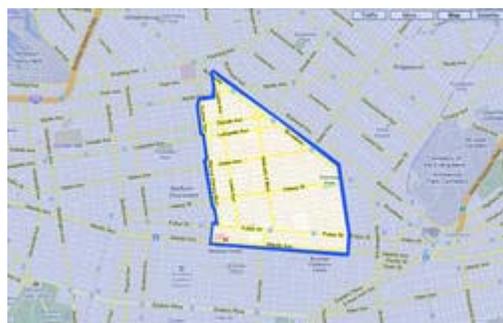


# The NYPD Tapes: Inside Bed-Stuy's 81st Precinct

By **Graham Rayman**

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**Chad Griffith**



At 1.7 square miles, the 81st Precinct in Bedford-Stuyvesant is one of the smallest in the city, but the densely populated neighborhood is also a rough place to work. One cop there recently told us, "It keeps you from getting bored is about all you can say."

**C.S. Muncy**



Two years ago, a police officer in a Brooklyn precinct became gravely concerned about how the public was being served. To document his concerns, he began carrying around a digital sound recorder, secretly recording his colleagues and superiors.

He recorded precinct roll calls. He recorded his precinct commander and other supervisors. He recorded street encounters. He recorded small talk and stationhouse banter. In all, he surreptitiously collected hundreds of hours of cops talking about their jobs.

Made without the knowledge or approval of the NYPD, the tapes—made between June 1, 2008, and October 31, 2009, in the 81st Precinct in Bedford-Stuyvesant and obtained exclusively by the *Voice*—provide an unprecedented portrait of what it's like to work as a cop in this city.

They reveal that precinct bosses threaten street cops if they don't make their quotas of arrests and stop-and-frisks, but also tell them not to take certain robbery reports in order to manipulate crime statistics. The tapes also refer to command officers calling crime victims directly to intimidate them about their complaints.

As a result, the tapes show, the rank-and-file NYPD street cop experiences enormous pressure in a strange catch-22: He or she is expected to maintain high "activity"—including stop-and-frisks—but, paradoxically, to record fewer actual crimes.

This pressure was accompanied by paranoia—from the precinct commander to the lieutenants to the sergeants to the line officers—of violating any of the seemingly endless bureaucratic rules and regulations that would bring in outside supervision.

The tapes also reveal the locker-room environment at the precinct. On a recording made in September, the subject being discussed at roll call is stationhouse graffiti (done by the cops themselves) and something called "cocking the memo book," a practical joke in which officers draw penises in each other's daily notebooks.



Clipboards containing the all-important statistics and crime reports line a wall inside Brooklyn's 81st Precinct stationhouse. On a recent evening, patrol officers with the 81st made a routine traffic stop.

C.S. Muncy



C.S. Muncy



C.S. Muncy



The intersection of Chauncey and Ralph in the 81st Precinct is often the site of police attention.

"As far as the defacing of department property—all right, the shit on the side of the building . . . and on people's lockers, and drawing penises in people's memo books, and whatever else is going on—just knock it off, all right?" a Sergeant A. can be heard saying. "If the wrong person sees this stuff coming in here, then IAB [the Internal Affairs Bureau] is going to be all over this place, all right? . . . You want to draw penises, draw them in your own memo book. . . And don't actually draw on the wall." He then adds that just before an inspection, a supervisor had to walk around the stationhouse and paint over all the graffiti.

The *Voice* is releasing portions of the tapes in batches on our website, [villagevoice.com](http://villagevoice.com), and is also publishing several stories to deal with the issues that the recordings present. In this week's installment, we look at the roll calls at the Bed-Stuy precinct and the conflicting instructions given to street cops, who must look busy at all times, while actually suppressing crime reports. (Repeated attempts to get an official response from the police department have been met by silence.)

The *Voice* obtained the digital audio recordings from Police Officer Adrian Schoolcraft, an eight-year veteran of the NYPD. (The *Voice* has identified the NYPD bosses speaking at roll calls, but is using initials—different from their names—for most of them.)

Schoolcraft first made headlines in February, when the *Daily News* reported that he was speaking out about manipulation of crime reports at the 81st. His complaints, the *Daily News* wrote, had sparked an investigation that had put even the precinct's commander, Deputy Inspector Steven Mauriello, under suspicion. Those stories, however, gave no indication that Schoolcraft was also in possession of the remarkable audiotapes.

