

## **Police Scholarship for the Future: Resisting the Pull of the Policy Audience**

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David Bayley, *Police for the Future*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994. Pp vii + 187. \$27.00.

Paul Chevigny, *Edge of the Knife: Police Violence in the Americas*. New York: New Press, 1995. Pp ix + 319. \$23.00.

**T**he academic literature on policing is in a paradoxical state. On the one hand, there has never been more of it. Sociologists, criminologists, political scientists, historians, law professors, and others have, in recent years, generated volumes of research on virtually every aspect of police work, behavior, and policy. So much research and writing on police is regularly produced that the task of keeping up with the literature—especially for those who wish to read and write about other topics—is altogether daunting. On the other hand, the quality of police scholarship has never been worse. Driven almost entirely by the concerns of police leaders and policymakers, most police scholarship fails to advance our understanding of the nature, functions, structural contradictions, effects, or meanings of police work and police institutions. As a consequence, most police scholarship today is impoverished theoretically and, put bluntly, often not worth reading.

This is a sad state of affairs. Beginning with the groundbreaking ethnographic studies of William Westley (1953, 1970), Michael Banton (1964), and Jerome Skolnick (1966), the sociology of modern policing emerged in the mid-1960s as one of the most exciting and thriving new areas of sociolegal scholarship. Within a few years, police scholarship had attracted some of the leading social scientists of a generation whose theoretically in-

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formed and empirically grounded studies shaped our most fundamental understanding of the forms and functions of modern policing. While innovative police scholarship continued to flourish in the 1970s, by the 1980s there were few theoretical breakthroughs or compelling studies of American policing.<sup>1</sup> By the mid-1980s, the field appeared to be in disarray, if not decomposition. The 1990s have fared even worse. The most insightful works have been participant observer accounts researched and written not by academic scholars but by journalists—notably, David Simon's (1991) acclaimed *Homicide: A Year on the Killing Streets* and Greg Donaldson's (1993) *The Ville: Cops and Kids in Urban America*. While they are often highly valuable to scholars and usually better written than academic studies, journalistic accounts remain less compelling than academic scholarship for several reasons: (1) they virtually always fail to engage the previous academic literatures, leaving little sense of research as a cumulative undertaking; (2) they often are not sensitive to basic methodological and design issues; (3) they typically are not grounded in any theoretical framework; and (4) they usually make little, if any, effort to generalize their findings.

The near demise of compelling theoretically informed and empirically grounded police scholarship in the 1980s and 1990s may seem, in retrospect, surprising yet predictable. It is surprising that social science—especially Law and Society—scholars seem to have lost interest in pursuing the bigger questions of policing. After all, the police remain central to the operation of law, coercion, authority, and legitimacy in any modern society. One cannot meaningfully understand the relationship between law and society, or how law functions in society, without understanding the police. This is also surprising because the 1990s, like the 1960s, are very exciting times to be studying police. Contemporary events—including the beating of Rodney King, the subsequent riots in Los Angeles, President Clinton's call for 100,000 more police officers on the streets, the perjury and racism of Mark Furhman, and the recent corruption and brutality scandals in New York, Philadelphia, and New Orleans—have all kept policing, especially the political and legal aspects of policing, on the front pages of the nation's newspapers.

Yet at the same time, the downward trajectory of police scholarship in the past two decades may not be very surprising at all. My thesis in this review essay is that the policy audience has been largely responsible for the decline in theoretically driven empiri-

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<sup>1</sup> Two notable exceptions were Donald Black's (1980) *The Manners and Customs of Police* and Gary Marx's (1988) *Undercover: Police Surveillance in America*, both of which are among the most sociologically compelling studies of police in the American literature. Outside of the American literature, there were a number of theoretically compelling, empirically grounded studies of police in the 1980s, notably Ericson (1981, 1982) and Shearing & Stenning (1984).

cal police research in the 1980s and 1990s. Unlike the leading police scholars of a generation ago who sought to deepen our understanding of police institutions and behavior or the role of police in society more generally, many of today's police researchers appear to be more concerned with the needs of more specialized policy audiences. Little contemporary police scholarship is animated by a desire to understand or expose the workings of power, coercion, and authority in police institutions. As police scholars internalize the interests and agendas of police leaders and policymakers, they become advocates of police reform agendas, and the quality of police scholarship becomes impoverished. Quick monographs, research reports, and slapdash books seem to carry greater currency than ever in the field.

