Source:

Police Conduct

Law enforcement officers are trained in the use of force, are authorized to use force in specific circumstances, and typically face numerous circumstances during their careers when use of force is appropriate--for example, in making some arrests, restraining unruly combatants, or controlling a disruptive demonstration. When the level of force exceeds the level considered justifiable under the circumstances, however, the activities of the police come under public scrutiny. Incidents involving the use of excessive force by police officers frequently receive attention from the media, legislators, and, in some instances, civil and criminal courts. Whether the excessive force is aberrant behavior of individual officers or a pattern and practice of an entire law enforcement agency, both the law and public opinion condemn such incidents (http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/pubs-sum/176330.htm).

A recent study (http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/196694.pdf) of self-report data by police from 7,512 adult custody arrests in six moderate to large U.S. jurisdictions found that the rate of physical force varies from 12 to 17 percent and that the amount of force used by the police is concentrated at the lower end of various measures of force. Most arrests do not involve the use of force. When force is used, the most frequent type cited is weaponless tactics, the most common of which is grabbing.

How does police conduct affect the public's perception of the police? A new study (http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/197925.pdf) has found that the two factors that most influence public opinion of the police are residents' perceptions of neighborhood characteristics and their interactions with police. Los Angeles residents who had informal personal contact with police (e.g., increased officer visibility in neighborhoods, police participation at community meetings) were likely to express approval of the police, even when those residents perceived their neighborhoods as crime ridden, dangerous, and disorderly--all factors that ordinarily led to lower approval ratings. Race and ethnicity, factors cited as influential in other studies, were not found to be as important as community disorder in determining the public's satisfaction with police, except for assessment of police demeanor. The media were found to have little influence on public opinion of the police.

Officers have to be held accountable for their actions while on duty as public servants. Federal laws that address police misconduct include both criminal and civil statutes. These laws cover the actions of State, county, and local officers, including those who work in prisons and jails. Several laws also apply to Federal law enforcement officers. The laws protect all persons in the United States, both citizens and noncitizens (http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/cor/Pubs/polmis.htm).

Early warning systems have emerged as a popular remedy for police misconduct. A recent National Institute of Justice case study (http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/188565.pdf) of three police departments suggests that these systems can reduce citizen complaints and other problematic police behaviors. Officers in the three departments were involved in

substantially fewer citizen complaints and use-of-force incidents after the intervention than before it. In these three departments, however, the systems were part of larger efforts to raise standards of accountability. The effectiveness of such systems is reinforced by (and probably dependent on) other policies and procedures that enforce standards of discipline and create a climate of accountability.

In addition, specific programs that reach out to police officers and their families have been found to be effective in decreasing stress-related symptoms and concerns. The Law Enforcement Assistance & Development Program provided for a consortium of three rural law enforcement agencies and mental health professionals that offered a range of services to law enforcement personnel and their families to prevent and reduce stress and enhance their over-all health and well-being. In addition, services addressed organizational factors that contributed to the stress experienced by personnel. The overall goal, beyond increasing the health of individuals, was to enhance the health of the organizations involved. This approach was believed to be more beneficial than a narrow focus on enhancing the coping skills of individual officers (http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/192277.pdf).

The following resources provide a glimpse of available research on police administration, stress, and use of force and the perception the public has of law enforcement officers in their communities.

Publications

General

Addressing Police Misconduct: Laws Enforced by the United States Department of Justice
Available electronically at http://www.usdoj.gov/crt/cor/Pubs/polmis.htm.
Outlines the laws enforced by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) that address police misconduct and explains how a person can file a complaint with DOJ if he or she believes his or her rights have been violated.

Measurement of Police Integrity (NCJ 181465)
Available electronically at http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/nij/pubs-sum/181465.htm
Presents findings from a survey that explored police officers' understanding of agency rules concerning police misconduct and the extent of their support for these rules.

Police Administration
Early Warning Systems: Responding to the Problem Police Officer (NCJ 188565)
Available electronically at http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/188565.pdf .
Reports on a study of early warning systems designed to identify police officers who may be having problems on the job and to provide those officers with appropriate counseling or training.

How Police Supervisory Styles Influence Patrol Officer Behavior (NCJ 194078)

Available electronically at http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/194078.pdf .
Examines the way in which police supervisory styles influence patrol officer behavior within the community and finds that, overall, police supervisors best lead by example, which is the hallmark of the active style.

Mediating Citizen Complaints Against Police Officers: A Guide For Police and Community Leaders (NCJ 196148)
Available electronically at http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/pdf/e04021486web.pdf .
Provides guidance to help police and community leaders develop successful mediation programs to address citizen complaints against police officers.

Potential Sources of Observer Bias in Observational Studies of Police (NCJ 196678)
Available electronically at http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/196678.pdf .
Synthesizes fragmented accounts of observer bias in the research literature by defining and describing four types of observer bias, operationalizing one type of observer bias (reactivity) by identifying key independent and dependent variables, and deriving hypotheses that can be tested by using qualitative and quantitative data from a large-scale observational study of police (Project on Policing Neighborhoods).

Principles for Promoting Police Integrity: Examples of Promising Police Practices and Policies (NCJ 186189)
Available electronically at http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/ojp/186189.pdf .
Presents principles for police practices that build community trust, enhance police accountability, and reduce police misconduct and that are based on recommendations from a 1999 national conference ("Strengthening Police-Community Relationships") that brought together police executives, union representatives, academic experts, and civil rights and community leaders.

