

FROM THE AGE OF DRAGNET TO THE AGE OF THE INTERNET: TRACKING CHANGES WITHIN THE LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT

Wellford W. Wilms, UCLA School of Public Policy and Education

Following the Rodney King beating in 1991, rioters later burned and looted South Central Los Angeles on the news that the accused Los Angeles Police officers had been acquitted. It seemed that things could hardly get worse. But the King beating only served to focus public attention on the problems of policing a huge and diverse city like Los Angeles. It was the beginning of a series of wrenching changes that would all but paralyze the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) for more than a decade.

Following the King beating, then-Mayor Tom Bradley established the Christopher Commission (named after chairman, former Secretary of State Warren Christopher) to delve into the underlying causes. The Commission sought to reveal the roots of the LAPD's problems. According to the Commission, since William Parker had become chief in 1950 and took steps to professionalize the department, officers learned to respond to crime aggressively and swiftly. Strapped for resources to police a huge city of 465 square miles, Parker relied on efficiency to squeeze production from his officers. He began the practice that persists today of evaluating officers on statistical performance – response time, number of calls handled, citations issued and arrests made.

Not surprisingly, the LAPD began to pride itself on being a high profile paramilitary organization with “hard-nosed” officers, an image that was greatly enhanced by the radio and TV program, “Dragnet.” But while the Christopher Commission acknowledged that aggressive, statistics-driven policing produced results, it did so at a high cost, pitting residents against police creating a “siege mentality” within the department (Independent Commission, 1991, p. xiv). One of the central recommendations of the Commission was that the LAPD must embrace community policing, a model of policing that forges ties between the police and residents.

The Study

These turbulent times seemed ideal to gain access to the department to try to understand how a large paramilitary organization responds to changes in its environment.¹ The immense pressure on the LAPD offered an opportunity to conduct “action research,” a method developed by organizational psychologist Chris Argyris to help organizations become more effective by providing feedback on their performance (Argyris, 1978). We designed a study to create feedback loops up and down the chain of command to help department leaders understand how policies establishing community policing were received within the LAPD and how well its structure and culture were aligned to support them. We agreed with then-Chief of Police Willie Williams, to keep the research results confidential until they had been fed back to the department. But after feeding them back to key people in the organization, the results would be published to keep policy leaders and the public informed. In addition to helping the police department

improve and keeping policy leaders informed, we hoped to develop a model partnership between the city's two premier universities and the LAPD.

We began conducting research in 1994 and became known as the "Change Management Study Team." Our initial challenge was to become accepted and trusted so that we could have access to the inner-workings of the department. Only with an "insider's" view could we identify and understand meaningful data that could be systematically gathered, analyzed and fed back to the department. We consciously decided against calling ourselves "consultants" because advice from outsiders is usually resented and rarely heeded. Rather, we defined ourselves as "mirrors" to the organization. We assumed that if LAPD managers and employees were to become more conscious of changes taking place within the organization, they would naturally make more informed decisions. We knew that if the project were to succeed, LAPD personnel would have to take responsibility for any decisions about changes if they were to endure. Members of the research team were given wide access. Passes provided us entry to all LAPD facilities at any time, day or night, and a special directive from the Chief of Police enabled us to go on ride-alongs without supervision. Between 1994 and 2000, we went on more than 100 ride-alongs, observed work in individual stations, and periodically interviewed executives and employees up and down the chain of command, while taking hundreds of pages of field notes. We also developed a survey instrument with captains who commanded nine of the 18 divisions to tap a variety of employee perceptions (sworn officers and civilians) that they deemed important. The surveys were conducted three times between 1996 and 2000.

We fed back the data to the divisions and to the Chief of Police (in aggregate form). We also gathered data on the reactions of executives, managers and employees while we conducted briefings for chiefs, command officers, and employees for additional clues about how the organization worked. All of the quantitative and qualitative data were coded in electronic form for computerized analysis.

Precipitating Events (1992-2003)

The Williams Era

From 1991 onward, the LAPD was in constant turmoil. In 1992, a change to the City Charter limited the Chief of Police to one five-year term with the possibility of one additional term. In 1992, Daryl Gates, who had led the Department for 14 years, resigned under pressure. He had been popular with rank-and-file officers. Gates was "a cop's chief" and he supported his officers, frequently criticizing the powerful *Los Angeles Times* and the City's political leaders in public.