Schoolcraft tells the *Voice* he carried the audio recorder initially to protect himself from the civilian complaints that can result from street encounters. But then he began to document things happening in the precinct that bothered him. After he ran afoul of precinct politics, he recorded what he viewed as retaliation by his bosses.

"How else would you present the fraud being committed on the public?" he asks.

ON JANUARY 28, 2009, PATROL OFFICERS on the evening tour at the 81st Precinct gathered in the utilitarian muster room at the 30 Ralph Avenue stationhouse. They



Police Officer Adrian Schoolcraft

Details:

***Follow continuing coverage of the NYPD Tapes here at our [Runnin' Scared](#) blog.***

*The Voice presents excerpts from "The NYPD Tapes: Inside Bed-Stuy's 81st Precinct," from precinct roll calls between June 1, 2008 and Oct. 31, 2009.*

## **JANUARY 28, 2009**

### **"How Many Superstars and How Many Losers Do You Have"**

In this excerpt, the 81st Precinct commander, a lieutenant and a sergeant talk about the constant pressure from bosses, and push cops to "get their numbers."

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## **JUNE 12, 2008**

### **"The Hounds are Coming"**

Precinct supervisors talk about a specific "numbers" quota, warn

stood on white floors in ranks. The blue-and-white walls are decorated with old Wanted posters, two glass cupboards with crime maps, posters with warnings about sexual harassment and retaliation, and a flat-screen television. There are two tables, three chairs, and a podium used by supervisors to address the cops.

A roll call is the key moment in the workday of any police officer. Think *Hill Street Blues* and "Let's be careful out there." The sergeants, lieutenants, and, sometimes, the precinct commander relay orders to the rank-and-file. The officers are told about recent crimes and trouble spots in the neighborhood. Officers are subject to inspection and are given training. The language, naturally, is a mix of quasi-military jargon, street slang, rough epithets, and a fair bit of gallows humor—in other words, cop-speak.

The 81st Precinct covers Bedford-Stuyvesant, a densely populated, multiracial patchwork of low-income areas, public housing projects, and blocks going through gentrification. At just 1.7 square miles, Bed-Stuy is geographically small, but a place that, according to the tapes, the officers view as a "heavy precinct."

"You're not working in Midtown Manhattan, where people are walking around, smiling and being happy," a lieutenant tells officers in a November 1, 2008, roll call. "You're working in Bed-Stuy, where everyone's probably got a warrant."

On this particular day, the precinct commander, Deputy Inspector Steven Mauriello, a Lieutenant B., and a Sergeant C. are leading the session.

After attendance has been taken and assignments handed out, Mauriello, a hard-charging boss given to colorful language, exhorts the officers to disperse crowds away from certain buildings, and stop and question people.

"Listen, if it's micromanaging, it's micromanaging," he says. "Just do your job. If you see a large crowd, get out [of your car]. Just do what you gotta do. You know them, you stop them. Go somewhere else. Stay off the radar."

Mauriello then relates how a three-star chief, Michael Scagnelli, closely questioned him on the number of tickets the officers write, and warns them to make their numbers. "He says, 'How many superstars and how many losers do you have?' " Mauriello says. "And then he goes down and says, 'How many summonses does your squad write?' I

cops to pick up their numbers, or else, and complain about outside inspections.

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### **SEPTEMBER 1, 2009** **"Just Knock It Off, All Right? We're Adults"**

In this roll call, a supervisor tells officers to stop drawing penises in each other's memo books and drawing graffiti on the walls. There's also an extended speech on the virtues of personal hygiene.

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### **SEPTEMBER 26, 2009** **"This Is Crunch Time"**

The pressure for "numbers" (summonses, arrests, stop and frisks and community visits) was worst at the end of each month and the end of each quarter because that's when individual officers had to file their activity reports. In other words, stay away from cops after the 25th of the month.

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### **OCTOBER 4, 2009** **"It's Not About Squashing Numbers"**

In this roll call, precinct supervisors order officers to be skeptical about robbery victims, and tell the cops that the precinct commander and two aides call victims to question them about their complaints.

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want everyone to step up and be accountable and work. Don't get caught out there."

