



# Evolution of Public Opinion on Policing in the United States: A Century-Long Perspective

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**Abstract:** *The origins of American policing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, influenced by transformative policing philosophies emerging from the United Kingdom, laid the groundwork for the evolution of law enforcement amidst various social and political challenges. While police organizations have adapted over time to changing circumstances, public opinion on policing purportedly remains consistent with the original role and purpose of law enforcement. Central to the investigation is an examination of Sir Robert Peel's original principles of policing and their relevance to modern-day public opinion. Hypothesizing that while specific aspects of policing may have shifted, fundamental perceptions of law enforcement's role and purpose have remained relatively stable.*

**Keywords:** *American policing, Sir Robert Peel, policing principles, police and community engagement*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Numerous scholars have attempted to link the origins of American policing. It can be said that the origins began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century at the time the United Kingdom was transforming its policing philosophies. Throughout history, the United States has gone through many social and political challenges, which helped shape police reform. Consequently, police organizations have changed over time as police officer's duties and styles continue to evolve as new challenges arise.

This paper examines public opinion on American policing by considering policing principles and standards enacted in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Since the research includes a survey of a small population of local area college students, it provides an opportunity to see how certain police principles and standards, which have been in place since the 19<sup>th</sup> Century still currently prove relevant in forming or maintaining public opinion on policing.

## 2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROBLEM

Despite significant changes in social conditions within the United States over the past century, public opinion on policing has purportedly remained consistent with the original role and purpose of law enforcement. Understanding the factors contributing to this perceived consistency is essential for comprehending the enduring perceptions of policing within society. The purpose of this research is to examine the purported consistency of public opinion on policing through the past century in the United States. By investigating the historical evolution of the factors influencing public attitudes toward law enforcement, this study aims to provide insights into why perceptions of policing have seemingly remained unchanged despite societal transformations.

It is not known how, or to what extent Sir Robert Peel's original principles of policing apply to public perception of modern-day policing. How has public opinion on policing evolved over the past century in the United States, and what factors contribute to the perceived consistency with law enforcement's original role and purpose? It is hypothesized that while there have been shifts in societal attitudes towards specific aspects of policing over time, such as technology adoption, community engagement strategies, and accountability measures, the fundamental perceptions of law enforcement's role and purpose have remained relatively stable. Factors contributing to this consistency may include cultural norms, historical legacies, media representations, and institutional structures within the criminal justice system.

### 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

In 1829, the British Home Secretary, Sir Robert Peel, passed the Metropolitan Police Act creating the first British police force setting the stage for civil policing in today's modern world. Best known for his Peelian Principles, Peel created a set of standards over time which guided the London Metropolitan police department:

- The police must be stable, efficient and organized along military lines;
- The police must be under government control;
- The absence of crime will best prove the efficiency of police;
- The distribution of crime news is essential;
- The deployment of police strength both by time and area is essential;
- No quality is more indispensable to a policeman than perfect command of temper; a quiet, determined manner has more effect than violent action;
- Good appearance commands respect;
- The securing and training of proper persons is at the root of efficiency;
- Public security demands that every police officer be given a number;
- Police headquarters should be centrally located and easily accessible to the people;
- Policemen should be hired on a probationary basis; and
- Police records are necessary to the correct distribution of police strength (Burke, et al., 2019).

Included with such guidelines, Peel established a standard of principles to guide police activities and behavior:

- The basic mission for which the police exist is to prevent crime and disorder.
- The ability of the police to perform their duties is dependent upon public approval of police actions.
- Police must secure the willing co-operation of the public in voluntary observance of the law to be able to secure and maintain the respect of the public.
- The degree of co-operation of the public that can be secured diminishes proportionately to the necessity of the use of physical force.
- Police seek and preserve public favor not by catering to public opinion but by constantly demonstrating absolute impartial service to the law.
- Police use physical force to the extent necessary to secure observance of the law or to restore order only when the exercise of persuasion, advice and warning is found to be insufficient.
- Police, at all times, should maintain a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and the public are the police.
- Police should always direct their action strictly towards their functions and never appear to usurp the powers of the judiciary.
- The test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder, not the visible evidence of police action in dealing with it (LEAP, n.d.).

These standards and principles are considered by many to be the foundation of today's community policing and how local police organizational structures. These principles described the duties of local law enforcement and included recommendations for all local law enforcement to follow. Along with policing concepts, many other ideas used in early America included common law, individual rights, and the court systems we still use today.

The three core ideas of policing set out by Peel were first to prevent crime – not catching criminals (LEAP, n.d.). Continuing, police efficiency should be evaluated by their crime statistics and not their arrest statistics. Peel's second core idea was the key to reducing and preventing crime was through

public support (LEAP, n.d.). Crime prevention is the responsibility of every member of the community and if the public supports and trusts the police, crime prevention is more effective. The third core idea was that the police must earn public support by respecting community principles (LEAP, n.d.). This is managed through hard work, reputation, impartiality, use of force restraint, and employing police personnel who understand the community (LEAP, n.d.).

