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Chapter 2

Historical analysis of police misconduct

TEACHING POINTS

- Police misconduct is not a recent phenomenon.
- There have been reports of police misconduct from the beginning of the modern police force.
- Many of the early reports were of police brutality, especially against striking workers.
- The early policing of black, Latino, and Native American communities in the United States was initially in the form of occupation, surveillance, and pacification.
- Lynching has had an essential part in understanding the history and character of police violence in America because it reveals the sexual and gender dimensions of maintaining the color line and disciplining minorities.
- Most researchers trace the modern police department's origin to Alfred the Great of England during the ninth century.
- By the seventeenth century, the chief law enforcement officials in the urban areas of England were the magistrates, who presided over the courts, ordered arrests, and investigated suspected criminal activities. In rural areas, the shire-reeves were responsible for maintaining law and order among the citizens.
- The thief-takers were private individuals who were paid by the government on a piecework basis. They had no official status and only the authority of private citizens to arrest. Many of the thief-takers were criminals themselves.

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- When the English settlers settled in America, they brought with them the English law enforcement structure. At the time, America was mostly rural and was policed by officers in the offices of constable and sheriff.
- The first modern police force in the United States was the slave patrols, which were established in the southern states.
- The first organized metropolitan American police force was established in Philadelphia in 1833.
- The first police forces were generally under the control of a chief of police who was appointed by the mayor. The mission of the early police departments was merely to keep the city clean and to keep everything quiet.
- In the late nineteenth century, in an effort to eliminate politics from the police forces, many cities established police administrative boards. These boards exercised control over the police department. The boards were given responsibility for managing police affairs and appointing police administrators.
- Starting in the latter part of the 1800s, police forces grew in size and expanded their functions, with attempts at reform including the concept of merit employment and civil service.
- Narrowly defined, police corruption refers to police personnel using their position and authority for personal rather than public benefit. More broadly, police corruption refers to any violation of rules, even when there is no personal gain, as in perjury, physical abuse of prisoners, sexual misconduct, robbery, and racial profiling.

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- Police corruption in American police departments became widespread shortly after the formation of the first police departments in the mid-1800s.
- The political era of policing was so named because of the close ties between police and politics. This era began with the development of police departments during the 1840s, continued through the Progressive Era, and ended during the early 1900s.
- The reform era developed in reaction to politics. It started in the 1900s but only took hold during the 1930s. The era thrived during the 1950s and 1960s but began to be eroded during the late 1970s.
- Prohibition in the 1920s greatly increased the potential for corruption. Massive amounts of money were being made by bootleggers who in turn paid off police officers to allow their illegal activities to continue.
- The production of the 1931 Report on Lawlessness in Law Enforcement by the Wickersham Commission was one of the most important events in the history of American policing. It was the first systematic investigation of police misconduct.
- American history is replete with reports of police brutality, especially against striking workers. Apparently, the first use of the term *police brutality* by the media was in the *New York Times* in 1893.
- There are numerous reports of police brutality against striking workers and minority citizens.
- The summer of 1967 again brought racial disorder to American cities, and with it shock, fear, and bewilderment to the nation.

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CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

- How history has influenced the conduct of present American policing
- The development of modern policing
- The history of police corruption
- The history of police brutality

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True/False Questions

1. Police misconduct is a recent phenomenon. F
2. The first formal police units in America were the slave patrols. T
3. Even before formal police departments were established, the people in power relied on legal and extralegal violence and terrorism to pacify, discipline, and exploit minority communities. T
4. By the seventeenth century, the chief law enforcement officials in the urban areas of England were the magistrates, who presided over the courts, ordered arrests, and investigated suspected criminal activities. T
5. In rural areas, the shire-reeves were responsible for maintaining law and order among the citizens. T
6. The early policing of black, Latino, and Native American communities in the United States was initially in the form of occupation, surveillance, and pacification. T
7. English police officers were required to wear distinctive uniforms so that citizens could recognize them and respect them. F
8. After the American Revolution, most sheriffs were appointed by the governors. F

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9. The first organized metropolitan American police force was established in South Carolina in 1833. F
10. The concept of state control in the United States was uniformly applied and was directed mainly toward the smaller cities. F
11. U.S. police forces in the late 1800s were generally under the control of a chief of police, who was appointed by the mayor. T
12. The mission of the early police departments was merely to keep the city clean and to keep everything quiet. T
13. One probable reason that the police boards were not successful was that they were not directly accountable to the citizens they served. T
14. The reform movement in U.S. policing resulted in an increased military-like structure of police departments and specialized police units such as traffic, juvenile, and vice. T
15. The Kerner Report was the first major commission to look at police performance in the United States. F

Multiple Choice Questions

1 Which of the following statements are not correct regarding the English thief-takers?

a. *They had an official status in the police departments
b. They had the authority to make a citizen's arrest
c. Many of the thief-takers were criminals themselves
d. They were paid on a piecework basis

2 Which of the following statements regarding Henry Fielding is not correct?

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a. He was a magistrate in Westminster

b. He formed the Bow Street Runners

c. *He stepped down from his position to write the novel, *Tom Jones*

d. His office was located on Bow Street

3 The police reform movement started in the latter part of the 1800s and lasted until the

a. 1930s

b. 1940s

c. 1950s

d. *1960s

4 In 1895, Theodore Roosevelt attempted to

a. *Raise the recruitment standards of the city's police officers

b. Eliminate the strict discipline imposed on police officers

c. Lower the average salary of police officers

d. Increase the political pressures on police officers

5, Which of the following statements are not correct regarding the Pendleton Act of 1883?

a. It was the first civil service act passed by the United States

b. It provided that employees would be promoted based on merit

c. *It allowed applicants to be hired based on political reasons

d. It applied only to federal employees

Short Essay Questions

1. What was the result of the Boston police strike in 1919?

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2. How did prohibition effect American policing?

3. Why are the Kefauver hearings considered important?

4. Explain the importance of the Pendleton Act on federal appointments.

5. According to Professor Getty, why do good people commit deviant behavior as police officers?

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