

The invention of Peel's principles: A study of policing 'textbook' history

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Abstract

Beyond noting the importance of the Act for Improving the Police in and near the Metropolis (1829) (hereafter referred to as the Metropolitan Police Act of 1829) to the origins of modern policing, law enforcement and policing textbooks commonly include a list identified as Peel's principles. In researching the origins of such lists and their principles, this study found that they are largely the invention of twentieth century textbook authors. From this understanding emerge several considerations for the future of textbook history and of Peel's principles. These include the ongoing importance of incorporating new scholarship and changing historical interpretation into texts. In such an endeavor, however, care should be taken not to impose twentieth or twenty-first century concepts on the past.

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Introduction

The study of history in the discipline of criminal justice remains largely incidental. Dedicated history courses are rare and the 'historical roots' of criminal justice are more often relegated to an introductory chapter or even paragraphs of textbooks. Partially, this lack of historical context is the product of the breadth of the discipline. The history of policing is, for instance, brief compared to say the courts or law. Where does one start a history of criminal justice? Similarly, the history of criminal justice as a discipline is relatively short compared to other disciplines with undergraduate practitioner dimensions and a long tradition of foundations courses, for example, education and social work. In this line of thought, it may be that criminal justice has not sufficiently matured to fully develop its own

historians and philosophers, although the emergence of significant new work particularly in the history of policing indicates substantial growth in this regard (see for example, Philips & Storch, 1999; Reynolds, 1998; Taylor, 1997). Much of this more modern and critical work, however, does not seem to have, as yet, been fully integrated into policing textbooks.

Still, that history is often seen as peripheral to criminal justice does not relieve the discipline from getting the history it does acknowledge, and often uses, accurate. Absent designated history courses, it is the many topical courses of criminal justice which are foundational for understanding the role of history in the discipline of criminal justice. In this regard, textbooks remain at the undergraduate level as critical learning tools about foundation. As textbook authors, in their monumental task of condensing an enormous body of material, remain current in regard to social science and legal research, so too is remaining current in historical study vital to the internal and external legitimacy of the discipline. In this task, writers are significantly

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dependent on secondary sources, but perhaps more so in history. For social science and law, the primary source is often but a few clicks away in the form of the actual study, case, or statute. One does not imagine textbook authors scouring public records offices and historical societies for new insights; it would, quite simply, be impractical. Nevertheless, critical assessment of sources, whether primary or secondary, is an ongoing process. Without it, errors may become lasting dogma.

This study examined the textbook history of Peel's principles, the set of nineteenth century precepts so often referenced as foundational to modern policing. Since even a cursory review of sources cited for such principles by textbooks identifies only secondary sources, the research question initially posed was simply 'what is the origin of Peel's principles?' While the answer may on paper seem self-evident—Sir Robert Peel himself, it is problematic. Quite simply, how is this known to be true? Although the fact that secondary sources are uniformly cited for such principles might alone stimulate interest in such a query, one of this study's authors, a historian with some research background in the time period, has never seen a reference to Peel's principles in either primary documents or secondary historical sources.

The methodology required is basic to historical research, a tracing of layers of sources. Since it is the sources cited which must be examined in order to trace the factual origins of Peel's principles, recent textbooks in multiple editions were initially selected for review. That they have reached at least a second edition indicates their usage or popularity. Such texts were examined for whether they referred to Peel's principles, and if so, what source was cited. Significantly, no one list or set of Peel's principles was identified. Some textbooks cite earlier policing texts as the source for the list of principles, others older policing histories. It was these cited sources that were then examined, proceeding further back in time in order to identify the first references to Peel's principles. Accordingly, following a discussion of the first generation of policing textbooks will be a review of early policing histories. The ultimate finding is that Peel's principles, as they are generally presented and understood today, are an invention of twentieth century policing textbooks.

That Peel's principles were invented, however, does not necessarily make them a fiction. Quite simply, much of history is constructed by scholars and media, and then reconstructed as new information is discovered. Sometimes the reconstruction is revisionist; more commonly the reconstruction is about filling-in missing information or enriching the factual context of a particular

historical point. Whether revisiting Peel's principles is about a need to better define the history of modern policing or just a trivial addition to historical dicta, is in the eyes of the beholder. Toward the former idea, the present research and its conclusions provide some direction for the future teaching of policing history. This writing will, therefore, conclude with several suggested considerations regarding textbook discussions of history and the future of Peel's principles.

Textbook history today

In the 1990s as criminal justice programs flourished, so too did policing courses and the writing of policing textbooks. In this regard, it is important to add that textbooks themselves also often become secondary sources for other texts. In the writing of textbooks, 'getting it right' is critical, since one error in a citation or reference will undoubtedly multiply. In the historical discussion of the current generation of policing textbooks, the importance of the Metropolitan Police Act of 1829 to modern policing remains central. For example, in addressing the day that the new police marched from their headquarters, one text, *Policing American Society*, stated, "The importance of this day in Britain is nearly impossible to overstate—modern public policing had been born" (LaGrange, 1993, p. 31).

