

# POLICE AND INVESTIGATIVE PSYCHOLOGY

PART



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# 2

## POLICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY PSYCHOLOGY

### CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 Describe how the work of police and public safety psychologists has changed over the past 50 years.
- 2.2 List 8–10 public law enforcement agencies operating at federal, local, and state levels.
- 2.3 Illustrate a general characterization of the interaction between police and the public, as well as when this interaction has been positive and when it has been problematic.
- 2.4 Describe existing legal standards on the use of force, as well as what is meant by excessive force and how it is determined.
- 2.5 List the forms of forensic assessment in police and public safety.
- 2.6 Discuss at least five instances in which psychological assistance to individual officers is desirable or required.
- 2.7 Describe areas in which police psychologists consult with law enforcement agencies other than services provided to individual officers.
- 2.8 Propose research that could be done by police psychologists to benefit law enforcement and the public.

*After a mass shooting in 2023 in which 17 persons were killed at two different locations, law enforcement officials scoured the primarily rural area over 48 hours for the suspect, who was found dead of a self-inflicted shotgun wound.*

*In early 2024, a police officer who happened to be on patrol dove into a large and deep pond and rescued an 8-year-old girl who had fallen through the ice.*

*In a widely publicized incident in 2014, a man selling loose cigarettes on an urban street corner was placed in a chokehold that ultimately caused his death.*

Law enforcement work requires many and varied skills, and like most occupations, it attracts a wide range of personalities. Most people who enter this work probably begin hoping to make a positive difference, such as by deterring crime, helping others, or protecting child victims. Others enter with less noble motives. Training and supervision are essential elements in ensuring policing that protects and serves everyone, every age group, every race, every gender, and every ethnicity. Nevertheless, experiences on the job, distrust from the public, the failings of fellow officers, demands for accountability, and changes in laws, as well as personal crises in their

nonpublic lives, can produce stress and burnout. Faced with the realities of police work, many perform their duties competently and conscientiously, but they can be helped in doing this by the police and public safety psychologists who are the subject of this chapter.

The American Psychological Association (APA, 2022b) defines police and public safety psychology as “assisting law enforcement and other public safety personnel and agencies in carrying out their missions and societal functions with effectiveness, safety, health, and conformity to laws and ethics.” Public safety personnel include not only law enforcement but also firefighters, EMTs, paramedics, search and rescue workers, emergency dispatchers, and other first responders. These professionals not only keep the public safe but also often come into contact with psychologists and other mental health professionals. Like law enforcement personnel, they are routinely exposed to incidents involving devastating injuries and tragic loss of life and property. The cumulative effects of these experiences can have a negative psychological impact on their lives and their families.

Law enforcement will be the main focus of the chapter, though, because the profession represents the largest number of all public safety professionals. Furthermore, it has—by far—the greatest contact with the legal system, especially the courts. For example, arrest powers, methods of interviewing and interrogation, and lineup procedures often come under the scrutiny of the judicial system.

Police psychology is *not* strictly a forensic enterprise. As noted by Marques and Paulino (2022), “Police psychology is a compilation of different types of psychology practice” (p. xxxi). The field often includes significant contributions from industrial/organizational, clinical, or developmental psychologists. Furthermore, many psychologists working with law enforcement prefer to call themselves police psychologists rather than forensic psychologists. Still, consistent with the broad definition of forensic psychology adopted here, many psychologists researching or providing clinical and psychological services to police and public safety personnel do classify themselves as such.

## BRIEF HISTORY OF POLICE PSYCHOLOGY

Precisely when a partnership between law enforcement and psychology first began is unclear. To a certain extent, community psychologists offered some type of consulting service to police agencies, usually on an “as needed” basis, throughout the 20th century. Their earliest contributions were in the form of cognitive and aptitude testing of applicants for police positions, with psychologist Lewis Terman being the first to use these methods in 1917.

Police psychology probably began in the United States as a viable profession in 1968, however, when Martin Reiser was hired as a full-time in-house psychologist by the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD). Reiser (1982) himself modestly claimed that he was not altogether certain he was the first “cop doc.” However, there is little doubt that Reiser was the most prolific writer on police psychology in the United States throughout the 1970s. He also established the first graduate student internship in police psychology at the LAPD, in conjunction with the California School of Professional Psychology. By 1977, at least six other law enforcement agencies in the United States employed full-time psychologists (Reese, 1986, 1987).

In the years spanning the 20th and 21st centuries, numerous books and journal articles on police psychology were published in the academic literature. They included such topics as screening candidates for law enforcement positions, coping with stress in policing, police culture, police corruption, police suicide, relationship problems, the legitimate use of force, and

women in policing. Notable contributions were made by psychologists Blau (1994), Kurke and Scrivner (1995), Niederhoffer and Niederhoffer (1977), Scrivner (1994), and Toch (2002). Later, books by Toch (2012) and Kitaeff (2011) continued to focus on psychological aspects and demands of police work. Gradually, police psychology emerged into police and public safety psychology. Throughout these years, and into the present, a rich store of psychological research has been developed, much of which will be visited here.

Recognition of police psychology as a growing profession has expanded greatly in other ways. For example, in 2011, the American Board of Professional Psychology (ABPP) established a specialty board to serve as an avenue for psychologists to become professionally certified in police psychology (Corey et al., 2011). This was heralded as the “most significant event in the history of the field” (Scrivner et al., 2014, p. 447). In addition, the American Psychological Association recognized police and public safety psychology as a specialty in 2013. This has encouraged APA-accredited doctoral programs in clinical psychology and forensic psychology to offer degree concentrations in this area. Some organizations also have developed graduate, postdoctoral, and continuing education standards and opportunities for persons planning careers in the field (Gallo & Halgin, 2011).

Currently, there are five national police psychology organizations in the United States: (1) the Police Psychological Services Section of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, (2) Division 18 (Police and Public Safety Section) of the American Psychological Association, (3) the Society for Police and Criminal Psychology, (4) the American Academy of Police and Public Safety Psychology, and (5) the American Board of Police and Public Safety Psychology. Perhaps the first listed provides the best resources and guidelines for psychologists on issues pertaining to police assessment, counseling, consultation, and operational assistance.

In Canada, which has its own parallel history of police psychology, the major organization for police and forensic psychology is the Criminal Justice Psychology Section of the Canadian Psychological Association. This section is divided into several subsections, including police psychology and psychology in the courts.

Police agencies across the world often share goals and cooperate in training. Specifically related to psychology, for example, the International Association of Chiefs of Police has established guidelines for police psychological service. The guidelines have been updated often, most recently in 2023 (International Association of Chiefs of Police, Police Psychological Services Section, 2023). They cover many areas of professional practice, including preemployment psychological evaluations, psychological fitness-for-duty evaluations, officer-involved shootings, and peer emotional support during times of personal or professional crises. The Canadian Psychological Association also passed guidelines in 2013 for Canadian psychologists who conduct preemployment psychological assessments of police candidates.

In sum, there is a vast and ever-expanding literature on police and public safety psychology. We have now reached the point where psychologists play a vital and expanding role in many police and public safety agencies, as both in-house employees and community consultants (Marques & Paulino, 2022; Mitchell & Dorian, 2017, 2020; Scrivner et al., 2014; Trompetter, 2017). As Mitchell and Dorian (2020) state, “Once considered rare birds in the law enforcement landscape . . . today’s psychologists are integral to the effective functioning of both large and small police departments” (p. 279).

Later in the chapter we cover four general and overlapping domains of practice. First, however, it is important to briefly describe agencies and numbers, then highlight critical issues currently facing law enforcement.

## LAW ENFORCEMENT NUMBERS TODAY

There are approximately 14,700 general-purpose law enforcement agencies in the United States, employing 708,000 full-time sworn officers and 348,000 full-time civilians (Goodison, 2022). Civilian personnel refer to officers or deputies with limited or no arrest powers and to nonsworn personnel, such as administrative assistants. Local police departments account for about 67% of the full-time employed sworn officers in the United States. Sheriffs' departments make up an additional 25% of the total sworn officers, employing 174,000 (Brooks, 2022a). It is widely acknowledged that more diversity in law enforcement agencies is desirable. For example, in both police and sheriffs' departments, only about 13% of the full-time officers are women, a number that has not changed significantly over the past 25 years. Only 3% of female officers are in leadership positions (Corley, 2022). Also, in police departments, 60% of the full-time officers are white, 12% are Black, and 2% are Hispanic or Latinx. In sheriffs' offices, 71% of the full-time officers are white, 10% are Black, and 14% are Hispanic or Latinx (Corley, 2022). In general, a better balance of officers from various gender, racial, and ethnic groups would also help reduce current problems in policing, which will be discussed shortly.

Most local police departments serving over 100,000 residents have specialized units for dealing with sexual assault, child abuse/endangerment, cases involving mental health crises, and hostage/crisis intervention (Goodison, 2022). Similarly, most sheriffs' departments with 100 or more full-time officers have personnel assigned to specialized units for school safety concerns, mental health/crisis intervention, and human trafficking (Brooks, 2022a). These specialized units include school resource officers (SROs), who are assigned to schools not only to provide safety but also to assist students and staff in a range of contexts. SROs have arrest powers, and they are usually armed. Many are selected to serve as SROs because they have special skills or training for dealing with youth. The National Association of School Resource Officers, for example, offers a 40-hour training course for SROs (Sawchuk, 2021). Although much more research needs to be done, recent studies on the effectiveness of SROs suggest that the presence of SROs often leads to declines in violent incidents in schools, such as rape, robbery, and physical attacks (Sawchuk, 2021).

In addition to general-purpose state and local law enforcement agencies, federal law enforcement agencies employ 137,000 officers who are authorized to make arrests, carry firearms, or both (Brooks, 2022b). Overall, there are 94 agencies that make up federal law enforcement, including 44 Offices of Inspector General, which provide oversight of federal agencies and their activities. About half of the federal law enforcement personnel work for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and about one third (30%) work for the Department of Justice (DOJ). The primary function of most federal officers (68%) is criminal investigations. About 15% of federal law enforcement officers are women, approximately 61% are white, 21% are Hispanic, and 10% are Black.

Two federal law enforcement agencies that do not often come to attention are the Metropolitan Police Department for the District of Columbia (DC Police) and the U.S. Capitol Police. The DC Police is a local department but operates under federal authority. Capitol Police officers are charged with protecting the U.S. Congress in Washington, DC, and nationwide. These two agencies are often under the radar, but this changed dramatically on January 6, 2021, when insurrectionists stormed the U.S. Capitol in an effort to overturn the 2020 presidential election. The world watched the unfolding violent events, including attacks on law enforcement officers—and the events have been replayed extensively in Congressional hearings, trials, and all manner of media accounts and more since then. Though it is not our intent to revisit January 6 here, it is significant to emphasize that these two federal law enforcement groups also are subject to public scrutiny.

Finally, tribal law enforcement deserves mention. The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) operates 23 police agencies, which are federal. In addition, there are 234 law enforcement agencies operated by various tribes, all having at least one full-time sworn officer with authority to arrest or issue citations in Indian country. Tribal agencies provide public safety services, respond to calls for service, and investigate crimes, among other duties.

There is also a wide range of private and public safety agencies. Some are private security agencies, and others are supported by public funding, such as campus police departments on public university and college campuses. Virtually every university and college campus in the United States, public or private, has a public safety department, whose officers may or may not be armed and may or may not be invested with police powers. Two thirds of public colleges and universities employ armed officers, which is more than double the number of private colleges that employ armed officers (Reaves, 2015). Private security personnel, some armed, also are found in hospitals, schools, corporate offices, and large retail establishments.

The preceding discussion presents a brief summary of law enforcement agencies and numbers. For the remainder of the chapter, we focus on important issues facing this profession as well as specific activities engaged in by forensic psychologists who provide services to the law enforcement community.



Insurrectionists clash with Capitol Police on January 6, 2021.

Kent Nishimura / Los Angeles Times via Getty Images

## PUBLIC CONTACT WITH POLICE

According to a study by the U.S. Department of Justice, 21% of U.S. residents age 16 or older reported having contact with the police in some capacity in 2020 (Tapp & Davis, 2022). Ten percent of these residents reported they had experienced a police-initiated contact, while 11% indicated they experienced a resident-initiated contact. Examples of resident-initiated police contact included noncriminal medical emergencies, reporting suspicious or criminal activity, and custody enforcement. An additional 3% were involved in a traffic accident that led to a police contact. In a bizarre turn of events, late 2023 and early 2024 saw increases in “swatting” incidents, in which police received calls falsely reporting suspicious activities such as possible burglaries or even bombs planted in the homes of public figures including politicians, judges, and actors. Police were obliged to respond to the scenes but found no suspicious activity. Swatting was a means of harassing these individuals in their homes, presumably because they acted against the wishes of the “swatter.”

Residents ages 18 to 24 were the most likely age group to have police-initiated contact, and Blacks and males most often reported police-initiated contact. In addition, Black (6%) and Hispanic persons (3%) were more likely than white persons (2%) to experience the threat or use of force, and were more likely to be shouted at by police (Tapp & Davis, 2022).

Law enforcement officers are sometimes confronted with interpersonal violence from aggressive, angry people who may be engaging in criminal behavior. In addition, police often have



A police officer sits with a child separated from the child's guardians during a festival.

mental illness, particularly serious mental illness; and (3) police attitudes and biases against persons who are LGBTQ+.

### Police Contacts With People of Color

In many communities across the United States in recent years, relationships between police and the public have been strained because of numerous shootings, perceived increases in violence, fear, and the national political climate. Unfortunately, race enters into this climate in both subtle and not-so-subtle ways.

American history has continually demonstrated that people of color have been overpoliced. For example, throughout history, Black and Latinx people have been significantly more likely than white people to be handcuffed, searched, detained, and arrested (Najdowski & Stevenson, 2022). Once arrested, people of color are also more likely to be charged “with crimes, charged with more serious crimes, and fully prosecuted” (Najdowski & Stevenson, 2022, p. 400). Police are also more likely to use force, including excessive and fatal force, on people of color than on white people. In many of these police practices, the underlying belief is that people of color, especially Black men, are “inherently predisposed to criminality” (Najdowski, 2023, p. 696). Najdowski (2023) points out that it is more than simply the belief that people of color are predisposed to commit crime. People of color, when they come into contact with or even see police officers, often feel tense, anxious, and fearful because of the well-known disastrous history of police encounters with the Black population in general. However, police officers may then interpret these concerns of threat and fear “as evidence of guilt, deception, noncompliance, or danger, further increasing the risk that Black people will be overpoliced and harmed” (Najdowski, 2023, p. 701). It is helpful to recall the following high-profile incident.