### 3.1. Eras of U.S. Policing Reform

Police accountability can be found in all three branches of the U.S. government. The executive branch relies on the professional leadership over a police agency through leadership and policy compliance. The judicial branch of government deals with police legal issues and creates rules of conducted through the Constitution. The legislative branch of government creates strategies and laws to expand public oversight of the police.

The first era of policing lasted between the 1840s to the 1930s. During this era, policing in the United States [U.S.] was dominated by political control. Policing was decentralized and the police generally served the local politicians (CP, n.d.). In the early 1900s, policing in America was political and ripe with corruption and graft. Political leaders in communities controlled the police and used them for personal gain. Because of these close relationships between the police and the politicians they served, there were problems with graft, brutality, and incompetence as there were no qualifications required for law enforcement officers. Although the role of the police was crime control and order maintenance, police also served at the will of the local politicians and participated in many social programs. Towards the end of the first era, reformers began advocating training and education for police officers. Reformers also wanted to centralize the policing function and remove the police from political influences.

The second era of policing started in the 1930s and lasted into the 1970s. During this reform era, there was a push for police professionalism and for the police role to focus more strictly on crime control (CP, n.d.). This led to a strong growth in aggressive para-military style policing which embedded itself deeply into the policing culture. The police were moving away from being dependent on local political leadership. Chief executives were hired to run a centralized police force. The focus during this period was to remove the police from politics, develop acceptable standards for police personnel, and focus on crime control efforts. However, little progress had been made to control police behavior in the streets.

The third era of policing started in the 1970s and some argue continues into the present day. The main objective of the police role during this era was to place law enforcement professionals on the streets with the focus of crime control and social disorder (CP, n.d.). In the 1950s-1960s, known as the civil rights era, the police were being better managed and deployed to fight crime, but the U.S. Supreme Court came down with multiple rulings on police practices and behavior related to the Constitution and Bill of Rights. During this period, the Courts system became an important instrument of future police reforms and professionalism. Cases such as *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966) and *Mapp v. Ohio* (1961) created additional standards on police conduct. However, there was little discussion to police discretion and excessive use of force. What was still missing from police professional accountability was use of force reporting, citizen complaint procedures, collection of data on officer performance, and officer incident analysis.

Although police were already subjected to civil litigation, 1990s legislation made it possible for the federal government to bring civil suits against the police for abuse. Other legislative efforts, in the form of laws and commissions helped to mitigate police abuse and activities of discrimination. An important strategy for police accountability has been the creation of police oversight committees. These civilian review boards oversee use of force incidents, citizen complaints and executive policies and procedures for the police. Yet, if these committees are politically controlled, they may do little in dealing with management failures of an organization and focus on line officers only for punishment.

Over the past 50 years, police have been attempting new and innovative approaches in fighting crime through crime prevention and problem-solving techniques. As technology has advanced, police have been using intelligence-led data to identify crime patterns. In a team effort, the police have developed partnerships within their communities to use both public and private resources to solve crimes, as well as deterring crimes before they happen. Using the same relationships, existing crime problems are being better addressed using problem-oriented policing strategies.

Past reform efforts to improve police accountability have achieved positive results, but have lacked key elements to root out the underlying causes of police abuse and discrimination. Early reforms focused on police management, but did very little to control police conduct. The U.S. Supreme Court has passed down many rulings to thwart police misconduct, but has no oversight over controlling police misconduct. In addition to this, there has been little research on the supervisory role of line management. Also, prior reforms have had little success towards long-term sustainability.

A fourth era of American policing may be emerging as a result of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Since 9/11 and the advent of the national strategy, local and state law enforcement became recognized as having a critical role in our country's unified effort to make our country safer. Critically, the 9/11 Commission Report (2004) recommended the nation's counterterrorism strategy be changed to attacking terrorists and their organizations; prevent the continued growth of Islamist terrorism; and to protect against and prepare for terrorist attacks. From these recommendations, homeland security evolved further into using all elements of national power at the Federal, State and local levels (363-364). Since 9/11, improvements continue on collaborative information sharing, enhanced technologies and the securing of our nation's border.

The mission of the Department of Homeland Security [DHS] established to lead a unified national effort to secure the country through prevention and deterrence of terrorist acts. The mission continues to include response to national hazards and security of the border (DHS, 2008-2013). Although the national strategy does address the role local police, it is oriented towards federal issues facing the United States (Oliver, 2007).

