 185-208.

⁴⁵ Harmon, “Legal Remedies;” Harris, “Racial Profiling;” Henry F. Fradella and Michael D. White, “Stop-and-Frisk” in *Reforming Criminal Justice: Volume 2: Policing*, ed. Erik Luna (Phoenix, AZ: Arizona State University, 2017), 51-82.

protests, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights issued an open letter to leaders in Congress with major legal organizations like the ACLU, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, and the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law included as signatories.⁴⁶ Like the ASU reform report, the letter provided several recommendations geared toward enhancing police accountability, including the creation of a national officer decertification database and the elimination of qualified immunity protections for individual officers in civil suits alleging constitutional rights violations. But the letter also included several proposals aimed at redrawing the line between lawful and unlawful police conduct, many of which mirrored the reforms proposed by the #8cantwait campaign. These proposals included (1) limiting justifiable police uses of force to situations in which such force is “necessary,” as opposed to merely “reasonable;” (2) revising down the standard for criminal prosecutions of officers who commit rights violations from “willfulness” to “recklessness;” (3) banning neck restraints and chokeholds; and (4) banning the use of no-knock warrants (4).

One reform recommendation that has drawn particularly wide support since 2020 is the proposal to limit the current scope of policing by having alternative government response agencies handle functions such as mental health calls and traffic enforcement.⁴⁷ Even police

⁴⁶ Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, “Civil Rights Coalition Letter on Federal Policing Priorities,” press release, June 1, 2020, <https://civilrights.org/resource/civil-rights-coalition-letter-on-federal-policing-priorities/>.

⁴⁷ Jordan B. Woods, “Traffic Without the Police,” *Stanford Law Review* 73 (2021): 1471; Barry Friedman, “Disaggregating the Policing Function,” *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 169 (2020): 925; Katherine Beckett, Forrest Stuart, and Monica Bell, “From Crisis to Care,” *Inquest*, September 2, 2021, <https://inquest.org/from-crisis-to-care/>; Molly Bernstein and Sean McElwee, “National Poll: Shift Law Enforcement Funds to Non-Police Emergency Response,” *The Appeal*, April 8, 2021, <https://theappeal.org/the-lab/polling-memos/likely-voters-support-non-police-emergency-response/>; Meg O'Connor, “State Lawmakers are Pushing New Bills to Reduce Reliance on Police,” *The Appeal*, February 2, 2021, <https://theappeal.org/politicalreport/state-lawmakers-are-pushing-new-bills-to-reduce-reliance-on-police/>; Cailin Crowe, “Cities Consider Taking Police Out of Traffic Stops,” *Smart Cities Dive*, June 3, 2021, <https://www.smartcitiesdive.com/news/cities-consider-taking-police-out-of-traffic-stops/600912/>.

chiefs⁴⁸ and union representatives⁴⁹ have shown support for shifting some of these responsibilities to alternative agencies. What characterizes this recommendation as reformist, and the likely source of police support for it, is the belief that shifting some responsibilities to other agencies will ultimately improve policing's ability to contribute to public safety.⁵⁰ Removing adjunct responsibilities would allow police to focus on their core function—often described as “fighting crime”⁵¹—while avoiding the problems that stem from emergency calls for which unarmed civilian response teams might be better suited. As Bill Bratton, the most prominent police chief of the last three decades, describes, “The profession is more than willing to cede responsibility for the social services it is now providing. That would allow the police to return to its traditional job, the full-time work of preventing crime and disorder.”⁵²

This argument dovetails with work from scholars who contend that the key to improving policing outcomes is identifying the “socially optimal” level of police involvement in community problems.⁵³ Sharkey's seminal book, *Uneasy Peace*, is among the most frequently cited examples of such work.⁵⁴ In *Uneasy Peace*, Sharkey argues that police have been essential to the tremendous decline in violent crime in the U.S. since the 1990s.⁵⁵ However, the increased

⁴⁸ Bill Bratton and Peter Knobler, “Bill Bratton: Defund the Police? Insane—We Need to Re-Fund Them,” *New York Post*, June 16, 2021, <https://nypost.com/2021/06/16/bratton-defund-the-police-insane-we-need-to-re-fund-them/>; Josh Wood, “The US Police Department That Decided to Hire Social Workers,” *The Guardian*, September 19, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/sep/19/alexandria-kentucky-police-social-workers>; Brady Dennis, Mark Berman, and Elahe Izadi, “Dallas Police Chief Says ‘We’re Asking Cops To Do Too In This Country,’” *Washington Post*, July 11, 2016, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/post-nation/wp/2016/07/11/grief-and-anger-continue-after-dallas-attacks-and-police-shootings-as-debate-rages-over-policing/>.

⁴⁹ Elizabeth Chou and Josh Cain, “6 LA Council Members Want Social Workers, Not Police, to Respond to Non-Violent Calls,” *Los Angeles Daily News*, June 6, 2020, <https://www.dailynews.com/2020/06/16/2-la-council-members-want-social-workers-not-police-to-respond-to-non-violent-calls/>.

⁵⁰ See, e.g., Friedman, “Disaggregating the Policing Function.”

⁵¹ Eric Westervelt, “Removing Cops From Behavioral Crisis Calls: ‘We Need To Change The Model,’” *NPR*, October 19, 2020, <https://www.npr.org/2020/10/19/924146486/removing-cops-from-behavioral-crisis-calls-we-need-to-change-the-model>.

⁵² Bratton and Knobler, “Bill Bratton: Defund the Police?”

⁵³ Emily Owens, “The Economics of Policing,” in *Handbook of Labor, Human Resources and Population Economics*, ed. Klaus F. Zimmerman (Springer, August 2020), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-57365-6_146-1.

⁵⁴ Patrick Sharkey, *Uneasy Peace: The Great Crime Decline, the Renewal of City Life, and the Next War on Violence* (WW Norton & Company, 2018).

⁵⁵ Sharkey, *Uneasy Peace*, 45-49.

reliance on police to maintain public safety has come with “great costs”—mass incarceration, high-profile instances of police violence, and deepening distrust toward police and the broader legal system, particularly in communities of color.⁵⁶ Hence, Sharkey maintains that we must develop a “new model to respond to urban poverty and reduce violent crime,”⁵⁷ one that relies less on police and more on community organizations dedicated to addressing violence, which have also been linked to crime declines in empirical research.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, as Sharkey has asserted in recent interviews, “police still certainly have a role to play” under this new model.⁵⁹ The key is finding the proper balance between the crime suppression benefits and social costs of policing, a perspective shared by recent economic scholarship on the issue.⁶⁰

As the controversy surrounding the #8cantwait campaign demonstrates, however, the reformist approach to policing has ceded significant support to the *abolitionist* camp in the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder. At its core, the abolitionist position maintains that the original purpose and ultimate function of U.S. policing is to manage and perpetuate the subordination of marginalized populations, particularly disadvantaged Black communities. Hence, policing is an irredeemably flawed institution, and the only hope of meaningfully addressing problems with policing is through abolition. Many abolitionists expand the argument by asserting that racial and economic subordination through policing is integral to the maintenance of social, political, and economic inequality within U.S. society generally.⁶¹ Accordingly, these abolitionists argue that police abolition must be simultaneously coupled with investments in programs, organizations, and institutions that undermine social, political, and

⁵⁶ Sharkey, *Uneasy Peace*, 181.

⁵⁷ Sharkey, *Uneasy Peace*, 145.

⁵⁸ Sharkey, *Uneasy Peace*, 50-55.

⁵⁹ Roge Karma, “How Cities Can Tackle Violent Crime Without Relying on Police,” Patrick Sharkey interview, *Vox*, August 7, 2020, <https://www.vox.com/21351442/patrick-sharkey-uneasy-peace-abolish-defund-the-police-violence-cities>.

⁶⁰ See, e.g., Owens, “Economics of Policing.”

⁶¹ Allegra M. McLeod, “Envisioning Abolition Democracy,” *Harvard Law Review* 132 (2018): 1613; Dylan Rodríguez, “Abolition as Praxis of Human Being: A Foreword,” *Harvard Law Review* 132 (2018): 1575.

economic inequality.⁶² It is further asserted that these investments will help to address the root causes of criminal behavior, thereby reducing or perhaps even eliminating crime and the concomitant need for punitive responses to crime.⁶³ This is the essence behind the “defund the police” slogan and campaign, which gained considerable traction in the protests following George Floyd’s death.⁶⁴

The argument for police abolition is typically grounded in a historical analysis of policing’s roots in slavery and the preservation of white supremacy. Recent historical research argues that, contrary to traditional policing narratives, slave patrols in the colonial south were the first government regulated entities in the U.S. to approach modern police forces.⁶⁵ As Williams describes, “the rural patrols all engaged in roughly the same activities and served the same function...intimidating, terrorizing, and brutalizing slaves into submission and meekness.”⁶⁶ Research on subsequent eras traces a throughline from these early slave patrols to contemporary policing, illustrating how white supremacy and anti-Black racism has informed law enforcement practices throughout the entirety of U.S. history.⁶⁷ Muhammad, for example, describes how, in the late 19th and early 20th centuries following the Civil War, racial crime statistics were used to develop and solidify a cross-regional consensus that Black people were

⁶² Dan Berger, Mariame Kaba, and David Stein, “What Abolitionists Do,” *Jacobin*, August 24, 2017, <https://jacobinmag.com/2017/08/prison-abolition-reform-mass-incarceration>.

⁶³ Zach Norris, *We Keep Us Safe: Building Secure, Just, and Inclusive Communities* (Beacon Press, 2020); Mariame Kaba, “Yes, We Mean Literally Abolish the Police,” *New York Times*, June 12, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/12/opinion/sunday/floyd-abolish-defund-police.html>.

⁶⁴ Christy E. Lopez, “Defund the Police? Here’s What That Really Means,” *Washington Post*, June 7, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/06/07/defund-police-heres-what-that-really-means/>; Sam Levin, “Movement to Defund Police Gains ‘Unprecedented’ Support Across US,” *The Guardian*, June 4, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/jun/04/defund-the-police-us-george-floyd-budgets>.

⁶⁵ Kristian Williams, *Our Enemies in Blue: Police and Power in America* (AK Press, 2015); Ben Brucato, “Policing Race and Racing Police,” *Social Justice* 47, no. 3/4 (161/162) (2020): 115-136; Micol Seigel, “The Dilemma of ‘Racial Profiling’: An Abolitionist Police History,” *Contemporary Justice Review* 20, no. 4 (2017): 474-490.

⁶⁶ Williams, *Our Enemies in Blue*, 69.

⁶⁷ Rodríguez, “Abolition as Praxis;” Elizabeth Hinton and DeAnza Cook, “The Mass Criminalization of Black Americans: A Historical Overview,” *Annual Review of Criminology* 4 (2021): 261-86.

uniquely prone to crime, thereby justifying harassment and harsh treatment from police.⁶⁸ Alexander forcefully contends that mass incarceration and the War on Drugs constitute a new “racial caste” system, designed to maintain white supremacy and racial hierarchy following the collapse of Jim Crow in the 1960s.⁶⁹ Butler argues that the racially disproportionate harms of contemporary police practices are “integral features” of a system that “targets black men”: “Cops routinely hurt and humiliate black people because that is what they are paid to do.”⁷⁰ Other scholars in the abolitionist vein emphasize that, in addition to maintaining racial hierarchy, police practices have also been essential to the suppression of both the poor and working class and leftist political groups.⁷¹

Central to the abolitionist position is the notion that prior efforts to reform problematic police practices have universally failed.⁷² To be sure, most scholars, even those in the abolitionist camp, acknowledge that policing has changed over time.⁷³ However, abolitionists tend to characterize these changes as superficial. At best, reforms provide minor improvements to racially discriminatory enforcement practices and excessive uses of force while leaving the underlying police function of racial and economic subordination intact.⁷⁴ At worst, these reforms provide false legitimacy to policing as an institution for addressing crime, entrenching it deeper within the social fabric and rendering it more difficult to challenge and critique.⁷⁵ For many, George Floyd’s murder by officers with the Minneapolis Police Department provided a particularly graphic and salient illustration of the futility of police reform efforts. Prior to George

⁶⁸ Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Harvard University Press, 2010).

⁶⁹ Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (The New Press, 2011), 12.

⁷⁰ Paul Butler, *Chokehold: Policing Black Men* (The New Press, 2017), 6, 2.

⁷¹ Williams, *Our Enemies in Blue*; Vitale, Alex S. *The End of Policing* (Verso Books, 2018).

⁷² Butler, *Chokehold*; Vitale, *End of Policing*.

⁷³ Alexander, *New Jim Crow*; Butler, *Chokehold*; Vitale, *End of Policing*; Williams, *Our Enemies in Blue*.

⁷⁴ Butler, *Chokehold*; Vitale, *End of Policing*.

⁷⁵ Alexander, *New Jim Crow*; Williams, *Our Enemies in Blue*; Mariame Kaba, “To Stop Police Violence, We Need Better Questions — and Bigger Demands,” *Medium*, September 25, 2020, <https://gen.medium.com/to-stop-police-violence-we-need-better-questions-and-bigger-demands-23132fc38e8a>.

Floyd's death, the Minneapolis Police Department "had already been given the full spa treatment of police reform: new use-of-force standards, implicit bias training, de-escalation training, diversity of police leadership, body cameras, community policing."⁷⁶ None of these reforms were adequate to forestall George Floyd's murder by a smirking white officer in broad daylight before a crowd of onlookers pleading for restraint.

Although much of the research and analysis undergirding the abolitionist position has been developed in academic publications, professional academics rarely express explicit support for police abolition.⁷⁷ Even Vitale, whose formative book, *The End of Policing*, is one of the most widely read and cited texts in abolitionist circles, falls short of arguing for an actual end to policing.⁷⁸ Rather, it is political activists and advocacy organizations who are the primary exponents of police abolition, and it is their work that is often centered in explicitly abolitionist academic publications.⁷⁹ For example, Critical Resistance, a political collective founded in 1997 by Angela Davis, Ruth Wilson Gilmore, and others, has been described in print as "the most important contemporary abolitionist movement in the United States."⁸⁰ With chapters across the country, Critical Resistance has achieved notable victories in reducing the scope of local policing programs and shifting the discourse around police reform and abolition.⁸¹ In response to the #scantwait campaign, the organization circulated a highly influential factsheet contrasting "reformist reforms vs. abolitionist steps in policing," arguing that many of the

⁷⁶ Jocelyn Simonson, "Power Over Policing," *Boston Review*, June 8, 2020, <https://bostonreview.net/articles/jocelyn-simonson-compstat-power/>.

⁷⁷ Notable exceptions include Rodríguez, "Abolition as Praxis;" Butler, *Chokehold*; McLeod, "Envisioning Abolition Democracy;" Angela Y. Davis, *Abolition Democracy: Beyond Empire, Prisons, and Torture* (Seven Stories Press, 2011); Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Abolition Geography: Essays Towards Liberation* (Verso Books, 2022); Amna A. Akbar, "An Abolitionist Horizon for (Police) Reform," *California Law Review* 108 (2020): 1781.

⁷⁸ Vitale, *End of Policing*. Verso Books, 2018.

⁷⁹ McLeod, "Envisioning Abolition Democracy;" Rodríguez, "Abolition as Praxis;" Butler, *Chokehold*; Akbar, "Abolitionist Horizon;" Meghan G. McDowell and Luis A. Fernandez, "'Disband, Disempower, and Disarm': Amplifying the Theory and Practice of Police Abolition," *Critical Criminology* 26, no. 3 (2018): 373-91.

⁸⁰ McDowell and Fernandez, "'Disband, Disempower, and Disarm,'" 377.

⁸¹ "Our Impact," Critical Resistance, accessed November 23, 2023, <https://criticalresistance.org/our-impact/>.

reforms touted by #8cantwait expand the scope and power of police organizations.⁸² In Minneapolis, local abolitionist groups capitalized on the outcry over George Floyd’s death by advancing a ballot initiative to abolish the Minneapolis Police Department, which garnered the endorsement of nine of the city’s thirteen city council members.⁸³ Although the ballot initiative ultimately failed, the level of support gathered for such a radical position on policing was unprecedented.

Both the reformist and abolitionist camps highlight important empirical findings that must be addressed in developing a complete understanding of police reform. Research from the reformist camp demonstrates that, while not all reform measures are successful, some reforms have the potential to produce improvements in police outcomes. Research on police consent decrees provides perhaps the strongest evidence in support of this claim. Consent decrees are comprehensive reform agreements reached between the U.S. Department of Justice and police departments that have been found to exhibit a “pattern or practice” of federal and/or Constitutional rights violations.⁸⁴ Departments subject to a consent decree thus represent some of the most problematic and recalcitrant police organizations in the country, consistently and persistently engaging in illegal conduct such as excessive uses of force and racial discrimination.⁸⁵ Consent decrees often mandate many of the reform measures most widely advocated by the reformist camp: enhancing community engagement through civilian oversight committees; promoting procedural justice in civilian encounters; integrating proportionality and de-escalation principles into use of force policies; implicit bias trainings; early intervention

⁸² “Reformist Reforms vs Abolitionist Steps in Policing,” Critical Resistance, accessed November 23, 2023, <https://criticalresistance.org/resources/reformist-reforms-vs-abolitionist-steps-in-policing/>.

⁸³ Michelle S. Phelps, Anneliese Ward, and Dwjuan Frazier, “From Police Reform to Police Abolition? How Minneapolis Activists Fought to Make Black Lives Matter,” *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (2021): 421-441.

⁸⁴ Samuel Walker, “The Justice Department’s Pattern-or-Practice Police Reform Program, 1994-2017: Goals, Achievements, and Issues,” *Annual Review of Criminology* 5 (2022): 21-42.

⁸⁵ Amanda D’Souza, Ronald Weitzer, and Rod K. Brunson, “Federal Investigations of Police Misconduct: A Multi-city Comparison,” *Crime, Law and Social Change* 71 (2019): 461-482.

systems; and orienting departments toward a community policing model.⁸⁶ Empirical research on consent decrees demonstrates that these reforms can reduce officer uses of force, reduce complaints against police, improve the quality of investigative stops and searches, and improve community perceptions of police.⁸⁷ Although the durability and sustainability of these improvements remains an open question, as Walker describes in his review of the literature, “[n]o study has found a consent decree to be a complete failure.”⁸⁸ Rushin goes further, arguing that, “[i]n each of the documented cases, policing has measurably improved after the initiation of federal oversight.”⁸⁹ The success of these popular reform measures in such deeply dysfunctional police departments provides promising evidence of their potential to improve outcomes across the field.

Nevertheless, as abolitionists emphasize, distressing patterns of racial discrimination and police violence remain a constant feature of U.S. policing. Butler is forthright in his description: “There has never, not for one minute in American history, been peace between black people and the police.”⁹⁰ Virtually every study of police behavior finds that Black people

⁸⁶ U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, *The Civil Rights Division’s Pattern and Practice Police Reform Work: 1994-Present* (Washington, D.C., January 2017), <https://www.justice.gov/crt/file/922421/download>; Stephen Rushin, *Federal Intervention in American Police Departments* (Cambridge University Press, 2017).

⁸⁷ Zachary A. Powell, Michele Bisaccia Meitl, and John L. Worrall, “Police Consent Decrees and Section 1983 Civil Rights Litigation,” *Criminology & Public Policy* 16, no. 2 (2017): 575-605; Joshua M. Chanin, “Evaluating Section 14141: An Empirical Review of Pattern or Practice Police Misconduct Reform,” *Ohio State Journal of Criminal Law* 14 (2016): 67-112; Christopher Stone, Todd Foglesong, and Christine M. Cole, *Policing Los Angeles Under a Consent Decree: The Dynamics of Change at the LAPD* (Harvard Kennedy School: Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management, 2009); Robert C. Davis, Nicole J. Henderson, and Christopher W. Ortiz, *Can Federal Intervention Bring Lasting Improvement in Local Policing? The Pittsburgh Consent Decree* (Vera Institute of Justice, 2005); Greg Ridgeway *et al.*, *Police-Community Relations in Cincinnati* (RAND Corporation, 2009).

⁸⁸ Walker, “Pattern-or-Practice,” 34.

⁸⁹ Rushin, *Federal Intervention*, 16.

⁹⁰ Butler, *Chokehold*, 2

are disproportionately subject to investigative stops,⁹¹ searches,⁹² arrests,⁹³ and uses of force.⁹⁴ The available data on police killings, while far from perfect, suggest that such killings have increased over the past two decades, and that Black people are consistently overrepresented among those who are killed, especially among those who are unarmed.⁹⁵ Despite heightened scrutiny of police practices following George Floyd’s murder in 2020, “[m]ore people were killed by police in 2021 than almost any other year in recent history.”⁹⁶ To abolitionist critics, the persistence of policing problems in spite public outcry and increased efforts at reform comes as no surprise. Muhammad details how a social psychologist testifying before the Kerner Commission in 1968 described the sense of *déjà vu* he experienced when reviewing the work of prior police commissions:

I read the report of the 1919 riot in Chicago, and it is as if I were reading the report of the investigating committee of the Harlem riot of 1935, the report of the investigating committee of the Harlem riot of 1943, the report of the McCone Commission on the Watts riot [1965]...I must again in candor say to you members of the Commission—it is a

⁹¹ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. *Proactive Policing: Effects on Crime and Communities* (Washington, D.C.: The National Academies Press, 2018), <https://doi.org/10.17226/24928>; Stephen Rushin and Griffin Edwards, “An Empirical Assessment of Pretextual Stops and Racial Profiling,” *Stanford Law Review* 73 (2021): 637.

⁹² Emma Pierson *et al.*, “A Large-Scale Analysis of Racial Disparities in Police Stops Across the United States,” *Nature Human Behaviour* 4, no. 7 (2020): 736-745; Magnus Lofstrom *et al.*, *Racial Disparities in Law Enforcement Stops* (Public Policy Institute of California, 2021), <https://www.ppic.org/publication/racial-disparities-in-law-enforcement-stops/>.

⁹³ Ojmarrh Mitchell and Michael S. Caudy. “Examining Racial Disparities in Drug Arrests.” *Justice Quarterly* 32, no. 2 (2015): 288-313.

⁹⁴ Mark Hoekstra and Carly Will Sloan, “Does Race Matter for Police Use of Force? Evidence from 911 Calls,” *American Economic Review* 112, no. 3 (2022): 827-60; Roland G. Fryer Jr., “An Empirical Analysis of Racial Differences in Police Use of Force,” *Journal of Political Economy* 127, no. 3 (2019): 1210-61; Amanda Geller *et al.*, “Measuring Racial Disparities in Police Use of Force: Methods Matter,” *Journal of Quantitative Criminology* 37, no. 4 (2021): 1083-1113; Justin Nix and John A. Shjarback, “Factors Associated with Police Shooting Mortality: A Focus on Race and a Plea for More Comprehensive Data,” *PLoS One* 16, no. 11 (2021): e0259024.

⁹⁵ Frank Edwards, Hedwig Lee, and Michael Esposito, “Risk of Being Killed by Police Use of Force in the United States by Age, Race–Ethnicity, and Sex,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 116, no. 34 (2019): 16793-98; Justin Nix *et al.*, “A Bird’s Eye View of Civilians Killed by Police in 2015: Further Evidence of Implicit Bias,” *Criminology & Public Policy* 16, no. 1 (2017): 309-40; “Our Visualizations,” Fatal Encounters, last updated January 3, 2021, <https://fatalencounters.org/our-visualizations/>.

⁹⁶ Mapping Police Violence, *2021 Police Violence Report* (2021), 3, <https://policeviolencereport.org/policeviolencereport2021.pdf>. See also Marisa Iati, Steven Rich, and Jennifer Jenkins, “Fatal Police Shootings in 2021 Set Record Since *The Post* Began Tracking, Despite Public outcry,” *Washington Post*, February 9, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/2022/02/09/fatal-police-shootings-record-2021/>.

kind of Alice in Wonderland with the same moving pictures reshown over and over again, the same analysis, the same recommendations, and the same inaction.⁹⁷

Kaba expressed the same sense of *déjà vu* following George Floyd’s murder, reflecting on how additional commission reports since 1968, including the report of President Obama’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing, have failed to meaningfully address police violence in Black communities.⁹⁸ Even in departments subject to consent decrees, aggressive police practices and racial disparities in enforcement have been found to persist despite improvements in other areas.⁹⁹

The competing empirical claims highlighted by each camp are tied to competing conceptions of the malleability of police culture. Policing scholars of all stripes argue that organizational culture plays a primary role in shaping police behavior, even more so than formal law or policy.¹⁰⁰ The oft-cited adage is that, when it comes to changing police practices, “[o]rganizational culture eats policy for lunch.”¹⁰¹ Reformists do not view culture as an insurmountable obstacle to improvements in policing—they instead make cultural change the primary goal of their reform efforts. In the case of consent decree reforms, the focus on organizational culture change is explicit:

[W]hen the Division finds a pattern or practice of police misconduct, it usually finds that pattern or practice is the product of many decades of dysfunction that has become engrained in police culture. Reversing that process [through a consent decree] requires enormous effort and commitment.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Muhammad, *Condemnation of Blackness*, xvi.

⁹⁸ Kaba, “Yes, We Mean Literally Abolish the Police.”

⁹⁹ Stone, Foglesong, and Cole, “Policing Los Angeles Under a Consent Decree;” Ridgeway *et al.*, “Police-Community Relations in Cincinnati;” Butler, *Chokehold*.

¹⁰⁰ Williams, *Our Enemies in Blue*; Barbara E. Armacost, “Organizational Culture and Police Misconduct,” *George Washington Law Review* 72 (2003): 453-546; National Research Council, *Fairness and Effectiveness in Policing: The Evidence* (Washington, D.C.: National Academies Press, 2004).

¹⁰¹ President’s Task Force, *Final Report*, 11. Occasionally, “breakfast” is used in place of “lunch.” Emily Bazelon *et al.*, “A Discussion About How to Reform Policing,” *New York Times*, June 13, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/06/13/magazine/police-reform.html>.

¹⁰² U.S. Department of Justice, *Civil Rights Division*, 36.

Cultural change is also the primary focus of reformist calls for a shift from a “warrior” to “guardian” mentality among police officers.¹⁰³ The warrior mentality stems from a culture that casts community members as potential threats and posits police officers as the ultimate line of defense, out to defeat these threats through “righteous violence.”¹⁰⁴ By contrast, the guardian mentality is tied to a culture in which the police are understood as a part of the community, whose role is to “protect” community members and ally with them to address shared community problems.¹⁰⁵ Many of the reform proposals discussed above, particularly those related to community engagement and improving police-community relations, can be characterized as aiding in the shift from a warrior to guardian culture in policing.¹⁰⁶

Abolitionists, however, view the culture of police violence, suspicion, and discrimination as inherent to the primary police function of subordinating marginalized communities of color. This culture cannot be changed or reformed because it reflects the essence of policing as an institution. Vitale, for example, argues that, “as long as the police are tasked with waging simultaneous wars on drugs, crime, disorder, and terrorism, we will have aggressive and invasive policing that disproportionately criminalizes the young, poor, male, and nonwhite.”¹⁰⁷ Butler puts the argument bluntly and forcefully: “The problem is police work itself. American cops are the enforcers of a criminal justice regime that targets black men and sets them up to fail...Police violence and selective enforcement are not so much flaws in American criminal justice as they are integral features of it.”¹⁰⁸

¹⁰³ President’s Task Force, *Final Report*; Seth W. Stoughton, “Principled Policing: Warrior Cops and Guardian Officers,” *Wake Forest Law Review* 51 (2016): 611; Sue Rahr and Stephen K. Rice, “From Warriors to Guardians: Recommitting American Police Culture to Democratic Ideals,” *New Perspectives in Policing Bulletin* (U.S. Department of Justice: National Institute of Justice, 2015), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/248654.pdf>.

¹⁰⁴ Stoughton, “Principled Policing,” 634.

¹⁰⁵ Rahr and Rice, “From Warriors to Guardians,” 6.

¹⁰⁶ President’s Task Force, *Final Report*.

¹⁰⁷ Vitale, *End of Policing*, 27.

¹⁰⁸ Butler, *Chokehold*, 6.

The Present Study

The present study attempts to surmount the reformist-abolitionist divide by developing a more complete understanding of police reform and cultural change that can reconcile the apparently conflicting claims of each camp. Certainly, both sides offer accounts to address the findings and arguments raised by the opposing camp. But these accounts are generally one-sided and typically consist of attempts to simply downplay or outright dismiss opposing claims. Abolitionists, for example, generally acknowledge that policing has changed over time, and that some reform efforts have led to improvements in policing outcomes.¹⁰⁹ However, they characterize these improvements as minor and insignificant in light of the persistence of racialized enforcement and police violence. Rodríguez, for example, argues:

Contemporary reformist approaches to addressing the apparent overreach and scandalous excesses of the carceral state—characterized by calls to end "police brutality" and "mass incarceration"—fail to recognize that the very logics of the overlapping criminal justice and policing regimes systemically perpetuate racial, sexual, gender, colonial, and class violence through carceral power. Thus, in addition to being ineffective at achieving their generally stated goals of alleviating vulnerable peoples' subjection to legitimated state violence, reformist approaches ultimately reinforce a violent system that is *fundamentally asymmetrical* in its production and organization of normalized misery, social surveillance, vulnerability to state terror, and incarceration.¹¹⁰

Given the tremendous stakes involved in police reform, however, these arguments seem too dismissive. As Butler notes, even partially successful police reforms can “prevent some people from being beaten and killed by the police.”¹¹¹ It seems improper to disregard reform efforts as “ineffective at... alleviating vulnerable peoples' subjection to legitimated state violence” when the benefits include the preservation of lives that would otherwise be taken by police.

More fundamentally, the abolitionist argument is that even if reforms produce some meaningful improvements in policing, the underlying culture and function of racial and

¹⁰⁹ Alexander, *New Jim Crow*; Butler, *Chokehold*; Vitale, *End of Policing*; Williams, *Our Enemies in Blue*.

¹¹⁰ Rodríguez, “Abolition as Praxis,” 1576-77.

¹¹¹ Paul Butler, “The System Is Working the Way It Is Supposed to: The Limits of Criminal Justice Reform,” *Georgetown Law Journal* 104 (2016): 1466.

economic subordination remains unchanged. But even this deeper claim appears suspect in light of recent developments. Modern police departments are now staunchly and vociferously anti-discrimination.¹¹² The responses among police to George Floyd's murder are particularly telling in this regard. Although police throughout their history have been frequently criticized for expressing unconditional loyalty to officers who engage in misconduct,¹¹³ police generally responded to George Floyd's death by acknowledging the wrongfulness of the officers' behavior and committing themselves to addressing some of the critiques raised by police protestors.¹¹⁴ The highly influential International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) issued a statement that included the following:

The callousness and disregard shown for Mr. Floyd is sickening and leaves everyone, including police officers across this nation, shocked, appalled, and infuriated. Mr. Floyd's death is a painful reminder to all who strive for justice of the work that remains before us...Protestors have raised legitimate concerns regarding policing policies and practices, ranging from use of force, to bias in policing, to police accountability and transparency. These are issues that are rightly at the heart of any community's relationship with its police department and must be addressed.¹¹⁵

The Fraternal Order of Police (FOP), the nation's largest officer union, issued a similar statement:

Our thoughts and prayers today are with the friends and family of Mr. George Floyd, whose tragic death this week shocked and horrified our nation...Police officers need to treat all of our citizens with respect and understanding and should be held to the very highest standards for their conduct...there is no doubt that this incident has diminished

¹¹² International Association of Chiefs of Police. *Bias-Free Policing* (Alexandria, VA: IACP Law Enforcement Policy Center, January 2020), <https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/Bias-Free%20Policing%20January%202020.pdf>; Lorie Fridell *et al.*, *Racially Biased Policing: A Principled Response* (Washington, D.C.: Police Executive Research Forum, 2001), https://www.policeforum.org/assets/docs/Free_Online_Documents/Racially-Biased_Policing/racially%20biased%20policing%20-%20a%20principled%20response%202001.pdf.

¹¹³ Leonard Savitz, "The Dimensions of Police Loyalty," *American Behavioral Scientist* 13, no. 5-6 (1970): 693-704; Jerome H. Skolnick, "Corruption and the Blue Code of Silence," *Police Practice and Research* 3, no. 1 (2002): 7-19; John Kleinig, "Police Loyalty: Understanding the Post-Shooting Support for Officer Darren Wilson," *Jupiter*, March 17, 2015, <http://www.thecritique.com/articles/police-loyalty-understanding-the-post-shooting-support-for-officer-darren-wilson/>.

¹¹⁴ Chuck Wexler, "Moving Forward from One of the Most Difficult Weeks in Policing," Police Executive Research Forum, June 6, 2020, <https://www.policeforum.org/trendingjune6>.

¹¹⁵ International Association of Chiefs of Police, "The Challenge Before Us," blog post, May 31, 2020, <https://www.theiacp.org/news/blog-post/the-challenge-before-us>.

the trust and respect our communities have for the men and women of law enforcement. We will work hard to rebuild that trust and we will continue to protect our communities.¹¹⁶

Some officers went so far as to express support for police protestors by marching with them or kneeling in solidarity, a gesture meant to recall NFL player Colin Kaepernick's recent protests against racial discrimination and police brutality.¹¹⁷ Abolitionists typically dismiss these displays as empty rhetoric, arguing that we should "focus less on what the police say they are doing and instead assess the institution based on what it actually does."¹¹⁸ But these gestures were coupled with action—in the wake of George Floyd's murder, many departments adopted measures and proposals advocated by the reformist camp.¹¹⁹ It appears that a substantial portion of the police community is genuine in their commitment to bias-free enforcement, and that these responses to George Floyd's murder reflect a sincere determination to address racial discrimination and excessive use of force in policing.

Yet, as it has throughout its entire history, policing remains unquestionably racialized. Aggressive enforcement and police violence continue to be concentrated in marginalized communities of color.¹²⁰ If abolitionists have been too dismissive of the benefits of reform and the potential for change in police culture, reformists have been equally dismissive of policing's entrenched tradition of racialized harm. In this respect, the abolitionist critique of reformism is

¹¹⁶ "FOP Issues Statement on George Floyd Arrest Death," *Police*, May 28, 2020,

<https://www.policemag.com/556932/fop-issues-statement-on-george-floyd-arrest-death>.

¹¹⁷ David Baratz, "Police Take a Knee in Solidarity with George Floyd Protesters," *USA Today*, June 2, 2020, <https://www.usatoday.com/picture-gallery/news/nation/2020/06/02/police-take-knee-solidarity-george-floyd-protesters/5316495002/>; Alexandra Svokos, "Why Some Police Officers Stood with Protesters Outraged over George Floyd's Death," *ABC News*, June 1, 2020, <https://abcnews.go.com/US/police-officers-stood-protesters-outraged-george-floyds-death/story?id=70984369>.

¹¹⁸ Williams, *Our Enemies in Blue*, 1.

¹¹⁹ "Compare Cities," #8cantwait, Campaign Zero, accessed November 23, 2023, <https://8cantwait.org/compare/>; <https://8cantwait.org/compare/>; Zusha Elinson, "George Floyd's Death Prompts Police Training to Confront Colleagues' Misconduct," *Wall Street Journal*, June 28, 2021, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/post-derek-chauvin-police-are-training-to-intervene-when-they-witness-misconduct-11624874400>; Alexei Koseff, "'People Don't Think Clearly in Crisis:' California Law Enforcement Turns to Mental Health Clinicians on Toughest 911 Calls," *CalMatters*, March 28, 2022, <https://calmatters.org/justice/criminal-justice/2022/03/mental-health-crisis-police/>.

¹²⁰ Hinton and Cook, "Mass Criminalization of Black Americans."

particularly apt. Reformists approach racial disparities and police violence as reparable flaws of an otherwise sound institution—“*discrete, mistaken excess*...[that] can be redressed and reformed.”¹²¹ But the severity of these problems and their persistence throughout policing’s history, even in the face of occasionally extensive reform efforts, belies any notion that are simply ancillary flaws. Rather, as abolitionists claim, racial disparities and violence appear to be “integral features”¹²² of policing that cannot be eradicated through the sorts of “technocratic fix[es]”¹²³ advocated by reformists.

A complete understanding of police reform, therefore, must be able to address *both* the potential for improvements in police outcomes and changes in police culture highlighted by reformists *and* the persistence of racialized police harm highlighted by abolitionists. The present study seeks to develop this understanding by focusing on two primary research questions:

1. How has police culture changed over time in response to reform? When it comes to police culture, what changes and what remains the same?
2. How can change and stability in police culture help us to understand both the potential for reforms to improve police outcomes and the persistence of racialized police harm over time?

The study addresses these questions through a historical case study of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). Case study approaches are particularly well-suited to generating theory about the links between particular social phenomena.¹²⁴ The goal of the present case study is to develop a theoretical understanding of how stability and change in police culture are linked to stability and change in police outcomes in the face of reform.

¹²¹ Rodríguez, “Abolition as Praxis,” 1593. See also Butler, “System is Working.”

¹²² Butler, *Chokehold*, 6.

¹²³ Vitale, *End of Policing*, 221.

¹²⁴ Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications: Design and Methods* (Sage Publications, 2014); Albert Mills, Gabrielle Durepos, and Elden Wiebe, *Encyclopedia of Case Study Research* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2010), <https://methods.sagepub.com/reference/encyc-of-case-study-research>.

The LAPD provides an optimal case for study for at least two reasons. First, the LAPD is what Yin refers to as a “common case”¹²⁵ or what Mills, Durepos, and Wiebe describe as a “paradigmatic case.”¹²⁶ At various points throughout its history, the LAPD has served as a trendsetter for other police agencies, particularly with regard to police reform. The adoption of the “professional model” in the 1950s under Chief Parker was mimicked by countless urban police departments striving to enhance their legitimacy in the mid-20th century.¹²⁷ The militarization of the LAPD in the 1980s was similarly imitated by departments across the country waging their own “War on Drugs,” funded by the same federal grants and equipment giveaway programs utilized by the LAPD.¹²⁸ Most recently, the reforms adopted by the LAPD in response to the Ferguson and George Floyd protests have made the department a model of “21st century policing.”¹²⁹ Accordingly, the LAPD’s experience with cultural change and stability in the context of these evolutions may provide insight into the experiences of other large urban police departments who went through similar periods of evolution.

Second, the LAPD is also what Yin describes as a “critical case.”¹³⁰ LAPD history is a perfect illustration of the apparent paradox underlying the reformist-abolitionist divide. Recent LAPD reform efforts have successfully accomplished many of the goals currently pursued by reformists, including reductions in the use of serious force, contractions in the scale of enforcement, and improvements in community perceptions of the police. Yet, racial disparities in LAPD enforcement have persisted from the department’s inception to today, and police harm continues to be concentrated among the same neighborhoods and racial/ethnic groups in Los Angeles as it always has. This is precisely the conflict that a complete theory of police reform and cultural change should be able to address. A theory of cultural change and stability that can

¹²⁵ Yin, *Case Study Research*, 52.

¹²⁶ Mills, Durepos, and Wiebe, *Encyclopedia*, 645-47.

¹²⁷ Robert M. Fogelson, *Big-City Police* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977).

¹²⁸ Radley Balko, *Rise of the Warrior Cop: The Militarization of America’s Police Forces* (PublicAffairs, 2013).

¹²⁹ President’s Task Force, *Final Report*.

¹³⁰ Yin, *Case Study Research*, 51.

make sense of the LAPD's mixed reform experience has the potential to elucidate similar patterns of conflicting findings among other police agencies.

Literature Review: What Is Culture?

The focus of the present study is cultural change and continuity in the context of reform throughout LAPD history. As a preliminary matter then, we must develop a clear understanding of what culture is and how it can be studied historically. Early sociological approaches to culture were dominated by the influence of Talcott Parsons.¹³¹ Parsons portrayed culture as a collection of internalized values concerning “good and bad, right and wrong, worthy and unworthy.”¹³² These internalized values are cultivated in individuals through socialization processes, and once engrained they serve as the causal force behind individuals' actions. As Vaisey describes, “at the core of these perspectives are two ideas: first, that *people acquire particular values through a process of socialization* and, second, that *these values play a vital role in causing behavior*.”¹³³

Virtually all literature on police culture adopts this Parsonian, value-centric perspective.¹³⁴ The pioneering ethnographic research of Westley,¹³⁵ Skolnick,¹³⁶ Banton,¹³⁷ Bittner,¹³⁸ and Van Maanen¹³⁹ tended to depict police culture as a unified set of values and practices shared by more-or-less every officer.¹⁴⁰ As Cockcroft describes, “earlier depictions of

¹³¹ Stephen Vaisey, “Socrates, Skinner, and Aristotle: Three Ways of Thinking About Culture in Action,” *Sociological Forum* 23, no. 3 (2008): 603-13; Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society* (University of California Press, 1984).

¹³² Vaisey, “Socrates, Skinner, and Aristotle,” 604.

¹³³ Vaisey, “Socrates, Skinner, and Aristotle,” 605.

¹³⁴ Holly Campeau, “‘Police Culture’ at Work: Making Sense of Police Oversight,” *British Journal of Criminology* 55, no. 4 (2015): 669-87.

¹³⁵ William A. Westley, “Violence and the Police,” *American Journal of Sociology* 59, no. 1 (1953): 34-41.

¹³⁶ Jerome H. Skolnick, *Justice Without Trial: Law Enforcement in Democratic Society* (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, 1966).

¹³⁷ Michael Banton, *The Policeman in the Community* (Tavistock Publications, 1964).

¹³⁸ Egon Bittner, “The Police on Skid-Row: A Study of Peace Keeping,” *American Sociological Review* 32, no. 5 (1967): 699-715.

¹³⁹ John Van Maanen, “Working the Street: A Developmental View of Police Behavior,” in *The Potential for Reform of Criminal Justice*, ed. Jacob Herbert (Sage Publications, 1974).

¹⁴⁰ Janet Chan, “Changing Police Culture,” *British Journal of Criminology* 36, no. 1 (1996): 109-34; Steve Herbert, “Police Subculture Reconsidered,” *Criminology* 36, no. 2 (1998): 343-70; Eugene A. Paoline III, “Police Culture,” in *Encyclopedia of Criminology and Criminal Justice* (Springer, 2014), 3577-86.

police culture...tended to highlight the existence of a single culture supported by a linear socialization process.”¹⁴¹ Paoline summarizes this early research in a conceptual framework dubbed the “monolithic model.”¹⁴² According to the model, police culture develops as a coping mechanism to address the strains that all officers encounter in the course of police work. The primary occupational strains impinging on police culture include (1) the risk of danger and violence; (2) the need to establish coercive authority over the public; (3) unpredictable oversight by supervisors; and (4) ambiguity in the roles that officers are expected to perform. To cope with these strains, officers develop common values and practices that are “transmitted through a socialization process across occupational generations in the training academy, and continue throughout one’s tenure as an officer.”¹⁴³ These coping mechanisms include (1) general suspiciousness towards the public and new recruits; (2) “maintaining the edge” by constantly asserting one’s authority in interactions with the public; (3) avoiding activities and practices that might invite attention from supervisors; and (4) strictly focusing on the crime fighting aspects of their role.¹⁴⁴ The adoption of these coping mechanisms leads to specific outcomes, namely (1) social isolation separating police officers from the rest of the community and (2) extreme loyalty among officers in the face of external threats.

Other scholars have cited additional features as common to this unified police culture, including cynicism and pessimism regarding the inherent virtues of society,¹⁴⁵ moral and political conservatism,¹⁴⁶ “machismo” or other forms of gendered norms and values,¹⁴⁷ and

¹⁴¹ Cockcroft, Tom. *Police Culture: Themes and Concepts* (Routledge, 2012), 46.

¹⁴² Eugene A. Paoline III, “Taking Stock: Toward a Richer Understanding of Police Culture,” *Journal of Criminal Justice* 31, no. 3 (2003): 199.

¹⁴³ Paoline III, “Taking Stock,” 203.

¹⁴⁴ Paoline III, “Taking Stock,” 202.

¹⁴⁵ Cockcroft, *Police Culture*; Peter K. Manning, “Rules, Colleagues, and Situationally Justified Actions,” in *Policing: A View from the Street*, ed. John Van Maanen and Peter K. Manning (Santa Monica, CA: Goodyear, 1978).

¹⁴⁶ Robert Reiner, *The Politics of the Police*, 4th ed. (Oxford University Press, 2010); Jerome H. Skolnick, “Enduring Issues of Police Culture and Demographics,” *Policing & Society* 18, no. 1 (2008): 35-45.

¹⁴⁷ Reiner, *Politics of the Police*; Robert W. Benson, “Changing Police Culture: The Sine Qua Non of Reform.” *Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review* 34, no. 2 (2000): 681-90.

racism.¹⁴⁸ Several additional factors have also been cited as influential in the culture's development and transmission, including derision of and retaliation against critics of the culture,¹⁴⁹ "canteen" discussions between police officers about their work,¹⁵⁰ academy training,¹⁵¹ officer funerals,¹⁵² and police perceptions of public antipathy.¹⁵³ And while the monolithic view is typically associated with early scholars of police culture, more recent research argues that this cultural framework continues to endure in modern police organizations.¹⁵⁴

Not all policing scholars subscribe to the view of police culture as homogenous and universally shared. From the earliest origins of the field, a minority group of scholars drew attention to variation in cultural orientations, both among departments and among individual officers.¹⁵⁵ Wilson, for example, examined police behavior in eight communities, sorting the departments he observed into three ideal-type categories: watchman style, legalistic style, and service style.¹⁵⁶ Watchman departments were characterized by a focus on maintaining social order, legalistic departments were characterized by a focus on reducing individual officer discretion, and service departments blended elements of both while focusing primarily on public satisfaction. Contemporary empirical research continues to examine whether Wilson's three

¹⁴⁸ Cockcroft, *Police Culture*; Reiner, *Politics of the Police*.

¹⁴⁹ Jeffrey M. Cancino and Roger Enriquez, "A Qualitative Analysis of Officer Peer Retaliation: Preserving the Police Culture," *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management* 27, no. 3 (2004): 320-40; Venessa Garcia, "Constructing the 'Other' within Police Culture: An Analysis of a Deviant Unit within the Police Organization," *Police Practice and Research* 6, no. 1 (2005): 65-80.

¹⁵⁰ Merlijn Van Hulst, "Storytelling at the Police Station: The Canteen Culture Revisited," *British Journal of Criminology* 53, no. 4 (2013): 624-42.

¹⁵¹ Allison T. Chappell and Lonn Lanza-Kaduce, "Police Academy Socialization: Understanding the Lessons Learned in a Paramilitary-Bureaucratic Organization," *Journal of Contemporary Ethnography* 39, no. 2 (2010): 187-214.

¹⁵² Michael Sierra-Arévalo, "The Commemoration of Death, Organizational Memory, and Police Culture," *Criminology* 57, no. 4 (2019): 632-58.

¹⁵³ Christopher J. Marier and Richard K. Moule, "Feeling Blue: Officer Perceptions of Public Antipathy Predict Police Occupational Norms," *American Journal of Criminal Justice* 44, no. 5 (2019): 836-57.

¹⁵⁴ Bethan Loftus, "Police Occupational Culture: Classic Themes, Altered Times," *Policing & Society* 20, no. 1 (2010): 1-20; Michael Sierra-Arévalo, "American Policing and the Danger Imperative," *Law & Society Review* 55, no. 1 (2021): 70-103.

¹⁵⁵ Robert Reiner, "Is Police Culture Cultural?" *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice* 11, no. 3 (2017): 236-41.

¹⁵⁶ James Q. Wilson, *Varieties of Police Behavior* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968).

ideal-type categories can be used to classify the cultures of modern police departments.¹⁵⁷ Reuss-Ianni was among the first to highlight cultural variations among individual officers, arguing that two distinct cultures develop within police organizations: a street cop culture and a management cop culture.¹⁵⁸ Subsequent scholars expanded on Reuss-Ianni's initial distinction by adding additional categories like "alienated cynic," "peacekeeper," and "law-enforcer" that reflected not just an officer's rank, but her approach to police work generally.¹⁵⁹ Rather than classifying officers, Herbert offers a typology of six "normative orders" that shape officers' cultural orientations: law, bureaucracy, adventure/machismo, safety, competence, and morality.¹⁶⁰ Herbert argues that the cultural orientations of individual officers vary from one another in relation to where each officer falls on the continuum of values encompassed by these six normative orders. The ultimate takeaway of this research is that there is no single police culture, but rather multiple distinct police cultures. However, these scholars still share the same Parsonian view of culture as internalized values, transmitted through intra-organizational socialization processes, which subsequently determine police behavior.¹⁶¹ While they distinguish themselves by asserting the existence of multiple sets of values rather than a single unified set, they share the same fundamental understanding of culture as adherents of the monolithic model.¹⁶²

In sociological circles, however, the Parsonian view of culture has fallen out of favor.¹⁶³ Of the many critiques that have been levelled against the perspective, three are particularly

¹⁵⁷ John Liederbach and Lawrence F. Travis III, "Wilson Redux: Another Look at Varieties of Police Behavior," *Police Quarterly* 11, no. 4 (2008): 447-67; Jihong Zhao, Ni He, and Nicholas Lovrich, "The Effect of Local Political Culture on Policing Behaviors in the 1990s: A Retest of Wilson's Theory in More Contemporary Times," *Journal of Criminal Justice* 34, no. 6 (2006): 569-78.

¹⁵⁸ Elizabeth Reuss-Ianni, *Two Cultures of Policing* (New Brunswick, N.J: Transaction Books, 1983).

¹⁵⁹ Reiner, *Politics of the Police*, 134.

¹⁶⁰ Herbert, "Police Subculture Reconsidered," 347.

¹⁶¹ Herbert explicitly characterizes his typology of normative orders as Parsonian. Herbert, "Police Subculture Reconsidered," 348. See also Wilson, *Varieties of Police Behavior*; Reiner, *Politics of the Police*.

¹⁶² Campeau, "'Police Culture' at Work."

¹⁶³ Vaisey, "Socrates, Skinner, and Aristotle;" Giddens, *Constitution of Society*.

noteworthy in the context of studying police culture. First, the Parsonian model offers an oversimplified understanding of the link between values and behavior that overlooks the potential for human agency. Because behavior is completely determined by internalized values adopted through socialization processes, actors are treated as “cultural dopes” who engage in prescribed actions in accordance with predetermined ends that they are indoctrinated to accept.¹⁶⁴ It is clear, however, that actors exert some agency over both the cultural interpretations they use to make sense of the world and the behaviors they engage in on the basis of such interpretations.¹⁶⁵ Second, the Parsonian model does not provide an adequate understanding of extra-organizational influences on police culture. If cultural values are transmitted primarily through intra-organizational socialization processes, it is difficult to see how cultural values from outside the police organization can ever affect what goes on inside the organization. Yet, there is a long line of research demonstrating that police organizational cultures systematically vary according to the local environments in which they operate.¹⁶⁶ Third, the Parsonian model does not provide an adequate account of how cultures can change over time. This third critique stems from the first two—without a satisfactory account of human agency or the potential for change from the outside, police organizations appear trapped in a perpetual cycle in which the same cultural values and behaviors are consistently passed from generation to generation without significant alteration.¹⁶⁷ Police culture scholars that try to give an account of the potential for change have

¹⁶⁴ Herbert, “Police Subculture Reconsidered,” 345, citing Harold Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1967).

¹⁶⁵ William H. Sewell Jr, “A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation,” *American Journal of Sociology* 98, no. 1 (1992): 1-29.

¹⁶⁶ See, e.g., Wilson, *Varieties of Police Behavior*; John P. Crank, “The Influence of Environmental and Organizational Factors on Police Style in Urban and Rural Environments,” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 27, no. 2 (1990): 166-89; Elaine B. Sharp, “Politics, Economics, and Urban Policing: The Postindustrial City Thesis and Rival Explanations of Heightened Order Maintenance Policing,” *Urban Affairs Review* 50, no. 3 (2014): 340-65; John Shjarback, “‘Neighborhood’ Influence on Police Use of Force: State-of-the-Art Review,” *Policing: An International Journal* 41, no. 6 (2018): 859-72.

¹⁶⁷ This third critique, however, is applicable even to police culture scholarship that explicitly attempts to overcome the first two shortcomings of the traditional Parsonian model (e.g. Herbert 1998; Campeau 2015; Chan 1997). Although these scholars acknowledge both variation in police cultural orientations and the capacity for officers to exercise agency over how culture is deployed, they fail to give a satisfactory account of *why* and *how* cultural variation develops and agency is exercised, both of which are key to understanding cultural change over time. Herbert, “Police Subculture Reconsidered;” Campeau, “Police

primarily emphasized the importation of officers and organizational leaders who possess differing cultural values because of their particular background and/or demographic characteristics.¹⁶⁸ However, empirical research demonstrates that background and demographic characteristics are generally poor predictors of officers' cultural orientations to police work.¹⁶⁹ Moreover, contemporary organizational theorists are quite pessimistic about the ability of leaders to simply define the culture that shapes the practical, everyday work of organizational members.¹⁷⁰

Semiotic Perspectives on Culture

One of the dominant paradigms to arise in cultural sociology following critiques of the Parsonian model is a broadly semiotic approach grounded in a cultural reading of the work of linguist Ferdinand de Saussure.¹⁷¹ In his *Course in General Linguistics*, Saussure lays out three principles in the study of language that would later form the foundation for semiotic cultural analysis.¹⁷² The first principle is that “language is a system of signs expressing ideas,”¹⁷³ with linguistic signs (or words) being composed of two elements: a “sound pattern” and a

Culture' at Work;” Janet Chan, *Changing Police Culture: Policing in a Multicultural Society* (Cambridge University Press, 1997).

¹⁶⁸ Chan, *Changing Police Culture*; Tom Cockcroft, “Police Culture and Transformational Leadership: Outlining the Contours of a Troubled Relationship,” *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice* 8, no. 1 (2014): 5-13.

¹⁶⁹ See, e.g., Jasmine R. Silver *et al.*, “Traditional Police Culture, Use of Force, and Procedural Justice: Investigating Individual, Organizational, and Contextual Factors,” *Justice Quarterly* 34, no. 7 (2017): 1272-1309; Robert E. Worden, “Police Officers’ Belief Systems: A Framework for Analysis,” *American Journal of Police* 14, no. 1 (1995): 49-82.

¹⁷⁰ See, e.g., Mats Alvesson and Stefan Sveningsson, *Changing Organizational Culture: Cultural Change Work in Progress* (Routledge, 2015); W. Warner Burke, *Organization Change: Theory and Practice* (Sage Publications, 2018); Albert J. Meijer, “From Hero-Innovators to Distributed Heroism: An In-Depth Analysis of the Role of Individuals in Public Sector Innovation,” *Public Management Review* 16, no. 2 (February 2014): 199-216.

¹⁷¹ Jeffrey C. Alexander, “Analytic Debates: Understanding the Relative Autonomy of Culture,” in *Culture and Society: Contemporary Debates*, ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander and Steven Seidman (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 1-27.

¹⁷² Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, trans. Roy Harris, 4th ed. (La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1991).

¹⁷³ Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 15.

“concept.”¹⁷⁴ Saussure refers to these elements respectively as the “signal” and the “signification.”¹⁷⁵ The sound pattern or signal refers to the “material”¹⁷⁶ component of a word—the sound invoked in the actual practice of linguistic communication. The concept or signification refers to the *idea* attached to the word—what comes to mind for a linguistic participant when the signal is invoked. The second principle highlighted by Saussure is that the relationship between signal and concept is “arbitrary” insofar as it is established purely through social processes, not by any natural affinity between the two.¹⁷⁷ He argues that this principle is “demonstrated...by the existence of different languages,” in which different signifiers are used to express the same concept.¹⁷⁸ According to Saussure, “any means of expression accepted in a society rests in principle upon a collective habit, or on convention.”¹⁷⁹ The third principle corresponds to the distinction between what Saussure refers to as “*langue*” and “*parole*.”¹⁸⁰ *Langue* is language understood as a system of meaning—“the whole set of linguistic habits which enables the speaker to understand and [to be] understood”¹⁸¹—while *parole* refers to specific utterances or speech acts made by individual speakers employing a particular *langue*.

Saussure argued that the analysis of language as a system of signs was one subgenre of a more general science of *semiology*, a neologism he coined to refer to the general analysis of “*the role of signs as part of social life...the nature of signs and the laws governing them.*”¹⁸² However, because language is the “the most complex and the most widespread all systems of expression,” as well as “the most characteristic,” Saussure believed that, “linguistics serves as a model for the whole of semiology, even though languages represent only one type of semiological system.”¹⁸³

¹⁷⁴ Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 66-67.

¹⁷⁵ Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 67.

¹⁷⁶ Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 66.

¹⁷⁷ Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 67.

¹⁷⁸ Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 68.

¹⁷⁹ Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 68.

¹⁸⁰ Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 77.

¹⁸¹ Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 77.

¹⁸² Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 15.

¹⁸³ Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 68.

Heeding Saussure's direction, subsequent scholars have extended and adapted Saussure's three linguistic principles to the analysis of culture more broadly. Under this "semiotic" perspective, cultural systems, like language, are understood as systems of signs or symbols that provide meaning to human experience.¹⁸⁴ The term "symbol" is often used to indicate that cultural systems are not comprised merely of linguistic signs, but of objects, attributes, events, behavior, and all other phenomena that might hold meaning for a cultural community. Moreover, meaning in this context does not refer purely to denotation, but rather to a sign or symbol's significance in relation to how human beings interpret the world and behave within it. For example, the term "cow" has a particular denotative meaning—it denotes a female bovine animal. However, using only this denotative meaning, it would be impossible to understand the contrasting significance to Hindus and U.S. ranchers of the statement, "The cow was slaughtered." That is because the significance of this statement does not depend on the linguistic meaning of "cow," but rather its relationship to values, beliefs, and practices within a cultural community. It is this understanding of meaning—meaning as significance—to which semiotic scholars refer when they assert that culture should be understood as a system of meaningful signs or symbols.

Like the relationship between signifier and signified, semiotically inclined scholars contend that the relationship between a sign or symbol and its cultural meaning is "arbitrary," or established and maintained entirely through social processes.¹⁸⁵ As Stoltz describes, scholars

¹⁸⁴ Alexander, "Analytic Debates," 8-9; Orlando Patterson, "Making Sense of Culture," *Annual Review of Sociology* 40, no. 1 (2014): 8; Patricia H. Thornton, William Ocasio, and Michael Lounsbury, *The Institutional Logics Perspective: A New Approach to Culture, Structure, and Process* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 2; Mats Alvesson, *Understanding Organizational Culture* (Sage Publications, 2012), 4; William H Sewell Jr, *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (University of Chicago Press, 2005), 160-61, 331-32; John W. Mohr, "Measuring Meaning Structures," *Annual Review of Sociology* 24, no. 1 (1998): 351; Jeffrey C. Alexander and Philip Smith, "The Discourse of American Civil Society: A New Proposal for Cultural Studies," *Theory and Society* 22, no. 2 (1993): 156; Anne Kane, "Cultural Analysis in Historical Sociology: The Analytic and Concrete Forms of the Autonomy of Culture," *Sociological Theory* 9, no. 1 (1991): 56; Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (Basic Books, 1973), 5, 89, 144.

¹⁸⁵ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 357-59; Mohr, "Measuring Meaning Structures," 351; Kane, "Cultural Analysis," 56; Alexander, "Analytic Debates," 9.

have extended this principle further by arguing that the cultural meaning of a given sign or symbol is determined primarily through its relations with other signs or symbols.¹⁸⁶ The question then becomes: What types of relations are constructed between cultural signs or symbols to provide cultural meaning? The structuralist branch of semiotic analysis, by far the most influential in cultural sociology, emphasizes relations of “homology and opposition.”¹⁸⁷ Similarities are drawn between different signs and symbols by arranging them together in collective categories, which are then distinguished through opposition to other cultural categories. Classic studies in the structuralist tradition have examined how fundamental oppositions such as *male-female* and *human-god* underlie various myths across human societies¹⁸⁸ and how the fundamental opposition between *democratic* and *counter-democratic* categories underlies the “discourse of civil society” throughout U.S. political history.¹⁸⁹ There can be no doubt that fundamental symbolic relations of homology and opposition can be enduring and broadly impactful across cultural communities. The current study, for example, demonstrates how the binary opposition between the *community* and the *dangerous class* forms the foundation of the LAPD’s institutional legitimacy from its inception through to today.

But the significance of cultural signs and symbols is not limited to their arrangement within opposing cultural categories. As Sewell argues, “symbols and meanings are defined as much by their local relations to worldly practice as by their global semiotic relations of similarity and difference.”¹⁹⁰ Put another way, signs and symbols gain significance not only through

¹⁸⁶ Dustin S. Stoltz, “Becoming a Dominant Misinterpreted Source: The Case of Ferdinand de Saussure in Cultural Sociology,” *Journal of Classical Sociology* 21, no. 1 (2021): 92-113. See Mohr, “Measuring Meaning Structures,” 351; Alexander and Smith, “Discourse of American Civil Society,” 157; Kane, “Cultural Analysis,” 56.

¹⁸⁷ Alexander and Smith, “Discourse of American Civil Society,” 164. See also Mohr, “Measuring Meaning Structures;” Alina Arseniev-Koehler, “Theoretical Foundations and Limits of Word Embeddings: What Types of Meaning can They Capture?” *Sociological Methods & Research* (2022), <https://doi.org/10.1177/00491241221140142>; Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology* (Basic Books, 1963).

¹⁸⁸ Claude Lévi-Strauss, “The Structural Study of Myth,” *The Journal of American Folklore* 68, no. 270 (1955): 428-444.

¹⁸⁹ Alexander and Smith, “Discourse of American Civil Society.”

¹⁹⁰ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 214.

relations of homology and opposition, but also through their placement within longer chains of meaning that inform action and interpretation in particular spatiotemporal contexts. Scholars have developed a variety of terms for these chains of meaning: “schemas” or “schemata,”¹⁹¹ “frames,”¹⁹² “scripts,”¹⁹³ “narratives” or “stories,”¹⁹⁴ “logics,”¹⁹⁵ “ideologies,”¹⁹⁶ and “discourses.”¹⁹⁷ These categories are typically differentiated based on criteria such as metaphysical location,¹⁹⁸ level of abstraction from real-world practices,¹⁹⁹ breadth,²⁰⁰ and power implications.²⁰¹ But the distinctions between them are less consequential than what they share in common—all can be understood as chains of meaning, typically built on relations between symbols that are more complex than similarity and difference, that provide frameworks for interpreting the world around us, including the behavior of others, and for guiding our own behavior.²⁰² Cultural categories alone provide very little practical direction for navigating

¹⁹¹ Sewell Jr, “Theory of Structure;” Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (University of Chicago Press, 1992); Andrei Boutyline and Laura K. Soter, “Cultural Schemas: What They Are, How to Find Them, and What to Do Once You’ve Caught One,” *American Sociological Review* 86, no. 4 (2021): 728-58.

¹⁹² Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Harvard University Press, 1974); Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, “Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 26, no. 1 (2000): 611-39.

¹⁹³ Robert P. Abelson, “Psychological Status of the Script Concept,” *American Psychologist* 36, no. 7 (1981): 715-29; Stephen R. Barley and Pamela S. Tolbert, “Institutionalization and Structuration: Studying the Links Between Action and Institution,” *Organization Studies* 18, no. 1 (1997): 93-117.

¹⁹⁴ Andrew Abbott, “From Causes to Events: Notes on Narrative Positivism,” *Sociological Methods & Research* 20, no. 4 (1992): 428-55; Francesca Polletta *et al.*, “The Sociology of Storytelling,” *Annual Review of Sociology* 37 (2011): 109-30.

¹⁹⁵ Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, *Institutional Logics*.

¹⁹⁶ Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 193-233.

¹⁹⁷ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (Vintage Books, 1990); Chris Barker and Dariusz Galasinski, *Cultural Studies and Discourse Analysis: A Dialogue on Language and Identity* (Sage Publications, 2001).

¹⁹⁸ E.g., Schemas are characterized as cognitive while frames are characterized as social-interactional. Michael L. Wood *et al.*, “Schemas and Frames,” *Sociological Theory* 36, no. 3 (2018): 244-61.

¹⁹⁹ E.g., Narratives and frames are characterized as more tightly connected to real-world behavior than logics or discourses. Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, *Institutional Logics*, 152-59.

²⁰⁰ E.g., Logics, discourses, and ideologies are characterized as encompassing schemas, frames, and narratives. Klaus Weber, “A Toolkit for Analyzing Corporate Cultural Toolkits,” *Poetics* 33, no. 3-4 (2005): 227-52.

²⁰¹ E.g., Discourses and ideologies are characterized as more thoroughly laden with power differentials than logics, schemas, and frames. Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 193-233; Foucault, *History of Sexuality*.

²⁰² Patterson, “Making Sense of Culture;” Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, *Institutional Logics*, Ch. 4; Sewell Jr “Theory of Structure;” Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*; Phillip Smith, *Why War? The Cultural Logic of Iraq, the Gulf War, and Suez* (University of Chicago Press, 2010), 14; David A. Snow,

concrete reality. This has been a persistent critique of cultural structuralism from its earliest development in the writings of Claude Lévi-Strauss.²⁰³ It is through the arrangement of signs and symbols in pragmatic chains of meaning that cultural categories are instantiated and put to work in actions and interpretations of the world. These chains are “the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action;”²⁰⁴ they are the “frames of reference that condition actors’ choices for sensemaking, the vocabulary they use to motivate action, and their sense of self and identity;”²⁰⁵ they “function as symbolic templates for the practical activities—conduct, thoughts, feelings, and judgments—of social agents.”²⁰⁶

Nevertheless, despite their centrality in linking cultural categories to ‘doing’ in the world, cultural sociologists have tended to de-emphasize these more complex relations between signs and symbols.²⁰⁷ Occasionally they are brushed off as idiosyncratic and ephemeral—mere *parole* to the cultural *langue* of systematic likeness relations.²⁰⁸ This perspective, however, is flawed in several respects. First, shared chains of meaning are how disparate perspectives and interests are aligned and individuals are mobilized into social collectivities in the pursuit of shared goals;²⁰⁹ such chains of meaning cannot be accurately characterized as idiosyncratic. Second,

Rens Vliegthart, and Pauline Ketelaars, "The Framing Perspective on Social Movements: Its Conceptual Roots and Architecture," in *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, ed. David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, Hanspeter Kriesi, and Holly J. McCammon (2018), 392-410; Mario L. Small, David J. Harding, and Michèle Lamont, "Reconsidering Culture and Poverty," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 629, no. 1 (2010): 6-27; Martha S. Feldman, "Resources in Emerging Structures and Processes of Change," *Organization Science* 15, no. 3 (2004): 295-309; Margaret R. Somers and Gloria D. Gibson, "Reclaiming the Epistemological 'Other': Narrative and the Social Constitution of Identity," in *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Oxford University Press, 1993), 37-99; Eviatar Zerubavel, *The Fine Line: Making Distinctions in Everyday Life* (University of Chicago Press, 1993).

²⁰³ Bourdieu and Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 42-43; Smith, *Why War?*, 43; Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge University Press, 1977), 22-30; Shmuel N. Eisenstadt and Miriam Curelaru, *The Form of Sociology: Paradigms and Crises* (John Wiley & Sons, 1976), 249-52; Alan Dundes, "Binary Opposition in Myth: The Propp/Lévi-Strauss Debate in Retrospect," *Western Folklore* 56, no. 1 (1997): 39-50.

²⁰⁴ Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 145.

²⁰⁵ Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, *Institutional Logics*, 2.

²⁰⁶ Bourdieu and Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 7.

²⁰⁷ See, e.g., Mohr, "Measuring Meaning Structures."

²⁰⁸ See, e.g., Weber, "Toolkit," 228-29; Alexander and Smith, "Discourse of American Civil Society," 166.

²⁰⁹ Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes;" Alvesson, *Understanding Organizational Culture*.

even if these chains of meaning are more ephemeral than relations of homology and opposition, they have concrete and consequential impacts in the real world—they shape the contours of social action, social structures, and power relations in particular spatiotemporal contexts.²¹⁰ This is why researchers who focus more closely on contextualized cultural practice in specific socio-historical settings, such as Geertz,²¹¹ Sewell,²¹² and Bourdieu,²¹³ find chains of meaning more useful for understanding and explaining social behavior than likeness relations alone. But, perhaps more importantly, these chains of meaning are not necessarily ephemeral—they can endure even as the cultural categories of which they are composed undergo important shifts and changes. Mooney and Hunt, for example, demonstrate how master frames within agrarian movements have endured throughout U.S. history despite deep structural changes in the nature and understanding of agrarian production.²¹⁴ The current study illustrates how the fundamental policing logic at the core of LAPD organizational culture has remained fixed over time, even as the cultural categories embedded in this logic, including conceptions of the *community* and the *dangerous class*, have undergone substantial shifts in operative meaning over time.²¹⁵

²¹⁰ Smith, *Why War?*, 14, 44-47; Sewell Jr, “Theory of Structure.”

²¹¹ Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*.

²¹² Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*.

²¹³ Bourdieu, *Theory of Practice*.

²¹⁴ Patrick H. Mooney and Scott A. Hunt, "A Repertoire of Interpretations: Master Frames and Ideological Continuity in US Agrarian Mobilization," *Sociological Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (1996): 177-97.

²¹⁵ A deeper reason underlying cultural sociologists’ focus on likeness relations relates to the field’s commitment to methodological principles of validity and reliability derived from the natural sciences. As Sewell (2005) describes, this commitment to the “natural science model”—derided by critics as “physics envy”—has influenced a disciplinary bias for studies involving large data sets and quantitative analysis techniques (15-16) (see also DiMaggio, Nag, & Blei 2013). When applied to the analysis of cultural meaning, however, the use of quantitative methodologies limits the analyst to studying only those relations between signs or symbols that can be expressed in terms of correlations and/or relative placement within an N-dimensional space, since these are the only relations that can be modeled mathematically and analyzed with computational techniques. Relations of similarity and difference are easily captured by such models, but the more complex relations between signs and symbols embodied in frames, logics, and analogous chains of meaning are largely outside of their purview. Hence, some of the most influential recent scholarship in cultural sociology focuses on ‘measuring’ cultural meaning through topic modeling (DiMaggio, Nag, & Blei 2013) and word embedding (Kozlowski, Taddy, & Evans 2019) techniques, both of which are limited to capturing relations of similarity and difference between signs. While these methodologies are immensely powerful tools for capturing deep, enduring, and efficacious likeness relations, they are ill-suited to capturing the more complex chains of meaning that animate concrete actions and interpretations in specific spatiotemporal contexts. Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*; Paul DiMaggio, Manish Nag, and David Blei, "Exploiting Affinities Between Topic Modeling and the Sociological Perspective on Culture: Application to Newspaper Coverage of US Government Arts

Lastly, drawing on Saussure's distinction between *langue* and *parole*, cultural scholars have delimited an analogous distinction between culture as intersubjective systems of meaning (*langue*) and culture as embodied in individual actions or "practice" (*parole*).²¹⁶ Importantly, however, these scholars posit a different relationship between cultural *langue* and *parole* than Saussure's understanding of the relationship between linguistic *langue* and *parole*. Saussure argued that, because *langue* is fixed, *parole* has no influence over linguistic meaning: "No individual is able, even if he wished, to modify in any way a choice already established in the language. Nor can the linguistic community exercise its authority to change even a single word."²¹⁷ But for cultural scholars, cultural practice (*parole*) plays an active role in both the maintenance and transformation of cultural systems (*langue*).

Sewell²¹⁸ discusses how this relationship is powerfully illustrated through Anthony Giddens's conception of structures as "dual"—both "the medium and outcome of the conduct it recursively organizes."²¹⁹ Because cultural systems shape how we interpret the world and behave within it (culture as medium), these systems are revealed as they are put into practice or "instantiated in action."²²⁰ Through cumulative exposure to systematic practice, culture systems become reified as "memory traces, the organic basis of human knowledgability" (culture as outcome).²²¹ Cultural structures, therefore, are consistently (re)produced through social action—"Structures shape people's practices, but it is also people's practices that constitute (and reproduce) structures."²²² Crucially, this understanding of the relationship between *langue* and

Funding," *Poetics* 41, no. 6 (2013): 570-606; Austin C. Kozlowski, Matt Taddy, and James A. Evans, "The Geometry of Culture: Analyzing the Meanings of Class Through Word Embeddings," *American Sociological Review* 84, no. 5 (2019): 905-49.