On May 25, 2020, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, George Perry Floyd Jr. went into a corner convenience store to buy a pack of cigarettes. Floyd, a 46-year-old Black man, gave the checkout employee a \$20 bill. As Floyd was leaving the store, the checkout employee examined the bill and believed it was counterfeit. The store employee immediately called 911 to report the apparently counterfeit money and identified Floyd as the culprit. Meanwhile, Floyd left the store and got into a nearby car parked outside.

Two rookie police officers, who had less than a week on the job, responded to the call. They found Floyd still sitting in the car and removed him after he refused to step out. They then

to deal with emotionally charged encounters with victims of crimes, accidents, and natural disasters. Most police agencies do a competent and thoughtful job of handling these potentially stressful and sometimes very difficult situations. The vast majority of police carry out their work responsibly, legally, and humanely. And to do this “has always required a unique combination of physical, cognitive, emotional, and interpersonal skills” (Blumberg et al., 2022, p. 47). However, there are multiple other illustrations of questionable or illegal actions taken by some police officers. Currently, three types of police–public contacts are the most troubling: (1) police contacts with people of color; (2) police reactions to persons with



immediately handcuffed him and placed him into the back seat of the squad car. He resisted somewhat, saying he was claustrophobic.

At that point, Derek Chauvin, a white officer, arrived at the scene with his partner, Tou Thao. They immediately pulled Floyd out of the police car and forced him to the pavement. Chauvin then pinned Floyd to the pavement with his knee forcibly on his neck for over 9 minutes. During this time, Floyd continually begged for his life, said he couldn't breathe, and eventually lost consciousness. Even after Floyd lost consciousness and stopped breathing, Chauvin continued to apply forceful knee pressure on his neck. Meanwhile, the scene was being recorded by a 17-year-old bystander, who captured the police behavior on a cell phone. Floyd eventually died.

The bystander's video showed officers at the scene were taking a series of actions that violated the procedures and policies of the Minneapolis Police Department. The video spread over social media, sparking a nationwide and global outcry. Widespread protest against police brutality and unjust policing practices, involving approximately 20 million Americans, followed Floyd's murder (Boudreau et al., 2022). "Although police brutality toward people of color in the United States has been an ongoing crisis, Floyd's murder appears to have drawn more national attention than any other police killing in recent history, exemplifying the experience of many people of color throughout the United States and initiating a record-breaking number of community members taking to the streets in protest" (Cross et al., 2023, p. 519).

On June 16, 2023, the U.S. Department of Justice issued a very strong critique of the Minneapolis Police Department, concluding that the department had systematically discriminated against people of color, continually violated Constitutional rights, and disregarded the safety of people in custody for years (Salter & Vancleave, 2023).

It should be noted that in 19 years of service, Chauvin had faced at least 17 citizen misconduct complaints, none of which had derailed his career (Dewan & Kovaleski, 2020). Chauvin and his fellow officers faced charges and were convicted in both state and federal courts. In state court, Chauvin was convicted of second-degree murder in April 2021 and was sentenced to 22.5 years in prison. In May of that year a federal grand jury indicted him on two counts of violating Floyd's civil rights.

The three other officers were convicted of aiding and abetting Chauvin. In federal court, the four were charged with depriving Floyd of his Constitutional rights, a Fourteenth Amendment violation. Chauvin pleaded guilty to that offense, waiving his right to a trial, apparently after a plea negotiation that enabled his transfer from the state prison where he was serving time to a federal facility where he would presumably be safer. Ironically, in 2023 Chauvin was stabbed severely in that high-security facility, though he survived. The other three ex-officers were convicted in 2022, and all received both state and federal sentences. Shortly after Floyd's death, the U.S. House of Representatives introduced the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act of 2020 (H.R. 7120). Among other provisions, the bill would have required federal law enforcement and any state or local police receiving federal funds to:

- Hold law enforcement accountable for misconduct in courts
- Improve transparency in data collection
- Reform police training
- Ban chokeholds
- Increase the use of body cameras on law enforcement officers
- Limit the use of lethal force only when necessary and as a last resort

The bill passed the House of Representatives but was not introduced into the Senate. On September 29, 2023, President Joseph R. Biden issued an executive order that essentially covered these changes to apply to federal law enforcement officers. In addition, many agencies across the United States have adopted policies that are consistent with the provisions of this bill. For example, some states and local jurisdictions have banned the use of chokeholds and no-knock warrants, many have increased the use of body cameras, and training academies have revised their curricula to pay more attention to police responses to people of color and persons who demonstrate serious mental illness.

The George Floyd case is highlighted here primarily because of the circumstances and the nationwide publicity it engendered. However, numerous other instances of illegal or at least questionable police behavior against people of color can be found. Shortly we will refer to another incident in July 2024 in which a 36-year-old Black woman, Sonya Massey, was shot to death in her home by a deputy sheriff after making a 911 call reporting an alleged intruder. In 2023, after an incident involving Tyre Nichols in Memphis, Tennessee, there were renewed public calls for passage of the Floyd Act, including calls from Nichols's mother and Floyd's relatives. Nichols was a 29-year-old Black man, a father and a FedEx worker, who was stopped by police in January 2023 for allegedly driving recklessly. He was brutally beaten by five officers, all of whom were also Black, and subsequently died after 3 days of hospitalization. The officers were fired and charged with both state and federal crimes. One pleaded guilty in October 2023.

Incidents like these, regardless of the race of the officers, present professional challenges for psychologists and other mental health professionals working with law enforcement and public safety. According to the *Washington Post*, law enforcement in the United States killed approximately 1,180 people in 2022, making it the deadliest year on record for police violence (Levin, 2023). In one third of the cases, the victim was fleeing before being killed. Also, according to the *Post*, police, on average, shoot and kill more than 1,000 people every year. Furthermore, the *Post* statistics for 2023 revealed that, although Black Americans account for only 14% of the U.S. population, they were killed by police at a rate more than twice the rate for white Americans. Most of the Black victims were young, with an average age of 30. Similar data were also reported in research by Lett and colleagues (2021).

Equally disturbing is the fact that research has indicated that police are over three times more likely to use force when encountering Black people than when encountering white people (Ewanation & Maeder, 2023; Goff et al., 2016). Available statistics also reveal that Black people, compared to white people, are also more than three times more likely to be killed during a police encounter (G. Schwartz & Jahn, 2020; B. Wilson & Wolfer, 2022).

The tragic death of 36-year-old Sonya Massey—a rapidly developing story from Springfield, Illinois—illustrates concerns about both police contact with persons of color and contact with people with mental illness, a topic to be discussed next. Massey had mental health problems, but it is not believed she was *seriously* mentally ill or a danger to herself or others. She called 911 from her home in early morning hours to report an intruder. Two sheriff's deputies responded and found no evidence of intrusion, but in the process of the investigation Massey was shot in the head by one of the sheriff's deputies, who claimed self-defense because she was holding a pot of boiling water. Body cameras helped determine how the incident had developed over a short time period. The department stated the deputy, who did not have a stellar work history, had violated standards during the incident and had not acted as trained. He was immediately terminated and was subsequently indicted and charged with first-degree murder and other offenses. The head sheriff retired about a month later. Not surprisingly, this incident has attracted considerable public attention and will likely continue to be followed closely, similar to others we have mentioned.

## Police Contact With Persons With Serious Mental Illness

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of police-initiated contacts between police and persons with serious mental illness (SMI) (Roesch & Goossens, 2022). SMI generally refers to major depression, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia (Swanson, 2021). Available statistics estimate that 5% percent of adults living in the United States qualify as SMI (National Institute of Mental Health, 2021). Available statistics also indicate that 10% of police contacts in the United States involve someone with SMI, even if no criminal activity is involved (Townsend et al., 2023). The case of Daniel Prude is one such example.

At around 3 a.m. on March 23, 2020, 41-year-old Prude was wandering the streets of Rochester, New York, naked and babbling. He was apparently suffering a serious mental breakdown, probably exacerbated by drug abuse, having ingested PCP (phencyclidine). Prude, who was from Chicago and was visiting his brother, bolted out of the brother's house, shoeless and wearing only a tank top and long johns in 30-degree weather. His brother immediately called 911. Police also received a separate call reporting that a naked man was running in the street and shouting he had coronavirus. Prude apparently had shed his clothing. Still another 911 call came from a tow-truck driver who reported a strange, seemingly deranged naked person walking in the street. Between the time Prude left the brother's house and encountered Rochester police officers, Prude was captured by surveillance cameras throwing a brick through a computer store window. He then entered the store briefly and exited through the broken window, likely getting cut in the process.

Responding officers found Prude acting strangely and appearing delirious. When the officers handcuffed him and placed him on the ground, he became agitated and began spitting. The officers then put a mesh "spit hood" over his head to protect themselves from possible infection from coronavirus, which was very active at the time. A police body camera later showed the officers standing around the face-down Prude, smiling and laughing as Prude continued to make delusional comments (Sandoval, 2020). When Prude tried to get up, three officers forcibly pushed him back down, with one officer using body weight to keep Prude's hooded head pinned to the cold, dark pavement. Another officer pressed down on his back, and a third officer pinned down his legs. Struggling to breathe, Prude continually pled to be let up. Eventually, his words turned to gurgles, and then he became silent. He stopped breathing after about 2 minutes.

When paramedics arrived, Prude not only had stopped breathing but also had no heartbeat. The paramedics immediately began CPR and eventually were able to resuscitate him and rush him to a hospital. However, he never fully recovered from the ordeal and died a week later.

The medical examiner ruled that Prude's death was a homicide caused by complications of asphyxia due to physical restraint, and noted Prude had some PCP in his system. The Rochester Police Department was very reluctant to release the body cam videos and wanted to keep the incident quiet, until social and political pressures managed to get them released (M. Wilson & Sandoval, 2020). A series of large protests in downtown Rochester followed the video's release.

On February 23, 2021, after an investigation of the incident, New York's attorney general declined to charge the seven officers involved in Prude's death. The decision was primarily based on the finding by the medical examiner that Prude's body did not show any evidence of physical trauma. Instead, the medical examiner believed the cause of Prude's death was probably ingestion of a large quantity of PCP, which precipitated excited delirium and led to death by cardiac arrest. However, in October 2022, the City of Rochester reached an agreement with Prude's family and agreed to pay the family \$12 million as settlement for wrongful death.

To this point we have not mentioned that Prude was a Black man. If he had been white, would this have made a difference? If Sonya Massey had been white, would she have been shot and killed? As mentioned previously, available statistics indicate Black people are three times more likely to be killed

by police than white people (Saleh et al., 2018; Townsend et al., 2023). Perhaps more disturbing is the finding that a Black person with SMI is over four times more likely to be killed by police than a Black person without SMI (Townsend et al., 2023). Many persons with SMI are experiencing homelessness, are often on the streets, are unemployed, and are addicted to alcohol and/or various assortments of drugs—all circumstances that often prompt police intervention (Roesch & Goossens, 2022).

Most people with SMI are not involved in criminal activity, but those that are usually are not violent or dangerous to others (Cordiner, 2006). Only about 3% to 5% of violent crime occurring in the United States is attributable to *some form* of mental illness (Swanson, 2021). Yet, when police have contact with someone considered mentally ill, the contact often turns violent. For example, Laneyoni and Goff (2021) discovered in their research on police use of force that people with SMI “are 12 times more likely to experience use of force and 10 times more likely to experience injuries from that force than persons without serious mental illnesses” (p. 6).

Police officers are often placed in the role of gatekeepers because they must decide whether to make an arrest or refer the individual with SMI for proper care and treatment (Roesch & Goossens, 2022). Fortunately, some communities across the United States have established **crisis intervention teams (CITs)** to address this problem (see **Focus 2.1**). The teams comprise mental health professionals who are immediately dispatched to the event, offer aid to the person, assist the police, and de-escalate the crisis. In the best possible scenario, the person can be taken to shelter and treatment in the community, and no arrest is needed.

Unfortunately, there is currently a substantial shortage of mental health treatment centers or mental health hospitals across the United States, largely due to extensive deinstitutionalization that began during the 1960s and 1970s. During that time, public attitudes, laws, and mental health practices changed significantly, leading to the closing of many state hospitals and psychiatric facilities (Cordiner, 2006). Today, without resources or a CIT available, a disproportionate number of police–SMI contacts do result in an arrest. Available data suggest arrested residents with SMI are three times more likely to be in jail or prison than a hospital or treatment center, and they are more likely to be rearrested (Roesch & Goossens, 2022).

In some cases, the attending officer is forced to take the person to a local hospital emergency room for diagnosis and possible help in placing them in an appropriate facility. Often, the hospital has no suggestions for the attending officer regarding appropriate community mental health placement. Consequently, a significant portion of “arrestees” with serious mental health conditions end up in jails, a problem we will address again in chapters ahead.

## FOCUS 2.1: CRISIS INTERVENTION TEAMS

Psychologists and other mental health professionals are fully capable of helping police officers recognize persons who have mental illness and suggesting strategies for how to respond to them. This approach involves training police personnel in de-escalation skills, how to extend compassion, and how to recognize a person’s level of dysfunction and, if appropriate, dangerousness to self or others. The officers would also be expected to determine whether the person requires immediate psychological intervention rather than arresting them.

Such training is routinely provided at police academies today, although training academies vary in the amount of time spent at these endeavors. In addition, many communities have established crisis intervention teams (CITs) that include psychologists and other mental health professionals who are directly involved in immediate emergency care along with police. A CIT, also known as the Memphis Model after the city in which it originated, is a group of mental health professionals who are trained to deal immediately and effectively

with people currently undergoing a mental health (or drug) crisis, provided they have not allegedly committed a violent crime (Dupont & Cochran, 2000).

The program allows people in crisis to receive medical and psychological treatment without requiring arrest. In addition, police dispatchers are usually trained on how to receive and dispatch calls involving these types of cases. The CIT typically travels to the location of the person in crisis. In addition, the CIT usually has immediate access to an emergency mental health facility designed to provide additional mental health services if the crisis requires more long-term care (Roesch & Goossens, 2022).

Research has demonstrated that CITs are usually very effective alternates to police involvement in mental health crises and are always in need of psychologists and mental health professionals to help (Roesch & Goossens, 2022). There is also an ongoing critical need for well-done psychological research on the effectiveness of CIT programs across the country.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Review the facts of the Daniel Prude case and discuss how a CIT would have handled this situation differently.
2. Should law enforcement officers be expected to call in a CIT (or recommend that dispatch do this) in *any* interaction with a civilian who appears to have a serious mental illness? If yes, support your answer. If no, then when should calling in a CIT be expected?
3. Interestingly, a co-response team of police and behavioral health professionals existed in Springfield during the incident in which Sonya Massey was killed. Obtain updated information about that incident and consider whether and how this team might have been called in to service.

