Taking stock: Toward a richer understanding of police culture

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Abstract

Police researchers have long speculated on the importance that culture plays in the everyday functioning of officers. Most characterizations of police culture focus on describing the various elements and facets of a single phenomenon among occupational members (e.g., group loyalty, crime fighter image, organizational tension with supervisors, etc.). Little work has been done in synthesizing what we "know" about this occupational culture, as textbook depictions highlight broad generalizations that tend to differ from text to text. A conceptual model of the police occupational culture is presented here that explains its causes, prescriptions, and outcomes. This monolithic model is then critiqued based on research that highlights the complexity of culture, noting variation across organizations and within by rank and style. The article also assesses the ways in which police culture thought is beginning to change, as departments diversify demographically and philosophically. The article concludes with recommendations for future studies of police culture.
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Introduction

The aim of this article is to trace the development and study of police culture, and to address potential courses of action for police researchers. If one were to ask about the importance of police culture, one would undoubtedly find that both practitioners and academics alike would acknowledge, in varying degrees, the critical role that culture plays in American policing. On the other hand, if one were to ask about the nature of police culture, one would find that there are many different definitions and interpretations. Researchers have spent a considerable amount of time studying police culture. The most abundant research on police culture tends to describe the various elements and

facets of a single phenomenon among occupational members, but usually focuses on only parts of the process (e.g., loyalty among members, the crime fighter image, "us versus them" orientation toward citizens, organizational tensions with punitive supervisors, etc.). Thus, one of the contributions of this article is the development of a conceptual model of "the" police culture that explains its causes, prescriptions, and outcomes. In addition, alternative approaches that contrast the idea of a monolithic occupational culture will be discussed. The article will then highlight some of the more recent culture research, and conclude with recommendations for understanding and studying police culture within contemporary times, as policing philosophies change and as the demographic composition of police personnel continues to diversify. Within the discussions of sources of cultural variation and recent additions to the study of police culture, illustrative examples of testable hypotheses will be outlined.

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The significance of understanding police culture lies in the role that it plays in the everyday functioning of police officers. Most connotations of police culture are negative. For example, many have asserted that the major barrier to reforming the police is the culture (Dean, 1995; Goldsmith, 1990; Greene, 2000; Skogan & Hartnett, 1997; Sparrow, Moore, & Kennedy, 1990). Others have noted that the culture often endorses the violations of citizen rights and misuses of police authority (Brown, 1988; Kappeler, Sluder, & Alpert, 1998; Skolnick & Fyfe, 1993). Relatedly, researchers have found that efforts to ensure accountability of the police have been met with cultural resistance, stemming from the credo that police should never "rat" on fellow officers, and the impenetrable "blue wall of silence" that often thwarts investigations of officer wrongdoing (New York Commission, 1994; Silverman, 1999; Walker, 2001). On the other hand, there are positive aspects of police culture that should not be understated. Like other occupations, the collectiveness of culture helps to buffer the strains that officers face on a daily basis (Brown, 1988; Chan, 1996; Waddington, 1999). In addition, the prescriptions of police culture are said to teach new (and continuing) occupational members about the day-to-day components of police work, by experienced officers, in learning the craft of policing (Manning, 1995; Van Maanen, 1974). Finally, researchers have acknowledged how culture can actually be used as a positive tool in reforming the police (Crank, 1997; Skogan & Hartnett, 1997), as well as regulating and preventing inappropriate police conduct (Goldsmith, 1990; Kappeler et al., 1998). In sum, police culture is a useful concept in understanding many facets of policing from learning the ropes, day-to-day functioning, investigating forms of police deviance, keeping the police accountable, and the success of reform efforts.

The occupational culture of policing: environments, coping mechanisms, and outcomes

Occupational cultures are a product of the various situations and problems which all vocational members confront and to which they equally respond. As Manning (1995) explains, "occupational cultures contain accepted practices, rules, and principles of conduct that are situationally applied, and generalized rationales and beliefs" (p. 472). Viewing culture in these terms is not limited to just policing, as others have noted the collectiveness of culture among occupational members—e.g., social workers (Meyerson, 1991), miners (Vaught & Wiehagen, 1991), construction workers (Steiger & Form, 1991), and correctional guards (Farkas, 1997; Kauffman, 1988; Webb

& Morris, 1978). Across all fields of study, the assertion is that members are confronted with a variety of tasks and problems, from which shared attitudes, values, and norms for the resolution of such problems are developed and transmitted across members. Viewing police culture as an occupational phenomena suggests that officers collectively confront situations that arise in the environments of policing, and subsequent attitudes, values, and norms that result are in response to those environments.

One of the contributions of this article is the development of an organizing framework for conceptualizing what "the" police culture includes. Researchers have studied and explained components of culture, but a current void exists in terms of a coherent framework for understanding where culture comes from (i.e., the work environments of policing), what culture prescribes (i.e., the ways of coping with the strains of the environments), and what are the outcomes (i.e., the implications for how the police relate to citizens and other occupational members). What follows is a synthesis of years of research about what is believed to be part of the universally shared occupational culture of policing.[1] Fig. 1 represents the primary components of the traditional occupational culture of policing, in terms of the environments, coping mechanisms, and outcomes.

The environments of policing: occupational and organizational

...when a policeman dons his uniform, he enters a distinct subculture governed by norms and values designed to manage the strains created by his unique role in the community. (Van Maanen, 1974, p. 85)

What must be recognized is that patrolmen lead something of a schizophrenic existence: they must cope not only with the terror of an often hostile and unpredictable citizenry, but also with a hostile—even tyrannical—and unpredictable bureaucracy. (Brown, 1988, p. 9)

Since the seminal ethnographic work of William Westley in the late 1940s, descriptions of a "single" police culture have focused on the "coping mechanisms" that are said to insulate group members from the hazards that originate in the two environments of policing. One of the environments that officers work in is the occupational environment, which consists of his/her relationship to general society (i.e., citizens). Two of the most widely cited elements of this environment are the presence or potential for *danger* (Barker, 1999; Brown, 1988; Cullen, Link, Travis, & Lemming, 1983; Kappeler et al., 1998; Reiner, 1985;

Environments	Coping mechanism/ prescriptions	Outcomes

Occupational

  Danger   Suspiciousness

  Coercive   Maintaining the edge

  authority   ↘   ↗   Social isolation

           Stress   ↗

           anxiety   ↘

Organizational   Loyalty

  Supervisor   ↗   ↘   Lay low/CYA

  scrutiny

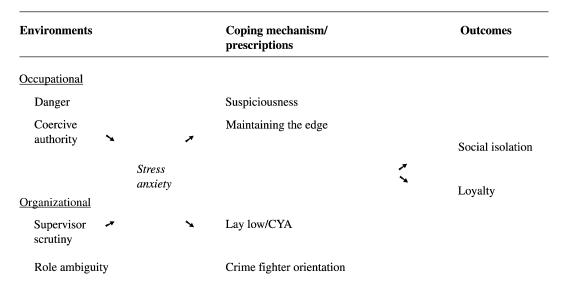 Role ambiguity   Crime fighter orientation

Fig. 1. Traditional occupational police culture model.

