

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Holding out for a hero: selecting a chief of police

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Little research exists regarding the process of selecting a chief of police. This paper uses focus group data collected from internal and external stakeholders in a medium-sized municipality to examine what stakeholders want in a new chief. What attributes stakeholders want to see in a chief of police is summarized including a discussion of where stakeholders differ and concur in their opinion regarding a chief of police selection. A secondary concern addressed in this paper is the ramification of funding sources on the successful implementation of community-oriented policing (COP) strategies by police chiefs. Stakeholders’ assessments of the Medium City Police Department indicated that there were problems with sustaining COP programs which were linked to their desires for a chief who would heroically revamp the department and relations with the community. Findings indicate that the ability of a new chief to set and meet goals is hindered, in this case, by management styles of command officers and by lack of resources for the police department.

Keywords: police chief; selection process; focus groups

Introduction

Community-oriented policing (COP) dominates how many researchers think about the provision of law enforcement and policing services in the USA (Gaffigan, 1994; Gianakis & Davis, 1998; He, Zhao, & Lovrich 2005; Lord & Friday, 2008; Maguire & Mastrofski, 2000; Pino, 2001; Trojanowicz, 1994; Walker, 2004; Wycoff & Skogan, 1994). Citizens, politicians, media, and law enforcement have publicly encouraged the adoption of a COP philosophy. The Crime Control Bill of 1994 allocated funding for COP which helped COP gain traction throughout the law enforcement community (He et al., 2005; Maguire & Mastrofski, 2000; Oliver, 2000). He et al. (2005, p. 311) argue that COP is often implemented initially with help from federal grants, but ‘will the local [police departments] sustain the momentum of COP program implementation when the federal monies run out?’ Federal monies encourage COP; however, how committed police departments are to the idea of community policing – allowing communities to fully participate in decision-making practices – is less clear. In this work, we aim to better understand how stakeholders, in a medium-sized city, perceive the role of a new chief of police. It is through this lens that we can glimpse how stakeholders perceive the COP ideal. This research provides valuable insights to policy makers everywhere. Hearing the voices of stakeholders, we can understand how different groups in communities perceive their safety issues and needs in *their* own voice.

The Department of Justice’s Office of Community Policing Services (COPS) defines community-oriented policing as:

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... a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies, which support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques, to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime. (Department of Justice, 2008)

The COPS office further identifies three important aspects of community policing: community partnerships; organizational transformation; and a problem-solving orientation. There is a great deal of debate over just what programs and organizational changes constitute COP; however, there is general agreement that the above-mentioned aspects are the core of the philosophy (Department of Justice, 2008; Gaffigan, 1994; Giacomazzi & Brody, 2004; Gianakis & Davis, 1998; Greene, Bergman, & McLaughlin, 1994; He et al., 2005; Maguire & Mastrofski, 2000; Wilkinson & Rosenbaum, 1994).

In order to develop successful COP strategies, the organization, culture, and environment must be considered within the police department itself (internal) and within the larger community (external) (Giacomazzi & Brody, 2004; Gianakis & Davis, 1998). Police executives and supervisors play key roles in disseminating a COP philosophy throughout their departments and in altering the current police culture (Paoline, 2004; Wilkinson & Rosenbaum, 1994; Zhao & Hassell, 2005). Police chiefs are often called upon to set the tone throughout a department through their administrative and management styles (Rainguet & Dodge, 2001). Wilkinson and Rosenbaum (1994, p. 125) suggest that 'the chief of police and the leadership he or she demonstrates plays a critical role' in effecting change in a police department. Although chiefs are required to satisfy the demands of a number of stakeholders both internal and external to the department itself, the different positions of these stakeholders can be beneficial in networking efforts and expansion of resource allotment in the hands of a savvy chief (Coe & Wiesel, 2001).

