

Police Corruption

Why is policing so susceptible to corruption?

- Police have authority to enforce law
- Police also have the discretion to not enforce the law
- Police receive relatively low pay, but have important responsibilities
- Police become cynical about the court's soft treatment of criminals
- Society in general is ambivalent about vice

Types of Corruption

- The *Knapp Commission* in 1972 identified two kinds of corrupt officers
 - o **"Grass eaters"**: officers who occasionally engage in illegal and unethical activities, such as accepting small favors, gifts, or money for ignoring violations of the law during the course of their duties
 - o **"Meat eaters"**: officers who actively seek ways to make money illegally while on duty
- Stoddard identified a more complete list of police misconduct
 - o **Bribery**: accepting cash or gifts in exchange for non-enforcement of the law
 - o **Chiseling**: demanding discounts, free admission and free food
 - o **Extortion**: the threat of enforcement and arrest if a bribe is not given
 - o **Favoritism**: giving breaks on law enforcement to family and friends
 - o **Mooching**: accepting free food, drinks, and admission to entertainment
 - o **Perjury**: lying for other officers apprehended in illegal activity
 - o **Prejudice**: unequal enforcement of the law with respect to racial and ethnic minorities.

 - o **Premeditated theft**: planned burglaries and theft.

 - o **Shakedown**: taking items from the scene of a theft or a burglary.

 - o **Shopping**: taking small, inexpensive items from a crime scene.

Corruption Example: Camden, NJ (2010)

- Corruption charges were filed against two Camden police officers accused of falsifying evidence in drug cases that led authorities to dismiss more than 200 criminal cases
- Were indicted by a jury
- Assigned to police hot spots to crack down on open-air drug markets, started trafficking drugs themselves
- Stole drugs, from suspects, kept drugs for themselves, planted drugs on others
- Had to discard 200 criminal cases

Corruption Example: Joseph Gray (2001)

- Joseph Gray was on his way home from drinking to start his shift, ran a red light, and killed four people

- Officers failed to collect evidence properly
- Gray was released on bail the next day but was later charged with second degree murder and the officers who covered for him were fired

Controlling Corruption

Some of the ways to control and reduce corruption in policing are:

- High moral standards
- Police policies and disciplines
- Proactive and internal affairs investigations unit
- Uniform enforcement of the law
- Outside review and special prosecutors
- Court review and oversight

Police Use of Force

Examples:

1. Firm Grip
3. Batons, nightsticks
4. Pushing, shoving
5. Kicking, punching
6. Swarming
7. Sprays, chemical
8. Taser (Stun Gun)
9. Choke holds
10. Shooting

Continuum of Force

1. No force- typical verbal commands
2. Slight force- strong directive language and or minimal force
3. Forcibly subdues suspects with hands- uses arm/wrist lock, takedown, block, punch, or kick
4. Forcibly subdues suspect using methods other than hands- gun or baton

Police Encounters with Citizens

- About 209 million people 16 or older in US
- 45 million of these people will come into contact with police
- 19 million of these 45 million will be stopped in a vehicle
- 24 million of these 45 million will be stopped not in a vehicle
- Of the 19 million stopped in cars, only about 140,000 will encounter force
- Of 24 million of the individuals stopped not in a car, about 282,000 will encounter force

Police Encounters with Citizens

- A police officer is legally justified in using force to protect him/herself from physical attack or to subdue a suspect who is resisting arrest
- Any force beyond that is "improper"

BJS 1999 Report

- 1999- BSI reported that police officers used force or threatened to use force in about 1% of all encounters with citizens (average 421,000 force incidents each year nationally; includes justified and unjustified)
- Studies estimate that approximately 1/3 are unjustified (140,000 annually)
- What we know about police use of force:
 - o Officers use force infrequently
 - o Police use of force typically occurs at the lower end of the force spectrum, involving grabbing, pushing or shoving
 - o A small proportion of officers are disproportionately involved in use of force incidents
 - o Use of force appears to be unrelated to an officer's personal characteristics, such as age, gender and ethnicity
 - o Use of force typically occurs when police are trying to make an arrest and the suspect is resisting

Factors That Influence Police Abuse of Force, Such as Excessive and Deadly Force

1. Jurisdiction

- Cities vs. rural areas
- Population characteristics (economic)
- Level of violence in the area

2. Police Workload

- Ratio of number of calls, arrests to officers
- Police stress

3. Firearm Availability

- The greater number of crimes committed with firearms, the higher police violence
- Gen density (proportion of suicides and murders with guns)

4. Social Variables

- Non-residents, transient population

5. Administrative Policies/ Departments

- Restrictive vs. non-restrictive policies
- Poorly written or ambivalent policies create undue tension and stress on officers
→ higher use

6. Race

- Racial disparities in use of deadly force and excessive force (80% in some cities), regardless of race of officers
- In the 1970s, the police fatally shot 8 African Americans for every 1 white person (8 to 1)
- By 1998- the ratio had been reduced to 4 to 1

Controlling Excessive and Deadly Force

1. Supreme Court

- **Fleeing Felon Rule**- prior to 1985: okay to shoot someone who resisted arrest or tried to flee/avoid arrest

Tennessee v. Garner, 1985