



The Evolution of Policing and a Return to Principles

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Nearly 200 years ago, the forefathers of municipal policing recognized some core principles that are finding renewed significance for the practitioners of contemporary policing. These policing principles seem to be circling back to those century-old core principles—with the help of new technological advancements, science, data, comprehensive research, and courageous leadership. In many regards, nothing is new; while in others, the industry of law enforcement has moved light years to meet the rising complexities of policing.

It is clearer than ever that to reach significant reductions in violent crime, police trust-building must be a priority. Whether some community members do not report crime or do not work with police due to apathy, fear, or a lack of confidence, it is data-driven policing coupled with trust-building that can begin to change that. Whether some community members do not occupy their public spaces because of perceived or actual crime, smarter policing and trust-building can ease these fears.

Policing is a noble profession; but as police officers face one of the most difficult times ever, they are sometimes left feeling vilified. Wellness programs are continually

being developed to support these men and women in law enforcement. The most recent evolution of policing considers all aspects of wellness for both the community and its members and for the police officers who serve their community. Three significant areas make up this evolutionary shift: enforcement, relationships, and metrics. Guaranteeing that these three be operationalized and institutionalized in police departments across the nation is critical to melding the municipal connections of the past with the heightened awareness and trust-building of the present.

Police History Lane

To understand where the law enforcement profession is headed, an examination must first be made of where it has been. In America, by the middle of the nineteenth century, and after many southern police forces had originated from patrols for escaped slaves or in other areas across the country as police "Watchmen," there was a recognition to form professional municipal police departments. This shift is believed to have originated from Sir Robert Peel's Metropolitan London force. Peel, widely regarded as the father of modern policing, formed the often-cited nine Peelian Principles. The Peelian principles mostly relate to the idea of "policing by consent," where police powers are derived, not from fear, but from public co-operation with the police, and the idea that policing should be based on the approval and respect of the public. Although Peel influenced American policing at that time, most police forces did not truly follow all of the Peelian Principles.

By the 1930s, American policing saw the rise of organized crime and experienced one of the deadliest decades for law enforcement officers. Graft and corruption were also concerns, and the "reform era" and "professional model" began to unfold. This model aimed to distance police from the public, rejecting the alliance between the public and the police. At that time, no one foresaw the negative consequences of severing the ties between the officers and the neighborhoods. Then came the introduction of motorized police units and radios, shifting police units into being "radio cars" used for preventative patrols and rapid call response. But through the 1960s and 1970s, crime skyrocketed, and riots ensued, and the beginnings of enforcement crackdowns, the likes of which America had never seen, took place. Intrusive police practices exacerbated the divide between the community and the police. Some data collection began during this era, such as the 1972 Kansas City preventive patrol experiment, which showed visible patrols were not getting results in crime reduction.

A decade later, another shift in policing began to occur, and this was the shift *back* to re-connecting with the community. By the 1980s and early 1990s, many police departments instituted "community policing," yet most were no more than specific programs or specific units. "Problem-oriented-policing" and "community-oriented policing" arose which focused on giving attention to underlying community problems; this followed the theory that focusing on "broken windows" to address urban disorder issues in neighborhoods could keep them from falling into deeper disrepair. But many believe that some use of zero-tolerance enforcement of "broken windows," such as

mass stop and frisk tactics, was a misapplication of the original “broken windows” theory, and it had unintended consequences of even further distancing the community.

In the mid-1990s, computerized statistics and meetings, such as “Compstat,” became common in policing and were frequently driven by many metrics such as arrest and citation rates. Positive outcomes of Compstat were that commanders were held accountable, and police units were forced to communicate with one another, but the negative consequences of underreporting and also of a high reliance upon dropping crime rates through arrests overshadowed the success that Compstat brought. The next often cited shift in policing was a stronger emphasis on the “warrior mindset,” after the New York City tragedy on September 11, 2001. The attacks ushered in a strong counterterrorism policing era, with a singular focus on tactics, training, and equipment. Most experts later agreed that although officers must sometimes be highly tactical and wear the “warrior” hat, the primary role of law enforcement officers should be that of “guardian.”