Added to the discussion of the Metropolitan Police Act and the formation of the new police, this first edition text included a separate box titled "Peel's Principles of Law Enforcement" (LaGrange, 1993, p. 34). In support of the nine listed principles, the author cited a nearly century-old policing history by W. I. Melville Lee (1901). The same nine principles and Melville Lee were also referenced by David Carter and Louis Radelet (1999) in the sixth edition of the text *The Police and the Community* and again in the seventh edition by Carter (2002).

Another text, *Policing in America: Methods, Issues, Challenges* by Kenneth Peak (1993) identified twelve rather than nine principles of Peelian reform. In a more recent edition of the same text, the author (Peak, 2003) recited the same twelve principles, citing as their source a policing text by Pamela Mayhall (1985), *Police-Community Relations and the Administration of Justice*. These same twelve principles are also identified in the text, *Policing: Concepts, Strategies, and Current Issues in American Police Forces*, by Michael Palmiotto (1997), but the cited source is a well-known law enforcement text of the 1960s and 1970s by Germann, Day, and Gallati (1968). In a quite detailed overview of early British policing, Gaines, Kappeler, and Vaughn

(1999) in the third edition of *Policing in America* also identify Germann et al.'s (1968), twelve principles of Peelian reform, noting that they serve to guide modern police operations.

In general, such policing texts simply list Peel's principles with little added discussion. Roberg, Crank, and Kuykendall (2000) in the second edition of *Police and Society* did suggest, however, a need to reconsider them, stating:

One of the most important principles of the Peelian approach was to emphasize preventive aspects of law enforcement. This attitude resulted in police officers being distributed throughout the city...This idea was to become an important part of the development of the police in the United States. Other principles were also implemented to guide development of the new police force. Originally, there were 12 principles; however, some of them dealt with the same issues. These principles are consolidated, rearranged...(p. 35)

The authors go on to list their nine principles as being adapted from a text by Kirkham and Wollan (1980), *Introduction to Law Enforcement*, adding that several original principles have been called into question in recent years. In essence, the consolidated nine principles are but a slight rewriting and reorganization of the twelve principles prominently cited in other texts and attributed to Germann et al. (1968). Only one of the policing texts reviewed, the second edition of *Policing in America: A balance of forces*, by Langworthy and Travis (1999), does not refer to Peel's principles or provide a list of any policing principles. Instead, the authors identify factors such as social organization, elite interests, and perceptions of crime and disorder as a framework for analyzing the history of policing in various societies including England during Peel's time.

Although efforts to reconsider or rewrite Peel's principles are commendable, they remain problematic without an examination of the origin or origins of the principles themselves. As such, critical commentary may lack foundation, and this same problem may exist for historical discussion generally. It is, thus, essential to examine the sources cited by current or recent textbooks. For the purposes of this writing, it is the sources cited for Peel's principles that remain the central focus. As noted above, these include earlier policing texts, as well as early police histories. Accordingly, such earlier or first generation policing textbooks, roughly covering the late 1960s to the mid-1980s, will be examined first to ascertain whether Peel's principles are referenced, and if so, what source is cited for them. While the surveyed

texts were primarily selected based on their citation by the more recent textbooks, such as Mayhall (1985) and Germann et al. (1968), a few which also appeared in multiple editions were added to expand the analysis. In this regard, the actual lists of Peel's principles are reproduced providing an opportunity for criminal justice authors and professionals to note, perhaps for the first time, similarities and differences among the lists.

The first generation of policing texts

Certainly one of the most reprinted texts of the 1960s and well into the 1970s is that of Germann et al.'s (1968) titled *Introduction to Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice*. It is also often cited as a source of Peel's principles. Four chapters of Part II are dedicated to the "History of Law Enforcement." In their introductory chapter, the authors explain that such a "complete resume of the development of law enforcement" is given "so that the reader may more readily understand present-day activities, and better appreciate anachronisms" (Germann et al., 1968, p. 4). What is, however, extremely disconcerting about the detailed chronology of English precedents which clearly required extensive research is the authors' failure to cite any sources. With that said, Germann et al. assert that *Peelian Reform* centering on the Metropolitan Police Act of 1829 signaled the birth of modern policing. According to the authors, during the ten years following the Act, "There was a *complete and total revolution in law enforcement*. Many fundamental principles of the *Peelian Reform* are as applicable today as they were in 1829" (authors' emphasis) (Germann et al., 1968, p. 60). Following this statement was a list of twelve principles which "Peel held" (p. 60). They are provided in Table 1.

