

Literature review

The cornerstone of British policing is consent-based policing, in part because of Robert Peel's 9 Principles of Policing, which were initially distributed to all new officers in 1829. The Peelian Principles require officers to always be conscious of the fact that the public's acceptance of the police, their actions, and their demeanour, as well as their ability to win and maintain the public's respect, are the foundations upon which the police's ability to do their duties is dependent. It also says to always keep in mind that winning the public's respect and approval means getting their willing support in the fight to guarantee that laws are obeyed.

In a recent YouGov survey, 42% of participants expressed a slight or very high mistrust in the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS), on behalf of the BBC (Elgueta, A *et al*). 1051 persons in London made up the sample size for the poll, which was conducted between March 27 and March 31, 2023. Of those surveyed, 43% said their view of the MPS had gotten worse in the past year. Furthermore, the poll found that 73% of participants believed that some people were treated differently by the police than others (Parliament. House of Lords, 2023).

The Institute for Government has suggested that there may be a correlation between the increase in reported cases of misconduct and criminal behaviour by police officers and a decline in public trust towards law enforcement. This is particularly evident in high-profile cases such as that of Sarah Everard, who was abducted, raped, and murdered by a serving MPS officer, Wayne Couzens, in March 2021. Similarly, the case of MPS officer David Carrick, who was sentenced to 36 life sentences in February 2023 after pleading guilty to 49 offences, including 24 counts of rape, has further eroded public confidence in the police forces. The erosion of this public confidence can be seen in the protests that took place before the sentencing of Couzens and Carrick. On the 29th of September 2021 a Feminist group Sister Uncut protested outside of the court house where Couzens was set to be sentenced with signs such as “Abolish the Police” and “Met Police, Blood on your hands” (Davis, B, 2021). In the case of Carrick on Monday the 6th of February 2023 protesters for Women against Rape and other organisation gathered outside of Southwark Crown Court, with one protester Hodo Ahmed showing distrust in reporting police violence to the police who they believed to be “the same police who rape us and persecute our children and loved ones, or report us to the immigration authorities”(Russel, H, 2023).

In order to attract viewers and readers, news groups must utilize the negativity bias, as modern news is available 24/7 and generates revenue through subscription fees and advertisements (Conscious Vibe, 2022). This bias is based on the tendency of humans to place greater importance on negative events, objects, or personal traits (Rozin, P., & Royzman, E. B, 2001), which explains the prevalence of negative news stories in the media's coverage of policing.

The objective of the study is to gain a deeper comprehension of the gap between law enforcement and the press, the impact it has on the day-to-day responsibilities of police officers, and establish a path towards policing through consent.

Research in to the links between the media and public perception of policing has been ongoing for many years. A 2021 study conducted by Jaeyonh Choi aimed to explore the impact of positive, negative, and mixed depictions of the police in the media on individuals' perceptions of law enforcement (Jaeyong Choi, 2021). Data was derived and sampled from a group of undergraduate university students with a large sample coming from Criminology and justice students. Students were shown one of five two minute clips of footage showing one of the following, police misconduct and its effects on victims, footage showing the high risk of police work, and clips that had been complied. edited and evaluated to show both elements in equal measure. The study identified that media that is in its nature positive of police had no effect on the perception of

policing in the sampled students. Its findings also indicated that individuals have the ability to shape their perceptions by being exposed to media, with a notable emphasis on negative police images amplifying this effect. Although the links between negative media and police perception are outlined the study suffers from issues with sampling bias. Sample selection bias can occur due to the study's design or the data collection procedure, which may result in the collection of data that is biased towards or against certain groups or individuals, or under certain circumstances (Shringarpure, S., & Xing, E. P, 2014). As this study was conducted with undergrad students it is not proportionate of the wider populations as often these types of students are of a similar age and social standing. Students as a sample study are also likely to be less representative of the wider population as people who are considered financially disadvantaged and receiving free school meals are 20.2% less likely to attend university (Department of Education, 2023). This shows the flaws that are present in only sampling students as often they are not a good indication of what the greater public at large is thinking or feeling regarding subject matters. There is also the potential for confirmation bias to be present during the study as the study itself uses a large sample of criminology students. The term confirmation bias refers to the tendency to search for or interpret evidence in a manner that favours pre-existing beliefs, expectations, or hypotheses (Nickerson, R. S, 1998). A study conducted in 2017 found that online users have a tendency to choose assertions that align with their existing beliefs and disregard contradictory information. The presence of confirmation bias significantly contributed to the spread of viral phenomena. Additionally, the vast accessibility of online content facilitates the formation of communities consisting of like-minded individuals, leading to the reinforcement of group polarization. It also showed that confirmation bias has the potential to influence public discourse and subsequently shape public opinion (Del Vicario, M *et al*, 2017). By Choi selecting a large volume of the sample size from single group of criminology students it leaves the study open for significant confirmation bias tainting any results. Even with the potential for these biases the study still provides value towards proving the fact that negative media has its impacts on the perception of policing.