The pull of the policy audience is a well-known influence in sociolegal scholarship. As Sarat and Silbey (1988) have argued, it can have a negative effect on sociolegal scholarship by limiting, if not distorting, the kinds of knowledge that sociolegal scholars might produce. The policy audience fosters an uncritical acceptance of the status quo and thus diminishes the critical potential of scholarship. And when the policymaker's problems become the scholar's problems, scholarship becomes a means to an end rather than a pursuit for its own sake. To be sure, there are many legitimate purposes of academic scholarship, and research that suggests policy or applied consequences is one of them (see Lieberman 1985). And, of course, there is no reason why policy-relevant research cannot also be theoretically informed; these purposes are not mutually exclusive. Yet while we must appreciate the value in policy research, we must also acknowledge the opportunity costs of policy or applied research, especially when an entire field seems to be driven by this type of scholarship.

The nature of empirical police research intensifies the "pull of the policy audience" for at least two structural reasons. The first is funding. With institutions like the National Institute of Justice, the Police Executive Research Forum, and the Police Foundation pouring hundreds of thousands of dollars into police research annually, it is not surprising that many police scholars are willing to do the bidding of policy elites. The second reason is methodological. Apart from funding, the empirical study of police is inherently fraught with the difficulty of maintaining a critical distance from one's subjects. Police institutions are extremely secretive, distrustful, and sensitive to the intrusions of outside researchers—especially social scientists, whom they view as potential muckrakers. Frequently, police will provide access to scholars only if they believe they will get something from the research in exchange for their cooperation. Even after access is established, in order to acquire data from police the researcher must cast his agenda as relevant to their practical and policy concerns. This process may involve implicit and explicit research bargains,

moral compromises, and artificial role constructions—all of which may easily lead to the cooptation of the researcher by the police institution. While these pressures also exist in other sociological research settings, they are intensified here by the secretive, distrustful, and relatively closed nature of police institutions (see Leo 1995; Van Maanen 1978; Manning 1972).

It is perhaps no coincidence that more theoretically oriented police scholarship fell out of favor at the same time that police leaders and policymakers became infatuated with community policing. To its supporters, community policing represents a new organizational strategy that seeks to redefine the methods and goals of police work by emphasizing police-community reciprocity, decentralization of command, reorientation toward foot patrol and away from rapid response to calls for service, and civilianization (see Moore 1992; Kelling & Moore 1988; Skolnick & Bayley 1986). If this sounds vague and amorphous, it is because community policing is indeed a vague and amorphous concept that “means many things to many people” (Greene & Mastrofski 1988:xii). To compound the confusion, community policing is not an empirical phenomenon that exists independently of the police leaders who have created it and actively promote it; rather, it is a normatively derived managerial strategy that police leaders and policymakers are currently pushing to advance their own agendas. The dominant view is that these agendas are to enhance public security, prevent crime, and increase police legitimacy in the community (Moore 1992; Greene & Taylor 1988). A more critical view, however, is that what lay behind these agendas is the desire to present an ideal version of police to the public in order to control the citizenry’s perceptions (Manning 1988) and to mystify and conceal the police’s coercive powers (Klockars 1988).

