More than Cosmetic Changes: The Challenges of Experiments with Police Demilitarization in the 1960s and 1970s

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Abstract
In response to civil unrest, many U.S. police forces in the 1960s and 1970s adopted more aggressive postures, including “militarized” uniforms and tactics. A few, however, directed reform efforts toward “demilitarization.” This article focuses on the Menlo Park Police Department, in California, led by the maverick reformer Victor Cizanckas. It analyzes his attempts to change relations between the police and the public in his municipality, especially by decreasing incidents of abuse in one predominantly poor, black neighborhood. He instituted, for example, new uniforms and a nonhierarchical bureaucracy in the department. The article details how Cizanckas used emerging networks of law-enforcement professionalization to disseminate his ideas. It also analyzes the failures and challenges of these reform efforts. The article concludes that even radical police reform efforts in the period could not overcome racial inequality or a right-wing backlash against progressive ideas in policing.

Keywords
police, police reform, militarization of policing, racism, Silicon Valley

Hello “pigs.” I bring you greetings from Moscow, U.S.A., also known as Berkeley. . . . We have had groups in Berkeley such as the SDS, YSA and the Weathermen. You name it, we have them. . . . They know that it’s possible to bring the city of Berkeley to its knees if they wish. 1

These words did not come through a megaphone, nor were they printed on a leaflet hastily mimeographed late at night. They were not the declamation of a street protester, a hippie, or a radical. Instead, these were the sarcastic words of Charles Plummer, formerly a captain in the police department of Berkeley, California, and at the time the chief in nearby Hayward. He was addressing a gathering of law-enforcement officials from across the Golden State during an “after-action” conference in Sacramento. This group had gathered to evaluate a multiagency training exercise called Cable Splicer III, a rehearsal in May 1970 for the control of civil unrest, involving 3,000 police officers and 1,000 Army and National Guard personnel. Plummer was ventriloquizing police perceptions of the widespread disrespect they faced. Critics, in turn, highlighted the coarse and violent rhetoric that surrounded the six total Cable Splicer exercises, which seemed

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tantamount to the declaration of martial law. According to one account, Plummer’s address advised, “When Code 69, the start code for using batons, goes into effect, you are to go in low, hit at kneecap level and hurt somebody, otherwise don’t bother.” This encouragement of the brutal use of batons was one common response to the disrespect Plummer identified. A less common one, however, came from a contemporary of his, a police chief in Menlo Park, California, a town across the San Francisco Bay. That police chief, Victor I. Cizanckas, believed that the only way for police to garner respect was for them to appear less outwardly violent and militaristic, to soften their typically tough language, and to reconfigure their agencies to promote problem-solving and discretion rather than adherence to stiff procedural requirements that did not always match the complex situations they encountered on the street. In his favored term, Cizanckas wanted to eradicate the “paramilitary” aspects of policing in his municipality.

Rehearsals and conferences, aided by infusions of money from State capitals and from Washington via the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA), beginning near the end of the 1960s and continuing into the 1970s, began a process typically labeled the “militarization of policing.” New tactics and expensive hardware, some military surplus obtained at low prices or for free, changed how police approached political unrest and high-pressure emergency situations. Such tactical coordination, technical upgrading, and budgetary reformulation represented one facet of police militarization. Another occurred at a more localized level. The higher scale efforts enabled the production of highly trained and well-equipped specialized units at the municipal and county scales, called “SWAT” or Special Weapons and Tactics. The story of SWAT’s rise and the militarization of policing have been told frequently, earnestly, and critically. The politics of the critique of SWAT today descend from those behind the activist-investigative research that first unearthed words like Plummer’s and published them in underground newspapers. Yet this story of the militarization of policing is uncomfortably unidimensional.

In the existing histories of the militarization of policing, a charismatic figure like Victor Cizanckas becomes inexplicable. Around the time of the Cable Splicer exercises, resources for the development of SWAT teams, or at least for training in the skills underpinning them, were becoming available to small and affluent towns of California. But Cizanckas spurned the idea. He called it “mere game-playing” and insisted that only the counties should develop SWAT capacities, as individual municipalities like his had no need for such a thing. To complement his position, using a more expansive definition of militarization, Cizanckas developed a range of innovations and reforms for the Menlo Park force that he would then peddle across the country. Historians’ traditional focus on either large cities or the federal level obscures how small cities like Menlo Park could become self-proclaimed laboratories for innovative and experimental reforms of policing. Because small cities often relied on the LEAA and foundations for funding, their reform work necessarily took on the cast of the “demonstration project” and became mobile and modular from the outset. The fiscal imperative to test ideas that could be applicable elsewhere was less powerful for big cities and their well-known police executives. The most widely hailed—and imitated—reform Cizanckas introduced was a new type of uniform for Menlo Park’s officers. In addition, he eliminated the rank system within the force while boosting salaries. He also fostered open lines of communication among Menlo Park officers and local residents. Unlike the invective that characterized Plummer’s speech, Cizanckas urged his officers to say “please.”

This article analyzes this forgotten history of small-city police demilitarization.

The militarization concept, to critics, implies inevitability of negative outcomes. What else could result from a process called “militarization” but highly aggressive policing, collaboration between the Army and local police forces, and curtailment of civil rights? But this story fails to account for countervailing tendencies within the domain of professional policing and law-enforcement expertise. Without paying attention to the alternatives that were on offer at the time—to, for example, the uniform as a site of political contestation from within the police profession and in police forces’ relationship to broader publics—it seems as though teleological
militarization was the only option. Cizanckas represented a distinct alternative. “What we did,” he declared of his tenure as chief in Menlo Park, “was bust the paramilitary system.”

A focus on militarization alone also makes it more difficult to explain what the era’s police reform, professionalization, and modernization were attempting to achieve: to win back police legitimacy after a period of self-inflicted wounds. The uniform was one technology, one medium of this effort. Militarization is typically understood, often implicitly, as the external imposition of new criteria and alien technologies and tactics upon police. It seems obvious that heavy weapons, body armor, and military-surplus vehicles would harden divisions between police and the so-called “community.” Yet most police reform of the period—including Cizanckas’s paradigmatic demilitarizing reform effort—was voluntarily undertaken, often in response to widely circulating critiques of physical excesses and racial prejudices of police, to reassert police autonomy, enable police discretion, and ward off more thoroughgoing and externally imposed reform efforts. A further goal of reform was to train the public in new ways of interacting with police to foster or instill lawfulness, respect, and cooperation. In this regard, Cizanckas and Plummer had similar order-oriented goals but they advocated diametrically opposed methods, one less and the other more militaristic. Plummer’s was ultimately more widely adopted. But the problems of supposed disorder that both attempted to solve do persist, indicating that there was a mismatch in scope between the sources of this problem and a solution confined to the reform of police institutions and officers’ repertoires.

Cizanckas became Menlo Park’s chief in June 1968, a few months after the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders (Kerner Commission) issued its report and the very month President Lyndon Johnson signed into law the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act, creating the LEAA. His term thus coincided with a moment of profound transformations in law enforcement around the country, which were not reducible to militarization, even as many of them did abet it. It is important, however, to make a distinction between variably scaled processes. Cizanckas himself favored local autonomy for police and the ability of a single chief to dictate what was best for his force in his particular municipal jurisdiction, in consultation, he insisted, with an empowered officer corps. But he also was not averse to higher scale mutual-aid coordination and planning, such as the Cable Splicer exercises and the accompanying or resulting specialized tactical units at the county level. He himself had received riot-control training during his eight years as a military policeman in the Marines prior to becoming a police officer in Menlo Park. Critics often render federal policy as dictating local decisions, leading inexorably to the local reproduction of the nationally scaled institution of the military. The way that federal policy enabled local autonomy, however, is important to examine. The LEAA’s unique and awkward bureaucratic design was intended to protect autonomy at the state level for decisions concerning law enforcement. Law-enforcement leaders were loath to advocate for federal intervention that might have undermined their independence. Ever thirsty, though, they still lined up at the federal spigot. Cizanckas’s efforts were consonant with this restructuring of the state space of policing, and he was influenced by the reformist findings of the President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice (Katzenbach Commission). In Menlo Park, his demilitarization efforts were also tested by political militancy from the Left and the Right. Left-wing radicals broadly agreed that police should be demilitarized, but some protest tactics summoned well-armed responses. Right-wing extremists, in contrast, opposed police demilitarization. Their protest tactics—in the form of bombings—also summoned armed responses.

