

INVESTIGATING CORRUPTION AMONGST UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICERS IN  
LOCAL POLICE DEPARTMENTS

THOMAS F. FREEMAN HONORS COLLEGE

SENIOR THESIS

BY

KEARA DIXON

B.A. POLITICAL SCIENCE

SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

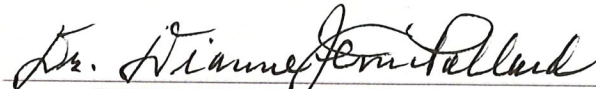
DEC 2021

APPROVED BY



HONORS FACULTY FELLOW MENTOR

11/15/2021  
DATE



DEAN, HONORS COLLEGE

11/15/2021  
DATE



TEXAS SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY  
Thomas F. Freeman Honors College

## **ABSTRACT**

### **INVESTIGATING CORRUPTION AMONGST UNIFORMED POLICE OFFICERS IN LOCAL POLICE DEPARTMENTS**

By

Keara Dixon

Texas Southern University, 2021

Dr. Baker & Dr. Cook

Police corruption within the United States has been around since the formation of the first police department in Boston, Massachutes. Furthermore, the prevasiveness of police corruption threaten the lives and safety of civilians residing in the U.S. Past reform movements failed to eradicate the issue and bring about change. This has inspired the question how can police departments and uniformed officers be reformed to eradicate police corruption. A case study of uniformed police officers in popular police departments would demonstrate the pervasiveness, adaptability, and factors of police corruption. A historical analysis of the New York Police Department, Miami Police Department, and Los Angeles Police department proved that corruption adapts over time and is molded by the environment and culture of the department. This analysis has led to five possible reform solutions that could possibly eradicate police corruption.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION	PAGE
Abstract.....	i
Table of Contents.....	ii
List of Tables.....	iv
List of Figures.....	v
Vita.....	vi
Dedication.....	vii
Acknowledgments.....	viii
Chapters	
Introduction.....	1
A. Problem Statement.....	5
B. Research Question.....	7
C. Literature Review.....	8
D. Research Design.....	14
Analyzing Corruption within the N.Y.P.D.....	17
A. Background.....	17
B. Historical Analysis.....	18

C. Results.....	18
D. Analysis.....	26
Analyzing Corruption within the M.P.D.....	28
A. Background.....	28
B. Results.....	29
C. Analysis.....	32
Analyzing Corruption within the L.A.P.D.....	33
A. Background.....	33
B. Results.....	34
C. Analysis.....	36
Conclusion and Possible Solutions.....	38
A. Case Study Conclusion.....	38
B. Possible Solutions.....	39
References.....	41

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>TABLE</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
Table 2.1. The Results of the N.Y.P.D. Commissions.....	25 & 26

## LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
Figure 1.1. Demographic of the N.Y.P.D., L.A.P.D, &..... M.P.D	16

## VITA

Keara S. Dixon

Born	February 28, 2001, in Houston, TX
2015 – 2019	HS Diploma, Houston Academy for International Studies
2018 – 2019	Congressional Intern
2019 – 2021	B.A. Political Science, Texas Southern University
Major Field	Political Science

## **DEDICATION**

*This thesis is dedicated to those who have and are currently experiencing the brutality of corrupt uniformed officers. Furthermore, I would like to extend a special dedication to my brothers, Kenneth, Sidney, and Jamaryn for sparking inspiration for this unique topic.*



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*I wish to thank the Honors College who generously offered their time and expertise. A special thanks to Dr. Olivia Cook, my advisor, for her countless hours of reflecting, reading, encouraging, and most of all patience throughout this entire process. I would also like to extend a special thank you to, Dr. David Baker, for offering his expertise and wisdom. Furthermore, I would like to extend a special thanks to my school, Texas Sothern University without whom this would not be possible. Finally, I would like to thank my brothers, Kenneth, Sidney, and Jamaryn. The atrocities they have experienced with law enforcement encouraged me to choose this topic for my thesis. Without them, there would have been no inspiration nor motivation behind this topic. I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to them*

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Police corruption threatens the lives and safety of everyone residing in the United States (Holmes, 2020). The civilians of the United States, especially black, indigenous, people of color, walk around in fear of the power police officers have daily. These officers have access to deadly weapons, firearms, and the criminal justice system, all of which could impose a serious threat to the lives of civilians (Holmes, 2020). Moreover, police officers exercise a substantial amount of control over the lives of civilians daily, and an abuse of this power is especially appalling (Webadmin, 2020). If the issue of police corruption continues to persist in the United States, it could aid in further public mistrust of police officers and continue to ruin the lives of millions.

Furthermore, police corruption is a difficult concept to define and has multiple interpretations, but for this research, police corruption is defined as acts involving the misuse of authority by a police officer for personal gain for themselves or others (Goldstein, 1975).

Additionally, there are currently nine prominent forms of police corruption: (1) corruption of authority, (2) kickbacks, (3) opportunist theft, (4) shakedowns, (5) protection of illegal activities, (6) illegal fixing of the justice system, (7) direct criminal activities, (8) internal payoffs, and lastly (9) police brutality (Barker & Roebuck, 2014). One thing these forms all have in common is that they impose harm on the lives of those residing in the United States. Recently, one of the prominent forms of police corruption in the U.S. that has received global attention is police brutality.

After the deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor, African Americans who died from excessive violence administered by police officers in 2020, America erupted into nationwide protests (The New York Times, 2021). Millions of people took to the streets and protested the violent deaths of Floyd and Taylor and called for change within police departments (The New

York Times, 2021). Furthermore, many officers saw nothing wrong with how the victims were treated during their last moments, including Derek Chauvin, the officer that killed George Floyd (New York Times, 2021). Moreover, Chauvin stated that “his handling of Mr. Floyd’s arrest was a reasonable use of authorized force” (The New York Times, 2021). Chauvin kneeled on Floyd’s neck for over eight minutes while Floyd and bystanders were shouting that he could not breathe (The New York Times, 2021). In the case of Breonna Taylor, police officers used a no-knock warrant and busted into her home, and fired over 20 rounds, eight of which hit and killed Taylor (Cineas & North, 2020). Sadly, there are thousands of George Floyd’s and Breonna Taylor’s in America whose stories were not as publicized. Both cases highlighted excessive and violent force used by police officers on citizens. Additionally, these deaths forced America to face police corruption head-on and consider possible reforms.

Some citizens would argue that failed police reform efforts are the reason that police corruption has remained unchecked in the U.S. (Underhill, 2020). Furthermore, past reform movements militarized the police and enforced racist attitudes, rather than solve the issue of police corruption, even in recent years (Underhill, 2020). President Obama saw the issues that were persisting in police departments and created the Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing in 2014 (Underhill, 2020). This task force was supposed to build trust between minorities and police officers and demilitarize police departments, but President Trump overturned President Obama’s guidelines (Underhill, 2020). Police corruption has remained unchecked in America for far too long and the protests of 2020 were a direct result of that.

If police corruption continues to go unchecked in America, it will continue to lead to the endangerment of the lives of citizens. Furthermore, the current and past reform efforts have been unsuccessful or not properly implemented by governments, which has aided in rampant police

corruption. Moreover, this literature intends to suggest possible reform efforts that could help in combatting police corruption. In addition, to make suggestions for the future of police departments, there needs to be an overlook of the past of policing, police corruption, and reform efforts.

Modern day policing in America began in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in Boston, Massachusetts (Potter, 2013). Modern police forces in America originated from community policing in the northern 13 colonies of America and slave patrols in the southern 13 colonies of America (Potter, 2013). Moreover, modern police forces came to be as a response to the growing population in America in the north and the south's slave patrol evolved into a department fit to control newly freed slaves (Potter, 2013). However, the government and bureaucrats no longer saw community policing and slave patrols fit to control social disorder (Potter, 2013). As a result, when this new model of policing began in America so did police corruption. During this time, police corruption was so widespread in America that there was a reform effort to try and combat it. The reform effort was headed by the Progressives, which were a group of reformers who sought to eliminate corruption within the government, regulate business practices, address health hazards, and improve working conditions (Mintz & McNeil, 2018). This period was known as the Progressive Era.

The Progressives fought for the professionalization of police forces as this reform was intended to eliminate political influences in police departments, hire qualified professionals to lead said departments, and raise personnel standards ("Policing Twentieth-Century America"). These reforms were backed by leaders such as Richard Sylvester, the superintendent of Washington D.C. Police Department, and August Vollmer, police chief in Berkley California ("Policing Twentieth-Century America"). Both men played a key role in influencing reform

efforts, during this era Richard Sylvester, “had a significant impact on the acceptance of the reform agenda across several police departments,” and August Vollmer, “advocated for the hiring of college graduates and offered the first collegiate course in Police Science at the University of California” (“Policing Twentieth-Century America”). Additionally, the Progressives were able to restructure police departments with the passing of the 1883 Civil Service Reforms Act (Pendleton Act), which mandated that federal positions be awarded based on merit, not politics and connections (“Successes and Failures of Progressivism”).

Although the Progressive Era was not entirely successful, they were able to identify the issue of police corruption, which has led to a series of reform efforts over time. Some of these reform efforts were the reform era of the 1960s and the reform era of 2020. Each of these reform efforts was ignited once the incompetence and extreme corruption of police departments were exposed to the public. These reforms led to a major analysis of police departments, which concurrently led to major reconstruction.

