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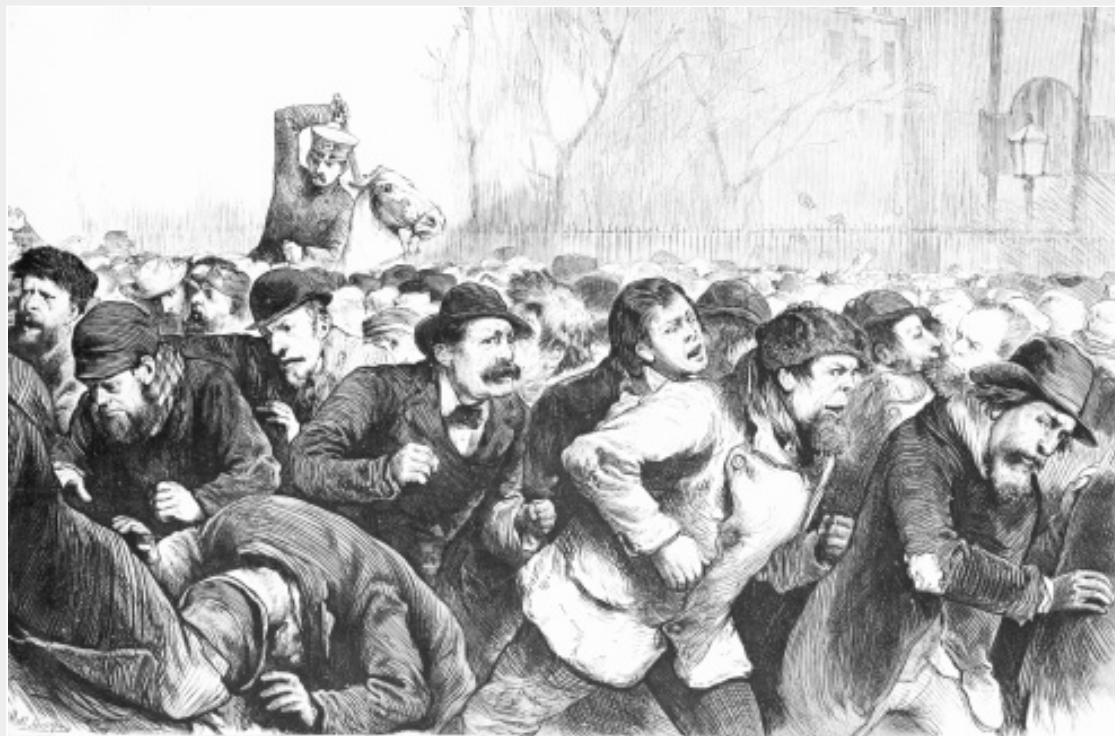
JANUARY 15, 2015

Wanted: Cops who know when not to use force

 December 5, 2014 by [stevenyoder](#)  [Leave a Comment](#)

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Crowd driven from Tompkins Square by the mounted police, in the Tompkins Square Riot of 1874. 31 January 1874. Illustration in: Frank Leslie's illustrated newspaper, 1874 Jan. 31, p. 344. Courtesy Wikimedia Commons

In the deaths of Eric Garner and Michael Brown, what happened before the violence started may matter more than what came after. In the [video](#) of New York police arresting Garner, he complains loudly about police harassing him and claims it's unfair. And in Ferguson, Missouri, key witness Dorian Johnson contends that Michael Brown's encounter with officer Darren Wilson started when Wilson rolled up in his police cruiser and shouted through the window at Johnson and Brown, who were walking in the street, to "get the F on the sidewalk."

It might be hard for members of the public to understand why cops choose an authoritarian, in-your-face approach in their encounters. To police, it's obvious—they face potentially dangerous situations every day, and if they can project force and dominance instead of vulnerability, they'll be safer.

But it turns out that research doesn't support that belief.

In 2003, criminologist John McCluskey, now at the Rochester Institute of Technology, looked at data from two metropolitan police departments to figure out what helped cops get suspects to comply with requests. Specifically, he wondered whether coercive tactics or "procedurally just" tactics worked better.

The results were clear—"the higher the level of coercive power displayed by police, the less likely targets are to comply. . . . For every one unit increase in the index of coercion, citizens are about twice as likely to rebel against the self-control request," McCluskey noted. "The 'justness' of police tactics has the greatest power in explaining why citizens comply with police requests for self-control," he concluded.

