

## Columns

[President's Message](#)[Chief's Counsel](#)[Legislative Alert](#)[Technology Talk](#)[From the Director](#)

## Departments

[Police Chief Update](#)[Highway Safety Initiatives](#)[IACP News](#)[Line of Duty Deaths](#)[New Members](#)[Products & Services](#)[Product Update](#)[Survivors' Club](#)

## Current Issue

[Archives Past Issues](#)[Web-Only Articles](#)[About Police Chief](#)[Advertising](#)[Editorial](#)[Subscribe / Renew / Update](#)[Law Enforcement Jobs](#)[Buyers' Guide](#)[send to a friend](#)[printer-friendly](#)

## Ideas & Insights: Reply to Community Policing Revisited: Implementing the Principles of Procedural Justice and Police Legitimacy

*Ronal W. Serpas, PhD, Chair, IACP Community Policing Committee, and Remi A. Braden, Director of Public Affairs (Former), New Orleans, Louisiana, Police Department*

Fundamental to community policing is the concept that the police and the public co-produce public safety through trust, legitimacy, information sharing—and above all—transparency. It's also imperative that policing keep up with the times, which means change should be the norm for departments everywhere.

Over the last 30 years, there is no question that U.S. law enforcement has demonstrated its willingness to embrace new and evolving forms of service to improve relations with the public, and that openness to change may be the profession's strongest attribute. Besides adopting community policing to increase support among those they protect and serve, officers also stepped up to the challenge when introduced to intelligence-led policing, CompStat, and other reforms. For example, in the last 15 years, law enforcement has made itself more transparent with the use of car dash cameras; audio and video recording of interviews of criminal suspects; social media to broaden direct communications with the public; and, most recently, body-worn cameras. The dramatic escalation in the use of such technology, as well as scientific advancements in DNA analysis and ballistics tracing, has helped to eliminate gray areas; "he said, she said" disagreements; and previously unanswerable questions in countless investigations. Ensuring that police work is both unbiased and efficient has been a hallmark of today's law enforcement.

Innovative chiefs recognize that, despite the willingness of police to change delivery systems over the years, general public support of officers remains virtually unchanged. The Confidence in U.S. Institutions series by Gallup has shown that, over the last few decades, the number of people who consider the police to be among the institutions that they have the most confidence in hovers within the 50–60 percent range. The most recent Gallup poll shows a historical average of 57 percent of those asked have "a great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in the police. Police officers were surpassed in the historical survey data only by small business owners, who polled at 63 percent, and members of the military, who took the top spot with 67 percent.<sup>1</sup>

The events of Ferguson, Missouri, did, however, cause the police to suffer a double-digit drop in Gallup's annual survey on Honesty and Ethical Behavior of selected professions in 2014. But that number did rise again in 2015, to 56 percent. In this year's measure, "[f]our in ten nonwhites now rate the ethical standards of police as very high or high—a sharp increase from the 23 percent who held this view in 2014." Police, were outranked in this category only by high school teachers at 60 percent, medical doctors at 67 percent, and pharmacists at 68 percent. The survey found that nurses were considered the most honest and ethical on the job (85 percent). The remaining professions measured all fall below 50 percent.<sup>2</sup> The police were consistently in the 54–58 percent range between 2010 and 2013, according to Gallup. However, a third Gallup poll released in late 2015 also found that "[f]ifty-two percent of blacks say local police treat these minorities 'very fairly' or 'fairly,' while 48 percent say the police act 'unfairly' or 'very unfairly.' In contrast, 73 percent of national adults, 71 percent of Hispanics, and 78 percent of whites say the police treat racial minorities fairly."<sup>3</sup>

Community policing is the best chance policing has to close these gaps in perceptions of service. But of course, it has its shortcomings. Some believe there is too much variability in its application. There's also the fact that not all departments employ community policing, and there are lingering questions as to whether it should be a department-wide system or limited to a simple unit. These factors are what led Chapman and Martin and others to note, "the support for community policing from an evaluation standpoint is not conclusive." It's clear that law enforcement leaders must focus on incorporating other strategies and ideas to advance community policing. Integrating the principles of procedural justice and police legitimacy throughout policing is the answer to these problems.<sup>4</sup> They form the basis for the core service delivery model that must be used in every citizen encounter to build the support and cooperation necessary to implement community policing more completely throughout the United States.

