



**INTERNATIONAL POLICE EXECUTIVE SYMPOSIUM
GENEVA CENTRE FOR THE DEMOCRATIC CONTROL
OF ARMED FORCES**

WORKING PAPER NO 24

**Weak Links and Warrior Hearts:
A Framework for Judging Self and Others in Police Training**

Norman Conti

**AUGUST 2010
WWW.IPES.INFO
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IPES/DCAF Working Paper No 24, August 2010

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ABSTRACT

This article examines professional socialization within a metropolitan police academy in the United States. Specifically, the research documents how the normative orders of the occupational culture come to function as a framework used to either stigmatize or idealize fellow recruits. A series of narratives regarding and reactions to particular events in the training serve as examples that detail the manner by which recruits internalize the occupational culture as they evolve through the training. The article also discusses how recruits are eventually able to utilize their burgeoning understanding of normative orders to discredit police administrators and the training structure itself.

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Introduction

This research seeks to understand the cultural transmission of outdated notions within policing. The article presents an ethnographic analysis of narratives and group reactions that develop over the course of police academy training. It focuses on both formal and informal structures within the training environment that promote traditional notions of masculinity and police work, within an incoming cohort of recruits. Specifically, the analysis is geared to generate insight into how particular characteristics come to be either stigmatized or idealized within the occupation.

Literature Review

Professional socialization within policing has been the subject of a large sociological literature documenting changes in perspective, personality, and identity that occur over the course of academy training (e.g., McNamara 1967; Van Maanen 1973; Burgin 1975; Hopper 1977; McCreedy 1980; Bennett 1984; Fielding 1984; Maghan 1988; Berg 1990; McNulty 1994; Conti 2006). Such studies highlight the importance of setting in occupational socialization, and three general themes have developed within this literature. The first is a critique of the high stress paramilitary training model's design to elicit frustration, emotional overload and subjective crisis (Lundman 1980; Albuquerque & Paes-Machado 2004).¹ Since the initial ethnographic analyses, this model of police socialization

¹ Lundman (1980) identifies three types of training models in policing: high stress paramilitary, vocational and collegiate models. Roberg, Novak and Cordner (2008) explain that high stress academies are more prevalent with in large departments and the non-stress model is more productive in community oriented policing environments. In a comprehensive survey, Hickman (2005) discovered that fifty-four percent of American academies can be categorized as the high stress variety. His study noted that sixty-eight percent of municipal, county, regional and state academies utilized a stress model while sixty-two percent college, university, or technical schools employed a non-stress model. So, while there is variation in training styles throughout the United States, the type of academy described in this research is quite common within large urban departments.

has been described as a punitive initiation into the occupational subculture during which instructors enthusiastically embrace sacrifice, humiliation and pain as pedagogy for building character (Van Maanen 1972; Harris 1973).

A second theme in the literature is that important segments of the formal curriculum of high stress paramilitary training, especially the more progressive elements, do not hold up in the face of field training and the realities of “the street” (Wortley & Homel 1993; Buerger 1998; Tuohy, Wrennall, McQueen, & Engelson 1998; Sun 2003a; 2003b). Specifically, academy training has failed to advance the community or problem-oriented philosophies of policing (Mastrofski & Ritti 1996; Bradford & Pynes 1999; Traut, Feimer, Emmert, & Thom 2000; Haar 2001; Cheurprakobkit 2002; Quinet, Nunn, & Kincaid 2003; Chappell 2006). There are also serious problems in ethics training (Morgan, Morgan, Foster, & Kolbert 2000), cultivating discretion (Lint 1998; Helsen & Starkes 1999), diversity training (Gould 1997; Rowe & Garland 2003; Conti & Doreian 2010) as well as significant gender discrimination within academies (Fletcher 1996; Marion 1998; Prokkos & Padavic 2002; Haar 2005).

Eterno (2006) has noted that high stress paramilitary training is common among compstat departments while nonstress training is frequently found in community oriented policing style departments. However, Chappell and Lanza-Kaduce (2009) report that even in an academy which has been retooled, to emphasize community policing a high stress paramilitary ethos bleeds through. Some scholars have even noted that the high stress paramilitary model of training results in police practices that are contrary to democratic governance (Paes-Machado & Albuquerque 2002; Marenin 2004) and that a structure utilizing university connections, experiential learning and critical thinking would be significantly more effective (Birzer & Tannehill 2001; Birzer 2003; Glenn, Panitch, Barnes-Proby, Williams, Lewis, Germehr, & Brannan 2003; Lino 2004).

The third theme is that while the training structure may fail to instill much of the formal curriculum within recruits, it is a fairly effective excision of the civilian identity and transmission of the demeanor, bearing, and competence befitting an idealized sense of police character (Fielding 1984; Shernock 1998). This ethos is transmitted in the subtext of war stories or parables told by instructors, veteran officers, and peers as well as through extra-curricular presentations of obedience

to authority in paramilitary dress, demeanor and deportment (Ford 2003; Langworthy & Travis 2003; Chappell, Lanza-Kaduce & Johnston 2005). During the socialization process, recruits experience shifts in self-concept, attitude, and moral relativism that parallel the perspectives of active officers (Stradling, Crowe & Tuohy 1993; Catlin & Maupin 2004; Christie, Petrie, & Timmins 1996). Additionally, the informal curriculum promotes values that are contrary to the formal training as well as the recruit's initial idealism, motivation and commitment (Van Maanen 1975; Fielding 1988; Haar 2005; White 2006).

Taken together, these overarching themes present an image of high stress paramilitary training as a test of character in which recruits are expected to strive for an idealized sense of what it means to be a police officer (i.e., strength) to the exclusion of a discredited idea of civilian characteristics (i.e., weakness). This conception of police socialization was fully confirmed in the course of the ethnographic fieldwork where the data for this research were collected. Specifically, the training utilized a dialectical process of stigmatization and idealization in which a mythologized notion of the police officer was juxtaposed against a lesser image of the average civilian. This heroic police archetype was captured in the Deputy Chief of the department's explanation that:

This job is hard. You're gonna have to be a social worker, a medic, a lawyer, a priest, and a warrior. You have to have the warrior heart. It's gotta be in your soul.

