

LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

A REPORT OUTLINING THE PERCEPTION OF POLICE BY
POLICE OFFICERS AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC

A RESEARCH PAPER
SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULLFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR MODULE I, II, and III

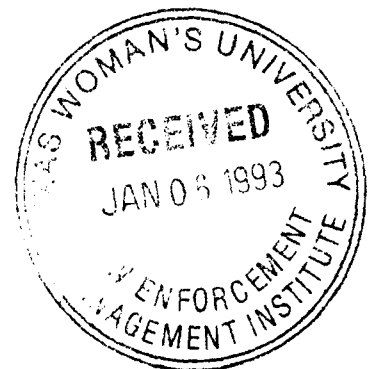
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IMAGE OF POLICE IN OUR SOCIETY

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IMAGE OF POLICE IN OUR SOCIETY

BY JOE S. PRICE

The general public views differently from the way officers think of themselves. I will present how these images differ and the conflict caused by the difference. The image portrayed by police is the same for both male and female officers. So, for the purpose of clarification, all officers will be referred to in the male gender.

Since America became a colony, the people have been trying to set up a security force in order to protect their homes. The early settlers decided that some rules of law must be maintained but did not want law that infringed on their individual freedoms. Certain changes were made to the English law to make it compatible to the desires of the colonists.

In Colonial America, security or law enforcement officers were generally chosen from the lower class and were paid very little for their work. Law enforcement was very ineffective, and the strong often took control over their weaker neighbors. Stronger law enforcement was needed, and during the nineteenth century, persons often were hired as peace officers who were as bad as the people they tried to arrest.

As years passed, the need for better class officers also increased. Bribes and corruption were prevalent and the people were in need of better police service from more qualified officers.

In order to understand a police officer, it is helpful to understand what is required to qualify for the role.

The police applicant must be of legal age, possess an high school level education or higher, be in excellent physical condition and have the highest moral character. This would represent the general basic requirements for entry, certainly not the only requirements. In many cases, the applicant must also take a competitive examination and undergo an extensive background investigation.

Police applicants come from all walks of life and it is more difficult for some applicants to conform to police rules and regulations than others. All people have different personalities and different norms.

After applicants qualify, they must attend a law-enforcement academy for several months and emerge with a passing score. Some candidates react very favorably to the training given to them at the academy, and some have difficulty adjusting to the restrictions that attend becoming an officer. After graduation from the academy, he is required to take an examination given by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officers Standards and

Education. If a passing score is accomplished, applicants are licensed as qualified Texas peace officers. His training is now just beginning.

The officer is considered a "rookie" by peers, but the general public usually does not make this distinction. As far as the public is concerned, the rookie police officer should know as much as veterans and should be able to handle any situation. After all, they wear the same uniform and carries the same badge. Nothing designates any officer as a beginner in the profession.

The image of police varies slightly from one geographical location to another. In locations where organized crime flourishes, the image of police has sometimes been tarnished, because of the flow of money from illegal activities. When crime rises and corruption prevails, the image of police declines rapidly each time an officer yields to temptation. When officers violates their oath of office, police everywhere feel the impact.

The whole police profession is penalized for the illegal act of one person who violated a public trust. An ex-Chief of Police from New Haven, Connecticut, James F. Ahern, stated, "No quality is rarer in public life than a sense of uncompromised outrage". He was referring to the public outcry when a peace officer was caught violating the oath of office.¹

POLICE IMAGE: SOME HISTORICAL OBSERVATIONS

The movie image of the old west portrayed the local peace officer as a straight- shooting, hard- riding, two-fisted person who tipped his hat to ladies and appeared almost the mythical "knight in shining armor". Many books have been written and movies made about some of these heroes of the old west. Most of the books and movies are pure fabrication. In reality, many of these men were cold-blooded killers wearing a badge. Many books were written by authors who were alien to the west and wrote anything that would sell to easterners, who considered the west an exciting region.

As the law by gun diminished, the image of the peace officer began to improve. By the beginning of the twentieth century, most of the old gunfighters were remembered more from the paperback novels that were written about them than the actual deeds they were written about them than from the actual deeds in which they were involved.

By 1902, the public started spending more money on law enforcement and generally expanding support until about 1960. During these years, law enforcement agencies normally spent in the range of 90% of budgeted funds on salaries and 10% on equipment.² Limited equipment and

inflationary trends began to encroach on budgets as the demand for law enforcement increased. The police, if they were honest, could barely survive on their salaries, so graft and corruption became a way of life in some urban centers in the pre-World War II era.