²¹⁶ Patterson, "Making Sense of Culture," 15; Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 332; Anthony Giddens, *New Rules of Sociological Method: A Positive Critique of Interpretive Sociologies* (London: Hutchinson, 1976), 118-122; Marshall Sahlin, *Culture in Practice: Selected Essays* (New York: Zone Books, 2000), 286.

²¹⁷ Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics*, 71.

²¹⁸ Sewell Jr, "Theory of Structure."

²¹⁹ Giddens, *Constitution of Society*, 374.

²²⁰ Giddens, *Constitution of Society*, 377.

²²¹ Giddens, *Constitution of Society*, 377.

²²² Sewell Jr, "Theory of Structure," 4.

parole opens the possibility for change in cultural systems through cultural practice. As Sewell describes, “agents can...improvise or innovate in structurally shaped ways that significantly reconfigure the very structures that constituted them.”²²³ Hence, cultural practice is the key to understanding both how cultural systems are perpetuated and how they are modified over time.²²⁴ Actors’ interpretations of events and behavior also become a particularly significant form of cultural practice under this formulation, since interpretation provides an opportunity for actors to inflect practices with new cultural meaning.²²⁵

Addressing Critiques of the Parsonian Model

This semiotically-grounded understanding of culture provides a structure for addressing all three of the major critiques leveled against the Parsonian model. First, the semiotic perspective offers a more robust means for theorizing human agency. The key to understanding agency under lies in the acknowledgement that culture is not monolithic, but rather there are a “multiplicity” of overlapping cultural systems corresponding to different frameworks of cultural meaning.²²⁶ Social actors are situated within and have access to a variety of relatively autonomous systems of cultural meaning, and as a result they are “capable of applying a wide range of different and even incompatible schemas” in any given situation.²²⁷ Individuals, for example, are typically embedded in numerous social groups orientated around family, friends, employment, professions, recreational interests, politics, geography, and a variety of other relations, each of which provide their own set of cultural materials for interpreting the world

²²³ Sewell Jr, “Theory of Structure,” 5.

²²⁴ Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, *Institutional Logics*, 128-29; Kane, “Cultural Analysis,” 57, 60; Bourdieu and Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 19; Bourdieu, *Theory of Practice*, 91; Gary A. Fine, *Tiny Publics: A Theory of Group Action and Culture* (Russell Sage Foundation, 2012), 158; Sherry B. Ortner, “Theory in Anthropology Since the Sixties,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26, no. 1 (1984): 154-56.

²²⁵ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 344-45, 348.

²²⁶ Sewell Jr, “Theory of Structure,” 16; Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 209.

²²⁷ Sewell Jr, “Theory of Structure,” 17. See also Patterson, “Making Sense of Culture,” 20-21 on “configurations.”

and guiding behavior. Agency under this perspective corresponds to actors' capacity to "transpose" cultural materials from one meaning system to another, thereby inflecting objects and situations with new cultural meaning.²²⁸ The scholarly literature is replete with examples of how organizational cultures are transformed through cross-cultural exchanges by strategically positioned organizational actors with diverse cultural attachments.²²⁹

Second, the semiotic perspective offers a clearer means for understanding extra-organizational influences on intra-organizational cultures. Because cultural meaning is fundamentally "arbitrary," meaning-making is a necessarily social negotiation process.²³⁰ Social actors work with and against one another to construct cultural meaning, and cultural systems are the conjunctive product of these social exchanges. This observation is especially salient in the context of police organizations, which must justify themselves as public institutions in order to maintain legitimacy and persist.²³¹ The current study on the LAPD provides an illustrative example. Throughout its history, the LAPD has occasionally succeeded in cultivating cultural outlooks among officers that conflict with public expectations and desires. These conflicts, however, have always resolved in a crisis that produces alterations to better align cultural articulations of policing among the LAPD and the public. Recognizing the socially negotiated

²²⁸ Sewell Jr, "Theory of Structure," 17-18. See also Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, *Institutional Logics*, 164-68; Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes," 627.

²²⁹ Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, *Institutional Logics*, 106-110; Fine, *Tiny Publics*, 147-50; Klaus Weber and M. Tina Dacin, "The Cultural Construction of Organizational Life: Introduction to the Special Issue," *Organization Science* 22, no. 2 (2011): 292-93; Lauren B. Edelman, Gwendolyn Leachman, and Doug McAdam, "On Law, Organizations, and Social Movements," *Annual Review of Law and Social Science* 6 (2010): 658-61; Calvin Morrill, "Culture and Organization Theory," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 619, no. 1 (2008): 29-31.

²³⁰ Sewell Jr, "Theory of Structure," 21; Smith, *Why War?*, 46-47; Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, *Institutional Logics*, 93-94, 101; Fine, *Tiny Publics*, 78-79; Patterson, "Making Sense of Culture," 15-16; David Snow *et al.*, "The Emergence, Development, and Future of the Framing Perspective: 25+ Years Since 'Frame Alignment,'" *Mobilization: An International Quarterly* 19, no. 1 (2014): 30. For examples of meaning-making as a social negotiation process, see Edelman, Leachman, and McAdam, "On Law;" Jeffrey C. Alexander, "The Societalization of Social Problems: Church Pedophilia, Phone Hacking, and the Financial Crisis," *American Sociological Review* 83, no. 6 (2018): 1049-78; Christopher Marquis and Julie Battilana, "Acting Globally but Thinking Locally? The Enduring Influence of Local Communities on Organizations," *Research in Organizational Behavior* 29 (2009): 283-302.

²³¹ John P. Crank, "Institutional Theory of Police: A Review of the State of the Art," *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management* 26, no. 2 (2003): 186-207.

character of cultural meaning, as well as policing's role as a public institution, is key to understanding this process.

Third, the possibility for cultural change is built into the very notion of cultural systems and cultural practice as mutually determinative. As discussed above, agentic transpositions of cultural meaning in the form of innovative cultural practice are one means of effecting change. However, cultural change need not be consciously directed—the possibility for change is inherent in the concept of practice itself. Cultural practice is the “conjugate product” of cultural systems and “pragmatic” circumstances.²³² Through cultural practices, actors mold general cultural categories and chains of meaning to fit the exigencies of the immediate situation. This process puts these cultural categories and chains of meaning “at risk, makes it possible that the meanings of the symbols will be inflected or transformed by the uncertain consequences of practice.”²³³ In other words, the enactment of cultural structures in novel circumstances makes it possible for even routine cultural practice to produce cultural change, since these novel circumstances can potentially “reach back” and shift the meanings embedded in the enacted cultural structures.²³⁴ Sahlins provides a particularly poetic summation of this principle: “Burdened with the world, the cultural meanings are thus altered.”²³⁵ The point is also illustrated by empirical research on organizational routines in the “practice theory” tradition:

Performances of routines (specific actions taken by specific people in specific times and places) create, maintain, and *modify* the ostensive aspects of routines (the abstract patterns), and the ostensive aspects guide, *refer to*, and *account for* these performances [emphasis added].²³⁶

²³² Patterson, “Making Sense of Culture,” 5, 7.

²³³ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 168, citing Marshall Sahlins, *Historical Metaphors and Mythical Realities: Structure in the Early History of the Sandwich Islands Kingdom* (University of Michigan Press, 1981).

²³⁴ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 366.

²³⁵ Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (University of Chicago Press, 1985), 138.

²³⁶ Martha S. Feldman and Wanda J. Orlikowski, “Theorizing Practice and Practicing Theory,” *Organization Science* 22, no. 5 (2011): 1245. See also Brian T. Pentland *et al.*, “Dynamics of Organizational Routines: A Generative Model,” *Journal of Management Studies* 49, no. 8 (2012): 1484-1508.

As the above quote demonstrates, scholars are careful to note that practice generally has a “strong reproductive bias,”²³⁷ and that most instances of practice ultimately reinforce the cultural systems that structured their performance.²³⁸ But the potential for change is nevertheless an innate feature of cultural practice itself.

The “Relative Autonomy” of Culture

There are two remaining issues that any account of culture must be able to address, the first of which concerns the relationship between cultural systems and the material conditions that sociologists typically refer to as “social structure.”²³⁹ The term social structure encompasses the primarily economic and political circumstances that are said to “objectively” shape both human behavior and social systems.²⁴⁰ Bourdieu and Wacquant describe social structure as “the distribution of socially efficient resources that define external constraints bearing on interactions and representations.”²⁴¹ Sewell provides an illustrative list of material conditions that are often said to comprise social structure: “occupational distributions, business cycles, demographic patterns, inheritance systems, hierarchies of wealth, urban settlement patterns, systems of land tenure, and the like.”²⁴² Many sociological accounts of behavior, particularly those in the Marxist tradition, characterize the “hard” material components of social structure as primary and determinative of the “soft” ideational components of cultural systems.²⁴³ Under these accounts, social structure determines both culture and action, and hence social structure is where the analyst must look to understand the dynamics of social systems. The influence of social structure is indeed undeniable. Accordingly, any attempt to understand the distinct

²³⁷ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 139.

²³⁸ Sewell Jr, “Theory of Structure;” Patterson, “Making Sense of Culture,” 15-16; Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, *Institutional Logics*, 99; Bourdieu and Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 10; Bourdieu, *Theory of Practice*, 91-95; Ortner, “Theory in Anthropology,” 146, 152-53.

²³⁹ Kane, “Cultural Analysis;” Alexander, “Analytic Debates;” Sewell Jr, “Theory of Structure.”

²⁴⁰ Alexander, “Analytic Debates,” 1-2.

²⁴¹ Bourdieu and Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 11.

²⁴² Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 28.

²⁴³ Sewell Jr, “Theory of Structure,” 3; Alexander, “Analytic Debates,” 1-3.

influence of cultural systems on behavior must provide an account of the “relative autonomy” of culture from social structure.²⁴⁴

The most convincing accounts argue that culture and social structure recursively shape one another. Sewell, for example, argues that structures should be thought of as “composed simultaneously of schemas [cultural structures], which are virtual, and of resources [material structures], which are actual.”²⁴⁵ It is through schemas that material resources are imbued with meaning and purpose in social life, and hence “resources are the effects of schemas.” However, because resources are “instantiations or embodiments of schemas,” they can also be “*read* like texts, to recover the cultural schemas they instantiate.” Moreover, for schemas to be “sustained or reproduced over time...they must be validated by the accumulation of resources.” Hence, it is also true that “schemas are the effects of resources.”²⁴⁶ In later work, Sewell uses the metaphor of the “built environment” to further illustrate this relationship.²⁴⁷ The metaphor draws attention to the notion that material conditions are ultimately “social constructs,” but once materially instantiated they both “constrain and enable” how we understand and operate within the world. Sewell’s characterization of the mutually sustaining relationship between cultural systems and social structure shares much in common with others,²⁴⁸ but particularly Bourdieu’s notion of the “double objectivity” of the social world.²⁴⁹ Like Sewell, Bourdieu argues that cultural structures and material structures mutually shape one another:

[T]he mental structures which construct the world of objects are constructed in the practice of a world of objects constructed according to the same structures. The mind born of the world of objects does not rise as a subjectivity confronting an objectivity: the objective universe is made up of objects which are the product of objectifying operations structured according to the very structures which the mind applies to it. The mind is a

²⁴⁴ Kane, “Cultural Analysis;” Alexander, “Analytic Debates.”

²⁴⁵ Sewell Jr, “Theory of Structure,” 13.

²⁴⁶ Sewell Jr, “Theory of Structure,” 13.

²⁴⁷ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 361-68.

²⁴⁸ See Ortner, “Theory in Anthropology,” 148; Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, *Institutional Logics*, 10-11; Kane, “Cultural Analysis,” 59.

²⁴⁹ Bourdieu and Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 7.

metaphor of the world of objects which is itself but an endless circle of mutually reflecting metaphors.²⁵⁰

A mutually determinative relationship between culture and social structure could imply perpetual “stasis,” with the same cultural structures continually reproduced within and reinforced by material conditions in the social system.²⁵¹ It is important to remember, however, that under the semiotic perspective, the cultural meaning of material conditions is fundamentally “arbitrary.” Actors can creatively transpose cultural structures to redefine material conditions, reinterpreting existing resources in new ways or producing new resources altogether.²⁵² Moreover, material resources are governed by forces other than the cultural structures that imbue them with primary meaning to a given social group, including both their physical attributes and their alternative meanings within distinct but overlapping cultural systems.²⁵³ Material instantiation therefore presents the inherent potential for shifts in meaning.²⁵⁴ In sum, a study of cultural stability and change over time should be able to demonstrate (1) how cultural structures inform social structure,²⁵⁵ (2) how social structure is reflective of cultural structures, and (3) how social structure at a given point in time both constrains and enables subsequent cultural iterations.

Cultural Coherence

The second issue concerns the coherence and stability of cultural structures. If meaning is fundamentally arbitrary, as the semiotic approach asserts, then the meanings embedded in cultural structures would appear to be intrinsically unstable, undermining the potential for intersubjective consistency. Derrida and the deconstructionists were among the first to pick up

²⁵⁰ Bourdieu, *Theory of Practice*, 91.

²⁵¹ Sewell Jr, “Theory of Structure,” 15.

²⁵² See Feldman, “Resources,” 296, on “resourcing.”

²⁵³ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 365-368.

²⁵⁴ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 365-366.

²⁵⁵ Social structure here understood as material conditions and resource distributions.

on this critique.²⁵⁶ The central claim of deconstructionists is that the meaning of linguistic signs is fundamentally indeterminate and contestable.²⁵⁷ Deconstruction as an analytical method seeks to expose the ambiguities inherent in signs and the hidden assumptions that structure various interpretations of them.²⁵⁸ The critique is also immanent in “toolkit” conceptions of culture, which characterize cultural systems as congeries of inconsistent or even contradictory cultural structures that actors deploy primarily as *post hoc* justifications for interest-driven behavior, which is itself often inconsistent and contradictory.²⁵⁹ Certain interpretations of Bourdieu’s concept of social “fields”²⁶⁰ have also led scholars to characterize social settings as sites of perpetual conflict and struggle over cultural meaning.²⁶¹ What these perspectives share in common is a general disinclination to acknowledge that meaningful relations between signs and symbols coalesce in the form of coherent and stable cultural structures and systems that are shared intersubjectively across broad social groups.

There are, however, many factors that motivate the construction of shared, coherent, and stable cultural structures, despite the fundamental arbitrariness of cultural meaning. For one, we *like* when our meanings align with others—it strengthens our sense of understanding about ourselves, the world around us, and how to behave within it.²⁶² Giddens, for example, argued

²⁵⁶ Josue V. Harari, “Critical Factions/Critical Fictions,” in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-Structuralist Criticism*, ed. Josue V. Harari (Cornell University Press, 1979), 38.

²⁵⁷ Barker and Galasinski, *Cultural Studies*, 9-10; Ian Craib, *Modern Social Theory: From Parsons to Habermas* (Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 184-85; Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy* (University of Chicago Press, 1982), 1-27.

²⁵⁸ Harari, “Critical Factions/Critical Fictions,” 31-38; Jonathan Culler, *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism After Structuralism* (Cornell University Press, 2007), 85-225; Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri C. Spivak (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976).

²⁵⁹ See Ann Swidler, “Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies,” *American Sociological Review* 51, no.2 (1986): 273-86; Ann Swidler, *Talk of Love: How Culture Matters* (University of Chicago Press, 2001); Stephen Vaisey, “Motivation and Justification: A Dual-Process Model of Culture in Action,” *American Journal of Sociology* 114, no. 6 (2009): 1675-1715.

²⁶⁰ See Bourdieu and Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 16-17.

²⁶¹ E.g., Joshua Page, “Punishment and the Penal Field,” in *The Sage Handbook of Punishment and Society*, ed. by Jonathan Simon and Richard Sparks (Sage Publications, 2012), 152-166; Philip Goodman, Joshua Page, and Michelle Phelps, “The Long Struggle: An Agonistic Perspective on Penal Development,” *Theoretical Criminology* 19, no. 3 (2015): 315-35.

²⁶² Alexander, “Analytic Debates,” 3, discussing Dilthey; Fine, *Tiny Publics*, Ch. 4; Benford and Snow, “Framing Processes,” 631-32; Alvesson, *Understanding Organizational Culture*, 1-5, 27-28; Patterson, “Making Sense of Culture;” Martha S. Feldman and Anat Rafaeli, “Organizational Routines as Sources of

that intersubjective structures provide “ontological security” by enabling the development of stable identities, understandings, and modes of action.²⁶³ Giddens developed the concept of ontological security through an analysis of empirical works from Garfinkel and Goffman,²⁶⁴ which demonstrate how actors actively work to maintain shared frameworks of understanding that provide stability and predictability to social interactions.²⁶⁵ Geertz²⁶⁶ argued that shared cultural systems were a physiological necessity, since human beings, unlike “lower” animals, have no innately determined patterns of behavior to navigate the world and fulfill basic needs: “man’s nervous system does not merely enable him to acquire culture, it positively demands that he do so if it is going to function at all.”²⁶⁷ In a recent article on culture for the *Annual Review of Sociology*, Patterson went so far as to state:

I consider it *foundational* that people normally seek to harmonize their relations, to make sense of and confirm their own and others’ intentions and sentiments, through mutual adjustments in their “affectively generated actions” and symbolic gestures, facilitated by invoking shared meanings from the cultural resources available to them [emphasis added].²⁶⁸

Actors derive not only “ontological security” from shared cultural meanings but also *power*. This is true in at least two respects. First, cultural structures are more efficacious when they are broadly shared. Foucault describes this principle in terms of the power relations immanent in discrete instances of practice:

Power comes from below...the manifold relationships of force that take shape and come into play in the machinery of production, in families, limited groups, and institutions, are the basis for wide-ranging effects of cleavage that run through the social body as whole. These then form a general line of force that traverses the local oppositions and

Connections and Understandings," *Journal of Management Studies* 39, no. 3 (2002): 309-31; Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. Thomas Burger and Frederick Lawrence (MIT Press, 1991).

²⁶³ Giddens, *Constitution of Society*, 50.

²⁶⁴ See Giddens, *Constitution of Society*, 60-92.

²⁶⁵ Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology*; Erving Goffman, *Interaction Ritual: Essays in Face-to-Face Behavior* (Pantheon, 1967).

²⁶⁶ Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, Ch. 3.

²⁶⁷ Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 68.

²⁶⁸ Patterson, “Making Sense of Culture,” 7. Internal citations omitted.

links them together...Major dominations are the hegemonic effects that are sustained by all these confrontations.²⁶⁹

Cultural structures find support through the multiplicity of cultural practices in which they are enacted. The broader its base of support in practice, the stronger and more “hegemonic” a given cultural structure becomes, thereby increasing its potency in subsequent iterations of practice. In essence, broadly shared cultural structures are a means by which individuals can exert power over others through practice.²⁷⁰ Bourdieu makes a parallel point when arguing that shared cultural structures are “*instruments of domination*” that serve “crucial political functions” by legitimizing power differentials.²⁷¹ Furthermore, shared cultural structures are how we collectively mobilize resources to accomplish goals—they are the means by which disparate individuals are bound together into efficacious social collectivities. This is the central finding of the “framing” literature on social movements, which illustrates how shared chains of meaning—“frames”—are a primary mechanism for effecting the “transformation [of individuals] into mobilizable agents whose self-interests and daily routines coincide with the movement’s cause or mission.”²⁷²

The second respect in which actors derive power from shared meanings corresponds to the fact that cultural structures draw power from their links to other cultural structures. Social movement scholars describe this principle in terms of “discursive opportunity structures.”²⁷³ The term refers to the “cultural contexts in which movements are embedded,” which provide varying degrees of opportunity for social movement frames to gain traction and effect political change.²⁷⁴ The extent to which a particular frame can link its embedded meanings to other

²⁶⁹ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 94.

²⁷⁰ See also Smith, *Why War?*, 13; Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 172-74.

²⁷¹ Bourdieu and Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 13.

²⁷² Snow *et al.*, “Emergence, Development, and Future,” 25. See also Snow, Vliegenthart, and Ketelaars, “Framing Perspective;” Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, *Institutional Logics*, 97-98; Patterson, “Making Sense of Culture,” 20, on “configurations.”

²⁷³ Snow, Vliegenthart, and Ketelaars, “Framing Perspective,” 398.

²⁷⁴ Snow, Vliegenthart, and Ketelaars, “Framing Perspective,” 399.

cultural structures in the “discursive field,” the more likely it is to succeed.²⁷⁵ This principle applies not only to the specific example of social movement frames, but also to cultural structures more broadly.²⁷⁶ The strength that cultural structures draw from links in meaning to other structures is the driving force underlying the formation of cultural systems—collections of cultural structures whose meanings hang together and mutually reinforce one another.²⁷⁷ Because the efficacy of a cultural structure is shaped by both (1) the extent to which it is shared and enacted among social actors and (2) the extent to which it is linked to other widely shared cultural structures, actors are more likely to deploy structures that are broadly interconnected, providing a strong impetus toward meaning convergence.

The material environment—social structure—also helps to maintain the stability of shared cultural structures. As discussed above, social structure can be thought of as the material instantiation of cultural structures, a construction that shapes subsequent cultural iterations. Accordingly, cultural structures concretized in the form of social structure can endure by continually shaping cultural practice.²⁷⁸ Many scholars have highlighted how interaction settings produce consistency in cultural practice by constraining the deployment of cultural structures.²⁷⁹ This constraining effect is bolstered not only by cues imprinted in the interaction setting’s

²⁷⁵ Snow, Vliegenthart, and Ketelaars, “Framing Perspective,” 398. See also Benford and Snow, “Framing Processes,” 622-24, on how the “cultural resonance” of a frame influences “frame amplification” processes.

²⁷⁶ See Edelman, Leachman, and McAdam, “On Law,” 658, 668-70, 672; Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, *Institutional Logics*, 68-70, 125; Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 172, 265-66; Martha Feldman and Monica Worline, “The Practicality of Practice Theory,” *Academy of Management Learning & Education* 15, no. 2 (2016): 308.

²⁷⁷ Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 95.

²⁷⁸ Sewell Jr, “Theory of Structure,” 13; Bourdieu and Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*, 12-15; Alvesson, *Understanding Organizational Culture*, 124-31.

²⁷⁹ Goffman, *Frame Analysis*; Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, *Institutional Logics*, 80-84, 91-92; Patterson, “Making Sense of Culture,” 19-20; Fine, *Tiny Publics*, 165-67; Nina Eliasoph and Paul Lichterman, “Culture in Interaction,” *American Journal of Sociology* 108, no. 4 (2003): 735-94; Francesca Polletta and Pang Ching Bobby Chen, “Gender and Public Talk: Accounting for Women’s Variable Participation in the Public Sphere,” *Sociological Theory* 31, no. 4 (2013): 291-317.

material environment, but also by audience expectations, another potent stimulus toward cultural consistency and coherence.²⁸⁰

None of this is to say that culture is unitary, uncontested, or fixed. The fundamental arbitrariness of cultural meaning ensures that cultural structures are inherently malleable and contestable. As a consequence, it is exceedingly rare for signs and symbols to be defined uniquely through a single cultural structure or system across an entire social body—alternative and potentially conflicting meanings are virtually guaranteed to be at play in the social system.²⁸¹ Yet, for all the reasons discussed above, these alternative meanings are unlikely to be idiosyncratic. Strong forces motivate the development and perpetuation of cultural structures that are broadly shared and interconnected to other structures within the social system. Alternative meanings are more likely to reflect stable and coherent cultural structures shared by alternative social groupings or “configurations,”²⁸² rather than momentary expedients to address individual exigencies. Moreover, when conflicts of meaning occur between opposing cultural structures, these same forces ensure that the conflict more often manifests as contestation over the terms of compromise, rather than which competing cultural meaning will win out over others.

Methodology: How Can Culture Be Studied Historically?

As Sewell asserts, “methodologies...always imply ontologies.”²⁸³ The current study necessitates a methodological strategy that both accords with the understanding of culture developed above—culture as (1) composed of signs and symbols imbued with meaning via their socially constructed relations with one another, which facilitate interpretation and action in the world, and (2) locked in a mutually determinative relationship with social structure—and

²⁸⁰ Sewell Jr, “Theory of Structure,” 21; Smith, *Why War?*, 46-47; Benford and Snow, “Framing Processes,” 630.

²⁸¹ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 169-72.

²⁸² Patterson, “Making Sense of Culture,” 20.

²⁸³ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 320.

enables the study of culture historically. Some of the most influential post-Parsonian, semiotic analyses of culture were conducted by anthropologists employing ethnographic observational methods.²⁸⁴ Ethnographic cultural analysis, however, is inherently “synchronic”—it can provide a snapshot of cultural structures and systems as they exist at the time of observation, but it is “at a loss when it [comes] to explaining historical change in cultural patterns.”²⁸⁵

Because the study of history is necessarily “limited to what was written down [and/or] saved in archives or libraries,”²⁸⁶ cultural historians have adapted the interpretivist or hermeneutic methods employed by anthropologists to analyze cultural structures via historical texts and artifacts.²⁸⁷ This approach seeks to interpret the underlying structure of symbolic relations reflected in the cultural practices evident in these historical texts and artifacts.²⁸⁸

Sewell summarizes this approach as follows:

Interpretive scholars proceed by “reading” texts, rituals, images, sequences of action, or other repositories of meaning and then attempting to reconstruct the [semiotic] codes...that the texts or text analogues instantiate and upon which their authors can be presumed to have drawn in carrying out their actions.²⁸⁹

This approach is enabled by the fact that culture is “not locked away in actors’ heads but embodied in publicly available symbols.”²⁹⁰ The cultural practices captured in historical texts and artifacts are discernable manifestations of symbolic relations and structures operative in a particular spatiotemporal context. As Geertz describes, “Cultural acts, the construction, apprehension, and utilization of symbolic forms, are social events like any other; they are as public as marriage and as observable as agriculture.”²⁹¹

²⁸⁴ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 152-53. See, e.g., Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*.

²⁸⁵ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 17, 182.

²⁸⁶ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 180.

²⁸⁷ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 40-43, 179-81; Lynn Hunt, “Introduction: History, Culture, and Text,” in *The New Cultural History*, ed. Lynn Hunt (University of California Press, 1989), 11-12.

²⁸⁸ See Alexander, “Analytic Debates,” on “semiotic” and “Weberian” approaches to cultural analysis.

²⁸⁹ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 332.

²⁹⁰ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 180. See also Ortner, “Theory in Anthropology,” 129.

²⁹¹ Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*, 91.

Interpretivist methods, however, are frequently critiqued as too subjective to enable valid and reliable analyses of cultural meaning.²⁹² DiMaggio, Nag, and Blei's characterization is emblematic: "Some scholars simply read texts and produce virtuoso interpretations based on insights their readings produce. The limitations of this approach for generating reproducible results are apparent."²⁹³ Scholars sensitive to this critique have developed two general approaches to 'systematize' the analysis of cultural meaning, one qualitative and one quantitative. On the qualitative side, scholars have employed paradigmatic frameworks for organizing and graphically representing symbolic relations, such as "semiotic squares," "paradigmatic clustering," and "commutation tests."²⁹⁴ These approaches, however, merely sidestep the critique. The arrangement of cultural symbols in such frameworks is a fundamentally hermeneutic activity, vulnerable to the same criticisms as more open-ended interpretive methods. Moreover, scholars who employ such techniques readily acknowledge that they do not provide definitive interpretations of the culture under study. As Feldman relates, these techniques can facilitate new insights, but "it is important to understand that the categories I use are in no way absolute and that taking them too seriously will result in inadequate understanding of the ideas and inappropriate uses of the techniques."²⁹⁵ In the process of channeling cultural meanings into these paradigmatic frameworks, analysts run the risk of overlooking important symbolic relations at play in the cultural system that cannot be adequately captured within these frameworks.

On the quantitative side, scholars have developed a variety of computational programs to analyze the content of large corpuses of historical text. These programs analyze relations between individual words or collections of words by measuring word frequencies, correlations,

²⁹² See Ortner, "Theory in Anthropology;" Wendy Griswold, "A Methodological Framework for the Sociology of Culture," *Sociological Methodology* (1987): 1-35.

²⁹³ DiMaggio, Nag, and Blei, "Topic Modeling," 577.

²⁹⁴ Martha Feldman, *Strategies for Interpreting Qualitative Data* (Sage Publications, 1995); Weber, "Toolkit," 232-34.

²⁹⁵ Feldman, *Strategies*, Conclusion.

or placement within an N -dimensional space.²⁹⁶ These computational programs are immensely powerful tools for reliably (i.e., reproducibly) measuring relations of “homology and opposition”²⁹⁷ between textual signs—the very relations that, according to structuralists dominant in the field of cultural sociology, imbue signs with cultural meaning.²⁹⁸ In addition, because these programs can analyze vast corpuses of data much larger than humans can efficiently read and process, the resulting ‘measures’ of symbolic relations within a cultural community are less vulnerable to sample selection critiques.

However, these methods are not well-suited to capturing the more complex chains of meaning—schemas, frames, scripts, logics, discourses—that provide cultural frameworks for concrete action and interpretation in the real world. Culture does not merely enable us to categorize and classify phenomena according to similarities and differences. Culture also provides both specific templates and broader logics or rationalities for how to behave (and interpret behavior) in particular spatiotemporal contexts.²⁹⁹ These behavioral templates and logics are constructed through relations between signs that are more complex than simply homology and opposition—relations with much stronger pragmatic and normative dimensions. Computational programs for analyzing patterns in word usage offer great promise for uncovering key signs and categories in a cultural community, demonstrating how they are distinguished from one another, and tracking patterns in their usage across time and space. But their ability to capture how these cultural signs are arranged into pragmatic schemas, frames, or

²⁹⁶ See DiMaggio, Nag, and Blei, “Topic Modeling;” Kozlowski, Taddy, and Evans, “Geometry of Culture;” Marshall A. Taylor and Dustin S. Stoltz, “Concept Class Analysis: A Method for Identifying Cultural Schemas in Texts,” *Sociological Science* 7 (2020): 544–69; Megan Woods *et al.*, “Advancing Qualitative Research using Qualitative Data Analysis Software (QDAS)? Reviewing Potential Versus Practice in Published Studies Using ATLAS.ti and NVivo, 1994–2013,” *Social Science Computer Review* 34, no. 5 (2016): 597–617.

²⁹⁷ Alexander and Smith, “Discourse of American Civil Society,” 164.

²⁹⁸ Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*; Mohr, “Measuring Meaning Structures;” Arseniev-Koehler, “Theoretical Foundations.”

²⁹⁹ Goffman, *Frame Analysis*; Geertz, *Interpretation of Cultures*; Bourdieu and Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*; Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, *Institutional Logics*; Patterson, “Making Sense of Culture.”

scripts that inform concrete action and interpretation in specific historical contexts is questionable, and their ability to uncover the arrangement of cultural signs in deeper logics, rationalities, or ideologies whose normative implications shape a variety of more specific action templates is non-existent.

Hence, despite its intrinsic vulnerability to subjectivity and the necessary limitations it places on data selection, open-ended interpretation of historical texts and artifacts by human beings remains the most flexible and versatile method for studying culture historically. The validity of this form of cultural analysis depends not on adherence to pre-established analytical procedures, but rather the extent to which the resulting articulation of cultural structures and systems coheres with the cultural practices of the community under study. As Sewell states, “The central challenge for researchers is to reconstruct those meanings and experiences in a form simultaneously true of to the ever-changing world being studied and graspable by the researcher’s audience.”³⁰⁰ The true test then is whether the cultural analysis ‘makes sense’—both of the historical practices, material structures, and changes under study and to the analyst’s audience.

There are, however, additional risks associated with open-ended interpretive methods that, while less frequently acknowledged than concerns of reliability and validity, are no less significant. These risks are particularly pronounced when analyzing culture primarily through discursive texts, one of the principal sources of data for historical cultural analysis. In attempting to re-construct cultural structures from these data sources, analysts run the two-fold risk of indulging in ‘idiographic idealism’—a form of missing the forest for the trees.

First, by focusing only on cultural structures internal to a specific community—in this case, the LAPD—the analyst risks overlooking broader cultural structures that, while not fully articulated within the cultural context under study, nonetheless play a key role in shaping

³⁰⁰ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 320. See also Feldman, *Strategies*, 68; Clifford Geertz, “From the Native’s Point of View’: On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding,” *Bulletin of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences* 28, no. 1 (1974): 26-45.

internal cultural features and dynamics. One of the persistent findings of cultural structuralism is that core, fundamental, and enduring cultural structures—typically binary oppositions between key cultural categories—underlie more specific cultural manifestations across broad expanses of space and time.³⁰¹ Yet, the full contours and import of these broad cultural structures are not microcosmically represented in all cultural communities in which they are efficacious. This observation is particularly salient in the context of studying police cultures, which abolitionist scholars argue are deeply structured by cultural conceptions of race in general and Blackness in particular, despite the fact that police rarely discuss race explicitly, and when they do it is most often to assert that race plays no role in police culture or functions. A study of LAPD culture attuned only to the idiographic elements reflected in organizational statements and documents will miss the ways in which broader cultural structures interact with these idiographic elements, thereby influencing both the instantiation of organizational culture in organizational practices and the dynamics of change and stability in organizational culture over time. Accordingly, an analysis of LAPD culture must consistently examine how broad, deep, and enduring cultural structures identified in other scholarly work might interact with the more specific cultural structures operative within the organization to co-determine organizational practices and cultural evolution.

The second risk associated with idiographic idealism is that by studying only symbolic relations reflected in discourse, the analyst ignores the influence of material elements—both non-verbal practices and the resource distributions commonly referred to as social structure—on cultural structures. As discussed above, culture is not purely ideational. Cultural structures are instantiated in practices—concrete social actions in the real world. Furthermore, practices play a key role in *defining* these cultural structures—it is through practice that cultural structures are (re)produced and modified over time. Talk is one form of cultural practice, but it

³⁰¹ Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*; Alexander and Smith, “Discourse of American Civil Society;” John W. Mohr and Vincent Duquenne, “The Duality of Culture and Practice: Poverty Relief in New York City, 1888-1917,” *Theory and Society* 26, no. 2/3 (1997): 305-56.

is not the sole or necessarily primary form of practice that reveals and determines cultural structures.³⁰² By examining only discursive practices contained in historical texts, the analyst can miss how non-verbal forms of practice, including actual organizational behavior, operates to structure and define organizational culture. In particular, non-verbal cultural practices can help to illustrate how capacious and polysemic signs at play in organizational discourse are further specified and particularized by organizational actors at specific points throughout history.

Similarly, cultural structures are also concretized in the form of social structure—the distribution of effective material resources in the social system. Social structure also plays a determinative role in cultural systems by constraining and enabling particular forms of cultural practice.³⁰³ Because practice is central to cultural stability and change over time, any account of cultural evolution must also remain attentive to the role that material conditions play channeling this process. Thus, to avoid the twin risks associated with idiographic idealism, the analyst must look beyond discursive practices within the particular community under study by evaluating how broad-based cultural structures, non-verbal practices, and material social structure also bear on cultural structures and cultural evolution within that community.

The methodological approach advocated above dovetails with the conception of “eventful temporality” that historian William Sewell details in *Logics of History*, which in 2008 won the American Sociological Association’s award for best recent book in sociological theory. Eventful temporality refers to Sewell’s understanding of how cultural structures, practices (both verbal and non-verbal), and material structures interact in the process of historical development.

Sewell describes eventful temporality as follows:

Eventful temporality recognizes the power of events in history. Social life may be conceptualized as being composed of countless happenings or encounters in which persons and groups of persons engage in social action [practice]. Their actions are constrained and enabled by the constitutive structures of their societies. Most happenings...reproduce social [material] and cultural structures without significant

³⁰² Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 333-36.

³⁰³ Sewell Jr, “Theory of Structure;” Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*; Bourdieu and Wacquant, *Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*; Bourdieu, *Theory of Practice*.

changes. Events may be defined as that relatively rare subclass of happenings that significantly transforms structures. An eventful conception of temporality, therefore, is one that takes into account the transformation of structures by events.³⁰⁴

Embedded in this description are three principles that also form the basis of the methodological approach outlined above. First, “social action” or practice is the primary mechanism by which cultural and material structures are both “reproduce[d]” and “transform[ed]” over time.

Furthermore, as Sewell details elsewhere, talk is not the only form of practice that shapes cultural structures: “symbolic practices that constitute social life cannot be reduced to forms of *discourse*...the world of meaning is much wider than the world of speech and writing.”³⁰⁵

Rather, cultural signs and symbols are “made up of something more than language”³⁰⁶—they are also defined by the nondiscursive practices in which they are instantiated.

Second, practices are “constrained and enabled” by both “cultural” and “social,” or material, structures. Cultural structures provide the frameworks that guide action and interpretation in the real world, and thus their influence over practice is clear. But practice is also influenced by social structure: “human practice, in all social contexts or institutional spheres, is structured simultaneously both by meanings and by other aspects of the environment in which they occur—by, for example, power relations or spatiality or resource distributions.”³⁰⁷ Sewell uses the metaphor of “built environment” to illustrate this relationship.³⁰⁸ Just as “housing, roads, waterways, mines, fields, ports, and so on” shape activities such as “[o]ur daily routines, whom we will interact with, how we can earn our living, our sense of the limits of the manipulable world, [and] the means of bringing people together for coordinated action,”³⁰⁹ so too do the material conditions associated with social structure influence the possibilities of

³⁰⁴ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 100. Internal citations omitted.

³⁰⁵ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 335.

³⁰⁶ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 336.

³⁰⁷ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 164.

³⁰⁸ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 362.

³⁰⁹ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 362-63.

social practice. As a result, “[e]xisting stocks of spatially fixed resources will have continuing effects on the social world well into the future.”³¹⁰

Third, practice offers the potential to “significantly transform” cultural and material structures. Sewell provides several examples of such transformational practices. One such transformational practice involves the application of existing cultural structures to novel material circumstances that then “reach back”³¹¹ and inflect the pre-existing structures with new meaning. As an example, Sewell cites Sahlins’s³¹² analysis of how the mythical categories of *god* and *mana* obtained new cultural meaning in Hawaiian society through their novel application to arriving English explorer Captain Cook and his relics in the late 18th century. Another such transformational practice involves novel (re)interpretations of existing material conditions or practices. The example Sewell provides here is of the storming of Bastille, an “act of crowd violence” consistent with pre-existing conceptions of a “riot” that was instead interpreted as “an act of the people’s sovereign will”—an act of legitimate “revolution.”³¹³ As Sewell describes, there was “extraordinary novelty” in applying this interpretation to the events of Bastille Day: “Prior to the summer of 1789, the word revolution did not carry the implication of a change of political regime achieved by popular violence.”³¹⁴ A third form of transformational practice consists of actions that significantly shift material conditions or resource distributions. These practices include wars, economic investment and divestment, and large-scale migratory patterns that produce substantial demographic changes across geographic locations, all of which can result in significant changes to social structure that shape subsequent practice.

Sewell’s conception of eventful temporality can be critiqued for the sharp distinction it makes between “events” that transform structures and mere “happenings” that reinforce structures. Events do not necessarily result in immediate structural transformations—often

³¹⁰ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 363.

³¹¹ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 366.

³¹² Sahlins, *Islands of History*.

³¹³ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 235-36.

³¹⁴ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 235.

events merely open the possibility for structural change. The subsequent transformation of structures—what gives events their ‘eventful’ quality—is achieved by countless subsequent happenings that reinforce the novel structural configurations made possible by the event. Moreover, as Sewell acknowledges, even routine practice in the context of happenings puts cultural structures at risk of shifts in meaning: “all social practices undergo constant revision even in the course of reproduction, and the accumulation of small revisions may eventually result in significant transformations.”³¹⁵ But the distinction between events and happenings is not essential to Sewell’s account of historical development. The central takeaway is that cultural and material structures condition practice, and while this often results in practices that reinforce these same structures, practice is also the mechanism by which these structures are transformed. Hence, Sewell’s account highlights the very same elements as the methodological approach advocated above: cultural structures, material structures, and practices, both verbal and non-verbal.

A Note on Primary and Secondary Sources

There is a rich set of existing historical and sociological research on the LAPD,³¹⁶ and the current study relies heavily on these secondary sources. Primary source research was employed strategically to serve two purposes for which existing secondary sources are insufficient on their own. First, primary sources are used to illuminate cultural understandings of policing, both among LAPD organizational actors and leading Los Angeles residents and politicians. Secondary

³¹⁵ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 226.

³¹⁶ E.g., Kelly Lytle Hernández, *City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles, 1771–1965*, (University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Gerald Woods, *The Police in Los Angeles: Reform and Professionalization* (Garland Publishing, 1993); Edward J. Escobar, *Race, Police, and the Making of a Political Identity: Mexican Americans and the Los Angeles Police Department, 1900–1945* (University of California Press, 1999); Alisa S. Kramer, “William H. Parker and the Thin Blue Line: Politics, Public Relations, and Policing in Postwar Los Angeles” (PhD diss., American University, 2007); Max Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles: Race, Resistance, and the Rise of the LAPD* (University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

sources are helpful for summarizing key “events” and “happenings”³¹⁷ over time, but they are ill-suited for capturing the cultural meanings that both animate and are transformed by these events and happenings. To uncover these cultural meanings, a direct analysis of cultural practice is required. Because verbal practices are the primary mechanism by which cultural structures are revealed and communicated,³¹⁸ primary source research was principally directed toward collecting statements from pivotal LAPD figures and community members. Key sources for these statements include public speeches, autobiographies, interviews, and statements included in newspaper articles and editorials. The dissertation uses long-form quotations from these primary sources to illustrate the key categories and chains of meaning bearing on LAPD organizational culture over time. When available, the dissertation also utilizes primary source analysis of non-verbal LAPD practices reflected in organizational documents and statistics, both to reinforce cultural interpretations derived from the analysis of verbal practices and to clarify how ambiguous and polysemic signs at play in verbal practice were given concrete meaning by LAPD officers in specific spatiotemporal contexts.

Second, primary source research was also used to fill gaps in the existing historical research on Los Angeles and the LAPD. Although secondary sources provide a fairly comprehensive picture of the LAPD throughout the 20th century, research on the 19th century and 21st century bookend periods is more limited. Secondary sources covering these bookend periods typically focus on specific dimensions of LAPD history and practice, such as the demographic make-up of arrestees and inmates,³¹⁹ “community policing” strategies,³²⁰

³¹⁷ Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*, 100.

³¹⁸ See Sewell Jr, *Logics of History*; Kozlowski, Taddy, and Evans, “Geometry of Culture;” John W. Mohr *et al.*, *Measuring Culture* (Columbia University Press, 2020).

³¹⁹ Hernández, *City of Inmates*.

³²⁰ Luis Daniel Gascón and Aaron Roussell, *The Limits of Community Policing: Civilian Power and Police Accountability in Black and Brown Los Angeles* (NYU Press, 2019).

“predictive” policing strategies,³²¹ and disorder management in Los Angeles’s Skid Row.³²² Accordingly, primary source research was also directed toward providing a broader and more holistic picture of events, happenings, and LAPD practices in these bookend periods. Similarly, while existing historical research often references the dramatic demographic changes that took place in Los Angeles in the mid- to late 20th century, these changes are often described summarily and without concrete detail. Census figures are therefore employed to give definite form and detail to the demographic changes so crucial for comprehending shifts in cultural understandings of policing in Los Angeles over this period.

Overview of Subsequent Chapters and Arguments

The subsequent chapters trace LAPD history from the founding of the department to the present. The historical analysis focuses on trends in the three factors identified above as critical for understanding cultural change and stability over time: (1) dominant cultural structures, (2) material resource distributions or “social structure,” and (3) LAPD practices. This historical analysis illustrates how a fundamental “policing logic” has remained fixed at the center of LAPD organizational culture since the mid-20th century. Although the logic was immanent in aspects of LAPD practice stretching back to the department’s founding, it became the defining feature of departmental culture in the 1950s under Chief Parker. Since that time, the policing logic has continued to structure LAPD practices and undergird the department’s institutional legitimacy through to today, even as the department has weathered numerous high-profile crises, including two of the most violent and destructive racial uprisings in U.S. history.

Yet, while the policing logic at the core of LAPD organizational culture has remained remarkably stable, the cultural categories embedded in this logic have undergone significant

³²¹ Sarah Brayne, *Predict and Surveil: Data, Discretion, and the Future of Policing* (Oxford University Press, 2020).

³²² Forrest Stuart, *Down, Out & Under Arrest: Policing and Everyday Life in Skid Row* (University of Chicago Press, 2016).

shifts in meaning over time, coinciding with shifts in social structural conditions and dominant cultural structures in Los Angeles. Changes in the operative meanings of these cultural categories have produced correlative changes in LAPD practices, even as the underlying logic that animates these practices remains fixed. This account of stability in the underlying policing logic coupled with change in the cultural categories embedded in the logic is key to understanding police reform throughout LAPD history. Reform for the LAPD consists of bringing departmental culture and practices into better alignment with prevailing interpretations of the policing logic among dominant social groups in Los Angeles. As LAPD history demonstrates, such reform is capable of achieving outcomes that many reformists regard as substantial improvements, including reductions in the use of serious force, contractions in the scale of enforcement, and improvements in community perceptions of the police. Nevertheless, cultural and structural conditions in Los Angeles, coupled with the LAPD's own history of racialized enforcement, ensure that as long as the department remains committed to the policing logic, LAPD practices will continue to produce racialized harm. Accordingly, abolitionists are right to assert that the LAPD will continue to function as an institution for perpetuating racial and economic subordination in Los Angeles, despite significant reforms.

The remaining chapters are divided into two parts. Part I consists of Chapters 1-4, which describe the emergence of the policing logic over the course of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Chapters 1-3 are empirical chapters chronicling LAPD history from inception through the Watts uprising and its aftermath. Chapter 4 is a discussion chapter describing the policing logic that came to define LAPD organizational culture in this period. This chapter illustrates how dominant interpretations of the policing logic's constituent categories were mutually informed by broad cultural structures of White racism, local social structural conditions, and LAPD practices in early Los Angeles. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the policing logic's power to generate widespread support for the LAPD, even among residents of the segregated

Black and Chicano neighborhoods that bore the worst of the department’s abusive practices in this period.

Part II consists of Chapters 5-8, which describe the perpetuation of the policing logic since the mid-20th century. Chapters 5-7 are empirical chapters chronicling LAPD history from the late 1960s to today. Chapter 8 is a discussion chapter describing how, even as the policing logic continued to define LAPD culture, interpretations of the logic’s constituent categories evolved over time in response to changes in dominant cultural structures and social structural conditions in late 20th and early 21st century Los Angeles. Changes in the operative meanings of these categories produced concomitant shifts in LAPD practices that were celebrated by police reformers, especially over the last two decades. However, the LAPD’s continued commitment to the policing logic in the cultural and structural context of modern Los Angeles ensures that Black and Latino residents will continue to be disproportionately targeted for enforcement, perpetuating the LAPD’s legacy of racialized harm in spite of significant reform. The chapter concludes by discussing the study’s implications for understandings of police reform and the reformist-abolitionist debate.

Table 1. Significant Chiefs Throughout LAPD History

Chiefs of Police	Tenure
James E. Davis	1926-1929, 1933-1938
William H. Parker	1950-1966
Thomas Reddin	1967-1969
Edward M. Davis	1969-1978
Daryl Gates	1978-1992
Willie Williams	1992-1997
Bernard Parks	1997-2002
William Bratton	2002-2009
Charlie Beck	2009-2018
Michel Moore	2018-Present

Chapter 1. Policing in Los Angeles in the 19th Century

Although exploratory trips were undertaken as early as the 16th century, European settlement in the area that would become Los Angeles began with a delegation of the Spanish Franciscan order in the late 18th century.¹ At the time, the area was inhabited by the native Tongva people, who had occupied the region for approximately 7,000 years.² Spanish settlement between the late 18th and early 19th centuries was coupled with the subjugation of these native peoples and the decimation of their villages and landscape. The Spanish established missions and pueblos that relied fundamentally on the Tongva as a “dependent workforce.”³ Following the War for Mexican Independence in 1810 to 1821, control over Spanish lands in the region transferred from the Catholic Church to a select group of Mexican citizens who established “ranchos”—large-scale, subsistence-focused cattle farms that continued to rely fundamentally on native labor.⁴ Mexican settlers viewed idle indigenous peoples as a threat and requested that the local municipal government place them under “strict police surveillance.”⁵ In response, new laws were passed that required unemployed natives to be arrested and forced to labor on both public and private work projects.⁶

The U.S. declaration of war against Mexico in 1846 culminated in the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, which ceded sovereign authority over the region to the U.S.⁷ Although formerly Mexican residents in the area were granted U.S. citizenship, changes brought about by the transfer of government taxing authority and incoming migrants from other U.S. states decimated the rancho economy.⁸ Throughout the mid- to late 19th century, the large

¹ Kelly Lytle Hernández, *City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles, 1771–1965* (UNC Press Books, 2017), 21-23; Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (University of California Press, 1993), 5.

² Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 17.

³ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 28.

⁴ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 32-33; Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 8-9.

⁵ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 34.

⁶ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 33-34.

⁷ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 34.

⁸ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 12-17.

rancho estates were bought out by U.S. capitalists or subdivided into smaller plots and converted to agricultural production.⁹ Between 1850 and 1885, the population grew from 1,610 mostly formerly Mexican and native inhabitants to approximately 20,000 predominantly White inhabitants from other U.S. states.¹⁰

During this same period, the first modern police departments began to appear in urban cities throughout the U.S.¹¹ Based on the model of Sir Robert Peel's Metropolitan Police of London, the initial formation of these departments was met with some opposition. As Monkkonen describes, "Opponents argued that the new police threatened traditional civil liberties and freedom...[a product of] the monarchical and antidemocratic English...[that] would evolve into standing armies."¹² The fear was that these departments would serve as domestic military forces directed toward suppressing citizens' legitimate expression of fundamental rights. However, these early police departments were justified and legitimized under the notion that they would be directed specifically toward the "prevention of crime," and in so doing would function as enforcers of popular, "democratic" justice.¹³ The 1857 annual report of Boston's newly installed chief of police stated, "To prevent the commission of crime is a paramount object, and if the appearance of police, in a dress distinguishing them from other citizens, will tend to this result, it is well worth the experiment."¹⁴

The preventative orientation of these early police departments was reflected in the wide-ranging duties they performed. As opposed to pre-modern "constables and thief catchers," who were fundamentally reactive and "did not become involved until a prohibited behavior had occurred,"¹⁵ newly formed urban police departments focused on general, proactive management

⁹ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 17-20.

¹⁰ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 37; Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 21, 82.

¹¹ Eric H. Monkkonen, *Police in Urban America, 1860-1920* (Cambridge University Press, 1981).

¹² Monkkonen, *Police*, 40-41.

¹³ Monkkonen, *Police*, 39-40. See also Roger Lane, "Urban Police and Crime in Nineteenth-Century America," *Crime and Justice* 15 (1992): 11; Robert Reiner, *The Politics of the Police*, 4th ed (Oxford University Press, 2010), 56-57.

¹⁴ Monkkonen, *Police*, 30.

¹⁵ Monkkonen, *Police*, 41.

of the “dangerous class”—those who were viewed not only as crime-prone but as “threats to the social order.”¹⁶ In essence, the focus shifted “from illegal behavior to potential offender, from act to actor.”¹⁷ Management and control of this dangerous class entailed not only criminal law enforcement in the form of arrests, but also lodging, food, and limited services provision. Monkkenon uses quantitative data on police practices to illustrate how social services such as overnight boarding of the homeless and returning lost children were not ancillary duties but core functions expected of these early police departments, akin to criminal arrests—“the police were the ones who felt the initial responsibility to the poor, and were also the agency to which the poor appealed.”¹⁸ Walker and Katz assert that, “[t]he police were a major social welfare institution in the nineteenth century.”¹⁹ Nevertheless, police provision of social services was circumscribed by their nominal focus on crime prevention, and thus departments provided only the barest services viewed as minimally adequate for accomplishing this goal. As Monkkenon describes, “The lodgings, clearly, served only to keep the people alive and moving, nothing more; and once revived, the lodgers wanted to escape.”²⁰

Although proactive crime prevention was the ostensible purpose of early police departments, they often functioned as tools of political factionalism, a fact which served as a persistent source of corruption scandals, leadership changes, and public critique throughout the mid- to late 19th century.²¹ Fogelson argues that police departments in this period were largely the pawns of local political machines. Prevailing machine bosses exploited police departments as tools for suppressing political enemies, manipulating polling practices, and providing large-scale patronage employment, all in the interests of maintaining political power.²² Moreover, bribery

¹⁶ Monkkenon, *Police*, 88.

¹⁷ Monkkenon, *Police*, 41.

¹⁸ Monkkenon, *Police*, 102.

¹⁹ Samuel Walker and Charles M. Katz, *Police in America*, 5th ed. (McGraw-Hill, 2005), 32. See also Lane, “Urban Police,” 9; Robert M. Fogelson, *Big-City Police* (Harvard University Press, 1977), 16.

²⁰ Monkkenon, *Police*, 91.

²¹ Fogelson, *Big-City Police*; Samuel Walker, *A Critical History of Police Reform: The Emergence of Professionalism* (Lexington Books, 1977).

²² Fogelson, *Big-City Police*, 17-39.

was rampant, leading to selective underenforcement of the “vice” offenses—gambling, drunkenness, and prostitution—that so troubled Progressive reformers of the time.²³ As Fogelson states, “the police did not suppress vice; they licensed it...Nor did the police eradicate crime; they regulated it.”²⁴

Although Los Angeles in the mid- to late 19th century was still a small, rural municipality, the city’s police exhibited many of the same features associated with emerging departments in large urban centers throughout the U.S. For one, police in early Los Angeles performed a similar mix of social control and social service functions designed to contain the threat posed by the “dangerous class.” Table 2 provides lodging and arrest data from the earliest Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) annual reports available in city archives.²⁵

Table 2. Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) Lodging and Arrests to 1900

Year	“Lodging”	“Destitute fed and cared for”	Total Arrests	Drunk Arrests
1886	372	-	2,564	891
1892	655	769	2,303	940
1893	1,080	1,195	3,077	1,075
1896	710	431	4,818	1,805
1897	514	440	4,649	1,883
1898	450	496	4,369	1,967
1899	511	556	3,878	-
1900	302	192	3,961	1,773
<i>Source:</i> Los Angeles Police Department Annual Reports, Los Angeles City Archive, Boxes B-101, B-108, B-110.				

²³ Fogelson, *Big-City Police*, 20-21.

²⁴ Fogelson, *Big-City Police*, 32.

²⁵ Hernández states that the LAPD and city archivists destroyed a considerable portion of the department’s records following the publication of Escobar’s book on the LAPD and the making of Mexican American political identity in early Los Angeles. Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 2-3; Edward Escobar, *Race, Police, and the Making of a Political Identity: Mexican Americans and the Los Angeles Police Department, 1900-1945* (University of California Press, 1999).

As these data demonstrate, the provision of lodging was a significant service performed by police in early Los Angeles, as it was throughout the U.S. The ratio of arrests to lodgers was as low as 3.5 to 1 in 1892-1893. It rose steadily throughout the latter half of the 1890s, a trend witnessed in most U.S. cities at the turn of the century,²⁶ eventually reaching 13.2 to 1 in 1900. Nevertheless, the department was still housing nearly 1 lodger a night at that time.²⁷ Moreover, the 1886 annual report makes clear that lodging provision was not viewed as an auxiliary function, secondary to criminal law enforcement. The department's accounting of its activities for the year consists of a combined list in which arrests for criminal offenses and services performed are not separated or differentiated. "Lodging" ranks second on the list behind only "Drunk and Disorderly" arrests and immediately ahead of "Drunk - To Sober Up" arrests, another coercive form of lodging provision with a decidedly preventative focus. Beginning in 1892, reports also included an annual count of "Destitute fed and cared for," an additional service that represented a substantial portion of overall police activities.

Coupled with these "supportive" measures²⁸ were arrests for quality-of-life offenses, which represented the punitive dimension of "dangerous class" control. Arrests for drunkenness in particular outnumbered arrests for any other offense category in every year for which data are available pre-1900. In only one year—1893—did the number of lodgers (1,080) eclipse the number of drunk arrests (1,075). From 1896-1900,²⁹ drunk arrests outnumbered the second most frequent arrest category by more than 1,000 arrests, and the second largest arrest category in each of these years was another quality-of-life offense, either "Disturbing the peace" or "Vagrancy." In the 1886 annual report, drunk arrests are separated into two categories—"Drunk and Disorderly" (620 arrests) and "Drunk - To Sober Up" (271 arrests)—indicating that a

²⁶ Monkkonen, *Police*.

²⁷ This represents an average (.85 lodgers per night). Lodging provision exhibited large seasonal fluctuations, with totals considerably higher in the winter months of November-March relative to the rest of the year.

²⁸ Monkkonen, *Police*, 136.

²⁹ Excluding 1899, for which arrest data by offense type are not available in city archives.

considerable portion of these arrests were purely preventative, without accompanying “disorderly” behavior. In subsequent reports, only the single arrest category of “Drunk” appears, rendering it impossible to determine precisely what proportion of these arrests continued to be made on a purely preventative basis. However, the absence of the “disorderly” modifier in the category label suggests that at least some of these arrests were made for the purpose of forestalling criminal or “disorderly” conduct that had not yet occurred.

Like other departments across the country in the 19th century, LAPD activity was directed toward a fluidly defined “dangerous class” perceived not simply as a criminal threat, but as a threat to prevailing social order. In the earliest days following the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, criminal violence among incoming White settlers was dramatic and widespread, giving early Los Angeles a reputation as an exceedingly dangerous frontier town.³⁰ And yet it was the native Tongva people that were perceived as the primary threat necessitating police enforcement, as they had been in Mexican Los Angeles prior to the war.³¹ A county grand jury in 1859 urged that, “Stringent vagrant laws should be enacted and enforced compelling such persons [Indians] to obtain an honest livelihood or seek their old homes in the mountains.”³² Indeed, the city’s first governing council described the jailer’s salary as payment for “board[ing] Indians as city prisoners.”³³ Many of these native inmates were forced to work on chain gangs to construct public infrastructure for the growing city, and the council similarly described the salary of the gangs’ overseer as payment for “superintending Indians on public works.”³⁴ Native inmates, however, were not set to work exclusively on public projects; local legislation also enabled native prisoners to be auctioned off to private employers, and such auctions were held

³⁰ John M. Faragher, *Eternity Street: Violence and Justice in Frontier Los Angeles* (WW Norton & Company, 2016); Horace Bell, *Reminiscences of a Ranger, or Early Times in Southern California* (Yarnell, Caystile & Mathes, 1881).

³¹³¹ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 33-44.

³² Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 42.

³³ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 36.

³⁴ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 37.

weekly in front of the county jail.³⁵ As one law enforcement ranger of the time described, “Los Angeles had its slave mart, as well as New Orleans and Constantinople—only the slave at Los Angeles was sold fifty-two times a year as long as he lived, which did not generally exceed one, two, or three years.”³⁶ As this quote also demonstrates, forced labor and incarceration were a major contributor to the tremendous decline in the native population in Los Angeles, which by 1880 only numbered 312 individuals.³⁷

Although they represented only a tiny fraction of the population in late 19th century Los Angeles, Chinese immigrants were also the targets of both official law enforcement and mob violence.³⁸ In 1871, a White rancher was killed after intervening in a gun battle with the purpose of capturing or killing the Chinese shooters. The death fueled rumors that Chinese immigrants were intentionally killing local Whites, culminating in a “massacre” in which 500 Los Angeles residents set fire to Chinese residences and shot or hung at least 18 people, more than 10% of the Chinese population in Los Angeles at the time.³⁹ Hernández describes some of the parties involved in the massacre: “Among the participants were a local judge, the district attorney, the county sheriff, and a future county supervisor. The mayor temporarily resigned his post to take part in the riot.”⁴⁰ Woods cites an eyewitness account stating that the mob was led by members of the city marshal’s office.⁴¹

But, as the “tramp panic” at the turn of the century illustrates, the dangerous class in Los Angeles was not defined solely by race.⁴² The term “tramp” (or synonymously “hobo”) was used to refer to propertyless, nomadic White men displaced from “farm life and artisan careers”⁴³

³⁵ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 38.

³⁶ Bell, *Reminiscences of a Ranger*, 48.

³⁷ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 44.

³⁸ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 65-67.

³⁹ Scott Zesch, *The Chinatown War: Chinese Los Angeles and the Massacre of 1871* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

⁴⁰ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 66-67.

⁴¹ Gerald Woods, *The Police in Los Angeles: Reform and Professionalization* (Garland Publishing, 1993), 29.

⁴² Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 45-63.

⁴³ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 45.

who roamed the U.S. in the late 19th century and early 20th century providing temporary labor for various seasonal industries. Because “tramping” contravened dominant conceptions of social order centered on steady employment, property ownership, and the “hetero-patriarchal nuclear family,”⁴⁴ tramps were viewed as a social threat across the U.S.⁴⁵ At conference of *charity workers* in 1877, Francis Wayland, then dean of Yale Law School, described a tramp as “false, treacherous, ungrateful, and malignant always, he wanders aimlessly from city to city...wherever he goes, a positive nuisance and a possible criminal.”⁴⁶ He further claimed that tramps as a class constituted an “evil” that “threatens the very life of society.”⁴⁷

With its idyllic winter weather, Los Angeles was a popular off-season destination for tramps, who in the late 19th century comprised an estimated 7% of the city population between the months of November and March.⁴⁸ Publisher Harrison Gray Otis and the *Los Angeles Times*, which served as a mouthpiece for the city’s early business elite,⁴⁹ mounted a vociferous campaign denouncing the migrants and calling for police action. A fall 1882 issue of the *Times* included an article entitled “A Tramp’s Insolence,” which claimed:

Every man or woman who feeds or contributes to feed one of these vags [vagrants] is perpetuating a wrong on the community and maintaining a criminal in idleness. Kick them out and turn them over to the police and the tender mercies of Justice Adams.⁵⁰

The police in Los Angeles were responsive to these concerns, and the paper frequently reported on tramp arrests.⁵¹ A 1900 issue described the LAPD’s approach to tramps in the city:

⁴⁴ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 46.

⁴⁵ Frank T. Higbie, *Indispensable Outcasts: Hobo Workers and Community in the American Midwest, 1880-1930* (University of Illinois Press, 2003).

⁴⁶ Francis Wayland, “The Tramp Question,” in *Proceedings of the Conference of Charities* (A. Williams & Co., 1877), 113.

⁴⁷ Wayland, “The Tramp Question,” 120.

⁴⁸ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 47.

⁴⁹ Robert Gottlieb and Irene Wolt, *Thinking Big: The Story of the Los Angeles Times, Its Publishers, and Their Influence on Southern California* (Putnam, 1977), Sec. I.

⁵⁰ “A Tramp’s Insolence,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 16, 1882, 4. See also “An Influx of Vagrants,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 30, 1882, 4.

⁵¹ See, e.g., “The Tramp Nuisance,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 14, 1882, 4; “Rough on Tramps,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 28, 1885, 1. A search of “tramp AND criminal” in the *Los Angeles Times* online

Chief of Police Elton has given instructions to his men to look after the tramp fraternity closely this winter...The season of the year is at hand when tramps and criminals usually flock to Southern California, and Chief Elton proposes to take no chances with these gentry. He therefore hopes that the courts will deal severely with hobos rounded up by the police, so that they will learn to give this city a wide berth.⁵²

One month later, in an article entitled “To Prevent Any Carnival of Crime,” Chief Elton is quoted discussing the crime prevention goal of his tramp crackdown:

We always expect more work during the winter season than during any other part of the year, and this season we are preparing to handle it from the start...We will have men watching all incoming trains from now on, and as many criminals as can be recognized will be arrested as soon as they arrive here...[W]e propose to do all we can to apprehend as many as possible before they have an opportunity to do any work...It is not my desire to alarm any person unnecessarily, but if earnest work by this department will prevent crime, we will prevent it.⁵³

There is evidence in the LAPD annual reports to suggest that tramps were some of the primary recipients of police lodging and other service accommodations. In reports that include monthly tallies, the number of lodgers and “Destitute fed and cared for” is considerably higher in the winter months between November and March, particularly relative to the summer months when tramps were more likely to find seasonal work.⁵⁴ However, like the *Los Angeles Times* articles cited above, the annual reports also suggest that the police response to tramps was by no means limited to such “supportive” measures. In fact, the reports indicate that at the close of the 19th century, just as the LAPD began to shift away from lodging provision and toward more quality-of-life arrests, the targets of their enforcement became whiter. Table 3 includes LAPD annual report data on lodging, quality-of-life enforcement, and the imprisoned population in Los Angeles at the turn of the 20th century.

archives reveals 1,150 matches between the paper’s founding in 1881 and 1900, with matches peaking in the period between 1893 and 1897.

⁵² “Round-Up of Tramps: Police Hot After Hobos,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 10, 1900, 10.

⁵³ “To Prevent Any Carnival of Crime: The Police Department Takes Steps to Protect the People,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 15, 1900, 9.

⁵⁴ Los Angeles Police Department Annual Reports 1886-1900, LA City Archive, Boxes B-101, B-108, B-110.

Table 3. LAPD Lodging, Quality-of-Life Enforcement, and Imprisoned Population to 1900

Year	“Lodging”	Total Arrests	Percent Quality-of-Life Offenses*	“Meals Furnished Prisoners”	“Colored Imprisoned”	“Chinese Imprisoned”
1886	372	2,564	53.9%	-	-	-
1892	655	2,303	57.8%	37,255	391	326
1893	1,080	3,077	60.2%	39,156	-	-
1896	710	4,818	63.7%	77,199	165	225
1897	514	4,649	60.4%	84,090	157	276
1898	450	4,369	64.3%	74,210	105	94
1899	511	3,878	-	56,285	184	118
1900	302	3,961	64.4%	-	144	71

*Includes “drunk,” disorderly conduct, vagrancy, disturbing the peace, and begging.
Source: Los Angeles Police Department Annual Reports, Los Angeles City Archive, Boxes B-101, B-108, B-110.

These data illustrate that as the number of lodgers declined at the end of the century, annual arrests increased dramatically, and quality-of-life enforcement comprised an increasingly larger proportion of LAPD’s total arrest activity. Total annual arrests averaged 2,648 in the years 1886, 1892, and 1893, compared to 4,335 from 1896 to 1900. In 1898 and 1900, the last two years for which data are available, quality-of-life offenses made up 64% of total arrests, compared to 54% in 1886 and 58% to 60% in 1892 to 1893, the peak years of LAPD lodging provision.

At the same time, as the LAPD shifted focus toward quality-of-life enforcement, it appears that the non-White proportion of the total imprisoned population also shrank. Although reports do not include a count of the total incarcerated population, they include a count of “Meals Furnished Prisoners,” which suffices as an adequate proxy. The reports also do not include the total number of non-White persons incarcerated; the only two racial groups tracked in the reports are “Colored Imprisoned” and “Chinese Imprisoned,” affirming that these groups were indeed perceived by the LAPD as uniquely dangerous threats to the community. Nevertheless, imprisonment of these racial groups generally declined, even as the number of

meals served to prisoners increased. In 1892, the first year for which imprisonment data is available, the LAPD served 37,255 meals in prison, and they imprisoned 391 “Colored” individuals and 326 “Chinese” individuals. From 1896 to 1898, however, the LAPD imprisoned an average of 142 “Colored” individuals and 198 “Chinese” individuals annually, even as the number of meals served to prisoners increased to an annual average of 78,499. The number of meals dropped to 56,285 in 1899, and the number of “Colored Imprisoned” nearly doubled. But this appears to be an outlier, as the number of “Colored Imprisoned” in 1900 was the second lowest on record, and the number of “Chinese Imprisoned” was the lowest. It appears, therefore, that as both arrests for quality-of-life offenses and the total incarcerated population in Los Angeles grew at the end of the 19th century, White individuals made up an increasingly larger proportion of those incarcerated. This is a trend that would continue into the early 1900s; Hernández states that in 1905, “white men comprised 98% of all people held in the city jail.”⁵⁵

Finally, like other emerging departments across the country, police in Los Angeles were the subject of frequent corruption scandals. The LAPD was initially formed in 1876 to replace the prior city marshal’s office, which was disbanded due to corrupt fee-taking and bribery practices.⁵⁶ In 1870, the marshal was shot and killed by his own deputy in a dispute over a reward for returning stolen goods.⁵⁷ The nascent LAPD, however, was also rife with corruption. As Woods describes, “Citizens as well as politicians apparently considered the LAPD a lowly patronage bureau.”⁵⁸ Employment in the department depended on who held political office, and politically motivated turnover was routine. Between 1877 and 1889, the department was led by “at least” 16 different chiefs, and “[a] change of chief often toppled the captains and sergeants as well.”⁵⁹ Tenuous employment conditions discouraged “capable, honest men” and attracted those

⁵⁵ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 56.

⁵⁶ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 12.

⁵⁷ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 12. Woods further notes that members of the city marshal’s office frequently colluded with thieves to return stolen goods while sharing the reward money.

⁵⁸ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 14.

⁵⁹ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 13.

who were willing to take advantage of the opportunities that corruption provided.⁶⁰ Officers supplemented their meager salaries through bribes, allowing brothels, illicit casinos, and unlicensed saloons to proliferate in the city's depressed central core where the poor and non-white residents of the city resided.⁶¹

In 1889, the city charter was re-written, and a civilian police commission was established to oversee the LAPD with the hope of curbing political influence.⁶² The commission initially consisted of the mayor and four private citizens, two Democrats and two Republicans, appointed by the city council. Establishment of the commission, and the accompanying appointment of Chief Glass the same year, somewhat stabilized the department, and the chief remained in office for the next ten years.⁶³ In 1899, however, in a display of the persistent power that politicians exercised over the force, Chief Glass was forced out after instituting disciplinary measures that upset members of the city council. The council forced the resignation of two commissioners, and their appointed replacements immediately pushed out Chief Glass and rolled back his attempted reforms.⁶⁴ In his annual message to the city council in 1900, Mayor Eaton lamented, "It is the spirit of the charter that the police force shall be a non-partisan body, free from all political influences, but in practice it has too often been quite the reverse."⁶⁵

⁶⁰ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 14.

⁶¹ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 14; Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 50.

⁶² Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 14-15.

⁶³ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 15-18.

⁶⁴ "Mayor's Annual Message: General Review of Affairs Affecting the Municipality," *Los Angeles Times*, January 3, 1900, 9.

⁶⁵ Mayor Fred Eaton, Letter to City Council dated January 2, 1900, LA City Archive Boxes, B-101, B-108, B-110.

Chapter 2. Population Booms and Rampant Corruption:

Los Angeles and the LAPD in the Early 20th Century

Between 1850 and 1885, Los Angeles grew rapidly but remained a small, rural town. Los Angeles numbered 11,183 residents in the 1880 census, less than 5% of the population of San Francisco, then California's largest city.¹ More than 90% of the city consisted of natural or agriculture landscapes, and utility services did not extend beyond two miles from the city center.² Starting in the late 19th century and proceeding with earnest in the early 20th century, Los Angeles experienced successive population booms that catapulted it into the class of large urban U.S. centers. By 1930, Los Angeles would be the fifth largest city in the country with over 1.2 million residents, nearly double the population of San Francisco.³

The influx of migrants was unique in several respects. Charles Fletcher Lummis, the first editor of the *Los Angeles Times*, described it as, "the least heroic migration in history...they were, by and large, by far the most comfortable immigrants, financially, in history."⁴ The initial booms of the late 19th century were fueled by wealthy retirees and consumptives seeking out Los Angeles's highly promoted "salubrious" climate.⁵ But, as the Los Angeles Board of Trade protested in 1888, "[the city] cannot have permanent prosperity merely from a few rich men coming here to build homes, without producing anything."⁶ By the early 20th century, Los Angeles's booster community changed tacks, hoping to appeal to new generation of restless, middle-class Whites from central and midwestern states.⁷

¹ Robert M. Fogelson, *The Fragmented Metropolis: Los Angeles, 1850-1930* (University of California Press, 1993), 21.

² Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 137.

³ Campbell Gibson, "Population of the 100 Largest Cities and Other Urban Places in the United States: 1790 to 1990," U.S. Census Bureau Working Paper No. POP-WP027 (June 2018), tbl. 16.

<https://www.census.gov/library/working-papers/1998/demo/POP-twps0027.html>

⁴ Carey McWilliams, *Southern California: An Island on the Land* (Gibbs Smith, 1973), 150.

