THE RELEVANCE OF HISTORY

The history of the American police can help us understand policing today. The idea that the police do not change is a myth. In fact, American policing has changed tremendously, even in the last few years.[1] The study of its history helps us understand how and why these changes occur. It can illuminate the social and political forces affecting the police, as well as the impact of different reforms.

Many current police problems have long histories. Corruption, for example, is deeply rooted in police history, and it is useful to understand its origins and why it has been so difficult to eliminate. Some current problems, on the other hand, are the result of yesterday's reforms.[2] The patrol car was hailed as a great advance because it allowed efficient patrol coverage, but it isolated officers from the public and contributed to police–community relations problems. Other reforms have succeeded. Recent controls over police use of deadly force have significantly reduced the number of citizens shot and killed by the police. It is useful to analyze why some reforms succeed, and why other reforms fail.

THE ENGLISH HERITAGE

American policing is a product of its English heritage. The English colonists brought a criminal justice system as part of their cultural baggage. This heritage included the English common law, the high value placed on individual rights, the court system, various forms of punishment, along with different law enforcement agencies.[3]

The English heritage contributed three enduring features to American policing. The first is a tradition of limited police authority. The Anglo-American legal tradition places a high premium on protecting individual liberty and, to that end, places limits on governmental authority.[4] In the United States, these limits are embodied in the Bill of Rights. Continental European countries, by contrast, give their law enforcement agencies much broader powers. German citizens, for example, are required to carry identity cards and report changes of address to police authorities.

The second feature inherited from England is a tradition of local control of law enforcement agencies.[5] Countries in Europe, Asia, Africa, and South America, by contrast, have centralized, national police forces.

Local control contributes to the third feature, a highly decentralized and fragmented system of law enforcement. The United States is unique in having about 18,000 separate

SIDEBAR 2–1

THE RELEVANCE OF HISTORY

The study of police history can

1. Dramatize the fact of change.
2. Put current problems in perspective.
3. Help us understand what reforms have worked.
4. Alert us to the unintended consequences of reforms.

law enforcement agencies, subject only to minimal coordination and very little national control or regulation.[6] This issue is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

Formal law enforcement agencies emerged in England in the 13th century, and over the centuries evolved in an unsystematic fashion. Responsibility for law enforcement and keeping the peace was shared by the constable, the sheriff, and the justice of the peace. Private citizens, however, retained much of the responsibility for law enforcement, pursuing offenders on their own and initiating criminal cases. This approach was brought to America and persisted into the 19th century.[7]

Creation of the Modern Police: London, 1829

By the early 19th century the old system of law enforcement in England began to collapse. London had grown into a large industrial city, with problems of poverty, disorder, ethnic conflict, and crime. The 1780 Gordon riots, a clash between Irish immigrants and English citizens, triggered a 50-year debate over the need for better public safety. Parliament finally created the London Metropolitan Police in 1829. The father of the London police was Sir Robert Peel, from whom the term "Bobbies" originated.[8]

The London police introduced three new elements that became the basis for modern policing: mission, strategy, and organizational structure.

The *mission* of the new police was crime prevention. This reflected the utilitarian idea that it was better to prevent crime than to respond after the fact. Crime prevention, or deterrence, was to be achieved through a *strategy* of preventive patrol. Officers would maintain a visible presence throughout the community by continuously patrolling fixed "beats." Peel borrowed the organizational structure of the London police from the military, including uniforms, rank designations, and the authoritarian system of command and discipline. This quasi-military style prevails in American police administration to this day.

In a comparative study of the development of policing around the world, David Bayley argues that the essential features of the modern police are that they are "public, specialized, and profession."[9] They are public in the sense that government agencies have primary responsibility for maintaining public safety. They are specialized in the sense that they have a distinct mission of law enforcement and crime prevention. Finally, they are professional in the sense that they involve full-time, paid employees. Bayley cautions that these characteristics did not appear all at once. Although the London police were formally established in 1829, in reality it represents a consolidation of features that had been developing for centuries.

The continual presence of the police throughout the community was part of a general growth of government regulation in all aspects of social and economic life. Allan Silver argues that this presence reflected a "demand for order" in the emerging urban industrial society.[10]

LAW ENFORCEMENT IN COLONIAL AMERICA

The first English colonists in America created law enforcement institutions as soon as they established organized communities. Although borrowed from England, the sheriff, the constable, and the watch evolved in the new environment and eventually acquired distinctive American features.[11]

The sheriff, appointed by the colonial governor, was the chief local government official. In addition to criminal law enforcement, the sheriff's responsibilities included collecting taxes, conducting elections, maintaining bridges and roads, and other duties.[12] The constable also had some responsibility for enforcing the law and maintaining order. Initially an elective position, the constable gradually evolved into a semiprofessional appointed office. In Boston and several other cities, the office of constable became a desirable and often lucrative position.[13]

The watch resembled the modern-day police in some respects. Watchmen patrolled the city to guard against fire, crime, and disorder. At first there was only a night watch. Gradually, however, as towns grew larger they created a day watch. Boston created a watch in 1634. Following the English tradition, all adult males were expected to serve as watchmen. Many men tried to avoid this duty, either by outright evasion or by paying others to serve in their places. Eventually, the watch evolved into a paid professional position.[14]

The slave patrol was a distinctly American form of law enforcement. In southern states where slavery existed, it was intended to guard against slave revolts and capture runaway slaves. The slave patrols were probably the first modern police forces in this country. The Charleston, South Carolina, slave patrol, had about 100 officers in 1837 and was far larger than any northern city police force.[15]

The Quality of Colonial Law Enforcement

Colonial law enforcement was inefficient, corrupt, and subject to political interference. There was never a "golden age" of efficiency and integrity in American policing.

The sheriff, the constable, and the watch had little capacity to either prevent crime or apprehend offenders.[16] The sheriff and constable were reactive agencies, responding to complaints brought to them, and did not engage in preventive patrol. Moreover, they did not have enough personnel to investigate many crimes. Crime victims had no convenient way to report crimes. Finally, officials were paid through a system of fees that reimbursed them for particular duties. As a result, they had greater incentives to work on their civil responsibilities, which offered more certain payment, than on criminal law enforcement.