Now, since 2010, police departments are recognizing how essential the component of building public trust is. There has also been an understanding that law enforcement cannot arrest their way out of crime and disorder problems. *Principled Policing* has come to the forefront, bringing along with it the historical *Peelian Principles*. The Evolution of Policing has come full circle, with the added benefit of lessons learned and the focused awareness needed to apply and activate these fundamental principles.

The Latest Evolution

That there is a tie between trust within the police and crime reporting and crime-fighting is intuitive, but it is also based on developing data and research (REFERENCE 1). Violence is highest in neighborhoods with low trust in government and residents can feel trapped in a cycle of mistrust and violence that self-perpetuates. Data-driven policing can restore trust because it uses enforcement more strategically while focusing on the things that threaten communities most.

Police agencies across the country are moving through the latest evolution in policing which connects trust and crime. Stockton, California, is an example. It is not *the* example, but rather is *one* example. Probably unique, however, is how the City of Stockton went through the evolution of policing on an accelerated track. This fast track was not by design necessarily but rather due to a “negative trifecta”—the 2012 filing of bankruptcy, while simultaneously becoming one of the most understaffed larger police departments in the nation, while also experiencing one of the highest violent crime rates. Given these dire straits, the police department needed the community more than ever. The Stockton Police Department made a shift away from a “call responder” approach to the latest evolution of policing: Strategic Data-Driven Policing and Principled Policing. The police department made this shift regardless of staffing or budget and therefore required a reset of priorities and a new organizational design under *Principled Policing*.

Principled Policing, although based on comprehensive research, is nothing really new. It is in a sense returning to the true origins of the Peelian Principles of 1829 to ensure American Policing stands for an understanding of policing by consent. We can, though, go even further back in time, to 350 B.C., to show how *Principled Policing* should be at the heart of the law enforcement industry. Aristotle held justice as a virtue; and, in fact, his four cardinal virtues of prudence, courage, temperance, and justice ring familiarly similar to Procedural Justice's four pillars of voice, neutrality, respect, and trustworthiness.

Procedural Justice holds that these pillars shape police officer encounters and that people's perceptions of the encounter are influenced more by the experience than the end result of the interaction. That then directly shapes individuals' feelings of whether they felt they were treated justly, which translates into whether they view the police department as a legitimate authority, and perceptions of legitimacy have a major impact on people's compliance with the law. Community surveys in the neighborhoods with the highest levels of distrust and crime have shown some interesting results. Residents in these neighborhoods mostly and strongly feel they cannot trust the officers and that the officers do not hold themselves accountable. However, these residents also want lawful activity within their neighborhoods and want to work with the police. The survey results show there is much work to be done, but that there is hope for working together.

Principled and Smarter Policing is what police officers want to do and so often do on a daily basis. Consider just the City of Stockton alone where police handle on average 1,000 calls-for-service per day. No one hears of those 1,000 daily calls where everything goes right, and perhaps law enforcement can do a better job of advertising that and the fact that so many men and women put their lives on the line daily for the people in the community. These men and women willingly become the guardians of our communities.

With the advent of *Principled and Smarter Policing*, feedback from officers has been that this is exactly what they signed up to do; it is the core of their job. An examination of the reasons why police officers sign up to pin the badge on their uniform in the first place shows the reasons are the same now as they have been for decades: to serve justice and to help and protect people. Procedural justice courses have been some of the highest-rated courses within the Department; this is good news that police officers want to nurture and build community trust. What is new to them is the layered science and structure behind these principles, and they are more than willing to learn all the nuances. Along with enthusiasm for increased awareness and education, however, there also must be an acknowledgment that cynicism is bound to occur in police officers' careers due to the many challenges they face and horrendous things they see. It is critical that police departments openly face cynicism and provide tools to help combat stress, disillusionment, and even despair. Police departments must concentrate on training, policy, and trauma-informed care to keep officers committed to their

principles. Many departments are doing exactly that through Wellness Programs and Networks. Officer wellness is more important than ever because of the current climate generated by certain factions of the media and groups of citizens. Although the vast majority of citizens approve what police officers do, officers often feel a balanced evaluation of their service to the community is missing. As perspectives become broader and encompass more understanding and appreciation of community dynamics, it is hoped this evolution will include all levels of interaction between the community and those who protect and serve it.