An example of a reform movement that led to major reconstruction within police departments is the reform efforts of the 1960s. Police departments were trying to fight the war on crime, control riots and the civil war movement, and fight antiwar sentiment, all of which forced police departments to face their unprofessionalism head-on (Summerhays, 1979). Consequently, many police forces began to realize that they were not properly trained to handle many of the situations they were previously handling (Summerhays, 1979). During this era, police forces found their techniques to fighting crime and keeping the social order ineffective, so they had to quickly find a solution to improve their policing. As a result, the Progressives’ reforms aimed to improve the effectiveness of crime-fighting in America and to better educate and train police officers (Summerhays, 1979). Therefore, without the Progressive Era, movements like the 1960s

would not be fathomable, as the Progressives observed the issue of police corruption and attempted to do something about it. They understood that police corruption aided in the undermining of justice in America. The Progressives also understood that it was the responsibility of the police department to protect and serve the citizens in America; because they knew that corruption caused a rift between citizens and the police. In other words, the Progressive Era created a blueprint that other reform movements soon followed.

Furthermore, the Progressive Era showed us that police corruption makes it difficult for citizens to trust those that are in place to serve and protect them. Also, it makes it hard for the police to fight crime, since citizens will not report crimes to “dirty cops” (Holmes, 2020). Police corruption can pose a threat to the safety of citizens, jeopardize the justice system in America, create a hostile image of police in America, and makes it difficult for citizens to trust or cooperate with police officers, which can make it inevitably harder to solve crime (Holmes, 2020). Each of these issues serves as a reason to investigate police corruption in America. Police corruption amongst uniformed officers in America has failed to be combatted and completely reformed. To combat corruption amongst uniformed officers, an observation of rampant police corruption amongst three prominent police departments would lead to efficient solutions and reform efforts.

#### **A. PROBLEM STATEMENT**

Police corruption in America has caused a divide between the citizens and police officers (Bayley & Perito, 2011). This makes it increasingly difficult for police officers to effectively do their jobs and even harder for citizens to exist in America. This divide hurts the integrity of America and the people they hold to the highest degree of the law (Holmes, 2020). Even more

so, the previous police reforms that have been introduced have not gotten to the root of the problem of police corruption because it is still a major issue in America (Bayley & Perito, 2011).

Ideally, uniformed police officers would protect and serve. These officers would not abuse their power for self-gain (Capps, 2014). Furthermore, there would be procedures and exams that would eliminate any threat to the integrity of police departments. Also, police officers would be better trained, less overworked, and better paid. This means all stressors that would cause a uniformed police officer to become corrupt would potentially be removed.

Unfortunately, each of these ideals is not always met. History has shown us that the government has not aided in reform efforts in the past and has protected police departments from scrutiny (Williams, 2002). Furthermore, police departments have protected officers that become corrupt and they even go as far as to intimidate citizens to stop them from speaking out on any type of corruption they could have witnessed (Potter, 2013). Police corruption is a difficult issue to combat currently because there are too many powerful entities protecting corrupt officers. This further harms citizens within the United States, as citizens would go unprotected if the people hired to protect them can break the law and go unpunished. (Holmes, 2020)

The corruptness within police departments and amongst uniformed officers is not a victimless crime, as the consequences of police corruption in America have made it difficult for both citizens and uniformed police officers (Syed, 1997). Citizens, including police officers, often time no longer feel safe in their own country (Williams, 2002). Many citizens walk around in fear of law enforcement mainly due to the power many of them abuse daily. Encounters like this cause justice to be delayed or denied, because many citizens are fearful to report the injustices they might have witnessed (Holmes, 2020). Officers cannot properly do their jobs if citizens

refuse to report crimes. As a result, this can cause a spike in crime rates in America, which in turn makes policing more difficult for both citizens and uniformed officers (Holmes, 2020).

Therefore, an investigation into how police departments and uniformed officers currently operate could help solve the issue of police corruption. If the departments and officers are investigated, it can expose the underlying problems that cause corruption (Holmes,2020). Once these problems are exposed, then solutions can be set to help reduce and eradicate police corruption as police corruption is a decentralized problem that requires a decentralized solution. Therefore, this paper seeks to address the problems in local police departments and provide some recommendations that will help inform both scholars and practitioners on better ways to address these issues. The upcoming pages will identify the current issues plaguing police departments and uniformed officers. And once these issues have been examined, there will be recommended solutions to bring the literature as well as society closer to eradicating the deep and systemic corruption in American police departments for good.

## **B. RESEARCH QUESTION**

RQ: How can police departments and uniformed officers be reformed to eradicate police corruption?

There have been many reform movements with the sole aim of combatting police corruption, but none have been successful in its efforts. There have been few reform movements to get legislation passed that have managed police corruption. Although, there have been none to be successful in completely reforming police departments.

To address the research question, I will utilize case studies by examining the New York Police Department (NYPD), Miami-Dade Police Department (MDPD), and the Los Angeles



Police Department (LAPD). Once I have concluded the case studies, I will offer possible reasons as to why reform movements have not been successful in eradicating police corruption in the past. Then, I will offer possible solutions to combat this problem moving forward.

## **C. LITERATURE REVIEW**

When researching the impact of police corruption amongst uniformed officers within America, many things have become clear. The first thing is that corruption has existed within police departments since the beginning of the first police force (Potter, 2013). The research conducted by Bayley & Perito (2011) and Potter (2013) analyzes how pervasive police corruption is in America.

A plethora of governmental and scholarly, peer-reviewed material are available along with an increasing number of news articles chronicling the impact of police corruption in the United States (Bayley & Perito 2011; Holmes 2020; Syed 1997; Uchida 1989; Weitzer 2005). Much of the literature focuses on the issue of corruption itself, without providing any tangible solutions to stop it (Bayley and Perito 2011; Holmes 2020; “Police Corruption”; “Police Corruption and Misconduct”; Potter 2013; Syed 1997; and Weitzer 2005). To begin addressing the problems found in the police departments, I have selected the following subcategories best suited to advancing the research for this thesis: 1) the history of police departments in America and 2) corruption in modern police forces in different eras.

### **1. The History of Police Departments in America**

Policing has been around since the development of the 13 colonies in America (Potter, 2013). In the northern colonies, policing was known as the “Watch.” The watch system was made up of community volunteers whose main job was to warn of impending danger (Potter,

2013). The first-night watch was created in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1636, and eventually, other colonies then followed suit (Potter, 2013). However, the night watch was not effective at controlling crime as many of the Watchmen were routinely drunk or asleep while on duty. This form of policing lasted up until the 1830s when the first modern police department was created (Potter, 2013).

In southern colonies, policing was known as the “slave patrol” (Platt, 1982). The slave patrol had three main functions, which were to: “(1) chase down, apprehend, and return to their owners, runaway slaves; (2) provide a form of organized terror to deter slave revolts; and (3) maintain a form of discipline for slave-workers who were subject to summary justice, outside of the law, if they violated any plantation rules” (Potter, 2013). In the south, the slave patrol lasted until the civil war, where it then evolved into modern southern police departments (Potter, 2013).

***a. Modern Police Departments***

The first modern police force was created in Boston, Massachusetts in 1838 (Potter, 2013). By the 1880s all major U.S. cities had municipal police forces in place (Potter, 2013). On the other hand, police forces in the north wanted to keep social control of the people, especially the working class. On the other hand, police forces in the south wanted to control the now freed slaves and keep the social order intact. The two different police forces in the north and south maintained different purposes. In the north, early police departments were under the control of local politicians, also known as the political ward leader (Potter, 2013). The local political party ward leader, a division of a city for representative, electoral, or administrative purposes (Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, 2020), appointed the police executive in charge of the ward leader’s neighborhood (Potter, 2013). The ward leader was also, “the neighborhood tavern owner, sometimes the neighborhood purveyor of gambling and prostitution, and usually

the controlling influence over neighborhood youth gangs who were used to get out the vote and intimidate opposition party voters” (Potter, 2013). The police executives in charge would commonly take payoffs or ignore the illegal activities that were taking place in the neighborhood out of loyalty to the political ward leaders (Potter, 2013). According to Potter (2013), the corruption within modern police departments usually went unpunished and was commonly rewarded by local politicians. Whereas in the south, the slave patrol evolved into modern southern police departments after the civil war. The newly developed southern police departments were tasked with controlling newly freed slaves and enforcing “Jim Crow” laws, which denied equality to African Americans in the south (Potter, 2013). Furthermore, uniformed officers in the south would go as far as to use excessive force to enforce “Jim Crow” laws (Hassett-Walker, 2021).

***b. Corruption in Early Modern Police Departments***

Early police departments commonly took part in corruption by protecting local politicians, by allowing them to participate in illegal activities such as drinking, gambling, and prostitution (Potter, 2013). Another way police officers would participate in corruption was by participating in vote-buying and ballot-box-stuffing to help local politicians get re-elected (Potter, 2013). Local politicians would reward this behavior by making political operatives police officers (Potter, 2013). Furthermore, police officers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, “provided services and assistance to political allies of the machine and harassed, arrested and interfered with the political activities of machine opponents” (Potter, 2013). Uniformed police officers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were agents of local politicians, which gave them unprecedented power to take advantage of citizens and degrade the law with little to no consequences (Potter, 2013).