Crank, Regoli, Hewitt, and Culbertson (1995) found that beneficial personal characteristics of a police executive can be overwhelmed by organizational and institutional characteristics that are not compatible with the goals and values of the department. In an ideal situation, organizational change would keep pace with the philosophical and procedural changes implemented in a given police department (He et al., 2005; Lord & Friday, 2008). Some argue that the specific ways in which COP is implemented can be better understood with attention to 'the unique local circumstances of each community' (Maguire & Mastrofski, 2000, p. 13). Local circumstances refer not only to the crime rate in an area, but also to the availability of resources and the chief's ability to obtain and use resources well, to the kind of relationships that exist within and among governmental agencies, and to the level of external funding a department receives from federal agencies (Coe & Wiesel, 2001; Helms & Gutierrez, 2007).

The current work examines data gathered through focus groups with specific attention to three emergent themes: community involvement; organizational and management culture of the Medium City Police Department¹ (hereafter, MCPD); and the idea of the police chief as a trendsetter and role model for the MCPD. Themes emerged from interview data collected from a variety of stakeholders in order to assess the qualities they wanted to see in a new chief of police. Data collection strategy is addressed first, themes are considered and explicated next, and finally, these themes are considered in light of the literature regarding police chiefs and COP.

Method

The current study was undertaken by researchers from Old Dominion University, at the request of the City Manager's Office, in order to inform the process of selecting a new chief

of police. The purpose of this study was an exploration of the characteristics, qualities, and skills stakeholders view as most important in hiring a chief of police. Researchers worked with the City Manager's Office to establish a project design consisting of a series of open-ended questions. Five focus groups were conducted over a three-week period in January 2009. Groups were composed of patrol officers, command officers, community leaders, youth advocates, and constitutional officers. The group consisting of constitutional officers was composed of administrators from the juvenile corrections office, the city attorney's office, and other legal and administrative members of the city government. In addition to focus groups, data was collected from the general public through web-based questions which allowed citizens to respond to the questions discussed in the focus groups, and to provide basic demographic information.²

Description of Medium City

The site of this study is a growing city with mixed rural, urban, and suburban areas and a population of slightly less than 80,000. The MCPD consists of 233 employees, 180 of whom were sworn officers. The police department's mission statement indicates that partnership with the community is a priority; however, the city does not have a formal COP program more recently revised than 2001. In 2000, the last year for which Bureau of Justice Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) are available for this city, Medium City had an informal, unwritten COP plan and a full-time COP unit (Reaves & Hickman, 2004).

During the year previous to the LEMAS survey, Medium City had participated in citizen academies, citizen surveys, community group meetings, and assigned individual patrol officers to specific geographic areas. A problem-solving orientation was encouraged among patrol officers through special projects, but problem solving was not a criterion used to evaluate officers (Reaves & Hickman, 2004). MCPD received grants from the COPS office in 2002, and the emphasis in the police department's 2007 vision and mission statements on community partnerships indicates that the department continues to promote their focus on the COP philosophy.

Generating focus group questions

The interview guide was generated by the research team and approved by the City Manager's Office.³ Questions were determined using literature on job satisfaction of officers, community-oriented policing, and literature related to the roles of police chiefs. One question addressed the participants' conceptualization of public safety, two questions addressed opinions about the MCPD's operation. Other questions attempted to discover what issues participants felt should be the highest priority of the MCPD, what the role of citizens and police should be in community-police partnerships, and how the MCPD can strengthen ties within those partnerships.

Participant selection

Participants were invited to the focus groups by the City Manager via a letter composed by the researchers. The city provided the researchers with conference rooms within city government buildings. No city personnel were present during the focus groups, other than to allow researchers access to the building. Focus group sessions lasted between 90 minutes and two hours, and group size ranged from 5 to 19 participants.

Participants were invited to the focus groups so that those individuals with the most relevant knowledge and experience related to the MCPD would have an opportunity to attend. In order to foster open discussion and a high level of comfort, attention was paid to supervisory relationships among participants. Thus, the City Manager and the Human Resources Department were instructed to invite officers who did not have direct oversight of one another. Groups consisted of as few members as possible who were related to each other through a supervisory capacity (Babbie, 2004; Grudens-Schuck, Allen, & Larson, 2004; Hyde, Howlett, Brady, & Drennan, 2005; Jordan et al., 2007; Schutt, 2006; Swayze, 2008).