According to Oliver (2007), the first strategic objective of homeland security is deterrence and detection. The second strategic objective is to reduce our nation's vulnerability to terrorism. The third strategic objective is to minimize the damage and recover from attacks that do occur (p. 106). All agencies must be accountable and responsible in doing their part in the national effort. Also, everyone must allocate resources judiciously and be ready to mobilize when needed (Oliver, 2007).

Police must seek opportunities from adversity, by refraining from wasteful spending and finding multiple uses for limited resources (Oliver, 2007). For example, local burglary detectives conducting a property crime investigation may discover suspicious documents that may be linked to possible money laundering schemes. Looking at this in a national security perspective, this information should be passed onto other agencies, although it may have no relevance to their local investigation.

Local police participation in homeland security does not require any drastic changes in the way a local police department will deliver their services to the community. What has changed is the way police think about their surrounding environment. Also, police must realize that they are participants in a larger national effort and not just contained to their limited jurisdictions. Depending on the local environment and resources, some police departments have established anti-terrorism units because they exist within a higher-threat environment. Other smaller departments which have limited resources tend to train their SWAT units as anti-terrorism tactical units as well.

Over the past few years, the U.S. has witnessed public backlash against the police because of aggressive policing tactics more commonly seen in low-income urban communities. These tactics have been shown to be highly effective in reducing crime, but the tactics have also caused some major damage to the relationships between the police and minorities in this country. In this author's view, the turnaround from community policing towards tactical law enforcement started after September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York City and Pentagon in Washington, D.C. Establishing new Federal law enforcement to combat terrorism and the redistribution of federal funds to local police agencies changed the direction and focus towards policing in the U.S. However, as history tends to repeat itself, we have yet to see the ultimate policing reforms to address these recent conflicts, but it may certainly move the United States into a new fourth era of American policing.

### **3.2. Chain of Command**

Shortly after World War II, state and local law enforcement moved further into the military model. Uniforms, rank structures, rigid policy and militaristic communication systems became the norm. Not surprisingly, this movement followed the advent of combat veterans coming back from the European and Asian-Pacific theaters intending to pursue law enforcement when they ended their enlistments.



Today, the para-military structure in local policing is still strongly supported by management. Depending on the size of a police agency, the policing rank structure still closely resembles the rank structure of the U.S. military.

Why is there a general need for the para-military rank structure? That is easy question to answer: *Life and Death*. The paramilitary model has worked well for law enforcement due to the need for command and control (Cruickshank, 2013). Officers must be able to follow the chain-of-command without hesitation in emergency situations, or simply, someone may die. However, since policing is not the military, the military structure is still beneficial for social authority as well because people tend to respect rank. However, outside of the crime fighting, within an organization, communication is loosened and tends to flow at a much greater ease within the organization than what is typically observed within the military. Police tend to understand that the military model in law enforcement is flexible and appropriate in the right place and at the right time, when needed.

### 3.3. Modern-Day Policing Strategies

Traditional policing generally involves police officers assigned patrol districts based on population groupings. The higher density the population within a given area, the smaller the patrol area. In 2011, the rate of sworn officers was 2.4 per 1,000 inhabitants in the nation (FBI, 2011). In traditional policing, patrol officers serve in mostly a reactive mode, where they respond to calls for service. Research in this area over the past several decades have shown this method of policing to be ineffective in reducing crime. For example, the 1972 *Kansas City Preventative Patrol Experiment* found that routine patrol in marked police cars had no impact on crime rates, nor did the visibility of marked police cars have any impact on the public's feelings of safety (NPI, 1974). In 1981, The *Newark Foot Patrol Experiment* tested the impact of increased foot patrol on crime during a two-year period. This intervention did not have a statistically significant impact on crime, or victimization. However, people did feel safer with the police walking around their neighborhoods.

In traditional policing, police tend to stay in their vehicles unless called out. They tend to focus on criminals and not on any particular social problem. This activity does nothing to change people's perception of the police or crime, nor does it have any relevant impact on crime reduction. So why do it? Some argue that is the way they have always done it, and why break tradition. However, modern policing disagrees with the traditional practices of policing.

Police strategies change over time, as policing in the United States is tied to the ever-changing socio-political environment. Generally, policing in America involves crime prevention, crime detection and the apprehension of criminals (Kappeler, 2006). As the mandates for policing changes, the strategies are adjusted to give the appearance of conformance to the mandate of the times.

Community Policing is a term, but the concept stems back to Sir Robert Peel's *Principles of Policing*. Community policing is an old concept brought out from most academic studies and criminology of the 1970s (NPI, n.d.), to include the *Broken Windows Theory* and the *Routine Activities Theory*. Community policing is a strategy to reduce and/or prevent crime by focusing on the relationship between the police and the community. In doing so, the police and the community work together to solve issues to prevent crime or disorder. This type of activity requires the police to get out of their cars and talk to people that does not involve making a police report.