Whether one takes a benign or skeptical view, community policing has been the hottest research issue in the study of policing for more than a decade. No other topic has commanded nearly the same level of attention, resources or ideological interest.<sup>2</sup> To give just one example, the National Institute of Justice recently awarded the Urban Institute nearly \$2.5 million to evaluate community policing. Whether scholars are funded or not, however, community policing seems to be the major subject of virtually

<sup>2</sup> As David Bayley (at 104) notes in *Police for the Future*:

The intellectual reassessment of policing in the 1980s has generated so much sustained activity that it is fair to refer to community policing as a movement. A dauntingly large number of books and articles have been written; conferences, seminars, and workshops abound; and consultants, both police and non police, advise police departments about it. The National Institute of Justice, the research arm of the U.S. Department of Justice, has funded pilot projects and research on community policing. Professional organizations such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Police Foundation, and the Police Executive Research Forum encourage it. There is even a National Center for Community Policing at Michigan State University.

every major conversation about policing in virtually every major academic, policy, or popular publication about policing these days. To say that community policing is in the air would be an understatement; it fills the air.

If one were looking for a recent illustration of the pull of the policy audience in police scholarship, one could almost choose no better example than David Bayley's *Police for the Future*. Clearly organized, well written, and forcefully argued, *Police for the Future* turns much conventional wisdom about crime prevention and control on its head as it illustrates both the contributions and the limitations of policy-driven research. Bayley opens the introductory chapter, "The Myth of Police," with the bald assertion that police do not prevent crime. After attempting to establish the incontrovertible truth of this proposition, Bayley announces the purpose of the book (p. 11): "to discuss this crisis in policing and the choices available to us." In particular, Bayley sets out to analyze why police have not been effective in preventing crime and what they might do to become more effective crime deterrents. The goal of *Police for the Future* is to provide police leaders and policymakers with information that will assist them to restructure police organizations so as to more effectively and efficiently prevent and control crime. Following the introductory chapter, the remainder of the book is neatly divided into three sections: "Problems," "Possibilities," and "Solutions."

In the first section ("Problems"), Bayley offers three reasons why police do not prevent crime. First, police do not view crime prevention as their primary work. Instead, police spend most of their time engaging in what Bayley calls "authoritative intervention," the restoration of order, and "symbolic justice," demonstrating the existence of a regime of law to offenders and to the public. Second, police do not allocate, use, or manage their resources in a manner rationally designed to enhance public safety or institutional effectiveness. Instead, police resources are driven by inflexible bureaucratic traditions, organizational convenience, and worker preferences. Third, the organizational culture of policing does not reward the kinds of initiative, problem-solving, and public service assignments necessary to prevent crime. The specialized organization of criminal investigation does not result in a higher clearance rate. Police managers, who are primarily concerned not to make mistakes for which they may be blamed, serve more as auditors than as problem-solvers. Police officers do not see themselves as responsible for achieving the objectives of the police institution, but instead are preoccupied with monetary rewards. And, finally, the most critical assignments in policing—patrol—enjoy the lowest status.

In the second section of *Police for the Future* ("Possibilities") Bayley argues that police must rethink the basics if they are to take crime prevention seriously. They cannot prevent crime if

they act alone (i.e., without the assistance of the public), reactively or passively. Because the legitimacy of the police has been called into question by the public perception that they are costly but not effective at controlling crime, police have turned to innovative organizational strategies in the 1980s and 1990s. Foremost among these, of course, is community policing. Offering yet another definition of this elusive concept, Bayley identifies the operational elements of community policing as consisting of consultation, adaptation, mobilization, and problem-solving. While he has been critical of community policing elsewhere (see Bayley 1988), here he argues for the implementation of this “many splendored thing” (p. 115)—despite the absence of any evidence that community policing actually prevents crime. Nevertheless, community policing, argues Bayley (p. 120), is “a qualitative advance in political evolution” that “represents the domestication of the coercive authority of the state.”

In the third and final section of the book (“Solutions”), Bayley examines the options that he believes are available to police in democratic societies, and then suggests a threefold blueprint for police organizations to rationally reorganize themselves to successfully prevent crime. First, create a new line of police, call them “Neighborhood Police Officers,” and give them the responsibility of diagnosing security needs in small areas and then determining the appropriate corrective courses of action. Second, create “Basic Police Units” to determine, allocate, and oversee the “coordinated deployment” of police resources in various localities. And, finally, provide the resources, organization, and evaluation that police forces need to successfully create a police organization that would prevent crime. This tripartite blueprint, argues Bayley, not only moves police toward a rational system of crime prevention by overcoming current problems, but it also taps community resources, expands police capabilities, and increases police accountability.

