

An Introduction to Policing

The Police and Society

Police

- The domestic institution and individuals in the direct and full-time employ of the state to whom the state gives the general right to use coercive force.
 - Policing is a socially constructed profession.
 - The police are typified by the legitimate use of coercive force.

Police Officers and Peace Officers

- Police Officer
 - All police officers are also peace officers.
- Peace Officer
 - Peace officers are defined by legal statute and are comprised of a variety of types.
 - Peace officers are afforded broader powers for arrest and use of lethal force than “ordinary citizens”.

The Dual Role of the Police

- Police are tasked with protecting and serving the public.
 - Public service
 - Order maintenance
 - Combat crime
 - The police spend about one-third of their time to criminal law enforcement.
 - It is estimated that less than twenty percent of the call to the police involve law enforcement.
 - Only about 2 percent pertain to violent crime.

The Crime Fighter Myth

- Media influence
 - Media coverage of crime is highly skewed.
- Public perception
 - Police should focus on important work.
 - Belief that crime is much worse than it is.
- Consequences
 - Minimizes the importance of order maintenance and peacekeeping.
 - Role ambiguity among the police and confusion about “real” police work.

Role Conflict

- Officers are often torn by the dual charge to protect and serve.
 - People call the police as a last resort.
 - The police are tasked with handling a wide spectrum of events.
 - The public is often unsure about how we feel about the police and what we want them to do.

Use of Force

- According to Bitter the capacity to use force is the defining feature of the police.
- Limitations on the police use of force
 - The law
 - The police cannot lawfully shoot to kill anyone.
 - The job
 - Legitimate use of force is confined to an officers professional duties.
 - Within reason
 - The police cannot legally arrest, harass, or abuse citizens without just cause.

The Police and Social Control

- Social Control
 - “The capacity of a society to regulate itself according to desired principles and values” (Janowitz 1975).
 - The police are dependent upon the public to maintain social control.
- Gatekeepers
 - Street level officers are afforded tremendous latitude on what crime to enforce.
- The police are symbols of the political system.
 - The most visible source of power and authority

Problem-Oriented Policing

- Herman Goldstein (1990)
 - Problem oriented policing is a proactive approach that is concerned with identifying community crime problems.
 - Officers are directed to focus on the identified crime problems.
 - Proponents contend that problem oriented policing maximizes police manpower and resources.
 - Research and planning are important components of the approach.

Community Policing

- Community policing programs are the most prevalent alternative to traditional policing.
 - Involves a unification of the police and the public that they serve.
 - CAPS (Chicago PD)
 - Emphasizes a complete department-community partnership to combat crime and maintain order.
 - SMART (Oakland PD)
 - A partnering of the police and government agencies working with the public.

Zero Tolerance Policing

- This method focuses upon enforcing all law violations.
 - Proponents note that minor crimes often uncover severe criminals.
- Critics argue that zero tolerance policing encourages police abuse of citizens.
 - Zero tolerance policing was innovated and widely used by NYPD in the 1990's.

Information Led Policing

- Also referred to as “technology driven policing”.
- Involves the use of complex computer crime mapping.
 - GIS computer mapping
- Role of civilian labor
 - Civilians are often employed in this model.