Skolnick, 1994; Sparrow et al., 1990; Toch, 1973; Van Maanen, 1974; Westley, 1970), and the unique *coercive power* and authority that police officers possess over citizens (Banton, 1964; Bittner, 1974; Brown, 1988; Manning, 1995; Muir, 1977; Reiner, 1985; Skolnick, 1994; Van Maanen, 1974; Westley, 1970).

Studies of police have noted that officers perceive their working environment to be laden with danger or the risk of danger.[2] Officers have often been described as being "preoccupied" with the danger and violence that surrounds them, always anticipating both. Skolnick (1994) notes that the element of danger is so integral to officers that explicit recognition might induce emotional barriers to police work (p. 42). Danger has a unifying effect on officers and works to separate them from the chief source of danger—the public (Kappeler et al., 1998).[3]

In addition to danger, the coercive authority that police wield is another component of officers' occupational environment. Police are unique in that they have been granted the legitimate use of coercion or "a license to threaten drastic harm to others" (Muir, 1977, p. 37). The issues that officers confront with the use of coercion and displaying their authority often work to reinforce the perception of danger in the occupational environment (Muir, 1977; Skolnick, 1994). No matter what the situation, officers are expected to create, display, and maintain their authority (Manning, 1995).

A second environment that police officers work within is the organizational environment, which consists of one's relationship to the formal organization (i.e., supervisors). Two major issues, confronted by officers that the police culture addresses are: the

unpredictable and punitive supervisory oversight (Brown, 1988; Manning, 1995; McNamara, 1967; Skolnick, 1994), and the ambiguity of the police role (Bittner, 1974; Brown, 1988; McNamara, 1967).

The relationship between police officers and their supervisors has been described as one in which is dominated by a feeling of uncertainty. Police are expected to enforce laws, yet are required to follow the proper procedural rules and regulations (Brown, 1988; McNamara, 1967; Skolnick, 1994). Due process violations from improper application of the law can result in disciplinary action for both the officer and the department. Officers come to find out that when they are recognized it is usually for something that they have done wrong (procedurally), rather than for something they have done well (substantively). Officers often feel as if proactive work (e.g., zealous enforcement of the law) only leads to the potential for procedural errors and "exposure and negative evaluation" (Van Maanen, 1974). As such, officers are constrained, working within an organization that demands that all problems be handled on the street with efficiency and certainty, yet held to excessive scrutiny by "watchful administrators" at a later date (Brown, 1988; Ericson, 1982; Fielding, 1988; Skolnick, 1994). This organizational uncertainty is the counterpart to the perceived physical danger within an officer's occupational environment.

In addition to the uncertain and punitive supervisory oversight, police officers also work within an organizational environment that reinforces an ambiguous role identification. Research has identified at least three major functions that officers are expected to perform in society: order maintenance, law enforcement, and service (Brown, 1988; Rumbaut & Bittner,

1979; Wilson, 1968), yet police organizations have historically often only officially recognized law enforcement. Traditionally, police training, the creation of specialized divisions, the focus on crime statistics, and most importantly, performance evaluation and promotion, all reinforce the law enforcement orientation (Bittner, 1974, pp. 21–22; Walker, 1999). Thus, the police handle situations on the street that encompass all three roles, yet only one role (law enforcement) gets reinforced and rewarded within the organization. The ambiguity for officers comes from supervisors who expect their subordinates to handle all police functions on the street equally.

The danger and coercive authority in officers' occupational environment, as well as the supervisor scrutiny and role ambiguity from the organizational environment, create stress and anxiety for officers. The way in which police officers cope with these strains can be found in the prescriptions of the police culture.

Prescriptions of the occupational culture

> The values of the police culture derive from the hazards of police work and seek to minimize these hazards and protect members. (Brown, 1988, p. 85)

Coping mechanisms prescribed by the police culture work to minimize the stress and anxiety created by the environments, guiding both attitudes and behaviors. In this sense, coping mechanisms help officers regulate their occupational world. Two widely cited coping mechanisms stem from officers' occupational environment—*suspiciousness* (Kappeler et al., 1998; Reiner, 1985; Reuss-Ianni, 1983; Rubinstein, 1973; Skolnick, 1994; Westley, 1970) and *maintaining the edge* (Brown, 1988; Reuss-Ianni, 1983; Rubinstein, 1973; Van Maanen, 1974), while two coping mechanisms stem from officers' organizational environment—*lay-low* or *cover-your-ass* (CYA) (Ericson, 1982; Fielding, 1988; Reuss-Ianni, 1983; Van Maanen, 1974), and a strict adherence to the *crime fighter* image (Klockars, 1985; Sparrow et al., 1990; Westley, 1970).

In an attempt to reduce or control the uncertainty associated with a dangerous occupational environment, officers are said to be suspicious actors. Skolnick (1994) notes:

> . . .it is the nature of the policeman's situation that his conception of order emphasize regularity and predictability. It is, therefore, a conception shaped by persistent suspicion. (p. 46)

Police are not only suspicious of the general public, they also approach new occupational members with suspicion. New recruits, for established

officers, represent an additional danger—a potential breakdown in group cohesion. As Reuss-Ianni (1983) explains in her codes of the street cop culture, officers should not "trust a new guy until you have checked him out" (p. 268). Such a prescription acknowledges that officers must display a minimal commitment to fellow officers before they are accepted.

