

OVERVIEW OF THE POLICE IN THE UNITED STATES

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A TIMELINE OF POLICING IN AMERICA



Women had gendered responsibilities within police departments during the political era of policing.

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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Examine the English roots of American policing.
- Describe how slave patrols and watch groups evolved into formal police agencies in Colonial America.
- Examine the ways that politics influenced American policing during the political era.
- Explain how the adoption of technology and actions by police reformers changed American policing during the reform era.
- Discuss the strategies used by some police agencies to strengthen and in some cases build strong relationships between the police and the public during the community/problem-solving era.
- Identify how the terrorist attacks on 9/11 increased the use of intelligence by American police agencies during the Homeland Security era.

It is important to examine the history of policing in the United States to understand how it has progressed and changed over time. Alterations to the purpose, duties, and structure of American police agencies have allowed this profession to evolve from ineffective, voluntary watch groups into formal police agencies that incorporate advanced technology and cutting-edge strategies into their daily operations. This chapter provides a historical timeline of American policing beginning with a discussion of the English influence of Sir Robert Peel and the London Metropolitan Police through contemporary times where some police agencies utilize problem-solving and community policing strategies to fulfill their organizational missions. The historical timeline provides an overview of several distinct eras in American policing. Several influential police reformers, along with important events that have shaped American policing since its inception, are also discussed.

THE BEGINNING OF AMERICAN POLICING: THE ENGLISH INFLUENCE

American policing has been heavily influenced by the English system throughout the course of history. In the early stages of development in both England and Colonial America, residents were responsible for law enforcement in their communities.¹ The English referred to this as *kin police* in which people were responsible for watching out for their relatives or kin.² In Colonial America, a watch system consisting of citizens (usually men) was in place until the mid-19th century.³ Citizens that were part of watch groups provided social services, including lighting street lamps, running soup kitchens, recovering lost children, capturing runaway animals, and a variety of other services. Their involvement in crime control activities at this time was minimal at best.⁴ Policing in England and Colonial America was largely ineffective, as their method of patrol was both disorganized and sporadic.⁵

Sometime later, the responsibility of enforcing laws shifted from individuals to groups consisting mostly of men living within the community; this was referred to as the **frankpledge system** in England.⁶ The frankpledge system was a semi-structured system in which groups of men were responsible for enforcing the law. Men living within a community would form groups of 10 called *tythings* (or tithings); 10 tythings were then grouped into *hundreds*, and then hundreds were grouped into *shires* (similar to counties).⁷ A person called the *shire reeve* (sheriff) was then chosen to be in charge of each shire.⁸ Individual members of tythings were responsible for capturing criminals and bringing them to court, while shire reeves were responsible for providing a number of services, including the oversight of the activities conducted by the tythings in their shire.⁹

In 1749, Henry Fielding (author and Westminster Magistrate) created the **Bow Street Runners** in response to an increase in crime in London.¹⁰ This newly formed group consisted primarily of constables and former constables who were responsible for locating and arresting serious offenders. Fielding received a small sum of money from the government to pay the Bow Street Runners for their efforts. When government funds ran out, the Runners were paid from official reward money when they captured wanted offenders and from payments from crime victims who hired them for their services.¹¹ Henry Fielding also placed advertisements in the newspaper informing residents that they should contact the Bow Street office whenever they experienced or learned about serious crimes so that the Bow Street Runners could help capture any involved offenders.

When Henry Fielding died in 1754, his half-brother, John Fielding, took over the Bow Street Runners.¹² The mission of this group remained the same; however, John Fielding expanded the role of the Runners by requiring them to patrol streets and roads leading into the region in an effort to prevent crime. The Runners' primary modes of patrol were foot and horse. He also made the Bow Street office a centralized collection point for information related to serious crimes across the country and maintained a register of stolen goods.¹³ In an effort to inform the public, the Bow Street office circulated information regarding wanted criminals and stolen goods. Over time, this circulation led to the creation of the *Quarterly Pursuit* publication, which ultimately turned into the *Police Gazette*, a daily publication of the London Metropolitan Police.¹⁴ The creation of the London Metropolitan Police in 1829 (discussed in greater detail later in this chapter) greatly diminished the responsibilities of the Runners. The Bow Street Runners ultimately disbanded in 1839.¹⁵

In America during this time, constables, sheriffs, and community-based watch groups were responsible for policing in the colonies. Sheriffs were responsible for catching criminals, working with the courts, and collecting taxes; law enforcement was not a top priority for sheriffs, as they could make more money by collecting taxes within the community.¹⁶ Night watch groups in Colonial America, as well as day watch groups that were added at a later time, were largely ineffective; instead of controlling crime in their community, some watch group members would sleep and/or socialize while they were on duty.¹⁷

The community-based watch groups were not equipped to deal with the increasing social unrest and rioting that were beginning to occur in Colonial America in the late 1700s through the early 1800s.¹⁸ It was at this time that publicly funded police departments began to emerge across both England and Colonial America.

Sir Robert Peel and the London Metropolitan Police

In 1829, **Sir Robert Peel** (Home Secretary of England) introduced the Bill for Improving the Police in and Near the Metropolis (also referred to as the Metropolitan Police Act) to Parliament with the goal of creating a police force to manage the social conflict resulting from rapid urbanization and industrialization taking place in the city of London.¹⁹ Peel's efforts resulted in the creation of the London Metropolitan Police on September 29, 1829.²⁰ Historians and scholars alike identify the **London Metropolitan Police** as the first modern police department.²¹ Sir Robert Peel is often referred to as the father of modern policing, as he played an integral role in the creation of this department, as well as several basic principles that would later guide the formation of police departments in the United States. Past and current police officers working in the London Metropolitan Police Department are often referred to as bobbies or peelers to honor the efforts of Sir Robert Peel.²²

Peel believed that the function of the London Metropolitan Police should focus primarily on crime prevention—that is, preventing crime from occurring instead of detecting it after it occurred. To do this, the police would have to work in a coordinated and centralized manner, provide coverage across large designated beat areas, and be available to the public both night and day.²³ It was also during this time that preventive patrol first emerged as a way to potentially deter criminal activity. The idea was that people would think twice about committing crimes if they noticed a strong police presence in their community. This approach to policing would be vastly different from the early watch groups that patrolled the streets in an unorganized and erratic manner.²⁴ Watch groups prior to the creation of the London Metropolitan Police were not viewed as an effective or legitimate source of protection by the public.²⁵

It was important to Sir Robert Peel that the newly created London Metropolitan Police Department be viewed as a legitimate organization in the eyes of the public, unlike the earlier watch groups.²⁶ To facilitate this legitimation, Peel identified several principles that he believed would lead to credibility with the public (see Table 1.1), including that the police must be under government control, have a military-like organizational structure, and have a central headquarters that was located in an area that was easily accessible to the public.²⁷ He also thought that the quality of people who were chosen to be police officers would further contribute to the organization's legitimacy. For example, he believed that men who were even-tempered and reserved and who could employ the appropriate type of discipline to residents would make the best police officers.²⁸ It was also important to Peel that his men wear appropriate uniforms, display numbers (badge numbers) so that the public could easily identify them, not carry firearms, and receive appropriate training in order to be effective at their work.²⁹ Many of these ideologies were also adopted by American police agencies during this time period and remain in place



Sir Robert Peel was the founder of the London Metropolitan Police Department.