Other than suggesting that Sir Robert Peel himself is the origin of these twelve principles, no direct source is cited, nor are the principles identified as quotations from Peel. The principles are also not clearly integrated into the brief discussion which follows addressing implementation of such 'Peelian reform.' Given this lack of foundation, it is not surprising that recent or current texts referencing them are most likely simply to list them with little or no additional analysis. Yet, these twelve principles remain those perhaps most commonly referenced, even today.

Two additional texts from the 1970s which appeared in multiple editions also address principles reportedly gleaned from Peelian reforms. Vern Folley's *American Law Enforcement* identifies the "significant features of the new metropolitan police" as: "1) adherence to semimilitary principles, 2) the quality of the men

Table 1

Germann, Day, and Gallati's principles (1968, pp. 60–61)

1. The police must be stable, efficient, and organized along military lines.
2. The police must be under government control.
3. The absence of crime will best prove the efficiency of police.
4. The distribution of crime news is essential.
5. The deployment of police strength both by time and area is essential.
6. No quality is more indispensable to a policeman than a perfect command of temper; a quiet, determined manner has more effect than violent action.
7. Good appearance commands respect.
8. The securing and training of proper persons is at the root of efficiency.
9. Public security demands that every police officer be given a number.
10. Police headquarters should be centrally located and easily accessible to the people.
11. Policemen should be hired on a probationary basis.
12. Police records are necessary to the correct distribution of police strength.

employed, 3) the discipline that prevailed, and 4) the fact that one man was in charge and responsible only to the national government" (Folley, 1976, pp. 56–57). The last feature refers to the new police being under the authority of commissioners (there were actually two), appointed by and responsible to the Home Secretary, a cabinet level position. To this Folley adds "some of the principles" (p. 57) under which the metropolitan police were established, citing Douglas Browne's *Rise of Scotland Yard: A History of the Metropolitan Police* which was published in 1956. These principles listed by Folley, ten in number, follow in Table 2.

Folley (1976, p. 57) adds that such principles were as applicable in the seventies when he was writing as in 1829, demonstrating a particular "farsightedness" on Peel's part but also the failure of modern-day police to learn from history.

Another text from the 1970s, *Effective Police Administration: A Behavioral Approach* by Harry W.

Table 2

Folley's principles (1976, p. 57)

1. Police officers must be under strict discipline to ensure the necessary high standard of behavior.
2. The absence of crime is an index of efficiency.
3. The force should be territorially distributed.
4. The force should be divided by hours and shifts.
5. Higher positions should be filled by men from lower ranks.
6. Police officers should wear a uniform and that good appearance commands respect.
7. Applicants for the police force should be judged on their own merits.
8. Training of police officers assures greater efficiency.
9. The principle object to be attained is the prevention of crime.
10. A perfect command of temper is an essential quality.

More, Jr. (1979), after briefly addressing the circumstances surrounding the passage of the Metropolitan Act of 1829, examines more closely the formation of the new police. Two of the prominent police historians cited by More are Charles Reith, *The Police Idea* (1938) and *A New Study of Police History* (1956), and W. H. Melville Lee's *A History of Police in England* (1901). Significantly, More also refers extensively to primary sources quoted by Reith and Melville Lee. Among these are *General Instructions* which More identifies as being drafted by one of the commissioners, or magistrates, Charles Rowan, a former military officer (citing Reith), and general guidelines established by both commissioners, the second being Richard Mayne, a lawyer (citing Melville Lee). More's general guidelines are twelve in number and their source is identified as Melville Lee's chapter XII, titled the 'New Police.' More's principles appear in Table 3.

In the 1980s, there were policing textbooks such as the *Introduction to Law Enforcement* by Kirkham and Wollan (1980) and *Police-Community Relations and the Administration of Justice* by Mayhall (1985), both of which have been cited by current textbook authors as sources for Peel's principles. Kirkman and Wollan listed twelve principles, "formulated by Peel," without citing a source. These principles, however, are *verbatim* those of Germann et al. (1968). Only one new set of principles appeared, that of Mayhall. While she directly quotes from Melville Lee's discussion of "Peel's principles of law enforcement" (Mayhall, 1985, pp. 3–4), Mayhall cites Reith's *Blind Eye of History* as her source for nine "Peelian Principles" added in an appendix at the end of her text (pp. 425–26), citing in addition "see also

Table 3

More's principles (1979, p. 9)

1. The principal objective of the police is crime prevention.
2. The absence of crime is the best proof of police efficiency.
3. Daily reporting (presentment) of incidents to the commissioners.
4. Serious crimes circularized in the "Police Gazette."
5. Separation of the supervision of the police machinery from the judiciary.
6. Creation of police divisions, sections, and beats.
7. Establishment of various ranks with assigned duties:
 - a. Superintendent
 - b. Inspector
 - c. Sergeant
 - d. Constable.
8. Establishment of centrally located police stations.
9. Creation of a divisional reserve.
10. Issuance of a "beat-card," to each constable, which listed the names of the streets on the beat.
11. Modification of the system to meet local needs.
12. Rotation of shifts; two-thirds of the force employed by night.