In balancing the homogeneity of group composition, however, it is important to consider that working relationships and the closed nature of the organizational culture of the police may enable participants to mask issues that are considered 'off-limits' to outside researchers. Jordan et al. (2007, p. 2), in their focus group study of nurses in Northern Ireland, found that 'focus groups should be considered most useful for illuminating locally sanctioned ways of talking about sensitive issues.' In the case of research dealing with police, this approach to the sensitivity of issues related to commanding officers or specific local issues can aid understanding of the ways in which Medium City police officers make sense of their local context (Jordan et al., 2007; Krueger, 1993).

In an effort to safeguard participants' anonymity and increase their level of comfort, no recordings were made of focus group discussions and no effort was made to identify participants by name or by their organizational positions or ranks. Handwritten notes were taken by two of the researchers, while a third facilitated the discussion. Particular attention was paid by the note-takers to themes and issues that were relevant within and across groups, as well as contradictory opinions and attitudes within and between groups (Grudens-Schuck et al., 2004). Approval for this research was obtained from the College Human Subjects Committee at Old Dominion University prior to conducting the focus groups.⁴

Results

Three important themes emerged from the focus group discussions that bear on potential tension between organizational and institutional factors and the ability of a new chief of the MCPD to address and solve problems within the department. Each of these themes will be addressed with respect to the ways that they may affect future COP efforts in Medium City, with respect to the efforts of the next chief. Although respondents' conversations often reflected opinions about a wide variety of issues, the themes offered here reflect responses and ideas that revolve around the hiring of a new chief of police in MCPD. A summary of how stakeholders differ in their opinion on selection of the new chief of police is presented in Table 1.

Thematic categories

Theme 1: community involvement

There was a strong emphasis among a majority of respondents on improving and sustaining community/police relations. The ways in which participants envisioned community relations with the MCPD was strongly in line with COP, particularly with respect to assigning officers semi-permanently to specific geographic areas, and with respect to community members having input into decision-making and policy determination (Gianakis & Davis, 1998; Maguire & Mastrofski, 2000; Pino, 2001). With the notable exception of the

Table 1. Summary of stakeholder opinions regarding current police issues in the community and how to select new chief of police.

	Command officers	Patrol officers	Constitutional officers	Community leaders	Youth advocates	Web survey
Problems within current organization	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	n/a	Yes
Need better community relations	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Want proactive policing	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Want chief selected internally	Yes	Yes	No	No	n/a	n/a
Desire for more interagency work	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Central problem in current organization	Resources	Management style	Management style	Management style	Management style	Management style

command officers, who viewed their jobs and the role of the MCPD as mainly reactive, police and citizens alike expressed a desire for closer ties between police and community members.

Attitudes toward COP. There seems to be a division between command officers in Medium City and all of the other focus groups regarding the degree to which it is the job of the police department to proactively solve problems in cooperation with citizens. Command officers did not appear to be sympathetic to this style of policing, focusing on a vision of policing as more reactive than proactive. They focused on cleaning up problems and did not see their role as preventing crime.

Command officer: Our job is to put people in jail. At the end of the day you can do all the proactive stuff, but our job is to lock people up. Prevention, etc. within the community has nothing to do with the police.

Constitutional officers, patrol officers, youth advocates, and community leaders are drawn to the idea of a partnership between officers and the community. The City Manger is also interested in community involvement, as the request for input of the community and police in hiring a new chief originated with the City Manager. Citizens saw their role as becoming the ears of the community and working in cooperation with officers to identify problems. However, it was clear that some areas of the city were considered problem areas, and there were differences between focus groups in how people saw effective presence and patrolling by police. There seemed to be agreement that the city was patrolled differently depending on the area of the city. Several participants referred to the idea that ‘there are really 2 [Medium Cities]’ to indicate the division between the rural and suburban areas, and the urban downtown area which seemed to be indicted as ‘bad’ areas. This was expressed by one participant as: ‘Northern Medium City isn’t really a part of Medium City. It’s a different world. Very different from downtown.’

When asked about the meaning of public safety, another respondent argued that educating citizens as to what areas of the city to avoid would be helpful in preventing crime.

Youth advocate: Information. Information about locations where you should be more careful. People are often victims because they just don't know what times and days are dangerous in that given area. We need better public understanding of various areas of the city.

