Modern Day Policing And Society

Policing as we know it today has developed from various political, economic, and social factors. The first instance of a full time uniformed police was established based on Sir Robert Peel's Metropolitan Police Force of London, which was instituted in 1829. However, unlike their English counterparts, American police departments lacked the powerful, central authority of the crown to establish a legitimate, unifying mandate for their enterprise. Instead, American police derived both their authorization and resources from local political leaders, often ward politicians. They were, of course, guided by the law as to what tasks to undertake and what powers to utilize. But their link to neighborhoods and local politicians was so tight that both Jordan and Fogelson refer to the early police as adjuncts to local political machines. The relationship was often reciprocal: political machines recruited and maintained police in office and on the beat, while police helped ward political leaders maintain their political offices by encouraging citizens to vote for certain candidates, discouraging them from voting for others, and, at times, by assisting in rigging elections. With the above being noted, the history of policing in the U.S. can be categorized into three eras with each changing overtime and becoming more advanced as well as each having their pros and cons defining the era. The first was the political (1840 to 1930), the second era was the reform era, (1930 to 1980) and the last era was the community problem solving era, (1980 to the present day).

In the political era (1840-1930), police organizations were controlled and used by politicians for political purposes and the police were subject to abuses such as corruption and partisanship. This era was influenced by Sir Robert Peel, the father of modern policing who proposed appointing civilians to be paid by the community to serve as police officers. The political era was distinguished by police officers seeking a friendly relationship with the community and politics influenced the police department and police practices. During this era, the police had limited technology, so they had to walk around and communicate with people. The pros of this era were that there was a good interpersonal relationship with the police. Apart from solving crime, they provided a wide variety of social services. In the late 19th century, municipal police departments ran soup lines; provided temporary lodging for newly arrived immigrant workers in station houses and assisted ward leaders in finding work for immigrants, both in police and other forms of work. Meanwhile, the cons were that the police was corrupt and racist. They only tend to protect the people that paid them. The main outcome of this era was citizen and political satisfaction. Meanwhile, the reform era (1930-1980) was based on reconstructing the corrupt police departments. The reform was also to redefine the duties of the police to uphold the law which was not being done during the nineteenth century. They brought in professionals to do policing; fighting crimes and arresting people. The community relation with the police was going down and the police became heavily reliant on technology and concerned with efficiency. This era was influenced by August Vollmer, the first chief of police to require police officers to attain a college degree. He was also the first police chief to create a motorized force; placing officers on motorcycles and in cars so that they could patrol a broader area with greater efficiency. Radios were also included in patrol cars. Policing became more centralized, and the social distance between police and the communities increased. This is a period of policing in which police only dealt with crime, and all other community problems were seen as a responsibility of between the police and the communities they serve. Each year, law enforcement faces new challenges that redefine the profession. "The challenges facing law enforcement in the 21st Century are

extremely complex and ever evolving. Some of these are new twists to old problems and some are new, sophisticated challenges that 20 years ago we could not have imagined nor even prepared for," states James P. McDonnell, Sheriff of Los Angeles County on behalf of the Major County Sheriffs of America & the National Sheriff's Association. The number one issue facing policing today is the allegation that officers act on stereotypes and biases. Across the country, community members are expressing great concern about the over-representation of racial/ethnic minorities among individuals against whom police use force and whom police arrest, stop and frisk. As a result, police have lost public trust especially from these groups. African Americans frequently report that police officers are more likely to stop, question and even use force against them than against white suspects. Black youth describe being followed in convenience stores or being pulled over or frisked by police repeatedly. Research on bias in policing has shown that the stereotype that young African American males are more crime-prone oftentimes is accompanied by disparate treatment by the police. Recent research also shows that African Americans experience stereotype threat, or the fear of doing something that will inadvertently confirm the criminal stereotype, in encounters with police-type figures. Social psychologist Cynthia Najdowski has also shown that the concern about being judged unfairly by the police because of stereotypes will lead innocent black suspects to experience more arousal, a greater cognitive load, and engage in more self-regulatory efforts than whites during those encounters. Because police believe that nervous behavior is a non-verbal cue to deception, Najdowski hypothesizes that stereotype threat could, ironically, increase the likelihood that individuals will be perceived as suspicious and that this will lead police to initiate investigatory contacts with blacks disproportionately more often than with whites. High profile incidents like those in Ferguson and other places have only served to rock public confidence and exasperate some of the challenges already faced. Even though concerns about bias in policing are particularly loud and powerful at this time, they are not new. Communities and the law enforcement profession have grappled with this issue for many years.