### Police Contact With Persons Who Self-Identify as LGBTQ+

According to a Gallup poll conducted in 2022, the percentage of U.S. adults who identify as something other than heterosexual doubled over a 10-year period, from 3.5% in 2012 (when Gallup first measured gender or sexual identity) to 7.1% in 2022 (B. Jones et al., 2023). This increase was especially prominent among people who were ages 18 to 25 in the year the poll was taken. More specifically, 21% of that age group identified themselves as LGBTQ+, and this total is likely to increase, according to Gallup. B. Jones et al. (2023) write: “With many more younger than older adults seeing themselves as something other than heterosexual, the LGBT share of the entire U.S. adult population can be expected to grow in future years.”

The acronym *LGBTQ+* stands for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer. *Q* may also stand for “questioning.” It should be emphasized that the acronym represents a vastly heterogeneous group of people who often do not fit neatly into any single category, hence the symbol +. Sometimes *I* and *A* are also included in the acronym to represent “intersex” and “asexual.” Other terminology includes *gender-non-binary*, *genderqueer*, *gender-nonconforming*, and *gender-creative*.

Persons who self-identify as LGBTQ+ may experience a variety of mental health conditions due to societal pressures directed at them (B. Shepherd et al., 2023). Approximately 40% reported attempting suicide at least once in their lifetime (Counselman-Carpenter & Redcay, 2023). These mental health issues are largely due to the hostile and unaccepting environments they often experience during their daily lives. It is clear that psychologists and other mental health professionals with clinical skills are strongly needed to provide services, including services related to interaction with law enforcement.

Since its beginnings, law enforcement has been deeply rooted in a heavily masculinized culture (Lloyd & Fountain, 2023). It is a culture that assumes a gender binary and often resists

evidence to the contrary. In recent years, this strict traditional culture has begun to change, although very slowly. Discrimination and harassment by law enforcement based on one's sexual orientation and gender identity has historically been—and continues to be—a serious ongoing problem for LGBTQ+ communities (Lloyd & Fountain, 2023; Mallory et al., 2015). This is especially true for LGBTQ+ people of color, and most prominently young people of color (Girardi, 2022; Hyland et al., 2015; Mallory et al., 2015).

Victim surveys have indicated that when persons who consider themselves LGBTQ+ have contact with the police, which usually occurs in public places, they are often ridiculed, laughed at, misgendered, and belittled by police (Girardi, 2022). They also are more likely to be unlawfully searched, arrested, and legally sanctioned compared to their heterosexual and white peers (Dwyer, 2011; Fileborn, 2019).

Unfortunately, members of the LGBTQ+ community are more likely to live in poverty and experience higher rates of unemployment and homelessness than heterosexual people, due to widespread and systematic discrimination in education, employment, and housing (Copple, 2017). Part of the problem stems from the fact that many LGBTQ+ people experience a lack of support and acceptance from their families and the community (Girardi, 2022). Nearly one third LGBTQ+ people who do find work report employment discrimination, including being harassed at work, being denied promotions, or being fired (Counselman-Carpenter & Redcay, 2023).

These problems have been compounded by the current anti-trans political climate in America (Lloyd & Fountain, 2023, p. 343). *Trans* refers to individuals who are either transitioning to or have transitioned to a gender other than the one assigned at birth. Nationwide, a record-breaking 568 anti-trans bills were proposed by state lawmakers between 2021 and 2023, with 83 passing; 360 are still active at this writing, and 123 have failed to pass (American Civil Liberties Union, 2023). Some of these bills have restricted trans and gender-expansive youth from participating in certain sports, using bathrooms, or participating in gender-affirming medical care. Fortunately, in a recent survey (A. Shaw, 2023), 79% of Americans favor laws that protect LGBTQ+ people from discrimination.

Some police departments across the country are trying to improve the policing quality of LGBTQ+ people by recruiting and hiring law enforcement officers who are themselves members of the LGBTQ+ community (Copple, 2017). One approach is spearheaded by the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS). The COPS Office is a component of the U.S. Department of Justice responsible for advancing the practice of community policing through information and grant resources. COPS also encourages police departments throughout the United States to adopt policies not only to protect the diversity of their communities but also to encourage the LGBTQ+ community to apply for and become fully engaged in the profession of law enforcement. COPS also advocates that the U.S. government pursue a law enforcement initiative designed to help local communities diversify their law enforcement officers to better represent their communities.

We now turn our focus to the ongoing problem of excessive force used by police when encountering members of the public, particularly criminal suspects. This issue revolves around what constitutes reasonable use of police force.

## EXCESSIVE FORCE: LETHAL AND NON-LETHAL

Law enforcement officers today are under considerable public scrutiny. The entertainment and the news media, along with social media, are not hesitant to portray bad cops, particularly those who use excessive force or decide to shoot in carrying out their duties. Although force is justifiable in many circumstances, examples of its overuse are not difficult to find. Today, with the

help of portable video equipment such as smartphones and public street cameras, police–citizen encounters are often recorded and circulated, letting the world see behavior that has long been familiar in some communities.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police (2001) defines police use of force as the amount of effort required by police to compel compliance by an unwilling subject. When the level of force exceeds what is considered justifiable under the circumstances, it is called **excessive force**. It is unacceptable and illegal behavior demonstrated by an individual officer or group of officers, or it might be a pattern and practice of an entire law enforcement agency. In many instances, excessive force probably reflects some combination of both. However, the line between excessive and justifiable force is often not a clear one to draw. Sometimes, changes in policy are needed to specify what is and what is not allowed. The “chokehold,” which by 2020 was allowed in some departments and banned in others, is a case in point. Recall that the chokehold was referred to in an anecdote at the beginning of this chapter. Not mentioned there is the fact that although the death was ruled a homicide, officers involved at the scene, including the officer who used the chokehold, were not charged with a crime. They were, however, stripped of their positions after disciplinary hearings, and the officer who applied the chokehold failed in his attempt to be reinstated.

### The Reasonable Officer Standard

In any confrontation with a suspect or during a brief investigative stop, when is force justified, and when is it excessive? Numerous courts have considered this question in dealing with individual cases, many of which revolve around the Fourth Amendment prohibition of unreasonable search and seizure. Under the law, an arrest is a seizure, as is even a brief stop police might make to investigate if crime is afoot. Therefore, what the officer does must be reasonable. Force may be reasonable, depending upon the circumstances, but excessive force is not.

The U.S. Supreme Court has offered guidance in a range of cases, two of which will be briefly noted here. In one, *Tennessee v. Garner* (1985), the Court made it very clear that fatally shooting an unarmed fleeing felon was not objectively reasonable. In a later case, *Graham v. Connor* (1989), the Court highlighted the standard that a “reasonable officer at the scene” would apply. The two cases are sometimes discussed jointly to emphasize the importance of a **reasonable officer standard** regarding use of force by law enforcement (Vardsveen & Wiener, 2022).

The facts of each case are very different, as are the actions taken by police. In the Tennessee case, police had stopped an unarmed young man as he was trying to climb over a fence after presumably burglarizing a home. The officer who shot him in the head admitted that he was reasonably sure that the suspect was not armed, but the officer was following procedure that allowed shooting a suspect trying to flee. When the case reached the U.S. Supreme Court, the Court ruled that, although there were times when police were justified in shooting fleeing suspects, this was not one of them. It is reasonable to shoot a fleeing felon who is a danger to the officer and others in the community—in other words, a fleeing felon with a weapon. Put another way, police cannot use *deadly force* to prevent an unarmed person seeking to run away or flee from police conducting an investigatory stop or attempted arrest, if the suspect poses no immediate danger to the officer. Edward Garner, the young person who died at the scene, was trying to get away, but he was not armed or dangerous. The Tennessee law allowing the officer’s behavior violated the Fourth Amendment. Put another way, the force used by the officer in this situation was excessive.

In *Graham v. Connor* (1989), a North Carolina case that involved physical beating but not shooting, the Court again took up the question of reasonableness. It emphasized that force,

both lethal and less than lethal, should be objectively reasonable. It was already clear, based on *Tennessee v. Garner*, that it was not reasonable to shoot an unarmed fleeing felon. Dethorne Graham, the petitioner in this case, was a person with diabetes who was driven to a convenience store by a friend to get orange juice after an insulin reaction. Going into the store he saw a line of people waiting for service, so he turned around and ran out of the store and into his friend's waiting car. A police officer saw this activity and decided to pursue them, apparently thinking crime was afoot, which would be reason to make a brief investigative stop (*Terry v. Ohio*, 1968). The officer called for backup and ultimately stopped the car. In the process of the stop, Graham was apparently injured by police, suffering a broken foot and bruises on his face. This was clearly not lethal force, but was it justifiable? Did the police behavior pass the reasonableness test?

The Court in *Graham* emphasized that the Fourth Amendment requires careful attention to the facts and circumstances of each case. The following three critical objective factors must be taken into account: (1) the severity of the suspect's alleged crime; (2) whether the suspect poses an immediate threat to officers or others; and (3) whether the suspect resisted arrest or attempted to flee. The Court also stated that the use of force must be judged according to what a reasonable officer would do in similar situations, hence the reason this three-factor test is often referred to as the reasonable officer standard.

*Tennessee v. Garner* (1985) is considered a landmark case, and there is little controversy about it. Simply put, an officer cannot shoot a fleeing suspect unless the suspect is dangerous (e.g., carrying a weapon). There are alternatives to shooting—call for backup and for other officers to intervene in the direction the suspect is fleeing, pursue the suspect, obtain an arrest warrant, and more.

The 1989 *Graham* case leaves many unanswered questions. According to the Court, “reasonableness” is objective, but subjectivity must surely enter. Since that case, there is no shortage of law enforcement defendants who have used force on suspects but were not charged because prosecutors or other charging entities decided that a reasonable officer might have used the same amount of force. If charges are brought and the case goes to trial, a jury also may make a similar decision.

Studies reveal that when male police officers use what the public believes is excessive force or threaten force, the public trusts them less and perceives the officers to be less effective (Salerno & Sanchez, 2020). Female officers, compared to male officers, are less likely to use force in general, but when female officers do use force, the public tends to believe it is probably justified and not excessive (Salerno & Sanchez, 2020). This finding indicates that when female officers use force, the public perceives their behavior to be a result of the dangerous external situation that requires the force rather than due to any personal, internal traits. On the other hand, when male officers use force, the public often attributes their behavior to internal traits, such as a tendency to be aggressive and emotionally reactive.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) is a comprehensive source of information about police use of force (Tapp & Davis, 2022). In 2020, BJS began providing surveys of police and public contacts based on interviews with residents, rather than from police records. According to the 2020 BJS survey reported in Tapp and Davis (2022), 54 million U.S. residents, age 16 or older, reported having contact with the police (see **Table 2.1**). Residents ages 18 to 24 (3%) were more likely to experience the threat of force or the use of force than other age groups. Male respondents were more likely than female respondents to experience threats or the use of force, and Blacks and Hispanics were more likely to do so than non-Hispanic whites. According to Davis and colleagues (2018), examples of threats or nonfatal excessive force include the following:



**TABLE 2.1 ■ U.S. Residents, Age 16 or Older, With Police Contact Who Experienced Threat or Use of Force, by Race or Hispanic Origin, 2020**

	Face-to-Face Contact	Force Threatened or Used	Force Perceived as Excessive
All races	53.9 million	1,045,600 (1.8%)	1.9%
White	36.7 million	560,200 (1.5%)	1.5%
Black	5.7 million	241,800 (3.8%)	4.3%
Hispanic	7.3 million	172,900 (3.4%)	2.4%

Source: Adapted from Tapp & Davis (2022).

- Threatening to use force
- Handcuffing
- Pushing, grabbing, hitting, or kicking
- Using a chemical or pepper spray
- Using an electroshock weapon
- Pointing a gun
- Using some other type of force (such as threatening to arrest)

Police psychologist Ellen Scrivner (1994), in a report sponsored by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ), investigated some of the psychological characteristics of officers who engage in excessive force. Although this report is over 30 years old, the key findings are not inappropriate, because they relate to personality profiles that do not go out of date. Police psychologists assigned to conduct fitness-for-duty evaluations should be knowledgeable about the behaviors outlined in the report. Scrivner identified five different officer profiles that are prone to excessive-force complaints or charges:

1. Officers with personality patterns that reflect a lack of empathy for others and antisocial, narcissistic, and abusive tendencies
2. Officers with previous job-related experiences such as involvement in justifiable police shootings
3. Officers who experienced early-career-stage problems having to do with their impressionability, impulsiveness, low tolerance for frustration, and general need for strong supervision
4. Officers who had a dominant, heavy-handed patrol style that is particularly sensitive to challenge and provocation
5. Officers who had personal problems such as separation, divorce, or perceived loss of status that caused extreme anxiety and destabilized job functioning

In a study by Trinkner and colleagues (2019), the researchers found that officer cynicism may be a key variable in officers' use of excessive force. Police cynicism is defined "as a pessimistic and suspicious perspective towards their job, the public, and society in general" (Caplan,

2003, p. 304). It is similar to psychological “burnout.” Moreover, it “is a progressively evolving characteristic of even the most idealistic police officers” (Caplan, 2003, p. 304).

Trinkner et al. (2019) surveyed 784 patrol officers and sergeants of a large urban police force over a period of eight weeks. The survey revealed that cynical officers not only are more likely to distrust the public; they are more prone to engage with community members in hostile, aggressive, forceful ways. Trinkner et al. write: “In this respect, one would not expect them to support the department’s use of force policy or engaging with the public in a fair and respectful manner to the same degree as less cynical officers” (p. 431). Trinkner et al. also found that female officers were more likely to support fair and just policies compared to male officers.

There are other factors that influence the tendency of law enforcement to use force—whether justifiable or excessive—besides officer personality. For example, police are more likely to use force in neighborhoods that are known for high crime rates and previous encounters with difficult suspects (Reyes & Houston, 2019; Terrill & Resig, 2003; B. Wilson & Wolfer, 2022). Reyes and Houston (2019) note that age, income, race, and education level also influence the level of force used by police, “with male, youth, minority [*sic*], and lower-income suspects found to be more likely to have higher levels of force used against them to effect an arrest” (p. 315). Use of force is also likely to occur if the suspect resists arrest (Terrill et al., 2008). In addition, the psychological or mental status of the suspect may also be a factor in the amount of force used in an encounter with police.