Likewise, police officers in the post-Civil War era would commonly participate in strikebreaking, which was the use of force to break up strikes (Potter, 2013). These officers would use extreme violence to disperse the demonstrating workers (Harring, 1981). They would also try to prevent strikes from organizing, by making “public order” arrests towards workers (Potter, 2013). Public order crimes are, according to Attorneys on Demand (n.d.), any acts or behaviors that are considered to interfere with the normal flow of society. Police officers also took advantage of ambiguous laws to make arrests on union-organized and unemployed workers (Potter, 2013). In conclusion, police corruption has taken many forms in early modern police departments. First with police departments being controlled by local politicians, then by police officers using violent force to control citizens (Potter, 2013). One thing that remained the same through the times was rampant corruption within police departments.

## **2. Corruption in Modern Police Forces in Different Eras**

Police corruption might have begun in the early 1800s, but it did not end there (Potter, 2013). Police corruption continued to evolve through different eras. The eras included: 1) The Political Era, 2) The Reform Era, and 3) The Community Era. Each of these eras has led to the foundation that police corruption stands on today (Bond, 2016). This means, police corruption in modern police forces in America still exists. Scholars Bayley & Perito (2011) have noted that police corruption in America is still widespread throughout the nation making it more difficult for citizens to survive in America. The following sections analyze the different eras of police corruption providing the history needed to understand the modern and current pervasiveness of corruption in society today.

### ***a. The Political Era***

The Political Era in policing is categorized by the 1840s to the 1930s (Bond, 2016). During this era, policemen represented local politicians (“History of Policing,” n.d.). According to Potter (2013), local politicians controlled the actions of policemen while they were on duty and policemen had no issue with illegally protecting politicians from losing elections. As a result, policemen were known as the main agents in getting local politicians re-elected.

Also, during this time, the prohibition era was in full swing. The prohibition era was categorized as an era that discouraged the use of alcoholic beverages through the 18<sup>th</sup> amendment of the U.S. Constitution (Library of Congress). Prohibition aided in an increase in organized crime, which resulted in widespread police corruption (Bond, 2016). During prohibition, “police became little more than watchmen for organized crime enterprises, or, in a more sinister vein, enforcement squads to harass the competition of the syndicate paying the corruption bill” (Potter, 2013). By the end of prohibition, modern American policing was engulfed in total corruption. One form of corruption was categorized by an alarming use of excessive force on citizens, where many police officers were dedicated to maintaining public order by any means necessary, which put citizens in harm's way. In conclusion, the corruption of the Political Era of policing was categorized as the beginning of police corruption in America, which led to the Reform Era (Bond, 2016).

***b. The Reform Era***

The reform era of policing lasted from the 1930s to the 1980s, which was a direct result of the political era of policing (Bond, 2016). This era was defined by reforms to modify police departments in a concerted effort to try to eliminate corruption in policing and was successful in changing the way police departments functioned. Due to the reforms, police departments were more professional, required training and tests to become police officers, and began utilizing

scientific methods in their investigations (Morey, 1991). Although police reforms were being introduced, they did not eliminate corruption from police departments as many were still dealing with the issue of racism and drugs (Summerhays, 1979). Many commissions during this time exposed that police officers were taking bribes and payoffs to ignore the trafficking, production, and selling of illegal drugs (Bond, 2016). Furthermore, this era also created an “us versus them” mentality amongst police officers, which made police officers less approachable and less understanding (Bond, 2016)). As a result, this new policing environment put a strain on the relationships police officers had with communities. In short, the Reform Era reshaped and redefined modern day policing, but it did not eliminate corruption nor create a safe environment for citizens as many police officers were still participating in illegal activities while on duty and increasingly became more hostile and pessimistic towards citizens (Bond, 2016).

*c. The Community Era*

The Community Era is the present era of policing and began in the 1980s (Bond, 2016). The advertised goal of this era is to rebuild relationships with communities, to show them that police officers care about the well-being of citizens, and to aid safer communities (Bond, 2016)). Although the Community Era sets to rebuild what the Reform Era destroyed, it is still heavily corrupt with police brutality on citizens, particularly minorities within America (Ang, 2020). Luckily, due to the advancement of technology, many citizens are now actively recording and exposing the corruption of modern police officers (Hudson, 2012). Because of this, there have been several viral videos that have exposed the racial insensitivity of police officers. These videos show police officers violently beating or killing unarmed Black, Indigenous, and/or People of Color (BIPOC). However, most officers are not charged nor indicted for their actions against BIPOC (Dewan, 2020). During this era, uniformed officers have been able to get away

with murder (Trivedi, 2020). Therefore, although this era can be categorized as an era that is trying to improve policing through rebuilding community relationships, it has not been entirely successful. The lack of accountability and racial insensitivity in police departments makes it difficult for communities to trust police officers.

#### **D. RESEARCH DESIGN**

The thesis analyzes the issues of police corruption amongst uniformed officers and how it negatively affects citizens to create a solution of reform for police corruption. Although there have been multiple police reform efforts, none of them have been successful in eradicating police corruption (Alpert et al., 2020). Over the years, there have been many commissions that were created with the sole purpose of understanding police corruption; however, these commissions do not provide solutions it only exposes the issue (Armstrong, 2012).

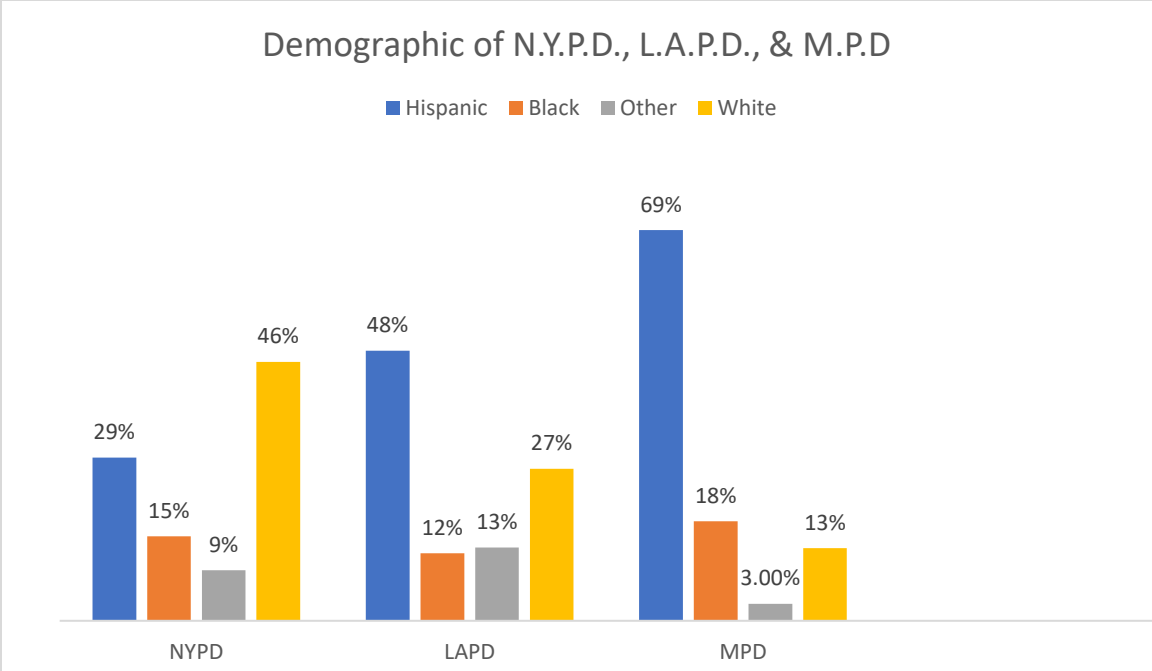
To address the problems of modern day police corruption and provide recommendations to solve them, this research employs a multiple case analysis or a case study method, to observe three prominent police departments to determine the best solution for police corruption. The case study method allows for an in-depth analysis of three different police departments and the reasons as to why officers become corrupt in the first place. Robert Yin (2013) best defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not evident.”

The case study method was chosen because it allows more of an in-depth approach to real-world complex issues (Avery et al., 2011). According to its premise, the case study approach is a great method to study something as complex as police corruption as there are numerous

issues to address concerning this widespread problem. This method will allow for the study of different police departments and the issues that are plaguing them.

The three case studies focus on the New York Police Department (N.Y.P.D.), Miami Police Department (M.P.D.), and the Los Angeles Police Department (L.A.P.D.). Each of these police departments are in cities with very different cultures. The city of New York is home to an artistic multi-ethnic culture, and it is also known for its business culture (Pound, 2020). The city of Miami is known for its rich Latin American culture (Miami Culture and Cuban Influence, n.d.). Furthermore, the city of Los Angeles culture is centered around the entertainment capital (Pound, 20). The demographics of the police departments are also different. Refer to Figure 1 below to observe the demographic of the N.Y.P.D., L.A.P.D., and M.P.D. As the data below supports, these three police departments are very different, that is why they have been chosen to be a part of the case study. The differences of these departments will highlight how rampant police corruption is and how it can present itself in different environments. Not only were these departments chosen because of their differences, but also for their locations. Each of these departments are located in different parts of America, which can further highlight how pervasive corruption is. These three departments are very popular and have each been involved in some form of police corruption. Also, these departments are highly bureaucratized, which aids in a group-think mentality that can foster police corruption (Potter, 2013). The investigation of these three departments that are rampant with police corruption may provide some insight into other similar police departments.





