

Question

Response Policing

- Critically evaluate public perceptions of response policing
- Critically evaluate response policing in the context of dealing with critical and major incidents

Answer

In this essay I will discuss the role of a response policing officer and how it has changed over the years in order to meet the ever-changing demands that are presented today. I will critically evaluate the perception that the public have of response officers and explore the reasons behind the difficulty in maintaining the public's confidence towards the police. Finally, I will critically evaluate response policing in the context of dealing with critical and major incidents.

In order to truly understand why the public perceive officers in a certain way, it is important to understand the role that officers undertake and the history of policing. Following this we can start to identify and evaluate the reasons behind what influences the public in their opinion and perception of the police, and why the confidence in today's policing is unsteady. The most accurate definition of the role of a constable is written by the College of Policing (2021a) who states

“Constables work in partnership on a day-to-day basis with local communities, stakeholders and colleagues in order to promote law and order, reduce the fear of crime, provide reassurance and build confidence to improve the quality of life for citizens.”

This definition explores the concept that constables do more than just react to immediate response calls, but they also engage with the community and other partnerships to ensure

that confidence is built, and the fear of crime is reduced within the public. Policing not only consists of response officers but an array of other providers that forms what is known as the extended policing family. This extended policing family includes Police Community Support Officers (PSCO), Special constables, Neighbourhood Policing team and much more (Bryant and Bryant, 2020a, p.20). All branches of the extended policing family work together towards the same goal by following The Standards of Professional Behaviour and the Policing Principles. The Standards of Professional Behaviour have been created in order to outline the minimum standard that officers must maintain during their duties (Bryant and Bryant, 2020b, p.76). The policing principles consist of the following: Fairness, Integrity, Honesty, Leadership, Objectivity, Openness, Respect and Selflessness (UK Government, 2014). These policing principles are also known as the Code of Ethics and their purpose is to outline “the general attitudes and approaches to police work” (College of policing, 2014).

The principles and standards that we know today have been adapted and modernised from the Peelian Principles that were developed by Sir Robert Peel in the 19th Century. In 1822 Sir Robert Peel became Home Secretary and during his ministerial term he became concerned that the increasing levels of crime would become a threat to the systems of government. Due to his increasing concerns Peel decided to set up a Parliamentary inquiry which led to the establishment of the Metropolitan Police Act 1829 (Rawlings, 2002). Section 1 of the Metropolitan Police Act 1829 states

“His Majesty may establish a new police office for the metropolis and the surrounding district, and may appoint two persons as justices, to conduct the business of the office, under the directions of Secretary of State”

(Metropolitan Police Act, 1829)

Following the establishment of the Metropolitan Police Act 1829 Sir Robert Peel laid out nine points of policing that was subsequently referred to as the 'Peelian Principles'. These included: "The use of crime rates to determine the effectiveness of the police, the importance of a centrally located, publicly accessible police headquarters and the value of proper recruitment, selection and training" (Patterson, no date). These 9 principles essentially promoted the theory "that the police are the people, the people are the police and crime prevention is possible without heavy intrusion into citizens' lives" (Lewis, 2011). The Peelian Principles were heavily community based and perhaps the most influential introduction to policing was the establishment of regular patrol areas, also known as 'beats'. Before 1829, the police would only react and respond to crimes after they had been reported and committed. Patrols would occur very infrequently and any apprehension of criminals in the act of committing crimes would happen by accident and not by officers being proactive. Peel then decided it would be beneficial to allocate each officer with a specific geographical zone. Each officer would then be held responsible for preventing and interrupting crime within the boundaries of their zones (Patterson, no date). This has now been progressed in the 21st Century to having neighbourhood policing teams who patrol hot spot areas and also Police Community Support Officers who engage with the public and show a presence within the community. It is thought by some people that Peel's police reform was heavily based on a philosophy that the power of the police comes from common consent of the public, instead of the power of the state (Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, 2018).