The studies just described focused primarily on the psychological profiles of individual police officers. They were not intended to give attention to the properties of entire police organizations that may implicitly (or explicitly) promote or condone excessive force within their ranks. For example, an agency may have an aggressive policing policy that encourages confrontational tactics that increase the probability of violence on the part of officers as well as members of the public. As K. Adams et al. (1999) stated, “A major gap in our knowledge about excessive force by police concerns characteristics of police agencies that facilitate or impede this conduct” (p. 11). K. Adams and colleagues further assert that many formal aspects of the organization—such as hiring criteria, recruit training, in-service programs, supervision of field officers, disciplinary mechanisms, operations of internal affairs, specialized units dealing with ethics and integrity, labor unions, and civilian oversight mechanisms—plausibly are related to the levels of officer misconduct.

As suggested earlier, police and public safety psychologists should realize that, in some cases, the law enforcement agency itself might be a major factor in implicitly encouraging the use of excessive force by its officers. Police training, both at the police academy and on the job, is another extremely important component. Officers who have not been taught appropriate de-escalation tactics, for example, may find it tempting to resort to force when it should not be needed. Agencies that have not banned or severely limited the use of chokeholds also may be more likely to attract citizen complaints. Possibly, agencies may be placed on a continuum signifying the degree of aggressive policing they advocate in the community. At one pole, the agency advocates that minimum force be applied when dealing with suspects, but at the other pole, the agency encourages force—and, if necessary, something approaching excessive force in dealing with suspects.

In summary, research data consistently show that *most* police officers do not engage in excessive force in dealing with the public, but even a small minority that does becomes problematic for both the public and the law enforcement agency. Fortunately, an “early warning system,” used by an increasing number of departments, can help supervisors identify problem officers early and intervene through counseling or training to correct problem behaviors (S. Walker et al., 2001), not only those related to the use of force.

**Early warning systems** of various types are increasingly being introduced into police agencies nationwide (Scrivner et al., 2014). They are data-based management tools, usually consisting of three basic phases: (1) selection, (2) intervention, and (3) postintervention monitoring (Bartol &

Bartol, 2004). The criteria by which officers are placed in an early warning category vary from agency to agency but usually include some threshold combination of citizen complaints, civil litigation, firearms discharge or use-of-force reports, high-speed pursuits, and resisting-arrest incidents (S. Walker et al., 2001). Preliminary research on the effectiveness of early warning systems suggests that they are effective, especially if used in combination with department-wide attempts to raise standards of performance and improve the quality of police services. Unfortunately, as has been demonstrated in recent years, agencies nationwide vary widely on the extent to which they develop standards and monitor behavior of individual law enforcement officers.

## FOCUS 2.2: SHOOTER BIAS

It is well documented that police officers rarely discharge their weapons in the line of duty. “[T]he discharging of one’s weapon in the line of duty is a rare and profound event that almost always leaves a psychological trace on the officer involved” (L. Miller, 2015, p. 107, citing multiple references). Firing a gun does not always result in a death, but when it does, an investigation of this “officer-involved shooting” invariably follows. The majority of these incidents of deadly force are found to be justified, but in some, officers are charged with crime. Both indictments and convictions are rare.

Extensive publicity in recent years has focused on lethal shootings of people of color, particularly Black men and youth. Although guns are almost always used, the weapon also may be a knee, as it was in the death of George Floyd, or fists or handheld weapons, as they were in the beating of Tyre Nichols, who ultimately died from his injuries. Victims like Michael Brown, Walter Scott, Breonna Taylor, Tyre Nichols, Tamir Rice, Ahmaud Arbery, Sonya Massey, and George Floyd have become symbols of systemic racial bias displayed by members of the law enforcement community. It is widely recognized that racial bias exists throughout society, sometimes explicitly but more often implicitly. Forensic psychologists are not immune to implicit bias, a point made in Chapter 1. When bias produces discriminatory behavior, this becomes a problem. Is bias at the root of decisions to use force? Not surprisingly, a number of psychologists and criminologists have conducted research examining the decision to shoot.

Following are highlights of some of this research. You will note that some findings seem to be contradictory.

- Officers of any race or ethnicity are equally likely to be involved in a deadly force incident (McElvain & Kposowa, 2008; Salerno & Sanchez, 2020).
- Personal philosophies of chiefs and other supervisory personnel, not the level of crime in the community, are determinants of police shootings (Fyfe, 1988; H. Lee & Vaughn, 2010).
- Training and experience are effective in minimizing the effect of implicit bias (Correll et al., 2007; J. Sim et al., 2013).
- In simulated experiments, police demonstrate less bias in shooting than community samples, including college students (Correll et al., 2007).
- Racial bias tends to be demonstrated more in response time (i.e., how long it takes to make a decision) than in the ultimate decision to shoot (W. Cox et al., 2014; Salerno & Sanchez, 2020).
- Officers use more deadly force against Blacks than whites (Goff & Kahn, 2012; A. Hall et al., 2016; J. Sim et al., 2013).
- The quality and amount of dispatcher information received by the responding officer(s) has a major influence on police decisions to shoot (D. Johnson et al., 2018; P. Taylor, 2019).
- Black boys are seen as older by police and less innocent than white boys (A. Hall et al., 2016; Goff et al., 2016).

- Black and Latino suspects were subjected to force earlier during police interaction, while white suspects were subjected later during the interaction (K. Kahn et al., 2017).

In general, the literature on **shooter bias** shows mixed results, with some indicating little overall bias when other factors are controlled, while other research suggests strong racial stereotyping. What are we to make of these different and sometimes divergent findings? Although research on the extent of disparate treatment must continue, it is clear that effective training of police to recognize their implicit biases and to exercise cognitive control in making decisions is essential (K. Kahn & McMahon, 2015).

### Questions for Discussion

1. Although we focus here on lethal shootings, research indicates that force in general is used disproportionately more against Blacks than suspects of other races. Discuss reasons why this might occur.
2. We addressed just a few conclusions from research relating to shooter bias in policing. Find and discuss results of a recent study on this topic. Is it consistent with the research highlighted here?
3. Laurence Miller (2015) notes that most actual shooting scenarios involve “petty criminals, mentally disordered subjects [*sic*], domestic violence escalations, or the posturing of young-and-dumb juveniles” (p. 104). Assuming Miller is correct, how might this affect the officer who did the shooting?

### Dispatch Information

D. Johnson and colleagues (2018) examined the critical importance of dispatcher information that police officers receive before arriving at an emergency situation. D. Johnson et al. hypothesized that lethal force may be more likely to occur when officers (especially novice ones) have little advance information or have misinformation about the person(s) they encounter.

The researchers first surveyed the type of information dispatchers typically relay to responding officers. “Officers responding to an emergency call typically receive, at minimum, demographic information about the person in question from dispatch” (D. Johnson et al., 2018, p. 617). For example, the dispatcher might relay physical descriptions of the suspect’s sex, race, age, weight, hair color, and clothing. In a typical emergency, then, officers will likely have information about the race and sex of the suspect before they encounter them. In the case of a crime, dispatchers routinely ask the caller whether weapons are present, and they immediately pass this information to the officers.

D. Johnson et al. (2018) used three laboratory studies to test how dispatch information and police experience affected the decision to shoot. The researchers focused on race and the presence of a weapon as potential influences on the decision to shoot. D. Johnson et al. consistently found that giving “incorrect dispatch information increased the likelihood that participants mistakenly shot unarmed men” (p. 619). (Related to this, see **Focus 2.2** on shooter bias.)

A classic example of dispatch misinformation is exemplified by the shooting of Tamir Rice on November 22, 2014, a case that received nationwide attention. Rice was a 12-year-old Black boy who was throwing snowballs and playing with a realistic-looking, airsoft-style pellet handgun (which fired plastic pellets) in a park in Cleveland, Ohio. The pellet handgun belonged to an older friend who allowed Rice to carry it temporarily while the friend took care of an errand. The gun, a Colt replica, was a few years old. Although the handgun had an “orange safety tip, intended to distinguish it from a pistol that fired real bullets, it had been removed or had fallen off” (Dewan & Oppel, 2015, p. A1). While in the park, the boy played around with the toy handgun, repeatedly pulling it out of his pocket until someone called 911 to inform the dispatcher that there was a male in the park pointing a gun at people. The 911 caller, who was calm throughout the report, said the person with the gun

was “probably a juvenile” and twice emphasized that the “gun” was probably fake. The dispatcher reported the incident as a “Code 1,” indicating the incident was the police department’s highest level of urgency. However, the dispatcher did not inform the responding officers that the caller indicated the gun was probably a fake, and that the carrier was “probably a juvenile.”

Two Cleveland police officers arrived at the scene and drove the police vehicle very close to the picnic area where the “suspect” was located. One of the officers immediately got out of the car and within seconds shot the preteen in the abdomen from point-blank range. It was unclear whether and when the officer gave any warnings, because there were discrepancies in his subsequent accounts to investigators and to a grand jury. He said he shot fearing his life was in danger. He also said the boy looked around age 20, 8 years older than Tamir Rice actually was. Remember, the dispatcher failed to mention to the officers that the caller said the person with the gun was “probably a juvenile.” Research finds that Black boys are commonly perceived to be older and less innocent than white boys, and this “adultlike” quality makes “them appear to be more appropriate candidates for greater use of police force” (A. Hall et al., 2016, p. 176). In research conducted by Goff et al. (2014), for example, both civilians and police officers perceived Black youths as nearly 5 years older than they were.

A grand jury investigation produced no criminal charges against the officers, apparently due to the critical miscommunications between the dispatcher and the officers but also due to poor quality of video. Dewan and Oppel (2015) write: “with the county sheriff’s office reviewing the shooting, interviews and recently released video and police records show how a series of miscommunications, tactical errors and institutional failures by the Cleveland police cascaded into one irreversible mistake” (p. A1). Moreover, within two weeks after Rice’s death, the U.S. Department of Justice released a “scathing report accusing the [Cleveland police] department of a pattern of excessive force for which officers were rarely disciplined” (Dewan & Oppel, 2015, p. A1).

The officer who shot the boy was eventually fired two and a half years after the incident, not because of the shooting incident but because he had provided false information in his original application to the department. After investigations, both the dispatcher and the officer who drove the police car were suspended for brief periods. The officer who shot Tamir Rice was hired by another police department in Ohio in 2018. Nine years after the incident, in 2023, Rice’s mother was still seeking justice for her son as well as other youths shot by police.

Based on their research data, D. Johnson et al. (2018) concluded that racial bias in shooting decisions, as observed in laboratory studies, might be more likely when an officer is relatively untrained, has no dispatch information about a person, and has to make the decision in a short amount of time” (p. 617). The researchers add: “Considerable research has stressed that stereotypes are more likely to be used in situations where information is ambiguous” (p. 618). Providing dispatch information to the officers (even relatively inexperienced ones) about the race of the suspect before any information about the presence of a weapon should significantly reduce the ambiguity of the situation. “This perspective suggests that it is not race information per se that reduces bias, but the effect of this information on reducing uncertainty” (p. 618). Lack of information or wrong information is the key. This is not to indicate that there is no racial bias among police officers but rather to point out that the quality of the dispatch information is critical in police decision making.

At this point in the chapter, having provided a brief history of police and public safety psychology, described law enforcement agencies today, and addressed current problems involving public contacts with police, we now turn to the tasks engaged in by forensic psychologists offering services to law enforcement. Almost 20 years ago, Aumiller and Corey (2007) divided police psychology—and by extension police and public safety psychology—into four general and overlapping domains of practice: (1) assessment, (2) intervention, (3) operational support, and (4) organizational/management consulting. These domains continue to be relevant today. (Table 2.2 shows some of the more

**TABLE 2.2 ■ Common Activities and Tasks of Police and Public Safety Psychologists**

Assessment	Intervention	Operational Support	Consulting and Research
Job analysis	Individual therapy and counseling	Crisis and hostage negotiations	Research on interrogation, lineups, use of force, police stress, and other law enforcement issues
Psychological evaluations of police applicants	Group, couple, and family therapy and counseling	Police academy education and training	Management and organizational consulting
Fitness-for-duty evaluations	Critical incident early intervention and debriefing	Threat assessments	Supervisory consultation
Psychological evaluations of specialty police units	Critical incident stress management and therapy	Criminal activity assessment and offender profiling	Development of performance standards for agency personnel
Emergency consultations concerning individuals with serious mental conditions	Substance abuse and alcohol treatment	Operations-related consultation and research	Mediation

common activities associated with each.) In each of these areas, psychologists must recognize that effective law enforcement requires a unique combination of physical, cognitive, emotional, and interpersonal skills (Blumberg et al., 2022). In addition, the ongoing development of technical advancements in the field has added to the requirements for effective policing. “Today’s police officers carry more tools on their equipment belts (e.g., Tasers) and bodies (e.g., body-worn cameras), utilize more equipment in their patrol cars (e.g., computers), and face more public scrutiny of their actions due to smartphones and social media than officers from previous generations” (Blumberg et al., 2022, p. 47).

Aumiller and Corey (2007) were able to identify over 50 activities or services that police psychologists may be expected to provide. These categories are virtually identical to those identified in publications of the police and public safety psychology specialty: assessment, clinical intervention, operational support, and organizational consulting (Brewster et al., 2016). We now discuss each of these in detail, focusing on the tasks as well as the research assessing them.

## FORENSIC ASSESSMENT IN POLICE AND PUBLIC SAFETY PSYCHOLOGY

“Psychological assessment is considered a core competency for psychologists specializing in police and public safety” (Corey & Borum, 2013, p. 246). The two categories of assessments most commonly done in this context are preemployment psychological screening and fitness-for-duty evaluations. **Preemployment psychological screening** occurs when psychologists evaluate a person’s psychological suitability for police work prior to being hired. Cochrane and colleagues (2003) conducted a survey of police agencies across the nation and reported that nearly 90% used psychological testing for preemployment selection. Psychological screening of candidates

for police positions is mandated by law in at least 37 states (Corey et al., 2023). These psychological screenings are conducted by an estimated 4,500 psychologists each year in the United States (C. Mitchell, 2017). However, despite the mandated testing, it remains unclear—at least in most states—precisely what psychological characteristics (mental or emotional conditions) qualify for exclusion from becoming a police officer.