Many focus group participants referred to a/the 'bad community' or 'bad neighborhood' in the city. Some felt these areas should be saturated with police presence to stem criminal activity. Others expressed concern that the current methods of allocating resources resulted in other areas of the city being poorly patrolled. Patrol officers, in addition to constitutional officers, community members, and youth advocates felt that more effort should be made to strengthen relationships with citizens in those areas so that information about crime/criminals could be obtained. There is clearly the perception among these stakeholders that certain neighborhoods are the root of many serious problems in the city.

Citizens and police both expressed a desire for more community involvement. Citizens liked the idea of having a designated officer assigned to their neighborhood. Almost all of the participants felt that sustained geographic assignment of officers would help to build trust in the police department. Community members expressed concern that many of the programs that had been implemented in the past, such as assigning officers to specific areas, citizen academies, and officers' attendance at Neighborhood Watch meetings had 'fallen by the wayside.'

Community member: The issue with officers being reassigned to different neighborhoods is that you don't get the same trust and relationships that way. There's not the feeling of having a neighborhood police officer.

There appears to be a consensus among citizens and patrol officers that a different kind of relationship with the police department is desired than currently exists. All focus groups, save the youth advocate and community leader groups, felt the police could be doing a better job in partnering with the community. Most participants also indicated that officers do treat citizens with respect. Citizens indicated both that they wanted to be involved, and acknowledged that initiating wider participation had been somewhat unsuccessful. Patrol officers expressed that they appreciate the recognition among the community that the police are not solely responsible for public safety. However, there appears to be a serious need to determine just how such involvement might best be achieved, especially as it was noted by all of the focus groups that there are serious budgetary concerns in Medium City. No mention was made of proposed budgeting strategies beyond the acknowledgement that a new chief needs to be able to 'play the political game' in order to get departmental needs met.

Theme 2: organizational culture of MCPD

While organizational culture was not directly addressed in the interview guide, participants offered a host of observations about the internal culture of the MCPD. Organizational culture can be one of the largest obstacles to a new chief, in that 'organizational change in general must have personnel investment' (Lord & Friday, 2008, p. 220). Further, this investment depends on the support and active encouragement of all levels of the police organization (Giacomazzi & Brody, 2004; Maguire & Mastrofski, 2000; Paoline, 2004; Wilkinson & Rosenbaum, 1994; Zhao & Hassell, 2005; Zhao, Thurman, & He, 1999).

Most participants agreed that morale was low in the MCPD; partly due to a 'culture of fear' arising from communication and management issues, and also from problems with resource allocation and recruitment/retention. Respondents in the constitutional officers' focus group indicated that the MCPD structure made officers at the 'bottom of the pyramid' feel that they cannot speak up for fear of retribution. There also appear to be problems in the MCPD (noted by patrol officers, command officers, and constitutional officers) with regard to communication and trust. One of the patrol officers argued that the new chief would need to 'identify the rhetoric within the department that stifles new ideas.'

Patrol officers focused on the need to be able to go to command and make suggestions, discuss problems, or suggest improvements. It was clear from these officers' comments that many officers do not feel that the expressed 'open door policy' is truly open. One patrol officer gave the example of an officer who had passed a suggestion up the chain of command, only to see his suggestion implemented with no acknowledgement of his role; others expressed concern that command may not want input. Other groups indicated that the culture of fear in the MCPD was likely the reason that communication was flawed in the department.

Patrol officers also expressed frustration with not being treated in a supportive manner by commanding officers. Management was considered to be intolerant of the 'moral failing' of lack of commitment on the part of patrol officers, and the command officers' comments support this perception. Patrol officers, constitutional officers, and community members indicated that there was a serious communication problem in the MCPD. The command officers at the MCPD were a cohesive unit that appeared to work well together. These individuals expressed frustration with regard to recruiting qualified officers as opposed to those who can just pass the test. One command officer expressed this frustration as 'We may have some folks that are on the wrong bus,' and some of the other command officers then indicated that they wished they had the authority to 'throw some folks off the bus.' The researchers perceived that the command group was dismissive of patrol officers, and that the patrol officers had picked up on this. Command officers did, however, indicate that their biggest failing as an organization, and as leaders, was that they tend to give orders rather than 'helping people along' in the organization.