While *Police for the Future* offers valuable advice to police chiefs, policymakers, and political leaders, it is precisely the policy audience’s pull that reveals both the shortcomings and the limitations of *Police for the Future*. By its very nature, policy research casts the academic analyst into the role of an advocate who must persuade the policy audience of his solutions to their problems. However, to persuade their clients, advocates may overstate, simplify, exaggerate, and sometimes even shade the truth to frame it in the way most favorable to their position. Whether intentionally or not, Bayley often marshals his arguments in the style of an advocate rather than as a disinterested scholar who is advancing knowledge for its own sake. A prominent example should illustrate the point.

Bayley’s opening argument that police do not prevent crime—which forms the basis of his entire book—is neither the



“myth” nor “one of the best kept secrets of modern life” that Bayley asserts. Rather, the relationship between policing and crime prevention is far more ambiguous and complex than Bayley is willing to admit for at least three reasons. First, there is not enough direct research on the relationship between the strength of police forces and crime rates to resolve the matter conclusively one way or the other. Not surprisingly, Bayley cites many secondary sources (e.g., Walker 1989; Reiner 1985; Silberman 1978) that merely repeat his claim rather than provide any new evidence for it. Second, Bayley selectively omits any reference to studies that do, in fact, demonstrate that police can prevent crime (e.g., Wilson & Boland 1978). Third, Bayley’s argument that police do not prevent crime because the strength of police forces is not inversely correlated with crime rates is flawed at its premise. Just as we cannot automatically infer cause from correlation, we also cannot automatically infer the absence of cause from the absence of correlation. What Bayley’s one-dimensional argument ignores is the potential for one or more intervening variables that may affect the relationship between strength of police forces and crime rates in different ways in different jurisdictions. The absence of a positive correlation between arrest rates and clearance rates, for example, does not necessarily mean that the crime rate is unaffected by the ability of police to solve crime. Not only must we consider potentially intervening variables, but the independent variable (size of police forces) may be only one of many variables that accounts for variation in the dependent variable (crime rates). An additional complicating factor is that the size of police forces may affect different crimes differently. It may be that police are successful in preventing some kinds of crimes but not others. As criminologists have repeatedly demonstrated, the only way to make sense of crime as a dependent variable is to disaggregate it (see, e.g., Zimring & Hawkins 1995).

The real issue here is not *whether* police prevent crime but the *extent* to which they do. About this there is little disagreement among criminologists. Even Bayley agrees with this statement, or else he would not have written a book replete with suggestions that police can, in fact, prevent crime and chock full of policy proposals about how they might do so. Because he adopts the concerns of a policy audience that demands unambiguous answers to complex problems, however, Bayley presents his arguments with more certainty and more simplicity than is warranted. This leads to a persistent and ironic contradiction that runs throughout *Police for the Future*. When offering a *diagnosis* of current problems confronting police, Bayley strenuously argues that police cannot prevent crime, so much so that anyone who thinks otherwise has been taken in by one of modern life’s best-kept secrets. Yet when he is offering a *prognosis* for current problems

confronting police, Bayley strenuously argues that police can prevent crime if they follow his blueprint.

But the effects of the policy audience's pull in *Police for the Future* are evident in other ways as well. Because he is writing for police leaders, politicians, and executive policymakers, Bayley's academic agenda here is altogether atheoretical. Although the first sentence of *Police for the Future* advertises the book as a theory of policing—a theory of policy choices, to be sure—the truth is more nearly the opposite. There is not a single theoretical aspiration in the entire text of *Police for the Future*; from start to finish; it is an exposition in policy analysis. To the extent that it either seeks explanation or takes note of more theoretical work, the discussion is driven by the analytic demands of its prescriptions. Just as the leading police policy issues of the day frame and orient the agenda of *Police for the Future*, they also limit the scope of its answers and the breadth of its analysis. Critical questions about the police crime control function that it seeks to advance—questions, for example, about the social construction, class bias, and unintended consequences of the crime control agenda in policing—are all but ignored. Not surprisingly, then, like virtually all of the literature in the past two decades in the largely book-driven field of policing, *Police for the Future* does not seek to deepen or broaden our understanding of police institutions and behavior.<sup>3</sup>