The "warrior heart" ideal was consistently restated throughout the course of training. The staff frequently talked about the kind of heart that a cop had to have and then go on to discuss the solidarity that existed among officers as they were collectively "running towards trouble while everyone else was running away."

The academy curriculum provides recruits with a series of opportunities to demonstrate evidence of the warrior heart. From conforming to the most basic standards of dress and deportment to meeting the performance requirements for physical fitness, self-defense, firearms and the like, recruits must perpetually demonstrate that they are worthy of an eventual elevation to the status of police officers. Alternatively, failure to meet these requirements frames the recruit as

unfit to carry the mantle of policing. This distinction was made clear by an instructor who explained that:

They are looking for that weak link. That's why they push you so hard. You see, there are no demerits on the street and that next call could be your last.

Here, the recruits were warned that the academy is only a partial simulation of what they could expect from a career in policing. As such, it was an important opportunity for them to begin to shed their civilian characteristics in favor of those of the idealized cop. Otherwise, if they were “weak links” and could not live up to training standards, they would serve best, and be best served, by avoiding the potential dangers that the occupation has to offer.

This analysis brings something new to the extant literature by documenting the adoption and utilization of the normative orders of the occupational culture as a framework for judging fellow recruits and the departmental administration. While previous research has examined the function of war stories, jokes, and legends as mechanisms for cultural transmission in policing (Shearing & Ericson 1991; McNulty 1994; Buerger 1998; Crank 1998; Ford 2003) there has not been any discussion of how recruits use their new vocabulary of meaning to construct accounts of and justify reactions to events that occur over the course of training. This article does just that, by describing recruit narratives and reactions to particular events that illustrated the progression of academy socialization through three distinct stages.

Additionally, the research examines the idealized conception of masculinity, which is at the center of the occupational subculture. In this sense, the analysis is documenting masculinity lessons as they are presented to both the men and women within the academy. Though various scholars have detailed the barriers faced by women (Hunt 1990; Martin 1990; Morash & Haar 1995; Harrington 2002; Burke & Mikkelsen 2005; Rabe-Hemp 2008) and African Americans (Walker, Spohn & DeLone, 2000; Barlow & Barlow 2002; Raganella & White, 2004) within policing, relatively little has been written about the types of men who represent a threat to the traditional masculine ethos in policing (Bernstein & Kostelac 2002; Miller, Forest, & Jurik 2003). This research examines how these

types of men can be used to reinforce the boundaries of the occupational subculture.

Methods

The context of this ethnography is a recruit class at the Rockport police department's training academy.² The class consisted of seventy recruits and lasted for twenty-one weeks from late 1999 through early 2000. The data were collected through participant observation over the course of training. Access to the site was achieved through a written request to the chief of police that detailed a specific interest in police training and socialization. The department accommodated this request with the stipulation that the recruits' participation would have to be voluntary and anonymous. Recruit dossiers and other academy documentation were also made available. The overall scope of this ethnography is limited by the fact that it is a study of only one recruit cohort in one police academy.

The author took an overt role and was identified to all present as a sociologist working on a research project, and when questioned about topic and motive he claimed a general interest in communication patterns.³ Since it was mainly a classroom environment, detailed observations were recorded without much notice because the author was just one person, among seventy others, writing in a notebook. In addition to observing as much of the formal training as possible, he also went to great lengths to frequently eat lunch with the recruits and maintain a presence during their periodic breaks. These experiences allowed him to observe and interact with the recruits at informal moments when they could be more candid in their interpretation and retelling of the narratives in question.

The data were analyzed from a grounded theory perspective where field notes were coded for emerging processes and themes (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Charmaz 1983). Analytic memos were essential in understanding how the academy was functioning. When the significance of idealized masculinity and stigmatization began to emerge, the field notes were reviewed once more in order to determine

² Rockport is a pseudonym for an American city with a population of 500,000 and a police force of 2000 officers.

³ A portion of this research was devoted to a network analysis of social knowledge and friendship ties so, this was both true and easily verified by the questionnaires recruits were periodically asked to complete (see Conti and Doreian 2010).

how these informal elements of the training were functioning. Eventually it became clear that representations of particular recruits as either examples, or counter examples, of the masculine ethos within the occupational culture were important mechanisms for illustrating normative orders and illustrating progress through the stages of the recruit's moral career.

Normative orders, moral careers and others

This project is largely inspired by Herbert's work (1998) on the function of normative orders in structuring worldview and producing emotive response in policing. Normative orders are sets "of generalized rules and common practices oriented around a common value" that provide officers with frames for understanding, enacting, and valuing situations (Herbert 1998, 374). Herbert identifies six normative orders within policing (e.g., law, bureaucratic control, adventure/machismo, safety, competence and morality) and explains how they inform the professional vision of officers by serving as boundaries for the subculture that both justify and limit behavior. For instance, Herbert explains that the law provides police officers with the right to use coercive force in a manner that is not offered to the general public while also placing limits upon when and how it can be used (1998, 351). Moreover, he goes on to describe how these normative orders can be inconsistent with one set of bureaucratic rules and in an irreconcilable conflict with another. Furthermore, individual officers or entire departments may likely hold different conceptions of competence. Finally, Herbert points out that these normative orders may overlap in complicated ways that make it difficult to know if an instance where force is being used is the result of adventure/machismo, safety, or morality.

In a later piece, Herbert (2001) examines the foundation of police culture in a masculine ideal of a "hard charging" crime fighter that is juxtaposed against a social service oriented "station queen". Given this cultural base, most of the normative orders can easily be traced back to an idealized sense of masculinity. Garcia (2003) also recognizes this masculine ethos and notes that in all cultures, individuals as well as groups are dichotomized into the categories of normal and other. She explains that this dialectic is founded upon the generalization that there are two kinds of people, those like us and those not. In policing, the norm is

conceptualized as the “crime fighter” (e.g., individual police or squads specializing in homicide, vice, organized crime and gangs) while officers or units engaged in social service activities (i.e., domestic violence, community policing, juvenile crime units) are stigmatized as deviant.