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TABLE 1.1 ■ Peelian Principles

Military characteristics (stability, organization, and efficiency)	Government control	Measure effectiveness	Distribute crime news to the public	Implement standards for what makes a “good cop”
Police uniform	Badge numbers	Central headquarters	Probationary period for new officers	Track professional progress of officers and the organization

in some contemporary police agencies across the United States. It is important to note that recently, there has been some debate about whether Peel really espoused the previously mentioned ideologies or principles or if they are the result of various interpretations (or misinterpretations) of the history of English policing.³⁰

POLICING IN COLONIAL AMERICA

Similar to England, Colonial America experienced an increase in population in major cities during the 1700s.³¹ Some of these cities experienced an influx of immigrant groups moving in from various countries (including Germany, Ireland, Italy, and several Scandinavian countries), which directly contributed to the rapid increase in population.³² The growth in population also created an increase in social disorder and unrest. The sources of social tension varied across different regions of Colonial America; however, the introduction of new racial and ethnic groups was identified as a common source of discord.³³

Slave Patrols of the South

Racial and ethnic conflict was a problem across Colonial America, including both the northern and southern regions of the country.³⁴ Since watch groups could not cope with this change in the social climate, more formalized means of policing began to take shape. Most of the historical literature describing the early development of policing in Colonial America focuses specifically on the northern regions of the country while neglecting events that took place in the southern region—specifically, the creation of **slave patrols** in the South.³⁵

Slave patrols first emerged in South Carolina in the early 1700s, but historical documents also identify the existence of slave patrols in most other parts of the southern region.³⁶ Samuel Walker identified slave patrols as the first publicly funded police agencies in the American South.³⁷ Slave patrols (or “paddyrollers”) were created with the specific intent of maintaining control over people who were enslaved.³⁸ Slave patrols would later extend their responsibilities to include control over white indentured servants.³⁹ Sally Hadden identified three principal duties placed on slave patrols in the South during this time, including searches of the lodges of people who were enslaved, keeping people who were enslaved off of roadways, and disassembling meetings organized by people who were enslaved.⁴⁰ Slave patrols were known for their high level of brutality and ruthlessness as they maintained control over the people who were enslaved. The members of slave patrols were usually white men (occasionally a few women) from every echelon in the social strata, ranging from very poor individuals to plantation owners who wanted to ensure control over the people they enslaved.⁴¹

Slave patrols remained in place during the Civil War and were not completely disbanded after slavery ended.⁴² During early Reconstruction, several groups merged with what was formerly known as slave patrols to maintain control over Black people. Groups such as the federal military, the state militia, and the Ku Klux Klan took over the responsibilities of earlier slave patrols and were known to be even more violent than their predecessors.⁴³ Over time, these groups began to resemble and operate like some of the newly established police departments in the United States. In fact, David and Melissa Barlow noted that “by 1837, the Charleston Police Department had 100 officers and the primary

function of this organization was slave patrol . . . these officers regulated the movements of slaves and free blacks, checking documents, enforcing slave codes, guarding against slave revolts and catching runaway slaves.⁴⁴ Scholars and historians assert that the transition from slave patrols to publicly funded police agencies was seamless in the southern region of the United States.⁴⁵

While some regard slave patrol as the first formal attempt at policing in America, others identify the unification of police departments in several major cities in the mid-1800s as the beginning point in the development of modern policing in the United States.⁴⁶ For example, the New York City Police Department was unified in 1845,⁴⁷ the St. Louis Metropolitan Police Department in 1846,⁴⁸ the Chicago Police Department in 1854,⁴⁹ and the Los Angeles Police Department in 1869,⁵⁰ to name a few. These newly created police agencies adopted three distinct characteristics from their English counterparts: (1) limited police authority—the powers of the police are defined by law; (2) local control—local governments bear the responsibility for providing police service; and (3) fragmented law enforcement authority—several agencies within a defined area share the responsibility for providing police services, which ultimately leads to problems with communication, cooperation, and control among these agencies.⁵¹ It is important to point out that these characteristics are still present in modern American police agencies.

Other issues that caused debate within the newly created American police departments included whether police officers should be armed and wear uniforms and to what extent physical force should be used during interactions with residents.⁵² Sir Robert Peel's position on these matters was clear when he formed the London Metropolitan Police Department. He wanted his officers to wear distinguishable uniforms so that the public could easily identify them. He did not want his officers armed, and he hired and trained his officers in a way that would allow them to use the appropriate type of response and force when interacting with residents.⁵³ American police officers felt that the uniforms would make them the target of mockery (resulting in less legitimacy with the public) and that the level of violence occurring in the United States at that time warranted carrying firearms and using force whenever necessary.⁵⁴ Despite their objections, police officers in cities were required to wear uniforms, and shortly after that, they were allowed to carry clubs and revolvers in the mid-1800s.⁵⁵ In contemporary American police agencies, the dispute concerning uniforms and firearms has long been resolved, but the use of force by the police is still an issue that incites debate today.

POLITICAL ERA OF POLICING IN AMERICA

One way to understand the history of American policing beginning in the 19th century through modern times is to dissect it into a series of eras. Depending on which resource you choose, the number and names of those eras will slightly vary; however, there is a general agreement on the influential people and important events that took place over the course of the history of American policing.

A distinct characteristic of policing in the United States during the 1800s was the direct and powerful involvement of politics. During this time, policing was heavily entrenched in local politics. The relationship between the police and local politicians was reciprocal in nature: Politicians hired and retained police officers as a means to maintain their political power, and in return for employment, police officers would help politicians stay in office by encouraging citizens to vote for them.⁵⁶ The relationship was so close between politicians and the police that it was common practice to change the entire personnel of the police department when there were changes to the local political administration.⁵⁷

During this era, the police derived their legitimacy from formal law, which directed their duties and the power they possessed while performing those duties, as well as from local politicians, who provided police agencies with resources. Demands for police services came from political ward bosses and



Slave patrols in the southern region of the United States are believed by some historians to be the first formal police organizations.