The emergent fiscal structure of law-enforcement assistance was not the only form of interdependence among police at the time. In addition, national law-enforcement publications and fraternal organizations helped to establish connections among individual agencies even as these connections were used to share technical expertise that would both bolster individual agencies’ autonomy and officers’ discretion and foster serial replication of techniques. Cizanckas was strongly embedded in such networks, and he used them to raise his own profile and that of his
reform ideas. With some social-scientific training, he published in the monthly magazine of the
International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), *The Police Chief*, and in the organization’s
more academic *Journal of Police Science and Administration*, copublished with Northwestern
University School of Law. He also contributed to *Police*, a bimonthly magazine oriented toward
rank-and-file officers. With research funding from the LEAA and the Police Foundation,
Cizanckas and Donald G. Hanna, from Ohio State University’s police department, coauthored
a policing textbook that detailed their shared philosophy and evaluated its application in Menlo
Park and elsewhere across the country.11 Menlo Park achieved an international profile. High-
ranking police officials visited from Germany, Japan, and Great Britain, interested in learning
about the menu of reforms.12 Cizanckas’s participation in these networks and their early forms of
what today would be called “policy transfer,” however, highlights exactly why his demilitarizing,
labor-intensive reform efforts could spread but did not ultimately supersede other trends. These
ideas perforce had to compete in a quasi-marketplace that was not geared necessarily toward
enabling the ideas that best curtailed crime to win out. Instead, these networks were shaped by
powerful individuals and institutions, and by the state itself, at multiple scales, and its selectivity
toward capital-intensive initiatives, such as those that comprised militarization.13 The IACP, for
instance, sponsored exhibitions at its annual meetings to display the latest weapons and gadgetry
available from commercial firms.14 Similarly, part training, part celebration of law enforcement,
and the after-action conference following Cable Splicer III also featured an expo of the latest
gadgetry, including new weapons and surveillance technologies. With little parallel financial
incentive to “sell” labor-intensive reforms, innovators like Cizanckas were operating in a differ-
ent register. Overall, during the same period, he was developing these innovations, LEAA spend-
ing grew twenty-five-fold overall, with the majority on capital-intensive disorder-control,
surveillance, and data-management implements.15

Militarization of policing as it is typically understood and demilitarization as discussed in this
article were interdependent tendencies that emerged more or less simultaneously. To focus on one
alone would be to miss how contested internally the field of law enforcement has been, as well
as to underestimate the importance of external pressures on policing—from social movements,
elected officials, clergy, crime victims and their families, and so on. It is a mistake to characterize
policing as static. At the same time, it is useful to pay attention to how social and legal theorists
have attempted to characterize the most salient constitutive aspects of police. According to the
genealogical–legal theorization of Markus Dirk Dubber and Mariana Valverde, police is defined
by the inevitability of discretion.16 What an empirically grounded historical analysis can offer is
a qualification: police actors themselves have not always trusted that discretion, which they tend
to recognize as the core of their profession, would be inevitable. Instead, they have under-
taken laborious efforts to protect, enshrine, and bolster police discretion. Cizanckas, one of the
most progressive police chiefs in the United States in the late 1960s and into the 1970s when
discretion was widely criticized, is a perfect example.17 He was not interested in weakening his
police force or constraining individual officers. Instead, he felt that allowing his officers to act
with discretion would reassert their authority, lessen attacks on them, and curtail criminal activ-
ity. Thus, discretion should be analyzed in its historical context. It is not inevitable so much as
structured and structuring, shaped by external and internal forces, conditioned by and condition-
ing the social and political climate in which police operate in turn.

Menlo Park

Menlo Park, today a tony centerpiece of Silicon Valley, home to Facebook’s headquarters, and
adjacent to Stanford University and Palo Alto, may seem an unlikely crucible for innovative
police reform.18 In the late 1960s, the peninsular town’s population hovered near 30,000. One of
the smaller municipalities in San Mateo County, the population was packed densely
into approximately six square miles of nineteen total. Menlo Park was predominantly white and well-off, and the town offered a home base for many of the contending fads and identities associated with the Bay Area of the period, from hippies to New Left radicals to evangelical Christians to early entrepreneurs of microtechnology. The police force, with thirty-six officers in 1960 and ten more a dozen years later, plus a reserve of approximately sixteen, devoted much of its attention to traffic problems. The crime rate was low, with burglary as the highest incidence crime. In one section on the east side of the town, Belle Haven, 99 percent of the residents were black. The Bayshore Freeway (Route 101) physically separates Belle Haven from much of the rest of the city (Figure 1). Belle Haven borders East Palo Alto, then a large unincorporated part of San Mateo County whose residents were predominantly black (it incorporated in 1983). During Cizanckas’s tenure, roughly 20 percent of Menlo Park’s population lived in Belle Haven, and the median income there was almost 50 percent lower than that of the rest of Menlo Park. The median age in Belle Haven was nineteen years, significantly lower than elsewhere in town. Police officials often emphasized how typical Menlo Park was, including in its experience in the mid-1960s of racial strife. Before 1968, police in the town had a reputation for toughness: “a beat ’em up, throw ’em in the can” style. The city had only one full-time black officer. He told a journalist that there was “no doubt in my mind that there is some racism within the department.”20 White officers often called black men “boy,” causing acute resentment.21

Cizanckas became chief through circumstances that were shaped by racism. Despite prior efforts to improve relations between the police and Menlo Park’s black residents, some black residents of Belle Haven became fed up with police abuse, segregation, and economic inequity. The almost entirely white police force was alienated from Belle Haven. In 1966, after cops intervened in a fight, Menlo Park police, San Mateo County sheriff’s deputies, and California Highway Patrol officers armed with “riot guns” and dogs confronted up to 400 young black people who tossed rocks and bottles and shouted, “We live here, you don’t!”22 The most severe unrest unfolded in Belle Haven in 1967. Although only a sergeant, Cizanckas was charged with restoring calm. Because property damage during the unrest was limited, Cizanckas earned the attention of the progressive city manager, Michael Bedwell. When the police chief retired soon afterward, Bedwell elevated Cizanckas to the top of the department. In the months before he became chief, Cizanckas was already involved in attempting to improve race relations in Menlo Park and San Mateo County more broadly. He taught a college-level black history course and spearheaded a mandatory “course on police and minority group relations” for municipal police and county sheriffs. Among the topics discussed, including in presentations by black political organizers, were “the history of riots from 1909 through 1967 and a study of the Black Power movement both national and local.”23

As chief, Cizanckas proudly reported that the year of 1970 saw no further incidents of unrest in Belle Haven, which he attributed to his program of reforms (Figure 2). Other cities experienced similar sudden downturns in civil unrest, but Cizanckas attributed the absence of riots in Menlo Park to his program of reforms. Cizanckas touted decreases in crime that occurred after he became chief and instituted reforms: major crimes decreased 2.5 percent in 1970, whereas other similar cities saw an increase of 13 percent.24 Petty and grand theft were the only crimes to increase. Cizanckas eventually garnered over US$160,000 in funding from the LEAA to begin a program of passive prevention, which recommended ways for residents and businesses to prevent theft or vandalism and safeguard valuables.25 In the third year of that three-year program, the department’s annual budget was US$1,142,590, with US$71,033 in outside sources of funding.26