⁵ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 66-68; Tom Zimmerman, "Paradise Promoted: Boosterism and the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce," *California History* 64, no. 1 (1985): 23.

⁶ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 68.

⁷ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 68-75.

The booster campaigns of the early 1900s were attuned to a cultural shift among members of this new generation. Previous booster campaigns of the late 1800s emphasized Los Angeles's agricultural potential with "spectacular statistics of crop production, land prices, water resources, and transport facilities."⁸ But farmers in rural America, and particularly their young descendants, had become disillusioned with the toil and provincialism of farm life.⁹ Memoirist Hamlin Garland's description of rural life "on the prairie" epitomizes this shift in attitudes toward farming at the turn of the century:

Most authors in writing of "the merry merry farmer" leave out experiences like this—they omit the mud and the dust and the grime, they forget the army worm, the flies, the heat, as well as the smells and drudgery of the barns. Milking the cows is spoken of in the traditional fashion as a lovely pastoral recreation, when as a matter of fact it is a tedious job. We all hated it. We saw no poetry in it. We hated it in summer...and we hated it still more in the winter.¹⁰

What this new generation valued was the opportunity to live a less toilsome, more well-rounded life. Hard work and wealth accumulation were no longer viewed as ends in and of themselves, but as a means of obtaining "the legitimate comforts of life."¹¹ Weiss describes how "success books" from turn-of-the-century New Thought authors emphasized a new vision of "the good life":

The good life, always the object of guides to success, now became synonymous with the full life...Inspirationalists advised their readers not to concentrate their efforts exclusively on business, and to leave plenty of leisure time for the cultivation of hobbies, family life, and enjoyment of nature. Balance in the new success literature took the place which moderation had occupied in the old.¹²

⁸ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 72; Zimmerman, "Paradise Promoted," 24.

⁹ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 69.

¹⁰ Hamlin Garland, *A Son of the Middle Border* (MacMillan Company, 1917), 129.

¹¹ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 70-72.

¹² Richard Weiss, *The American Myth of Success: From Horatio Alger to Norman Vincent Peale* (Basic Books, 1969), 145.

With its temperate, forgiving climate and “varied, even exotic landscape,”¹³ Los Angeles was well-positioned to attract rural migrants seeking this new vision of “the good life,” and booster materials at the turn of the century changed accordingly. The emphasis on productivity and profit waned, replaced with a focus on the unique leisure and recreational opportunities that Los Angeles afforded.¹⁴ As Zimmerman describes, “hedonism became acceptable as a motif.”¹⁵ The booster magazine *Land of Sunshine* raved of southern California’s potential:

It will have a population ruddy with out-of-doors, with not one day in a lifetime behind shut windows; ungnarled by desperate labor; generous because happy, genial because unworried, tolerant because unprovincial, intellectual because with means, leisure and incentive for culture...

[B]y-and-large it will be a community whose units shall live easier, live better, live longer; shall be more alive, and more glad to be alive, and more fit to be alive, than the units of any other population [on earth].¹⁶

References to work in booster materials appeared only in the context of claims that agricultural production in Los Angeles required less time and effort, providing more opportunities for savoring life’s enjoyments: “The difference between this and many parts of our land is that nature seems to work with man, and not against him...[to] soften the asperities...[and abate] the restless rush and haste of our usual life.”¹⁷ The *Land of Sunshine* asserted:

We shall probably continue to “get as much done” as the Saxon has ever done anywhere; and we shall unquestionably get very much more out of it. Indeed, by force of our environment rather than by our deliberate wit, we are destined to show an astonished world the spectacle of Americans having a good time.¹⁸

¹³ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 72.

¹⁴ Clark Davis, “From Oasis to Metropolis: Southern California and the Changing Context of American Leisure,” *Pacific Historical Review* 61, no.3 (1992): 357–86.

¹⁵ Zimmerman, “Paradise Promoted,” 26.

¹⁶ “In the Lion’s Den,” *Land of Sunshine* 3, no. 3 (August 1895): 135-137.

¹⁷ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 72.

¹⁸ “La Fiesta de Los Angeles,” *Land of Sunshine* 6, no. 6 (May 1987): 261.

As use of the term “Saxon” in the above quote suggests, the ideal image of Los Angeles promoted in booster materials was unquestionably a racial project.¹⁹ City promoters shared in the hope that “[t]he true destiny of Los Angeles was to become an Aryan city of the sun.”²⁰ Los Angeles was described by boosters as “Eden of the Saxon home-seeker”²¹ and “the White Spot of America.”²²

Social Structural Conditions in Los Angeles in the Early 20th Century

The successive waves of incoming migrants to Los Angeles between 1900 and 1930 illustrate the tremendous success of this campaign. Table 4 includes data on city population trends in this period.

Table 4. Los Angeles Population Growth, 1900 to 1930

Year	Population ¹	U.S. Rank ¹	Percent Growth	U.S.-Born White ²	Born in Midwest or Mountain State ²	Foreign-Born White ²	Non-White ²
1900	102,479	36	-	77.7%	29.8%	18%	4.3%
1910	319,198	17	211%	76.6%	34.5%	19%	4.4%
1920	576,673	10	81%	75.8%	34.4%	19%	5.2%
1930	1,238,048	5	115%	70.8%*	32.2%	15%*	14.2%*

¹ Source: Gibson 1998

² Source: Fogelson 1993, tbls. 6-9, 80-82

*According to Fogelson (1993), “The Bureau of the Census reclassified the Mexicans from white to nonwhite in 1930” (80), resulting in a drop in the White population percentages (both U.S.- and foreign-born) and concomitant increase in non-White population percentage.

Los Angeles’s rate of growth in this period was unparalleled among other U.S. cities.²³ The population in 1930 was more than 12x larger than it was just 30 years prior, and much of this

¹⁹ Kelly Lytle Hernández, *City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles, 1771–1965* (University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 49; Kevin Starr, *Inventing the Dream: California through the Progressive Era* (Oxford University Press, 1985), 89-92.

²⁰ Starr, *Inventing the Dream*, 91.

²¹ *Land of Sunshine* 2, no. 2 (January 1895), 34.

²² Dennis McDougal, *Privileged Son: Otis Chandler and the Rise and Fall of the L.A. Times Dynasty* (Perseus Publishing, 2001), 105.

²³ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, tbl. 4-5, 78-79.

growth was sustained by incoming migrants from the central states. The initial boom between 1900 and 1910 was coupled with a sizeable increase in the percentage of residents born in a Midwest or mountain state, from 29.8% to 34.5%. For the next 20 years, this percentage dipped only slightly, indicating that natural increase in the local population was matched by continued immigration from these central states. Fogelson confirms that the percentage of Los Angeles residents born in California remained virtually unchanged from 1910 to 1930.²⁴ It was the idealistic visions of these U.S.-born White migrants that would shape the development of Los Angeles throughout the early 20th century. As Fogelson states, “their conception of the good life so shaped the landscape, community, and government of Los Angeles as to leave an indelible imprint on the character of their adopted metropolis.”²⁵

This is perhaps no more evident than in the unique spatial patterns of Los Angeles’s expansion. Development in Los Angeles was suburban from the start.²⁶ Suburban development reflected migrants’ desires for residences at the ideal urban-rural interface, where pastoral pleasures, rustic recreation, and communal conviviality could be enjoyed simultaneously.²⁷ The result was form of residential dispersal and business decentralization unique among large U.S. cities. In 1930, Los Angeles’s population density was 2,812 residents per square mile, less than one-third the density of any other U.S. city in the top 10.²⁸ Industrial and retail commerce was spread throughout these suburban developments, rather than concentrated in a central business district.²⁹ Suburban subdivisions catered not only to the affluent, but also to working- and middle-class migrants.³⁰ Yet, the differences between subdivisions were dwarfed by their similarities: “Despite the differences in chronology, clientele, topography, climate, and location,

²⁴ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, tbl. 7, 79.

²⁵ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 84.

²⁶ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, ch. 7.

²⁷ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 144-45; Becky M. Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven: Life and Politics in the Working-Class Suburbs of Los Angeles, 1920-1965* (University of Chicago Press, 2002), 18.

²⁸ Gibson, “Population,” tbl. 16.

²⁹ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 153-54; Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven*, 22-25.

³⁰ Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven*, 25-26.

the variations in subdivision design were remarkably slight in greater Los Angeles.”³¹ The economic promise of single-family-home ownership became a self-fulfilling prophecy, as persistent in-migration pushed property values perpetually higher, and the single-family home became a primary vehicle for generating household wealth.³² Working-class suburbanites derived additional “use value” from property ownership by “turn[ing] their domestic property into sites of production, growing fruits and vegetables and raising small livestock in backyards as a means of family sustenance.”³³

Racially restrictive covenants—deed provisions limiting the sale of property to non-Whites—were key to ensuring that suburban subdivisions remained almost exclusively White.³⁴ In the early 20th century, increased migration from non-Whites was an additional contributor to Los Angeles’s population expansion.³⁵ From 1900 to 1930, the Black population in Los Angeles grew nearly 20-fold from 2,131 to 38,898, and their share of the city’s population increased from 2.5% to 3.1%, despite heavy in-migration from U.S. Whites.³⁶ The earliest stages of this growth were fueled by Los Angeles’s reputation among Black Americans as a “land of golden opportunities,”³⁷ where they too could share in the dream of single-family-home ownership.³⁸ *The Liberator*, an early 20th century news magazine covering Los Angeles’s Black community, summarized the motivations of early Black migrants to the city: “We are here like other people, to share those splendid conditions found in California, buying homes and contributing our efforts to the common cause that is building up this great State.”³⁹ And indeed,

³¹ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 154.

³² Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 75; Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven*, 17-18.

³³ Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven*, 3, 29.

³⁴ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 145, 200-01; Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven*, 156-57; Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (Vintage Books, 1992), 161.

³⁵ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 75-77.

³⁶ Lawrence B. DeGraaf, “The City of Black Angels: Emergence of the Los Angeles Ghetto, 1890-1930,” *Pacific Historical Review* 39, no. 3 (1970): 330.

³⁷ Josh Sides, *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (University of California Press, 2003), 15.

³⁸ DeGraaf, “City of Black Angels,” 330-34; Lonnie G. Bunch, “A Past Not Necessarily Prologue: The Afro-American in Los Angeles,” in *20th Century Los Angeles: Power, Promotion, and Social Conflict*, ed. Norman M. Klein and Martin J. Schiesl (Regina Books, 1990), 101-09.

³⁹ “Why California Should Not Have Segregated Schools,” *The Liberator* 11, no. 15 (January 31, 1913): 1.

36.1% of Black residents of Los Angeles in 1910 were homeowners, by far the largest percentage among large U.S. population centers.⁴⁰ W.E.B. DuBois's *The Crisis* magazine further lauded the quality of this residential housing: "The colored population of Los Angeles...are without doubt the most beautifully housed group of colored people in the United States."⁴¹

But by the late 1910s, the growth of Los Angeles's Black population triggered a racist backlash, producing the pattern of residential segregation that would define the city over the coming decades.⁴² Much of this backlash was fueled by self-fulfilling fears among Whites that Black migrants led to "property depreciation in the community where they settle."⁴³ Although residential segregation began to increase throughout the 1910s, it accelerated in earnest following a 1919 ruling from the California Supreme Court officially sanctioning the use of deed restrictions to prohibit non-White occupancy.⁴⁴ Davis cites research stating that, as a result of these racially restrictive covenants, "95 per cent of the city's housing stock in the 1920s was effectively put off limits to Blacks."⁴⁵

During that decade, as the Black population expanded by more than 23,000, the majority of Black residents settled in the Central Avenue district near downtown or further south in "a few detached islands" such as Watts, an incorporated city annexed by Los Angeles in 1926, allegedly at the behest of the local Ku Klux Klan who feared the city might elect a Black mayor.⁴⁶ As early as 1915, Central Avenue was described as the city's "Black belt" by *The California Eagle*, Los Angeles's leading Black newspaper.⁴⁷ With increased in-migration in the

⁴⁰ Bunch, "Past Not Necessarily Prologue," 103-04. Bunch states that, with respect to the Black homeownership rate in 1910, "[t]he only areas to surpass Los Angeles were small towns such as Marshall, Texas at 37.5% and Atchison, Kansas with 53.6%" (104).

⁴¹ "Colored California," *The Crisis* 6, no. 4 (August 1913): 193.

⁴² Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 17-18; DeGraaf, "City of Black Angels," 334-38.

⁴³ DeGraaf, "City of Black Angels," 336. See also Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 147.

⁴⁴ *Los Angeles Investment Co. v. Gary*, 181 Cal. 680 (Cal. 1919).

⁴⁵ Davis, *City of Quartz*, 161.

⁴⁶ DeGraaf, "City of Black Angels," 335, 347. Watts was surrounded the "nearly lily-white cities" of Compton and South Gate, which each had one Black household in 1930, and Lynwood, which described itself in this period as "the friendly Caucasian city." Gerald Horne, *Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s* (Da Capo Press, 1997), 27. See also Nicolaidis, *My Blue Heaven*, 54.

⁴⁷ Douglas Flamming, *Bound for Freedom: Black Los Angeles in Jim Crow America* (University of California Press, 2005), 92.

1920s, the neighborhood's reputation as "the heart" of Black life in Los Angeles only increased.⁴⁸ In 1928, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) held their annual convention on Central Avenue, a recognition of both the vitality of Los Angeles's Black community and the importance of the district to Black Los Angeles.⁴⁹ Alongside the many Black churches, media outlets, restaurants, and shops,⁵⁰ Central Avenue also housed the bars, theaters, and music clubs that made it the focal point of entertainment and nightlife in early 20th century Los Angeles.⁵¹ Suburban Whites would go "slumming" in the neighborhood, indulging in scandalous late-night pleasures and "the exotic notion of associating with Blacks."⁵² But, as Bunch notes, "[t]his practice was not meant to encourage better communication between the races for rarely did the two groups interact."⁵³

Despite the strong association between Central Avenue and Black culture, both within and outside of Los Angeles's Black community,⁵⁴ the district was racially and ethnically diverse.⁵⁵ The neighborhood also housed a sizeable population⁵⁶ of Mexican/Chicano residents,⁵⁷ a community that also experienced rapid growth in 1920s Los Angeles. Los Angeles's Chicano

⁴⁸ Kelly Lytle Hernández, *City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles, 1771–1965* (University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 164.

⁴⁹ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 165.

⁵⁰ Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, Ch. 3.

⁵¹ Bryant *et al.*, *Central Avenue Sounds: Jazz in Los Angeles* (University of California Press, 1999); Johnny Otis, *Upside Your Head! Rhythm and Blues on Central Avenue* (Wesleyan University Press, 1993).

⁵² Bunch, "Past Not Necessarily Prologue," 113. See also Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 167.

⁵³ Bunch, "Past Not Necessarily Prologue," 114.

⁵⁴ Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 93.

⁵⁵ Sides, *L.A. City Limits*, 15; George J. Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American: Ethnicity, Culture, and Identity in Chicano Los Angeles, 1900–1945* (Oxford University Press, 1993), 74–76.

⁵⁶ Flamming states that, "ethnic Mexicans [in the Central Avenue district]...were equal to Negroes in number." Flamming estimates that between 10% to 20% of Central Avenue residents in 1920 were Black. The wide range stems from a Census tabulating error that Flamming uncovered in his research. Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 93, 394.

⁵⁷ In the remainder of the dissertation, I will use the term "Chicano" to refer to all individuals of Mexican descent residing in Los Angeles, both Mexican nationals and Mexican Americans. As McWilliams (1973 [1946], 317–318) describes, similar racism and marginalization was experienced by all those of Mexican descent in the city, regardless of nationality (see also Escobar 1999). McWilliams, *Southern California*, 317–18. See also Edward J. Escobar, *Race, Police, and the Making of a Political Identity: Mexican Americans and the Los Angeles Police Department, 1900–1945* (University of California Press, 1999).

population dwindled in the late 19th century following the U.S. seizure of California.⁵⁸ But the Mexican Revolution and economic expansion in the U.S. southwest during the early 1900s induced many migrants to head north.⁵⁹ By 1930, 10% of individuals born in Mexico resided in the U.S.⁶⁰ Los Angeles was a primary destination for many of these migrants, and by 1930 the city “boasted the second largest Mexican population of any metropolitan area in the world, exceeded only by Mexico City.”⁶¹ While estimates differ, there is no dispute that the Chicano population of Los Angeles more than tripled in the 1920s to somewhere between 97,000 and 190,000 residents, making it Los Angeles’s largest non-White racial or ethnic group.⁶² While still barred from the White suburbs by the same restrictive covenants that shut out Black and Asian residents, Chicano residents were more widely dispersed in Los Angeles, comprising a significant proportion of ethnically heterogeneous neighborhoods throughout downtown and East Los Angeles.⁶³ As a result of this geographic dispersal, as one Los Angeles housing official of the period noted, “there is no spot which we can call ‘Mexican Villa’ or ‘Little Mexico.’”⁶⁴

In addition to the domestic fantasies and racial antipathy that fueled suburban development and residential segregation, U.S.-born White migrants to Los Angeles during the boom period were characterized by their turn-of-the-century Progressive politics.⁶⁵ Given the unique characteristics of Los Angeles’s growth, however, the brand of Progressivism practiced locally differed from its urban east coast variants. Absent was any focus on charity or social services for poor European immigrants, largely because this population was quite small in Los

⁵⁸ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 37; Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 21, 82.

⁵⁹ Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 19-20.

⁶⁰ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 129.

⁶¹ Escobar, *Race, Police*, 79.

⁶² Escobar, *Race, Police*, 78-79. Escobar states, “While according to Census figures the Mexican population of the city rose from nearly 30,000 in 1920 to over 97,000 in 1930, Chicano scholars have estimated that the increase was even greater, ranging from approximately 50,000 in 1920 to 190,000 in 1930” (79).

⁶³ Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 73-77.

⁶⁴ Sánchez, *Becoming Mexican American*, 76.

⁶⁵ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, Ch. 10.

Angeles relative to other large U.S. cities.⁶⁶ As the editor of the *Los Angeles Times* recounted, “The ignorant, hopelessly un-American type of foreigner which infests and largely controls Eastern cities is almost unknown here.”⁶⁷ More broadly, it was believed that the problems associated with urban east coast slums—extreme poverty, moral degradation, and radical leftist politics—could be adequately addressed through Los Angeles’s unique suburban city design.⁶⁸ A realtor in early 20th century Los Angeles argued, “Home owners [sic] do not go about with torch and bomb, bent upon destruction...Of the forty percent of Americans who do own their own homes, not one has yet been classed with the malcontents.”⁶⁹ Progressives in Los Angeles instead focused their efforts on promoting efficient, corruption-free municipal governance. This manifested in broad support for direct legislation, recall power, and other modes of democratic policymaking; the dilution of party strength as means of undermining machine politics; and civil service protections to insulate government bureaucrats from undue political influence.⁷⁰

These migrants were also intent on weaving their conservative social mores into the fabric of their new city. An early city charter amendment in 1902 banned gambling and prostitution in Los Angeles,⁷¹ and over the next several decades residents passed numerous ordinances restricting public drunkenness, sales of alcohol in the suburbs and on Sundays, revealing clothing at city beaches, and whistles, trumpets, and other “loud noise” on city streets.⁷² In 1913, the literary magazine *The Smart Set* ran an article entitled “Los Angeles—The Chemically Pure” lambasting the city’s strident morality:

Enjoyment is considered the first step to perdition. Noise is the rumbling of the gates of hell. Music is the sign of immorality, and dancing is indecent...It is small wonder that Los Angeles enjoys the reputation of being the most puritanical and stupidly governed

⁶⁶ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 80, tbl. 6.

⁶⁷ Starr, *Inventing the Dream*, 89.

⁶⁸ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 191-92.

⁶⁹ Nicolaides, *My Blue Heaven*, 17.

⁷⁰ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 210-12; Escobar, *Race, Police*, 24-25; Gerald Woods, *The Police in Los Angeles: Reform and Professionalization* (Garland Publishing, 1993), 18.

⁷¹ Escobar, *Race, Police*, 25.

⁷² Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 50.

city of the first class in America—a city of little sociability or hospitality, a city devoid of lenience and cosmopolitanism.⁷³

As Fogelson recounts, the article enraged city residents.⁷⁴ But rather than disputing the article's characterization, they responded by defending the city as described. In an article for booster magazine *Out West* entitled "Los Angeles, A Moral City," one resident asserted:

Los Angeles believes in the home. She believes in the moralities; she believes in the decencies of life...She deliberately chooses to be dubbed "Puritan," "Middle-West Farmer," "Provincial," etc., and glories in the fact that she has been able to sweep away many flaunting indecencies that still disgrace older and more vice-complacent communities.⁷⁵

Moral entrepreneurs such as Rev. Gustav Briegleb, who spearheaded the passage of a ban on touching the head or cheek of one's partner while dancing,⁷⁶ and Pastor Robert "Fighting Bob" Shuler, whose radio show garnered "the largest religious radio audience in the world,"⁷⁷ amassed tremendous local popularity and support by railing against immorality and "vice" in the city.⁷⁸

LAPD Practices in the Early 20th Century

A favorite target of "Fighting Bob" Shuler's ire, and a primary source of Progressive discontent in the city, was the LAPD, which was repeatedly rocked by successive corruption scandals throughout the entirety of the boom period.⁷⁹ These scandals revealed that, despite public overtures to the moralistic electorate, the department routinely accepted bribes that allowed illicit "vice" operations—gambling halls, illegal saloons, and prostitution—to proliferate in the city, often at the behest of equally corrupt mayors and local politicians. The result was a

⁷³ Willard Huntington Wright, "Los Angeles—The Chemically Pure," *The Smart Set* 39, no. 3 (March 1913): 112.

⁷⁴ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 191.

⁷⁵ George Wharton James, "Los Angeles, A Moral City." *Out West* 5, no. 3 (March-April 1913): 208-09.

⁷⁶ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 35.

⁷⁷ McWilliams, *Southern California*, 343.

⁷⁸ Joe Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve: The LAPD's Century of War in the City of Dreams* (Pocket Books, 1995), Ch. 2.

⁷⁹ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*.

persistent cycle in which city and department leaders gathered support through empty promises, only to be ousted when their corruption was later revealed: “Again and again the progressives elected ‘reform’ candidates, only to lose the victory when their standard-bearers unaccountably turned coats.”⁸⁰

Chief Elton, who succeeded Chief Glass in 1900, resigned four years later to avoid questioning from the city council regarding the discovery of “the ‘Ballerino,’ a building of many narrow cells, or ‘cribs,’ designed specifically for prostitution.”⁸¹ Over the next six years, “[f]ive police chiefs departed in disgrace.”⁸² The following decade, Mayor Fredrick Woodman, an LAPD vice squad sergeant, and three officers were indicted on bribery charges related to gambling halls operating in the Central Avenue district. They were acquitted only after a key witness disappeared, having been last seen at a train station with another LAPD officer.⁸³ Chief Home, who was appointed by Mayor Woodman’s successor, was forced to retire less than two years into the position following bribery investigations by the *Los Angeles Record* and a local grand jury.⁸⁴ In the context of these investigations, a “bunco” artist testified that pickpockets and swindlers arriving to the city immediately reported to the LAPD to receive “licenses” to operate, and the department kept track of the thieves’ earnings through complaints made by victims.⁸⁵ Two years later, in 1922, the police commission was once again investigating bribery allegations against former Chief Jones and his successor, Chief Everington.⁸⁶ An LAPD captain testified, “Bookmakers told me if I didn’t quit arresting them I would be transferred. Chief Jones transferred me the next day. He didn’t tell me why, and I didn’t ask.”⁸⁷

⁸⁰ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 19.

⁸¹ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 19.

⁸² Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 19.

⁸³ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 38.

⁸⁴ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 39-43.

⁸⁵ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 41.

⁸⁶ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 50.

⁸⁷ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 52.

The appointment of August Vollmer as chief in 1923 signaled a genuine attempt to address the department's issues with corruption.⁸⁸ Vollmer was a highly respected police chief from Berkeley, CA, who served as president of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) and taught classes on criminology and police administration at UC Berkeley.⁸⁹ Vollmer, however, under pressure from local politicians who resented their lack of influence over the department under his leadership, resigned after only a single year.⁹⁰ The subsequent appointment of R. Lee Heath, a formerly disgraced but politically well-connected captain of vice enforcement,⁹¹ reflected a regression back to the department's pattern of corruption and ignominy.⁹² Despite relentless criticism from "Fighting Bob" Shuler and other Progressive moralists, Chief Heath managed to skirt major controversy and retired in 1926, after which James E. Davis was named as his successor. Under Chief Davis, "the police force reached the lowest depths of its dreary history."⁹³ Davis was forced out just three years into his tenure after infamous alcohol bootlegger Harry "Bathhouse" McDonald revealed that he paid \$100,000 annually to the LAPD for protection from enforcement.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, Davis returned four years later to serve as chief under Mayor Frank Shaw, one of the most corrupt politicians in Los Angeles history.⁹⁵ Vollmer later summarized the situation in Los Angeles succinctly in his book, *The Police and Modern Society*:

Los Angeles, California, is an excellent illustration of the hold that vice has upon the government. Through the attempts of a small group led by preachers, an effort was made to eliminate gambling and prostitution from that city, with the result that the underworld people, in order to protect their business interests, were obliged to form a defense organization and to pay large sums of money to a political group, ostensibly for campaign purposes. Any chief of police who attempted to do his duty and eliminate these

⁸⁸ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 65-66.

⁸⁹ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 72.

⁹⁰ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 90-93.

⁹¹ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 63-65.

⁹² Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 105-15.

⁹³ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 103.

⁹⁴ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 126.

⁹⁵ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 161.

iniquitous dens would soon have suffered a shortening of his career. The business of vice therefore continued to flourish [and] the protests of the people were wantonly flouted.⁹⁶

The LAPD in this period attempted to strike a balance between appeasing the moralist majority and continuing to profit off bribes from vice operators. Their primary strategy for achieving this balance was to ensure that organized vice operations remained primarily confined to Los Angeles's "Black belt"—the Central Avenue district. Since the late 19th century, the city had used local zoning laws to guarantee that legal saloons and dance clubs remained on Central Avenue and out of the White suburbs.⁹⁷ The LAPD employed a parallel tactic regarding illegal vice operations, which were permitted to proliferate alongside the legal establishments.⁹⁸ The *Los Angeles Times*, summarizing testimony from a police commission investigation into the corruption of then-Captain and future-Chief R. Lee Heath, stated, "Central avenue...politically is close enough to the City Hall to virtually control the vice squad and in other ways cause trouble and turmoil in the conduct of the police department."⁹⁹ Another *Times* story on grand jury investigations into George Brown, the so-called "mayor of Central Avenue,"¹⁰⁰ described a recorded conversation between Brown and the LAPD's "Captain of Detectives" in which the two discuss how to distribute earnings from Brown's "ten disorderly houses and as many liquor establishments"—two-thirds for the LAPD and one-third for Brown.¹⁰¹ As Hernández affirms, "Central Avenue, the center of vice, was the center of the LAPD's protection racket."¹⁰²

Occasionally, in a feigned gesture of sincerity regarding vice enforcement, the LAPD would conduct highly publicized raids in the Central Avenue neighborhood.¹⁰³ But these raids were coordinated with major vice operators, ensuring that significant players were never

⁹⁶ August Vollmer, *The Police and Modern Society* (University of California Press, 1936), 97-98.

⁹⁷ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 167.

⁹⁸ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 168-69.

⁹⁹ "Dark Trails to City Hall Are Uncovered," *Los Angeles Times*, August 17, 1923, 19 (Pt. II, 1).

¹⁰⁰ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 169.

¹⁰¹ "Grand Jury's Evidence of Vice 'Plot' Told," *Los Angeles Times*, December 10, 1930, 21 (Pt. II, 1).

¹⁰² Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 168.

¹⁰³ Hernández discusses numerous stories from the *Los Angeles Times* in the 1920s and early 1930s regarding vice raids in the Central Avenue district. See Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 169-70.

rounded up.¹⁰⁴ In grand jury testimony, George Brown claimed to direct many of these raids, selecting LAPD targets as means of eliminating competition in the neighborhood.¹⁰⁵ Instead of netting major figures, these raids primarily resulted in mass arrests of Black Central Avenue residents.¹⁰⁶ Indeed, the most frequent targets of these raids were private homes, rather than organized vice establishments.¹⁰⁷ As the persistent department controversy and turnover in this period demonstrates, this strategy was not enough to mollify the city's Progressive moralists. But the raids did reinforce in the minds of Los Angeles's White majority the image of Black residents as a primary threat to their ideal community. In describing the problems with vice on Central Avenue, the *Los Angeles Times* blamed, "Negro politicians [who] make and unmake [the] police vice squad."¹⁰⁸

Los Angeles's Black press and leading Central Avenue residents expressed ambivalence toward LAPD vice enforcement in the district. On the one hand, like Progressive White migrants to the city, many of Los Angeles's Black residents identified as "middle class...in [their] values, lifestyle, and aspirations."¹⁰⁹ They too desired a community free from illegal vice operations, and law enforcement was viewed as key to eradicating these operations in their neighborhoods. In a 1902 article in the *Los Angeles Times* on Central Avenue's vice "dens," one Black resident is quoted stating:

I know I speak for the respectable portion of the colored population of the city when I say that such places should not be tolerated in any city no matter who keeps them...It is the duty of the police to close those places, even if they have to resort to [aggressive] methods.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 40.

¹⁰⁵ "Details of Vice 'Plot' Aired," *Los Angeles Times*, December 10, 1930, 21, 35 (Pt. II, 15).

¹⁰⁶ Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 275-76.

¹⁰⁷ See Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 169-72, 177.

¹⁰⁸ "Dark Trails to City Hall Are Uncovered," *Los Angeles Times*, August 17, 1923, 19 (Pt. II, 1).

¹⁰⁹ Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 8.

¹¹⁰ "Negroes Say 'Close Dens,'" *Los Angeles Times*, November 24, 1902, 10.

A 1923 article in *The California Eagle*, Los Angeles's leading Black newspaper, praised vice raids by the LAPD's "Crime Crusher" squad, asserting, "We are with the police 100 per cent for law and order and have no complaint, when without brutality or unnecessary beating, the officers proceed to perform their duty."¹¹¹ A few years later, in 1927, a delegation of leading Black residents appeared before the police commission requesting further crackdowns on illegal gambling in the neighborhood.¹¹²

On the other hand, these leaders were dismayed by the LAPD's focus on arresting innocuous Black residents of Central Avenue rather than vice operators or White patrons, and by the overly aggressive tactics the department employed during raids. A 1925 issue of *The California Eagle* describes how the LAPD treated Los Angeles's multi-ethnic Eastside neighborhoods as a "poaching reserve upon which to build a record of arrests."¹¹³ The editorial goes on to describe a recent court scene:

This week on Monday there were more than fifty offenders in the morals court and every one was either a colored person or a Mexican. Now it stands to reason that all of the moral infractions of the law are not committed by these two groups...We do not object to law enforcement, but we cannot see any reason of enforcing it for a part of the people and letting the others slide.¹¹⁴

The community's reaction to the LAPD killing of Sam Faulkner in 1927 epitomized this ambivalent stance toward vice enforcement.¹¹⁵ Faulkner, a 20-year-old Black resident, was shot by a drunk LAPD officer during a "liquor raid" of a private home in the Central Avenue neighborhood. Following the shooting, the LAPD planted drugs and a gun near Faulkner's body in an effort to justify the killing. The plot unraveled after another officer on the scene agreed to testify against the shooter. Nevertheless, the shooter was acquitted of all charges, and the officer who testified against him was fired by Chief Davis.

¹¹¹ "Cholo Johnson with Crime Crushers," *The California Eagle*, November 2, 1923, 4.

¹¹² "Negroes State Gambling Rife," *Los Angeles Times*, June 22, 1927, 8.

¹¹³ "Police, Mexicans, and Negroes," *The California Eagle*, May 22, 1925, 6.

¹¹⁴ "Police, Mexicans, and Negroes," *The California Eagle*, May 22, 1925, 6.

¹¹⁵ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, Ch. 6.

Black residents of Los Angeles were outraged by the killing. *The California Eagle* published an open letter to Chief Davis from Dr. Claude Hudson, president of the local NAACP chapter. In the letter, Dr. Hudson walks a delicate line between embracing the ethos of law enforcement and criticizing the LAPD's tactics:

I want to assure you at the outset that we highly appreciate the very grave and vexatious responsibilities that rest upon you as Chief of Police in so large a city. We are in hearty sympathy with every movement that deals without fear, or favor, or partiality, of any sort with the building up of a more effective police program...

The attention of the Police Department has been called in complaints made by citizens...to countless, (so-called raids), in which houses were literally wrecked, and doors and windows broken, when they could have obtained admission by knocking...

[M]en have been picked up...for no other offense than being on the street near 12th and Central, or loafing in a pool hall, or for being seen on the streets late at night...

[Officers in the Central Avenue district] themselves violate the law in making these arrests; have gloried in them; have bull-dozed and terrorized people in making them; have been guilty of brutality, and have arrested people needlessly, whether or not they saw them committing misdemeanors, in order to produce this [arrest] record which you point to with pride...

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People is engaged in seeking to promote the orderly process of punishment for crimes and has always been, and will always be, a bitter enemy to law violation. Our fight in the past has been largely one against "mob violence," and we are frank to say that we consider [the officers involved in the Faulkner killing] a "mob" unto themselves, and their tactics for the most part have been that of "the mob."¹¹⁶

White Progressives, while unconcerned by the LAPD's targeting and abuse of Black city residents, were also dissatisfied with how LAPD corruption undermined their pursuit of a "moral city" free of vice. They responded with numerous campaigns to oust exposed city and department leaders. McWilliams asserts that "Fighting Bob" Shuler was the primary force behind the removal of "a mayor, a district attorney, and numerous police chiefs."¹¹⁷ Ultimately,

¹¹⁶ "Dr. Hudson in Scorching Reply to Chief Davis," *The California Eagle*, May 27, 1927, 1, 6.

¹¹⁷ McWilliams, *Southern California*, 343.

these campaigns failed to address the department's issues with corruption—long-term replacements invariably protected vice operations in the city just as their predecessors had.

The other strategy employed by Progressives to address corruption was the implementation of city charter amendments and civil service protections designed to insulate the LAPD from political influence. It began in 1889 with a charter amendment establishing the citizen police commission.¹¹⁸ Another charter amendment in 1902 granted civil service protections to LAPD officers, precluding them from removal without just cause.¹¹⁹ Subsequent charter amendments in 1909, 1911, 1923, 1925, and 1931 reorganized the police commission and granted further protections to officers.¹²⁰ However, the most significant measures were adopted within a three-year span in the mid-1930s. The first, in 1934, granted the department exclusive authority to discipline officers for misconduct.¹²¹ Additional legislation in 1936 and 1937 then extended civil service protections to the chief of police, enabling life-time tenure in the absence of egregious misconduct.¹²² These charter amendments were similarly ineffective, both at eradicating department corruption and in their stated goal of protecting chiefs and officers from political removal. As Skolnick and Fyfe describe, “The protection proved to be only nominal...LAPD's chiefs continued to come and go with the changing of municipal administrations.”¹²³ However, several decades after their initial passage, these charter amendments would be utilized by subsequent chiefs to shield the department, its officers, and themselves from public reprisal in response to significant department scandals and crises.

¹¹⁸ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 15.

¹¹⁹ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 18.

¹²⁰ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 24-25; Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 93; Alisa S. Kramer, “William H. Parker and the Thin Blue Line: Politics, Public Relations, and Policing in Postwar Los Angeles,” PhD diss. (American University, 2007), 28, n. 70.

¹²¹ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 166-67; Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 28; Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 94.

¹²² Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 28-29; Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 94-95.

¹²³ Jerome H. Skolnick and James J. Fyfe. *Above the Law: Police and the Excessive Use of Force* (Free Press, 1993), 175.

The only way the department was able to garner any support in this period was by targeting social groups viewed as a threat to Los Angeles's White majority and their vision of ideal social order. Included among these groups was the city's growing Black and Chicano populations. Perceptions of Black and Chicano residents as a social threat were fueled not only by the deliberate concentration of bars, nightclubs, and vice establishments in the central city neighborhoods where they primarily resided, but also by plain racism. After all, many White migrants were attracted to the city on the promise that it represented "Eden of the Saxon home-seeker"¹²⁴ and "the White Spot of America."¹²⁵ Throughout the late 1910s and most of the 1920s, Black residents were barred from public pools except before cleaning days and from "all but a few hundred feet" of the city's public beaches.¹²⁶ Restrictive housing covenants kept both Black and Chicano residents from residing in the White suburbs, which some referred to as "Little Texas" or "Little Mississippi."¹²⁷ In the early 1920s, a resurgent Ku Klux Klan (KKK) found numerous supporters in Los Angeles, including "Fighting Bob" Shuler.¹²⁸ In 1922, the Los Angeles district attorney seized KKK records indicating that, along with many LAPD officers, city council president Ralph Criswell and LAPD Chief Oaks were members.¹²⁹ Both men remained in their positions following the discovery.

The Zoot Suit Riots of 1943 illustrate the depth of antipathy toward Chicano residents, who comprised the largest non-White group in the city. For seven days in June, hundreds of U.S. servicemen marauded through the multiethnic neighborhoods of downtown and East Los Angeles, viciously attacking Chicano youths and stripping them of their distinctive zoot suit outfits.¹³⁰ Among Chicano youths, the zoot suit had become a symbol of cultural rebellion

¹²⁴ *The Land of Sunshine* 2, no. 2 (January 1895): 34.

¹²⁵ McDougal, *Privileged Son*, 105.

¹²⁶ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 163; Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 192.

¹²⁷ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 164.

¹²⁸ Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 194-211.

¹²⁹ Flamming, *Bound for Freedom*, 204-05.

¹³⁰ Escobar, *Race, Police*, 234-43.

against the discrimination and alienation they faced in Los Angeles society.¹³¹ The riots, in which targets were primarily selected based on zoot suit attire, represented a backlash against the perceived threat posed by Chicano assertions of cultural autonomy in Los Angeles. The riots were preceded by several years of public “hysteria” regarding Chicano youth crime,¹³² punctuated by the Sleepy Lagoon trial in which a dozen Chicano youths were convicted of murder in sham proceedings that failed to produce any evidence that the defendants even assaulted the victim.¹³³ This “hysteria” was itself preceded by several decades of sensationalized reports from Los Angeles newspapers concerning Chicano crime in the city.¹³⁴ Charlotta Bass, publisher of *The California Eagle*, issued an open letter to Mayor Fletcher Bowron as the riots were ongoing, stating:

[N]othing in my experience has been so vicious, deliberate or disruptive as the campaign of our city’s metropolitan papers against what they call “zoot suit” Mexican youth. A white heat of lynch fury has been whipped up by these newspapers.¹³⁵

LAPD arrest data for this period is sparse. However, the department’s annual report for 1937-1938 provides a glimpse into the distribution of arrests by race and ethnicity.

¹³¹ Escobar, *Race, Police*, 178-85.

¹³² Escobar, *Race, Police*, 197-202.

¹³³ Escobar, *Race, Police*, 207-27.

¹³⁴ Escobar, *Race, Police*, 105-09; McWilliams, *Southern California*, 318-19.

¹³⁵ “An Open Letter to Fletcher Bowron,” *The California Eagle*, June 10, 1943, 1.

Table 5. LAPD Annual Report 1937-1938: Arrests by Race and Ethnicity¹³⁶

Race/Ethnicity	Total Arrests	Drunkenness	Vagrancy	Lottery & Gambling Ordinances
All	77,061	39,611	14,514	3,080
U.S.-Born White	53,182 (69%)	27,837 (70%)	11,010 (76%)	988 (32%)
Black	6,858 (9%)	1,417 (4%)	1,668 (11%)	567 (18%)
“Red” [Chicano]*	9,829 (13%)	6,353 (16%)	1,167 (8%)	125 (4%)

Note: Percentage of arrests for all races/ethnicities included in parentheses.
 *In the annual report, arrests are disaggregated into the following racial/ethnic categories: White, Black, Red, Yellow, and Brown. Context illustrates that the “Red” label was used primarily to describe Chicano arrestees. The report lists the total number of prisoners for the year as 77,061, identical to the total number of arrests made by the department. The number of prisoners of Mexican descent is listed as 9,798, nearly identical to the total number of “Red” arrestees (9,829). On the other hand, the total number of “Brown” arrestees is listed as 719, considerably lower than the number of prisoners of Mexican descent.

The annual report data in Table 5 indicate that Black individuals comprised a disproportionately high percentage of arrestees (9%) relative to their percentage of the total Los Angeles population (3-4%). In fact, with a total Black population of only 63,744 in 1940,¹³⁷ the data suggest that each year the LAPD was arresting approximately one Black individual for every nine Black city residents. Black arrestees were also considerably more likely to be arrested for alleged lottery or gambling offenses, supporting the view that Black residents were targeted by vice raids in the Central Avenue district. Of the 6,858 total arrests of Black individuals, 8.3% were for lottery or gambling offenses, compared to just 1.9% for U.S.-born White arrestees and 1.3% for “Red” arrestees.

Given variations in estimates of the Chicano population in Los Angeles between 1930 and 1940,¹³⁸ it is hard to determine whether Chicano individuals were disproportionately represented among LAPD arrestees. However, it is clear that the Chicano arrestee percentage was not more than double the Chicano population percentage, as it was for Los Angeles’s Black

¹³⁶ Los Angeles City Archive, Box B-1061.

¹³⁷ *Sides, L.A. City Limits*, 2.

¹³⁸ Escobar, *Race, Police*, 166-67.

population. Nevertheless, relative to both Black arrestees and U.S.-born White arrestees, “Red” arrestees were considerably more likely to be arrested for drunkenness offenses, suggesting that they too were targeted by LAPD discretionary enforcement activities. The percentage of “Red” arrestees brought in for drunkenness offenses was 64.6%, compared to 53.6% for U.S.-born White arrestees and 20.7% for Black arrestees. Moreover, Escobar illustrates that while arrests of Chicano *adults* in this period show little disparity relative to the size of the Chicano population, considerable disparities are evident in arrests for Chicano *juveniles*.¹³⁹ In the late 1930s and early 1940s, nearly one-third (27.5%-33.7%) of all juvenile arrestees were of Mexican descent, far beyond even the largest estimates of the Chicano youth population percentage at the time.¹⁴⁰ Nearly 40% of these juvenile arrests were for curfew violations or “noncriminal detention.”¹⁴¹

The LAPD was also widely criticized for its actions during the Zoot Suit Riots. Several committee investigations cited evidence that LAPD officers encouraged the rioting, arrested Chicano victims while ignoring White instigators, and at times even participated in the attacks themselves.¹⁴² Charlotta Bass wrote in *The California Eagle*:

[The LAPD] aided the sailors and soldiers against the Mexicans. It looked the other way when the servicemen attacked Mexicans. Yet it militantly arrested scores of innocent Mexican youth, beat many, and sowed a whirl wind of disunity.¹⁴³

Escobar argues that the targeting of Black and Chicano residents was a key source of support for the LAPD among its majority White constituency in the early and mid-20th century.¹⁴⁴

¹³⁹ Escobar, *Race, Police*, 124-30, 186-96.

¹⁴⁰ Escobar, *Race, Police*, 125, 190. Escobar states, “While we do not know what percentage of the juvenile population was of Mexican descent, we can be reasonably certain that it was substantially lower than the percentage of Mexican American youths arrested on all charges or for violent crimes. People of Mexican descent simply did not account for even as much as 20 percent of the population of Los Angeles during the 1930s” (125-26).

¹⁴¹ Escobar, *Race, Police*, 192.

¹⁴² Escobar, *Race, Police*, 243-46.

¹⁴³ “An Open Letter to Fletcher Bowron,” *The California Eagle*, June 10, 1943, 1.

¹⁴⁴ Escobar, *Race, Police*, 286-87.

However, the 1937-1938 annual report also suggests that, while the “tramp panic” at the turn of the century may have subsided,¹⁴⁵ destitute Whites continued to be targeted for proactive enforcement. U.S.-born Whites comprised 69% of arrestees, only slightly below their city population percentage in 1930 (70.8%). Over half of *all* LAPD arrests were of U.S.-born Whites for either drunkenness or vagrancy. In the mid-1930s, at the height of the Great Depression, Chief Davis waged a highly publicized campaign against poor “Okies” migrating to the city.¹⁴⁶ In a particularly audacious gambit, Chief Davis sent over 100 hundred LAPD officers to the California state border to serve as a “blockade” against the “hordes of indigents [that] have flooded the State and Los Angeles.”¹⁴⁷ The campaign was patently unconstitutional; a federal judge was quoted stating, “[The Constitution] provides that...a man shall be free from interference in moving himself or his goods from one state to another. Evidently Jim Davis hasn’t heard about that one yet.”¹⁴⁸ The move also angered several border-county sheriffs, including the sheriff of Modoc County who threatened to arrest LAPD personnel for impersonating law enforcement officers.¹⁴⁹ But the campaign received support from the *Los Angeles Times*, as well as “the Chamber of Commerce, Los Angeles Realty Board, Los Angeles Building and Trades Council and local retail stores such as the May Company and Bullock’s.”¹⁵⁰ Even California Governor Frank Merriam demurred, commenting that the stationing of LAPD officers at the state border was “up to them, if they can get away with it.”¹⁵¹ The campaign was coupled with mass arrests in the city of “panhandlers, dissolute persons, suspicious characters,

¹⁴⁵ See Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 63.

¹⁴⁶ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 168-69; Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 60-63.

¹⁴⁷ “Police Take Up Duty on State Lines,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 4, 1936, 1-2.

¹⁴⁸ “Davis, Biscailuz Open City, County ‘Bum’ War,” *Daily News* [Los Angeles], February 7, 1936, 10.

¹⁴⁹ “Davis, Biscailuz Open City, County ‘Bum’ War,” *Daily News* [Los Angeles], February 7, 1936, 10.

¹⁵⁰ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 21, n. 39.

¹⁵¹ “Police Plan Draws Fire,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 7, 1936, 3.

and others with no visible means of support,”¹⁵² which continued long after the “blockade” ended two months later.¹⁵³

The LAPD also curried favor among Los Angeles’s business elite by targeting the city’s “radicals,”¹⁵⁴ which included not only leftist political groups but also unions and the legal organizations that represented them, like the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Although socialist movements started to gain a foothold in the city during the early 1900s,¹⁵⁵ popular support for leftist politics was irrevocably undermined by the 1910 bombing of the *Los Angeles Times* building by radical labor organizers, as well as the subsequent revelation of many other planned bombings throughout the city.¹⁵⁶ Recently migrated rural Progressives, who already viewed organized labor askance as potentially “subversive,”¹⁵⁷ formed a decisive political coalition with the city’s Republican business interests against labor that lasted several decades.¹⁵⁸ The same year of the *Times* bombing, after the socialist mayoral candidate was roundly defeated and Progressives made strong gains in council elections, the city enacted a strict anti-picketing ordinance that became a model for similar legislation across the country.¹⁵⁹

Although the LAPD had served as a “union-busting force”¹⁶⁰ since its inception in the 19th century, its efforts grew in earnest over the first three decades of the 20th century.¹⁶¹ In 1923, in response to an LAPD raid of a workers’ meeting at a private residence in San Pedro and the subsequent mass arrests of protestors, famed author and socialist Upton Sinclair announced he would read the First Amendment aloud to the public on San Pedro’s Liberty Hill.¹⁶² Just as he

¹⁵² “Vagrants Rounded Up in City and County: Police and Sheriff Open Drive to Supplement Border Patrol Halting of Indigents,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 7, 1936, 1.

¹⁵³ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 63.

¹⁵⁴ Escobar, *Race, Police*, 28.

¹⁵⁵ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 124-25; Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 214.

¹⁵⁶ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 214-15; Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 26; McWilliams, *Southern California*, 283.

¹⁵⁷ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 131.

¹⁵⁸ Fogelson, *Fragmented Metropolis*, 213-28; Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*.

¹⁵⁹ Escobar, *Race, Police*, 26.

¹⁶⁰ Escobar, *Race, Police*, 28.

¹⁶¹ Escobar, *Race, Police*, Ch. 3, 5; Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*.

¹⁶² Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 60-61.

began, he was arrested by the LAPD, as were three others who tried to continue the reading. The captain of the San Pedro division was quoted telling Sinclair, “You can’t hand me that Constitution stuff.”¹⁶³ The arrests were sanctioned by then-Chief Oaks, the KKK member, who insisted that Sinclair “will not be allowed to read the Constitution...in violation of my order.”¹⁶⁴ Later that year, Sinclair and others founded the Southern California chapter of the ACLU in response to the incident.¹⁶⁵

The department’s (anti-)radicalism reached its zenith in William “Red” Hynes’s “Red Squad,” which terrorized labor organizers, their legal advocates, and other enemies of the city’s business elite from the late 1920s to its eventual dissolution in 1938.¹⁶⁶ Hynes initially made a name for himself as an undercover officer who infiltrated the International Workers of the World (IWW) union and undermined their organizing and strike efforts in San Pedro—the same efforts Sinclair was attempting to support on Liberty Hill.¹⁶⁷ After Hynes testified against the union in 1923, effectively ending his cover, he was assigned to the Red Squad, and four years later he was made the commanding officer under Chief James Davis, himself a rapid anti-communist.¹⁶⁸

The squad’s official charge, according to an internal LAPD bulletin, involved “investigations, surveillance, arrest and prosecution of illegal activities in connection with ultra-radical...[and] labor organizations involved in strike disturbances, illegal picketing, and sabotage.”¹⁶⁹ In practice, it operated as unrestrained attack force, violently breaking strikes with tear gas and clubs, raiding private meetings and wrecking the offices of organizations like the ACLU, and infiltrating labor unions as undercover agents provocateurs and saboteurs.¹⁷⁰ So

¹⁶³ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 61.

¹⁶⁴ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 61.

¹⁶⁵ “Founding,” *ACLU Southern California*, <https://www.aclusocal.org/en/founding>.

¹⁶⁶ Escobar, *Race, Police*, 80-84; Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 117-18, 121, 142-46; Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 63-68, 78.

¹⁶⁷ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 63.

¹⁶⁸ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 63, 23.

¹⁶⁹ Escobar, *Race, Police*, 81.

¹⁷⁰ Escobar, *Race, Police*, 81-84; Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 142-46.

intertwined were the squad's activities with the city's business interests that Hynes kept his office in the Chamber of Commerce building, rather than LAPD headquarters.¹⁷¹ The squad's overtime wages, as well as the tear gas and projectiles used on picketers, were paid for by the city's business elite.¹⁷² But the squad's activities were also endorsed by city officials and the Progressive electorate.¹⁷³ As Woods argues, "the department received broad progressive support for its vigilant and violent effort to make Los Angeles an unhealthy place for 'radicals' [and] labor organizers."¹⁷⁴

As many of the above examples illustrate, the LAPD in the early 20th century frequently employed brutal tactics with little regard for constitutional rights and other legal protections. In fact, the organization seemed to pride itself on these lawless tactics. Chief James "Two Gun" Davis boasted of arresting narcotics addicts on sight for vagrancy and locking them in the jail where they would receive nothing but "beans and abuse"—"that is my stand and I won't back down on it."¹⁷⁵ He instructed his officers that he wanted gangsters "brought in dead, not alive," and that he would, "reprimand any officer who shows the least mercy to a criminal."¹⁷⁶ A positive profile¹⁷⁷ from the *Los Angeles Record* summarized Chief Davis's perspective on constitutional rights:

Davis quite honestly and sincerely believes that the country would be much better off if the whole question of constitutional rights was forgotten, and everything left to the discretion of the police. As with many other police-minded officials, it is an axiom with Davis that constitutional rights are of benefit to nobody but crooks and criminals, and that no perfectly law-abiding citizen ever has any cause to insist upon "constitutional rights."¹⁷⁸

¹⁷¹ Escobar, *Race, Police*, 83; Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 137.

¹⁷² Escobar, *Race, Police*, 83.

¹⁷³ Escobar, *Race, Police*, 83; Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 144-46.

¹⁷⁴ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 34.

¹⁷⁵ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 119.

¹⁷⁶ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 52.

¹⁷⁷ The profile opens by claiming, "It is difficult to understand, in view of his [performance]...the reason for the loud clamor in certain quarters for his removal." "Why Liberals Oppose Davis," *Los Angeles Record*, December 23, 1929, 1.

¹⁷⁸ "Why Liberals Oppose Davis," *Los Angeles Record*, December 23, 1929, 2.

Chief Steckel, Davis's brief replacement between 1930 and 1933, was known as "Strongarm Dick,"¹⁷⁹ and he expressed a similar view regarding legal limitations on the police: "Suppose it is against the law; is that any good reason why it shouldn't be done? It's practical. It gets results...we have no intention of stopping."¹⁸⁰ The Wickersham Commission, which conducted the first major national government study of the U.S. criminal legal system, stated in their 1931 report, "In no other city in which there has been field investigations by the Commission have we found anything like the amount of discussion of police lawlessness that exists in Los Angeles."¹⁸¹ Even under Vollmer, the only chief in this period that could plausibly be described as a reformer, "illegal detention and the 'third degree' were standard procedures."¹⁸²

However, as Woods emphasizes, "In Los Angeles...violent and unconstitutional police work accurately reflected community mores."¹⁸³ In 1931, a civilian grand jury heard testimony regarding over 50 allegations of LAPD abuse, and one of the implicated officers beat a photographer just outside of the jury chambers as the hearings were ongoing.¹⁸⁴ Nevertheless, the committee concluded that, aside from a few wayward officers, criticism of the department was "unjust and unmerited."¹⁸⁵ A civilian police commissioner, in response to claims that the Red Squad frequently violated constitutional rights, stated, "The more the police beat [the communists] up and wreck their headquarters, the better...Communists have no constitutional rights and I won't listen to anyone who defends them."¹⁸⁶

There were certainly cracks in the edifice. The NAACP, the city's Black newspapers, and prominent Chicano political organizations like the Sleepy Lagoon Defense Committee frequently

¹⁷⁹ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 56.

¹⁸⁰ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 141.

¹⁸¹ National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement. *Report on Lawlessness in Law Enforcement* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1931), 144.

<https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/44549NCJRS.pdf>

¹⁸² Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 95.

¹⁸³ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 140.

¹⁸⁴ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 142.

¹⁸⁵ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 142.

¹⁸⁶ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 143.

voiced their opposition to the department's deplorably violent and discriminatory enforcement practices.¹⁸⁷ A 1931 joint committee sponsored by the Los Angeles Bar Association and two prominent associations of religious ministers raised complaints with Mayor Porter about the Red Squad, citing four specific legal protections that the squad frequently abrogated.¹⁸⁸ The mayor accused the committee of a plot to "overthrow the United States Government."¹⁸⁹ It would take nearly a decade for these critiques to begin to gain any real traction.

¹⁸⁷ Hernández, *City of Inmates*, 183; Escobar, *Race, Police*, Ch. 12.

¹⁸⁸ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 144-45.

¹⁸⁹ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 145.

Chapter 3. The “Thin Blue Line”: Parker’s LAPD

When William H. Parker was named chief of the LAPD in 1950, the department was still reeling from yet another scandal unearthed the year prior. Chief Horrall had resigned shortly before he was indicted for perjury in a case involving police protection of a prostitution ring.¹ Despite Horrall’s claims of ignorance, grand jury testimony indicated that he was aware of and ignored, and perhaps even squashed investigations into, pay-offs received by the vice squad from a local madam. During the investigations, the leaders of the gangster squad and newly reinstated red squad also resigned, having been implicated in analogous bribery schemes within their respective ambits.² Seeking a complete outsider to reform and reorganize the department, Mayor Fletcher Bowron convinced the police commission to appoint the retired Marine Corps general William Worton as chief.³ Worton, however, did not meet civil service requirements for the position, so he served only a one-year temporary term before Parker assumed control.⁴

In the two decades prior to Parker’s appointment, the line of department scandals remained essentially unbroken. Frank Shaw, another “reform” candidate who ran on promises to end corruption, was elected as mayor in 1933.⁵ One month into his appointment, he reinstated James Davis as chief, four years after Davis was ousted following a bribery scandal involving bootlegger “Bathhouse” McDonald.⁶ Chief Davis’s second term featured not only the “bum blockade” and the worst abuses of Hynes’s Red Squad, but also some of the most extensive political corruption in the city’s history. Mayor Shaw installed his campaign manager as Chief

¹ Gerald Woods, *The Police in Los Angeles: Reform and Professionalization* (Garland Publishing, 1993), 210-12; Alisa S. Kramer, “William H. Parker and the Thin Blue Line: Politics, Public Relations, and Policing in Postwar Los Angeles.” PhD diss. (American University, 2007), 32-33.

² Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 211-12. Grand jury testimony suggested that the gangster squad sold incriminating wiretap recordings to the infamous Mickey Cohen, and that the red squad was hired out to private employers as a strikebreaking force.

³ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 210-12; Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 32-33.

⁴ Joe Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve: The LAPD’s Century of War in the City of Dreams* (Pocket Books, 1995), 100-01.

⁵ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 154.

⁶ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 126.

Davis's personal secretary to ensure that he kept a firm hand on the department's activities.⁷ The mayor's brother sold answers to the civil service exams that determined LAPD employment offers and promotions.⁸ Numerous previously dismissed officers were reinstated. According to Woods, "drunk, thugs, rapists, and extortionists made up the majority of the reinstated men, [and] others had connections with criminal organizations."⁹

Both the mayor and the department used Earle Kynette and the "intelligence squad" to surveil and harass their political enemies. Kynette allegedly joined the LAPD at the behest of the city's boss of organized prostitution, and in 1924 he became acting captain of the vice squad.¹⁰ A police trial board voted to fire him for extorting prostitutes, but he was reinstated by the police commission and ultimately transferred to the intelligence squad, "where he searched for scandals in the lives of the administration's critics."¹¹ Kynette spied on over 50 prominent city residents, including "the district attorney, Byron Fitts, two of the five members of the County Board of Supervisors, the publisher of the *Citizen News*, and [vocal corruption critic] Clifford Clinton."¹² In 1936, a resident sued the LAPD for harassing him at the state border in the context of the "bum blockade."¹³ The day before trial, the resident disappeared with Kynette, then later arrived to court, "disheveled and distraught," where he withdrew the suit without explanation.¹⁴ Kynette received a promotion for his "fine work" on the case.¹⁵ The intelligence squad was also behind the entrapment of Progressive city councilmember and LAPD critic Carl Jacobson. Jacobson was arrested for "lewd conduct and vagrancy" after being set up by the relative of an LAPD detective who was promised both payments from a known crime boss and the support of

⁷ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 163; Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 72.

⁸ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 72-73.

⁹ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 165.

¹⁰ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 183; Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 45.

¹¹ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 121.

¹² Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 76.

¹³ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 169.

¹⁴ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 169.

¹⁵ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 169.

Chief Davis.¹⁶ Following the revelations and several hung juries, the charges against Jacobson were dropped.

Nothing, however, would compare to the scandal that erupted in 1938 following the car-bombing of Harry Raymond, who was working as an investigator for Clifford Clinton's Citizens' Independent Vice Investigation Committee (CIVIC). Clinton was appointed to a 1937 grand jury investigating city corruption but was frustrated when the jury issued a report concluding that, "no evidence of corruption has been presented...Public enemy number one in this country is not the gun-toting racketeer [or] the confidence man...He is the malicious, unbridled, reputation-smearing gossip."¹⁷ Clinton co-authored a minority jury report asserting that, "A portion of the underworld profits have been used in financing campaigns...[of] city and county officials in vital positions...The district attorney's office, Sheriff's office, and the Los Angeles Police Department work in complete harmony and never interfere with...important figures in the underworld."¹⁸ Clinton helped to form CIVIC, an independent body for investigating city corruption whose members included "Fighting Bob" Shuler, and Harry Raymond¹⁹ was hired as a CIVIC investigator.²⁰

In January 1938, a bomb wired to Raymond's car exploded, and although the investigator was severely injured, he miraculously survived.²¹ Within a week, Chief Davis declared Kynette and the intelligence squad innocent of involvement, and Kynette was even briefly placed in charge of the investigation.²² A month later, however, Kynette was indicted, and later that year he was convicted of attempted murder after Raymond's neighbor testified to

¹⁶ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 54-55.

¹⁷ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 181-82.

¹⁸ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 75.

¹⁹ Woods states that, "Few were better qualified to investigate vice than Raymond. His experiences as police chief in Venice, two stints with the LAPD (interrupted by service with [corrupt] District Attorney Asa Keyes) and his most recent duty as San Diego police chief, all terminated in scandal." Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 182.

²⁰ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 179-82.

²¹ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 181-82. Another bomb had gone off in Clinton's home several months prior, but no one was injured.

²² Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 183; Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 76-77.

seeing Kynette break into Raymond's garage the night before the bombing.²³ The witness further alleged that Kynette later returned to his home, beat him, robbed him, and told him to stay quiet about what he saw.²⁴

Kynette's trial revealed a number of embarrassing and incriminating details about the department's intelligence squad. Chief Davis divulged that Kynette's job was to investigate "criminal and *criminal-political* elements...attempting to destroy confidence in the police department" (emphasis added).²⁵ The squad protected not only the department, but the mayor as well; Kynette's second-in-command testified that he "heard" that Kynette reported directly to a representative in the mayor's administration.²⁶ The public became privy to the countless intelligence files the LAPD kept on "anyone even remotely critical of the department."²⁷ When asked during trial why the department spied on then-state assemblymember Sam Yorty, Clifford Clinton, future mayor Fletcher Bowron, and numerous other political opponents, Chief Davis responded that, when traffic violations are included, each one had in fact been arrested before.²⁸

The scandal had wide-reaching ramifications. Chief Davis caved to public pressure and disbanded the intelligence squad, although General Worton would later reinstitute it during his temporary stint as chief a decade later.²⁹ Frank Shaw became the first big-city mayor in U.S. history to be successfully recalled.³⁰ His replacement was local judge Fletcher Bowron, who is generally regarded as the first genuine reformer to occupy the mayor's office.³¹ Charlotta Bass of *The California Eagle* referred to him as "the people's mayor."³² Mayor Bowron immediately replaced all five members of the civilian police commission.³³ Chief Davis and several other

²³ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 185; Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 77.

²⁴ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 76.

²⁵ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 185.

²⁶ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 185.

²⁷ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 77.

²⁸ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 185.

²⁹ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 78, 99.

³⁰ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 78.

³¹ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 185-217.

³² Charlotta Bass, "An Open Letter to Fletcher Bowron," *The California Eagle*, June 10, 1943, 1, 3.

³³ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 191.

high-ranking officials resigned before the new commissioners could begin investigations into misconduct, and the commission forced nearly two dozen other top LAPD officials to retire.³⁴ The red squad was abolished, although it too, like the intelligence squad, would resurface again within the decade.³⁵

Bowron would serve as Los Angeles's mayor for the next 15 years. Yet, as demonstrated by the scandal that engulfed Chief Horrall a decade into Bowron's tenure, corruption in the LAPD stubbornly persisted. Part of the difficulty of eradicating corruption stemmed from the Progressive city charter amendment of 1934, which granted significant civil service protections to LAPD officers.³⁶ When Mayor Bowron was initially elected, the commission utilized an obscure charter provision to force the retirement of senior LAPD officials with significant tenure. Otherwise, the ability of the mayor or the police commission to fire or discipline LAPD officers was severely limited. Woods argues that it took the entirety of Bowron's tenure for a "generation[al]" turnover to take place in the LAPD, supplanting older corrupt officers with officers less susceptible to bribery and political influence.³⁷

William H. Parker was the vanguard of this new generation within the LAPD. Parker entered the LAPD in 1927 under Chief James Davis, but he managed to skirt the rampant corruption and abuse that plagued the department in the 1920s and 1930s.³⁸ Domanick describes how Parker in his early career "became known for being obstinate, ornery, demanding, [and] a stickler for the rules."³⁹ Parker himself recounted that in his earliest days on the force, "there were mornings when I was the only sober man in the office, and no one seemed to care what the others did."⁴⁰ He often described the history of policing as "one of alternating

³⁴ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 192-93.

³⁵ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 78.

³⁶ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 194, 197-198.

³⁷ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 217.

³⁸ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 224; Kramer, "William H. Parker," 12-14.

³⁹ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 92. See also Dean Jennings, "Portrait of a Police Chief," *Saturday Evening Post* 232, no. 45 (May 7, 1960): 44-45, 84, 87, 89.

⁴⁰ Jennings, "Portrait," 89.

inefficiency, corruption, and brutality.”⁴¹ In reminiscing on his early career, Parker acknowledged, “I do not long for those ‘good old days.’...They were simple times, but they were also ugly times. With a few exceptions, I do not remember them with any great pride for the American police service.”⁴²

Despite the malfeasance he witnessed, Parker was nevertheless a strong proponent of internal disciplinary procedures that would insulate the department from outside scrutiny.⁴³ Parker drafted the 1934 city charter amendment that gave the department exclusive authority over officer discipline.⁴⁴ He undoubtedly hoped internal disciplinary measures would be meted out by hard-nosed officers such as himself, and he indeed served as a prosecutor in departmental misconduct hearings in the late 1930s.⁴⁵ But in that period, being a “stickler for the rules” earned him little favor, and after being repeatedly passed over for promotion, he departed the LAPD in 1943 to serve in World War II.⁴⁶ He returned in 1945 but continued to be marginalized in the department⁴⁷ until he was selected by General Worton to head the newly formed Internal Affairs bureau.

The Internal Affairs bureau was Worton’s “most significant innovation”⁴⁸—an answer to critics in the wake of the Horrall scandal who alleged that the department’s internal disciplinary processes were inadequate. For the first time, the investigation and prosecution of officer misconduct cases became centralized in a distinct LAPD division dedicated solely to that task.⁴⁹ The bureau also formalized the process for addressing citizen complaints, which critics argued

⁴¹ William H. Parker, *Parker on Police* (Charles C. Thomas, 1957), 138, 187.

⁴² Parker, *Parker on Police*, 135.

⁴³ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 27-28.

⁴⁴ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 166-67; Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 28. Parker was also instrumental in the passage of the 1936 and 1937 charter amendments that extended civil service protections to the chief of police. Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 93-95. He would later utilize these protections to evade public reprimand more effectively than any chief who preceded him.

⁴⁵ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 224.

⁴⁶ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 31. Parker claimed that he was “the most passed-up officer in the history of the Los Angeles Police Department.” Lou Cannon, *Official Negligence* (Random House, 1997), 58.

⁴⁷ Although Parker was promoted to inspector in 1947, he continued to serve as head of the traffic division, a relatively minor post. Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 32; Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 225.

⁴⁸ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 213.

⁴⁹ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 213.

were frequently ignored.⁵⁰ Given his reputation as a “headhunter,”⁵¹ Parker was a natural fit to lead the bureau, and many saw it as his stepping stone to the chief position.⁵² Certainly, Parker’s appointment nurtured a belief that he possessed secret information on everyone in the department, making it less likely that others would oppose him.⁵³ Establishment of the bureau was enough to protect the LAPD’s claim to exclusive authority over officer discipline. A proposal to establish a civilian review board for addressing officer misconduct, which was endorsed by the newly elected Edward Roybal, the city’s first non-White councilmember, was defeated at the polls the following year.⁵⁴

Chief Parker’s Policing Logic and LAPD Practices in the Mid-20th Century

After Worton’s one-year term as chief concluded in 1950, Parker was appointed as his successor. As chief, Parker articulated a philosophy of policing that would form the bedrock of the department for decades to come. Central to this philosophy is the notion that police represent the “thin blue line” protecting the community from those who would threaten it.⁵⁵ Hence, Parker divided city residents into two fundamental categories: the community (or “society”) and the dangerous class who threaten the community.⁵⁶ In a radio address upon his appointment as chief, Parker stated:

There are wicked men with evil hearts who sustain themselves by preying upon society. There are men who lack control over their strong passions, and thus we have vicious assaults, many times amounting to the destruction of the life of a fellow man. To control

⁵⁰ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 214.

⁵¹ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 213.

⁵² Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 225; Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 34-35.

⁵³ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 225.

⁵⁴ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 213-14.

⁵⁵ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 60, 101. Although Parker did not coin the phrase, he was perhaps more influential than any other officer in popularizing the use of “thin blue line” to describe the police. See Robert M. Fogelson, *Big-City Police* (Harvard University Press, 1977), 147. In 1952, Parker ran a short-lived television program entitled *The Thin Blue Line* “to communicate police information to the public.” Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 114.

⁵⁶ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 226; Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 63-69; Edward J. Escobar, “Bloody Christmas and the Irony of Police Professionalism: The Los Angeles Police Department, Mexican Americans, and Police Reform in the 1950s,” *Pacific Historical Review*, 72, no. 2 (2003): 195.

and repress these evil forces, police forces have existed, in some form or another, throughout recorded history...

We will continue in our attempts to eradicate from the community those parasites who prey upon us and whose nefarious activities drain huge sums of money from local channels of trade.⁵⁷

Chief Parker often described the dangerous class using terms such as “evil” and “parasite”:

As we study the pages of recorded history we learn that men banded together with their fellowmen in a social unit for the purpose of promoting a better way of life and for the further purpose of mutual assistance. From the first inception of this social unit, there were found in the group some wicked men with evil hearts who undertook to prey upon society rather than contribute to its welfare. In consequence, it became necessary to establish a system of rules of conduct and a legal profession to aid in their administration. Some form of police was also needed to protect the good people of the society from attack by these wicked members.⁵⁸

There are those of us who sincerely believe that this nation must undergo a moral and spiritual rebirth if it is to survive. The apathetic manner in which we have allowed human parasites to fasten their tentacles into the legal channels of trade and draw off huge fortunes must be corrected. It is a luxury that this country can no longer afford....We are proud of the name of our great city, Los Angeles, the City of Angels, and your police force is banded together in the firm determination that we shall successfully resist the evil efforts of the handful of parasites in our midst that would substitute the holy designation of our city with another name of Spanish derivation, Los Diablos, the city of devils.⁵⁹

According to Parker, it was the responsibility of the police to contain the threat posed by the dangerous class. Parker insisted that police were not the only social institution with a role to play; he acknowledged that, “criminal activity often has its origins in unfortunate social conditions,” and that “society as whole” has the responsibility for promoting social conditions inimical to the development of “criminals.”⁶⁰ However, as indicated by Parker’s discussion of the need for “a moral and spiritual rebirth” and the “apathetic manner” in which society has allowed crime to flourish, he believed that U.S. society was failing miserably at this task.⁶¹ Society,

⁵⁷ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 5, 7.

⁵⁸ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 23.

⁵⁹ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 32.

⁶⁰ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 101.

⁶¹ See Parker, *Parker on Police*, 29-32, 49.

through its permissiveness, was allowing the dangerous class to metastasize. Given society's failure, police are required to combat the immediate threat posed by this dangerous class:

The task of the police does not cover the entire field of crime prevention because the police are not assigned the tasks of guardianship, child rearing, education, religious instruction, correction of mental or physical illness and social maladjustments, or otherwise dealing with the root causes of crime. The fundamental role of the police service is not crime prevention *per se*. Rather, policemen consider themselves as a "containing element"—a thin line of blue which stands between the law-abiding members of society and the criminals who prey upon them.⁶²

It is estimated that the ever-increasing criminal army in our midst consists of approximately six million people. This is a far greater force than have overthrown whole nations in the past. It continues to expand as crime increases at a more rapid rate than the population. In order to have some degree of protection against its criminal by-products, society employs a police force whose primary responsibility is to contain the criminal army away from the society which produced it. It is not dissimilar to the role assigned to the United Nations Forces in Korea whose mission was to contain the Chinese Communist army.⁶³

Our rich and complex economic system, our political freedom, the very conduct of our way of life, is made possible because of the security provided by local police agencies. Indeed, the entire social structure is balanced upon patterns of order created by community law enforcement.⁶⁴

LAPD practices in this era reveal whom they categorized among the dangerous class in Los Angeles society. Parker himself was deeply preoccupied by organized crime and communism.⁶⁵ He frequently characterized U.S. society as facing "a three-pronged threat, a simultaneous assault in three dimensions: the armed might of Soviet Russia, the Communist Fifth Column within our borders, and organized crime."⁶⁶ And it does appear that Parker was diligent in the deployment of LAPD resources to combat organized crime.⁶⁷ Crime boss Mickey Cohen complained that Parker was "a man that don't never seem to forget. He just keeps up his vindictiveness against me."⁶⁸ At a regional gathering of police chiefs in 1952, Parker boasted that

⁶² Parker, *Parker on Police*, 101.

⁶³ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 67.

⁶⁴ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 149.

⁶⁵ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 99, 102; Kramer, "William H. Parker," 199.

⁶⁶ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 49.