Members of the watch patrolled city streets—checking taverns for drunks, for example—but were not much of a deterrent to crime. They were few in number, patrolled on foot, and had no way of communicating with one another in case of serious trouble.

For the same reasons, these agencies were ill-equipped to maintain order. There were simply too few watchmen on duty to be effective in the case of major problems. Disorder was a serious problem in colonial cities. Public drunkenness was a constant problem, particularly among sailors in seaport cities. Riots were common as well.[17] Citizens could not readily report disturbances, and neither the sheriff nor the constable could respond effectively. Providing emergency services, as today's police do, was not a regular part of the sheriff's or the constable's job.

In practice, official law enforcement agencies played a relatively small role in maintaining law and order. Ordinary citizens maintained social control through informal means: a comment, a warning, or a rebuke from friends or neighbors, or a "trial" by the church congregation for misbehavior. This system worked because communities were small and homogeneous; there was much face-to-face contact and people shared the same basic values. The system eventually broke down as communities grew into larger, diverse towns and cities.[18]

If policing was ineffective in cities and towns, it was almost nonexistent on the frontier. Organized government did not appear in many areas for decades. Even then, the courts operated only once or twice a year. Settlers had to rely on their own resources and often took the law into their own hands. This tradition of vigilantism persisted into the 20th century.[19]

Corruption appeared very early. The criminal law was even more moralistic than today, with restrictions on drinking, gambling, and sexual practices. But as is the case today, people wanted to engage in these activities and tried to bribe law enforcement officials to not enforce the law.

The First Modern American Police

Modern police forces were established in the United States in the 1830s and 1840s. As in England, the old system of law enforcement broke down under the impact of urbanization, industrialization, and immigration. In the 1830s, a wave of riots struck American cities. Boston had major riots in 1834, 1835, and 1837.[20] Philadelphia, New York, Cincinnati, Detroit, and other cities all had major disturbances. In 1838, Abraham Lincoln, then a member of the Illinois state legislature, warned of the "increasing disregard for law which pervades the country."[21]

Many riots were clashes between different ethnic groups: Irish or German immigrants against native-born English Protestants. Other riots were economic in nature. During economic crises, for example, angry depositors often stormed and destroyed banks. Moral issues also produced violence. People objecting to medical research on cadavers attacked hospitals; residents of Detroit staged several "whorehouse riots," attempting to close down houses of prostitution. Finally, pro-slavery whites attacked abolitionists and free black citizens in northern cities.[22]

Despite the breakdown in law and order, Americans moved very slowly in creating new police forces. New York City did not create one until 1845, 11 years after the first outbreak of riots. Philadelphia followed a more erratic course. Between 1833 and 1854, it created and abolished several different forms of law enforcement before finally creating a consolidated, citywide police force on the London model.[23]

These delays reflected deep public uncertainty about how to maintain public safety. The idea of a continual police presence throughout the community was something radically new. For many Americans, it brought back memories of the hated British colonial army. Others were afraid that their political opponents would control the police and use them to their advantage. Finally, many people were not prepared to pay the cost of a public police force.

Many of the early American police departments were little more than expanded versions of the existing watch system. The Boston police department had only nine officers in 1838.[24] The first American police officers did not wear uniforms, but were identified

only by a distinctive hat and badge. They also did not carry firearms. Weapons did not become standard police equipment until the late 19th century, in response to rising levels of crime and violence.

Americans borrowed most of the London model of modern policing: the mission of crime prevention, the strategy of visible patrol over fixed beats, and the quasi-military organizational structure. The structure of political control of the police, however, was very different. The United States was a far more democratic country than Britain. American voters—only white males with property in the early part of the century—exercised direct control over all government agencies. London residents, by contrast, had no direct control over their police. As a result, American police departments were immediately immersed in local politics, a situation that led to much improper political influence. The commissioners of the London police, freed from political influence, were able to maintain high personnel standards.[25]

In the United States, however, politics influenced every aspect of American policing in the 19th century. Inefficiency, corruption, and lack of professionalism were the chief results.[26]

AMERICAN POLICING IN THE 19TH CENTURY

Personnel standards, for all practical purposes, did not exist. Officers were selected entirely on the basis of their political connections. Men who had no education, bad health, and criminal records were hired as officers. There were a few female matrons, but no female sworn officers until the early 20th century. In New York City, a $300 payment to the Tammany Hall political machine was the only requirement for appointment to the force.[27]

Only a few departments offered recruits any formal preservice training. New officers were generally handed a badge, a baton, and a copy of the department rules (if one existed), and were sent out on patrol duty. Cincinnati created a police academy in 1888, but it lasted only a few years. New York City established the School of Pistol Practice in 1895, but offered no training in any other aspect of policing until 1909. Even then, a 1913 investigation found that it gave no tests and all recruits were automatically passed.[28]

Police officers had no job security and could be fired at will. In some instances, almost the entire police force was dismissed after an election. Nonetheless, it was an attractive job because salaries were generally higher than those for most blue-collar jobs. In 1880 officers in most big cities earned $900 a year, compared with $450 for factory workers.

Jobs on the police force were a major form of patronage, which local politicians used to reward their friends. Consequently, the composition of departments reflected the ethnic and religious makeup of the cities. When Irish Americans began to win political power, they appointed their friends as police officers. When Barney McGinniskin became the first Irish-American police officer in Boston in 1851, it provoked major protests from the English and Protestant establishment in the city. Many German Americans served as police officers in Cleveland, Cincinnati, Milwaukee, and St. Louis, where German immigration was heavy. After the Civil War, some African Americans were appointed police officers in northern cities where the Republicans were in power.[29]

Patrol Work

Police patrol was hopelessly inefficient. Officers patrolled on foot and were spread very thin. In Chicago, beats were three and four miles long. In many cities entire areas were not patrolled at all. The lack of communications systems made it impossible to respond to crime and disorder.

Supervision was equally weak. Officers easily evaded duty and spent much of their time in saloons and barber shops. Rain, snow, and extremely hot weather were powerful incentives for officers to avoid patrolling. Sergeants also patrolled on foot and found it nearly impossible to keep track of the officers under their command.