To date, California has been the nation's leader in spelling out the necessary psychological qualities most likely to lead to a successful career in law enforcement. The standards are reported in the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training (POST) manual, created by psychologists Shelley Spilberg and David Corey (2017). The POST screening manual “represents a state-of-the-art achievement in this area and has impacted the practice of police psychology in much of the United States” (C. Mitchell & Dorian, 2020, p. 284). The POST guidelines were also created to educate and inform psychologists who conduct screening evaluations for law enforcement and also to stimulate further research in the area. The goal of the manual is to assist California law enforcement agencies and their psychological evaluators in the challenging task of screening out police officer candidates who lack the psychological competencies to become effective police officers. The manual focuses on identifying personality traits, both normal and abnormal, such as stress tolerance, impulse control, the ability to be a team player, and freedom from discriminatory biases. The guidelines were recently revised in August 2022. The current revision of the guidelines incorporates the update *Principles for the Validation and Use of Personnel Selection Procedures* (APA, 2018) and the *Professional Practice Guidelines for Occupationally Mandated Psychological Evaluations* (APA, 2017b).

In **fitness-for-duty evaluations (FFDEs)**, psychologists evaluate an employed police officer's ability to continue to perform the job. This often occurs after the officer has been through a personally stressful experience, either in their personal life or on the job (e.g., sudden death of a spouse, being taken hostage, or involvement in a shooting incident).

We discuss both candidate screening and FFDEs shortly. As Corey and Borum (2013) note, these psychological assessments should be conducted by psychologists who have a fundamental and reasonable level of understanding of police work and what it entails. This brings us to the important topics of police culture and job analysis.

## Police Culture

A police psychologist does not have to be a former police officer to be an effective service provider to law enforcement agencies. However, the police psychologist must be highly familiar with and knowledgeable about what policing involves, as well as the **police culture**, defined as the rules, attitudes, beliefs, and practices that are thought to be accepted among law enforcement officers as an occupational group. Woody (2005) notes that one of the clear requirements to be a successful police psychologist is to recognize and understand this culture, adding that the psychologist should reasonably accommodate it as long as it does not endanger the public safety, police ethics, or the mental, physical, or behavioral health of the officer. Obviously, the culture also should not be biased against the constitutional rights of others.

Paoline (2003) perceptively observed, though, that researchers, scholars, and practitioners (including psychologists) often make the mistake of assuming that there is a single, homogenous police culture. Paoline emphasized that police cultures may vary in terms of the style, values, purpose, and mission of the organization itself, starting from the top down. The culture of a federal agency, for instance, is likely to be different from that of a county sheriff's department. The culture may also vary according to rank. The street cop culture is apt to be quite different from the cultures in administration and supervision. In addition, there may be “subcultures”

within the ranks, with some officers adopting a different style of policing from that of others. Some supervisors may play strictly by the book, whereas others may be flexible in interpreting departmental procedures and policies. Finally, the changing face of law enforcement as a result of recruitment of persons from diverse gender, racial, and ethnic groups will certainly affect the concept of police culture in a very positive way (Corley, 2022).

In short, claiming to be an expert without understanding and earning the acceptance and respect of a police agency, and without acknowledging the many facets of police culture, will likely lead to limited success for a new or inexperienced psychologist. Interestingly, although law enforcement experience is not necessary, some police and public safety psychologists choose that path after spending some years as police officers (e.g., Fay, 2015). For those without prior police experience—the majority—entry into the field of police psychology usually begins with providing limited consulting services to police agencies, such as screening and selection, or psychotherapy or counseling of police officers and their families. C. Mitchell and Dorian (2020) also encourage psychologists—most of whom are working as consultants rather than as “in-house” psychologists—to spend time with the department when possible, such as by attending department functions or meetings beyond those that are directly concerned with work as a consultant. As both exposure and experience accumulate, the agency becomes more familiar with the psychologist, and the psychologist may be asked to do many other things, such as perform FFDEs or become a member of the hostage/crisis negotiation team.

### Job Analysis

The psychologist conducting assessment procedures should have a good understanding of what the job of policing involves. The tasks required go far beyond those reflected in media and popular American culture. Although some tasks are similar regardless of the agencies, others are specific to the nature of the job or the setting. In order to evaluate whether someone is a good candidate for law enforcement, one must first understand what the job entails. In order to assess whether someone is fit to return to duty, one must understand what that duty involves. Job analysis, then, is the process of identifying and analyzing how, where, and why a particular job is done. In the context of this chapter, **job analysis** is a systematic procedure for identifying the skills, abilities, knowledge, and psychological characteristics that are needed to do public safety work successfully. A comprehensive job analysis of a particular law enforcement agency should reveal the essential functions of the personnel,

the working conditions unique to their respective ranks and assignments, the common and novel stressors inherent in public safety work, the normal and abnormal adaptation to occupational stress and trauma, [and] the research pertinent to resilience and recovery in public safety. (Trompetter, 2011, p. 52).

Job analyses have revealed characteristics that are desirable, and sometimes necessary, for all successful police officers. For example, successful candidates need to have good judgment and common sense, appropriate decision-making skills, interpersonal skills, a solid memory, good observation talents, and communication skills (both oral and written) (Spielberger, 1979). Integrity and trustworthiness are certainly other important traits. Overall emotional stability and the ability to remain steady under stress are also considered critical traits for successful and competent police and public safety officers (Detrick & Chibnall, 2006, 2013). Although the emphasis that each agency places on the preceding characteristics may differ slightly, they tend to be universal psychological requirements for law enforcement work.



Police psychologists who assess candidates for hire, fitness for duty, promotion, or special assignments should be familiar not only with the general literature on job analysis, but also with specific requirements of the agency. For example, a department may require certain psychological strengths in addition to the general requirements listed earlier, such as the ability to work in special units with victims of sexual abuse, searching for missing children, or hostage negotiation. In addition, a job analysis must be carefully done, and the assessment measures that are selected should comport with the analysis. That is, the approach to selection that is ultimately used should be able to be justified by referral to the analysis. Data may be subjected to legal scrutiny concerning gender, racial, salary, promotional, selection, and—more generally—psychological testing issues. For example, police applicants who feel they have been unfairly evaluated may challenge the entrance exam used by the agency on the grounds that the test is not valid or is discriminatory. If it is demonstrated that the exam comports with a carefully done and nondiscriminatory job analysis, the agency is unlikely to be found at fault.

### Preemployment and Postoffer Psychological Evaluations

Nearly all law enforcement agencies are subject to law, regulations, or accreditation standards that require psychological evaluations of public safety candidates (Aumiller & Corey, 2007; C. Mitchell, 2017). Ideally, evaluation methods should comport with a solid job analysis, as noted in the previous section. At least 37 states mandate psychological evaluations for police officers. These evaluations—usually in the form of personality measures that may or may not be accompanied by interviews—help to ensure that the candidates are free of mental or emotional impairments that would interfere with effective, responsible, and ethical job performance as a police officer. A candidate who is severely depressed, has strong paranoid tendencies, or is prone to aggressive behavior with minimal provocation is unlikely to perform well as a law enforcement officer. Consequently, psychological evaluations are necessary to identify any job-relevant risk behaviors and the presence of job-critical personal and interpersonal qualities that are likely to endanger public safety.

The International Association of Chiefs of Police, Police Psychological Services Section (2016) has developed guidelines for police psychologists who conduct preemployment psychological evaluations. The guidelines spell out recommended standards for examiner qualifications, conflict-of-interest issues, and informed consent recommendations for those police candidates who undergo the examination. The guidelines also offer advice on what should be included in the psychological report and what procedures and psychological measures should be included in the evaluation. Another valuable source of information for this purpose is an evidence-based approach that was introduced in California (Spilberg & Corey, 2017).

The measures used to evaluate officers have never been consistent across the United States, however. In the mid-20th century, psychologists often administered intelligence tests, and agencies used scores on these tests to help in their hiring decisions. Over the years it became clear that intelligence tests per se were not effective measures of how an officer is likely to perform on the street. Although some psychologists continue to use these tests as a standard practice in other contexts (e.g., various court-ordered evaluations, educational assessments, and prisoner intakes), intelligence tests are not commonly used in psychological screening of law enforcement applicants. A majority of police agencies and police academies still require a written or aptitude test, though, which may or may not have been prepared with assistance from consulting psychologists.

As an aside—because this does not directly relate to the psychological evaluation—educational requirements are worth noting. Approximately 15% to 20% of law enforcement agencies require an education beyond the high school degree, but only about 1% require a bachelor's college degree (Aamodt & Brewster, 2022; C. Gardner, 2017). In addition, some law enforcement agencies also offer additional pay based on educational attainment. There is also some evidence to suggest that a college education is beneficial in many ways, although this is not to infer that someone without a college degree cannot be successful. However, those with college degrees tend to have better communication skills; are less likely to use excessive violence; are less likely to be the subject of citizen complaints; are less likely to be terminated for misconduct; are better able at implementing problem-oriented policing strategies; and earn promotions at a faster rate than non-college-educated officers (Aamodt & Brewster, 2022; G. F. Cole & Smith, 2001; Rydberg & Terrill, 2010). Some researchers also have argued that a college education would certainly enhance the officer's understanding of people's constitutional rights, values, and the democratic process (Carter et al., 1988). In addition, officers with a college education are likely to have a positive effect on the police culture in general (Paoline, 2003).

With respect to the psychologist's role, only licensed or certified professionals who are trained and experienced in psychological assessment instruments and their interpretation should conduct candidate evaluations. It is also important that the examiners be knowledgeable about what law enforcement demands as well as the research literature on public safety. They should also be familiar with ethnic and cultural norms and practices among those applying for law enforcement or public safety positions, although such information is not always available, particularly in paper-and-pencil measures. For example, applicants from different cultural backgrounds and experiences may interpret questions on personality inventories differently than others, and their responses may be outside the norms, but they should not be disqualified on that basis alone. Finally, the examiner must be thoroughly aware of developments in the law relating to the hiring of candidates, both at the federal and at the state level.

### Screening Out and Screening In

Law enforcement agencies often hope police psychologists will help them both avoid candidates who would not perform well and hire those who would be good or even exceptional. This is a challenging task, and thus far there has been more success at screening out than screening in. In fact, **screening-out procedures** are those most commonly used by police psychologists (Varela et al., 2004). They try to eliminate those applicants who appear to be poorly suited for work in law enforcement. For example, the candidate may be evaluated as showing signs of poor judgment and common sense or poor stress tolerance. The screening procedure may also reveal that the candidate shows an unwillingness to follow rules, exhibits difficulty working within a chain-of-command work environment, or demonstrates a lack of *basic* ability or mental acuity to perform the job in a safe and responsible manner. **Screening-in procedures**, on the other hand, are intended to identify those attributes that distinguish one job applicant as being potentially a more effective officer than another applicant. Implicit in this approach is the ability to rank-order applicants, allowing agencies to select the top candidates from a pool that passed the initial screening procedures. This approach assumes that there are traits, habits, reactions, and attitudes that distinguish an outstanding officer from a satisfactory one. Scrivner et al. (2014) observe that the development of screening-in measures has progressed in recent years. To date, though, there is little evidence that psychologists have reached the goal of establishing valid measures for ranking applicants in some hierarchical order of suitability, although some tests may be more useful than others.

## Psychological Testing in Police Selection

There is a lack of consensus concerning which personality inventory or measure is most useful in the screening and selection process. Consequently, there is a great need for solid research by psychologists to identify and improve psychological inventories that do well at this endeavor. Research on law enforcement screening (e.g., Aamodt & Brewster, 2022; Cochrane et al., 2003) indicates that the following six personality measures are the most commonly used by psychologists:

- The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory series, including the MMPI-2, MMPI-2-RF, and MMPI-3
- The Inwald Personality Inventory (IPI) and IPI2
- The California Psychological Inventory (CPI 260 and CPI 434)
- The Personality Assessment Inventory (PAI)
- The NEO Personality Inventory–Revised (NEO PI-R)
- The Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire–Fifth Edition (16PF)

To say these measures are commonly used is not to say they are necessarily the best measures, however. The jury is still out as to which is most deserving of continued use in the selection process, but currently the MMPI series is, by far, the most researched instrument for selecting law enforcement. Furthermore, many agencies also make use of alternative approaches, particularly measures designed specifically for preemployment screening of police candidates (Scrivner et al., 2014; Spilberg & Corey, 2017). One example of these alternative measures is the Matrix-Predictive Uniform Law Enforcement Selection Evaluation (M-PULSE; R. Davis & Rostow, 2008). However, it is critically important for alternative tests to be validated for use in police officer selection procedures.

Here, we focus on the MMPI because it is—by far—the most commonly used personality assessment instrument in police screening and selection. The other assessment instruments in the preceding list are used by some police agencies and some police psychologists, but most police agencies and police psychologists prefer the MMPI-2, MMPI-2-RF, or MMPI-3.

### The MMPI-2

For over six decades, the most commonly used psychological instrument for police and public safety preselection screening has been the **Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory–Revised (MMPI-2)** (Ben-Porath et al., 2017). Police officer candidates often know it by its length (“that endless test”—it has 557 questions!). The MMPI-2 is a revision of the MMPI, and both were originally designed to measure psychopathology or behavioral disorders. In recent years, however, psychologists have modified the scoring of the MMPI-2 to measure positive personality traits, such as stress tolerance, emotional maturity, self-control, and judgment.

Cochrane et al. (2003) discovered that the MMPI-2 was used in 70% of all surveyed police departments in the United States in preemployment screenings. This is probably a good thing, because a large amount of research has demonstrated that the MMPI-2 is a useful predictor of police officer job performance (Ben-Porath et al., 2017; Caillouet et al., 2010; Detrick et al., 2001; Sellbom et al., 2007; Weiss et al., 2013). Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that performance on the MMPI-2 should be only one factor to be considered in the overall screening or

evaluation process. Other sources of information—such as background checks, performance on oral board examinations, aptitude tests, and prior law enforcement experience—are all pertinent.

In 2008, the **Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory–Revised–Restructured Form (MMPI-2-RF)** was published (Ben-Porath & Tellegen, 2008). Although this inventory used 60% of the items from the MMPI-2, it should not be considered a revision of the MMPI-2 (Butcher et al., 2015). “Rather, it is a new test, made from MMPI-2 items, that has to be researched and validated to establish its own merits and not just accepted as a newer version of the MMPI-2” (Butcher et al., 2015, p. 251).

