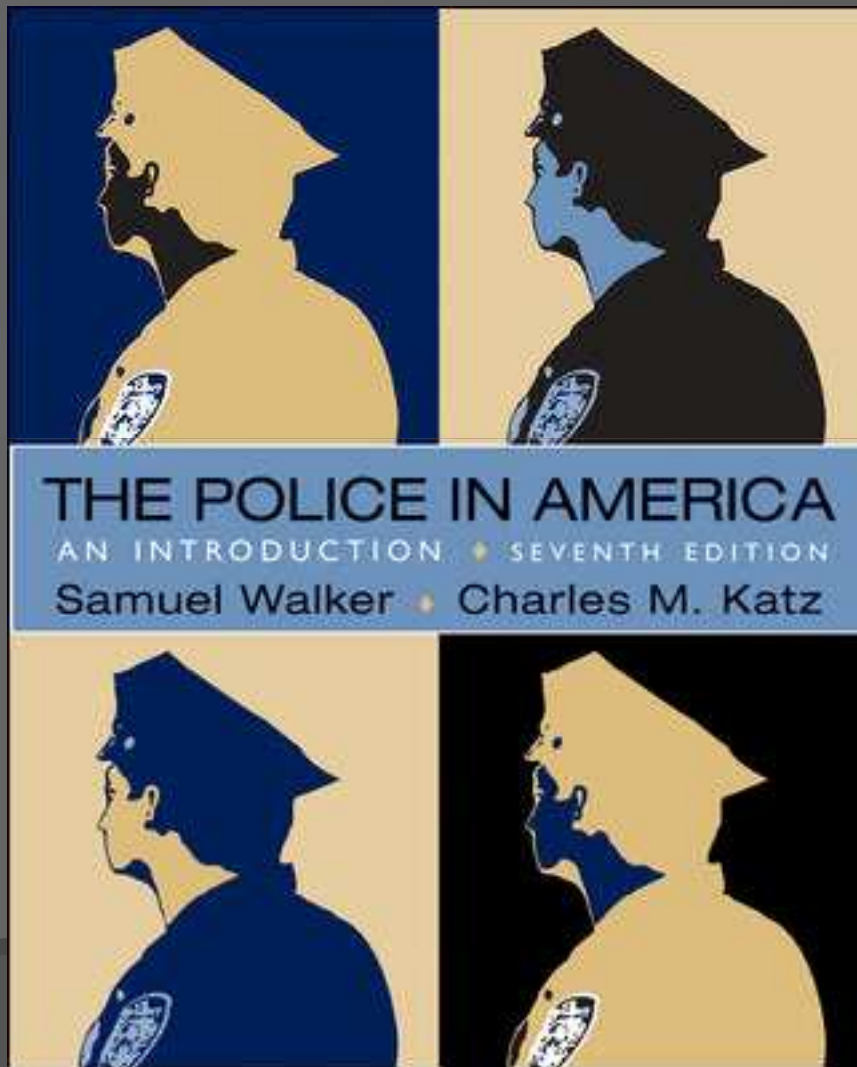


# Police in America



## Chapter Six Police Officers II: On the Job

# Beginning Police Work

- Reality Shock: The astonishment a new police officer experiences during the first weeks and months on the job when encountering the unpleasant aspects of dealing with the public, the criminal justice system, and the department

# Reality Shock

- Encountering Citizens

- Officers rank importance of “listening attentively when the victim expresses feelings” lower after only 4 months on the job
- Hostility (~10% of all encounters)
- Politicians
- Media
- Citizen complaints
- Worst of humanity -- violence, atrocity, people with problems (not much contact with average person)
- Lack of respect from public
- Being stereotyped
- Uncomfortable reactions of public to badge, gun, power

----> Lead to socializing with other police, formation of exclusive subculture

# Reality Shock

- Encountering the Criminal Justice System
  - Police officers as “insiders”
  - See the reality of the system
    - Cases dismissed, plea-bargains, incompetence
    - Cynical about ability of the system to be fair or effective
    - Belief that courts are too lenient
    - Lack of respect from attorneys and judges
      - Education
      - Attempts to discredit, embarrass
- Encountering the Department
  - Department politics
    - Assignments and promotions
    - Hard work is not always recognized or rewarded
  - Incompetence and lack of trust in superiors

# Initial Assignment

## ■ Impact of the Seniority System

- Officers with more experience have first priority in requesting assignments
- (+) Eliminates favoritism and discrimination
- (-) Least experienced officers get the most difficult assignments
  - (-) Patrol, worst areas, busiest shifts, weekends, holidays
  - (+) New officers gain great deal of experience

# The Idea of a Unique Police Subculture

- A particular set of values, beliefs, and acceptable forms of behavior characteristic of a group
- William Westley: occupational sociology study
  - Distinct police subculture exists that emphasizes
    - Group solidarity (grows from common experiences)
    - Violence (ability to use and justify)
    - View that public is the enemy (grows from selective contact)
    - Secrecy, “Code of silence” (consequence of group solidarity and public hostility)
  - Code of silence prevents
    - Police accountability
    - Reduction of corruption
    - Detection of corrupt/violent officers

# Code of Silence

- Also known as the “blue curtain,” or “blue wall”
- Code of honor among police officers whereby officers refuse to testify against corrupt colleagues, creating a veil of secrecy around police actions.
- Secrecy: In this context, it is the attitude displayed by police officers to the rest of the world. Police officers keep secret the misbehaviors of other police officers.
- *What happens to officers who break the code of silence?*

# The Idea of a Unique Police Subculture

## ■ Jerome Skolnick

- Develop “working personality” shaped by danger and authority
- Suspicion of all people, on-guard
- Develop “visual shorthand” to size up level of danger based on sex, age, race, apparent income level, style or dress
- May lead to stereotyping and racial profiling

## ■ The Capacity to Use Force

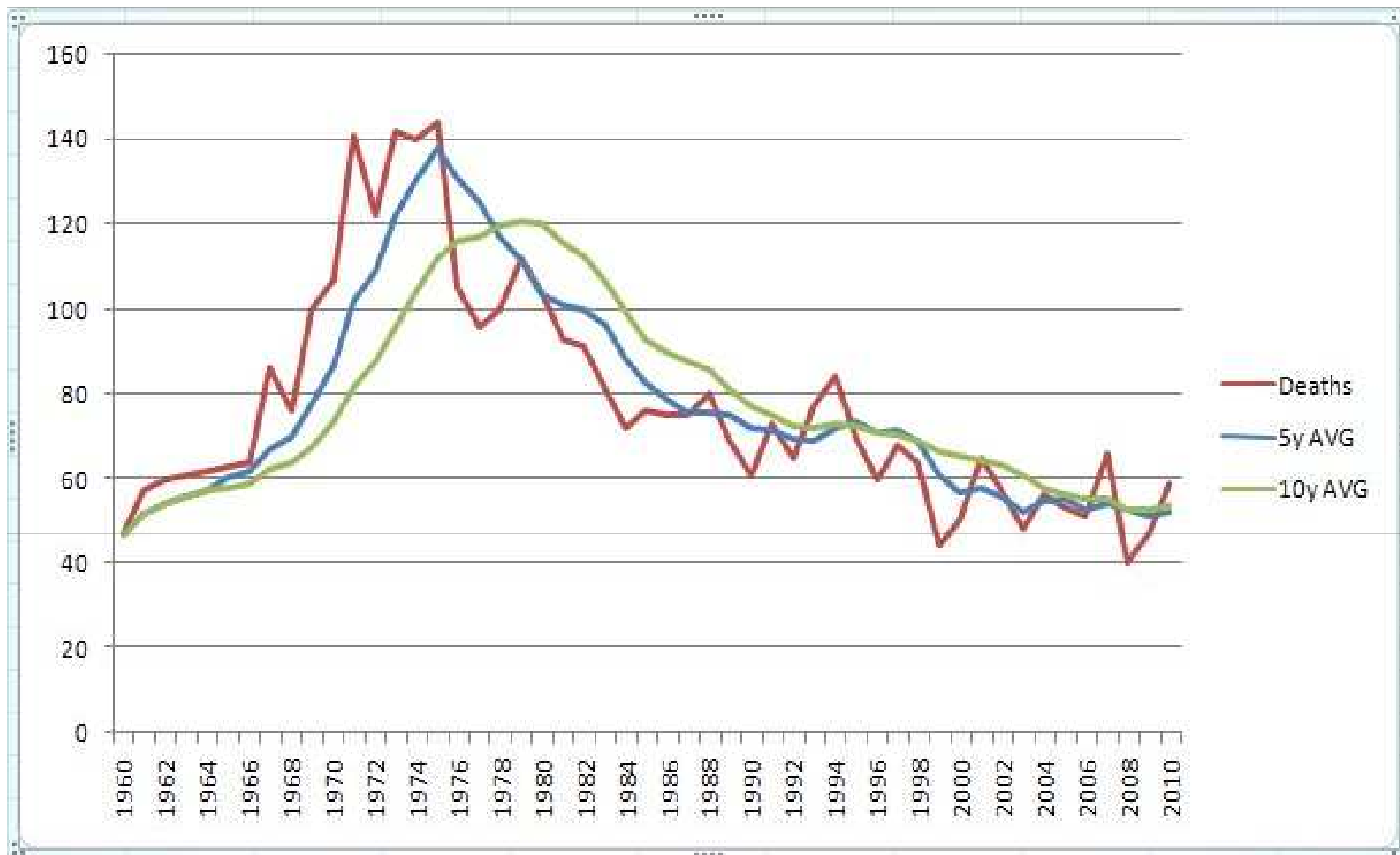
- No other occupation has power to take away liberty through force