The first primitive communications system involved a network of call boxes which allowed patrol officers to call precinct stations. Officers learned to sabotage them: They left receivers off the hook, which took the early systems out of operation, or lied about where they were.[30]

The lack of an effective communications system made it difficult if not impossible for citizens to contact the police. In the event of a crime or disturbance, someone had to personally locate an officer who would then have to walk to the scene.

The police were a major social welfare institution in the 19th century. Precinct stations offered lodging to the homeless. The Philadelphia police, for example, lodged over 100,000 people a year during the 1880s. After 1900, care for the poor became the responsibility of professional social work agencies, and the police concentrated more on crime.[31]

The Police and the Public

Many people today have a romanticized image of the 19th-century police officer. The myth is that officers were friendly, knowledgeable about the neighborhood, and helpful.

SIDEBAR 2–2

THE DIARY OF A POLICE OFFICER: BOSTON, 1895

We know very little about what police officers actually did in the early years. Most of the evidence comes from reformers or journalists seeking to expose corruption and inefficiency. Their reports are inherently biased. The recently discovered 1895 diary of Boston police officer Stillman S. Wakeman provides a revealing glimpse into actual police work 100 years ago.

Officer Wakeman was "an officer of the neighborhood." He spent most of his time on patrol responding to little problems that neighborhood residents brought to him: disputes, minor property crimes, and so on. He spent relatively little time on major offenses: murder, rape, robbery. Generally, he acted as a neighborhood magistrate, resolving problems informally.

Officer Wakeman's role was not that different from that of contemporary patrol officers. He was reactive and a problem solver. The major difference was the absence of the modern police technology: the patrol car and the 911 telephone system.

Source: Alexander von Hoffman, "An Officer of the Neighborhood: A Boston Patrolman on the Beat in 1895," *Journal of Social History* 26 (Winter 1992): 309–330.

If their methods were often rough, they did maintain order. This image is highly inaccurate. It is unlikely that police officers had close relations with many people on their beats. They were few in number, personnel turnover was high, and people moved more often than today. Official records, moreover, indicate that many police officers had serious drinking problems and frequently used excessive physical force. There is considerable evidence that police officers enjoyed little citizen respect and often faced open hostility from the public. Juvenile gangs, for example, made a sport of throwing rocks at the police or taunting them. People who were arrested often fought back.[32]

In a provocative study of the police in London and New York City, Wilbur Miller argues that in London a high level of mutual respect emerged between citizens and police. Through their restrained and civil conduct, the police overcame initial public hostility. The commissioners of the London Metropolitan Police maintained high personnel standards and exercised strict supervision. In the United States, however, the lack of adequate supervision allowed police officers to respond to public hostility with physical force. The result was a complete lack of professionalism.[33]

Citizen violence eventually caused American police officers to adopt firearms. As late as 1880 the police in Brooklyn (then an independent city of 500,000 people) were unarmed. In some cities weapons were optional or carried at the discretion of a sergeant. Firearms did not become standard equipment for police officers until the late 19th century, in response to rising levels of crime and violence.

Corruption and Politics

Police corruption was epidemic in the 19th century. Historian Mark Haller argues that corruption was one of the main functions of local government, and the police were only one part of the problem.[34] The police took payoffs for not enforcing laws on drinking, gambling, and prostitution. The money was divided among officers at all ranks. Corruption extended to personnel decisions. Officers often had to pay bribes for promotion. The cost of obtaining a promotion was compensated for by the greater opportunities for graft. One New York City Police Officer, admitted in 1894 that he had amassed a personal fortune of over $350,000.[35]

Corruption served important social and political ends. Alcohol was an important symbolic issue in American politics. Protestant Americans saw sobriety as a badge of respectability and self-discipline. They sought to impose their morality on immigrant groups, especially the Irish and Germans, by controlling or outlawing drinking. For immigrant and blue-collar Americans, meanwhile, the neighborhood saloon was an important social institution and often the base of operations for political machines. Thus, the attack on drinking was also an attack on working-class political power. Working-class immigrants fought back by controlling the police through their political machines and effectively nullified laws intended to control drinking.[36]

The Failure of Police Reform

Political reformers made police corruption a major issue during the 19th century, but their efforts were generally unsuccessful. They concentrated on changing the formal structure of control of police departments, usually by creating a board of police commissioners appointed by the governor or the legislature. This struggle for control reflected political, ethnic, and urban and rural conflicts. New York created the first state-controlled police commission in 1857.[37] In many cities, the battle for control of the police was endless. Cincinnati underwent 10 major changes in the form of police control between 1859 and 1910.[38]

Even when the reformers won, however, they did not succeed in improving the quality of policing. Their reform agenda emphasized replacing "bad" people (their opponents) with "good" people (their own). They did not have any substantive ideas about police administration, and made no significant changes in recruitment standards, training, or supervision.

Theodore Roosevelt's two-year term as New York City police commissioner between 1895 and 1897 illustrates the failure of the reformers. The future U.S. president made a vigorous effort to raise recruitment standards, discipline officers who were guilty of misconduct, and ensure enforcement of laws prohibiting the sale of liquor on Sundays. But most of his efforts were dramatic personal gestures, rather than institutional reforms: He would go out at night to catch officers not working. He made no lasting changes, however, and corruption and inefficiency continued long after he resigned in 1897.[39]

The Impact of the Police on Society

Historians debate the impact of the police on society. Some argue that the police did help to maintain order. Cities became more orderly as the 19th century progressed, but it is not clear that the police were primarily responsible for this. Other historians argue that the police were so few in number that they could not possibly have deterred crime. Orderliness may have been the result of a more general adaptation to urban life. The daily routine of urban life—reporting to work every day at the same hour—cultivated habits of self-discipline and order. The police, according to this view, played a supporting role at best.[40]

The role of the police in labor relations during the 19th century is also a matter of debate among historians. Sid Harring and other Marxist historians argue that the police served the interests of business and were used to harass labor unions and break strikes.[41] American labor relations during these years were extremely violent. Management adamantly resisted unions, and many strikes led to violence. In some communities, particularly those with coal and steel industries, strikes were virtual civil war. In many cities, however, the police were friendly to organized labor, mainly because they came from the same blue-collar communities.[42]

The modern police were created to deal with the problems of crime and disorder, but they succeeded primarily in becoming a social problem themselves. The rampant corruption and inefficiency set in motion generations of reform efforts that continue today.