Payoffs to police were normal operating procedure in Chicago from 1905 to 1925.³ A prostitute would pay from \$25 to \$50 just to operate in a specific territory. She often paid the money directly to the officer on the beat or to his superior. Prostitution was illegal in Illinois, but the police had written regulations pertaining to the operation of houses of prostitution. Dishonesty was almost expected anyone who applied for the job.

During the reign of organized crime in Chicago, when Al Capone and the infamous Genna brothers were heading the liquor runners, the police chief wrote a memo to all police officers instructing them not to use "police flivvers" to escort beer trucks carrying illegal alcohol. In one episode which came to light, eleven Chicago policemen were selling illegal liquor in a police station.⁴ The corruption in Chicago continued until 1974 when 60 police officers were indicted for bribery and extortion. In circumstances such as this, the public may ask who can they trust if they can't trust a police officer. The question seems a valid one.

By 1930, the image of police had fallen to lowest level in history. Prohibition was the law at the time and people were drinking illegal whiskey smuggled from other countries or moonshine whiskey, bath tub gin, or home brew made by law breakers in this country. It was the simple rule of supply and demand. The people were demanding the liquor and the criminals were providing it.

It was common for law enforcement officers to be "on the take" and for politicians to be corrupt. Criminals became millionaires and bought their own politicians. They drove big cars and sported fancy women. Many police officials were working for criminals such as Al Capone.

At the same time the newspapers were printing stories about crooked police and rich criminals, thousands of hard working police officers were honest and were simply trying to do a good job. The actions of some dishonest police officials left a stain on every police officer in the country who tried to be honest.

When J. Edgar Hoover was appointed director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation by the President of the United States in 1924, the image of law enforcement began to improve. The publicity attached to the tracking down of all the known big-time gangsters and the forming of the "untouchables"⁵ contributed to the enhancing of the police image in the public view. Law enforcement heroes who could be used as role models were finally visible

that could be used as a role model. The untouchables were a special group of hand picked men who allegedly could not be bought and were beyond reproach. Police officers, once again, became the good guys.

After the major organized crime figures were apprehended or killed by law enforcement, crime began to diminish by the mid 1930's, and the general public began to take law and order for granted. Because of the depression, people were more concerned with food, or the lack of it, than they were with crime.

More money was being spent now on modern technology that assisted police officers in their work. This caused the public to build some respect for law enforcement that may have been lacking. Police officers began to receive at least minimal training in certain areas, and this promoted self confidence and aided in restoring public confidence.

CIVIL RIGHTS ACTIVITY AND THE POLICE

"Law and Order" was a dormant issue after the late 1930's and did not become a major issue until it was raised in a presidential campaign in 1964.⁶ By that time, the police were coping with racial unrest, bigoted politicians and general hatred among the minority population who had just had their first taste of real freedom with the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Enforcement of the Civil Rights Act and other additional duties placed on the Justice Department required a budget increase of 500% from 1964 to 1971, and police budgets were also being raised to meet the added need for civil protection.⁷

Charges of police brutality and violation of civil rights were continually being leveled against local police and sheriff's departments. Some were valid, and some were not.

The African-American community said the Anglo police officers were overreacting to situations and demonstrations with excessive physical violence.

Many Anglo police officers and, occasionally, entire communities, reacted violently to African-American demands. The results were usually blamed on the police, especially if they were bad and the politicians often took credit if they were good.

Anglo officers thought the African-American community wanted too much for free and African-American officers argued that the community was simply reacting to past police mistreatment. The only point in general agreement was the fact that nobody had a quick solution to the tension. Tremendous progress has been made since 1964, in the field of civil rights, but tension and prejudice still exist in both communities.

Sometimes, police see color as sufficient reason for suspecting crime and for arresting African-Americans with less evidence than would be necessary if the offenders were Anglo. This attitude is totally unacceptable in both public and police communities, and is something that has to change in order for the police to gain respect.

The African-American community has to realize that, they too, must strive to improve their communities and better themselves.

Officers in the law enforcement profession should be color blind and should see each offender only as a person who has broken the law. In order to gain respect, each person must be treated equally under the law. Prejudice has no place in the halls of justice.

THE MODERN DAY POLICE IMAGE

Also during the post World War II era, television has had a terrific impact on the image of law enforcement. This image has both positive and negative connotations. Law enforcement has been glamorized by many television shows, during the last three decades. And, it has also been portrayed as a refuge for the worst and most dishonest.⁸

The added publicity, caused by the books and television shows, increased interest in law enforcement and brought more applicants to the police profession. In some instances, they came with misconceptions, or entered

the profession for the wrong reasons. Some applicants expected to become instant detectives, wear two guns, and capture all local criminals in a week. When this didn't happen and they discovered only routine police procedures, many lost enthusiasm or quit the profession. Others have taken their frustration out on the people they were hired to serve.