“Soft Wear” in Silicon Valley

The reform Cizanckas instituted that received the most press attention and was most widely replicated was the adoption of new, demilitarized police uniforms. Out went the typical blue uniform with a badge and insignias on the shirt; a utility belt with pistol, handcuffs, radio, and so on; and
Figure 1. Maps of the Bay Area and Menlo Park and its immediate vicinity. Source: Maps by Jill Hubley and Stuart Schrader.
the traditional police hat. Instead, officers began wearing green (or sometimes gold) blazers over white shirts and black or brown slacks. Officers wore ties as well. Hats were no longer required. Cizanckas referred to the new uniform as “soft wear.” Considered “natty,” the sport-coat blazers concealed the officer’s gun and other equipment. The jackets were emblazoned with a City of Menlo Park logo and the word POLICE on the left breast. A metal plate attached to the blazer indicated the wearer’s name. Officers also were equipped with a “zip-in jumpsuit” and a three-quarter-length coat for wear during inclement weather or for “prolonged traffic control.” Officers stopped routinely carrying nightsticks and kept them stashed in a bag with the jumpsuit and a gas mask. Only four officers, including Cizanckas himself, initially adopted Menlo Park’s new “mod” uniforms on a trial basis in the summer of 1968, but all Menlo Park officers, save the department’s lone motorcycle officer, eventually began to wear the new uniforms in August 1969. In a photograph of the force featured on Cizanckas’s office wall in 1973, “the men look more like members of a college glee club than police.” Through a bidding process, the department was able to get the cost of the new uniforms for all its officers down from US$80.00 at first to US$57.00 each (US$351 in 2016). Cizanckas also had the department’s cars repainted. Instead of black and white, they would now be pastel green and white. Cizanckas reported the changes he instituted were “traumatic.” Within two years, half the force had quit over objections to his campaign of reform, but employment rebounded and stabilized soon thereafter. Menlo Park reverted to traditional police uniforms almost a decade later, after Cizanckas had departed for a new position as chief in Stamford, Connecticut, in April 1977.

Although the new uniforms represented a cosmetic change, they embodied the new approach to policing that Cizanckas wanted to instill. This approach consisted of a reassessment of what police actually did and a reconfiguration of interactions with the public. At the core of his analysis of policing was the recognition that police did not spend most of their time on crime. Cizanckas
frequently used the statistic that 80 percent or more of an officer’s work was unrelated to crime, and when officers dealt with crime, little of it was violent. This calculation was consistent with that of scholars of policing of the era, as represented by the Katzenbach Commission’s findings (and it remains accurate today). The traditional police uniform, inherited from a “paramilitary” approach to the job, did not allow the flexibility and discretion that he thought the job now required. He and his textbook coauthor asked of the military-style uniform: “Does it contribute to the general thinking by police that they lack discretion in many respects in order to have uniform response?” The traditional dress uniform bequeathed practical uniformity in a complex social environment that demanded flexibility. Cizanckas believed, “Today we don’t have police forces.” It was more accurate to refer “departments of police services.” For him, the line between “social work” and “police work” was exceedingly blurry. Rather than attempting to draw a firm distinction between the two and change what police could do, the new uniforms were intended to recognize and admit this existing blurriness and trust officers to deal with it adroitly based on training and through the application of discretion. Overall, this reform was intended to reconfigure how the public dealt with the police, even more than to reconfigure how the police dealt with the public, which had already changed through the blurring of roles prior to the adoption of the new, demilitarized uniforms.

The new uniforms eliminated symbols of “the paramilitary pretense.” Integral to this reinvention was Cizanckas’s belief that hierarchy within police forces was a hindrance. As such, he intended the new uniforms to equalize officers on the street. Members of the public, he believed, would no longer treat low-ranking officers poorly and demand to speak to higher ranking supervisors. It would be impossible to distinguish beat patrolmen from detectives. In one experiment, Menlo Park sent its most junior officer dressed in a new uniform to an incident along with much more senior officers dressed traditionally. The result was that members of the public tried to speak with the rookie. Cizanckas felt that approachability was critical. He did not intend merely to hide traditional ranks from the public. Instead, he actually abolished them. In tandem with the uniform experiment was a novel effort to eliminate the paramilitary hierarchy within the police force. Gone beginning in 1971 were the ranks of sergeant and lieutenant, and with them the individual ambition and the incentive structure to rise up the ladder. Instead, sergeants became “operations directors” and lieutenants “police operations managers.” These were descriptive, functional titles. They were integrated into a new “proactive” approach he called “team policing,” which “fixes responsibility and decision making at the lowest level of the organization.” Like Cizanckas himself, several of Menlo Park’s officers who took part in the demonstration project of demilitarization actually had been in the military before becoming cops, a couple in the Air Force and another a Marine. They acculturated.

Cizanckas lamented that the hierarchy within which police usually operated created the wrong kind of mentality in the patrol officers on the street, unrelated to function. He was influenced by the mid-1960s management psychology of Abraham H. Maslow, as much as by the latest thinking on police reform. Cizanckas felt that in typical departments, the chief acted like a paternal figure, a “daddy,” whether benevolent or cruel. Each ranking officer below the chief was a conduit for hierarchical relations dictated from the top. The lowest ranking officers were oriented toward this “parent-child” hierarchy, rather than toward the public. Their training instilled this orientation in them. The paramilitary-paternalistic hierarchy meant that beat cops, as “the last child” in the line, in turn, treated “the citizen on the street” like another child. They adopted paternalism toward citizens, demanding full and immediate compliance, even as they acted like subordinate children toward their supervisors. But, he insisted, “rather than parent-child relationships, we want adult-adult relationships. It requires a change of structure.” The new uniforms were the outward representation of that change of structure toward horizontalism within the force but also elevation of police officers themselves vis-à-vis the broader social structure, from being perceived as “blue collar” to being perceived as “white collar.” The point was not discretion for
discretion’s sake, however. Instead, unleashing discretion meant better problem-solving, based on heightened in-service training and rigorous education requirements for new hires and for promotions. Rather than evaluating police officers’ success in terms of arrests made, Cizanckas averred, “police will operate with broad parameters and great discretion, and their worth will be measured in a different way: not in the number of arrests that they make but the number of problems that they solve.”39 To assist an inebriate in joining Alcoholics Anonymous rather than to arrest her was an example of how discretion would play out.

Cizanckas’s belief that eliminating paternalism would widen the ambit of officer discretion was original. For political scientist James Q. Wilson, writing at the time, what distinguished the military from the police was precisely the interaction of rank hierarchy and discretion. For Wilson, the essence of police was that “within it discretion increases as one moves down the hierarchy.”40 In contrast, military command authority was direct. From higher ranks to lower ranks, orders were to be followed, with civilian authority, which held the greatest latitude, at the top. Cizanckas simply believed too much isomorphism between military and police had grown due to their similar structures of rank and bureaucratic centralization. To introduce and adhere to paramilitary rank structures had been a central plank of police reform and professionalization in the first half of the twentieth century, orchestrated by August Vollmer and then Orlando W. Wilson. Such reform was not aimed at protecting discretion per se; professionalization recognized that discretion at the lowest levels fit tongue-in-groove with corruption.