THE 20TH CENTURY: THE ORIGINS OF POLICE PROFESSIONALISM

American policing underwent a dramatic change in the 20th century. There were three principal forces for change: an organized movement for police professionalism, the

FIGURE 2–1
THE REFORM AGENDA OF THE PROFESSIONALIZATION MOVEMENT

1 Eliminate political influence from policing.
2 Appoint qualified chief executives.
3 Define a mission of nonpartisan public service.
4 Raise personnel standards.
5 Introduce principles of scientific management.
6 Develop specialized units.

introduction of modern communications technology, and the civil rights movement's demand for equal justice.

The Professionalization Movement

Around the turn of the century, a new generation of leaders launched an organized effort to professionalize the police. Police reform was part of a much broader political movement known as progressivism between 1900 and 1917. Progressive reformers sought to regulate big business, eliminate child labor, improve social welfare services, reform local government, as well as professionalize the police.[43]

The two most prominent leaders of the police professionalization movement were Richard Sylvester and August Vollmer. Sylvester was superintendent of the District of Columbia police from 1898 to 1915. As president of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) from 1901 to 1915, he made it the national voice of police reform. Until then, the police had no effective national professional association.[44]

Vollmer was chief of police in Berkeley, California, from 1905 to 1932, where he developed principles of modern police administration. He is most famous for advocating higher education for police officers, hiring college graduates in Berkeley, and organizing the first college-level police science courses at the University of California in 1916. He wrote the 1931 Wickersham Commission *Report on Police*, and trained a number of students who went on to become reform police chiefs.[45]

The Reform Agenda

The professionalization movement developed an agenda that dominated police reform through the 1960s (see Figure 2–1).[46]

Eliminating politics and hiring qualified leaders went hand in hand. The reformers argued that the police needed chief executives who had proven abilities to manage a large organization. Arthur Woods, a prominent lawyer, served as police commissioner in New York City from 1914 to 1917; Philadelphia hired Marine Corps General Smedley Butler to head its police department from 1911 to 1915.[47]

The reformers sought to define policing as a profession. This meant that the police should be public servants with a professional obligation to serve the entire community on a nonpartisan basis.

To raise personnel standards, departments began to establish minimum recruitment requirements of intelligence, health, and moral character. New York City created the first permanent police training academy in 1895, although it was initially restricted to firearms training. In most cities the process of reform was painfully slow. Some cities did not offer any meaningful training until the 1950s.

Modern management principles called for centralizing command and control within police departments and making efficient use of personnel. Until then, police chiefs had exercised little real control; captains in neighborhood precincts and politicians had the real power. Reformers closed precinct stations and used the new communications technology to control both midmanagement personnel and officers on the street.

The reformers increased the military ethos of police departments, adding parades, close-order drill, and military-style commendations. Until that time, American police departments had in fact been extremely unmilitarylike: They were undisciplined and inefficient.[48]

Reformers also created the first specialized units such as traffic, juvenile, and vice. Previously, police departments had only patrol and detective units. Specialization, meanwhile, increased the size and complexity of the police bureaucracy, complicating the problem of managing departments.

Juvenile units led to a historic innovation: the first female sworn officers. Until then, policing had been an all-male occupation. The Portland (Oregon) police hired the first policewoman, Lola Baldwin, as a juvenile specialist in 1905. Alice Stebbins Wells, appointed to the Los Angeles police department in 1910, organized the International Association of Policewomen in 1915. By 1919 over 60 police departments employed female officers. Policewomen were not assigned to regular patrol duty, usually did not wear uniforms, and did not carry weapons. Most had only limited arrest powers. Policewomen advocates argued that women were specially qualified to work with children and that they should not handle regular police duties.[49]

The Impact of Professionalization

Police reform progressed very slowly. By 1920 Milwaukee, Cincinnati, and Berkeley had emerged as leaders in the field. Most other departments, however, remained mired in corruption and inefficiency. August Vollmer spent the year 1924 attempting to reform the Los Angeles police, but gave up in despair and returned to Berkeley. Chicago seemed to resist all efforts at reform. In some cities, the police made notable steps forward, only to slide backward a few years later. Philadelphia made considerable strides under a reform mayor and police commissioner between 1911 and 1915, only to have all progress wiped out when the city's political machine regained control.[50]

Despite these failures, the reformers could claim one great success: They firmly established the idea of professionalism as the goal for modern policing, and had defined a specific agenda for reform.

New Problems in Policing

Professionalization also introduced a number of new problems in policing. The rank-and-file police officer remained a forgotten person. Most reformers did not respect ordinary officers and placed all their hopes on strong administrators. As a result, the rank and file retreated into an isolated and alienated subculture that opposed most reforms.[51]

The most dramatic expression of this development was the 1919 Boston police strike, one of the most famous events in police history. Salaries for Boston police officers had not been raised in nearly 20 years. When their demand for a 20 percent raise was rejected, they voted to form a union. Police Commissioner Edwin U. Curtis suspended the union leaders, and 1,117 officers went out on strike, leaving only 427 on duty. Violence and disorder erupted throughout the city. Governor Calvin Coolidge called out the state militia and won national fame for his comment, "There is no right to strike against the public safety by anybody, anywhere, at any time." The strike quickly collapsed and all the strikers were fired.[52]

Because of the violence in Boston, a national backlash against police unions set in, and other police unions across the country disappeared. Police unionism was dead for the next 20 years, but the problem of an alienated rank and file remained.

Professionalism also created new problems in police administration. As departments grew in size and created new specialized units, they became increasingly complex bureaucracies. The management of police organizations continued to be a major challenge into the 1990s.

Police and Racial Minorities

Conflict between the police and the African-American community also appeared during the World War I years. Major race riots erupted in East St. Louis, Illinois (1917), and Chicago and other cities in 1919. Investigations of these riots found race discrimination by the police prior to and during the riots. In some cases, officers joined in the rioting themselves. The Chicago riot commission recommended several steps to improve police–community relations, but nothing was done.[53]

Some police departments in northern and western cities hired a few African-American officers, but almost all were assigned to the black community. Southern police departments were rigidly segregated. Many hired no African-American officers at all. Others hired some in a second-class category: They were assigned to the black

POLICE HISTORY ON THE WEB

The Boston Police Department web site describes the 1919 police strike. Find the web site. What do they say about the strike? How does it compare with the description presented here?

community and not allowed to arrest whites.[54] Conflict between the police and the African-American community remained a serious problem in all parts of the country. It did not receive any serious attention until the riots of the 1960s.