Willie L. Williams, Jr., the first outsider to head the Department since the late 1940s, replaced Gates and became the LAPD's 51st Chief on June 30, 1992. Williams was brought to Los Angeles from Philadelphia to implement community policing as the Christopher Commission had recommended. He had been credited with successfully implementing community policing in Philadelphia, and his outgoing personal style was seen by many as an asset in bringing members of the Los Angeles community closer to

the LAPD. The new Chief began by revitalizing and expanding the Basic Car Plan from 122 to 168 cars, establishing community police advisory boards across the city, and developing a strategic plan called Commitment to Action.

In 1993, Richard Riordan was inaugurated as Mayor on the pledge to greatly expand the police department. The City received a large grant from the U.S. Department of Justice in 1995 to hire and train 3,000 police officers to augment the buildup. In 1994, the O.J. Simpson murder trial began. Revelations about slipshod handling of evidence, the Department's substandard scientific lab, and self-serving and racist comments by Detective Mark Fuhrman, again cast a dark shadow upon the LAPD.

In the early years of his administration, Williams was one of Los Angeles' most popular officials and he attracted considerable support for the idea of community policing from elected officials and community leaders. However, Los Angeles' political environment was highly charged. The new Chief soon drew criticism for implementing these reforms too slowly. In 1996, the Department's first Inspector General was hired, the result of a recommendation by the Christopher Commission. But high-level managers began to take a "wait and see" attitude because of their lack of confidence in Williams.

The perception within the Department was that it was drifting. Despite a large investment of time and effort to create a strategic plan, Commitment to Action was generally ignored at the upper levels of the Department. Most managers claimed that it was too ambitious to be useful, and with 37 unranked goals, it lacked focus. But despite widespread agreement that the strategic plan was without focus, many captains described how they used the plan's very lack of focus to advance their own area goals that could easily be aligned with some of the plan's 37 unranked priorities. Their behavior was an early and serendipitous finding that revealed the central role the captains play in the management of officers under their command. We take up that issue in greater detail later in this paper.

Despite Williams' public popularity, he lost support internally because of a widely publicized account that revealed he was given free rooms in a Las Vegas casino, a gift that he publicly denied. His denial only confirmed what many LAPD officers already believed – that "east coast" police were inherently corrupt. Frustrated with the slow pace of change the Los Angeles Police Commission refused to re-appoint Williams to a second five-year term.

The Parks Era

In August 1997, the Los Angeles Police Commission appointed Bernard Parks as the City's 53rd Chief of Police.² Parks immediately launched a blizzard of new initiatives adding to the existing workload with which the Department was already having difficulty coping. Parks removed the rank of Assistant Chief and took the patrol function away from the Captain I position (then called "patrol captain") and gave it to the Captain III who commanded each area. He also introduced FASTRAC (Focus, Accountability, Strategy, Teamwork, Response and Coordination), a method modeled on New York's

“COMPSTAT” to focus attention systematically on patterns of crime as a basis for action, and he implemented a new complaint system. Parks also tightened up on discipline, and issued a flurry of administrative orders on subjects ranging from the Department reorganization to community policing, personnel investigations, Basic Car realignment, domestic violence, and others.

His decision in 1998 to send 168 senior lead officers back to the field angered a large number of vocal Los Angeles residents because these senior lead officers had become points of contact with the Department for many residents. They had become the symbols of community policing.³ Removing the senior lead officers was a blow to many of the Department’s staunch advocates of community policing, and many residents regarded it as a huge step backward. But Parks said publicly that he believed that responsibility for community policing had to be spread throughout the Department’s ranks and not limited to the senior leads.

Despite Parks’ public comments about community policing, it was common knowledge within the Department that Parks was not an advocate. Accordingly, Parks removed community-policing responsibilities from the senior lead officers and reassigned them to the field. Pressure grew to reinstate the senior lead officers. Eventually, in 2000, the Los Angeles Police Commission told Parks to put them back in their old positions. But the public perception was that Parks was moving too slowly. Finally, in March 2001, Riordan ordered Parks to reinstate the senior lead officers announcing, “Community police officers are the bedrock that unites our neighborhoods with the officers who are sworn to protect them. I am proud to announce today that...community policing is back.” (*Los Angeles Times*, March 14, 2001).