For theorist Markus Dubber, however, an intimate connection exists between “patriarchy” and discretion. The police power originates for Dubber in the patriarchal power that the householder exerts over his household. The modern state is an extension of the household, managed according to the prudential, practical, fatherly wisdom to identify and eliminate threats to present and future health, safety, and prosperity of those within it. Theorists call this management “police” and that prudential wisdom “discretion.” Because the threats cannot be known, except in broad strokes, in advance of their occurrence, discretion is inevitable and limitless.41 If Dubber’s genealogy draws on a history that seems distant from the vagaries of 1970s suburban California, Cizanckas’s insistence that police services were indistinct from other forms of social services catapults us back into an earlier moment of modern state formation. In eighteenth-century formulations, there was no sharp distinction between Polizeistaat and Wohlfahrtsstaat, as security, order, and welfare were synonymous: “the only reason we do not equate” the two is “because we are captives of twentieth-century definitions of police state and welfare state.”42 Cizanckas’s originality, therefore, resided in his resistance to this definitional captivity. Whereas many police executives and intellectuals like James Q. Wilson at the time were attempting to shore up the distinction and get police out of the business of social-welfare provision—and, relatedly, shrink social-welfare capacities—Cizanckas wanted his officers to turn resolutely toward the mire. And arrest was not to be the only means of clearing it up. The paramilitary pretense stood in the way of recognizing the reality of the police power’s inherent limitlessness: “The basic military mission is usually well defined; but the basic police mission is not well defined, because it is part of a changing social scene involving the management of people in crisis or problem situations.”43 Although he believed that police officers should not act like parents toward childlike citizens, he was not willing to discard the fundamental belief that discretion—fatherly though it may have been—was the central feature of police practice.

Cizanckas intended the new uniforms to remold public perceptions of police officers. “People are the product of police service.”44 The point, therefore, of the reforms was to authorize and inculcate a different type of response to police from members of the public. Whereas many a police department at the time was expending resources on “public relations programs,” Menlo Park was aiming to infuse the entire department’s structure with a new relationship to the public and a new sense of professionalism. Cizanckas and Hanna dismissed the idea of fostering better “police–community relations” as an expensive gimmick. They did not believe “the community”
was a viable actor but instead usually referred to as “unorganized, unstructured, and shapeless collection of people.” Yet the prevalent mode of police reform at the time treated “the community” as if it were cohesive and coherent. Police departments frequently sought to address this fabricated community through specialized units. For Cizanckas and Hanna, this technique was a mistake because it was too specific in its management approach yet not specific enough in its goals. They wrote:

At the heart of the misunderstanding is the habit of discussing police-community relations as if it were a distinct and separate branch of police work, like patrolling, investigating, or controlling traffic; as if, to stretch the point only slightly, a department should assign the fostering of good community relations to a community-relations squad, the way it assigned the solving of murders to a homicide squad, and be reasonably the confident that the matter has been taken care of. However, relating to the community is not an effort to be addressed by a few specialists, but something every police officer on the street practices during every working hour.

The police cannot meet change by creating community-relations units; they cannot paste onto department procedures “Be Responsive to Minorities” directives . . . They can meet the problem only by fundamentally changing the departments themselves, with innovations in recruiting, training, supervising, promoting, inspecting, and planning.

The more thorough reforms Cizanckas instituted in Menlo Park, however, aimed at relatively limited and specific targets. A primary goal was to reduce assaults on officers. Cizanckas reported that in the six months prior to the adoption of the blazers, five officers were assaulted, leading to brief hospitalizations. Not a single officer in a blazer, in the first eighteen months after their adoption, experienced a “lost time assault,” meaning an altercation that resulted in an injury that prevented him from working. Less serious assaults did occur, but at a rate 50 percent lower, from 3.7 to 1.3 percent per arrest, Cizanckas claimed. As of 1973, assaults on police remained “markedly reduced.” On only a handful of occasions did a member of the public question whether the officer wearing the new outfit was actually a cop. A group of criminologists who followed and analyzed the Menlo Park reforms concluded, “The end result is clear and leads us to believe that aggression can be dramatically reduced by an alteration of the psychological symbols surrounding the police role.”

A related goal was to improve the relationship between the Menlo Park police department and the black residents of Belle Haven. Over time, as racial tensions in the city failed to ease significantly, Cizanckas became even more insistent that improving them had been the reason for reform. In his coauthored textbook, Cizanckas explicitly identified the “social turmoil” of the 1960s as forcing the specific changes Menlo Park undertook. “The questions of effective tactics during crisis, department philosophy toward black communities, response to white and black pressure groups—all entered into the day-to-day and long-range planning of any department that provided service to a large black population.” Consequently, “When the Menlo Park Police Department began its organizational development program, a primary concern was the black community of the city.” Initially, “Black community response was . . . excellent,” with “patrol officers reporting that people thought they were receiving service from sergeants and inspectors.” In 1969, the department conducted a survey of attitudes toward the Menlo Park police in Belle Haven. One goal was to refute “the voice of the militant calling for withdrawal of police patrols” by showing that the police were welcome in Belle Haven. The survey team discovered the forty-nine respondents (out of 455 in 385 households) rated the department as “poor,” 130 as “fair,” 186 as “good,” and 39 as “excellent.” Of the respondents, twenty-nine wanted less patrol, 183 the same level of patrol, and 202 more patrol. Cizanckas reported that simply conducting this survey and talking to black residents helped the officers understand them better and helped the residents better understand the police. Menlo Park soon developed a “ride-along” program that was geared toward fostering relationships between black youths and the police department.
Almost six years into Cizanckas’s tenure as chief, further research showed widely disparate attitudes toward the Menlo Park police department according to racial identification. A great majority of white residents surveyed believed the town’s police avoided unnecessary arrests, stopped and questioned people only with good reason, and did not use too much force. Black residents mostly disagreed on all of these points. Black residents also were less likely to have noticed the change in uniform, attributed by the researchers to “a stereotyped picture of police officers which many members of the black community might hold, making them less likely to notice differences in uniform among police agencies.” Ultimately, although white residents of Menlo Park were highly favorable toward Cizanckas’s slate of reforms, black residents of the Belle Haven section, especially the least educated and poorest, were less impressed. As much as Cizanckas aimed to reform policing practices and officer appearance, he could not dispose of widely shared attitudes about criminal propensity in segregated black districts. “Because crime in black communities is comparatively high, ‘harsh reality,’ as [Cizanckas] says, dictates that blacks will be stopped more frequently than whites.” Furthermore, because, as the Atlantic Monthly profile declared, “70 percent of all Menlo Park crime is committed by blacks,” Cizanckas insisted, “you’ve got to do some inquiring when you see something suspicious.” Despite his willingness to question many of the prevailing orthodoxies of policing, he was less interested in decoupling crime from blackness, as many at the time were demanding, including in Menlo Park.

**Militants, Militarism, and Demilitarization**

Although the early years of Cizanckas’s time as chief saw a reduction in “riots,” social protest in Menlo Park did not abate. Cizanckas took this protest as evidence he was doing a good job, but it demonstrated inconsistencies and gaps in his reform effort. He asserted, “People who must have the paramilitary model around them can’t stand” the reform program his instituted.

They fought me, and they asked a grand jury to investigate me. There are still some people in Menlo Park that think the Russians dropped me out of an airplane to subvert the Bay Area. However, I must be doing something right because we have bomb-throwing Nazis and bomb-throwing Maoist communists and they’re both suing me.