This research is different from earlier discussions of idealized masculinity and stigmatization within policing. While they focus on how these sentiments have harmed female officers or inhibited the success of community oriented policing, this study is concerned with their initial establishment as part of the socialization process within the academy. Here, the research follows a line of thought initially opened by Prokos and Padavic (2002) in their examination of a hidden curriculum within police training that promotes elements of hegemonic masculinity (e.g., subordination of women, heterosexism, uncontrollable sexuality, authority, control, competitive individualism, independence, aggressiveness and capacity for violence) among recruits. They explain that this curriculum socializes recruits into the, “particular forms of masculinity that are lauded in police culture, the relationship between masculinity and police work, and the nature of groups that fall ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ the culture of policing” (Prokos & Padavic 2002, 440). Specifically, their research focused on the role of female recruits as counter examples used within the academy to illustrate the importance of dominant masculinity in policing.

Having analyzed how the presence of women in police training facilitates a process of differentiation for the male recruits, Prokos and Padavic suggest further research on the role that men who do not conform to hegemonic masculinity can play in these sorts of “masculinity lessons.” They argue that an analysis of the criteria that are used by men for judging other men for police group membership “may offer insights into their hostility towards the presence of women” (Prokos and Padavic 2002, 455). While this research is an attempt at answering their call for further research and may be useful in saying something about the role of gender in policing, its goals are somewhat more general.

This analysis focuses on the internalization of normative orders during “the regular sequence of changes (...) in the person’s self and his framework of imagery for judging himself and others” that constitute the recruit’s moral career (Goffman 1961, 128). Transition through a moral career involves a series of

consecutive turning points in worldview marked by particular happenings (e.g., admission to a police academy) that illustrate the link between self and society through a public event, such as a shift in social category (e.g., from civilian to police recruit). Remembering that normative orders structure the worldview of police (Herbert 1998, 361), there is an inherent conceptual linkage to moral career that this research seeks to explore.

In one of the first pieces of research on police training, Van Maanen (1973) used a moral career model in order to explain the police socialization process. His model included the four phases of choice, introduction, encounter and metamorphosis. When potential recruits decide to pursue a career in policing they enter the choice phase of the moral career. If successful in negotiating the civil service process, they move into the introduction phase during their academy training. The encounter phase occurs during field training when rookie officers receive their first taste of the realities of policing. Metamorphosis occurs in the shift between being a rookie and a veteran officer, when new officers fully transform into real cops.

The introduction or recruit phase of the moral career entails the navigation of three distinct stages of self: noncivilian, paramilitary, and anticipatory police (Conti 2009). For average recruits, the noncivilian stage begins at the start of academy training. In this instance they are entering an environment that is highly foreign to individuals lacking in either law enforcement or military experience. This initial situation is framed by the notion that participation in the training is a highly valued prize because it offers recruits an opportunity to achieve the idealized status of police officer. While the recruits have competed fiercely and successfully undergone a series of trials during the civil service selection process, their position within the academy can easily be forfeited if they fail to properly conform to academy standards. These standards are an all-encompassing set of rules that cover everything from dress to demeanor and deportment. Thus, the noncivilian stage is the recruit's initial step into an organizational culture that stands in sharp contrast to life within the wider society.

Once the staff has devoted sufficient time to their expectations and the recruits have internalized these basic standards, the training moves into its paramilitary stage. At this point, simply knowing how to function within the training structure

is no longer enough to stand out as a competent recruit. During this stage, the cohort is frequently divided into squads which alternate between areas of instruction that are more intense and better suited to small groups. These academic foci include firearms, self-defense, and physical fitness. By this point in the training, the cohort has for the most part adopted a paramilitary demeanor and is sharply focused upon living up to the requirements for graduation. This is an important shift: while in the noncivilian stage recruits are mostly focused on avoiding sanction in order to maintain their position within the academy, during the paramilitary stage their attention shifts to meeting the standards that will enable them to successfully get out. Additionally, it must be noted that a significant portion of the cohort entered the training with military experience, so the noncivilian stage of the training was most likely little more than a refresher course on the type of discipline with which they were already familiar.

As the training moves closer to its conclusion, recruits become aware of being just steps from “the street”. The emergence of this recognition signifies the start of the anticipatory police stage of the academy, where isolated skills such as firearms training and self-defense are united in building search scenarios. In these events recruits are armed with flashlights, handcuffs and service weapons that fire paint-filled pellets and sent into an abandoned building at night to find an instructor playing the part of an armed suspect. The combination of these practical events with their impending graduation leaves the recruits feeling more like real police officers and less like students. This shift was apparent in statements where recruits would knowingly talk of “the street” as if they had actually experienced it in a qualitatively different manner than any other urban resident. Additionally, just as recruits from military backgrounds are little affected by the noncivilian stage and likely begin the training more or less in the paramilitary stage, a few recruits had left positions as police officers in smaller departments in order to join the academy. For these recruits, the entire training is mostly an anticipatory police stage.

This analysis includes a discussion of how the training staff used one narrative that had worked its way into academy lore as well as another that emerged during the training in order to demarcate normative orders during the noncivilian stage. The focus then shifts to an account of a recruit resignation given under highly

suspicious circumstances, which was constructed within the cohort itself. In this example the recruits shift from audience to authors and take on a degree of agency that reflects an internalization of the normative orders during the paramilitary stage essential for their integration into policing. Finally, the research considers the group reaction to a last-minute alteration of the training standards enacted by the departmental administration to prevent the failure rate within the cohort from reaching a bureaucratically intolerable level. While this case is not really a narrative, it is an example of the recruits internalizing the normative orders of policing so fully during the anticipatory police stage that they could use them to make judgments against the occupational culture itself. These narratives and reactions mark the changes in framework of imagery for judging one's self and others that Goffman described as the soul of the moral career.

It is important to note that the majority of the narratives and reactions discussed in this article are exemplars of "weak links" rather than "warrior hearts". Counter examples tend to predominate within the subtext of the overarching training narrative because recruits hold so thoroughly degraded a position within the occupational culture that senior officers have been observed referring to them as "lower than snake shit" (Gallo 2001, 23). Given their status, it is unlikely that prime examples of the "warrior heart" would come from within an academy cohort. Moreover, on the rare occasions when they did, they were personified by recruits who had previously worked as police officers. So, the "warrior heart" is more of an aspiration or something to be proven in the cohort, while a "weak link" is much more easily confirmed and discussed.