However, the image of the LAPD was not always one of friction and dysfunction. In 1997 the Department was once more in the public eye, now in a positive way for the professional way it handled the North Hollywood shootout in which two heavily armored bank robbers were killed by LAPD officers. Later in 1998 the Department again gained public approval for its handling of a shooting at a Jewish community center.

But in late 1998, the Rampart scandal, ironically discovered and investigated by the Department, drew it into a bruising public debate over increased civilian oversight. The scandal reversed any forward motion the Department may have regained. In early 1998, the Department’s internal control systems had triggered an inquiry into cocaine that was missing from the Property Division in Parker Center. A management audit determined that the cocaine had in fact been stolen. An LAPD task force identified officer Rafael Perez, who was assigned to the Rampart Area anti-gang unit (CRASH), as the suspect and he was arrested.⁴ It soon became evident that other suspects were closely associated as friends or working partners. Events surrounding the investigations produced a momentous public debate that once again placed the Los Angeles Police Department under intense scrutiny.

In 2001, after months of negotiation, the city entered into a consent decree with the U.S. Department of Justice. The Department said that it had discovered evidence of a “pattern or practice” of civil rights violations. It required the LAPD to make changes in its systems of management and supervision, including use-of-force investigations, collecting racial data on those who are apprehended, and improving the way in which complaints are taken. The consent decree also contains requirements for a system to track problem officers.

Hahn and Parks

In 2001 Richard Riordan left office. Later, in mid-2001, James Hahn, who was elected mayor with strong support from the Los Angeles Police Protective League, took office. Hahn appointed four new members to the Los Angeles Police Commission. He was clear in his support for a compressed work schedule (a campaign promise he had made to the League in return for its support) and for community policing.

The new Mayor had drawn important political support from Los Angeles’ African American community where Parks also had considerable influence. Early in Hahn’s term, it appeared that he supported Parks as Chief of Police. But Parks seemed to go out of his way to antagonize the Police Protective League whose leaders had supported the Mayor. Continuing a pattern of adversarial labor relations, Parks, in 1998, publicly characterized the League’s board of directors as “nine tired old men” who were out of touch with their members. “They’re dated and stuck in a time warp,” Parks charged (*Los Angeles Times*, August 12, 1998). The League, in turn, had likened Parks in its monthly publication to Saddam Hussein and the Ayatollah Khomeini.

To some, the fracas appeared to be just union politics. And Parks and his supporters characterized it that way, obscuring the seriousness of issues brought forth by the League – that the disciplinary system needed overhauling, working conditions had deteriorated, and that morale among the rank and file had plummeted. These were the same issues that our preliminary study had reported to Parks first in 1998 and later made public in 2000.

In late 2001, the Mayor brought the Chief and League together to try to patch up relationships, but Hahn sidestepped the issues that the League had raised. A few weeks later the League charged that, according to a poll it sponsored, 93 percent of its officers voted “no confidence” in the Chief of Police (*Los Angeles Times*, January 18, 2002). The following week the Mayor issued a letter to the League chastising it for waging a political campaign against the Chief.

Parks continued to come under fire from the League, and later from the federal monitor who was overseeing the consent decree, for dragging his feet on steps to reform the Department. In its May 15, 2002 report, the federal monitor charged that the LAPD had failed to make the agree-upon changes and worse, that efforts were being made within the Department to undermine its authority (*Los Angeles Times*, May 15, 2002). In early February 2002, in a surprise move, Hahn announced his opposition to Parks’ reappointment for a second five-year term. The Mayor said that Parks had not done

enough to fight crime, to reform the LAPD, to improve officer morale, or to implement community policing. In early April 2002 the Los Angeles Police Commission voted four to one against rehiring Parks and opened a national search for a new Chief of Police. After a national search, former New York City Police Commissioner, William J. Bratton was sworn in on October 25, 2002 as Los Angeles' 54th Police Chief.

Findings

I have organized the findings around a concept called “force field” analysis developed by industrial psychologist, Kurt Lewin. Lewin thought of organizations' performance as being driven by some forces and restrained by others. Where these “driving” and “restraining” forces met he called the “force field.” It is a useful concept because the LAPD's high levels of performance in some areas and low levels in others are products of significant driving and restraining forces. Knowing these forces and how they operate, we reasoned, should help the Department reach higher levels of organizational performance.