## ■ Danger: Potential versus Actual

- Threat of injury or death by criminal means (vs accident in other professions)
- Lack of control
- *Potential* for danger is high, though police work has become safer in the last 20 years

## ■ Conflicting demands: Law versus Order

- Pressure to bend or evade the rules to get evidence or confessions



Number of LEO deaths by gunfire in U.S. since 1960.

# New Perspective on the Police Subculture

- David Sklansky: “Police officers are far less unified today and far less likely to have an us-them view of civilians”
  - Education, professionalization (less macho, less cowboy), more accountability
- Criticism of Westley & Skolnick’s work as “primarily mere opinion”
- Police are really more average, less different than previously thought
  - Slightly more conservative than general population
  - Slightly more idealistic (recruits)

# New Perspective on the Police Subculture

- Steve Herbert's Dimensions of Police Subculture at LAPD
  - Six factors shape & explain police officer behavior
    - **The law** defines boundaries of permissible actions
    - Subject to **bureaucratic control** by members of department and justice system
    - **Culture of “adventure/machismo”** fosters respect of aggressive police work
    - Concern for one's own **safety**
    - **Competence**: officers take pride in their own competence and respect other officers who are competent
    - **Moral judgments**: those whom police judge to be “good” moral people deserve better treatment than those whom police judge to be “bad” moral people
  - Identification with and empathy for “good” people -- lack of empathy for “bad” people

# New Perspective on the Police Subculture

- Herbert
  - morally neutral factors shape police attitudes
  - subculture exists but is not unique, distinct or pathological
- Westley & Skolnick
  - Negative factors shape distinct subculture
- Which theory do you believe is most correct?
- Which aspects do you most agree and disagree with?
- Are these theories adequate? If not, what are they missing?
- Are there any logical extensions you can make from the theories?

# The Changing Rank and File

- Women
- African Americans
- Hispanics
- Asians
- Gay & Lesbian Officers
- Levels of Education
  
- Emphasis on diversity

# The Impact of Women Police Officers

- Susan Martin:
  - Breaks up the traditional solidarity of the work group
  - Different outside interests, expression of traditional male characteristics, friendships
- Attitude of men toward women officers varies
  - Traditionals / Moderns / Moderates
- Percentage of women among sworn officers remains around 13-14%
  - “Glass ceiling” at entry level and in terms of promotion
- Style of work the same as men
- Receive fewer citizen complaints
- Less likely to use force
- Sexism and sexual harassment still an issue
  - More subtle than in early years

# The Impact of Women Police Officers

- What is sexual harassment?
  - Unwanted sexual advances
  - Offensive or demeaning sexually-related behavior
  - Discrimination in assignments or promotion
- Responses of female officers to sexual harassment
  - Under-reporting
    - Tendency of departments to not investigate complaints or to not discipline officers
  - Deflection
  - Direct protest to offending person

# African-American Police



- Different attitudes on police use of excessive force
- NBPOA published a pamphlet urging officers to report incidents of misconduct and brutality
- More likely to support citizen oversight
- More likely to support community policing
- More likely to live in area where they work
- No significant difference in policing or conduct between African American and white officers

# Hispanic/Latino Officers

- Increasing significantly in recent years
- Dual identities: both police officers and members of Hispanic community
- In some departments, they are the majority
- Minority Hispanic police officers believe they are discriminated against in salary and promotions

# Gay and Lesbian Officers

- Gay Officer Action League (GOAL) of NYC (1982)
- By 1992, at least 10 depts in US actively recruited gay and lesbian officers
- NYC: police union and religious organizations tried to block the recruitment of gay & lesbian officers
- Choose law enforcement for the same reasons other people have traditionally chosen it
- Many have experienced discrimination on the job
  - Homophobic talk by other officers (67%)
  - Barriers in promotion (22%)
  - Barriers in assignment (17%)