A Situation of Immediate Consequences

The fundamental *stress* in high stress paramilitary police training comes from the fact that it is an environment with a fairly unusual set of rules whose violation may result in the dynamic punishment of expulsion. Since recruits have a great deal at stake both emotionally and financially, extreme emphasis upon these rules is an effective tool for establishing the normative order of bureaucratic control. During the noncivilian stage, the staff exploits this vulnerability by continually reminding them how fragile recruit standing is within the academy. Violation of any rule is framed as at least partial evidence that a recruit lacks the character

necessary to be a police officer. This practice ensures compliance through fear of economic and professional consequences of sanction, as well as stigmatization of the wayward recruit.

Generating compliance is an essential part of the socialization and a central focus of the noncivilian stage of the training, because unquestioning conformity demonstrates the internalization of the normative order of bureaucratic control. When the staff explains the basic rules and regulations, each one is accompanied by either a hypothetical account of what could happen if an infraction occurs or an example of a past violation. A vivid illustration came in the discussion of recruit ID's. At the start of training recruits were issued ID cards that were necessary for gaining access to police headquarters. A cautionary tale was presented about a female recruit who refused to present her ID on graduation day. The recruit asserted that her official police uniform was all the identification she needed to get in. The commander of the academy discovered this and expelled her, just hours before she was to be sworn in as a police officer. Additionally, it was a reminder that recruit status stands absolute until the moment of graduation, when the academy comes to its official close. The recruits shuddered at the idea of completing all of the training that lay ahead just to be dismissed at the very last minute for a disciplinary violation.

Moreover, while this story was presented during the noncivilian stage, it was clearly drawn from the anticipatory police stage of training. This is an important factor because other than making the point about the importance of proper identification and academy standards, it also demonstrates the sanction of a recruit who had otherwise proven herself in the training to a group who had yet to do so. What is important about this, for the recruits, is that if someone so far beyond them in the training could be instantly expelled for such a seemingly minor issue, then they would have to be constantly on guard against any potential rule violation for the entire twenty-one weeks of training. Furthermore, as discussed earlier, a number of the recruits come to the training from military or law enforcement backgrounds, so this story served to inform them that while the training may be one long paramilitary or anticipatory police stage for them when

it comes to disciplinary sanction, they would have as much at risk as their more civilian colleagues.⁴

During this stage of the training, the academy staff forcefully emphasized the importance of attendance. On the first day of training a staff member read the attendance policy from the state training manual and explained that there were particular classes mandated by the state that could not be missed under any circumstance. A recruit with serious medical problems preventing attendance of a required course would not be permitted to receive state certification. Since there were absolutely no exceptions to this rule, it added a powerful incentive for staying healthy.

The problem with this mandate against illness and injury is that a significant portion of the academy training is both physical and self-defense oriented, so recruits are frequently put at risk for sprains and broken bones. Over the course of the academy, this misfortune was realized in the cases of three recruits who were forced to repeat the academy with a later cohort because they were unable to complete firearms training due to broken wrists suffered during physical training.⁵ Furthermore, a large portion of the training was conducted outside in the cold winter months. Under these circumstances the recruit was competing against all of the personal and outside forces that would lead to absences, as well as specific hazards of the academy that could have the same effect.

Moving beyond injury and illness as reasons for absences, a training officer made it very clear that any recruit not ready for inspection by 0800 hours would be officially marked as tardy. She explained that while state training requirements called for automatic dismissal of recruits who were tardy five percent of the time, even one percent tardiness would likely carry the same consequence. If delayed, recruits were required to call a supervisor thirty minutes prior to roll call, report their situation and then check in every thirty minutes thereafter until they arrived. Any recruit who failed to comply with this regulation would be designated as AWOL and then the training officers would have to come looking for them. Their

⁴ This narrative can also be read as having a gendered text in which the overly assertive behavior of the female recruit qualified her as a “bitch” within an environment of hegemonic masculinity.

⁵ This was considered rather tragic because the recruits in question would have to sit through the same mind- numbing lectures and collect the same minuscule salary that they had been receiving, for the entire length of an additional training session.

search would start with a series of phone calls beginning when they discovered the recruit's unexplained absence and end with officers from the training unit in a zone car tracking down the missing recruit.

A narrative illustrating the importance of both bureaucratic control and staying healthy emerged two weeks into the academy during the first session of physical training. At the completion of a run that was designed as a baseline fitness measurement, one recruit fell to the ground holding his ankle. When questioned with regard to his silence on the matter prior to the run he responded "I didn't want you to think I was a bitch." This explanation only served to agitate the staff because they did not permit swearing among recruits.

At the next roll call there was a conspicuous truancy. Many of the recruits had been aware of the ankle injury during physical training and imagined the worst. Rumors spread and while there were many opinions on the issue, a general consensus emerged that the recruit had resigned. The following day, a training officer explained that his resignation was the product of the recruit's neglecting to inform the academy staff about his absence. The officer noted that this was a failure to meet academy standards for notification of the staff when there was a problem, and could have been easily avoided. All of the proper departmental medical forms had been filled out and the recruit was treated immediately after being injured. The only mistake that the recruit had made was not showing up for roll call or phoning to explain his absence. She stressed the importance of notifying the staff about any problems that they might experience during the course of their training and made the recruits write down a list of important academy numbers and put them in their wallets.

Her explanation of the circumstances surrounding the resignation suggested that there was more to his resignation than just a single unreported absence. The actual penalty for missing roll call was not entirely clear; however, this was used as an intensely vivid counter example of correct recruit behavior. The previous day another staff member had informally presented the back-story of this event as follows:

Oh Lord, you ain't never seen nothin like this. I mean it was a four or five hour ordeal. It started when he didn't show up for roll call. We

started calling him and the line was busy for a long time. So, from there, we called the phone company to check the line. They tell us it's off the hook, so we call Waldern PD to make sure he wasn't in an accident or in their system or anything like that.⁶ He wasn't. So, we called the State Police to see if they had any record of him. They didn't. We had WPD go to his house to check on him. They got there and talked to his wife and convinced her to pick up the phone the next time we called. She told WPD that her husband was not in a good mental state to talk on the phone with the academy staff. WPD told us that the recruit looked like he was drunk or beat up or something. If you ask me, it sounds like it could be a domestic thing where she's the one abusing him. Eventually, we did get him on the phone and convinced him to come in. At this point the Lieutenant met with him and suggested that he resign from the academy. He did.

