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## **Crime Control**

### **Question One**

Police misconduct is quite common in police operations, raising concerns about their role in public service. The misconduct ranges from brutality, coercion during interrogations, and racial profiling, thus causing harm and violating the victims' rights. While there may be several explanations about police misconduct, a study by Donner et al. (2016) sought in examining role of self-control on law enforcers misconduct. Resulting information from a study of a hundred and one police supervisors indicated that self-control measured as per the provisions of Gottfredson and Hirschi's theory was highly correlated with police misconduct (Donner et al., 2016). In addition, the study showed that there was possibility of future misconduct explained by self-control of the police. The study affirmed that both the original (personal trait) and new version (rational choice) of self-control theory were appropriate in explaining self-control in committing crimes. Therefore, both low self-control and internal inhibitors explained the choices police made when delivering their services. The police supervisors felt a position of power and the lack of self-control pushed them to engage in criminal behaviors that they found quite appealing and beneficial. The findings were quite similar to those of Gottfredson & Hirschi's theory, which provided lacking self-control is a main factor in explaining misconduct among the police.

In the general theory of crime, crime is described as a means of getting immediate satisfaction; thus, the inability to delay short-term desires is seen as lack of self-control. Gottfredson & Hirschi claim individuals with minimal self-control portray a high propensity to commit crimes when an opportunity presents (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). However, the

opportunities for misconduct are many, thus leaving lack of self-control as the main drive of misconduct. Self-control is determined by a person's early development, thus eliminating age for those who engage in criminal behavior. An individual can lack self-control due to parents' failure to monitor children's behavior or note some inappropriate misconduct at childhood (Gottfredson & Hirschi, 1990). Gottfredson and Hirschi's added that parents with limited skills in self-control might find it difficult to teach self-control to their children. Individuals who have self-control can easily resist impulsive criminal behaviors, while those lack self-controls tend to act at the moment and prefer the easier root to problems.

Following the provisions of self-control theory, it is easy to explain the police misconduct witnessed today. For instance, a police officer can easily take a bribe to cater to their financial needs at the time. In another instance, brutal police officers might harm an individual when offended as it is seen as the easier route compared to the lengthy court processes. In that case, the provisions of the theory are important in directing police institutions to closely evaluate the behaviors and conduct of individuals who are joining the force. More so, the research aims to inform institutions that determine social control programs. For instance, the self-control theory can form the basis of programs that help parents to bring up children appropriately from an early age in line with the expectations of the society.

### **References**

- Donner, C. M., Fridell, L. A., & Jennings, W. G. (2016). The relationship between self-control and police misconduct: A multi-agency study of first-line police supervisors. *Criminal Justice and Behavior*, 43(7), 841-862.
- Gottfredson, M. R., & Hirschi, T. (1990). *A general theory of crime*. Stanford University Press.

## Question Two

In the USA, the government utilizes <sup>1</sup> **Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994** to prohibit unlawful misconduct. The Act provides that no government authority or persons associated with the government will engage in practices that deprive other people's rights and privileges (Alpert et al., 2017). To enforce the Act on police misconduct, the Department of Justice (DOJ) establishes Consent Decrees if there is a reason to believe that police departments are engaging in practices that violate civil rights. The agreement is submitted in a court of law in writing and becomes legally binding upon approval by a judge. DOJ uses consent decrees as a tool to reduce police misconduct while dealing with the public.

Police misconduct has always been a major in the USA and Consent Decrees have proved to help control the misconduct in certain instances. However, the precise effectiveness of the agreements cannot be defined due to the few decrees established for the short time the phenomenon has been in play. Research that focused on 23 police departments under consent decrees indicated that the agreements effectively reduce violation of civil rights. The results showed an average of 25% drop of suits against the department since the intervention of consent decrees (Goh, 2020). In another case, consent decrees were noted to effectively reduce the death cases pinned on police officers but in the presence of monitoring teams. To be precise, there was a 29% decrease in deaths when monitor teams were assigned to the police departments, while no significant changes were recorded in the absence of monitor teams (Goh, 2020). Therefore, we can conclude that Consent Decrees are crucial in reducing police misconduct, but necessary monitoring and extensive application are required for the process to be effective.

The effectiveness of <sup>1</sup> Violent Crime Control Section 14141 and Law Enforcement Act of 1994 dwells on provision for DOJ in addressing allegations made against police institutions regarding patterns and practices. Section 14141 gives the DOJ the power to go through law enforcement agencies' practices to determine whether any civil rights, immunities or provisions according to the US law have been violated (Alper et al., 2017). Once discrepancies are established, the DOJ can decide to sue the police departments in the quest to obtain an equitable way to eliminate the unfair practice. Consent Decrees are one of the actions that DOJ takes in addressing the improper practices. The decrees ban the police institution against the practice, but they also require maintenance of police systems to a level that ensures compliance (Alper et al., 2017). Section 14141 of the Act becomes effective by offering the DOJ the authority to investigate practices, drive policies and use the policy in improving police transparency and conduct. It is through the Acts provisions that Consent decrees come into play and bring along their benefits. However, bureaucratic procedures and requirements are a major barrier to effective performance of the DOJ and thus an explanation to why consent decrees are not used extensively.

### References

- Alpert, G. P., McLean, K., & Wolfe, S. (2017). Consent decrees: An approach to police accountability and reform. *Police Quarterly*, 20(3), 239-249.
- Goh, L. S. (2020). *THE POLICY EVALUATION OF MEASURES TO REDUCE POLICE USE OF FORCE* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pennsylvania).

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