Fundamentals of Policing

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A major goal of nearly every police department in the United States is reducing the incidence of violence between police officers and citizens. From the perspective of the police executive, the successful accomplishment of that objective should have two major benefits. First, it should enhance the safety of police officers. Second, it should foster an atmosphere of cooperation and mutual respect between the police and the people they serve. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a basis for assessing a police department to determine, first of all, if its culture is conducive to reducing violent confrontations between the police and citizens.

Understanding Conflict Management in Policing

What is Conflict Management?

Think of a time when you had to mediate a disagreement between friends. You listened to both sides and helped them find a middle ground. That's essentially what conflict management is. In policing, it involves understanding various community issues and finding ways to resolve disputes peacefully. Officers aim to ensure that everyone feels heard and respected, reducing tensions and preventing situations from escalating.

Why is Conflict Management Important?

In a community, like a big neighborhood, everyone has different backgrounds, beliefs, and concerns. When these differences lead to misunderstandings or disputes, it can create an uneasy atmosphere. Police officers play a crucial role in identifying and addressing these issues. By managing conflicts effectively, they help maintain peace, improve relationships within the community, and ensure a safer environment for everyone.

How Do Police Manage Conflicts?

Police departments often have specific strategies to handle conflicts:

1. Be Observant: Officers stay alert to signs of unrest or tension in the community.
2. Engage in Dialogue: Regular discussions with community members and leaders help police understand various perspectives and concerns.
3. Strategize: Departments develop plans to address potential conflicts, focusing on peaceful resolutions and minimizing the need for force.
4. Skill Development: Officers receive training in effective communication and problem-solving techniques to handle disputes diplomatically.

Who Should Be Involved?

Effective conflict management in policing isn't just the responsibility of the officers. It's a collaborative effort that involves the whole community. Residents, local leaders, and other stakeholders can contribute by sharing their insights and participating in conflict resolution initiatives. This collaboration ensures diverse viewpoints are considered, making the approach more inclusive and effective.

> 🔍 *Reflect: How can understanding and managing conflicts in your own life help contribute to a more peaceful community?*

The Power of Negotiation in Policing

Choosing Words Over Confrontation

Have you ever been in a situation where people around you were arguing and it seemed like things might get worse? That's often what police officers face. When they arrive at a scene where there's a big problem, like a serious argument or a dangerous situation, they have to decide how to handle it.

Why Negotiation Matters

At first, the people causing trouble might seem to have the upper hand. But as more officers arrive, they start thinking about whether to use force to solve the problem. Here's the thing: every situation is different, so the police have to really think about the best way to handle it. Often, talking and negotiating can be much better than jumping straight to using force.

When police choose to talk things out first, they're seen as being in control and not just reacting without thinking. Departments that focus on talking and solving problems peacefully are often praised for lowering tension.

The Benefits of Taking Time to Talk

When police negotiate, they get time to plan a careful response. They can put their best people in the right places and use all the resources they have to end the situation well.

Even if talking doesn't work and they have to stop negotiating, the police can show that they tried their best to use reason before force. This shows that they only changed their approach when they had no other choice.

Learning to Negotiate

Being good at talking things out, mediating, and solving conflicts isn't something police officers are just born with. These skills need to be learned and practiced. Police departments should have classes on these topics as part of their ongoing training. It's important to know that negotiation won't always work, but the police should try to use it whenever they can.

> 🔍*Reflect: Think about a disagreement you've witnessed or been a part of. How could negotiation have been used to resolve it? How does understanding the*

police approach to negotiation and conflict resolution change your perspective on handling disagreements?

Understanding Police-Community Tensions

Identifying High-Risk Situations

Let's dive into understanding why sometimes things get really heated between the police and the community. To do this, it's essential to figure out the kind of situations where the chance of violence is high. Unfortunately, there's not a lot of nationwide data about when police use force, especially concerning firearms. But, by looking closely at different events, we can pinpoint certain areas where the police and the community often clash.

Areas of Special Concern

Think of this like a detective trying to solve a mystery. The detective looks for clues to understand where problems might happen. In the same way, by studying different situations, we can find out where things might go wrong between the police and the community.

Suggestions for Police Agencies

Here's where things get proactive. Police departments can use this information to guide their officers on how to handle these tricky situations better. The goal is to lower the chances of things turning violent. However, it's important to remember that this list isn't complete – there are always new things to learn and understand.

🔍*Reflect: Consider your own community or a community you're familiar with. Can you think of any situations or areas where there might be tension between the community and the police? How do you think these could be addressed or improved?*

The Seriousness of Deadly Force in Policing

The Weight of the Decision

Imagine having to make a decision in a split second that could change lives forever. That's what police officers face when they have to decide whether to use deadly force. This is a huge responsibility because it can lead to serious injuries or even death, not just for the suspect, but also for the officer and others around.