He then mentions the patrol borough commander, Marino, who is apparently examining the "activity" of every cop in the 10 precincts he oversees. "If you don't want to work, then, you know what, just do the old go-through-the-motions and get your numbers anyway," he says. "He's taking this very seriously, looking at everyone's evaluations. And he's yelling at every CO [commanding officer] about 'Who gave this guy points?' or 'This girl's no good.' "

Sergeant C. then says the cops should be able to hit their numbers' targets. "I told you guys last month: They are looking at these numbers, and people are going to get moved," he says. "It ain't about losing your job. They can make your job real uncomfortable, and we all know what that means."

Next, Lieutenant B. cites the declining numbers of officers in the department. "A lot of people are leaving the job," he says. "They aren't getting new recruits. Patrol is not getting new people. It's more accountability, it's less people. They got this catchphrase, 'Do more with less,' right? And they're looking at the numbers."

He adds that the top bosses are pressuring the precinct commander, who is pressuring his supervisors, who then have to pressure the cops.

"Unfortunately, at this level in your career, you're on the lowest level, so you're going to get some orders that you may not like," he says. "You're gonna get instructions. You're gonna get disciplinary action. You gotta just pick up your work. I don't wanna get my ass chewed out, in straight words. I'm sick of getting yelled at."

**THE SAME THEMES—of shit** rolling downhill, and that constant pressure to do more with less—appear again and again throughout the tapes dating back to June 1, 2008.

Bosses spend more time in the roll calls haranguing the officers for "activity"—or "paying the rent," as it was known—than anything else. In other words, writing summonses, doing stop-and-frisks (known as "250s"), doing community visits, and making arrests. Or else.

Officers were under constant pressure to keep those numbers high to prove that they were doing their jobs, even when there was little justification for it. Like a drumbeat, this mandate was hammered home again and again in

**OCTOBER 12, 2009**

**"How Do We Know This Guy Really Got Robbed?"**

Police officers are supposed to take crime complaints, but in this roll call, a sergeant tells cops not to take robbery complaints if the victim won't immediately return to speak with detectives. She questions the victim's motives, too.

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almost every roll call.

"Again, it's all about the numbers," a Sergeant D. tells his officers on October 18, 2009.

Command often set up special summons duty to artificially increase the numbers of tickets issued. On December 13, 2008, there was this from a Sergeant E.: "In order to increase the amount of C summonses patrol is writing, they are going to try to, when they can, put out a quality-of-life auto. Your goal is to write C summonses, all right?"

A "C summons" requires a warrant check and covers a wide range of offenses, like public drinking, disorderly conduct, littering, blocking the sidewalk, and graffiti. An "A summons" is for illegal parking, and a "B summons" is for

traffic violations like running a red light or using a cell phone while driving.

Certainly, there's enforcement value to issuing tickets and stopping people on the street, but the true value of this "activity," the tapes indicate, was that it offered proof that the precinct commander and his officers were doing their jobs. With those numbers, the precinct boss could go to police headquarters with ammunition. Low numbers meant criticism and demotion; high numbers meant praise and promotion.

The NYPD has always claimed that there are no specific numerical targets or quotas. Most recently, police spokesman Paul Browne denied the existence of quotas in early March, but said that "police officers, like others who receive compensation, are provided productivity goals, and they are expected to work."

The tapes show, however, that, of course, quotas exist.

On June 12, 2008, Lieutenant B. relayed the summons target: "The XO [second-in-command] was in the other day. He actually laid down a number. He wants at least three seat belts, one cell phone, and 11 others. All right, so if I was on patrol, I would be sure to get three seat belts, one cell phone, and 11 others.

"Pick it up a lot, if you have to," he says. "The CO gave me some names. I spoke to you."

While the NYPD can set "productivity targets," the department cannot tie those targets to disciplinary action: "What turns it into an illegal quota is when there is a punishment attached to not achieving, like a transfer or loss of assignment," says Al O'Leary, a spokesman for the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association.

In the 81st Precinct, however, the tapes indicate that "activity" was routinely tied to direct and implied threats of discipline. The message, relayed down the chain from headquarters, is repeated over and over again in the roll calls by the precinct commander, the lieutenants, and the sergeants.