Community policing goes beyond making arrests. When police are working with their communities to solve the underlying root of a problem, the results generally reduce crime in the long-term. This also increases citizen's perception of the police. In criminology, criminality is viewed as a condition sparked by underlying social conditions which allow for the criminality to occur. Taking away underlying social problems may result in mitigation of crime. Some major barriers to community policing involve changing the organizational structure of the police department, as well as changing the negative perceptions that many people within a community may carry with them. Both require hard and consistent work to implement the change. This does not happen overnight. It can take decades, depending on the community.

According to Manning (1978), strategies assist the police organization in managing its appearance to the criminal element that it is effective in its crime fighting mandate. Once the strategies are developed, the police implement tactics to carry out those strategies effectively. Manning [1978]

argues that the police mandate is fraught with difficulties because many of the mandates are self-created. The police have defined their task in fighting crime in such a way that is impossible to meet the expectations of the public (Kappeler, 2006). For example, police attempt to sell the idea that they are efficient in fighting crime, but in fact, they are not. Police cannot control the social conditions that exist which create the underlying causes of crime.

Problem-oriented policing [POP] is a concept built upon community policing. You cannot implement POP unless there is a solid community policing philosophy within the organization that has been active with the community for a while. Dr. Herman Goldstein first described the problem-oriented approach to policing in a 1979 article he published – and then later published the book *Problem-Oriented Policing* in 1990 (ASU, n.d.). For over 20 years, some police agencies are still trying to figure it out, while others are significantly reducing crime in their communities.

POP is an approach to policing in which policing places a high value on deterrence, rather than enforcement. In concert with resources within a community, the police and the community (stake holders) design strategies which impact the social systems allowing for criminality to thrive. POP carries a commitment to implementation of a strategy, evaluating the results, and reporting those results to other police agencies to help them with similar issues within their communities. The POP strategy is known as the “SARA” model:

- Scanning
- Analysis
- Response
- Assessment (ASU, n.d.)

Using a *Problem-Analysis Triangle*, the problems are better understood resulting in more effective interventions. Any POP effort goes beyond the “quick fix”, such as a prostitution sting, or DWI task force. POP looks deeper. People impacted by the crime are involved with the police to pro-actively solve problems rather than just having the police react to the crime. Most people observe criminality as “crime”, but it is not general. Crime is situational. While the problem analysis triangle helps to analyze problems, situational crime prevention provides a framework for the POP intervention. Situational crime prevention sees crime as an opportunity taken by the offender. Remove the opportunity, the crime never happens (Brooks, 2020). Yes, it sounds much more exciting to make arrests and police get to still do that, but POP is what police managers need to focus on. Managers should involve their officers in POP, or crime will continue the same year after year with the police completely incapable of mitigating it.

We have been observing much anti-policing rhetoric over the past few years because of this very issue. The public has become so dependent on the police to fix community social problems and have been dismayed over the failure of the police to do so. In fact, the Constitution does not allow for the police to be efficient. Otherwise, we would be living in a police state. The negative perceptions of policing today have been largely created by the police in giving false perceptions of their capabilities. Some may also argue that we are seeing a social decline in this country and the police have put themselves in a position as an easy target to blame for many of our social problems.

### 3.4. Policing Methods Using Criminological Theory

There are several criminological theories that attempt to explain criminal behavior. Some of these theories assume that crime itself is simply a part of human nature. Others focus crime on biological, psychological, sociological, economic factors, or some combination thereof. Most of what is done in the criminal justice system is based on criminological theory. Problem-oriented policing strategies derive from a criminological theory called *Routine Activities Theory*.

In lieu of viewing crime with a psychological, biological or social factor influence, Lawrence E. Cohen and Marcus Felson (1979) studied crime as an event, connecting these events between space and time. Their hypothesis posed that the absence of a capable guardian would encourage likely offenders with the goal of committing crimes would look for suitable targets. From this they derived a crime triangle where in the absence of a capable guardian, when an offender comes together with a victim within the same time and space, a crime would occur (Miro, 2014). In short, *Routine Activities*

*Theory* observes criminal activities and their patterns through explanation of changes in crime rate trends, criminal events, distribution and grouping in space and time, rather than offenders' motives. Police administrators use this theory in development of policies and practices aimed at altering the necessary elements that make the existence of a crime possible and thereby preventing it (Miro, 2014).

From the development of the Chicago School of social disorganization, in 1982, James Q. Wilson and George Kelling introduced the *Broken Windows Theory*, which relates to social disorganization (CRBCP, n.d.). Once people conclude that no one cares, or no one is in charge, the community becomes distressed. In turn, social disorder increases, the quality of life goes down, and crime goes up in the neighborhood. In order to combat this type of criminal behavior, the police response to social disorder is to focus their strategies on “order maintenance” (CRBCP, n.d.).