Driving Forces

We identified four driving forces that produce positive performance within the LAPD. Table 1 summarizes these findings.

Police Officers' Altruism and Mission

Throughout the course of our study, it became clear that most officers are guided by altruistic values. Most say they are in police work to make the community safer and to help people by fighting crime. Most believe that proactive police work (arresting people and putting criminals in jail) is a means to this altruistic end. Until recently, most officers also viewed police work as a good career (although the percent has declined since 1998).

Quality of Worklife – Teamwork and Job Satisfaction

The quality of work life at the area (division) level is another driving force, although it too has declined since 1998. When we began our surveys in 1996, the vast majority of the officers gave high marks to their captains' leadership, although these ratings declined as Chief Parks exerted increasing management control. Relationships between officers and their immediate supervisors remained favorable and stable across all three surveys taken in the 1996-2000 period.

Most officers also reported being treated with dignity and respect in their areas, a critical ingredient of a positive work environment. Also, most rated their areas as outstanding places to work and said they feel part of a team. But these figures have eroded since 1998.

Inclusiveness

Most LAPD officers described their areas as inclusive places to work where people from many different backgrounds are welcome. Most agreed that their areas have a good mix of employees – with men and women of various ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Despite a public perception of the LAPD as being racist and sexist, we

found very little evidence to support this view. While some officers said that diversifying the Department had produced a lower quality workforce, this issue does not seem to be a “hot button” item for most of them. Rather, there appears to be an acceptance of the steps being taken to bring more women and officers of color into the Department.

Support for Community Policing

Most LAPD officers embrace the principles of community policing. The overwhelming majority understands and agrees with the concept as partnering with the community, understanding citizens’ priorities and concerns, and taking responsibility for a specific territory. And most agreed that community policing offers distinct benefits – effective police service and reducing the potential for violence. They believe that the Department should continue to implement it.

Restraining Forces

Just as the four driving forces increase performance, five key restraining forces work in opposition – restricting the LAPD’s performance. Table 2 summarizes these findings.

Feelings of Abandonment

Most officers say that support from politicians, the media, and members of the community, is weak and declining. Officers complain bitterly that radio, TV, and the newspapers sensationalize and distort high profile cases. They think that elected officials are overly concerned with being “politically correct” to protect their own careers. They also complain about the unwillingness of the district attorney to prosecute and about a judiciary that fails to keep criminals off the street.

Leadership

Most officers gave extremely low ratings to Chief Bernard Parks’ leadership. (We were not allowed to ask about Chief Willie Williams’s leadership.) While Parks seemed unperturbed by the results, explaining them as a natural reaction to his many new orders and initiatives, our research revealed a stiffening resistance throughout the organization.

Though Parks claimed that captains had a great deal of autonomy, most officers believed that he had undermined their authority by adding so much to their workload. Relationships between officers and captains had seriously eroded between 1996 and 2000 – with officers’ rankings of their captains’ leadership falling 25 percentage points. Similarly, the supervisors’ increased workload and the removal of their discretion in handling complaints also began to erode working relationships between officers and their supervisors.

Discipline and the “1.28” Complaint System

A second restraining force is the officers’ increasing fear of unfair or capricious discipline. The introduction of a new complaint system in early 1998 known as the “1.28” added to officers’ lack of confidence in getting fair treatment. This system, recommended by the Christopher Commission but never implemented until 1998,

requires a thorough investigation of every complaint lodged against officers. It removes the discretion once used by supervisors and captains on how to handle complaints at a lower level.

The “1.28” is hated by the vast majority of officers, whose anger spilled over to Parks who implemented it. Most officers think the system is unfair and gives undue power to citizens who can make unfounded complaints without penalty. Most officers are convinced that unfounded complaints cannot be stopped once they are in the system and that unresolved complaints will damage their careers.

Fear of Punishment

The cumulative impact of officers’ feeling a lack of support from citizens, politicians and the media, a lack of leadership from the Chief to their captains, and an unfair disciplinary system all but paralyzed the Department in making needed changes. Nowhere can this be seen more clearly than in the fact that 80 percent of all officers say they fear being punished for making an honest mistake. Most officers say that the “1.28” discourages pro-active policing because officers mistrust the system and fear its consequences.