**Figure 1.1 Demographic of the N.Y.P.D, L.A.P.D., & M.P.D**

## **CHAPTER 2: ANALYZING CORRUPTION WITHIN THE N.Y.P.D.**

### **Background**

The New York Police Department has always had an issue with corruption since its creation in 1844 (Grennan, 2001). Throughout the department's 177 years of service; it has been rocked by six major police scandals (Grennan, 2001). Each of these scandals were investigated by a commission, which exposed major issues within the department. These six commissions are known as the Lexow Committee (1895), Curran Committee (1913), Seabury Commission (1932), The scandal of Harry Gross (1949), Knapp Commission (1970), and the Mollen Commission (1992) (Grennan, 2001). Once the commissions discovered and exposed corruption within the department, it offered solutions and recommendations to reform the officers of the N.Y.P.D. (Parent, 2016). Although, it was at the discretion of the department to implement these solutions and recommendations (Grennan, 2001). Although these commissions were not able to fully eradicate corruption within the N.Y.P.D., they proved to be helpful when it came to exposing corruption in the department (Grennan, 2001). These commissions were able to expose dirty cops, dirty politicians, and the rules that helped them break the law (Parent, 2016). Furthermore, without these commissions', corruption within the N.Y.P.D. would not be as easy to highlight in the modern day. An in-depth analysis of the commissions that reviewed corruption within the department and the solutions offered will help understand the pervasiveness of corruption within the N.Y.P.D. and bring the literature closer to eradicating police corruption. Furthermore, an in-depth analysis of commissions will demonstrate how corruption has adapted over time.

## **Historical Analysis**

Historical analysis' according to Thorpe and Holt (2008), is "a method of the examination of evidence in coming to an understanding of the past." This approach to data collection will allow the researcher to analyze the past while using facts. Furthermore, a historical analysis allows the researcher to develop a cause-and-effect relationship that will allow them to understand why things happened (Thorpe & Holt, 2008). Moreover, historical documents, such as the reports left by the commissions, are considered key historical traces (Jupp, 2006). A historical analysis of past N.Y.P.D. commission reports would allow for the researcher to understand the past of police corruption and the reasons as to why it persisted in the department for decades. Moreover, Victor Jupp (2006) stated in his article that, "A stronger conception of historical analysis sees it as a pervasive and necessary technique in its own right, without which no account of phenomena in the present may be properly understood." The present issue of police corruption within the N.Y.P.D. could not properly be understood without understanding the past.

## **Results**

### **1. The Lexow Committee**

The Lexow Committee was formed in March of 1894, and it was headed by Clarence Lexow, a state senator. The committee was formed because the N.Y.P.D. was facing corruption allegations by businesses and reform organizations (Grennan, 2001). Moreover, the committee was funded by private organizations because of the lack of support from the state government (Grennan, 2001). The goal of the committee was to investigate the corruption taking place within the N.Y.P.D. and collect evidence to support its findings (New York State, 1895). The Lexow

Committee discovered interference at the voting polls, extortion, blackmail, and corruption (New York State, 1895). Once the discoveries of the Lexow Committee were exposed, many high-ranking members of the N.Y.P.D. were initially removed from their positions (Grennan, 2001). Many of the officers appealed to be reinstated back to their old positions and some succeeded in their appeals (Grennan, 2001). Also, the committee discovered that to be promoted in the department, officers had to pay a bribe to a corrupt politician (Grennan, 2001). In conclusion, the Lexow Committee was able to successfully expose corruption but not eliminate it.

## **2. The Curran Committee**

The Curran Committee was formed almost seventeen years after the Lexow Committee on August 5, 1912. The committee was formed after allegations a police lieutenant was involved in the murder of a gambler (Grennan, 2001). Herman Rosenthal, a gambler, was paying Lieutenant Charles Becker not to raid his gambling establishment. Becker went against his word and raided the location and Rosenthal retaliated by cooperating with the district attorney's office (Grennan, 2001). Several days after Rosenthal gave a statement to the district attorney about Becker's involvement in corruption, he was lured into a hotel where he was shot to death (Grennan, 2001). After the indictment of Becker, the Curran Committee filed its report with the legislature on March 9, 1913 (Driscoll, 1913). The Curran Committee found that police officers were extorting money from a variety of businesses and giving false testimonies (Grennan, 2001). The committee recommended; (1) in-depth background checks on recruits, (2) additional training for recruits, plainclothesmen, and detectives, (3) create new promotional practices to prevent corruption in the promotional process, (4) the revision of detective duties, and (5) the creation of a confidential unit within the department to ensure the maintenance of honesty and integrity (Grennan, 2001). Although the Curran Committee attempted to eradicate police corruption, the

growing crime and the illegalization of the possession and use of alcohol in the U.S. made it impossible (Grennan, 2001).

### **3. The Seabury Commission**

The Seabury Commission was formed in August of 1930 and was headed by Judge Samuel Seabury (Grennan, 2001). The commission was formed once allegations of corruption within the magistrate's court, a court having limited jurisdiction over minor civil and criminal matters, was brought to the attention of Governor Franklin D. Roosevelt (Grennan, 2001). Seabury was tasked with investigating the corruption that was taking place in the magistrate's court (Burstein, 2019). Although, no one could have been prepared for the results of the Seabury Commission. The investigation revealed that police officers, magistrates, bail bond persons, court personnel, and attorneys were extorting money from anyone who entered the magistrates' court (Grennan, 2001).

Furthermore, most of the cases that were presented in the magistrate's court were arrests made by N.Y.P.D. officers and the verdicts were mainly decided by the testimony of an arresting officer (Grennan, 2001). These officers were typically vice cops and would initially propose to victims that the arrests would go away if they could pay the fee. For those who could pay the fee, they were immediately released and those who couldn't or wouldn't were processed then taken to arraignment. Additionally, to determine how deep the corruption of the officers was, Seabury requested a financial check into some members of the vice squad. Many of the officers had large sums of money in their accounts and could not legally explain how it got there (Grennan, 2001). The commission resulted in all members of the vice squad being demoted back to uniform. Furthermore, thirteen of the officers were convicted of crimes committed while working in the vice squad. The biggest achievement of the commission was the resignation of Mayor Jimmy

Walker, who had proved to also be corrupt (Burstein, 2019). Moreover, the Seabury commission recommended the elimination of the magistrate's court, the children's court, and the court of special sessions among other things. However, this recommendation was the most helpful in aiding the reform of police corruption during that period (Grennan, 2001).

#### **4. The Investigation of Harry Gross**

Harry Gross also known as the man who bought the N.Y.P.D., paid the department over \$1 million a year to protect his gambling establishments (Krajicek, 2018). Gross would brag about the policemen and politicians he had on his payroll and would even gift them with lavish items such as tv sets and cars (McFadden, 1986). Furthermore, Gross was so aware of the power he had over the department that he would negotiate bribes inside station houses (Krajicek, 2018). All this changed once Gross was arrested in 1950 (McFadden, 1986). Gross was aware of the time he was facing, so he made a deal to expose the officers on his payroll for a lighter sentence (Grennan, 2001). Gross initially gave incriminating information on twenty-one officers, who were then indicted on charges of conspiracy and extortion (Grennan, 2001). However, Gross refused to testify against the officers, which resulted in a dismissal of the cases against the officers, and because of double jeopardy, they were never tried again (Grennan, 2001). Although, Gross agreed to testify against these officers at the N.Y.P.D. departmental trials, which resulted in the dismissal of many officers from the department (Grennan, 2001). Overall, the discovery of Harry Gross and his relationship with the N.Y.P.D. led to twenty-two convictions and the dismissal or resignation of over 240 police officers (McFadden, 1986). The Helfand Commission, the commission that investigated Harry Gross, resulted in the resignation of the chief inspector, the police commissioner, and the mayor (Grennan, 2001). Additionally, all plainclothes officers were placed back into uniforms. The commission also aided in the creation

of a new law that prevented police officers from retiring when they were petitioned to appear before a grand jury (Grennan, 2001). In conclusion, the investigation of Harry Gross exposed the pervasiveness of corruption within the N.Y.P.D.

## **5. The Knapp Commission**

On April 25, 1970, The New York Times published an article accusing the N.Y.P.D. of police corruption and suggested that Mayor John V. Lindsey ignored the issue (Armstrong, 2012). As a response to these accusations, Mayor Lindsey formed the Knapp Commission which was headed by Whitman Knapp (Grennan, 2001). The commission was launched after a plainclothes officer named Frank Serpico went to the New York Times and reported widespread corruption within his unit (Armstrong, 2012). Serpico also stated that he previously tried to report the corruption to his superiors and city officials, but nothing was ever done (Armstrong, 2012). The actions of Serpico lead to Mayor Lindsey wanting to protect his reputation, so he launched a commission that would investigate corruption in the N.Y.P.D. (Armstrong, 2012).