The MMPI-2-RF has 338 items and 51 scales, compared with 10 clinical and 4 validity scales on the MMPI-2. Preliminary research suggests that it appears to be a somewhat stronger measure than the MMPI-2 for predicting law enforcement officer performance (Sellbom et al., 2007; Taescavage et al., 2015, 2016). As noted by Ben-Porath et al. (2017), the MMPI-2-RF builds on the power of the MMPI-2 with “a comprehensive, modern literature documenting associations between pre-hire scores and a broad range of job-relevant variables” (p. 69). Nevertheless, practicing psychologists prefer the MMPI-2 to the MMPI-2-RF by a 3 to 1 margin (Butcher et al., 2015).

The MMPI-3 was released in 2020. The goal of the MMPI-3 is to improve the questions, optimize existing scales, introduce new scales where warranted, and update the test norms. However, rather than updating the MMPI-2, the revision appears to be more an improvement of the MMPI-2-RF, which was released in 2008 (A. Friedman & Nichols, 2017). “An MMPI-3 based on the MMPI-2-RF is not an authentic successor to the MMPI and MMPI-2 and their 70-year history of research and successful clinical use” (A. Friedman & Nichols, 2017, p. 3). The MMPI-2 continues to be more widely used than the MMPI-2-RF, and will likely continue to be the most popular among psychologists for the foreseeable future (Lally & Williams, 2017; Williams & Lally, 2017).

### Fitness-for-Duty Evaluation (FFDE)

Police officers, emergency personnel, crisis team members, paramedics, and firefighters who witness especially disturbing events—such as the bodies of young children, fire victims, terrorist attacks, victims of child sexual abuse or sex trafficking, plane crashes, the devastation following natural disasters, or catastrophes involving fellow officers and personnel—may exhibit intense emotional or psychological reactions (see **Focus 2.3**). Paramedics, who are trained to perform a variety of medical treatments and life-saving procedures, perhaps experience more psychological trauma than most other emergency personnel. In addition, police officers may experience personal crises, such as the sudden death of someone close to them or the shooting of a suspect later found not to be armed. In these situations, they may take a leave of absence or be placed on administrative leave. Following such leaves, a fitness-for-duty evaluation (FFDE) may be required. In other situations, the officer may have displayed behavior that is of concern, such as harassing or abusing someone with a firearm, displaying wide variations in mood and irritability while on duty, talk of committing suicide, or being unreliable in completing assigned tasks. In any one of these situations, the FFDE may be needed to determine whether the officer has the mental and psychological stability to continue as an effective officer on the street, at least for the foreseeable future. This requires a much more extensive assessment than the psychological screening evaluation for initial employment positions.

Psychologists are often asked to perform FFDEs for organizations in addition to law enforcement agencies. Large private corporations, federal agencies, universities, hospitals and other health care agencies, and licensure bureaus often ask them to do FFDEs (Bresler, 2010). The

basic goal of any FFDE is “to ascertain to what extent an employee is, or is not, able to meet job expectations” (Bresler, 2010, p. 1). However, our focus here is on FFDEs designed to serve law enforcement agencies. In addition, we will focus on psychological issues instead of physical impairments; in the latter, the examination obviously requires medical personnel, such as a physician, a nurse practitioner, a physician’s assistant, or another qualified professional.

FFDEs require that the examining psychologist carefully consider the balance between the agency’s need for the assessment and the officer’s understandable desire for confidentiality. Supervisors are given appropriate feedback, but the psychologist also must carefully explain the limits to confidentiality to the officer being evaluated (C. Mitchell & Dorian, 2020). The evaluations must be done with the informed consent of the officer, but the examiner is under no obligation to explain the results to the officer. The “owner” of the FFDE is essentially the agency requesting the evaluation. On the other hand, the agency is not entitled to any more psychological information regarding an employee than is necessary to document the presence or absence of job-related personality traits, characteristics, disorders, propensities, or conditions that would interfere with the performance of essential job functions (International Association of Chiefs of Police, Police Psychological Services Section, 2010). Mayer and Corey (2015) emphasize that “psychological FFDEs are often contentious examinations in which the employee being evaluated has much to lose, public and officer safety is at risk, and the likelihood of an administrative grievance, arbitration or litigation is high, particularly when the officer is deemed to be unfit for duty and the results are contested” (pp. 110–111).

In addition to carrying out the evaluation, the examining psychologist should recommend intervention methods or reasonable accommodations that would help improve the officer’s effectiveness. These may involve counseling, retraining, or treatment. However, the psychologist conducting an FFDE should not be the one providing treatment to the officer being evaluated, because this would constitute a dual relationship (assessor and treatment provider), which is frowned upon by the *Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct* (APA, 2017a).

The FFDE report usually includes the psychological measures used, a conclusion regarding the determination of fitness for duty, and a description of the functional limitations of the officer. In most instances, the FFDE report is provided to the department as a confidential personnel record. Periodic evaluations of the officer may also be necessary. The International Association of Chiefs of Police, Police Psychological Services Section (IACP-PPSS, 2010) recommends that the psychologist conducting the FFDE include performance evaluations, commendations, testimonials, reports of any internal affairs investigation, preemployment psychological screening, formal citizen/public complaints, use-of-force incidents, officer-involved shootings, civil claims, disciplinary actions, incident reports of any triggering events, medical/psychological treatment records, or other supporting or relevant documentation related to the officer’s psychological fitness for duty. The IACP-PPSS further recommends that only personality, psychopathology, cognitive, and specialized tests that have been validated be used in the assessment process.

## Special Unit Evaluations

Psychological assessments are also done as standard procedure for members of special teams, such as special weapons and tactics (SWAT) teams and tactical response teams (TRTs); undercover agents; and narcotics, internal affairs, and crisis/hostage negotiation teams, to determine if they are psychologically fit to undergo the pressures and possess the judgment requirements of high-stress positions. These evaluations are usually referred to as psychological evaluations for police special assignments (PEPSA) (Trompetter, 2017). Successful members of SWAT teams,

for example, tend to be “self-disciplined, conscientious, adherent to rules, comfortable accepting rules, conforming, and helpful” (Super, 1999, p. 422). Special units usually deal with the execution of high-risk search warrants or high-risk arrest warrants, barricaded persons, hostage situations, heavily armed offenders, terrorist acts, and suicidal persons.

It is not unusual for team members to be reevaluated periodically to identify problems before they develop into more serious behavioral patterns that would interfere with effective job performance. However, very little research has focused on the validity of assessment procedures used to aid in special team selection. Some time ago, Super (1999) indicated “there is a serious need for rigorous research regarding psychological assessment and special unit appointments” (p. 422). Since that time, the National Tactical Officers Association (2015, 2023; International Association of Chiefs of Police & National Tactical Officers Association, 2015) proposed standards for tactical police teams, and increasing efforts are taken to assess candidates for these roles as well as evaluate support services offered by the agencies.

## PSYCHOLOGICAL INTERVENTION ACTIVITIES

The second major category of tasks performed by police and public safety psychologists includes a variety of services that provide support to individual officers, their colleagues and families, and the police organization itself (Aumiller & Corey, 2007; Brewster et al., 2016). Primary examples are stress management, dealing with posttraumatic stress from shooting incidents, and preventing police suicide.

### Stress Management

The management of stress became a dominant theme in police psychology from the mid-1970s to the early 1980s and remains an important consideration today. The earliest full-time police psychologists, as well as community consultants, were called on to identify and dissipate stress, which, if left unmanaged or untreated, could result in an array of psychological and physical health problems for the officer and potentially put the public at risk due to faulty judgment and decision making. *Stressors*, *burnout*, *posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)*, and *critical incident trauma* became standard terms in the police psychologist’s vocabulary. The focus on stress was significant because it moved police psychologists away from their traditional assessment functions and into a much larger realm of opportunity and services. Consequently, psychologists began to offer not only stress management but also crisis intervention training, hostage negotiation training, domestic violence workshops, and substance abuse and alcohol treatment.

Many researchers, as well as officers and their families, consider law enforcement to be one of the most stressful of all occupations, with correspondingly reported high rates of divorce, alcoholism, suicide, and other emotional and health problems (Ricciardelli, 2018; Santa Maria et al., 2018; Turgoose et al., 2022). Persons in many occupations may argue that they face more physical danger than law enforcement officers. Construction workers, miners, paramedics, firefighters, and demolition workers are all exposed to potential death or physical injury, and they witness directly the death of other people (see **Focus 2.3**). However, perhaps few occupations encounter the wide variety of stressors, ranging from organizational demands (e.g., shift work) to the nature of police work itself (e.g., exposure to violence, suffering, and tragedy at all levels), as consistently as law enforcement. An additional source of stress in the current political climate is the tension between police and the community they serve in communities across the country, where shootings by police have resulted in citizen distrust and, in some cases, federal investigations.

A common strategy employed in the police stress literature is to divide the occupational stressors identified by police officers into four major categories: (1) organizational, (2) task related, (3) external, and (4) personal.

### Organizational Stress

**Organizational stress** refers to the emotional effects that the policies and practices of the police department have on the individual officer. These may include poor pay, excessive paperwork, insufficient training, inadequate equipment, weekend duty, shift work, inconsistent discipline or rigid enforcement of rules and policies, limited promotional opportunities, poor supervision and administrative support, and poor relationships with supervisors or colleagues. Rural police officers and sheriff's deputies often deal with limited training, old equipment, lack of proper resources, and outdated technology (Page & Jacobs, 2011; Ricciardelli, 2018). Organizational stressors in major departments may also include antagonistic subcultures within the department, such as intense competition between specialized units, precincts, or even shifts. Being investigated by the internal affairs division is another troubling stressor. Also, the organizational structure of large police departments often promotes office politics, lack of effective consultation, nonparticipation in decision making, and restrictions on behavior. In fact, organizational stressors have been considered to be the most prevalent and frustrating source of stress for law enforcement personnel (Bakker & Heuven, 2006; Finn & Tomz, 1997; Turgoose et al., 2022).

### Task-Related Stress

**Task-related stress** is generated by the nature of police work itself. These stressors include inactivity and boredom; situations requiring the use of force; responsibility of protecting others; the use of discretion; the fear that accompanies danger to oneself and colleagues; dealing with violent or disrespectful, uncivil individuals; making critical decisions; frequent exposure to death; continual exposure to people in pain or distress; and the constant need to keep one's emotions under close control. In many rural police or sheriff's departments, the officer must deal with the situation alone or without immediate backup.

One area of stress that is rarely mentioned in the research literature is the interactions police often have with juveniles. Police are usually trained to interact with juveniles the same way they treat adults (Arrigo & Sellers, 2022). "Police psychology research on recruitment, selection, and training illustrates the fact that law enforcement officers are not given any specific or systematic direction on how to interact with youth, including how to interpret adolescent misbehavior and developmental immaturity (Arrigo & Sellers, 2022, p. 135). More specifically, officers often become hasty and punitive when dealing with adolescent misconduct or defiance (Arrigo & Sellers, 2022; Thurau, 2009). When dealing with adolescents, some officers simply lose their patience.

Police are expected to keep their emotions under control, a process that has been referred to as "emotional labor" (G. A. Adams & Buck, 2010; Grandey, 2000). Furthermore, they must regulate their emotional *expressions* to conform to societal norms and expectations. Although this is expected to some degree in many other occupations (e.g., lawyers, physicians, health care workers), this is especially expected of police officers on a day-to-day basis. Police officers are expected to regulate their emotions to display a facial and physical expression that is neutral, solid, and controlled. Moreover, police officers are expected to master the art of constantly switching between a more human response and the control of emotional expression (Bakker & Heuven, 2006) because sometimes a more "human" response is desired, as when an officer must inform people of the death of a loved one. Grandey (2000) calls this emotional regulation "surface acting," which is accomplished

by suppressing the emotion that is actually felt (e.g., anger or sadness) and faking the appropriate emotion that the situation (or job) demands. Some researchers refer to this response as *emotional dissonance* (G. A. Adams & Buck, 2010). In essence, “emotional dissonance is the discrepancy between authentic and displayed emotions as part of the job” (Bakker & Heuven, 2006, p. 426). Increasing evidence supports the view, however, that emotional dissonance has detrimental effects on health and well-being (Heuven & Bakker, 2003).

Perhaps the most troubling task-related stress in police work is dealing with **critical incidents**. These are emergencies and disasters that are nonroutine and unanticipated, such as an active shooter or a family hostage-taking situation involving young children. These events tend to be very stressful primarily because they threaten the perceived control of the police officers (Paton, 2006) and have the potential to cause many deaths and injuries. In an incident in Minnesota in early 2024, police and first responders received a 911 domestic violence call and proceeded to a house where a person had barricaded himself with seven family members, all children. Two officers and an EMT/firefighter were killed, and one officer was injured. The suspect was found dead in the house, and the children were rescued.

Police officers in the United States experience on average at least three critical incidents or traumatic experiences in their policing experience (Turgoose et al., 2022). Critical incidents can produce a number of psychological, neurological, and physical symptoms in responding officers, including confusion, disorientation, chest pain, sweating, rapid heart rate, and loss of memory. These symptoms may occur during or shortly after the critical incident. However, delayed postincident stress symptoms may occur weeks or months after the incident. These delayed symptoms include restlessness, chronic fatigue, sleep disturbances, nightmares, irritability, depression, problems in concentration, and misuse of alcohol or illegal substances. In addition, officers are often concerned about how they reacted in critical incidents, and they want to know whether their psychological reactions were normal and appropriate (Trompetter et al., 2011). For example, confrontations that might involve the use of deadly force are rapidly unfolding, ambiguous, and highly dangerous, and after the incident the officer is often unsure whether they performed adequately (Trompetter et al., 2011).

Considerable research strongly supports the effectiveness of immediate intervention after the officer experiences traumatic events (Trompetter et al., 2011; A. T. Young, Fuller, & Riley, 2008). Moreover, it appears that this intervention is especially effective if it occurs at or near the location of the crisis (Everly et al., 2001; A. T. Young et al., 2008), which is not easily achievable. Some psychologists work as members, advisors, or consultants on critical incident stress management (CISM) teams, also called critical incident stress debriefing (CISD) teams. The primary focus of these teams is to minimize the harmful effects of job stress as a result of very unusual crisis or emergency situations.

### External Stress

**External stress** refers to an officer’s ongoing frustration with the courts, the prosecutor’s office, the criminal justice process, the correctional system, the media, or public attitudes. Available data suggest that for every 100 felony arrests, 86 are typically dismissed or not prosecuted (Hechinger, 2023). Although this is not necessarily a bad thing, police often find it troubling. Moreover, many law enforcement officers feel court appearances are excessively time consuming, and they are often frustrated over what they perceive as inefficiency and “unjust” court decisions.