Police officers are still expected to possess the untouchable quality stipulated by J. Edgar Hoover and the F.B.I. in the 1920's. Most career officers possess at least some of these qualities and dedicate themselves to a law enforcement career. Many are highly educated individuals who are continually training to improve themselves and the profession. They are also aware of the need to improve their reputation within their communities. They recognize the need to hold their tempers under difficult circumstances. They must conduct their lives in a manner that will not bring discredit on the uniform or the department. It is expected that officers will set an example for the general public and conduct their private lives discreetly.

Occasions surface, at times, that embarrass the profession and remind society of continuing police weaknesses and temptations. Such an example was the case recently seen on national television, involving the apprehension of a subject, in Los Angeles, California,

when he was beaten by police officers who were making an arrest after a traffic chase.

All peace officers must share the burden of the negative impact caused by this incident, regardless of the outcome of the actual case. One of the directors of a local N.A.A.C.P. office stated, "Public awareness may have been increased as a result of attention generated by the videotape"⁹ referring to the Los Angeles case.

Officers must also maintain the best of credit records on a salary, which, many times, is below that for comparable employment in the private sector. An Attorney General for the United States Justice Department summed it up pretty well when he wrote

The modern policeman must be law enforcer and lawyer, scientist in a whole range of physical sciences - chemistry, physics, electronics - medic, psychologist, social worker, human relations and race relations expert, marriage counsellor, youth advisor, athlete, public servant - These are but a few of the many skills a major police department must exercise daily. Individual policemen must personally possess many of them and perform them with excellence. Safety, life and property, equal justice, liberty, confidence in government and in the purpose of our laws will depend on it.

The concept is the same today as it was then. then.

The stress of facing unknown dangers every day and trying to live a fantasy type existence to appease the general public tend to be more than some candidates are willing to withstand.

Before 1970, in order to become a peace officer in the State of Texas, the only requirement for a peace officer, not under state civil service, was to be 21 years of age and a citizen of the United States. The agency gave new officers badges and identification cards and they were considered genuine peace officers. Less emphasis was placed on their general understanding of the law they were asked to enforce.

Many political appointments were made during this period, and officers who knew little about the law were patrolling the streets. As a result, civil rights were violated, police brutality existed, and numerous situations occurred, that were not compatible with good law enforcement. This angered the general public, and there were calls from citizens and public officials for better treatment from law enforcement officers. The "good ole boy" syndrome was on the way out.

In 1970, the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement Officer Standards and Education came into being. This commission was formed in order to set guidelines to upgrade the class of law enforcement in Texas by

requiring education and experience as qualifications for a law enforcement officer. In order to get an intermediate or advanced certificate, more training and years of experience were required. This has been the process for promoting professionalism in law enforcement. Police officers have become more professional, but the pay for police is still at the laborer level in some cities.

Officers are expected to be proficient in law and have extraordinary common sense. An officer is also expected to be physically and morally capable of handling almost any situation which could occur. A police officer must make quick decisions, sometimes in a split second, that may not always be the "right" decision. This one mistake could get him killed or terminated from his employment. After an officer is terminated from employment, it is very difficult to find employment at another department, regardless of the reason for termination. This attitude, however valid, may contribute to officers binding together in a common brotherhood. Some police feel this is necessary because of public apathy, but this, of course, is not true, because law abiding citizens in all communities hold the police in high regard. Numerous community opinion surveys have demonstrated this fact.

A SURVEY OF CITIZEN AND POLICE ATTITUDES ABOUT THE
POLICE IMAGE AND ROLE

Misconceptions concerning the police can often be attributed to over-zealous news reporters or biased television cameramen looking for the one story that will win them the coveted Pulitzer or a similar trophy. When a situation arises that brings the new media to the scene, some reporters will try to get the most sensational picture possible. This type of reporting, especially if it concerns the activities of police officers, sells newspapers and increases the ratings of television programs.

The television industry has also contributed to the distrust and disrespect of police. Some television programs continually show law enforcement officers as being corrupt; they also often show the criminal as the hero. Programs often depict officers as dishonest and untrustworthy, which is having a definite effect on the public.

Television has also portrayed the police officer as the type person many men would like to be. The officers shown on television and movies are often martial art experts who command respect through their athletic abilities or other talents. Recruitment in the police profession can be partially credited to these men.

Television and the movies too often portray the role of police in society as a speeding police car careening around a corner with red lights and siren wailing. It is the good guy chasing the bad guy with guns blazing. Many people expect the police to act like their favorite television hero did at the last gunfight. While these shows continue to swell the recruitment lines of law enforcement, many are attracted for the wrong reasons.