Like David Bayley, fellow New Yorker Paul Chevigny has also been a long-time critic and scholar of police behavior. In *Edge of the Knife* (whose title, ironically, comes from a quote by David Bayley),<sup>4</sup> Chevigny builds on his earlier work on police brutality in New York City (Chevigny 1969). Based on data assembled from various sources (e.g., human rights organizations, government reports, newspaper stories, as well as his own fieldwork and interviews), Chevigny undertakes an ambitious comparative investigation and analysis of contemporary police violence (torture to extract information, as well as the abuse of deadly and nondeadly force) in several major cities in the United States, Latin America, and the Caribbean: Los Angeles, New York, São Paulo, Buenos Aires, Jamaica, and Mexico City. For all these places, Chevigny attempts to document the prevalence of official violence in ordinary police work, explain the factors leading to the persistence or decline of police abuses, and suggest strategies of accountability to control routine police violence. More generally, Chevigny sets out to understand how police reproduce the social order through violence and how the social order, in turn, controls police use of violence.

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<sup>3</sup> David Bayley has made a number of important scholarly contributions over the years that have broadened our understanding of the nature and functions of police institutions (Bayley 1969, 1976, 1985; see also Das 1990).

<sup>4</sup> "The police are to government as the edge is to the knife" (Chevigny at iix).



The extent of violence in the six case studies varies quite considerably. In the United States there has been a general decline in police torture of custodial suspects since the 1930s (see Leo 1992) and a precipitous decline in police use of deadly force since the 1960s (see Fyfe 1979). In Los Angeles, however, police violence (specifically, the use of deadly force) has remained high compared with other U.S. cities, while accountability has remained low. By contrast, in New York, where police are subject to stronger, more centralized systems of accountability, the use of deadly force has been controlled more successfully. In São Paulo—where the sense of citizenship and obligations among citizens is weak, vigilantism is high, and police accountability is low—the level of police violence and torture remains the highest among the six cities under study. Like São Paulo, Buenos Aires has only recently emerged from a dictatorship, and police violence remains common. With a weak sense of common citizenship and widespread vigilantism (despite a democratic tradition), Jamaica has also suffered considerable police violence. Finally, Mexico City—which has avoided a military model of government but has remained centralized—has kept the abuse of deadly force under control, yet torture continues to be a common police method of interrogation.

Because of its intensive focus on six case studies, *Edge of the Knife* is rich in detail (including chilling accounts of police torture, corruption, and execution) and thus is not easy to summarize, especially in the short space of a review essay. What unifies Chevigny's analysis, however, is his focus on a specific set of factors across contexts. To explain the varying levels of official violence, Chevigny examines each case on four dimensions: the nature of government, citizen participation in the legal order, the prevalence of private dispute settlement by violence, and the growth of regularity and oversight in government relations with citizens. Corrupt and clientelistic polities, high economic disparities, a low respect for legal rights, vigilantism, the widespread fear of crime and disorder, a military model of policing, and weak systems of accountability all contribute to official violence and impunity for police misconduct. While the specific causes and conditions of police violence vary by the context of each case study, Chevigny concludes that "a correlation [exists] between the sociopolitical structure of the places and the level of violence by the police; the departments reproduce and represent the relations in the social order" (p. 249).