Officers work a great deal with individuals who have broken the law, but they also work with a lot of victims. Whilst officers work with victims this is where some individuals will

develop an opinion on how they perceive each individual officer which then leads to their opinion of the whole police force. The impact of one negative encounter can shape someone's mind and feelings towards the work of one officer. Hillard (2003) states "you have ten positive encounters with the police and that's good; but one negative encounter, and all the positives disappear". When dealing with a victim of crime officers must understand that it may be hard for that individual to engage with them and may find it hard to follow the process. When this occurs it's important for officers to be aware of other people's needs and know that their actions may influence the individuals needs. A good example of this is the Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow, 1943).

During the 1940's Maslow studied the structure of human needs and introduced a new approach to humanistic psychology and later formed what is now known as the pyramid of need or Maslow's pyramid (Pichère, Cadiat & Probert, 2015). The pyramid comprises of a five-tier model of human needs which are outlined as hierarchical levels within the pyramid (McLeod, 2018). In this theory Maslow states that you should satisfy the needs of each level before you can progress to the next one (Pichère, Cadiat & Probert, 2015). However, he later clarified "that satisfaction of a need is not an 'all-or-none' phenomenon, admitting that his earlier statements may have given 'the false impression' that a need must be satisfied 100 percent before the next need emerges" (McLeod, 2018).

The five stages within this model can be divided into 2 categories; deficiency needs and growth needs. The first 4 needs within the pyramid are referred to as the deficiency needs and the top-level need is known as the growth needs. Deficiency needs arise due to deprivation, meaning that someone needs these basic physical requirements because they

are experiencing a lack of these basic needs. The top level of this pyramid is called growth needs. These needs don't stem from a lack of something, but rather from the desire and determination to grow as a person (Cherry, 2021).

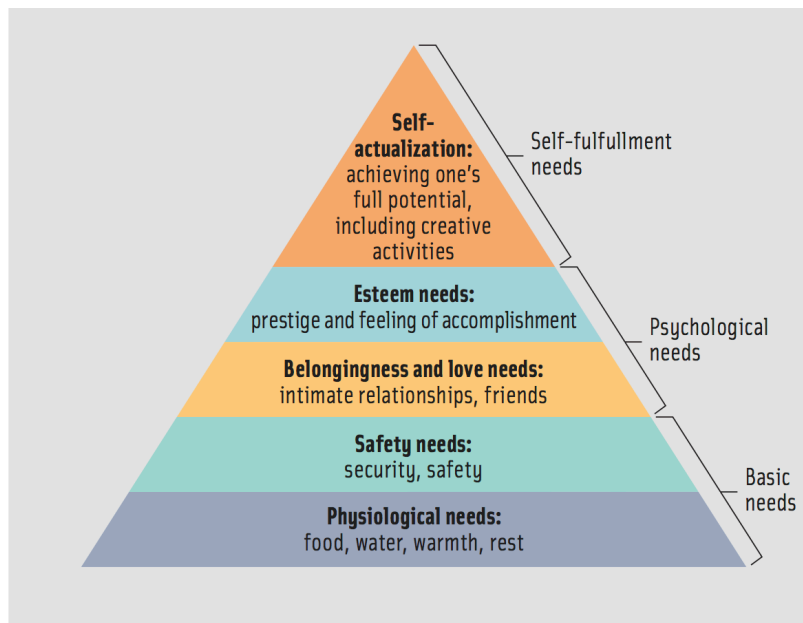


Figure 1: Diagram showing Maslow's hierarchy Pyramid (Poston, 2009)

The hierarchy pyramid includes the following five needs:

1. **Physiological needs** – these are the most basic of the biological requirements for a human to survive i.e. shelter, food, drink, clothing, sleep and warmth. If these simple needs cannot be provided or satisfied the human body cannot function at its optimal level.
2. **Safety needs** – these are the needs for security and stability. Individuals need to feel that they are in control of their lives and understand why certain things happen to them.
3. **Love and belongingness** – This is where individuals seek for the need to belong and a need for interpersonal relationship which will motivate human behaviour.