The general public expects all professions that interact with the public to adhere to a certain code of ethics. They want their police, lawyers, judges, and other professionals to stop taking bribes, stop lying, and involving themselves in conflicts of interest.¹⁰ In short, these professionals are expected to be honest and have the highest integrity.

The citizens of any community expect the police to be their line of defense against violent criminals, but they are very reluctant to assist at times for fear of "getting involved". The common person on the street views any criminal as a violent person. The criminal justice system does not consider all criminals in the violent category and continues to release them, in great numbers, to prey upon society almost at will.

When the court frees a criminal, after being charged with a crime, many uneducated people blame the police officers for the early release of the subject. This is

usually caused by a misunderstanding of the Criminal Justice System. The mere fact the criminal walks the street again causes the community to resent the persons in authority. This also means the police. Many segments of the public are uneducated about the Criminal Justice System and the policeman is a sign of authority. Therefore, some do not understand when the criminal walks the street a few hours later. They blame the police officer because they do not know anyone else to blame. This can be remedied through education.

This also causes the policemen to become frustrated because he has no control over the situation he is blamed for. It causes a conflict between the police and the public when a portion of the community does not understand our system of government. In some cities where the population consists of many new immigrants of other cultures, this creates a problem.

The general public expects police officers to handle any criminal or violent situation that comes up and officers should react within the scope of their training for the situation. No two situations are the same, nor can they be handled the same with surety. The only thing for sure is the fact the officer is the only one who stands between the lawless and the law abiding.

More responsibilities are being placed on the police officer that tend to be more social than law enforcement.

Police officers, in the majority, view themselves as law enforcers, not social workers, but public demand determines the role of police officers.

PUBLIC SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS

To determine how police appear to the public today, a survey was conducted in Houston, Harris County, Texas. Questionnaires were sent to three sociologically different neighborhoods. Ninety questionnaires were sent; a total of 40 was returned. (A copy of this questionnaire is included as Appendix A.) Eleven were returned from the lower socio-economic group, 20 from the middle group and 9 from the upper group.

Each questionnaire consisted of eleven questions, with the first three questions to be answered on a scale of one to five. One was considered lowest and five the highest score.

The questions on the public survey were as follows:

PUBLIC RESPONSE TO SURVEY

1. Do you trust your police
to protect you?

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
2	8	1	0	0

1 Lower Socio-Economic Group

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
1	0	17	2	0

2 Middle Socio-Economic Group

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
0	0	1	4	5

3 High Socio-Economic Group

The lower socio-economic group in table 1 did not trust the police to protect them as the middle and high group did in tables 2 and 3. This could be a signal that added police activity is needed in the lower socio-economic area in order for the citizens to feel secure.

2. How honest are the police?

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
1	6	3	1	0

4 Lower Group

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
0	0	10	7	3

5 Middle Group

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
0	0	1	8	0

6 High Group

The majority of the lower socio-economic group said they believed the police were less than honest. The middle group stated they believed the police were above average in honesty in table 5 and the high group said the same in table 6. This indicates a need for closer supervision of police officers by superiors to determine the reason for the distrust in the lower socio-economic community.

3. How would you score the
image of police officers you
know?

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
0	9	2	0	0

7 Lower Group

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
0	0	3	9	7

8 Middle Group

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
0	0	0	2	7

9 High Group

The lower socio-economic group indicated the image of police they knew was below average while the middle group scored the officers they knew as above average. The high group said their image of the known officers were very high. This could indicate the type service that each community is receiving from the police.

4. Are you related to a
police officer?

<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>
8	3

10 Lower Group

<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>
16	4

11 Middle Group

<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>
9	0

12 High Group

The majority of all three groups indicated that only a few of the persons responding were related to police officers. The majority had no relatives as police officers.

5. Are you personally
acquainted with a law
enforcement officer?

<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>
4	7

13 Lower Group

<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>
3	17

14 Middle Group

<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>
3	8

15 High Group

The majority of the lower socio-economic group in table 13 and also the middle and high groups were acquainted with police officers. Some only knew the officers by sight and others had business with officers. Some stated they barely knew the officer.

6. Do you believe the police
should be more honest than
any other citizen?

<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>SAME</u>
0	10	1

16 Lower Group

<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>SAME</u>
0	18	2

17 Middle Group

<u>NO</u>	<u>YES</u>	<u>SAME</u>
0	5	4

18 High Group

All three groups stated that the police should be more honest than an ordinary citizen. The middle group was emphatic about officers being beyond reproach and the high group, in the majority, stated the same thing. These tables clearly indicate that citizens expect their police to be very honest and their standards should be above that of the general public. The high group had the highest percentage of persons who thought the officers should have the same honesty as any other citizen.