Secondly, according to Sheriff Mc Donnell, there is a major issue as it relates to recruitment, hiring and retaining qualified men and women to serve in law enforcement. All law enforcement agencies are facing the problem. Hence, this crisis in not just a local issue, it affects federal and state agencies. With recent high profile incidents, videos of law enforcement actions going viral, recent targeted assassinations of law enforcement personnel and other negative second guessing of the press and local officials has made recruiting and hiring qualified men and women a real challenge. Combine this with the fact that gone are the days of finding young men and women who are wanting to take on a career and stay for 30 plus years and you are looking at a serious issue. Added to that is the difficulty of hiring minorities and women, who look at this negative atmosphere, and simply do not find the occupation to be appealing. Adding more concern is that in many jurisdictions around the country there are either significant pension crisis, and/or pension reform efforts that have, or will have reduced the pension formulas for employees at all levels of government service. This also serves as a disincentive and creates a level of future uncertainty in prospective employees. Finally, social media presents a host of issues and challenges for law enforcement in the 21st century from activist organizations sudden protests, gang recruitment tools, terrorism indoctrination, chilling crimes committed live on various social media platforms, to human trafficking, scams, and personal security issues for the public and law enforcement. In San Francisco, following a shooting by transit police, protests were organized online in an attempt to block Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) stations. In perhaps an other city and community agencies (National Institute of Justice). Hence, the pros were that it was professional policing, they were not corrupt, and they were trained and not as racist. Lastly, there is the community policing era, which we are currently in. Problem-solving

and community policing are strategic concepts that seek to redefine the ends and the means of policing. The policing philosophy went back to decentralizing and creating special units of community policing officers Problem-solving policing focuses police attention on the problems that lie behind incidents, rather than on the incidents only. Community policing emphasizes the establishment of working partnerships between police and communities to reduce crime and enhance security. Policing efforts were in re-building relationships and demonstrating that the local police department cares about the communities they serve by improving the quality of living and encouraging the community to work with their local police department and officers.

The prevalent approach that emphasizes professional law enforcement has failed to control or prevent crime, has failed to make policing a profession, and has fostered an unhealthy separation ill-considered response, BART shut down wireless service in the subway to disrupt organizers, which outraged protesters and created yet more trouble. In August, for example, Philadelphia Mayor Michael Nutter announced an expanded curfew for minors following flash mob violence. Flash mobs — organized online through various social media — convene at a predetermined time and place for a specific purpose. Though many are harmless or merely pranks, in Philadelphia, the purpose was to rob pedestrians and then swarm through stores shoplifting. According to the Department of Justice, ISIS is so adept in its use of social media for propaganda and recruitment that most cases of domestic terrorism can now be traced to social media platforms. This presents enormous challenges for local and state law enforcement. Although the federal government primarily handles the monitoring of such activities, it’s local and state law enforcement that ultimately has to deal with the terrorist event as the police such as Sheriff McDonnell are usually the first responders. They usually find themselves, outgunned and sometimes completely unaware of the threats in their own neighborhoods. Another group is anarchists or those who use social media to research peaceful protests and will mix in to turn an ordinary peaceful expression of one’s constitutional rights into a melee or riot. This presents a serious challenge for all involved. Anarchists and those opportunists who relish the chaos of such events are not new to the American discourse, but social media has given them a way to coordinate nationwide and reach thousands in a single keystroke.

Globalisation continues to accelerate and present new challenges resulting in a rise in the complexity of the police task. Communities will become increasingly diverse and complex, with an increasingly aging society, necessitating a more sophisticated response. Proposals to devolve more power to locally elected mayors to lead combined authorities covering health, policing and social services provide real potential for the development of more integrated working practices. By developing effective strategies in public safety and communicating these strategies to all officers and the public, law enforcement can gain the advantage of strong relationships with internal, external, and political audiences in the future per say in the next five years. Numerous studies have shown that individuals are far more likely to comply with the law and to cooperate with law enforcement authorities when they perceive their actions as legitimate—and that one critical component of legitimacy is the perception that police officials are responsive to community demands. At listening sessions before the President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing, a number of police officials also testified about the benefits of adopting robust civilian oversight and community engagement programs. Nonetheless, simply educating individual citizens on constitutional law and their rights won’t solve the problem of how they are being treated by police, regardless of whether the treatment comports with constitutional limitations. Even changing the legal rules themselves won’t solve the problem for the same reason since it fails to adequately address officer behavior in interpersonal interactions. Instead, as Meares advocates, there needs to be different kinds of training programs for the police itself,

who “need to be encouraged to treat people with dignity and respect regardless of whether the rules require it.” Her study further highlights that, by helping to foster legitimacy and “build communities out of crime,” treating people fairly simply becomes good police policy if and when practiced in the future.

However, in an atmosphere where government bodies are plagued with lingering economic woes and are forced to make very difficult choices about their budgets, most police departments continue to be underfunded. Additional funding will therefore be needed in the future from governmental sources not only for equipment but for training that will enhance the diversity consciousness of law enforcement professionals such as implicit bias, de-escalation, and use of force. Grant programs such as the State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSP) and the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) work to address gaps in local agencies capabilities for responding to terrorist threats. Other programs such as the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant Program (JAG) have a broader focus of providing critical funding to support a range of different program areas. Leaders then must figure out how to integrate the technological advancements into their agencies with limited funding should the issue of being underfunded remain.

Lastly, recruiting and retaining law enforcement professionals at the local level will also ensure that we have a highly trained and experienced workforce to provide police-related services and conduct complex investigations, whether they involve criminal activity, terrorism.There is increased scrutiny and greater expectations from the citizenry and resources are key here, but the most important question is: “Will there ever be enough?

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