Another example of stress from external sources is that arising from police–citizen relationships, particularly when tied to violent encounters that may or may not involve excessive force. Since 1991, when the infamous incident involving the arrest of Rodney King was captured on



a video recording, many other police–citizen or police–suspect encounters have been recorded on cell phones, street cameras, and police body cameras, and they are often circulated on social media, particularly if they involved the use of excessive force. As noted earlier in the chapter, this has become all the more problematic in recent years.

### Personal Stress

**Personal stress** refers to stressors involving marital or partner relationships, health problems, addictions, peer group pressures, feelings of helplessness and depression, discrimination, sexual harassment, and lack of accomplishment. Some officers worry about their competency to do the job well or worry about doing something against regulations. Many police officers feel that the nature of their work has an adverse effect on their home life and social life. Older officers, because of their long, stressful careers, are especially vulnerable to serious physical and mental health problems (Gershon et al., 2002). In addition, female officers appear to be more prone to depressive symptoms and suicide due to stress factors than male officers (Violanti et al., 2009). This finding does not imply a weakness on the part of the officer; rather, it is more likely a symptom of the traditional male environment in which the female officer works.

It is not surprising that police departments are increasingly hiring either full-time police psychologists or psychological, counseling, or mental health consultants who are available to consult on cases as well as offer their services to individual officers and their families. Delprino and Bahn (1988) reported that 53% of police agencies in their sample used counseling services for job-related stress. Since that survey, police psychologists moved from providing counseling services for stress to a broad range of law enforcement-related activities (Dietz, 2000). About one third of the agencies surveyed by Dietz (2000) hired psychologists to provide relevant workshops and seminars. In addition, many support groups for families of police officers are appearing throughout the United States, frequently at the instigation of police spouses who band together to discuss and solve common problems. In some cases, police psychologists provide therapy or group counseling sessions to spouses or other family members of law enforcement officers without the participation of the officers themselves (Trompetter, 2017).

Peer counseling programs are available in a number of departments, but many police officers prefer to work with mental health professionals who are knowledgeable about police work but who are *not* police officers themselves. Officers are often resistant to discussing with other police officers the problems that are generally unacceptable within the police culture, such as sexual problems, fear of getting hurt, or inability to use force when perceived to be necessary in the line of duty. This varies, though, because other officers distrust clinicians whom they may see as working for the police administration. In any case, it seems that psychologists must be careful *not* to try to act and talk like police officers as a means of gaining acceptance, or they may be labeled as “cop wannabes.” Nonetheless, psychologists who consult with police should not hesitate to be on the premises and allow members of the department to get to know them on a more casual basis (C. Mitchell & Dorian, 2020).

As mentioned earlier, most law enforcement officers have experienced at least three highly stressful or highly traumatic situations, though they have not necessarily sought professional help in dealing with them. It is the atypical officer, for example, who has *never* been worried about getting hurt, *never* experienced marital or relationship problems, *never* been devastated after seeing a dead child, and *never* had sleep problems. At least one of these must have been experienced. In the following sections, we will cover two situations that are less common and thus perhaps far more problematic to the individual officer who experiences them.

## Postshooting Traumatic Reaction

A **postshooting traumatic reaction (PSTR)** represents a collection of emotions and psychological response patterns that may occur after a law enforcement officer shoots a person in the line of duty—which in itself is usually considered a critical incident. The traumatic reaction is especially likely when the victim dies. Fortunately, in contrast to what is depicted in so many media portrayals of police work, most law enforcement officers complete their career without ever firing a weapon in the line of duty.

Nonetheless, officer-involved shootings are the subject of both media and psychological research on cognitive science as it applies in forensic settings (Herrera et al., 2015; Sharps & Hess, 2008; Godfrey et al., 2024). Stressful effects on the officers also are studied. The most common psychological problem after a serious critical incident is posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a psychological problem that results in a series of emotional reactions in persons who have either witnessed or experienced a traumatic event. Prevalence rates of PTSD among law enforcement officers vary widely (Jørgensen & Elklit, 2022). Such symptoms among police officers after a serious critical incident range from 7% to 19% (Brucia et al., 2017). According to Brucia et al. (2017), “Duty-related critical incidents most strongly associated with PTSD are killing someone in the line of duty, the death of a fellow officer, and physical assaults” (p. 121). Some research on police officers in the United States discovered that many officers experienced their first serious traumatic event within the first 6 months of active duty (Galatzer-Levy et al., 2011).

Shooting incidents are not the only factor in precipitating PTSD or stressful reactions in police officers. Law enforcement officers can be traumatized “by other incidents that resonated with their personal lives and struggles, as well as other types of life-threatening on-duty incidents” (Rouse et al., 2015, pp. 102–103). For example, witnessing a fatally injured child after a car accident can be a highly stressful event for any police officer.

The standard operating procedure in large agencies after a critical incident—such as a shooting or another stressful event—is to immediately contact the on-duty postshooting peer support team members and/or the police psychologist. The psychologist will consult with supervisors to determine whether to meet with the involved officers at that time or see the officer at a later time. Police psychologists generally realize that many police officers have a reputation for shunning mental health services under a wide range of circumstances. L. Miller (1995) writes that some officers have a notion of the psychotherapy experience as akin to brainwashing or as a humiliating, infantilizing experience. More commonly, the idea of needing “mental help” implies weakness, cowardice, and lack of ability to do the job.

Despite cynicism toward mental health professionals, many agencies require that the involved officer or officers receive immediate attention from both the peer support group and the police psychologist, regardless of the circumstances. Some agencies provide a “companion officer” as soon as possible, preferably a trusted colleague who has been through an officer-involved shooting themselves (Trompetter et al., 2011). Some researchers (e.g., Kamena et al., 2011) note that psychologists have a valuable role to play in training peer support teams. If the officers see a mental health professional after the incident, Trompetter et al. (2011) assert that—if possible—the most effective postshooting intervention occurs if the officer is offered privileged communication while working with the mental health professional. Nevertheless, in reality, some officers prefer to go to a respected mental health professional than to a peer support group. Both options—the professional psychologist and the peer team—should be available.

## FOCUS 2.3: FIREFIGHTERS, EMTS, AND MORE

The term *public safety personnel* encompasses numerous individuals other than those engaged in law enforcement. Firefighters, EMTs, paramedics, search and rescue workers, emergency dispatchers, and other first responders all keep the public safe and may come into contact with forensic psychologists. These professionals are routinely exposed to crises, disasters, danger, and life-threatening situations, often unexpectedly. They are often responsible for the recovery of the seriously injured and the dead, and in many cases, they are expected to console the family and acquaintances of victims at the scene of the tragedy.

On October 6, 2018, 17 young people traveling to a birthday party in broad daylight in a rented stretch limousine were killed in New York State, when the brakes of the vehicle failed and it careened through a stop sign at the bottom of a hill and into the parking lot of a country store. The brakes apparently failed because of inadequate maintenance of the vehicle. Two bystanders and the driver of the limousine were also killed. First responders rushed to the scene and tried to extricate the crash victims. What they witnessed was, of course, indescribable horror. For the next 6 years, these rescuers relived the disaster through media accounts and numerous civil and criminal court hearings.

Public safety professionals also meet challenges during wars (e.g., bombings) and mass shootings. Also, in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, first responders were just as likely as police and other health care professionals to be faced with problems such as the lack of personal protective equipment, masks, and gowns.

As a result of their frequent encounters with trauma, shock, and grief, these public safety professionals—like law enforcement officers—often exhibit trauma-related symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and drug and alcohol problems (Kleim & Westphal, 2011). Research reveals, for example, that 8% to 32% of first responders show signs of PTSD, usually at moderate levels (Haugen et al., 2012).

PTSD and depression, if left unrecognized and untreated, result in significant impairment and inability of public safety personnel to do their jobs effectively. Increasingly, clinical forensic psychologists and police psychologists are used in the screening, selection, training, and treatment of public safety personnel at all levels. At this point, however, while there is growing research literature on the screening and selection of law enforcement applicants, there is very little research on these topics for first responders. Furthermore, effective treatment methods for helping public safety professionals deal with consistent encounters with trauma and tragedy are also heavily weighted toward law enforcement, and very little is directed at other public safety professionals beyond the importance of social and peer support (Haugen et al., 2012; Kirby et al., 2011; Kleim & Westphal, 2011). “The literature is startlingly sparse and is not sufficient for evidence-based recommendations for first responders” (Haugen et al., 2012, p. 370).

### Questions for Discussion

1. In many communities across the United States, firefighters, EMTs, and other first responders work part-time or as community volunteers. Is this part-time or volunteer status likely to affect the likelihood that they will develop task-related adjustment problems?
2. Compare and contrast the work of a firefighter and a law enforcement officer. To what extent are the topics discussed in this chapter relevant to both professions?
3. Consider the work of EMTs and paramedics, such as during the pandemic or a sudden tragedy like the limousine case. Are they as likely to have a “culture” as law enforcement officers? If yes, what might be features of that culture, and how would they be transmitted? To what extent should police and public safety psychologists be attuned to this?

## Police Suicide

Data on the prevalence or frequency of police suicide are extremely difficult to obtain. Law enforcement agencies are often reluctant to allow researchers access to police officer suicide data (O'Hara et al., 2013; Roberts, 2022). Furthermore, the research in the area has been mixed and essentially inconclusive. The common assumption is that the rate of suicide among police officers is one of the highest of any occupational group in the United States (Violanti, 1996). However, a study of police suicide conducted by Aamodt and Stalnaker (2001) indicates that the suicide rate among police officers is significantly well below the rate of suicide in the sector of the population comparable to police officers in age, gender, ethnic/minority, and racial group. Similar results were found in later studies (Aamodt et al., 2015; O'Hara & Violanti, 2009; O'Hara et al., 2013). As noted by Roberts (2022), "it seems that police officers are at no greater risk of suicide than properly matched controls" (p. 124).

Even though suicide rates among police officers may not be higher than found in a comparable population, suicide is still a serious and devastating problem. Each public safety officer who commits suicide leaves behind family, partners, supervisors, friends, and a depressing void within the department (D. W. Clark et al., 2012). Police suicide may result from a number of factors, including psychological reactions to critical incidents, relationship difficulties, internal investigations, financial difficulties, frustration and discouragement, and easy access to weapons (D. W. Clark & White, 2017; Herndon, 2001; Roberts, 2022). The strongest reason for police suicide, however, appears to be difficulties in marital or intimate partner relationships, followed by legal problems and internal investigations (Aamodt & Stalnaker, 2001).

In recent years, police psychologists and other mental health professionals have worked on improving the sophisticated screening procedures and rigorous evaluations at the time of hiring, increased use of stress awareness training, better police training, increased counseling opportunities, and the many services provided by police psychologists and other psychologists working closely with police agencies. A study by Conn and Butterfield (2013) reported that a large segment (80%) of the new generation of police officers expressed a desire for access to mental health resources, including counseling and psychotherapy. As noted earlier, findings such as this suggest that the police cultural resistance toward mental health assistance may be changing.

## OPERATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

A major shift in the role of police psychology in recent years has been in the area of operational support (Dietz, 2000; International Association of Chiefs of Police, Police Psychological Services Section, 2016; C. Mitchell & Dorian, 2020). Though assessment and intervention services continue to be crucial, psychological input has become important in many areas that were previously often overlooked or attended to only minimally. A few, listed by Scrivner et al. (2014), include liability mitigation (minimizing the likelihood of being sued), program evaluation, conflict management within the agency, training to reduce the effects of racial bias, and training to improve police performance in specific skills. Operational support also may include assisting in hostage-taking incidents, crisis negotiations, criminal investigations, and threat assessments. Investigation will be covered in some detail in Chapter 3. Here, we will discuss hostage taking and crisis negotiation.

### Hostage-Taking Incidents

Police and public safety psychologists often serve as consultants, either training for hostage-taking incidents or assisting during the incident itself. A *hostage situation* is characterized by

a person (or persons) holding victims against their will who are used to obtain material gain, deliver a sociopolitical message, or achieve personal advantage. Typically, the hostage taker threatens to take the lives of victims if certain demands are not met within a specified time period. A *barricade situation* is one in which an individual has fortified or barricaded themselves in a residence or public building or structure and threatens violence either to the self or to others. Barricade situations may or may not include the taking of hostages. Included in the broad hostage-taking category are abductions and kidnappings, vehicle abductions (including aircraft or other forms of public transportation), school captive takings, and some acts of terrorism. Nearly 80% of all hostage situations are “relationship driven” in that perceived relationship difficulties and resentment seem to be the precipitating factor (Van Hasselt et al., 2005). Very often the hostage is a significant other, spouse, or close relative.

Police experts have classified hostage takers into four very broad categories: (1) political activists or terrorists, (2) individuals who have committed a crime, (3) prisoners, and (4) individuals with mental disorders (Fuselier, 1988; Fuselier & Noesner, 1990). Political terrorists, who take hostages primarily to gain publicity for their cause, are considered the most difficult to deal with. The hostage crisis associated with the war between Israel and Palestine in 2022–2024 is a case in point. Terrorist demands often go beyond the authority of the local police departments and usually require the involvement of federal officials, and in that case international response. According to Fuselier (1988), political terrorists take hostages for four basic reasons:

- (a) to show the public that the government cannot protect its own citizens; (b) to virtually guarantee immediate coverage and publicity for their cause; (c) to support their hope that after repeated incidents the government will overreact and place excessive restrictions on its citizens; and (d) to demand the release of members of their group who have been incarcerated. (p. 176)

The hostage taker who committed a crime is usually trapped while committing the crime, such as robbery or domestic violence, and is trying to negotiate some form of escape. Prisoners, on the other hand, usually take hostages (typically correctional personnel) to protest conditions within the correctional facility. Persons with mental illness take hostages for a variety of reasons but primarily to establish their sense of control over their life situations. Research suggests that more than 50% of all hostage-taking incidents are perpetrated by individuals with mental conditions (Borum & Strentz, 1993; Grubb, 2010). Consequently, the need for well-trained psychologists as part of the crisis negotiation team is becoming increasingly apparent to many police agencies. However, in many departments, consulting psychologists participate in training sessions to prepare officers for possible hostage-taking incidents, whether or not they participate during a hostage-taking crisis.

Hostage negotiation is essentially a tactical team endeavor, which, as just indicated, may or may not involve the assistance of a psychologist (Palarea et al., 2012). The hostage taker or takers hold and threaten others under their control, and the negotiation team may defuse the situation without other assistance. Or, hostage taking may require a tactical response, such as a SWAT team or another specialized unit, when—despite negotiation efforts—a peaceful resolution appears unlikely (Vecchi et al., 2005).