7. How do you think the image of police today compares with the image of police before the Korean Action of 1950?

<u>LOW</u>	<u>HIGH</u>	<u>SAME</u>
7	1	3

19 Low Group

<u>LOW</u>	<u>HIGH</u>	<u>SAME</u>
0	18	2

20 Middle Group

<u>LOW</u>	<u>HIGH</u>	<u>SAME</u>
0	7	2

21 High Group

The vast majority of the middle and high groups indicated the image of police has risen since 1950, but the lower group stated the image was lower than in 1950. This means the police has not been performing properly in the lower socio-economic communities or the treatment of the individuals in the lower group is different than in the middle and high group.

8. How many law enforcement officers have you invited to a social function in the last year?

<u>NO#</u>	<u>NONE</u>
0	11

22 Lower Group

<u>NO#</u>	<u>NONE</u>
2	18

23 Middle Group

<u>NO#</u>	<u>NONE</u>
1	8

24 High Group

These tables indicate that the majority of all three groups do not socialize with police officers. More functions should be instituted on a social level so police officers and citizens can be introduced to each other. Too often, the only contact between citizens and the police is on an official basis. Without the tension of official confrontation, both the public and officers would have a better opportunity to interact with each other.

9. Why do you think more policemen are being charged with crimes today than in the past?

A	B	C
8	2	1

25 Lower Group

- A. Police mistreat citizens more.
- B. More chance of getting caught.
- C. Faulty hiring practice.

A	B	C
0	4	16

26 Middle Group

A	B	C
0	2	7

27 High Group

The majority of the lower socio-economic group believes that more police officers are being charged with crimes today because they mistreat people. This clearly shows that improvement must occur in the relationship between the police and lower socio-economic communities. The middle group and high group indicated that faulty hiring practices by police were responsible for officers being charged with crimes. They stated that these type people should have been screened and not employed at all by police organizations. While this is

true in actuality, it is utterly impossible to foresee all the situations in advance. Better qualifications for entry level police officers would help. Better technology in crime detection has been a tremendous help in apprehending both citizens and bad police officers.

10. Are you involved in a
community policing project?

NO	YES
11	0

28 Lower Group

NO	YES
18	2

29 Middle Group

NO	YES
8	1

30 High Group

The vast majority of those people responding in all three groups indicated that only a few were involved in a community policing project. With more people involved in the program, there would be a better opportunity to communicate between police and the community. This might help in overcoming some of the problems which occur with lack of communication.

11. What would enhance your
image of police today?

A	B	C
7	3	1

31 Lower Group

- A. Better treatment
- B. More community involvement
- C. Nothing would enhance
- D. Better qualifications
- E. Satisfied with image

A	B	C	D	E
0	4	0	15	1

32 Middle Group

A	B	C	D	E
0	3	0	6	0

33 High Group

The lower socio-economic group stated that better treatment of citizens would enhance their image of police along with community involvement. The middle group said that their image of police would enhance if better hiring practices were placed in operation. They also wanted more community involvement by the police. The high group also wanted more community involvement, but the majority stated that better hiring practices would enhance the image of police.

RESPONSE FROM POLICE SURVEY

Because home addresses of law enforcement officers are not published, it was necessary to hand deliver the questionnaires to various law enforcement agencies in the Harris County area or mail them, in bulk, to the various departments. Thirty questionnaires were personally delivered and 60 were mailed for a total of 90. A total of 71 was returned for this survey. The officers surveyed consisted of police officers, deputy constables, and deputy sheriffs from the Harris County area. Agencies involved consisted of the Houston Police Department, Humble Police Department, Pasadena Police Department, Harris County Sheriff Department and the Harris County Constable Precinct 2 Department.

Responding officers were asked a total of 11 questions, and the first 4 questions were to be answered on a sliding scale of 1 to 5 with 1 being the lowest score and 5 the highest. The questions were as follows:

1. How do you think the	<hr/>					
public would score the image	Score	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
of police?	Response	1	17	52	1	0

The police, according to the response of the survey, realize their image has been tarnished. They said the public would only rate their image a little above average. Some said the public would rate their image below average.

2. Do you resent policemen
being used for other purposes
than law enforcement, such as
social services?

Score	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Response	4	0	43	4	
	20				

35 Police Survey

The majority of the officers responding had very little resentment although some resented being used for social services. This attitude of resentment must change if the police image is to rise. Police officers must respond to the wishes of the general public, regardless of the services demanded.