Incidents in Menlo Park involving different forms of political radicalism tested the limits of the demilitarization program and showed the persistence of paramilitary policing. These events indicated that although Cizanckas was able to modify everyday policing, in response to unusual incidents the force relied on a traditional mind-set and established practices. Because the reform program was intended to ameliorate racial prejudice and prevent resulting unrest, it is notable that “militant” political organizations maintained political pressure on the Menlo Park police department after Cizanckas’s appointment. Chief among these organizations was Venceremos—the “Maoist communists” Cizanckas mentioned—which began with mostly Chicano members. Based in nearby Redwood City, it operated a free two-year college and a medical clinic. Venceremos gained notoriety when joined by H. Bruce Franklin, a professor at Stanford University and one of the most famous members of the New Left communist organization Revolutionary Union (RU). Franklin’s split from RU and membership in Venceremos changed its dynamics and brought additional new members. Franklin was outspoken in his opposition to the U.S. war in Vietnam (which led to his firing from Stanford). Venceremos became focused on militant protest against the war effort. One target was the Stanford Research Institute (SRI), a research firm that activists accused of aiding the war effort because it received funds from the Pentagon and hosted scientific meetings that helped develop military technologies. SRI happened also to be Menlo Park’s biggest single employer. And it was located within a couple blocks of the new police station the city had built in 1960. Police from Menlo Park, Stanford University,
and Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties broke up one particularly boisterous protest, which resulted in nine arrests and several injured officers. A helicopter, tear gas, truncheons, body armor, and mutual-aid procedures: with these, riot control in Menlo Park looked much like what the Cable Splicer exercises had rehearsed, though a number of the officers remained clad in their blazers.58

Beyond the war an ocean away, though, Venceremos also focused on local issues, including policing in Menlo Park. Jane Franklin, “wife of Maoist Bruce Franklin,” spearheaded a protest of the Menlo Park City Council in September 1971. She accused the board of stifling a public conversation about the “racist practices of the police department.” After she and others had demanded a hearing, the city council held a special session a few days later. Franklin and four other attendees complained, though, that this session occurred too quickly, before they could prepare for it. They also demanded that the meeting occur in Belle Haven, rather than in the usual location downtown. Venceremos members bristled because the audience at the special session was almost entirely white.59 The city conceded and allowed additional meetings, which saw many complaints leveled but no violence, as police had feared, and no resolution. Although the group decried the police department for racism, the incident that spurred the protest was not a common sort of police interaction with a person of color in Belle Haven. Instead, it was a raid on the home of members of Venceremos that turned up a cache of weapons. A response to a report of a robbery of an elderly couple led police to a house at 107 Chester Street, close to but not in Belle Haven. The alleged robbers, four black men, were nowhere to be found. When Menlo Park officers demanded entry into the residence around midnight on August 31, 1971, members of Venceremos who lived there resisted and then scared them off by brandishing a loaded shotgun. The next day, police returned, arrested the man who had wielded the weapon, Venceremos member Morton Newman, and searched the premises, allegedly for over ninety minutes. During the search, the police found a “destructive device,” a timer for a bomb, which Venceremos claimed had been “planted.” In response to the accusations that police had planted the bomb timer, Cizanckas laughed. “Of course police always carry these bomb devices around with them,” he joked. After the raid, the chairman of Venceremos, Aaron Manganiello, asserted members’ “right to bear arms.” The group also released an official statement demanding “that the police be disarmed.”60 In its newspapers, Venceremos began repeating slogans of the Black Panther Party, like “off the pigs.” For its part, the Midpeninsula Free University, later linked with Venceremos, had offered a free course taught by a Stanford Law School graduate called “Gun Laws for Revolutionaries.”61

After this relatively self-serving set of protests, Venceremos reconfigured its approach to the Menlo Park police in response to incidents involving what it called “the local Gestapo force” and members of the public. In February 1972, Morton Newman, Bruce Franklin, and others appeared at a city council meeting to issue complaints “of police harassment” on behalf of black residents. Newman demanded the city council consider instituting a “police review board.” Another member of Venceremos who also lived at 107 Chester Street accused the city council of protecting the Menlo Park police due to its “basic racist attitude.” One candidate for city council in an upcoming election supported the complaints, and one young black man testified at the meeting that police had recently harassed him. Menlo Park’s mayor shrugged the complaints off by saying that he could not run the city like a “commune,” but in the end, the city council decided to refer complaints to the San Mateo County Human Relations Commission.62 To upscale the adjudication of complaints about police took the matter out of the hands of local authorities. According to Cizanckas’s interpretation of the police power, to downscale and act with discretion was the best way to ensure fairness. Although he likely had no choice, Cizanckas assented to the investigation.

Yet county-level authorities were not innocent of racism. Mere days after the city council agreed to a county-level investigation of Menlo Park’s police department, a San Mateo County deputy sheriff shot and killed a fifteen-year-old black boy, Gregory White, who fled after
allegedly stealing a car. *The Black Panther* newspaper reported that a “pig bullet” struck the boy in the back. Venceremos responded by establishing “people’s committees” that demanded establishment of a police review board, criminal charges against the deputy sheriff, that “the people be granted full participation in the makeup and guidelines of the law enforcement agencies affecting our community,” and monetary restitution to the family of the boy who had been killed. These pleas went unanswered. Venceremos demanded of Menlo Park and San Mateo County “that the police be prevented from harassing black people and other Third World people and poor and working people.” An ad hoc “People’s Tribunal” then held its own hearing and trial of the officer who shot white. It connected the shooting in Menlo Park to other police killings near and far, including in South Africa, labeling them symptoms of . . . the common problem of all Black people—the fact that as Black people we have every little say over the decisions which determine the kind of environment we will live in and the kind of life we will lead.

The group asked that punishment of the officer who killed the boy should actually restructure “the entire system . . . which perpetuates the atrocities,” including the “lack of community control, no local self government, a white police force in a Black community.”

Menlo Park police were more amenable to reform in response to complaints than county officials. After six months, the Menlo Park police formed a task force comprising two officers and several residents of Belle Haven to “facilitate police/community relations.” The goal was to reduce crime in the black district. The police were alarmed because burglary rates in Belle Haven, attributed to spiraling rates of heroin addiction, continued to rise. Herbert Harrison, cochairman of an existing group called the Concerned Citizens Committee, declared, “the community does not know the officers and the officers do not know the community.” Harrison’s colleague, Rev. Mattie L. Bostic, would even criticize Menlo Park’s police for being too lenient and responding to complaints of racism by “overdoing it with their friendliness.” He asserted, “I think the kids themselves want a little more authority.” In this community effort to stem crime, Venceremos was not involved, as it had been in spurring the county-level investigation into racism in the police department. The findings of the investigation, released around the time the community effort began, were clear: there was “no incident where a person’s civil rights were violated because of his race.” The Menlo Park police, the Human Relations Commission declared, were praiseworthy for acting in a “nonauthoritarian manner.” The department’s “philosophy” and ongoing training programs “in intergroup relations” indicated that it was “more advanced than other departments” in the county. The investigation Venceremos demanded had exonerated the police. And some local black leaders were willing to work with the police to reduce crime. Thus, although Cizanckas and Hanna would come to dismiss the idea of community, the police nevertheless were caught within its parameters, conscripted into its idiom, because some actors believed that community was something they could direct toward specific political ends. The police experts were right, though, in highlighting the indeterminacy of the concept. For Venceremos, community was a bulwark against police harassment and could be mobilized for egalitarian ends. For the more conservative black leaders in Belle Haven, community was something for police to address, and the mark of good policing would be its responsiveness to it—but not too much responsiveness.

Although Venceremos attracted the attention of the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the House of Representatives Committee on Internal Security (the descendent of the House Un-American Activities Committee), in addition to that of Menlo Park police, Cizanckas first had to confront violent attacks by what turned out to be a local extreme right-wing organization. A group of white Christian extremists called the “Society of Man” commenced a campaign of approximately thirty bombings in Menlo Park and nearby environs in response to what members
saw as both the police department’s capitulation to the Left and ongoing Left organizing and institution-building. Among the targets was Kepler’s Books, run by Roy Kepler, executive secretary of the War Resisters League, who sympathized with Venceremos but eventually broke from the group as it became more militant. The Midpeninsula Free University was another target, as were organizations involved in poverty alleviation under the Office of Economic Opportunity. The bombings perplexed the police, destroyed property, and frightened many, though no deaths resulted. The decision of militants in Venceremos and other left-wing groups to heavily arm themselves flowed from the persistent attacks upon their spaces. They did not trust the police to protect them, whereas the bombers believed the police were coddling the radical Left. The “extreme political right,” Cizanckas came to report, “felt we were losing our authority.”

