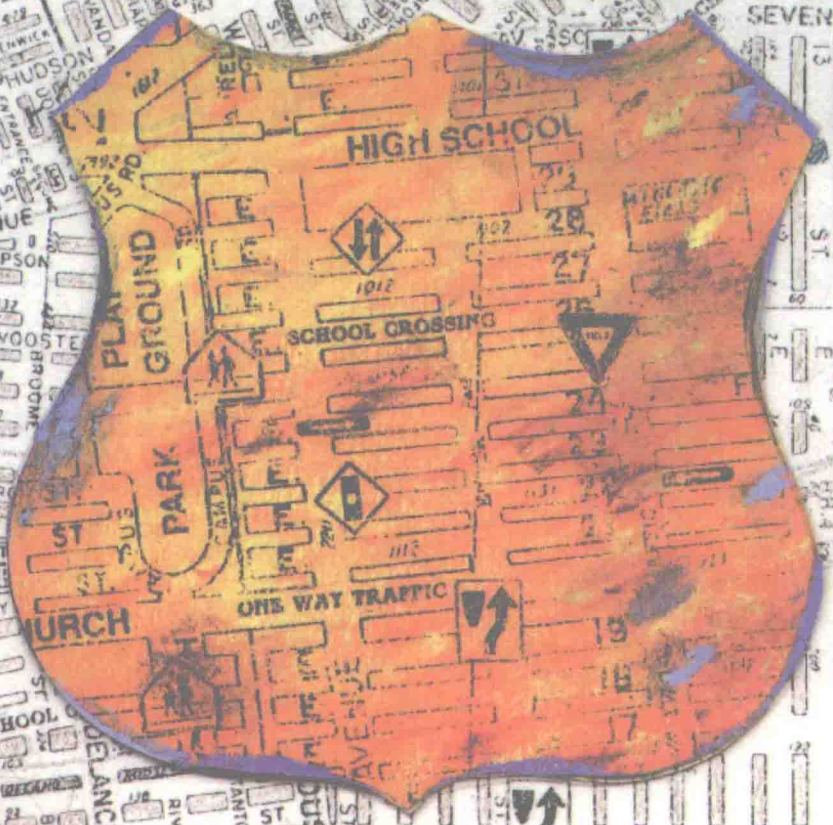
Police-Community Relations and the Administration of Justice

FOURTH EDITION



Pamela D. Mayhall
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POLICE–COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

Fourth Edition

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POLICE–COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

To the memory of Pamela D. Mayhall

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PREFACE

Relationships change as individuals, communities, and societies change. They change as the needs and responsibilities of each member in the relationship change. This book addresses a challenge that all criminal justice practitioners—police, courts, and corrections—must confront. It is the challenge of developing and maintaining meaningful relationships with each other and with the citizens they serve in an atmosphere of change.

The police are the edge, the most visible and, according to many citizens, the most approachable of these criminal justice practitioners. A police–citizen partnership is essential to reducing crime. Shaping the partnership in positive ways requires effective police–community relations practice. Many disciplines are involved: criminology, law, history, philosophy, psychology, political science, communication, sociology, economics, and more.

In this book we draw from all of the above in order to help the reader better understand and practice positive police–community relations. To achieve our purpose, many topics are addressed in the context of community relations. For example: What are the psychological processes that accompany the business of enforcing laws in America today? What is the relationship between crime prevention and community relations? How can systems principles be applied to police–community relations? What is the nature of the media link to the community? The reader is encouraged to explore the dynamics and problems of communication, to relate these to a variety of issues associated with discretion, and to discover ways in which the police and the community can interact more effectively.

This text is designed for use in a one- or two-semester course on Police–Community Relations or Police and Society. It represents an overview. Much more can be said about every topic included. We address these topics in the context of community relations, and encourage the reader to pursue further study in areas of special interests.

The third edition of this text had many friends. To them we would like to say that every chapter in this fourth edition has been updated to reflect current issues and research. Some chapters have only been updated, others have seen extensive revisions, a couple have been incorporated within other chapters, and a new chapter on community policing has been added. Yet, we have tried very hard to maintain the style and integrity of the previous edition.

As in the third edition, we have attempted to make the subject matter accessible to students. The pedagogical devices utilized there have been maintained to ensure student comprehension. Each chapter begins with a summary overview and learning objectives. Each chapter ends with conclusions, a student checklist, questions for discussion, and the feature "One Step Forward," designed to apply concepts, increase understanding, and offer new learning opportunities.

It is our fervent desire that this edition continue the tradition established by Pamela D. Mayhall of providing both instructors and students with an interesting and challenging overview of the many issues relative to police–community relations.

Thomas Barker
Ronald D. Hunter

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book is dedicated to the late Pamela D. Mayhall for good reason. She authored the finest undergraduate text ever written on the topic of police–community relations. We are honored that Mr. Travis Mayhall and Prentice Hall, Inc. allowed us to revise such an important contribution to the study of criminal justice.

The pressures of maintaining the integrity of the previous edition, resolving our creative differences, meeting production deadlines, and responding to manuscript reviews did little to enhance the quality of life for our loved ones. We are extremely grateful for the tolerance, understanding, and support provided by our spouses and families.