The need for improvement in helping newer officers along was attributed in part by command officers to a lack of resources; this group noted that other departments' command groups have more administrative and clerical help. Lack of resources was indicated as a barrier to command officers having the time to better communicate with patrol officers. For example, one patrol officer indicated that command officers often don't even know the names of patrol officers. The command group does not, as noted above, appear sympathetic to community policing, which may be indicative of a commitment to the current departmental structure.

Most of the command officers focused on a lack of resources as the central issue affecting their ability to focus attention on officers, whereas most other stakeholders implicated management style. Constitutional officers and others see a need for the MCPD to move in a different direction; however, given the current command staff's acknowledgements of their own shortcomings, derision of their own officers, and outside corroboration by community focus groups, this may be difficult to achieve, especially in light of MCPD's budget concerns.

There appear to be differences in opinion regarding resource issues with the MCPD. Constitutional officers assumed there would be cooperative arrangements for training in community facilities within Medium City; however, police officers very much expressed a

desire for their own training and recreational facilities and felt at a disadvantage within the larger metropolitan community with the lack of such facilities. Further, officers felt their buildings were too small and poorly constructed. Others in the community felt the new buildings were nice and should serve the department well. Nearly all of the participants named budgetary issues as a general concern in the MCPD, and given the patrol officers' comments about training (including the above-mentioned concerns with field training assignments and the length of service many officers have), it seems that patrol officers are bearing the burden of budgetary shortfalls.

Recruitment and retention of officers in MCPD. Hiring and retaining officers who are well trained and invested in the COP philosophy has been addressed by many researchers, and stands as one very important aspect of improving performance ratings and job satisfaction of patrol officers (He et al., 2005; Lord & Friday, 2008; Monk-Turner, O'Leary, & Sumter, 2010; Rainguet & Dodge, 2001; Scrivner, 2006; Wycoff & Skogan, 1994; Zhao et al., 1999). Many individuals alluded to significant problems within the current MCPD with regard to the hiring, promotion, and retention of officers. The researchers did not get a good feel as to what the specific problems were; however, it was noted that seasoned officers were leaving (and being asked to leave) the force which finds the department with a very young staff. One of the patrol officers noted that more than half of the current force had less than five years of experience. Tied to problems of staffing and lack of resources was also the desire to see better teamwork between new recruits to the MCPD and more experienced officers.

Interagency cooperation in Medium City. Bayley (1994) argues that mobilization, or the 'active enlistment of non-police people and agencies,' is a key facet of community policing. Interagency cooperation is one of the ways in which police departments can facilitate more efficient policing practices (Eck & Rosenbaum, 1994), and one of the ways chiefs are able to increase the legitimacy of the department (Crank et al., 1995). Cooperation between police chiefs and elected officials and city managers, in addition to effective mobilization of interest groups are important ways in which police departments can increase budgets and effect change in their departments (Coe & Wiesel, 2001).

Constitutional officers had a poor opinion of MCPD's job performance with regard to cooperating in order to effectively prosecute, in part, because cases were not being put together well by the department. One constitutional officer expressed that problems for the MCPD affect all of the agencies in the city government. He stated that there is a lot of openness within the MCPD and in other areas of city government to 'cross training' and resource sharing, which was supported by many of the patrol officers. This respondent, and others in the constitutional officers' group, felt that reciprocal relationships among agencies and open communication were important; 'If it's a community problem, let's solve it as a community.'

One patrol officer stated that 'It's well known that we [MCPD] don't play well with others,' and one participant in the patrol group indicated that 'We've been governed by the city rather than strong command staff. The city council doesn't understand law enforcement.' The command group's only reference to interagency cooperation was with respect to 'officers' providing good customer service to all agencies and citizen groups. Alternatively, youth advocates indicated that the police were prosecuting well, and that the department had good relationships with the schools and other organizations. Overall, participants expressed that a new chief should be someone who can facilitate and enforce interagency relationships.

Theme 3: chief as trendsetter/role model

Having established a description of the organizational culture in the MCPD provides context for participants' descriptions of an ideal new chief of police. Most participants wanted to see a new chief who was adept at navigating the political, social, economic, and departmental realities and who would strive to improve and sustain strong community relations. Participants in all groups were cognizant of the multiple constituencies that police chiefs have to address, and were hopeful that the new chief would help to provide a strong vision and leadership in this complex environment.

