

Ethics in law enforcement assignment

Law



The analysis of the ethical decision making process in law enforcement agencies has been the subject of numerous research articles in the past several decades. The following research project uses a non-experimental design to collect and analyze the responses of police officers in a suburban agency, to survey items that attempt to measure officer perceptions of the seriousness of specific ethically problematic behaviors.

Introduction

The ethical behavior of police officers is a fundamental issue in the creation of trust within a community.

Police officers are given an enormous amount of power; this power has been granted to police officers by consent of citizens in the form of a social contract. This social contract transfers citizens' rights to the police, and includes such rights as the right to use force to defend their property, to apprehend law breakers with forceful action, and other rights of self-protection. Therefore, citizens must be able to trust that police officers will use this power that has been ceded to them, with a great deal of moral and ethical restraint.

Unfortunately, the history of policing has been plagued by abuses of police power, which have led to many social problems, including the erosion of the trust of citizens. One of the issues that seems to contribute to this problem is that police officers are not held accountable for their actions. This research project will explore the relationship between ethical behavior and law enforcement tasks.

Review of Literature

There have been numerous research initiatives that have been developed to investigate the relationship between ethical behavior and law enforcement tasks.

Several have looked specifically at the problem behaviors that have resulted in disciplinary action against police officers (Del Bozo, 2005; lovesick, 2003; Clocks, lovesick, Harder, & Haverford, 2000). In these studies the authors were primarily unconcerned with identifying the specific behaviors, rather than the attitudes and perceptions that led to the behaviors. This research project is interested in investigating whether the attitudes and perceptions of police officers is related to the decision to engage in problematic behaviors.

In his research, Newman (2002) looked closely at the perceptions and attitudes of officers who appeared to have made unethical decisions.

Newsman's research is important for this project as he has identified several characteristics that seem to be correlated with unethical behavior; this researcher will use several of Newsman's characteristics in developing the survey instrument to be used in the research project.

In his review of the problems found at the Hillsboro, Wisconsin police department, one researcher suggested that “ promoting police integrity at the station level cannot be achieved without the support of the entire organization, from the chief executive to the line officer, to include civilian employees” (Newman, 2002, p. 35). This observation is extremely important because Discussion There are several possible research methods that could be used to investigate the current perception and attitudes of police officers to specific ethical issues.

For the purposes of this research project, the author will use a non-experimental methodology that will use surveys to measure specific perceptions of officers. A series of ethical issues or scenarios will be

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identified and rated by respondents using a five-point Likert scale. Several examples of survey items would be respondents to indicate responses that range from strongly agree to strongly disagree, to each of the scaled items.

In addition to survey items, the researcher will collect respondents demographic data that will be used as variables, to include information such as number of years as an officer, current officer rank, current assignment, gender, age, ethnicity and current educational level. The researcher has chosen a Minnesota suburban police agency as the population for the research project. This agency was chosen because The agency chosen has xx sworn police officers. Because this is a population that is not extremely large, the research will survey all officers of the agency.