Maintaining the edge is a function of the danger inherent in police officers' occupational environment, and is also related to the ability of officers to display their authority. In their contacts with the general public, officers come to believe that they can minimize the potential danger they confront, as well as properly displaying their coercive authority, by always being prepared or "one-up" on citizens (Rubinstein, 1973; Sykes & Brent, 1980). Maintaining the edge has much to do with "reading people and situations" (Muir, 1977; Van Maanen, 1974). Part of reading people and situations is manifested through the sorting of clientele. Officers learn to sort citizens into categories (*suspicious persons*, *assholes*, and *know-nothings*), based on the potential danger (cf. Skolnick, 1994) that they may present (Van Maanen, 1974, p. 118).[4]

In addition to the coping mechanisms prescribed by the police culture as a result of the interactions with citizens in the occupational environment, the organizational environment in which officers work also produces stress and anxiety that are said to be relieved by the police culture. As Manning (1994a) points out, "as an adaptive modality, the occupational culture mediates external pressures and demands and internal expectations for performance and production" (p. 5). One consequence of police supervisors' focus on rule violations is the *lay-low* or CYA attitude. This coping mechanism discourages officers from engaging in efforts that might bring undue attention to themselves (Brown, 1988). Herbert (1997) explains how the CYA syndrome can have extreme effects on the way in which officers police: "the CYA syndrome afflicts officers who live primarily in fear of administrative censure and thus avoid all situations that involve risk that might later be second guessed" (p. 805).

Another coping mechanism is a strict adherence to the *crime fighter* or *law enforcement* orientation. One of the ways officers resolve the ambiguity of their role in society is to identify with the one that management has historically recognized as the official mandate of the police (Fielding, 1988; Jermier, Slocum, Fry, & Gaines, 1991; Klockars, 1985; Walker, 1977).[5] The police culture is thought to stress law enforcement or "real" police work over order maintenance and service roles (Brown, 1988; Drummond, 1976; Sparrow et al., 1990; Van Maanen,

1974). As such, the inner-directed aggressive street cop is somewhat of the cultural ideal that officers are expected to follow (Brown, 1988). A strict law enforcement orientation may conflict with one's ability to lay-low, which cause many officers to adopt a selective approach to law enforcement (in covering their ass), focusing on more serious, less ambiguous, criminal incidents (i.e., felonies).

The prescriptive coping mechanisms of the police culture are transmitted through a socialization process across occupational generations in the training academy, and continue throughout one's tenure as an officer. Van Maanen (1974) appropriately notes that the socialization process provides "the new member with a set of rules, perspectives, techniques, and/or tools for him to continue as a participant in the organization" (p. 86). The socialization process of officers starts in the training academy, where new recruits learn about the environments (both occupational and organizational) in which they work. During this introductory phase, group cohesion and loyalty are stressed in a paramilitary environment (Bahn, 1984; Van Maanen, 1974). Uniformity in appearance, attitude, and behavior, as well as strict adherence to rules and procedures, is expected of all recruits. The initial learning process usually begins with "war stories" from senior personnel. The socialization process heightens when new recruits "hit the streets" with their FTO[6] and other experienced officers (Van Maanen, 1974). While early contact with training officers within the police academy or training school represents more of a formal socialization, subsequent contacts in the field with senior personnel and peer group members (i.e., other officers) represents more informal socialization (Fielding, 1988; Kappeler et al., 1998). The former reflects most of the "what to do and expect" teaching, while the latter is more of the "here's how things operate in the real world" teaching. Both formal and informal socialization reinforces the chaotic elements of the occupational and organizational environments. Learning through other officers teaches rookie officers about policing and the coping mechanisms prescribed by the police culture (Goldsmith, 1990). As Brown (1988) explains, "patrolmen undergo an intensive rite of passage in which they acquire some general precepts of police work and learn the norms that govern the police culture" (p. 242).

Cultural outcomes: police relationships with citizens and other officers

No one else understands the real nature of police work. That is, no one outside the police service—academics, politicians, and lawyers in particular—can comprehend what we have to do. The public is generally naive about police work... Members of the public are basically unsupportive and unreasonably demanding. They all seem to think they know our job better than we do. They only want us when they need something done ("building blocks" of police culture). (Sparrow et al., 1990, p. 51)

Watch out for your partner first and then the rest of the guys working that tour... Don't give up another cop... Hold up your end of the work... If you get caught offbase, don't implicate anyone else... Make sure the other guys know if another cop is dangerous or "crazy"... Don't leave work for the next tour ("street cop codes"). (Reuss-Ianni, 1983, pp. 15–16)

The problems officers confront in their occupational and organizational environments, as well as the coping mechanisms prescribed by the police culture, produce two defining outcomes of the police culture: *social isolation* and *group loyalty*.

Although the occupation of policing itself works to separate police officers from general society (e.g., shift work, tensions of the job, etc.) (Drummond, 1976; Fielding, 1988; Reiner, 1985), the chief factors contributing to social isolation are found in officers' occupational environment. The hostility and danger in the occupational environment, as well as the coercive authority that officers wield, separates police from "nonpolice." The prescriptions to be suspicious and maintain the edge over citizens further contribute to the isolation of police from the public. The professionalization of the police (i.e., taking the politics out of policing, focusing on scientific crime fighting, using motorized patrol) has been described by some authors as another factor contributing to this isolation (Brown, 1988; Kelling & Coles, 1996; Sparrow et al., 1990). Due to this separation between the police and the public, officers tend to identify and socialize exclusively with other officers. In this context, officers develop a "we versus they" attitude toward citizenry (Kappeler et al., 1998; Skolnick, 1994; Sparrow et al., 1990; Westley, 1970). This contributes to a strengthening of the bond between police officers and facilitates the second defining outcome of the police culture—strong group loyalty.

The cultural mandate of loyalty is a function of both the occupational and organizational environments. Officers depend on one another for both physical and emotional protection because of the danger, uncertainty, and anxiety found in the occupational environment (Manning, 1995; Westley, 1970). New recruits are expected to display their

loyalty to their colleagues (e.g., backing up other officers) (Van Maanen, 1974), before they are accepted and reap the benefits of mutual protection of the group (Brown, 1988; Fielding, 1988; Reuss-Ianni, 1983). Moreover, officers must also provide protection to one another against supervisors, in the organizational environment, who are often viewed as "out to make their jobs difficult" (Sparrow et al., 1990). Brown (1988) summarizes how loyalty toward colleagues insulates cultural members:

> The police culture demands of a patrolman unstinting loyalty to fellow officers, and he receives, in return, protection and honor: a place to assuage real and imagined wrongs inflicted by a (presumably) hostile public; safety from aggressive administrators and supervisors; and the emotional support required to perform a difficult task. (p. 83)

In sum, the occupational account depicts police culture as widely shared attitudes, values, and norms, which serve to manage strains created by the nature of police work and the punitive practices of police management and supervision. These attitudes, values, and norms include a distrust and suspiciousness of citizens and a prescription to assess people and situations in terms of their potential threat, in wielding one's coercive authority (i.e., "maintaining the edge"), a lay-low or CYA orientation to police work, a strong emphasis on the law enforcement elements of the police role, a "we versus they" attitude toward citizens, and the norm of loyalty to the peer group.