Table 4

Mayhall's principles (1985, pp. 425–426)

1. To prevent crime and disorder, as an alternative to their repression by military force and severity of legal punishment.
2. To recognize always that the power of the police to fulfill their functions and duties is dependent on public approval of their existence, actions and behavior, and on their ability to secure and maintain public respect.
3. To recognize always that to secure and maintain the respect and approval of the public means also the securing of the willing cooperation of the public in the task of securing observance of the law.
4. To recognize always that the extent to which the cooperation of the public can be secured diminishes, proportionately, the necessity of the use of physical force and compulsion for achieving police objectives.
5. To seek and preserve public favor, not by pandering to public opinion, but by constantly demonstrating absolutely impartial service to law, in complete independence of policy, and without regard to the justice or injustice of the substance of individual laws, by ready offering of individual service and friendship to all members of the public without regard to their wealth or social standing; by ready exercise of courtesy and good humor; and by ready offering of individual sacrifice in protecting and preserving life.
6. To use physical force only when the exercise of persuasion, advice and warning is found to be insufficient to obtain public cooperation to an extent necessary to secure observance of law or restore order; and to use only the minimum degree of physical force which is necessary on any particular occasion for achieving a police objective.
7. To maintain at all times a relationship with the public that gives reality to the historic tradition that the police are the public and that the public are the police; the police being only members of the public who are paid to give full-time attention to duties which are incumbent on every citizen in the interests of community welfare and existence.
8. To recognize always the need for strict adherence to police-executive functions, and to refrain from even seeming to usurp the powers of the judiciary of avenging individuals or the state, and of authoritatively judging guilt and punishing the guilty.
9. To recognize always that the test of police efficiency is the absence of crime and disorder and not the visible evidence of police action in dealing with them.

Melville Lee.” These nine principles are quite different from the three lists previously identified in several respects and are provided in full in Table 4.

The first generation of policing texts, examined in this section, select and identify principles associated with the formation of London's Metropolitan Police referencing both historical secondary sources and other textbooks. While the four lists show marked similarities, they are also remarkably different. Some principles are quite general or broad, others very specific and narrow, and even exceedingly mundane. In some sense, the listing of various principles represents a summation of issues central to policing—its purpose and function,

organization or structure, and personnel including their presence and deployment. In this, Peel's principles could remain a useful tool. Yet, the lists have no apparent priority or organization. Significantly, without elaboration or discussion, such principles remain simply a list. What a student is supposed to make of such ‘principles’ remains problematic.

To a degree, common themes, or even wording, among the lists suggest that the cited secondary historical sources relied on or at least explored the same primary sources. It is, therefore, essential to examine these secondary historical texts for whether they refer to Peel's principles, and if so, what source is cited in their support.

The invention of Peel's principles

The historical studies commonly referenced for Peel's principles continue to be older policing histories, including those of Douglas Browne's (1956) *The Rise of Scotland Yard: A History of the Metropolitan Police*, Melville Lee's (1901) *A History of Police in England*, and particularly, Charles Reith's (1952) *A Blind Eye of History*. In regard to such historical secondary sources, it must first be emphasized that, on their close examination, none contains a listing titled Peel's principles. Melville Lee's (1901) chapter XII provides a brief, descriptive overview of the early organization of greater London's police following the enactment of the *Act for Improving the Police in and near the Metropolis* (1829), better known as the Metropolitan Police Act of 1829. There is, however, no list. Browne (1956), much later, addressed the passage of the Metropolitan Act and the first decades of ‘the new police’ in greater detail. Here too, however, there is no list of precepts gleaned from history.

Only Reith (1952, p. 154), in fact, identifies “nine principles of police,” but they are presented as a summation of the evolution of the British police in a chapter titled “British Police To-day.” Reith asserts that the “explanation of all that is of special value and unique in the modern British Police Institution can be found in an analysis of the principles which are its basis.” It is Reith's nine principles that appear in at least one first generation policing textbook (see Mayhall, 1985, Table 4) and are actually misidentified in some more recent texts as coming from Melville Lee.