How Often Does This Happen?

A study in 1999 found that police in the U.S. interact face-to-face with citizens about 45 million times a year. Only about 1% of these encounters involve the police using or threatening to use force. When force is used, it's usually at the lower levels of what's called the "use-of-force continuum."

Levels of Force

Think of the use-of-force as a ladder. At the bottom rung, there's the officer just being there. Then, as you go up, there's verbal direction, gentle physical methods, pepper spray, stronger physical methods, non-lethal weapons, and at the very top, lethal force. This is called the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Model.

Training and Policy

Police officers aren't just trained to use weapons. They also learn how to solve conflicts and persuade people, which can help avoid situations where force is needed. Departments should regularly review how force is used to find patterns and improve their policies. This can help reduce how often force is needed.

Impact on the Community

When police use deadly force, it can really shake the community's trust in them. If an officer uses deadly force in the wrong way, they could be held legally responsible. People might even take them to court. That's why understanding the rules and limits about using deadly force is super important.

Training is Key

Police departments need to provide ongoing, specialized training. This isn't just about shooting skills but also understanding the big picture of using deadly force. Departments should have clear written policies about this so that every officer knows what's expected of them.

Flashpoints of Tension

When deadly force is used, especially if it results in the death of a person of color, it can lead to protests or unrest. Several things can make this situation more tense, like the relationship between the police and the community, how the media reports the incident, and what community leaders do in response.

> 🔍*Reflect: Think about the different levels of force police can use. Why is it important for police to have options other than deadly force? How do you think police training in conflict resolution can impact the use of force?*

Understanding Arrest Situations in Policing

The Risks of Arrest Situations

When it comes to the dangers police officers face, arrest situations top the list. According to the FBI, from 1992 to 2001, over a third of officers who lost their lives were involved in arrest situations. Most of the time, these high-risk situations happen when someone is resisting arrest. But there's a lot of debate about this, especially when it comes to how police interact with minority groups during arrests.

Stressful for Everyone
Getting arrested is super stressful, and people can react in unexpected ways. For some, it feels like they're losing all their freedom, and they might do things they wouldn't normally do, like using a gun. This can quickly lead to a situation where the police might need to use force.

Lack of Specific Data
Here's a tricky part: we don't really have clear data on which types of arrest situations are more likely to end in violence. This makes it hard to predict and prevent these situations.

Spotting Patterns
Over the years, studies have shown that some police officers are more likely to use force when making arrests than others. So, it seems important to identify the specific situations where force is used. If we can find patterns – like certain types of arrests or actions by specific officers leading to more use of force – we can come up with better ways to handle these situations.

Developing New Approaches
Once we understand these patterns, we can create strategies to deal with these high-risk arrest situations. This might mean training officers differently, changing how arrests are made, or even working on improving police-community relations.

> 🔍*Reflect: Think about how stressful situations can cause people to act differently. How do you think understanding and preparing for these reactions can help police officers make arrests safer for everyone involved?*

Challenges in Responding to Disturbance Calls

The Dilemma of Disturbance Calls
Responding to disturbance calls is one of the riskiest parts of a police officer's job. These calls often involve stepping into the middle of a heated argument without knowing much about what's going on. The police might not have a lot of authority to solve the root problem, especially if no one has broken the law.

High Expectations and Tensions
People involved in these disturbances often expect the police to take their side, thinking they're in the right. This can be tricky, as sometimes the officers have to make an arrest, which can lead to both parties getting angry at them. These situations can quickly escalate, with force being used by or against the officer. This gets even more complicated when dealing with minority communities.

Improving Police Skills
Over the last 25 years, there's been a big push to improve how police handle these situations. Progressive police departments are training their officers to understand different kinds of conflicts, especially family or domestic issues. With this training, officers can handle more disturbance calls without having to use force or put themselves in danger.

Training Focus
Training isn't just about physical skills. It's also about how an officer acts and talks. Using the right psychological techniques can help control a situation and calm angry people. Officers need to discuss and understand these skills.

Written Policies and Procedures
Besides training, departments are also developing written guidelines. These help officers know when to use their judgment, like having at least two officers respond to a call, offering alternatives to arrest, and using other resources like spouse abuse shelters. This kind of guidance helps officers feel more confident in handling these situations and reduces the need to use force.