New Law Enforcement Agencies

Two important new law enforcement agencies appeared in the years before World War I: the state police and the Bureau of Investigation forerunner of the FBI.

Several states created state-level law enforcement agencies in the 19th century, but they remained relatively unimportant agencies. The Texas Rangers were established in 1835. The Pennsylvania State Constabulary, created in 1905, was the first modern state police force, but was not typical of most others. It was a highly centralized, militaristic agency that concentrated on controlling strikes. Business leaders believed that local police and the militia were unreliable during strikes. Organized labor bitterly attacked the constabulary, denouncing its officers as cossacks.[55]

Other states soon created their own agencies. About half were highway patrols, limited to traffic control, and the other half were general law enforcement agencies. Although business interests sought the creation of Pennsylvania-style agencies, in several states organized labor was able to limit their powers or block their creation altogether.[56]

The Bureau of Investigation was established in 1908 by a presidential executive order. Until then, the federal government had no full-time criminal investigation agency. Private detective agencies were sometimes used under contract on an as-needed basis. The new Bureau of Investigation was immediately involved in scandal. Some agents were caught opening the mail of one senator who had opposed creation of the agency. In 1919 and 1920 the bureau conducted a massive roundup of suspected radicals, accompanied by gross violations of due process. More scandals followed in the 1920s.[57]

THE NEW COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

Some of the most important changes in policing were the result of modern communications technology. The patrol car, the two-way radio, and the telephone transformed patrol work, the nature of police–citizen contacts, and police management.[58]

The patrol car first appeared just before World War I, and by the 1920s it was in widespread use. In certain respects, the police had to keep up with citizens and criminals who were now driving cars. Police chiefs also believed that the patrol car would make possible efficient patrol coverage that would effectively deter crime and allow the police to respond quickly to crimes and other problems. American police departments steadily converted from foot to motor patrol, and by the 1960s only a few major cities still relied primarily on foot patrol.

The patrol car had unintended consequences that created new problems. By removing the officer from the street, it reduced informal contact with law-abiding citizens. Racial minorities increasingly saw the police as an occupying army. This problem remained hidden until the police–community relations crisis of the 1960s.

The two-way radio became widespread in the late 1930s and had two important consequences. First, it completed the communications network and allowed departments to dispatch officers in response to citizen calls. Second, it revolutionized police supervision by allowing the department to maintain continuous contact with patrol officers.

The telephone was invented in 1877, but it did not have a great impact on policing until it was linked with the patrol car and the two-way radio in the mid-20th century. Together, the three pieces of technology completed a communications link between citizens and the police. The telephone allowed citizens to contact the police easily and to request service; the two-way radio enabled the police department to dispatch a patrol officer to the scene; the patrol car, in turn, allowed the patrol officer to reach the scene quickly.

Police departments encouraged people to call, promising an immediate response. Gradually, citizens became socialized into the habit of "calling the cops" to handle even the smallest problems.[59] As a result, citizens developed higher expectations about the quality of life, and the call workload steadily increased. When the rising number of calls overloaded the police, they responded by adding more officers, more patrol cars, and more sophisticated communications systems. More resources, however, only encouraged more calls, and the process repeated itself.

Telephone-generated calls for service altered the nature of police–citizen contacts. Previously, police officers rarely entered private dwellings. Patrolling on foot, they had no way of learning about problems in private areas, and citizens had no way to summon them. The new communications technology made it possible for citizens to invite the police into their homes. The result was a complex and contradictory change in police–citizen contacts. Whereas the patrol car isolated the police from people on the streets, the telephone brought police officers into peoples' living rooms, kitchens, and bedrooms. There, officers became involved in the most intimate domestic problems: husband–wife disputes, alcohol abuse, parent–child conflicts, and other issues.[60]

NEW DIRECTIONS IN POLICE ADMINISTRATION, 1930–1960

The Wickersham Commission Report

The 1931 *Report on Lawlessness in Law Enforcement* shocked the country with its conclusion, "the third degree—the inflicting of pain, physical or mental, to extract confessions or statements—is extensively practiced." The report found that police routinely beat suspects, threatened them with worse punishment, and held them illegally for protracted questioning. It cited examples of a suspect who was held by the ankles from a third-story window, and another who was forced to stand in the morgue with his hand on the body of a murder victim. The chief of police in Buffalo, New York, openly declared that he would violate the Constitution if he felt he had to.[61]

The report was one of 14 published by the Wickersham Commission, officially the National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement, the first national study of the American criminal justice system. It was the first significant attack on police misconduct and set in motion a new era of reform.[62]

Professionalization Continues

Under the influence of August Vollmer, California police departments took the lead in professionalization from the 1920s through the 1960s. Vollmer's protégés became police chiefs throughout the state, spreading reform agenda of professionalization. The first undergraduate law enforcement program was established at San Jose State College in 1931. California also developed a system of regional training for police officers in the late 1930s.[63]

Vollmer's most important protégé was O. W. Wilson who served as chief of the Wichita, Kansas, police from 1928 to 1935; as dean of the University of California School of Criminology from 1950 to 1960; and as superintendent of the Chicago police from 1960 to 1967.[64] He was the author of two extremely influential textbooks on police management: the International City Management Association's *Municipal Police Administration* and his own *Police Administration* (1950).[65] He emphasized the efficient management of personnel, particularly patrol officers. He led the shift from foot patrol to automobile patrol, and developed a pioneering workload formula for the distribution of patrol officers according to crimes and calls for service. His textbook became the unofficial "bible" of police management and he influenced police administration through the 1960s.