This recruit was not a typical of the rest of his classmates so his loss was met with mixed emotions. He had an intelligence and outspoken nature that were unusual for a recruit within this class. Moreover, his forthright disposition left no doubt that he held progressive ideals regarding law enforcement and was very critical of police racism.

These attributes cast him as a threat to the traditional notion of a police officer and led the members of the class to have either strong positive or negative feelings about him. Some recruits felt that they had lost a comrade, while others were glad to see him go. The more open-minded recruits appreciated what were deemed eccentricities within the fairly conservative environment, while the recruits with tighter institutional perspectives saw him as a deviant and potential weak link. His resignation from the academy under circumstances that allowed him to be portrayed as a direct counter example to the normative order of bureaucratic control served to further illustrate this point. Moreover, the introduction of mental breakdown and domestic violence plotlines in which he was being abused by his wife served to place him outside the normative order of

⁶ Waldern is a pseudonym for the adjacent city in which the recruit was living at the time.

adventure/machismo as well as the more general masculine ethos of the occupational culture.

Strength & Character

One of the essential functions of police training is to provide recruits with opportunities to demonstrate evidence of the character associated with the idealized status of police officer. While the formal curriculum is pragmatic, with a focus on the basic occupational skill set, there is an underlying training structure designed to convey the normative orders of competence, safety, adventure/machismo, and morality.⁷ The distinction between these two curriculums can best be observed in the tests that accompany them. Within the high stress paramilitary model of police training, tests come in multiple forms that have complex meanings. Important examples are the tests of discipline in which recruits are expected to display obedience to authority in order to demonstrate that they are worthy of the elevation to the status of police officer that comes with graduation. During the paramilitary stage of the training, emphasis shifts from merely following the rules to demonstrating proficiency during physical and technical training. Simple obedience to authority is no longer sufficient to illustrate that the recruit has what it takes to serve as a police officer. At this point the recruit is expected to show significant progress toward achieving the performance goals of the training.

In this stage, the cohort spends most of their time building the required skills essential for meeting certification requirements in physical fitness, firearms, and driving. Recruits can easily be discredited within the milieu for lacking the physical strength and dexterity needed to do the mandated number of push-ups or handle a weapon effectively. Moreover, these tests have a symbolic meaning that extends beyond the physical or technical. They provide opportunities to demonstrate the basic competence to navigate the dangers of the occupational setting without putting anyone at risk. Recruits who are unable to meet these standards can be viewed as potential threats to themselves and others. While this

⁷ For another discussion of secondary or “hidden curriculums” in police training see White (2006).

type of incompetence may be perfectly acceptable within the civilian world, it does not permit advancement through the moral career in policing.

Grounded upon this understanding, the paramilitary stage operates as a nexus where four distinctive normative orders can come together in the training. First, the hypermasculine nature of the training supports the normative order of adventure/machismo. Secondly, the normative orders of both competence and safety are conjoined in this training because proficiency in the skills is purported to ensure the recruit's wellbeing on the street. Finally, there is a connection to the normative order of morality that results from the manner in which adventure/machismo, competence and safety come together in this stage. The connection between these normative orders is found in the idea that if a recruit is unable to demonstrate the idealized "warrior heart" through competence, then—as a weak link—he or she will eventually put him or herself and others at risk as a police officer. So, this inability to ensure the safety of fellow officers stigmatizes the underperforming recruit by placing him or her outside the normative order of morality. The notion of immorality applied here is centered on the assumption that anyone who would seek certification as a police officer without the ability to adequately safeguard himself or herself and others is missing a very important element of personal character.

Though any recruit enters the training with the potential to fail these sorts of tests, some begin the training already stigmatized by past failure. These recruits have been recycled from previous cohorts because they were unable to pass a specific element of the training requirements. Key examples include recruits who did not meet the mandatory physical fitness standards. Obviously, within an occupation where moral and physical strength are frequently conflated, a recruit who was too weak to complete the requisite number of push-ups will lack credibility. This discrediting was observed early in the training, as one recruit explained:

Seriously man, I ain't talk'n to nobody 'cause they got spies in here and you can't trust people. Like those recycles, man. Hey, they're in here, but I mean they already had their chance. I mean if you can't do it, you know maybe everybody isn't cut out to be a cop. There's nothing wrong with that, but then you bring them back through and

they already know all of the instructors. How can you trust them that they're not spies.

It is important to note that this recruit had worked as an institutional guard within the department, so his claim of a connection between demonstrated incompetence and trustworthiness seemed to carry some weight, particularly with other recruits who were new to the police milieu. As mentioned earlier, while a number of recruits enter the training without any experience in paramilitary environments, there are those for whom the academy structure is not so unusual. Moreover, there are also some who have worked as police officers or in other capacities within the criminal justice system. Since this recruit had worked as an institutional guard within the department, and as such had experienced the daily operations of policing and an abbreviated version of the academy, he stood as a direct counter example to the recycled recruits. He and those like him had demonstrated at least some degree of the “warrior heart” and were now placed among the cohort where they could serve as partial role models, bridging the gap between stigmatized recruits and idealized cops.

A key example of this type of role modelling came during a very emotional class on “street survival” designed to prepare recruits to confront the dangers of policing. The class included many stories of officers who were either killed, injured, or had survived attacks, accompanied by numerous videos of violent incidents. At one point the instructor was telling a story of a Port Authority officer who survived being shot in the line of duty, when a recruit informed him that the officer was now a member of the training cohort. Once informed of the presence of this former officer, the instructor called him up to the front of the room and put his arm around him with great feeling. He commanded the recruits to give him a round of applause and with tears welling in his eyes, he explained that:

This is a survivor. He made it home that night. You have to survive too. You can't let anyone take you away from your families. Look at this guy and know what you have to do.