Other researchers have confirmed those results. In 2011, for example, New York University researcher Tom Tyler, in a [paper](#) that appeared in the *European Journal of*

Anastasia Taylor-Lind: Fighters and mourners of the Ukrainian revolution

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Criminology, noted that “legitimacy” is the key to effective policing. Numerous studies, Tyler notes, have looked at how people evaluate their personal experiences with the police. All show that what shapes people’s reactions to personal encounters with cops is not the outcome—whether they get a ticket, for example. Rather, people evaluated their experience as good or bad based on whether they perceived that they were treated fairly.

In 2002, for example, Tyler and a colleague studied encounters between police and citizens in Oakland and Los Angeles. They surveyed citizens who had been stopped. Those who got a favorable outcome—say, not being issued a ticket—were 15 percent more likely than those who got an unfavorable outcome to accept cops’ decisions. But those who perceived that they were treated fairly were 70 percent more likely to accept police decisions than those who were treated unfairly. Those findings, the researchers argued, show that what’s critical to good policing is appealing to people’s sense of fair play.

In his paper, Tyler calls for a focus in police training that normally gets little attention: how to de-escalate conflict and put into practice the principles of “procedural justice.”

That would include changes that he says would be easy to implement—teaching cops to give people opportunities to be heard before making decisions, to explain how and why the cops are making the choices they do, and to give suspects information on who to go to with complaints if they think cops aren’t treating them fairly. Most important, Tyler says, training would focus on how cops can convey courtesy and respect in their encounters.

In London, for example, Tyler says police have built support among residents by distributing newsletters that reflect an awareness of resident concerns. And he suggests that officers could carry around and distribute a statement that explains police principles, the rights citizens have when they’re stopped, and procedures for

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Commentary: For Hunger Games – Mockingjay, teens are doing the marketing

December 4, 2014

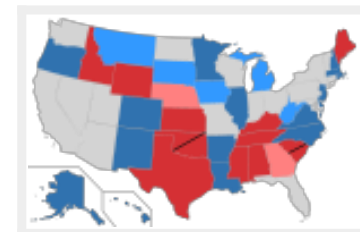
By Joan Oleck – The Hunger Games:

Mockingjay—Part 1

is, for its teen fan base, a powerful lesson in marketing manipulation. For anyone not living in a cave, this third film in the series of four is based on the über-successful book series by Suzanne Collins and weaves a compelling tale of teen survival in [...]



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filing a complaint.

Equally important, Tyler proposes that forces start evaluating their success based on more than arrest and clearance rates—they also need to track how legitimately the community views their behavior. “The police need to select, train and reward officers with an eye to ensuring that police encounters with the public build legitimacy, a focus that leads to concerns about the quality of people’s experiences, not just their outcomes,” he notes.

Had Darren Wilson gotten training like that, Michael Brown might be alive. Former Baltimore cop and police commissioner Fred Bealefeld, for example, told the *New York Times* that, “The notion of riding through neighborhoods yelling, ‘Get up on the curb’ or ‘Get out of the street,’ is not where you want your officers to be. You want them out of their cars, engaging the public and explaining to people what it is you are trying to do. Drive-by policing is not good for any community.”

As Michigan State University criminologist William Terrill puts it, “The best officers are those who use less, not more force.”

Those conclusions could have implications beyond police training. They might call into question the premises of a federal policy that puts more firepower—armored personnel carriers, amphibious tanks, bulletproof trucks equipped with battering rams—in the hands of local police. “When you equip domestic police officers in civilian law enforcement with military uniforms, military equipment, military weapons,” former Boston police lieutenant and SWAT team member Tom Nolan told a Vermont television station in November, “they’ll conduct themselves as if they’re waging war in our communities.”

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November 11, 2014

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October 31, 2014

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Commentary: Bandwagon outrage over Brunei's strict Islamic criminal code all but gone



October 18, 2014

When Brunei became the first Southeast Asian country to nationally adopt a strict Islamic penal code known as Sharia earlier this year, the world was outraged. News and social media told us so in such headlines as “Brunei adopts sharia law amid international outcry” and “Ellen DeGeneres backs boycott of Brunei-owned hotels over ‘stone the [...]”

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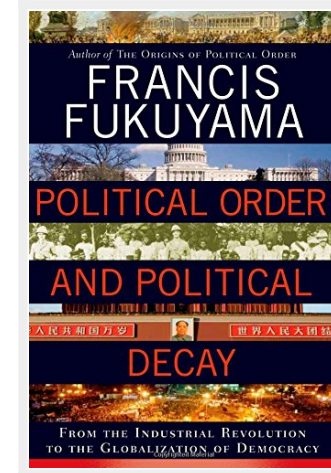
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