In discussing his nine principles, Reith (1952, p. 154) generally identifies their origin in policing history and experience adding that his statement of principles is “merely a collected and numbered tabulation compiled from references and definitions found in public records,

in official hand-books, and in the works of earlier writers on the subject.” While this may be so, Reith does not provide any specific citations, even to quotations. For the origins of his first principle, “to prevent crime and disorder, as an alternative to their repression by military force and severity of legal punishment,” he identifies Henry Fielding, Patrick Colquhoun, and Sir Robert Peel (Reith, 1952, p. 155). The remaining principles are, according to Reith (1952, p. 154), directly the “conception and invention” of the first police commissioners of the new Metropolitan force, Charles Rowan and Richard Mayne, that is, except for certain aspects originating in Saxon times. Nevertheless, the contributions of the two commissioners are often not clearly identified. Reith’s seventh principle (1952, p. 163), for example, includes a statement often attributed to Peel in policing texts, that “the police are the public and that the public are the police,” but he provides no reference to its origin.

It is only in his later text *A New Study of Police History* that Reith (1956) discusses primary sources in detail, although again often failing to provide citations. This failure to adequately cite sources is a problem evident in all the early police histories, including that of Melville Lee (1901). Reith’s *New Study* could have been appropriately titled “A Biography of Sir Charles Rowan.” Roughly the first half of the book deals with Rowan’s military career. It is evident throughout the study that Reith sees Rowan, in particular, as the guiding figure behind the organization and structure of the new police. His admiration of Rowan is without doubt, and he clearly would never have labeled his list of nine policing principles as originating with Peel.

From this brief examination of early policing histories, it is evident that the first generation of policing textbooks could have more precisely stated that their listings of Peel’s principles were adapted from early historical texts. The only exception to this is Mayhall’s (1985) principles which may be directly attributed to an earlier list of principles, that of Reith (1952). Current and more recent policing texts would be more accurate in citing the first generation of textbooks as their source for Peel’s principles. This is so simply because they lift their lists of principles directly from such first generation texts. Their citation of early policing histories is, thus, at the very least misleading. Moreover, the intimation by textbook authors that Sir Robert Peel wrote or even held such principles is simply inappropriate. None of the sources cited by any textbook or early history support such a conclusion. In short, the invention of ‘Peel’s principles’ can be found in twentieth century policing textbooks.

The future of textbook history and Peel’s principles

Concluding that Peel’s principles are a later twentieth century invention does not deny the possibility of common themes, values, or even principles being found in earlier times. Nevertheless, the implications of this study’s findings regarding the origins of Peel’s principles are important for the writing of textbook history in general and for the future of Peel’s principles in particular. At the very least, textbook authors need to provide accurate citations for any reference to or list of policing principles. While the title “Peel’s principles” may be a convenient label, as currently used it is a misleading, for several reasons, representation of historical fact. Significantly, reevaluating the four lists of principles is a possibility but to do so will require revisiting primary sources, and most significantly, integrating current and ongoing historical scholarship. Among several considerations which emerge in this regard are the importance of acknowledging changing historical interpretation and of not imposing present concepts or views on the past. From these first two follows a third, the importance of examining the context of policing in its own society and time.

Generations of policing history

In examining historical scholarship in the context of policing textbooks, one important consideration is simply the need for a critical analysis of the early policing histories which became the cited sources for Peel’s principles. Added to this is the need to integrate recent historical research not only into an examination of the founding and development of the ‘new police,’ as they have been often called, but also into any discussion or list of principles which are presented as historically validated. While this task alone is formidable and necessarily beyond the scope of this writing, some suggested directions and issues follow.

As noted above, the policing histories which have been sources for Peel’s principles are early histories (e.g., Browne, 1956; Melville Lee, 1901; Reith, 1952). Significantly, such histories have been all the more influential because of reprints in the 1970s. While these and other early police historians can be commended for identifying the study of policing as worthy in itself, their views should not simply be transported to textbooks without critical reading and analysis. For example, historians writing prior to the 1960s or 1970s, in particular, represent what is commonly termed the Whig or Whiggish perspective, one that largely viewed English history as a linear story of progress.

Historian David Taylor (1998, p. 73) writes that such a perspective or interpretation considers modernization to be “unproblematic” and the new police to be simply a “progressive, far-sighted and effective response to the collapse of law and order in an emerging/industrial society.” Indeed, the early histories are filled with sweeping conclusions of this sort. For example, Melville Lee (1901, p. 228) begins his chapter on “The New Police” noting that “the year 1830 saw an almost instantaneous change in the police of London, a transformation from an inconceivably rotten and antiquated system into one which immediately became an example to the world...” Reith’s (1938, pp. v, x) early work, *The Police Idea*, is filled with references to the growth of “uncontrollable crime” and the “menace of mob disorder” at the time of the Metropolitan Police Act and during the century that proceeded it. In his later work, *The Blind Eye of History*, he confirms that the eighteenth century witnessed the “complete breakdown of the parish-constable system in London” and throughout the provinces and industrial towns (Reith, 1952, p. 31).