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people they would encounter while on foot patrol.⁵⁸ Outcomes of police success or effectiveness were measured by the levels of satisfaction regarding crime control and order maintenance by local political bosses and residents.⁵⁹

Politicians were able to maintain their control over police agencies, as they had a direct hand in choosing the police chiefs that would run the agencies. An appointment to the position of police chief came with a price. By accepting the position, police chiefs had little control over decision-making that would impact their employees and agencies.⁶⁰ Many police chiefs did not accept the strong political presence in their agencies, and as a result, the turnover rate for chiefs of police at this time was very high. For example, “Cincinnati went through seven chiefs between 1878 and 1886; Buffalo (NY) tried eight between 1879 and 1894; Chicago saw nine come and go between 1879 and 1897; and Los Angeles changed heads thirteen times between 1879 and 1889.”⁶¹

Politics also heavily influenced the hiring and promotion of patrol officers. In order to secure a position as a patrol officer in New York City, the going rate was \$300, while officers in San Francisco were required to pay \$400.⁶² The going rate for a sergeant’s position was \$1,600 and \$12,000 to \$15,000 for a position as captain in New York City.⁶³ Upon being hired, policemen were also expected to contribute a portion of their salary to support the dominant political party.⁶⁴ Political bosses had control over nearly every position within police agencies during this era.

Due to the extreme political influence during this time, there were virtually no standards for hiring or training police officers.⁶⁵ Essentially, politicians within each ward would hire men who agreed to help them stay in office and not consider whether they were the most qualified people for the job. August Vollmer bluntly described the lack of standards during this era:

Under the old system, police officials were appointed through political affiliations and because of this they were frequently unintelligent and untrained, they were distributed through the area to be policed according to a hit-or-miss system and without adequate means of communication; they had little or no record keeping system; their investigation methods were obsolete, and they had no conception of the preventive possibilities of the service.⁶⁶

Mark Haller described the lack of training another way:

New policemen heard a brief speech from a high-ranking officer, received a hickory club, a whistle, and a key to the callbox, and were sent out on the street to work with an experienced officer. Not only were the policemen untrained in law, but they operated within a criminal justice system that generally placed little emphasis upon legal procedure.⁶⁷

Cities were divided into precincts during this era, which resulted in police precincts being run like mini independent police departments, even though they were all part of one police department.⁶⁸ Political bosses within each precinct in the city would have control over the hiring and firing of police officers and would also determine the police services provided by officers working in their precinct. Police organizations were structured in a centralized, quasi-military manner during the political era; however, the lack of technology and direct communication resulted in police officers often using their discretion to determine how to handle situations they encountered while on duty.⁶⁹ Therefore, police organizations had a centralized structure, but ultimately they operated in a decentralized manner where individual officers within each precinct had great latitude in decision-making.

During this era, the function of the police included crime prevention, crime control, and provision of a wide range of social services to the public.⁷⁰ Police services included a variety of tasks related to health, social welfare, and law enforcement. Robert Fogelson described police duties during this time as “officers cleaning streets. . . inspecting boilers. . . distributed supplies to the poor. . . accommodated the homeless. . . investigated vegetable markets. . . operated emergency vehicles and attempted to curb crime.”⁷¹ All of these activities were conducted under the guise that it would keep the citizens (or voters) happy, which in turn would help keep the political ward bosses in office. This was a way to ensure job security for police officers, as they would likely lose their jobs if their

ward boss was voted out of office. In addition, providing an array of social services to the public created a close relationship between the police and residents in their communities.⁷²

It is important to note that in some cities across the United States, police officers provided only limited services to residents. Some police officers spent time in local saloons, restaurants, barbershops, and other business establishments during their shifts. They would spend most of their time eating, drinking, and socializing with business owners when they were supposed to be patrolling the streets providing services to the public.⁷³

There was also limited supervision over patrol officers during this time. Accountability existed only to the political leaders that had helped the officers acquire their jobs.⁷⁴ In an essay, August Vollmer described the limited supervision over patrol officers during earlier times:

A patrol sergeant escorted him to his post, and at hourly intervals contacted him by means of voice, baton, or whistle. The sergeant tapped his baton on the sidewalk, or blew a signal with his whistle, and the patrolman was obliged to respond, thus indicating his position on the post.⁷⁵ Sometime in the mid- to late 1800s, **call boxes** containing telephone lines linked directly to police headquarters were implemented to help facilitate better communication between patrol officers, police supervisors, and central headquarters.⁷⁶ The lack of police supervision coupled with political control of patrol officers opened the door for police misconduct and corruption.⁷⁷

Incidents of police corruption and misconduct were common during this era of policing. Corrupt activities were often related to politics, including the rigging of elections and persuading people to vote a certain way, as well as misconduct stemming from abuse of authority and misuse of force by officers.⁷⁸ Police officers would use violence as an accepted practice when they believed that individuals were acting in an unlawful manner. Police officers would physically discipline juveniles, as they believed that it provided more of a deterrent effect than arrest or incarceration. Violence would also be applied to alleged perpetrators to extract information from them or coerce confessions out of them. The technique used by the police was referred to as the **third degree**. Violence was also believed to be justified in instances in which officers felt that they were being disrespected by citizens. It was acceptable to dole out “street justice” if citizens were noncompliant to officers’ demands or requests. If citizens had a complaint regarding the actions of police officers, they had very little recourse, as police supervisors and local courts would usually side with police officers.

One of the first groups appointed to examine complaints of police corruption was the Lexow Commission.⁷⁹ After issuing 3,000 subpoenas and hearing testimony from 700 witnesses (which produced more than 10,000 pages of testimony), the report from the Lexow investigation revealed four main conclusions:⁸⁰ First, the police did not act as “guardians of the public peace” at the election polls; instead they acted as “agents of Tammany Hall.” Second, instead of suppressing vice activities such as gambling and prostitution, officers allowed these activities to occur with the condition that they receive a cut of the profits. Third, detectives only looked for stolen property if they would be given a reward for doing so. And finally, there was evidence that the police often harassed law-abiding citizens and individuals with less power in the community instead of providing police services to them. After the Lexow investigation ended, several officers were fired and, in some cases, convicted of criminal offenses. Sometime later, the courts reversed these decisions, allowing the officers to be rehired.⁸¹ These actions by the courts demonstrate the strength of political influence in American policing during this time.



Call boxes were the most common form of communication used by police officers during the political era.