Order maintenance policing involves law enforcement focusing on the little things that impact the quality of life issues within a community. In the 1980s, the New York City Police Department changed its policing strategies to mirror the recommendations given by Wilson and Kelling. Although community policing had been introduced in the 1970s, some would argue that Broken Windows gave birth to the policing strategies adopted to implement community policing. In New York City and with the assistance of the community, the police assured that minor criminal activity was dealt with using zero tolerance policies. One of the cornerstones of the NYPD philosophy was for the people and the police to take the neighborhoods and streets back from the criminal element.

Under Broken Windows, the central function of the police is to aggressively fight crime (CRBCP, n.d.). The more aggressive the police, the more order maintenance and social regulation is achieved. This creates a community dependency on policing as an institution of informal social control. Since the formal institutions of social control have failed the community, a dependence on police exists to enforce “street justice” in order to combat crime and maintain order.

When a community becomes reliant on the police to maintain order and reduce crime, the police are given the open discretion to do so. In turn, the police will venture into the neighborhoods that have the most disorderly behavior. This selective enforcement leads the police to low-income and disorganized neighborhoods to mitigate crime and re-establish social control through their zero tolerance policies. From these aggressive activities, the liberal concepts of community policing are abandoned for crime control models that cause long term negative social relationships between the police and the community they serve.

### **3.5. Police Discretion**

There has been much written about *street justice* and this author finds this topic linked to the use of police discretion. Street justice in law enforcement terms is not the same as one might consider as police deviance. Street justice is informal police activity used to prevent crime and maintain order because the formal process would not be effective or improper under the circumstances. Police discretion is the decision-making power given to the police to decide whether to pursue formal charges, or handle in an informal setting, such as a stern warning.

There are many social situations which occur that are considered deviant, but not necessarily criminal. There are also situations which occur where a person may have technically violated the law, but the culpability of the offender is in question. Whenever a situation becomes disorderly, many times the police are expected to handle it under their order maintenance role. Without these discretionary powers, our expectations of policing would just not be possible (Kappeler, 2006). In the Texas Penal Code, the intention of the Code is for law enforcement to enforce the spirit of the law, in lieu of the letter of the law, which would be a literal interpretation of the words. According to Kappeler (2006), discretionary enforcement accounts for about half of all the discretionary power exercised in our legal system (p. 260).

A problem with police discretion is selective enforcement practices and the social influences that guide police discretion. In El Paso, many years ago the local police department implemented a “0” tolerance policy on domestic violence incidents. Prior to this policy, police could use their discretion in choosing whether to arrest, or separate affected parties. Because of the financial costs derived from civil litigation, this discretion was taken away from the police. It is common now for police to arrest

both the husband and wife for assaulting each other, whereas before it was common to call it a “draw” and have someone stay at a relative’s house over night until everyone calmed down. In this author’s opinion, *Zero* discretion in this type of enforcement has resulted in more assaults on the police and fewer calls to 9-11 for police assistance on domestic violence incidents.

Selective enforcement occurs when the police use discretion in deciding how to punish a person who has committed a crime [violated the law]. In following the spirit of the law, informal action may better serve the needs of the person or the community at the time, in lieu of formal action which could make the situation even worse. For example, an adolescent who causes damage by way of criminal mischief to a neighbor’s property may be handled informally by the police officer if the victim of the damaged property agrees with the parent of adolescent to recover the loss through other informal means. In this case, the child may be better served in the long-term by working towards restitution, rather than being punished by a juvenile court. In some cases, the officer may choose this discretion because the officer does not believe the juvenile court will rehabilitate the adolescent.

If negative social influences guide police discretion, this could lead to discrimination and racial profiling. Again, police discretion should never be eliminated, but it must be controlled and monitored. A current form of discretion monitoring by the State is to account for all police to public investigative stops. When police conduct a field stop, they must record data related to the person being stopped. Departmental statistics are gathered and trends and patterns of negative enforcement practices can be identified for further investigation. If the department identifies a problem, such as potential racial discrimination, the department can modify enforcement policies and establish different types of mandatory training to mitigate such practices.

### **3.6. Using Technology in Police Accountability**

Over the past couple of decades, advancements in technology have aided tremendously in police accountability. Police had much more field discretion prior to hand held video devices, as citizen complaints were “he said, she said” and rarely could be proven. Today, technology has gone beyond police efficiency, it has also increased their accountability.

Prior to the 1970s, most police departments did not have any formal processes for handling citizen complaints. For those which did, the process was intimidating and citizens felt discouraged from filing complaints in fear of retaliation, or simply having the belief that the department would protect its own. As professional policing advanced through the community policing era, police accountability had improved greatly, but the complaint process did not see much change until the more modern advancements of technology.