Police negligence unnecessarily allowed the bombing campaign to persist. Because the police initially were unable to prevent the bombings, a corps of volunteers remained vigilant, keeping watch at night over likely targets. One such volunteer with the Free University years later claimed he had provided the Menlo Park police with the license-plate information of a person who turned out to be one of the bombers, only to have the information dismissed because the car belonged to an upstanding white citizen. It is impossible to verify this anecdote, and it is difficult to know what the Menlo Park police department’s internal rationales were. But it does seem likely that worries about unrest and crime in Belle Haven, and the inherent belief that criminal activity was concentrated in the black area of town that Cizanckas had expressed, led to the department’s disregard of the possibility that a white man unaffiliated with known left-wing radicals was involved.

Later ingenuity on Cizanckas’s part and the intrepid undercover work of one of his officers ultimately solved the crimes. Officer Armand J. Lareau befriended a suspect and pretended to be a disgruntled cop. He claimed to be a supporter of the John Birch Society trapped in a police department overseen by a left-wing radical, a “commie dupe.” To prove Lareau’s disaffection, Cizanckas concocted a fake letter of reprimand that Lareau shared with members of the Society of Man. Satisfied that his politics were authentic, the group invited Lareau to join. The gumshoe became involved in a plot to disrupt a discussion meeting at the Palo Alto Unitarian Church of communism in China. He offered to supply tear-gas grenades stolen from the Menlo Park police department. Not all the members of the Society of Man, which purported to be a Bible-study group, favored the idea of attacking a church. Some later claimed Lareau hatched the plot and effectively entrapped them. In the event, the attack did not go as planned and the meeting was minimally disrupted, with no tear gas released, but it provided sufficient proof that the Menlo Park police had found the bombers. Witching-hour raids conducted by Menlo Park and other nearby police on homes of members of the Society of Man turned up a large cache of rifles, shotguns, and pistols, as well as bullets, seventy-five pounds of gunpowder, and Nazi paraphernalia such as photographs of Hitler and swastika flags. In the end, nine people were charged with a variety of crimes. Prosecutors used California’s “criminal syndicalism” law, dating to the 1919 Red Scare, which actually angered some of the very left-wing radicals the Society of Man had targeted. That law violated rights to political speech, they contended. In the end, not all the charges stuck, and the few prison sentences recommended owed not to the bombings but to other charges. The majority of the bombings actually remained unsolved. Immediately after the raids, Cizanckas appeared in a photograph circulated by a wire service kneeling beside a display of the guns, gunpowder, and Nazi emblems the police had seized. It signaled an early success in his career as Menlo Park’s police chief, but it also helped the defendants claim that the police had prejudiced the public against them. His yen for publicity, which he unconvincingly denied, helped his reforms travel, but it also failed his local constituencies who sought answers about what was tearing the local social fabric apart. Insofar as he believed police could “solve” complex social problems, his effort to make police more prominent dovetailed with the local critiques of them emanating from the Left as too invasive on local social and political life and the Right as insufficiently proactive against disruptions to it.
In 1972, there was one bombing incident that threw into relief the contradictions of Cizanckas’s demilitarization gambit. On May 15, a twenty-four-inch pipe bomb exploded with a blast that could be heard three miles away. The target was M. B. Associates, located in the Bohannon Industrial Park. That “innovative” center of industry in Menlo Park had been built over three decades beginning in the 1950s “in order to bring new jobs and businesses into the community.”

The explosion shattered windows and caused other structural damage, costing over US$10,000. Why was M. B. Associates targeted? It manufactured “nonlethal police stun guns used in riot control.” Over 300 police and military agencies were its customers, but it marketed “less lethal weaponry” to civilians, including its “Prowler Fouler,” “Prowlette,” and “Pocket Prowlette”: guns designed to harm but not kill targets. Where was Bohannon Industrial Park? It was adjacent to Belle Haven, on the other side of a railroad track. How did the developer David Dewey Bohannon earn his fortune? He sold residential lots in, among other places, an unincorporated area then called Belle Haven City, creating a segregated neighborhood ex nihilo, a place black people could purchase property when covenants barred them from becoming owners elsewhere nearby. Although Bohannon’s may have claimed benevolent motives, they were inextricable from the area’s larger racial political economy and spatial organization. M. B. Associates, as one firm that was to provide employment for local residents, produced weapons for social control. It further took advantage of and propagated racialized and gendered fears of violent crime that widely circulated in this period. Although most of the bombings in Menlo Park and surrounding areas had ostensibly been the work of extremists connected to the Society of Man, the attack on M. B. Associates seemed to be the work of the Left, in opposition to the manufacture of weapons used to militarize policing. The firm’s consumer products, described in a *Los Angeles Times* article six months after the bombing, in turn, were geared toward people who believed the police could not protect them from crime. The Society of Man critique of Cizanckas had charged him with weakening the police, and this ideology underpinned the consumer market for weapons like the Prowler Fouler. To demilitarize, policing might have undermined the commercial market for riot-control weapons, but it augured a strengthened consumer market for their cousins. Cizanckas was caught in this contradiction. The bombs did not destroy, but revealed, it.

**Demilitarization’s Denouement**

Menlo Park was among the first urban municipalities to adopt demilitarized uniforms in an era of widespread enthusiasm for police reform. Cizanckas was unique for coupling the new uniforms with deeper transformations of the department itself. The new uniforms were widely replicated. Over the next decade, almost 500 other municipalities adopted similar blazers for their officers. Rural areas without their own local forces also adopted them: for instance, Riverside County in Southern California engaged in a uniform experiment, which police executives considered successful, around the same time as Menlo Park (Figure 3). After Cizanckas left Menlo Park in 1977, the new chief reverted to traditional uniforms, as did other municipalities that had tried the demilitarized garb. The new chief also developed a new “rules book,” contradicting the discretion-enabling philosophy of Cizanckas, who believed that lengthy and detailed statements of rules and procedures impeded policing success.

Other reforms that Cizanckas instituted, geared toward eliminating hierarchy to strengthen discretion, were not as widely imitated. But in his desire to ameliorate race relations, strengthen the public image of police, and craft specific public reactions to police, he aligned with prevailing trends. Increased pay, more intensive training, innovative techniques, and upgraded technologies were the essence of police reform under the War on Crime. Bolstered by the widespread vogue for reform and the LEAA’s encouragement of experimentation, cohorts of innovators introduced their ideas piecemeal. A new chief in Beverly Hills introduced elevated educational standards for officers there, like his old buddy in Menlo Park had. Direct, personal connections were not
essential in many other cases, though. Cizanckas was integrated within the networks of police reform and professionalization that both enabled policy mobility and constrained the types of policy experiments that could arise. He garnered funding from the LEAA for his efforts, and organizations like SRI aided his research. Such research firms became increasingly involved in criminology in the 1970s once funding from the LEAA became available and protests against taking money from the Pentagon became pervasive. But the amount of money available to purchase new weapons exceeded the amount of money available for research in innovative policing methods. The IACP fostered the circulation of new ideas like Cizanckas’s, but it also helped create the marketplace for new weapons. LEAA expenditures were never enough to cover the cost of all the new weaponry police agencies purchased in the aftermath of the unrest in the 1960s, but LEAA funding helped jumpstart the practice of stockpiling these weapons and the IACP helped convince police officials of the need for them.

