



[About DV](#) [Archives](#) [Donate](#) [Contact Us](#) [Submissions](#) [Books](#) [Links](#)

Carding and Random Murder

Evolutionary Anthropology of Police Practice in Maintaining a High-gradient Hierarchical Social-class Structure

by Denis Rancourt / June 21st, 2016

Summary: I show that the *de facto* police practice of constant random harassment by carding and other means, combined with less frequent unprovoked executions and prosecutions using false charges, in containing groups targeted for containment is exactly the most effective and efficient strategy for hierarchical containment developed by evolution and described by primate anthropologists. As such, the said practice should be understood to be an intrinsic feature of the societal dominance hierarchy. The harm from this practice can be mitigated using further knowledge from primate anthropology, to lower the hierarchy gradient and produce a net societal benefit (and less senseless violence). Cops are apes, not pigs.

Role of the police

In maintaining class structures in the Western societal dominance hierarchies (e.g., US, Canada), the lower-strata groups (below the elite classes of rulers) are targeted, with the obvious overlaps, for either:

- sharing in the plunder (business elite classes),
- rewarded service (professional classes),
- maintenance (middle classes and working classes),
- integration (recruited groups within or between classes),
- containment (ghetto and prison-population classes), or
- elimination (genocidal-target classes).

The police and “justice” system play multiple roles in enforcing the class structure. As such, it is a structural feature of enforcement practice that *different* standards and rewards and punishments must be applied to different classes. Police and “justice” system discrimination and class bias are necessary characteristics of a stable Western dominance hierarchy.

The actively propagated myth of (even merely theoretical) equality in the “justice” system is entirely an instrument used in the maintenance of the middle and working classes. And mostly those are the classes that believe this myth, which is propaganda aimed at them. The myth is integrated deeply, at the individual identity level. As such, there are many cases of the individual being most perturbed by examples and experiences of not being oppressed fairly.

An unwanted but easily manipulated side-effect of the resulting sense of justice is that the middle classes will have some empathy against oppression of the lower classes, if the oppression can be sufficiently identified with. Thus lower-classes seeking inter-class “solidarity” and professional classes selling inter-class “solidarity” must market the oppression using terms that trigger empathy among middle class individuals. Another route is by transfer of the empathy for animal pets, which are allowed for compensation of the social isolation imposed by hierarchy, and so on.

In this article, I make the point that (*de facto*) police practice in containing the ghetto classes, in the US and Canada, is exactly the optimized practice that is predicted by evolutionary anthropology, as deduced from observations of primates and other animals. As such, it is not an accident or a defect. It is a structural feature of our hierarchies.

Violence is evolutionary

All social animals form hierarchies with various magnitudes of hierarchical gradient. I define the hierarchical gradient as the difference in individual privilege between the top and the bottom of the hierarchy. Privilege includes access to power, resources, security, reproduction, and continuity of lineage.

Since humans are “without question the most behaviourally flexible animals in the world”¹, we have developed complex multi-layered societies that incorporate every kind of technology and organizational strategy. However, it is important to recognize that human psychology and our intrinsic social nature have not changed since long before we developed agriculture. We are the animals that billions of years of evolution have produced, and we cannot be anything else.

Our high intelligence is accompanied by an apparently unsurpassed Theory of Mind (ToM), which is the ability to have an image of ourselves and an image of how others are. ToM allows us to read the minds of others, in terms of their emotional states, motives, and intentions. It also allows us to perceive our place and the place of others in the social hierarchy.

Human children spontaneously use punishment — including intimidation, manipulation, and violence — to establish hierarchical dominance as soon as they concomitantly develop ToM, as young as two years of age²:

“As young as 2 years of age, children assemble stable, linearly transitive dominance hierarchies when brought together in novel social groups.

Dominance hierarchy is the most characteristic and overt feature of any human society³, and it manifests itself in any human group. Even the methods devised to locally or sectorially remove hierarchy are enforced by higher layers of hierarchy, in order to confer more overall hierarchical stability. This is true of creating “safe space” as much as of the practice of voting, or any institutional rules of procedure.

