Policing: Issues & Challenges

• Police officers are human.
  – All humans have shortcomings and frailties.

• Police are held to a higher standard.
  – Sworn to uphold the law
  – Unique powers
  • Arrest
  • Search
  • Force
The Police Personality

• Skolnick identified the *police working personality* in the 1960s.

• Along with Niederhoffer they observed that police were more likely to be cynical compared to the general population.
  – Citizen: “Officer, I forgot to renew my license.”
  – Cop: “Yeah, right, and I rooted for the Yankees last year.”
• Police working personality
  – All aspects of the traditional values and patterns of behavior evidenced by officers who have been socialized into the police subculture.
  – Many of these characteristics often extend into the personal lives of the officers.
Corruption

• An abuse of power that involves much more than financial gain.
  – Has existed since the dawn of American policing.
  – Corruption occurs at all levels within the organization
    • Individual
    • Group/unit
    • Department
Fig. 8.1

- Violent Crime
- Civil Rights
- Criminal Acts
- Property Crime
- Major Bribes
- Above the Law
- Minor Bribes
- Playing Favorites
- Gratuities
Dangerous Work

• Violence is present in police work day-in and day-out.
  – Over 12K officers killed in the line of duty.

• Physical risks
  – Disease
  – Terrorism
  – Environment
Percent of 530 officers feloniously killed
Percent of 586,915 officers assaulted

1 Time was not reported for 0.2 percent of all law enforcement officers feloniously killed.
Note: The 72 deaths that resulted from the events of September 11, 2001, are not included in this figure.
Percent of 530 officers feloniously killed

- Tactical situation: 5.8%
- Handling person with mental illness: 2.3%
- Investigative activity: 1.7%
- Handling, transporting, custody of prisoner: 2.6%
- Ambush situation: 20.0%
- Traffic pursuit/stop: 15.1%
- Disturbance call: 14.3%
- Investigating suspicious person/circumstance: 11.7%
- Arrest situation: 23.0%

Percent of 586,915 officers assaulted

- Civil disorder: 1.2%
- Handling person with mental illness: 1.7%
- Investigating suspicious person/circumstance: 9.8%
- Ambush situation: 0.3%
- Traffic pursuit/stop: 11.1%
- Disturbance call: 31.0%
- Arrest situation: 18.4%
- All other: 14.0%

1 Because of rounding, the percentages may not add to 100.0.
2 The circumstance category of “All other” does not apply to the data collected for law enforcement officers feloniously killed.

Note: The 72 deaths that resulted from the events of September 11, 2001, are not included in this figure.
Use of force

• Police use of force
  – The use of physical restraint when dealing with a person.

• Excessive force
  – The amount or frequency of force greater than required to compel compliance.

• Deadly force
  – Force likely to cause death or serious bodily injury.
Restrictions on deadly force

• Defense of life
• Fleeing subject - must be an imminent threat
• Verbal warnings – if feasible
• Warning shots – prohibited
• Vehicles – not for the purpose of disabling a vehicle.
• Less lethal – restricted by jurisdiction
Civil liability

• Police officers are sworn to uphold the law and protect individual rights guaranteed by the US Constitution.

• Failure to adhere to these principles often results in civil litigation filed against
  – Officer
  – Supervisors
  – Agency
  – Training
  – Governing body
Federal Protections

• Section (§) 1983, Title 42 of the US Code
  – Civil Rights Act
    • Passed in 1871 after the Civil War.
    • Prohibits actions under the color of authority that violates individual rights.
    • No person can be deprived of life, liberty, or property.
  – Bivens Act is the federal equivalent for federal agents.