3. How much do you socialize
outside the police
brotherhood?

Score	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>
Response	3	21	20	37	0

36 Police Survey

The majority of officers socialize largely outside police circles, but there are many who remain with only police as close friends. These police officers who fail to enlarge their circle of friends are very often the subjects who develop personal problems that lead to termination from the service.

4. Do you feel the public would support you if you were sued, after making an honest mistake, in the performance of your duties?

Score	1	2	3	4	5
Response	0	45	13	10	1

37 Police Survey

Most of the officers had no confidence in the public's support if they made a mistake, although about 1/3 of the officers thought the public would support them. This situation can be remedied by Public officials who assure their officers that if they are right, they will be protected by the public sector.

5. How do you classify yourself in law enforcement?

Score	A	B	C	D
Response	64	6	0	1

A. Professional

B. Craftsman

C. Laborer

D. Not classified

38 Police Survey

All but 7 of the 71 officers responding classified themselves as professionals, while 6 said they were skilled craftsmen. One stated that he was unclassified. This clearly shows that police officers would like to be professionals, whether the general public acknowledges or not. In order to accomplish this goal, officers must continue to strive for excellence.

6. Do you resent the fact
some criminals live better
than you?

Score	<u>YES</u>	<u>NO</u>
Response	70	1

39 Police Survey

Police officers indicated they had a deep resentment when known criminals live better than themselves. This resentment could be derived from the knowledge of the criminal's source of income. It is up to the police to change remedy this type situation instead of harboring resentment.

7. How do you feel about
criminals being released
after serving less than 1
month for each year they were
sentenced?

Score	<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>
Response	71	0	0

40 Police Survey

- A. Frustrated with system
- B. Pleased with system
- C. Immaterial

All officers responding were frustrated with the criminal justice system that allows inmates to mock our system of justice. None indicated they were satisfied and all said the system needed changes that would prevent this. The frustration caused by this creates an atmosphere where the officer feels his work is serving no purpose. When problems such as this

occur and officers feel that convicted felons are not being punished, they may decide to become a felon themselves. This may be one of the reasons that so many officers are being charged with crimes.

8. What group do you think is responsible for the weakness in our criminal justice system, if any?

Score	A	B	C	D
Response	14	52	0	5

41 Police Survey

- A. Attorneys
- B. Legislators
- C. Courts and general public
- D. Parole board

The vast majority of officers said that legislators were responsible for the weakness of our criminal system, and others stated that attorneys were responsible. Most legislators are attorneys so this table clearly brings into focus the group that police believe should be held responsible. In order to remedy this situation, the general public must elect more legislators from other occupations or professions. A small number indicated the parole board was to blame. The fault may lie with all of these groups collectively. There must be cooperation between all the groups named in order to correct the system.

9. How long have you been in
law enforcement?

Years	<u>1</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>15</u>
Response	27	38	6	0

42 Police Survey

Most of the officers surveyed had over 5 years experience or more than 1 year and less than 5. None had over 15 years experience. All the officers had more than 1 year experience.

10. Why do you think more
police officers are leaving
law enforcement and
committing crimes now than in
the past?

<u>A</u>	<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>
0	66	1	4

43 Police Survey

- A. Lack of support from public
- B. Frustration with system
- C. Family problems or low pay
- D. Stress

Sixty six officers agreed that a combination of 2 or more causes were responsible with frustration with the criminal system being the largest cause. Some cited stress, family problems and low pay, but they were in the minority. This return clearly shows a lack of confidence in our criminal justice system and unless changes for the better are made, more officers will be leaving the service in the future for more lucrative positions.

11. How would you enhance the
image of police in the eyes
of the general public?

Score	A	B	C	D
Response	0	0	0	71

44 Police Survey

- A. Better pay and
training
- B. More qualified personnel
- C. Community policing
- D. Combination of all A, B, and C

All the officers surveyed agreed that a combination of better qualified personnel, better training, better pay, and the instituting of community policing would help the image of police to escalate. They also agreed that better treatment of citizens could have a marked effect on the image.

The preceding tables demonstrate the results of the survey questions from both the public and police view points. and although this cannot be considered a scientific survey, due to the methodology, it does reflect a few of the problems which exist.

From the public view, the survey shows that little progress in upgrading the police image has been made since 1950 in the lower socio-economic group, but middle class America feels the image has been enhanced. It also shows that the working middle class expect their policemen to be above average in honesty, but feel they are well below this mark in actuality. The public, in general, also feels that the police

are not adequate protection necessary for their well being and indicated a change is needed in order to make the police more efficient.

Results of the police survey suggest that policemen feel a general lack of support from the public. It also shows that police are not happy with the image that is portrayed to the public and they know a change must occur to remedy this. The general consensus was that the image of police is not at the desirable level so police must learn to interact more with the citizens in the communities they police and terminate those officers who refuse to upgrade their image. This also means that police must give lower socio-economic communities the same protection they give the middle and high socio-economic communities.