Animals, including humans, use punishment (violence) for the following reasons⁴:

- “the establishment and maintenance of dominance relationships”
- “theft, parasitism and predation” (including war)
- “the establishment of mating bonds”
- “parent/offspring conflict” (“education/socialization”)
- “the enforcement of cooperative behaviour” (including enforcement of societal norms)

All of these areas identified by animal-behaviour researchers relate to the establishment, operation and stabilization or growth of dominance hierarchy.

Modern large-scale human hierarchies use specialized enforcers and institutions, rather than a predominantly distributed approach to violence, although low-intensity distributed punishment remains vital. [See Footnote No. 1] Such specialization of violence both allows a larger scale hierarchy and provides net evolutionary-fitness benefit to the species (ideas which I will develop in a next article).

Nonetheless, the bio-psychological mechanisms for effective hierarchical establishment and maintenance developed through millions of years of evolution remain the same, whether the enforcers are dominant apes in a tropical-forest family group or steroid-charged police officers, backed by class-conscious judges, patrolling a ghetto suburb in a modern city.

Why card and kill?

In the modern city, there are large inner-city and suburban compounds or ghettos of racially and culturally identifiable groups that are targeted for containment. This is true even in Canada's luxurious capital city Ottawa, where in addition to homelessness which is targeted for containment pending elimination, there are subsidized housing neighbourhoods targeted for containment pending imprisonment, deportation or integration, such as the Somali neighbourhoods where residents are both Black and Muslim.⁵ In addition, carding, police harassment, and random police executions are more well known in larger cities such as Toronto.

So what is the evolutionary bio-psychological tactic that has evolved to impose hierarchical dominance on individuals who are to be contained and does it correspond to carding, random harassment, and random executions? Here, by "random" I mean unprovoked, sudden and specifically unpredictable to the target.

Well, evolutionary anthropology of primates is quite clear in its answer:⁶

“ The logic of unprovoked and unpredictable aggression potentially applies to any animals that live in stable groups of familiar individuals, interact repeatedly, remember past interactions, and use dominance to mediate access to valuable resources. ...

The logic of random aggression exploits mammalian stress physiology. ... [L]ong-term activation of the stress response is pathogenic. In social species within which subordination is associated with high rates of stressors and low availability of coping responses, subordinates tend to suffer the most stress and are most vulnerable to stress-related diseases that impair health and reduce fertility. ...

In this situation, randomly timed attacks on randomly selected targets creates continuing uncertainty in subordinates about when and if they will be attacked. This uncertainty generates long-term, low-level stress, which has deleterious long-term effects on subordinates. Dominants benefit because they are able to inflict these costs on subordinates but are able to minimize the risks associated with escalated aggression. Thus, randomly timed attacks on randomly selected targets may be favored by natural selection because this strategy is both effective and efficient. ...

Of course, if threats are never translated into action, potential victims will eventually learn that they have no reason to be fearful. Thus, aggressors must sometimes attack subordinates to legitimate the threat of aggression.

Thus, carding and the entire gamut of unprovoked and random police harassment events (such as intimidating patrol car dismounts, searches, interrogations, etc., and intense surveillance itself), coupled with random executions and random prosecutions using false charges, constitute a complete practice that exactly mirrors the most “effective and efficient” evolutionary behaviour for containing subordinates in a dominance hierarchy of primates or other animals.

The only difference is that the human dominance hierarchy is larger, more stratified and employs specialized professionals and institutions for enforcement. But when containment of a targeted group is the primary mission, then the police practice is the optimized enforcer behaviour developed through millennia of evolution.

I have previously explained how the stress from dominance enforcement is a pivotal bio-psychological mechanism that stabilizes human hierarchies, and how the costs to individuals is the factor that moderates increases in hierarchical gradient [See Footnote No. 3]. I have also described how physiological stress is the dominant causal factor in individual health⁷.

In this case, we see the particular mode of application of debilitating stress when the police contain a group targeted for containment, in circumstances that operationally exclude complete physical imprisonment, complete deportation, mass murder and complete genocide.

What is the best defence?

Evolutionary anthropology also informs us about the best defence against the above-described police practice of containment. I don't mean coping strategies for individuals in a targeted group. Instead, I mean how the police practice can best be disarmed, at its root, within the societal hierarchy.