On October 28, 2008, for example, the precinct commander, Mauriello, tells officers he will change their shifts if they don't make their numbers: "If I hear about disgruntled people moaning about getting thrown off their tours, it is what it is. Mess up, bring heat on the precinct—you know what, I'll give you tough love, but it doesn't mean you can't work your way back into good graces and get

back to the detail and platoon you want."

He adds: "If you don't work, and I get the same names back again, I'm moving you. You're going to go to another platoon. I'm done. I don't want to be embarrassed no more."

On July 15, 2008, he says, "I don't want to see anyone get hurt. This job is all about hurting. Someone has to go. Step on a landmine, someone has to get hurt."

On December 8, 2008, he excoriates officers who failed to write enough tickets for double-parking, running red lights, and disorderly conduct, and who failed to stop-and-frisk enough people.

"I see eight fucking summonses for a 20-day period or a month," he says. "If you mess up, how the hell do you want me to do the right thing by you? You come in, five parkers, three A's, no C's, and the only 250 you do is when I force you to do overtime? I mean it's a two-way street out here."

Later, he adds, "In the end, I hate to say it—you need me more than I need you because I'm what separates the wolves from coming in here and chewing on your bones."

In the same roll call, Sergeant C. adds: "When I tell you to get your activity up, it's for a reason, because they are looking to move people, and he's serious. . . . There's people in here that may not be here next month."

The pressure is the worst at the end of the month and at the end of every quarter, because that's when the precinct has to file activity reports on each officer with the borough command and police headquarters. (Put another way: If you want to avoid getting a ticket, stay away from police officers during the last few days of the month, when the pressure for numbers is the highest.)

From the tapes, it's not hard to imagine an officer desperately driving to the precinct, looking for someone smoking pot on a stoop or double-parking to fill some gap in their productivity.

In a roll call from September 26, a Sergeant F. notes that the quarter is coming to an end, and a deadline is nearing for applying to take the sergeants' exam. "If your activity's been down, the last quarter is a good time to bring it up, because that's when your evaluation is going to be done," he says. "We all know this job is, 'What have you done for me lately?'"

He goes on to lay on the pressure for more numbers. "This is crunch time," he says. "This is Game Seven of the World Series, the bases are loaded, and you're at bat right now. . . . It's all a game, ladies and gentlemen. We do what we're supposed to, the negative attention goes somewhere else. That's what we want."

And take August 31, 2009. Sergeant Rogers tells his officers, "Today is the last day of the month. Get what you need to get."

Or as Sergeant F. says just a few days before that: "It's the 26th. If you don't have your activity, it would be a really good time to get it. . . . If I don't have to hear about it from a white shirt [a superior officer], that's the name of the game."

**IT'S ALSO CLEAR FROM THE** recordings that supervisors viewed the constant pressure for numbers as an annoyance, busy work to fill the demand from downtown. "We had a shooting on midnight on Chauncey, so do some community visits, C summonses over there, the usual bullshit," Sergeant A. says in an August 22, 2009, roll call.

The obsession with statistics at police headquarters bleeds out into the borough commands as well. In early 2009, the Brooklyn North patrol command started holding its own CompStat meetings, reviewing everything from crime stats to the number of tickets written by each officer to sick reports.

The move was seen in the precinct as yet another layer of unnecessary oversight. "This job is just getting tighter and tighter with accountability," Lieutenant B. says on January 13, 2009. "So there are certain things I'd like to get away with, but I can't anymore. It just goes down the line and, eventually, it falls on you."

Eight days later, he offers his view of these so-called Boro Stat meetings, on January 21, 2009: "Robbery spikes, crime spikes, on and on and on. It's a lot of horseshit I gotta sit through, but it's accountability, all right?"

As a result of this outside pressure, the precinct was constantly worried about violating bureaucratic rules that would result in even more scrutiny, and result in Command Disciplines (CDs), a penalty that could carry a loss of vacation days.

Take one example: A sergeant spends a roll call upbraiding his officers for not having the proper equipment. "Nobody's got your whistle holder, and half of you don't have your whistle," he says. "That's unacceptable. When I fall down the mine shaft, I'm the only one that's going to be able to call for help. The rest of you are going to have to fire off your gun, and they'll give you a CD for that."