The Three Evolutionary Shifts

The most recent evolution of law enforcement, of the latest of *Principled and Smarter Policing*, has three primary shifts. These shifts are enforcement, relationships, and metrics.

- **Enforcement** – Enforcement by police has moved away from blanket, zero-tolerance enforcement to strategic and data-driven enforcement. Instead of simply responding to a high crime area and saturating it with zero-tolerance enforcement for the whole community, police departments are being much more strategic to focus on the very small percentage of community members committing the vast majority of crime. Police departments are also focusing on the crimes that are most important to public safety and well-being. Group violence interventions and other focused deterrence strategies have proven successful in many jurisdictions. Operation Ceasefire is an example of such a strategy.
- **Relationships** – Relationships are not new, but there is a shift in understanding the levels of police mistrust and how it can be best addressed through historical acknowledgments, listening, and recognizing the need for improvements with collaboration. Relationships have been a component of Peelian Principles as well as community-oriented policing methods. The newest data and research tells us now how best to reach out to the most disenfranchised communities. An understanding of the levels and sources of mistrust, especially in our communities of color, and how historical acknowledgments and reconciliation can assist in meaningful dialogue, is a building-block for relationship-building, and therefore trust-building. Law enforcement agencies are also beginning to recognize the importance of being trauma-informed.
- **Outcomes and Metrics** – There is less an emphasis on arrests and citations as a police report card for success and a stronger focus on trust-building metrics. Community sentiment and feedback on the policing of our communities is important for a police department's gauges of success. Many of these outcomes and metrics are still being developed, as this is a relatively recent shift for many police departments. Promising strategies seem to be comprehensive community

surveys externally and a shift from traditional Compstat numbers to collective overviews looking at both crime-fighting and trust-building efforts in Departmental meetings internally.

Much of the content of these three areas of shift is contained in the California Attorney General's Principled Policing Subcommittee and Statewide Training, the National Initiative on Building Community Trust and Justice, and the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, all of which had Stockton involved. All the training and initiatives have the three shifts—enforcement, relationships, and metrics—in common.

Shift Implementation

The success of *Principled Policing* and these three evolution shifts relies upon leadership at all levels, top to bottom, and a culture embracing change. It must be ingrained into the policing culture, which is the shared set of values and beliefs. The culture should be one where ideas are evaluated on merits rather than rank or politics, openness is promoted, people are held accountable, and best practices are sought. Transparency (body-worn cameras, policies made public, advisory boards, etc.) and accountability (force review processes, audits, etc.) are at the minimum needed, but *Principled Policing* also requires the operationalization at the field level for the most routine of tasks and institutionalization for department-wide permeation.

- **Operationalization**

Neighborhood Response—implementing deployment into neighborhoods using the four pillars of Procedural Justice

Multiple Layers of Community Input—varying layers from public forums, to neighborhood-based and issue-based meetings, to smaller listening sessions such as study circles, “Courageous Conversations,” and Reconciliation Sessions, which include law enforcement acknowledgments of historical past wrongs

Intelligence and Information-led communications and planning meetings for multiple divisions within police departments—spending equal time on trust-building strategies with crime-fighting strategies

- **Institutionalization**

Mission statement—such as with Stockton PD there was a revised mission statement that focuses on building and maintaining relationships “founded on trust and mutual respect while reducing crime and improving quality of life”