Traffic Stop Data Collection Policies for State Police, 2001 (NCJ 191158)
Available electronically at http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/tsdcp01.pdf .
Reports on State police agencies' policies and procedures for collecting race and ethnicity data on motorists involved in traffic stops and discusses the circumstances under which demographic data are collected for traffic-related contacts and violations.

Police Stress

Assessment of the Law Enforcement Family Support Grant: Vermont State Police, Final Report (NCJ 186278)
Available electronically at http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/186278.pdf .
Presents the methodology and findings of an evaluation of the Critical Incident Stress Management and Critical Incident Stress Debriefing training program for Vermont State troopers, dispatchers, and their spouses or significant others.

Final Grant Report of the Law Enforcement Assistance & Development (LEAD) Program: Reduction of Familial and Organizational Stress in Law Enforcement (NCJ 192277)
Available electronically at http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/192277.pdf .
Discusses the LEAD Program, which provided for a consortium of three rural

law enforcement agencies and mental health professionals that offered a range of services to law enforcement personnel and their families to prevent and reduce stress and enhance their overall health and well-being.

Lessons Learned From Early Corrections and Law Enforcement Family Support (CLEFS) Programs (NCJ 192287)
Available electronically at http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/192287.pdf .
Discusses the lessons learned from the first 3 years of funding (1996-98) of the National Institute of Justice-sponsored Corrections and Law Enforcement Family Support (CLEFS) Program, which addressed the negative effects of stress experienced by law enforcement and correctional officers and their families.

Organizational Approach to Developing a Stress Program (NCJ 187779)
Available electronically at http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/187779.pdf .
Describes a project conducted by the Longview, Washington, Police Guild--started in December 1998 and funded by the National Institute of Justice--that focused on the use of an organizational approach to address police occupational stress.

Police Family Life Education Project (FLEP) Implementations, September 11, 1999, October 2, 1999, April 29, 2000 and June 24, 2000 and Follow-Up Surveys of Families Who Attended Each of the Classes--Final Report (NCJ 187858)
Available electronically at http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/187858.pdf .
Discusses the Police Family Life Education Project (FLEP), whose purpose is "to develop and deliver a program that will provide police recruits and their immediate family members with stress management education that focuses on the role and responsibilities of the law enforcement profession and its impact on the family unit, as well as family stressors that may interfere with an officer's safety and satisfactory job performance."

Tired Cops: The Prevalence and Potential Consequences of Police Fatigue (NCJ 190634)
Available electronically at http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/jr000248d.pdf .
Reports on a study that examined the prevalence and effects of police officer fatigue, exhaustion, and extreme drowsiness and their impact on officer performance, health, and safety to identify effective strategies for measuring fatigue among police officers and to better understand its prevalence among officers in the field.

Public Opinion

Citizen Review of Police: Approaches and Implementation (NCJ 184430)
Available electronically at http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/184430.pdf .
Describes types of citizen oversight systems; presents program information from jurisdictions with citizen oversight bodies; examines social and monetary costs and benefits of different citizen oversight processes; addresses staffing and ways to resolve potential conflicts between citizen oversight bodies and police; and discusses monitoring, evaluation, and funding concerns.

Factors That Influence Public Opinion of the Police (NCJ 197925)
Available electronically at http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/197925.pdf .
Presents the results of a study on factors that influence public opinion of the police, which found that residents' perception of the level of crime and disorder in their neighborhood is a significant factor shaping their opinion of the police and that residents who had informal police contacts (e.g., seeing officers in the neighborhood or at community meetings) had more positive perceptions than residents with only formal contacts (e.g., being arrested or questioned).

Satisfaction With Police--What Matters? (NCJ 194077)
Available electronically at http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/194077.pdf .
Addresses the various factors that contribute to individuals' positive views of police performance based on telephone interviews with 5,361 residents in Indianapolis, Indiana, and St. Petersburg, Florida.

Use of Force

Contacts between Police and the Public: Findings from the 1999 National Survey (NCJ 184957)
Available electronically at http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/cpp99.pdf .
Presents data on the nature and characteristics of citizen contacts with the police over a 12-month period and provides demographic characteristics of citizens and police officers involved in traffic stops and use-of-force encounters from a nationally representative survey of nearly 90,000 residents age 16 and older.

Phoenix Project: Predictors of Suspect Use of Force (NCJ 187776)
Available electronically at http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/187776.pdf .
Includes several separate analyses that used data from a 1995 study of 1,585 arrests made in Phoenix, Arizona, in 1994 and both replicated and reversed the methods of the original study to determine the likely predictors of police use of force in making an arrest as well as suspect use of force.

Police Responses to Officer-Involved Shootings (NCJ 192286)
Available electronically at http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/nij/grants/192286.pdf .
Reviews previous research on police officers' responses when they are involved in shootings, describes the research procedures used in the current study, provides sketches of the officers who participated in the current study and of the incidents in which they shot someone, details officers' experiences during and after their shootings, and discusses the academic and policy ramifications of the findings.

Policing and Homicide, 1976-98: Justifiable Homicide by Police, Police Officers Murdered by Felons (NCJ 180987)
Available electronically at http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/ph98.pdf .
Presents annual trends from 1976 to 1998 in two types of homicide: justifiable homicides of felons by police and murders of police officers by felons, including demographic similarities, and discusses the report's methodology.

Understanding the Use of Force By and Against the Police in Six Jurisdictions,

Final Report (NCJ 196694)

Available electronically at .

Reports on the prevalence of the use of physical force as well as the severity of force used by and against the police in 7,512 adult custody arrests, based on confidential self-reports from police officers in 6 law enforcement agencies in late 1996 and early 1997.

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