The officers in Bed-Stuy viewed a unit called Brooklyn North Inspections with a particular measure of contempt. Inspections, known as "the hounds," would slip into the precinct, look for rules violations, and then hit officers with CDs.

"Inspections—they pull you over like a perp, and you know it's disrespectful to us, but this is what they're doing," Lieutenant B. says on June 12, 2008. "So Inspections is not really our friend. Let's leave it at that."

On November 12, 2008: "Brooklyn North Inspections is not our friend. I'm just going to lay it out there right on the line," he says. "If you see they're here, they're probably here to hurt someone."

Hurting someone means issuing a CD for, say, not having your shirt tucked in, or reading the newspaper on duty. In one instance, in October 2008, four officers were given CDs for leaving the precinct to have lunch. (81st Precinct officers seemed to believe there weren't any decent restaurants in the precinct itself.)

During a roll call on October 30, 2008, Sergeant C. upbraids the officers for their appearance. "It keeps the hounds off," he says, adding, "That includes smirks. One smirk cost the whole borough 13 CDs last week."

**ONE OF THE MOST BASIC THINGS** a police officer does is take crime complaints from victims. But that very simple edict evolved into something substantially different in the 81st Precinct.

Usually, an officer arrives at a crime scene and begins taking information. Then, either on the scene or at the precinct, the officer fills out a report known as a "61" and presents it to the desk officer, a sergeant, for his signature.

After the sergeant classifies the crime, the 61 is then entered into a computer system, making it official, and it's passed on to the detective squad for investigation. Police veterans say their standard was always, "Refer the complaint, not the complainant." In other words, if someone wants to make a report, you take it, and let the squad check it out. It was the squad's job to determine whether the complainant's story was worth checking further.

In the 81st Precinct, that traditional discretion of a street cop was being taken away from them, the tapes indicate. There was constant second-guessing and questioning of crime complaints and crime victims before cases were ever entered into the computer. The message to street cops was to exercise extreme skepticism with crime victims—unless you didn't mind getting yelled at.

Officers were told that, unlike in the past, their bosses would need to be present at the scene of a possible robbery, for example, to look over their shoulders. "There are certain jobs that I must be present on," Sergeant C. says on October 13, 2008. "If I'm not present, you gotta call me up. You can't come in here with a robbery, and I don't know anything about it."

Rank-and-file cops don't like the change, which is reflected on Internet bulletin boards, where they leave messages like this recent posting: "It used to be that a radio car turned out and two partners went from job to job making decisions, applying common (uncommon) sense to solve problems," an officer writes. "A Sgt. or Lt. was not called to the scene unless there was a death or serious incident. Patrol officers now have been indoctrinated that they are not qualified to make any decisions about anything."

During a September 12, 2009, roll call, a fellow cop tells Schoolcraft: "A lot of 61s—if it's a robbery, they'll make it a petty larceny. I saw a 61, at T/P/O [time and place of occurrence], a civilian punched in the face, menaced with a gun, and his wallet was removed, and they wrote 'lost property.' "

The practice of downgrading crimes has been the NYPD's scandal-in-waiting for years. The NYPD claims that downgrading happens only rarely, but in the course of reporting this story, the *Voice* was told anecdotally of burglaries rejected if the victim didn't have receipts for the items stolen; of felony thefts turned into misdemeanor thefts by lowballing the value of the property; of robberies turned into assaults; of assaults turned into harassments.

How widespread that kind of thing was in the 81st Precinct is unclear just from the recordings, but Schoolcraft claims it was common. Of course, caution in taking a complaint is prudent. But the fact that the precinct commander discourages the taking of robbery complaints has to influence other decisions down the chain.

So officers get marching orders like the following, which was recorded October 4: "If it's a little old lady, and I got my bag stolen, then she's probably telling the truth, all right?" Sergeant D. says. "If it's some young guy who looks strong and healthy and can maybe defend himself, and he got yoked up, and he's not injured, he's perfectly fine—question that. It's not about squashing numbers. You all know if it is what it is—if it smells like a rotten fish—then that's what it is. But question it. On the burglaries as well."

**LAST OCTOBER 11, TWO PATROL** officers made a terrible mistake: They took a robbery complaint. A man reported that some suspects had forcibly taken his cell phone, but the victim didn't want to immediately accompany officers to the precinct to talk to the detective squad. The victim, the tapes show, told the officers he didn't want to go back with them because he didn't want to be seen getting into a marked police car.