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REFORM ERA OF POLICING IN AMERICA

Political involvement in American policing was viewed as a problem by both the public and police reformers in the mid- to late 19th century. Early attempts (in the 19th century) at police reform in the United States were unsuccessful, as citizens tried to pressure police agencies to make changes.⁸² Later on in the early 20th century, with help from the Progressives, reform efforts began to take hold and made significant changes to policing in the United States.⁸³

A goal of police reform during this era included the removal of politics from American policing. Reformers wanted the police to be viewed as a legitimate group of professionals. They believed that one way to achieve this goal was to use law as their primary means of influence instead of political influence. As a result, enforcement of criminal law became the focus of daily operations and guided the way that police officers conducted their work.⁸⁴ Crime control and criminal apprehension became the core metric for measuring the success or effectiveness of the police in the reform era.⁸⁵

The importance of the role of “crime fighter” was highlighted in a 1931 report produced by the National Commission on Law Observance and Enforcement (popularly known as the Wickersham Commission), which examined rising crime rates in the United States and the inability of the police to manage this problem. It was proposed in this report that police officers could more effectively deal with rising crime by focusing their efforts primarily on crime control instead of providing the social services that they had once provided in the political era.⁸⁶ The Report on Lawlessness in Law Enforcement in 1931 by the Wickersham Commission is an important event in the history of American policing.⁸⁷ This report was the result of the first systematic investigation of police misconduct in the United States and was viewed as a catalyst for police reform at that time.

Another goal of police reform during the early 1900s was to professionalize the police. Reformers believed that this could be achieved by setting standards for the quality of police officers hired, implementing better police training, and adopting various types of technology to aid police officers in their daily operations, including motorized patrol and two-way radios.⁸⁸ Two-way radios increased communications between police officers working the streets and people at central headquarters. Citizens’ demands for police service were channeled through central headquarters to patrol officers using the two-way radio system. Access to advanced communications-based technology contributed to the efficiency of police work during this era.

During the reform era, foot patrol was perceived to be less efficient and effective after mobilized patrol became available to police organizations. Mobilized patrol meant that police officers would have a greater presence in their community as they could randomly patrol neighborhoods when they were not responding to citizens’ calls for service (routine preventive patrol). Patrol cars allowed officers to respond to citizens’ demands for service more quickly than on foot patrol and made it possible for officers to patrol larger geographic areas in their districts. Faster response times to citizens’ calls for service was another way that police could be viewed as a legitimate, professionalized group. The traditional model of policing was the dominant policing strategy in the United States during this era. This policing strategy places great importance on officers spending much of their time reacting to calls for service and solving crimes with limited input and collaboration with citizens in their community. This strategy would ultimately drive a wedge between police and citizens in communities across the United States.

The professionalization movement of the police in America resulted in police organizations becoming centralized bureaucracies focused primarily on crime control.⁸⁹ This organizational structure was based on the classical theory of administration, which was influenced by ideas from Frederick Taylor, Henri Fayol, and Max Weber.⁹⁰ Taylor’s view of organizations centered on the planning of work to achieve efficiency, standardization, and specialization.⁹¹ Max Weber’s ideas regarding organizational structure focused on the division of labor and the control of organization members’ behavior. Fayol’s approach to organizational structure concentrated on the accomplishment of tasks and the function of management.⁹²

Using principles from the classical theory of administration, police administrators sought to standardize patrol work, which meant that the use of discretion by patrol officers would be limited. Control over patrol officers would be achieved through rank-based supervision, flow of instructions from the top of the organization down to patrol officers, and the adoption of intricate record-keeping systems,

which would require additional levels of middle management.⁹³ Police reformers believed that a centralized, bureaucratic organizational structure would result in greater efficiency and effectiveness, which would further contribute to the professionalization of the police.

In an article published in 1933, August Vollmer outlined some of the significant changes that he believed had taken place in American policing from 1900 to 1930. The use of the civil service system in the hiring and promotion of police officers was one way to help remove politics from policing and to set standards for police recruits. The implementation of effective police training programs was also an important change during this time. The ability of police administrators to strategically distribute police force according to the needs of each area or neighborhood was another change made to move toward a professional model of policing. There was also an improved means of communication at this time, which included the adoption of two-way radio systems. Many agencies also began to adopt more reliable record-keeping systems, improved methods for identifying criminals (including the use of fingerprinting systems), and more advanced technologies used in criminal investigations (such as lie detectors and science-based crime labs). Despite the heavy emphasis on crime control that began to emerge in the mid-1930s, some agencies began to use crime prevention techniques. And finally, this era saw the emergence of state highway police to aid in the control of traffic, which had increased after the automobile was introduced in the United States.⁹⁴ Vollmer stated that all these changes contributed to the professionalization of the police in America.

O. W. Wilson was the protégé of August Vollmer. His work essentially picked up where Vollmer's left off in the late 1930s. Wilson's greatest contribution to American policing lies within police administration. Specifically, his vision involved the centralization of police agencies; this includes both organizational structure and management of personnel.⁹⁵ Wilson is also credited with creating a strategy for distributing patrol officers within a community based on reported crimes and calls for service. His book, *Police Administration*, published in 1950, became the "bible of police management" and ultimately defined how professional police agencies would be managed for many decades that followed.⁹⁶

The work of Vollmer and Wilson helped American policing advance beyond that of the political era. Harlan Haun and Judson Jeffries argue that police reforms of the 1950s and 1960s neglected the relationship between the police and the public.⁹⁷ The relationship deteriorated between the two groups because citizens called for police services that were mostly noncriminal in nature, and the police responded with a heavy emphasis on crime control.⁹⁸ The introduction of mobilized patrol also contributed to the deterioration of the police–citizen relationship as face-to-face communication decreased in frequency. The distance between these two groups would become even greater as the social climate began to change in the United States.