Eroding Morale and Job Satisfaction

Until 1998, high levels of officer morale and job satisfaction served as a driving force. Morale then began to plummet and became a force that restrained change in the Department. Since 1998, job satisfaction, teamwork, and on-the-job initiative declined markedly. Not surprisingly, an alarmingly high percent of officers reported being burned out in their jobs and were ready to leave the Department if they had the chance.

Conclusions

I have listed below the four main conclusions from our study and the recommendations that flow from them. Finally, I discuss the reactions of Chief William Bratton to them.

1. The LAPD as an open system

Many think of the LAPD as being autonomous, but it is not. The LAPD is much more of an “open system” – existing in a constant exchange with its environment and depending on many other agencies for resources and policies necessary to provide police services. It is a dynamic system that is always undergoing change.

At the heart of this system is a continuing struggle among a wide variety of stakeholders over budgetary and policy control. Authority for budgetary and Department policy is widely dispersed among a wide variety of actors – the Mayor, 15 City Council members, and members of the Police Commission. In addition, there are special interest groups like the Police Protective League, the American Civil Liberties Union, and lawyers who specialize in representing clients with lawsuits against LAPD. Each stakeholder attempts to influence policies that affect the Department and to manipulate the media to promote its viewpoint.

As pressures to make the Department more accountable have mounted, politics have influenced decisions formerly reserved for the Chief, who, until Willie Williams, was insulated by Civil Service. In 1991, Los Angeles voters passed “Proposition F,” stripping the Chief of this protection. Proposition F made the Chief directly accountable to the Police Commission (whose members serve at the pleasure of the Mayor).

A powerful Department culture that has developed over the past half century has produced a set of beliefs and values that restrain change. Most officers have a strong sense of duty to the community and the desire to be regarded and valued as professionals. But they also resist external political pressures on the Department out of the conviction that politics and policing do not mix.

2. Using Control to Manage

As the environment has become more turbulent, it has become extremely difficult for any single executive to manage the large bureaucracy alone. Most recently, Bernard Parks believed that he could manage the Department mainly through the use of his authority exercised through the chain of command and through discipline. Control is trained into LAPD officers because citizens want their police officers to know how to use reasonable force to maintain civic order. Its use is reinforced daily on-the-job and it pervades the Department. Top-down management control is the norm for the organization.

Except for a brief and unsuccessful period when Willie Williams was Chief, every chief in recent memory has managed the Department with varying degrees of coercive authority. Orders are given from above and carried out below. Control is also exercised through the Department’s disciplinary system. Chiefs aggressively guard their prerogative for exclusive control over discipline.

This study shows, however, that relying exclusively on control to manage employees seriously reduces their opportunities to exercise their own initiative and to participate in decision making. Worse, it turns employees against their managers, restraining the Department’s ability to change and improve.

3. Control and the Interaction with Citizens

Because control is so deeply embedded in police behavior, officers instinctively interact with citizens in a manner that may seem imperious or dictatorial. The effect is to fuel stereotypes on both sides. As a result, the opportunity to establish mutual understanding and trust is lost.

The LAPD’s aggressive policing, begun a half century ago and measured in terms of efficiency, almost guaranteed that many arrests would be for minor infractions, that physical force would be used frequently, and that few productive relationships would be formed between the police and the community. It also insured the likelihood that citizens would become alienated from, and skeptical of, the police. In time, the beliefs necessary to support such aggressive policing became the underpinnings of a “new” LAPD culture, which is still visible today. As the Christopher Commission noted:

LAPD officers are trained to command and to confront, not to communicate. Regardless of their training, officers who are expected to produce high citation and arrest statistics and low response times do not also have time to explain their actions, to apologize when they make a mistake, or even to ask about problems in a neighborhood (Independent Panel, 1991).

In view of Los Angeles' changing racial composition where its "minorities" have become a "majority," it is easy to see how mistrust and tension between the police and the community have developed. The effect has been for the Department to behave more as a "closed" than an "open" system. Once conflict breaks out between the Department and external agencies like the Mayor, City Council, or special interests like the American Civil Liberties Union or community groups, the differences quickly lead to polarization and more conflict. The natural behavior for the Department, like any other organism that is threatened, is to turn inward and close off communication.