> 🔍 *Reflect: Why do you think it's important for police officers to have training in psychological techniques and conflict management? How can these skills help reduce the use of force in disturbance calls?*

Traffic Stops and Pursuits

The Routine Nature of Traffic Stops
Police officers make tons of traffic stops every day. It's like any routine task – after a while, you might start doing it without thinking much. This can lead to small mistakes, which might end up with the officer getting hurt or needing to use force to solve a problem that could have been avoided.

Avoiding Mistakes and Overreactions
The big challenge for police leaders is making sure officers stay sharp and avoid mistakes, but without making them so worried that they overreact to situations that aren't actually dangerous. Regular training helps, but a lot of it comes down to the officers themselves and their supervisors. They need to stick to basic procedures and see using force as a last resort.

The Value System in Police Work
Creating a culture where using force is the least preferred option starts at the top of the police department. But for it to really work, the officers on the ground and their supervisors need to buy into this approach.

High-Speed Pursuits: A Tricky Situation

Police chases have been in the spotlight a lot because of big lawsuits against police departments. These chases are risky – they can lead to injuries, deaths, and a lot of damage. And often, they end with the police using force to stop the person they're chasing. These situations are super tense and can make both the officer and the suspect act in ways they wouldn't normally.

The Dilemma for Police Administrators

Handling chases is tough. If the police don't chase suspects, more people might try to run away. But not chasing doesn't always solve the problem, as it might look like the police aren't doing their job. This is a real "lose-lose" situation.

Developing Balanced Policies

Policies need to be made to guide how officers decide whether to chase someone. Unfortunately, a lot of the training doesn't really prepare officers for the tough decisions they have to make in these situations. They might end up being too aggressive, which can upset people, or not aggressive enough, which can make it seem like they don't care. Just like in other areas, they need clear, practical guidelines that balance the rights of individuals with the community's safety needs.

> 🔍 *Reflect: Consider the challenges police face in traffic stops and pursuits. Why is it important to have a balance between being vigilant and avoiding overreactions? How can training and policies help officers make better decisions in these high-pressure situations?*

Handling and Transporting Prisoners

Risks in Police Custody

When the police have someone in their custody, you'd think everything would be under control. But surprisingly, this is when a lot of assaults and even fatalities can happen. Both officers and suspects can get hurt during this time, especially during the booking process – that's when the person is officially taken into custody and their information is recorded.

Tensions in the Booking Environment

Classic studies, like those in Baltimore County and Newport News, show that many conflicts happen right where booking takes place. The reasons aren't totally clear, but one thing that seems to help is separating the arresting officer from the suspect. This reduces the number of incidents.

Unclear Data on Transportation

We don't have much information on what happens specifically during the transportation of prisoners. This is when the police move someone from one place to another, like from the

arrest site to the jail. But, reviewing and improving how this is done could definitely help lower the chances of conflict.

The Need for Better Procedures

What this all means is that police departments should really look at how they handle and transport people in custody. They should make sure they're using the best methods to keep everyone safe and reduce the chances of something going wrong.

> 🔍*Reflect: Think about the different steps involved when the police take someone into custody. Why is it important to have clear procedures and training for handling and transporting prisoners? How can this affect the safety of both the officers and the individuals in custody?*

Mentally Impaired Individuals

Changing Approaches to Mental Health

The way we treat mental illness has changed a lot. Instead of keeping people in hospitals, there's now more focus on helping them in their communities. This means police officers are more likely to encounter individuals with mental health needs.

Importance of Police Familiarity with Mental Health

With more people with mental health issues living in communities, it's important for the police to know about mental illnesses and how to handle these situations. Police departments should work with local mental health resources and invite health professionals to train officers.

The Role of Police Officers

The goal isn't to turn police officers into psychiatrists, but to help them understand and empathize with people who have mental illnesses. They need to be able to tell the difference between someone who's mentally ill and someone who's just acting out.

Communication and Training

Good communication between police, mental health professionals, and treatment centers is crucial. Police should also get training to recognize and handle situations involving mental illness effectively.

The Challenge of Identifying Mental Illness

Not all mental illnesses are obvious. Some people might seem normal but are under a lot of stress. Telling the difference between mental illness and criminal behavior takes skill and experience.

Innovative Police Programs

Several police departments have come up with creative ways to handle calls involving mentally ill individuals:

- In Madison, Wisconsin, patrol officers get over 20 hours of mental health training.
- The Galveston County Sheriff's Department in Texas uses a special team for mental health calls.
- In Birmingham, Alabama, police work with social workers to handle these situations.

Portland and Multnomah County's Approach

Portland and Multnomah County in Oregon set up a task force to create a plan involving city and county agencies. This is to make sure mentally ill individuals don't get overlooked and to improve how the police interact with them.