In the late 1990s, further advancements in video recording became available to police departments through federal grants. Racial profiling laws in the state required the police to begin collecting data on all police initiated stops. In response, the federal government made available funds to police agencies to put video recording devices in the patrol units, in lieu of recording statistical data for annual state reporting. At first, officers were distrusting, as this was believed to limit police discretion. In fact, the opposite occurred. Although this did raise police accountability, citizen complaints were usually recorded (both audio and video) and the investigations were quickly resolved. In this author’s opinion, once the public realized they were being recorded, behavior was more controlled and use of force incidents dropped dramatically.

Over the past few decades, advancements in technology have helped the police in their effectiveness and accountability. Data and analytics help the police to identify crime trends, which makes them utilize resources more effectively. Police departments have been taking advantage of the Internet by improving police – citizen communication as well. Social media has been a great avenue to communicate with the public by providing crime data, and allowing the public more ease in reporting crime, suspicious behavior, and citizen complaints. Another advance in technology has been the widespread police use of GPS tracking systems.

### **3.7. Early Intervention Programs**

The 80/20 rule is a common term recognized by police managers [Kappler (2006) refers to it as the 5% rule]. Police supervisors tend to spend about 80 percent of their time dealing with about 20 percent of the work force. It was also common many years ago for those few members of a department to cause most of the trouble for the agency, with little to no action being taken by the departments to correct the negative behavior.



With the advancements in technology management systems in the 1990s, law enforcement agencies started using early intervention systems [EIS] to collect and analyze officer behavior through a set of pre-established indicators. Through these systems, patterns of behavior could be analyzed by management with intervention opportunities made available to the officers prior to disciplinary action. In 2001, all CALEA accredited agencies were required to have an EIS in place to help establish good discipline and maintain officer integrity.

The early EIS collected data from officer reports, use of force incidents, citizen complaints, as well as other indicators to identify problem patterns that could be addressed through policy changes, training and individual intervention when necessary. The EIS is a very effective tool in bringing officer accountability to a police agency. Although early EIS could identify poor performance indicators, it could not predict future behavior.

Although it is difficult to prove a citizen's complaint without any physical proof accompanying the accusation, the complaint is still logged and archived. An officer may be cleared of a citizen complaint, but the EIS can identify a pattern of behavior by the officer. For example, most managers may not realize that an officer recently cleared of a complaint may have had five prior complaints of a similar nature within the last 12 months. Also, in helping to establish community trust, many agencies have moved the administrative investigative process away from internal field supervision within the department.

It is common today to see in moderate to larger departments some form of an internal affairs section. Having a dedicated unit to investigate complaints builds upon public trust. Technology also allows the department to display openly its complaint process and statistics related to prior complaints and investigative conclusions. Having an open-door policy to internal complaints builds public trust with the organization. For agencies accredited through CALEA, their internal affairs system for complaints meets national standards for transparency and integrity.

Even today, people are still wary about the integrity of citizen complaint investigations. To help alleviate these concerns, many police departments require their investigators to contact the complainant with the outcome of the investigation and make themselves available to discuss these outcomes with the complainant. Also, many organizations have established citizen oversight committees to review citizen complaints and the department's handling of those complaints. This increases transparency and builds trust between the organization and the community it serves.

### **3.8. Police Internal Reflection**

According to Van Maanen (1978), the term "asshole" was used by the police to depict the typical type of person that the police tend to deal with on a day-to-day basis. Since most police contacts involve some level of negativity, police develop an unrealistic view of the general population that crosses the path of their public duties.

Many police believe their purpose is to prevent the bad people from taking over the community and their existence is to hold the line against those wishing to bring society into chaos. It gives the police a higher purpose for their existence and motivates them to perform their unpopular duties by serving this higher purpose, which also elevates their own status and ego. Within the law enforcement area, which this author came from, the local police called it the "thin blue line" and the concept was taught to them early on in their careers.

Every policing community calls Van Maanen's "asshole" something different, but whatever the term that is being used still fits the same description. One of the common terms used from the agency I came from was "scumbag" (street criminal) or "shit head" (jail inmate). The problem with this type of negative labeling is that within a certain length of time, those who are assholes, and those who are not, tend to get distorted.

There is a sense of pride and honor among the police for those who "work in the trenches", compared to the others who have day jobs and administrative responsibilities. These are your "hardened" cops, whom almost everyone within the organization respect. To maintain the persona, these officers tend to be more aggressive in their behavior and view the majority of the community they deal with as anti-cop. They begin to believe more and more that each citizen approached is an "asshole", or a potential one, and one way or another they must establish control from the beginning of the contact. To these

street cops, they view “assholes” as people who have very little respect for the Constitution, government and police authority. These people do not play by the rules, so in order to beat them, the police officer must do the work down into their level.