4. A Time for Leadership

The vast majority of LAPD officers have chosen police work for altruistic reasons and they support the principles of community policing. When asked about their own values, most reflect the Department motto, "To Protect and to Serve."

Our findings make it clear that most officers take their greatest pleasure from helping people and serving communities by fighting crime. And, according to the most recent survey, the overwhelming majority of officers would report serious misconduct of fellow officers. They understand that Department policy needs to be followed when apprehending criminals.

Federal court orders mandating racial and gender goals in the Department are supported by most officers. Most embrace the diversified direction in which the Department is headed. Officers of all backgrounds appear to accept one another. Of the thousands of comments provided by officers about problems they experience on-the-job, only a very small number mentioned race or gender discrimination.

Despite sliding morale and job satisfaction over the past five years, most officers take pride in working for the Department. They, along with the citizens of Los Angeles, are ready for new leadership.

Recommendations

Each of the following recommendations aims to reduce forces that restrain the Department from higher levels of performance and in their place create new driving forces that build on the LAPD's strengths.

1. Lead changes from the top, middle and bottom of the organization

Leadership to set the vision and the organization's goals must come from the top of the Los Angeles Police Department – the Police Commission, the Chief of Police, and the command staff. Demands of Los Angeles political leaders are also focused at the apex

of the Department where they must be sorted out and interpreted if the organization is to function effectively.

At the same time, the captains who command the 18 geographic areas must feel part of, and share in, the organization's vision and goals. Since they are close to the day-to-day problems presented by crime, the captains have much to contribute to formulating the Department's goals. And, to the extent that their knowledge is valued, they will become committed to the Department's goals. The captains are a critical link in the chain of command because they, and lieutenants and sergeants, deploy most of the Department's resources to achieve its goals. Rank-and-file officers must also feel part of the organization's vision and embrace its goals so that resources are aligned up and down the chain of command.

Finally, the League can be an important ally and a constructive force for change if it is brought into the decision making process. Unfortunately, the League has never been considered a potential ally by the LAPD. To the extent that the League is considered at all, or included in decisions, it has been included only after the fact, that invariably leads to needless conflict. Excluding the League from issues affecting employees misses an opportunity to make use of League's leaders' knowledge (and their political support) to build commitment inside and outside of the organization for necessary changes.

2. Redesign the LAPD's work systems to include community policing activities as the means of producing cultural changes.

Much has been written about changing the LAPD's "command and control" culture, one that has proven remarkably resistant to change. But to change an organization's culture, its underlying work systems that govern employees' daily routines must first be altered. An organization's daily work routines exert enormous power in shaping and maintaining its culture.

The elements of community policing still exist in the LAPD's organization – the Basic Car plan, the senior lead officers, and the 18 Community Police Advisory Boards. What is clear is that if community policing is to be developed and sustained, it must be systematically built into the core work processes of the Department. It must be reflected in the day-to-day routines of police officers. Evidence of processes that engage citizens and police in productive crime reduction (leads about criminal activity emanating from citizens, incidents of problem-solving, etc.) must be identified, measured and reported, along with traditional measures like arrests and use of force.

While implementing community policing has been far more difficult than imagined, it holds great promise for the future of the city and for legitimizing the use of the LAPD's coercive police power. Embracing the concept may enable the Department to break down generations of hostility among the poorer parts of the city by rebuilding relationships horizontally with citizens.

3. Rebuild confidence in disciplinary system by redesigning the citizen complaint process

Even before the introduction of the new “1.28” complaint system, the vast majority of officers mistrusted the Department’s disciplinary process, especially when cases went beyond the divisional level. When we began surveying officers in 1996, most said they trusted that their supervisors would support them if they made an honest mistake. And most regarded their captains as good leaders with integrity.

However, the current complaint system, recommended by the Christopher Commission and implemented by order of the Police Commission by Chief Bernard Parks, is truly hated by most officers. It requires that every complaint (save the blatantly frivolous) be investigated, resolved, and reviewed by the Chief of Police. Officers know that the system has stripped supervisors and captains of authority to resolve complaints at the divisional level. They believe the system leaves them vulnerable to arbitrary and capricious decisions by the bureaus, Internal Affairs, and the top command staff. While complaints are under investigation (a process that takes from 9-12 months) officers with complaints against them cannot transfer or be promoted. And although officers have been told that unsubstantiated complaints will not count against them, these complaints are filed in permanent personnel records. Experience with the complaint system over the past four years has shown it to be a step in the right direction. But the system needs to be modified to insure that officers feel it is fair and that they will not be singled out for punishment.