**From Stanford to Stamford**

In 1977, Cizanckas and his family left Menlo Park for Stamford, Connecticut, all the way on the other side of the country. There he was appointed to a lifetime term as police chief, an unusual move in the era of police professionalization. The complexity of the political situation in Stamford

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**Figure 3.** Officers wearing a traditional late 1960s uniform (left) and a new demilitarized uniform featuring a blazer (right), Riverside County Sheriff, 1969. Source: Author’s collection.
that he confronted could be the subject of an entire article. His term of leadership was tempestuous. Entrenched corruption borne of ties to organized crime in the police force and the municipal government, a powerful and adversarial police union, local economic woes, a terrific rate of police brutality, and a more severe incidence of crime than he faced in Menlo Park: these all combined to thwart Cizanckas in Stamford. Despite his belief that hierarchy in the force interfered with effectiveness, he imposed his reforms unilaterally from the top. Officers then filed a complaint with the State Board of Labor Relations. He received threats. A burglar, likely a disgruntled officer, broke into his office. Cizanckas did not bring demilitarized uniforms to Stamford—which had its own SWAT team—but he tried to instill his commitment to making “community relations” the job of every officer. He also infused his reform efforts with a new rhetoric: demilitarization would mean “running the Police Department like a private business,” which entailed measurement and assessment of effectiveness. He instituted new patrol routines and reconfigured the chain of command. To eliminate corruption, bookkeeping procedures were renovated and an internal-affairs division created. In response, off-duty officers picketed the police headquarters.

Hired in Stamford at age forty, Cizanckas died from a heart attack in late November 1980, at age forty-three. He served his lifetime term as chief. An autopsy ruled out “any possibility of foul play.” Immediately after his death, supporters and well-wishers lamented that his reforms had just begun to take hold. In 1998, a new reformist chief, Dean Esserman, was appointed in Stamford, still plagued by a “dispirited” force. Through a connection with the police reformer and former LEAA Administrator Patrick Murphy, Esserman had met Cizanckas two decades earlier, when he interned with the Stamford police prior to attending law school.

**Conclusion**

The brief career of Victor Cizanckas emblematizes several trends that have shaped policing since the tumultuous mid-1960s in the United States. Most notably because it is an underappreciated trend, he was an avatar of the demilitarization of policing. Although police militarization is typically thought to have commenced in 1968 and then massively increased in the past two decades, there was an interregnum between 1968 and the more recent explosive era of militarization beginning during the Clinton administration and continuing after 9/11. The demilitarization of police uniforms was one widespread trend that occurred during this interregnum, troubling the telos implicit in the militarization narrative. Cizanckas paired cosmetic changes in the form of new uniforms—most easily adopted—with more thorough rethinking of how paramilitary inheritances from an earlier moment of police professionalization had constrained police and diverted officers toward the goal of arrest, away from solving problems. His belief was that hierarchy within police departments had warped incentives. As a result, with arrest as a singular measure of policing success, officers were not necessarily interested in addressing the question of whether arrest would actually stem crime. Hierarchy within the department translated into an attitude of hierarchy among police over residents and that had negative consequences. First, many residents did not trust police and police did not trust them. Second, police assumed the worst of residents. Third, a hierarchical position toward residents dovetailed with racial prejudice. To find a way to equalize relations was his goal. To this end, Cizanckas believed a renewed relationship of police to community had to be achieved through top-to-bottom reshaping of policing. He and his textbook coauthor even expressed the belief that community was not a viable category, because it was too diffuse and polysemic. Yet the Menlo Park experience showed that he was stuck with community because so many residents believed in its power and held affective attachments to it. Today, it is common to encounter an analytic opposition of militarized policing and community-oriented policing, but the demilitarized form of policing Cizanckas originally favored was not synonymous with community-oriented policing.
Cizanckas was also a key participant in the emergent networks of law-enforcement expertise that grew in number, strength, scope, and reach with the advent of the LEAA. Although many histories of policing tend to be place-specific, the institutional and bureaucratic transformations in this period rendered police reform inherently mobile and less place-bound. Cizanckas published widely in the professional literature, and he consulted other police executives and worked with researchers. He won grants in an era when the federal government expressly sought to fund innovative and experimental reform practices in law enforcement. His participation in these networks conferred a platform for the dissemination of his reform ideas, but this participation also undermined his reform efforts. One way that participation in these efforts was self-undermining was that, in contrast to his claims of sensitivity to local needs, his policies were designed to be widely applicable, easily imposed on other locales. However, he faced recalcitrance within the rank-and-file of the police force, in Menlo Park and even more so in Stamford. Officers who felt that the reforms came at their expense proved to be a great problem for Cizanckas, occupying a good deal of his attention. Cizanckas’s reforms were designed to empower officers to act with discretion, but it was not clear that officers actually desired the difficult on-the-spot decision making that throwing out the rulebook required. Some certainly did. Others preferred the rote.

Whereas Cizanckas derided arrest for the sake of arrest, the punitive turn of the era, which was responsible for giving him a platform, reconfigured social priorities. The major reconfiguration was the tendential shift toward the ideological and political definition of many social problems as crime, which meant they required a singular solution. The discretion he favored started to become superfluous. At the same time, he necessarily participated in the rebalancing of police and welfare apparatuses by assuming that police could assist in solving problems that might otherwise be delegated to social service providers or by helping people become enrolled in social service provision. Perhaps he could not have easily predicted the retrenchment of welfare services that was on the horizon, but Cizanckas nevertheless embodied the ideological companion to that fiscal retrenchment: the belief that police might be well suited to pick up the slack.

Cizanckas’s reforms were addressed to problems of racial inequity. Police reform in Menlo Park, as in most locales in the United States, resulted from an effort to avoid destructive unrest in districts of spatially contained minoritized and economically exploited populations, like what had occurred with great frequency across the country from 1964 through 1968. Not long after Cizanckas became chief, the incidence of unrest in Menlo Park declined to zero. Yet it is difficult to determine how much credit his reforms deserve. Unrest in black and Latino neighborhoods across the United States did decline across the next decade. Because it declined in a small city that demilitarized its police, this evidence suggests that such declines elsewhere may not have been due to militarization of policing alone. Nevertheless, political unrest did not disappear in the 1970s. In many places, it took on new forms. The 1970s were characterized by the exhaustion of one particular form of protest and its replacement with new forms. Cizanckas believed that by controlling the outbreak of unrest in Menlo Park, he might be able to reshape everyday policing. Yet what Cizanckas did not anticipate was the irruption of different types of political protest and disorder, including the rise of the extreme Right in the area, as well as new forms of left-wing militancy and cross-racial organizing. Reformed everyday policing thus accompanied traditional control of unrest.

Cizanckas’s reform program attempted to ameliorate the police force’s relations with black residents in Belle Haven, but it foundered on racial and economic inequality. It was judged a success by almost all white residents, but by less than half of the city’s black residents. Police could change how they approached residents, including by speaking more politely, but police could not transform the social relations that created concentrated zones of poverty and racial segregation. Political unrest in the years before Cizanckas became chief was not solely the result of police
attitudes, however. By enforcing existing laws in Belle Haven, even if officers acted with discretion and chose not to arrest black residents for all infractions, their presence necessarily reproduced the political economy that had created the ghettoized area. Theorist Mark Neocleous refers to this practice of police as the “fabrication of social order.”95 Police cannot reform away this essential function. Cizanckas never expressed a desire to overturn existing social relations, nor to minimize the police role. Instead, he aimed to insinuate police into social life more deeply while maintaining a sociopolitical status quo. He wanted to improve the stature of police and insulate the Menlo Park department from criticism and externally imposed constraints. Furthermore, he was surprised to discover that black residents of Belle Haven did not believe there was a correlation between the new style of policing and the lack of unrest.96 Cizanckas consistently plugged the benefits of police discretion by referring to examples in which officers had chosen not to arrest in situations when they might have. But by doing so, he underemphasized the reality of white police discretion among black residents: the complement to the choice to avoid arresting white offenders was the choice to arrest black offenders in similar situations. Police reform is not designed to help citizens. It is designed to help police.