The notion of a single occupational culture has been endorsed by both past and contemporary police scholars. As Crank (1998) explains, "I argue that street cops everywhere tend to share a common culture because they respond to similar audiences everywhere" (p. 26). This has become the conventional wisdom about police, as current policing texts still subscribe to a somewhat oversimplified conception of culture (e.g., Bartollas & Hahn, 1999, p. 77; Dempsey, 1999, pp. 128–129; Lyman, 2002, p. 249; Peak & Glensor, 1999, p. 146). While authors such as Crank (1998) suggest that culture is shared by "street cops everywhere," there are others that assert that the homogeneity in attitudes, values, and norms of a single culture has been overstated. As Manning (1994b) notes, "criminology and criminal justice texts, with some exceptions, depict police values and attitudes as uniform, static, unitary, and traditional. They fail to identify potential differences, internal tensions, contradictions and paradoxes" (p. 4). While some authors have pointed out the possibility of cultural variation, the academic field has yet to incorporate such complications into the prevailing view of culture.

Sources of variation in the occupational culture of policing

Although conventional wisdom about police culture focuses on the cultural homogeneity of officers, some researchers have noted important differences, which could be expected to affect a unitary police culture. Three potential sources of variation are organizations, rank, and individual officer styles. Such differences suggest cultural fragmentation. That is, all three highlight potential differences in the work environments, prescriptive coping mechanisms, and outcomes of the traditional police culture.

Organizations

In contrast to the universal occupational culture which concentrates on the similarities over differences across organizations, others note that culture is more of an organizational phenomenon. That is, the focus is on the specific organization, agency, or department that is part of an overall occupation. In this sense, *organizational* members collectively cope with internal and external demands (Schein, 1991, 1992). According to Schein (1992), organizational cultures are responsible for "covering behavioral, emotional, and cognitive elements of group members' total psychological functioning" (p. 33). One of the core differences between an occupational culture and an organizational culture is the locus of cultural influence. While occupational cultures originate and are maintained by front-line workers (Van Maanen & Barley, 1984), organizational cultures are usually defined from the top of the organization down (Schein, 1992). Although monolithic descriptions of organizational culture suffer from the same drawbacks as occupational characterizations, the point that cannot be overlooked is that organizations that are embedded within an occupation also exert cultural influence on members. The seminal study of organizational culture among police departments was conducted by Wilson (1968). According to Wilson, it was the top police administrator (i.e., chief, superintendent, commissioner, or captain) who took into account the makeup and demands of the community in defining the department's style. In a study of eight communities in the early 1960s, Wilson (p. 6) identified three types of departmental styles (legalistic, watchman, and service) that varied with regard to their emphasis toward two major functions of the police: enforcing the law and maintaining order.

Wilson's (1968) organizational account of police culture differed from the portrayal of occupational culture in that Wilson suggested that there was variation in organizational environments across departments. For example, *legalistic* style departments focus on crime fighting, and would represent the "typical" organizational environment described in traditional accounts of occupational culture.[7] *Watchman* and *service* style departments, with less of an emphasis on crime fighting and fewer administrative controls and pressures on officers, represent contrasting organizational environments. As such, the ways in which officers might cope with their organizational environments might differ across different types of departments. One could thus construct testable hypotheses based on this research, by comparing and contrasting departmental styles. For example, in departments where bureaucratic controls are less stringent and law enforcement is not the primary performance criteria (e.g., service style departments), the amount of supervisor scrutiny and role ambiguity should be less than that found in legalistic style departments. As a result, the need to cope by laying low/covering one's ass and espousing a crime fighter image will thus be lower for officers in service style departments than for those officers in legalistic style departments.[8] Another difference between the two depictions is the source of cultural influence. Whereas the peer network is emphasized in the occupational culture literature, Wilson's research emphasized the role of the top administrator in producing the departmental culture. According to Wilson (p. 140), "what is the defining characteristic of the patrolman's role thus becomes the style or strategy of the department as a whole because it is reinforced by the attitudes and policies of the police administrator." This comports with analyses of organizational culture in general, which suggest that managers have a central role in shaping organizational culture for the purpose of improving overall organizational performance (Schein, 1992).

The utility of this research for understanding police culture is twofold. First, it highlights the point that aspects of police culture may differ among police agencies (see also Chan, 1996; Reiner, 1985). In this regard, organizational environments may differ, and thus the way officers cope might not be the same from department to department. In addition, because Wilson (1968) asserts that departmental style is partly a function of a given community's needs, occupational environments may also differ. For example, one could reasonably hypothesize that perceived levels of danger, and the importance placed on wielding one's coercive authority, for officers working in service style occupational environments, would be less than that for those found in higher crime legalistic areas. One might also expect that officers in service style departments, who are expected to "serve" the public, would be less suspicious of citizens and feel less of a need to maintain the edge over them, compared to officers in legalistic style departments. Second, it does suggest that, along with the peer group, management have some impact in shaping police culture. Thus, accounts of police culture that do not take into consideration differences that exist across police organizations may be both incomplete and misleading.

Rank

In addition to the occupational and organizational depictions of police culture is research that suggests that there is more than one culture among ranks of police officers. Reuss-Ianni (1983) acknowledges the existence of the occupational culture, but notes that this is not the only culture operating among police personnel. Based on her research in the NYPD, Reuss-Ianni identified two cultures of policing: *street cop culture* and *management cop culture*.

The street cop culture is found among the lower rank patrolmen and is the equivalent of what has been described above as the occupational culture. Reuss-Ianni (1983) asserts that there has been a weakening of the street cop culture among police due to the following changes in social and political forces: competition among agencies for scarce resources, management oriented political leadership emphasizing accountability and productivity, the addition of minority groups in policing, higher salaries and education allowing officers to live away from their policing area and expand their job opportunities (pp. 5–6). The author explains the makeup and coexistence of both cultures in policing:

> Now there are two cultures that confront each other in the department: a street cop culture of the "good old days," working class in origin and temperament, whose members see themselves as cops for the rest of their careers, and a management cop culture, more middle class, whose education and mobility have made them eligible for alternate career outside of policing, which makes them less dependent on and less loyal to street cop culture. (p. 121)

Although both cultures share the common goal of crime reduction, the level and means by which they believe this goal should be accomplished differ. Street cop culture believes in local crime reduction through strong in-group ties and the reliance on one's own experience to make decisions, while management cop culture believes in citywide or system-wide crime

reduction through "efficient organization, rational decision making, cost efficient procedures, and objective accountability at all levels of policing" (Reuss-Ianni (1983, p. 6).