Afterward: Bratton Responds to the Report

Between 1997 and 2000 we briefed Chief Parks repeatedly on the emerging findings and urged him to adopt a “the buck stops here” philosophy. By taking credit for the good news and responsibility for the bad news, he could lead the Department through a difficult time. He chose instead to ignore the study’s findings and lost his job for most of the reasons we had tried to bring to his attention. In the summer of 2002, William Bratton telephoned me, asking about the report. I sent him a copy and he read it. After having been appointed Chief in October 2002, he invited us to present the findings and recommendations to the Department’s command officers (captains and above) at a half-day conference. At that meeting Bratton described the study to his command officers as “the blueprint for the Department.” Some months later in a meeting at UCLA, Bratton acknowledged that he had implemented nearly all of the report’s recommendations.

While it is too early to fully assess the impact Bratton has had upon the LAPD, it is clear that violent crime in Los Angeles has fallen by 25 percent over the past year. Also, Bratton’s aggressive public relations campaign has helped the Department to regain some of the public credibility it had lost. He has also forged what appears to be a positive working relationship with the Police Protective League – the first time in the LAPD’s history. Anecdotal evidence indicates that officers are far happier than they were in the past because they feel they are getting leadership they deserve. Bratton is conducting his own survey of rank-and-file officers to get some empirical evidence on their perceptions about the direction of the Department. I am also conducting interviews with a random sample of command officers to tap their perceptions of these new

directions and changes over the past year. The results will be published later this year as part of a final report to the National Institute of Justice.

Wellford Wilms is a professor in UCLA's Departments of Education and Policy Studies. He has conducted research on organizational change processes in industrial, educational and governmental organizations. His books include *Restoring Prosperity: How Workers and Managers are Forging a New Culture of Cooperation* (Times Books, 1996), and *Awakening the Academy: A New Time for Leadership* (with Deone Zell) (Anker Publishing, 2002).

Table 1: Driving Forces: Percent of Officers Agreeing with Statement			
	1996-1997	1998	1999-2000
Altruism			
I am in police work to help people	95%	96%	95%
I am in police work to make the community safer	92%	94%	93%
Quality of Worklife			
Positive relationship with immediate supervisor	93%	94%	93%
I feel like I am part of a team	78%	75%	65%
I am treated with dignity and respect	76%	76%	72%
My division is an outstanding work environment	69%	60%	50%
Inclusiveness			
People from different backgrounds are welcome	93%	95%	95%
My division has a good mix of employees	89%	90%	91%
Support for Community Policing			
Community policing means understanding community	96%	93%	94%
Community policing means partnering with community	93%	93%	93%
Community policing means responsibility for territory	89%	91%	93%
Source: Survey of LAPD Officers			
Table 2: Restraining Forces: Percent of Officers Agreeing with Statement			
	1996-1997	1998	1999-2000
Abandonment			
Police have more support from community	57%	43%	34%
Police have more support from politicians	23%	24%	11%
Police have more support from the media	18%	27%	7%
Leadership			
The Chief is leading in the right direction	n.a.	15%	18%
My captains are good leaders	83%	65%	58%
Discipline			
I fear being punished for making an honest mistake	60%	73%	79%
The (new disciplinary system) makes me more effective	n.a.	2%	5%
Eroding Morale			
I have the opportunity to be creative in my work	67%	64%	54%
I am burned out with my job	19%	20%	27%
I would leave the department if the opportunity arose	42%	46%	57%

Source: Survey of LAPD Officers

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Endnotes

¹Wellford Wilms from UCLA's department of education, Alex Norman from UCLA's department of social welfare and Warren Schmidt, from USC's school of policy, planning and development were leaders of the research team.

² During a three-month period while the Los Angeles Police Commission searched for a new chief, Bayan Lewis, a former Assistant Chief and veteran LAPD executive, served as chief.

³ Under Chief Edward Davis, the senior lead officers were the embodiment of community policing, working in the field, working cars and training rookie police officers.

⁴ "CRASH" is an acronym for Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums.