## Police Process

Dae-Hoon Kwak  
Michigan State University  
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Lecture 6  
Police Officers II:  
On the Job

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### Outline for the lecture

- Explain the reality shock experienced by new officers
- Identify factors that influence P.O attitudes and behaviors
- Describe the changing composition of rank and file in policing
- Explain issues related to career development
- Discuss factors related to job satisfaction and job stress

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### Reality Shock: Beginning Police Work

- **Encountering Citizens**
  - Attitudes change significantly during the first weeks and months (i.e., organizational socialization)
  - Hostility from citizens (vs. help people)
  - Being stereotyped
    - Citizens feel uncomfortable
    - Isolated from the public
  - Being required to perform society's "dirty work"
    - Officers handle tasks no one else want to perform
    - These effects accumulate over time

- **Encountering CJ system**
  - Officers see firsthand how the system works:
    - Arrest dispositions
    - Cases plea-bargained
    - How judges work
    - Incompetence among prosecutors, attorneys, judges
  - Become cynical about the effectiveness and fairness of the system
  - React negatively to manner in which they are treated by those in the system

- **Encountering the Department**
  - Many officers have the most hostility toward the Dept.
  - "Politics" of the organization
    - Org. do not act in a rational and efficient manner
    - Some supervisor are incompetent
    - Promotions not necessarily based on merit
    - Hard work may not be rewarded
    - Best approach is to do little as possible
    - Avoid potential troubling situations
  - Conflict between rank and file officers and manager

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### The Seniority System

- New officers generally assigned to Patrol, High crime areas, and evening shift
- Officers with more experience have first priority in requesting assignments
- Positive side: eliminates favoritism and discrimination
- Negative side
  - Least expected officers get the most difficult assign.
  - As increase in minority and female officer hiring, minorities and female highly represented in undesirable assign.
- Resolution: Improving personnel standards and training
Police Officer Attitudes and Behavior

- The Concept of Organizational Culture
  - The unwritten rules, mores, customs, codes, values, and outlooks that creates the policing environmental style
  - An org.'s culture varies from one agency to another

- Two major explanations for Attitudes and Behavior
  - Sociological aspects of police work: special characteristics, nature of police org. and situational factors
  - Individual officer background characteristics: SES, race, ethnicity, gender, education, etc.

Police Officer Attitudes and Behavior (cont.)

- The Concept of Police "Subculture"
  - First identified in William Westley's study (1950)
  - Aspects of police subculture
    a. Attitude of secrecy toward outsiders to investigate the realities of police work
    b. Eagerness to help someone needing assistance
    c. Extremely complex phenomenon
    d. Emphasize secrecy, solidarity and violence
    e. A consequence of group solidarity or secrecy which serves as a shield against the attacks from the outside world
    f. Secrecy and "Code of Silence (Blue Curtain)" means that officers refuse to testify against other officers who are accused of misconduct

- The Capacity to Use Force
  - Further isolates officers from the public
  - Bittner: the capacity of use force is the defining feature of the police (vs. other occupations)
  - Powers are inherent in the police role

  Danger: Potential vs. Actual
  - Potential danger (e.g., attacks by citizens) shapes the police subculture (Skolnick)
  - Police work is not the most dangerous occupation (vs. mining)

Cynicism and Authoritarianism (Niederhoffer)

- The police subculture is shaped by cynicism and authoritarianism
- Officers are cynical about both the outside world and the inside world of PD
- "Police personality" associated with authoritarianism

Crank (2004) "Understanding Police Culture"

- Police subculture is shaped by solidarity and loose coupling
- Solidarity develops because the police regularly have conflicts with external groups. So, police have to rely on each other for survival.
- Loose coupling allows police to do their work unhampered by the external inspection of the police administration.

Working Personality (Skolnick)

- Working personality shaped by Danger and Authority
- Officers routinely suspicious of all people because of potential danger
- Officer develop a "perceptual shorthand" of visual cues associated with criminals (e.g., young men, low-income young men, and low-income racial minority men)
  cf. Focal concerns theory of sentencing
Police Officer Attitudes and Behavior (cont.)

- Criticisms of the Traditional Police Subculture Concept
  - Highly focused on negative view of officers, portraying them as isolated, hostile to the public, prejudiced, and opposed to accountability
  - Most of the early research was impressionistic, not systematic (must compare with other occupations), failed to take into account significant changes in police employment
  - Bayley and Mendelsohn found:
    a. P.O.s are average people
    b. They are somewhat more conservative than average public
    c. They are not authoritarian

- The Dimensions of the Police Subculture
  - Herbert in his study of LPD identified six different factors that explain P.O. behavior
    a. The law
    b. Bureaucratic control
    c. The element of "adventure/machismo"
    d. Concern for safety
    e. Competence
    f. Morality
  - The traditional definition of the police subculture is too limited, and there are a number of factors that enter into how officers think about and carry out their jobs

The Changing Rank and File

- Women Police Officers
  - Women into policing
    a. Broken up the traditional solidarity of the work group
    b. No longer appropriate "traditional masculine characteristics"
  - Attitudes of male officers toward female officers (Martin)
    a. Traditional: image of policing as dangerous physical work
    b. Moderns: accept policewomen relatively easily
    c. Moderates: accepted the idea of female officers in principle, did not like the idea of women on patrol duty
  - Percentage of women among S.O. remains at around 13 to 14
  - Style of work is the same as men, but receive fewer citizen complaints, less likely use force

- African American Officers
  - White and black officers have different attitudes about police use of excessive force (e.g., about 50% of B.O. believe that police more likely to use force against blacks vs. 4.5% for white officers)
  - B.O. more likely to support innovation, change, citizen oversight, and CP

- Hispanic Officers
  - Little research on Hispanic/Latino officers
  - H.O believed dept. discriminated against His.citizens and H.O. in promotions (Carter)

The Changing Rank and File (cont.)