Much like the recruit discussed earlier, who had worked as an institutional guard and was most likely starting the training primed for the paramilitary stage, this recruit and the others who had previously served as police officers were likely to

have taken little away from the noncivilian or paramilitary stages of the training. Undoubtedly the training was one extended anticipatory police stage, with an emphasis on anticipating being a police officer in a different setting rather than just anticipating being a police officer in general. Again, a recruit with this type of background is the antithesis of a recruit recycled because he or she could not live up to training standards. What is more, this battle-tested recruit in particular was a dynamic exemplar of the “warrior heart.”

Alternatively, because the recycled recruits fell short of training standards, they, epitomized the potential for failure that everyone in the cohort was trying to avoid. In this situation, recruits are left to construct accounts of the weakness that was at the root of their classmate’s failure. These narratives seek to detail the precise reasons why certain individuals may not be “cut out to be cops.” Recruits seize on whatever characteristics are most out of line with the police archetype and construct narratives that almost fully discredit the recycled recruit within the occupational culture. As seen above in the discussion of recycled recruits as potential spies, not only had they proven their weakness; they had also placed themselves in a position where they could not be trusted.

Stigmatization of this type was observed in the case of one recruit who was being recycled from a previous academy because he was unable to meet one of the physical fitness standards for graduation. While this was an objective incompetence, there was a widespread sentiment within the group that his failure resulted from a decidedly unmasculine manner and physique. As a result, he was frequently the subject of homophobic jokes and taunting.⁸ At one point during the training, a fellow recruit took a pink sheet of paper that he had rolled up into a spyglass and began to survey the room. When he stopped on the recruit in question he began making a beeping sound and explained that the improvised device was a “fag-ometer.” This instance was perhaps the most extreme case of abuse suffered by the recruit, but it captured the general regard in which he was held.

⁸ For extended discussions of homophobia in police culture see Burke 1993, 1994, Buhrke 1996, Bernstein and Kostelac 2002, and Miller, Forest, and Jurik 2003.

As the academy progressed into the paramilitary stage, the negative sentiment toward this recruit was only further solidified. The confirmation began in an ongoing series of lectures given by a detective from the auto theft unit. The detective was always a welcome presence within the cohort because he had a charismatic presence, and his lectures included lots of humor and war stories as well as descriptions of the mechanics of auto theft. During one of the breaks between his classes, the stigmatized recruit began talking to him about a time when his own car was stolen. The detective listened patiently and seemed to pay serious attention to the recruit's description of the events. Later in the training when teaching classes on interrogation, he made it a point to frequently call on him in class and talk to this recruit during free moments. Eventually, the detective started showing up unexpectedly and having the recruit excused from class in order to speak further with him. Recruits joked about his absence, saying that the detectives were "sweating him down in the box" (i.e., interrogating him).

As it turned out, that was exactly what he was doing because the detective actually was conducting an investigation in his discussions with the recruit. Eventually, it was discovered that this recruit had crashed his car while working as a driver for a prostitution ring and then reported it stolen. The detective had been gaining the recruit's confidence during his informal conversations with him and then put together a case that left little doubt as to what he had done. The recruit resigned from the academy in order to avoid prosecution. The serendipity of a recruit coming under investigation for an automobile-related crime during a class on auto theft, and then being interrogated during a class on interrogation, was not wasted on the cohort and undoubtedly ensured the longevity of this story in academy lore.

This emerging narrative of the recruit's resignation captured the essence of the paramilitary stage of the socialization through a central figure who was a dynamic counter example to the mythologized notion of a police officer. His example was used to illustrate the importance of morality and masculinity within police culture that has been noted by a number of authors (Martin 1980, 1994; Hunt 1990; Martin & Jurik 1996; Fletcher 1998). While the resignation of the recruit who failed to report to roll call illustrated the importance of discipline this example helped confirm the notion that certain types of people lack the strength required in

the idealized conception of policing. In this instance physical strength, sexuality and morality were all linked in support of a traditional masculine notion of what it takes to be a police officer.

However, this case is not necessarily representative of the situation of homosexual police officers. First, it should be noted that the stigmatized recruit was perceived and described as gay by a number of his classmates without ever openly identifying with that label. Secondly, Miller et al. (2003, 370) report that homosexual officers who possess the qualities essential to the normative order of adventure/machismo are able to effectively navigate and gain acceptance within the occupational subculture of policing. This is a particularly interesting finding because it demonstrates that a specific normative order can outweigh a general bias.

And the weak shall fall by the wayside?

As the close of training approaches and recruits move into the anticipatory police stage of the socialization, there is a dynamic shift in how they behave within the academy. Having successfully negotiated the bulk of the training and demonstrated proficiency in an array of skills, they begin to take on an air of confidence befitting actual police officers. At this point they begin to outgrow the academy structure and project themselves into their upcoming release into the world of active policing. By the eighteenth of the twenty-one weeks of training the commander of the academy explained that, "These people need to go because there's nothing I can do with them anymore." Her point was that with only a few weeks between them and the street, the recruits had generally begun imagining themselves to be actual police officers and had become more difficult to manage.

The potential for disorder during the anticipatory police stage was increased by the fact that the concluding weeks of the training are less structured than the preceding stages of training. Instead of spending all day in a series of tightly scheduled lectures and training sessions, large blocks of time were spent preparing for the state certification exam, filling out final paperwork and distributing equipment. As bits of the formal training structure were fading, recruits got a sense of the realities of organizational life within an urban police department.

A clear example of this was observed in the student performance objectives (SPO's) for physical fitness. From the beginning of the training, the recruits were informed that there were a series of SPO's for push-ups, sit-ups and running that had to be met in order to complete the academy. A good deal of the physical training in the academy was devoted to conditioning and pre-testing for a final examination in these SPO's. While the staff presented the SPO's as if they were sacred edicts, the recruits eventually learned that there is more room for negotiation in an urban bureaucracy than they had been aware. This lesson was conveyed when around twenty percent of the class failed at least one of their SPO's.

