

Police socialization within their organization research paper examples

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Curse:

Police Socialization

Socialization within an organization refers to the process where novice individuals learn the necessary skills to become competent members of the organization. In the context of police recruits, socialization means that they learn various forms of cultural knowledge that include presumptions, values, and behavioral norms associated with the organization. As such, gaining knowledge of the law, various codes, as well as the rules, become part of the socialization process. The recruits must adopt the assumptions and attitudes that are compatible with their work description and with the other officers within their organization. It is important to note from the onset that the process of socialization within police organizations is elaborate and multi-dimensional. One can fully appreciate the process by first understanding the various stages of socialization starting from the advertising, process of recruiting police officers, the initial training in police schools during the

apprenticeship phase, as well as the ongoing socialization to the culture of occupational police (O'Connor, 2012). Therefore, socialization within the police organizations entails learning customs, norms, traditions, values, symbols, responsibilities, language, as well as the ideologies of the police culture (Crank, 2004).

Some people hold different myths regarding the culture of police. It is possible that different backgrounds acculturate police recruits to different perspectives of police culture. Socialization within the police organizations does not consider far-reaching personality changes, but it entails a form of indoctrination once police organizations recruit successful applicants (Crank, 2004). In this regard, the organizational socialization does not take into consideration the upbringing of an individual. Even though factors such as family values can have some sway, the main motivation for organizational socialization is the social group. As such, it involves a secondary individuation process among peers, which is also a major determinant of self-worth (Wolf, 2008).

Recruitment Standards

In most cases, the recruitment processes in police organizations consider the previous skills of the applicants before deciding whether an applicant is suitable to join the organization. During the hiring process, the police leadership introduces conditions in a bid to hire the best candidates, at least in theoretical perspectives. Some of the common conditions during recruitment of police officers include citizenship, age, education, vision,

height and weight, criminal history, medical condition, and mental health (Barker, 1999). These considerations may also entail aptitude testing.

Training Procedures

Within the United States, the Police Officer Standards and Training Commission (POST) approves all forms of training, whether the training is basic or in-service, in every state save for states where the commission is not present such as West Virginia and Hawaii (O'Connor, 2012). The commissions on police training standards have been in existence since the 1960s (Dempsey, 2011). However, in most instances, the work of the POST is to plan future expectations and the skill sets that will be necessary. By planning, the commissions alert the recruiting departments about the skill sets that will be important, that will be taken into consideration for the current policing challenges (Rydberg, 2010).

Accordingly, the police training schools indoctrinate the recruits through standard modules that entail field assignments, investigations, patrol procedures, report writing, collection of evidence, ethics, and law enforcement. The socialization process does not entail teaching because the trainers are not teachers per se; instead, the trainers tend to focus more on the memorization of the policing procedures (O'Connor, 2012). Dwelling on the memorization limits the college-educated trainees, because the form of training requires them to 'unlearn' what they already know and adhere to the pre-existing organizational cultures. Such scenarios occur because the instructors do not necessarily get their positions as trainers because of their academic achievements but rather other achievements and recognition

within the police force. This ensures that the training that the recruits undergo is virtually similar to previous trainees and the subsequently trainees will still acquire the same training; therefore they end up being socialized into the organization.

During their operations, the new police officers gradually develop an operational style that is similar to those held by the previous recruits. The police officers develop a specific approach in responding to repeat scenarios, which contribute the bulk of the actual police work every day. Any form of consistent exposure to human troubles changes the attitude of any person, but in policing such habits tend to cause typical formations that most scholars refer to as the 'subcultures' of the police (O'Connor, 2012). The manner in which the police respond to situations becomes the same. The subcultures can lead the police officers to develop idealist beliefs regarding the preservation of the social order, optimistic beliefs in helping the community, enforcement of beliefs in the effectiveness of arrest, and practical beliefs in assisting fellow officers (Dempsey & Frost, 2011). Such beliefs may come about depending on the level of cynicism among individual officers, which may depend on the level of education, result oriented, people oriented, and the attitude of an officer (Rydberg, 2010).

Culture and personality are important elements during socialization (O'Connor, 2012). Police culture refers to the dress code, behavior, language, and a system of beliefs. As such, police cultures comprise norms and values that organizations transmit through institutionalized structures. Values refer to the things that seem important while norms denote the expectations in a range of circumstances (Crank, 2004). In the context of the police, these

aspects refer to what the police officers deem important in their line of duty and the expectations that society has towards law enforcement agents.

Availability of Choice

In most instances, police officers have the liberty to choose how they will handle the situation as they deem fit. In this regard, a police officer will make their own decisions about how to respond to certain situations, that is, the extent of enforcement, against whom, and under what circumstances (Kleinig, 1996). An officer has the discretion regarding whether or not to use force during an arrest especially in cases where the officers do not need warrants. Through socialization, it is possible to put the discretion to proper use through a structured approach. Laws do not cover each situation that a officers may encounter in the course of their day to day operations. Police discretion is something that professional and community norms must determine. Police officers consider many variables regarding the offenders, system, and circumstances before making decisions. All these considerations depend on the attitude of the individual officer.

Socialization and acculturation are systems that orient police recruits by enabling them acquire an understanding how things work and why things work in a specific way (Crank, 2004). These systems are essential because the work of police involves various pressures from the politicians and the society in general. Through socialization, police officers are able to handle such pressures and in the process avoid stress. If there are no systems to develop police socialization, the officers will not be able to overcome physical and emotional stressors (Henry, 2004). It is important to note that

stressors affect the health and no matter how little the stress, it can have a considerable impact on the choices that one makes every day.

Consequently, if a police officer becomes stressed in the course of his or her work, chances are that the officer will not make rational decisions, a situation that is likely to be harmful to the police organization, the society, and to the officer (Barker, 1999). It is through police socialization that recruits and existing police officers are able to develop ways of dealing with possible stressors in the course of their work.

Socialization within police organizations also helps in shaping the attitude of the police officers towards their role in community policing (Wolf, 2008). If the training and socialization of the police officers equip them with the traditional methods of policing, the approach will be apparent in their work. Accordingly, such officers may face challenges if they are required to adopt the latest approaches to community policing while carrying out their roles. Consequently, it is through socialization that one is able to determine whether the police officers possess the necessary attitudes to play their roles of community policing in an effective way.

Conclusion

Police socialization should begin from the pre-entry level where an applicant decides to become a law enforcement agent (O'Connor, 2012). At this level, it is important for the personnel departments to adopt specific strategies that assess the attitudes of the applicants. For instance, the recruiters can adopt field-training strategies that require recruits to act as probation officers. From such strategies, the trainers will be able to develop

appropriate strategies that would inculcate the attitude that is suitable in policing. Attitude is essential in determining whether a police officer is predisposed to traditional policing that centers on reactive measures of modern policing that focuses on proactive approaches. As such, police socialization determines the effectiveness of the enforcement organizations in curbing crime within the society.

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