The implications that media has had an impact on public perception of policing has been prevalent for many years as a 2007 study by Kenneth Dowler and Valerie Zawilski explored. The objective of this research was to examine the influence of media consumption on attitudes towards police misconduct and discrimination. The results indicated that individuals who extensively consumed network news were more inclined to perceive police misconduct as a common occurrence. This trend was particularly evident among minority participants. Likewise, minority respondents who frequently watched network news were more likely to believe that Whites received preferential treatment from law enforcement. Additionally, the findings demonstrated that individuals who regularly viewed police dramas believed that the affluent received preferential treatment from the police. In contrast, frequent viewers of crime solving shows held the belief that the wealthy did not receive preferential treatment (Dowler, K & Zawilski, V, 2007). Sample data was gained from a survey conducted in 2000 where 1011 adults were contacted via telephone. This was conducted as a closed question survey via a cold calling procedure where participants answer a series of questions on both media consumption and perceptions of policing. Telephone interviews, despite being less frequently utilized in research compared to face-to-face interviews, can still serve as a flexible means of gathering data. Respondents have been noted to exhibit a sense of ease during telephone interviews, leading to a willingness to openly discuss personal information. The qualitative data obtained through telephone interviews have been deemed to be of exceptional quality, characterized by richness, vividness, and detail (Novick, G, 2008). The utilization of telephone interviews presents a notable advantage in terms of reduced expenses when contrasted with face-to-face interviews (Chapple, A, 1999). Telephone interview also provide access to subjects who are geographically distant (Sturges, J. E., & Hanrahan, K. J, 2004). However in research conducted by Bolland *et al* in 2006 a number of disadvantages to telephone surveying were identified. In this study it found that telephone surveys have become less effective compared to previous years. The study highlights two major drawbacks, namely the decrease in contact rate due to the use of land-

line telephones and consumer fatigue, where individuals refuse to participate in phone interviews. Additionally, the growing trend of mobile-phone-only households poses a new challenge for researchers, as the prevalence of landline telephones in homes has been decreasing since 2006 (Bolland, M, *et al*, 2006). This issue is only compounded further when looking at a 2021 study where it was identified that 56% of respondents did not own or operate a landline telephone (Auxier, B. and Anderson, M., 2021). There is also the concern that the lack of visual cues during telephone conversations is believed to lead to the loss of contextual and non-verbal information, as well as hinder rapport, probing, and interpretation of responses (Smith E. M, 2005). When looking at Dowler and Zawilski's research and the research methods, there is reason to believe that the data obtained is credible and it is believable that the sample size has provided genuine and honest answers to the questions asked. This provides further insight in to the relation between media and policing and again substantiates the links between negative news media and public perception towards policing.

When looking at the media impact on public perceptions of police it is also important to take in to account what impact that this is having on the police itself. In a 2022 study conducted by Gau *et al* it officers that are less willing to police proactively due to pressures from the media. The findings indicate that officers who have a heightened perception of negative publicity tend to believe that police are less inclined to initiate stops on their own. Additionally, individuals who expressed apprehension about being unjustly filmed also noted a reluctance among their fellow officers. Conversely, perceiving support from higher-level management seemed to act as a safeguard, as those who felt strongly supported by their managers exhibited less worry regarding self-initiated enforcement (Gau, J *et al*, 2022). The study utilizes information gathered from police officers in a major urban department to examine the correlation between adverse publicity and the hesitancy of officers to participate in proactive actions, which are self-initiated. The dependent variable utilized in this study concentrates on a specific category of activity that is highly discretionary, thus predominantly within the control of the officers such as stop searches. The study also aims to determine whether police officers suffer from the effects of the "Ferguson effect". The hypothesis of the Ferguson Effect proposes that police officers are aware of the adverse media attention directed towards their profession. They acknowledge that their actions can be documented by the public at any moment, which may result in them being reluctant to perform their duties to prevent allegations of racial profiling or excessive use of force. Consequently, this reduction in policing activity contributes to a rise in criminal activities (Wolfe, S. Nix, J, 2016). When looking at the links between the Ferguson effect and this study it hard to quantify the effect as the study itself does not include any crime statistics but it does show the links between negative media and de-policing. This study provides little to prove the effect of the Ferguson effect on crime itself however in other studies conducted by Rosenfeld and Wallman in 2019 (Rosenfeld, R. Wallman, J., 2019) and Shjarback *et al* 2017 (Shjarback, D, *et al*, 2017) there was no quantifiable effect between de-policing and crime. The study was conducted by issuing a random identification number to 552 full time officers. Issues in the study relate to the survey itself which asks potential career damaging questions to serving officers. In a 1998 study by Clark and Desharnais it was identified that asking sensitive and embarrassing questions can lead to lying or cheating in studies (Clark, S. J., Desharnais, R. A, 1998). This is also compounded in a 2007 study by Tourangeau and Yan where it was found that respondents to surveys were more likely to lie if the outcome would be embarrassing or have potential repercussions with a third party (Tourangeau, R., Yan, T, 2007). The protection of the individual officers by way of randomised numbers goes part of the way of alleviating this concern as a 2018 study conducted by Robertson *et al* discovered. The study identified that the more anonymity that is provided during a survey leads to more honest answering of said survey (Robertson, R, E, *et al*, 2018). Although data provided in Gau *et al* has the potential to be inaccurate due to the implications for surveyed officers, it still provides a strong idea of what impacts the media has. There is also the potential for the actual impact on proactive policing to be worse as respondents would be more likely to lie to protect themselves as shown in Robertson 2018.

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