The next day, Mauriello took out his anger on what the officers had done on their sergeant, the tapes show. And she, in turn, took it out on the officers.

"OK, so he [Mauriello] was flippin' on me yesterday because they wrote a 61, and the guy talking about he not coming in to speak to nobody," says a Sergeant G. in the October 12 roll call. "He don't want nobody see him getting in the car."

While one of the core duties of a police officer is to take crime complaints, the 81st Precinct had a controversial policy that held that if a victim refused to come to the stationhouse and speak to the detective squad, officers should refuse to take the complaint.

"You know, we be popping up with these robberies out of nowhere, or whatever," Sergeant G. tells her officers in the roll call. "If the complainant does not want to go back and speak to the squad, then there is no 61 taken. That's it. They have to go back and speak to the squad."

In effect, under this policy, a robbery complaint would be rejected if the victim was unable to come to the stationhouse. It didn't matter if a victim was unable to come down because he or she had to work or take care of kids. Perhaps not coincidentally, that would also be one less robbery to count against the precinct's crime statistics.

The sergeant went on to suggest that the victim was lying: "How do we know this guy really got robbed?" she asked. "He said he had no description. Sometimes they just want a complaint number—you know what I'm saying?—so if he don't wanna come back and talk to the squad, then that's it."

This policy was mentioned repeatedly starting last August. The sergeant repeated the directive on October 24. "If the complainant says, 'I don't want to go to the squad, I don't want to go to the squad,' then there's no 61, right?" she says. "We not going to take it, and then they say they're going to come in later on, and then the squad speaks to them and usually they don't want to come in."

She repeats the admonition again on October 27, and this time, a Lieutenant K. adds, "Don't take that report. That's it. It's over."

There's no reference to this policy in the NYPD Patrol Guide, the department bible of practices and procedures.

Retired detectives tell the *Voice* that the practice is highly questionable: "I've never heard of something like that," says Greg Modica, who retired in 2002 as a Detective First Grade after 20 years with the Manhattan Robbery Squad. "And I don't think the commissioner would care for it. If the complainant couldn't come in on the spot, patrol would take the complaint, turn it over to us, and we'd follow up.

"If the victim can't come in for some reason—maybe they have a babysitter at home or they have to work—you take the report and tell them the detectives will make an appointment to see them," he adds.

Modica and other ex-detectives say it simply isn't patrol's job to determine whether or not a victim is lying. Their job is merely to take the report and turn it over to the detective squad.

"You might get a feeling on the street, but that doesn't mean you don't take it," he says. "It's the detective's job to determine that. And anyway, [a false report] didn't happen that many times.

Robbery is a very serious crime."

**ALL OF WHICH BRINGS UP** something known as a "callback"—which occurs when an officer or a detective makes a follow-up call to a crime victim, usually when he needs another piece of information or has to check his information. That's the traditional definition.

In the 81st Precinct, it meant something substantially different, Schoolcraft says. It meant calling a crime victim and questioning them closely on the details of their complaint with an eye toward downgrading it or scrapping it.

"It's, 'Are you sure you want to do this?' " Schoolcraft says, describing the practice. "Sometimes, it's, 'Have you ever been arrested?' or 'We're going to know if you're lying or not.' "

Mauriello himself and at least two of his lieutenants were doing their own callbacks.

Mauriello's involvement in callbacks is confirmed in an October 4, 2009, roll call, during which Lieutenant K. tells the officers, "Whether it's CO, Lieutenant L., or [Sergeant] M., they always do callbacks. So a lot of time, we get early information and they do callbacks."

"And then we look silly," Sergeant D. adds. "A woman says, 'Hey, my boyfriend stole my phone.' He didn't really steal the phone. It's his phone, and he was taking it. Did he snatch it out of her hand? Yeah. Is it a grand larceny? No, because I'm telling you right now the D.A. is not going to entertain that."

Modica and other retired detectives say they're stunned that a precinct commander and his aides would be calling crime victims directly and asking about their complaints. "I don't think he should be doing it," Modica says. "It's the detectives' job. If the captain comes up and says, 'It's not a robbery,' I say, 'That's OK, but we have a case, and it's up to us to investigate it now.' It makes you wonder whether they are doing it to cut down on statistics."