Here is the relevant observation from evolutionary anthropology [See Footnote No. 6]:

“ The tactic of launching randomly timed attacks on randomly selected subordinates has at least one major drawback: if attacks are effective, then it will be difficult for dominants to interact with subordinates, even when their intentions are peaceful. This may make it hard for dominants to approach subordinates in order to solicit grooming, handle their infants, or huddle together for warmth.

There you have it. The best defence is to effectively boycott, shun and shame the police, as leverage to get it to curb its practice. The difficulty with modern human society is that specialization, professional compartmentalization and the class structure are such that police usually don't seek substantive positive contact with the groups they are tasked with targeting.

The latter difficulty can partly be solved by inter-class “solidarity”, where agents who do have leverage with the police can play a role. Social media, such as YouTube, has been useful in this regard by spreading images that tarnish the reputation of the police in social classes that matter to the police.

Indeed, arguably the only way to apply pressures against hierarchical oppression, within the hierarchy, is via the human relations that matter to the dominants, and that can thus perturb the dominant by distancing, and via any induced reputational self-image incongruence^{8,9}.

In this regard, insults that catch-on can be very effective. Therefore, in view of the above evolutionary anthropology results, we should say that the police are apes, not pigs.

We must guard against our learned class-structure-supporting political correctness reflex of avoiding making insults, and instead try to make insults that stick and spread, and that will steer the police away from its most damaging practices in a high-gradient hierarchy. Lowering hierarchical gradients produces significant public health benefits [See Footnote No. 3].¹⁰ Liberation is better than oppression.

Author's Note: I was inspired to research and write this article by reading Hazel Gashoka's recent graduate-course (York University, Canada) paper entitled "Racial profiling and health outcomes for Black women in Toronto".

1. Punishment and spite, the dark side of cooperation, by Keith Jensen, *Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences*, Vol. 365, No. 1553, Cooperation and deception: from evolution to mechanisms (12 September 2010), pp. 2635-2650. [🔗]
2. Social Stratification, Health, and Violence in the Very Young, by W. Thomas Boyce, *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 1036 (2004), pp. 47-68. doi: 10.1196/annals.1330.003 [🔗]
3. *Hierarchy and Free Expression in the Fight Against Racism*, by Denis G. Rancourt, Stairway Press (2013), 175 pages. ISBN: 978-0-9859942-8-0 [🔗]
4. Punishment in animal societies (review), by T.H. Clutton-Brock & G.A. Parker, *Nature*, Vol. 373 (19 January 1995), pp. 209-216. [🔗]
5. Civil Unliberties: The Space Between Policing and Justice, by panelists Sadia Jama, Yavar Hameed & David Moffette, Inaugural B. Myron Rusk Annual Memorial Lecture, Ottawa, March 1, 2016 [🔗]
6. Practice random acts of aggression and senseless acts of intimidation: The logic of status contests in social groups, by Joan B. Silk, *Evolutionary Anthropology*, Vol. 11 (2002), pp. 221-225. doi: 10.1002/evan.10038 [🔗]
7. Cancer arises from stress-induced breakdown of tissue homeostasis, by Denis G. Rancourt, *Research Gate*, (December 2015), 25 pages. doi: 10.13140/RG.2.1.1304.7129 [🔗]
8. Psycho-biological basis for image leverage and the case of Israel, by Denis G. Rancourt, *Activism Teacher* (12 June 2010). [🔗]
9. [Self-image-incongruence theory of individual health](#), by Denis G. Rancourt, *Dissident Voice*, 26 October 2014 [🔗]
10. Income inequality and health: A causal review, by Kate E. Pickett & Richard G. Wilkinson, *Social Science & Medicine*, Vol. 128 (2015), pp. 316-326. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2014.12.031. [🔗]



Denis G. Rancourt is a former tenured full professor of physics at the University of Ottawa, Canada. He is a researcher for the [Ontario Civil Liberties Association](#). He has published [more than 100 articles in leading scientific journals](#), on physics and environmental science. He is the author of the book [Hierarchy and Free Expression in the Fight Against Racism](#). Denis can be reached at denis.rancourt@gmail.com. [Read other articles by Denis](#).

This article was posted on Tuesday, June 21st, 2016 at 8:08pm and is filed under [Canada](#), [Civil Liberties](#), [General](#), [Police](#), [Psychology/Psychiatry](#), [Solidarity](#).