To explain why police violence has persisted in some places and declined in others, as well as why it exists in some forms and not others, Chevigny draws on Norbert Elias's theory of a "civilizing process" (Elias 1978, 1982). As Western states become more centralized and acquire a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, Elias argued, their use of violence becomes "hidden be-

hind the scenes” of social life. This is because citizens increasingly identify with the humanity of victims and come to expect greater participation in, and citizenship from, their governmental institutions. Consequently, government activity generally becomes more rationalized, personal life becomes more privatized, and urban violence declines as state violence is pacified. In the United States, for example, while he attributes the decline in coerced confessions to the judiciary and the decline in deadly force to changing police regulations, Chevigny identifies the underlying cause in a long process of pacification through which torture and unnecessary killings have become offensive to the sensibilities of urban Americans. This civilizing process has been expressed through the growth of rights consciousness, the organization and vigilance of minorities, and changing public expectations.

After documenting the problem of official violence and trying to explain (both generally and specifically) the historical, political, and economic causes of police abuses, Chevigny analyzes how to make governments more accountable for police violence. To this end, Chevigny examines the successes and failures of several, overlapping methods of accountability: internal administrative disciplinary procedures, criminal prosecutions, civil damages, federal oversight bodies, and national human rights’ organizations. Though each of these policies can reduce police violence in some instances, Chevigny argues that they are generally inadequate and ineffective because of political and other barriers.<sup>5</sup> Instead, Chevigny proposes combining internal and external methods of accountability and, in particular, creating a tripartite system of accountability. This would involve, first, a fact-finding body to investigate complaints effectively; second, an internal auditor or ombudsman to oversee the working of the department and obtain departmental documents and other evidence of misconduct; and, third, “an internal inspector general” committed to reforming the department and institutionalizing the findings of other departments. Although he is doubtful that such a solution will be implemented—indeed, all levels of the police organization would probably oppose it—Chevigny nevertheless remains hopeful that current methods of accountability can, in some instances and to varying degrees, be successful despite political and other barriers. He reminds us that police violence has declined in all six cities in his study and argues that international human rights standards—because no government

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<sup>5</sup> Administrative review, for example, is cumbersome and unlikely to be effective unless police leaders accept laws and create incentives for their compliance; civilian review boards face a blanket of police silence and, in the end, have no disciplinary powers; criminal prosecutions serve as *ex post facto* punishments but cannot define professional police standards; civil damages become just another cost of doing business; and so on. The central problem with disciplinary procedures, Chevigny argues, is that they proceed on a case-by-case basis.

can openly admit to deliberately violating them—have substantially contributed to the reform of police practices.

On the whole, *Edge of the Knife* is an impressive book. It is the most thoroughly researched and broadly conceived study of police violence in the American literature. Chevigny thoughtfully analyzes the sources, characteristics, and correlates of police violence. At the same time, *Edge of the Knife* seeks to deepen our understanding of police institutions—their nature, functions, and structural contradictions—more generally. While it speaks to a policy audience (human rights organizations and reformers), *Edge of the Knife* transcends the limitations of most police policy research precisely because it synthesizes empirical, theoretical, and normative materials. The comparative perspective that Chevigny brings to bear on the problems of, and solutions for, police violence adds a new dimension to our analysis of these issues and, like David Bayley's (1985) earlier research, suggests a model for future police scholarship.

Despite its virtues, however, *Edge of the Knife* contains several shortcomings. Densely written, it makes for plodding reading that at times has the feel of a human rights report. The reader would have been less overwhelmed if Chevigny had organized some of his description and analysis into tables, charts, and summaries. Conceptually, *Edge of the Knife* is really two separate books—the first about police violence in America (Los Angeles and New York City) and the second about police violence in the Americas (South America, Latin America, and the Caribbean)—combined into one. The underlying reason for this, I believe, is methodological. Chevigny chose his six cases not according to any analytic criteria but rather because of their convenience to his project. Analytically, Los Angeles and New York fit together well as a pair, and thus become the subject of the first third of *Edge of the Knife*; but they remain a redundant and curious selection for this study because police violence, at least in comparative perspective, is exceedingly rare in both places. While comparative analysis is no easy task, Chevigny's analytic project would have been better served had he chosen his cases in order to maximize variation in the dependent variable (the quantity and quality of police violence) and if he had chosen the nation-state, rather than particular cities, as his unit of analysis. More important, Chevigny's analytic purposes would have been better served if he had employed the comparative method in a more rigorous and structured manner (see Skocpol & Sommers 1980; Prezowski & Teune 1970). Instead, Chevigny's use of the comparative method is more impressionistic than systematic, and often more descriptive than analytic. Chevigny analyzes only one of the six case studies (Jamaica) in comparative perspective. The four variables he identifies as accounting for official violence in each case (nature of the government, citizen participation, private dispute