Throughout the training, SPO's were a key source of anxiety because a substantial portion of the recruits lacked the strength, speed or endurance to meet them in the initial baseline tests or later pre-tests. Many recruits ran together on the weekends, while others were assigned to remedial training during lunch or at the end of the day in order to prepare for the exam. The final physical exam was an intensely emotional day. Recruits who were easily able to meet their SPO's took pride in their accomplishment while encouraging classmates who were struggling in particular events. During the timed run, recruits who had quickly finished returned to the track in order to jog alongside and support slower classmates, while others shouted encouragement to those doing push-ups or sit-ups. This type of solidarity was further illustrated by the profound sense of disappointment shared by failing recruits and the group. In particular, a number of recruits broke down into tears after failing an event and were then vigorously consoled by their classmates.

Within the mythology of policing conveyed during the training, the final physical examination should have been a dramatic moment where the weak were separated from the strong and sent back into the civilian world. However, police mythology is almost entirely subordinate to civic bureaucracy and a twenty-percent failure rate in an academy class translates into hundreds of thousands of tax dollars in training costs gone to waste. So, as the results of the final examination made their way up the chain of command for the department and office of public safety, it was decided that failed recruits would spend the remainder of the academy in almost full-time remedial training until they were able to meet their SPO's. While

this was a practical decision on the part of the department and the city as well as a wonderful turn of events for the failed recruits, it was a direct contradiction to the normative orders of competence, safety, adventure/machismo, and morality that had been the focus of so much of the socialization up until that point. In response to the remedial training and retesting following the final exam, one recruit asked, “What’s the point? It’s like it doesn’t even mean anything. I mean if they are just going to test you until you pass, then why bother?” Obviously, this type of disjunction between pretence and practice can be viewed as a dynamic mechanism for establishing cynicism within an occupation.

Specifically, by this stage of the training, the recruits themselves were discrediting fellow classmates who “didn’t deserve all those chances” as well as the department’s administration that was providing the opportunities, based upon their own internalization of the normative orders. The more vocal recruits began to juxtapose individuals who had initially struggled with their SPO’s but found it within themselves to rise to the challenge with those who had not. One recruit explained:

Look at Smith. She came in here with two kids and still worked every day to get in shape. Now she’s so together that the Gym staff is trying to get her involved with the police body building program. Then there’s Jones. She hasn’t done anything at all and she’s going to make it through because they’re going to test her until she passes. That’s bullshit!

Clearly this recruit was taking great exception to the contradictions between the normative orders made apparent in these events. In this situation normative orders of adventure/machismo, competence, safety, and morality are being subordinated to bureaucratic control. Moreover, he is acknowledging that the masculine ideals of the culture are applicable to both men and women.

A similar point was made in a narrative that involved a recruit who had broken his wrist early in the training. On the day of the firearms qualification, he cut off his cast and joined his classmates on the firing line. This recruit, like the one who had survived being shot, had worked as a police officer elsewhere prior to joining the academy, so he was able to shoot with enough accuracy to pass the test despite his

injury and the fact that he was unable to participate in the preceding firearms training. His demonstration of both competence and grit was inspirational and framed him as a “real cop” in the eyes of the other recruits as well as the training staff.

Unfortunately, despite passing this test, the recruit could not be certified because he had failed to complete the mandated number of firearms training hours required by the state. The hero in this narrative was the antithesis of the recruits who were in the ongoing process of retesting. In this case, despite upholding the normative orders of adventure/machismo, competence, safety, and morality the injured recruit was being victimized as a result of the administration’s need to maintain bureaucratic control. Here a recruit who was clearly in possession of the “warrior heart” would have to be recycled while a group of “weak links” were given numerous and arguably undeserved opportunities to complete the training. This finding fits with Hunt’s (1990) identification of formal rules and administration as feminine characteristics within policing while resistance to management is defined as masculine.

Discussion

The goal of this project has been to link Herbert’s (1998) work on normative orders in policing with the concept of a moral career (Goffman 1961) through a discussion of idealization and stigmatization during academy training. The union and application of these concepts helps to explicate the process by which police internalize core elements of their occupational subculture. Moreover, together they illustrate what is most essential to the mythologized status of “police officer” for those who are preparing to assume it. Manning explains the consequences of this self-conception as follows:

The policeman’s self is an amalgam of evaluations made by many audiences before whom he, as a social actor must perform... His most meaningful standards of performance are the ideals of his *occupational culture*. The policeman judges himself against the ideal policeman as described in police occupational lore and imagery. What a “good policeman” does is an omnipresent standard. The occupational culture, however, contains more than the definition of a

good policeman. It contains the typical values, norms, attitudes, and material paraphernalia of an occupational group. (Manning 1999[1978], 99)

Above, Manning is explaining how professional identity and occupational culture are linked through the notion of an idealized police officer. For Herbert, Manning's archetype is the masculine cop who can exist at the intersection of the various normative orders and navigate them effectively despite an array of both internal and external contradictions. This research has attempted to detail how recruits adopt and utilize these subcultural elements by documenting narratives, as well as reactions, that they were both audiences for and authors of.

Specifically, this article has described the manner by which narratives emerge in accordance with the basic structure of the training. One of the more interesting aspects of this element of the socialization process is how the narratives become more complex as the recruits evolve through their moral careers. As explained above, the first resignation occurred during the noncivilian stage of the training and resulted from a failure to fully conform to the normative order of bureaucratic control. While this narrative included a subtext which may have served to place the recruit outside the normative order of adventure/machismo, its fundamental elements were rather simple: the recruit, who presented some potentially unmasculine characteristics, did not conform to the rules regarding absenteeism and was subsequently encouraged to resign.

The second narrative was generated within the cohort and somewhat more complex because it included an extended criminal investigation of a recruit who was already doubly discredited within the training environment. Since this recruit was both recycled from a previous training cohort for lacking the strength to meet his SPO for push-ups and perceived to be gay, his narrative held greater symbolic value within the cohort than that of the prior recruit, who was only in the class for a couple of weeks and suffered less of a stigmatization. Moreover, his resignation served to illustrate the convergence of four separate normative orders (e.g. safety, competence, morality and adventure/machismo). Obviously, this is a much more complicated story than the previous one and its sophistication can be seen as paralleling that of the cohort as they progressed through their moral careers.