The implementation of the justice and legitimacy principles will require new and innovative ways to measure the success of policing. For too long, the United States has relied on the yearly release of the Uniform Crime Report – Major Crime Index to assess law enforcement success. While the Major Crime Index has value, it should not be the preferred measurement used. In cities like New Orleans, Louisiana, and Nashville, Tennessee, one neighborhood's crime problem is not the same as another's. What matters in each neighborhood is as different from one another as the street names. Because cities and neighborhoods differ so much, the police play a guardian role in some places and a warrior role in others. In both cases, if officers embrace the justice and legitimacy principles as their core service delivery model, they can gather community support from their role as guardians, or, when necessary, warriors, as they steadfastly seek resolutions to problems, co-produce safety with the community, and move into the preferred guardian role throughout the community.

As chief in Nashville and later in New Orleans, Ronal Serpas arranged for citizen satisfaction

Get the answers  
you **NEED.**

Not just the ones  
you can **FIND.**

Click for more.

**IBM.**

You know what happened.



But what happens next...

Click for more.

**IBM.**

Get the answers  
you **NEED.**

Not just the ones  
you can **FIND.**

Click for more.

**IBM.**

The  
**PoliceChief**  
2016 Media Kit



surveys to be conducted routinely to measure police performance on a variety of issues. These surveys started in December 2005 and were performed by competent professionals. The results were used to drive and direct accountability measures of field commands, supervisors, and officers that were not based on arrest, citations, or crime rates, but instead focused on how officers interacted with the public. This type of survey should be the gold standard of measurement and accountability of U.S. policing. The Major Crime Index does not capture all the nuances of today's policing service. A well-designed and frequently administered citizen survey of police service can assess crime, neighborhood disorder, perceptions of personal and community safety, officer behavior, officer and departmental cooperation, professionalism, and so forth.<sup>5</sup> Recently the National Police Research Platform developed an index of questions that could be used as a national model in citizen surveys to assess police performance in the areas of legitimacy and justice.<sup>6</sup>

**Ronal W. Serpas**, PhD, is the current IACP Community Policing Committee chair and the past superintendent of police in New Orleans, chief of police in Nashville, and chief of the Washington State Patrol. Currently, Serpas is a professor of practice in criminology and justice at Loyola University New Orleans.

**Remi A. Braden** is the former director of public affairs/spokesperson for the New Orleans Police Department. Braden has also served as the communications director/spokesperson for a member of the U.S. Congress and as a broadcast news producer in London, Houston, and New Orleans.

Transparency must exist for community policing to make a difference. Officers must embrace justice and legitimacy in every encounter with the public to advance transparency. Police supervisors should equally adapt justice and legitimacy principles in the way they supervise officers to build transparency, trust, and confidence in police leadership. Law enforcement must fully incorporate the measurement of justice and legitimacy outcomes in survey data, timely and accurately conducted, to augment the crime-fighting accountability models.

Despite the fact that the surveys show that police do have a solid base of support to build upon, it is important to acknowledge that the percentage of support has changed little in the last few decades and the police are not viewed the same in every community. Community policing can, and has, helped the police bridge so many divides, but police leaders and officers must continue to aim higher and be willing to accept more change in policing. ♦

#### Notes:

<sup>1</sup>Historical averages of confidence expressed as “a great deal,” or “quite a lot” of confidence in the institution, following the police at 57 percent are church/organized religion, 55 percent; U.S. Supreme Court, 44 percent; (U.S.) presidency, 43 percent; public schools and banks, 40 percent ... newspapers, 32 percent; television news, 30 percent. Historical averages are based on all times Gallup has asked about institutions, which for most of them dates back to 1973 or 1993. See Gallup “Confidence in U.S. Institutions,” survey, June 15, 2015, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/1597/Confidence-Institutions.aspx> (accessed January 26, 2016).

