

APPENDIX D

REPORT ON FOCUS GROUP OF POLICE SUPERVISORS

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Rosann Greenspan

David Weisburd

Edwin E. Hamilton

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Police Supervisors

D

POLICE SUPERVISORS

Introduction¹

We explained the selection criteria that guided the process for choosing the police departments for participation in the two panels of police—one of rank-and-file officers and one of supervisory-level officers—in Appendix C, Report on Focus Group of Rank-and-File Police Officers. However, the method bears repeating here.

Our goal was to achieve representation from various types of departments, as characterized by their style of policing, with attention to size of the community served and region of the country. We began the selection process by using our own expertise and by consulting several colleagues to develop a list of police departments that are particularly known for either community-oriented policing, problem-oriented policing, or traditional policing. We attempted to ensure that all regions of the

country were represented as well as departments of varying sizes. On the basis of the established criteria, we derived a list of 24 police departments, assigning half to the rank-and-file group, and half to the supervisory-level group. As a result, 11 departments participated in the rank-and-file focus group, and 11 departments participated in the focus group of supervisory-level officers.

To guide the participating police departments in selecting representatives to participate in the supervisory-level focus group, we provided the chief executives with a list of suggested criteria. Criteria for selection of supervisory officers were naturally somewhat different than for the rank-and-file group. We asked the chief executives to choose an officer with the rank of sergeant or lieutenant and 3 to 5 years of supervisory experience. For those departments selected for their

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orientation toward community- and problem-oriented policing, we asked that the officer selected be a member of those units. We asked departments selected for traditional policing to select officers from specialized units, such as narcotics or gang units, who have considerable contact with community residents. As requested, their assignments included community- or neighborhood-policing units, and specialized units including narcotics, organized crime, mounted patrol, street crime, and internal affairs. The 11 officers from all regions of the country who participated in the supervisory-level focus group ranged in policing experience from 10 to 29 years, with an average of about 18 years experience as police officers. With respect to their experience as supervisors, they ranged in experience from 2 to 11 years, with an average of 5 years of supervisory experience.

The supervisory-level focus group was moderated by Rhoda Cohen, survey director of the project, from Mathematica Policy Research under contract with the Police Foundation, with the participation of Dr. Rosann Greenspan, Research Director, Earl Hamilton, and Kellie Bryant of the Research Division of the Police Foundation. The focus group met for two days, from 9:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M., on October 27, 1997, and from 9:30 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. on October 28, 1997.

Following a framework similar to that used with the rank-and-file group, the moderator led the sergeants and lieutenants in a discussion of a range of topics with a set of questions to guide each topic. The broad categories included defining police authority, supervisors' perceptions of the extent and nature of abuse of authority, the effect of community policing on the abuse of authority, societal factors that affect police

authority, the culture of policing, and what can be done to prevent problems of abuse of authority.

In addition, the supervisory-level officers pretested the second draft of the instrument to be used in the national survey. They provided valuable input by reviewing and reacting to each of the survey items, and by making general and specific recommendations. The participants worked diligently, discussing difficult and personal issues they face in policing and their burdens and responsibilities as supervisors in addressing those issues. We are sincerely grateful for their thoughtful and frank conversation.

Defining Issues of Police Authority

We began the focus group by discussing how police supervisors view the boundaries of the proper use of authority, as well as by asking participants to discuss what they consider appropriate and inappropriate conduct in the exercise of police authority. The supervisors immediately turned to the form of abuse that they perceive as the most extensive problem in their supervisory work: discourteous behavior by officers toward citizens. Although some focused on this abuse as the problem in itself ("A lot of what comes through our department is the language complaints, the attitude complaints."), others stressed the relationship between officer insensitivity and the escalation of the problem. They suggested that abuse of a more serious nature could be prevented if officers maintained a polite demeanor from the outset.

One Internal Affairs officer led off the discussion by stating, "Our Internal Affairs Division investigates anywhere from eight [thousand] to ten thousand complaints a

year. And many of them stem from incidents that really need not occur if people were more courteous or officers were more sensitive to people they're talking to." She elaborated that her observation of this problem was also based on her experience while working with patrol officers, "Just looking at some of the complaints...from what was my experience on a district level when I did work with patrol officers, many of the complaints could be avoided simply by being more courteous and more pleasant, schmoozing."

Another officer suggested that no connection necessarily existed between discourtesy and brutality: "We don't have a brutality problem, but we sure as hell have a discourtesy problem."

A key element in courteous behavior recognized by the officers was taking the time not only to "schmooze" but also to explain "what you're doing and why you're doing it...Most of the time you take the 15 or 20 seconds to explain what you're doing and why you have to do it, and you can avert [or] divert from a lot of problems."

Despite the general agreement that courtesy was the big problem—the problem that concerns their departments—one officer found this emphasis both in the focus group and in his own department surprising:

I find it very interesting because just two weeks ago we had one of our supervisors' meetings. And IA [internal affairs] was scheduled as one of the presenters at the meeting. And so you have about 30 supervisors from the captain and the sergeant ranks listening to IA and I suppose, like me, expecting that there were going to be some pretty severe topics that IA was

going to focus on. And their complete focus was trends of police officers, trends that are specific to what we're talking about that were—and I'm not trying to lessen it—but nothing more than officers not being personable enough with the public.

One officer shared a recent incident that he just investigated as an illustration of the type of "courtesy complaint" that causes problems for officers and that influences the negative impressions citizens have about the police:

I've got a good example...[A]n officer went to a house with his sunglasses on to get some information from a complainant. She asked him to have a seat, but he wouldn't sit down. He wouldn't take the damn sunglasses off. She's pissed off. She says, "He has no concern. Why did I bother to call in the first place?"