J. Edgar Hoover and the War on Crime

The most important new figure in American law enforcement in the 1930s was the director of the FBI, J. Edgar Hoover. He was appointed director of the bureau in 1924 after another series of scandals. Capitalizing on public fears about a national crime wave in the 1930s, he increased the size and scope of the bureau's activities and renamed it the Federal Bureau of Investigation. In 1930 he won control of the new Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) system. In 1934 a set of new federal laws gave the FBI increased jurisdiction, including the authority to arrest criminals who crossed state lines in order to avoid prosecution. The following year the FBI opened its National Police Academy, which trained bureau agents and, by invitation, some local police officers.[66]

Hoover was a master at public relations, skillfully manipulating the media to project an image of the FBI agent as the paragon of professionalism: dedicated, honest, trained, and relentlessly efficient.[67] Some of Hoover's reputation was deserved. FBI agents were far better educated and trained than were local police officers. But there was an ugly underside to Hoover's long career (1924–1972) as leader of the bureau. He exaggerated the FBI's role in several famous cases such as that of Pretty Boy Floyd, and manipulated crime data to create an exaggerated impression of the bureau's effectiveness. He concentrated on small-time bank robbers, ignoring organized street crime, white-collar crime, and violations of federal civil rights laws. Even worse, Hoover systematically violated the constitutional rights of citizens, spying on political groups and compiling secret files on elected officials. His misuse of power did not become known until after his death in 1972.[68]

Hoover's leadership of the FBI had a significant impact on local police. His emphasis on education and training set a new standard. He also contributed to the growing emphasis on police work as crime fighting. The introduction of the UCR, the

development of the Ten Most Wanted list, and the creation of the FBI crime lab all served to emphasize crime fighting at the expense of other aspects of policing.

THE POLICE CRISIS OF THE 1960s

In the 1960s the police were at the center of a national crisis over race, crime, and justice.[69] The Supreme Court issued a series of landmark decisions placing constitutional limits on police practices. The 1961 *Mapp v. Ohio* decision held that evidence gathered in an illegal search and seizure could not be used against the defendant. In the even more controversial *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966) decision, the Court held that police officers were required to advise suspects that they had the right to remain silent, that anything they said could be used against them, that they had the right to an attorney, and that, if they could not afford one, a lawyer would be appointed. The *Miranda* warning was designed to ensure the suspect's protection against self-incrimination.

Mapp, *Miranda*, and other decisions provoked an enormous political controversy. The police and their supporters claimed that the Court had "handcuffed" them in the fight against crime. Conservative politicians accused the Court of favoring the rights of criminals over the rights of victims and law-abiding citizens.[70]

Meanwhile, the civil rights movement entered a new militant phase in the 1960s, challenging race discrimination in all areas of American life. African-American college students launched sit-ins to protest segregated stores in the South, and civil rights groups challenged job and housing discrimination in northern states. Civil rights groups also attacked race discrimination and physical brutality by the police.[71] The white police officer in the black ghetto became a symbol of white power and authority. Studies of deadly force found that police officers shot and killed African-American citizens about eight times as often as white citizens. As a result of employment discrimination, meanwhile, African-Americans were seriously underrepresented as police officers.[72]

Tensions between the police and the black community exploded in a nationwide wave of riots between 1964 and 1968. Almost all were sparked by an incident involving the police. The 1964 New York City riot began after a white off-duty officer shot and killed a black teenager. The 1965 riot in the Watts district of Los Angeles was sparked by a simple traffic stop. The Kerner Commission counted over 200 disorders in 1967 alone.[73]

Police departments responded to the crisis by establishing police–community relations (PCR) units. PCR programs included speaking to community groups and schools, "ride-along" programs that allowed citizens to view police work from the perspective of the police officer, and neighborhood storefront offices to facilitate communication with citizens. These programs, however, had little impact on day-to-day police work and, therefore, did little to improve police–community relations.[74]

Civil rights leaders demanded the hiring of more African-American officers and the creation of citizen review boards to investigate citizen complaints of excessive force. Although the 1964 Civil Rights Act outlawed race discrimination in employment, minority employment made little progress until the 1980s. The demand for citizen review was also unsuccessful. The Philadelphia Police Advisory Board (PAB), created in 1958, was abolished in 1967 under pressure from the police union. The police union in New York City succeeded in abolishing a citizen-dominated Civilian Complaint Review Board (CCRB) in 1966.[75] By the end of the 1960s, even though the riots had stopped, relations between the police and minority communities remained tense. The steady criticisms from the African-American community were a major force for change over the following thirty years.

The Police in the National Spotlight

As a result of rising public concern about crimes, riots, and racial conflicts, a series of national commissions examined the police and made recommendations for change. President Lyndon Johnson appointed the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Justice (known as the President's Crime Commission) in 1965. The commission's report, *The Challenge of Crime in a Free Society* (1967) endorsed most of the traditional agenda of professionalization: higher recruitment standards, more training, and better management and supervision. The commission sponsored pioneering research, including Albert Reiss and Donald Black's observation of patrol officers at work, and made important recommendations for the control of police discretion.[76] The first two chapters of the commission's *Task Force Report: The Police*, included a thoughtful analysis of the complexity of the police role and the fact that only a relatively small part of police work was devoted to criminal law enforcement.[77]

The National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, popularly known as the Kerner Commission, was created after the riots of 1967 to study the national crisis in race relations. Its report found "deep hostility between police and ghetto communities as a primary cause of the disorders." It recommended that routine police operations be changed to ensure proper individual conduct and to eliminate abrasive practices," that more African-American police officers be hired, and that police departments improve their procedures for handling citizen complaints.[78]

The Kerner Commission raised serious questions about the traditional assumptions of police professionalization. It noted that "many of the serious disturbances took place in cities whose police are among the best led, best organized, best trained, and most professional in the country."[79] The patrol car removed the officer from the street and alienated the police from ordinary citizens, and aggressive crime-fighting tactics, such as frequent stops and frisks, were a particular source of tension.

The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) illustrated the commission's point. The LAPD was widely regarded as the most professional department in the country. Since 1950 Chief William Parker had eliminated corruption and installed high personnel standards. Aggressive anticrime tactics, however, aggravated conflict with minority communities. Chief Parker tolerated no criticism and he dismissed complaints about excessive force voiced by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) as supporting the criminal element.[80]

In 1973 the American Bar Association (ABA) published its *Standards Relating to the Urban Police Function*. The standards reflected a growing body of research on the police and a new understanding of the complex role that police departments play. The emerging view recognized that police officers were primarily peacekeepers rather than

crime fighters: They spent most of their time maintaining order rather than fighting crime. The ABA standards also emphasized the need to control the exercise of discretion by police officers.[81]

These reports were accompanied by an explosion of research on the police. Much of this research was funded by the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) (1968–1976), and later the National Institute of Justice (NIJ).