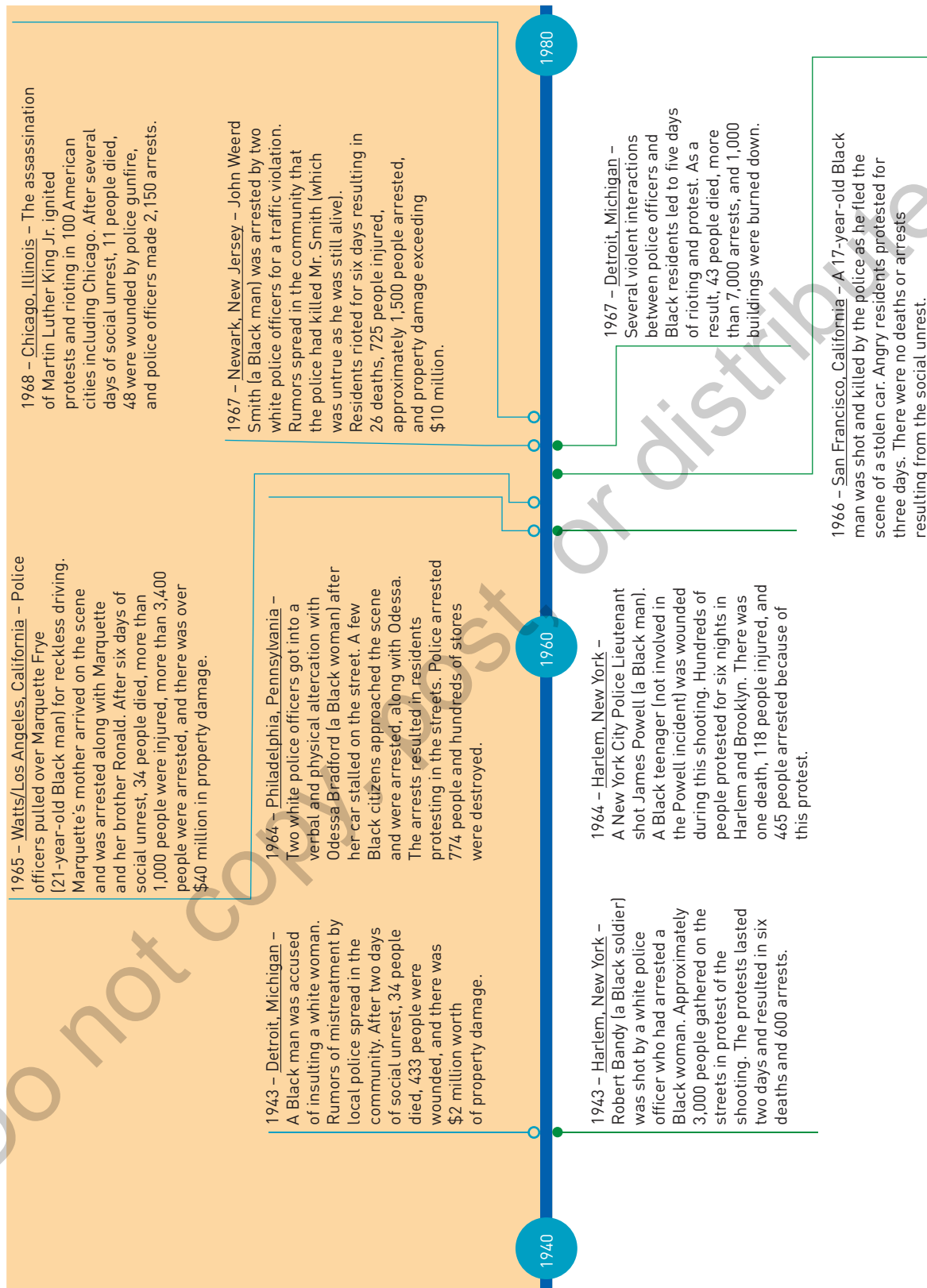
The 1950s marked the beginning of a social movement that would bring race relations to the attention of all Americans. Several events involving African American citizens ignited a series of civil rights marches and demonstrations across the country in the mid-1950s. For example, in December 1955, Rosa Parks was arrested after she violated a segregation ordinance by refusing to move to the back of the bus. Her arrest triggered what is now referred to as the Montgomery bus boycott.⁹⁹ African American citizens carpooled instead of using the city bus system to protest segregation ordinances. Local police began to ticket Black motorists at an increasing pace to retaliate against the boycott. In one instance, Martin Luther King Jr. was arrested for driving 5 miles per hour over the posted speed limit.¹⁰⁰ Arrests were made at any type of sit-in or protest, whether it was peaceful or not. Research on the precipitants and underlying conditions that contributed to race riots during this time identified police presence and police actions as the major conditions present prior to most of the race riots in the 1940s through the 1960s.¹⁰¹ Jamila King identified several incidents of social unrest during the 1940s through the 1960s that resulted from negative interactions between police officers and people of color (see Figure 1.1).¹⁰²



May 3, 1963: a 17-year-old civil rights demonstrator in Birmingham, Alabama, is attacked by a police dog.

AP Photo/Bill Hudson

FIGURE 1.1 ■ Police and Race-Based Social Unrest in the U.S., 1940s–1960s



Adapted from Jamilah King, "Before Freddie Gray: A Timeline of American Unrest." *Takepart*, April 29, 2015.

The President's Commission on Civil Disorder (also known as the Kerner Commission) reported that "almost invariably the incident that ignites disorder arises from police action."¹⁰³ The Kerner Commission was an 11-person committee appointed by President Lyndon B. Johnson in 1967 to study the causes of the race riots occurring in 1967.¹⁰⁴ After 7 months of investigation, the Kerner Commission concluded that the riots were the result of frustrations in the African American community associated with the lack of economic opportunities. Specifically, the report identified a failure of the government to provide access to housing, education, and social services, as well as the media for presenting information through the lens of white citizens. A famous passage from the report states that "Our nation is moving toward two societies, one black, one white—separate and unequal."¹⁰⁵ The report also included recommendations related to the police. Specifically, the report suggested that police organizations hire more diverse and sensitive police officers. In response to this recommendation, the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration provided federal funding to local police agencies interested in creating more diversity among the ranks.

Social disorder resulting from protests, marches, and rioting in the 1960s resulted in frequent physical clashes between the police and the public. It was during this time that people across the United States began to see photographs in newspapers and news reports on television that featured incidents of violence between these two groups. The level of violence and force being used by police officers was shocking to some citizens, as they had not been exposed to it through visual news media in the past. One of the most recognized examples of this type of violence was the clash between police and protesters at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in August of 1968.¹⁰⁶ Graphic photos of the police hitting, pushing, and arresting protesters were featured on the national news and in many national printed publications. These types of incidents contributed to the growing public relations problem experienced by American police agencies during the 1960s.

COMMUNITY/PROBLEM-SOLVING ERA OF POLICING IN AMERICA

Some police executives began looking for solutions to public relations problems that resulted from publicized human rights issues associated with clashes between police officers and residents occurring in the 1960s and 1970s. In addition, the continued use of the traditional model of policing during that time resulted in police officers having less face-to-face contact with citizens; instead, much of the police–citizen contact occurred when officers were taking formal action against residents, such as making arrests or issuing citations. To reconnect with the community, police agencies have had to make significant changes to their mission/purpose, organizational structure, daily operations, and interactions with citizens in their communities.