⁶⁷ Jennings, "Portrait;" Kramer, "William H. Parker," 60-62.

⁶⁸ Jennings, "Portrait," 84.

he kept intelligence files on over ten thousand major figures in the criminal underworld.⁶⁹ He also engaged in a highly publicized feud with J. Edgar Hoover over the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) refusal to house a national intelligence clearinghouse on organized crime.⁷⁰ In response, Parker formed his own voluntary association of police departments to distribute intelligence information, and it eventually grew to include nearly 230 local agencies.⁷¹ Several commentators noted that organized crime did not seem to flourish in Los Angeles to the same extent as it did in other major cities in this period.⁷²

Fueled by a rabid anti-communism every bit as strong as Chief James Davis's, Parker continued the department's tradition of targeting leftist "radicals."⁷³ But under Parker, the targets subtly shifted. As Woods relates, the department no longer served as a union-buster: "The department ceased to be an arm of the Merchants and Manufacturers Association [economic elites], removing an old source of conflict and bridging the chasm between the police and the white working class."⁷⁴ This may have been influenced by Parker's own participation in labor politics as an executive member of the LAPD officer union for several years prior to becoming chief.⁷⁵ Rather than targeting labor, Parker's LAPD focused on civil libertarians and critics of the police as the primary radical threats in Los Angeles. Parker contended that it was "the criminal, the communist, the self-appointed defender of civil liberties [who] constantly cries out for more and more restriction upon police authority."⁷⁶ A retired Deputy Chief claimed, "Parker suspected that liberal judges and civil libertarians were closet communists who

⁶⁹ Kramer, "William H. Parker," 150.

⁷⁰ John T. Donovan, "I Have No Use for This Fellow Parker': William H. Parker of the LAPD and His Feud with J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI," *Southern California Quarterly* 87, no. 2 (2005): 171-98.

⁷¹ Kramer, "William H. Parker," 62.

⁷² O. W. Wilson, "Introduction: Chief William H. Parker." In *Parker on Police* (Charles C. Thomas, 1957), ix; William W. Turner, *The Police Establishment* (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1968), 74; Richard Whitehall, "When the Mobsters Came West: Organized Crime in Los Angeles Since 1930," in *20th Century Los Angeles: Power, Promotion, and Social Conflict*, ed. Norman M. Klein and Martin J. Schiesl (Regina Books, 1990), 131-51.

⁷³ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 50-51; Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 149-50; Fogelson, *Big-City Police*, 147.

⁷⁴ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 232.

⁷⁵ Wilson, "Introduction," xi; Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 93-94.

⁷⁶ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 64.

undermined the ability of police to enforce the law, and that Supreme Court decisions were part of a subversive plot to destroy society.”⁷⁷

Like his predecessors, Parker gathered intelligence information on his political rivals, including Governor Edmund “Pat” Brown, Attorney General Stanley Mosk, and members of the Los Angeles city council who were critical of the LAPD.⁷⁸ He apparently used this information to secure further support for the department. Prior to becoming mayor in 1961, Sam Yorty was a strong critic of the LAPD’s racialized enforcement and spying practices.⁷⁹ Shortly after his election, the LAPD allegedly presented Mayor Yorty with damaging information gathered by their intelligence operations, and thereafter Yorty became one of the department’s fiercest supporters, frequently echoing Parker’s claims that criticism of the LAPD was “communist-inspired.”⁸⁰

Parker, however, did not approach spying operations merely as a matter of departmental- or self-preservation, as Chief James Davis and Mayor Shaw had. Rather, Parker characterized the targeting of civil libertarians and LAPD critics as an extension of the police’s role in confronting the threat posed by the dangerous class. By criticizing and/or attempting to limit police practices, the department’s adversaries were empowering the dangerous class and enabling their predatory behavior, and thus these adversaries stood on the other side of the “thin blue line,” opposed to the well-being of the community.⁸¹ Souza described how Parker’s characterization of civil libertarians and department critics trickled down to line officers such as himself:

⁷⁷ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 141.

⁷⁸ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 117-18, 190-91.

⁷⁹ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 170-71; Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 195-96.

⁸⁰ Raphael Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles* (Princeton University Press, 1993), 40, 68; Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 197-98.

⁸¹ See Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 105-06, 114, 141, 155-57, 257; Escobar, “Bloody Christmas,” 178-79, 189-90, 194-95, 197.

The civil unrest of the '60s was anathema to the conservative cops under the direction of Chief Parker. The department was largely made up of white men who had fought in World War II and Korea, honorable wars for honorable causes. The communist threat was the cloud that hung over our country, and it was represented by civil libertarians who were marching, demonstrating and protesting on our streets.⁸²

Parker's LAPD was also notorious for its targeting of Los Angeles's Black and Chicano residents.⁸³ Parker himself was known to make racist statements about non-Whites. In testimony before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, Parker asserted:

[T]he Latin population that came in here in great strength were here before us and presented a great problem...because some of those people were not far removed from the wild tribes of the inner mountains of Mexico. I don't think you can throw genes out of the questions when you discuss behavior patterns of people.⁸⁴

Parker frequently claimed that Los Angeles's growing Black population represented a *per se* criminal threat.⁸⁵ When discussing the possibility that the city's Black population might grow to 45%, Parker stated:

Now how are you going to live with that without law enforcement? If you want any protection in your home and family in the future, you're going to have to get in and support a strong police department. If you don't do that, come 1970 God help you!⁸⁶

Prior to Mayor Yorty's conversion to LAPD supporter, he exhorted Parker to "stop making remarks about minority groups. We're not living in the South."⁸⁷

The department under Parker enforced *de facto* segregation by harassing non-Whites who ventured into the White suburbs.⁸⁸ In the city's segregated Black communities, officers

⁸² Glenn Souza, "A Simple Time, in Black and White: In the '50s, Racism Was an Enforcement Tool Passed Down from a Chief who Was God to a Legion of Fuhrmans," *Los Angeles Times*, October 12, 1995, para. 12, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1995-10-12-me-55977-story.html>.

⁸³ Kramer, "William H. Parker," Ch. 6; Escobar, "Bloody Christmas," Gerald Horne, *Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s* (Da Capo Press, 1997), Ch. 7.

⁸⁴ Kramer, "William H. Parker," 241

⁸⁵ Kramer, "William H. Parker," 220, 261, 265-66, 299.

⁸⁶ Kramer, "William H. Parker," 292.

⁸⁷ Jack Langguth, "Yorty Warns Chief to Change Policies," *Valley Times* 24, no. 131 (June 2, 1961): 3.

⁸⁸ Kramer, "William H. Parker," 23-24, 100-01, 220.

conducted dragnet operations, stopping and arresting scores of residents in pursuit of a small number of suspects.⁸⁹ Souza recounts how racism influenced the day-to-day operations of LAPD officers on the ground:

Back in the late Middle Ages when I came on the job (1959), the Los Angeles Police Department was completely segregated and by any definition extremely racist. Dwight D. Eisenhower was President and Chief William H. Parker was god.⁹⁰

We were a mercenary army unofficially [*sic*] empowered to arrest anyone at any time for any cause. The most common was drunkenness or drinking in public view, but more exotic charges could always be approved by the detectives on probable cause. At every roll call, officers were required to record in their notebooks a string of recent robbery or burglary reports in which suspects were usually described as male Negroes, 25 to 30 years old, average height and weight, black hair and brown eyes. Sometimes the descriptions were refined to include porkpie hats or processed hair, but still, any report could describe half of the men in the division's area.⁹¹

Black people could not venture north of Beverly or much west of La Brea after dark without a strongly documented purpose. In Hollywood Division, a Negro was an automatic "shake" or field interview with the resultant warrant check or match-up to some vague crime report.⁹²

White officers would walk up to the lieutenant's desk and throw down their badges rather than work with a Negro. These bluffs were almost always reconciled with quiet reason, but no adamant refusal was challenged—there weren't that many black officers to be paired with anyway.⁹³

The Los Angeles Chapter of the Civil Rights Congress (CRC) described these practices as "random arrest" and "operat[ing] on the basis of 'community suspects,'" asserting that they occurred only in "Mexican and Negro communities, rarely elsewhere," because it "would create a scandal if it happened in any other part of town."⁹⁴ In 1959, a superior court judge dismissed gambling charges against 25 Black men after concluding that the LAPD was targeting Black men

⁸⁹ Daryl F. Gates, *Chief: My Life in the LAPD* (Bantam Books, 1992), 34-35.

⁹⁰ Souza, "A Simple Time," para. 1.

⁹¹ Souza, "A Simple Time," para. 3.

⁹² Souza, "A Simple Time," para. 7.

⁹³ Souza, "A Simple Time," para. 9. On racism among LAPD officers, see also Mike Rothmiller and Ivan Goldman, *L.A. Secret Police: Inside the LAPD Elite Spy Network* (Pocket Books, 1992), 29-31.

⁹⁴ Civil Rights Congress, *The Civil Rights Congress Tells the Story* (1951), 8.

for gambling arrests.⁹⁵ The judge had written to Parker requesting an explanation for the disproportionate number of Black gambling defendants appearing in his courtroom. Parker responded with data showing that Black men made up a stunning 85% of LAPD gambling arrests over the previous two years. Evidently, Parker believed these data demonstrated a *lack* of discrimination in LAPD gambling enforcement. The judge concluded otherwise. In typical Parker fashion, he claimed that the dismissals aided the dangerous class by undermining public confidence in police.⁹⁶

Every major non-profit organization in Los Angeles dedicated to civil rights and combating racial discrimination, including (but not limited to) the ACLU, NAACP, CRC, Los Angeles County Conference on Community Relations (LACCCR), Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), and Community Service Organization, all denounced the brutal tactics employed by Parker's officers against the city's non-White residents.⁹⁷ Parker's first significant crisis regarding these racial abuses stemmed from the "Bloody Christmas" beatings in December 1951.⁹⁸ Early on Christmas morning, an LAPD party at the central jail descended into violence after a false rumor spread that an officer had lost an eye in a struggle with several young men who were now in custody.⁹⁹ Approximately 50 drunken officers from the party savagely beat the seven prisoners, five of whom were Chicano. Most of the victims suffered internal hemorrhaging from organ ruptures, and one survived only due to repeated blood transfusions.¹⁰⁰ The incident provoked a firestorm of criticism.¹⁰¹ Chicano councilmember Edward Roybal attested that he had evidence on 50 other "provable" complaints of brutality against Chicano residents in his

⁹⁵ Kramer, "William H. Parker," 156-57.

⁹⁶ Kramer, "William H. Parker," 157.

⁹⁷ See Kramer, "William H. Parker," Ch. 6; Escobar, "Bloody Christmas;" Martin J. Schiesl, "Behind the Badge: The Police and Social Discontent in Los Angeles since 1950," in *20th Century Los Angeles: Power, Promotion, and Social Conflict*, ed. Norman M. Klein and Martin J. Schiesl (Regina Books, 1990), 156-63.

⁹⁸ Escobar, "Bloody Christmas."

⁹⁹ Escobar, "Bloody Christmas," 183-84.

¹⁰⁰ Escobar, "Bloody Christmas," 184.

¹⁰¹ Escobar, "Bloody Christmas," 187-89.

Boyle Heights district.¹⁰² Parker touted the minor suspensions handed out to over 40 officers as evidence of Internal Affairs' effectiveness in addressing the attack, a response that largely satisfied the city's political elites and majority White electorate.¹⁰³ Escobar argues that, "Bloody Christmas solidified Parker's hold not only on the department but also on the city as a whole."¹⁰⁴ And indeed, despite repeated claims of racial brutality that persisted throughout the entirety of his tenure as chief,¹⁰⁵ Parker managed to protect both his own authority and the department's exclusive authority over officer discipline.

Parker, for his part, did not deny racial disproportionalities in LAPD enforcement. Instead, he insisted that these disproportionalities were justified because non-White residents committed a disproportionate share of the city's crime. As demonstrated by his exchange with the superior court judge, Parker primarily cited the LAPD's own arrest statistics as proof of racial differences in offending, an inherently dubious evidentiary basis made incontrovertibly so by the department's extensive history of racialized enforcement.¹⁰⁶ In a speech entitled "Police Role in Community Relations," Parker explicitly advocated the use of race to guide police decision-making:

Every department worth its salt deploys field forces on the basis of crime experience. Deployment is often heaviest in so-called minority sections of the city. The reason is statistical—it is a fact that certain racial groups, at the present time, commit a disproportionate share of the total crime.

Let me make one point clear in that regard—a competent police administrator is fully aware of the multiple conditions which create this problem. There is no inherent physical or mental weakness in any racial stock which tends it toward crime. But—and this is a "but" which must be borne constantly in mind—police field deployment is not social agency activity. In deploying to suppress crime, we are not interested in why a certain group tends toward crime, we are interested in maintaining order. The fact that a group

¹⁰² Escobar, "Bloody Christmas," 185.

¹⁰³ Escobar, "Bloody Christmas," 196-98; Woods, *Police in Los Angeles* 233-34.

¹⁰⁴ Escobar, "Bloody Christmas," 174. See also Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 234.

¹⁰⁵ Kramer, "William H. Parker," Ch. 6; Schiesl, "Behind the Badge," 156-63. See, e.g., Civil Rights Congress, *Tells the Story*.

¹⁰⁶ See Kelly Lytle Hernández, *City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles, 1771-1965* (University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Edward J. Escobar, *Race, Police, and the Making of a Political Identity: Mexican Americans and the Los Angeles Police Department, 1900-1945* (University of California Press, 1999).

would not be a crime problem under different socio-economic conditions and might not be a crime problem tomorrow, does not alter today's tactical necessities. Police deployment is concerned with effect, not cause.

When I am told that intense police activity in a given area is psychologically disturbing to its residents, I am forced to agree. And *I agree that it can add weight to discriminatory beliefs held by some who witness it* [emphasis added], and that it can create a sense of persecution among those who receive it. Is the police administrator, then, to discard crime occurrence statistics and deploy his men on the basis of social inoffensiveness? That would be discrimination indeed! ...

At present time, race, color, and creed are useful statistical and tactical devices...Discrimination is not a factor there. If persons of Mexican, Negro, or Anglo-Saxon ancestry, for some reason, contribute heavily to forms of crime, police deployment must take that into account. From an ethnological point-of-view, Negro, Mexican, and Anglo-Saxon are unscientific breakdowns; they are a fiction. From a police point-of-view, they are a useful fiction and should be used as long as they remain useful.¹⁰⁷

As Woods asserts, this was an argument that Los Angeles's White super-majority largely bought:

"The reported incidence of crimes committed by minority group members provided the white community with one rationale for supporting its local police force."¹⁰⁸ Broad local support for racialized enforcement was thus reinforced by three intertwining factors in this period, all of which are highlighted by Parker in the quote above: (1) White racism, which, though undeniably present, was often sublimated into discourse about socioeconomic disadvantage; (2) the residential segregation of non-Whites into the most socioeconomically disadvantaged areas of the city; and (3) the LAPD's own history of racialized enforcement practices, which, as Parker acknowledged, reinforced perceptions of non-Whites as a criminal and social threat.

Upon this fundamental binary relation between the community and the dangerous class, Parker constructed several additional tenets of his policing logic. One of these additional tenets was that police must address the threat posed by the dangerous class through punitive enforcement—the police are not social workers and cannot address the underlying social

¹⁰⁷ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 161-62.

¹⁰⁸ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 232. See also Escobar, "Bloody Christmas," 195-96.

conditions that give rise to the dangerous class.¹⁰⁹ In a speech before the IACP, Parker emphasized:

Law enforcement officers are neither equipped nor authorized to deal with broad social problems. We do not control economic cycles; we are not equipped to deal with racial, religious, or political prejudice; we are not arbiters of right and wrong. In short, we are not healers of social ills. Our job is to apply emergency treatment to society's surface wounds; we deal with effects, not causes.¹¹⁰

The officer corps under Parker was indeed ill-suited to addressing “social problems.” As Souza describes, the vast majority of officers were combat veterans.¹¹¹ Parker claimed that 83% of the force (approximately 3,500 officers) were veterans of World War II.¹¹² He conceded that, “[i]t is a radical change to relieve a man from a fighting armed force, where he is imbued with a deep sense of preservation of self and destruction of the enemy, and to place him in the peacetime role of a police officer.”¹¹³ Parker's officers were also, in his own words, “conservative, ultraconservative and very right wing.”¹¹⁴ It is estimated that up to 2,000 officers were members of the John Birch Society,¹¹⁵ and Parker himself participated in Birch Society events.¹¹⁶ Tasking officers with punitive enforcement rather than social work fulfilled a crucial function by bridging the roles of military combatant and LAPD officer in a manner palatable to radically conservative political outlooks.

Parker also stressed that LAPD enforcement must be proactive, rather than reactive.¹¹⁷ Rather than passively responding to resident complaints or tips, officers must actively seek out the dangerous class, even if it means hassling innocent members of the community. Not only

¹⁰⁹ Fogelson, *Big-City Police*, 187; Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 49.

¹¹⁰ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 12.

¹¹¹ Souza, “A Simple Time.”

¹¹² Parker, *Parker on Police*, 27.

¹¹³ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 7.

¹¹⁴ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 199.

¹¹⁵ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 139.

¹¹⁶ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 204.

¹¹⁷ Fogelson, *Big-City Police*, 187-88, 190-91, 231; Schiesl, “Behind the Badge,” 155.

will such tactics allow officers to find and arrest the dangerous class in greater numbers—these tactics are also the only means by which officers might possibly be said to “prevent” crime:

The function of police insofar as prevention is concerned lies in two general fields: (1) the prevention of criminal acts by actual or potential physical intervention, and (2) performance so effective that the fear of apprehension, conviction and punishment tends to prevent criminal actions; in other words, crime repression.

The first of these is accomplished through such police procedures as uniformed and plainclothes patrol on foot and by vehicle, and by the maintenance of such organization and communications as to place men at a scene of planned disorder or other crime within the shortest possible time. Crime repression is accomplished through educating criminals to fear, not only the policeman in plain view or on patrol in the area, but also the policeman who may be keeping them under surveillance without their knowledge.¹¹⁸

Daryl Gates, who would lead the department from 1978 to 1992, served as Parker’s personal driver, a role that Gates described as “a tutorial on how to be chief.”¹¹⁹ Gates referred to “pro-active policing” as Parker’s “most important” innovation:

Many police departments operate on the theory that you simply react...Parker thought it would be far more effective to try to stop crime before it happened. In a troubled neighborhood, we knew who the troublemakers were. If a man was suspected of a burglary, we put him under surveillance. If someone looked out of place in a neighborhood, we had a little chat with him. If a description of a thief could be obtained, we stopped everyone fitting that description, even if it meant angering dozens of innocent citizens...Using these proactive tactics, LAPD would become the most aggressive police department in the country.¹²⁰

In a profile of Parker for the *Saturday Evening Post*, Jennings described how LAPD detectives would greet suspected “mobster[s]” at the airport as they flew in, informing them of the negative consequences that awaited them in Los Angeles if they did not depart on “the next eastbound plane.”¹²¹ Parker’s commitment to proactivity was also evident in his vociferous advocacy for

¹¹⁸ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 101-02.

¹¹⁹ Gates, *Chief*, 30.

¹²⁰ Gates, *Chief*, 34-35.

¹²¹ Jennings, “Portrait,” 89.

warrantless police surveillance, which he described as “the most effective method of suppressing crime and ferreting out criminal activities.”¹²²

In a marked departure from his predecessors, Parker acknowledged that there were limitations to acceptable police behavior, even in the context of proactive enforcement. He insisted that police must respect constitutional rights, which he described in exceedingly laudatory terms:

I believe that we cannot pass lightly over those inalienable rights of individuals which are the greatest possessions of a free people. I do not believe that the police service can afford either to ignore or to trample upon these priceless possessions, and I believe that history will indicate that every police organization which has assumed a tyrannical attitude has been doomed to oblivion. We still today suffer from the abuse of power by those who preceded us in the police profession. I believe that to avoid these fatal errors we must know and recognize the legal rights of individuals and be fully cognizant of when the law permits us to invade personal liberty.¹²³

Parker took an especially hard line against the sort of bribery and corruption that was previously endemic to the department, and which had torpedoed the department’s public reputation since its founding.¹²⁴ Future chief Ed Davis claimed that Parker would “put his own mother in jail if he had to,” and Daryl Gates commended Parker for “stamp[ing] honesty and integrity into the minds of every young recruit.”¹²⁵ Parker called the diminution of graft “[b]y far the most important factor in police progress” under his leadership.¹²⁶

But although bribery and corruption were clearly no longer tolerated, the boundaries of acceptable police behavior under Parker were fuzzy. The LAPD’s serial brutality against non-Whites, documented by a myriad of government and non-profit organizations but never adequately punished,¹²⁷ belies Parker’s stated commitment to constitutional rights. Parker

¹²² Parker, *Parker on Police*, 108. See generally 99-112.

¹²³ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 102. See also 20-21, 100, 102, 114, 125, 131.

¹²⁴ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 227; Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 47-48, 56-57.

¹²⁵ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 46, 54.

¹²⁶ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 204.

¹²⁷ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” Ch. 6; Schiesl, “Behind the Badge,” 156-63; Civil Rights Congress, *Tells the Story*, 11.

himself often qualified his reverence for constitutional rights by asserting that these rights should not hamper police effectiveness: “society *should* control police activity by holding the police strictly accountable for the proper exercise of their power, but *should not* tie their hands to the extent that their effectiveness is critically impaired.”¹²⁸ He also railed against court decisions that imposed the exclusionary rule on illegally seized evidence and limited police authority to engage in warrantless spying, writing polemical law review articles and dedicating sections of the LAPD annual report to correlating these court decisions with crime increases.¹²⁹

Whatever the boundaries were, it was up to Parker and the LAPD to determine them. The department’s exclusive authority over officer discipline allowed it to define for itself what constituted appropriate police practices, and Parker wielded the chief’s civil service protections as a shield to rebuff any attempts by outsiders to hold the department accountable.¹³⁰ Both practices were enabled by the Progressive city charter amendments of the mid-1930s; as Woods states, “Parker...transformed the department’s statutory autonomy from theory to fact.”¹³¹ Parker’s own employment protections allowed him to stonewall the civilian police commission’s attempts to exert independent control. In 1959, Herbert Greenwood, then the only Black member of the commission, asked Parker for information on Black officers in the department and racial disproportionalities in gambling arrests. He also requested that commissioners be allowed to question officers accused of brutality.¹³² Parker angrily refused and accused Greenwood of trying to use the information to attack him. Exasperated by Parker’s obstinance and without recourse to force his hand, Greenwood resigned, declaring, “We don’t tell him. He tells us.”¹³³ No “reform-minded” commissioner appointed in the 1950s lasted for very long, and the commission ultimately became entirely compliant to Parker.¹³⁴ According to Kramer’s review

¹²⁸ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 100. See also 65, 109, 111, 114.

¹²⁹ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 99-123; Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 141; Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 241.

¹³⁰ Escobar, “Bloody Christmas;” Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 114-17.

¹³¹ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 223.

¹³² Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 157-58.

¹³³ “Police Board Member Flays Parker, Quits,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 19, 1959, 1.

¹³⁴ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 234.

of police commission minutes from the 1950s, the civilian commissioners “voted unanimously on almost every issue that came before them and always supported the chief.”¹³⁵ A former commissioner from 1953 to 1966 recounted, “We relied on Parker an awful lot, and maybe that’s why we got the rubber stamp image. But, you know, Parker was usually right—he wasn’t wrong very often.”¹³⁶ It is no surprise that Parker once told a reporter, “The police commissioners do not run the department...I run the department.”¹³⁷

Following the minor suspensions handed out to officers in the “Bloody Christmas” beatings, the LAPD’s claim to exclusive disciplinary authority remained essentially unchallenged for nearly a decade.¹³⁸ The next major confrontation came in 1960, when the ACLU and NAACP jointly proposed a city ordinance that would establish a civilian review board for investigating complaints against the LAPD and providing disciplinary recommendations.¹³⁹ Parker, of course, opposed the proposal, as did the mayor and the editorial board of the *Los Angeles Times*.¹⁴⁰ Both the American Legion and the head of the LAPD officer union intimated that the civilian review board was part of a communist plot to destroy U.S. society.¹⁴¹ The city council quickly rejected the proposal, but critics continued to denigrate it even after the rejection.¹⁴² In sum, the precise boundaries of acceptable police conduct were ambiguous and entirely up to the LAPD to determine. Nevertheless, in acknowledging that there were boundaries at all, as well as publicly professing that the LAPD would respect the boundaries established through constitutional law, Parker drew a pronounced contrast between himself and prior department leaders.

Parker was adamant about the necessity of obtaining public support for the department and its enforcement practices: “We accept the principle that the police derive their powers from

¹³⁵ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 117.

¹³⁶ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 116.

¹³⁷ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 117.

¹³⁸ Escobar, “Bloody Christmas;” Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 234.

¹³⁹ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 236-39; Schiesl, “Behind the Badge,” 159-60.

¹⁴⁰ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 237.

¹⁴¹ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 238; Schiesl, “Behind the Badge,” 159-60.

¹⁴² Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 237-39.

the public and must be held continually responsible to the public for the use or misuse of those powers.”¹⁴³ According to Parker, the practice of manufacturing public support for policing was akin to selling a product to consumers:

There must be created a desire and a demand on the part of the community for the quality of police service that is offered. In this respect, law enforcement does not differ greatly from private industry. The one factor which predetermines the success of any business is the market. Unless the ultimate recipient of a product or service is convinced that he needs it, the most skillful organization and techniques are wasted.

A second lesson the police administrator can draw from industry is that markets are created—they seldom spring full-blown from the unshaped desires of the people. The vital elements of civilized life, including our most sacred institutions, at one time or another have been laboriously sold to people...

The police administrator’s first step toward building a foundation for a good police public relationship must be to introduce to the public a fact which is elemental to every society. This fact is: the police function is a basic component of man’s government by man which has determined the character and permanence of every social structure since human beings first sought collective security...

The creation of the market need not be so much the sale of a startling new concept as it is the calling to memory of some well-known facts.¹⁴⁴

To that end, Parker was more active in public relations than perhaps any other police chief in history.¹⁴⁵ He expanded the LAPD’s “Public Information” group into a full division (PID) with five sections: “press, radio, television, police magazines and research.”¹⁴⁶ The division fed stories to the media, published its own pro-LAPD print material, and booked LAPD speakers across the city.¹⁴⁷ Parker himself spoke to “a few hundred audiences each year.”¹⁴⁸ Yet, his biggest impact on public perceptions of the LAPD may have come through his involvement in the police procedural *Dragnet*, featuring fictional LAPD detective Joe Friday.¹⁴⁹ The show was massive hit

¹⁴³ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 135. See also 69-70, 100-101, 146, 151, 225.

¹⁴⁴ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 139-140. See also 145-46, 188-89.

¹⁴⁵ Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 60. See also Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 62-91.

¹⁴⁶ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 63, 71.

¹⁴⁷ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 71-77.

¹⁴⁸ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 63. For a collection of representative speeches, see Parker, *Parker on Police*.

¹⁴⁹ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 82-88.

in the 1950s and earned several Emmy awards, and Parker had officers on set for every episode to ensure that LAPD officers were presented as “ethical, efficient, terse and white.”¹⁵⁰ Episodes were based on actual LAPD case files, and each ended with the message: “Technical assistance for the filming of DRAGNET comes from the Office of Chief W.H. Parker, Los Angeles Police Department.”¹⁵¹ Woods described *Dragnet* as “the greatest propaganda mechanism that any police department had ever had.”¹⁵² But media successes were not enough—Parker emphasized that line officers, through their day-to-day interactions with the public, also played a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of police.¹⁵³

Parker’s efforts to generate public support were wildly successful. For nearly 75 years prior to his appointment in 1950, the LAPD exhibited a nearly unbroken streak of bribery and corruption scandals. Already by 1952, the *Chicago Sun Times* was declaring the LAPD to be one of the best police departments in the country.¹⁵⁴ Two years later, *Newsweek* named it *the* best police force in the nation, declaring that, “Not only has it accomplished much for Los Angeles; even more important, it has given other cities a model to follow.”¹⁵⁵ Parker received universal support from the mayors under which he served,¹⁵⁶ and he was showered with plaudits by countless local organizations and media outlets.¹⁵⁷ A local radio station declared August 7, 1957, the 30th anniversary of Parker’s start in the LAPD, to be “Bill Parker Day” and aired recorded tributes from Vice President Richard Nixon, Mayor Paulson, California Governor Goodwin Knight, and George Ottewis, Chicago chief of police and president of the IACP.¹⁵⁸ The same day,

¹⁵⁰ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 84.

¹⁵¹ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 84. Jack Webb, the actor who played detective Joe Friday, later penned a hagiography of Parker entitled, *The Badge: The Inside Story of One of America’s Great Police Departments*. See Jack Webb, *The Badge* (Prentice-Hall, 1958).

¹⁵² Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 87. See also Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 126.

¹⁵³ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 6, 137, 160, 181-182.

¹⁵⁴ Escobar, “Bloody Christmas,” 180.

¹⁵⁵ “‘Best’ Police Force vs. Worst Crime Wave,” *Newsweek* 43, no. 6 (February 8, 1954): 53. https://archive.org/details/sim_newsweek-us_1954-02-08_43_6/page/n11/mode/2up.

¹⁵⁶ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 235.

¹⁵⁷ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 88-91, 170-71.

¹⁵⁸ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 126.

he received resolutions of endorsement from the city council, the police commission, and the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, and he attended a lunch in his honor with over 850 local civic organizations.¹⁵⁹ Escobar describes Parker in this period as “at once the country’s most renowned big city police chief and the post powerful man in Los Angeles.”¹⁶⁰

Changes in Social Structural Conditions in Los Angeles in the Mid-20th Century

Despite Parker’s broad popularity, changes in the political economy of Los Angeles in the 1950s and 1960s produced increasing friction with the LAPD under his command. Tables 6 and 7 include Census data on the demographic changes experienced in the city and county over this period.

Table 6. Los Angeles City Population Growth, 1940 to 1960

Year	City Population	U.S.-Born White	Percent Growth	Foreign-Born White	Percent Growth	Black	Percent Growth
1940	1,504,277	1,191,182	-	215,248	-	63,774	-
1950	1,965,150	1,506,110	26.4%	247,710	15.1%	170,880	167.9%
1960	2,481,456	1,776,917	18.0%	287,060	15.9%	334,763	95.9%

Note: In Census data, Los Angeles’s Chicano population is included among the U.S.-born and foreign-born White population counts.
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 1940, pt. 1, ch. 6, tbl. B-36, 630; U.S. Census Bureau 1950, pt. 5, ch. 4, tbl. 53, 5-205; U.S. Census Bureau 1960, pt. 6, ch. D, tbl. 96, 6-478.

Table 7. Los Angeles County (Excluding Los Angeles City)* Population Growth, 1940 to 1960

Year	County Population	U.S.-Born White	Percent Growth	Foreign-Born White	Percent Growth	Black	Percent Growth
1940	1,281,366	1,129,144	-	124,468	-	11,435	-
1950	2,186,537	1,956,206	73.2%	167,918	34.9%	47,001	311.0%
1960	3,560,975	3,139,099	60.5%	254,334	51.5%	126,783	169.7%

*Exclusion of Los Angeles city population by author calculation.
Note: In Census data, Los Angeles’s Chicano population is included among the U.S.-born and foreign-born White population counts.
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 1940, pt. 1, ch. 6, tbl. 21, 541; U.S. Census Bureau 1950, pt. 5, ch. 3, tbl. 42, 5-163; U.S. Census Bureau 1960, pt. 6, ch. B, tbl. 28, 6-196.

¹⁵⁹ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 90.

¹⁶⁰ Escobar, “Bloody Christmas,” 180. See also Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 241; Samuel Walker, *A Critical History of Police Reform: The Emergence of Professionalism*, (Lexington Books, 1977), 171-72.

The first major trend illustrated by these data is the tremendous growth of Los Angeles's Black population. Between 1940 and 1960, the Black population in Los Angeles County grew 6-fold. Over 70% of these new residents settled in the city of Los Angeles, and the city's Black population percentage grew from 4.2% in 1940 to 13.5% in 1960. Overall, 72.5% of Black county residents in 1960 lived in the city of Los Angeles as opposed to areas outside of the city limits.

The second trend highlighted by these data is the continuing process of suburbanization and white flight, which increasingly spread beyond the city of Los Angeles in this period. Between 1940 and 1960, growth in county areas outside of Los Angeles outstripped growth within the city itself, largely driven by substantial increases in U.S.-born Whites. Of the over 2.5 million new U.S.-born White residents in the county, 77.4% settled *outside* the city of Los Angeles rather than within it, nearly the mirror opposite of Black migration in this period. The city's U.S.-born White population percentage dropped from 79.1% in 1940 to 71.6% in 1960, but the U.S.-born White population in the county suburbs remained level at 88%, even as this population nearly tripled. The Black population in the suburbs also grew, but Black residents still only comprised 3.5% of county residents outside of the city in 1960. By that year, 63.9% of U.S.-born White county residents lived *outside* the city of Los Angeles rather than within the city limits, again the near mirror opposite of the distribution of Black residents in the county. In short, the city population grew modestly and became darker, while the population in the county suburbs grew considerably and remained lily-white.¹⁶¹

Many of the incoming Black migrants were poor, rural Southerners seeking employment in Los Angeles's industrial sector, which boomed during the 1940s amid World War II.¹⁶² Even after the enforcement of racially restrictive housing covenants was declared unconstitutional in

¹⁶¹ Census data include Los Angeles's Chicano population among the U.S.-born and foreign-born White population counts, without differentiating between those with and without Mexican ancestry. An independent measure of Chicano population growth in this period is therefore not feasible. See Kramer, "William H. Parker," 40, n. 126.

¹⁶² Horne, *Fire This Time*, 31-34, 247-48; Carey McWilliams, *Southern California: An Island on the Land* (Gibbs Smith, 1973), 371-72; Elizabeth Poe, "Nobody Was Listening," in *Los Angeles: Biography of a City*, ed. John W. Caughey and LaRee Caughey (University of California Press, 1977), 426-27.

1948, discrimination continued to be a formidable barrier for Black migrants seeking housing in the White suburbs. In 1964, California voters overwhelmingly approved Proposition 14, a measure which overturned a 1963 fair housing law and enabled property sellers and realtors to engage in explicit racial discrimination in housing decisions.¹⁶³ In addition to discrimination from property owners and landlords, property value appreciation in the White suburbs coupled with discrimination from mortgage lenders often left housing economically out of reach for Black migrants.¹⁶⁴ As a result, they largely settled in Watts and other segregated neighborhoods in south Los Angeles. By 1950, over half of the Black population in Los Angeles resided in Watts,¹⁶⁵ and the neighborhood was over 80% Black.¹⁶⁶ According to Fulton, “By the mid-1960s, Los Angeles was the most segregated city in the country.”¹⁶⁷

In the 1950s following the war, industrial labor opportunities in Los Angeles contracted, and the slack labor market produced even greater employment discrimination.¹⁶⁸ Watts disproportionately suffered from these economic changes, as well as deliberate disinvestment from city hall.¹⁶⁹ In 1960, “unemployment in Black LA officially was 12.5 percent and most likely higher,” and 44.5% of households in Watts were below the poverty line.¹⁷⁰ The Jordan Downs,

¹⁶³ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 37. Although Proposition 14 was declared unconstitutional by the California Supreme Court two years later, only overt racial discrimination was legally prohibited, and the breadth of support for the proposition suggests that racial discrimination likely continued to influence housing decisions, albeit less conspicuously.

¹⁶⁴ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 31.

¹⁶⁵ John H. M. Laslett, “Historical Perspectives: Immigration and the Rise of a Distinctive Urban Region, 1900-1970,” in *Ethnic Los Angeles*, ed. Roger Waldinger and Mehdi Bozorgmehr (Russell Sage Foundation, 1996), 58.

¹⁶⁶ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 35. Horne describes how rural Southerner migrants to Watts were discriminated against even within Los Angeles’s existing Black community for their rural “folkways” (33; see also 14, 32-34, 50-51). Eldridge Cleaver recalled that, “We used Watts as an epithet in much the same way as city boys used ‘country’ as a term of derision. To deride one as a ‘lame,’ who did not know what was happening (a rustic bumpkin).” Eldridge Cleaver, *Soul on Ice* (Dell Publishing, 1968), 27.

¹⁶⁷ William Fulton, *The Reluctant Metropolis: The Politics of Urban Growth in Los Angeles* (John Hopkins University Press, 2001), 10.

¹⁶⁸ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 248-50.

¹⁶⁹ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 51-52.

¹⁷⁰ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 248; Poe, “Nobody Was Listening,” 427.

Imperial Courts, and Hacienda Village public housing units were all constructed in Watts as “temporary housing” in this period.¹⁷¹

But increases in the non-White populations of Los Angeles also led to breakthrough political victories. In 1949, a political coalition of Chicano, Jewish, and Black residents succeeding in electing Edward Roybal, a Chicano resident from Boyle Heights, as the city’s first non-White councilmember.¹⁷² Growing up in a multiethnic, central-city neighborhood, Roybal had personal experience with LAPD’s “proactive” harassment of non-Whites, and as a councilmember he consistently brought attention to brutality and bias in LAPD practices.¹⁷³ He was frequently joined by Rosalind Weiner Wyman, a Jewish councilmember elected in 1953 who also became a frequent critic of the LAPD.¹⁷⁴ In 1963, the first three Black city councilmembers were elected: Billy Mills, Gilbert Lindsay, and future mayor Tom Bradley.¹⁷⁵ All three “spoke out against abuse in the department,” but they continued to be outnumbered by White councilmembers supportive of Chief Parker.¹⁷⁶

The LAPD’s harassment and abuse of the city’s growing non-White populations produced ever increasing tension throughout Chief Parker’s tenure.¹⁷⁷ Horne describes how “Black nationalist” groups such as the Nation of Islam (NOI) gained traction in Los Angeles in the 1950s and 1960s by giving voice to the Black community’s frustrations with discrimination in housing, employment, public services, and policing.¹⁷⁸ However, these Black nationalist groups were effectively marginalized in Los Angeles politics.¹⁷⁹ Parker, with little to no pushback

¹⁷¹ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 35.

¹⁷² Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 41; Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 62-63.

¹⁷³ Escobar, *Race, Police*, 172-74, 285.

¹⁷⁴ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 156.

¹⁷⁵ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 234-35.

¹⁷⁶ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 231-32. See also Horne, *Fire This Time*, 295-97.

¹⁷⁷ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” Ch. 6; Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 235.

¹⁷⁸ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 10-13, 122-26.

¹⁷⁹ Horne, *Fire This Time*, Ch. 6.

from other city figures, frequently portrayed the NOI as part and parcel of the radical communist threat confronting U.S. society.¹⁸⁰

The approach of the city's first non-White councilmembers, while often highly critical, nonetheless reflected the same ambivalence toward the LAPD as critiques from elite Black residents of Central Avenue in the 1920s. Roybal and Bradley, the two councilmembers who would go on to hold higher office,¹⁸¹ are illustrative in this regard. Roybal was the department's fiercest critic on the city council throughout the 1950s. He began his council term by endorsing proposals for a civilian misconduct review board; he drew attention to systemic racial abuse during the Bloody Christmas scandal; and he supported the local judge in his dispute with Parker over discrimination in gambling arrests. He even called for Parker's resignation following Parker's comments about Chicano residents being recent descendants of the "wild tribes of...Mexico."¹⁸² Yet, Roybal also requested increased LAPD patrols in his district.¹⁸³ As Escobar describes, "Roybal generally endorsed the department's requests for additional funding, and he also attempted to act as a conduit between the LAPD and the community on issues of mutual concern, such as growing problems with drugs and gangs in East Los Angeles."¹⁸⁴ He frequently met with LAPD officers in his district, and he lectured at the police academy on sociological issues in Los Angeles.¹⁸⁵ Thus, Roybal appears to have walked the same fine line as NAACP president Dr. Hudson in 1927: He vehemently criticized the LAPD's tactics, while still embracing the underlying legitimacy of policing as an institution.

Bradley, prior to joining the council, was a 20-year veteran of the LAPD and the only Black officer appointed to lieutenant under Parker.¹⁸⁶ In 1955, Bradley was assigned to the

¹⁸⁰ See, e.g., Schiesl, "Behind the Badge," 161; Kramer, "William H. Parker," 246-48.

¹⁸¹ Roybal served as a member of the U.S. House of Representatives for 30 years (1963-1993), while Bradley served as Los Angeles mayor for 20 years (1973-1993) and was quite nearly elected as governor of California.

¹⁸² Escobar, *Race, Police*, 288-89.

¹⁸³ Kramer, "William H. Parker," 156.

¹⁸⁴ Escobar, *Race, Police*, 288.

¹⁸⁵ Kramer, "William H. Parker," 155.

¹⁸⁶ Kramer, "William H. Parker," 224-25; Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 70.

Public Information Division (PID) as a “community relations” officer, where he worked with local Black newspapers to improve perceptions of the department and assuage concerns about bias and brutality.¹⁸⁷ Future chief Gates would later claim that Parker received an “intelligence report” that Bradley was bad-mouthing the department to “dissident groups,” and thereafter Bradley became “an absolute traitor” in Parker’s eyes.¹⁸⁸ Domanick maintains that Parker simply blamed Bradley for continuing bad press about the department’s racial brutality.¹⁸⁹ In any case, Bradley was branded as disloyal and transferred out of PID. Even as he was promoted to lieutenant, he remained “in Wilshire, on the graveyard shift.”¹⁹⁰ His stock in the department sank even lower in 1960 after he permitted officers who volunteered to work on integrated patrols to do so.¹⁹¹ The notoriously segregated and “extremely racist” department¹⁹² subjected the integrated patrols to what Bradley later described as a “very sick kind of treatment and abuse from their fellow officers.”¹⁹³ The harassment was bad enough that the White volunteers on the integrated patrols asked to be reassigned. Parker stood idly by and allowed it to happen. It was not until Parker’s hand was forced by the election of Mayor Yorty in 1961 that he finally committed to integrating LAPD patrol teams,¹⁹⁴ and according to Bradley, “It wasn’t until about 1963 or ’64 that the chief finally got around to announcing the policy of nondiscrimination in the assignment of radio cars.”¹⁹⁵

By then, Bradley had retired from the force and was serving as an elected member of city council. He could rely on his own firsthand experience when he critiqued the department’s

¹⁸⁷ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 141.

¹⁸⁸ Gates, *Chief*, 66.

¹⁸⁹ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 164.

¹⁹⁰ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 165.

¹⁹¹ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 166-67.

¹⁹² Souza, “A Simple Time.”

¹⁹³ Bernard Galm, *The Impossible Dream: Thomas Bradley*, 1978 interview (Oral History Program, University of California, Los Angeles, 1984), 68.

¹⁹⁴ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 167.

¹⁹⁵ Galm, *Impossible Dream*, 68.

virulent racism, which he did frequently in his early years in office.¹⁹⁶ Yet, as demonstrated by his decades of LAPD service and his work with the PID, Bradley too demonstrated a fundamental commitment to policing as an institution. Years later, Bradley would even commend Parker for bringing the LAPD—and, by its influence, policing in the rest of the country—closer to the ideal:

I would say that [improvement in the LAPD] really did not begin to pick up until the beginning of Chief Parker's tenure, when, by virtue of strong standards which had begun to develop even under prior chiefs but certainly dramatically highlighted under Chief Parker, there was more respect for the department in terms of its professionalism, its integrity, and the effectiveness, the honesty of the membership of the department.¹⁹⁷

William Parker, again, a man of brilliant intellect, an eloquent spokesman, tough disciplinarian, a man who, perhaps more than any in my memory, helped to set a pattern of professional standards for the police department in this city as well as across the nation that had a lasting effect and impact.¹⁹⁸

He [Parker] had some excellent programs in the field of community relations, and he had outstanding policies with regard to many issues affecting relationships between the police department and the community.¹⁹⁹

As an administrator, in terms of his efforts to establish new standards that I thought were good for law enforcement, he was excellent.²⁰⁰

Nevertheless, despite his respect for the department's "professionalization" under Parker, Bradley was one of the prescient observers who predicted that the LAPD's approach to policing in Black communities was likely to lead to "a major confrontation."²⁰¹ The claim was not new; a Black attorney in 1939 warned the police commission of potential "bloodshed" in response to abusive LAPD practices in the Central Avenue district.²⁰² But by 1965, a chorus of voices in Los Angeles was echoing presentiments of violence, particularly after racial uprisings

¹⁹⁶ Kramer, "William H. Parker," 221, 230-231, 249; J. Gregory Payne and Scott C. Ratzan, *Tom Bradley, the Impossible Dream: A Biography* (Roundtable Publishing, 1986), 72.

¹⁹⁷ Galm, *Impossible Dream*, 63.

¹⁹⁸ Galm, *Impossible Dream*, 92-93.

¹⁹⁹ Galm, *Impossible Dream*, 94.

²⁰⁰ Galm, *Impossible Dream*, 95.

²⁰¹ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 295.

²⁰² "Police Terrorism Charged by Central Ave. Leaders," *Los Angeles Times*, February 1, 1939, pt. II, 2.

in Harlem and Philadelphia in the summer of 1964. Bradley was joined by the national director of CORE, a lawyer in the California Attorney General's office, and fellow councilmember Billy Mills in predicting that LAPD abuse could provoke a violent reaction.²⁰³ Paul Weeks, the *Los Angeles Times* reporter on the "black beat," warned in 1964 that, "This town is going to blow up one of these days, and the *Times* won't know what hit it."²⁰⁴

There were also violent confrontations in the early 1960s that presaged the possibility of an even larger upheaval. In 1961, after a 17-year-old Black youth was arrested at Griffith Park for riding the merry-go-round without a ticket, over 200 Black men from a nearby picnic surrounded the arresting officers and demanded that the youth be released.²⁰⁵ An additional 75 officers were called to the scene, sparking a "melee" that "ended with many blacks arrested, dozens injured, and several hospitalized."²⁰⁶ A year later, in 1962, LAPD officers stopped two burglary "suspects" outside of an NOI temple, and several temple members came out to assist the detainees.²⁰⁷ Once again, dozens of additional LAPD officers were called, and after a brief altercation these officers stormed the temple, "shooting wildly."²⁰⁸ The ensuing gun battle ended with one member of the NOI dead, two others permanently disabled, and several others severely wounded, in addition to an LAPD officer who was shot.²⁰⁹ Without fail, Parker cast critics of the LAPD in the wake of these incidents as radical leftists, and police violence against the Black community continued unabated.²¹⁰ According to Schiesl, the LAPD killed 60 Black residents between 1963 and 1965, an annual average of approximately 9 killings for every 100,000 Black residents.²¹¹ Of the 60 Black residents shot, 25 were unarmed and 27 were shot in the back.

²⁰³ Kramer, "William H. Parker," 265-67.

²⁰⁴ Kramer, "William H. Parker," 267.

²⁰⁵ Josh Sides, *L.A. City Limits: African American Los Angeles from the Great Depression to the Present* (University of California Press, 2003), 173.

²⁰⁶ Schiesl, "Behind the Badge," 160. Former LAPD officer Souza describes confrontations at the Griffith Park merry-go-round in the early 1960s as "[t]he city's first race riots." Souza, "A Simple Time," para. 10.

²⁰⁷ Schiesl, "Behind the Badge," 161; Kramer, "William H. Parker," 246.

²⁰⁸ Schiesl, "Behind the Badge," 161; Horne, *Fire This Time*, 123.

²⁰⁹ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 123; Kramer, "William H. Parker," 246-47.

²¹⁰ Schiesl, "Behind the Badge," 161-63.

²¹¹ Schiesl, "Behind the Badge," 164.

The Watts Uprising and Its Aftermath

The building tension finally exploded during the Watts uprising in August 1965.²¹² The immediate trigger was a DUI stop by the California Highway Patrol (CHP) at the corner of 116th Street and Avalon Boulevard.²¹³ A crowd formed as the officer attempted to arrest the driver, 21-year-old Black resident Marquette Frye. Included in the crowd was Frye's mother, who lived nearby and arrived 10 minutes after the initial stop. The Fryes maintained that the scene turned violent after Frye's mother was handcuffed roughly, causing her to cry out in pain. Officers claimed that Frye became belligerent after his mother scolded him for drinking, implying that Frye was embarrassed by the challenge to his masculinity. It is undisputed that Frye, his mother, and his brother were all violently arrested at gunpoint as the crowd—and its distress—continued to grow. Frye sustained injuries consistent with his claim that he was hit in the head with a baton twice, and CHP officials admitted to punching Frye's mother in the face.²¹⁴ LAPD officers arrived at the scene as the arrests were ongoing and dragged Joyce Gaines from the crowd, alleging that she spat at officers. Gaines was wearing a "barber's smock"²¹⁵ that was mistaken for a maternity dress, and the image of LAPD officers forcing an apparently pregnant woman into the back of a police car was the final catalyst for the agitated crowd. They pelted the patrol cars with rocks and bottles as the arrestees were driven away.

Within the hour, reports arrived that members of the crowd, which had now grown to over 1,000 residents, were throwing rocks at cars driven by Whites.²¹⁶ Journalists who arrived to cover the scene were also attacked.²¹⁷ A local community leader recounted that he started directing cars off Avalon Boulevard to keep them safe.²¹⁸ A group of 70 to 80 LAPD officers

²¹² Horne, *Fire This Time*, 45-167.

²¹³ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 54-56; Kramer, "William H. Parker," 269-70; Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 179-80.

²¹⁴ Frye's mother stated that she was struck at the scene, while CHP officers asserted that she was struck at the station while she was booked into custody. Horne, *Fire This Time*, 55-56.

²¹⁵ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 55.

²¹⁶ Kramer, "William H. Parker," 277; Horne, *Fire This Time*, 58.

²¹⁷ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 58-60.

²¹⁸ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 58.

commanded by future chief Gates battled with members of the crowd throughout the evening, but the officers retreated from the area shortly before dawn.²¹⁹ Although sporadic violence continued the next morning,²²⁰ the disturbance had diminished, leading top LAPD officials to falsely believe the worst was over.²²¹ At that point, the upheaval was not altogether disproportionate to the prior violent episodes of the preceding several years. But the LAPD brass underestimated the depth of disaffection among Black residents, as well as the White racism that would continue to stoke the flames.

A public meeting the following afternoon with local civic leaders, including the still-active Dr. Hudson of the NAACP, backfired after a local youth pledged to take the violence into wealthier areas of the city.²²² Although the crowd made clear its dissent and several other youths offered sensible non-violent solutions, only the threat of violence in the suburbs was aired in TV footage of the event, intensifying fears among local Whites. That evening, as Black residents began to congregate again near the scene of Frye's arrest, LAPD patrol cars slowly cruised through the area blaring racial epithets on a loudspeaker and encouraging residents to "come on outside!"²²³ According to one resident, that is when "all hell [broke] loose."²²⁴

Extensive "looting" began around midnight, and weapons from "war surplus stores" were among the first items taken.²²⁵ The *Los Angeles Times* described a harrowing scene involving gun battles between LAPD officers and residents, Molotov cocktails hurled into cars, and motorists dragged from their vehicles and beaten; Horne states that, "[t]he reality on the ground was, if anything, more chaotic."²²⁶ Nevertheless, it was not until the following evening that the first official death of the uprising was recorded: a young Black bystander killed in an

²¹⁹ Gates, *Chief*, 90-91.

²²⁰ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 59-60.

²²¹ Gates, *Chief*, 95.

²²² Horne, *Fire This Time*, 61-62.

²²³ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 63.

²²⁴ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 63.

²²⁵ Horne, *Fire This Time* 65, 69.

²²⁶ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 69.

“accidental” shooting by an LAPD officer.²²⁷ LAPD officers would kill at least three other unarmed Black men that night, two of whom were suspected only of stealing.²²⁸

The violence continued in fits and starts for a week, spreading over 46.5 square-miles of south Los Angeles, an area roughly the size of San Francisco.²²⁹ As 16,000 members of law enforcement and the national guard engaged in “guerrilla warfare” with tens of thousands of Black residents, both sides compared the scenes to Vietnam.²³⁰ Countless fires burned unabated,²³¹ hundreds of businesses were ransacked and destroyed,²³² numerous Whites who entered the area were beaten,²³³ and organized bands of Black residents exchanged gunfire with officers.²³⁴ After being “caught flat-footed” in the initial stages of the uprising,²³⁵ the LAPD ultimately unleashed “random, racist, arbitrary violence” on Black residents in the area.²³⁶ A curfew was instituted on the third night over “any area in South Los Angeles where African-Americans lived,”²³⁷ and LAPD officers and national guardsmen began shooting indiscriminately at residents out on the streets.²³⁸ Horne marks the seemingly unprovoked LAPD raid of an NOI

²²⁷ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 70.

²²⁸ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 72-74.

²²⁹ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 3, 64-167.

²³⁰ Gates, *Chief*, 92; Horne, *Fire This Time*, 3, 64-67.

²³¹ Members of the fire department, which was considered “as Negrophobic as any other major city institution,” were attacked with rocks and occasional gunfire when they entered the area to fight the blazes. Horne, *Fire This Time*, 76-78, 81, 106.

²³² Horne notes, “Few residences were burned down, or schools, or churches, and only one library was damaged.” Horne, *Fire This Time*, 106. There is evidence indicating that White-owned businesses were targeted, and Black-owned businesses experienced comparatively less damage. See Horne, *Fire This Time*, 70, 78, 81, 99, 109-111.

²³³ While not all participants in the uprising were animated by racial antipathy, Horne maintains, “The piercing hatred for whites was stunning.” Horne, *Fire This Time*, 102; see generally 100-106. The situation was further inflamed by reactionary Whites arriving from surrounding areas to do battle with Black residents. See Horne, *Fire This Time*, 60, 91-92.

²³⁴ The organization among Black residents is one of the reasons that Horne insists that, “the Watts Uprising was no mindless riot but rather a conscious, though inchoate, insurrection.” Horne, *Fire This Time*, 3; see also 64-67, 99. Because there were no reported fatalities among law enforcement at the hands of Black residents, it is unclear whether resident gunfire was actually intended to harm officers or merely scare them out of the neighborhood, the latter being one of the clear and explicitly stated goals of insurrectionists. See Horne, *Fire This Time*, 62, 100-106.

²³⁵ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, Ch. 11.

²³⁶ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 142. See generally 64-133.

²³⁷ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 82.

²³⁸ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 98.

temple one week after Frye's arrest as the official end of the uprising.²³⁹ By then, LAPD officers had killed at least 16 Black residents, a large majority of whom were unarmed and accused only of looting.²⁴⁰ An additional 4,000 residents had been arrested, most of whom did not have anything more than petty criminal records.²⁴¹ Only 80 of these arrestees reported having an annual income of \$500 or more.²⁴²

Although it was always acknowledged that the Watts uprising was about more than policing,²⁴³ the LAPD's extensive history of racial abuse, coupled with the indiscriminate violence unleashed in its "guerrilla war" with Black residents, made it hard to deny that the department was "the principal malefactor, the signal offender in angering blacks to the point of insurrection."²⁴⁴ This is confirmed by the insurrectionists' most persistent and widely expressed demand that White LAPD officers be removed from south Los Angeles.²⁴⁵ Chief Parker, whose grossly ineffective leadership was heavily criticized in the aftermath of the uprising,²⁴⁶ predictably blamed radical leftist agitators who he alleged had whipped the Black community into a frenzy. The day following Frye's arrest, Parker claimed that the disturbance started when

²³⁹ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 126-27.

²⁴⁰ Governor's Commission on the Los Angeles Riots [McCone Commission]. *Violence in the City—An End or a Beginning?* (1965), 23; Horne, *Fire This Time*, 64-133. Although the total number of national guardsmen deployed in the curfew zone totaled about 14,000, compared to around 1,000 LAPD officers, the military unit recorded half the number of killings (8) as the police department (16). Horne, *Fire This Time*, 82. A Los Angeles Sheriff's deputy and an officer with the Long Beach Police Department also died, but both were killed by police gunfire. Horne, *Fire This Time*, 72, 120. No fatalities among LAPD officers were reported.

²⁴¹ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 239-40.

²⁴² Horne, *Fire This Time*, 240.

²⁴³ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 36-42, 182-84.

²⁴⁴ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 134. See also 141.

²⁴⁵ See Horne, *Fire This Time*, 62, 100-06. At the height of the uprising, residents of Jordan Downs insisted to an observer that, "this was not a war against all whites...this was and will be a continued war against the LAPD and Chief Parker." Horne, *Fire This Time*, 104.

²⁴⁶ Early the third evening, the night that 10,000 national guardsmen arrived in the curfew zone and the LAPD killings began, Parker had delegated responsibility to Thomas Reddin, another future chief of the department. Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 182-83. But he did not inform other members of LAPD leadership, resulting in widespread confusion among officers as to who was in charge. Parker took no active role in managing the situation—he went home each evening before the situation reverted to violence, telling Reddin to "just call me every morning at eight o'clock and tell me what happened the night before so I can be well informed with the press." Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 182. It is not as if he had much to offer; upon delegating responsibility to Reddin, Parker instructed him: "Don't ask me how to fight the riot. I never fought one. Nobody's ever fought a riot like this. How should we know?" Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 182; see also Horne, *Fire This Time*, 64, 138.

“one person threw a rock and then like monkeys in a zoo, others started throwing rocks.”²⁴⁷ He vehemently refused to meet with Black leaders during the uprising,²⁴⁸ claiming that “the so-called leaders of the Negro community can’t lead at all.”²⁴⁹ He blamed the violence on “meddlers” in the Black community who were constantly “alleging police brutality.”²⁵⁰ He railed against “black agitators” in a heated meeting with Dr. Martin Luther King after the uprising had concluded.²⁵¹ He was supported by Mayor Yorty, who told reporters that false allegations of police brutality were being spread by communists.²⁵²

The support for Parker in the aftermath of the uprising is astounding. The civilian police commission met on the uprising’s final day but essentially ignored what had just transpired. References to the uprising appeared only in the commission’s discussion of a resolution praising Parker and the LAPD for their “personal courageous devotion to duty,” which passed unanimously.²⁵³ The city council passed two resolutions endorsing Parker, each opposed only by Bradley and the council’s other two Black members.²⁵⁴ Parker received praise from Senators George Murphy and Robert F. Kennedy, the County Board of Supervisors, former Mayor Fletcher Bowron, the *Los Angeles Times*, the Chambers of Commerce, and 23,000 signatories to a petition from the “Citizens for the Preservation of Law and Order Committee.”²⁵⁵ Parker himself claimed that, “since Watts, I’ve never gotten so many awards and citations in my life.”²⁵⁶

²⁴⁷ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 290. See also Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 182.

²⁴⁸ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 159; Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 283.

²⁴⁹ “Parker raps ‘false’ Negro leadership,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 15, 1965, C.

²⁵⁰ “Parker raps ‘false’ Negro leadership,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 15, 1965, C.

²⁵¹ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 287. Dr. King’s meeting with Mayor Yorty was even more contentious. The mayor “excoriated” King for suggesting that the LAPD acted unlawfully during the uprising and flatly stated that King “shouldn’t have come here.” Horne, *Fire This Time*, 183. It is unclear what King might have done to be considered an agitator. His statements about the uprising were mild, describing it as “a form of social protest very common through the ages as a dramatic and destructive gesture of the poor toward symbols of their needs.” Horne, *Fire This Time*, 184. Moreover, as Horne relates, King’s message was not well-received in Black Los Angeles, which was increasingly drawn to the more militant Black “nationalism” of groups like the NOI and the nascent Black Panther Party. See Horne, *Fire This Time*, 129, 167, 182-184.

²⁵² Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 293.

²⁵³ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 166.

²⁵⁴ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 297.

²⁵⁵ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 296; Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 238.

²⁵⁶ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 297.

Sears and McConahay report on survey data indicating that Parker was still viewed favorably by 79% of White residents and 74% of Chicano residents following the uprising, while only 15% of each group viewed him unfavorably.²⁵⁷

Views among Black residents were very different. The same survey from Sears and McConahay suggests that 76% of Black residents held *unfavorable* views of Parker, the virtual opposite of White and Chicano residents.²⁵⁸ Horne argues that the LAPD's indiscriminate violence during the uprising motivated Black residents to further embrace the militant Black nationalism of groups like the NOI and the Black Panther Party, which formed in the city shortly thereafter.²⁵⁹ But the reactions among Black councilmembers like Bradley were decidedly more circumspect. Although they heavily criticized Parker in the aftermath of the uprising and refused to support council resolutions praising him,²⁶⁰ they did not call for his resignation. On multiple occasions, Bradley firmly denied Parker's accusation that Bradley was seeking to blame the LAPD for the uprising.²⁶¹

The "McCone Commission," appointed by Governor Pat Brown to investigate the causes of the uprising, issued a report in December "absolving Chief Parker of any responsibility for the violence."²⁶² The commission noted that there was a "problem—deep and serious" with relations between the Black community and the LAPD.²⁶³ But although the Black community made Parker the "focal point of criticism," he was not to blame: "Despite the depth of feeling against Chief Parker expressed to us by so many witnesses, he is recognized, *even by many of his most vocal critics*, as a capable Chief who directs an efficient police force that serves well this entire

²⁵⁷ David O. Sears and John B. McConahay, *The Politics of Violence: The New Urban Blacks and the Watts Riot* (Houghton Mifflin Company, 1973), 165.

²⁵⁸ Sears and McConahay, *Politics of Violence*, 59.

²⁵⁹ Horne, *Fire This Time*, 10-13.

²⁶⁰ See Horne, *Fire This Time*, 127-28, 295-97; Kramer, "William H. Parker," 294-97, 314.

²⁶¹ Kramer, "William H. Parker," 294-95, 314; Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 186-88.

²⁶² Kramer, "William H. Parker," 310.

²⁶³ McCone Commission, *Violence in the City*, 27.

community” (emphasis added).²⁶⁴ Instead, the solution to the problem must involve “action by both police and the Negro community”:

Much can be done to correct the existing impressions and promote an understanding between the police and the Negro community, and this, we believe, is essential in the interest of crime prevention...

Basically, on the one hand, we call for a better understanding by the law enforcement agencies of Negro community attitudes and, on the other hand, a more widespread understanding within the Negro community of the value of the police and the extent to which the law enforcement agencies provide it with security.²⁶⁵

To this end, the commission made three recommendations for improving “community-police relations”: (1) strengthening the civilian police commission, (2) establishing an inspector general (serving under the chief) to investigate citizen complaints, and (3) expanding “community relations” programs.²⁶⁶ The report was widely scorned by liberal groups and even national media outlets such as *Newsweek*, but there was little public pressure for more serious reforms.²⁶⁷

Not only was Parker able to rebuff even the meager recommendations made by the McCone Commission²⁶⁸—he was also able to maintain his job as chief until his death in July 1966.²⁶⁹ Fogelson describes the adulatory response to Parker’s passing as “mind-boggling.”²⁷⁰ His funeral ceremonies “resembled those for heads of governments.”²⁷¹ His casket was placed in the rotunda of City Hall, and thousands of mourners visited to pay tribute.²⁷² He was celebrated by countless California politicians, including former Mayor Bowron, who described Parker as “the outstanding police chief of the United States.”²⁷³ The *Los Angeles Times* mourned Parker as

²⁶⁴ McCone Commission, *Violence in the City*, 28.

²⁶⁵ McCone Commission, *Violence in the City*, 28.

²⁶⁶ McCone Commission, *Violence in the City*, 30-37.

²⁶⁷ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 312-14; Horne, *Fire This Time*, 343-48.

²⁶⁸ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 314-16.

²⁶⁹ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 324.

²⁷⁰ Fogelson, *Big-City Police*, 243.

²⁷¹ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 327.

²⁷² Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 327; Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 196.

²⁷³ Fogelson, *Big-City Police*, 243.

“the man who devoted his life to making this the best-policed city in the nation.”²⁷⁴

Councilmember Bradley expressed regret at Parker’s passing and commended him for his contributions to professionalizing the LAPD, conceding only that Parker “often spoke from emotion without considering the effect of his words.”²⁷⁵ The most critical opinion reported in local newspapers was that of Thomas Kilgore, western representative of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, who stated that, “His death [is] a loss in the sense [that] he put together a strong, disciplined police force. But I think [it] will be a relief to the minority community, who believes he woefully misunderstood the social revolution taking place.”²⁷⁶

²⁷⁴ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 324. See also Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 196.

²⁷⁵ Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 326.

²⁷⁶ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 196. See also Kramer, “William H. Parker,” 327.

Chapter 4. The Emergence of the Policing Logic

Chief Parker articulated, publicized, and garnered widespread support for a cultural logic¹ of policing that forms the foundation of the LAPD's public legitimacy and continues to undergird departmental practices to this day. From the department's founding in 1876 to Parker's appointment as chief nearly 75 years later, LAPD history was characterized by constant public outcry and organizational turmoil. By contrast, the public support amassed by Parker was so strong that he not only lasted longer than any LAPD chief before him—he was able to maintain lifetime tenure despite a literal insurrection on the streets of Los Angeles engendered by the LAPD's racist enforcement practices. The policing logic that Parker so strenuously promoted was the bedrock of this public support.

The following three propositions encapsulate the essential contours of the policing logic articulated by Parker:

- (1) There is a dangerous class that poses a threat to the community.
- (2) It is the responsibility of the police to manage the threat posed by the dangerous class.
- (3) Police must address the threat posed by the dangerous class through appropriate proactive enforcement tactics.

Although the logic was immanent in aspects of LAPD practice stretching back to the department's founding, it became the defining feature of LAPD organizational culture under Parker. Interpreting the cultural categories embedded in this logic requires an analysis of how (1) broader cultural structures, (2) local practices, and (3) resource distributions or "social structure" mutually inform the cultural meaning of these categories in Los Angeles over time.

¹ This cultural structure is referred to as a "logic" because of the structure's affinity with the denotative meaning of logic as "the facts which dictate what action is rationally to be taken." "Logic, n.," *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, www.oed.com/view/Entry/109788. However, it is analogous to what has been referred to variously in cultural studies as a "schema" (Sewell 1992; Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992), "frame" (Goffman 1974; Benford & Snow 2000), or "script" (Abelson 1981; Barley & Tolbert 1997). The particular label used for the cultural structure is decidedly less important than the structure's *content* and the ways in which, by virtue of this content, the structure shapes LAPD practices over time.

Proposition 1: The Dangerous Class

The term *dangerous class* is borrowed from Monkkonen who used it to describe the class of individuals broadly perceived as a “social threat” who were targeted by the first modern police departments in the mid- to late 19th century.² Here too it is used to describe the class of individuals viewed as a social threat by dominant groups in Los Angeles and targeted by the LAPD. In verbal practice, the term “criminals” was often used as the signifier for the dangerous class, particularly among LAPD chiefs like Parker.³ However, several observations⁴ serve to illustrate that the dangerous class in Los Angeles was never limited to those who violate the criminal law, particularly as the criminal law is now understood.

For one, the law in Los Angeles through the mid-20th century criminalized a range of activities whose relation to modern crimes can only be described as prefatory at best. A broad “anti-vagrancy” law passed in 1872 made a criminal out of anyone who was “without visible means of living...and who does not seek employment.”⁵ A strong anti-picketing ordinance criminalized protest activities, and an expansive anti-“syndicalism” law criminalized union organizing.⁶ All of these laws were eventually declared unconstitutional in the mid- to late 20th century,⁷ and the behaviors they criminalized are unrelated to the sort of harm viewed as essential to modern understandings of crime. The “harm” contemplated was merely the threat to prevailing understandings of proper social order. Thus, by virtue of expansive criminal laws, “criminals” in early Los Angeles were not limited to those who produced the sort of the harm protected by contemporary criminal law. The term “criminal” applied to virtually everyone in

² Eric H. Monkkonen, *Police in Urban America, 1860-1920* (Cambridge University Press, 1981), 41, 88.

³ E.g., Chief Elton’s comments on tramps in 1900, Chief James Davis’s testimony during the Kynette trial in 1938, and Parker’s public statements throughout the 1950s.

⁴ Two of these observations will be discussed here in relation to Proposition 1. The third will be discussed below in relation to the LAPD’s commitment to proactive enforcement tactics.

⁵ Kelly Lytle Hernández, *City of Inmates: Conquest, Rebellion, and the Rise of Human Caging in Los Angeles, 1771–1965* (University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 52.

⁶ Edward J. Escobar, *Race, Police, and the Making of a Political Identity: Mexican Americans and the Los Angeles Police Department, 1900-1945* (University of California Press, 1999), 26, 84.

⁷ Escobar, *Race, Police*, 84.

the city whose behavior contravened the image of ideal social order embraced by dominant social groups.

But even more importantly, the LAPD's non-verbal practices belie the notion that the dangerous class was limited to "criminals," even under the expansive criminal codes that existed at the time. Instead, LAPD enforcement practices targeted a broadly conceived dangerous class viewed as *potential* criminals.⁸ This is no more obvious than in the department's abusive practices toward the city's Black and Chicano populations. Enforcement was not limited to Black and Chicano residents who broke the law, but anyone who "looked out of place in a neighborhood."⁹ Deliberately vague suspect descriptions were used as flimsy justifications for dragnet operations in which countless Black and Chicano residents were stopped, frisked, and otherwise harassed, even though officers were well aware that nearly all of their targets had not broken the law.¹⁰ These non-verbal enforcement practices conclusively demonstrate that the dangerous class was not limited to "criminals" or lawbreakers in Los Angeles.

Perceptions of Black and Chicano residents as a social and criminal threat were initially informed by White racism among the U.S.-born migrants who flooded Los Angeles in the early 20th century and established a lasting White supermajority in the city. These broad cultural structures of White racism then became locally reified in the form of (1) lasting social structural inequalities and (2) persistent patterns of racialized enforcement practices by the LAPD. White racism produced the residential segregation that became permanently inscribed on the city's geography. Residential segregation further enhanced the social and economic marginalization of Black and Chicano residents in the city, producing severe socioeconomic disadvantages in non-White communities that rapidly worsened with increased Black migration in the 1940s to 1960s.

⁸ Another way of phrasing the same observation is that the dangerous class was defined by class attributes, rather than behavior. See Monkkonen, *Police in Urban America*, 41.

⁹ Daryl F. Gates, *Chief: My Life in the LAPD* (Bantam Books, 1992), 34-35.

¹⁰ Gates, *Chief*, 34-35; Glenn Souza, "A Simple Time, in Black and White: In the '50s, Racism Was an Enforcement Tool Passed Down from a Chief who Was God to a Legion of Fuhrmans," *Los Angeles Times*, October 12, 1995, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1995-10-12-me-55977-story.html>.

Throughout Los Angeles history, the indigent had always been categorized among the dangerous class. But from the “tramp panic” through the Great Depression, indigency in Los Angeles was often portrayed as a White phenomenon. From the 1940s through the 1960s, dominant conceptions of indigency grew darker as more poor Black migrants arrived in the city looking for industrial work, only to confront severe discrimination in housing, education, employment, government services, and numerous other domains of social life.

Furthermore, it was in the city’s segregated non-White communities that the LAPD deliberately allowed illicit “vice” operations to proliferate for the first four decades of the 20th century. LAPD raids against non-White residents in these communities became the department’s primary (though abortive) strategy for appeasing the Progressive White majority at a time when the department was dominated by bribery and corruption. This historical pattern of deliberately concentrated “vice” crimes and racially disproportionate LAPD enforcement further reinforced cultural structures of White racism that posited non-White residents as a uniquely potent criminal threat. To Los Angeles’s White majority, it appeared as if crime only occurred among Black and Chicano residents in the city’s segregated non-White communities. Parker’s own claims about how “certain racial groups” commit more crime in Los Angeles are illustrative in this regard. As evidence for these claims, Parker typically cited the LAPD’s own arrest data, which the department’s sustained history of racialized enforcement guaranteed would exhibit significant disproportionalities. Hence, the department’s own racialized enforcement practices became ‘proof’ of the inherent criminality of Los Angeles’s Black and Chicano residents.

Social structural inequalities and patterns of LAPD practice also reinforced broad cultural discourses that located the source of Black ‘criminality’ in sociocultural and economic disadvantage. In *Condemnation of Blackness*, Muhammad describes how the first racial crime statistics in the late 19th century were used by both White racists *and* Progressive White

“liberals” to reinforce understandings of Black communities as uniquely crime prone.¹¹ Even among liberals, the White racism that fueled racial differences in conviction rates went unchallenged. Instead, these liberals argued that, while Black individuals were not inherently or biologically inclined to commit crime, Black communities exhibit social, economic, and primarily cultural disadvantages that ensure residents will commit more crime. Following the Civil War and Reconstruction, this discourse provided the basis for a cross-political racial détente between aggrieved White Southerners and Northern White liberals regarding the inherent dangerousness of Blackness.