Not uncommon to their time period, these early historians also tend to overemphasize the role of personality in history, hence the focus on individuals such as Henry Fielding, Patrick Colquhoun, and Sir Robert Peel, often to the neglect of other individuals, institutions, and societal factors (Taylor, 1998). Reith, in fact, wrote that

The British police institution was made not by, but in spite of, the British people. It is almost solely the product of personalities...whose single-mindedness in vision, ideals and purpose was brought eventually, by the last of them, to practical adaptation in the shape of the British Police as we know them to-day. (1952, p. 131)

In Reith’s view, these last individuals are, indeed, Rowan and Mayne, the Metropolitan Police’s first commissioners. Significantly, the writings of these prominent police reformers from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries are often taken on face value by Whig historians, that is, their authors are viewed as correct in their portrayal of existing conditions and ultimately in their conclusions. As a consequence, the context of policing development is often limited to rather simplistic generalizations where reforms rationally evolve out of some sort of benign societal consensus (e.g., Emsley, 1991).

Although Whig interpretation, also termed traditional or even orthodox history, continues to dominate many policing textbooks, since at least the late 1970s, historians have been critically reexamining and chal-

lenging such policing history and its assumptions. The 1990s alone produced Clive Emsley’s (1991) *The English Police: A Political and Social History*, Elaine Reynolds’ (1998) *Before the Bobbies: The Night Watch and Police Reform in Metropolitan London, 1720–1830*, David Taylor’s (1997) *The New Police in the Nineteenth Century: Crime, Conflict, and Control*, and *Policing Provincial England, 1829–1856* by Philips and Storch (1999). There are also many more. From such ongoing scholarship, several issues of importance to policing textbooks may be highlighted. Perhaps first and foremost is a rejection of sweeping generalizations regarding the corruption and inefficiency the old system and the revolutionary nature of the new. Quite simply, it is well documented that most of the characteristics of the new police were not new.

Tying Peel’s principles or the emergence of modern policing to a particular person or date glosses over developments of earlier decades and the continuing evolution of the metropolitan as well as the provincial police in the decades following 1829. While Reith and Melville Lee, in particular, see eighteenth century policing as persistent failures of government policy, Reynolds (1998), among others, has at the very least provided an alternative view. Significantly, Emsley (2001, p. 79) notes that “A complete picture of policing in eighteenth century England requires more research, yet it is clear that the situation was not static, nor was the overall picture one of an archaic system in serious decline.” In this regard, for example, today it is well known that ‘Peel’s police’ were not the first police force to be paid, to wear uniforms, or to operate around the clock (e.g., Reynolds, 1998; Taylor, 1997, 1998; see also Radzino-wicz, 1957, Appendix 10 which describes policing units in London prior to the Metropolitan Police Act).

A question of history

In addition to incorporating new scholarship and alternative views into policing texts, there is the issue of historical integrity, that twentieth or twenty-first century ideas or perceptions should not be uncritically imposed on the past. For example, Germann et al., refer to a probationary status in their list of principles. Does this imply that there was a form of civil service in the late 1820s? Another example from Germann et al. (1968, p. 60) is that “The police must be stable, efficient, and organized along military lines.” Alternately, More (1979, p. 56) refers to the importance of “semi-military principles.” Significantly, there has apparently been little effort to critically examine the origin or meaning of these ideas. Do they reflect a perception of the American

military as it existed in the twentieth century or did the authors consider the British military of the early nineteenth century? In this regard, the military itself during the time of the Napoleonic Wars had been undergoing significant challenges and change. Is this reference to the military a ‘principle’ because Peel consciously selected a former military officer to be one of the first commissioners? Or, did the new police simply appear to twentieth century textbook authors like a military organization because Charles Rowan applied his military experience to the new institution? Without additional analysis or discussion, it is difficult to know just what military lines, style, or principles are supposed to mean: are they simply military titles, organization, training, discipline?

Both Melville Lee (1901) and Reith (1956) did emphasize the military experience of Rowan as being essential to his ideas about the organization and structure of the new police. Yet, nowhere did either refer to the military in any sense as a principle of policing. Reith, in fact, emphasized the civilian nature of the British Police as essential to a democratic society (e.g., his first principle, quoted by Mayhall, 1985, Table 4). Moreover, in considering organizational models, there was probably not much of a selection from which to choose, an issue, in fact, noted by Reith (1956). As such, the advertised structure or style of the new police may have been, in part, a matter of expediency, referencing known structures rather than an actual intent.

Reference to the military as reflecting a principle of policing during Peel’s time is particularly problematic since heated historical debate continues regarding the intent of Peel and the government in creating the consolidated Metropolitan force (e.g., Emsley, 2001; Paley, 1989). For example, that the new police largely replaced the military in confronting mass demonstrations and riots could suggest a military nature to the police or simply that the government wanted the military out of what was increasingly viewed as a ‘police’ matter. Hence, in cautioning against imposing present perceptions or concepts on the past, there is the equally important consideration of the context of policing in its own society, a concern which was defined quite narrowly, if not simply slighted, by early police historians.