The importance of Reuss-Ianni's (1983) research is it illustrates the fragmentation of "the" police culture—that is, the occupational culture—among officers into two cultures. Whereas the literature on the monolithic occupational culture describes the cultural reaction to "hostile" management (cf. Brown, 1988), this research explains such a relationship in terms of the competing cultural dimensions of each group.[9]

More recently, Manning (1994a,1994b), like Reuss-Ianni (1983), asserts that culture is segmented among ranks within police organizations. Manning's work differentiates among three classes or segments of culture: lower participants (patrol and street sergeants), middle managers (some sergeants up to department brass), and top command (brass-commanders, superintendents, deputy chiefs, and chiefs). The contention here is that at each level (i.e., rank designation) of the organization, different concerns, orientations, values, norms, and sentiments dominate each culture (Farkas & Manning, 1997). As such, culture works to insulate members based on the different issues or concerns unique to their rank designation. Lower participants embody many of the features of Reuss-Ianni's street cop, focusing primarily on the more immediate aspects of the job. Those who reside within the middle management culture tend to emphasize management themes as they serve as a buffer between the "street" (lower participants) and upper police management (top command). Top command focuses on the politics of managing police organizations internally, as well as being aware of the need to be accountable to external audiences.

Like Reuss-Ianni (1983), Manning (1994a) identifies cultural segmentation, based primarily on different concerns of officers that are "anchored in interactions in distinctive social spaces (by rank) in the organizational hierarchy" (p. 2). Manning differentiates more finely among managers, by distinguishing middle managers (buffering concerns between lower participants and brass) and top commanders (buffering concerns between the internal organization and external politics). This research suggests that culture is dynamic and not static. One could reasonably hypothesize that as officers advance in rank, commitment to the occupational culture that served to manage the strains found at the entry level of policing wanes, as different cultural commitments emerge, based primarily on changes in one's work environments. Moreover, one might expect divergent street cop values (i.e., traditional culture prescriptions) for those officers with aspirations to advance in rank, as they might emulate the values of higher ranking officers. This raises additional interesting questions for researchers. For example, how does the transformation of values and beliefs take place over time, as officers advance within police departments? Is this process the same for all officers? Which values and beliefs, if any, do officers carry over with them as they move up in rank? Research that finds rank-related differences is yet another addition to a growing body of knowledge on the police that highlights cultural segmentation over homogeneity.[10]

Officer style

Another approach to understanding differences among officers was conducted by researchers that highlighted the individualism that police officers exercised. As evidenced by the previous discussion of the traditional occupational police culture, research tended to stress "group thought" over individualism among police officers. As Westley (1970) explains, "the individual policeman finds his own interests have been forcibly identified with those of the group" (p. 110). Conversely, others noted that officers work within an occupation that emphasizes autonomy of decisions (Manning, 1995, p. 474). Officers are loyal to the group, but may also think and operate individually. Brown (1988) summarizes the relationship between group loyalty and individualism: "loyalty and individualism are the opposite sides of the coin: the police culture demands loyalty but grants autonomy" (p. 85). So, it appears that there are some shared attitudes, values, and norms among police officers as well as tolerated differences.

The differences that exist among officers have been the focus of researchers interested in the "craft" of policing (Bayley & Bittner, 1984; Ericson, 1982; Fielding, 1988; Wilson, 1968). The emphasis in this research is on officers learning based on their personal experience. Much of the experience-building process depends on the ability of officers to "play it by ear" (Bittner, 1974), as officers develop and display their own styles of policing. The formation of officer style is often a result of different interpretations, learning, and handling of the problems officers confront in their work environments. This suggests that not all officers see the occupational world through the same lens.

While the research on the occupational culture concentrates on the similarities among police personnel, the work on police typologies focuses on the stylistic variation among officers (e.g., Broderick, 1977; Brown, 1988; Muir, 1977; Reiner, 1978; Walsh, 1977; White, 1972). Research that identifies "types" or "styles" of police officers suggests subcultural

differences that bound or delimit occupational and organizational cultures. More specifically, the experiences that officers cope with produce stylistic differences that may or may not be in concordance with other members of the occupation and/or organization. In this sense, subcultures could be reflected in particular styles that members may develop when processing work related information (Swidler, 1986). Van Maanen and Barley (1985) refer to this as *ideological differentiation*, whereby subcultures reflect competing stances toward issues such as "the nature of the work, the choice of appropriate techniques, the correct stance toward outsiders, or the best way to treat particular clients" (p. 44). The research that identified stylistic differences among officers concluded with similar "types" or "styles" of officers despite independent research sites and samples, and over different points in times—all of which speaks to both the reliability and validity of this research (see Reiner, 1985; Worden, 1995).[11]

One example of a typology of police officers is Brown's (1988) research in three California police departments in the early 1970s. Brown examined differences in officers' attitudes toward "aggressiveness" and "selectivity" in forming his fourfold typology of officers.[12] Brown defines aggressiveness as "a matter of taking the initiative on the street to control crime and the preoccupation with order that legitimizes the use of illegal tactics" (p. 223). Selectivity is defined by Brown as distinguishing among patrolmen those "who believe that all laws should be enforced insofar as possible, and those who consciously assign felonies a higher priority" (p. 223). Brown's *old-style crime-fighter* (i.e., highly aggressive and selective) epitomizes many of the qualities of the officer described in the occupational police culture literature (cf. Westley, 1970).[13] The varying attitudes toward aggressiveness and selectivity exemplified by the *clean-beat crime-fighter* (high aggressiveness and nonselective), the *professional* style (low aggressiveness and nonselective), and the *service* style (low aggressiveness and selective) imply that the boundaries of the occupational culture may be narrower than conventional wisdom holds (Westley, 1970, p. 224). More specifically, this research suggests that officers cope in different ways with the strains created by their work environment, and that portraits of a single occupational culture may have been misdrawn. In deducing hypotheses based on this research, one could reasonably expect that as officer style (as a proxy for subculture) differs from that of traditional characterizations of the occupational culture, varying levels of adherence to the cultural coping mechanisms and outcomes should be expected. For example, the *professional* officer, who Brown describes as effective in balancing the needs and

concerns of citizens and supervisors, might be less likely to be suspicious, maintain the edge over citizens, lay low from supervisors, and adhere to a strict crime-fighting approach, compared to the *old-style crime-fighter*, who embodies many of the traditional occupational culture values.[14]