Moreover, the Knapp Commission categorized two different types of corrupt officers, the “meat-eaters” and the “grass-eaters.” The “meat-eaters” are police officers who aggressively misuse their police powers for personal gain and the “grass-eaters” are those that accept the payoffs that police work throw their way (Knapp Commission, 1973). The Knapp Commission also discovered that not all corrupt officers are corrupt by choice, but by force or peer pressure (Goldstein, 1975). Some officers believed to truly be accepted by other officers, they had to participate in corrupt activities (Goldstein, 1975). Furthermore, the Knapp Commission discovered that many units within the N.Y.P.D. were taking payoffs from criminal institutions, specifically gamblers, and stealing money from crime scenes (Grennan, 2001). Moreover, gamblers would pay entire units every month to leave them alone and look the other way

(Grennan, 2001). Units would then take the collected money and share it amongst the officers in the unit (Armstrong, 2012). This led to the discovery that corruption in the N.Y.P.D. was widespread and that the Internal Affairs Unit was incapable of fighting corruption within the department (Grennan, 2001).

The main recommendation from the Knapp Commission was the establishment of a Special Prosecutor's Office for the criminal justice system in New York City (Armstrong, 2012). The office would be tasked with monitoring the district attorneys in their anti-corruption efforts and when needed, conduct their own investigations (Armstrong, 2012). Although the recommendation of a special prosecutor's office in New York City was taken, it did not eradicate police corruption from the department. Almost two decades later another commission was launched.

## **6. The Mollen Commission**

In 1992, Mayor David Dinkins named Milton Mollen as the lead on a special panel to investigate police corruption in the N.Y.P.D. (Grennan, 2001). This special panel came to be known as the Mollen Commission and is the most recent commission launched to investigate corruption in the N.Y.P.D. (Grennan, 2001). Furthermore, the investigation was launched after six police officers from the N.Y.P.D. were arrested on drug charges (Grennan, 2001). One of the officers arrested was Michael Dowd and he proved to be very helpful to the Mollen Commission (Grennan, 2001). Dowd was aware that he could be facing life imprisonment, so he decided to cooperate with the commission to receive a lighter sentence (Grennan, 2001). With the help of Dowd, the commission discovered that Dowd and his police gang had, "robbed and beaten-up drug dealers, burglarized drug locations, sold drugs, lied in court to get drug dealers' charges dismissed and many other crimes" (Grennan, 2001).



The commission also discovered another police gang which was run by Bernard Cawley (Grennan, 2001). This gang was very similar to Dowd's gang with the exception that they were more violent (Grennan, 2001). Furthermore, Cawley admitted in his testimony to the commission that he would "beat up" drug dealers and innocent bystanders to show who was in charge (The New York Times, 1993). Cawley even admitted that his sergeant was aware of his aggressive behavior towards citizens and rewarded him and other officers for it (The New York Times, 1993). Furthermore, the Mollen Commission discovered more corrupt officers like Cawley and Dowd but realized that corruption was not systemic in the N.Y.P.D, but isolated among rogue officers (Raab, 1993).

The Mollen Commission's recommendation to reform the N.Y.P.D. was an independent oversight agency to monitor anti-corruption investigations and for a reconstruction of the department's internal programs for preventing and detecting misconduct (Raab, 1993). The commission also recommended new anti-corruption tactics such as thorough background checks of recruits, anti-corruption training methods, and methods to ensure supervisors are held accountable for corruption and misconduct (Raab, 1993). Furthermore, the commission was able to discover the corruption taking place in the N.Y.P.D and why it has been able to persist for so long. The commission stated that the N.Y.P.D. failed to address the issue of corruption and has allowed it to plague the department for decades (Raab, 1993). Although the commission was successful in many areas, it was unsuccessful in reforming the department. Refer to Table 2.1 to see the results and recommendations of each commission of the N.Y.P.D.

<b>Name and Year of Commission</b>	<b>Forms of Corruption Discovered</b>	<b>Commission's Recommendations</b>
The Lexow Committee (1894)	Extortion, interference at the voting polls, blackmail, and payoffs to politicians for promotions.	None
The Curran Committee (1912)	Extortion and false testimonies in court.	In-depth background checks on recruits, additional training for all officers, create new promotional process, revision of detective duties, and the creation of Internal affairs units.
The Seabury Commission (1930)	Extortion, false testimonies, blackmail, and corrupt mayor.	Elimination of the magistrate's court, children's court. And the court of special sessions
The Scandal of Harry Gross (1950)	The entire police department was being paid off by Harry Gross.	A law that prevented police officers from retiring when petitioned to appear before a grand jury.
The Knapp Commission (1970)	Payoffs from criminal institutions and theft	The establishment of a special prosecutor's office.

The Mollen Commission (1992)	Brutality, extortion, and drug dealing	Independent oversight agency, reconstruction of the internal programs for preventing police corruption, and new anti-corruption tactics.
------------------------------	--	--

**Table 2.1 The Results of N.Y.P.D. Commissions**

**Analysis**

No commission tasked with investigating the N.Y.P.D was able to eradicate or reform the officers in the department. This is evident because almost every two decades a new corruption scandal would launch another investigation. Each investigation made recommendations, but not all these recommendations proved to be helpful. For example, the creation of an internal affairs unit. The internal affairs unit was described as useless in the eradication of corruption. Furthermore, the department also failed to address corruption within the system. To extend on this point, the department overlooked the reports of the commissions and demoted officers that were involved rather than firing them. These officers were still able to participate in corruption but at a lower rank. Also, because it was at the discretion of the department to accept the recommendations of the commissions, they were never forced to their corrupt behavior.

Commissions could not force their recommendations onto the department therefore, they could not adequately impact change. These commissions also had a difficult time eradicating or reforming corruption within the N.Y.P.D. mainly because there was no pressure for the department to accept the recommendations of the commission. Because of the lack of pressure, the department felt they never really had to change its practices or the way they handled

corruption. Due to this, the department reverted to their old ways once the public eye was no longer on them. In conclusion, the commissions never stood a chance at eradicating or reforming corruption within the N.Y.P.D., because discretion to accept any recommendations made by the commission was at the discretion of the department.

## CHAPTER 3: ANALYZING CORRUPTION WITHIN THE M.P.D.

### Background

Corruption in the early Miami Police Department (M.P.D.) was related to the racial turmoil that plagued Miami in the 40s and 50s (Lersch, 2001). Officers in the department were abusing and discriminating against the black community. These officers would beat, sexually assault, and kill black people and not face any real consequences (Lersch, 2001). These actions continued to add to an already tumultuous relationship between cops and the black community. The tension finally came to a bursting point in 1980 after the death of Arthur McDuffie. Arthur McDuffie, a black insurance agent, was riding his motorcycle when he popped a wheelie and gave an obscene gesture towards a police sergeant (Lersch, 2001). McDuffie was then pursued by over a dozen police cars and when he finally stopped, he was beaten by at least six of the responding officers (Lersch, 2001). A few days later McDuffie succumbed to his injuries (Lersch, 2001). The department tried to cover his death by claiming that he died from crashing his motorcycle, but the coroner's office refuted this claim (Veitenhans, 2009). Furthermore, a police officer who followed the chase testified that the officers beat McDuffie to death with their flashlights (Veitenhans, 2009). Although the testimony of the officer and coroner's report was strong evidence, an all-white jury found the officers not guilty. This verdict led to the race riots of 1980. The next era of corruption within the M.P.D. was categorized by the arrival of drugs in the United States (Lersch, 2001). Many officers took advantage of the luxuries drug dealing had to offer (Lersch, 2001). These officers were on the payrolls of big-time drug kingpins and worked on their behalf (Lersch, 2001). An in-depth analysis of the Miami Police Department before and after the race riots of 1980 and the drug-related corruption of the 80s and 90s would reveal the pervasiveness of corruption and how easily it can adapt to the times. Furthermore, this

analysis would bring the literature closer to reform by highlighting how corruption in the past was upheld.

## **Results**

### **1. The M.P.D. Before the Race Riots of 1980**

The Miami Police Department before the race riots of 1980, gave the black community of Miami a lot to be angry about (Lersch, 2001). There were many incidents where black people were unnecessarily abused, harmed, and had their civil rights violated by officers of the department. One incident included the mistake of five officers who raided the home of Nathaniel Lafleur, a junior high teacher. In the raid, Lafleur and his son were both beaten. Lafleur stated that he was never shown a search warrant, the officers never announced who they were, and only one officer was in uniform (The New York Times, 1979). It was revealed that the officers had raided the wrong home (Lersch, 2001). The result of the raid was a suspension without pay for four of the officers involved (Lersch, 2001).

Another incident involving abuse towards black people by the Miami Police Department was when a white off-duty cop killed an unarmed black man (Lersch, 2001). The jury claimed that they saw no criminal wrongdoing, although the officer was later charged with negligence in the mishandling of his weapon (Lersch, 2001). There were many more cases similar or more heinous than this, which led to the race riots of 1980 (Lersch, 2001). Incidents like this infuriated the black community, mainly because they did not see any justice be served to the cops who committed these crimes (Lersch, 2001). The verdict of the cops who beat Arthur McDuffie was the tipping point for the anger of the black community (Lersch, 2001).

