

Chapter 19

Final Thoughts – Examining Policing Options to Enhance Transparency and Community Trust



James F. Albrecht

Epilogue and Discussion

As the epilogue for this insightful and thought-provoking work, I would like to discuss my observations as both a former police practitioner and an open-minded criminal justice researcher as it relates to police and community, specifically minority group, relations and interactions. As a police administrator who has worked both locally, in New York City, and internationally, for the United Nations and European Union as an international police official, I am saddened at the negative criticism that appears to overwhelm law enforcement practitioners. As a whole, we sincerely view ourselves as committed to the rule of law in search of a safer and more comfortable environment for our constituents and the public-at-large. Most police officers select this challenging profession as a means to help others and are truly altruistically oriented. Yet, there has been consistent criticism, particularly from under-represented groups, that extol that police officers are inherently bad individuals, often acting with racist or discriminatory intentions, that are mere pawns of the controlling and self-serving elite.

The condemnation of police professionals over the last few decades, most recently fueled by rather over-sensationalized and often inaccurate social media accounts, has left many law enforcement officers to question their innate benevolent nature, with many opting to unfortunately strive more for career survival over public service. This is obviously unfortunate, as this movement has caused many to alter their personal ideologies in contradiction to their intrinsic beliefs.

On the other hand, my perspective as a criminal justice researcher, and sociologist at heart, has caused me to concede that there is a major disconnect in today's society that critically needs to be acknowledged and effectively addressed. Certain sections of society, both in western cultures and globally, convey such a distrust and

J. F. Albrecht (✉)
Department of Criminal Justice and Homeland Security, Pace University,
New York, NY, USA

dismay for the police that are clearly unacceptable in the contemporary world. Unfortunately, this mistrust commonly appears to afflict under-represented groups. In the United States, these complaints often originate in the African-American, Black, Hispanic, Native American and Muslim communities. In Europe, these voices come from immigrant and other minority groups. In the Middle East, religious sects, in Africa, tribal groups, and in Asia, ethnic minorities, routinely coincide with the discontent conveyed in government and the criminal justice system. There is also a common overlap between these accusations and socio-economic disadvantage that appears to fuel the stance that local governance has been designed as a means to hamper accomplishment, personal success and general contentment of those in minority groups.

Even with the most impressive crime reduction and counter-terrorism accomplishments, these achievements can be said to be for naught if they do not coincide with high, if not total, public trust and confidence. As Gary Cordner has noted in the book *Preface*, a totalitarian state can be blessed with low crime rates, but this may coincide with diminished trust and satisfaction in regional authorities and local government officials. In reality, without public support and acclaim, can anyone truly assert to be an effective and successful leader? When one describes a police officer, one can paint many roles, but the most relevant is one as a public servant. But what measures can be taken to ensure that police officers actually do serve the public, and actually make certain that all factions of the communities are properly heard and acknowledged? This appears to be the paramount challenge and, one could say, quagmire that plagues police administrators in the contemporary era. The many authors of this book have outlined many options for enhancing organizational transparency and improving public confidence in the law enforcement profession. Let's now examine some of these proposals.

The book is divided into sections that highlight the multi-faceted issues inherent in policing minority communities, including the many sensitive and controversial factors, and contrasts the North American and global perspectives. The first section starts with Chap. 1 by Albrecht, which underscores the foundations of the law enforcement profession as proposed by the esteemed Sir Robert Peel and contrasts the goal of direct public involvement in police practice and prioritization with public perceptions of the police from a global perspective. Generally speaking, the more corrupt and abusive the police are perceived, the less trust and confidence the community will convey in them. Chapter 2 by Stanislas and Sadique critically examine the role that faith and religion issues play in police training. They have discovered that these issues play limited roles in most law enforcement jurisdictions, particularly those in English speaking nations, which is not surprising given the secular nature of many democratic societies. However, there has been considerable effort in raising religious considerations within police cultural sensitivity training. Aarset and Glomseth in Chap. 3 examine the overwhelming challenges faced by today's police administrators, analyze leadership concepts in policing, and conclude with recommendations to enhance organizational efficacy and efficiency. Albrecht in Chap. 4 continues with an overview of critical criminology, the proposed theory that an isolated elitist class devises law, policy and criminal justice

practices that are designed to hinder under-represented groups across society. The ‘left realism’ ideology, a sub-theory of critical criminology, which advocates enhanced involvement of the public and the crime victim in law enforcement and criminal justice policies and practices, is proposed as an option to re-engage all facets of the population into prioritizing government and police actions.