A Strategic Plan—for example, one created with input from all members of the police department and a community survey, focusing on two pillars: *Smarter Policing* and *Principled Policing*

Not Referencing *Principled Policing* or Trust-Building as Just Programs or Projects

Policies and Practices Reflecting the Principles and Tenets of Procedural Justice—a comprehensive review of all policies and revising and reflecting these principles and tenets

Training—Procedural Justice, Police Legitimacy and Implicit Bias Training, and De-escalation Training

Evaluations and Rewards/Awards Reflecting These Principles—rewards and awards, and police officer performance evaluations focusing on these principles along with heroic and other outstanding behavior; promotional examinations also focusing on these principles

The two pillars of *Principled* and *Strategic Policing*, like any set of pillars, must lay on a solid foundation. In this case, the foundation must be made of a healthy culture and leadership at all levels, from the top of the organization to the line level. Stockton has had the benefit of the police union buying in and helping shape the Department's strategic plan.

Conclusion

Sir Robert Peel was right all along, and American policing in the nineteenth century saw value in the Peelian Principles, but unfortunately drifted away when it was determined there should be distance between the public and police. In the 1980s, American policing made advancements with the "broken windows" theory about the benefits of order maintenance and addressing tipping-point neighborhoods, but many departments had not considered the unintended consequences of zero-tolerance policing. Fortunately, now, police agencies are getting back to understanding the strong need for public consent policing as Peel outlined.

The evolution of policing continues its process because as with any profession, law enforcement is a learning organism, all searching for best practices and evolving as necessary. Although the evolution has brought us *back* to the core of what police officers should stand for, there is now research behind this shift of enforcement, relationships, and metrics. Operationalizing and institutionalizing these shifts are required to move the noble profession of law enforcement forward.

Police officers everywhere must walk the delicate balance of being vigilant, due to violent assaults upon them, with also being approachable and accessible to the public. It is a difficult balance but is worth the valuable cause of policing; yet meanwhile, there is sometimes an unfortunate insistence that there must be two sides: either pro-police or anti-police. But the rhetoric of the need for two sides can be cut through if everyone can agree on two things: (1) that a safe community is a desirable outcome; and (2) that negative police encounters should be reduced. Our continued, generative evolution depends on this.



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Reference 1: Desmond, Papachristos and Kirk, "Police Violence and Citizen Crime Reporting in the Black Community," *American Sociological Review*.

Reference 2: 1829 Sir Robert Peel's Nine Peelian Principles:

1. To prevent crime and disorder, as an alternative to their repression by military force and severity of legal punishment.
2. To recognise always that the power of the police to fulfil their functions and duties is dependent on public approval of their existence, actions and behaviour, and on their ability to secure and maintain public respect.
3. To recognise always that to secure and maintain the respect and approval of the public means also the securing of the willing co-operation of the public in the task of securing observance of laws.
4. To recognise always that the extent to which the co-operation of the public can be secured diminishes proportionately the necessity of the use of physical force and compulsion for achieving police objectives.
5. To seek and preserve public favour, not by pandering to public opinion, but by constantly demonstrating absolutely impartial service to law, in complete independence of policy, and without regard to the justice or injustice of the substance of individual laws, by ready offering of individual service and friendship to all members of the public without regard to their wealth or social standing, by ready exercise of courtesy and friendly good humour, and by ready offering of individual sacrifice in protecting and preserving life.
6. To use physical force only when the exercise of persuasion, advice and warning is found to be insufficient to obtain public co-operation to an extent necessary to secure observance of law or to restore order, and to use only the minimum degree of physical force which is necessary on any particular occasion for achieving a police objective.
7. To maintain at all times a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and that the public are the police, the police being only members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence.

8. To recognise always the need for strict adherence to police-executive functions, and to refrain from even seeming to usurp the powers of the judiciary, of avenging individuals or the State, and of authoritatively judging guilt and punishing the guilty.
9. To recognise always that the test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder, and not the visible evidence of police action in dealing with them.