4. Esteem need – Marlow had decided to split this into 2 categories: Self- esteem and respect from others.
5. Self-actualisation needs – This is where individuals realise what their potentials are and then decide to focus on themselves in order to achieve that potential (McLeod, 2018).

The way in which this pyramid works is that an individual must be satisfied that they have achieved the needs of a specific level before progressing to the next.

This model is relevant to policing today as it shows how officers may assist people in progressing through the pyramid which results in an individual to perceive that officer as someone who is willing to assist them rather than wasting their time. An example of this is when an officer is taking a statement from a victim of crime. The officer will guide that individual through the first need (physiological needs) by explaining everything they are doing, reassuring the individual and asking them whether they need a drink or to sit down. Following this the individual progresses to the second need (safety needs). During this level the officers help the victim to understand what will happen before, during and after the process of providing a statement which will make the victim feel like they are in control therefore are able to progress to the third level within the pyramid. The third need is love and belonging. During this level the officer builds a good rapport with the victim where they may feel accepted and know that the officer is there to listen to them. This will make the victim feel like the only reason the officer is there is in order to help them, therefore ready to move to the fourth level within the pyramid, where the officer helps the victim to build on their self-esteem and encourages them to interact and focus on the statement at hand. This helped to motivate the victim to work well with the officer to write a good statement.

Following this the individual enters the top level within the pyramid and shows the officer that they want to give a good statement by providing the relevant details for the statement.

Many individuals within our communities are satisfied with what their local police officers achieve and ultimately have a good perception of how officers complete their roles and deter crime within their community. However, this is not always the case. Over the years there have been many occasions where the public are clearly unhappy with the police and are not satisfied that police officers are doing their duties in a fair manner. The earliest sign of this was back in 1981 where the public's perception and anger towards police was displayed in the manner of riots. This riot is known as the Brixton riots and was a pivotal point in the change of police officers' powers.

The 1981 the Brixton outbreak was caused by a number of factors which included social and economic deprivation that was a result of the lack of jobs around the area (John, 2006). This subsequently meant that approximately 55% of the young black men living within Brixton were unemployed (BBC, 2004). Throughout 1981 there was increasing tension between the black community and The Metropolitan Police. One of the main causes for this tension was that many young black men within London believed that officers were discriminating against them, especially when using the 'sus law' (Pierre, 2020). The 'sus law' was introduced by the Vagrancy Act 1824, which allowed an officer to use his powers to stop and search an individual purely on the basis that the same officer had a suspicion that the individual was going to commit an offence, had committed an offence or has just committed an offence (Keeling, 2017).

In early April 1981 the Metropolitan Police began a widespread operation called 'The Operation Swamp'. This was put in place in order to attempt to cut down on street crime in Brixton which had increased over the previous months. The 'Sus Law' was heavily used during this operation with around 1,000 individuals being stopped and searched by officers during the first six days however, within the 1,000 individuals the majority of them were young black males (John, 2006). The mixture of deprivation, racial tension and the poor public relations with the police sparked off the riots where 300 individuals were subsequently injured (John, 2006).

Following the riots, the Home Secretary William Whitelaw appointed Lord Scarman to conduct an inquiry into the serious disorder that took place in Brixton (BBC, 2004). Scarman specifically identified the issue that stop and search powers were being overused, particularly against ethnic minority communities which play a significant role in the breakdown of relations between the police and the community (Keeling, 2017). During the inquiry Scarman also found that a large majority of the community had lost their confidence in the police and their policing methods (BBC, 2004). In the report Lord Scarman made a large amount of reference towards stop and search by stating

'... the hostility of young black people, who felt they were being hunted irrespective of their innocence or guilt. And their hostility infected older members of the community who, hearing the stories of many innocent young people who had been stopped and searched, began themselves to lose confidence in, and respect for, the police. However well-intentioned, these operations precipitated a crisis of confidence between the police and certain community leaders.' (Keeling, 2017).