Chief Parker’s statements make clear that, by the 1950s, this discourse had spread to conservative police figures who wished to provide ‘race-neutral’ justifications for undeniably racialized enforcement practices. Parker stressed that there was “no inherent physical or mental weakness in any racial stock which tends it toward crime;” rather, crime was the result of adverse “socio-economic conditions.”¹² Local conditions in Los Angeles seemed to confirm the truth of this logic, even for White residents who might not ascribe to beliefs in inherent racial inferiorities. Social structural inequalities between racial groups were engraved into the city’s landscape, and LAPD enforcement was always heaviest in the non-White communities facing the most social and economic disadvantage. This is especially important to acknowledge because both this discourse and structural inequalities in Los Angeles never dissipate, even in future decades as overt White racism in the city begins to subside. The discourse on socioeconomic disadvantage and non-White criminality, reinforced by local inequalities and concentrated LAPD enforcement in disadvantaged non-White communities, would continue to provide an apparently race-neutral basis for categorizing non-White residents among the dangerous class in Los Angeles long into the future.

¹¹ Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Harvard University Press, 2010).

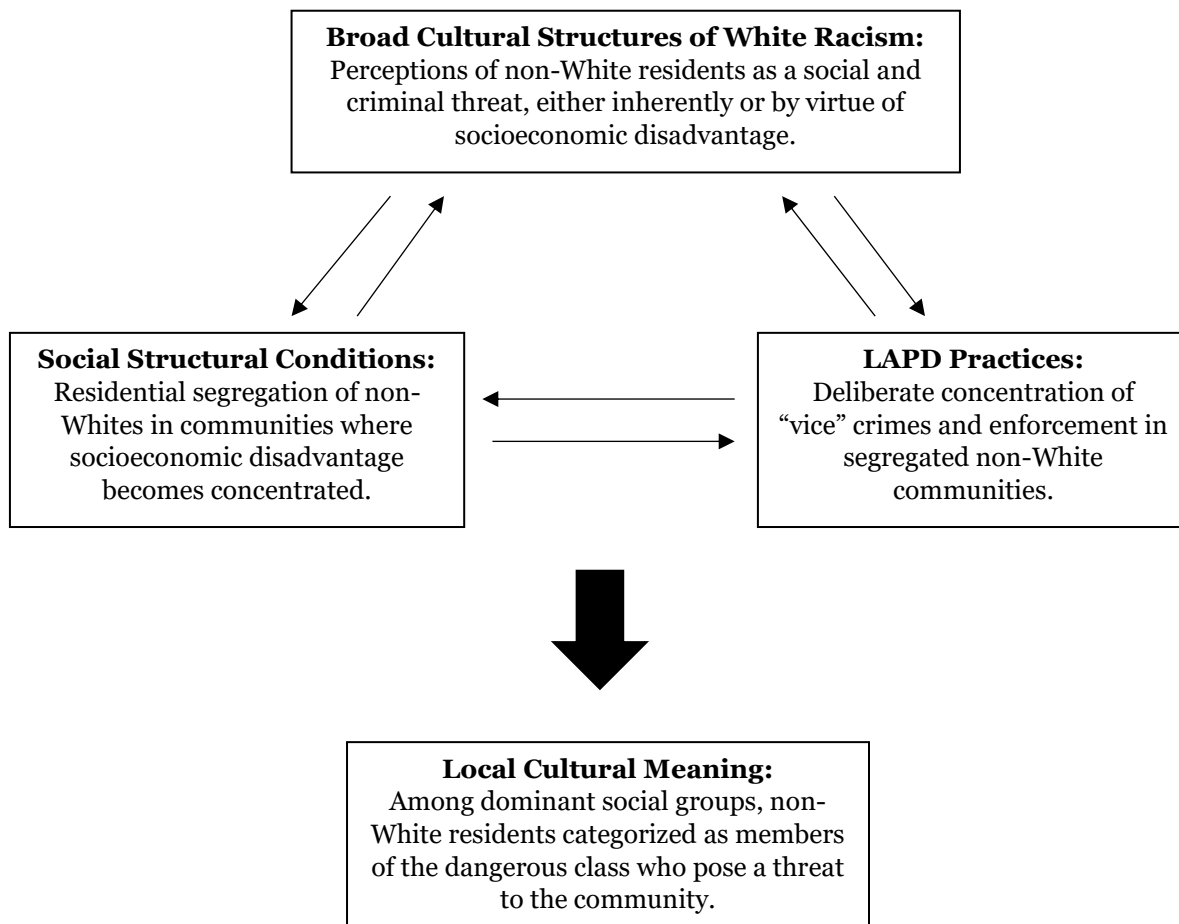
¹² William H. Parker, *Parker on Police* (Charles C. Thomas, 1957), 161.

Figure 3 below summarizes how broad cultural discourses of White racism, social structural conditions in Los Angeles, and LAPD practices each contributed to cultural understandings of non-White residents as members of the city's dangerous class.¹³ The process is an exemplary demonstration of how cultural structures, cultural practices, and social structure exist in a mutually determinative relationship, each recursively influencing one another.¹⁴ Cultural structures of White racism among U.S.-born migrants bred social structural conditions and LAPD practices that then reinforced those same cultural structures of White racism, as well as one another. All three elements—broad cultural structures, local cultural practices, and social structure—intertwined to ensure that Black and Chicano residents would be categorized among the dangerous class by dominant social groups in Los Angeles.

¹³ By isolating these four elements, I do not mean to imply that there are not additional linkages between these elements and other cultural structures, practices, or social structural conditions not included in the figure. For example, the demographic and political dominance of Los Angeles's U.S.-born, Progressive White population was the linchpin social structural condition that facilitated the deep impact of White racism on residential segregation, socioeconomic inequality, LAPD practices, and dominant cultural understandings of the dangerous class in Los Angeles. This social structural condition was influenced, in turn, by the cultural fantasy of ideal Los Angeles promoted by local White boosters, which spurred tremendous U.S.-born White migration in the early 20th century. LAPD practices—the concentration of “vice” in non-White communities coupled with vice raids against non-Whites in these communities—were inextricably intertwined with both the cultural conservatism of this White supermajority and the department's own self-interest in continuing to profit from graft. In short, the connections between these four elements and other cultural and structural factors are myriad. Nevertheless, isolating these four elements allows one to spotlight the central social processes bearing on dominant cultural understandings of the dangerous class in early Los Angeles.

¹⁴ See William H. Sewell Jr, “A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation,” *American Journal of Sociology* 98, no. 1 (1992): 1-29; Pierre Bourdieu and Loïc Wacquant, *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology* (University of Chicago Press, 1992).

Figure 3. Cultural Structures, Cultural Practices, and Social Structural Conditions Influencing Conceptions of the Dangerous Class in Early Los Angeles



The indiscriminate targeting of Black and Chicano residents in Los Angeles is alone sufficient to illustrate that the dangerous class was not limited to “criminals.” However, the LAPD’s surveillance and harassment of “radicals” and police critics provides even further proof. Quite often, these targets were engaged in behavior that was not only not criminal, but constitutionally protected. Examples include Upton Sinclair and the ACLU, labor organizers, political figures who critiqued the LAPD, and political figures who had the potential to harm the department’s reputation if they happened to decide to critique the LAPD. Chief James Davis, in his testimony during the Kynette trial, called these targets “criminal-political elements,” distinguishing them from “criminal” elements, presumably on the basis that their only real

crime was their politics.¹⁵ Dominant conceptions of “radicals” as a social and criminal threat were informed by broader cultural structures of anti-leftism among Los Angeles’s Progressive White majority, another example of how local cultural meaning was informed by the intertwining influence of broad cultural and structural factors.

Proposition 2: The Police and the Dangerous Class

The notion that police are responsible for addressing the threat of the dangerous class is grounded in a long tradition of police practice stretching back at least as far as the origins of the first modern police departments in the mid-19th century.¹⁶ Since their inception, modern police have always functioned as the primary institution for addressing social and criminal threats, and the LAPD was no different. Parker contended that other social institutions played a primary role in influencing whether individuals or social groups were prone to commit crime. But he made very clear that these social institutions were failing, resulting in an “ever-increasing criminal army.”¹⁷ As such, police were necessary to address the threat posed by this growing dangerous class. The police, as Parker constantly reiterated, are the “thin line of blue which stands between the law-abiding members of society and the criminals who prey upon them.”¹⁸

The LAPD’s role vis-à-vis the dangerous class was also reinforced by local structural conditions. Progressive movements in east coast cities at the turn of the 20th century were often coupled with significant charity and social services for the poor, but these were virtually absent from Los Angeles. There were no other major social institutions in the city for addressing poverty and other social conditions associated with the dangerous class, bolstering the institutional justification for policing. As Parker once stated, “The responsibility must be placed

¹⁵ Gerald Woods, *The Police in Los Angeles: Reform and Professionalization* (Garland Publishing, 1993), 185. When pressed, Chief Davis attempted to claim that these political targets were in fact a criminal threat because they had previously been arrested by the LAPD for traffic violations.

¹⁶ See Monkkonen, *Police in Urban America*.

¹⁷ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 67.

¹⁸ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 101.

on someone. The men of the police service are aware of this responsibility, and in choosing their profession voluntarily assume it.”¹⁹

Proposition 3: Appropriate Proactive Enforcement Tactics

Parker was adamant that the police were not social workers or “healers of social ills.”²⁰ The police can only address the threat of the dangerous class through punitive enforcement tactics: surveillance, “investigative” stops, arrests, and uses of force. This marked a deviation from the LAPD’s 19th century tradition of coupling enforcement with limited social services provision, a common approach among police departments at that time. But it was consistent with LAPD practices over the first half of the 20th century, as well as cultural and social structural conditions in the department when Parker became chief. The officers under Parker were “ultraconservative” military combat veterans, ill-equipped for any approach that did not involve “a deep sense of preservation of self and destruction of the enemy.”²¹ Punitive enforcement was the best way to make use of these human “resources.”²²

Parker also stressed that enforcement must be proactive—deterrence through aggressive, proactive enforcement is the only way that police can possibly prevent crime. Both police professionals and historians have described proactivity as Parker’s primary innovation.²³ But the notion that police departments are primarily oriented toward preventing rather than reacting to crime was the primary justification behind their initial formation in the mid-19th century.²⁴ Parker was not innovating—he was drawing upon deep cultural structures that provided legitimacy to policing at an embryonic stage when its institutional role was more seriously questioned than it ever would be again. The commitment to proactivity also rested upon decades

¹⁹ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 100.

²⁰ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 12.

²¹ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 7.

²² See Sewell Jr, “Theory of Structure,” on material “resources” in the context of cultural analysis.

²³ See, e.g., Gates, *Chief*, 34-35; Robert M. Fogelson, *Big-City Police* (Harvard University Press, 1977), 187-88, 190-91, 231.

²⁴ Monkkonen, *Police in Urban America*.

of departmental practices stretching back to the LAPD's founding in the late 19th century, all geared toward the prevention of crime that had not yet occurred. Parker's only innovation, if it can be called that, was his insistence that LAPD's efforts at preventing crime would be exclusively punitive and not at all "supportive."²⁵

The commitment to preventative, proactive enforcement inherently conflicts with an understanding of the dangerous class limited only to "criminals" or lawbreakers. As Monkkonen describes, the preventative orientation of the first modern police departments entailed a shift in focus from "from illegal behavior to potential offender, from act to actor."²⁶ To prevent crime, it would appear necessary to gear enforcement toward the broad class of *anticipated* criminals, not just those who had already broken the law. Monkkonen coined the term "dangerous class" to describe these very individuals who, because they threatened dominant conceptions of "social order," were viewed as potential criminals and targeted by the first police departments.²⁷ Reconciling a commitment to proactivity with a conception of the dangerous class limited to lawbreakers would require a significant reinterpretation of the dangerous class that would not even begin to gain traction until the turn of the 21st century.

In his most marked departure from prior cultural traditions and practices in the department, Parker acknowledged that there were limits to acceptable police conduct. The term *appropriate* is used as the signifier for acceptable police conduct because, although Parker insisted in verbal practice that these limits were defined by constitutional and statutory law, the LAPD's non-verbal practices systematically violated both. Thus, the precise boundaries of acceptable, appropriate police conduct were murky. This lack of clarity persisted due to a key social structural condition: the LAPD's legally protected, exclusive authority over officer discipline, established by the Progressive city charter amendment in 1934. This authority allowed the LAPD to literally define for itself what constituted appropriate police practices,

²⁵ Monkkonen, *Police in Urban America*, 136.

²⁶ Monkkonen, *Police in Urban America*, 41.

²⁷ Monkkonen, *Police in Urban America*, 88.

enabling abusive and unconstitutional policing to persist despite Parker’s verbal commitments to respecting the law.

The Policing Logic’s Power

The policing logic articulated by Parker was by no means his creation. The logic rests on foundational cultural structures and traditions of practice tracing back to the earliest origins of policing. The institutional justification behind the creation of the very first modern departments was the notion that police would serve as enforcers of “democratic” justice on the streets, proactively protecting the community from the threat posed by the dangerous class.²⁸ This same principle forms the core of the policing logic promoted by Parker. Parker himself recognized the connections between this policing logic and foundational democratic principles. He described the process of ginning up support for the policing logic as “calling to memory of some well-known facts,” facts which were “elemental to every society. This fact is: the police function is a basic component of man’s government by man which has determined the character and permanence of every social structure since human beings first sought collective security.”²⁹

The policing logic’s connections to these deep and broadly shared cultural structures was one of the factors facilitating its broad embrace by a critical mass of Los Angeles residents. These deep structures provided a firm foundation of public support for the logic, reinforced by historical LAPD practices that received widespread support even when the department was dominated by bribery and corruption. The department had always targeted the dangerous class—the indigent, “radicals,” and non-White residents—for punitive, proactive enforcement, and these practices were largely endorsed by the city’s Progressive White supermajority. By firmly committing to the policing logic and bringing the department’s practices in better alignment with it, Parker was staking the LAPD’s public legitimacy on a deeply rooted cultural

²⁸ Monkkonen, *Police in Urban America*, 39-40.

²⁹ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 140.

structure and pattern of police practice that had always received broad support in Los Angeles (and elsewhere).

Relatedly, the policing logic allowed Parker to rescue the department from its corrupt history. Proactive enforcement against the dangerous class was not the only hallmark of LAPD practice prior to Parker—the other was rampant bribery and collusion with social and political elites. These practices run directly counter to the policing logic. They contradict the notion that police serve the “democratic” function of protecting the community, and they are entirely consistent with predictions made by those who opposed the initial formation of the first modern police departments, fearing they would serve as “antidemocratic” goon squads.³⁰ Corruption was undeniably central to LAPD organizational culture prior to 1950. But by embracing the policing logic and orienting LAPD practices around it, Parker was able to portray corruption as an aberration and deviation from the true essence of policing and the LAPD, which is the protection of the community from the dangerous class.³¹

Eliminating graft and grounding the department’s culture and practices in the policing logic was one of the key ways in which Chief Parker cultivated support for the LAPD. Another was better aligning the department’s targets with dominant conceptions of the dangerous class among Los Angeles’s White majority. Even when its public reputation was at its lowest point, the department used aggressive enforcement against non-Whites to garner public support, and the targeting of non-Whites continued under Chief Parker. But for the first time in history, organized crime also became subject to significant LAPD police enforcement, finally bringing

³⁰ Monkkonen, *Police in Urban America*, 40-41.

³¹ Parker was so committed to the policing logic that he even attempted to interpret the targeting of the department’s critics within this framework. According to Parker, department critics should be categorized among the dangerous class because, by undermining the effectiveness of police, they provide a greater opportunity for “criminals” to prey on the community. It was an inherently dubious and controversial justification, and in the immediate decades following Parker’s death the targeting of department critics would come under greater public scrutiny than any other aspect of LAPD practice. But it was still more plausible than Chief James Davis’s claim during the Kynette trial that LAPD critics were part of the dangerous class because they had previously been arrested for traffic violations, and it demonstrates the extent to which Parker strove to justify LAPD practices in terms of the policing logic that was so widely embraced.

department practices in line with the city's deeply entrenched cultural sensibilities regarding "vice" operations. Unions and labor organizers were no longer targeted as members of the dangerous class, enabling further support for the department from working class Whites with left political leanings. The synchronization of LAPD practices with conceptions of the dangerous class among Los Angeles's dominant White populace was an additional factor contributing to widespread support for the LAPD under Parker. Even Parker's acknowledgement that there were limits to appropriate police practices, a conspicuous deviation from prior historical traditions in the LAPD, was intended to promote the department's public legitimacy by forestalling criticism from civil libertarians.

But perhaps the central feature driving broad public acceptance of the policing logic is the logic's polysemy. In *Logics of History*, Sewell provides (in a footnote) a profound observation on the relationship between polysemy and the "centrality" of certain cultural concepts:

I would maintain that the polysemy of these concepts is actually linked to their centrality, because their centrality is enhanced by their ability to call up simultaneously a number of interrelated meanings. Moreover, their centrality enhances their polysemy, since speakers and writers are likely to attempt to harness the terms' power by stretching their meaning to cover the arguments currently being made.³²

The key cultural categories embedded in the policing logic are fungible, capacious, and polysemic. The dangerous class has included White "tramps" as well as non-Whites, elite leftist professionals and politicians as well the poor. Even the signifier used in verbal practice for the dangerous class—"criminals"—is capable of a wide variety of distinct interpretations. Because the logic is fundamentally agnostic regarding the dangerous class, the logic can be embraced even by those whose understandings of the dangerous class conflict sharply with that of the LAPD and dominant social groups in Los Angeles. The logic is similarly agnostic regarding what

³² William H. Sewell Jr, *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (University of Chicago Press, 2005), 324.

constitutes appropriate enforcement practices. LAPD critics can embrace the core policing logic undergirding department culture and practices, even as they forcefully protest the department's particular tactics.

The polysemy of the policing logic is perhaps the most important factor promoting the LAPD's public legitimacy because it enables the LAPD to draw support for its core organizational culture even from some of the department's fiercest detractors. Los Angeles history is replete with examples of staunch LAPD critics who nonetheless embraced the policing logic. Elite Black residents of Central Avenue in the 1920s vehemently decried the LAPD's racially targeted and grievously violent enforcement practices, yet still expressed "appreciat[ion] [at] the very grave and vexatious responsibilities that rest upon [the] Chief of Police... [and] hearty sympathy with every movement that deals without fear, or favor, or partiality, of any sort with the building up of a more effective police program."³³ Roybal, the city's first non-White councilmember, frequently drew attention to the LAPD's systemic racial brutality throughout the 1950s, yet he also requested increased LAPD patrols in his district and frequently met with local LAPD officers to discuss the district's "growing problems with drugs and gangs."³⁴ Future mayor Bradley's oft-professed respect for the LAPD's "professionalization" under Parker was entirely premised on the degree to which Parker had brought the department's culture and practices in better alignment with the policing logic.³⁵ Even Watts insurrectionists, when approached by NAACP representatives and other Black leaders in the city, demanded the removal of *White* LAPD officers from south Los Angeles, rather than the removal of *all* LAPD officers.³⁶ Not even these residents dared to propose a city without any police.

With its deep ties to democratic principles of protecting the community, it is no surprise that the policing logic would be so broadly embraced, nor that Parker and the LAPD would

³³ "Dr. Hudson in Scorching Reply to Chief Davis," *The California Eagle*, May 27, 1927, 1, 6.

³⁴ Escobar, *Race, Police*, 288.

³⁵ Bernard Galm, *The Impossible Dream: Thomas Bradley*, 1978 interview (Oral History Program, University of California, Los Angeles, 1984), 63, 68, 92-95.

³⁶ Gerald Horne, *Fire This Time: The Watts Uprising and the 1960s* (Da Capo Press, 1997), 62.

receive such strong support for making it the centerpiece of departmental culture and practices. Essentially, all the logic requires for endorsement is (1) a belief in the existence of a dangerous class and (2) a belief that proactive enforcement by police is an adequate mode of addressing the threat posed by the dangerous class. Non-White residents in the early 20th century were particularly likely to possess potent conceptions of the dangerous class, since it was in the segregated non-White communities that the LAPD deliberately allowed “vice” and other criminal activity to proliferate. Consequently, non-White residents of early Los Angeles did not need to look far for “criminals.” The fact that non-White residents likely had a different conception of the dangerous class in mind relative to the city’s dominant White majority was ultimately inconsequential for the cross-racial consensus that developed around the policing logic itself. In Los Angeles politics, commitment to the policing logic became hegemonic.³⁷

By virtue of this hegemony, the policing logic would set the terms of debate for all future police reform campaigns in the city. The policing logic itself would never be seriously questioned or challenged, and it would continue to remain at the core of LAPD culture and practices. Police reform campaigns would instead be characterized by efforts to bring LAPD practices in better alignment with changing conceptions of the dangerous class and appropriate police practices. Parker’s tenure as chief provides an early example of this type of reform. As Bradley noted, Parker was the LAPD’s first significant reform chief.³⁸ Part of this reform, of course, was indelibly imprinting the policing logic on the department. But another was bringing the department’s enforcement practices in better alignment with conceptions of the dangerous class among the city’s dominant White majority. For the first time, the LAPD began targeting organized “vice” operations, and it ceased targeting White labor organizers and unions. This was

³⁷ Black nationalist groups like the NOI and the Black Panther Party were the only significant sociopolitical groups in mid-20th century Los Angeles to seriously contest this hegemony. These groups adopted the abolitionist argument that the culture and function of policing is fundamentally rooted in White supremacy and racial subordination. However, official and sociocultural sabotage campaigns by dominant social groups would effectively marginalize these Black nationalist groups in Los Angeles politics. See Horne, *Fire This Time*.

³⁸ Galm, *Impossible Dream*, 63.

all part of Parker's process of selling the LAPD to the public and nurturing a broad consensus regarding the department's legitimacy.³⁹ Continuing changes in local social structural conditions, broad cultural structures of White racism, and LAPD practices would produce notable changes in dominant interpretations of the policing logic over the coming decades, both among Los Angeles residents and within the LAPD. What does not change is the wide public support for the policing logic itself, its role as the centerpiece of LAPD culture and practice, and the broad public legitimacy that the department derives from it.

³⁹ Parker, *Parker on Police*, 139-40, 145-46, 188-89.

Chapter 5. The LAPD Between Uprisings and into the 21st Century

After a brief interim appointment following Parker's death, Tom Reddin was appointed as chief of the LAPD in 1967.¹ Reddin was a deputy chief under Parker, and for the most part he shared his predecessor's vision of proper policing and its role in establishing social order:

Succinctly described, the police role is this:

[1] The police are the representatives of government—a government of laws, not men. The laws reflect the voice of the people.

[2] The police have a sworn duty to enforce the laws. This they should do impartially, objectively, unemotionally.

[3] The police will protect and preserve the public peace by every legal means.

[4] The police must recognize the rights of individual citizens, as well as the rights of law-abiding citizens to pursue their daily lives without illegal interference.

It is important for us to realize that the historical police mission remains constant.²

In some ways, Reddin appeared even more conservative than Parker, refusing to acknowledge any social influences on crime whatsoever:

I do not believe society causes crime. People cause crime...We do not think you're sick, we do not think you're a product of a disorganized society, we think you're a criminal, we think you should be caught and you should be put in jail and you should be punished.³

Under Reddin, the LAPD quadrupled the number of officers in the "Metro Division,"⁴ then under the command of Parker's former driver and future chief Daryl Gates. According to Gates, "At the time, Metro...[was] used mainly to handle labor disputes and to 'shake, rattle, and roll,'—that is, roust—anything strange that moved on the streets."⁵ As Gates would tell it, the new additions to Metro under Reddin primarily consisted of "castoffs" from other divisions, but

¹ Joe Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve: The LAPD's Century of War in the City of Dreams* (Pocket Books, 1995), 203; Max Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles: Race, Resistance, and the Rise of the LAPD* (University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 43.

² Thomas Reddin, *Some Considerations in the Development of a Community Relations Program*, Presentation at the Major Cities Police Administrators' Conference, April 30, 1967, 2, https://digitallibrary.usc.edu/asset-management/2A3BF1O05C35R?FR_1&W=766&H=741.

³ "Law Enforcement Faces Grave Challenges," *FBI Law Enforcement Bulletin* 37, no. 1 (January 1968): 13.

⁴ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 52.

⁵ Daryl F. Gates, *Chief: My Life in the LAPD* (Bantam Books, 1992), 112.

they became quite effective once Gates “gave them some leeway and the opportunity to use their own initiative.”⁶ Under his guidance, Metro Division blossomed into “the elite of the department.”⁷ Gates was also the impetus behind the formation of the LAPD’s “Special Weapons and Tactics” (SWAT) team, which made its first appearance under Reddin.⁸ SWAT initially consisted of “sixty expert marksmen who also ranked in the upper 25 percent of the department in physical skills,” trained in specialized military tactics for raiding buildings to apprehend “a sniper or [] a barricaded individual.”⁹ The LAPD also began to amass a formidable “antiriot arsenal” consisting of “armored personnel carriers, .30 caliber machine guns, .41 Magnums, tear gas launchers, mace, and a smoke screen device,” as well as hundreds of additional shotguns¹⁰ and seven additional helicopters.¹¹

Where Reddin departed from his predecessor was in his approach to “police community relations.”¹² Reddin, unlike Parker, appeared chastened by the Watts uprising, and he openly acknowledged that the LAPD, as a “symbol of the entire White Power structure,”¹³ could be a source of “conflict” in non-White neighborhoods.¹⁴ For Reddin, the key to addressing this potential conflict was “total community involvement” in LAPD’s enforcement efforts:

If we really mean what we say about “social order,” “law and order,” “domestic tranquility,” or however you want to describe it, as being a joint responsibility of all members of the community, then there must be some method of activating this partnership and some way of getting “total involvement.” Reduced to simplest terms, this is your task: The designing of methods, programs, activities, and organizations whereby there can in fact be a partnership between the citizen and the policeman.¹⁵

⁶ Gates, *Chief*, 113.

⁷ Gates, *Chief*, 113.

⁸ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 207.

⁹ Gates, *Chief*, 114.

¹⁰ Reddin is quoted stating, “We endorse shotguns highly. The shotgun is probably the most threatening, forbidding looking hand weapon that exists.” Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 52.

¹¹ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 52, 55.

¹² Thomas Reddin, *1968—The Year of Total Community Involvement*, speech transcript (1968), 5. On file with author.

¹³ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 58.

¹⁴ Reddin, *1968*, 6.

¹⁵ Reddin, *1968*, 5.

Community Relations programming must provide an essential ingredient. That ingredient is the opportunity for the community to exert constructive influence on the operations of this Department. We need to examine our operations from the point of view of the residents of the community. We must make our policies and practices more understandable, and thus more acceptable. It must be a two-way process, though, because the members of our community need to know more about the nature of the police task—more about the reason for Department policies and practices—more about those things which daily confront our officers.¹⁶

Reddin saw better communication between the LAPD and the community, “most particularly [] the disadvantaged community,” as the key to broadening the LAPD’s base of support and avoiding “mass confrontations resulting in violence.”¹⁷ To that end, Reddin expanded the LAPD’s “community relations” division “from 3 officers to 120,” making it “a model for other cities.”¹⁸ The division organized events for Black youth from south Los Angeles that drew hundreds of attendees, much to the satisfaction of councilmembers Bradley and Mills.¹⁹ The division held a conference with Chicano leaders to “encourage our Mexican-American communities...to accept the outstretched hand of the LAPD in sincerity and friendship.”²⁰ Reddin even met with representatives of the Black Panthers and other “militant” groups in the city.²¹ As Reddin explained, “Sitting down to talk with militants of whatever persuasion does not mean an automatic compromise of position or giving in to pressure. It

¹⁶ Reddin, 1968, 8.

¹⁷ Reddin, 1968, 6, 12. See also Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 58-59.

¹⁸ Linda McVeigh Mathews, “Chief Reddin: New Style at the Top,” *The Atlantic*, March, 1969, 84, 87, <https://cdn.theatlantic.com/media/archives/1969/03/223-3/132589496.pdf>. Mathews provides an evocative contemporary description of the LAPD’s “community relations” efforts in this period:

[T]he chief and his assistants are quick to point out their administrative, technological, and social innovations just to prove there is substance behind the claims of progress. It is a list which reads like the recommendations of the Kerner Report or the summary of the latest police science primer, and [sic] leaves no doubt about the progressive bent of the LAPD. Every commission-stamped police experiment known to American society is being tested there, which lends to Reddin's efforts a significance they otherwise might not have. One is led to the conclusion that if the LAPD fails, it will be a failure for all the less progressive cities and for all the standard commission-produced remedies as well (85).

¹⁹ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 59-61.

²⁰ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 60.

²¹ Mathews, “Chief Reddin,” 92; Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 61.

means very simply that conditions in society today demand that we communicate with all segments of the community.”²²

In a profile for *The Atlantic*, Mathews argued that, while Reddin and his community relations division put forth their best efforts, “the patrolman’s behavior was the one thing Reddin could not control.”²³ LAPD practices outside of the community relations division changed very little, if at all. The Mexican American Political Association described the department’s campaign as “[a] cheap merchandising technique to make palatable an unchanging policy of repressive and discriminatory law enforcement.”²⁴ Mathews went further, asserting that, “Reddin cannot abandon these practices, no matter how they impede real progress in the ghetto, as long as he wants to retain the support of the middle class and the loyalty of his own officers.”²⁵ As a result, the perceived success of the community relations campaign depended on which of the city’s “two distinct constituencies” one fell under—the “large WASPish middle class” or “the 30 percent of the population living in the sprawling Negro ghettos and Latin barrios.”²⁶ White Los Angeles, which still comprised a sizeable majority of the city, was “once again proud of its police force,” assured that major conflagrations could be avoided even while aggressive enforcement persisted.²⁷ “But in the ghetto, there is only the flimsiest police-citizen détente,” as residents’ aspirations for meaningful change in the “the attitudes and actions of the lowly patrolmen” continued to be frustrated.²⁸

Seeming to confirm the insurmountability of officer resistance to his policies, Chief Reddin abruptly resigned just two years into his tenure.²⁹ His replacement was Ed Davis, whom Tom

²² Martin J. Schiesl, “Behind the Badge: The Police and Social Discontent in Los Angeles since 1950,” in *20th Century Los Angeles: Power, Promotion, and Social Conflict*, ed. Norman M. Klein and Martin J. Schiesl (Regina Books, 1990), 169.

²³ Mathews, “Chief Reddin,” 92.

²⁴ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 62.

²⁵ Mathews, “Chief Reddin,” 93.

²⁶ Mathews, “Chief Reddin,” 85.

²⁷ Mathews, “Chief Reddin,” 93.

²⁸ Mathews, “Chief Reddin,” 91, 93.

²⁹ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 206; Gerald Woods, *The Police in Los Angeles: Reform and Professionalization* (Garland Publishing, 1993), 248.

Bradley described as another of Chief Parker's "protégés."³⁰ Unlike the "usually restrained Reddin,"³¹ "Crazy Ed" Davis was a belligerent reactionary known for his incendiary public rhetoric.³² He derided the city's liberals as "swimming pool communists and sophisticated Bolsheviks."³³ He claimed that, "the North Hollywood area is a cesspool of pornography, fruit bars and bottomless bars, thanks to the United States and California Supreme Courts."³⁴ He blamed the social unrest of the late 1960s on a breakdown in "self-discipline on the part of the American people" that gave rise to an ethics of "doing your own thing."³⁵

Under Ed Davis's command, "law and order" once again became the LAPD's watchword.³⁶ Davis not only refused to meet with "militant" Black and Chicano leaders—he orchestrated a police harassment campaign to "[run] them out of the city."³⁷ In November 1969, the LAPD raided the Black Panthers' headquarters with over 300 officers, including the SWAT team, where they engaged in a five-hour shootout that resulted in the surrender and arrest of 21 Panthers members.³⁸ In 1971, Davis would boast that, "The power struggle is over...we knocked them [Black Panthers and Brown Berets] off right and left."³⁹ Criticisms of the LAPD's use of deadly force were frequent throughout Davis's tenure—and glaring.⁴⁰ Woods asserts, "Policemen who shot innocent people were seldom punished, no matter how unprofessional their conduct, unless they missed their targets."⁴¹ In 1976, a local news station aired a "Peabody Award-

³⁰ Bernard Galm, *The Impossible Dream: Thomas Bradley, 1978* interview (Oral History Program, University of California, Los Angeles, 1984), 98.

³¹ Mathews, "Chief Reddin," 86.

³² Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 250, 254; Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 221-23.

³³ William J. Drummond, "There is More to Chief Davis Than Meets the Ear," *Los Angeles Times: West Magazine*, August 15, 1971, 7. Davis favored Chief Parker's old tactic of labeling police critics as communists, and he deployed it frequently. See Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 84; Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 252.

³⁴ Drummond, "More to Chief Davis," 7.

³⁵ Drummond, "More to Chief Davis," 10.

³⁶ Drummond, "More to Chief Davis," 10.

³⁷ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 79.

³⁸ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 77.

³⁹ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 79.

⁴⁰ Drummond, "More to Chief Davis," 13; Schiesl, "Behind the Badge," 173-74, 178-79; Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 267-68; Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 251-53.

⁴¹ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 251.

winning” exposé on the “astounding number of unarmed people shot and killed by LAPD officers.”⁴² But the number of shootings only increased over the next two years.⁴³ In 1978, the year that Ed Davis would retire, the LAPD shot 101 people, 57 of whom were Black.⁴⁴ The staggering total was enough to spur the police commission to finally adopt a shooting policy for the LAPD⁴⁵ that limited deadly force to situations in which a suspect presented “a substantial risk of death or bodily injury to others.”⁴⁶

Nevertheless, as Cannon would later put it, Chief Ed Davis was a “study in contrasts.”⁴⁷ His flamboyant, reactionary persona overshadowed his contributions to the fledgling “community relations” efforts underway in the department—contributions that came to eclipse even those of his predecessor. In 1971, the *Los Angeles Times* would claim that “for all the controversies Davis has stirred up, the fact remains that he has brought the LAPD closer to residents of every neighborhood in town than any police chief in modern times.”⁴⁸ Davis was not a fan of the community relations programs he inherited from Reddin, concluding that they did not contribute to the “resolution of mutual problems” because they did not adequately center crime prevention.⁴⁹ According to Davis, “What the poor people in the ghetto community really want from their police isn’t better so-called human relations. What they want is protection from crime.”⁵⁰

His solution was the “Basic Car Plan,” implemented citywide in March 1970.⁵¹ The program revolved around amateur anthropologist Robert Ardrey’s concept of the “territorial

⁴² Joe Domanick, *Blue: The LAPD and the Battle to Redeem American Policing* (Simon and Schuster, 2015), 35.

⁴³ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 252.

⁴⁴ Schiesl, “Behind the Badge,” 179.

⁴⁵ According to a former LAPD assistant Chief there was no shooting policy in place prior to 1978 because, “It was felt that a shooting policy would limit an officer’s activities in a department [with] a proactive morality of seek out the criminal and take action.” Domanick, *Blue*, 62.

⁴⁶ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 252. Shortly thereafter, this became the constitutional standard for use of deadly force following the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision in *Tennessee v. Garner*, 471 U.S. 1 (1985).

⁴⁷ Lou Cannon, *Official Negligence* (Random House, 1997), 88.

⁴⁸ Drummond, “More to Chief Davis,” 7.

⁴⁹ Schiesl, “Behind the Badge,” 174.

⁵⁰ Drummond, “More to Chief Davis,” 10.

⁵¹ Drummond, “More to Chief Davis,” 12.

imperative,”⁵² or the notion that living organisms will always seek to “fiercely defend their turf.”⁵³ Under the Basic Car Plan, Senior Lead Officers (SLOs) were assigned to a small area consisting of a few square blocks—their “turf.” There, they became responsible for first meeting with residents to “learn their area’s particular crime problems,” then deploying patrol officers to solve those problems.⁵⁴ SLOs were required to remain in the same area for several years to deepen their territorial commitment and facilitate stronger relationships with the community.⁵⁵ But unlike the community gatherings and “kaffeeklatsches”⁵⁶ organized under Reddin, meetings between SLOs and community members were strictly limited to discussing crime concerns. SLOs were “under strict orders not to discuss police harassment and brutality,”⁵⁷ and thus only residents who embraced the department’s aggressive and violent enforcement practices were willing to attend.⁵⁸

In his book, *Staff One: A Perspective on Effective Police Management*, Davis described the ultimate goal of his Basic Car Plan:

In addition to the policeman’s being sensitive to the crime level [in his area], the people of that territory become *their people*. If the policeman is white and the people he serves are black, he may think at first, “I don’t like black people very much,” and the black people may think at first, “We don’t like white cops very much.” Yet he’s their protector, and he knows they are depending on him; and if they sit down and rap together about how to protect the area, pretty soon the whiteness and the blackness disappear, and it becomes *Us*, a feeling of unity. We, the police and the people of Watts, against the criminal army.⁵⁹

⁵² Robert Ardrey, *The Territorial Imperative: A Personal Inquiry into the Animal Origins of Property and Nations* (Atheneum, 1966).

⁵³ Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 88; Luis Daniel Gascón and Aaron Roussell, *The Limits of Community Policing: Civilian Power and Police Accountability in Black and Brown Los Angeles* (NYU Press, 2019), 55-56.

⁵⁴ Schiesl, “Behind the Badge,” 175; Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 224.

⁵⁵ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 119; Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 248.

⁵⁶ Mathews, “Chief Reddin,” 84.

⁵⁷ Schiesl, “Behind the Badge,” 175.

⁵⁸ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 224; Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 119; Gates, *Chief*, 308.

⁵⁹ Edward M. Davis, *Staff One: A Perspective on Effective Police Management* (Prentice-Hall, 1978), 136.

The strategy at the heart of Davis's Basic Car Plan would form the core of what the department would later call "community policing."⁶⁰ The strategy involves promoting a division *within* non-White neighborhoods between community members deserving of police protection and the dangerous class—or "criminal army"—who threatens them. Under Chief Parker, the "community" the LAPD was intent on protecting was the city's conservative White suburbanites. Because non-Whites as a class were perceived as a social threat by this "community," largely all of Los Angeles's non-White residents were treated as part of the dangerous class. Entire neighborhoods became targets of the LAPD's dragnet enforcement operations, and any non-White resident who ventured into the White suburbs could expect police harassment.⁶¹ The Watts uprising exposed how truly grievous these practices were to Black Los Angeles, as well as the terrible consequences that could follow from such broad-based enforcement. The goal of the Basic Car Plan, as well as the "community policing" programs that would follow, was to divide non-White communities against themselves, incorporating agreeable residents within the "community" fold as a means of garnering support for aggressive enforcement against "dangerous" residents in the neighborhood. By broadening the base of community support and narrowing the range of LAPD targets, the belief was that "community policing" might avert another large-scale uprising in Los Angeles.

The LAPD under Chief Gates

These nascent community policing efforts evaporated almost immediately after Daryl Gates became chief of the LAPD in 1978.⁶² From his earliest days on the force, Gates appeared fated for the position.⁶³ Less than a year into his career, Gates was selected to become Chief

⁶⁰ See Gates, *Chief*, 308.

⁶¹ See, e.g., Civil Rights Congress, *The Civil Rights Congress Tells the Story* (1951); Glenn Souza, "A Simple Time, in Black and White: In the '50s, Racism Was an Enforcement Tool Passed Down From a Chief Who Was God to a Legion of Fuhrmans," *Los Angeles Times*, October 12, 1995, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1995-10-12-me-55977-story.html>.

⁶² Gates, *Chief*, 308-09.

⁶³ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 245-47.

Parker's personal chauffeur and bodyguard, a job that Gates later described as "a tutorial on how to be chief."⁶⁴ Chief Parker took a keen interest in Gates,⁶⁵ and as a result Parker "didn't close me [Gates] off from anything. He'd discuss decisions as we'd drive, he philosophized a lot...He told me why he was doing certain things. It was just an incredible, golden opportunity."⁶⁶ Gates, in turn, was "totally smitten with Bill Parker," and he credited Parker completely for "mold[ing] the LAPD into the world-recognized, aggressive police force that it is today [1992]."⁶⁷

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Gates played a formative role in many of the LAPD's major enforcement operations, serving as the department's on-the-ground field command during the Watts uprising, creating the SWAT unit, and leading the department's Intelligence and Metro Divisions.⁶⁸ When Ed Davis announced his retirement in 1978, the civil service regulations that controlled the chief hiring process essentially guaranteed that Gates would be selected as his replacement, and as a result Gates was "defiant" in his interviews with the civilian police commission.⁶⁹ When the commission asked Gates to explain how he would implement a list of bureaucratic changes they wanted accomplished, he allegedly responded with two words: "Trust me."⁷⁰ Gates himself would later say, "I admit I behaved with a touch of arrogance. I was, in effect, daring them to select somebody else, then justify it."⁷¹

With Gates at the helm, the LAPD operated according to a brutal, atavistic variant of Parker's policing logic that was virtually impervious to extradepartmental influence. It was clear from the outset that Gates hoped to emulate Parker's reign as chief, as one sergeant stated flatly to the *Los Angeles Times*: "He wants to be Bill Parker. He's still living in the 50s or 60s."⁷² Like Parker, Gates saw police as the "thin blue line" protecting the community from the dangerous

⁶⁴ Gates, *Chief*, 30.

⁶⁵ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 246-47.

⁶⁶ Bella Stumbo, "LAPD Has Own Critics of its Chief," *Los Angeles Times*, August 16, 1982, 1-3.

⁶⁷ Gates, *Chief*, 30, 32.

⁶⁸ Gates, *Chief*, 70-139.

⁶⁹ Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 91.

⁷⁰ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 253.

⁷¹ Gates, *Chief*, 176.

⁷² Stumbo, "LAPD Has Own Critics."

class.⁷³ “In a college sociology class,” Gates learned that, “people develop a pattern of conduct and mores at an early age. And even if you move them into a new environment, they are unlikely to change.”⁷⁴ And while there had always been youth in Los Angeles “lost to society before they grew up,” Gates argued that, “Today, there are just more of them. They are more unanchored; many operate with guns in their hands and drugs in their systems...society still has not found a way to turn the hopeless ones around.”⁷⁵ According to Gates, liberal society “flinches from the truth” about the irredeemability of this dangerous class: “[W]e do our best to find psychological and sociological reasons to excuse behavior that our minds won’t accept for what it is. You walk into court and you have all these attorneys explaining away all of the things that you can sum up in one simple word: Evil.”⁷⁶

To address the threat of “Evil,” the LAPD under Gates employed hyperaggressive, “pro-active”⁷⁷ enforcement tactics that were striking even in the context of the department’s long history of similar practices. As Gates described to his officers in an end-of-the-year address, “It’s like having the Marine Corps invade an area that is still having little pockets of resistance. We can’t have it...we’ve got to wipe them out.”⁷⁸ Under Gates’s leadership, racking up arrests and “pounding the fear of God into people,” as one officer would later put it, became a “career-advancement imperative.”⁷⁹ LAPD arrests increased precipitously throughout Gates’s tenure, rising from 177,894 arrests in 1980 to 276,706 arrests in 1988.⁸⁰ Most of the growth was driven by arrests for relatively minor offenses; arrests for Part II crimes increased by 60% (85,738

⁷³ Reflecting on Gates’s tenure, future chief Charlie Beck would say, “It was a time when we policed by the thin blue line. And Daryl [Gates] perfected thin blue line policing.” Frank Stoltze, “Daryl Gates Remembered by Friends, Family and Colleagues,” *LAist* [KPCC], April 27, 2010, <https://www.kpcc.org/2010-04-27/daryl-gates-remembered-friends-family-and-colleagu>.

⁷⁴ Gates, *Chief*, 23.

⁷⁵ Gates, *Chief*, 40.

⁷⁶ Gates, *Chief*, 165.

⁷⁷ Gates, *Chief*, 35, 293, 302.

⁷⁸ David Freed, “Gates Blames Drugs, Gangs for 4% Rise in L.A. Crime,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 25, 1986, pt. II, 1.

⁷⁹ Domanick, *Blue*, 61.

⁸⁰ Los Angeles Police Department, *Statistical Digest* (1980), 3-1, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/81209NCJRS.pdf>; Los Angeles Police Department, *Statistical Digest* (1988), 3.2, <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/Digitization/117834NCJRS.pdf>.

arrests) while arrests for Part I crimes increased by only 36% (13,074 arrests). Complaints of excessive force also increased, doubling between 1983 and 1988.⁸¹ Between 1987 and 1990, the LAPD averaged over 900 uses of the baton each year.⁸² City payouts in LAPD-related litigation increased from \$891,000 in 1980 to \$11.3 million in 1990.⁸³

One of the hallmarks of the Gates era was the prestige bestowed upon LAPD's "specialized" enforcement units, such as SWAT, Metro Division, and the Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums (CRASH) units.⁸⁴ Initially formed under Chief Ed Davis in the mid-1970s, CRASH units were nominally focused on "gang" suppression.⁸⁵ According to Charlie Beck, a future LAPD chief who served on CRASH units in south Los Angeles throughout the 1980s, the units' strategies, like those of SWAT and Metro, were "all search and destroy and blunt-force military tactics and assaults."⁸⁶ Promotions into one of these "specialized" units, like promotions elsewhere in the department, were determined by arrests and aggression, so their ranks swelled with the most hard-charging and violent officers.⁸⁷ Another future chief, Bill Bratton, would later describe the Metro Division as "the heart and soul of the LAPD culture that people had always been complaining about—the insensitivity, the brutality and the use of force, particularly against minorities, and the idea that they could use force without consequence and not have to explain it."⁸⁸ Additional funding to enhance security ahead of the 1984 Summer Olympics enabled the LAPD to purchase "military hardware" for these units, including machine guns, infrared viewing devices, and "a couple of old APCs [armored personnel carriers]."⁸⁹

⁸¹ Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 105.

⁸² Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 105.

⁸³ Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 105.

⁸⁴ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 339.

⁸⁵ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 104-05; Gates, *Chief*, 292.

⁸⁶ Domanick, *Blue*, 62. See also Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 113, 198-99.

⁸⁷ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 282, 339.

⁸⁸ Domanick, *Blue*, 302.

⁸⁹ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 199-200; Radley Balko, *Rise of the Warrior Cop: The Militarization of America's Police Forces* (PublicAffairs, 2013), 154.

Federal grants made available through the 1988 Anti-Drug Abuse Act allowed the department to enlarge these units and fund additional officer overtime for “drug-related investigations.”⁹⁰

These specialized units were at the center of the most infamous LAPD enforcement operations under Gates’s command. In 1985, Gates invited a couple of photographers to tag along with the SWAT team on a raid of an alleged “rock house” in Pacoima.⁹¹ SWAT, for the first time, planned to use one of the APCs obtained during the Olympics as a “battering ram” to blast an entry hole into the house; Gates wanted photographers there to “record this great event.”⁹² With Gates riding “co-pilot,” the APC smashed the wall of the house, only to find two women and two children eating ice cream—“no drugs.”⁹³ Despite the mistake, Gates argued the operation had been a success: “It frightened even the hard-core pushers to imagine that at any moment a device was going to put a big hole in their place of business, and in would march SWAT, scattering flash-bangs and scaring the hell out of everyone.”⁹⁴

Throughout 1988 and 1989, CRASH and Metro Division officers were deployed to south Los Angeles as part of “Operation Hammer,” a series of “gang sweeps” that led to the arrest of “at least twenty-five thousand overwhelmingly black men.”⁹⁵ Officers were instructed to “pick ‘em up for anything and everything,” and they carried out their orders zealously.⁹⁶ Over one weekend in April 1988, the LAPD arrested 1,453 people, but charges were filed against only 103 of them.⁹⁷ In August 1988, during an appalling raid of an apartment complex on Dalton Avenue, gang officers beat and arrested 33 residents then proceeded to destroy their homes, “tearing all the toilets from the floors; smashing in walls, stairwells, bedroom sets, and televisions with

⁹⁰ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 198; Balko, *Rise of the Warrior Cop*, 167.

⁹¹ Gates, *Chief*, 278.

⁹² Gates, *Chief*, 278. See also Balko, *Rise of the Warrior Cop*, 154-56.

⁹³ Gates, *Chief*, 279.

⁹⁴ Gates, *Chief*, 280.

⁹⁵ Domanick, *Blue*, 64. See also Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 208-09.

⁹⁶ Eric Malnic and Mark Arax, “1,000 Officers Stage Assault Against Violent Youth Gangs,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 9, 1988, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1988-04-09-me-845-story.html>.

⁹⁷ David Ferrell, “NAACP Raps Police Over Gang Sweeps,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 15, 1988, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1988-04-15-me-1485-story.html>.

sledgehammers; slashing open furniture; and then sending it all crashing through windows into the front yard.”⁹⁸ Before leaving, the officers used spray paint to graffiti the walls with messages including “LAPD Rules” and “Rolling 30s Die.” Ultimately, the raid resulted in drug possession charges for only a single resident and over \$3 million in settlement payments for the others, who had to be housed in temporary shelter provided by the Red Cross.⁹⁹

But no matter how extreme officer behavior became under his watch, Chief Gates permitted his troops to operate with relative impunity. Few officers faced serious discipline after the Dalton Avenue raid,¹⁰⁰ and when the deputy district attorney suggested that the LAPD’s investigation had not been sufficiently “thorough,” Gates responded that he was “sick and tired of [the deputy DA’s] nasty remarks about this department.”¹⁰¹ The obvious truth was that internal affairs investigations and discipline were notoriously lax under Gates’s command.¹⁰² Gates routinely reduced punishments issued by his commanding officers, a practice that one of his assistant chiefs would later describe as “the essence of the [LAPD’s] excessive force problem.”¹⁰³ Several days before the Dalton Avenue raid, the involved officers were told by an LAPD captain that, “if a shooting occurred, management would not view it negatively.”¹⁰⁴

Throughout most of Gates’s tenure, the LAPD team that investigated officer involved shootings (OIS) was led by Chuck Higbie, regarded within the department as a “major deity” for his ability to protect officers from culpability.¹⁰⁵ In 1979, Higbie’s team came under increased scrutiny after absolving the officers involved in the killing of Eulia Love, a single Black widow

⁹⁸ Domanick, *Blue*, 18. See also Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 190.

⁹⁹ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 190-91; Domanick, *Blue*, 18.

¹⁰⁰ See John L. Mitchell, “The Raid That Still Haunts L.A.,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 14, 2001, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2001-mar-14-mn-37553-story.html>.

¹⁰¹ Andrea Ford, “Gates Lashes out at Prosecutor in Dalton Raid Case,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 2, 1991, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-02-02-me-182-story.html>.

¹⁰² Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 335-38.

¹⁰³ Domanick, *Blue*, 32.

¹⁰⁴ Richard A. Serrano, “Session Before Dalton Raid Described,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 6, 1990, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1990-12-06-me-8127-story.html>.

¹⁰⁵ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 270.

who allegedly tried to throw a knife at officers during a dispute over a \$22.09 gas bill.¹⁰⁶ In 1983, the police commission issued new directives regarding OIS investigations, but Higbie continued to openly flout them.¹⁰⁷ According to Higbie's then-commander, when he confronted Higbie about the inadequacies of his investigations, Higbie responded, "I'm doing what Gates wants me to...mind [your] own fucking business"—a request the commander thereafter respected.¹⁰⁸ From 1980 to 1986, LAPD officers shot 372 people, but not a single officer faced criminal charges and only one was fired.¹⁰⁹ The atmosphere of impunity bred truly horrifying shooting practices. Officers in the Special Investigations Section (SIS), another of the LAPD's "specialized" units, were accused of lying in wait and allowing crimes to develop in order to provide optimal justifications for shootings.¹¹⁰ In 1988, a *Los Angeles Times* investigation found that SIS officers were involved in nearly double the number of shootings as SWAT team members, and 16 of the 22 people recently killed by SIS had been shot in the back.¹¹¹

Any attempt by those outside the department to address these practices was met with intense pushback from Chief Gates.¹¹² Gates strongly resented the notion that anyone other than himself should have any influence over the LAPD: "I am the only chief in the history of this department to be told how to run this organization...I *don't* understand...all these people [city officials] who don't know what the *hell* they're doing, telling *me* how to run *my organization!*"¹¹³ Like his mentor Parker, Gates understood that the chief's civil service protections essentially immunized him from removal,¹¹⁴ enabling him to ignore or rebuff directives from his nominal

¹⁰⁶ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 255-58, 274.

¹⁰⁷ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 276.

¹⁰⁸ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 272.

¹⁰⁹ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 271.

¹¹⁰ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 66-67.

¹¹¹ David Freed, "Special Investigations Section: Watching Crime Happen," *Los Angeles Times*, September 25, 1988, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1988-09-25-mn-3850-story.html>.

¹¹² Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 259.

¹¹³ Stumbo, "LAPD Has Own Critics."

¹¹⁴ Gates was even permitted to write his own civil service evaluations, ensuring that these evaluations would never provide sufficient grounds to remove him for "good and sufficient cause." Domanick, *Blue*, 31.

managers, the mayor and the civilian police commission. “It is impossible to talk to him,” the mayor’s chief administrative officer once stated. “He’s like a cobra, he comes here and just zaps us, not with fact, just, well—icy.”¹¹⁵

Nevertheless, LAPD critics in this period achieved some minor success in curbing some of the department’s most extreme practices. Local media coverage of deaths resulting from LAPD chokeholds led Gates to adopt a revised policy restricting its use in 1982.¹¹⁶ Over the prior seven years, the LAPD killed 16 people via chokehold, while other major cities such as New York, Chicago, Dallas, and San Francisco saw no more than one chokehold death each.¹¹⁷ Not only did LAPD chokehold deaths appear excessive, but 12 of the 16 people killed were Black.¹¹⁸ When asked about the enormous racial disparity, Gates replied that he had “a hunch” that, “some blacks when [the chokehold] is applied, the veins or arteries do not open up as fast as they do in normal people.”¹¹⁹ Public outrage following the comment forced Gates into adopting a policy restricting chokeholds to situations in which “deadly force is authorized.”¹²⁰ Several officers would later tell journalist Lou Cannon that the new restrictions on chokeholds led officers to rely more heavily on metal baton strikes, which soared in the late 1980s.¹²¹

Activists also succeeded in finally placing some limitations on the LAPD’s surveillance of political opponents and department critics. Political spying had been a lingering feature of LAPD practice since the early 20th century, a legacy of the deeply rooted corruption that pervaded the department at that time. Gates himself played a direct role in perpetuating this legacy as head of the LAPD’s Intelligence Division under Chief Parker.¹²² Gates describes how, after a California Supreme Court ruling prohibited the use of recordings from LAPD “bugs” (i.e.

¹¹⁵ Stumbo, “LAPD Has Own Critics.”

¹¹⁶ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 133.

¹¹⁷ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 264.

¹¹⁸ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 132.

¹¹⁹ David Johnston, “Bradley Orders Probe of Statements by Gates,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 11, 1982, 1, 3.

¹²⁰ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 133.

¹²¹ Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 104-07.

¹²² Gates, *Chief*, 70-87.

microphones illegally planted in people's homes) as evidence at trial, the LAPD "continued to bug anyway, for our own edification."¹²³ In 1975 and 1976, on the heels of Watergate, the department was forced to destroy some of the intelligence records maintained by the Public Disorder Intelligence Division (PDID), the unit that assumed primary responsibility over spying operations under Chief Ed Davis.¹²⁴ But PDID continued to spy on politicians, activist organizations, and non-White "militants" throughout the late 1970s and early 1980s.¹²⁵

Documents released in 1980 and 1982 through a joint lawsuit filed by the ACLU and the Coalition Against Police Abuse (CAPA) revealed that the LAPD "spied on elected officials, including Mayor Bradley, and routinely spied on nonviolent community organizations protesting police abuse."¹²⁶ Multiple officers disclosed that they had hidden LAPD intelligence files at home or in storage units to avoid discovery and destruction, both during the initial purge of the mid-1970s and in the context of the ACLU and CAPA litigation in the early 1980s.¹²⁷ It also became clear that Gates, although he claimed that PDID had "absolutely no interest in peaceful groups," received direct reports of PDID's surveillance of political organizations like CAPA and was fully aware of the concealment of intelligence files to avoid disclosure.¹²⁸ Ultimately, the lawsuit concluded in 1984 with a consent decree that required the LAPD to obtain civilian approval for any undercover surveillance operations.¹²⁹ While the lawsuit was a clear victory for activists, a former officer would later publish a book alleging that the department's political spying secretly continued without the public's knowledge through the Organized Crime Intelligence Division (OCID).¹³⁰

¹²³ Gates, *Chief*, 83.

¹²⁴ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 144.

¹²⁵ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 145-57; Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 294-95; Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 266-73.

¹²⁶ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 152.

¹²⁷ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*, 269-72.

¹²⁸ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 156.

¹²⁹ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 158.

¹³⁰ See Mike Rothmiller and Ivan Goldman, *L.A. Secret Police: Inside the LAPD Elite Spy Network* (Pocket Books, 1992).

Incredibly, despite the persistent controversy that beset the department throughout Gates's tenure, public support for the LAPD did not collapse under his leadership. Tom Bradley, a former LAPD lieutenant and one of the city's first Black councilmembers, was elected mayor in 1973, and he would serve in the position for the next 20 years. Since his earliest days as a councilmember in the 1960s, Bradley had been an assiduous police critic, balancing his criticisms of LAPD racism and excessive force with a deep commitment to policing as an institution. During the 1973 mayoral campaign, however, Bradley was forced to tack right on criminal justice to counter incumbent Mayor Yorty's dog whistles that Bradley was anti-police, which previously torpedoed Bradley's campaign four years earlier.¹³¹ After his election, Mayor Bradley continued to champion the LAPD, despite the department's conspicuous abuses under Chief Gates. Although he occasionally spoke out against Gates's offensive rhetoric, such as when Gates claimed that a group of over 150 Black ministers was conducting a "public lynching" by critiquing the LAPD,¹³² Bradley consistently delivered city budgets that expanded the department's resources and manpower throughout the 1980s.¹³³ The number of LAPD officers increased from 6,900 in 1984 to 8,414 in 1990,¹³⁴ and yet even this increase was not enough. In 1990, Bradley presented a city budget that made the LAPD "our No. 1 priority" by authorizing the hiring of 400 additional officers.¹³⁵

Polls conducted by the *Los Angeles Times* also suggest that the LAPD actually gained community support as the 1980s progressed, particularly among non-White residents. In 1979, shortly after the Eulia Love shooting, 30% of Black respondents and 45% of "Hispanic" respondents approved of the LAPD's performance, while 52% and 37%, respectively,

¹³¹ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 86-94.

¹³² David Johnston, "Bradley Orders Probe of Statements by Gates," *Los Angeles Times*, May 11, 1982, 1, 3.

¹³³ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 1, 129.

¹³⁴ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 186.

¹³⁵ Paul Lieberman, "Bradley Seeks \$14 Million to Hire 400 More Officers," *Los Angeles Times*, January 24, 1990, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1990-01-24-mn-607-story.html>.

disapproved.¹³⁶ By 1985, opinions of the LAPD had improved slightly but remained low, with only 35% of Black respondents and 51% of “Latino” respondents expressing approval of the department’s performance.¹³⁷ But by 1988, opinions of the LAPD were decidedly more positive, with 64% of Black respondents and 80% of “Latino” respondents approving of the department’s performance.¹³⁸ Opinions of Chief Gates specifically followed a similar trajectory, with 33% of Black respondents expressing approval in 1979 and 51% expressing approval in 1988.¹³⁹

Part of this support is undoubtedly attributable to a minor but highly consequential shift in the LAPD’s operative definition of the dangerous class under Chief Gates. Ed Davis, following in the tradition of Chief Parker, posited leftist “radicals” as the central threat to Los Angeles society, a label that the LAPD applied indiscriminately to virtually all forms of Black and Chicano political activism in the 1960s and early 1970s.¹⁴⁰ But for Chief Gates and the LAPD under his command, “gang members and gun-toting drug dealers” became the archetypal social threat necessitating police enforcement.¹⁴¹ In testimony before the U.S. Senate in 1990, Gates infamously stated that “the causal drug user ought to be taken out and shot.”¹⁴² Less well known is the response he gave to an incredulous *Los Angeles Times* reporter who later asked if Gates really meant what he said:

Yeah, Ron, I did. I understand the terrible burning compulsion an addict has for drugs.¹⁴³ What I don’t understand is an individual who is supposedly a ‘casual drug user’...[I]f we have people who smoke a little pot or snort a little coke, who simply want to go out and

¹³⁶ George Skelton, “Public Taking Dimmer View of L.A. Police,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 15, 1979, 18. The remaining percentage of Black and “Hispanic” respondents expressed no opinion.

¹³⁷ Kevin Roderick, “The *Times* Poll: Most in L.A. Are Satisfied Despite the Fear of Crime,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 25, 1985, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1985-03-25-mn-21508-story.html>.

¹³⁸ David Freed, “The *Times* Poll: Performance of Gates, LAPD Get High Marks,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 28, 1988, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1988-03-28-mn-142-story.html>.

¹³⁹ Opinions of Gates among Latino respondents also improved but less dramatically, with 51% expressing approval in 1979 and 61% expressing approval in 1988. Freed, “The *Times* Poll.”

¹⁴⁰ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*.

¹⁴¹ Gates, *Chief*, 44.

¹⁴² Richard A. Serrano and Jane Fritsch, “‘Yeah, I Mean It!’ Gates Says of Idea to Shoot Drug Users,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 8, 1990, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1990-09-08-me-478-story.html>.

¹⁴³ Gates’s son, Scott, whom Gates discusses in the chapter of his autobiography entitled “Evil,” was a narcotics “addict.” Gates, *Chief*, 159-62.

party and use drugs, I think they ought to be taken out and shot, because if this is a war on drugs, they are giving aid and comfort to the enemy.¹⁴⁴

The “gang” threat was presented by the department as inextricably intertwined with the drug threat.¹⁴⁵ The LAPD frequently asserted that growth in rock cocaine distribution was the source of rising gang homicides throughout the 1980s.¹⁴⁶ As one LAPD assistant chief stated, “Now, they really have something to fight over. Before, it was just territory and girls. Now, it’s mucho bucks.”¹⁴⁷ Gates voiced a similar sentiment:

With the invention of rock cocaine—known as “crack”—the stakes grew larger...[T]he streetwise criminals used gangs to set up a lucrative narcotics distribution network. Gang members were the visible part of that network; some sold the drugs; others, with their guns, served as protective coating to scare off anyone who tried to interfere.¹⁴⁸

Protecting the community from the interlocking threat of drugs and “gangs” became the LAPD’s nominal justification for continuing to target non-White neighborhoods with heavy, broad-scale enforcement.¹⁴⁹ Both the department and the media depicted rock cocaine trafficking as dominated by violent Black street gangs.¹⁵⁰ And for LAPD officers in this period, the “gang” label applied to virtually all young Black and Latino men who resided in the city.¹⁵¹ By virtue of broad and vaguely defined “gang” classification guidelines, “black and brown kids on the fringes of gangs were automatically labeled the enemy.”¹⁵² Furthermore, the LAPD’s primary tactic for addressing the “gang” threat was to “arrest them to death,” as the LAPD’s “anti-gang,

¹⁴⁴ Gates, *Chief*, 286-87. See also Richard A. Serrano and Jane Fritsch, “‘Yeah, I Mean It!’ Gates Says of Idea to Shoot Drug Users,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 8, 1990, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1990-09-08-me-478-story.html>.

¹⁴⁵ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 192, 195.

¹⁴⁶ See, e.g., Paul Feldman and David Freed, “Police ‘Czar’ Assigned to Spearhead Assault on Gang-Drug Tie In,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 14, 1988, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1988-01-14-me-35932-story.html>.

¹⁴⁷ Kenneth Reich, “Surge in Gang Crime Caused by Narcotics, Police Assert,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 17, 1986, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1986-07-17-me-21697-story.html>.

¹⁴⁸ Gates, *Chief*, 292.

¹⁴⁹ Domanick, *Blue*, 65-66.

¹⁵⁰ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 192, 195.

¹⁵¹ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 203-11.

¹⁵² Domanick, *Blue*, 65.

anti-drug czar” stated in 1988.¹⁵³ This involved large-scale sweeps such as those employed through Operation Hammer, which inevitably rounded up scores of “marginal drug dealers, users, petty criminals...[and] innocent teenagers and young men” who lacked even a hint of “gang” affiliation.¹⁵⁴ Jerome Miller cites a 1991 report from the Los Angeles County detention center estimating that one-third of all Black men in the county aged 20-29 had been arrested *that very year*.¹⁵⁵ The report also suggested that more than half of young Black men in Los Angeles could expect to spend time in a correctional facility before reaching the age of 30.

Yet, it was simultaneously true that fear of gang violence was widespread among non-White residents of south and east Los Angeles.¹⁵⁶ According to the 1985 *Los Angeles Times* poll, “two-thirds of southern area residents polled said they feel unsafe in their neighborhoods at night, and most described their feelings as ‘very unsafe.’”¹⁵⁷ Even in 1988, when opinions of the LAPD were more favorable than they had been in a decade, 75% of Black respondents and 51% of Latino respondents indicated that serious crime had gotten worse over the past 10 years.¹⁵⁸ The pervading fear of violent crime fed support for the LAPD’s hyperaggressive enforcement practices under Chief Gates. As Felker-Kantor relates, “in the fight against drugs and gangs, liberals, conservatives, and law enforcement officials were often closely aligned...Middle- and working-class residents and religious organizations turned to the police to help ‘save’ their communities from the drug and gang crisis.”¹⁵⁹ Some local residents even praised the LAPD for

¹⁵³ Paul Feldman and David Freed, “Police ‘Czar’ Assigned to Spearhead Assault on Gang-Drug Tie In,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 14, 1988, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1988-01-14-me-35932-story.html>.

¹⁵⁴ Domanick, *Blue*, 65-66.

¹⁵⁵ Jerome G. Miller, *Search and Destroy: African-American Males in the Criminal Justice System* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 5.

¹⁵⁶ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 192, 212; Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 16.

¹⁵⁷ Kevin Roderick, “The *Times* Poll: Most in L.A. Are Satisfied Despite the Fear of Crime,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 25, 1985, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1985-03-25-mn-21508-story.html>.

¹⁵⁸ David Freed, “The *Times* Poll: Performance of Gates, LAPD Get High Marks,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 28, 1988, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1988-03-28-mn-142-story.html>.

¹⁵⁹ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 191-92.

the infamous Dalton Avenue raid, claiming that it reduced drug sales and drive-by shootings in the area.¹⁶⁰

Mayor Bradley, perhaps reflecting the dominant attitudes of Los Angeles residents, consistently offered full-throated support for the LAPD's drug and gang initiatives.¹⁶¹ During the first publicized sweep of Operation Hammer, Bradley addressed the involved officers and stated, "We are going to take these terrorists off the streets...We are determined to take back the streets from these hoodlums."¹⁶² In 1990, Bradley heartily endorsed LAPD's "Operation Cul-de-Sac," which involved erecting barricades around "war zones" in south Los Angeles and establishing checkpoints to stop any "suspicious-looking persons."¹⁶³ In support of the initiative, Bradley stated, "We are determined to take back the streets of this community for the law-abiding people who live here, who work here and who play here...[O]f 560 residents interviewed recently, all but two wanted the barricades."¹⁶⁴

History Repeats: Continuing Social Structural Change in Los Angeles and the Rodney King Uprising

In direct parallel to Parker's tenure as chief, the broad public support enjoyed by the LAPD in the late 1980s masked the degree to which social structural changes in the city were producing ever increasing friction with the department's brutal and racialized enforcement practices. Table 8 provides Census data on the demographic changes experienced in Los Angeles from 1970 to 1990.

¹⁶⁰ Darrell Dawsey, "Many Laud Police for Drug Raid on Dalton Ave," *Los Angeles Times*, November 13, 1990, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1990-11-13-me-4420-story.html>.

¹⁶¹ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 194-98.

¹⁶² Eric Malnic and Mark Arax, "1,000 Officers Stage Assault Against Violent Youth Gangs," *Los Angeles Times*, April 9, 1988, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1988-04-09-me-845-story.html>.

¹⁶³ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 202-03.

¹⁶⁴ Jane Fritsch, "Police Barricades Go up in South-Central 'War Zone,'" *Los Angeles Times*, February 2, 1990, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1990-02-02-me-1295-story.html>.

Table 8. City of Los Angeles Demographic Characteristics, 1970 to 1990

Year	City Population	White	Percent White	Black	Percent Black	Latino*	Percent Latino
1970	2,816,061	1,654,809	58.8%	503,606	17.9%	518,791	18.4%
1980	2,966,850	1,433,330	48.3%	504,301	17.0%	806,296	27.2%
1990	3,485,398	1,299,604	37.3%	487,674	14.0%	1,358,026	40.0%

*The Latino population is an estimate from Census data on the total number of “persons of Spanish language or Spanish surname” in the city.
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau 1970, pt. 6, ch. B, tbl. 23, 6-104; U.S. Census Bureau 1970, pt. 6, ch. C, tbl. 96, 6-671; U.S. Census Bureau 1980, pt. 6, ch. A, tbl. 5, 6-22; U.S. Census Bureau 1980, pt. 6, ch. C, tbl. 58-59, 6-44, 6-70; U.S. Census Bureau 1990, pt. 6, ch. C, tbl. 6, 76.

Los Angeles’s Black population, which nearly doubled between 1950 and 1960, increased by an additional 50% (168,843 residents) between 1960 and 1970. The Black population percentage in the city at that time (17.9%) was the highest it had ever been or ever would be again. While the Black population would remain level at about a half-million residents over the next 2 decades, the Latino population in the city grew considerably. In 1970, the Census began tracking “persons of Spanish language or Spanish surname,” a proxy for those of Latin American heritage.¹⁶⁵ Census data indicate that the Latino population, which also consisted of about a half-million residents in 1970, grew by 167% (839,235 residents) over the next two decades. The growth of the Latino population was coupled with notable reductions in the White population, the first in the city’s history under U.S. rule. Between 1970 and 1990, the White population declined by 21.5% (355,205 residents), and the White population percentage in the city fell from 58.8% to 37.3%. Entering the final decade of the 20th century, the conservative White base that traditionally supported the LAPD’s aggressive enforcement against non-Whites had completely eroded.

¹⁶⁵ Census data from 1980 and 1990 illustrate that residents who traced their Latin American heritage to countries other than Mexico comprised an increasingly large proportion of city residents in this period. In 1980, Latin American residents of non-Mexican heritage numbered 193,501 individuals, 6.5% of the total city population. In 1990, this number increased to 421,519 residents, 12.1% of the city population. In light of these demographic changes, the term “Latino” will be used hereinafter to describe the combined category of Chicano residents and all other residents of Latin American descent residing in Los Angeles.

In its place, a new political power base emerged, a coalition of liberal Black, Latino, and White residents that would dictate city politics over the next three decades.¹⁶⁶ The emergence of this coalition was reflected in the political dominance of Democrat Tom Bradley, who won 5 consecutive mayoral elections before retiring from politics in 1993. It was also reflected in the shifting politics of local media in Los Angeles. Since its inception, the *Los Angeles Times* had been a mouthpiece for conservative business interests in the city, which often entailed endorsing or ignoring abusive LAPD practices that favored the city's economic elite.¹⁶⁷ In the 1980s, however, spurred by a competing publication's attention-grabbing coverage of the Eulia Love killing in 1979, the *Times* became increasingly critical of the LAPD.¹⁶⁸ Along with the *Los Angeles Herald Examiner* and the *Los Angeles Daily News*, the *Los Angeles Times* played a critical role in drawing the public's attention to the LAPD's deplorable record on chokeholds, officer discipline, and political spying under Chief Gates.¹⁶⁹ It was emblematic of a wider shift in the LAPD's relationship with local media, whose LAPD boosterism receded over the course of Gate's tenure.

Los Angeles also experienced dramatic changes in the local economy in this period.¹⁷⁰ The decline in industrial employment, a trend that began in the 1950s following World War II, accelerated in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Outsourcing and reductions in U.S. defense spending led to the loss of hundreds of thousands of industrial jobs, including over 70,000 jobs in south Los Angeles alone between 1978 and 1982.¹⁷¹ By 1990, apparel manufacturing was the only industry continuing to grow in Los Angeles, and annual wages in this industry were

¹⁶⁶ Raphael Sonenshein, *Politics in Black and White: Race and Power in Los Angeles* (Princeton University Press, 1993).

¹⁶⁷ Woods, *Police in Los Angeles*; Robert Gottlieb and Irene Wolt, *Thinking Big: The Story of the Los Angeles Times, Its Publishers, and Their Influence on Southern California* (Putnam, 1977).

¹⁶⁸ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 269; Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 130.

¹⁶⁹ Domanick, *To Protect and To Serve*, 336-37; Domanick, *Blue*, 35-36, 207-08.

¹⁷⁰ Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (Vintage Books, 1992), 300-09; Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 7-15.

¹⁷¹ Davis, *City of Quartz*, 304; Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 8.

approximately one-third the wages in the departing industries.¹⁷² In addition, over two-thirds of the jobs in garment factories were held by Latino and Asian immigrants—“blacks held very few.”¹⁷³ Black residents comprised over 20% of the municipal workforce, a legacy of Mayor Bradley’s successful affirmative action employment initiatives, but municipal employment also contracted following the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978, which drastically reduced local revenues from property taxes.¹⁷⁴ The impact of Proposition 13 was perhaps even more devastating for Los Angeles’s schools, which saw their funding slashed and dropout rates soar throughout the 1980s.¹⁷⁵

The result was ever increasing unemployment and poverty in Los Angeles’s segregated non-White neighborhoods—the same neighborhoods targeted by the LAPD’s hyperaggressive enforcement tactics under Chief Gates. Davis cites a state government report from 1982 stating that unemployment in “Southcentral neighborhoods” increased by 50% over the previous decade.¹⁷⁶ By the late 1980s, the unemployment rate for Black youth in Los Angeles sat at 45%.¹⁷⁷ Over one-third of households in south Los Angeles were below the poverty line.¹⁷⁸ In 1985, the Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations (LACCHR) issued a report on the persistent challenges confronting south Los Angeles nearly two decades after the Watts uprising. The report’s conclusions were ominous. According to the LACCHR:

Many of the problems [identified by study participants] were identical to those noted by the McCone Commission, and the overall conclusion of those testifying was that conditions are as bad, or worse, in South Central Los Angeles today as they were 19 years ago. As one speaker testified: “A basic problem in South Central Los Angeles in 1984, as it was in 1965, is poverty: grinding, unending, and debilitating for all whom it touches.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷² Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 9-10.

¹⁷³ Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 10.

¹⁷⁴ Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 11.

¹⁷⁵ Davis, *City of Quartz*, 307.

¹⁷⁶ Davis, *City of Quartz*, 304-05.

¹⁷⁷ Davis, *City of Quartz*, 305.

¹⁷⁸ Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 11-12.

¹⁷⁹ Los Angeles County Commission on Human Relations [LACCHR]. *McCone Revisited: A Focus on Solutions to Continuing Problems in South Central Los Angeles* (1985), 2. On file with author.

The report went on to note that, “police-community relations [] was regarded as the most crucial area of concern by many presenters.”¹⁸⁰ The LACCHR concluded that, almost 20 years after the Watts uprising, “the issue of equitable law enforcement continues to be one of the most contentious and serious problems for residents of South Central Los Angeles.”¹⁸¹

Each of these structural factors played a contributing role in the events that followed the beating of Rodney King by LAPD officers in the early morning hours of March 3, 1991.¹⁸² The incident began when California Highway Patrol (CHP) officers tried to execute a traffic stop on Rodney King’s car, resulting in a 7.8-mile, 100-mph pursuit that LAPD officers quickly joined.¹⁸³ After the chase concluded, a clearly intoxicated King¹⁸⁴ wandered about outside of his car, at one point engaging in a hip shake that, as an LAPD sergeant would later claim, inspired “fear [] of a Mandingo sexual encounter” in the female CHP officer on scene.¹⁸⁵ LAPD officers instructed the CHP officer to stand down, then shot King with multiple TASER darts and beat him with metal baton strikes as he lay on the ground. Over two dozen officers were on the scene, and most simply stood by and watched the beating unfold. King suffered a broken cheekbone, multiple additional facial fractures, and a broken leg, in addition to countless cuts and contusions.¹⁸⁶

A bystander happened to capture the beating on video, and when the footage aired on a local news broadcast two days later, it sent shock waves throughout Los Angeles and across the country. As Cannon describes:

By Wednesday, March 6, the tape that would transform the Rodney King beating into an international symbol of police brutality was receiving more attention in the Los Angeles media market than the just concluded war...In the ensuing thirteen months, the NBC, CBS, and ABC networks would do eighty-seven stories on the evening news alone.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁰ LACCHR, *McCone Revisited*, 4.

¹⁸¹ LACCHR, *McCone Revisited*, 12.

¹⁸² Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 20-50.

¹⁸³ Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 25.

¹⁸⁴ King’s blood-alcohol level at the time of the beating was more than two and half times the legal driving limit. Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 39.

¹⁸⁵ “The Record Gets Lengthier: Sgt. Koon’s Unpublished Memoirs Contain Offensive Stereotyping,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 19, 1992, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1992-05-19-me-13-story.html>.

¹⁸⁶ Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 32.

¹⁸⁷ Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 23.

For Los Angeles residents, the Rodney King beating completely altered the social and cultural politics of support for the LAPD. In the 1980s, a broad, multiracial consensus emerged regarding the threat of “gang” violence in the city. This consensus was the foundation of public support for the LAPD under Chief Gates, despite the department’s many controversies throughout his leadership. As future decades would illustrate, this consensus continued to endure, long after the Rodney King beating and the events that followed. But the scrutiny that King’s beating received in both local and national media outlets made it impossible to disregard the department’s abuses any longer. While broad support for policing as an institution would prove durable in Los Angeles, support for the current iteration of the LAPD under Chief Gates entirely collapsed.

A *Los Angeles Times* poll conducted less than a week after the beating found that already 86% of respondents had seen the video, and 92% of them believed the LAPD used excessive force.¹⁸⁸ 80% of Black respondents stated that police brutality was “very” or “fairly” common, and 58% of White respondents agreed. Overall opinions of the department’s performance nosedived, with White respondents “evenly divided” between approval and disapproval and Black respondents disapproving “by a margin of nearly 3 to 1.”¹⁸⁹ In the absence of a conservative White majority to shore up support, the tide of public opinion had turned.

A day after the video first aired, Mayor Bradley stated that he was “shocked and outraged,” and he insisted that, “this is something we cannot, and will not, tolerate.”¹⁹⁰ A month later, he called on Chief Gates to resign “for the good of the LAPD and the welfare of all of Los

¹⁸⁸ Ted Rohrlich, “The *Times* Poll: Majority Says Brutality by L.A. Police is Commonplace,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 10, 1991, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-03-10-mn-356-story.html>.

¹⁸⁹ Rohrlich, “The *Times* Poll.” Among Latino respondents, 51% approved and 41% disapproved of the LAPD’s performance.

¹⁹⁰ Hector Tobar and Leslie Berger, “Tape of L.A. Police Beating Suspect Stirs Public Furor,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 6, 1991, <https://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-tape-of-la-police-beating-suspect-stirs-public-furor-19910306-story.html>.

Angeles.”¹⁹¹ Gates refused, and civil service protections ensured that he could not be forcibly removed.¹⁹² But Mayor Bradley pursued other routes for reform, establishing an independent commission to conduct “a full and fair examination of the structure and operation of the LAPD.”¹⁹³ The commission was headed by Warren Christopher, a previous contributor to the McCone Commission report whose “achievements as a diplomat and adviser to presidents, governors and mayors [] raised hopes that the commission might get to the bottom of the Rodney King beating.”¹⁹⁴ In his charge to the commission, Mayor Bradley stated:

I remain confident in the ability and integrity of the large majority of men and women of LAPD who are out on the streets daily, doing the tough, dirty, and dangerous business of fighting crime. I intend to support our police department to the fullest. I was a police officer for twenty-one years, and I feel for the thousands of honorable men and women of the LAPD. They have watched helplessly in recent weeks as the LAPD's fine reputation has been damaged. My top priority is to restore the public's confidence in the cop on the street.

Nonetheless, we all know—and the Rodney King beating has been a shocking and tragic reminder—that we have problems in the department. These problems can and must be corrected.¹⁹⁵

The “Christopher Commission” issued its report in July 1991.¹⁹⁶ It was a damning indictment of racism, excessive use of force, and lack of accountability in the department.¹⁹⁷ The Commission issued 36 major recommendations, including creating of an inspector general’s

¹⁹¹ Hector Tobar and Richard A. Serrano, “Bradley Asks Gates to Quit for Good of City,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 3, 1991, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-04-03-mn-1878-story.html>.

¹⁹² When the civilian police commission attempted to place Gates on inactive duty pending an investigation, Gates sued the commission for exceeding their authority, and the city council reinstated him the next day. Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 223.

¹⁹³ Office of the Mayor. *The Charge by Mayor Tom Bradley to the Special Independent Commission to Review the Structure and Operation of the Los Angeles Police Department, with the Cooperation and Assistance of the Los Angeles District Attorney’s Office* (City of Los Angeles, April 1, 1991), 2. Appendix I of Independent Commission (1991).

¹⁹⁴ Bill Boyarsky, “Echoes of the McCone Commission,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 3, 1991, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-05-03-me-1112-story.html>.

¹⁹⁵ Office of the Mayor, *Charge by Mayor*, 1-2.

¹⁹⁶ Tracy Wilkinson, Andrea Ford, and Tracy Wood, “Panel Urges Gates to Retire: Report on Police Cites Racism, Excess Force,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 10, 1991, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-07-10-mn-1889-story.html>.

¹⁹⁷ Independent Commission on the Los Angeles Police Department, *Report of the Independent Commission on the Los Angeles Police Department* (City of Los Angeles, 1991).

office to independently monitor the LAPD's operations,¹⁹⁸ removing civil service protections and establishing term limits for the chief,¹⁹⁹ and orienting the department to a "community-based policing" model.²⁰⁰ The Commission noted that prior community policing efforts under Reddin and Ed Davis had been discontinued under Gates,²⁰¹ and it further acknowledged that, "[t]he values underlying community policing, most fundamentally restraint and mutual respect, are most difficult to incorporate into the behavior of officers operating within the LAPD's current professional system."²⁰² "Nonetheless," the Commission asserted, "the LAPD should adopt the community-based policing model and implement it fully, albeit carefully, throughout the Department."²⁰³ Gates strongly resisted virtually all the Commission's recommendations, particularly those that would undermine the chief's immunity from removal.²⁰⁴ But in January 1992, he begrudgingly introduced a pilot community policing program with a deliberately vague mandate that gave each division "considerable leeway in drawing up their own approaches to this philosophy in consultation with neighborhood groups."²⁰⁵

Four LAPD officers were quickly indicted on felony charges for their part in King's beating.²⁰⁶ In July, a California appellate court ordered that the trial be moved from Los Angeles, ruling that, "[s]o extensive and pervasive has been the [media] coverage, and so intense has become the political fallout, potential jurors have been infected to the extent that there is a reasonable likelihood that a fair and impartial trial cannot be had in Los Angeles County."²⁰⁷ The trial was moved just over the hill to Simi Valley in Ventura County, which was considerably

¹⁹⁸ Independent Commission, *Report*, 171.

¹⁹⁹ Independent Commission, *Report*, 214-15.

²⁰⁰ Independent Commission, *Report*, 105.

²⁰¹ Independent Commission, *Report*, 101-02.

²⁰² Independent Commission, *Report*, 104.

²⁰³ Independent Commission, *Report*, 105.

²⁰⁴ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 225-26.

²⁰⁵ Ted Rohrlich, "Gates' Community-Based Policing Plan OKd," *Los Angeles Times*, January 22, 1992, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1992-01-22-me-678-story.html>.

²⁰⁶ Leslie Berger and Tracy Wood, "L.A. Officers Indicted in Beating," *Los Angeles Times*, March 15, 1991, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-03-15-mn-297-story.html>.

²⁰⁷ Richard A. Serrano and Edward J. Boyer, "Trial of LAPD Officers Ordered out of County," *Los Angeles Times*, July 24, 1991, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-07-24-mn-305-story.html>.

Whiter and more conservative than Los Angeles.²⁰⁸ On April 29, 1992, when all 4 officers were acquitted of all charges by a jury with no Black members, south Los Angeles once again exploded in anger and frustration.²⁰⁹

In scenes hauntingly reminiscent of the Watts uprising less than 30 years prior,²¹⁰ innocent motorists were dragged from their cars and beaten,²¹¹ residents exchanged gunfire with LAPD officers, and firefighters were attacked as they tried to address the countless blazes.²¹² Nearly one thousand businesses were “looted” and destroyed.²¹³ Once again, thousands of National Guard members were called in to quell the upheaval.²¹⁴ But there were also notable differences in the Rodney King uprising. While the Watts uprising had been mostly confined to the 40 or so square miles of south Los Angeles, the Rodney King uprising spread out over 100 square miles of the city, and as a result “whites felt personally menaced by the 1992 disturbances.”²¹⁵ The Rodney King uprising also involved “slightly more Latino than black participants.”²¹⁶ When the uprising concluded five days after it began,²¹⁷ over 16,000 individuals had been arrested; 50.6% of them were Latino and 36.2% were Black.²¹⁸ Over 50 people had died, 26 of whom were Black and 14 of whom were Latino.²¹⁹ LAPD officers killed six of them.²²⁰

²⁰⁸ Andrea Ford and Daryl Kelley, “King Case to Be Tried in Ventura County,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 27, 1991, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-11-27-mn-220-story.html>.

²⁰⁹ Richard A. Serrano and Tracy Wilkinson, “All 4 in King Beating Acquitted,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 30, 1992, <https://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-all-4-in-king-beating-acquitted-19920430-story.html>.

²¹⁰ See generally Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 281-346.

²¹¹ As in the Watts Uprising, the attacks remained racially targeted, but the victims included more Latino and Asian residents, which Cannon attributes to the changed demographics of the city. Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 290.

²¹² Cannon is careful to note that, “Only a handful of blacks in South Central attacked or threatened firefighters...Much public attention was paid to those ‘bad people,’ [] and little to the numerous black bystanders who joined in picking up fire hoses...Firefighters were highly vulnerable, even with police protection, but they were rarely shot at after the first hours of the riots.” Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 331.

²¹³ Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 347.

²¹⁴ Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 345.

²¹⁵ Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 349.

²¹⁶ Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 282.

²¹⁷ Cannon marks Mayor Bradley’s lifting of the dusk-to-dawn curfew order on the afternoon of May 4 as the “official” end of the uprising. Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 347.

²¹⁸ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 230-31.

²¹⁹ Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 349.

²²⁰ Cannon, *Official Negligence*, 323.

The uprising was the catalyst that spurred many of the changes called for in the initial aftermath of King’s beating but not yet implemented. A month following the uprising, Los Angeles voters approved “Charter Amendment F” by a margin of over 2 to 1.²²¹ The amendment included many of the core policy recommendations called for by the Christopher Commission. The chief’s civil service protections were cut back, expanding the civilian police commission’s authority for removal. The chief would also be limited to two five-year terms, both subject to the city council’s approval. A civilian seat was added to the LAPD’s internal disciplinary panels, referred to as the “Board of Rights,” which determine ultimate punishments for officer misconduct.²²² And later that same month, Chief Gates retired. Characteristically defiant in his final press conference, Gates claimed that “the one nice thing about what’s going to happen around here” was that Mayor Bradley “has no future [and] hasn’t got a chance in the world of ever being elected in this city to anything.”²²³ When a *Los Angeles Times* journalist asked whether he was leaving with a “bitter attitude” after all that had transpired, Gates responded, “The only bitter attitude I have is with you. And some of your reporter friends.”²²⁴

The uprising even spurred legislation at the national level. In 1994, Congress approved the “Law Enforcement Misconduct Statute,”²²⁵ which enables the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) to sue police departments that engage in a “pattern or practice” of constitutional rights violations. The DOJ typically uses the threat of lawsuits to compel problematic police departments into adopting a slate of reforms determined by DOJ attorneys and “policing

²²¹ Louis Sahagun and John Schwada, “Measure to Reform LAPD Wins Decisively,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 3, 1992, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1992-06-03-mn-641-story.html>. Felker-Kantor notes that even in the city’s traditionally conservative San Fernando Valley, residents approved the measure “with just over 50% of the vote.” Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*, 226.

²²² Los Angeles Times Editorial Board, “Reforming the Police Disciplinary System Should Be Done in Public View, Not in Backroom Negotiations,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 31, 2016, <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/editorials/la-ed-board-of-rights-20160531-snap-story.html>.

²²³ Richard A. Serrano, “Williams Takes Oath as New Police Chief” *Los Angeles Times*, June 27, 1992, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1992-06-27-mn-828-story.html>.

²²⁴ Serrano, “Williams Takes Oath.”

²²⁵ “Law Enforcement Misconduct Statute,” 34 U.S.C. §12601 (September 13, 1994), [https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=\(title:34%20section:12601%20edition:prelim\)](https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=(title:34%20section:12601%20edition:prelim))

experts.”²²⁶ Although the statute was expressly motivated by the Rodney King beating and the uprising that followed,²²⁷ it would take five years and another major scandal before the statute would be applied to the department that inspired it.

Muddling Forward: Willie Williams, Bernard Parks, and the Rampart CRASH Scandal

The appointment of Willie Williams as Gates’s successor was a celebratory moment for Los Angeles. Williams became not only the first Black chief of the LAPD, but also the first outsider to lead the department since General Worton in 1949. Prior to his appointment, Williams had been serving as the first Black police chief in Philadelphia—“a city as racially charged as L.A.”—where he developed a sterling reputation as a reformer.²²⁸ Williams charmed Los Angeles by promising dramatic changes to the LAPD: “We will be addressing concerns about police abuse and concerns about the misuse of force, and about sexism and racism, and we’re going to look at our training...There are a lot of areas we are going to address. We’re going to take a whole fresh look at the department from A to Z.”²²⁹ He received spontaneous ovations as he appeared throughout the city, including at an “upscale restaurant” and a Dodgers baseball game.²³⁰ Six months into the job, Williams’s approval rating stood at 67%, and a year later he polled as “the most popular public figure in the city.”²³¹

Above all, Chief Williams professed a commitment to implementing “community policing” as recommended by the Christopher Commission.²³² In October 1992, Williams

²²⁶ U.S. Department of Justice. Civil Rights Division. *The Civil Rights Division’s Pattern and Practice Police Reform Work: 1994-Present* (January 2017), 10-11.
<https://www.justice.gov/crt/file/922421/download>.

²²⁷ U.S. Department of Justice, *Civil Rights Division*, 3.

²²⁸ Joe Domanick, “Officer Down: Willie Williams’ Fall from Grace,” *LA Weekly*, March 6, 1997, 27-28.

²²⁹ Serrano, “Williams Takes Oath.”

²³⁰ Domanick, “Officer Down,” 26.

²³¹ Domanick, *Blue*, 139-40.

²³² Gayle Pollard Terry, “Los Angeles Times Interview: Willie Williams,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 18, 1992, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1992-10-18-op-864-story.html>.

introduced his community policing plan, described as a “new beginning to build public safety confidence between the people of Los Angeles and their Police Department.”²³³ The plan involved the creation of “Community-Police Advisory Boards” (C-PABs) composed of LAPD-selected residents who would advise commanding officers on “problem-solving activities” in each of the department’s 18 area divisions.²³⁴ But the true “cornerstone” of the initiative was the “revitalization of the Basic Car Plan,” Chief Ed Davis’s program from the early 1970s.²³⁵ SLOs were reinstated and tasked with meeting with residents to coordinate LAPD enforcement with community crime concerns. In 1995, the LAPD issued a five-year strategic plan that committed the department to “reengineer[ing] its fundamental processes” and “implement[ing] Community Policing...Department-wide.”²³⁶

But while Chief Williams was able to successfully court public opinion with these promises and policy tweaks, city officials soon became frustrated with his lack of follow through. As early as May 1994, Williams was reprimanded by the police commission for failing to make tangible progress within the department. In a confidential evaluation leaked to the *Los Angeles Times*, the commission stated:

Consistently, you seem to lack focus and discernible purpose in managing the department...It is often unclear throughout the ranks exactly who is in charge and who is making decisions affecting the operations and directions of the LAPD...Often, you seem unable to move the department, to have your decisions understood and followed in a timely manner, if at all.²³⁷

Shortly thereafter, the commission assumed authority over implementation of the Christopher Commission recommendations, arguing that the department was not moving fast enough on its

²³³ Michael Connelly, “Williams Unveils Plan on Community Policing for L.A.,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 14, 1992, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1992-10-14-me-272-story.html>.

²³⁴ Los Angeles Board of Police Commissioners. *In the Course of Change: The Los Angeles Police Department Five Years after the Christopher Commission* (1996), 10.

²³⁵ Los Angeles Board of Police Commissioners, *In the Course of Change*, 9.

²³⁶ Los Angeles Police Department, *Commitment to Action: Strategic Plan 1995-2000* (1995), 6, 8.

²³⁷ Jim Newton and James Rainey, “Police Panel Rebuked Chief Sources Disclose,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 24, 1995, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1995-05-24-mn-5472-story.html>.

own.²³⁸ In 1995, Los Angeles voters approved the creation of an inspector general's office with independent authority to investigate the LAPD, another of the remaining Christopher Commission recommendations. A year later, attorney Katherine Mader became the first to serve in the post, and she quickly became one of Williams's fiercest critics, publicly rebuking the chief for failing to address the persistent lack of accountability among LAPD officers.²³⁹ When Williams proudly asserted that civilian complaints were down 45% during his tenure, Mader publicly disputed the claim, arguing that the LAPD continued to suppress complaints at the station level so they would not appear in official statistics.²⁴⁰ Liberal activists were also dissatisfied, with representatives of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the ACLU respectively describing the pace of reforms as "glacial" and "inexcusably slow."²⁴¹

A major contributor to the department's stagnation was Williams's lack of support among LAPD officers, which was evident from the very start of his term. On the day authority was transferred, Gates held his exit press conference immediately before Williams's first as chief. A *Times* journalist described how, "[a]fter Gates disappeared behind [] the elevator doors, Williams emerged...[and] stood alone as the dozens of officers and staff workers who had thronged around Gates filed past Williams and returned to work."²⁴² As an outsider, particularly one from a historically corrupt east coast department, it was always going to be difficult for Williams to command respect within the LAPD, a department that had long prided itself on being "the best [] in the *world*."²⁴³ It did not help matters that Williams was overweight, preferred suits to the traditional officers' uniform, and lacked proper certification to carry a

²³⁸ Jim Newton, "Panel Takes Over Monitoring LAPD Reforms," *Los Angeles Times*, December 21, 1994, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1994-12-21-mn-11459-story.html>.

²³⁹ Domanick, *Blue*, 165-66.

²⁴⁰ Domanick, "Officer Down," 34.

²⁴¹ Jim Newton, "Panel Takes Over Monitoring LAPD Reforms," *Los Angeles Times*, December 21, 1994, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1994-12-21-mn-11459-story.html>.

²⁴² Richard A. Serrano, "Williams Takes Oath as New Police Chief" *Los Angeles Times*, June 27, 1992, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1992-06-27-mn-828-story.html>.

²⁴³ Domanick, "Officer Down," 31.

firearm, all of which stood in marked contrast to the much-revered Gates.²⁴⁴ But the primary reason for the disconnect was that Williams made virtually no effort to speak or connect with his officers, despite persistent exhortations from the president of the police commission, himself a former LAPD officer.²⁴⁵ When, in October 1994, Williams failed to return from a weekend trip to Las Vegas after an officer was killed in the line of duty, mistrust became open hostility.²⁴⁶

High-level members of Williams's staff, including the LAPD's chief spokesman, began to disparage Williams in conversations with city officials and prominent residents.²⁴⁷ Bernard Parks, the lifetime LAPD officer who placed second to Williams in the competition to replace Gates, used his powerful position as head of LAPD operations to sabotage Williams's agenda.²⁴⁸ When the department's strategic plan emphasizing community policing was released in 1995, it was "generally ignored at the upper levels of the Department," as a UCLA researcher hired by the LAPD under Williams would later describe.²⁴⁹ Because Williams refused to meet directly with officers outside of his mutinous command staff, his directives were never effectively communicated throughout the department, and consequently they had virtually no impact on LAPD practices.

²⁴⁴ Domanick, *Blue*, 118-19. Although Gates never used a gun as an officer, as chief he wore both a sidearm and a gun strapped to his ankle and kept Uzi machine guns in his staff cars. Domanick, *Blue*, 119; Domanick, "Officer Down," 31.

²⁴⁵ Domanick, "Officer Down," 29-31; Domanick, *Blue*, 120-22.

²⁴⁶ Domanick, "Officer Down," 31. Chief Williams's frequent trips to Las Vegas were the subject of additional controversies throughout his tenure. In December 2014, the civilian police commission expressed concern that, "the chief's use of compensatory and vacation time was undermining his ability to lead the department." The commission then received a letter from a retired LAPD deputy chief alleging that Williams was receiving free accommodations on his Vegas sojourns. Williams denied the accusation, both in public and before the police commission, but was forced to recant when it became evident the allegations were true. Jim Newton and James Rainey, "Police Panel Rebuked Chief Sources Disclose," *Los Angeles Times*, May 24, 1995, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1995-05-24-mn-5472-story.html>.

²⁴⁷ Domanick, "Officer Down," 31-33.

²⁴⁸ Domanick, *Blue*, 124-25.

²⁴⁹ Wellford W. Wilms, *From the Age of Dragnet to the Age of the Internet: Tracking Changes within the Los Angeles Police Department* (UCLA: Luskin School of Public Affairs, 2004), 159, <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/62f3p7c3>. See also Jim Newton, "Most Top Brass Criticize LAPD Strategic Plan," *Los Angeles Times*, February 27, 1997, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1997-02-27-mn-33004-story.html>.

By the end of Chief Williams's first five-year term, it was clear that the department had made little, if any, progress. A report from the *Los Angeles Times* found that of the 44 LAPD officers singled out by the Christopher Commission as "problem officers," only three had been fired, nine had been promoted, and seven had been involved in additional shootings.²⁵⁰ In a 1997 interview, the LAPD captain in charge of training at the police academy bristled at the notion that change in the department had ever been necessary in the first place:

We don't have paramilitaristic training, never have...

[Community policing] is a catchall term that started here, rolled across the country, and now has come back packaged up with a ribbon on it, but the LAPD has been at it for 25 years, there's been no difference...The idea of problem solving, that's what team policing was about back in 1971, '72, and we've had senior lead officers [SLOs] ever since then and have been and are today at the forefront of—quote, unquote—community-based policing...This is new to writers and other people: it is not new to this Police Department...

The people who think the LAPD had problems with excessive force 10 or 15 years ago are wrong. I can lay out the numbers that show that the newspaper opinion and the media's opinion is not borne out by the facts. The use of force was a big issue with the Christopher Commission...that's all nonsense.²⁵¹

As Domanick would later maintain, what was truly astonishing was that "Willie Williams had allowed [the captain] to be in charge of shaping the attitudes and training of what was supposed to be a new reform generation of LAPD officers."²⁵² Later that same year, the police commission declined to appoint Williams to a second term. After the decision, the president of the police commission summarized the board's reasoning: "In the most basic way, it is business as usual. And this is something that the commission cannot legislate; this is something that has to do with the chief's commitment to change—to real change."²⁵³

²⁵⁰ Alan Abrahamson, "What Has Happened to the "LAPD 44"?" *Los Angeles Times*, October 15, 1995, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1995-10-15-mn-57273-story.html>.

²⁵¹ Domanick, "Officer Down," 29.

²⁵² Domanick, *Blue*, 177.

²⁵³ Domanick, *Blue*, 179.

Williams's replacement was Bernard Parks, the LAPD figure who, perhaps more than any other, had ensured Williams's failure as chief.²⁵⁴ Parks, a Black officer from Watts who had spent his entire 32-year career with the LAPD,²⁵⁵ possessed both the local political connections and departmental credibility that Williams lacked, and he was initially welcomed with open arms.²⁵⁶ His appointment as chief was unanimously approved by the city council, with one councilmember describing his swearing-in ceremony as "an absolute love-in."²⁵⁷ Although councilmembers expressed hope that Parks would "make his officers genuinely desire reform,"²⁵⁸ it should have been obvious that Parks was no reformer. Parks hung a picture of Daryl Gates on his office wall,²⁵⁹ and he remained an apologist for some of the worst abuses under Gates's reign. He once told an interviewer:

It's not the fault of the police when they stop minority males or put them in jail. It's the fault of the minority males for committing the crime. In my mind, it is not a great revelation that, if officers are looking for criminal activity, they're going to look at the kind of people who are listed on crime reports.²⁶⁰

He gave a similar explanation for racial disparities in police shootings: "It's easy to point at [the LAPD] and say they shot so many black people...What's hard [to explain] is why all those black people have guns that are creating crime and why the police are confronting them daily."²⁶¹

If it was not evident before Parks assumed control, it became clear quickly after that any limited reform efforts undertaken by the LAPD under Chief Williams were now over. Almost

²⁵⁴ Domanick, *Blue*, 123-25.

²⁵⁵ Parks was first sworn in as an LAPD officer a little more than six months before the Watts uprising. Matt Lait, "Parks Sworn in as LAPD Chief After 12-0 Vote," *Los Angeles Times*, August 13, 1997, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1997-aug-13-mn-21918-story.html>.

²⁵⁶ Domanick, *Blue*, 122, 183-84.

²⁵⁷ Matt Lait, "Parks Sworn in as LAPD Chief After 12-0 Vote," *Los Angeles Times*, August 13, 1997, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1997-aug-13-mn-21918-story.html>.

²⁵⁸ Lait, "Parks Sworn."

²⁵⁹ Domanick, *Blue*, 122. Parks was once Chief Gates's driver, just as Gates had been Chief Parker's driver. Peter J. Boyer, "Bad Cops," *The New Yorker*, May 13, 2001, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2001/05/21/bad-cops>.

²⁶⁰ Ed Boyer, "Parks Support Backs Blacks into a Corner," *Los Angeles Times*, February 17, 2002, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2002-feb-17-op-boyer-story.html>.

²⁶¹ Domanick, *Blue*, 123.

immediately after Parks became chief, the LAPD once again abandoned the Basic Car Plan, and SLOs were reassigned to normal patrol duties.²⁶² In justifying the move, Parks claimed that the SLOs were earning “5% to 15% more for doing 5% to 15% less work.”²⁶³ Parks also colluded with the president of the police commission on an underhanded campaign to limit the inspector general’s investigative authority and push Mader out of the position.²⁶⁴ Mader’s replacement immediately complained that the LAPD has “unilaterally sought to put restrictions on the inspector general’s office.”²⁶⁵ After only a single year in office, Chief Parks called a press conference to announce that the LAPD had “completed or closed” just over 80% of the Christopher Commission’s recommendations, and thus the “time has come to advance beyond [the Commission’s report].”²⁶⁶

Although Chief Parks appeared even less committed than Williams to genuinely reforming LAPD practices, he did gain a reputation as a strict disciplinarian. On January 1, 1998, Parks issued “Special Order No. 1” eliminating discretionary authority to suppress civilian complaints at the station level.²⁶⁷ The new policy, known as the “1.28 system,” mandated that all civilian complaints be routed to Internal Affairs for a full investigation. In the first year under the 1.28 system, officially recorded civilian complaints increased from 1,912 to 5,339,²⁶⁸ and Chief Parks fired 54 officers, nearly five times the number of officers fired during Williams’s last year in office (11).²⁶⁹ The policy shift decimated any internal support that Parks might have

²⁶² “Hahn Seeks Revival of LAPD Lead Officer Program,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 29, 2000, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-sep-29-me-28695-story.html>.

²⁶³ Bob Pool, “Homeowners Chide Chief Over Cuts in Community Policing Plan,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 18, 1999, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1999-sep-18-me-11537-story.html>.

²⁶⁴ Domanick, *Blue*, 200.

²⁶⁵ Jim Newton, “LAPD Corruption Probe May Be Test for City Leaders,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 20, 1999, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1999-sep-20-mn-12277-story.html>.

²⁶⁶ Matt Lait, “LAPD Headed in Right Direction, Parks Says,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 20, 1998, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1998-aug-20-me-14830-story.html>.

²⁶⁷ Rampart Independent Review Panel, *A Report to the Los Angeles Board of Police Commissioners Concerning the Operations, Policies, and Procedures of the Los Angeles Police Department in the Wake of the Rampart Scandal* (2000), 90.

²⁶⁸ Rampart Independent Review Panel, *Report*, 90.

²⁶⁹ Don Terry, “Unyielding Chief for the Los Angeles Police,” *New York Times*, January 17, 1999, <https://www.nytimes.com/1999/01/17/us/unyielding-chief-for-the-los-angeles-police.html>.

possessed among his officers. In a survey administered in 1999, only 18% of LAPD officers agreed that Parks was leading the department “in the right direction,” and 79% expressed fear at being punished for “an honest mistake.”²⁷⁰ This fear was likely the primary impetus behind a steep drop in arrests and OIS incidents, both of which hit multi-decade lows under Parks’s leadership.²⁷¹ Between 1998 and 2001, the LAPD averaged 38 shootings a year, compared to 71 shootings a year in Williams’s final four years and over 100 a year in Gates’s final four years.²⁷²

Nevertheless, the enhanced disciplinary system under Parks was quickly overshadowed by the corruption scandal that began to unfold later that same year. In August 1998, LAPD officer Rafael “Ray” Perez, a member of the Rampart CRASH unit, was arrested on suspicion of stealing cocaine from an evidence locker, one of many dubious police incidents over the past year to which Perez appeared to be connected.²⁷³ In September 1999, Perez entered into a plea agreement to give up information on other corrupt officers in exchange for a five-year sentence and immunity from any additional criminal prosecutions “short of murder.”²⁷⁴ Over the next nine months, investigators interviewed Perez more than 50 times, resulting in more than 4,000 pages of interview transcripts. During these interviews, Perez implicated over 70 LAPD officers in a breathtaking variety of misconduct, including planting evidence and firearms to justify false arrests and illegal shootings, selling drugs stolen from arrestees or LAPD evidence lockers, and collaborating with other drug dealers and gang members in the neighborhood to eliminate mutual competition.²⁷⁵

²⁷⁰ Wilms, *Age of Dragnet*, 170. See also Jill Leovy and Patrick McGreevy, “LAPD Union Says Poll Shows Vast Majority Oppose Parks,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 18, 2002, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2002-jan-18-me-23397-story.html>.

²⁷¹ See Christopher Stone, Todd Foglesong, and Christine M. Cole, *Policing Los Angeles Under a Consent Decree: The Dynamics of Change at the LAPD* (Harvard Kennedy School: Program in Criminal Justice Policy and Management, 2009), 28; Los Angeles Police Department, *Use of Force Year-End Review: 2018*, 142-43.

²⁷² Los Angeles Police Department, *Use of Force 2018*, 142-43.

²⁷³ Domanick, *Blue*, 122, 190-95.

²⁷⁴ Michael Kirk and Peter J. Boyer, “L.A.P.D. Blues: Rampart Scandal Timeline,” *PBS: Frontline*, May 15, 2001, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/lapd/scandal/cron.html>.

²⁷⁵ Michael Kirk and Peter J. Boyer, “L.A.P.D. Blues: Perez’s Confessions: Audio Excerpts,” *PBS: Frontline*, May 15, 2001, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/lapd/scandal/audio.html>; Domanick, *Blue*, 153-58.

It was all part of what Perez described as the “Rampart Way”—the culture of predatory lawlessness that was not only tolerated within the Rampart CRASH unit but celebrated.²⁷⁶ Officers who were “in the loop” could be expected to corroborate false stories and stay silent regarding any misconduct they witnessed.²⁷⁷ In uncanny parallel to the “gangs” the unit nominally targeted, some Rampart CRASH officers had matching arm tattoos of the unit logo, a skull wearing a cowboy hat affixed with an LAPD badge before a background of cards displaying “the dead man’s hand of aces and eights.”²⁷⁸ The group would hold celebrations and distribute plaques whenever officers were involved in shootings, regardless of the precipitating circumstances.²⁷⁹ Perhaps most disturbing of all, Perez indicated that similar practices were widespread throughout the department. “I would say that 90% of the officers that work CRASH, and not just Rampart CRASH, falsify a lot of information,” Perez told investigators. “They put cases on people...It hurts me to say it. But there’s a lot of crooked stuff going on with LAPD, especially LAPD specialized units.”²⁸⁰ Although Perez was undoubtedly “a liar,” and some of what he told investigators proved to be untrue,²⁸¹ LAPD officials claimed they were able to corroborate “70%-80% of Perez’s allegations.”²⁸²

As a result of the *Los Angeles Times*’s nonstop coverage of the scandal from September 1999 through 2000,²⁸³ public opinion of the LAPD once again collapsed. A *Times* poll in April

²⁷⁶ Terry McDermott, “Perez’s Bitter Saga of Lies, Regrets and Harm,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 31, 2000, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-dec-31-mn-6831-story.html>.

²⁷⁷ Peter J. Boyer, “Bad Cops,” *The New Yorker*, May 13, 2001, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2001/05/21/bad-cops>; Kirk and Boyer, “L.A.P.D. Blues: Perez’s Confessions.”

²⁷⁸ Domanick, *Blue*, 122, 153.

²⁷⁹ Kirk and Boyer, “L.A.P.D. Blues: Perez’s Confessions.”

²⁸⁰ Kirk and Boyer, “L.A.P.D. Blues: Perez’s Confessions.”

²⁸¹ Boyer, “Bad Cops;” Michael Kirk and Peter J. Boyer, “L.A.P.D. Blues: The Issue of Rafael Perez’s Credibility,” *PBS: Frontline*, May 15, 2001,

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/lapd/scandal/credibility.html>.

²⁸² Matt Lait and Scott Glover, “Perez’s Credibility Under New Attack,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 26, 2000, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-sep-26-me-26840-story.html>.

²⁸³ Domanick, *Blue*, 206-07. See, e.g., Matt Lait and Scott Glover, “Ex-Officer Says He Shot Unarmed Man,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 16, 1999, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1999-sep-16-mn-10714-story.html>; Matt Lait and Scott Glover, “Rampart Case Takes on Momentum of Its Own,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 31, 1999, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1999-dec-31-mn-49335-story.html>; Scott Glover and Matt Lait, “Police in Secret Group Broke Law Routinely, Transcripts Say,”

2000 found that public perceptions of the LAPD were worse than in the immediate aftermath of the Rodney King beating.²⁸⁴ Among Black, Latino, *and* White respondents, those who disapproved of the LAPD outnumbered those who approved, with Black respondents disapproving by a margin slightly larger than 3 to 1 (55% to 18%).²⁸⁵ 83% of Black respondents stated that police brutality was very (47%) or fairly (36%) common, an increase of 3% since the *Times* poll following King's beating.²⁸⁶ The Rampart CRASH scandal had wiped out any lingering goodwill generated by the department over the previous nine years.

Chief Parks came under heavy scrutiny for decisions that appeared to undermine investigations into the scandal. Much to the frustration of the district attorney and the president of the police commission, Parks refused to grant administrative immunity to LAPD officers who witnessed misconduct but failed to report it their superiors.²⁸⁷ Consequently, officers who only saw misconduct but did not participate still refused to speak out for fear of being reprimanded or fired. As the district attorney later explained, "the [LAPD officers] that were out there, who we think could have really helped us, could not, or would not, step forward, because they were afraid--fearful of administrative retribution within their own department."²⁸⁸ With only the testimony of Ray Perez, a proven liar, criminal prosecutions became virtually impossible. Under pressure from Parks to wrap up the cases quickly, the district attorney charged three officers,

Los Angeles Times, February 10, 2000, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-feb-10-mn-62921-story.html>; Terry McDermott, "Perez's Bitter Saga of Lies, Regrets and Harm," *Los Angeles Times*, December 31, 2000, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-dec-31-mn-6831-story.html>.

²⁸⁴ Elizabeth Armet, "Poll Analysis: Rampart Scandal Affecting the State of the City," *Los Angeles Times*, April 9, 2000, <https://www.latimes.com/local/la-000409lapoll-440pa1an-htmlstory.html>.

²⁸⁵ Latino respondents disapproved of the LAPD's performance by a margin of 48% to 36%, while White respondents disapproved by a margin of 46% to 44%.

²⁸⁶ See Ted Rohrlich, "The *Times* Poll: Majority Says Brutality by L.A. Police is Commonplace," *Los Angeles Times*, March 10, 1991, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-03-10-mn-356-story.html>.

²⁸⁷ Michael Kirk and Peter J. Boyer, "L.A.P.D. Blues: Cover Up?" *PBS: Frontline*, May 15, 2001, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/lapd/scandal/coverup.html>.

²⁸⁸ Michael Kirk and Peter J. Boyer, "L.A.P.D. Blues: Cover Up?"

but all three were acquitted at trial.²⁸⁹ The officers then successfully sued the city and the LAPD in civil court for violating their rights, each winning \$5 million plus attorneys' fees.²⁹⁰

In March 2000, Parks publicly released the LAPD's internal "Board of Inquiry" report, which reached the following conclusion about the scandal:

After careful consideration of the information developed during the Board of Inquiry's work, it is the Board's view that the Rampart corruption incident occurred because a few individuals decided to engage in blatant misconduct and, in some cases, criminal behavior...Even the finest corruption prevention system will not stop an individual from committing a crime if he or she has the will to do so.²⁹¹

In 2001, an Internal Affairs detective would assert that Parks restricted the scope of the investigation to bolster the perception that misconduct was limited to "a few individuals."²⁹² Indeed, subsequent independent investigations would fault the LAPD for failing to follow up on evidence suggesting that misconduct extended beyond the Rampart CRASH unit.²⁹³ Parks's decision in early 2000 to disband all CRASH units seemed to suggest that even he did not believe the department's problems were so limited.²⁹⁴

The Rampart CRASH scandal finally spurred the DOJ to leverage the "Law Enforcement Misconduct Statute" against the LAPD. In September 2000, in response to a threatened DOJ lawsuit, the city council agreed to enter a consent decree mandating reforms to LAPD supervision systems, use of force investigations, training, data collection, and numerous other

²⁸⁹ Domanick, *Blue*, 219.

²⁹⁰ Domanick, *Blue*, 219.

²⁹¹ Los Angeles Police Department, *Board of Inquiry into the Rampart Area Corruption Incident: Public Report* (2000), 331.

https://lapdonlinestrgeacc.blob.core.usgovcloudapi.net/lapdonlinemedia/2021/12/boi_pub.pdf.

²⁹² Michael Kirk and Peter J. Boyer, "L.A.P.D. Blues: Cover Up?"

²⁹³ Rampart Independent Review Panel, *Report*; Erwin Chemerinsky, *An Independent Analysis of the Los Angeles Police Department's Board of Inquiry Report on the Rampart Scandal* (Los Angeles Police Protective League, 2000); Blue Ribbon Rampart Review Panel, *Rampart Reconsidered: The Search for Real Reform Seven Years Later* (2006).

²⁹⁴ Matt Lait and Scott Glover, "Chief Parks Orders Current Anti-Gang Units Disbanded," *Los Angeles Times*, March 4, 2000, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-mar-04-mn-5159-story.html>.

policies and practices.²⁹⁵ Parks initially opposed the consent decree,²⁹⁶ but dropped his opposition once it became clear the city council had the necessary votes to force his hand.²⁹⁷ Federal monitoring of the decree began in June 2001, but a report from the independent monitor in February 2002 warned:

[T]here exists among some officers a lack of commitment to the Department's reform initiatives. For reform to succeed, all officers must take their obligations to the Consent Decree seriously. This direction must continue to be reinforced by all supervisors and senior ranking officers if true reform is to be achieved.²⁹⁸

Later that same year, the police commission declined to appoint Chief Parks to a second term.²⁹⁹ His replacement was Bill Bratton, a former member of the consent decree monitoring team looking to bolster his reputation as America's foremost police administrator and "turnaround" specialist.

²⁹⁵ *U.S. v. City of Los Angeles, CA, Board of Police Commissioners of the City of Los Angeles, and the Los Angeles Police Department*, Case No. 2:00-cv-11769-GAF-RC, Document 123. Consent Decree (filed June 15, 2001). <https://www.justice.gov/crt/file/826956/download>.

²⁹⁶ Tina Daunt, "Roirdan, Parks Oppose Consent Decree Dictating LAPD Reform," *Los Angeles Times*, June 1, 2000, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-jun-01-me-36255-story.html>.

²⁹⁷ Tina Daunt, "Roirdan, Parks Give in on LAPD Consent Decree," *Los Angeles Times*, September 16, 2000, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-sep-16-mn-21935-story.html>.

²⁹⁸ Kroll, Inc. *Report of the Independent Monitor for the Los Angeles Police Department: Second Quarterly Report* (February 15, 2002), 2.

²⁹⁹ Jill Leovy and Mitchell Landsberg, "Police Commission Rejects Parks," *Los Angeles Times*, April 10, 2002, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2002-apr-10-mn-37083-story.html>.

Chapter 6. Bratton and the “Reformed” LAPD

Appearing before the public and his officers for the first time as chief of the LAPD, William Bratton made clear that he believed the department had become too passive:

I want to talk very bluntly to you [LAPD officers]. The citizens of this city need you back in those streets. They don't need you smiling and waving. They need you out of those cars, on those corners, in those parks taking back those streets.¹

Bratton put the point even more forcefully in his first meeting with LAPD command staff.²

According to Charlie Beck, an LAPD captain who would later succeed Bratton as chief, Bratton excoriated the gathered leaders for failing to address rising crime in the city. He demanded that each member of the command staff submit a résumé and a description of their work in the department, which Beck and other leaders understood as a not-so-subtle message that they were re-applying for their own jobs. Most of the officers left the meeting stunned, but not Beck. As Beck saw it, Bratton was simply following the playbook for reform laid out in his autobiography, *Turnaround: How America's Top Cop Reversed the Crime Epidemic*.³ “Well, read his book, man,” Beck would later say. “We're in the first chapters of the book, that's where we're at. And those first chapters are not fun.”⁴

Bratton and the Policing Logic

Published shortly after Bratton departed as commissioner of the New York City Police Department (NYPD), *Turnaround* functions as both a history of Bratton's early career and a policing manifesto. Bratton included the book in “propaganda packages” he sent to police

¹ Megan Garvey, Richard Winton, and Andrew Blankstein, “Bratton Takes Reins at LAPD,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 29, 2002, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2002-oct-29-me-bratton29-story.html>.

² Joe Domanick, *Blue: The LAPD and the Battle to Redeem American Policing* (Simon and Schuster, 2015), 238-42.

³ William Bratton and Peter Knobler, *Turnaround: How America's Top Cop Reversed the Crime Epidemic* (Random House, 1998).

⁴ Domanick, *Blue*, 242.

commissioners and other influential decisionmakers during their search for a new LAPD chief.⁵ The book describes how *Dragnet*, the LAPD procedural produced by Chief Parker in the 1950s, convinced Bratton at an early age to become a police officer.⁶ After a voluntary stint in the military police during the Vietnam War,⁷ Bratton rose through the ranks of the Boston Police Department (BPD) before becoming the head of the Metro Boston Transit Association. He would later lead the Massachusetts Metropolitan Police, the New York City (NYC) Transit Police, and the BPD before being appointed commissioner of the NYPD in 1994 by newly elected Mayor Rudy Giuliani, who ran a campaign focused primarily on crime and quality of life issues.⁸ As head of the NYPD, Bratton became the celebrated face of a new brand of “proactive policing” that was credited by media outlets like *Time* magazine with contributing to the tremendous crime declines of the 1990s.⁹ When he took the job as chief of the LAPD in 2002, Bratton was looking to further burnish his legacy as America’s preeminent police leader and crime fighter.¹⁰

The policing philosophy espoused by Bratton in *Turnaround* exhibits remarkable parallels to Parker’s articulation of the LAPD policing logic in the 1950s. Like Parker, Bratton depicted the world as a battleground between the “good people” of the community and the “bad guys,” his preferred term for the dangerous class.¹¹ The “bad guys” possessed a distinctive “criminal mind” that distinguished them from the “law-abiding citizens” of the community.¹² According to Bratton, it is the responsibility of the police to wage a “war on crime” against the

⁵ Domanick, *Blue*, 228.

⁶ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 14.

⁷ Bratton states that as a result of his military tenure, he “basically missed the sixties.” This was not a problem for Bratton, who “disliked everything about the sixties...[and] believed in order and conformity and the need for everyone to abide by social norms.” Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 35-36.

⁸ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 192.

⁹ Richard Lacayo, “Law and Order,” *Time* 147, no. 3 (January 15, 1996): 51, <https://time.com/vault/issue/1996-01-15/spread/44/>. Bratton appeared on the cover of *Time* magazine’s January 15, 1996, issue, above the headline, “Finally, We’re Winning the War Against Crime. Here’s Why.” The article on Bratton and the NYPD’s success in reducing crime appears directly alongside another article entitled, “Now for the Bad News: A Teenage Time Bomb,” which describes DiIulio’s infamous prediction that America would soon be overrun by teenage “superpredators.” Richard Zoglin, “Now for the Bad News,” *Time* 147, no. 3 (January 15, 1996): 52-53.

¹⁰ Domanick, *Blue*, 224-25.

¹¹ See Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, xviii, xxviii-xxix, 154, 170, 178, 218, 220, 241-42.

¹² Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 218, 241, 312.

“bad guys.”¹³ Bratton’s discussion of “Operation Juggernaut,” one of his signature initiatives as head of the NYPD, is illustrative.¹⁴ In *Turnaround*, Bratton describes how the initiative was pitched to the mayor and his staff:

At the end [of the presentation], to leave them completely pumped up, Maple and Anemone’s planning group, The Swamp, produced a war movie—“Operation Juggernaut”—with scenes of drug use, a background of stirring music, the NYPD busting down doors to get at drug dens, a daisy chain of perps being led away, happy kids of all ethnicities playing in cleaned-up streets, men and women in NYPD windbreakers doing the job. We were going to wage war on drugs in New York and win.

Prior to Juggernaut, the city’s war on drugs had been our Vietnam; we were fighting a hit-and-run enemy and had gone in and made a lot of contact when we could, but we’d never held the ground. We didn’t have the tactics or the will to win. Juggernaut was the Normandy invasion. We were going to overwhelm our opponents, take the ground and never leave, and systematically take them out. The focus of our effort was going to be on the source of the problem: the drug dealers. We weren’t going after the users. We would systematically take out the low-level street dealer, the midlevel operator, and high-level kingpin. We would attack them consistently on all fronts at all times. If you were a drug dealer, you were a marked man.¹⁵

Like Parker, Bratton maintained that “fighting” crime is what police officers were best suited for—they were not equipped to act as social workers in the community.¹⁶ To some extent this was inevitable, given that, “[police departments] talk and preach service, but we hire adventurers...[who are] attracted by the action, the uniform, the power [*sic*].”¹⁷ Bratton was highly critical of the NYPD’s approach to community policing before he arrived because it was not focused on crime suppression, and thus officers were not equipped to implement it:

The community-policing plan that had been put into practice when I arrived focused on the beat cop...

In theory, that’s fine; beat cops are important in maintaining contact with the public and offering them a sense of security. They can identify the community’s concerns and sometimes prevent crime simply by their visibility...But the community-policing plan as it was originally focused was not going to work because there was no focus on crime. The connection between having more cops on the street and the crime rate falling was

¹³ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 194-195, 219, 241.

¹⁴ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 273-75.

¹⁵ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 273.

¹⁶ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, x, xviii, 95, 146, 151-54, 216, 277.

¹⁷ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 240.

implicit. There was no plan to deploy these officers in specifically hard-hit areas...and there were no concrete means by which they were supposed to address crime when they got there. They were simply supposed to go out on their beats and somehow improve their communities.

The new beat cop was a kid. No twenty-two-year-old kid from Long Island was going to come to Harlem, Hollis, the Upper East Side, or East New York and solve that neighborhood's problems. The city's problems were complex and difficult for the most experienced police and social service experts; these kids were unprepared and ill equipped to handle them, and it was unrealistic to expect they could.¹⁸

Bratton's conception of the dangerous class was fundamentally structured by his deep commitment to "broken windows" (BW) policing. Bratton became "convinced [] of the absolute wisdom" of BW theory based on his early career with the BPD in the 1970s: "Kelling articulated and put into beautiful words what I had found from experience. I supported what he wrote because I had already lived it."¹⁹ In his first interview with Mayor Giuliani about the NYPD job, Bratton began by "outlin[ing] [his] basic policing premises, beginning with the Broken Windows concept."²⁰ Giuliani, for his part, stated, "I chose Bill Bratton because he agreed with the Broken Windows theory."²¹ In *Turnaround*, Bratton delineated his understanding of BW theory:

As synopsised by Kelling, [BW theory's] three major points were:

1. Neighborhood disorder—drunks, panhandling, youth gangs, prostitution, and other urban incivilities—creates citizen fear.
2. Just as an unrepaired broken window can signal to people that nobody cares about a building and lead to more serious vandalism, *untended disorderly behavior can also signal that nobody cares about the community and lead to more serious disorder and crime* [emphasis added]. Such signals—untended property, disorderly persons, drunks, obstreperous youth, et cetera—both create fear in citizens and attract predators.
3. If police are to deal with disorder to reduce fear and crime, they must rely on citizens for legitimacy and assistance.²²

¹⁸ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 198-99.

¹⁹ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 138-39.

²⁰ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 192.

²¹ Eric Pooley, "One Good Apple," *Time* 147, no. 3 (January 15, 1996): 56.
<https://time.com/vault/issue/1996-01-15/spread/44/>.

²² Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 152. See also 87-89.

Thus, like Parker, Bratton portrayed even minor deviations from the dominant social order as inherently threatening. But whereas Parker cast such deviations as an embodiment of the leftist social forces undermining U.S. society,²³ Bratton's perspective was structured by the posited link between minor disorder and serious crime under BW theory. For Bratton and proponents of BW policing, "disorderly persons" pose a threat to the community because they invite "*more serious disorder and crime*" (emphasis added).

Bratton's commitment to BW policing is evident in countless initiatives implemented under his command. His first major initiative with the NYC Transit Police involved fare evasion "sweeps" in which groups of up to 10 officers conducted mass arrests of subway riders who failed to pay the \$1.15 fare.²⁴ The group of arrestees was often too large to efficiently process at a police station, so Bratton developed the "Bust Bus" to serve as a mobile arrest processing center.²⁵

According to Bratton, the initiative was a complete success:

Fewer weapons, fewer robberies and armed robberies, fewer murders, fewer perpetrators, fewer victims...We had reduced fare evasion...we had controlled disorder and achieved a decrease in crime. All from arresting people for a buck-fifteen crime. We were proving the Broken Windows theory.²⁶

Bratton's initial target as commissioner of the NYPD were the "squeegee people," whom he called "a living symbol of what was wrong with the city."²⁷ By "squeegee people," Bratton was referring to vagrants who approached cars at red lights and wiped windshields while requesting money. Reversing the NYPD's prior policy of issuing citations to these individuals, Bratton's NYPD began arresting them whenever they appeared on the street.²⁸ Bratton's discussion of the

²³ See, e.g., William H. Parker, *Parker on Police* (Charles C. Thomas, 1957), 29-32, 49.

²⁴ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 152-56.

²⁵ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 155.

²⁶ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 154, 156.

²⁷ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 212-14. Bratton described NYC in 1994 when he took over as commissioner as a "hellhole" (140; see also ix-x, xxiii-xxiv, 209-10).

²⁸ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 213-14.

upsides of this strategy highlights another benefit he saw in aggressive minor crime enforcement, distinct from the central principle of BW theory:

Of those [arrested], it was found that half had previous arrests for serious felonies: robbery, assault, burglary, larceny, or carrying a gun. Almost half had been arrested for drug offenses.²⁹

Under BW theory, the primary threat posed by minor disorder is the signal it sends to those contemplating more serious crime. Specifically, the presence of minor disorder creates the perception in *others* that more serious violent crime will go unaddressed. Bratton unquestionably embraced this principle of BW theory, but he also claimed that, in addition to shifting perceptions, aggressive minor crime enforcement was likely to sweep up potentially violent or otherwise serious criminals. Under Bratton's logic, serious criminals also committed more minor offenses, and therefore aggressively enforcing minor offenses was an adequate strategy for capturing these serious criminals. As Bratton put it, "It's the same concept as busting Al Capone for tax evasion."³⁰ "Quality-of-life enforcement" became the "linchpin strategy" of the NYPD's approach to youth violence,³¹ drug crime,³² and gun possession³³ under Bratton.³⁴

It is important to emphasize, however, that Bratton saw aggressive minor crime enforcement as a means to an end, not an end in and of itself. The ultimate goal, as posited by BW theory and embraced by Bratton, was the prevention of more serious crime. NYPD precinct leaders were judged not based on how many arrests were made, but on whether "murders,

²⁹ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 214.

³⁰ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 228.

³¹ The primary strategy was aggressive truancy enforcement against school-aged children. Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 225-226.

³² Bratton's NYPD baffled their federal law enforcement partners when they suggested "go[ing] after drug dealers with quality-of-life violations." Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 227.

³³ As Bratton acolyte Jack Maple described it, "Your open beer lets me check your ID. Now I can radio the precinct for outstanding warrants or parole violations. Maybe I bump against that bulge in your belt; with probable cause, I can frisk you." Pooley, "One Good Apple, 56. See also Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 229.

³⁴ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 228.

robberies, [and] felonious assaults” went up or down in their precinct.³⁵ Indeed, Bratton was almost maniacally focused on crime prevention:

Like most American police departments, for the last twenty-five years the NYPD had been content to focus on reacting to crime while accepting no responsibility for reducing, let alone preventing, it. Crime, the theory went, was caused by societal problems that were impervious to police intervention. That was the unchallenged conventional wisdom espoused by academics, sociologists, and criminologists. I intended to prove them wrong...I intended to create an organization whose goal and mission was to control and prevent crime—not just respond to it...

I believed that police could, in fact, be counted on to have a significant effect on crime. With effective leadership and management we could control behavior in the street, and by controlling behavior we could change behavior. If we could change behavior we could control crime.³⁶

The NYPD had people bluffed...They were good at responding to crime, they just weren't very good at preventing it. They weren't even trying to prevent it. They were cleaning up around it. My administration was going to commit itself to crime *prevention*.³⁷

[To the NYPD commissioner selection committee] I began by telling them, “We will win the war on crime. We *can* carry out the mayor's determination to dramatically reduce crime, disorder, and fear throughout New York. We will successfully move against street-level drug dealing within twelve months. We will reduce crime by 40% within three years.”³⁸

The creation of “Compstat,”³⁹ the Bratton administration's⁴⁰ signature policing innovation, was motivated by a desire to hold precinct leaders more accountable for crime prevention.⁴¹ Short for “computer-statistics meetings,” Compstat consisted of twice weekly gatherings of the entire NYPD command staff in which crime data and mapping were used to

³⁵ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 233.

³⁶ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, xi.

³⁷ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 209.

³⁸ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 194.

³⁹ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 233.

⁴⁰ Although Bratton is often credited for the development of Compstat, its true creator was Bratton's deputy commissioner Jack Maple. In 2014, the NYPD unveiled the newly constructed “Jack Maple CompStat Center,” a testament to Maple's singular role in Compstat's creation. Shawn Cohen, “Bratton Honors Legendary Cop Jack Maple in CompStat Center Opening,” *New York Post*, September 13, 2014, <https://nypost.com/2014/09/23/bratton-honors-legendary-cop-jack-maple-in-compstat-center-opening/>.

⁴¹ William Bratton and Sean W. Malinowski, “Police Performance Management in Practice: Taking COMPSTAT to the Next Level,” *Policing: A Journal of Policy and Practice* 2, no. 3 (2008): 261.

assess crime trends in each precinct. These meetings served two primary functions. First, crime maps were used to identify “crime clusters”⁴² where the NYPD could concentrate their “broken windows quality-of-life initiatives.”⁴³ As Bratton described, “It was like computerized fishing; you’d go where the blues [blue dots representing crime incidents] were running.”⁴⁴ Second, individual precinct leaders could be held accountable for crime reductions in their precincts. Data summaries of precinct-level violent crime “[with] significant increases or decreases [] printed in red.”⁴⁵ were distributed to everyone in the meeting, and precinct leaders who failed to address persistently high crime could expect a severe grilling from Bratton and his deputy commissioners.⁴⁶

Like Parker, Bratton vehemently insisted that police officers must act within the bounds of the law.⁴⁷ In his opening speech before NYPD officers as commissioner, he warned:

I expect you to be honest. I expect you to uphold the oath that you took on the first day. If you get into problems doing your job, and you’re doing it right, I’ll back you up. If you’re wrong, I’ll get you retrained and back to work. If you’re dirty or brutal, I’ll see to it that you’re arrested, you’re fired, and you’re put in jail.⁴⁸

It was the same tightrope that Chief Parker walked in the 1950s: Bratton offered extreme support for his officers, so long as they stayed within the boundaries of what he deemed to be acceptable police conduct.⁴⁹ But if they strayed beyond those boundaries, he made clear that he would seek to discipline them harshly:

⁴² “Hot spots” would become the preferred term for “crime clusters” in later academic literature on policing. See, e.g., David Weisburd, Cody W. Telep, and Brian A. Lawton, “Could Innovations in Policing Have Contributed to the New York City Crime Drop Even in a Period of Declining Police Strength?: The Case of Stop, Question and Frisk as a Hot Spots Policing Strategy,” *Justice Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (2014): 129-153.

⁴³ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 234; Bratton and Malinowski, “Police Performance,” 261.

⁴⁴ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 234.

⁴⁵ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 233.

⁴⁶ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 235-39. Bratton acknowledged that, “Sometimes the meetings got abrasive. But it was our business to try to save lives, and if a few egos were bruised, so be it.” Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 235.

⁴⁷ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 43, 89-90, 242-43.

⁴⁸ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, xviii.

⁴⁹ See Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, xiv, xix, xxii, 124, 175-76, 204-05.

[I]f you break the law, I'm going to fire you, I'm going to put you in jail. I've worked too long in this profession, and too many others have dedicated their lives, to have the profession dishonored by a few.

I would rather lose a hundred cases than have one cop arrested for perjury. If a cop tells the truth, that he made a mistake, and a criminal goes free, we still get that gun off the street, we still get those drugs off the street. We'll get another chance to catch the same bad guy next week.⁵⁰

Bratton inherited the NYPD in the midst of the Mollen Commission investigations, and six months into his tenure the commission issued a report concluding that, "police corruption is a serious problem confronting our City."⁵¹ Bratton responded by making the eradication of NYPD corruption one of his signature campaigns.⁵² Three months after the report was published, Bratton led a highly publicized⁵³ raid of the NYPD's 30th Precinct to arrest officers engaged in a corruption ring with striking similarities to the Rampart CRASH scandal.⁵⁴ Over thirty officers, the "Dirty Thirty" as they would later become known, were ultimately convicted of offenses related to robbing drug dealers and selling stolen drugs from the station house. At a press conference following the initial arrests, Bratton made a dramatic display of tossing the officers' badges in the trash and stating, "These shields...are tarnished. I am retiring these numbers so no cop will ever have to wear a disgraced number again."⁵⁵

In addition to policing within the law and remaining free from corruption, Bratton also insisted that officers must treat the public with "respect."⁵⁶ As he told his officers, "We're going to work very hard to take this city back, but all our good work can be undone by one cop who

⁵⁰ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 243.

⁵¹ Milton Mollen, Harold Baer, Jr., Herbert Evans, Roderick C. Lankler, and Harold R. Tyler, Jr., *The City of New York: Commission to Investigate Allegations of Police Corruption and the Anti-Corruption Procedures of the Police Department—Commission Report* (July 7, 1994), 1.

⁵² Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 249-55.

⁵³ Levitt, a NYC reporter, states that he and other reporters were "tipped off" about the raid from someone in the Bratton administration. He described the raid as "public relations gambol" for Bratton. Leonard Levitt, *NYPD Confidential: Power and Corruption in the Country's Greatest Police Force* (St. Martin's Press, 2009), 83.

⁵⁴ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 249-52; Levitt, *NYPD Confidential*, 78-95.

⁵⁵ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 252; Levitt, *NYPD Confidential*, 84.

⁵⁶ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, xviii, xxviii, 48, 137, 245-48, 311-12.

treats a citizen disrespectfully.”⁵⁷ Nevertheless, the “assertive”⁵⁸ policing that Bratton promoted did engender public blowback. In an otherwise positive profile, *Time* magazine acknowledged that civilian complaints of “increased force, abuse, and discourtesy” had risen 30% since Bratton took over the NYPD.⁵⁹ Bratton himself conceded that there were “criticisms...that in our effort to provide more proactive policing, we had encouraged more aggressive police behavior, particularly in minority communities.”⁶⁰ His response to these criticisms reveals an ambivalence that belies his professed commitment to “respectful” policing:

“Police brutality” is not a phrase I use lightly, yet we were being accused of exactly that.

It is important to define “police brutality.” We defined brutality as unnecessary behavior that caused broken bones, stitches, and internal injuries. But those were not the figures that had gone up significantly. What had risen were reports of police inappropriately pushing, shoving, sometimes only touching citizens [*sic*]. We were taking back the streets, and it wasn’t easy work. In the course of enforcing laws that had not been enforced for twenty-five years, we were being more proactive, we were engaging more people, and often they didn’t like it. We were dealing with murderers, rapists, muggers, and felons, the most violent people in society, as well as more than the usual number of thieves, drug addicts, and drunks. A lot of the “brutality” was reported by those people engaged in illegal behavior and looking for a bargaining chip...

But we were also coming into contact with law-abiding citizens, and it was those people we were also concerned with...Where some cops didn’t restrain themselves was their mouth. They tried to be too tough, they were impatient instead of courteous, they intimidated instead of simply carrying out their business [*sic*]. Sometimes the attitude led to more pushing and shoving than was necessary. Was there lack of respect by some police officers toward the public? Yes. Was there abuse? Yes. Was there more abuse than in previous years or administrations? I don’t believe so. The rise in complaints was commensurate with the rise in contact.⁶¹

What truly separated Bratton from Chief Parker was his approach to the community. For Parker and the LAPD under his command, the distinction between the community and the dangerous class was largely drawn along racial and ethnic lines. The community consisted of Los Angeles’s socially conservative White supermajority, and the dangerous class consisted of those

⁵⁷ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, xix.

⁵⁸ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 249.

⁵⁹ Pooley, “One Good Apple,” 56.

⁶⁰ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 291.

⁶¹ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 291.

viewed as a social threat by this White supermajority, including the city's growing non-White populations. Bratton, however, forcefully maintained that some non-White residents must be treated as part of the broader community deserving of police protection:

I felt it was important that the police department be understood by the black and other minority communities, particularly because the actions the mayor and I believed necessary could be misconstrued as putting down blacks or Hispanics. Our statistics told us clearly that a large percentage of the crime in New York was being perpetrated by blacks and Hispanics. That was a fact. But what also needed to be understood was that most of the victims were also blacks and Hispanics. They were the chief victims of crime and of police ineffectiveness in reducing crime. They had a right to be protected.⁶²

We changed the culture of permissiveness in New York that for 30 years had said, "Don't bother people with the little things." You know, they're poor, they're black, they're brown. It was a failure not to recognize that they were just like everyone else; they wanted peace, tranquility and a civil environment to bring their kids up in.⁶³

Bratton also differed from Parker in his approach to community influence over police practices. The alignment between Parker's LAPD and the city's White supermajority regarding the dangerous class and appropriate police tactics was reflexive and intuitive. Parker innately grasped what this "community" perceived as threatening, as well as the enforcement practices they were willing to accept to address this perceived "threat." Bratton, on the other hand, sought to formalize community influence over police practices through "community policing." Bratton pointed to community policing as the solution to "the challenge and dilemma of modern policing"—how to implement BW-style enforcement while maintaining community support:

How do we control our environment and at the same time train our people to work in the community's best interests? With its emphasis on treating people respectfully and as partners, on interacting with responsible community and religious leaders, and on understanding that even in the toughest neighborhoods most citizens are good and law-abiding, community policing offered the best hope for the department and for the city.⁶⁴

⁶² Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, xxviii.

⁶³ Joe Domanick, "The Reformer, on Honeymoon," *Los Angeles Times*, January 19, 2003, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2003-jan-19-tm-bratton3-story.html>.

⁶⁴ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 244.

Bratton gestured toward a lack of community support as one of the key factors behind the Rodney King uprisings in Los Angeles:

The police can't take back the streets that were effectively depoliced for twenty years without being assertive. However, if they are heavy-handed, if they don't get the consensus of the community, if they don't get the leadership and supervision of their own command staff that is so essential, then there is the potential for an explosion like that in Los Angeles.⁶⁵

In practice, “community policing” as implemented under Bratton was less about open dialogue than identifying constituencies who supported a BW-grounded approach to policing. As described in Bratton’s *Time* profile, “The Bratton version of community policing is to devise strategies that target specific criminal behavior.”⁶⁶ Typically, that meant collaborating with business owners and other elite residents to identify targets for BW initiatives, as when he developed a “a partnership among private institutions and the police and the neighborhoods” in support of aggressive minor crime enforcement⁶⁷ under the “Boston-Fenway program,” which he described as “one of the first community-policing initiatives in the nation, fifteen years before that term gained currency.”⁶⁸ But in addition to these elite residents, Bratton also insisted that the “good and law-abiding” community more broadly supported aggressive minor crime enforcement, either for its own sake or by virtue of its ability to reduce more serious crime:

[T]he public felt plagued by a constant invasion of little things, exactly the day-to-day annoyances that had been handled in previous eras by the beat cop.⁶⁹

There were [] 389 fewer murders in the City of New York in 1995 than there were in 1994. Of course, no one knows who those murder non-victims are; they're still alive. I'm sure if you ask the people who lived, plus their families and friends, whether the style of policing that saved their lives was worthwhile, they would say yes.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 249.

⁶⁶ Pooley, “One Good Apple,” 56.

⁶⁷ One of the chief initiatives of the program involved aggressively ticketing and towing cars parked on the street for long stretches of time. Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 94-95.

⁶⁸ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 90-100.

⁶⁹ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 94.

⁷⁰ Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 292. See also Pooley, “One Good Apple,” 56.

Through community policing, Bratton presented the possibility of cultivating intra-neighborhood divisions in non-White communities between “good and law-abiding” residents and a BW-defined dangerous class, garnering support from the former to wage “war” against the latter. By dividing non-White communities as means of bolstering support for aggressive enforcement, Bratton’s approach could fulfill the initial promise of “community policing” as it was first implemented in the LAPD under Chief Ed Davis in the form of the “Basic Car Plan.”

Ultimately, Bratton portrayed community policing, BW policing, and crime prevention as intimately interrelated.⁷¹ Community policing could be used to garner support for aggressive BW policing strategies, even in non-White communities historically hostile to the police. BW policing would produce crime reductions, which would bolster community support for the police and engender more collaborative community policing programs. A positive feedback loop would ensue, powerful enough to address the most deep-seated racial tensions of urban America. This is the message that Bratton delivers in the final pages of *Turnaround*:

Even as the police continue to accept responsibility for leading the way in finding new strategies to reduce crime and fear, two of America’s most intractable social issues are race and police behavior. Just as we attacked the crime and drug problems, I believe the police can take a leadership role in effectively resolving these issues that have traditionally been confrontational flash points and have contributed so much to the negative perception of police...

[I]f we reduce crime and disorder, while at the same time walking the streets in a respectful way, we can begin to help society deal with its racial tensions...

I am an optimist...I fully believe that with able police leadership, political will, well-trained cops, and community participation, we can take back American state by state, city by city, borough by borough, block by block. And we will win.⁷²

⁷¹ See Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 94-95.

⁷² Bratton and Knobler, *Turnaround*, 311-13.

The LAPD under Chief Bratton

Upon assuming leadership of the LAPD, Bratton immediately began to remold the department in accordance with this vision. As Beck and other LAPD leaders surmised, they would indeed be re-applying for their own jobs, and most would not make the cut. Within a few months, no assistant chiefs and only two deputy chiefs remained with the department. All others of equivalent rank were demoted or forced out.⁷³ Key members of Bratton's old command staff at the NYPD were brought in. George Kelling, one of the founders of BW theory, was hired to consult with LAPD captains on how to implement BW policing while avoiding backlash from non-White communities.⁷⁴ And arrests for minor crimes began to rise.

Figure 4 is reproduced from a report on the LAPD published by the Harvard Kennedy School of Government (HKS) in 2009, shortly before Bratton would leave the department.⁷⁵ The figure displays trends in LAPD arrests for relatively serious Part I crimes and more minor Part II crimes⁷⁶ from 1982 to 2007. At the close of 2002 when Bratton became chief, the department's annual arrest total was the lowest it had been in 20 years. Once Bratton assumed control, arrests for minor crimes rose every year until 2007, when they decreased only slightly. In contrast, arrests for more serious Part I crimes continued to decline during Bratton's tenure.

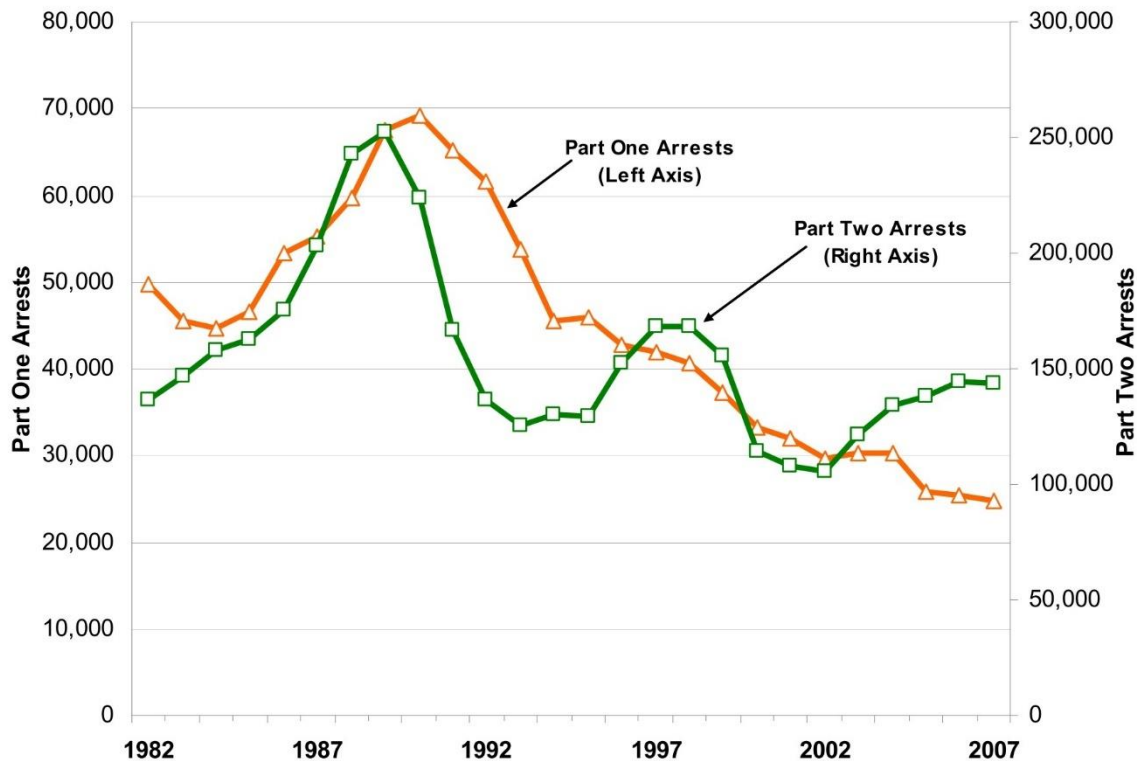
⁷³ Megan Garvey and Richard Winton, "Bratton Touts a Year of Progress at the LAPD," *Los Angeles Times*, October 28, 2003, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2003-oct-28-me-bratton28-story.html>.

⁷⁴ Domanick, *Blue*, 236-37. See also Forrest Stuart, *Down, Out & Under Arrest: Policing and Everyday Life in Skid Row* (University of Chicago Press, 2016), 70-73.

⁷⁵ Stone, Folgesong, and Cole, *Policing Los Angeles*, 28.

⁷⁶ The report adopts the FBI Uniform Crime Reports distinction between Part I and Part II crimes. See Stone, Folgesong, and Cole, *Policing Los Angeles*, 6. Part I crimes include "rape, robbery, homicide, aggravated assault, larceny, burglary, and auto theft." Part II crimes are all other crimes not included in Part I.

Figure 4. LAPD Annual Arrests from 1982-2007⁷⁷



Prendergast analyzed changes in arrest-to-crime ratios during this period and found that arrests per crime declined by 40% between 1998 and 2002, then increased by 40% between 2003 and 2006, with disproportionate increases in narcotics arrests relative to other crime types.⁷⁸ Thus, the increase in arrests under Bratton does not appear to have been driven by crime trends, but rather changes in discretionary arrest practices for minor offenses. Bratton instructed LAPD officers to “tak[e] back those streets,” and they appeared to be heeding the call with BW policing.

Part of this increase is likely attributable to a change in the civilian complaint process that coincided with Bratton’s appointment as chief.⁷⁹ Bratton proposed the change one week

⁷⁷ Reproduced from Stone, Folgesong, and Cole, *Policing Los Angeles*, 28, with permission of copyright holder.

⁷⁸ Canice Prendergast, “Drive and Wave’: The Response to LAPD Police Reforms After Rampart,” University of Chicago, Becker Friedman Institute for Economics (2021): Working Paper No. 2021-25, 19-20, <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3789061>.

⁷⁹ Prendergast, “Drive and Wave.’”

after he was sworn in, and it was adopted the same day by the police commission.⁸⁰ The new policy reversed Chief Parks's 1.28 system by granting station supervisors substantial authority to summarily close civilian complaints deemed frivolous or "non-disciplinary."⁸¹ Prendergast illustrates that this shift in policy was followed by a dramatic decrease in the percentage of "sustained" civilian complaints between 2002 and 2006.⁸² LAPD officers clearly noticed the shift. The percentage of officers who claimed that their career was negatively impacted by civilian complaints declined from over 55% in 1999 to under 25% in 2009.⁸³

More broadly, the endorsement of aggressive minor crime enforcement and the loosening of disciplinary procedures better aligned with the cultural attitudes of LAPD officers, who became an independent force of sabotage under Chief Williams a decade prior. The percentage of officers expressing confidence that "the Chief of Police is leading us in the right direction" increased from a dismal 18% in 1999 under Chief Parks to an astounding 85% in 2003, one year into Bratton's tenure.⁸⁴ The president of the LAPD officer union appeared to speak for his entire membership when he told the *Los Angeles Times*, "People outside this department just don't understand how dark the days had gotten here before [Bratton's] arrival. The man listens...that's rare for a chief."⁸⁵

But although Bratton appeared to "take the shackles off," as one officer put it to journalist Joe Domanick,⁸⁶ this did not result in significant changes in uses of force. Relatively

⁸⁰ Richard Winton and Andrew Blankstein, "Police Union, Chief Agree to Overhaul Complaint Process," *Los Angeles Times*, November 7, 2002, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2002-nov-07-me-brass7-story.html>.

⁸¹ This policy remains in place today. See Los Angeles Police Department, *LAPD Manual* (2023), sec. 810 et seq. <https://www.lapdonline.org/lapd-manual/>.

⁸² Prendergast, "Drive and Wave," 15-16.

⁸³ Stone, Folgesong, and Cole, *Policing Los Angeles*, 21.

⁸⁴ Wellford W. Wilms, *Police Reform by the Numbers: Will it Work?* (UCLA: Luskin School of Public Affairs, 2007), 134. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/05w4g04p>

⁸⁵ Megan Garvey and Richard Winton, "Bratton Touts a Year of Progress at the LAPD," *Los Angeles Times*, October 28, 2003, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2003-oct-28-me-bratton28-story.html>.

⁸⁶ Domanick, *Blue*, 240.

serious “categorical” uses of force⁸⁷ declined from 2004 to 2008, and less serious “non-categorical” uses of force remained level.⁸⁸ Changes in how the LAPD addressed use of force incidents were mandated as part of the consent decree (CD), and Bratton was committed to implementing the CD.⁸⁹ Bratton hired lawyer and active ACLU member Gerald Chaleff to serve as a bureau chief, second only to Bratton, tasked with ensuring departmental compliance.⁹⁰ One of the most important CD provisions related to use of force involved the creation of the “TEAMS II” system for tracking officers involved in a disproportionate number of force incidents or civilian complaints, enabling supervisors to identify and preemptively address “at-risk behavior.”⁹¹ In the 2009 final report from the CD monitor, the monitoring team stated that the implementation of the TEAMS II system was “among the City and Department’s greatest achievements,” and that “the system’s success within the Department, and the accompanying recognition from both law enforcement agencies and academia, sets TEAMS II as a model for law enforcement agencies.”⁹² Hence, while LAPD officers were seemingly less accountable to civilian complaints under Bratton, this enhanced disciplinary autonomy may have been counterbalanced by the department’s obligation to align LAPD practices with the mandates of the CD.

Although use of force remained level overall, LAPD practices were by no means transformed. The LAPD under Bratton still displayed the capacity for brutal and unconstitutional tactics, as evidenced by the May Day incident at MacArthur Park in 2007. On

⁸⁷ The LAPD distinguishes between “categorical” uses of force, which include any discharge of a firearm, dog bites, chokeholds, and any use of force that results in hospitalization or death, and all other “non-categorical” uses of force. See, e.g. Stone, Foglesong, and Cole, *Policing Los Angeles*, 34; Los Angeles Police Department, *Use of Force Year-End Review: 2022*.

⁸⁸ Stone, Foglesong, and Cole, *Policing Los Angeles*, 34, 36.

⁸⁹ Domanick, *Blue*, 234.

⁹⁰ Domanick, *Blue*, 232-33.

⁹¹ *U.S. v. City of Los Angeles, CA, Board of Police Commissioners of the City of Los Angeles, and the Los Angeles Police Department*, Case No. 2:00-cv-11769-GAF-RC, Document 123. Consent Decree (filed June 15, 2001), para. 39-54. <https://www.justice.gov/crt/file/826956/download>

⁹² Kröll, Inc., *Office of the Independent Monitor: Final Report* (June 11, 2009), 9. Document 399, Case No. 2:00-cv-11769-GAF-RC.

May 1, approximately 35,000 people gathered at a rally in support of citizenship for undocumented immigrants.⁹³ In what would later be described by the LAPD as “one of the first tactical deficiencies” of the afternoon, a group of motorcycle officers attempted to push the crowd off the street, and a small group of protesters responded by throwing rocks and bottles.⁹⁴ Members of the LAPD’s controversial Metro Division then formed a “skirmish line” to clear the park.⁹⁵ Before even a partial order to disperse was given,⁹⁶ Metro Division officers began using batons and rubber bullets to clear both protesters and media members who failed to flee the park in time.⁹⁷ By the end of the day, the department had employed “a total of 146 less-lethal impact munitions and over 100 uses of the baton” at the largely “peaceful” rally.⁹⁸

Bratton’s response to the May Day incident provides an exceptional example of how he managed to garner support both for himself and the department, despite the parallels between his brand of “proactive” policing and the hyper-aggressive LAPD enforcement practices of previous eras. Rather than closing ranks and protecting his officers from scrutiny, Bratton invited public criticism and was responsive to it. Bratton met with rally leaders on the night the incident and promised them a thorough investigation.⁹⁹ Within a week, Bratton offered a public apology and called the actions of Metro Division officers “indefensible,” a claim that drew a strong rebuke from the LAPD officer union.¹⁰⁰ The next day, Bratton demoted the deputy chief in charge at the scene and re-assigned the second ranking officer.¹⁰¹ All Metro Division officers

⁹³ Teresa Watanabe and Francisco Vara-Orta, “Small Turnout, Big Questions,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 2, 2007, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2007-may-02-me-march2-story.html>.

⁹⁴ Los Angeles Police Department, *Los Angeles Police Department Report to the Board of Police Commissioners: An Examination of May Day 2007* (October 9, 2007), 45.

⁹⁵ Los Angeles Police Department, *Examination of May Day*, 51.

⁹⁶ The LAPD report states that, “a complete dispersal order was never given,” and that the partial order was only delivered in English, not Spanish, which “likely resulted in a number of people who had no idea that they were being order to disperse.” Los Angeles Police Department, *Examination of May Day*, 50.

⁹⁷ Los Angeles Police Department, *Examination of May Day*, 45-52.

⁹⁸ Los Angeles Police Department, *Examination of May Day*, 9.

⁹⁹ Domanick, *Blue*, 305.

¹⁰⁰ Richard Winton, “Bratton Offers Deepest Apology,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 7, 2007, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2007-may-07-me-bratton7-story.html>.

¹⁰¹ Patrick McGreevy, “LAPD Shake-up Continues as Civilian Toll at Melee Grows,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 9, 2007, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2007-may-09-me-lapd9-story.html>.

were temporarily taken off duty and forced to undergo re-training;¹⁰² Bratton would later tell Domanick that he was attempting to “break the back of the culture of the department that existed in the Metropolitan Division.”¹⁰³ Following up on his promise to rally organizers, the department issued an internal investigative report described by the *Los Angeles Times* as “a scathing self-critique.”¹⁰⁴ One councilmember stated, “I’ve never seen any public official engage in the outreach over a crisis that Bill Bratton has [following the May Day incident].”¹⁰⁵ And the effort was largely successful. One month after the incident, the police commission reappointed Bratton to a second five-year term as chief, with commission president John Mack adding:

[Bratton] aggressively reached out to individuals, victims, immigrant rights organizations, rally participants, Latino leaders, members of the media who were victims, civil rights and civil liberties leaders and organizations...My fellow Commissioners and I carefully evaluated Chief Bratton’s response to the MacArthur Park incident, [*sic*] and unanimously agreed that he has met the test thus far.¹⁰⁶

It was Bratton’s style of “community policing” in action. Under Bratton, the LAPD became more receptive to community input on police practices than ever before. Bratton recognized that the LAPD’s aggressive, proactive enforcement practices under Gates were the primary driver behind the Rodney King uprising, and he acknowledged that things would have to be approached differently if the LAPD were to return to “fighting crime”:

I think what happened in Los Angeles was reflective of the screws being tightened too much. And it was the police who were effectively being rebelled against as much as anything else in society. That’s why this time we have to do it very differently. We have to do it with the spirit of community policing, the idea of partnership, working with ministers who will say to their congregations, “We want the police--that the police are going to come in and work on a targeted basis to reduce crime.” We’re going to have to have tactics and a philosophy that doesn’t appear that we’re just going back to the way

¹⁰² Winton, “Bratton Offers Deepest Apology.”

¹⁰³ Domanick, *Blue*, 305-06.

¹⁰⁴ Richard Winton and Duke Helfand, “LAPD Takes Blame for Park Melee,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 10, 2007, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2007-oct-10-me-melee10-story.html>.

¹⁰⁵ Patrick McGreevy and Matt Lait, “Bratton Faces his Toughest Test Yet,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 12, 2007, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2007-may-12-me-bratton12-story.html>.

¹⁰⁶ Los Angeles Police Department, “Police Commission Reappoints Chief Bratton to Second Term,” press release, June 19, 2007. <https://www.lapdonline.org/newsroom/police-commission-reappoints-chief-bratton-to-second-term/>

we were. At the same time, communities have to understand that for the police to get a handle on this, they're going to engage in stop and frisks. But there is a delicate balance that has to be maintained.¹⁰⁷

The above quote highlights two important aspects of “community policing” as it was implemented in the LAPD under Bratton. First, community policing referred to a “spirit...[or] idea,” not a specific program. As deputy chief Pat Gannon described:

There wasn't one program that was instituted throughout the department—not one department initiative that said here is how we are going to institute community policing in Los Angeles...As crime declined, community trust and confidence grew out in the field and within the department's divisions because we'd begun to do things differently—to develop relationships and partnerships within the community. That's what community policing is...

So, Bratton didn't give us a blueprint...He wanted us to just do it! Develop those relationships, use our imagination, do it legally, ethically, but do it. And as an organization that's what we started to do.¹⁰⁸

Second, this amorphous community policing mandate enabled significant discretion in the selection of community members who might provide meaningful input on LAPD practices. As Bratton suggests, officers generally sought partnerships with private organizations and influential community members who might say, “We want the police.”

Gascón and Roussell began observing meetings of a Community-Police Advisory Board (C-PAB) in south Los Angeles in the later stages of Bratton's tenure.¹⁰⁹ The C-PAB meetings were a legacy of the Rodney King uprising, a community policing program that pre-dated Bratton's arrival but was essentially abandoned under Chief Parks.¹¹⁰ Local C-PABs are comprised of LAPD-selected residents who meet regularly with neighborhood officers.¹¹¹ Gascón

¹⁰⁷ Joe Domanick, “The Reformer, on Honeymoon,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 19, 2003, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2003-jan-19-tm-bratton3-story.html>.

¹⁰⁸ Domanick, *Blue*, 242-43.

¹⁰⁹ Luis Daniel Gascón and Aaron Roussell, *The Limits of Community Policing: Civilian Power and Police Accountability in Black and Brown Los Angeles* (NYU Press, 2019).

¹¹⁰ See “Hahn Seeks Revival of LAPD Lead Officer Program,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 29, 2000, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2000-sep-29-me-28695-story.html>.

¹¹¹ Gascón and Roussell, *Limits of Community Policing*, 105-09.

and Roussell found that, “[C-PAB] meetings demonstrate that LAPD wishes to collaborate, but at the same time the Captain and SLOs favor LAPD’s traditional crime-fighting project. The Captains favor maintaining community order through problem-focused and data-driven enforcement strategies.”¹¹² They describe how community policing officers worked with business leaders¹¹³ and residents with pre-existing favorable opinions of the police¹¹⁴ to gather support for enforcement-focused solutions to community problems. The authors ultimately conclude that the meetings were a means by which “the state has used community discourse to justify the expansion of policing initiatives and police power...turn[ing] civilians into appendages of the state—their ‘eyes and ears’ on the street, as well as their ‘mouths’ during crises.”¹¹⁵

But it would be inaccurate to say that Bratton and the LAPD only made overtures to community members traditionally supportive of the department and BW-style enforcement. Soon after his appointment, Bratton met with ACLU leaders in the city and told them, “The consent decree’s intent is to reform the culture of this organization. Its culture can be reformed...what I’m looking for at the end of this five-year period [] is to have the federal government and, by extension, hopefully you—the ACLU—saying that the LAPD is no longer corrupt.”¹¹⁶ He hired Chaleff, an active ACLU member, as a second-in-command tasked with bringing the LAPD into compliance with the CD.¹¹⁷

Even more importantly, Bratton cultivated strong relationships with leaders in Los Angeles’s Black community, many of whom were aggrieved at seeing Chief Parks pushed out after a single term and feared that the department would regress to its past brutal practices.¹¹⁸

¹¹² Gascón and Roussell, *Limits of Community Policing*, 88.

¹¹³ Gascón and Roussell, *Limits of Community Policing*, 170-72.

¹¹⁴ Gascón and Roussell, *Limits of Community Policing*, 99-100.

¹¹⁵ Gascón and Roussell, *Limits of Community Policing*, 5-6.

¹¹⁶ Joe Domanick, “The Reformer, on Honeymoon,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 19, 2003, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2003-jan-19-tm-bratton3-story.html>.

¹¹⁷ Domanick, *Blue*, 232-35.

¹¹⁸ Earl Ofari Hutchinson, “Why Blacks Defend Chief Parks,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 7, 2002, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2002-feb-07-oe-hutchinson07-story.html>. Hutchinson asserts that one of the reasons Black leaders were so disappointed with Parks’ departure was the belief “that a black chief provides some insurance that police officers won’t brutalize the black community.”

Prior to his appointment, Bratton reached out to John Mack, “president of the Los Angeles Urban League and a lion of the black community for decades in its fights against police brutality.”¹¹⁹ Mack was particularly piqued by Parks’s ouster, but attorney Connie Rice describes how Bratton was able to win him over: “John Mack had seen anybody who opposed Parks as a personal enemy. Yet Bratton completely seduced Mack, who became one of Bratton’s biggest supporters. I call that skillful politics.”¹²⁰

It would be fair to say that Rice herself was also seduced. Rice was a prominent civil rights attorney who spent most of the 1990s litigating police brutality cases against the LAPD as a lawyer with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund.¹²¹ In early 2003, Bratton asked Rice and her non-profit, the Advance Project, to revisit the Rampart CRASH scandal and provide a more thorough, “Blue Ribbon” investigative report as an alternative to the truncated internal report released under Parks.¹²² Over the next two decades, continued collaboration would transform Rice from one of the LAPD’s fiercest critics into one of its strongest supporters.

It must be recognized that even through these outreach efforts, Bratton was cultivating support for his brand of proactive BW policing, rather than working in true partnership with the community. As Domanick describes:

The other values...[such as] helping build stronger neighborhoods through community policing partnerships, holding officers accountable for abusing the public, easing racial animosity between his cops and poor blacks and Hispanics—were all things Bratton publicly espoused. But ultimately they were ancillary problems to be unpacked and dealt with in the service of his one overriding imperative of reducing and preventing crime.¹²³

¹¹⁹ Domanick, *Blue*, 230. See also Joel Rubin, David Zahniser, and Sonali Kohli, “Civic Leader John Mack, a Prominent Voice on Los Angeles Police Reform, Dies at 81,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 22, 2018, <https://www.latimes.com/local/obituaries/la-me-ln-john-mack-obit-20180622-story.html>.

¹²⁰ Domanick, *Blue*, 230. Mack would go on to serve as president of the police commission for two years during Bratton’s tenure. It was he who, one month after the May Day incident, delivered the ringing endorsement of Bratton’s re-appointment to a second term as chief. Los Angeles Police Department, “Police Commission Reappoints Chief Bratton to Second Term,” press release, June 19, 2007. <https://www.lapdonline.org/newsroom/police-commission-reappoints-chief-bratton-to-second-term/>

¹²¹ Connie Rice, *Power Concedes Nothing: One Woman’s Quest for Social Justice in America, From the Courtroom to the Kill Zones* (Simon and Schuster, 2012), 92-214.

¹²² Rice, *Power Concedes Nothing*, 247-49; Blue Ribbon Rampart Review Panel, *Rampart Reconsidered: The Search for Real Reform Seven Years Later* (2006).

¹²³ Domanick, *Blue*, 281.

Even so, “community policing” under Bratton represented the LAPD’s first genuine attempt to expand the “community” tent by incorporating members of historically targeted non-White communities, even department critics. It was also the first time that these community members were given any meaningful opportunity to provide input on police practices, even within the narrow, BW-circumscribed scope of identifying police targets and appropriate tactics.¹²⁴

The LAPD’s attempts to deploy proactive BW policing while maintaining a broader base of community support are evident in many of the initiatives implemented under Bratton’s command. A month following his appointment, the LAPD began an aggressive enforcement campaign in Skid Row, the non-White¹²⁵ neighborhood in central Los Angeles that had long epitomized poverty and disorder in the city.¹²⁶ The initiative was spearheaded by Charlie Beck, then an LAPD captain who would later succeed Bratton as chief in 2009. Beck read *Turnaround* after Bratton was hired, and he had an idea of what Bratton wanted done in Skid Row.¹²⁷

Beck’s campaign involved working with three “neoliberal” mega-shelters in the neighborhood that “leveraged the provision of food and shelter as...a means to attract the poor into rehabilitative programs and a tool to hold them accountable for continued self-improvement.”¹²⁸ With food and shelter as the carrot, the LAPD became the stick. Officers, accompanied by representatives from the mega-shelters, began aggressively enforcing quality-of-life offenses¹²⁹ against residents on the streets unless they agreed to accept shelter services and abide by shelter rules, which included abstinence from drugs and alcohol, refraining from

¹²⁴ Although Chief Willie Williams said all the right things about community policing, he was denied re-appointment precisely because he failed to follow through.

¹²⁵ Stuart, who conducted ethnographic research on Skid Row from 2007 to 2012, states that, “it is reasonable to estimate [based on government data sources] that the vast majority of residents are male (80 percent) and black (70-75 percent), with Latinos (20 percent) and whites (8 percent) making up the next largest racial/ethnic categories.” Stuart, *Down, Out*, 24.

¹²⁶ Stuart, *Down, Out*, 5-7, 23-37.

¹²⁷ Domanick, *Blue*, 238, 245.

¹²⁸ Stuart, *Down, Out*, 62, 64.

¹²⁹ Such offenses included sleeping on the sidewalk between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m., drinking in public, jaywalking, and littering. “LAPD Says Streets are No Place Like Home,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 10, 2006, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2006-oct-10-me-qa10-story.html>.

“verbal abuse,” and participating in rehabilitation programs.¹³⁰ The campaign would later morph into the one of the department’s “Safer Cities Initiatives” in 2006, which entailed the deployment of an additional 50 officers to the 50-block neighborhood.¹³¹ The strategy would also be repackaged as “district policing” and implemented in the LAPD’s Harbor, Hollywood, and Rampart divisions.¹³²

In response to lawsuits filed by the ACLU, several court orders were issued declaring various aspects of the initiative unconstitutional.¹³³ Stuart found through his ethnographic research in Skid Row between 2007 and 2012 that many residents responded to the campaigns by becoming “copwise” and sequestering themselves indoors for long stretches to evade police contact, thereby hindering their social integration.¹³⁴ But the effort was nonetheless cited as an example of “community policing” in action: the LAPD working effectively with social service providers to employ “therapeutic” enforcement for the benefit of community residents.¹³⁵ As Stuart describes, “today’s Skid Row officers engage in preventive protection primarily on behalf of those living *within*, rather than *outside of*, Skid Row.”¹³⁶ As one officer told him, “I’m not a therapist. I don’t work for the department of housing. I’m not DPSS [Department of Public Social Services]. I’m a cop. I’m just doing what I can. At least when I arrest a guy I can get him into the system. At this point, that’s a victory.”¹³⁷

¹³⁰ Domanick, *Blue*, 246; Stuart, *Down, Out*, 37-39, 64-65.

¹³¹ Stuart, *Down, Out*, 73-77; Duke Helfand and Richard Winton, “Bratton Admits Skid Row Displacement,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 4, 2007, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2007-oct-04-me-skidrow4-story.html>.

¹³² Domanick, *Blue*, 260. See also Blue Ribbon Rampart Review Panel, *Rampart Reconsidered*, 11; Richard Winton, “He Said No to Naysayers,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 4, 2004, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2004-jun-04-me-onthelaw4-story.html>.

¹³³ David Rosenzweig and Eric Malnic, “Police Sweeps of Skid Row are Curbed,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 3, 2003, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2003-apr-03-me-sweeps3-story.html>; “LAPD Says Streets are No Place Like Home,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 10, 2006, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2006-oct-10-me-qa10-story.html>; Cara Mia DiMassa and Richard Winton, “LAPD Skid Row Searches Found Unconstitutional,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 25, 2007, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2007-apr-25-me-downtown25-story.html>.

¹³⁴ Stuart, *Down, Out*, 134-57.

¹³⁵ Domanick, *Blue*, 245-47; Stuart, *Down, Out*, 70-73, 84-98.

¹³⁶ Stuart, *Down, Out*, 87.

¹³⁷ Stuart, *Down, Out*, 91.

Beck employed a similar strategy when he assumed command of the Rampart Division. Included in the division's territory was MacArthur Park, which, according to Beck, was "literally a place that had been completely taken over by the criminal element."¹³⁸ Once again, Beck's officers used aggressive minor crime enforcement to rid the park of the "criminal element," including the enforcement of a city ordinance banning the use of shopping carts outside of supermarket parking lots.¹³⁹ But Beck also worked with community partners to bring "legitimate activities" back to the park.¹⁴⁰ Connie Rice, in her "Blue Ribbon" report on the Rampart CRASH scandal, cited Beck's work as evidence that the Rampart Division "had not merely recovered from the scandal but had done so by pioneering a promising community-backed, collaborative crime fighting model."¹⁴¹ Here is how the report described the department's efforts:

The Rampart team replaced intimidation tactics with problem solving joint ventures among the station, local businesses, community leaders and other city departments. They mobilized the community, and corporate donations and government grants allowed them to fill the park with cameras and monitoring equipment, state of the art lighting and playground equipment. Within six months, park crime plunged 45% and the park was clean to the point that families felt safe enough to dance to music in the dark under the new lights that awaited money to be turned on.¹⁴²

Bratton also cited the MacArthur Park turnaround as evidence that a transformed LAPD was using "strong community policing partnerships" to "return[] large tracts of the urban landscape to the law-abiding."¹⁴³

The balance between BW and community policing is also evident in the LAPD's approach to "gangs" in Los Angeles, which Bratton compared to the mafia in NYC and terrorist

¹³⁸ Bratton and Malinowski, "Police Performance Management," 259-60. See also Domanick, *Blue*, 261.

¹³⁹ Domanick, *Blue*, 263. See "Unauthorized Removal, Use or Possession of Shopping Carts," Los Angeles Municipal Code Sec. 41.45 (1965), https://codelibrary.amlegal.com/codes/los_angeles/latest/lamc/o-o-0-128850.

¹⁴⁰ Domanick, *Blue*, 261.

¹⁴¹ Blue Ribbon Rampart Review Panel, *Rampart Reconsidered*, 9.

¹⁴² Blue Ribbon Rampart Review Panel, *Rampart Reconsidered*, 10.

¹⁴³ Bratton and Malinowski, "Police Performance Management," 259-60.

organizations overseas.¹⁴⁴ The inflammatory rhetoric concerned some of Los Angeles's Black leaders, who requested a meeting with Mayor Hahn to discuss the issue. During the meeting, these leaders clarified that while they supported a targeted approach to gang enforcement, they feared that Bratton's rhetoric signaled a return to the LAPD's blanket enforcement practices in non-White communities. John Mack recounted that, "the admonishment I shared with [Bratton] and Mayor Hahn in my meetings with them is that it is very important that in the process of making the case against crime in South-Central the case is not over-made."¹⁴⁵ Tony Muhammad, a regional representative of the NOI, was more forthright: "We are not against the police. We are with the police...But how do you differentiate between a gang-banger and my brother?"¹⁴⁶ Councilman Villaraigosa, who would be elected mayor in 2005, later raised similar concerns: "The focus has to be violent gang members...Not every bald-headed kid is a threat to public safety."¹⁴⁷

Ultimately, however, Bratton's gang strategy was able to win the support of Los Angeles's political elites, including Mack, Villaraigosa, and Rice.¹⁴⁸ Part of this strategy involved the resuscitation of dedicated LAPD gang units reminiscent of the CRASH units disbanded after the Rampart scandal.¹⁴⁹ But as Villaraigosa relayed, these gang officers were employed in "coordinated, aggressive suppression strateg[ies] that target the worst offenders and the most violent gangs," not community-wide dragnet operations.¹⁵⁰ The department's "targeted"

¹⁴⁴ Charlie Leduff, "For Los Angeles's New Police Chief, a New World," *New York Times*, December 6, 2002, <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/12/06/us/for-los-angeles-s-new-police-chief-a-new-world.html>; Beth Shuster and Megan Garvey, "Black Leaders Caution Chief," *Los Angeles Times*, December 14, 2002, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2002-dec-14-me-bratton14-story.html>.

¹⁴⁵ Shuster and Garvey, "Black Leaders Caution Chief."

¹⁴⁶ Shuster and Garvey, "Black Leaders Caution Chief."

¹⁴⁷ Jill Leovy, "Anti-Gang Strategy is Revamped," *Los Angeles Times*, April 7, 2003, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2003-apr-07-me-gangs7-story.html>.

¹⁴⁸ Los Angeles Police Department, "Police Commission Reappoints Chief Bratton to Second Term," press release, June 19, 2007. <https://www.lapdonline.org/newsroom/police-commission-reappoints-chief-bratton-to-second-term/>; Joel Rubin and Duke Helfand, "Gang-Related Killings in L.A. Plunge 27%," *Los Angeles Times*, January 11, 2008, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2008-jan-11-me-gangs11-story.html>.

¹⁴⁹ Leovy, "Anti-Gang Strategy is Revamped."

¹⁵⁰ Patrick McGreevy and Richard Winton, "LAPD Targets City's Worst Gangs," *Los Angeles Times*, February 9, 2007, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2007-feb-09-me-gangs9-story.html>.

approach was also reflected in its use of “gang injunctions”—court orders against a specified list of suspected gang members prohibiting them from gathering with one another in public and being out between the hours of 10 p.m. and 5 a.m.¹⁵¹ For individuals listed in the injunction, these otherwise legal behaviors became criminal offenses punishable by up to six months in jail, thereby expanding the scope of minor crimes that could be enforced against them. By September 2008, there were 37 permanent injunctions in Los Angeles covering 57 designated gangs.¹⁵²

Muñiz describes how the implementation of these gang injunctions was facilitated by racialized gang narratives that played on existing perceptions of young Black and Latino men as a uniquely dangerous criminal threat.¹⁵³ The LAPD was able to cultivate key allies among residents with “wealth, education, visibility, and political connections,”¹⁵⁴ who shared these racialized fears of gang crime and supported the department’s enforcement efforts against young Black and Latino men.¹⁵⁵ Muñiz ultimately concludes that these “community partnerships” are evidence of how “community policing programs can be made compatible with the broken windows theory through an emphasis on informal social control, moral binaries, and the construction of an exclusive community...community is built through the formal and informal social control of an Other.”¹⁵⁶

Bratton also brought his data-driven strategy meetings, “Compstat,” to the LAPD, where they were refined into “COMPSTAT Plus.”¹⁵⁷ Fundamentally, these meetings functioned

¹⁵¹ City Attorney of Los Angeles, *Gang Injunction Guidelines* (2007), A1-A2, http://clkrep.lacity.org/onlinedocs/2008/08-0150-s1_misc_10-09-2008.pdf.

¹⁵² City Attorney of Los Angeles, *Important Facts to Know about Gang Injunctions* (2008). http://clkrep.lacity.org/onlinedocs/2008/08-0150-s1_misc_10-09-2008.pdf.

¹⁵³ Ana Muñiz, *Police, Power, and the Production of Racial Boundaries* (Rutgers University Press, 2015).

¹⁵⁴ Muñiz, *Police, Power*, 118.

¹⁵⁵ For an example of Bratton interacting with “priests, rabbis, union and neighborhood organizers” who expressed similar fears of gang crime in their neighborhoods of “South Los Angeles...Lincoln Heights...[and] Pico-Union,” see Joe Domanick, “The Reformer, on Honeymoon,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 19, 2003, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2003-jan-19-tm-bratton3-story.html>.

¹⁵⁶ Muñiz, *Police, Power*, 60.

¹⁵⁷ Bratton and Malinowski, “Police Performance Management,” 262.

precisely as they had in the NYPD. Crime data and mapping were used to target BW enforcement to specific “hot spot areas” in the city and to hold local supervisors responsible for crime reductions in their command areas.¹⁵⁸ As Bratton described it, “COMPSTAT Plus” was about developing “an all-encompassing crime-fighting blue print [*sic*]” for a given territory that would succeed in “reducing Part I Crimes.”¹⁵⁹ However, unlike the prior NYPD version of Compstat, “COMPSTAT Plus” involved incorporating “various stakeholders[,]...making them full partners in the process,” and developing “a universally accepted conclusion...about what the problems were [in the community].”¹⁶⁰ Hence, even the department’s data-driven enforcement strategies were inflected with the community policing “spirit.”

Each of the primary strategies implemented by the LAPD under Bratton—aggressive minor crime enforcement, “gang” member targeting, and data-driven “hot spot” policing—ensured that enforcement would remain disproportionately concentrated among Los Angeles’s non-White residents. Since the early 20th century, poverty and social disadvantage had been deliberately concentrated in the city’s segregated non-White neighborhoods, ensuring a higher concentration of the sorts of minor “disorder” implicated under BW theory. As Muñiz describes, fears of “gang” violence in the city were fundamentally undergirded by fears of young Black and Latino men, and this was precisely the group targeted by the LAPD’s gang enforcement strategies.¹⁶¹ More broadly, deep and enduring cultural narratives linking socioeconomic disadvantage and crime continued to reinforce perceptions that Los Angeles’s segregated non-White communities were overwhelmed with crime and violence. In 2004, Connie Rice argued that the “hot spots of underclass Los Angeles are well on the way” to becoming “failed ‘feral’

¹⁵⁸ Domanick, *Blue*, 281.

¹⁵⁹ Bratton and Malinowski, “Police Performance Management,” 262.

¹⁶⁰ Bratton and Malinowski, “Police Performance Management,” 262.

¹⁶¹ Muñiz cites research finding that, “[b]y 2003, 47% of African American men in Los Angeles County between the ages of 21 and 24 were on the Los Angeles County CalGang Database.” Muñiz, *Police, Power*, 34.

cities, engulfed by gangs, black markets, rapacious crime and dysfunction.”¹⁶² Racialized crime statistics, as they had since the late 19th century,¹⁶³ served as the objective, unbiased indicator of these crime problems in non-White neighborhoods.

Reports analyzing racial disparities in LAPD enforcement during this period are unanimous in support of the conclusion that Los Angeles’s non-White residents were disproportionately subject to stops, searches, arrests, and uses of force. The HKS report found that between 2004 and 2008, Black individuals made up over 20% of those stopped by the LAPD, over 30% of those arrested, over 30% of those subjected to “categorical” uses of force, and over 40% of those subjected to “non-categorical” uses of force, despite constituting less than 10% of the city’s population.¹⁶⁴ The report also found that between 2002 and 2007, complaints of racial profiling from Black residents increased by more than 75%.¹⁶⁵ In 2006, the city of Los Angeles released a report from Alpert and colleagues concluding that Blacks and Latinos were significantly more likely than Whites to be searched during LAPD investigative stops.¹⁶⁶ A report commissioned by the ACLU found the largest disparities, concluding that between 2003 and 2004, “the black stop rate [per 10,000 residents] [was] 3,400 stops higher than the white stop rate, and the Hispanic stop rate is almost 360 stops higher.”¹⁶⁷

Yet, during Bratton’s tenure as chief, the LAPD was able to overcome decades of nearly ceaseless controversy and win the support of prominent non-White residents and liberal

¹⁶² Constance L. Rice, “L.A.’s Budding Mogadishus,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 23, 2004, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2004-dec-23-oe-rice23-story.html>.

¹⁶³ See Khalil Gibran Muhammad, *The Condemnation of Blackness: Race, Crime, and the Making of Modern Urban America* (Harvard University Press, 2010); William H. Parker, *Parker on Police* (Charles C. Thomas, 1957), 161-63.

¹⁶⁴ Stone, Folgesong, and Cole, *Policing Los Angeles*, 38; U.S. Census Bureau, *QuickFacts: Los Angeles City, California*, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/losangelescitycalifornia/POP010210#POP010210>.

¹⁶⁵ Stone, Folgesong, and Cole, *Policing Los Angeles*, 62.

¹⁶⁶ Geoffrey P. Alpert *et al.*, *Pedestrian and Motor Vehicle Post-Stop Data Analysis Report* (City of Los Angeles, 2006), 4. https://lapdonlinestrgeacc.blob.core.usgovcloudapi.net/lapdonlinemedia/2021/12/ped_motor_veh_data_analysis_report.pdf.

¹⁶⁷ Ian Ayres and Jonathan Borowsky, *A Study of Racially Disparate Outcomes in the Los Angeles Police Department* (ACLU of Southern California, 2008), i. <https://www.aclusocal.org/en/racial-profiling-lapd-study-racially-disparate-outcomes-los-angeles-police-department>.

factions in the city. John Mack went from admonishing Bratton in 2002 for his inflammatory gang rhetoric to vigorously supporting Bratton's re-appointment in 2007 in the aftermath of the May Day incident.¹⁶⁸ In 2009, Mack commended Bratton for creating "a new department for the 21st century."¹⁶⁹ Religious leaders in south Los Angeles were also supportive of Bratton's reappointment, with one pastor noting, "[Bratton] has been willing to confront the issues of police brutality, racism and the need to increase the size of the force."¹⁷⁰ Connie Rice, whose career prior to Bratton's appointment consisted primarily of suing the LAPD for abuse and brutality, wrote an op-ed for the *Los Angeles Times* in 2006 entitled "This is not your grandpa's LAPD," in which she lauded Bratton as "a gifted and tenacious leader":

[Bratton] has a policing vision that is putting the LAPD on the right road. He envisions a force that has the resources to fight crime and ward off terrorism by winning trust in our poorest communities "through compassionate and constitutional" policing and by becoming a "catalyst for meaningful social change" and racial healing. Given the LAPD's history, this is a revolutionary vision.¹⁷¹

Upon Bratton's departure in 2009, Mayor Villaraigosa, a Democrat and the first Latino mayor of Los Angeles since the 19th century, stated that, "With Chief Bratton at the helm, the Los Angeles Police Department transformed itself into a beacon of progress and professionalism, a department seen as a partner, not an adversary, no longer bound by the misdeeds of the past."¹⁷² Even the ACLU, which had successfully sued the department for unconstitutional practices during the Skid Row crackdowns *and* published a report highly critical of racial disparities in

¹⁶⁸ Los Angeles Police Department, "Police Commission Reappoints Chief Bratton to Second Term," press release, June 19, 2007. <https://www.lapdonline.org/newsroom/police-commission-reappoints-chief-bratton-to-second-term/>.

¹⁶⁹ Joel Rubin, "William Bratton Announces He Will Resign as LAPD Chief," *Los Angeles Times*, August 6, 2009, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2009-aug-06-me-bratton6-story.html>.

¹⁷⁰ Patrick McGreevy, "Bratton Gets Support for a New Term," *Los Angeles Times*, May 1, 2007, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2007-may-01-me-bratton1-story.html>.

¹⁷¹ Constance L. Rice, "This Is Not Your Grandpa's LAPD," *Los Angeles Times*, July 16, 2006, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2006-jul-16-op-rice16-story.html>. See also Joe Domanick, "An LAPD Critic Comes in From the Cold [2012 Interview of Connie Rice]," *The Crime Report*, January 18, 2012, <https://thecrimereport.org/2012/01/18/2012-01-an-lapd-critic-comes-in-from-the-cold/>.

¹⁷² Rubin, "Bratton Announces He Will Resign."

LAPD enforcement, nonetheless offered Bratton effusive praise upon his resignation. The executive director of the ACLU of Southern California called Bratton's departure "a great loss for the city of Los Angeles," adding that:

[Bratton] believes in community policing, and he restored the confidence of the community in the LAPD. I watched three prior police chiefs run the LAPD, and the reality is that progress was not made until Chief Bratton became chief and imposed his will and values on the department.¹⁷³

It was not just the social and political elite of Los Angeles whose views on the LAPD seemed to shift during this period. Polling data suggest that non-White residents across Los Angeles began to view the department in a more favorable light. In 2000, amid the Rampart CRASH scandal, a *Los Angeles Times* poll found that 83% of Black respondents believed police brutality was very (47%) or fairly (36%) common, and they disapproved of the LAPD's performance by a margin slightly larger than 3 to 1 (55% to 18%).¹⁷⁴ The results were virtually identical to a poll administered by the *Times* the week following the Rodney King beating.¹⁷⁵ But by June 2009, two months before Bratton would resign, views of the LAPD were markedly more favorable. An overwhelming majority of Black (68%) and Latino (76%) poll respondents expressed approval of the LAPD's performance.¹⁷⁶ The HKS report found similar results, with over 70% of Black respondents and over 80% of Latino respondents rating the LAPD's performance as good or excellent.¹⁷⁷ Polling data from the LMU Center for the Study of Los Angeles found that a smaller but still substantial majority of Black respondents (59%) and

¹⁷³ Rubin, "Bratton Announces He Will Resign."

¹⁷⁴ Elizabeth Armet, "Poll Analysis: Rampart Scandal Affecting the State of the City," *Los Angeles Times*, April 9, 2000, <https://www.latimes.com/local/la-000409lapoll-440pa1an-htmlstory.html>.

¹⁷⁵ See Ted Rohrlich, "The Times Poll: Majority Says Brutality by L.A. Police is Commonplace," *Los Angeles Times*, March 10, 1991, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1991-03-10-mn-356-story.html>.

¹⁷⁶ Joel Rubin, "Approval of LAPD Spans Race, Ethnicity," *Los Angeles Times*, June 22, 2009, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2009-jun-22-me-poll22-story.html>.

¹⁷⁷ Stone, Folgesong, and Cole, *Policing Los Angeles*, 45.

Latino respondents (69.5%) in 2008 approved of Bratton's performance as chief.¹⁷⁸ Less than two decades after the Rodney King uprising and less than one decade after the biggest corruption scandal since the pre-Parker era, the LAPD had regained a significant majority of support throughout the city.

Coinciding with this shift in public opinion was a shift in officer demographics. Lack of diversity among LAPD officers had been a persistent issue throughout the department's entire history. In 1980, the department was forced into a consent decree mandating quotas for the hiring of non-White officers,¹⁷⁹ but Whites were still over-represented among LAPD officers relative to the city population at the turn of the 21st century. Between 2000 and 2010, however, White officers declined from 46% to 36% of the LAPD force, and Latino officers rose from 33% to 42%, more closely approximating the Latino population percentage for the city (48.4%).¹⁸⁰ Black officers comprised 12% of the LAPD officer corps, exceeding the Black population percentage for the city (8.6%). The increased diversity of LAPD officers was cited as even further evidence that the department under Bratton was a changed organization.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Thomas and Dorothy Leavey Center for the Study of Los Angeles, *Residents' Views on LAPD and Its Policies* (Loyola Marymount University, 2018), 13.

<https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1020&context=studyla-databriefs>

¹⁷⁹ Janet Clayton, "U.S. Request to End Quotas in Police, Fire Hiring Won't Affect L.A., Officials Say," *Los Angeles Times*, April 4, 1985, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1985-04-04-me-19670-story.html>.

¹⁸⁰ Los Angeles Police Department, *Response to Council Motion File No. 20-1600: Comparative Analysis on Los Angeles Police Department Diversity and Hiring* (April 27, 2021),

http://www.lapdpolicecom.lacity.org/052521/BPC_21-099.pdf; U.S. Census Bureau, *QuickFacts: Los Angeles City, California*,

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/losangelescitycalifornia/POP010210#POP010210>.

¹⁸¹ Stone, Folgesong, and Cole, *Policing Los Angeles*, 13-18; Tim Ruten, "Change Has Come to the LAPD Too," *Los Angeles Times*, January 21, 2009, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2009-jan-21-oe-ruten21-story.html>.

Chapter 7. Bratton's Legacy: The LAPD to Today

In June 2009, the CD monitor issued a final report concluding that the LAPD was in “substantial compliance” with the mandates of the CD and recommending that the department be released from federal oversight.¹ District Court Judge Feess agreed, and the following month he approved a motion to transfer oversight of the CD’s remaining provisions to the city police commission.² In issuing the order, Judge Feess summarized the department’s transition over the previous eight years:

When the decree was entered, LAPD was a troubled department whose reputation had been severely damaged by a series of crises...LAPD has become the national and international policing standard for activities that range from audits to handling of the mentally ill to many aspects of training to risk assessment of police officers and more.³

It was a formal declaration that the LAPD no longer engaged in a “pattern or practice” of constitutional rights violations—perhaps the first time in history the department might plausibly claim that as truth. Bratton, taking the order as a symbolic message that his mission to reform the department was accomplished,⁴ announced his resignation three weeks later.⁵

Charlie Beck was Bratton’s hand-picked replacement.⁶ To most observers, it was an obvious choice. Beck was the architect behind both the Skid Row crackdowns and the celebrated MacArthur Park turnaround, both models of Bratton’s approach to policing. Among insiders,

¹ Kroll, Inc., *Office of the Independent Monitor: Final Report* (June 11, 2009), 7. Document 399, Case No. 2:00-cv-11769-GAF-RC.

² *U.S. v. City of Los Angeles, CA, Board of Police Commissioners of the City of Los Angeles, and the Los Angeles Police Department*, Case No. 2:00-cv-11769-GAF-RC, Document 417. Order Re: Transition Agreement (filed July 17, 2009).

https://www.justice.gov/sites/default/files/crt/legacy/2010/12/15/US_v_LosAngeles_TA-Order_071709.pdf.

³ Joel Rubin, “U.S. Ends Oversight of L.A. Police,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 18, 2009, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2009-jul-18-me-consent-decree18-story.html>.

⁴ Joe Domanick, *Blue: The LAPD and the Battle to Redeem American Policing* (Simon and Schuster, 2015), 313-14.

⁵ Joel Rubin, “William Bratton Announces He Will Resign as LAPD Chief,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 6, 2009, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2009-aug-06-me-bratton6-story.html>.

⁶ Joel Rubin and Phil Willon, “Behind Closed Doors, Police Chief Pick Was No Shoo-In: Mayor’s Own Staff in the Dark Till the Last Minute,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 4, 2009, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2009-nov-04-me-chief-decision4-story.html>.

including Connie Rice, Beck was “known for balancing a tough stance on crime with the need to build ties with communities,” and he was viewed as “the best person to continue with the reforms and progress made under Bratton.”⁷ In November 2009, the city council unanimously approved Beck’s appointment as chief during what one councilmember described as a “love fest.”⁸ “[With] previous appointments,” the councilmember stated, “there seemed to be elements in the community that had issues with the nominee. I can’t think of any other situation where a chief has been welcomed so much.” In a statement released upon his appointment, Beck told the city and his officers, “I want to convert former Chief Bratton's legacy into our Department's destiny.”⁹

But in some ways, Beck’s approach began to depart from his mentor’s even in his earliest years as chief. In what was described by the *Los Angeles Times* as “L.A.’s first police crisis since Bratton’s retirement,” an LAPD officer shot and killed a “Guatemalan day laborer” in the densely populated Latino immigrant neighborhood of Westlake in September 2010, triggering several days of protests among community residents.¹⁰ In his assessment of the community’s outrage, Beck acknowledged that the LAPD’s policy of aggressively ticketing street vendors in the neighborhood played a contributing role:

This is a community of entry-level immigrants having an extremely difficult time making a living... Many depend on day-laboring, which has been severely impacted by the economy in a huge way, and this has forced them into street vending. This is not just an issue of the Los Angeles Police Department and a shooting; this is much more about the greater issue of survival.¹¹

⁷ Rubin and Willon, “Behind Closed Doors.” See also Cindy Chang, “Retiring After More Than 40 Years, LAPD Chief Charlie Beck Has Evolved with the Department He Leads,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 24, 2018, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-beck-profile-20180624-story.html>.

⁸ Joel Rubin, “Council Confirms Beck as Chief,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 18, 2009, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2009-nov-18-me-beck18-story.html>.

⁹ Charles Beck, “Message from the Chief,” *Los Angeles Community Policing*, November 18, 2009, <http://www.lacp.org/2009-Articles-Main/111809-ChiefCharlieBeckAffirmed.htm>.

¹⁰ Joe Domanick, “Chief Beck’s Challenge,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 24, 2010, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2010-sep-24-la-oe-domanick-beck-20100924-story.html>; Ruben Vives, “Man Shot by LAPD Officer in Westlake Apparently Went by Several Names,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 11, 2010, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2010-sep-11-la-me-0912-lapd-shooting-name-20100912-story.html>.

¹¹ Domanick, “Chief Beck’s Challenge.”

It was the first indication that Beck's commitment to BW policing might not be as strong as his predecessor's. Early in his career, Beck served in CRASH units throughout south Los Angeles under Chief Gates,¹² but he soured early on the aggressive suppression strategies that were the department's calling card during that period. As Beck would later tell the *Los Angeles Times*, "I saw it not working, but I didn't have the maturity yet as a person or professionally to recognize it and to understand why...I figured there had to be a way to be an effective police officer without alienating the people you were policing."¹³ Aggressive minor crime enforcement was a cornerstone of the strategies Beck developed for the LAPD under Bratton. But Beck would later emphasize that minor crime enforcement was only employed in service of the larger goal of reducing serious crime, and that aggressive minor crime enforcement that did not serve this goal was counterproductive:

Everybody interprets "broken windows" and "community policing" in their own way. There are people who believe they contradict each other. I'm not one of those. I think they complement each other. But it doesn't mean enforcing all minor crimes; it means enforcing the ones that are precursors to more serious crimes...I want to make sure people understand this is a department that believes in community policing and building trust.¹⁴

Like Bratton, Beck portrayed community policing and BW policing as fundamentally compatible and complementary. But whereas Bratton approached community policing as simply a means of garnering support for BW policing, Beck seemed to flip the emphasis. For Beck, maintaining strong relationships with the community was primary, even if that meant at times scaling back from aggressive BW enforcement.¹⁵

¹² Domanick, *Blue*, 16-17.

¹³ Joel Rubin, "An Epiphany, and an Evolving Philosophy of Policing," *Los Angeles Times*, November 15, 2009. See also Cindy Chang, "Retiring After More Than 40 Years, LAPD Chief Charlie Beck has Evolved with the Department He Leads," *Los Angeles Times*, June 24, 2018, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-beck-profile-20180624-story.html>.

¹⁴ Patt Morrison, "Chief Charlie Beck Talks About Perfecting the LAPD," *Los Angeles Times*, September 2, 2014, <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-morrison-chief-charlie-beck-20140903-column.html>.

¹⁵ Unlike Bratton, Beck had been a police officer in the context of an uprising motivated by police violence, and his stance on the relative importance of community policing and BW policing may have been shaped

This is particularly evident in the development of what would become Beck's signature initiative with the LAPD: the Community Safety Partnership (CSP).¹⁶ In 2011, the LAPD partnered with Rice's organization, the Advancement Project, and the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) to implement the first CSP programs in four public housing units in Los Angeles, three in Watts and one in Boyle Heights.¹⁷ At first blush, the program appeared to be another vaguely structured community policing initiative like those implemented under Bratton. An initial evaluation from the Urban Institute stated that, "CSP was designed to reduce gang influence, improve residents' perceptions of safety, help youth access resources and programming, and strengthen police-community relations and community trust in police."¹⁸ In a report for the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, Rice and Lee described the "key guiding principle" of the CSP program as "relationship-based policing...a law enforcement practice that relies on community trust and partnership, [sic] and authentic police legitimacy based on procedural justice to achieve community safety."¹⁹

What set the CSP program apart was the explicit de-emphasis on arrests. In a co-written op-ed, Beck and Rice described the typical work of a CSP officer:

by this experience. Speaking about the uprising, Beck would later state, "The whole decade of the '90s was devastating to the city of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Police Department...That really formed my beliefs in policing. I swore to myself that if I ever got in a position of significant authority, that I would never let this happen again." Kate Mather and Cindy Chang, "L.A. Police Chief Charlie Beck Announces Early Retirement, Ending Eight-Year Tenure as Head of the LAPD," *Los Angeles Times*, January 18, 2018, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-lapd-chief-beck-20180119-story.html>. See also Domanick, *Blue*, 273.

¹⁶ See, e.g., Cindy Chang, "Retiring After More Than 40 Years, LAPD Chief Charlie Beck has Evolved with the Department He Leads," *Los Angeles Times*, June 24, 2018, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-beck-profile-20180624-story.html>.

¹⁷ UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, *Evaluation of the LAPD Community Safety Partnership* (2020), 17. <https://ucla.app.box.com/s/gw60fjldwo9fjb3s4k3fh8ecyh5wz8s>

¹⁸ Lily Robin *et al.*, *The Los Angeles Community Safety Partnership: 2019 Assessment* (Urban Institute, 2019), 1. https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/101827/the_los_angeles_community_safety_partnership_2019_assessment.pdf

¹⁹ Connie Rice and Susan K. Lee, *Relationship-Based Policing Achieving Safety in Watts: A Report for the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing* (Advancement Project, 2015), 5. <https://advancementprojectca.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/imce/President%27s%20Task%20Force%20CSP%20Policy%20Brief%20FINAL%2002-27-15.pdf>

[O]fficers call out residents' names in greeting and patrol on foot with gang intervention specialists. The officers earn trust by participating in a range of neighborhood activities — everything from buying bifocals for older people to helping start a farmers' market and sports leagues for kids. The unit's officers are not promoted for making arrests, but for demonstrating how they diverted a kid from jail and increased trust. Above all, they do not view residents of high-crime areas as potential suspects or deportees but as partners in public safety.²⁰

Preventing violent crime and “bring[ing] safety to gang-impacted hot zones” remained the central goal of the CSP program.²¹ But the program was undergirded by the notion that reductions in violent crime could be better achieved by developing closer relationships between the police and community, and that a “suppression-only (e.g. arrests) approach” undermines the possibility of forming these close relationships in historically targeted non-White neighborhoods.²²

Hence, in touting the benefits of the program, Rice and Lee emphasized that, “in addition to reducing violent crime by more than 50% in all three Watts housing developments, the number of arrests have also declined by 50%.”²³ LAPD officer Emada Tingirides, who played a key role in the development of the CSP program,²⁴ asserted that for each of the four homicides that occurred in CSP territories between 2011 and 2014, “an arrest was made within two weeks thanks to help from the community.”²⁵ Of course, enforcement remained central to the LAPD's strategy in CSP housing developments, as an evaluation from the UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs attested:

²⁰ Charlie Beck and Connie Rice, “How Community Policing Can Work,” *The New York Times*, August 12, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/12/opinion/how-community-policing-can-work.html>. See also Connie Rice, “Op-Ed: Reappoint Charlie Beck as Police Chief,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 11, 2014, <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-rice-beck-lapd-20140812-story.html>.

²¹ UCLA Luskin, *Community Safety Partnership*, 22. See also Robin *et al.*, *Community Safety Partnership*, 1; Rice and Lee, *Relationship-Based Policing*, 3-4; Sydney Kahmann, Erin Hartman, Jorja Leap, and P. Jeffrey Brantingham, “Impact Evaluation of the LAPD Community Safety Partnership,” *The Annals of Applied Statistics* 16, no. 5 (2022): 1215-35.

²² Rice and Lee, *Relationship-Based Policing*, 5.

²³ Rice and Lee, *Relationship-Based Policing*, 5.

²⁴ UCLA Luskin, *Community Safety Partnership*, 17.

²⁵ Nicole Santa Cruz, “Jordan Downs in Watts Marks Three Years with a Homicide,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 28, 2014, <https://homicide.latimes.com/post/jordan-downs-watts-three-years-without-homicide/>.

It is important to understand that while CSP officers avoid traditional suppression strategies that destroy trust, they do not hesitate to arrest individuals for violent or threatening behavior. Additionally, when conditions grow too dangerous, CSP officers do not hesitate to enlist more traditional law enforcement strategies and suppression to stabilize the CSP site.²⁶

But, as one CSP officer put it, arrests were regarded as a “last resort,” and the wellspring of public support generated through a broader network of police-community relationships made it easier to conduct arrests when CSP officers deemed it necessary:

If we see a suspect, we are not refrained from arresting them, but it is about how we do it. Because we have the trust of the community, we could arrest violent suspects with little community uproar. If the Gang Unit would come in, all [residents] would come out. If they saw us present, they felt better. I would talk to key stakeholders afterwards. Because they knew us, they trusted what I said.²⁷

The LAPD and the Ferguson Protests of 2014

The CSP model took on even greater significance in 2014 following the police killing of Michael Brown in Ferguson, MO, and the subsequent mass protests against police violence that erupted across the country. In Los Angeles, the protests and ensuing activism became a referendum on the LAPD’s progress (or lack thereof) in addressing community concerns about police practices.²⁸ For three days following the grand jury decision not to indict the officer who killed Brown, protesters in Los Angeles shut down traffic on major thoroughfares throughout downtown, including the 101 freeway, and over 300 were arrested.²⁹ The Black Lives Matter

²⁶ UCLA Luskin, *Community Safety Partnership*, 23.

²⁷ UCLA Luskin, *Community Safety Partnership*, 52.

²⁸ See Angel Jennings, Kate Mather, Joe Mozingo, Ruben Vives, and Richard Winton, “LAPD is More Diverse, but Distrust in the Community Remains,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 28, 2015, <https://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-lapd-race-20150329-story.html>.

²⁹ Tre’vell Anderson, Taylor Goldenstein, Samantha Masunaga, and Brittny Mejia, “More Than 300 Arrested in 3 Days of Ferguson Protests in L.A.,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 27, 2014, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-more-than-300-arrested-in-la-ferguson-protests-20141127-story.html>.

(BLM) organization, formed in Los Angeles in the wake of George Zimmerman’s acquittal,³⁰ became an activist fixture across the city, “camp[ing] outside police headquarters and regularly disrupt[ing] the city Police Commission’s weekly meetings, turning normally dry public hearings into hours-long confrontations that frequently devolve into officers clearing demonstrators from the room.”³¹ In July 2016, BLM organizers began a City Hall “sit-in” to protest LAPD killings, vowing to remain camped out in front of the building until Chief Beck was fired.³² The sit-in lasted at least 50 days.³³

The LAPD continued to receive support from traditional mainstays such as Mack, Rice, and religious leaders in south Los Angeles, and Mayor Garcetti resisted calls to remove Beck as chief.³⁴ In fact, the same weekend that BLM’s City Hall sit-in began, Beck held a press conference with rappers Snoop Dogg and The Game announcing a joint effort to “unite [local gangs] to end violence in communities of color.”³⁵ But it was clear in the aftermath of Ferguson that, despite the considerable goodwill generated by the department over the previous dozen years, a significant and vocal segment of the Los Angeles community continued to believe that

³⁰ Andrea Castillo, “How Two Black Women in L.A. Helped Build Black Lives Matter From Hashtag to Global Movement,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 21, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-06-21/black-lives-matter-los-angeles-patrice-cullors-melina-abdullah>.

³¹ Kate Mather, Peter Jamison, and Angel Jennings, “L.A. Leaders Struggle with Disruptive ‘Black Lives Matter’ protests,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 20, 2015, <https://www.latimes.com/local/cityhall/la-me-garcetti-black-lives-20151021-story.html>. See also Shelby Grad, “How Black Lives Matter Became a Thorn in the Side of L.A. Leaders,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 20, 2015, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-how-black-lives-matter-became-a-thorn-in-the-side-for-l-a-leaders-story-so-far-20151020-htmllstory.html>.

³² James Queally, “Black Lives Matter Demonstrators Rope Off LAPD HQ with Crime Scene Tape After City Hall Sit-In,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 13, 2016, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-blm-city-hall-20160713-snap-story.html>; Lovell Estell III, “Occupy City Hall: Black Lives Matter L.A. Protest Continues,” *Capital & Main*, August 10, 2016, <https://capitalandmain.com/occupy-city-hall-black-lives-matter-los-angeles-protest-continues-0810>.

³³ See “50 Days, 19 Photographs of Black Lives Matter L.A.’s Protest,” *Advocate*, September 1, 2016, <https://www.advocate.com/politics/2016/9/01/50-days-19-photographs-black-lives-matters-la-protest>.

³⁴ Jennings *et al.*, “LAPD is More Diverse;” Mather, Jamison, and Jennings, “L.A. Leaders Struggle;” Angel Jennings, “Why the Bedrocks of L.A.’S Civil Rights Movements Won’t Embrace Black Lives Matter,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 29, 2016, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-black-church-activism-20160801-snap-story.html>.

³⁵ Sharon McNary, “Black Lives Matter Shuns LAPD Alliance Embraced by The Game,” *KPCC Los Angeles*, July 18, 2016, <https://www.kpcc.org/2016-07-18/black-lives-matters-shuns-lapd-alliance-embraced-b>.

the LAPD engaged in excessive force and excessive enforcement against non-White residents. As Melina Abdullah, a Cal State LA professor and co-founder of BLM, stated at the City Hall sit-in, “We are not willing to live in conditions where black people are treated like enemy combatants rather than residents of this city.”³⁶

The post-Ferguson period represented the strongest challenge to LAPD legitimacy since the Bratton makeover. A clear schism had developed between community policing and BW policing, the two pillars of department practice over the previous decade. In response, the LAPD appeared to tweak their enforcement practices to address community critiques and move away from aggressive minor crime enforcement. Table 9 provides data on LAPD discretionary stops and arrests from 2011 to 2019.

Table 9. LAPD Discretionary Stops and Arrests, 2011 to 2019

Year	Part I Crimes	Stops	Total Arrests	Drug Arrests	Liquor Arrests	Weapons Arrests	Violent Crime Arrests*
2011	107,200	950,636	157,536	20,088 (12.8%)	23,286 (14.8%)	3,141 (2.0%)	12,011 (7.6%)
2012	107,147	929,796	163,643	21,450 (13.1%)	27,945 (17.1%)	3,130 (1.9%)	11,487 (7.0%)
2013	103,763	899,445	152,535	20,970 (13.8%)	24,043 (15.8%)	2,958 (1.9%)	10,709 (7.0%)
2014	89,569	832,809	139,139	19,974 (14.4%)	19,408 (14.0%)	2,838 (2.0%)	10,990 (7.9%)
2015	117,489	620,345	125,838	13,180 (10.5%)	16,032 (12.7%)	2,963 (2.4%)	11,750 (9.3%)
2016	128,132	627,677	117,601	12,260 (10.4%)	12,801 (10.9%)	3,302 (2.8%)	12,303 (10.5%)
2017	132,166	724,384	106,894	11,581 (10.8%)	9,030 (8.5%)	3,432 (3.2%)	12,479 (11.7%)
2018	131,667	754,564	103,130	11,095 (10.8%)	7,567 (7.3%)	3,327 (3.2%)	12,339 (12.0%)
2019	125,473	712,806	92,332	11,035 (12.0%)	5,575 (6.0%)	3,056 (3.3%)	12,269 (13.3%)

Note: Percent of total arrests included in parentheses.
 *Violent crime arrests include arrests for homicide, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault.
 Sources: Los Angeles Police Department 2022b, 2023a, 2023b, 2023c

The data in Table 9 indicate that both stops and arrests declined in the years following the Ferguson protests of fall 2014. Between 2011 and 2014, the LAPD averaged 903,172 discretionary stops a year; that number declined to 687,955 stops a year between 2015 and 2019. Moreover, decreases in total arrests were disproportionately driven by declines in arrests

³⁶ Ben Poston, “Black Lives Matter ‘Occupation’ of L.A. City Hall Enters Fourth Day,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 15, 2016, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-black-lives-matter-city-hall-occupation-enters-fourth-day-20160715-snap-story.html>.

for minor crimes typically associated with BW enforcement. Reductions in drug arrests and liquor arrests in the latter half of the decade outpaced the reduction in overall arrests, and thus both declined as a percentage of total arrests. By the end of the decade, the LAPD was making roughly half the amount of drug arrests and roughly one quarter the amount of liquor arrests as they had between 2011 and 2014. The increase in reported Part I crimes in the latter half of the decade suggests that these declines in minor crime arrests were not driven by corresponding decreases in serious crimes. Furthermore, as total arrests were falling, arrests for both weapons offenses and violent crimes increased. In sum, it appears that LAPD enforcement in the post-Ferguson period began to tilt away from discretionary stops and minor crime arrests, in the direction of arrests more closely associated with violence.

The LAPD, with some assistance from the Obama administration, trumpeted the CSP program as emblematic of this shift. Four months after the killing of Michael Brown, LAPD officer Emada Tingirides was invited to attend President Obama's State of the Union address where she was honored for her work with the CSP program.³⁷ Rice and the Advancement Project were asked to submit a report on the CSP program to the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, convened following Brown's killing to provide recommendations on "how to build public trust and foster strong relationships between local law enforcement and the communities that they protect, while also promoting effective crime reduction."³⁸ In several op-eds and interviews, Beck cited the CSP program as representative of the LAPD's efforts to address community concerns about policing in "less-privileged communities."³⁹ The CSP program

³⁷ Veronica Rocha and Kate Mather, "LAPD Husband, Wife to be Honored at State of the Union," *Los Angeles Times*, January 20, 2015, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-lapd-husband-wife-state-of-the-union-20150120-story.html>.

³⁸ The White House. *President Obama Announces Task Force on 21st Century Policing*, press release, December 18, 2014, <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/12/18/president-obama-announces-task-force-21st-century-policing>. See Rice and Lee, *Relationship-Based Policing*.

³⁹ Charlie Beck, "Op-Ed: Charlie Beck: The Real Ferguson Effect in L.A.," *Los Angeles Times*, February 11, 2016, <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/op-ed/la-oe-0211-beck-ferguson-effect-lapd-20160211-story.html>. See also Charlie Beck and Connie Rice, "How Community Policing Can Work," *New York Times*, August 12, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/12/opinion/how-community-policing-can-work.html>.

expanded to four additional territories between 2015 to 2017,⁴⁰ but it remained a niche initiative within the department. Nevertheless, like the MacArthur Park turnaround in the Bratton era, the CSP program became the model for how LAPD enforcement should be conducted post-Ferguson.

The department also adopted numerous policies intended to better align police practices with community expectations. The department began deploying body-worn cameras in 2015, and in 2018 the police commission adopted a policy mandating the release of “critical incident” videos to the public within 45 days.⁴¹ A year later, the LAPD announced plans to randomly screen body camera videos to ensure officers were following proper guidelines. In announcing the policy, Michel Moore, Beck’s successor as chief, stated, “We can improve the public’s trust. It’s an opportunity to make sure people are being treated fairly.”⁴² In 2017, the LAPD began receiving “Weekly Sentiment Report[s]” from “Elucid,” a tech start-up founded through a

⁴⁰ Lily *et al.*, *Community Safety Partnership*, 2; Cindy Chang, “Garcetti, LAPD Announce Expansion of Community Safety Partnership Program,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 4, 2017, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-community-safety-partnership-20170304-story.html>.

⁴¹ James Queally, “In a First, LAPD Voluntarily Releases Body Camera Video of a Suspect Who Died in Custody,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 20, 2018, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-lapd-custody-death-video-20180619-story.html>; Kate Mather, “LAPD to Reverse Policy and Make Body Camera, Patrol Car Videos Public,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 20, 2018, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-lapd-video-release-20180320-story.html>.

⁴² Mark Puente, “LAPD Will Inspect Random Body-Worn Camera Videos for Training Lapses, Biased Policing,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 7, 2019, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2019-11-07/lapd-body-worn-camera-video-review>. Despite these policies, members of the public have continued to critique the LAPD’s use of body-worn cameras. In contrast to releases from other departments, LAPD video releases are highly edited and artfully produced, raising questions about what the department might be leaving out or trying to distract from. James Queally, “LAPD Hopes New Video Policy Can Turn Dangerous Clashes Into Teachable Moments,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 29, 2018a, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-lapd-video-policy-20180628-story.html>. One officer described LAPD video releases as “a full-blown professional production...laden with visual aids, background information and a narrator.” James Queally, “LAPD Hopes New Video Policy Can Turn Dangerous Clashes Into Teachable Moments,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 29, 2018, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-lapd-video-policy-20180628-story.html>. More recently, an internal affairs investigation into gang officers accused of routinely deactivating their body cameras during traffic stops has spiraled into a federal civil rights investigation involving the FBI. Libor Jany and Richard Winton, “FBI Joins Probe of LAPD Gang Officers Suspected of Turning Off Body Cameras,” *Los Angeles Times*, August 25, 2023, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-08-25/fbi-joins-probe-of-lapd-gang-officers-suspected-of-turning-off-body-cameras>. An internal LAPD report suggests that the problem of officers deactivating body cameras is not isolated to the gang officers under investigation. Libor Jany, “Internal LAPD Reports Show Body Camera Misuse More Widespread Than Chief Alleges,” *Los Angeles Times*, September 21, 2023, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-08-25/fbi-joins-probe-of-lapd-gang-officers-suspected-of-turning-off-body-cameras>.

partnership with Bratton after he returned as NYPD police commissioner in 2014.⁴³ The sentiment reports provided summarized feedback from micro-geographically targeted surveys, allowing local officers to gauge attitudes toward the police in the specific neighborhoods they patrolled. The same year, the police commission adopted policies requiring officers to employ “procedural justice” in citizen encounters⁴⁴ and “de-escalation” tactics prior to using force.⁴⁵ Voters also approved what was viewed at the time as a major reform to LAPD disciplinary procedures, allowing final decisions on officer discipline to be determined by panels composed entirely of civilians rather than fellow officers.⁴⁶

The LAPD’s data-driven enforcement practices also moved into a new phase, referred to alternatively as “predictive policing” or “precision policing.”⁴⁷ In 2011, the LAPD began using a software program called “PredPol”—short for predictive policing—that was designed to use past crime data⁴⁸ to identify “where and when crimes will most likely occur over the next 12 hours.”⁴⁹ At its core, PredPol formalized in an algorithmic model the basic logic that had informed “hot spot” policing through Compstat: Enforcement should be targeted to locations where “crime” has been historically concentrated. PredPol is built on a “near-repeat model...which suggests that once a crime occurs in a location, the immediate surrounding area is at increased risk for

⁴³ Office of the Inspector General, *Review of Selected Los Angeles Police Department Data-Driven Policing Strategies* (Los Angeles Police Commission, March 12, 2019), 30-31, https://www.lapdpolicecom.lacity.org/031219/BPC_19-0072.pdf; Simone Weichselbaum, “How a ‘Sentiment Meter’ Helps Cops Understand Their Precincts,” *Wired*, July 16, 2018, <https://www.wired.com/story/elucd-sentiment-meter-helps-cops-understand-precincts/>.

⁴⁴ Kate Mather, “L.A. Police Panel Pushes Fairness and Courtesy as Powerful Weapons to Improve Trust in the LAPD,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 3, 2017, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-lapd-commission-reform-20170502-story.html>.

⁴⁵ Kate Mather and Cindy Chang, “Fewer Shootings by Police — That’s the Goal of New Rules Adopted by the L.A. Police Commission,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 18, 2017, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-lapd-commission-force-20170418-story.html>.

⁴⁶ David Zahniser and Kate Mather, “Voters Decisively Back Measure to Rework Discipline at the LAPD,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 17, 2017, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-charter-amendment-c-20170516-story.html>.

⁴⁷ Office of the Inspector General, *Data-Driven Policing Strategies*; Sarah Brayne, *Predict and Surveil: Data, Discretion, and the Future of Policing* (Oxford University Press, 2020).

⁴⁸ Brayne notes that, “PredPol uses ten years of data, weighting more recent crimes more heavily than older crimes.” Brayne, *Predict and Surveil*, 70. See also Office of the Inspector General, *Data-Driven Policing Strategies*, 25.

⁴⁹ Office of the Inspector General, *Data-Driven Policing Strategies*, 25.

subsequent, similar crimes.”⁵⁰ Such a model, trained on nearly a decade’s worth of data from the Bratton era of BW policing, ensured that “place-based predictive policing” would be concentrated in the same “hot spots” where enforcement had always been concentrated: the city’s segregated non-White neighborhoods. Nevertheless, use of a computer algorithm rather than human decision-makers bolstered the department’s long-standing argument that concentrated enforcement in these neighborhoods was data-driven and objectively justified, rather than racially biased.⁵¹ By 2019, the LAPD was employing PredPol “Department-wide.”⁵²

The same year that PredPol was first implemented, the department also inaugurated “Operation LASER,” the LAPD’s first “person-based” predictive policing initiative.⁵³ Operation LASER relied fundamentally on Palantir, a software platform that integrates data on individuals and “objects” (primarily cars, cell phones, and real property) from an astoundingly wide array of law enforcement and institutional sources.⁵⁴ Using Palantir data, officers with Operation LASER would manually generate a “Chronic Offender List” with information on the 12 residents identified through a points-based system as the most serious “career criminals” in a given territory.⁵⁵ One of the key sources of LASER “points” were discretionary stops by LAPD officers, and thus patrol personnel were encouraged to make frequent contact with residents believed to be particularly suspicious.⁵⁶ Another key source of LASER “points” were alleged gang affiliations.⁵⁷ It is no surprise then that when the LAPD inspector general reviewed the demographic make-up of LASER-identified “chronic offenders” in 2019, 49.8% were Latino,

⁵⁰ Brayne, *Predict and Surveil*, 70.

⁵¹ See Brayne, *Predict and Surveil*, 6, 29-31, 108-10.

⁵² Office of the Inspector General, *Data-Driven Policing Strategies*, 26.

⁵³ Office of the Inspector General, *Data-Driven Policing Strategies*, 4-7; Brayne, *Predict and Surveil*, 60-70.

⁵⁴ Brayne, *Predict and Surveil*, 37-55.

⁵⁵ Office of the Inspector General, *Data-Driven Policing Strategies*, 5-7.

⁵⁶ Brayne, *Predict and Surveil*, 62-65.

⁵⁷ Office of the Inspector General, *Data-Driven Policing Strategies*, 6.

30% were Black, and only 12% were White.⁵⁸ The report also noted that “about half” of these “chronic offenders” had no prior arrests for gun-related offenses.⁵⁹

A report from the team behind Operation LASER describes how LAPD officers were expected to employ the information provided in “Chronic Offender Bulletins”:

The basic premise is to target with laser-like precision the violent repeat offenders and gang members who commit crimes in the specific target areas. The program is analogous to laser surgery, where a trained medical doctor uses modern technology to remove tumors or improve eyesight. First, the area is carefully diagnosed: Who are the offenders, and where and when are they involved in criminal activity? Plans are then developed to remove offenders from an area with minimal invasiveness and minimal harm to the people and areas around them. Extraction of offenders takes place in a ‘non-invasive’ manner (no task forces or saturation patrol activities), and the result produces less disruption in neighborhoods. Continuing with the medical analogy, by extracting offenders surgically, recovery time of the neighborhood is faster.⁶⁰

As a “person-based” rather than “place-based” system, Operation LASER represented a qualitative shift in the LAPD’s data-driven policing efforts, more significant than the initial implementation of PredPol. It signaled the LAPD’s first attempt to move from broad-based preventative enforcement, a hallmark of the department since its inception, to more “targeted” and “precise” preventative enforcement. The LAPD expanded Operation LASER from the Newton Division to other areas of the city in 2015; by 2019, LASER was in operation in 16 of the department’s 21 divisions.⁶¹

The department ultimately terminated Operation LASER in April 2019⁶² and discontinued its use of PredPol in April 2020.⁶³ But the strategies involved in these programs immediately reemerged in the guise of “data-informed community-focused policing” (DICFP),

⁵⁸ Office of the Inspector General, *Data-Driven Policing Strategies*, 15.

⁵⁹ Office of the Inspector General, *Data-Driven Policing Strategies*, 16.

⁶⁰ Office of the Inspector General, *Data-Driven Policing Strategies*, 4.

⁶¹ Office of the Inspector General, *Data-Driven Policing Strategies*, 4.

⁶² Mark Puente, “LAPD to Scrap Some Crime Data Programs After Criticism,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 5, 2019, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-lapd-predictive-policing-big-data-20190405-story.html>.

⁶³ Leila Miller, “LAPD Will End Controversial Program That Aimed to Predict Where Crimes Would Occur,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 21, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-04-21/lapd-ends-predictive-policing-program>.

described in an LAPD report released just one month after the PredPol contract was terminated.⁶⁴ The report contextualizes DICFP within the department's larger effort to "maintain public safety by addressing crime and disorder while ensuring that those being served do not feel alienated, marginalized or over-policed."⁶⁵ Like PredPol, DICFP involves "location-based crime and disorder enforcement":

The most recent research shows that focusing on small areas (micro-geographic locations) will deter crime from areas, and in fact, reduce the likelihood the crime ever occurs...By concentrating on these areas, police have smaller 'foot prints' and are not seen as over-policing neighborhoods...By focusing on micro-geographic locations with high concentrations of crime, the goal is to increase the general deterrence of police actions, in this case by increasing perceptions of the certainty of enforcement action.⁶⁶

Like Operation LASER, DICFP also includes an "offender-based strategy":

Under the Data-Informed, Community-Focused Policing plan, each geographic Area will be responsible for identifying offenders that are on PRCS [Post Release Community Supervision], probation, or parole for either a violent offense or a property crime of significant concern to that command. The Department, along with State and County agencies, will identify individuals and conduct appropriate supervision of them to prevent or identify reoffending, consistent with the terms of their post-release.⁶⁷

Thus, while the LAPD's use of the specific software involved in Operation LASER and PredPol may have ended, the DICFP report makes clear that the department remained committed to using data to enhance "police legitimacy and trust-building" by ensuring that enforcement is "accurately focused" on areas and people identified as particularly crime-prone.⁶⁸

Although the LAPD's post-Ferguson changes, like DICFP, were often touted as a means of addressing concerns about policing in non-White neighborhoods, racial disparities in

⁶⁴ Los Angeles Police Department, *Data-Informed Community-Focused Policing in the Los Angeles Police Department* (2020).

<https://lapdonlinestrgeacc.blob.core.usgovcloudapi.net/lapdonlinemedia/2021/12/data-informed-guidebook-042020.pdf>

⁶⁵ Los Angeles Police Department, *Data-Informed Community-Focused Policing*, 7.

⁶⁶ Los Angeles Police Department, *Data-Informed Community-Focused Policing*, 22.

⁶⁷ Los Angeles Police Department, *Data-Informed Community-Focused Policing*, 23.

⁶⁸ Los Angeles Police Department, *Data-Informed Community-Focused Policing*, 9.

enforcement only became more pronounced after 2014. Table 10 provides data on LAPD stops, weapons arrests, and officer involved shootings (OIS) by suspect race from 2011 to 2019 (see next page).

The data in Table 10 demonstrate that while discretionary stops declined post-Ferguson, stops became even more concentrated among the city's non-White residents. The proportion of stopped suspects perceived as White fell from 24.1% in 2011 to 18.7% in 2019, while the proportion of stopped suspects perceived as Black or Latino increased from 66.7% to 73.7%. Similar trends are evident with respect to weapons arrests, one of the few categories of arrests to see increases following 2014. Although the Latino percentage of weapons arrests decreased slightly in the last half of the 2010s, the Black percentage increased substantially, with corresponding decreases in the White percentage. OIS incidents exhibited greater year-to-year variability than stops or arrests, but these too displayed noticeable differences pre- and post-Ferguson. In three of the four years between 2011 and 2014, Whites comprised over 10% of suspects shot at by the LAPD, but the same would be true for only two of the next five years following the Ferguson protests. Meanwhile, the Latino proportion of suspects shot at by the LAPD would increase from 46.0% in 2011 to 57.7% in 2019, a particularly peculiar result given that Latinos made up a shrinking proportion of those arrested for weapons offenses.

Table 10. LAPD Stops, Drug Arrests, and Officer Involved Shootings (OIS) by Suspect Race, 2011 to 2019

Year	Discretionary Stops				Weapons Arrests				Officer Involved Shootings (OIS)			
	Total	Percent Black	Percent Latino	Percent White	Total	Percent Black	Percent Latino	Percent White	Total	Percent Black	Percent Latino	Percent White
2011	950,636	24.0	42.7	24.1	3,141	30.9	53.3	12.3	63	42.9	46.0	7.9
2012	929,796	24.2	43.1	23.3	3,130	30.1	53.0	12.7	37	18.9	51.4	21.6
2013	899,445	24.5	43.8	22.5	2,958	29.9	54.5	11.8	46	41.3	45.7	13.0
2014	832,809	23.7	44.8	21.5	2,838	35.0	51.4	10.0	30	40.0	40.0	13.3
2015	620,345	26.0	45.1	19.9	2,963	36.8	49.9	9.7	48	25.0	50.0	16.7
2016	627,677	27.3	46.3	17.9	3,302	37.7	50.1	8.6	41	31.7	56.1	2.4
2017	724,384	28.3	45.3	17.8	3,432	38.8	48.0	9.2	46	21.7	56.5	21.7
2018	754,564	29.3	46.3	17.2	3,327	38.5	49.3	8.4	36	30.6	52.8	5.6
2019	712,806	27.5	46.2	18.7	3,056	36.8	49.6	9.2	26	30.8	57.7	7.7

Sources: Los Angeles Police Department 2022b, 2023a, 2023c; LAPD Annual Use of Force Reports, 2012-2019.

BLM was not alone in highlighting the persistence of racial disproportionalities in LAPD enforcement. Other organizations such as Los Angeles Community Action Network (LACAN), Youth Justice Council (YJC), and Stop LAPD Spying engaged in countless activist initiatives and published numerous reports on the link between the LAPD's enforcement strategies and racial disparities in stops, arrests, and uses of force, particularly deadly force.⁶⁹ But while public support for the department fell slightly from its peak in the late Bratton years, it remained quite strong. In 2016, 70.4% of respondents to a poll from the LMU Center for the Study of Los Angeles rated the LAPD's performance as good or excellent, down from 77.7% in 2007.⁷⁰ In a separate poll from 2016 employing a three-part satisfaction scale, 36.9% of Black respondents rated the department's performance as "Good," 38.1% rated it as "Fair," and only 25.0% rated it as "Poor."⁷¹ That was considerably higher than the percentage of White (9.0%), Latino (10.5%), and Asian (10.4%) respondents who rated the department's performance as "Poor." Yet, it is clear that, even among Black residents, the perception that the LAPD was irredeemably broken was not widespread. Overall, public support for reforms more extensive than those already undertaken by the LAPD appeared to be lacking.

When Beck announced his retirement in 2018, he was not showered with plaudits from the ACLU, as Bratton had been. But he received favorable remarks from Connie Rice, Mayor Garcetti, the civilian police commission, residents of south Los Angeles who partnered with the LAPD on gang initiatives, and his fellow officers.⁷² Some of these remarks hinted at the

⁶⁹ See, e.g., Forrest Stuart, *Down, Out & Under Arrest: Policing and Everyday Life in Skid Row* (University of Chicago Press, 2016), 205-49; Ana Muñiz, *Police, Power, and the Production of Racial Boundaries* (Rutgers University Press, 2015); Stop LAPD Spying, *Before the Bullet Hits the Body: Dismantling Predictive Policing in Los Angeles* (2018), <https://stoplapdspying.org/before-the-bullet-hits-the-body-dismantling-predictive-policing-in-los-angeles/>.

⁷⁰ Thomas and Dorothy Leavey Center for the Study of Los Angeles, *Residents' Views on LAPD and Its Policies* (Loyola Marymount University, 2018), 6, <https://digitalcommons.lmu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1020&context=studyla-databriefs>.

⁷¹ Thomas and Dorothy Leavey Center for the Study of Los Angeles, *Public Safety Public Opinion in Los Angeles: 2016 Public Opinion Survey Report* (Loyola Marymount University, 2016), 33. See also Thomas and Dorothy Leavey Center, *Residents' Views on LAPD*, 8.

⁷² Cindy Chang, "Retiring After More Than 40 Years, LAPD Chief Charlie Beck has Evolved with the Department He Leads," *Los Angeles Times*, June 24, 2018, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-beck-profile-20180624-story.html>; Kate Mather and Cindy Chang, "L.A. Police Chief Charlie Beck

challenges that Beck navigated in his last years as chief. Garcetti stated, “I’ve seen him embrace, in tough times, the steady path of reforms even when there’s criticism from both sides saying stop or accelerate. He has been the right chief at the right time.”⁷³ Bratton relayed a similar message: “He was able to move forward and keep the ship on course in very turbulent waters.”⁷⁴

Garcetti named Michel Moore as Beck’s replacement. Moore was the runner-up in the competition to succeed Bratton back in 2009,⁷⁵ and he was known in the department for his “deep mastery of crime statistics” and “wonky data-crunching.”⁷⁶ Upon his appointment as chief, Moore affirmed his shared commitment to keeping the ship on course:

One of the most important questions of the moment may be, “Why do I want to be the next chief of police of this great city?” And it’s pretty simple. I wish to continue the momentum in building trust, particularly in communities of color, and improving public safety.⁷⁷

Moore would face his own Ferguson-style moment just two years later—a moment even more challenging than what Beck faced in the fall of 2014.

The LAPD and the George Floyd Protests of 2020

In May 2020, George Floyd was murdered by officers with the Minneapolis Police Department, and video of the killing once again triggered massive protests across the country, this time in violation of government recommendations to prevent the spread of COVID-19.⁷⁸ But

Announces Early Retirement, Ending Eight-Year Tenure as Head of the LAPD,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 18, 2018, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-lapd-chief-beck-20180119-story.html>.

⁷³ Mather and Chang, “Early Retirement.”

⁷⁴ Cindy Chang, “Chief Charlie Beck Says Goodbye to the LAPD,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 27, 2018, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-beck-last-day-20180626-story.html>.

⁷⁵ Joel Rubin and Phil Willon, “Behind Closed Doors, Police Chief Pick was No Shoo-In: Mayor’s Own Staff in the Dark Till the Last Minute,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 9, 2009, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2009-nov-04-me-chief-decision4-story.html>.

⁷⁶ Cindy Chang, David Zahniser, Richard Winton, and James Queally, “L.A. Mayor’s Pick for LAPD Chief is 36-Year Veteran with Deep Mastery of Crime Statistics,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 4, 2018, <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-lapd-chief-moore-20180604-story.html>.

⁷⁷ Chang *et al.*, “L.A. Mayor’s Pick.”

⁷⁸ Derrick Bryson Taylor, “George Floyd Protests: A Timeline,” *The New York Times*, November 5, 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/article/george-floyd-protests-timeline.html>.

the pandemic was not the only thing that distinguished these protests from the Ferguson protests several years earlier. Both during the protests and in the ensuing national debates about police reform, including in Los Angeles, “defunding” or abolishing the police became a primary rallying cry of police critics for the first time.⁷⁹

In 2016, in the midst of the City Hall sit-in, the demands made by BLM were decidedly more modest: (1) removal of Beck as chief; (2) the “establishment of a partnership with the City Council to develop a reparations policy for police-violence”; (3) “police commission meetings that are open and accessible to the community”; (4) the “appointment of community advocates to key commission seats”; and (5) “quarterly town hall-type meetings.”⁸⁰ A month following Floyd’s murder, BLM representatives were before the city council advocating for a nearly 90% reduction in the LAPD budget.⁸¹ Other activist organizations in the city, including YJC, LACAN, and Stop LAPD Spying, also coalesced behind a platform of defunding the LAPD. In June 2020, YJC organized a “defund the police” march from City Hall to LAPD headquarters that drew several hundred protestors.⁸² Amid the reformist-abolitionist debate triggered by the #8cantwait campaign, BLM, LACAN, and Stop LAPD Spying issued a joint statement criticizing the #8cantwait reforms as “cosmetic” and “superficial” and calling for policies that “defund the police,” arguing that:

⁷⁹ See, e.g., Christy E. Lopez, “Defund the Police? Here’s What That Really Means,” *The Washington Post*, June 7, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/06/07/defund-police-heres-what-that-really-means/>; Los Angeles Times Editorial Board, “Defund the LAPD? It’s Time to Rethink Public Safety in Los Angeles,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 8, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2020-06-08/defund-the-lapd-public-safety>.

⁸⁰ Lovell Estell III, “Occupy City Hall: Black Lives Matter L.A. Protest Continues,” *Capital & Main*, August 10, 2016, <https://capitalandmain.com/occupy-city-hall-black-lives-matter-los-angeles-protest-continues-0810>.

⁸¹ Emily Alpert Reyes, David Zahniser, and Dakota Smith, “As ‘Defund LAPD’ Becomes a Rallying Cry, Garcetti Will Seek Cuts up to \$150 Million,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 3, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-06-03/lapd-budget-unrest-garcetti>; David Zahniser and Dakota Smith, “Black Lives Matter Leaders Meet with L.A. Politicians, Saying ‘Defund the Police,’” *Los Angeles Times*, June 15, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-06-15/black-lives-matter-lapd-spending-peoples-budget-los-angeles-city-council>.

⁸² Stephanie Lai and Luke Money, “L.A. Youth Group Demands Defunding Police, Other Reforms,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 12, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-06-12/l-a-youths-demand-defunding-police-other-reforms>.

This historic moment provides an opportunity to redefine our vision of public safety by reigning in police power, implementing department accountability and greatly reducing law enforcement funding—instead investing in the needs of our community. Let’s not waste it on superficial reforms and feel good optics.⁸³

The defunding movement appeared to be gaining steam not just among activists but among policymakers as well. Two months before the protests, Mayor Garcetti proposed a pandemic-reduced budget that would have increased funding for the LAPD by 7% while slashing funds for other city services.⁸⁴ After a “defund the police” protest outside of his home, Garcetti reversed course and committed to cutting between \$100 and \$150 million from the LAPD budget and reinvesting those funds in “job programs, health initiatives and other services supporting the black community and other communities of color.”⁸⁵ The city council ultimately passed a budget the following month with \$150 million in cuts to the LAPD.⁸⁶ It was a far cry from the over \$1.5 billion in cuts advocated by BLM,⁸⁷ but it was nonetheless indicative of the very real momentum that was building behind the defunding movement in the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder.

The vision of “reimagined community safety”⁸⁸ advanced by defunding advocates represented a much deeper challenge to LAPD legitimacy than any prior calls for reform—it was an existential threat. The LAPD responded by embracing reforms proposed by more moderate police critics while disparaging the defunding movement as a threat to public safety. Two weeks

⁸³ Stop LAPD Spying, “Statement Rejecting #8cantwait and Demanding Real Change,” Instagram, 2020, June 5, 2020, https://www.instagram.com/p/CBFQjHwgqQG/?hl=en&img_index=1.

⁸⁴ Dakota Smith, David Zahniser, and Emily Alpert Reyes, “Street Repairs, Tree Trimming, Graffiti Removal Face Cuts Under Garcetti Budget Plan,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 20, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-04-20/coronavirus-garcetti-budget-story-2020-2021-furloughs-cuts>.

⁸⁵ Emily Alpert Reyes, David Zahniser, and Dakota Smith, “As ‘Defund LAPD’ Becomes a Rallying Cry, Garcetti Will Seek Cuts up to \$150 Million,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 3, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-06-03/lapd-budget-unrest-garcetti>.

⁸⁶ David Zahniser, Dakota Smith, and Emily Alpert Reyes, “Los Angeles Cuts LAPD Spending, Taking Police Staffing to Its Lowest Level in 12 Years,” July 1, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-07-01/lapd-budget-cuts-protesters-police-brutality>.

⁸⁷ BLM co-founder Melina Abdullah described the cuts as “meager.” Zahniser, Smith, and Reyes, “Los Angeles Cuts LAPD Spending.”

⁸⁸ People’s Budget LA, *The People’s Budget: Los Angeles 2020-2021* (2d ed.) (June 15, 2020), https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mz7iLhV_DdzhOQAac65lm5VfqgUYkdlw/view.

after Floyd's death, the LAPD union joined in a full-page advertisement for the *Los Angeles Times* and *Washington Post* that read, "No words can convey our collective disgust and sorrow for the murder of George Floyd.⁸⁹ We have an obligation as a profession and as human beings to express our sorrow by taking action."⁹⁰ The advertisement went on to list several proposed reforms supported by the union, including a revised use of force standard, a national database for police misconduct, and "ongoing and frequent training" to improve police-community relations.⁹¹ On the one-year anniversary of Floyd's murder, the union released a statement reiterating their support for these reforms, in addition to policies requiring officers to "intervene when they see excessive force or misconduct" and alternative first responders to address "mental health [] 911 calls that don't need an armed response."⁹²

At the same time, a union spokesperson described BLM's proposed reallocation of LAPD funds as a "fairy tale that will end in a city of chaos, crime and fear."⁹³ Dozens of officers confronted a city councilmember who supported Garcetti's more modest budget cuts, with an officer speaking on behalf of the group stating:

What about the law-abiding citizens that are law-abiding? They don't break the law. All they want is these officers to protect them, and this is what they do every day, and now you're cutting from their families when they put everything on the line? We're going to fight.⁹⁴

⁸⁹ At the time, the officers involved in Floyd's death had not yet been charged with murder, let alone convicted.

⁹⁰ Tatiana Sanchez, "3 Big California Police Unions Release National Reform Plan to Remove Racist Officers," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 15, 2020, <https://www.sfchronicle.com/bayarea/article/3-big-california-police-unions-unveil-national-15339228.php>.

⁹¹ Advertisement on file with author.

⁹² Los Angeles Police Protective League, *National Police Reform* (May 2021). On file with author.

⁹³ David Zahniser and Dakota Smith, "Black Lives Matter Leaders Meet with L.A. Politicians, Saying 'Defund the Police,'" *Los Angeles Times*, June 15, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-06-15/black-lives-matter-lapd-spending-peoples-budget-los-angeles-city-council>.

⁹⁴ Spencer Neale, "'You Bowed Down to Black Lives Matter': LAPD Officers Berate Democratic Councilwoman Amid Budget Cut Proposal," *Washington Examiner*, June 6, 2020, <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/you-bowed-down-to-black-lives-matter-lapd-officers-berate-democratic-councilwoman-amid-budget-cut-proposal>.

When the budget cuts were finally adopted by the city council, a union spokesperson described the cuts as “shameful,” adding:

If we want to have a real conversation about decisive actions that we can take to move us forward and to build trust we can do that...If you want to talk about reform, bring the Los Angeles Police Protective League to the table because the Los Angeles Police Department...should be the beacon on the hill because we have already implemented all of these things. So, take our example and let us lead from the front.⁹⁵

And the union indeed fought against further cuts. In December 2020, the union paid for billboards across Los Angeles drawing attention to recent increases in reported crime and insinuating that further cuts to the LAPD would make the city less safe.⁹⁶

In the months following Floyd’s murder, the LAPD adopted a flurry of policies advocated by police reformers. In June 2020, the department implemented a revised use of force standard that limited deadly force to situations in which it was “necessary in defense of human life,”⁹⁷ a modification that many reformers believed to be an improvement over the baseline constitutional standard established in *Tennessee v. Garner*.⁹⁸ The same month, the department ordered a “complete moratorium” on the use of CalGang, the statewide database for tracking alleged “gang” members.⁹⁹ One month later, the department announced an expansion of the

⁹⁵ Julia Musto, “Los Angeles Police Union Leader on Proposed \$150m Budget Cut: ‘It Was Shameful,’” *Fox News*, June 5, 2020, <https://www.foxnews.com/media/los-angeles-police-union-leader-on-proposed-budget-cuts>.

⁹⁶ Louis Casiano, “Los Angeles Police Union Targeting Council Members with Billboards Amid Talk of Budget Cuts,” *Fox News*, December 16, 2020, <https://www.foxnews.com/us/los-angeles-police-union-targeting-council-members-with-billboards-amid-talk-of-budget-cuts>.

⁹⁷ Los Angeles Police Department, *Policy on the Use of Force – Revised* (June 29, 2020), <https://www.lapdonline.org/newsroom/policy-on-the-use-of-force-revised/>.

⁹⁸ Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, “Civil Rights Coalition Letter on Federal Policing Priorities,” press release, June 1, 2020, <https://civilrights.org/resource/civil-rights-coalition-letter-on-federal-policing-priorities/>.

⁹⁹ Eric Leonard and Andrew Blankstein, “LAPD Chief Orders Moratorium on Gang Database,” *NBC Los Angeles*, June 19, 2020, <https://www.nbclosangeles.com/investigations/lapd-chief-orders-moratorium-on-gang-database/2383181/>. The department’s use of CalGang was already under intense scrutiny after an internal investigation in January revealed that officers from the Metro Division were falsifying gang records on field interrogation cards. Richard Winton and Mark Puente, “Officers Falsely Portrayed People as Gang Members, Falsified Records, LAPD Says,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 6, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-01-06/dozens-of-lapd-officers-accused-of-portrayed-innocent-people-as-gang-members-falsifying-records>. In July 2020, three of these officers would be criminally charged for preparing false records, and three more would be charged by the end of the year.

CSP program into a fully-fledged bureau, with Emada Tingirides elevated to deputy chief to serve as its leader.¹⁰⁰ Mayor Garcetti called the move “a dramatic step...we’re moving squarely towards the core of our policing philosophy—a model that is about co-owning public safety.”¹⁰¹ Chief Moore concurred, asking and answering the question he believed to be forefront “as America and really all of the nation is looking at policing and certainly here in Los Angeles looking at the LAPD...What’s our future? I think CSP defines our future.”¹⁰² But in direct defiance to calls for defunding, the department asked for additional funds to support the CSP expansion.¹⁰³ Less than six months after the protests, with the pandemic continuing to depress city revenues, the LAPD proposed a “bare bones” 2021 operating budget that called for \$100 million in additional funding.¹⁰⁴

Over the next several years, the department would continue to adopt additional policy changes to appease moderate police critics. One of the most frequently endorsed reforms following the George Floyd protests was the use of alternative first responders to address mental health 911 calls that do not involve serious threats of violence.¹⁰⁵ The LAPD already employed

Kevin Rector and Leila Miller, “3 LAPD Officers Charged with Falsifying Records to Claim People Were Gang Members, Associates,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 10, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-07-10/3-lapd-officers-charged-with-falsifying-records-to-claim-people-were-gang-members-associates>; Kevin Rector, Richard Winton, and Ben Poston, “Three More LAPD Officers Charged with Falsifying Information in Gang Labeling Scandal,” October 2, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-10-02/three-more-lapd-officers-charged-with-falsifying-information-in-gang-labeling-scandal>. The cases were quietly dismissed two years later for lack of evidence. Kevin Rector, “Cases Against LAPD Officers Accused of Making False Gang Claims Fall Apart,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 19, 2022, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-04-19/cases-against-lapd-officers-accused-of-making-false-gang-claims-fall-apart>.

¹⁰⁰ Cindy Chang, “LAPD Expands Community Policing Program, Appoints Black Female Deputy Chief,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 27, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-07-27/lapd-expands-community-policing-program-appoints-black-female-deputy-chief>.

¹⁰¹ Chang, “LAPD Expands Community Policing Program.”

¹⁰² Chang, “LAPD Expands Community Policing Program.”

¹⁰³ Emily Alpert Reyes, “L.A. Officials Want More Money for Community Policing. Activists Say it Misses the Point,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 10, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-06-10/lapd-community-policing-budget-proposal>.

¹⁰⁴ Kevin Rector, “LAPD Request for \$100-Million Budget Increase Draws Criticism Amid City’s Fiscal Crisis,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 24, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-11-24/lapd-100-million-budget-increase-request-criticized>.

¹⁰⁵ See, e.g., Office of the Attorney General, “Attorney General Becerra Calls for Broad Police Reforms and Proactive Efforts to Protect Lives,” press release, June 15, 2020, <https://oag.ca.gov/news/press-releases/attorney-general-becerra-calls-broad-police-reforms-and-proactive-efforts>.

two-person co-responder teams pairing officers with county mental health specialists to handle some of these call, and they strongly supported proposals to transfer the entire responsibility to unarmed response teams.¹⁰⁶ Chief Moore explained that proposals to shift responsibilities for nonviolent calls away from police “put the department on the right course—honing the role of officers more closely to crime prevention and response, rather than social services.”¹⁰⁷ A proposal to develop a pilot alternative first responder program, endorsed by the LAPD, was adopted by the city council in October 2020,¹⁰⁸ and the first teams hit the ground in March 2022.¹⁰⁹ The LAPD union continues to reiterate their support for removing officers from these calls, as well as calls for other nonviolent behaviors like panhandling and public urination, stating that, “such a shift would free up officers to focus more on violent crime.”¹¹⁰ In addition to supporting alternative first responders, the department also adopted revised policies on gang injunctions,¹¹¹ consent searches,¹¹² and pretextual stops,¹¹³ all of which were designed to place

¹⁰⁶ Leila Miller, “Reformers Want Police to Step Back from Mental Health Calls. The LAPD Says it’s Been Trying,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 24, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-06-24/protests-spur-bid-for-lapd-to-move-back-from-mental-health-calls>.

¹⁰⁷ Kevin Rector, “Push and Pull Over Los Angeles Policing Hits Roadways and Transit,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 18, 2021, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-02-18/lapd-alternative-dispatch>.

¹⁰⁸ Robert Garrova, “LA Takes Step Toward Pilot Program to Take Police out of Some Mental Health Calls,” *LAist*, October 14, 2020, <https://laist.com/news/la-city-council-pilot-program-police-mental-health>.

¹⁰⁹ Ruben Vives, “L.A. City, County Roll Out Pilot Program That Sends Mental Health Workers to 911 Calls,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 4, 2022, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-03-04/los-angeles-mental-health-response-team-pilot-program>. A recent exposé found that these teams were struggling to meet the demand for mental health emergency response in Los Angeles. More than 90% of callers in 2022 waited over an hour for the teams to arrive, and over 50% had to wait more than 4 hours. Lila Seidman, “L.A. Promised Mental Health Crisis Response Without Cops. Why Isn’t It Happening?” *Los Angeles Times*, April 13, 2023, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-04-13/988-hotline-mental-health-crisis-system-police>.

¹¹⁰ David Zahniser, “LAPD Should Stop Handling Many Non-Emergency Calls, Police Union Says,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 1, 2023, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-03-01/lapd-officers-want-to-stop-responding-to-nonviolent-calls>.

¹¹¹ James Queally, “Los Angeles Must Change Use of Gang Injunctions Under Court Settlement,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 26, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-12-26/los-angeles-gang-injunctions-must-change>.

¹¹² Kevin Rector, “Police Commission Approves Stricter Rules for Some LAPD Searches,” *Los Angeles Times*, November 17, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-11-17/police-commission-approves-stricter-rules-for-some-lapd-searches>.

¹¹³ Kevin Rector, “New Limits on ‘Pretextual Stops’ by LAPD Officers Approved, Riling Police Union,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 1, 2022, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-03-01/new-limits-on-pretextual-stops-by-lapd-to-take-effect-this-summer-after-training>.

further limitations on proactive enforcement, beyond those already imposed under constitutional law.

Consistent with these policy changes, discretionary stops by LAPD officers continued to decline in the years following the George Floyd protests, as did more serious “categorical” uses of force. Table 11 includes data on LAPD stops and uses of force from 2015 to 2022.

Table 11. LAPD Discretionary Stops and Uses of Force, 2015 to 2022

Year	Stops	“Categorical”* Uses of Force	Officer Involved Shootings (OIS)	“Non-Categorical”* Uses of Force
2015	620,345	99	48	1,825
2016	627,677	86	41	1,925
2017	724,384	78	46	2,123
2018	754,564	61	36	2,125
2019	712,806	53	26	2,319
2020	521,487	54	31	2,201
2021	429,340	64	37	2,256
2022	330,075	53	31	2,230

*The LAPD distinguishes between “categorical” uses of force, which include any discharge of a firearm, dog bites, chokeholds, and any use of force that results in hospitalization or death, and all other “non-categorical” uses of force (see LAPD 2022a, 37).
Sources: Los Angeles Police Department 2022b, 2023c; LAPD Annual Use of Force Reports, 2015-2022.

The data in Table 11 illustrate that discretionary stops, which were already curtailed in the post-Ferguson period, dropped even further in the years following the George Floyd protests. In 2022, the LAPD made less than half the number of discretionary stops as 2019 and nearly 200,000 stops less than 2020, the initial year of pandemic lockdowns. Reductions in “categorical” uses of force and OIS began to emerge in the two years preceding the George Floyd protests, and these reductions were largely sustained between 2020 and 2022. On the other hand, “non-categorical” uses of force rose over the same period, suggesting that LAPD officers may have been replacing more serious uses of force with more frequent use of minor force.

The LAPD’s response to the George Floyd protests was sufficient to mollify any concerns among Los Angeles’s social and political elites, and the department once again enjoys strong

support from the political establishment. After a \$150 million budget cut in 2020, the LAPD saw budget increases of 3% in 2021¹¹⁴ and 8.5% in 2022.¹¹⁵ A new police commission president appointed in July 2021 began his tenure by stating, “Let me be perfectly clear where I stand: I do not agree with the ‘defund the police’ notion...Our communities of color that are most impacted by crime...cannot afford to go without law enforcement.”¹¹⁶ During her 2022 campaign for mayor, Karen Bass joined her less progressive opponents in calling for an increase in the number of LAPD patrol officers,¹¹⁷ and she made good on this promise in her first year in office by delivering a budget that calls for the hiring of 1,000 additional officers over the 2023-2024 fiscal year.¹¹⁸ In February 2023, Mayor Bass reappointed Moore to a second term as chief over the strenuous objections of BLM, whose disappointment was magnified by the fact that Bass was considered “a friend and comrade for many years.”¹¹⁹

Public support for defunding the LAPD also proved to be less widespread than advocates might have hoped. Polling data suggest that even at the height of the movement in 2020, support for defunding was considerably less strong than support for more modest reforms. An LMU survey of Los Angeles residents in fall 2020 found that while 42.9% “strongly” supported and 39.4% “somewhat” supported proposals to divert nonviolent 911 calls to “unarmed social and mental health professionals,” only 20.7% “strongly” supported and 26.4% “somewhat”

¹¹⁴ Dakota Smith and David Zahniser, “Garcetti’s Proposed City Budget Increases Spending for LAPD by 3%,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 20, 2021, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-04-20/garcetti-proposes-slight-increase-in-lapd-spending>.

¹¹⁵ David Zahniser and Kevin Rector, “Garcetti Pushes for More LAPD Spending, Boosting Overtime and Officer Pay,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 20, 2022, <https://latimes.com/california/story/2022-04-20/mayor-eric-garcetti-seeks-hike-in-lapd-spending>.

¹¹⁶ Kevin Rector, “L.A. Police Commission Appoints New President, Who Promptly Rejects ‘Defund’ Movement,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 27, 2021, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-07-27/l-a-police-commission-new-president-no-defund>.

¹¹⁷ James Queally, “From More Cops to Defund: Candidates for L.A. Mayor Differ on Crime and Policing,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 27, 2022, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-05-27/how-will-the-candidates-in-l-a-s-mayors-race-keep-the-city-safe>.

¹¹⁸ David Zahniser and Julia Wick, “L.A. Council Approves Bass’ \$13-Billion Budget, Greenlighting Plan to Hire 1,000 Cops,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 18, 2023, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-05-18/mayor-karen-bass-spending-plan-for-cops-and-homelessness-wins-council-approval>.

¹¹⁹ Julia Wick, “Black Lives Matter-L.A. Criticizes Reappointment of LAPD Chief Michel Moore,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 1, 2023, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-02-01/black-lives-matter-l-a-criticizes-reappointment-of-lapd-chief-michel-moore>.

supported proposals to “defund the police.”¹²⁰ In a follow-up survey two years later, 12% of respondents expressed “strong” support for defunding, 19.3% expressed “somewhat” support, and 43.3% expressed “strong” *opposition*.¹²¹ Overall, despite intense scrutiny and criticism, support for the LAPD appeared to remain quite strong, even among the city’s Black and Latino residents. In the same LMU survey from 2022, 69.9% of Black respondents and 63.9% of Latino respondents indicated that they were either “very” or “somewhat” satisfied with the LAPD’s overall performance.¹²² In a poll from the *Los Angeles Times* that same year, 46% of Black respondents and 47% of Latino respondents stated that the number of LAPD officers should increase, while only 27% and 11% respectively indicated that the number should decrease.¹²³ Two new city councilmembers were elected in 2022 on a platform of defunding the LAPD,¹²⁴ but only one of them opposed Mayor Bass’s budget calling for the hiring of 1,000 officers.¹²⁵ The other met with Chief Moore in February 2023 to discuss alternative first responders for nonviolent 911 calls.¹²⁶ Summarizing the meeting, the councilmember stated:

[Chief Moore] said, “Find ways to take my guys off of things that they shouldn’t be doing,” like taking calls for mental health crises or dealing with homelessness. Did we agree on everything? No. Were there things that we agreed on? Yes.¹²⁷

¹²⁰ Thomas and Dorothy Leavey Center for the Study of Los Angeles, *Police Data Brief: 2020 Police and Community Relations Survey* (Loyola Marymount University, 2020), 8-9.

<https://lmu.app.box.com/s/tyouisxda3rah5bhrowv9c46lj06zyok>.

¹²¹ Thomas and Dorothy Leavey Center for the Study of Los Angeles, *Police Data Brief: 2022 Police and Community Relations Survey* (Loyola Marymount University, 2022), 10.

<https://lmu.app.box.com/s/rxjxotx7uaxfs5cm0q07w6m8ignbla26>.

¹²² Thomas and Dorothy Leavey Center, *Police Data Brief: 2022*, 17.

¹²³ Kevin Rector and Alejandra Reyes-Velarde, “Confidence in LAPD Drops Sharply, Poll Finds, but L.A. Voters Don’t Want to Shrink Force,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 6, 2022,

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-06-06/poll-shows-l-a-voters-see-problems-in-lapd-but-shrinking-the-force-isnt-popular>. The remaining respondents indicated that the number of LAPD officers should stay the same.

¹²⁴ David Zahniser, “They Called for Defunding the LAPD. Now They’re Looking to Defeat City Council Members,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 20, 2022, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-04-20/los-angeles-city-council-defund-candidates-look-to-oust-incumbents>.

¹²⁵ David Zahniser and Julia Wick, “L.A. Council Approves Bass’ \$13-Billion Budget, Greenlighting Plan to Hire 1,000 Cops,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 18, 2023, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-05-18/mayor-karen-bass-spending-plan-for-cops-and-homelessness-wins-council-approval>.

¹²⁶ Gustavo Arellano, “A Police Abolitionist City Council Member and the LAPD Union’s Tense Tango,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 10, 2023, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-02-10/hugo-soto-martinez-councilmember-police-abolitionist>.

¹²⁷ Arellano, “A Police Abolitionist.”

Chapter 8. The Perpetuation of the Policing Logic

From the mid-20th century through to the present, the policing logic articulated by Chief Parker has remained at the core of the LAPD's organizational culture. For 25 years following Parker's death, the department was led by his "protégés"¹—Reddin, Davis, and Gates—who remained committed to Parker's "thin blue line" vision of policing. After Willie Williams' brief and ineffectual term, the department was led by another lifetime LAPD officer, Bernard Parks, who hung a picture of Gates on his office wall.² Bratton was the outsider who ushered in the second golden era of the LAPD after Chief Parker's run in the 1950s.³ But while Bratton often presented himself as an innovator and iconoclast, the "broken windows" (BW) theory of policing he implemented with the LAPD was simply a recapitulation of the same broad-scale, proactive enforcement strategies the LAPD has deployed since its inception. Under Bratton's acolytes, Beck and Moore, LAPD practices have started to depart from this dragnet enforcement tradition, but both leaders remain deeply committed to policing's role in proactively "fighting crime," particularly violent crime.

Despite this underlying continuity, the categories embedded in the LAPD policing logic have undergone notable shifts in meaning over the last half century. In particular, operative understandings of the dangerous class and appropriate police tactics have changed over time, shaped by changes in social structural conditions and broad cultural logics dominant in late 20th and early 21st century Los Angeles. These shifts in meaning have resulted in concomitant shifts in LAPD enforcement practices and outcomes over time. This chapter traces both continuity and change in the LAPD policing logic since the mid-20th century, then discusses the implications of these trends for how we understand police reform.

¹ Bernard Galm, *The Impossible Dream: Thomas Bradley*, 1978 interview (Oral History Program, University of California, Los Angeles, 1984), 98.

² Joe Domanick, *Blue: The LAPD and the Battle to Redeem American Policing* (Simon and Schuster, 2015), 122.

³ The term "golden era" is used to reflect the LAPD's enhanced public reputation and role as model police department in each of these periods. It is not a normative statement about the department's quality.

Table 12. The Policing Logic

The Policing Logic
<p>(1) There is a dangerous class that poses a threat to the community.</p> <p>(2) It is the responsibility of the police to manage the threat posed by the dangerous class.</p> <p>(3) Police must address the threat posed by the dangerous class through appropriate proactive enforcement tactics.</p>

Proposition 1: The Dangerous Class

As discussed in Chapter 4, the term *dangerous class* is used to describe the class of individuals viewed as a social threat by dominant groups in Los Angeles and targeted by the LAPD. Following in Parker’s mold, Chief Ed Davis continued to identify “communists” and other radicals as the primary social threat to the community,⁴ a category that bore little relation to the countless non-White residents who continued to suffer the worst of the LAPD’s aggressive and violent enforcement practices. Under Chief Gates, however, a new bipartite threat came to occupy the central role in conceptions of the dangerous class: drugs and “gangs.”⁵ This discursive shift in the LAPD’s operative definition of the dangerous class is key to understanding the department’s broad public support in the late 1980s, despite the continued abuse of Los Angeles’s ever-growing non-White population.

By 1990, the conservative White majority that traditionally supported the LAPD’s aggressive, broad-scale enforcement practices against non-Whites had disappeared, and the city was dominated by a new liberal, multiracial coalition. But while non-White residents now comprised a new majority in the city, many of them shared the same fears of “gang” violence. By positing drugs and “gangs” as the central threat targeted by LAPD enforcement, the department was able to maintain significant support from this new non-White majority, even as LAPD officers continued to employ brutal, dragnet enforcement tactics in non-White neighborhoods.

⁴ See William J. Drummond, “There is More to Chief Davis Than Meets the Ear,” *Los Angeles Times: West Magazine*, August 15, 1971, 7-13.

⁵ See Max Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles: Race, Resistance, and the Rise of the LAPD* (University of North Carolina Press, 2018), 190-216; Daryl F. Gates, *Chief: My Life in the LAPD* (Bantam Books, 1992).

Following the beating of Rodney King and the subsequent uprising, Chief Gates's LAPD was widely repudiated. But future decades would prove that this was a repudiation only of (1) the breadth of individuals targeted as part of the "gang" threat and (2) the enforcement tactics used to combat this threat. A broad, multiracial consensus regarding the threat of "gang" violence would persist, and this consensus would form the bedrock of support for the LAPD under Chief Bratton a decade later.

The enforcement strategies employed by Bratton's LAPD were strikingly similar to those that sparked the Watts uprising in 1965 and the Rodney King uprising in 1992. Like Gates, Bratton identified "gang" violence as the primary threat to the community.⁶ What's more, like all LAPD leaders before him, including Parker and Gates, Bratton posited aggressive "proactive" enforcement of minor crimes as the primary strategy for addressing this threat. There are, however, at least two significant differences in how Bratton's LAPD employed these orthodox practices. First, Bratton provided a new justification for minor crime enforcement grounded in BW theory.⁷ Under Chief Gates, aggressive minor crime enforcement was justified by the purported drug-gang nexus.⁸ Broad sweeps in the mold of "Operation Hammer" would not only pick up "gang" members, but also wipe out the drug networks that fueled "gang" violence. In practice, the sweeps were characterized by the harassment and abuse of tens of thousands of innocent or petty criminal non-White residents, making enemies out of entire neighborhoods. Under BW theory, however, aggressive minor crime enforcement is deployed for the *benefit* of the neighborhood. According to the theory, minor crime and "disorder" strike fear in the "law-abiding" residents of the community and send the message that more serious crime will be tolerated. Aggressive "proactive" enforcement enables the community to "take back" the

⁶ See Charlie Leduff, "For Los Angeles's New Police Chief, A New World," *New York Times*, December 6, 2002, <https://www.nytimes.com/2002/12/06/us/for-los-angeles-s-new-police-chief-a-new-world.html>.

⁷ See William Bratton and Peter Knobler, *Turnaround: How America's Top Cop Reversed the Crime Epidemic* (Random House, 1998).

⁸ See, e.g., Paul Feldman and David Freed, "Police 'Czar' Assigned to Spearhead Assault on Gang-Drug Tie In," *Los Angeles Times*, January 14, 1988, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1988-01-14-me-35932-story.html>.

neighborhood, making the area less attractive for would-be criminals and “gang” members. Second, consistent with the altruistic thrust of BW theory, Bratton’s LAPD brought non-White residents into the community fold, giving them the opportunity to shape the targets and tactics of aggressive minor crime enforcement in their neighborhoods. The tremendous public support for the LAPD under Bratton—the strongest the department had received since the 1950s—illustrates that this was a winning strategy for many non-White residents in Los Angeles, particularly those among the city’s political elite.

In the aftermath of the Ferguson and George Floyd protests, broad support for aggressive minor crime enforcement appeared to recede, and LAPD practices began to shift accordingly. Since 2014, LAPD investigative stops and minor crime arrests have declined precipitously. The Community Safety Partnership (CSP) program, a “community policing” initiative that encourages officers *not* to enforce minor crimes, has been trumpeted by Chief Moore as the “future” of the LAPD.⁹ In recent years, the LAPD has even retreated from use of the “gang” label to signify potential threats in the city.¹⁰

Nevertheless, the LAPD remains committed to proactively combatting potential violent crime. “Data-informed, community-focused policing” (DICFP) represents the department’s new model for addressing potentially violent threats in the city.¹¹ Carried forward from the department’s prior experiences with PredPol and Operation LASER, the DICFP model relies on LAPD data to predict the places and people most at risk of future serious crime, enabling the department to be “more precise and focus on an ever-smaller footprint.”¹² “Community policing” practices are implemented to garner broad community support for targeted enforcement

⁹ Cindy Chang, “LAPD Expands Community Policing Program, Appoints Black Female Deputy Chief,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 27, 2020, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2020-07-27/lapd-expands-community-policing-program-appoints-black-female-deputy-chief>.

¹⁰ See Eric Leonard and Andrew Blankstein, “LAPD Chief Orders Moratorium on Gang Database,” *NBC Los Angeles*, June 19, 2020, <https://www.nbclosangeles.com/investigations/lapd-chief-orders-moratorium-on-gang-database/2383181/>.

¹¹ Los Angeles Police Department, *Data-Informed Community-Focused Policing in the Los Angeles Police Department* (2020).

¹² Los Angeles Police Department, *Data-Informed Community-Focused Policing*, 22.

strategies against these algorithmically determined threats. Racialized gang narratives have long served to channel LAPD gang enforcement toward Black and Latino residents.¹³ But the use of past LAPD data, steeped in the department's long tradition of zealous and racialized minor crime enforcement, ensures that non-White residents will continue to be disproportionately classified among the dangerous class, even as the category narrows, the "gang" label falls away, and LAPD enforcement becomes more "precise."

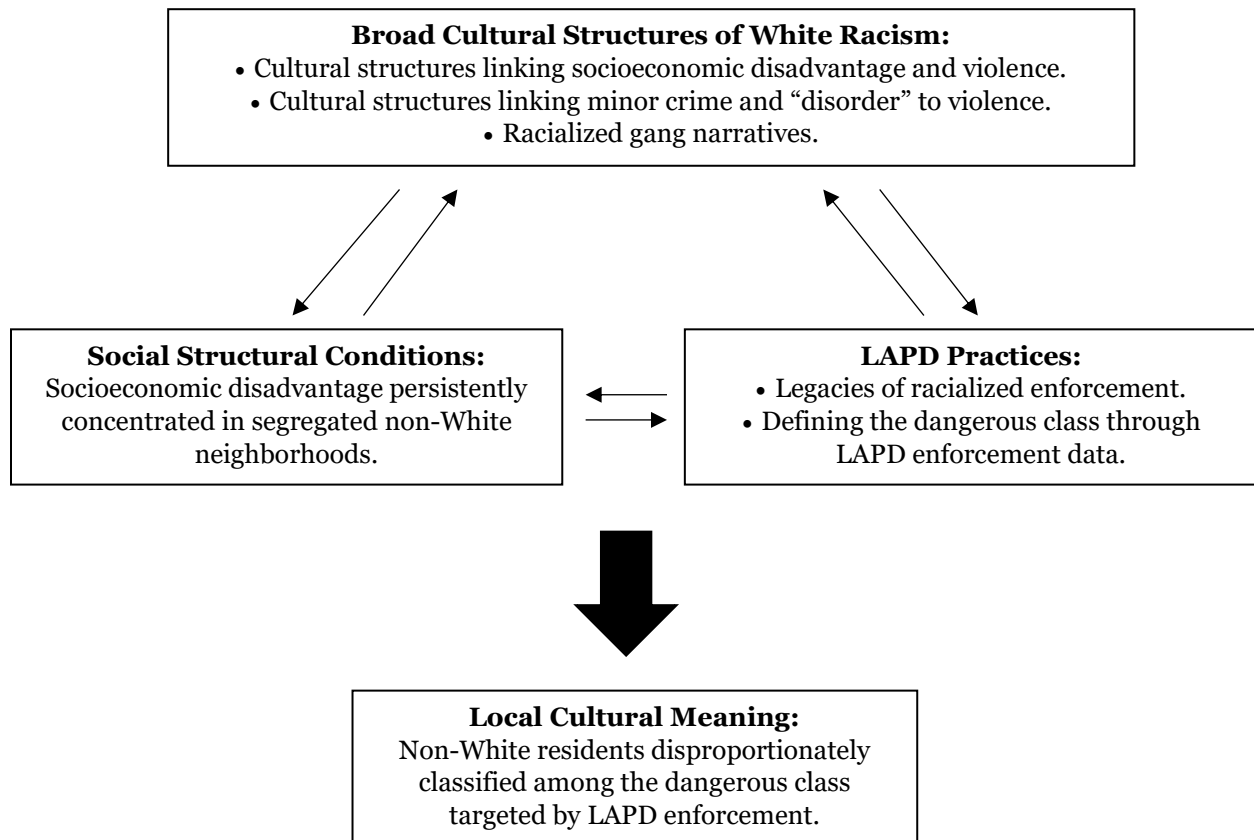
Figure 4 summarizes the broad cultural structures of White racism, LAPD practices, and social structural conditions in late 20th and early 21st century Los Angeles that mutually ensure non-White residents will be disproportionately classified among the dangerous class. While the ethnic composition of many neighborhoods throughout Los Angeles shifted as Latino residents came to comprise a majority of the city population, the basic patterns of residential segregation remained, and non-White residents continue to be disproportionately concentrated in disadvantaged neighborhoods of south and east Los Angeles.¹⁴ Economic conditions in these neighborhoods further deteriorated following the collapse of industrial production in Los Angeles in the 1970s and early 1980s. Coupled with the persistence of cultural narratives positing socioeconomic disadvantage as the source of violent crime,¹⁵ residential segregation ensures that LAPD enforcement will continue to be disproportionately concentrated in Los Angeles's disadvantaged non-White neighborhoods.

¹³ Felker-Kantor, *Policing in Los Angeles*; Ana Muñiz, *Police, Power, and the Production of Racial Boundaries* (Rutgers University Press, 2015).

¹⁴ See Rima Wilkes and John Iceland, "Hypersegregation in the Twenty-First Century," *Demography* 41 (2004): 23-36; Stephen Menendian, Samir Gambhir, and Arthur Gales, *Twenty-First Century Racial Residential Segregation in the United States* (The Other & Belonging Institute at the University of California, Berkeley, 2021), <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/roots-structural-racism>.

¹⁵ See, e.g., Constance L. Rice, "L.A.'s Budding Mogadishus," *Los Angeles Times*, December 23, 2004, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2004-dec-23-oe-rice23-story.html>.

Figure 5. Cultural Structures, Cultural Practices, and Social Structural Conditions Influencing Conceptions of the Dangerous Class in Late 20th and Early 21st Century Los Angeles



Throughout the late 20th and early 21st century, geographically and racially targeted enforcement was further justified through cultural structures linking minor crime and “disorder” to more serious violent crime. Under Chief Gates, drug trafficking was presented as the primary impetus for “gang” violence, and thus zealous enforcement of minor drug crimes became a focal strategy for addressing the “gang” threat. Under Chief Bratton, enforcement strategies were dictated by BW theory, which asserts that minor crime and “disorderly” conditions breed more serious violent crime. Concentrated disadvantage ensured that drug crime and “disorder” would always be more conspicuous in the non-White neighborhoods of south and east Los Angeles. Accordingly, the dominance of these cultural structures within the LAPD further assured that aggressive minor crime enforcement would be concentrated in these

disadvantaged non-White neighborhoods. Moreover, as “gangs” became the archetypal social threat in Los Angeles for both the LAPD and among dominant social groups, racialized gang narratives guaranteed that young Black and Latino men in the city would be disproportionately classified as “gang” members. Each of these factors contributed to the LAPD’s continued legacy of racialized enforcement practices well into the 21st century.

The sustained activism in the wake of the Ferguson and George Floyd protests have severely undermined the legitimacy of these cultural structures. In response to this shift, the LAPD has rolled back enforcement of minor crimes, de-emphasized the “gang” label, and begun to focus more narrowly on threats identified through data-driven algorithms. While these “precision policing” strategies are often presented as an antidote to racially biased policing, the predictions of these algorithms fundamentally depend on LAPD enforcement data tainted by the department’s deep legacy of racialized enforcement. Hence, reliance on these data-driven strategies guarantees that, even as the dangerous class narrows, non-White residents will continue to be disproportionately targeted by LAPD enforcement.

Proposition 2: The Police and the Dangerous Class

Throughout Los Angeles history, policing as an institution has enjoyed widespread, bipartisan, and multiracial support, particularly among the city’s political elite. The police role in addressing the threat of the dangerous class is the foundation of this durable public support. Because the LAPD is defined as the social institution for addressing the threat of the dangerous class, a belief in the existence of a dangerous class becomes an *ipso facto* basis for supporting the LAPD.

Dominant social groups in Los Angeles have always ascribed to the belief that a segment of the city’s population poses a dangerous threat to the rest of the community. Over the second half of the 20th century, the political economy of Los Angeles was completely upended as the city’s conservative White supermajority was supplanted by a new multiracial coalition of

liberals. Yet, this new dominant social group in Los Angeles continued to posit “gang” violence as a dangerous threat necessitating police enforcement. Broad public support for the LAPD under Chief Gates in the 1980s and Chief Bratton in the 2000s was premised on the department’s role in addressing this “gang” threat. Even in 2020, at the height of the defunding movement, support for the LAPD as an institution remained strong, and that support has only grown stronger in subsequent years as fears of violent crime have risen.¹⁶ One of the most widely advocated reforms in the aftermath of the George Floyd protests has been the use of alternative first responders to address nonviolent emergency calls, a proposal supported by Chief Moore and the LAPD officer union because it would “hon[e] the role of officers more closely to crime prevention and response, rather than social services”¹⁷ and “free up officers to focus more on violent crime.”¹⁸ In short, the institutional role of the LAPD continues to be defined in relation to the threat of the dangerous class, both by the department itself and by dominant social groups in Los Angeles.

Proposition 3: Appropriate Proactive Enforcement Tactics

Various figures throughout LAPD history have been credited with originating the principle that police enforcement tactics should be used to proactively prevent future crime. Gates credited Chief Parker; Bratton credited himself. The truth is that neither is correct—proactive crime prevention has been the goal of modern urban police departments since their inception in the mid-19th century. Over the last five decades, even as LAPD enforcement practices underwent notable changes, proactive crime prevention remained the central goal of

¹⁶ See Kevin Rector and Alejandra Reyes-Velarde, “Confidence in LAPD Drops Sharply, Poll Finds, But L.A. Voters Don’t Want to Shrink Force,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 6, 2022, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-06-06/poll-shows-l-a-voters-see-problems-in-lapd-but-shrinking-the-force-isnt-popular>.

¹⁷ Kevin Rector, “Push and Pull over Los Angeles Policing Hits Roadways and Transit,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 18, 2021, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-02-18/lapd-alternative-dispatch>.

¹⁸ David Zahniser, “LAPD Should Stop Handling Many Non-Emergency Calls, Police Union Says,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 1, 2023, <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2023-03-01/lapd-officers-want-to-stop-responding-to-nonviolent-calls>.

the department. All major assessments of the CSP program, the LAPD's cutting-edge "community policing" initiative, have focused on the program's crime prevention benefits.¹⁹ The stated goal of the department's new data-driven, "precision policing" model is to "reduce crime, including gun and gang-related crimes."²⁰ Moreover, like Chief Parker, recent LAPD leaders continue to maintain that punitive enforcement is the only means by which the LAPD can prevent crime—the police are not social workers. Chief Bratton justified the crackdowns on Skid Row homeless by asserting, "My responsibility is the behavior of these individuals. My responsibility is not their housing, not their medical care, not their social needs."²¹ Chief Moore currently supports the expansion of alternative first responders for nonviolent calls because the LAPD is better suited for "crime prevention and response, rather than social services."²² Even CSP officers, including Deputy Chief Tingirides who now heads the LAPD's CSP Bureau, maintain that one of the primary benefits of the CSP program is enhanced community cooperation in facilitating the arrests of serious violent criminals.²³

But while the department has always remained committed to proactive enforcement, conceptions of *appropriate* LAPD tactics have changed considerably over time. Under Chief Gates, brutal, lawless, and indiscriminate enforcement practices were not only condoned—they

¹⁹ UCLA Luskin School of Public Affairs, *Evaluation of the LAPD Community Safety Partnership* (2020). <https://ucla.app.box.com/s/gw60fjldwo9fjb3s4k3fh8ecyh5wz8s>; Lily Robin *et al.*, *The Los Angeles Community Safety Partnership: 2019 Assessment* (Urban Institute, 2019), https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/101827/the_los_angeles_community_safety_partnership_2019_assessment.pdf; Sydney Kahmann *et al.*, "Impact Evaluation of the LAPD Community Safety Partnership," *The Annals of Applied Statistics* 16, no. 5 (2022): 1215-35.

²⁰ Los Angeles Police Department, *Data-Informed Community-Focused Policing*, 9.

²¹ Josh Getlin and Carla Rivera, "Bratton's Plans for Homeless Debated," *Los Angeles Times*, October 31, 2005, <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2005-oct-31-me-nyhomeless31-story.html>.

²² Rector, "Push and Pull."

²³ See Nicole Santa Cruz, "Jordan Downs in Watts Marks Three Years with a Homicide," *Los Angeles Times*, August 28, 2014, <https://homicide.latimes.com/post/jordan-downs-watts-three-years-without-homicide/>; UCLA Luskin, *Community Safety Partnership*, 52. The LAPD's continued commitment to punitive enforcement is undoubtedly shaped by key structural trends within the department, including the incessant buildup of military-style weaponry in the second half of the 20th century and the extensive investments in big data computing in the 21st century. As result of these trends, the department's prodigious material "resources" are nearly universally oriented toward identifying the dangerous class and subduing them by potentially violent means. See William H. Sewell Jr, "A Theory of Structure: Duality, Agency, and Transformation," *American Journal of Sociology* 98, no. 1 (1992): 1-29, on "resources" in the context of cultural analysis.

became a “career-advancement imperative.”²⁴ Under Chief Bratton, the LAPD continued to champion broad-scale enforcement practices, but greater emphasis was placed on policing within the bounds of the law, due in no small part to the LAPD’s mandate to abide by the requirements of the consent decree. Since the Ferguson and George Floyd protests, the LAPD has continued to redefine the boundaries of appropriate tactics, issuing additional directives on enforcement practices that are even more stringent than those dictated by law. LAPD officers are now instructed to employ “procedural justice” in citizen encounters and “de-escalation” tactics prior to using force, and they are restricted from engaging in some otherwise legal consent searches and pretextual stops. LAPD policy limits the use of deadly force to situations in which it was “necessary in defense of human life,” arguably a more exacting standard than the constitutional restrictions established in *Tennessee v. Garner*.²⁵ CSP officers are encouraged to make greater use of their discretionary power *not* to arrest despite legal authority to do so. And LAPD officers are now evaluated not based on how many arrests they make, but the degree to which they “increase trust between the police and the public.”²⁶ Along with the narrowing of the dangerous class, these changes in the operative definition of appropriate tactics have undeniably contributed to the steep declines in LAPD stops, arrests, and serious uses of force over the previous decade. Yet, none of these changes have had a meaningful impact on racial disproportionalities in LAPD enforcement, which persist even as the scale of enforcement contracts.

Understanding Police Reform: Lessons from LAPD History

LAPD history is defined by alternating periods of scandal and reform. During the first half of the 20th century, bribery and corruption scandals kept the department in a near constant state of controversy and turmoil. Chief Parker, whom Tom Bradley described as the LAPD’s first

²⁴ Domanick, *Blue*, 61.

²⁵ *Tennessee v. Garner*, 471 U.S. 1 (1985).

²⁶ Los Angeles Police Department, *Data-Informed Community-Focused Policing*, 9.

significant reform chief,²⁷ brought stability to the department in the 1950s, orienting the department's practices to the policing logic and garnering widespread public support for the department's targeting of non-Whites, organized crime, and political "radicals." This public support was strong enough to withstand even a violent insurrection triggered by LAPD practices, and for nearly three decades after the Watts uprising, the department continued to proudly operate much as it had under Parker's command. But when history repeated and LAPD practices triggered another uprising following the Rodney King beating, public support finally collapsed, and the department was once again thrust into turmoil. The Rampart CRASH scandal less than a decade later compounded the controversy, and shortly thereafter the LAPD was forced into a consent decree mandating reforms to department operations.

Chief Bratton, brought in to implement the consent decree, would usher in the next successful era of LAPD reform, reinvigorating the department's commitment to the policing logic and working with a broader segment of the community to build a wider base of support for the department's enforcement practices. The result was a success, and the LAPD under Bratton enjoyed stronger public support than any point since the 1950s. The Ferguson and George Floyd protests, however, brought heightened scrutiny to law enforcement agencies across the country, and over the last decade the LAPD has confronted some of the strongest challenges to its legitimacy in its entire history. The LAPD has been responsive to these challenges, narrowing the class of individuals targeted for LAPD enforcement and adopting policy changes to bring enforcement practices in better alignment with the expectations of dominant social groups in Los Angeles. These reform efforts have also proved successful, and the LAPD once again enjoys widespread public support.

These periods of scandal and reform throughout LAPD history directly correlate with the degree of alignment between LAPD practices, the policing logic, and conceptions of the

²⁷ Galm, *Impossible Dream*, 63.

dangerous class and appropriate police practices among dominant social groups in Los Angeles. Periods of scandal are characterized by misalignment, when LAPD practices either (1) fail to conform to the policing logic, (2) target residents who are not perceived as a threat by dominant social groups, and/or (3) contravene prevailing conceptions of appropriate enforcement tactics. Examples of the first kind include the corruption scandals of the early 20th century and the Rampart CRASH scandal, in which the LAPD's core institutional role as protector of the community was thrown into question. The periods following the Rodney King uprising in 1992, the Ferguson protests in 2014, and the George Floyd protests in 2020 provide examples of the second and third kind. During these periods, while support for the LAPD as an institution remained strong, incongruities were revealed between LAPD practices and prevailing public conceptions of the dangerous class and appropriate police tactics.

Reform, on the other hand, consists of bringing LAPD practices into alignment with both the policing logic itself and prevailing interpretations of the logic's embedded categories among Los Angeles residents. This alignment has been present during every period in which the LAPD has enjoyed broad public support, including Chief Parker's tenure in the 1950s, Chief Bratton's tenure in the 2000s, and today. This understanding of reform makes clear why "community policing" has been consistently posited as the key to reform success since at least the Watts uprising in 1965. As it has been implemented throughout LAPD history, "community policing" has been designed to cultivate broad public support for proactive enforcement against a mutually identified dangerous class. The "Basic Car Plan," initially implemented by Chief Ed Davis in 1970 and widely regarded as the LAPD's first true "community policing" program, was designed to divide residents of Los Angeles's non-White neighborhoods against themselves and establish a broader consensus regarding the line between "We, the police and the people of Watts, [and] the criminal army."²⁸ Over 30 years later, the "spirit of community policing"

²⁸ Edward M. Davis, *Staff One: A Perspective on Effective Police Management* (Prentice-Hall, 1978), 136.

instilled by Bratton and carried forth by his successors was motivated by the very same goal of promoting a broader consensus among non-White residents regarding the LAPD's targets and tactics. The CSP program represents the apotheosis of this strategy. To bolster support in non-White neighborhoods traditionally targeted with heavy LAPD enforcement, the CSP program eschews minor crime enforcement, focuses narrowly on preventing violent crime, and encourages officers to employ enforcement practices that are not only legal, but also promote public trust and legitimacy. When reform is understood as the alignment of LAPD practices with prevailing conceptions of the dangerous class and appropriate police practices, it is easy to see why these "community policing" programs would be presented as the linchpin strategy for achieving reform.

This understanding of reform also provides the key to answering the two primary research questions that motivated the present study:

1. How has police culture changed over time in response to reform? When it comes to police culture, what changes and what remains the same?
2. How can change and stability in police culture help us to understand both the potential for reforms to improve police outcomes and the persistence of racialized police harm over time?

When it comes to change and continuity in police culture in response to reform, LAPD history illustrates that what remains the same is the policing logic, which has formed the core of LAPD organizational culture and continued to structure LAPD practice from the mid-20th century to today. What has changed throughout various periods of reform are the LAPD's operative definitions of the dangerous class and appropriate police practices, which have shifted in response to changes in prevailing interpretations of these categories among Los Angeles residents.

Changes in the LAPD’s operative definitions of the dangerous class and appropriate practices are the source of the improved outcomes associated with successful reform. Over the last decade, the dangerous class targeted by LAPD enforcement has narrowed considerably. A number of recent LAPD strategies reflect this trend, including the scaling back of aggressive minor crime enforcement, the expansion of the CSP program, the rise of data-driven “precision policing,” and the promotion of alternative first responders to take police off non-violent emergency calls. This narrowing of the dangerous class has resulted in steep declines in investigative stops and minor crime arrests, two key outcomes advocated by police reformers in the wake of the Ferguson and George Floyd protests. Similarly, changes in the LAPD’s operative definition of appropriate police practices, reflected in the adoption of de-escalation tactics, revised use of force standards, and numerous other policy changes over the last several years, are likely a key driver of recent reductions in officer involved shootings and other serious uses of force.

However, the LAPD’s continued commitment to the policing logic ensures that the harms associated with police enforcement will continue to be disproportionately concentrated among Los Angeles’s Black and Latino residents. This is because, although the policing logic is facially agnostic and race-neutral with regard to the dangerous class, the logic is deployed by the LAPD in the context of entrenched social structural inequalities; deep legacies of broad-scale, racialized enforcement; and broad cultural structures that link the socioeconomic disadvantages disproportionately suffered by the city’s non-White residents with increased risk of crime and violence. Racial disparities in LAPD enforcement are thus an inevitable byproduct of the interlocking structures of the policing logic, local social structural conditions, broad cultural structures, and the LAPD’s own historical legacies of racialized enforcement. The LAPD’s recent history corroborates this claim. In the last decade, LAPD stops, arrests, and officer involved shootings have all declined, but racial disparities in these enforcement practices have only

increased. Even as the scale of LAPD enforcement diminishes and the department becomes less violent, non-White residents of Los Angeles continue to disproportionately suffer police harm.

These findings hold important implications for contemporary debates between reformists and abolitionists regarding the possibilities and limitations of police reform. Reformists are correct in asserting that changes to police culture are possible, and that these changes can produce meaningful reductions in police harm. The narrowing of the dangerous class has averted tens of thousands of instances of LAPD harassment and arrest, and shifts in operative definitions of appropriate LAPD practices have likely saved lives. However, reformists are wrong to approach police use of force and racial disproportionalities in enforcement as “*discrete, mistaken excess...*[that] can be redressed and reformed,” as abolitionist Dylan Rodríguez discerningly describes.²⁹ Use of force is guaranteed by the LAPD’s commitment to punitive enforcement as the strategy for addressing the threat of the dangerous class. While use of force might diminish or become less violent over time, the LAPD’s institutional role is meting out punishment to people who are not already in custody, which necessarily entails the use of physical force. Furthermore, cultural and structural conditions in Los Angeles ensure that poor Black and Latino residents will be disproportionately classified among the dangerous class, and therefore these residents will continue to suffer disproportionate harm from LAPD enforcement.

The inevitability of racial and economic disparities in police enforcement supports the abolitionist argument that the primary function of policing is racial and economic subordination. It is undeniably true that the LAPD throughout its history has heaped excessive harm on already disadvantaged non-White neighborhoods in Los Angeles, further contributing to their downward spiral over the course of the 20th century. It is also undeniably true that any future harms of LAPD enforcement will continue to be disproportionately suffered by residents of these same non-White neighborhoods, regardless of how LAPD enforcement practices may

²⁹ Dylan Rodríguez, “Abolition as Praxis of Human Being: A Foreword,” *Harvard Law Review* 132 (2018): 1593.

change over time. But abolitionists are wrong to assume that because the LAPD *functions* as an institution for perpetuating racial and economic subordination, the LAPD's *purpose* must also be racial and economic subordination. The LAPD's purpose is defined by the policing logic, which is fundamentally agnostic regarding the dangerous class. This observation is key to understanding how the LAPD has maintained significant support among non-White residents, particularly city elites, throughout the department's history, even as it has functioned as a tool of racial subordination. Both the LAPD and Los Angeles residents identify the department's role as targeting the dangerous class, and a significant segment of Los Angeles's non-White residents share in the belief of a dangerous class. By defining the department in terms of the race-neutral policing logic, the LAPD can easily dismiss claims from police abolitionists that the department is inherently racist, and the department can continue to garner support from non-White residents seeking protection from dangerous threats in the city, even as it continues to perpetuate racialized harm.

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