Holding out for a hero: what stakeholders want in a chief. Patrol officers often voiced a desire for the new chief to be recruited from within the MCPD; however, this was not shared by all officers. Those who expressed this opinion seemed to believe that an individual with this background would have the experience necessary to do the job well, and would be knowledgeable about the locality. They would know the city and what was involved in doing the job. On the other hand, constitutional officers were unanimously and strongly opposed to hiring the chief from within the MCPD at this time. Constitutional officers did believe it was important to create an organizational culture that would facilitate officers being trained within the department to work their way up to the chief position. They felt it would be a poor choice to recruit internally now, given the current culture in MCPD, especially among the command group. The attitudes expressed by the command group support the opinion of the constitutional officers, which was that the command group is not willing to change, and would hamper efforts to increase interagency cooperation and community interactions. Further, constitutional officers also advocated for an attractive salary to be offered the incoming chief which would ensure that the candidate would stay in the position, would increase their independence, and would be in line with the project city growth.

Command officers focused a great deal on issues of strong leadership, but also stated that, 'we don't need a micromanager.' These participants also felt that the new chief needs to understand the way command works, and not alter that aspect of the departmental structure. It was clear to the researchers from the oft repeated and reinforced sentiments of the command group that it was resistant to consider change, and hoped that a new chief would 'listen to us.'

Personal traits were proposed almost unanimously by participants, including: integrity and 'strong moral character'; strong leadership personality; and commitment to a participatory management style and to community partnership. Participants wanted someone who is 'politically savvy, but not politically motivated,' stressing communication skills and creative thinking in addition to being 'inspirational.' All of the groups felt that the new chief needs to be able to facilitate and 'enforce' cooperation among other agencies and within the department itself. Constitutional officers felt that the new chief needs to 'both see a new model, and produce that change.' One constitutional officer stated that, 'The new chief will have to be a real problem solver because the department has some real problems.'

Community members were especially clear about the fact that the new chief needs to revive COP programs that had 'fallen by the wayside' in recent years, particularly citizen academies and related vehicles for intensive community involvement, but did not present any suggestions for alleviating budgetary concerns in order to do so. These participants, in addition to patrol officers, emphasized the need for a new chief to be savvy at presenting budget requests to the city government in order to gain resources for the department. Patrol officers, community members, and constitutional officers expressed the hope that the new

chief would be someone who would solve the problems in the MCPD, in short, these participants are holding out for a hero. One patrol officer, in spite of the problems expressed in his focus group said: 'We are so close to being a great department now. He needs to come in and take it forward.'⁵

Discussion

Gianakis and Davis (1998, p. 495) assert that in many departments that have attempted to implement COP, 'the overall approach seems to entail changing the officer before changing operational policies, administrative procedures, and command hierarchy.' There was a strong recognition that while the MCPD was doing a good job overall, there was much need for change. Many participants identified issues the MCPD should address, such as partnering with others in the community, being more involved in the community, and the need for the MCPD to present departmental concerns more effectively to a wider audience. All of these concerns follow the COP literature in that addressing these concerns would bring MCPD more in line with accepted strategies for community-oriented policing (Coe & Wiesel, 2001; Eck & Rosenbaum, 1994; Gaffigan, 1994; Giacomazzi & Brody, 2004; Maguire & Mastrofski, 2000).

Table 1 summarizes differences in stakeholder opinions regarding what is most important in the selection of a new chief of police. Command officers are most different from other stakeholders in how they perceive the chief of police selection. Command officers believe resources are the biggest current problem within the organization and do not concede that there are significant problems with organizational style including the need for more interagency coordination. Further, command officers do not see the need for proactive policing rather they take the view that their job is to clean up, not prevent, problems. Command officers, as well as patrol officers, believe the new chief of police should be selected internally a view that is sharply at odds with other stakeholders. Constitutional officers, community leaders, youth advocates, and patrol officers generally see significant problems in current organization style, a need to improve community relations, and a need for more proactive policing. It is problematic that command officers presented such different opinions compared to other stakeholders regarding current issues in the organization, and how best to select a new chief of police, given that they are the individuals who will work most closely with the new chief of police. Given deep divisions between patrol and command officers in perceived problems and needs within the organization, not to mention other stakeholder interests, whose hero will the new chief of police be? How well will this individual be able to manage the demand for loyalty between various groups in the community? Further, if police organizations are indeed secretive and closed at heart, especially among seasoned/command officers, then having a chief of police actively encourage and embrace community participation is anathema to them. Command officers, who represent the face of the official police organization, believe that they are the experts. They remain unconvinced that the community has much to offer in terms of a partnership with the police organization. This tension between current leadership, within the police organization, and civilian authorities helped shape the decision to recruit a new chief from the outside.

Save the command officers, all stakeholders wanted to see more in the way of COP. The community members and patrol officers' comments regarding programs that were no longer available, such as citizen academies, indicate that the removal of external funding through federal grants has reduced the ability of the MCPD to sustain COP on its own. Several studies have examined the ways in which COPS grants affect the effectiveness of

police departments (Helms & Gutierrez, 2007; Lilley & Boba, 2008; Worrall & Kovandzic, 2007; Zhao, Scheider, & Thurman, 2003). Some have found that these grants facilitate progressive change related to COP philosophies (Helms & Gutierrez, 2007), whereas others have focused on increases in arrests for specific crimes (Zhao et al., 2003). Still others have found that federal funding for COP programs has 'had little to no effect on crime' (Worrall & Kovandzic, 2007, p. 159). All of these studies however, fail to thoroughly examine what happens to departments after the federal funding is gone, though Helms and Gutierrez (2007, p. 105) argue that in departments where federal funding is 'appropriately targeted and made available in sufficiently high quantities, organizational change occurs.'

Worrall and Zhao (2003) argue that the necessary resource allocations to sustain COP programs are scarce. This may be the case in the MCPD, where grant funding seems to have helped to begin the COP efforts, but when those funds were no longer available, Medium City was forced to cut programs based on resource allocations. The removal of certain programs that solidify and legitimate the department's commitment to COP may be a key factor in what Klockars asserts is 'a series of circumlocutions whose purpose is to conceal, mystify, and legitimate police distribution of nonnegotiable coercive force' (Klockars, 1991, p. 239 in Helms & Gutierrez, 2007, p. 94). Simply stating a commitment to COP and implementing departmental change in an effort to satisfy external grant requirements, in other words, does not constitute a shift from reactive policing to COP, it simply expands departmental resources for a short time. Helms and Gutierrez (2007) argue that federal funding does stimulate a move toward progressive policing and COP. Once that funding runs out, however, if the department cannot sustain these programs it runs the risk of low officer morale, decreased legitimacy of the department, and serious budgetary strain on all aspects of operations.

While the stakeholders in this study did offer a wide range of insights, limitations of the study need to be addressed. This research is essentially exploratory in nature, and thus is not generalizable to any other department or locality. Additionally, the participants were selected by the City Manager's Office which limited the extent to which the sample represents the demographic and geographic makeup of Medium City. For example, the majority of the participants in all groups were older white males, and the scheduling conflict that reduced participation in the community members' group indicated that not all areas of the city were represented, and thus the focus on 'those areas' and the 'bad neighborhoods' may reflect some bias in the selection of participants. Further, the conceptual ambiguity of COP is in itself a limitation. There are few solid metrics of COP to use for comparison to the MCPD, and the literature indicates that COP means different things to different people (Giacomazzi & Brody, 2004; Gianakis & Davis, 1998). Additionally, more specific data related to hiring practices, budgetary practices, and organizational change in MCPD is necessary in order to derive clearer links between these areas and the success or failure of COP in the MCPD.

Running through all three themes that emerged from the focus group study was the recognition that staffing levels and budgetary concerns were affecting the continuation of COP-related programs that MCPD had implemented in the past. This concern was repeated throughout the focus groups, usually as a reason for negative assessments by participants. Indeed, the removal of external funding for hiring and implementation of COP programs may be a factor in the disappearance of certain programs (e.g., citizen academies), decreased staff levels, and retention problems in the MCPD. While there is a great deal of research regarding the effects of COP grants and programs on crime levels, and on arrest rates for certain crimes, there is far less research into the effects of the removal of external

federal funding. The MCPD clearly has made efforts to involve the community and to support officers in their role as liaison to the community; however, the lack of change to the hierarchical nature of the department's command structure in addition to a perceived lack of leadership has shifted the onus for change onto the new chief.