<sup>2</sup>Lydia Saad, “Americans’ Faith in Honesty, Ethics of Police Rebounds,” Gallup, December 21, 2015, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/187874/americans-faith-honesty-ethics-police-rebounds.aspx> (accessed January 26, 2016).

<sup>3</sup>Art Swift, “Blacks Divided on whether Police Treat Minorities Fairly,” Gallup, August 6, 2015, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/184511/blacks-divided-whether-police-treat-minorities-fairly.aspx> (accessed January 26, 2016).

<sup>4</sup>See, for example, Tom R. Tyler, ed. *Legitimacy and Criminal Justice: International Perspectives* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 2007); Tracey L. Meares, “Norms, Legitimacy and Law Enforcement,” Faculty Scholarship Series Paper (2000); and Tracey L. Meares and Tom R. Tyler, “Justice Sotomayor and the Jurisprudence of Procedural Justice,” Forum, *Yale Law Journal* 123 (2014).

<sup>5</sup>In Nashville and New Orleans, the survey firm was directed to incorporate question strategies similar to the National Crime Victimization Survey so that the agency could assess the rate of crime, the rate at which citizens reported victimization to the police, and the types of crimes occurring in these cities that are not found in the Uniform Crime Report.

<sup>6</sup>Dennis P. Rosenbaum et al., “Community-based Indicators of Police Performance: Introducing the Platform’s Public Satisfaction Survey,” National Police Research Platform (National Institute of Justice, February 2011), <http://static1.1.sqspcdn.com/static/f/733761/11089087/1299437174827/Public+Satisfaction.pdf?token=i2OZS7uynBF8WFqFCI2191rK3LA%3D> (accessed January 26, 2016).

## Ideas and Insights

Ideas and Insights is an ongoing series of articles from law enforcement subject matter experts and a response to each article from a current or former chief of police. Previous installments of Ideas and Insights can be found online in the *Police Chief* archives ([August 2015](#) and [November 2015](#)) at [www.policechiefmagazine.org](http://www.policechiefmagazine.org).

Please cite as:

Ronal W. Serpas and Remi A. Braden, “Reply to Community Policing Revisited: Implementing the Principles of Procedural Justice and Police Legitimacy,” Ideas and Insights, *The Police Chief* 83 (March 2016): 46–47.

[Top](#)

From *The Police Chief*, vol. LXXXIII, no. 3, March 2016. Copyright held by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, 515 North Washington Street, Alexandria, VA 22314 USA.

[send to a friend](#) 

[printer-friendly](#) 

**GAIN A SEAT AT THE CHIEF’S DESK**

Reach **173,250+** police chiefs and industry decision makers with ***The Police Chief*** magazine



**The PoliceChief**  
2016 Media Kit

**GAIN A SEAT AT THE CHIEF’S DESK**

Reach **173,250+** police chiefs and industry decision makers with ***The Police Chief*** magazine



**Reach Thousands of Police Leaders with IACP Marketing Opportunities**

**GAIN A SEAT AT THE CHIEF’S DESK**

Reach **173,250+** police chiefs and industry decision makers with ***The Police Chief*** magazine



The online version of the Police Chief Magazine is possible through a grant from the IACP Foundation. To learn more about the IACP Foundation, [click here](#).

All contents Copyright © 2003 - 20162016 International Association of Chiefs of Police. All Rights Reserved.  
[Copyright and Trademark Notice](#) | [Member and Non-Member Supplied Information](#) | [Links Policy](#)

44 Canal Center Plaza, Suite 200, Alexandria, VA USA 22314 phone: 703.836.6767 or 1.800.THE IACP fax: 703.836.4543  
Created by [Matrix Group International, Inc.®](#)