settlement by violence, and regularity and oversight in government-citizen relations) are not systematically tested or developed in any structured or explicitly comparative manner. As a result, the whole of Chevigny's comparative analysis often does not equal more than the sum of its parts.

Chevigny's theoretical perspective is also problematic. Like Chevigny, I believe that Norbert Elias's theory of the civilizing process may provide a helpful framework within which to understand the decline of violence in police institutions. Elsewhere, I have advanced some of the very same Eliasian arguments in my analysis of the decline of physical coercion in American police interrogation practices in the 20th century (Leo 1994). Nevertheless, Elias's theory of the civilizing process—perhaps like all grand theory—remains too general and vague to explain any particular phenomena *unless* we articulate a specific account of the mechanisms, conditions, and processes through which something like the “civilizing process” has occurred in any particular case. While Chevigny acknowledges that Elias's “pacification model” is rough and uneven, he fails to apply it with any specificity or depth, or connect it to the details of his analysis, in any of his six case studies. Instead, Chevigny's use of Elias's theory—which is mentioned only in the introductory chapter, in a middle chapter that offers overview, and in the concluding chapter—seems more like a tack-on to local explanations of police violence at strategic points in the book rather than an integral or integrated part of his comparative case study analysis.

Elias's theory of the civilizing process is so underspecified in Chevigny's analysis that it serves both as a general explanation for the decline of the third degree in America (p. 136) as well as an explanation for the persistence of third-degree police practices elsewhere (p. 257). In other words, Elias's theory, as Chevigny uses it, is so vaguely stated that it can be made to accommodate contradictory outcomes: On the one hand, the process of pacification has changed the consciousness of urban Americans so that the third degree is offensive to our sensibilities and must be eradicated; on the other hand, the process of pacification, because of our desire to exclude violence from the awareness of our consciousness, has supported the perpetuation of the third degree in the Third World, where it remains secret, hidden from view, and thus at the margins of our consciousness. In either version, however, Chevigny's pacification model operates more as a general description than as a specific explanation. Only in his analysis of the United States does he try to specify some of the mechanisms through which the civilizing process has operated—such as the courts, the development of rights consciousness, and the organization of minorities—although his

analysis of the factors leading to the decline of the third degree is only partially correct.<sup>6</sup>

Despite its shortcomings, *Edge of the Knife* is an important contribution to sociological scholarship for many reasons, not the least of which is the broadly interdisciplinary perspective it brings to bear on some of the most fundamental and important questions about policing. Unlike much police scholarship in the past two decades, *Edge of the Knife* successfully resists the intellectually deadening pull of the policy audience. To be sure, *Edge of the Knife* contains many insights and prescriptions that policymakers would do well to heed. Yet because *Edge of the Knife* was not written for police chiefs, executive funding agencies, police foundations, legislators, or other policymakers, it retains a critical distance from their interests, frames, and agendas. The police policy audience's problems are not Chevigny's problems; his scholarship, whatever its policy prescriptions, is not offered as a means to their ends. The overriding purpose of *Edge of the Knife* remains to help us critically understand why some police forces are more prone to violence than others. To this end, Chevigny creates a record of police violence in the Americas, sets out to deepen our understanding of its causes and its characteristics, and critically evaluates strategies to minimize it. *Edge of the Knife* is a work whose theoretical, methodological, and critical aspirations other police scholars would do well to emulate in the future.

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<sup>6</sup> My own historical research has indicated that in addition to the court's policing of the police, the movement for police professionalization and changing public expectations following the release and sensationalization of the Wickersham Commission Report also contributed to the decline of third-degree interrogation practices (Leo 1992).

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