- Intersection of Race, Gender, and Sexual Identity
  - In many dept.s, tension and conflict between racial, ethnic and gender groups (e.g., Haarr, W.male officers largely interacted with other W.male officers)

- Education
  - In many dept.s, education generation gap between younger, better educated officers and the veteran officers with less education
  - No strong evidence, but one study found that college-educated officers tended to receive fewer complaints

The Changing Rank and File (cont.)

- The Impact of Training on Performance
  - Training improves performance (common sense), but little evidence to prove this

- Cohort Effects
  - Officers in one decade will differ from officers hired in later decades
  - "Two cultures" among P.O.s
    a. Old street cop culture: values street experience, tough approach to deal with public
    b. Other group: identified with new bureaucratic style (i.e., more accepting of Supreme Court rules on police practices
The Changing Rank and File (cont.)

- Attitudes toward Community Policing
  - Tradition-bound officers have negative attitudes toward CP
  - CAPS (Chicago Alternative Policing Strategy)
    a. Older and A.A. officers more supportive of concept
    b. A.A. officers were “ready for change”
    c. W. officers were more satisfied with the status quo and most pessimistic about the likely success of CAPS
- 12 cities study: officers involved in CP increased job satisfaction, motivation, improvements in co-worker and citizen relationship

Overall, female, racial and ethnical minority, lesbian and gay, and college-educated officers (i.e., not homogenous population) bring different backgrounds and experiences to their job

The Relationship between Attitudes and Behavior

- Research suggests a complex relationship between the attitudes and behavior of members of any occupation (e.g., about 75% of the officers expressed some racial prejudice in the presence of field observers)
- No relationship between officers’ attitudes and their use of force (Terrill)
- Reason attitudes do not translate into behavior is that officers are constrained by dept. and CJ bureaucracy

Styles of Police Work

- Two types
  - Active officers (hardchargers) initiate more contacts with citizens, assert control of situations with citizens, and make more arrests
  - Passive officers (station queens) respond only to dispatched calls, and make few arrests
- Most police-citizen contacts are citizen-initiated
- Many officers make no arrests, small number of officers make a very high proportion of all arrests
- Style differences due to personal temperament and career expectations

Styles of Police Work (cont.)

- Career Styles (Walsh)
  - Street cops: most aggressive
  - Action seekers: initiate activity for immediate excitement
  - Middle-class mobiles: initiate activity for eventual reward
- Typology of Officers based on Power (Muir)
  - Professional: has passion and perspective
  - Enforcers: has passion but no perspective (cynical, coercive)
  - Reciprocators: has perspective but no passion (fail to act)
  - Avoiders: has no passion and perspective (take no action)

Career Development

- One of the most serious problems in American policing is a lack of career opportunities including promotion, rewards for good job performance, and less professional development
  a. Promotions are severely limited (time-in-rank requirement, irregular intervals)
  b. The testing process is controversial
  c. Only way to achieve a significant pay increase in through promotion
  d. Incentive pay for college edu., merit pay, overtime pay
  e. A principal reward available to a P.D. is to be assigned to a special unit
  f. Holding special assign. (coveted assign.) may be a factor in later promotion
  g. Opportunities to move to other agencies is very limited

Traditional Performance Evaluation System

- Concept
  - A written and documented evaluation of a police officers work performance. In general, this is done by a supervisor yearly or more often
  - Official performance evaluations do not reflect actual performance
- Problems
  - The definitions are not clear (don’t explain how effectiveness is to be measured)
Traditional Performance Evaluation System (cont.)

- Problems (cont.)
  - Officers who are rated high on one factor are likely to be rated high on all others (i.e., halo effect)
  - There is tendency to rate everyone highly (i.e., central tendency)
  - Focus on punishing misconduct rather than rewarding good behavior

- New approaches (under CP)
  - Different tasks officers are expected to perform

The Rights of Police Officers

- P.O.s have same civil and constitutional rights as other citizens
- Under 1st amendment, officers have right to belong to political and religious organizations, but rights can be restricted
- Most employers cannot use lie detectors in recruitment (vs. Police agencies are exempt)
- Officers have due process protections
  a. May not fired w/o cause
  b. Guaranteed in part by civil service procedures, union contract

Outside Employment & Turnover

- Outside Employment
  - Many officers supplement income with outside dept. (often in private security where officers wear police uniform)
  - Potential Problems including diminishing officer commitment to police work, conflict of interest (i.e., employment vs. LE)

- Turnover: Leaving police work
  - About 5% of P.O. leave their job each year (steady since the 1960s) because of retirement, death, dismissal, etc.
  - Women (6.3%) leave policing at a slightly higher rate than men (4.8%), also more likely to resign voluntarily (e.g., family)