It is very difficult to change the behavior of senior street officers, or the culture of an organization that embraces the thin-blue-line mentality. The ultimate result of the negative mentality of “us vs. them” causes a loss in communication between the police and the community they serve. Also, citizen complaints go up, use of force incidents go up, and ultimately – crime goes up. Negative labeling by the police does not serve the best interests of the community in which they serve.

### **3.9. Economics and Policing**

The economy has a direct impact on city budgets. This ultimately impacts police budgets, reducing manpower and services to be offered. When there is a negative impact on the economy, neighborhoods deteriorate and crime goes up. Also, with rising costs the police budgets have been slowly expanding, while providing more limited resources to the communities to meet those budgetary constraints.

Over the years, the police managers have chosen to adapt to business-like models in order to be more efficient. Also, police administrators have instituted more restrictive policies and procedures to minimize the potential of litigation against the department. Personally, this author had seen police administrators focus more resources on certain types of crimes that result in bigger profits. For example, a vast amount of resources were dedicated to the narcotics division, to include the asset forfeiture unit. When drug busts were conducted, the department’s HIDTA unit would begin asset forfeiture proceedings on properties which brought in a lot of money to the department. For many years, the narcotics division was self-funded and the monies seized and funds gained from auctions paid for all of the police vehicles and SWAT equipment. Otherwise, the county could not have been able to afford it without raising property taxes.

Over the years, business models in policing have increased in order to run the agencies more efficiently. The focus on crime control has slowly changed to employee control and greater efforts have been put into creating positive images of their organizations. Regardless of the crime occurring, managers still focus on limiting and controlling police activities in support of the “brand” they are selling to the public.

### **3.10. Policing and Violence**

Even in a civilized society, some social deviants will use violence as a means to achieve their goals. The police are society’s response to deal with these individuals who choose violence over civility and criminality over compliance to law. In order for the police to protect society, they are given power to use necessary force to enforce the laws, protect themselves while apprehending violent offenders, as well as protecting others who have placed their trust in the police to do so.

The police profession does go hand-in-hand with violence. Violence cannot always be avoidable as there are those who do not respect our laws, nor respect the authority of the police. In many cases, social deviants only respect the level of force that the police are willing and capable of using against them. The legitimate use of force by the police is necessary to maintain control of an otherwise violent society. In such a society, the ability to use force when necessary helps to maintain the respect for the authority that police possess.

The common police officer believes that the community will respect the police more by the observance of police activity. The best way to demonstrate effective policing by the common officer is to apprehend offenders, especially wanted felons. The necessary use of force during an apprehension is subjective, at best, but the officer who makes more apprehensions tends to get more “slack” on their level of force because of their productivity in bringing down the more violent offenders that risk public safety.

The problem with police authority is that the different authority related to law enforcement and order maintenance get distorted. Street officers can only maintain order if they believe they are being respected. In turn, the combination of making apprehensions and maintaining order become the same thing to them. When this occurs, it is more common to see street officers use force to maintain order,

as they would normally do when facing some type of resistance during an arrest. If there is resistance to the officer's authority, then there is an obvious lack of respect towards the officer. In some cases, the officer believes that the use of brutality is necessary to maintain that respect, which is ultimately an unjustified use of force.

Other than police brutality, there are also a very few deviant police officers that commit sexual abuse while on duty. There is an abundance of temptation to some police officers to accept sexual favors for leniency, or as a payment for some type of corruption. Just like in any other profession, there are also those rogue officers who sexually harass women being subjected to their authority. Many sexually deviant officers attempt to justify their misconduct by claiming the encounter as "consensual", but when a person is subjected to the authority of a police officer, consent is not considered valid. The behavior by the officer is considered oppressive.

Although the majority of law enforcement officers view excessive force as unlawful and do everything they can to avoid it – and even the perception of it – there are a few who exercise some forms of police brutality used as a preventative means to maintain personal safety, respect and control. In many situations, this behavior is neither legal nor justified, but the purpose tends to satisfy a short-term goal of effective control in certain circumstances to the police officer's advantage in critical situations. Officers are aware of the dangers associated to brutality and must walk a very thin line in knowing when the application of force is appropriate (safety) and when it is not (ego). Police officers who sexually harass others or solicit / accept sexual favors under the color of law are indeed deviant and deserve to lose their job, and in many cases undergo prosecution.

#### 4. METHODS

Quantitative results of this study included a student survey containing 12 questions related to modern-day policing principles. This survey was randomly administered to college-level students attending courses among separate institutions of higher education within the local area of the researchers. Quantitative data from the survey was collected and analyzed to identify patterns of public perspectives in relation to modern-day policing principles.