In sum, the most abundant research on police culture depicts it as an *occupational* phenomenon that encompasses most police officers. Wilson's (1968) research[15] takes a different approach by explaining that culture may differ across organizations and is defined by top management and shared by members of the *organization*. Both types of research emphasize the singularity of culture. Occupational analysts explain or describe "the" police culture, while organizational analysts, who allow for variation across different police departments, still explain or describe "the" organizational culture. Reuss-Ianni's (1983) divergent approach to the study of police culture revisits the occupational depiction of culture, expanding on the hostile relationship between this culture and supervision, concluding that there are two cultures in policing—street cop and management cop (rank cultures). Manning (1994a), concurring with the basic premise of Reuss-Ianni's research, suggests that cultural segmentation occurs among differing ranks of officers, and to properly understand culture is to acknowledge the concerns of each rank classification. Finally, typologies that focus on differentiation among officers further suggest subcultures among the occupational culture. This research, which was conducted over twenty-five years ago, suggested that officers coped in different ways with the strains created by their work environment. Since that time, the changes that have occurred in policing could reasonably be expected to contribute to even more cultural heterogeneity among officers. These differences have been the focus of some of the more recent work on police culture, and assist in the understanding of the cultural and subcultural forces that shape the way in which street-level officers view and respond to their work environments.

Recent additions to the study of police culture

Recent research is beginning to directly question the existence and conceptualization of a monolithic police culture, and is focusing on the complexity of culture and variation among officers (Britz, 1997; Chan, 1996; Fielding, 1988; Haarr, 1997; Herbert, 1998; Jermier et al., 1991; Manning, 1994a, 1994b; Paoline, 2001; Paoline, Myers, & Worden, 2000). The impetus for much of this work is the result of challenges to traditional ethnographic characteriza-

tions of culture (which might have overstated the cultural agreement among officers), as well as pointing out the changes that have occurred in policing over the past twenty-five years that could be expected to segment "the" police culture. More specifically, even if previous researchers of police were correct in their assertions about a monolithic culture, the homogeneity of attitudes, values, and norms associated with a single culture could be expected to break up as departments hire previously excluded members of the culture (i.e., non-Whites, females, and college-educated officers) (Britz, 1997; Haarr, 1997; Manning, 1994b; Paoline et al., 2000; Walker, 1985), and as organizational philosophies change (i.e., community policing) (Chan, 1996; Fielding, 1994; Paoline et al., 2000).

As police forces have become more heterogeneous, one would expect a single cohesive police culture to give way to a more fragmented occupational group. The modal officer of the past (i.e., White, male, working class, military experienced, high school educated) (Van Maanen, 1974) is continually changing as the selection and recruitment of officers has diversified. Police departments are represented by more racial minorities, women, and better educated and trained officers (Carter, Sapp, & Stephens, 1989; Reaves, 1996; Walker, 1999, pp. 328–332). Police officer diversity is expected to affect culture in one of two ways. First, representation of racial minorities, females, and college-educated personnel, all of which bring to the policing profession different outlooks and attributes based on their past experiences, might affect the way in which officers collectively interpret the world around them (see Paoline et al., 2000). Second, personnel diversity, which infuses police departments with previously excluded members of the occupation, may also affect socialization patterns (see Haarr, 1997; Manning, 1994b). The impact of both should result in the segmentation of a single culture, as well as possible subcultures of officers.[16]

Besides changes in the recruitment and selection of police personnel, community policing philosophies that stress a broader role orientation and partnerships with citizens may be working to erode many of the values of the police culture. Regardless of the "type" of community policing approach (i.e., "broken windows," "community building," or "problem-oriented policing") (Mastrofksi, Worden, & Snipes, 1995), the expectation is that police will expand their role to include other functions beyond law enforcement or crime fighting (e.g., public disputes, nuisances, and disorders—all of which have historically been regarded as "soft" policing). In addition, officers in a community era are expected to increase their interactions and communication with citizens in

handling and coming up with responses for crime and noncrime related problems. Within the organization, officers should also receive the message from administrators that more contemporary community policing functions are worthy of their efforts. These changes are said to affect both the occupational strains between police and citizens (e.g., mitigate the suspiciousness of citizens and the "us versus them" distinction), as well as the organizational strains between police and their supervisors (e.g., lessening the need for a crime fighter image as officers expand their role orientations) (see Paoline et al., 2000).

As noted for other sources of variation in police culture, testable hypotheses, based on this recent research on alterations in officer composition and police philosophy, can be deduced. As police organizations become more demographically heterogeneous, by adding previously excluded members of the police occupation (i.e., more females, racial minorities, and college-educated officers), the likelihood of a single collective traditional culture, and the values associated with it, decreases. One might expect the groups that have been excluded from the police culture to question, or outwardly reject, the attitudes, values, and norms associated with it. For example, a reasonable set of hypotheses suggests that both racial minorities and females, as representatives of the communities in which officers serve, should hold more favorable views of citizens and also be less suspicious of them. One might also expect college-educated officers to have a greater appreciation for the multiple functions that police serve in society, and thus have a more expansive role orientation beyond simply crime fighting. Moreover, the availability of occupational options beyond law enforcement (Reuss-Ianni, 1983) might make college-educated officers feel less troubled over supervisor scrutiny, and thus they might be less likely to lay low in responding to such criticism.[17] In addition, as departments embrace community policing philosophies, altering both the occupational and organizational environments (and subsequent strains), the likelihood of a collective traditional culture, and the values associated with it, decreases. For example, in departments where the community policing message is clear and valued as an organizational philosophy, officers should feel less of a need to maintain the edge, be suspicious, and be isolated from their "partners" (citizens) of policing. One might also expect that as departments make community policing efforts part of the performance expectations of officers, role ambiguity and the crime fighting coping mechanism should be reduced.