## **2. The M.P.D. After the Race Riots of 1980**

The Miami Police Department had very few black officers, and the black officers that were employed worked in a segregated unit (Lersch, 2001). From 1975 to 1980, the M.P.D. only had 80 black officers, and only 16 of those officers were employed above the level of patrol officers (Lersch, 2001). However, the employment of black officers began to change in 1980 due to consent decrees and affirmative action (Lersch, 2001). In 1970, Leonard Cohen, an African American M.P.D. officer filed a lawsuit against the city of Miami (Lersch, 2001). Cohen claimed that the police department was discriminatory against minorities in its promotional and hiring practices (Lersch, 2001). Cohen's lawsuit resulted in the Cohen Consent Decree (1973), which mandated that African American officers were to be hired to adequately reflect the population of Miami (Lersch, 2001). The second consent decree came about through a lawsuit filed by the U.S. Department of Justice in 1975, in which the Department of Justice claimed that the city of Miami was discriminatory against minorities and women in its employment practices (Lersch, 2001). This lawsuit resulted in a mandate that required 56% of individuals hired by M.P.D. to be minorities and women (Lersch, 2001). These decrees were not put into effect until 1980 when the M.P.D.'s budget was increased (Lersch, 2001). The improvement of hiring and employment practices led to a hiring frenzy from 1981 to 1982 (Lersch, 2001). Although the hiring frenzy more than doubled the size of the department, it also brought about a relaxed hiring standard (Lersch, 2001). This happened because the department was no longer directly handling the screening of applicants, instead, the responsibility was placed on the City Commission and the Department of Human Resources (Lersch, 2001). Moreover, an applicant's test results to qualify as an officer were no longer directly given to the M.P.D., but an agency was given a list of qualified applicants from which the M.P.D. was obligated to hire (Lersch, 2001). This allowed for

unqualified individuals, who typically would be denied employment, police officers (Lersch, 2001). Not only were hiring standards relaxed but so were promotional standards (Lersch, 2001). Relaxed promotional standards led to officers who were less experienced being promoted. These new relaxed standards in the M.P.D. led to the river cops, a group of corrupt officers, being hired.

### **3. Drug-Related Corruption**

The river cops' case is known as Miami's worst police scandal (Sechrest & Burns, 1992). The river cops were a group of nineteen Hispanic officers who were hired during the relaxed hiring standards of the M.P.D. (Lersch, 2001). According to Lersch (2001), these officers were accused of various state and federal crimes, including using the M.P.D. as a racketeering enterprise, murder, threats involving murder, civil rights violations, robbery, possession of narcotics, and various conspiracy charges. The river cops began to raise red flags within the department after they claimed they seized 850 pounds of cocaine from beneath a deck of a boat, but one of the smugglers reported that over 1,000 pounds of cocaine was on that boat (Sechrest & Burns, 1992). This incident resulted in the launch of an investigation into the officers. The second incident involved at least ten officers boarding a boat that contained 400 kilograms of cocaine (Sechrest & Burns, 1992). The officers threw the smugglers into the water and confiscated the drugs (Sechrest & Burns, 1992). The third incident, which was more severe, involved eight officers (Lersch, 2001). The officers raided the boat, confiscated the cocaine, and forced the crew into the water (Lersch, 2001). Unfortunately, three of the smugglers that were forced into the water were unable to swim and drowned (Sechrest, 1992). The officers were eventually caught when they tried to sell the stolen cocaine to undercover officers (Sechrest & Burns, 1992). Almost all the river cops were convicted by 1988 (Sechrest & Burns, 1992). The



crimes of the river cops exposed the corruption taking place in the Miami Police Department. According to Sechrest and Burns (1992), “By early 1988, 77 Miami police officers, including the River Cops, had been fired or suspended, or accused of misconduct after they resigned.” In conclusion, the relaxed recruitment, screening, and selection procedures were in part responsible for enabling the river cops and other corrupt officers (Sechrest & Burns, 1992).

### **Analysis**

The M.P.D.’s history with race and segregation allowed for corruption to creep into the department. Many officers were able to harm the black community and minorities and face virtually no consequences. The lack of repercussions officers faced caused tension between the black community and the department. This tension led to the riots of the 1980s. The black community and minorities were tired of the treatment they were receiving from the M.P.D., therefore they acted out. This consequently led to change within the department. Furthermore, the department was now able to increase the number of minorities that were hired, including women. This hiring frenzy led to relaxed standards, which ultimately led to corruption. Officers who were previously not qualified to work for the M.P.D. were now able to be employed by the department, which made it easier for corrupt people to become police officers. In conclusion, the relaxed standards and management enabled corruption within the Miami Police Department.

## CHAPTER 4: ANALYZING CORRUPTION WITHIN THE L.A.P.D.

### Background

The Los Angeles Police Department (L.A.P.D.) has had an interesting relationship with police corruption through the years. The beginning of L.A.P.D.'s history with corruption was deeply connected with racism. Officers would target minorities and stop them just for being a person of color (Bates, 2017). During these stops, officers were typically hostile towards civilians and would sometimes brutalize them for no apparent reason (Bates, 2017). It is also important to note that during this time the officers in the department were primarily white, which aided in the racist mindset of the department at the time. Similar to the Miami Police Department, there was tension between minorities and the L.A.P.D. Tensions finally erupted after the verdict of the Rodney King case (Bates, 2017). Rodney King was an African American who was brutally beaten by four L.A.P.D. officers in 1992. The officers were indicted but a jury deemed them not guilty, and this led to the L.A. Riots (Bates, 2017). The L.A.P.D was also categorized by corrupt officers who partook in criminal behavior (Bates, 2017). The Rampart Scandal, which is known as one of the biggest police scandals in L.A.P.D.s history, was the result of cops becoming criminals (Bates, 2017). Some of the cops associated with the scandal were affiliated with gangs, sold drugs, and harassed and tortured civilians (Bates, 2017). The Rampart Scandal exposed years of deep-seated corruption within the L.A.P.D and offered solutions to curb the issue of police corruption ("Rampart Scandal Timeline," n.d.). An in-depth analysis of the Rodney King beating, the L.A. Riots, and the Rampart scandal would demonstrate the role racism plays in corruption and how difficult it is to spot.

## **Results**

### **1. Rodney King and The L.A. Riots**

On March 3, 1991, Rodney King, an African American man, took the police on a high-speed chase while intoxicated (Sastry & Bates, 2017). When King finally stopped, he was drunk and uncooperative (Sastry & Bates, 2017). The four responding officers were becoming irritated with his behavior and began to beat him with their batons for approximately 15 minutes (Sastry & Bates, 2017). King was beaten past the point of being able to resist arrest (History.com Editors, 2010). King's injuries were skull fractures, broken bones and teeth, and permanent brain damage (Sastry & Bates, 2017). On March 15, 1991, the four officers involved were indicted on charges of felony assault and other offenses (Associated Press, 2017). A year later, on April 29, 1992, the four officers were found not guilty on charges and the jury was deadlocked on one (Sastry & Bates, 2017). The verdict resulted in chaos throughout the city. According to Sastry & Bates (2017) civilians, "set fires, looted and destroyed liquor stores, grocery stores, retail shops, and fast-food restaurants." The civilians also harassed anyone light-skinned, white, or Latino (Sastry & Bates, 2017). This era of chaos was known as the L.A. Riots. The community was already fed up with the actions of the officers, the citizens felt like they were being harassed without cause instead of protected (Sastry & Bates, 2017). The racism that plagued the department had finally caught up with them and the officers were now facing the consequences. The city was erupting into chaos after the racism of officers was once again overlooked. Even during these times, the L.A.P.D. failed to protect the citizens who needed them most. In conclusion, the L.A.P.D. took advantage of a vulnerable community and never faced consequences and the community finally responded.

## **2. The Rampart Scandal**

The Rampart scandal first began with the fatal shooting of Kevin Gaines in 1997. Undercover officer Frank Lyga claimed that Gaines, a black off-duty officer, threatened him with a gun (Boyer, 2001). Lyga claimed the incident started when they were sitting in traffic and he rolled down his window to ask Gaines what he was staring at (Boyer, 2001). Gaines then responded by aggressively yelling that he was not staring at Lyga (Boyer, 2001). Lyga then claimed that Gaines had invited him to pull over so they could handle the situation (Boyer, 2001). Lyga accepted the challenge, but as soon as Gaines pulled over Lyga bolted back into traffic and drove off (Boyer, 2001). This infuriated Gaines, so he chased after Lyga in traffic (Boyer, 2001). When Gaines finally caught up to him he showed Lyga his gun and threatened him (Boyer, 2001). Lyga then pulled out his gun and fired into Gaines vehicle twice with the second round killing him (Boyer, 2001). Lyga claimed that he was only acting in self-defense (Boyer, 2001). The investigation revealed that this was not the first incident Gaines had threatened civilians with his gun (Boyer, 2001). The investigation also revealed that Gaines was connected with Death Row Records, a record company that was claimed to be associated with the Mob Piru Bloods (Boyer, 2001).

The next incident that revealed the cracks in the L.A.P.D., was a bank robbery in 1997. A Bank of America was robbed for over \$700,000 on November 6, 1997 (Boyer, 2001). Brian Tyndall, the detective on the case, believed that it was an inside job and interrogated the assistant manager of the bank, Errolyn Romero (Boyer, 2001). Romero cracked and gave up David Mack as her accomplice (Boyer, 2001). David Mack was an L.A.P.D police officer who joined the force in 1988 (Boyer, 2001). When Mack was arrested, he refused to cooperate with the police (Boyer, 2001). When Mack went to prison, he slowly began to transition into a gang member and

completely renounced the L.A.P.D. (Boyer, 2001). The investigation into Mack revealed that he grew up in the same neighborhood as Suge Knight, the C.E.O. of Death Row Records (Boyer, 2001).