The American Bar Foundation (ABF) had conducted the first field observations of police work in 1956 and 1957, finding that police officers exercised broad discretion and that most police work involved noncriminal activity.[82] Reiss and Black's field studies for the Crime Commission provided more precise quantitative data on these phenomena.[83]

The Crime Commission raised questions about the effectiveness of patrol, which led to the Kansas City Preventive Patrol Experiment, one of the most important pieces of police research ever conducted (1972–1973). The experiment tested the effect of different levels of patrol, and found that increased patrol did not reduce crime and had no significant effect on public awareness about police presence. At the same time, reduced patrol did not lead to an increase in crime or in public fear of crime. Challenging the basic assumptions about the effect of patrol on crime, the experiment had a profound effect on the thinking about the police.[84]

Research also questioned the value of rapid police response. Faster response time did not lead to more arrests. Few calls involved crimes in progress and most crime victims did not call the police immediately.[85] The Rand Corporation study of criminal investigation, meanwhile, shattered traditional myths about the detective. Follow-up investigations are very unproductive: Most crimes are solved through information obtained by the first officer on the scene and most detective work is boring, routine paperwork.[86]

There was also much research on police officers' attitudes and behavior. William Westley identified a distinct police subculture, characterized by hostility toward the public, group solidarity, and secrecy.[87] Jerome Skolnick found a distinct working environment in policing, dominated by danger and exercise of authority. The pressure to achieve results in the form of arrests and convictions, moreover, encouraged officers to violate legal procedures.[88] Most studies indicated that police officer attitudes were shaped by the nature of police work, including the culture of the organization, and not their individual background characteristics.

The rapidly accumulating body of research had a significant effect on reform efforts. Much of the important new research shattered traditional assumptions about policing (e.g., the deterrent effect of patrol, the value of quick response time). The Kerner Commission suggested that many aspects of professionalism have adverse consequences for police–community relations. According to historian Robert Fogelson, police reform was "at a standstill" by the early 1970s.[89] Reform efforts were eventually revitalized in the 1980s with the emergence of community policing and problem-oriented policing.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN POLICING

The crisis of the 1960s stimulated a burst of police reform. Some of these efforts represented a continuation of the traditional reform agenda; others reflected very different ideas about policing.[90]

In 1970 the Ford Foundation established the Police Foundation, with a grant of $30 million. Over the next 20 years The Police Foundation sponsored some of the most important police research, including the Kansas City Preventive Patrol Experiment. Later, the Police Executive Research Forum (PERF), a professional association of big-city police managers, emerged as the leader of innovation in policing.

The Changing Police Officer

The profile of the American police officer changed significantly between the 1960s and the 1990s. The employment of racial and ethnic minority officers increased slowly but steadily. Underrepresentation of black officers on big-city police departments was one of the major complaints raised by civil rights groups. The Kerner Commission found that in 1967 African Americans represented 34 percent of the population of Cleveland but only 7 percent of the police officers; in Oakland, they were 31 percent of the population and 4 percent of the officers.[91] By 1993 African-American officers were a majority in Detroit, Washington, and Atlanta. In Miami, Hispanic officers comprised 47.7 percent of the police force in 1993, and blacks made up another 17.4 percent.[92] African Americans served as police chiefs in New York City, Los Angeles, Atlanta, Chicago, Houston, and many other cities.

Traditional barriers to the employment of women in policing crumbled under the impact of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which barred discrimination on the basis of sex, and the women's movement. By the mid-1990s, the percentage of female officers in most big city departments was about 13 percent.[93] Female officers were assigned to routine patrol duty for the first time and departments eliminated barriers to the recruitment of women. Evaluations of female officers on patrol in Washington, DC, and New York City, however, found their performance to be as effective as that of comparable groups of male officers.[94]

Police departments began to recruit college students. Between 1968 and 1976, the federal Law Enforcement Education Program (LEEP) provided nearly $200 million in financial assistance to students in college criminal justice programs. Although only 20 percent of all sworn officers had any college education in 1960, the figure had risen to 65 percent by 1988.[95]

The length of preservice training increased from an average of about 300 hours in the 1960s to over ,000 hours in many departments by the 1990s. The more professional departments added a field training component to the traditional academy training. Police academy curricula added units on race relations, domestic violence, and ethics. New York and California had introduced mandatory training for all police officers in 1959 and, by the 1970s, every state had a similar requirement. Previously, many small police and sheriff's departments offered no preservice training whatsoever.[96]

Supervision and the Control of Discretion

As a result of Supreme Court decisions on police practices, minority community protests about misconduct, and a rising tide of lawsuits, police departments instituted procedures to control on-the-street police behavior.[97] This mainly involved written

policies covering search and seizure, interrogations, and other aspects of police work. Particularly important were the policies on the use of deadly force, handling of domestic violence, and high-speed pursuits. These policies were collected in the standard operating procedure (SOP), which became the basic tool of police management. They were part of a general movement to control the exercise of discretion in the criminal justice system.[98]

The control of deadly force was one of the most important reforms. Research indicated that police shot eight African Americans for every white citizen. The disparity was especially great with respect to unarmed citizens. Many of the 1960s riots were sparked by a shooting incident. Most police departments at that time had either no policy on deadly force or relied on state statutes that permitted the shooting of fleeing felons. In the early 1970s, they began to adopt more restrictive "defense of life" policies. Pioneering research by James J. Fyfe found that the New York City Police Department's new policy (1972) reduced firearms discharges by 30 percent.[99] As other departments adopted similar policies, the number of citizens shot and killed by the police nationwide dropped by 50 percent between 1970 and 1984. At the same time, the ratio of blacks to whites shot and killed fell by 50 percent.[100]

Rising public concern about domestic violence led to a revolution in police policy in that area as well. Women's groups sued the police in New York City, Oakland, and other cities for failing to arrest men who had committed domestic assault. These suits produced departmental policies prescribing mandatory arrest. Soon other departments across the country adopted similar policies. This trend received a strong boost when a Police Foundation study found that arrest deterred future violence more effectively than either mediation or separation. Although subsequent studies failed to confirm this effect, mandatory arrest policies remained popular.[101]

The cost of law suits against the police led to the creation of the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies in 1979. It published its first set of standards in 1983 and, by 1997, 368 law enforcement agencies had been accredited.[102] Although accreditation was entirely voluntary, it represented an important step forward in terms of professional self-regulation.