Although criticism of the militarization of policing today is widespread, and historians have studied its roots, little empirical attention has been paid to the contemporaneous but opposite vector. This neglect is surprising because activists calling for police to demilitarize today could learn from the experiments of figures like Cizanckas. Among reformers, he stood out because he was willing to trash orthodoxies and step on toes. But his posture illuminates the core of police reform, which is the ambition to strengthen police and retrain the public in how to interact with police. It is not designed to eliminate racism or invidious and inequitable social relations. Demilitarized policing implies that police needed the military, or any exogenous influence, to commit acts of violence, which is clearly untrue. The term militarization of policing also relies too heavily on a hypothetical construct that has little relationship to reality: a time in twentieth-century U.S. history when there was a rigid distinction between military and police, during which the two did not bleed into each other. The term, moreover, implies a model of linear development (even if those who use the term “militarization of policing” grasp the development as declension) for a process that was uneven geographically, with accelerations and decelerations, failures and successes, and, importantly, no predetermined model or plan in terms of outcome. There can be no absolute level, with civilian characteristics of policing safely on one side, militaristic ones looming on the other. The criticism, instead, is relative.

A more radical and thorough critique, in contrast, would take into account the whole of the police power, its internally contested tendencies toward both militarization and its opposite, informed by an analysis that highlights the multiple routes police leaders have developed toward achieving the fragile enactment of police legitimacy. This critique would have to appreciate the contradictory character of reforms Cizanckas introduced that, from the top down, intended to flatten internal hierarchies within the department. Deeply democratic governance, either from outside or from within the force, was not on offer. Armed with such a critique, it becomes possible to analyze police as such and focus practically not on eliminating its distortions in the technical forms of militarization or demilitarization but on eliminating the social and political conditions that make police departments necessary and reform efforts within them ineluctable.

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Notes
2. In his next sentence, though, Plummer emphasized that supervising officers needed to instill discipline in their lower ranking officers because that call could easily lead them lose control. For the apparently unexpurgated version of Plummer’s planned remarks, see Charles Plummer, “Help Thy Neighbor,” Police—Materials, Carton 1, Paul N. Jacobs Papers, Banc MSS 79/107c; Manuscripts Collection, Bancroft Library. The fullest account of Cable Splicer III and its predecessors is found in Ron Ridenhour, “More than Just a Game: The Cable Splicer Papers,” New Times, special investigative supplement, November 19, 1975; overlapping and additional information is in the Berkeley Barb issue cited above. Documentary records of Cable Splicer are scanty, and the sparse existing scholarly discussions rely heavily on Ridenhour’s investigation.
3. California applied for a US$65,000 grant from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) to fund Cable Splicer III (over US$420,000 in 2016); State of California Military Department, Proposal Review Summary, September 26, 1969, Legislation—Riot, 1967-70 (2/4), Governor’s Office Legal Affairs Unit, Governor’s Office Files, box GO 72, Gubernatorial Papers, Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.
7. “Cizanckas Vetoes SWAT Team in MP,” Police Department (Menlo Park) no. 1, General 1927-1978 (hereafter F1), Menlo Park Historical Association (hereafter MPHA). This file contains documents and publications from the Menlo Park police department as well as many newspaper clippings, not all of which include identifying information on their source or date of publication. I reviewed more clippings and documents in this file than I directly cite. Michael Taylor, “A Fresh Police Approach,” San Francisco Chronicle, September 24, 1973.
9. Even as the everyday body armor and weapons police use today increasingly seem to resemble those of the military, the rubric of the militarization of policing also excludes the majority of the activities that
police undertake on a daily basis, as well as the predominant forms of violence in which they engage. One of the major critiques of militarization is simply that once equipped with expensive gadgets and trained how to use them, police inevitably will use them, regardless of their actual necessity in a given situation. Still, most arrests or police shootings of civilians do not involve military-grade hardware or SWAT (Special Weapons and Tactics) teams.

10. Patricia Lynden, “The Menlo Park Police,” The Atlantic Monthly, September 1973, 16-24. This article is the most thorough contemporaneous journalistic account of Cizanckas’s efforts; strangely, it misspells his name at every mention. A recent scholarly article in the criminology literature to discuss Cizanckas briefly is: Richard R. Johnson, “An Examination of Police Department Uniform Color and Police–Citizen Aggression,” Criminal Justice and Behavior 40, no. 2 (February 2013): 228-44.


18. On police reform in nearby San Francisco, see Agee, Streets of San Francisco. Furthermore, the police chief of nearby San Jose from 1976 to 1991, Joseph McNamara, was widely recognized as a successful reformer.


23. Palo Alto Times, March 22, 1968, F1, MPHA.


25. “Program Cuts Local Crime Sharply,” F1, MPHA.

26. Survey of Police Department: Budget, Personnel, and Per Capita Expenditures, 1974-1979, F1, MPHA.

29. Clifford, “Menlo Park’s Police Score.”
38. One study found that in Menlo Park, “The uniform experiment markedly influenced the style and content of interpersonal communication within the Menlo Park police force. Devoid of constant reminders of authority such as chevrons and insignia, communication between members of the police force became more informal”; Tenzel et al., “Symbols and Behavior,” 25.
47. Cizanckas, “Uniform Experiment and Organization Development,” 45.
52. Cizanckas, “Interim Report.”
53. Cizanckas and Hanna, *Modern Police Management*, 91. These findings were also published in *The Police Chief*. 


67. Taylor, “A Fresh Police Approach.” Police in this period invited “new” voices to give feedback on policy but selected which voices were acceptable. Clergy were considered reliable, and Bostic’s conservative comments indicate why. Thanks to Chris Agee for help on this point.

68. Cizanckas was familiar with the sociological text *The Authoritarian Personality*, coauthored by Theodor Adorno and based on research conducted in the Bay Area. He attempted to embrace its findings and translate them into police recruitment and promotion. See Tenzel and Cizanckas, “The Uniform Experiment.”

69. “Menlo Park Police Show No Racism,” *Palo Alto Times*, September 12, 1972, F1, MPHA.


71. Taylor, “A Fresh Police Approach.”


73. Lareau actually did face reprimand and demotion later, after “mishandling” department money. This incident spawned a series of reprimandings and set into motion Cizanckas’s departure from Menlo Park; “Restructuring Begun in Police Department,” January 5, 1977, F1, MPHA. Although beyond the scope of this article, Cizanckas’s efforts to lessen hierarchy in the department, initiated through a somewhat paradoxical executive management imperative, contrasted with another major trend of the era: the rise of police unionization. He himself opposed unionization because he believed it would enhance and calcify hierarchy within departments, but the demands he placed on his officers to be proactive and creative were of a kind with the top-down demands police unionization efforts resisted.


79. Tenzel et al., “Symbols and Behavior.”

81. “Police to Get New Uniforms,” *Menlo-Atherton Recorder*, F1, MPHA; Vivian B. Martin, “Blazers for Officers Are on the Way Out as Police Return to Traditional Style,” *Hartford Courant*, August 19, 1979. Evidence does not support the claim that assaults on police in Menlo Park increased over the 1970s, leading to the reversion to the old uniforms, as inaccurately stated in a recent scholarly study of police uniforms: Johnson, “An Examination of Police Department Uniform Color and Police–Citizen Aggression,” 228-44.


86. I reviewed several clipping files: Police Department 1977-1980; Stamford Collection (hereafter SC); Stamford Public Library, Stamford, CT (hereafter SPL). See also the self-published memoir of a Stamford cop, Vito Colucci, who worked under Cizanckas and took part in an undercover investigation, posing as a disaffected, rogue cop, modeled on Lareau’s investigation in Menlo Park: Dennis N. Griffin and Vito Colucci Jr., *Rogue Town* (Las Vegas: Houdini Publishing, 2013).

87. Carlsen, “Taking a New Look.”


90. “Cops Protest,” April 7, 1980; Police Department 1980, SC, SPL.


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