It's also unclear why a patrol sergeant would worry about what a prosecutor would do with a complaint, unless he was looking for a reason to reject it before it reached the prosecutor's desk.

"Whether a district attorney decides to take a case or not is not something for a precinct supervisor to worry about," says John Eterno, a retired NYPD captain who is now a professor of criminal justice at Molloy College. "He is making a judgment call based on what he thinks the D.A. will do. But the person made a complaint. That complaint needs to be taken."

**THE NYPD HAS A UNIT THAT** audits precinct crime stats, known as the Quality Assurance Division (QAD). The unit operates something like Internal Affairs, but is actually attached to the management and planning office.

On October 7, Schoolcraft was ordered downtown by QAD for a nearly-three-hour formal, on-the-record interview with an inspector, a lieutenant, and three sergeants.

Schoolcraft was advised that he could have an attorney represent him in the meeting, but he chose not to. It's also important to note that if he had lied during the interview, he could have been brought up on department or criminal charges. Plus, he was laying his career on the line by discussing misconduct he claimed to witness. He also supplied documentation of his claims. And the interview took place prior to his controversial suspension, and months before he spoke to the media. In short, he had little to gain and a lot to lose by speaking with the investigators.

Once again, Schoolcraft had brought along his audio recorder, and recorded the meeting without the knowledge of the others in the room. During the meeting, the QAD officers make some interesting off-handed observations about the extent of crime statistic manipulation in the precincts.

After a long description of how he does investigations, one of the supervisors says, "You know, I've been doing this over eight years. I've seen a lot. The lengths people will go to try not to take a report, or not take a report for a seven major [crime]. So nothing surprises me anymore."

The supervisor notes such instances can be criminal [falsification of business records], but district attorneys typically "don't want to touch" cases of officers manipulating statistics. "They'll give it back to the department to handle it internally," he says.

He goes on to note that, yes, precincts do downgrade reports: "We look at grand larceny because, as you know, they don't want to take the robbery," he says. "They punch a lady in the face, and they took her pocketbook, but they don't want to take that robbery, so they'll make that a grand larceny."

Schoolcraft tells the QAD officers that sergeants and lieutenants were berated for taking major crime reports. "Just about all of them, if they work patrol," he says. "When they come out, they say, 'It is what it is. It was a robbery—what could I do about it?'"

During the meeting, Schoolcraft provides documentation on an incident from December 5, 2008, that was initially taken as an attempted robbery—a teen reported that he was attacked by a gang of thugs who beat him and tried to take his portable video game—and later downgraded by a sergeant to an misdemeanor assault.

In the meeting, the QAD officers check their computer files and find that, indeed, the incident was classified as a misdemeanor assault.

Schoolcraft also provides documents from a June 29, 2009, auto theft report, in which the victim came in to obtain the report number, but no report existed. A sergeant told Schoolcraft to do a new report.

Schoolcraft tells the QAD officers that Mauriello came to the desk and told him, "I'm not taking this. Have the guy come in. I've gotta talk to him."

A couple of days later, the man arrived and was ushered into Mauriello's office. Mauriello interrogated the victim and his cousin. "There was yelling," Schoolcraft says. "They were in there for about 40 minutes. The cousin stormed out of the office yelling and screaming."

The stolen car complaint became an unlawful use of a motor vehicle, Schoolcraft said.

In another incident, an elderly man walked in off the street to report that someone had broken the lock on the cash box in his apartment and had stolen \$22,000. When he reported the incident at another precinct, he was told that it was a "civil matter" and to call 3-1-1, the city's complaint hotline.

The desk sergeant told Schoolcraft to send the victim back to the other precinct because he was "loopy."

The *Voice* asked a retired detective about this incident. If it had been handled properly, he replied,

someone would have checked his apartment for signs of a burglary. "Even if they don't believe the guy, it's still a crime," the ex-detective says. "You take the report. The detectives investigate it. They determine whether he was lying."

Among many other incidents Schoolcraft discussed were:

\* A man walked in to report that he was choked unconscious and robbed of his wallet. He left with a slip that would allow him to renew his driver's license. Then, a detective came down and said, "If that guy comes back, don't let him upstairs."