Formal law and professionalism continue to be legitimizing factors associated with the police in the community/problem-solving era; however, community support and community involvement emerged as equally important factors regarding police legitimacy. A study by Sunshine and Tyler revealed that citizens' perceptions of police legitimacy influences public support for the police, as well as citizen cooperation with the police.¹⁰⁷ Other studies found that when police officers use procedures that citizens perceive to be fair, when they treat citizens with dignity and respect, and give citizens a voice during police–citizen interactions, they increase the likelihood that citizens will comply with their commands or requests.¹⁰⁸ Giving citizens a voice during police–citizen interactions is very different from the professionally remote relationship the police had with citizens during the reform era.

The police function also expanded in the community/problem-solving era as it now includes crime control, order maintenance, conflict resolution, and problem-solving.¹⁰⁹ Community involvement in policing has become a significant part of the police function in many American police agencies. Crime prevention and problem-solving strategies used by some police agencies can only be effective if citizens cooperate with the police. A recent example of community involvement includes the creation of a citizen security camera roster created by the Boulder (Colorado) Police Department (BPD).¹¹⁰ Boulder residents and business owners who have security cameras located on the outside of their homes and businesses can add their names to a list that can be utilized by the BPD when crime or acts of vandalism occur in their geographic location. BPD believes that easy access to video footage from people and

businesses included on their roster will shorten the length of investigations and will increase the likelihood that someone will be apprehended for their involvement in such incidents. The only way that strategies like this one will be effective is if citizens feel comfortable with BPD to voluntarily put their names on the surveillance roster.

In addition to an expansion of the police function, the tactics and technology used by the police in the community/problem-solving era have also expanded in scope. Many police agencies now use one or more of the following strategies (in addition to regular patrol, specialized forms of patrol, and rapid response to emergency calls for service): foot patrol, victim services, community organizing and consultation, and problem-solving strategies.¹¹¹ The St. Petersburg (Florida) Police Department is a good example of a police agency that facilitates a wide range of services to crime victims. Their official website identifies victim services such as short-term/crisis intervention, transportation to service locations (if requested), assistance through the court process, and assistance to victims/witnesses of crimes who experience threats and intimidation by criminal suspects.¹¹² Police service in this era goes far beyond crime control and order maintenance of the reform era. Various social media platforms including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Nextdoor are some of the latest examples of technology used by American police agencies today as a means of direct communication with the public.

Body-worn cameras are another example of technology being adopted by some American police agencies in the community/problem-solving era. A report published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics revealed that approximately 47% of municipal police agencies in the United States had implemented body-worn cameras (BWCs) in 2016.¹¹³ Of the 47% of the police agencies that use BWCs, more than half (60%) are local police agencies, while 49% of county police agencies utilize this technology. Approximately 80% of the police agencies reported that the main reasons they decided to use this technology was to improve officer safety, increase the quality of evidence collection, reduce civilian complaints filed against police officers, and reduce liability claims involving their agency.¹¹⁴ Additional reasons for adopting BWCs include improving officer accountability, strengthening cases for prosecution, improving police officer professionalism and citizens' perceptions of the police, and reducing officer use of force. Police agencies that have not adopted BWCs reported that they could not afford to do so due to the high costs associated with acquiring cameras, storage of video footage, ongoing maintenance costs, and concerns regarding citizen privacy.¹¹⁵ A more detailed discussion of additional types of contemporary police technology is included in Chapter 7.

Decentralized Organizational Structure

The organizational structure of many American police agencies has also transformed in the community/problem-solving era. The centralized, bureaucratic organizational structure of the reform era does not mesh with the community policing strategies utilized by many American police agencies in the community/problem-solving era. Most community policing strategies require an organizational structure that allows decentralized decision-making by police officers working the streets.¹¹⁶ Along with citizen input, police officers use their discretion to diagnose and respond to crime and disorder found within their beat areas or districts.

Some examples of a decentralized police organizational structure include the creation of neighborhood police stations (including storefronts) and establishing beat offices (in churches or schools).¹¹⁷ In 2016, the St. Paul (Minnesota) Police Department opened a storefront in the Midway Shopping Center as residents in this neighborhood expressed increasing concerns about crime in that area.¹¹⁸ The creation of this storefront was meant to increase police presence in the neighborhood, with the hope that crime and disorder would decline.

Police substations have also been located within apartment complexes that experience prolonged crime and disorder problems. The Longmont (Colorado) Police Department created a substation in an apartment complex that has been experiencing problems with the manufacturing and sale of methamphetamine.¹¹⁹ The management of the Cloverbasin Village Apartments offered the police department an apartment to use as a substation free of charge. The police department chose this apartment complex based on the frequency of calls for service they received in recent years. According to police dispatch logs, the Longmont police responded to 399 calls for service from this apartment complex from

April 2017 to April 2018.¹²⁰ Most of the calls were for follow-ups from previous calls, disturbances, as well as suspicious people or situations.

In the community/problem-solving era, demands for police service come from several sources, including citizens calling 911 dispatch systems to request police service, face-to-face requests, and officers using proactive policing strategies. The reintroduction of foot patrol allows citizens to request police service during face-to-face interactions with police officers. The Middletown (Delaware) Police Department identified an increase in foot patrol as one of the most important community policing initiatives they implemented in 2019.¹²¹ The goal of increasing foot patrol was to increase communication with citizens. The Middletown Chief of Police wants his officers to “go to a baseball field and talk to the parents who are watching a game[,] . . . go to a Senior Center and have lunch with the residents.”¹²² The chief hopes that more frequent interaction with the public will increase trust and show residents the human side of policing. A more in-depth discussion on foot patrol is included in Chapter 7.

Demands for police service can also be identified by police officers who utilize proactive policing strategies including problem-solving techniques, such as the SARA model (discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2), which involves the identification of underlying sources of problems. The Center for Problem Oriented Policing website indicates that police agencies across the United States have used the SARA model to resolve various types of community problems, including those associated with alcohol and drugs, burglary and theft, disorder and nuisances, vehicles, gangs, youth/juveniles, and traffic, to name a few.¹²³

Outcome measures related to police effectiveness in the community/problem-solving era have also dramatically changed from the measures used in the reform era. Instead of using metrics that focus solely on crime control to measure police effectiveness, some police agencies now use measures associated with citizens’ satisfaction with the police/police services and quality-of-life issues, including fear of crime and perceptions of personal safety. It could be argued that citizens’ feelings of personal safety and quality of life are just as important as keeping crime statistics low.¹²⁴

Theoretically, if the police can reduce citizens’ fear of crime in their community, this could improve citizens’ perceptions of the police and enhance police legitimacy. Many police departments that operate using a community policing philosophy make fear reduction among citizens a priority. Using data from a semi-rural setting, Daniel Lytle and Ryan Randa discovered a relationship between citizen satisfaction with the police and fear of crime.¹²⁵ Specifically, this study revealed that lower levels of police satisfaction were associated with higher levels of fear of crime among residents. Another study found that fear of victimization was related to lower satisfaction with police, while actual victimization had an inconsistent effect when community satisfaction was considered.¹²⁶ Additional research is needed to have a complete picture of the relationship between citizens’ fear of crime and their perceptions of the police and delivery of police services.