We are also grateful for the encouragement provided by our colleagues and the students in the College of Criminal Justice at Jacksonville State University. We are especially thankful for the supportive efforts of Ms. Patsy Meadows, our college secretary and Ms. Candy Fortune, our student assistant.

The professional staff at Prentice Hall is also greatly appreciated. The guidance and editorial skills provided by Robin Baliszewski, Rose Mary Florio, Janet McGillicuddy, and Judy Casillo were outstanding. Their dedicated efforts made our work much easier.

No writing project can be successful without the helpful insights provided by colleagues in the field who perform the difficult task of manuscript review. We offer our thanks to the following individuals whose comments enabled us to revise and strengthen our original manuscript: Professor Donald J. Melisi, Middlesex Community College; Professor James D. Stinchcomb, Miami-Dade Community College; Professor Tom Dempsey, Thomas Nelson College; Professor Lois A. Wims, Salve Regina University; and Professor Ronald A. Pincomb, New Mexico State University.

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We also wish to thank Professor Richard C. Lumb of the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, and Professors Patrick Ryan and Sean Grennan of the Long Island University–C.W. Post Campus for their contributions and support.

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1

POLICE–COMMUNITY RELATIONS: AN OVERVIEW

. . . the police are the public and the public are the police. (Peel's Principles)

In the last few years, American law enforcement has accepted (begrudgingly at times) the notion that community relations is an important and even indispensable part of police work. In so doing, it has recaptured the old belief that a police force can and should be "the people's police"—an agency that is responsive to the public it serves.

Philosophically, not every officer agrees, and practically, the nature of community relations varies widely from agency to agency, community to community, but change has occurred. Awareness and acceptance of community relations—the process of developing and maintaining meaningful, two-way communication between the agency and specific populations served toward identifying, defining, and resolving problems of mutual concern—have increased.

STUDYING THIS CHAPTER WILL ENABLE YOU TO:

1. Provide an overview of police–community relations and its impact on the police system.
2. Explain how police–community relations are complex interactions among a multitude of internal and external communities.
3. Define the *people's police* and *community.*
4. Describe the evolution of police–community relations programs in the United States.
5. Identify the current status of and prospects for police–community relations.

THE POLICE–COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

Of all the issues that affect the police in the United States, none is more important than the manner in which the police and the public interrelate. Despite our democratic traditions (or perhaps because of them), we in the United States have been slow to accept the concept that "police are the public and the public the police" (Greene, 1989, p. 354). Yet the police and the community are not only interdependent, but are in fact inseparable from one another.

Readers, both police and civilian, may find it difficult to accept the assertion that police and community are inseparable. If one adheres to the traditional concept of police–community relations (as shown in Figure 1-1), such a statement may actually appear to be ludicrous. Typically, the police have responded to pressure from politicians and others who have reacted to complaints from groups or individual citizens regarding police procedures. Such an isolationist view has perpetuated an "us against them" mentality that has detracted from police–community interaction.

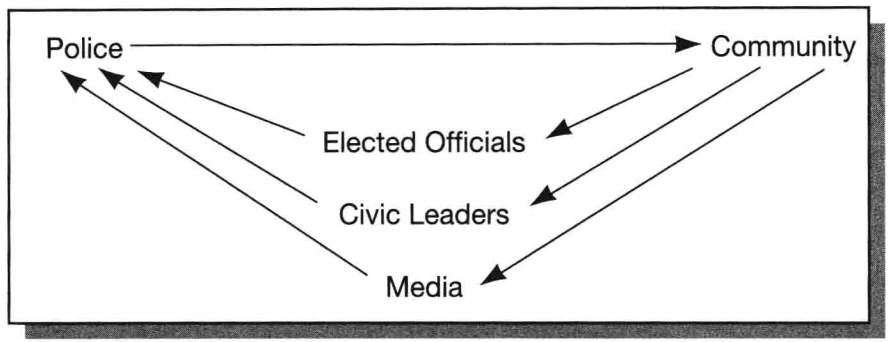

FIGURE 1-1 Traditional police–community relations.

However, if one adheres to the more contemporary view that the individuals within various police organizations are but a microcosm of the general society and that this society is composed of numerous interrelated communities, the previous assertion is valid. Today's police organizations are not isolated monoliths that are impervious to the communities they serve. The police organization is not a unified community. Nor is there a single community to which they respond. There are in actuality a myriad of sometimes cooperating, often competing communities that are constantly influencing and being influenced by one another.

Police organizations are in truth very responsive to this rapidly changing "community environment." To understand police–community interaction, it is necessary for the student of police to realize that there are constant exchanges between the various communities which exist both within and without the police organization. Figure 1-2 demonstrates how these "exchange relationships" (Cole, 1992, pp. 169–172) between communities occur.

As displayed in Figure 1-2, the police organization is comprised of a number of *internal communities* engaged in constant interaction with one another. These internal

communities are engaged in numerous individual and group exchanges with a myriad of *external communities.* Within the *overlapping communities* displayed are those groups from which both the internal and external communities are comprised.