In sum, the most recent developments in the study of police culture point out the changes in the demo-

graphics of occupational members and police philosophies over the past twenty-five years that may have eroded the monolithic police culture, to the extent that one ever existed. Current research is thus beginning to tap into explaining how officers individually cope with their occupational world (Chan, 1996). While the aim is to identify how officers are different from one another, there is also an implicit recognition that officers do share some (but not all) socialization experiences and cultural attitudes and values. Though the abundance of such research is lacking, the next logical step in the study of police culture appears to point toward conceptualizing and identifying officer subcultures among Reuss-Ianni's (1983) ''street cops'' or Manning's (1994a, 1994b) "lower participants" (see Jermier et al., 1991).

Discussion

This article has provided a template for understanding the ways in which police culture has been conceptualized. It was noted that conventional wisdom about police culture still rests heavily on descriptions of a single occupational phenomenon in which the attitudes, values, and norms of members are homogenous. A model of the occupational culture of police was presented, as were additional studies that question the scope of a monolithic police culture. Police researchers must continue to complicate the lines of culture inquiry. The author concurs wholeheartedly with Fielding (1988) who asserts "if occupational culture is to serve as an empirically satisfactory concept as well as a theoretically necessary one, the sense of its internal variations and textures must be brought out in the same fashion as have conceptions of culture in relation to delinquency" (p. 185). As police forces continue to diversify and as community policing becomes part of the philosophy of policing, both of which penetrate police culture, one should expect even more cultural variation. Given that there is a foundation for expecting and accounting for differences in culture related to organizations, rank, and individual style, research should incorporate these different levels in theories and empirical investigations of police culture. Some hypotheses have been derived throughout this article as illustrative examples of how each of these sources of variation might affect police culture.

Fig. 2 illustrates the different levels of cultural assessment from the overall occupational through individual officer styles. This figure suggests, as a research map for future inquiry, that police culture is best understood as a filtering process that is mediated through the organization and within by rank and style. At the most fundamental level, one can begin

OCCUPATIONAL CULTURE

ORGANIZATIONS

RANK

STYLES

Fig. 2. Police culture model.

with the way in which *occupational* members cope with their working environments. As such, one could use some of what is known from traditional characterizations of culture as a base. That is, the coping mechanisms of culture as a result of the occupational and organizational environments of policing, as well as subsequent outcomes (see Fig. 1) may be a starting point for our inquiries. One may find that some of the assertions of past researchers still hold true today, while some are no longer valid. For example, police officers, holding all other factors constant, may still view crime fighting as their core role orientation, but the extent to which officers and citizens are isolated from one another has waned in the community era. At the same time, one should also expect differences in culture across different departments (e.g., big, small, low bureaucratic, high bureaucratic, etc.) of varying locales and clientele. Extant research noted that more bureaucratic larger organizations usually have more administrative policies in an attempt to control officer discretion (Brown, 1988; Mastrofksi, Ritti, & Hoffmaster, 1987; Smith, 1984), and thus one might expect officers in these departments to align more with traditional cultural values, in holding higher levels of disdain toward punitive administrators in their organizational environments. Consequently, one might expect the ethos to "lay low" from supervisory oversight to be greater in these types of organizations compared to smaller less bureaucratized departments. Within organizations, one should also account for cultural variation related to rank, as well as differences among members of each rank, with a special focus on those who are assigned to patrol. Patrol divisions are a common starting point for all officers and where the majority of sworn personnel are found. Thus, this is where most accounts of police culture focus. It is also reasonable to expect that socialization forces are the most powerful at the patrol level, as officers are introduced to the occupation by other

members. Finally, patrol is where officers are said to develop their "style" of policing (see Brown, 1988). As such, researchers should continue to focus a large part of their efforts here, especially in gathering baseline data on officers in assessing potential individual changes in cultural identification and commitment over time.

While research should continue to work on highlighting the variation among officers, this should not be at the expense of overlooking similarities. That is, this article speaks about fragmentation in "the" police culture, but does not assert that, among contemporary police, there is no cultural agreement. For example, even though peer loyalty might vary in intensity among officers, there is no reason to suppose (even within altered and varied occupational and organizational environments) that officers are no longer loyal to one another. Thus, one might expect that loyalty is still a major outcome of culture. This all suggests that, even with changes in terms of police diversity and philosophy, there are some boundaries to fragmentation. Typology research potentially gives a basis for expecting, at a minimum, four subcultures of officers. Currently, the extent of cultural fragmentation is not known, but it would be incorrect to assume that there is so much fragmentation that there is (are) no culture(s). Put another way, the forces of fragmentation should be working to erode a single monolithic police culture, but not totally dissolve it. Even among the most diverse police departments, the concept of culture is still a useful one. Research should work to determine exactly how useful the concept is by disentangling what is part of an overall culture, as well as elements of a given subculture or subcultures. Herbert (1998) recently suggested that cultural differences among officers could be assessed in terms of priorities assigned to "normative orders" of policing, but did not specify how much agreement among officers must exist for something to be a normative order, or how one knew when you had a normative order. A critical missing component of this process is establishing a threshold of officer agreement in assessing cultural and subcultural attitudes, values, and norms (see Worden, 1987).

Future research should not merely speak about cultural fragmentation, but should work toward explaining the factors that shape such differences. Paoline et al. (2000) found variation in cultural attitudes of officers, but noted that the variation was not patterned by hypothesized background characteristics of officers (i.e., race, sex, education, length of service, assignment, and training). This begs the question—what accounts for differences among officers? Though one should continue to explore factors

such as officer background characteristics, especially as departmental representation of diverse populations increases, one might also look to other avenues in exploring variation in culture. For example, it would be reasonable to expect that officer shift and area assignments would impact cultural/subcultural commitments (see, for example, Paoline, 2001). That is, differences in officers' perceptions of citizens and supervisors might be directly related to where and when they work.

Finally, studies of police culture should employ a variety of methodological approaches, as well as utilize longitudinal data collection designs. In assessing the attitudes, values, and norms of police culture, researchers could, for example, conduct interviews and observations of officers in multiple research settings (e.g., in the field versus in the police station), in an effort to triangulate findings. Moreover, there might be aspects of culture (i.e., sensitive topics) that are best captured in the field that are more problematic in the closed doors of the police station and vice versa. This would undoubtedly contribute to more valid and reliable research. Longitudinal data designs will provide a deeper understanding of culture and the ways in which culture is transmitted through the socialization process. Examinations of officers over time will enable researchers to identify potential changes in the salience of culture and subcultural affiliation, as well as the factors that shape differences among officers. It could be that the lack of a relationship found between background characteristics and cultural attitudes is a product of the cross-sectional data designs. It is reasonable to expect that factors such as being male versus female, White versus non-White, or being college educated might be more of a distinguishing cultural factor at the beginning stages of officer tenure, but once occupational experiences and peer socialization take over, such characteristics are less influential. At what point does this take place? Do police experiences over time affect the way in which officers cope with their environment? If officers style and/or subcultural affiliation change over time, when might this happen, and what factors contribute to this change? These are but a few of the questions that could be answered with longitudinal data designs that follow officers over time (i.e., from the academy and beyond).