The second section of the book examines sensitive and controversial aspects of the dynamic between police and community. Chapter 5 by Tobin examines the challenges posed by the all-too-common interaction of the police with the mentally ill in the United States and outlines the measures that the New York City Police Department, in collaboration with other public and non-governmental organizations, have implemented in order to more effectively direct the mentally ill to the appropriate services and to better de-escalate the interaction between the two parties. Can in Chap. 6 examines public perceptions of police fairness and legality based on race, ethnicity and other demographic variables by examining these interactions in two American jurisdictions. Arslan in Chap. 7 moves on to an even more controversial topic in posing the need for more thorough analyses of police-involved shootings and outlining preliminary findings of the evaluation of the available American data from 2000 through 2017. Chapter 8, by Can and Frantzen, continues with an insightful study on public perceptions of police actions related to search and seizure in the United States by examining racial and regional differences.

North American perspectives are further examined in the next section, with Chap. 9 by Parent and Parent, comprehensively evaluating the measures that the police in Canada have undertaken to better serve all factions of the population, with specific attention paid to the LGBT and First Nations (i.e. indigenous or Native American) communities. Chapter 10, by Jacobs, Seidler, Middleton, Mullen and Whitaker, outlines the highly regarded *Project Illumination*, that impressively swayed public opinion in Charleston, in the American state of South Carolina, to dramatically increase public perceptions of the police and which permitted direct community input into the development of agency policies and priorities. Specific attention was made to ensure that every facet of the population was heard and permitted to provide critical input and insight. Morin and Morin, in Chap. 11, outline the measures that are taken to address the concerns of Native Americans (i.e. indigenous populations) in the United States, a sector that has traditionally been plagued by socio-economical challenges throughout American history. In Chap. 12, Hanser and Moran address the sensational issue of migration control along the United States and Mexican border. Border and migration control are both a federal and a local issue in America, but initiatives are often complicated as these resources do not necessarily act in unison and are often accompanied by jurisdictional conflicts, particularly as it relates to the prioritization of strategies. The lessons learned from the American experience may provide guidance to other global leaders who face similar circumstances and criticism.

The final section of the book moves from North America to provide a more global perspective of the challenges involved in providing professional and respected police services to all aspects of the population. Chapter 13, by Sanchez and Fahredin, outline the efforts made by the international community and local actors to create a

harmonious environment and develop a functional criminal justice sector following inter-ethnic conflict and violence in the Kosovo region of Serbia in the southern area of former Yugoslavia. In Chap. 14, den Heyer moves to the other end of the planet to describe the successful efforts made to deploy cultural liaison officers within the New Zealand Police. Arslan in Chap. 15 notes the challenges in maintaining an effective and respected policing mechanism in Turkey following a coup attempt in 2016, particularly as the government alleges that many police officials took part or supported the attempt to overthrow the still existent political hierarchy. The Ottoman Empire in Turkey was the true crossroads between west and east, and the many ethnic and religious groups present, particularly the Kurds in eastern Turkey, continue to be plagued by negatively perceived governmental actions. Aremu and Stanislas in Chap. 16 evaluate the policing strategies in Nigeria within the context of tribal differences and political gerrymandering. Chapter 17 by den Heyer takes a close look at community policing attempts within New Zealand as it relates to the indigenous population, which statistically appears to be disproportionately targeted by police action and which is more likely to convey distrust in local law enforcement officials. Finally, Bezuidenhout in Chap. 18 examines policing policy and practice within the multi-cultural and multi-tribal environment in South Africa.

Overall, common themes do appear throughout this book. It should be obvious that all regions of the globe have generally been affected by mistrust in the police, and this dissatisfaction appears to be concentrated within minority and under-represented groups. Conflict, violence and allegations of over-policing targeting minority communities appear to be common sources of complaint and result in repeat calls for reform and action. There is a broad call for transparency across government agencies and this book has attempted to analyze and propose recommendations to address these concerns within the criminal justice and policing sectors. Extensive efforts must be made to enhance the perceived legitimacy of the police and to increase public confidence and trust in this critical aspect of the democratic process. Without true rule of law, there is no true democracy. And social equality across all sectors of the population is a key factor in this regard.

The goal of this book has been to provide insight and recommendation to those interested in the critical fields of criminal justice, criminology and sociology, particularly as it relates to providing policing services to minority communities across the globe. It is hoped that this objective has been achieved through this enlightening collection of research, reflection and introspection.