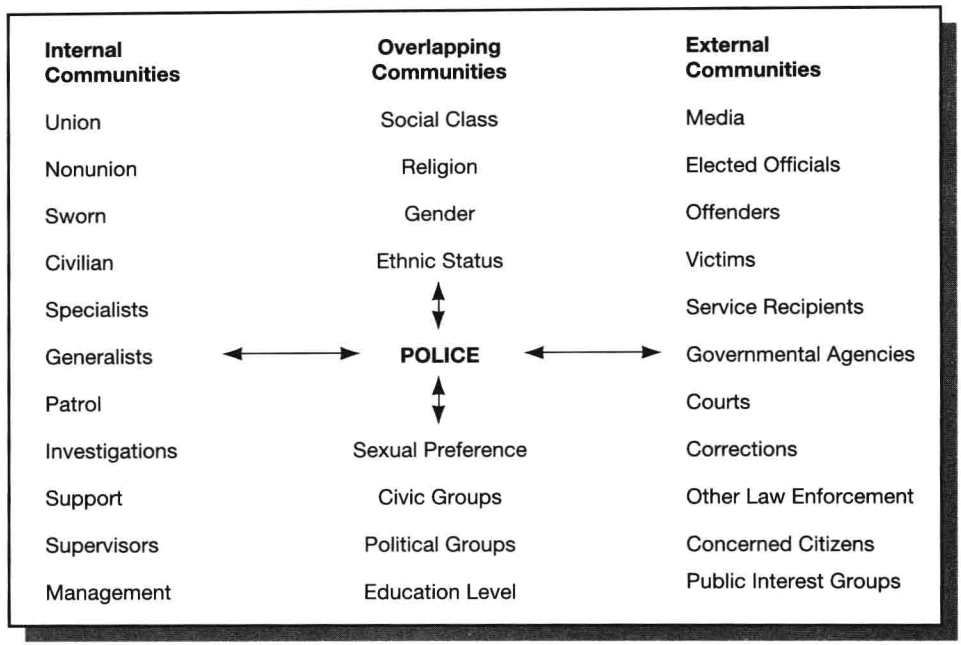

FIGURE 1-2 Contemporary police–community relations.

DEFINING POLICE–COMMUNITY RELATIONS

As argued in the preceding section, there is no one "community" that is served by the police. Instead, there are numerous communities that make up an often indefinable "public." As a result, "public opinion" is usually not a clear consensus of viewpoint within a nation, state, county, or municipality but a chorus of differing opinions from various communities.

Police–community relations are complicated and constantly changing interactions between representatives of the police organization and an assortment of governmental agencies, public groups, and private individuals representing a wide range of competing and often conflicting interests.

Throughout this book we focus our discussion of police and community interaction on both the external communities outside the police organization and the internal communities within the police organization. Our primary contention is that successful police–community relations must take into account exchange relationships among community groups located both within and without the police organization.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE CONCEPT OF POLICE–COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Secrecy and institutional separation have ceased to be defensible positions for police agencies to take in relation to the community they serve. Although secrecy and institutional separation have not totally disappeared, it is valid to state that in less than two decades the most insular of all institutions in American society is becoming committed, at least in principle, to programs of ongoing exchanges with the community and with other agencies about its mandate and practices.

The concept of police–community relations has gained a secure level of acceptance in the law enforcement establishment and in urban government. *Acceptance,* in a working sense, means that proposals to establish and maintain such programs have a fair chance of success. There are no longer any organized factions publicly opposing police efforts to open and cultivate channels of communication with the public in general and with civic groups and social movements in particular. Whether those who were aligned against such attempts are now merely silent for the time being, or whether they have changed their views, is an open question. But there is no doubt that activities included under the heading of police–community relations are achieving respectability, and that a large and growing number of police officials in positions of responsibility have come to view them as indispensable for effective law enforcement and peacekeeping.

ACCEPTANCE AS A SIGN OF PROGRESS

This acceptance alone is a sign of progress, a remarkable achievement. It is, however, only a first step toward implementation. It is much easier to agree with the reasonableness and justice of a proposal than to implement it and live with the consequences of its implementation. Above all, when the task is to decide what must and can be done, it is important to measure aspirations against resistance, inertia, and regression. Thus, for example, despite the acceptance of the principle of police–community relations, few, if any, actually functioning police–community relations programs are fully deserving of the name. Most have barely succeeded in laying the foundations for their own existence. A positive statement of present circumstances is that although newly functioning programs have been accepted in principle, the kinds of activities that total acceptance would lead one to expect have yet to be implemented.

TIGHT FINANCES AND THEIR EFFECTS

Today, in times of tight finances, new and existing programs must compete for reduced funding and human resources with other programs that meet long-established police obligations (e.g., crime, traffic, and vice control). In such circumstances it becomes necessary to demonstrate a high level of cost-effectiveness in meeting police goals. Often, community relations programs become locked into quick and relatively safe ways of demonstrating success: (1) "busy work" activities, which show that something is happening, and presumably goals are being accomplished; and (2) solv-

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