

Comparison of civilian and military police criminology essay



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In the society we live in today it would be hard to imagine the world without police. The police give our societies the structure they need to function properly and continue to grow. There have been many forms of police throughout time dating back to the ancient world in China. The first known or documented style of governments using police took place in China thousands of years ago. Before police existed it was impossible for societies to grow and function properly. Ancient world governments had no way of ruling the people without some type of law enforcement agency to keep the people in order. Thomas Hobbes, who was a philosopher back in the sixteen hundreds, had a belief that all people were born evil (Williams, 2006). He felt that when humans were born they were greedy and selfish. Although this belief has been argued and disputed for centuries the basis of his belief makes you wonder. Humans are considered animals, we belong to the animal kingdom and although show many different and improved traits than most, we are in fact animals. Now, knowing that and seeing how other animals act in the wild without organization and enforcement it makes you understand where he was coming from. It is not that we are evil; it is just that we are born without the knowledge of what is right and what is wrong and need to be taught at very young ages the difference between the two. Along with knowing the difference between what is right and what is wrong; what also helps us understand and differentiate between good and bad is punishment. Without the reinforcement and threat of punishment it would be difficult to remain "good" in society's eyes. The police provide societies with the threat of punishment for violating the laws set by the government. They also have the ability to enforce laws and protect the general public from harm.

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In the ancient world the governments were finding it hard to rule large amounts of people without having some style of enforcement over them. In Ancient Greece, police were used mainly for crowd control which could often cause situations to escalate out of hand. Another thing unique about the ancient times is that normally the civilian populous was responsible for policing themselves. In small communities and societies the population could operate with little or no police, relying mainly on the citizens policing themselves. However, when dealing with large societies that cover vast amounts of land this method would result in nothing but disaster. As times went on police began taking on more tasks within society. Over hundreds of years of trial and error the policing system made it way to the United States. At the time the United States was a newly settled and uprising country which needed some type of enforcement to keep it on the right track. The original United States system of policing was adopted from the British form. This form of policing laid the framework for the next two hundred years for our country to improve our police structure and organization.

The police organizational structure is broken down in seven elements. According to Mintzberg, an organizational structure can be defined simply the sum total of ways in which an organization divides its labor into distinct tasks and then achieves coordination among them (Mintzberg, 1979). When looking at the big picture of a police department there is an overall goal that needs to be accomplished. This goal is divided into a mission statement of what the departments overall goal is. From that overall mission statement the department can determine what needs to be done to accomplish it. After determining the subtasks to be accomplished the department can divide its

labor force amongst the tasks to meet the requirement. Now once the plans have been set the department can work towards reaching its goals together. The seven specific elements of law enforcement organizational structure include: functional differentiation, occupational differentiation, spatial differentiation, vertical differentiation, centralization, formalization and administrative intensity.

According to Peak the first four elements are methods of dividing labor. The first element is functional differentiation which is having multiple functions within to deal with different issues. Having functional differentiation within a police structure to properly distribute their officers amongst areas where they are needed. It also allows for officers to focus on just what is important to the overall goals by not having to be experts in all areas. The second element is occupational differentiation which is overall how a police structure divides its job titles throughout to the employees. Through proper occupational differentiation a police organization will not have to rely on specifically trained personnel to accomplish other tasks. In most civilian departments there are sergeants responsible for their shifts workers (Dempsey & Forst, 2010). The military works almost the same way with senior non commissioned officers being in charge for their respective shift of days or nights. The third element is spatial differentiation which would be how widely spread an organization is. Spatial the word refers to occupying space which applies to this element when dealing with physically spreading the organization. Spatial differentiation is not as required in small organizations but in large organizations it is required. When dealing with large areas with many personnel and vast areas of jurisdiction spatial

differentiation allows organizations to spread out to meet mission requirements throughout the whole area more efficiently. The fourth element that deals with dividing labor throughout the organization is vertical differentiation. Vertical differentiation deals with chains of command within police organizations. One role that all police officers must perform is leadership. Police officers are taught early in training academies about proper use of the chain of command. When dealing with large organizations the chain of command can become fairly large. It is important for personnel to know their specific chain of command and how to properly use it. Proper use of the chain on command can allow issues to be resolved at the lowest level possible to allow higher tier personnel in chain of command to deal with more important issues (Dantzker, 1999). Going outside the chain of command can cause many problems to moral and overall status of an organization and should be avoided at all times if possible.

The fifth element of police structure takes on a different approach to organization. Instead of dealing with dividing labor, centralization is how much control in the decision making process the personnel has. In many smaller police departments the higher tier leadership has say in majority of decision making. Some larger departments allow their personnel to have autonomy to make decisions on their own, and are considered less centralized. Formalization is the sixth element of police structure and is the extent laws and guidelines are enforced on employees. There are many laws that can limit how effective the police departments are, using formalization the amount of laws enforced on a department can be increased and allow them to become more efficient. The last element is administrative intensity

which is how proportionate personnel are spaced between the admin and operational sides of a department. Organizations with high levels of administrative intensity are often thought of as being more bureaucratic (Peak, 2010). In a bureaucratic organization laws and regulations come from leadership within the department and often become very top heavy.