The context of policing

While Whig scholars, such as Reith, criticized social and political historians for neglecting to acknowledge the significance of the London’s Metropolitan Police or simply for ignoring the societal importance of policing generally, they themselves tended to limit, if not omit,

critical examination of the broader context of the police and policing, of the social, religious, economic, cultural, and even political setting (e.g., Manning, 1977). Yet, from the assertions of such Whig writers regarding continually rising crime in the face of a corrupt and archaic policing system essentially came the long accepted mantra that the new police were needed to respond to increased levels of social disorder in a growing urban and industrialized society.

Such criticism of early police histories is not meant to lessen the enormous debt owed to their authors. In fact, works by Reith, for example, provide valuable narratives of policing development; nevertheless, it is important to recognize that such narratives are largely shaped by their primary sources, the wealth of public records in existence simply because the new police were established under an act of Parliament and placed under the authority of the secretary of state at the Home Office. As a consequence of ongoing scrutiny and the need for record keeping, the police commissioners closely documented police operations and orders, and Parliamentary oversight also continued. While such sources are valuable, they too require critical analysis. For example, in examining documents such as the reports of parliamentary commissions regarding the new police, it should be kept in mind that as political documents they may be shaped in response to perceived needs or special interests of that time. It is problematic whether policing and law enforcement can be truly understood when examined in isolation from the society which is policed. In this vein, the policing textbook authors of today in writing about the issues of today, might consider how their work will be perceived a century from now.

With this in mind, primary sources may be revisited. In his later text, Reith (1956) quotes extensively from *General Instructions* reportedly drafted by Rowan and Mayne in 1829, and also briefly referenced by Browne (1956, pp. 85–86). Melville Lee (1901, p. 241) appears to refer to them as “a set of rules and regulations” although he was unclear regarding their source. To his credit, Reith did indicate that a copy of the *Instructions*, as well as two unbound proof copies, existed in the library of Scotland Yard. It is these *General Instructions*, also referred to by Reith as a handbook, which appear to be an important primary source for Peel’s principles. Reith (1956) added that the *General Instructions* were supplemented often by “police orders,” the earliest handwritten volumes still located at Scotland Yard (see also Browne, 1956). Nevertheless, there was no suggestion that the *Instructions* were reissued periodically beyond a reprinting in 1836 or were even routinely provided to subsequent police constables. Significantly,

the “New Police Instructions” (1829) were published in both a morning, daily newspaper, *The Times*, and an evening daily, *The Courier* (New Police Instructions-Provisional, 1829) only five days before the new constables appeared on the streets. The circumstances of their publication, however, largely remain unexplained (e.g., Reith, 1956; also noted that the *Courier* published them with the addition of the word “provisional”). It remains to be determined to what degree they were put into practice during the nineteenth century as well as how much they may have been modified over time. Thus, it is uncertain how much the *General Instructions* represented a well-held ideal or were simply a matter of good public relations.

While the *Instructions* described the organization, and ranks and responsibilities of the new police, it is important to add that none of this detail regarding organization or structure existed in the Metropolitan Police Act itself. In fact, the legal substance of the act was the transfer of authority over identified, local police agencies to the national government and addressing the new organization’s funding. Although there was an overarching emphasis on the consolidation of various existing constabulary and watch forces, centralization under the Home Office was, perhaps, an even more important, initial goal as agencies already under central authority such as the horse patrol established in 1805 and the old Bow Street runners were not consolidated under the new force (Radzinowicz, 1968). In this regard, it is important to note the role of Sir Robert Peel in the passing of the act. As a cabinet member and member of Parliament, he was a driving force behind the passage of the police act.

As Home Secretary, however, the police bill was but one of Peel’s many concerns. Outside of criminal justice, the year 1829 is, in fact, remembered for a bill addressing Catholic emancipation, that is, the removal of certain political disabilities for Roman Catholics throughout the British Isles. In addition, the police bill was part of a much broader, ongoing reform effort encompassing the criminal code, the courts, and penal system (see e.g., Gash, 1961). After the enactment of the Metropolitan Police Act, Peel personally selected the first two police magistrates or commissioners, Rowan and Mayne, and they acted under his authority (Gash, 1961). While Peel reportedly remained keenly interested in the development of the police, in 1830 he resigned from his post, as did the entire government (Gash, 1961). As Peel moved on in his career, eventually becoming prime minister, the two commissioners he originally appointed remained in their positions for many years.