The next incident occurred three months after the bank robbery when six and a half pounds of cocaine went missing from the property room at the L.A.P.D. headquarters (Boyer, 2001). After an investigation, it was revealed that officer Rafael Perez stole the cocaine from lockup under the name Joel Perez (Boyer, 2001). This incident coupled with the other acts of corruption that had happened the previous year, Chief Bernard Parks, the current chief of the L.A.P.D., launched an internal investigative task force, which primarily focused on the prosecution of Rafael Perez (Boyer, 2001). To avoid a harsh sentence, Perez agreed to cooperate with the police and inform them of the corruption plaguing the department (Boyer, 2001). When Perez had concluded his testimony, he had implicated over 70 officers in misconduct (“Rampart Scandal Timeline,” n.d.). The Rampart investigative task force concluded with 108 recommendations for the L.A.P.D., including the improvement of hiring practices, supervisory oversight, and police training (“Rampart Scandal Timeline,” n.d.). This scandal lowered the morale of citizens and the department aiding in Chief Bernard Parks and District Attorney Gil Garcetti failing to be reelected for a new term (Boyer, 2001). In conclusion, the Rampart Scandal exposed the corruption that the department tried to ignore for decades.

### **Analysis:**

The L.A.P.D.’s lack of action to combat police corruption led to the Rampart Scandal of 1998. Former L.A.P.D. Chief Willie Williams took no action against the cops who were involved in the Rodney King case and did nothing about the corruption that seemed to be taking place within the department (Boyer, 2001). Bernard Parks, the chief who succeeded Williams, wanted

to do the complete opposite (Boyer, 2001). Chief Parks publicly called out District Attorney Gil Garcetti for not prosecuting any of the officers involved in the Rampart Scandal (Boyer, 2001). Parks made sure that he was vocal about his stance towards the corruption taking place within the department (Boyer, 2001). However, Parks did too little too late. Parks did not become vocal until after the officers in his department had been caught up in criminal activities. Parks should have tried to combat corruption when he was first named chief. Not only did Chief Parks fail to do anything about the corruption plaguing the department, but so did the chiefs before him. The L.A.P.D. failed to handle the issue of corruption early on and it led to the Rodney King beating and Rampart Scandal.

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

### Case Study Conclusion

The N.Y.P.D., M.P.D., and L.A.P.D. are three major police departments located in big cities with large populations. Each of these departments have been crippled by corruption at some point in their long history. When faced with corruption, the departments did not properly address the issue. Therefore, the problem never went away it just grew into a bigger problem. Each department presented identical themes, which allowed for the corruption to take place. For instance, the departments' internal affairs unit was practically absent. The internal affairs unit was not monitoring the corruption that was taking place nor were they properly monitoring the officers within the unit. This led to no oversight of officers in the department, which allowed these officers to continue on with corruption. Furthermore, the environment and culture of the departments at the time also aided the corruption that was taking place. The L.A.P.D. during the Rodney King beating had a culture of racism and during the Rampart Scandal the city was plagued with gang culture (Bates, 2017). The M.P.D. during the 1980 riots was plagued with racism and at the time of the drug related corruption the city was being taken over by drug kingpins (Lersch, 2001). The N.Y.P.D.s history as a department began under corruption with drunk and racist officers, which continued as the department grew. The environment and culture of the departments and cities impacted the corruption that was taking place. Lastly, there was minimal government involvement. The government officials at the time of these corruption scandals did not do much to change the culture of policing and other government agencies at different levels did not get involved. This caused superficial changes in the departments. The departments would return to its previous behavior once public attention was no longer on them. Additionally, there was no attention from various government agencies to impact any real

change. In conclusion, there were many factors affecting corruption within the three departments and many of those factors were similar. This showed how corruption was able to adapt and thrive in three separate locations with three separate cultures. The case study analysis proved helpful in identifying factors of police corruption, which can move the literature closer to solutions.

### **Possible Solutions**

Police corruption has been thriving since the beginning of police departments. Many reform movements have been unsuccessful in combating police corruption. Furthermore, in order to combat corruption the culture of policing will have to change. The first thing that needs to change is the lack of involvement from government agencies. Government agencies on all levels such as local, state and federal, need to be involved in fighting corruption (Stoughton et al., 2020). Corruption is not just plaguing one department but many departments in the American policing system, therefore it is an American problem and needs all agencies to participate in eradicating police corruption. The next thing that needs to change are the militarization of police officers. Police officers need to be demilitarized if they want to repair their relationship with the communities they are tasked with protecting. The more militarized a department is the more violent they are according to King (2020). This creates fear and distrust amongst civilians, which makes it harder for officers to do their jobs. The next thing that needs to change are the internal units tasked with investigating corruption within police departments. The case study on the departments showed how useless these units were when combatting corruption and checking officers. An alternative to internal affair units are ongoing monitoring/auditory authorities, which is a person appointed by a government official to investigate an officer or department, propose new policies and practices, and suggest the implementation of best practices from other law enforcement agencies. This oversight model would eliminate the department from doing their



own oversight and allow for an outside to objectively point on and correct corruption. The next thing departments need to change are the departments hiring standards. There are many officers who are employed by police departments that are not morally qualified to work there. These officers spread their corrupt ideals and it infects an entire unit or department. This can be seen by the N.Y.P.D. and the M.P.D. when many officers admitted to only participating in criminal activities because of peer pressure. The next thing that needs to change are the responsibilities of police officers. Police officers have a lot of responsibilities within a community, but they should not have to do it all. For example, calls pertaining to mental health. Officers should be tasked with a certain responsibilities within a community but not all of them. The last thing that need to change within departments is the use of body cameras and filming. As it stands, police officers are able to turn their body cameras on or off whenever they pleas and that needs to change. Body cams should stay on at all times while the cop is on duty to be sure that the officer was not participating in criminal activities. If all these reform solutions are followed police departments would be able to eradicate corruption because police officers would be held to higher standards and properly kept in check.

## Bibliography

- Ang, D. (2020). *Wider effects of police killings in minority neighborhoods*. Econofact. Retrieved from <https://econofact.org/wider-effects-of-police-killings-in-minority-neighborhoods>.
- Armstrong M. F. (2012) *They Wished They Were Honest: The Knapp Commission and New York City Police Corruption*. New York, New York: Columbia University Press.
- The Associated Press. (2017). *Rodney King Riot: Timeline of key events*. AP NEWS. Retrieved from <https://apnews.com/fa4d04d8281443fc8db0e27d6be52081>.
- Bayley, D., & Perito, R. (2011). Police Corruption: What Past Scandals Teach about Current Challenges. Retrieved from <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR%20294.pdf>
- Bates, G. K. (2017) “It's Not Your Grandfather's LAPD' - and That's a Good Thing.” *NPR*, NPR, 2017, [www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/04/26/492848045/-it-s-not-your-father-s-lapd-and-that-s-a-good-thing](http://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2017/04/26/492848045/-it-s-not-your-father-s-lapd-and-that-s-a-good-thing).
- Bond, M. (2016). Eras in American Policing. Retrieved from <https://andragogytheory.com/2016/01/05/eras-in-american-policing/>
- Boundless. (n.d.). Boundless US History. Retrieved from <https://courses.lumenlearning.com/boundless-ushistory/chapter/conclusion-the-successes-and-failures-of-progressivism/>.
- Boyer, J. P., (2001) “Bad Cops.” *The New Yorker*, 2001, [www.newyorker.com/magazine/2001/05/21/bad-cops](http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2001/05/21/bad-cops).

- Burstein, D. J. (2019). *Samuel Seabury*. Historical Society of the New York Courts. Retrieved from <https://history.nycourts.gov/biography/samuel-seabury/>.
- Capps, L. E. (2014). *Perspective: Characteristics of an ideal police officer*. FBI. Retrieved from <https://leb.fbi.gov/articles/perspective/perspective-characteristics-of-an-ideal-police-officer>.
- Data transparency initiative*. Current NYPD Members of Service - CCRB. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/ccrb/policy/data-transparency-initiative-mos.page>.
- Driscoll, C. J. (1913). *The New York Police situation*. Wiley Online Library. Retrieved from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/ncr.4110020304>.
- Goldstein, H. (2015). *Police corruption: A perspective on its nature and control*. National Police Foundation. Retrieved from <https://www.policefoundation.org/publication/police-corruption-a-perspective-on-its-nature-and-control/>.
- Grennan, S. (2001). *Historical perspective of police corruption in New York City*. Historical Perspective of Police Corruption in New York City (From Police Misconduct: A Reader for the 21st Century, P 117-131, 2001, Michael J. Palmiotto, ed. -- See NCJ-193774) | Office of Justice Programs. Retrieved from <https://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/historical-perspective-police-corruption-new-york-city-police>.