Some police departments across the country have enlisted the help of researchers to create, administer, and analyze data derived from citizen surveys. For example, beginning in 2008, Fort Collins (Colorado) residents were asked to complete surveys containing questions regarding perceptions of crime and safety in the community, as well as the delivery of police services.¹²⁷ The survey has been administered every two years since 2008 and is distributed to all demographic groups in the community. The survey is available in English and Spanish to account for any potential language barriers that might exist with Spanish-speaking residents. The International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) website provides several examples of community surveys that can be tailored to fit the needs of any community.¹²⁸ Information from citizen surveys can help police administrators determine which problems are important to citizens in their community and help them determine how to best use their resources to address those problems.

One of the biggest changes to American policing during this era has been an increased effort to improve police–citizen relationships. Instead of using a professionally remote approach when interacting with citizens as they did in the reform era, some police officers now utilize a consultative approach in their communications with the public. The police ask citizens about their perceptions of crime and social disorder in their neighborhoods instead of focusing solely on their own perceptions. Many police departments are beginning to use social media platforms to communicate with citizens regarding crime in their neighborhoods. For example, in San Bernadino (California), the local police department

received video footage of a home break-in from a homeowner. The police department uploaded the video footage on the social media website, Nextdoor. Several citizens recognized the suspect on the video and contacted the San Bernadino Police Department. This led to an arrest for the initial burglary, as well as four additional burglaries that the suspect admitted to.¹²⁹ Utilizing social media platforms, in addition to more face-to-face contact between police and citizens can strengthen and improve the relationship between the two groups.

Warrior Versus Guardian Policing Style

In recent years, police scholars have studied how policing styles can impact the relationship that police officers have with residents in their communities. Specifically, some police agencies are moving away from the “warrior” style of policing toward a “guardian” style of policing. **Warrior style policing** is associated with a heavy militarized or traditional approach to policing that centers on aggressively searching, chasing, and capturing suspects.¹³⁰ **Guardian policing** focuses on activities related to social services, forging community partnerships, and establishing positive contacts with residents on a more frequent basis.¹³¹ The idea is that if police officers view their role as one of a guardian, they will create greater trust and cooperation with members of their communities.

A study published in 2019 examined “*warrior v. guardian*” policing by surveying police officers working in Fayetteville, North Carolina, and Tucson, Arizona.¹³² Police officers participating in this study responded to nine questions regarding how they view themselves in the role of a police officer. They were also asked how they would respond to a hypothetical scenario involving a suspicious person walking in a park during the evening. The researchers discovered that the warrior and guardian approaches are in fact two distinct styles of policing. Police officers who had higher scores on the guardian measures were more likely to value communication, while higher scores on the warrior measure demonstrated greater importance placed on physical control and excessive use of force.¹³³ The researchers concluded that the warrior style of policing more often leads to use of force by police officers, which in turn increases the likelihood that both officers and citizens could get injured.

Strong police–community relationships and increased collaboration between police and citizens are foundational ideals of the community/problem-solving era. In recent years, highly publicized police-involved shootings have strained the relationships between police and citizens in some communities across the country. Many of these police-involved shootings resulted in citizens protesting the actions of the police across the country. In June 2017, thousands of residents in St. Paul, Minnesota, protested in the streets in response to the acquittal of the police officer involved in the Philando Castile shooting.¹³⁴ In March 2019, 80 people were arrested during a demonstration in Sacramento, California, over the police-involved shooting of Stephon Clark.¹³⁵ Demonstrators shut down a major highway in Alabama on November 27, 2018, in protest of the police shooting of Emantic “EJ” Bradford Jr. and a 12-year-old bystander at a shopping center.¹³⁶ In August 2020, the shooting of Jacob Blake by police officers in Kenosha, Wisconsin, led to several days of protests and rioting in that community.¹³⁷ All of these shootings have inflamed mistrust and anger toward the police in several urban cities across the country.

Because of the highly publicized police-involved shootings, some police executives are trying to rebuild (or, in some cases, retain) their agency’s credibility with the public by requiring their officers to participate in specialized training and wear body cameras and by strengthening department policies related to use of force. After the Stephon Clark shooting the California Department of Justice conducted an independent review of the Sacramento (California) Police Department and concluded that the agency must improve use of force policies, officer training, and the investigations conducted after officer-involved shootings.¹³⁸ The review highlighted the need for clearer policies on when police officers can use their firearms and encouraged the police department to get rid of

specific high-risk use of force practices, such as using carotid restraints and shooting at or from moving vehicles.¹³⁹

Implicit Bias Training

Implicit bias training is an example of the training used by several American police agencies to address underlying racial/ethnic biases held by some police officers that may lead to police-involved shootings or other use of force incidents. **Implicit bias training** is based on the idea that people, even those with good intentions, have unconscious biases toward people based on their social economic status, gender, and/or race and ethnicity.¹⁴⁰ It has been argued that implicit bias is an inevitable reality as stereotypes are infused in many aspects of American society. This training is important for police officers as they may find themselves in situations where they must make split-second decisions during interactions with citizens, and if they act based upon underlying biases, their actions can have deadly consequences.

The existence of implicit bias has been backed up by science. In 2007, researchers used video game technology with a group of police officers to examine the relationship between citizen race/ethnicity and shoot/don't shoot decisions. Officers were told to shoot armed targets and not shoot unarmed targets. Findings from this study showed that police officers decided more quickly to shoot armed Black people than armed white people. Further, it took police officers more time to decide to not shoot unarmed Black people.¹⁴¹ Using similar video game technology, another study found an equal level of bias among both Black and white participants.¹⁴² Similar findings have been produced in several additional studies during the past decade.¹⁴³

In the past decade, many police agencies across the United States have participated in implicit bias training. In 2018, the New York City Police Department (NYPD) participated in implicit bias training provided by Fair & Impartial Policing, LLC. According to the Fair & Impartial Policing, LLC website,

the 8-hour training helps the recruit and patrol officer to: Understand that even well-intentioned people have biases; Understand how implicit biases impact on what we perceive/see and can (unless prevented) impact on what we do; Understand that fair & impartial policing leads to effective policing; and, Use tools that help him/her (1) recognize his/her conscious and implicit biases, and (2) implement “controlled” (unbiased) behavioral responses.¹⁴⁴

Training sessions consist of discussion-based learning, as well as role-playing activities to allow police personnel to apply the material they learn from the curriculum. The main goals of this training are to acknowledge and identify biases and then learn alternative ways to respond to situations where bias can influence officer behaviors.