This survey was conducted to provide a consensus of opinion from a number of different sources and was not intended as a scientific study.

In the Anglo community, the general concept is that most of the police officers are good, honest, hard working men and women, who are too few in numbers to make a big difference. The majority of people in the African-American community coincided with the thoughts of the Anglo community, but some felt better treatment by the police was in order.

Several African-American men were interviewed at a shopping center which is basically lower class and inhabited by derelicts. The general consensus was that the police used

too much force and were to be feared. someone to be feared. Of course, this was the expected answer from this group. Most of the subjects interviewed were out of work, dealing drugs, abusing alcohol, or indulging in various types of criminal activity. The people from the respectable African-American community said the police were doing a good job with the manpower they had and wanted more police enforcement. In a Northeast section of Houston, Texas called Fidelity Addition, a concentrated African-American area, the general consensus was that more police were needed. They felt they were being deprived of police protection and were receiving less police activity than neighboring Anglo areas.

Of all grievances listed by members of the African-American community, police practice heads the list. All complaints seem to stem from some action either taken by the police or not taken by the police regarding incidents which have occurred in their neighborhood or to them individually.

In order to alleviate the problems facing the police and the community at this time, it will be necessary to completely overhaul the criminal justice system. There must be a change in a system that allows convicted criminals to prey on the public while on parole or on bond. The system should provide for criminals to serve the sentences given them by judges and juries. Criminals should also be required to be self supporting in a prison system with minimum cost to taxpayers. Victims should be reimbursed by criminals on probation and the

community should derive compensation through community service. This situation is a major factor for police because many victims of crime, not familiar with the criminal justice system, blame the police for misfortune. The police are often criticized for situations beyond their control. Recently, in Harris County, a person was no-billed by a grand jury after the man killed another with a knife. The family of the slain person were immigrants from another country and did not understand why the defendant was not punished. They insinuated the police were bad because they did not punish the defendant. This creates unrest in the community and mistrust in the police, but education of the criminal justice system will remedy these complaints.

Resolving this problem would relieve the frustration of police and citizens by giving them a feeling of accomplishment when offenders are convicted. With community policing and adequate financing, the police, with the help of citizens, can help curb the criminal element and make the phrase "Crime Does Not Pay" a truthful statement once again.

There are some, who are considered experts in the criminal justice field, who recommend only one appeal on death sentences before sentence is carried out."

Many would say it would not be a deterrent, but it has not been tried yet. If such a system were instituted, the image of police would rise considerably. The proof would be in the results.

CONCLUSION

With a few changes and with each officer enforcing the law impartially, our problems, both with the police image and with the community, could be alleviated.

Members of the general public want to leave their home in the morning and return after work to find their residence intact and their property secure. People are weary of working half their lives to gain a few items of luxury only to have the property stolen while they are working. With each report of unsolved crime, the police image declines.

Law enforcement officers have come a long way, but some still refuse to conform to professional standards. With each breach of ethics or other unacceptable behavior, the police image declines. The recent police beating of a motorist in Detroit, Michigan, which resulted in the death of the man, damaged many years of good public relation work in a matter of minutes. Such corrupt officers are continually weeded out by the profession with higher standards set for incoming cadets. This can gradually enhance the police image.

Greater public education must be available in order for the public to cohere with the officers in policing their neighborhoods. Communities must interact with law enforcement agencies in order to be effective against the common enemy.

Police officers must work together to communicate with other agencies, share information, expertise, or any other facility that is needed to combat the criminal element.

All law enforcement officers must take a long look at themselves and refuse to be sidetracked from a professional route, regardless of personal feelings or prejudices.

Police officers must be without prejudice in order to effectively interact with the public. When this is accomplished, we can call law enforcement a profession and defend that title to the utmost. As we do this, the image of law enforcement will increase among professions, both in the eyes of the public and the police.

Many law enforcement officers consider themselves a special breed. They believe it takes a special type of person to fulfill the requirements of a police officer and withstand the test of time and experience on the street. A police officer should strive to set examples for others to follow. High morals and integrity should be foremost in the criteria for law enforcement officers. Without these necessary elements, the image of police will never rise to an acceptable level.

The image of police will change as new police officers don their uniforms and challenge the problems assigned them by the community they serve. Police image will reflect how they handle the tasks assigned to them and how they interact with the people involved. The image of police is ever changing.

A combination of events must take place in order to enhance the image of police. First, the police must educate the public to the fact that the police are not the enemy. This can probably be accomplished in some places with community policing and better interaction with citizens. Methods must coincide with the problems from each area. The same method will not work in every environment. The police must be imaginative and innovative in order to be effective in their communities.