> 🔍*Reflect: Why is it important for police to have training in handling situations involving mentally impaired individuals? How can collaboration with mental health professionals improve the outcomes of these interactions?*

Police Response to Hostage/Barricade Situations

Specialized Teams for Critical Situations

In recent years, many police departments, especially the medium-to-large ones, have formed special teams to handle hostage and barricade situations. These teams, which often include skilled negotiators, aim to resolve these intense situations without anyone getting hurt.

Goals and Challenges

The main goal is to deal with these situations safely. But it's not always possible to avoid injury. When the people involved in these situations are from minority groups, any use of force can become even more controversial. This is partly because of the perception that police might treat different groups differently. The incident between Philadelphia police and the MOVE group in 1985 is an example of how tense these situations can become.

Training and Debriefing

These special teams don't just show up when there's a crisis. They train regularly and review their actions after every operation. This helps them get better at handling these situations and reduces the need to use force.

The Importance of Developing Capabilities

Not all police departments have these special teams, but it's a good idea to create them if possible. For smaller departments with fewer resources, working together with other local or state agencies can be a way to develop this capability.

> 🔍*Reflect: Consider the importance of specialized training for police in hostage and barricade situations. Why is it crucial for these teams to regularly train and debrief? How can collaboration between different agencies improve the police response to these critical incidents?*

Drugs and Gang Violence

The Challenge of Drug and Gang-Related Violence

One of the biggest challenges in policing is dealing with the violence linked to drugs and gangs. This issue is complex because it involves powerful weapons, organized crime, youth gangs, and a lot of money. These elements have caused deep divisions in communities, especially in communities of color, and strained relations with the police.

Impact on Communities

This violence has particularly affected homicide rates among minority youth. Some parts of the community are calling for very aggressive policing, even if it means bending some rules. But this approach can lead to practices that go against proper police procedures, creating a real dilemma for police leaders and their departments' values.

Police Leadership and Values

The solution starts with the core values of the police department. Police leaders need to establish systems that reflect these values in action. It's about finding a balance between enforcing the law and respecting individual rights.

A Comprehensive Approach

To effectively tackle the problems of drugs and gangs, the police need to work with the community. This includes understanding and addressing the community's fears and perceptions. There should be a comprehensive plan that involves everyone's cooperation and support.

Specialized Training and Community Support

Officers need special training in handling drug-related crimes, making arrests, and working on intervention programs. It's also important to have programs that build racial and cultural awareness. The police should also involve the community in programs like neighborhood watch and D.A.R.E (Drug Abuse Resistance Education).

Building Positive Relationships

The relationship between the police and urban youth doesn't have to be negative. It can be a partnership involving police, parents, schools, community leaders, and the media. This partnership should focus on preventing and solving crime and disorder through cooperation, collaboration, and mutual respect.

🔍*Reflect: Why is it important for police to have a balanced approach when dealing with drug and gang-related issues? How can involving the community and offering specialized training to officers help in addressing these challenges?*

Summary

Reducing violence between police officers and citizens is a key objective for police departments across the United States. This goal serves two main purposes: enhancing officer safety and fostering a cooperative, respectful relationship between the police and the communities they serve. The core of this chapter focuses on evaluating if a police department's culture is conducive to minimizing violent confrontations.

Conflict management in policing involves understanding various community issues and resolving disputes peacefully. It's akin to mediating disagreements, where officers aim to make everyone feel heard and respected, thereby reducing tensions. This is crucial in communities with diverse backgrounds and beliefs, as misunderstandings can escalate into disputes. Police play a vital role in identifying and addressing such issues to maintain peace and safety.

Police departments employ specific strategies for conflict management, such as being observant of community tensions, engaging in dialogue with community members, strategizing for potential conflicts with an emphasis on non-violent resolutions, and training officers in effective communication and problem-solving. This isn't solely a police responsibility; it requires collaboration with the entire community, including residents and local leaders.

The section further explores the importance of negotiation in policing, emphasizing choosing dialogue over confrontation. When police officers arrive at a tense scene, negotiation can often be a more effective approach than immediate force. This helps in maintaining control and reducing tensions. Regular training in negotiation and conflict resolution is emphasized for police officers.

Understanding and managing high-risk situations, especially in interactions with minority groups, is also a critical aspect. The chapter suggests that police departments should use data and patterns from past incidents to guide their responses in potentially volatile situations and reduce the likelihood of violence.

The Section concludes by discussing the seriousness of using deadly force in policing. It stresses the importance of ongoing, specialized training in understanding the broader implications of using deadly force and developing clear policies for its use. This approach is vital for maintaining community trust and handling critical situations responsibly.