As both the Metropolitan Police Act itself and the new police *Instructions* remain important primary

sources for policing history, their significance to that history depends on their ‘meaning’ in their own time. In this regard, the concept of ‘crime prevention’ is simply one discussion point. It is certainly a point that Peel raised in speeches to Parliament on the matter, as often noted in historical texts. In this context, however, it must be remembered that such speeches represent Peel, the public man and politician. Crime prevention is also included in each list of Peel’s principles and is a central focus of the *General Instructions* or *New Police Instructions*. Such *Instructions* begin:

It should be understood at the outset, that the object to be obtained is ‘the prevention of crime.’ To this great end every effort of the police is to be directed. The security of person and property, the preservation of public tranquility, and all the other objects of a police establishment will thus be better effected than by the detection and punishment of the offender after he has committed the crime. (New Police Instructions, 1829)

In addition, all four lists of Peel’s principles refer to the absence of crime as proof of efficiency, statements also likely originating in the *New Police Instructions* which posit that “the absence of crime will be considered the best proof of the complete efficiency of the police” (New Police Instructions, 1829). To fulfill such demands, the constable would be expected to learn every part of his beat, to become acquainted with the occupants of each house, and to be able to patrol his beat (in approximately ten to fifteen minutes) so that any person requiring assistance would be able to find him. Purportedly, by an officer’s “vigilance,” it would be impossible for crime to be committed under his watch (New Police Instructions, 1829).

Reith (1956) was particularly adamant about focusing on such prevention to the point of criticizing later policing developments emphasizing detection as a goal of policing. For Reith, detection was a function of policing, not a principle. Although the details of an officer’s daily beat would arguably be the heart of prevention, Reith, in his study of the turbulent first years of the new force, instead focused on police responses to demonstrations and riot. He stressed that the police developed new tactics to handle such confrontations including preemptive use of massive baton charges to break up demonstrations (Reith, 1956). In fact, in cataloguing the early experiences of the new police, their use against large demonstrations overshadowed other duties. Yet, little or no background was given regarding the causes of such demonstrations. While Reith alluded to the Reform Bill (of 1832 which

expanded the franchise) and various political organizations or actors, the reader is largely left to ponder what they represented or even demanded.

It is evident from Reith's narrative that the new police were involved in significant political, social, and economic events of the nineteenth century. This is not to say that these events absolutely defined the police, but they can contribute to the understanding of policing. On one level, some may take away from the handling of demonstrations in the early years of the new police simply the tactics; yet, on another level is the vital question of the role of police in society. The society of Peel's time was one of competing political, social, economic, religious, and even cultural interests and groups which would have each viewed the police quite differently. Defining prevention is, thus, perhaps more complex than Whig historians would admit.

Accordingly, it is not surprising that historians today are reexamining the purpose and function of the police and policing during the nineteenth century, as well as the nature and structure of the new police. Taylor (1998, p. 81) for example, suggests that the emphasis on crime prevention was, in fact, a convenient yet "misleading oversimplification of police work." It is even suggested that such 'preventive' policing of Peel's generation was perhaps not focused as much on discouraging crime by patrolling the streets, or even battling demonstrators, as on simply imposing a "new standard of social discipline" on the working classes of pre-Victorian society (Paley, 1989, p. 119; see also Taylor, 1998).

Conclusion

Given the importance of emerging historical scholarship and of textbooks to the understanding of criminal justice history, a rethinking of Peel's principles, their content, and purpose is most certainly in order at this time. Peel's principles have been particularly important in that they are often used in modern criminal justice education as the 'grandfather' of today's practices, as a way of showing how and when policing became rational. In an attempt to make sense of history, some authors may be adopting idealized ancestors as an orphan might tend to idealize never-known parents. As one generation looks to the last, comments and critiques may be mistaken for the original historical fact. In this regard, the existing lists of principles are misleading where concepts appear to be imposed by twentieth century authors on the past and primary sources are pulled out of their own time. This study was not intended to deny that there are important principles (or lessons) to be gleaned from the past, or that 'lists' cannot be helpful tools to

understand today. It is only to say that what is written and taught at the basic levels deserves more consideration because it might set the frame for what students decide as their future. If the academy is about truth, then the most considered way of presenting truth must be a goal.

In the uses of history in textbooks, it must be noted that the purpose or focus of much textbook history is often obscure. As a consequence, students are likely to be uncertain regarding what they are supposed to take away from such history. As descriptive narrative, they may appreciate chronological continuity and change, yet why and how change occurs may not be addressed. That textbook discussion of history is often quite limited does not mean that it must refrain from analysis, that it cannot be critical history.

In this regard, it is important to keep in mind that the history of policing in the nineteenth century is still being written, as is that of the eighteenth century. Herein, emerges the possibility of renewing a search for principles, perhaps of distinguishing broad or underlying principles of policing from applied principles that may guide their implementation. The purpose of this study was to further that discourse.

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