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Notes

1. In synthesizing extant research, constructs were chosen that had been identified as part of the occupational culture of policing. Like the incompleteness of theory in general, this model did not include *every* construct noted by police researchers. For example, researchers asserted that officer machismo was an element of the police culture (Fielding, 1994; Herbert, 1998; Reiner, 1985), and nowhere in this article is there a reference to this construct. This does not mean that this has no place in this model, as officers might display varying levels of machismo, in maintaining the edge over citizens or in the way they identify with the crime fighter image.

2. The author recognizes that, in terms of actual risk, policing might not be as dangerous as other occupations (e.g., coal mining). The occupation of policing is unique in that the threat of danger is ever-present among officers. In this sense, the actual risk of danger is disproportionate to the perceived risk among officers (see Cullen et al., 1983).

3. Researchers acknowledge that danger does vary from place to place (i.e., across states, cities, beats, etc.) and also in terms of seriousness (i.e., with or without weapons) (see Reiner, 1985). What varies less is the emphasis on being aware of the potential for the occurrence of dangerous or violent situations. Both formal training (i.e., academy and departmental training) and informal training (i.e., police peer socialization) reinforce this awareness among officers (Van Maanen, 1974).

4. For a more detailed classification of the sorting of citizens by officers, see Reiner (1985). Reiner's work examines encounters in general with citizens who are potential clients of police services (*good class villains*, *police property*, *rubbish*, *politicians*), citizens who work in an official capacity close to that of policing (i.e., doctors, lawyers, social workers) (*challengers*), citizens who can "weaken" or "neutralize" the work of the police (i.e., women, children, and the elderly) (*disarmers*), and citizens who are activists against the police (*do-gooders*) (ibid., pp. 94–96).

5. Much of this history can be traced back to professionalism, which emphasized "scientific crime fighting" over service functions (Kappeler et al., 1998; Kelling & Kliesmet, 1996).

6. Fielding's (1988) research on the British police supports Van Maanen's claim that the chief socializer is the recruit's training officer (tutor constable).

7. Jermier et al. (1991) study of organizational subcultures referred to this crime-fighting department as the "official" organizational culture of police.

8. This assumes that a department is characterized by one, and only one, style. Where departments comprise multiple or mixtures of styles, one might expect a multitude of differences among organizational members.

9. Punch (1983) also writes about the reciprocal tension and conflict that exists among occupational members of varying rank. Like Reuss-Ianni, Punch dichotomizes rank into "bosses" and "workers," and asserts that the isolation and loyalty that is found among occupational members and citizens in the occupational environment is also found within the organization between lower ranking personnel and top ranking officials (ibid., p. 248).

10. In distinguishing between cultural heterogeneity and homogeneity, the author is not speaking dichotomously about whether or not police culture exists. Instead, there is more of a concern over degrees of collectiveness among occupational members (much of which could have previously been overstated), and whether or not all, or nearly all, police align with a single culture. In identifying heterogeneity, this article highlights differences in commitments that are shaped by factors that one can empirically identify. In this sense, the assertion is more about the possibility of multiple cultures as opposed to no culture at all.

11. Worden's (1995) work synthesized the typologies that were done exclusively in the United States, while Reiner's (1985) work, which synthesized some of typologies that Worden included (i.e., Broderick, 1977; Muir, 1977), encompassed American, British, and Canadian police officers. Both authors concluded with a very similar synthesis of officer "types."

12. Other research on typologies examined differences among officers with respect to: applications of techniques (particularistic or universalistic), focus on outcomes or processes, and discretion-control or command-control orientation (White, 1972); maintaining social order (high and low) and due process of law (high and low) commitments (Broderick, 1977); morality of coercion or *passion* (integrated or conflicted) and perspective (tragic or cynical) (Muir, 1977); reasons for becoming a cop, goals in life, and social interaction patterns (Walsh, 1977); and, attitudes toward aspects of the job (i.e., initial attraction, current attachment, job satisfaction, privatization, unionateness, support for Federationists, promotions system, relations among the ranks, role of the police, and outside trade unions) (Reiner, 1978).

13. See also Broderick's (1977) *enforcer*, Muir's (1977) *enforcer*, Reiner's (1978) *new centurion*, Walsh's (1977) *action-seeker*, and White's (1972) *tough-cop*.

14. Space constraints prohibit a full explanation of such divergence. For a more detailed account of possible cultural differences, as a function of officer style, see Paoline (2001, Chap. 2).

15. The use of Wilson's research might be regarded by some as somewhat "dated". While more recent research has been done on organizational correlates of police behavior, no studies of differences in organizational culture (of police departments) have been done since Wilson's work.

16. Although he did not speak about the changes that occurred in policing to fragment police culture, Herbert (1998) did criticize traditional monolithic characterizations of culture in his discussion of variation among officers. Herbert identified six normative orders (law, bureaucratic control, adventure/machismo, safety, competence, and morality) of the police occupation that were said to shape the social world of officers. According to the author, the priorities assigned to each can give insight into "internal variation" among officers, as well as identifying potential subcultures (pp. 361–364).

17. Most empirical studies that examined previously excluded occupational members focused on the ways in which they were integrated in policing (see, for example Britz, 1997; Haarr, 1997). Little attention had been paid to the ways in which excluded groups differentially responded and coped with their occupational world. Where research focused on officer attitudes, few statistical differences were noted for females and racial minorities (Paoline et al., 2000; Worden, 1993), and mixed findings (at best) have resulted for education (Brooks, Piquero, & Cronin, 1993; Worden, 1990). Like Worden (1993) noted for examinations of gender differences, inquiry into differences among demographic groups should continue, especially as these groups accumulate experience in departments, obtain representation at the supervisory level, and become part of the socializing process for other occupational members (p. 231). This suggests that the changes in culture associated with demographic differences in personnel may be forthcoming.

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