##### 4.1. Data Analysis, Design and Procedure

In order to ensure a reliable and valid survey instrument, the survey research was examined and approved through the El Paso Community College Institutional Research Board for face validity and content. **Table 1** provides respondent distribution by age grouping and gender. In **Table 2**, a *Cronbach's alpha* reliability test on questions Q1 – Q12 demonstrated reliability in cumulative responses given by the test group. The resulting " $\alpha$ " coefficient of reliability ranges from 0 to 1 in providing an overall assessment of a measure's reliability. The closer the results to 1, the more likely the items in the survey have a shared covariance and probably measure the same underlying concept. If the results are less than .06, underlying concepts formed by the grouped questions and answers cannot be logically concluded on a broader scale.

##### 4.2. Survey Instrument

This survey was administered with voluntary and random student participation during the Fall, 2023 semester. A total of 144 ( $N = 144$ ) respondents provided voluntary informed consent to engage in the survey. Minors under the age of 18 were not allowed to participate. Participating respondents were instructed on confidentiality and the purpose of the survey. The survey questions were posed to the respondents with Likert scaled level responses: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) neutral, (4) agree, and (5) strongly agree.

#### 5. RESULTS

The following are results and analysis of the public survey. Twelve survey questions were provided to college students among a local area community college and university to solicit a public view on Peelian Principles of policing. A Cronbach's Alpha reliability test was used to assess the internal consistency from the survey questions Q 1 – Q 12 ( $N = 144$ ,  $\alpha = .7946$ ). The mean score for each question indicates a numerical value on the Likert scale from 1 to 5 (*strongly disagree* = 1, *disagree* = 2, *neutral* = 3, *agree* = 4, and *strongly agree* = 5). The observed  $N$  represents the number of survey respondents.

Table 1 represents a self-identified gender breakdown and reported age grouping among the respondents. Table 2 represents the survey questions and the aggregate analysis.

**Table1.** About you

Gender	N	%
Male	58	40%
Female	86	60%
Age Grouping		
18-24		74%
25-31		10%
32-38		9%
39-45		4%
Over 45		3%

**Table2.** Chronbach’s Alpha Reliability Measurement for..... (N= 144)

Variable	M	SD	$\alpha = .7946$
Q1: The basic mission for which the police exist is to prevent crime and disorder.	4.40	.796	
Q2: The police must be stable, efficient, organized along military lines and under government control.	4.34	.794	
Q3: The ability of the police to perform their duties is dependent upon public approval of police actions.	3.83	1.03	
Q4: Police must secure the willing co-operation of the public in voluntary observance of the law to be able to secure and maintain the respect of the public.	4.23	.689	
Q5: No quality is more indispensable to a police officer than perfect command of temper; a quiet determined manner has more effect than violent action.	4.27	.862	
Q6: A police officer displaying good appearance commands respect.	4.26	.775	
Q7: The degree of co-operation of the public that can be secured diminishes proportionately to the necessity of the use of physical force.	3.93	.846	
Q8: Police seek and preserve public favor not by catering to public opinion but by constantly demonstrating absolute impartial service to the law.	3.99	.832	
Q9: Police use physical force to the extent necessary to secure observance of the law or to restore order only when the exercise of persuasion, advice and warning is found to be insufficient.	4.04	.941	
Q10: Police, at all times, should maintain a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and the public are the police.	4.20	.851	
Q11: Police should always direct their action strictly towards their functions and never appear to usurp the powers of the judiciary.	4.30	.712	
Q12: The test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder, not the visible evidence of police action in dealing with it.	3.89	.951	

A Cronbach’s alpha reliability test on questions Q 1 – Q 12 demonstrated internal consistency between the cumulative responses given by the survey group. The resulting “ $\alpha$ ” coefficient of reliability ranges from 0 to 1 in scale providing an overall reliability assessment. The higher the value to 1 indicates a greater internal consistency. Based on the results ( $\alpha = .7946$ ), the results of this survey were statistically significant indicating support of this study’s original hypothesis in regard to original policing principles still being applicable to modern-day policing.

**6. LIMITATIONS OF STUDY**

Although the reliability testing of the survey responses demonstrated an internal consistency, different results may have resulted if the survey had been expanded beyond local college/university students to the general population within the local area, as well as a broader approach outside of the local area. However, this study was geared towards college-level students who are generally well informed about current events. The participating survey respondents may have contained some bias in relation to one’s age, residence and past experiences with the survey topic. Any subsequent studies expanding this research should include more data on diverse groups.



### 7. CONCLUSION

History has proven that the United States will continue to experience social and political change, which will affect policing philosophies. Regardless of these ongoing changes, policing in America must remain committed with the policing principles and standards enacted by Sir Robert Peel in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Apparently, public opinion has remained consistent throughout America's history. Recent history reveals that the U.S. has witnessed backlash against the police for aggressive tactics in some areas of the country. Further inquiry or research is needed to determine whether a fourth era of American policing is emerging and how it will influence policing philosophies and public opinion.

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