Finally, the remedial training and retesting of recruits who could not meet their SPO's, as well as that of the recruit who met his shooting SPO despite a broken wrist, are evidence that the recruits had fully arrived at the anticipatory police stage of the training. At this point the recruits had taken their most active role, in interpreting events that framed the failure and retesting of their classmates as an insult to all of those who met their SPO's in terms of normative orders. Moreover, the insult was exacerbated by the recycling of an idealized recruit. Unlike the stories of recruits who violated regulations imposed by the staff, the reaction to the retested recruits was that they degraded the accomplishments of the initially successful recruits. Since the reaction placed the successful recruits in the role that had previously been held by the academy staff, it is evidence of an internalization of normative orders.

Since the reaction placed the successful recruits in the role that had previously been held by the academy staff, it is evidence of an internalization of normative orders. This type of reaction demonstrates that the socialization process was effective in transmitting much of the complexity of police culture to the cohort. Moreover, the supplemental discrediting of the departmental administration was a twist in which recruits showed that they understood the difference between "real cops" and "management cops" (Reuss-Ianni 1993).

Conclusion

In the past decade, a number of scholars have noted that paramilitary training leads to police practices which are contrary to the democratic rule of law (Paes-Machado & Albuquerque 2002; Birzer 2003; Marenin 2004). Britzer (2003) and Marenin (2004) argue that the pedagogical structure of academy training (i.e., the transmission of information from expert to novice) implies that it is teaching to children. Each posits andragogy (i.e. the mutual involvement of expert and novice in the learning process) as an alternative training regime. An andragogical structure is expected to better orient officers toward problem solving, critical thinking, and the goals of policing in a democracy rather than the "robot, soldier-like mentality that has been perpetuated in the training classroom" under the pedagogical system (Birzer and Tannehill, 2001: 236). This research has focused less on the actual structure of police training and more on its subtext so, it is

difficult to argue for andragogy over pedagogy based on the analysis. However, in terms of general policy suggestions the study does have something to contribute in terms of both training and the wider culture of policing.

The extant literature presents police culture as both homogenous (Westley 1970; Bittner 1974; Kappeler, Sluder, & Alpert 1998; Crank 1998) as well as diverse (Wilson 1968; Muir 1977; Reuss-Ianni 1983; Fielding 1988; Manning 1994; Chan 1997; Waddington 1999; Paoline 2001). Paoline (2003) argues that those who have ignored the diversity of police culture foster a monolithic conception of it. His claim is important for sensitizing scholars, practitioners and the general public that there is not simply one “police type” and that individuals adjust to the professional circumstances in various fashions. Instead of contributing to the monolithic representation of police culture, this project has examined the persistence of the traditional police ethos and its function in contemporary policing (i.e., a particular spirit that is actually one of the grains of truth within the monolithic misconception). However, while it is very difficult to produce even a single example of a genuinely monolithic culture, calling to mind cultures that are monologic is less of a challenge (Bakhtin 1984). In monologic environments, dialogue between groups and individuals of varying social statuses is stifled and replaced by a single authoritarian voice. The distinction between pedagogy and andragogy discussed above is a clear example of what separates monologic from dialogic structures. Moreover, the traditional paramilitary model of police organizations and training is fundamentally monologic, both internally and externally. Meaningful dialogue between the ranks and with the community has been largely nonexistent or merely superficial.

While the demographics of police culture have shifted some in the past forty years, that change in personnel has not necessarily transformed the central cultural tenets. Police culture evolves in conjunction with the occupational realities faced by officers. There are two essential realities within the profession that have not changed since the culture initially worked its way into academic discourse. These are first, that police in the United States are charged with an impossible mandate—efficient crime control in a democratic society (Manning 1978)—and second, the police function in society is predicated upon the authorization to use force against one civilian on behalf of another (Bittner 1970).

In order to cope with the frustration of their circumstances (i.e., a professional mandate that cannot be accomplished) the potentials for danger and violence are overemphasized and the self-concepts of police officers may become reliant on living up to the monologic notion of the “warrior heart”. Consequently, anything other than hegemonic masculinity is degraded. A male recruit responding to a questionnaire in a follow-up study in Pittsburgh provides a valuable example:

All recruits should be held to the same physical standard. I feel some of the female recruits are not nearly strong enough to pull me from a burning car or help me win a fight. The double standard violates the “Civil Rights” of male officers who could meet the female standard, but lack the requisite vagina. It does more importantly jeopardize their safety, and the safety of the females themselves.

Obviously this recruit, like the ones who reacted strongly to the continued retesting of their classmates, sees gender-based physical requirements as standing in contrast to the normative orders of safety, competence, morality and adventure/machismo. He offers another example of a recruit recognizing that the normative order of bureaucratic control funnel “weak links” into the organization.

While there may be a sharp emphasis placed on the categorization of individuals as either weak or strong, this dichotomy does not accurately reflect the nuance of the human condition. People are not weak or strong; they are weak and strong. Individuals constitute a wide spectrum and vacillate between these poles at any moment and in different phases of their lives. So, it is very problematic that a profession in which social interaction is the central service, should maintain such a one-dimensional conception of human nature. Moreover, from a strictly pragmatic perspective, traditional training does not adequately prepare recruits for the diversity of police tasks, produces maladaptive coping strategies, and is not seen as valuable by experienced officers (McCreedy 1983; Violanti 1993; Shernock 1998).

From the first observations of police socialization, it has been apparent that the formal model of police practice presented during training does not fit with the realities of the profession (Van Maanen 1972; Harris 1973). The “real character of policing is radically unteachable” (Fielding 1984: 582), so the majority of training

focuses on cultivating skills that are of only minimal use (Gernman 1969; Mayhall, Baker, and Hunter 1995). Understanding all of these facts, a rational policy suggestion has to begin with a call to let go of the monologic conception of a “warrior heart.” This notion only feeds into the mythology of police as crime-fighting superheroes who must swoop in and rid communities of the villains that plague them (Nolan, Conti & McDevitt 2004). Once this illusion is abandoned, both police training and practice can focus exclusively on strategies and tactics that will actually make significant long-term contributions to public safety.

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