This report by Scarman marked a step in the right direction in changing and improving the way that the police analyse and understand how certain ways of policing may affect communities. A new general power to stop and search an individual was introduced by the creation of The Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 (PACE), which remains until this day the most used power under which stop and search is conducted (Keeling, 2017).

The Brixton Riots could be categorised as a major incident. Many individuals may change their perception of response officers following the actions made at some incidents. When response officers are dealing with major incidents it is important that the management of such incident is 100% accurate because the way in which an incident like this is dealt with has the ability to restore the public's confidence in how the police react and deal with such events. A major incident can be defined as

“an emergency that requires the implementation of special arrangements by one or more of the emergency services, the NHS, or local authority. It is likely to involve serious harm, damage, security risk or disruption” (Bryant and Bryant, 2020c, p.239)

When officers attend a major incident, they should be visible and able to manage the relevant cordons. This will then assist other emergency services to be able to carry out their duties in a safe manner. The first responder must assess the nature of the incident and communicate the relevant findings with everyone at scene and also the control room. In order to ensure that every initial multi-agency response is organised and structured the Joint Emergency Service Interoperability Principles (JESIP) have designed the M.E.T.H.A.N.E model. Each letter in the model corresponds to a category that needs to be established and

relayed to the rest of the emergency services at scene (London Fire Brigade, 2020). These categories can only be established after a major incident has been declared.

When a major incident has been declared the first officer on scene must establish the exact location of the incident followed by the type of incident that has occurred. Once these have been established the officer must then identify any potential hazards that may affect themselves, other emergency workers and of course the public. Following this the officers must decide on the best access routes for other emergency services to attend such as an ambulance or fire engine. It is then important for the number of casualties to be known which can then be relayed to the ambulance crew in order for them to calculate how many other emergency services are required (London Fire Brigade, 2020).

During the Brixton riots the officers did not seem to establish all that was necessary to appropriately deal with this major incident. They did not realise that they were the main cause of the riots so when more officers were deployed it angered the community further which led to more hostility towards officers. There was no sense of risk management as the police used the firemen's hoses in order to "repel the advance of the rioters" (Shivdasani, 2021). This alone suggest that the officers did not know what they were doing and has ultimately had an impact on how officers are perceived when dealing with major incidences today.

The effects of the Brixton riots on the public's perception of the police heightened the issues that communities were having in relation to the lack of confidence and the lack of trust towards the police. During the riots the police were perceived as individuals who were racist and who abused their powers towards communities who had a large number of

individuals from black and minority ethnic (BME) backgrounds. Due to how police treated the BME communities back in the 20th century it has influenced how people perceive the police today. There have been many improvements over the years with regards to the public's relationship with officers, however there is still hostility between members of minority groups and the police.

Research over the last 10 years has shown that individuals from BME backgrounds have difficulty in putting their confidence in the police (Awan, Blakemore and Simpson, 2013). The history, discriminatory use of stop and search by officers and also the handling of a major incident like the Brixton riots has had a significant impact on the police's communication with and handling of BME communities (Renauer & Covelli, 2011). This relationship has resulted in an increase in hostility, lack of confidence and ultimately the mistrust in the use of authority (Mile-Johnson & Pickering, 2017). Between April 2019 and March 2020, there had been 563,837 stop searches conducted in England and Wales. Within this figure there were 6 stop searches for every 1,000 white person compared to 54 for every 1,000 black person (UK Government, 2021). It is important to realise how these figures may affect someone's perceptions of the police as they are often formed during the first contact a member of public has with a police officer (Willis & Todorov, 2006). The public often expect the police to show signs of competence, manners, reliability, attentiveness and fairness (Awan *et al.*, 2019). There have been three criteria identified by Lind & Tyler (1988) that are used by individuals to judge whether they have been fairly treated. The three criteria are trustworthiness, neutrality and standing. Lind & Tyler (1988) state

“Trustworthiness refers to the belief that the police care about them and have their best interests at mind. Neutrality is concerned with the police being fair and unbiased; displaying non-stereotypical decision making. Standing refers to being treated with respect and dignity. If all three factors are present during an encounter, then it signifies to individuals that they are valued members of their social groups”.