Research data reveal that in about 83% of the cases, hostages are released without serious injury (Daniels et al., 2010; McMains & Mullins, 2013). W. Butler and colleagues (1993) discovered that police agencies that used a psychologist on the scene or in some other capacity (e.g., phone conversation) to assess suspects reported significantly fewer incidents in which the hostage taker killed or seriously injured a hostage. More specifically, nonpolice agencies that used a psychologist reported more hostage incidents ending by negotiated surrender and fewer

incidents resulting in the serious injury or death of a hostage. The data confirmed the observation that psychologists can make valuable contributions in resolving nonterrorist hostage incidents with a lessened chance of injury or death.

## Crisis Negotiation

Crisis negotiation is very similar to hostage negotiation, except *crisis negotiation* is a more general term, involving a broad range of situations and strategies. All hostage taking is a crisis, but not all crises are hostage-taking incidents. For example, a jumper situation is a special crisis involving thoughts of suicide by a depressed or highly emotionally upset person, requiring empathy, understanding, and considerable psychological skill. Police psychologists are more directly involved in crisis than in hostage situations. Most cases of crisis negotiation are due to a significant loss or rejection, termination from employment, financial problems, or a decline in health (Vecchi et al., 2005).

Law enforcement and public safety personnel are often present in crisis situations that do not involve hostage taking. “Crisis negotiation is closely linked to the behavioral sciences and, more specifically, to psychology” (Palarea et al., 2012, p. 281). It should be noted that the psychological procedures involved in modern hostage and crisis intervention techniques were first formulated by PhD psychologist and police officer Harvey Schlossberg of the New York City Police Department in 1973 (Murillo, 2022). He was also instrumental in establishing the Psychological Services Department in the same New York police agency.

Palarea et al. (2012) posit that the knowledge, skills, and training possessed by psychologists are well suited for operational application to crisis negotiations. The negotiation task, for example, may involve talking a suicidal person down from jumping off a bridge or ledge of a high office building, where a tactical response is uncalled for. You do not usually send a SWAT team in to prevent someone from committing suicide, although there are exceptions. One might be a “suicide-by-cop” situation, where an armed person is threatening to kill police but taunting them to kill him first.

It should be emphasized that communication skills are the most effective method for resolving crisis situations involving hostage taking, barricade situations, or threats of suicide (St-Yves et al., 2022). Any type of forceful resolution attempt usually is unsuccessful, compared to skillful and thoughtful communication (St-Yves et al., 2022).

In many crisis situations, law enforcement officers can be trained by psychologists to effectively negotiate, and the crisis negotiation team—like the hostage negotiation team—may comprise both law enforcement officers and police psychologists. As noted by A. T. Young (2016), “A primary negotiator endeavors to understand and have empathy for the individuals involved, allow for emotional expression, establish a relationship of trust, develop rapport, and then tries to problem solve and find solutions for the situation at hand” (p. 310). The perpetrators may be highly emotional, under the influence of drugs or alcohol, suicidal, violent, stressed, or struggling with psychological disorders (A. T. Young, 2016). St-Yves et al. (2022) emphasize that in most crisis situations the person in distress typically moves through three stages: (1) the acute or emotional stage; (2) the problem-solving stage where the distressed person becomes more rational and focused on solving the problem; and (3) the acceptance or resignation stage, which includes the ability to accept and face the consequences. This communication process can take a few hours, or even a few days.

Gelles and Palarea (2011) and Palarea et al. (2012) point out that police psychologists have several important roles during crisis negotiations. They are (1) preincident duties, (2) intraincident duties, and (3) postincident duties. During the preincident phase, psychologists may provide psychological screening and selection of negotiators; deliver training to

negotiators on the psychological aspects that are pertinent to crisis negotiations, such as active listening and persuasion techniques; and suggest strategies for a quick threat and violence risk assessment. (This should be distinguished from threat and violence risk assessments performed by psychologists in other contexts, which are complex and will be discussed in later chapters.)

During the intraincident phases, the psychologist on the premises may monitor the negotiations, offer advice on the emotional state and behavior of the individual in crisis, and assist negotiators in influencing the person's behaviors and intentions. During the postincident phase, the psychologist may provide stress management strategies, debriefing, and counseling services to the crisis management team. This may be especially needed if the crisis was not resolved successfully but is still relevant even if the worst possible situation was successfully averted.

Palarea et al. (2012) recommend that the psychologist involved in the intraincident phase of the operation not be the psychologist to offer postincident debriefing or counseling to the crisis team. The psychologist involved in the intraincident phase is a member of the crisis team and may be unable to maintain the necessary objectivity during the postincident phase.

Individuals aspiring to be on the crisis negotiation teams as psychologists, however, should realize that multiyear training—as expected of all crisis negotiation team members—is necessary to become an effective member of the team. This includes not only crisis negotiation training but also the appropriate level of operational experience and training (Gelles & Palarea, 2011). Part of that training may require some “street experience” such as ride-alongs with experienced officers and observations of seasoned officers in hostage or other crisis situations. “The chaos of the field or street situation, the military-like police command structure, and presence of real personal risk can come as quite a shock, no matter how professionally well trained one is” (Hatcher et al., 1998, p. 463). The negotiator should have interview and listening skills; the ability to deal with stressful situations; and an easy-going, nonconfrontational personality style (Terestre, 2005). They should be ready to be called, 24 hours a day.

In addition, psychologists aspiring to be involved in crisis negotiation should remain mindful of how individuals within various cultures and ethnicities differ (Gelles & Palarea, 2011). In recent years, there has been a discernible shift in the cultural diversity of hostage takers and other crisis situations (Giebels & Noelanders, 2004). This trend demands that psychologists increase their efforts to study and identify cultural differences in approaches to social interaction and understand how violent individuals from various cultures are likely to react to efforts to dissuade them from causing harm to their victims or themselves (Giebels & Taylor, 2009). According to Giebels and Taylor (2009), “a more sophisticated understanding of cross-cultural communication will help police formulate culturally sensitive negotiation strategies and enhance their appreciation of why perpetrators react the way they do” (p. 5). In addition, forensic psychologists and other mental health personnel can play a critical role in the training of negotiators and police officers by providing workshops and training sessions in cultural differences in persuasive arguments during crisis negotiations.

In years past, an estimated 30% to 58% of law enforcement agencies with a crisis or hostage negotiation team used a mental health professional in some capacity, of which 88% were psychologists as opposed to psychiatrists, social workers, and other professionals (W. Butler et al., 1993; Hatcher et al., 1998). More recently, the use of psychologists on crisis/hostage negotiation teams appears to be on the increase (Call, 2008; C. Mitchell & Dorian, 2020; St-Yves et al., 2022; Scrivner et al., 2014; Van Hasselt et al., 2005).

## CONSULTING AND RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

In describing the roles of the consulting police psychologist, Aumiller and Corey (2007) mention the development of performance appraisal systems, which “involves the design and development of organizational policies, processes and instruments for measurement and feedback of individual job performance” (p. 75). These activities are intended to improve performance and help in the career development of the individual officer. In some cases, they may be used in promotional considerations. Consulting psychologists may also be expected to participate in the resolution of interpersonal conflict among individuals within the organization or between the department and the community.

Consulting psychologists often do some training and education to assist agency personnel in optimizing their leader, management, and supervisory effectiveness (Aumiller & Corey, 2007). In recent years, many departments in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada have asked psychologists for assistance in training officers in such areas as interviewing witnesses and suspects (Brewster et al., 2016; Eastwood et al., 2018, 2019). We discuss this more in Chapter 3. In general, consulting and in-house psychologists are frequently shifting their roles to meet the crisis or problems that must be dealt with on an ongoing basis. In this section, we discuss efforts police administrators have made to create opportunities for persons from various gender, racial, and ethnic groups.

### Promoting Diversity

Before the 1970s, many police departments did not hire people of color (G. F. Cole & Smith, 2001), and female officers, few in number, were often restricted to specified duties, such as processing female arrestees or interviewing child witnesses. However, the makeup of departments and assigning women to limited duties changed beginning in that decade.

Improvements in racial and ethnic diversity nationwide in police departments and federal law enforcement agencies have been noted over the past 20 years. The largest increase in recent years has been Hispanics or Latinx (Brooks, 2022a). In the federal system, across many law enforcement agencies, people from various racial and ethnic groups made up one third of officers with arrest and firearm authority in 2016 (Brooks, 2019b, 2022a).

On the whole, persons of various racial and ethnic groups are better represented in law enforcement than are persons of various gender groups. It is important to stress that when it comes to gender, data typically report the binary distinction—men/women, female/male, and so forth. We are not given data (nor are they typically collected) on persons who are nonbinary. Therefore, we must only focus on the binary distinction.

At the turn of the 21st century, women remained a small minority in law enforcement nationwide, comprising only 11.5% of active-duty police officers in the United States (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2016), a figure that is about 3 percentage points higher than in 1990. In 2022, the percentage had risen slightly, to 13% (Calabro & Meisenholder, 2023). In large departments, women account for 16% of the sworn officers (Hyland & Davis, 2019). In small and rural departments (fewer than 100 police officers), women comprise an even smaller number (8%) of the officers (Hyland & Davis, 2019). In major metropolitan areas and in cities where a few women are police chiefs, the percentages may be higher. In both the federal law enforcement system and sheriff's departments across the nation, 14% of officers with arrest and firearm authority in 2016 were women (Brooks, 2019a, 2019b, 2022a).



The major long-term impediment to women gaining a greater proportion of representation in law enforcement agencies across the country is the common perception that policing is a male-oriented profession, requiring physical strength and a display of physical prowess for many of the tasks. This perception seems to hold even though women are as capable at police work as men. Moreover, female police officers are far less likely than male officers to use force or excessive force, while maintaining effective policing strategies (Bergman et al., 2016). In addition, female officers have more positive impact on communities, have greater empathy, and are better able to communicate with the public (Todak, 2017). As noted, research also shows that women officers are less likely to use force and less likely to use excessive force. Their approach to policing is less confrontational in general, they have a calming effect on male officers in high-stress situations, and they are named less frequently in citizen complaints (Calabro & Meisenholder, 2023). However, those who might be attracted to law enforcement work may be reluctant to apply when a department has the reputation of being hostile toward women or has a high female officer turnover rate that can be partly due to on-the-job harassment from other officers.

In 2022, of the 13% of full-time female police officers, 3% were in leadership positions (Calabro & Meisenholder, 2023). Approximately 7% of these were in top command positions, such as chiefs, assistant chiefs, commanders, and captains, and 10% were in supervisory positions such as lieutenants and sergeants. Female officers *as a group* generally possess better communication and social skills than their male colleagues and are better able to facilitate the cooperation and trust required to implement a community policing model (Bergman et al., 2016; Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2001). It is important to stress group rather than individual differences, because many male officers also possess communication and social skills and can adapt well to a community policing model. Women also may respond more effectively than men in situations involving violence against women (such as domestic abuse or sexual assault), although more research is needed in the area. Some research (e.g., Rabe-Hemp & Schuck, 2007) suggests that female officers may be at greater risk of being assaulted in domestic violence situations, especially when the assailant is drug or alcohol impaired. Nevertheless, hiring more women is likely to be an effective way of addressing the problems of excessive force and citizen complaints and also of improving community policing in general. It should also reduce the problems of gender discrimination and sexual harassment by changing the climate of the agency.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Psychologists have consulted with various law enforcement agencies in the United States and other countries, such as Canada and the United Kingdom, throughout the 20th century, but police psychology as a subfield of applied psychology was not officially recognized until the late 1960s or early 1970s. Since then, it has expanded rapidly and is more commonly referred to as police and public safety psychology. It was recognized by the American Psychological Association as a specialty in 2013. The many professional organizations devoted to this work and the increasing number of publications in the professional literature attest to the fact that police and public safety psychology is thriving.

We reviewed briefly the history of this specialty, beginning with early intelligence testing and continuing to the present, when services are provided in a large range of areas. We also provided

information about various law enforcement agencies in the United States today, including federal, state, local, and tribal entities.

Law enforcement agents have many positive interactions with the public they serve, but it is crucial to recognize at the outset that problems occur. These problems include but are not limited to contacts with persons of color, persons who self-identify as LGBTQ+, and persons with serious mental conditions. Racial bias among police has received increasing attention in recent years, particularly in relation to highly publicized shootings of unarmed Black suspects. A substantial amount of research has been done on this topic. Likewise, current research indicates that interactions with the LGBTQ+ community and people with serious mental illness need to be addressed. Programs aiming to do that were covered in the chapter.

We reviewed both classic and recent research on police use of force, including excessive force. Research suggests that officers who received excessive force complaints were more likely to have displayed personality characteristics such as lack of empathy or narcissism, showed evidence of behavior problems early in their careers, had heavy-handed patrol styles, and experienced marital or other relationship problems. However, it is important to emphasize that the culture within a department, as well as its policies, also may encourage the use of force, even in excessive amounts. Many departments have now adopted early warning systems to offer peer and professional support to officers who may be showing signs of problem behaviors, but it is equally important to be alert to an agency's own approach to interacting with the community it serves.

The chapter covered four main domains in which police psychologists today participate. They include psychological assessments in such areas as candidate hiring and fitness-for-duty evaluations; services providing to officers and their families, including stress management; operational responsibilities such as training for hostage-taking situations; and consulting with administrators in areas like optimal shift schedules, training for special operations, program evaluation, or conflict management within the agency.

As indicated throughout the chapter, there is no shortage of tasks to be performed by police and public safety psychologists, and research addressing these tasks is ongoing. In the next chapter, we address still more areas in which today's forensic professionals can make a contribution.

## KEY CONCEPTS

Crisis intervention teams (CITs)	Organizational stress
Critical incidents	Personal stress
Early warning systems	Police culture
Excessive force	Postshooting traumatic reaction (PSTR)
External stress	Preemployment psychological screening
Fitness-for-duty evaluations (FFDEs)	Reasonable officer standard
Job analysis	Screening-in procedures
Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory–Revised (MMPI-2)	Screening-out procedures
Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory–Revised–Restructured Form (MMPI-2-RF)	Shooter bias
	Task-related stress

**QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW**

1. What is meant by police culture? Can it be characterized as universal?
2. Give examples of each of the four types of stressors that are common in law enforcement.
3. Other than candidate screening, describe any three special evaluations that might be conducted by a police psychologist.
4. List at least five findings of the research on police interactions with people of color.
5. List at least five findings of the research on police interactions with persons with serious mental illness.
6. Discuss the common psychological reactions police may have to a shooting incident.
7. What is shooter bias, and what have researchers learned about it?

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