While stakeholders were clear in their visioning of a changed department led by a strong chief, the structural and budgetary problems in the MCPD indicate that a new chief may not be able to effect change on their own. Indeed, the expectations of what a new chief would accomplish were extremely high and, in some respects, sidestepped the issue of whether or not the resources the new chief would need are available.

This study uncovers several areas in which more research is needed and adds to the vast body of literature that attempts to theorize and understand the COP philosophy as it operates within communities and police departments. Most importantly, this study finds that there are serious consequences for the morale and functionality of a department that cannot sustain COP programs once federal grants are removed.

Conclusion

We found that line officers and other stakeholders were open to community participation in policing. All, save command officers, were eager for the community to be actively involved in ensuring the safety of all citizens. In fact, this was how most in the community could envision growth and prosperity in the area. Constitutional officers clearly recognized the split between command officers and the rest of the community, including line officers, in embracing this ideal of community involvement. Command officers did not embrace potential benefits of proactive policing rather they wanted to do their job without being micro-managed. This was their main concern with an external chief of police being selected. They wanted to make sure their voices were heard and that they could do their jobs. Notably, this was the same refrain echoed by line officers in reflecting on their interactions with the current command staff. Did the command officers see any irony here? Perhaps the essential lesson policy-makers may take away from the current research is that all of us want our voices heard. We want others in the organization, and the community, to hear and understand our problems. We want to be able to perform our jobs to the best of our ability. Further, we want leadership to provide the atmosphere where these goals may be accomplished in cooperation with a wider community. These are essential attributes of healthy organizations. When leadership becomes stuck and cannot provide a vision others want to see, then a hero may be sought from the outside. Addressing work and organizational problems along the way should be what policy-makers strive to accomplish. Problems in organizations should not become so entrenched that holding out for a hero is seen as the best solution.

Notes

1. The size of the municipality under consideration falls into a medium-sized demographic and could be compared to many other police departments across the country.
2. The data collected via the web will be considered alongside the community members' focus group data.
3. The interview guide used for these focus groups is available upon request.
4. The group of sworn officers was selected by the City Manager, the Director of Media and Community Relations, and the Director and Acting Assistant Director of Human Resources. A final group of 21 individuals was invited, consisting of 20 sworn officers and one officer from outside Small City who serves as the President of the local Fraternal Order of Police. A total of

19 sworn officers participated. The current Command Staff of the MCPD, consisting of one Major and four Captains, was invited. All five members of the command group attended the focus group. Citizens, civic leaders, and business leaders were selected by the City Manager, the Director of Media and Community Relations, the Director of Human Resources, and the Acting Assistant Director of Human Resources. Potential participants were chosen so that all boroughs of Small City were represented. Eighteen individuals were invited, and a total of six participated in the focus group. Attendance in this group was affected by a conflict in scheduling that arose due to a City Council meeting that was scheduled for the same date and time. The research team was unaware of this conflict until the time of the focus group meeting, when some of the attendees expressed concern about low participation due to the conflict. Data was also collected via a web survey that was promoted through the City's Director of Media and Community Relations. As the web responses were consistent with the community leaders' data collected via this medium was considered as part of the community leaders' focus group. The group of constitutional officers was selected by the Director of Media and Community Relations and the Director and Acting Assistant Director of Human Resources. Constitutional officers are members of the city government who serve in the court and the corrections system. Seven individuals were invited, and five constitutional officers attended the focus group. Youth advocates were selected for invitation by the Director of Parks and Recreation for Small City. All 18 of the individuals invited were part of the Small City Initiative on Youth. Additionally, the Superintendent of Small City Public Schools was invited. Of the 19 invitees, seven attended the focus group.

5. The researchers noted the use of gendered language in focus groups. When describing the new chief, participants usually used male gendered language, but some corrected themselves with 'he or she.' A minority of participants used 'he' continuously.

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