When members of the public feel valued and supported they are more likely to engage and support police officers with their duties which later leads to consensual legitimacy. Bryant and Bryant (2020d, p.29) states that consensual legitimacy “reflects the democratic aspect of policing within a liberal democracy, the notion of ‘policing by consent’”. In simple terms it means that the police are legitimate to the extent that the public within our communities’ consent to policing.

The concept of policing by consent had originated from the 9 general instructions that were given to the first officers of the Metropolitan Police back in 1829. These 9 instructions are also known as the Peelian Principles that were set out by Sir Robert Peel (UK Government, 2012). The challenges that face officers in regard to following this concept is the relationship and perception of the public towards officers. If the public have a difficult relationship with the police, it suggests that they are not willing to allow officers to conduct their duties in a fair manner meaning that they do not have the consent of the public to police. This ultimately means that the police lose their authority once the consent from the public is lost (Brown, 2021).

The way in which the public’s consent is maintained is not by “pandering to public opinion” (Brown, 2021) but by policing with transparency by applying the law fairly, using minimal

force on the public and by policing impartially. In order for officers to demonstrate that they are successfully applying the law fairly they must along with their forces operate with as much transparency as they feel possible (College of Policing, 2014). This transparency can be seen through the use of the integrity programme created by the College of Policing that offers guidance towards maintaining professional standards and fairness within the force (College of Policing, 2021b). It also demonstrates to the public that the police are not hiding anything and are happy and willing to show the inconsistencies that some officers may sadly demonstrate throughout their career. There is always a push to maintain consistency within the approach for officers to work with integrity which is seen through the use of the vetting system prior to officers accepting a job within the force. In order for each force to show that they are working with transparency there is a tremendous emphasis on the way that officers are challenged if they act in a manner that does not coincide with the Code of Ethics and the Standards of Policing behaviour. This means that when an officer has been seen conducting his/her duties in an unfair manner, such as using excessive use of force they may be referred to the Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC). This is then known by the public which to them represents a positive action towards the means of disciplining the officer. In my opinion this transparency creates a positive impact in the way that the public perceive the police.

This may not be the case with every member of the public. Some members of the public within our community may see these negative reports of officers which then may change their perception. These reports may impact the public's perception in a negative way, which will lead to the loss of confidence from the public. With this loss of confidence comes the loss of policing by consent. As stated by the Independent Police Complaints Commission

(2012) "Corruption is not widespread, or considered to be widespread, but that where it exists it is corrosive of the public trust that is at the heart of policing by consent".

The public's perceptions towards the police and response officers in particular is not always affected by the way in which an officer may interact with an individual from the public.

Many people determine their opinion of the police by looking at the crime rates that are in their area and by judging how much their local police force is doing in order to reduce the crime in their communities. According to the Office for National Statistics (2017) in 2016 approximately 60% of adults believed that crime had increased in the past few years in the country as a whole. But in fact, the crime rates had actually reduced during this period. The Office for National Statistics (2016) have stated that

"the crime survey for England and Wales (CSEW) showed that there were an estimated 6.3 million incidents of crime experienced by adults aged 16 and over in the survey year ending March 2016; 6% fewer than in the previous survey year (6.8 million)."