Police Unions

Police unions, which had been denied the right to exist in 1919 and again in the 1940s, spread rapidly in the 1960s and, by the 1970s, they had established themselves as a powerful force in American policing. Police officers were angry and alienated over Supreme Court rulings, criticisms by civil rights groups, poor salaries and benefits, and arbitrary disciplinary practices by police chiefs.[103]

Unions had a dramatic impact on police administration. They won significant improvements in salaries and benefits for officers, along with grievance procedures that protected the rights of officers in disciplinary hearings. They also produced a revolution in police management. Police chiefs were no longer all-powerful, and now had to negotiate with unions over many management issues. Many reformers were alarmed about the growth of police unions. Unions tended to resist innovations and were particularly hostile to attempts to improve police–community relations.

Citizen Review of Complaints

Although they had enormous power in many aspects of police administration, police unions steadily lost in one important area: citizen review of complaints against the police. Citizen review was one of the principal goals of civil rights groups, which argued that minority citizens were the victims of systematic police abuse and that police departments did not investigate complaints or discipline officers. Although the citizen review boards had been abolished in New York and Philadelphia in the 1960s, the concept revived in the 1970s. By the 1990s there were citizen review procedures in almost all the big cities.[104] The idea that citizen input into the complaints process was an important mechanism of accountability was, in fact, an international phenomenon. Citizen review procedures were universal in England, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and growing in other countries as well.[105]

Community Policing

The most important new development in policing in the 1980s and 1990s was the advent of community policing. Community policing was a philosophy of policing that embraced many different kinds of programs. The basic idea of community policing was that police departments should work closely with neighborhood residents, develop programs tailored for specific problems, and give rank-and-file officers more decision-making freedom. Instead of crime fighters, officers should function as problem-solvers, planners, and community organizers.[106]

Some of the components of community policing had been tried in the early 1970s under the heading of "team policing." The team policing idea, however, had died a dramatic death and was soon abandoned.[107] Community policing was based on a more solid empirical foundation regarding what the police can and cannot accomplish. In the seminal article, "Broken Windows," James Q. Wilson and George L. Kelling summed up the recent research on policing that patrol had only limited deterrent effect on crime, that faster response times did not increase arrests and that the capacity of detectives to solve crimes was limited. This research suggested two important points: that the police could not fight crime by themselves, but were very dependent upon citizens, and that the police could reduce fear by concentrating on less serious quality-of-life problems.[108]

Police chiefs, politicians, and community leaders quickly embraced the idea of community policing, and programs spread across the country in the 1980s.

Many programs incorporated the closely related concept of problem-oriented policing (POP). The originator of POP, Herman Goldstein, argued that instead of treating crime and disorder as general categories, the police should identify and focus on specific problems: chronic alcoholics in the neighborhood; abandoned buildings that served as drug houses, and so on.[109]

In the first POP experiment, officers in Newport News, Virginia, attacked crime in a deteriorated housing project by helping the residents organize to improve conditions in the project itself. This included pressuring both government agencies and private companies to fulfill their responsibilities regarding building conditions and sanitation.[110]

In New York City's Community Patrol Officer Program experiment, CPOP officers did not answer routine 911 calls; instead, they were expected to develop innovative strategies to deal with neighborhood problems.[111] New York City's approach later evolved into zero-tolerance policing, which involved aggressive enforcement of laws against minor crimes: public urination, graffiti, and so on. Serious crime in New York City dropped significantly in the mid-1990s. George Kelling argued that the attack on minor offenses was directly responsible. In many cases, he argued, a person arrested for a minor crime was found to be carrying an illegal weapon.[112]

Advocates of community policing hailed it as a new era in policing. As early as 1988, Kelling argued that "a quiet revolution is reshaping American policing."[113] By the late 1990s, it was still too early to assess the impact of community policing. Many programs were traditional anticrime, antidrug efforts. In some departments there was little more than rhetoric. Serious crime, meanwhile, fell nationwide in the mid-1990s, and could not necessarily be attributed to any specific police program such as New York City's zero-tolerance policing.

Whatever the impact of community policing, by the late 1990s, the American police were in the midst of an extraordinary period of innovation. Police chiefs across the country were open to experimentation and evaluation. David Bayley argues that "the last decade of the twentieth century may be the most creative period in policing since the modern police officer was put onto the streets of London in 1829.[114]

CONCLUSION: THE LESSONS OF THE PAST

As the 21st century approaches, we are aware of the innumerable changes in American policing. Viewed from the perspective of 300 years, the major change was the creation of the modern police: a large, specialized bureaucratic agency devoted to crime control and order maintenance. From the perspective of 100 years, American police departments changed from inefficient and corrupt political enterprises to enterprises with a nonpartisan professional mission.

From the perspective of the last 30 years one can see vast improvements in personnel standards and systems of accountability, including the values of due process and equal protection. The research revolution has produced an impressive body of knowledge about policing. There is a new candor about police discretion and about the limits of the police's ability to control crime. And, as David Bayley argues, the police are remarkably open to innovation and experimentation. [115]

The legacy of the past continues to weigh heavily on the police, however. Problems of abuse of authority—excessive physical force, corruption—continue to plague many departments. Conflict between the police and racial and ethnic minority communities is a problem in nearly every city. The introduction of women and racial and ethnic minority officers led to tension and often open conflict among the rank and file in many departments.[116] And despite the many community policing experiments, routine police work in most cities has not changed that much in 30 years: officers patrol in cars and answer their 911 calls. In a comprehensive review of recent developments in policing, Stephen Mastrofski concludes, "the patrol officers of today can be expected to do their job by and large as they did a decade ago and as they will do a decade hence."[117]

History offers many lessons about the American police. It dramatizes the fact that policing is always changing. Some of those changes are the result of planned innovation; others are the result of external social changes. At the same time, history illustrates the extent to which many aspects of policing, including some serious problems, endure.

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