Implicit bias training sounds great, but does it work? To date, there is limited evaluation-based research on the efficacy of implicit bias training. A recent evaluation of this specialized training was published in July 2020. A research group examined the impact of implicit bias training provided by Fair & Impartial Policing, LLC within the NYPD.¹⁴⁵ First, the researchers used surveys (both before and after the training) to measure officer awareness of implicit biases and their willingness to manage them while on duty. They discovered that officers were more aware of their biases and expressed a willingness to manage them. Next, the researchers looked for changes in NYPD officers' behaviors while on duty both before and after implicit bias training. Specifically, the researchers examined the racial composition of people who were stopped, frisked, summonsed, and arrested by NYPD officers. The data revealed no change in police officer behavior during those actions regarding resident race/ethnicity.¹⁴⁶ To put it another way, officers stopped, frisked, summonsed, and arrested people of color with similar frequency after they participated in implicit bias training. These findings do not necessarily mean that the implicit bias training did not work; instead, it is possible that there are factors other than the training that could influence officer behavior.

Today there is evidence that many police agencies across the United States are taking steps to create (or protect) a collaborative relationship with residents in their communities. It is likely that the police–community relationship will continue to evolve in years to come.

A FOURTH ERA? HOMELAND SECURITY ERA OF POLICING IN AMERICA

In 2006, Willard Oliver published an article that suggests that a fourth era of policing exists in American policing. He identified the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, as the beginning of a new era of policing in the United States—the **Homeland Security era**.¹⁴⁷ Oliver believes that in this era, the police receive authorization or legitimacy from national and international threats of terrorism, the law (intergovernmental), and professionalism.

The police function centers on crime control—specifically, antiterrorism and counterterrorism efforts—by using intelligence gathering and intergovernmental information sharing. Counterterrorism plays a large role in the police function in the Homeland Security era. Offensive measures are used to respond to terrorist acts, including preparedness training, creation of emergency operations centers, crisis intervention, and special reaction team training.¹⁴⁸ The collection, processing, and analysis of intelligence is considered a crucial part of the police function in the Homeland Security era.¹⁴⁹

In the Homeland Security era, the organizational design of American police agencies is more centralized due to information sharing with other agencies, but it is also decentralized as police officers working the streets will largely determine how services will be executed. Demands for police service are centralized because of the centralized organizational design of police agencies. The relationship between police and the public is professional because of the centralized nature of demand for service, organizational design, and function; however, the police do not isolate themselves from the public as they did in the reform era. Instead, they work closely with the public to gather information and intelligence.

Risk assessments, intelligence gathering/analyzing, and large-scale crisis response plans are the focus of police tactics and technology in this era. And finally, Oliver believes that the outcome measures used in his proposed era of policing include some from other eras (such as crime control, community satisfaction, and quality-of-life issues) but also emphasize community safety (specifically, the prevention of terrorist attacks using antiterrorism efforts).

Because Oliver's new era of policing was presented to the world in 2006, only time will tell if American policing will move in the direction that he predicted. Some people believe that the shift toward homeland security and antiterrorism efforts by local and state police will lead to a more traditional model of policing that is akin to that proposed by August Vollmer and O. W. Wilson. There is some concern that this shift would erode any progress that has been made by police agencies that adopted community policing years ago.¹⁵⁰ It has also been suggested that policing has become more aggressive since 9/11 and that this more forceful approach counters the basic principles of community policing.¹⁵¹ Further, some people worry that the police will become so focused on homeland security and the use of military-like tactics/technology that the lines between policing and the military will become blurred, leaving community policing by the wayside.¹⁵²

This chapter has described many ways that American policing has changed over time. The changes are striking when the eras are compared side-by-side (see Table 1.2). As society and technology continue to evolve in the future, American police agencies must also continue to change.

Elements	Political Era	Reform Era	Community/ Problem-Solving Era	Homeland Security Era
Legitimacy	Politics	Law, professionalism	Community support, law, professionalism	National/international threats, law, and professionalism
Function	Crime control, order maintenance, and broad social services	Crime control	Crime control, crime prevention, problem-solving	Crime control, antiterrorism/counterterrorism, intelligence gathering
Organizational Structure	Decentralized	Centralized	Decentralized, task forces	Centralized decision-making, decentralized execution of services
External Relationships	Close and personal, heavily influenced by local political bosses	Professionally remote	Consultative, police listen to community concerns	Professional
Demand for Police Service	Links between politicians and precinct commanders; face-to-face contact with the public	Channeled through central dispatching activities	Channeled through analysis of underlying problems	Centralized
Tactics and Technology	Foot patrol, simple investigations	Preventive patrol and rapid response to calls for service	Foot patrol, problem-solving, community policing	Risk assessment, police operations centers, information systems
Outcome Measures	Public and political satisfaction with social order	Crime control	Quality of life and resident satisfaction	Public safety, crime control, antiterrorism

Source: George L. Kelling and Mark H. Moore, *The Evolving Strategy of Policing* (Washington, DC: US Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice, 1989); Willard Oliver, "The Fourth Era of Policing: Homeland Security," *International Review of Law Computers & Technology* 20 (2006): 52.

SUMMARY

- American policing was influenced by Sir Robert Peel and the London Metropolitan Police.
- Slave patrols in the southern region of the United States were used to control people who were enslaved and have been identified by some scholars and historians as the first formal police agencies in this country.
- Politics played a major role in American policing in the 1800s. Political involvement was believed to be at the core of police corruption present in the agencies at that time.
- Police reform was geared toward making the police more "professional."
- It has been argued that the terrorist attacks on 9/11 marked the beginning of a new era in American policing centered on antiterrorism efforts.

KEY TERMS

Bow Street Runners (p. 4)	London Metropolitan Police (p. 5)
Call boxes (p. 9)	Sir Robert Peel (p. 5)
Frankpledge system (p. 4)	Slave patrols (p. 6)
Guardian policing (p. 16)	Third degree (p. 9)
Homeland Security era (p. 18)	Warrior style policing (p. 16)
Implicit bias training (p. 17)	

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is Sir Robert Peel important to the development of policing in the United States?
2. Describe some of the duties associated with the early watch groups in the United States in the mid-19th century.
3. Identify several principles espoused by Sir Robert Peel as he began to assemble the London Metropolitan Police Department.
4. What was O. W. Wilson's main contribution to American policing?
5. Explain how some of the changes in American policing during the reform era contributed to the deterioration of the relationship between police and the public.