It is believed that some sectors of the community are more likely to think and perceive that the crime rates have increased more than others. According to the Office for National Statistics (2015) certain demographic factors affect the way that an individual may perceive the crime in their area. For example, women are more likely to believe that crime has risen in recent years compared to men. Individuals who are living in the most deprived communities were more likely to believe that the crime rates had risen both locally and nationally. This is in contrast to individuals who are living in urban areas who believe that the crime rates have only risen in their local area.

The increase in individuals believing that crime has increased when it has in fact decreased may influence them in the way that they perceive the work that officers are conducting, as they may think that their local force is not doing anything to deter crime within their communities. A key reason in why many people perceive that crime and disorder is rising is because the public tend to base their judgements on the more obvious and visible local crimes or anti-social behaviour (ASB) (Bryant and Bryant, 2020e, p.46). These crimes are also known as 'Signal Crimes' which can be perceived by residents as warning signals in relation to the level of crime and insecurity within their community (Innes, 2014).

Signal crimes can be defined as "Any criminal incident that causes change in the public's behaviour and/or beliefs about their security" (Universities' Police Institute, no date). These crimes can range from prostitution, vandalism or public drinking. The impact of these signal crimes on the public perception of the police are highly important to understand. For example, if an individual visited a neighbourhood and saw several youths drinking in the park, seeing bus stop shelters with smashed windows and buildings with graffiti they would think that the local response officers in this particular area are not doing their job in the right manner. This will then have a negative impact on the way that this individual perceives officers. Whereas, if that individual visited a neighbourhood where there were no youths drinking, no vandalism and a visible presence of officers patrolling the area, this would have a positive impact towards their perception of the police.

Many signal crimes such as ASB have the potential to turn into a critical incident. According to Gloucestershire Constabulary (2018) a critical incident is defined as

“any incident where the effectiveness of the police response is likely to have a significant impact on the confidence of the victim, their family and/or the community”

I have referred to the signal crime ASB due to its ability to turn into a critical incident if the relevant processes have not been conducted correctly by officers. This unfortunately happened to Fiona Pilkington and her daughter back in 2007 whereby Fiona killed herself and her daughter following seven years of harassment and ongoing ASB (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2011). Prior to their deaths Fiona had contact Leicestershire Police on 33 separate occasions to report the ongoing harassment and ASB that she was receiving (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2011). This incident went to the Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) to be investigated. The IPCC concluded that the officers had not identified the difference in the level of seriousness between general ASB and the harassment that the Pilkington family endured (True Vision, no date).

It is obvious that the lack of communication and use of resources when dealing with this incident resulted in 2 females dying. This incident ultimately had a negative impact on the public's perception towards officers as it showed that the police force dealing with this were unable to maintain the confidence of the victim and their family. The way in which the officers could have changed the outcome is by using the Critical Incident management model. Whenever an incident has the likelihood to become critical it's important to react efficiently by using this model (National Policing Improvement Agency, 2011)

The critical incident management model includes a 3 phased approach. Phase 1 is the preparation phase whereby a chief officer needs to consider current management structures in order to establish whether sufficient amount of staff have been effectively

trained. Phase 2 is the management stage where critical incidents are identified early and notified to the most appropriate person. The last phase is called the restoring best confidence. This is where confidence may be rebuilt through community engagement following a critical incident. (National Policing Improvement Agency, 2011). If this management model had been followed the outcome of this incident may have been different and the restoration of the public's confidence may not have been as hard.

It may be apparent based on what has been discussed throughout this essay that many people do not perceive response officers in a very good manner, however there are individuals who are satisfied with what they see the police achieve. According to BMG Research (2019) in 2018 61% of the public were satisfied with the job that the police were doing and were also aware of the difficulty and pressures that all officers are under by conducting their roles.

It is important for new officers to learn about the history of policing and what has affected the public's confidence in today's policing. Only after they establish these facts are they able to learn from their mistakes and start rebuilding the relationship and confidence with the public in order for them to be able to conduct their jobs in the best possible way.

Word Count: 4868

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