- Hassett-Walker, C. (2021). *How You Start is How You Finish? The Slave Patrol and Jim Crow Origins of Policing*. American Bar Association. Retrieved from [https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human\\_rights\\_magazine\\_home/civil-rights-reimagining-policing/how-you-start-is-how-you-finish/](https://www.americanbar.org/groups/crsj/publications/human_rights_magazine_home/civil-rights-reimagining-policing/how-you-start-is-how-you-finish/).
- History Editors. (2010). *Riots erupt in Los Angeles after police officers are acquitted in Rodney King Trial*. History.com. Retrieved from <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/riots-erupt-in-los-angeles>.
- History of Policing (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.communitypolicing.com/history-of-policing>
- Holmes, L. (2020) Police Corruption. from <https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264079.013.633>
- Hudson Jr., D. L. (2012). *Good cop, bad citizen? as cellphone recording increases, officers are uneasy*. ABA Journal. Retrieved from [https://www.abajournal.com/magazine/article/good\\_cop\\_bad\\_citizen\\_as\\_cellphone\\_recording\\_increases\\_officers\\_are\\_uneasy](https://www.abajournal.com/magazine/article/good_cop_bad_citizen_as_cellphone_recording_increases_officers_are_uneasy).
- Jupp, V. (2006). *Historical Analysis*. SAGE Research Methods. Retrieved from <https://methods-sagepub-com.tsu.idm.oclc.org/reference/the-sage-dictionary-of-social-research-methods/n91.xml?fromsearch=true>.

- Krajicek, D. (2018). *The man who bought the NYPD*. Tribune. Retrieved from <https://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/news/ny-news-harry-gross-police-corruption-20180919-story.html>.
- Lersch, M. K. (2001) “Drug Related Police Corruption: The Miami Experience.” *Drug Related Police Corruption: The Miami Experience (From Police Misconduct: A Reader for the 21st Century, P 132-144, 2001, Michael J. Palmiotto, Ed. -- See NCJ-193774) | Office of Justice Programs*, Prentice Hall, 2001, [www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/drug-related-police-corruption-miami-experience-police-misconduct](http://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/drug-related-police-corruption-miami-experience-police-misconduct).
- Levinson-King, R. (2020). *George Floyd Death: Seven solutions to US police problems*. BBC News. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-52981634>.
- McFadden, R. D. (1986). *The lonely death of a man who made a scandal*. The New York Times. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/04/05/nyregion/the-lonely-death-of-a-man-who-made-a-scandal.html>.
- Miami culture and Cuban influence*. interexchange. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.interexchange.org/articles/visit-the-usa/miami-culture-cuban-influence/>.
- Miami-Dade Police Department. (2020). *Miami-Dade Police Department 2020 Annual Report*. Retrieved from <https://www.miamidade.gov/police/library/2020-mdpd-review.pdf>.
- Morey, T. (1991). 6.3. Policing Eras. Retrieved from <https://openoregon.pressbooks.pub/ccj230/chapter/5-3-policing-eras/>

New York (State). Legislature. Senate. Committee on Police Dept. of the City of New York, Jacob A. (Jacob Aaron) Cantor, Clarence Lexow, and New York (State). Legislature. Senate. Report And Proceedings of the Senate Committee Appointed to Investigate the Police Department of the City of New York ... Albany: J.B. Lyon, 1895.

The New York Times. (1993). *Ex-officer's account of a brutal police fraternity*. The New York Times. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/09/30/nyregion/ex-officer-s-account-of-a-brutal-police-fraternity.html>.

The New York Times. (1979) "Five Florida Officers Suspended after Raiding the Wrong House." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 1979, [www.nytimes.com/1979/02/15/archives/five-florida-officers-suspended-after-raiding-the-wrong-house.html](http://www.nytimes.com/1979/02/15/archives/five-florida-officers-suspended-after-raiding-the-wrong-house.html).

The New York Times. (2020). *How George Floyd died, and what happened next*. The New York Times. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/article/george-floyd.html?auth=link-dismiss-google1tap>.

The New York Times (1986) Police Corruption: A Look at History. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/1986/09/24/nyregion/police-corruption-a-look-at-history.html>

North, A., & Cineas, F. (2020). *The police shooting death of Breonna Taylor, explained*. Vox. Retrieved from <https://www.vox.com/2020/5/13/21257457/breonna-taylor-louisville-shooting-ahmaud-arbery-justiceforbreonna>.

Parent, N. (2016). *Failure to learn: NYPD, police misconduct and demystifying the efficacy of Non-Jeopardy/Just Culture Reporting*. Nik Parent. Retrieved from <https://nikparent.com/2016/08/04/failure-to-learn-nypd-police-misconduct-and-demystifying-the-efficacy-of-non-jeopardyjust-culture-reporting/>.

PBS (n.d.). The Scandal – Rampart Scandal Timeline | PBS – L.a.p.d Blues | FRONTLINE. Retrieved from <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/lapd/scandal/cron.html>

Police Corruption and Misconduct – History. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://law.jrank.org/pages/9245/Police-Corruption-Misconduct-History.html>

Police: History – Policing Twentieth Century America the Reform Era. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://law.jrank.org/pages/1643/Police-History-Policing-twentieth-century-America-reform-era.html>.

Potter, G. (2013). The History of Policing in the United States Part 1. Retrieved from <https://plsonline.eku.edu/insidelookhistory-policing-united-states-part-1>

Potter, G. (2013). *The Organization of Policing*. EKU Online. Retrieved from <https://ekuonline.eku.edu/blog/police-studies/the-organization-of-policing/>.

Pound, C. (2020). *The Culture that Defines Los Angeles*. BBC Culture. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20200224-the-culture-that-defines-los-angeles>.

Pound, C. (2020). *The Culture that Defines New York*. BBC Culture. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/culture/article/20200127-three-artworks-that-define-new-york>.

*Prohibition: A case study of progressive reform : Progressive Era to New Era, 1900-1929 : U.S. history primary source timeline : classroom materials at the Library of Congress : library of Congress*. The Library of Congress. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.loc.gov/classroom-materials/united-states-history-primary-source-timeline/progressive-era-to-new-era-1900-1929/prohibition-case-study-of-progressive-reform/>.

Raab, S. (1993). *New York's police allow corruption, Mollen Panel says*. The New York Times. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/12/29/nyregion/new-york-s-police-allow-corruption-mollen-panel-says.html>.

*Reform Solutions*. Campaign Zero. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://campaignzero.org/solutions.html#film-the-police>.

Roebuck, J. B., & Barker, T. (2014). *Typology of police corruption*. OUP Academic. Retrieved from <https://academic.oup.com/socpro/article-abstract/21/3/423/2925122?redirectedFrom=PDF>.



Sastry, A., and Bates G. K., (2017) “When La Erupted in Anger: A Look Back at the Rodney King Riots.” *NPR*, NPR, 26 Apr. 2017, [www.npr.org/2017/04/26/524744989/when-la-erupted-in-anger-a-look-back-at-the-rodney-king-riots](http://www.npr.org/2017/04/26/524744989/when-la-erupted-in-anger-a-look-back-at-the-rodney-king-riots).

Sechrest, K. D, and Burns P. (1992). “Police Corruption: The Miami Case.” *Police Corruption: The Miami Case* | *Office of Justice Programs*, 1992, [www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/police-corruption-miami-case](http://www.ojp.gov/ncjrs/virtual-library/abstracts/police-corruption-miami-case).

Stoughton, S. W., Noble, J. J., & Albert, G. P. (2020). *How to actually Fix America's police*. The Atlantic. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/06/how-actually-fix-americas-police/612520/>.

Summerhays J. J. (1979). American Police Reform – An Alternative Perspective. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/App/Publications/abstract.aspx?ID=66749>

Syed, T. (1997). Not Victimless: Understanding the Harmful Effects of Police Corruption. In *Servamus*, Vol. 91, No. 1.

Toussaint, K. (2020). *Decades of Failed Reforms have Allowed for Ongoing Police Brutality*. Fast Company. Retrieved from <https://www.fastcompany.com/90524915/decades-of-failed-reforms-have-allowed-for-ongoing-police-brutality>.

Thorpe, R., & Holt, R. (2008). *Historical Analysis*. SAGE Research Methods. Retrieved from <https://methods-sagepub-com.tsu.idm.oclc.org/reference/the-sage-dictionary-of-qualitative-management-research/n50.xml?fromsearch=true>.

*U.S. Census Bureau quickfacts: New York City, New York*. Quick Facts: New York City, New York. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/newyorkcitynewyork>.

Uchida, C. D. (1989). *Development of the American Police: An Historical Overview*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncjrs.gov/Apps/Publications/abstract.aspx?ID=114675>

United States Congress (1883). *Pendleton Act (1883)* Retrieved from <https://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=false>

Veitenhans, C. "Miami (Liberty City) Riot, 1980 ." *BLACKPAST*, 2009, [www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/miami-liberty-city-riot-1980/](http://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/miami-liberty-city-riot-1980/).

Webadmin. (2020). *The History of American Police Brutality*. The National Trial Lawyers. Retrieved from <https://thenationaltriallawyers.org/2020/07/the-history-of-american-police-brutality/>.

Weitzer, R. (2005). *Can the Police be Reformed?* Retrieved from [journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1525/ctx.2005.4.3.21](http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1525/ctx.2005.4.3.21)

*What are Examples of Public Order Crimes? What are Examples of Public Order Crimes? | Attorneys On Demand*. (n.d.). Retrieved from <http://www.attorneysondemand.net/examples-of-public-order-crimes.cfm>.

Williams, H. (2002). *Core Factors of Police Corruption Across the World*. Retrieved from [https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/publications/core\\_factors.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/treaties/publications/core_factors.pdf).

Yin, R. K. (2013). *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*. Los Angeles, California: Sage Publications.