\* Another downgraded robbery from October 23, 2008: Two officers responded to a robbery and found a guy beaten up and bleeding. A lieutenant responded to the scene and said, "We can't take this robbery." It came in as a lost property.

Schoolcraft says he contacted the victim, who sent him a written statement detailing what had happened.

By the end of the meeting, Schoolcraft seems to have their attention. "I'm not looking to burn anyone," he tells the investigators. "What this is doing is it's messing with the officers. They're losing track of what's real and what's not real, what their duties are and what their duties aren't."

The investigators are heard pledging a thorough examination of the precinct's crime reports. "We're very serious about this, and we will do a thorough investigation," an Inspector H. says. "That, I can promise you." Later, he adds, "Personally, I appreciate you coming in and bringing this to our attention. I know it's not an easy thing to do."

After the meeting ends, a supervisor makes a couple of other off-handed comments to Schoolcraft, noting that the pressure to artificially lower crime statistics is fueled by the bosses downtown. "The mayor's looking for it, the police commissioner's looking for it . . . every commanding officer wants to show it," he says. "So there's motivation not to classify the reports for the seven major crimes. Sometimes, people get agendas and try to do what they can to avoid taking the seven major crimes."

It is unclear what direction the QAD investigation has headed, but a law enforcement source assured the *Voice* that it is ongoing. The source declined to detail any findings.

Curiously, after questions were raised earlier this year about the 81st Precinct statistics, crime there jumped by 13 percent.

That increase has remained steady, fueled chiefly by a huge 76 percent jump in felony assaults. That jump in assaults is far ahead of the citywide increase of 4.6 percent.

In the 81st Precinct, at least, it appears that assaults are no longer being downgraded since Schoolcraft blew the whistle.

Schoolcraft decided to give the tapes to the *Voice* out of frustration that his attempts to report questionable activities went largely ignored within the NYPD. Instead of the department acting on his complaints, he says, he was subjected to retaliation by precinct and borough superiors.

Three weeks after his meeting with QAD investigators, on October 31, Schoolcraft felt sick and went home from work. Hours later, a dozen police supervisors came to his house and demanded that he

return to work. He declined, on health grounds. Eventually, Deputy Chief Michael Marino, the commander of Patrol Borough Brooklyn North, which covers 10 precincts, ordered that Schoolcraft be dragged from his apartment in handcuffs and forcibly placed in a Queens mental ward for six days.

Today, he lives upstate, north of Albany, and is still hoping that the department will take his concerns seriously.

**THE VOICE SHOWED TRANSCRIPTS OF** the roll calls to Eterno, the Molloy College professor who has, in the past, testified for the NYPD as an expert witness, and Eli Silverman, a John Jay College professor who wrote a 1999 book on NYPD crime fighting strategies that was well received in the department.

Earlier this year, Eterno and Silverman published a survey of retired NYPD supervisors, more than 100 of whom said the intense pressure to show crime declines led to manipulation of crime statistics. (That survey was roundly attacked by the NYPD, the mayor's office, and some commentators.)

"These tapes are an independent source of data that supports just about everything we found," Eterno said, speaking for both professors. "You're seeing relentless pressure, questionable activities, unethical manipulation of statistics. We've lost the understanding that policing is not just about crime numbers, it's about service. And they don't feel like they're on the same team. They are fighting each other. It's, 'How do I get through this tour, making a number, without rocking the boat?' "

"The pressure comes from the commanding officer, because of CompStat, and you're seeing the sergeants and lieutenants trying to deal with it and translate it into actionable terms."

*And the police said Adrian Schoolcraft was crazy.*

*They whisked him off for psychiatric evaluation against his will. But the tapes reveal crazy behavior by the bosses of the nation's largest police force.*

*In the next "NYPD Tapes" article, the Voice will examine the effects of these behaviors on the community—particularly the campaign by the precinct commander to "clear" corners and buildings in the precinct, as well as staffing shortages, why stop-and-frisk numbers have skyrocketed, and how training requirements were fudged.*

*And, in another installment, we'll look at what happened to the whistleblower himself, Schoolcraft, when he dared to question what was going on around him.*

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Follow continuing coverage of the NYPD Tapes here at our [Runnin' Scared blog](#).