# The Intersection of Gender, Race, Ethnicity, and Sexual Identity

- Relationships among officers of different races, genders, ethnicities and sexual identities are extremely complex
- Tension and conflict among groups
- Pattern of self-segregation
  - Limited interaction between officers of different groups
- “There is no credible evidence that officers of different racial or ethnic backgrounds perform differently during interactions with citizens *simply because of race or ethnicity*” – National Academy of Sciences

# Levels of Education

- Education level of officers has been rising
- Education generation gap between younger, better-educated officers and veteran officers with less education
- No strong evidence that higher education leads to better performance on the street

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

# Effects on Performance

## ■ What is a *cohort*?

## ■ Cohort Effects

- Officers hired in one decade will have different ideas and lifestyles than officers hired in later decades
- Old street cop culture vs. new bureaucratic style
- Ex) 1960's cops and Supreme Court decisions

## ■ Organizational Effects

- The culture of a police department affects officer attitudes toward certain important subjects
- Ex: Community Policing, searches and seizures, *Miranda* rights, etc.



# The Relationship Between Attitudes and Behavior

- It is not necessarily true that people who express prejudicial *attitudes* also express prejudicial *behaviors*
- Several factors mediate the effect of attitudes on behavior:
  - 1. Police officers are constrained by police bureaucracy and the criminal justice system
  - 2. Possibility of citizen complaint or lawsuit
  - 3. In a professional department, supervisors advise against prejudicial statements that are contrary to the values of the department

# Styles of Police Work

## ■ Active officers

- Initiate more contacts with citizens
- Back up officers on other calls
- Assert control of situations
- Make more arrests

## ■ Passive officers

- Initiate few contacts with citizens
- Respond only to calls to which they are dispatched
- Make few traffic stops/ field interrogations / arrests

# Moving Through Police Careers

## ■ Salaries and Benefits

- Benefits, job security, overtime
- Salary increase through promotion, tied to rank
- Incentive pay for college education, bilingualism, hazardous duty, shift differential

## ■ In-Service Training

- Preservice academy training
- Field training program
- Continuing professional training (x number of hours/year)
  - Perishable skills, updated policies, new laws, firearms re-certification

# Career Development

- Promotion
  - Limited opportunities
  - Irregular intervals
  - Formal testing
  - Few openings
- Assignments to special units
  - Discretion of chief
  - Seniority constraints
  - Politics of dept
- Coveted assignments
  - More challenging
  - May lead to promotion and recognition of ability
- Lateral entry
  - The opportunity to move to other police departments is very limited
- Outside employment
  - Supplemental income
  - Private security
  - Any problems with this?

# Performance Evaluations

- Annual evaluations are meant to identify and reward good performance and correct poor performance
- Problems
  - Definition of “effective police work”
  - Inconsistency / lack credibility
  - Incident --> reputation --> halo effect
  - Rating of all officers tend to cluster around one numerical level
  - Tendency to rate everyone highly
  - Insufficient or no mechanism for evaluating conflict defusion

# Job Satisfaction

- Job satisfaction or lack thereof
  - Nature of police work: working with people, serving the community, excitement, action
  - Organizational factors: recognition for good work, perceived support from leaders, relations with fellow officers, and opportunities for career advancement
  - Relations with the community: cooperation from citizens, presence or absence of conflict
  - Relations with the media and the political establishment: positive or negative portrayal and support
  - Personal or family factors: presence or absence of conflict b/t job and family, presence or absence of family problems

# Job Stress

- Sources of Job Stress

- Threat of danger
- Citizen disrespect and challenge to police authority
- Police department itself
- For female officers: sexual harassment and sexism
- Coping with Job Stress: many departments have programs to help officers cope with stress and other personal problems

# The Rights of Police Officers

- Same constitutional and civil rights as other citizens
- Protected by first amendment to belong to unpopular religious or political groups
  - Political or religious activity on the job is not permitted (as in most professions)
- Police Officer's Bill of Rights
  - Entitled to procedural due process: informed of charges, right to an attorney
  - May not be fired or disciplined without adequate cause
  - Protects officers under investigation for alleged misconduct

# Attrition

- Turnover: about 5% annually
- Retirement, death, dismissal, layoff
- Voluntary resignation
  - Career stagnation, intense and accumulated frustration, lack of fulfillment, family considerations, conduct of coworkers, departmental policies, new employment opportunities
- Women: 6.3% annually
  - Inadequate pregnancy leave
  - Environment more hostile