Once a department has its seven elements of organization and structure we can look at the basic police organizational structure. The Chief of Police is at the top of the structure and chain of command. Police Chief's are not elected like Sheriffs but municipal employees who serve the city. The Chief has many duties and responsibilities such as setting the department's mission and keeping it achievable. They must oversee all operations and keep improving and developing its department's personnel and equipment. Below the Chief the basic structure divides into two branches, the first being the Operations side and the other being Services. Within the Operations branch you will find patrol officers, investigations and youth activities sub divisions. Operations also deals with training personnel to effectively achieve the mission set by the Chief. The Services branch of a department deals with staff services such as budget management, fiscal year planning, manning and personnel issues. Although both branches are equally important quiet often more emphasis is placed on the operations branch due to it being more in the public's eye than the services support branch. The civilian basic organizational structure is very similar to the military's basic police organization. Within the civilian organization below the Chief are Captains, Lieutenants, and Sergeants much like the military model where each rank has their own duties and responsibilities (Dantzker, 1999).

I will now take a look at the comparison of civilian police and military police organizational structures and how the seven elements apply. In the typical military police structure there is the equivalent of the police chief. In the military they are referred to as Chief, Security Forces (CSF). Their job is to provide leadership and direction to all personnel within the organization. They set the mission of the unit and ensure it is achievable just like the police chief. Beneath the CSF there are three main branches, unlike the civilian structure of two. The first branch is operations which deal with investigations, confinement, installation security and patrols. Within the operations branch many more sub divisions can be created much like the civilian structure to deal with mission specific issues and specialties like canine teams and special reaction teams. The second branch is administrative which deals with information security, staff services and reports and analysis. The third branch in the military structure is resources and training. This branch was included in the civilian police branch of operations. Within this branch supplies, equipment, deployments and training are covered. The military structure works with normally more personnel and divides its labor among more groups to allow them to focus on single objectives rather than multiple tasks which falls under the occupational differentiation element of organization. The military utilizes vertical differentiation through having a clearly defined chain of command. Although it seems sometimes like you have almost too many people above you in the chain it is built that way for a reason. The military focuses greatly on proper use of the chain of command to deal with issues at the lowest level possible with having to involve the higher tier with resolvable issues.

Military structures are not as spatially differentiated as civilian departments
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due to the lack of physical occupation. Most military bases are limited and space and jurisdiction is limited to base perimeter. Some military bases like those in Korea have off base patrols in coordination with local government but their jurisdiction is limited. Vertical differentiation is very broad in the military structure allowing for members to remain focused on their specialty but also allows for them to move around within the structures when they have mastered one area. It can be presumed that the military structure was based on the civilian police structure but has been slightly modified to better accomplish the mission. Many military personnel who worked police duties normally have later in their careers made the switch to civilian police departments. I will now talk about how the basics of structure can assist and hinder them as they make the switch.

The military police structure and training can serve as a great basis for members to make an easier transition to the civilian police departments. Many military members join and volunteer to become security police with the goal of someday returning home and working for their local police departments. With this goal in the back of their mind they can focus on learning the basics of police duties and get a feel for how working in a civilian department would be. The military police structure is based on the civilian equivalent, therefore very similar in many ways. Working under one overall boss, either the Chief of Police or Chief, Security Forces allows officers to learn how one persons objective and mission goals can be accomplished by many personnel working together. Military police perform as law enforcement to military members who do not obey laws and often include a criminal investigations division much like the civilian departments

(Green, 2000). All military branches have a form of military police. The US Army and Marines have Military Police, the US Air Force has Security Forces and the US Navy has Masters at Arms. All the above listed allow for their respective branch to have enforcement of laws and regulations on their installations. The military training for their police is very similar to the civilian equivalent. Basic training such as self-defense, weapon employment, hand-cuffing, personnel searches and dealing with the public are almost identical to that of civilian police academy training. The basic principles and training provided to military police can greatly assist them if they decide to become civilian police but there are also areas where it may hinder them.

Military personnel are more strictly limited to what laws they can enforce. Military personnel are very rarely allowed to enforce laws on civilians. Based on Title 18, United States Code, when civilian personnel commit crimes on military installations military police are allowed to detain the suspect but not arrest them. Rules like these in my eyes can help and hurt their police officer abilities. I can see these rules if followed as a show of restraint which is an important characteristic for a law enforcement agent. The ability to not abuse their authority could help younger patrol officers learn when to use their position and when not to. Rules and limits on who military police can and cannot apprehend could harm them if they transition to civilian police duties by them not having enough experience in dealing with civilians. Anyone who has served in the military can normally look at a group of people and pick out the military members from the civilians. There are distinct traits and characteristics that can help identify who is in the military. The same traits and characteristics apply to personnel being detained or apprehended.

Military members are more likely to comply with military police as civilian suspects are more likely to be resistant to comply with military police.

Military members often do not normally deal with high stress situations as much as civilian police do. The military police organizations have created subdivisions to deal with serious crimes and situations such as Air Force Office of Special Investigation, Investigations, and Special Reaction Teams. With that being the case, normally military police have very limited experience with high stress situations. This could diffidently hinder them when making the switch to a civilian police career field. In today's military more and more duties formerly performed by military members and being passed over to civilians. The first duty to be passed off was working the gate or entry control point. Little by little just about every base has passed these duties off to civilians. A minor task like working the gate gave young military police experience with dealing with the public and traffic control. More recently the military has begun to pass off duties like on base patrols to civilian contractors. This giving away of duties again can hinder military police. Patrolling the base was maybe the most similar duty performed by civilian police departments. Now that this job has been eliminated from the militaries duties it can again diffidently hinder the military polices experience when dealing with the public, maintaining order, enforcing laws and attention to duty.

In my eyes, former military police can make very good civilian police officers. They have the ability to be trained, they have basic understanding of the organization and structure due to them being very similar. They have basic understanding of duties and responsibilities and although limited in

experience, most police careers you learn more through job experience than training.