Communities, in turn, must be willing to recognize professional officers and compensate them accordingly. Only the most qualified applicants should be accepted into law enforcement, and standards should continually be raised, not lowered, to attract good people to the profession. Without good pay to go with good qualifications, there will always be a shortage of qualified applicants in law enforcement.

Until a utopia is formed where everyone has everything they want and there are no differences in living conditions, the police image will continue to change with every arrest made, every traffic ticket written, and with every person who is told they must do what they do not want to do.

Hopefully, the police profession, academia, politicians, and local communities can work together, in harmony, to rid the streets of crime and poverty and once again, make the word, police, a name of honor and respect.

APPENDIX A
PUBLIC SURVEY OF POLICE IMAGE

DIRECTIONS: On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest, circle the answer which more closely reflects your feelings. Please be as honest as possible with your answers. This survey is for research purposes only.

QUESTIONS

1. Do you trust your police to protect you?

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4
- E. 5

2. How honest are the police?

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4
- E. 5

3. How would you score the image of the law enforcement officers you know?

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4
- E. 5

Circle your answer which more closely reflects your feelings.

4. Are you related to a law enforcement officer?

- A. Yes
- B. No

5. Are you personally acquainted with a law enforcement officer?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Know by sight
- D. Know by name
- E. Had business with officer

6. Do you believe the police should be more honest than any other citizen?
- A. Same as citizen
 - B. Less than citizen
 - C. Little more than citizen
 - D. Much more than citizen
 - E. Must be beyond reproach
7. How do you think the image of police today compares to the image of police before the Korean Action of 1950?
- A. Higher
 - B. Much higher
 - C. About the same
 - D. Slightly lower than in 1950
 - E. Do not have an opinion
8. How many law enforcement officers have you invited to a social event in the last year?
- A. More than five
 - B. Less than five, more than one
 - C. None
 - D. invited officer for security at social event

E. Do not know any officers

9. Why do you think more policemen are being charged with crimes today than in the past?

A. More chance of getting caught

B. Faulty hiring practice

C. Police mistreat citizens more

D. Commit crimes because of being underpaid

E. No opinion

10. Are you involved in a community policing program?

A. Not involved

B. Slightly involved

C. Moderately involved

D. Much involved

E. Totally involved

11. What would enhance your image of police today?

A. Nothing would enhance

B. Better treatment by Police Officers

C. Higher qualifications for Police

D. Satisfied with present image

E. More community involvement

POLICE SURVEY OF POLICE IMAGE
FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE

On a scale of 1 to 5, with one being the lowest and five being the highest score, circle the answer which more closely reflects your true feelings. Please be as honest as possible with your answers. This survey is for research purposes only.

1. How do you think the public would score the image of police?

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4
- E. 5

2. Do you resent policemen being used for other purposes than law enforcement, such as social services?

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4
- E. 5

3. How much do you socialize outside the police brotherhood?

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4
- E. 5

4. Do you feel the public would support you, if you were sued, after making an honest mistake, in the performance of your duties?

- A. 1
- B. 2
- C. 3
- D. 4
- E. 5

Circle the answer which more closely reflects your answer.

5. How do you classify yourself in law enforcement?

- A. Public Servant
- B. Professional
- C. Skilled Craftsman
- D. Blue Collar worker
- E. Not classified

6. Do you resent the fact some criminals live better than you?

- A. Yes
- B. No
- C. Slight resentment
- D. Burning hatred of criminals

7. How do you feel about criminals being released after serving less than one month for each year they were sentenced?

- A. Frustration
- B. Combination of two or more
- C. Does not accomplish anything
- D. Waste of time to arrest offenders
- E. Pleased with the situation

8. What group do you think is responsible for the weakness in our Criminal Justice System , if any?

- A. Legislators
- B. Attorneys
- C. General Public
- D. Judges and Courts
- E. Parole Boards

9. How long have you been in law enforcement?

- A. Less than 1 year
- B. More than 1 year, less than 5 years
- C. More than 5 years, less than 10 years
- D. More than 10 years, less than 15 years
- E. More than 15 years

10. Why do you think more police officers are leaving law enforcement and committing crimes now than in the past?

- A. Stress
- B. Frustration with Criminal Justice System
- C. Family problems and low pay
- D. Lack of support from public
- E. Caliber of officers hired
- F. Combination of two or more causes listed

11. How would you enhance the image of police in the eyes of the general public?

- A. Better treatment of citizens
- B. Neighborhood policing
- C. Pay and train the police better
- D. Combination of two or more answers
- E. Answer not listed

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