So I chatted with the officer before I came up here about it, "Well, you know, I didn't think about the sunglasses"...Most of our officers are less than three years on. And unless that couch has roaches on it and I've got to scrape them off, you know, I'll plop down anywhere most of the time. But this officer just did not feel comfortable sitting in this lady's house. And it wasn't a call that was a—it was a noise complaint. That's why she called 911. And that's what we see a lot of, that type, where just the body language is all bad, what they're projecting when they talk to people.

As the discussion continued, a theme emerged among these experienced officers

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that suggested that a source of the discourtesy problem was the younger or more inexperienced police officers in their respective departments (“Our department is a very young department...”).

As one officer suggested, “We are talking about officers in the field—officers that it sounds like most of them, including [his department] are more inexperienced than even the younger officers, and that they may be more responsible for inappropriate language or conduct.”

Another officer noted, “A lot of this is just inexperienced officers [who] haven’t been there.... It’s a learning process ... and most of it goes back to training and experience. You can come out of college with all the degrees you want, but unless you learn people, unless you know people, you can ask for a call, you can fill in the blanks on the forms, but you really haven’t solved the problem.”

However, another officer indicated that perhaps attention should focus on issues of supervision and training instead of the fact that the incident involved a young or inexperienced officer:

[I]f the citizen has made a complaint, it’s just what we did here at this table. We’ve only focused on, well, he is a young officer. We’ve got a good police department, but they are coming out with training. And if they come out with an attitude, the attitude is either purveyed by management or by training. So it’s either the supervision or the training [that] makes the officers handle situations, because no officer wants to go out there and have a complaint. And no officer wants to go out there and do

something improper, specifically a young officer coming off the street. Police [officers] create attitudes, and we get cocky and we get arrogant, and we get authoritative sometimes in situations. But it’s either allowed by the management, or it’s taught by the training, or it’s taught by the senior officers.

Yet another officer suggested that he doubted that training was the culprit because training in his department had been emphasizing communication for the past 10 years, and yet the complaints had continued to increase:

I find it interesting because, for us anyway, our academy instruction has changed dramatically in the last 10 years where the educational process is specifically focused on how to better deal with the public, and [on] what different social groups you are dealing with and what expectations those groups have. Yet I’m hearing that the trend is that just not listening well enough, officers using inappropriate language or are not taking the time to see another side of the story or whatever.

The officer concluded, “Maybe the public is just...less willing to listen to us, to our authority.” This comment was part of a very interesting discussion of whether the attitude and expectations of the public have changed, whereby they are less willing to accept police authority at the same time that they want more from the police. These changes, rather than an increase in disrespectful police behavior, have raised concern about police conduct. In other words, perhaps the public has been changing the definition or boundaries of proper police behavior. The same officer suggested

earlier: “So I think that it’s changed a little bit, the public’s perception of how open the officers should be to their discussions, the way that they’re talked to [by] the police. And I think that the expectation from that end is a little more than it was in the past.”

One officer suggested, “I think they kind of look for us to be a little bit more compassionate to their needs or [to be] able to give them the answer to their solutions right then and there.”

Another officer noted, “What I have found over the 24 years—and it seems to be getting worse, at least in [his city]—is there is less of a willingness of the [public] to submit to authority.” This comment met with general agreement from the participants.

One officer offered his perception of the negative attitude that the general public has toward police authority, which results in a need for greater “verbal skills” on the part of police officers:

[T]here [are] going to be the one percenters [who] are going to complain, no matter what the officer does. But also now it’s like you’re having to use more verbal skills to get over the immediate dissension that people have about police authority. Before, ...whatever a police officer told someone was not questioned. People just reacted and responded out of the respecting authority. With the media and the perception of us becoming more human and our mistakes being magnified, people don’t accept what a police officer says as quickly as I think they used to.

One officer suggested that the problem is lack of empathy, that officers who come

through the cadet program or who come from suburban areas “don’t associate with the area that they work with. They don’t have the empathy that they should have with some of these other cultures that they police.”

Another officer argued, “[The empathetic officer] has greatly improved over the last number of years, ...but the complaints are more now.”

Another officer pointed out that standards of acceptance of police authority vary from community to community and depend on how residents in a community view past relationships with police. Thus, the boundaries of acceptable behavior are variable:

I also think that it depends on where you’re working. What’s acceptable in one area of your community might not be acceptable in another. I could tell two people the same thing in different ends of this city. And one might take offense at it, but the other one would just go ahead and just do it because it’s the norm. I think they look at who they used to deal with...the expectations of the past, police officers, as opposed to what we’re dealing with now.

Further discussion indicated that the standards set by the citizens have altered considerably since the Rodney King case and the increased media attention it brought to police authority. One supervisor suggested that the public’s greater expectations are related to their being better informed about law enforcement:

[T]he public’s expectations, as well as their knowledge of law enforcement, has changed here in the last 20 years.... Obviously one of the big benchmarks

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was Rodney King....[The case] had nationwide impact. Something else that goes along with that in just about the same time period is the development of the news media to where they are always out there, and their cameras are always rolling; they are capturing all these events. So the public’s knowledge of how we operate in law enforcement has increased and changed.... I think these are two significant things that have changed the public’s outlook of law enforcement and their expectations of it.

One participant complained that citizens now expect that they can provoke officers with impunity and that since Rodney King, police are expected not to react but to be “robocop”:

You should be able to walk up to a policeman and slap him, kick him six or seven times, and then when he starts to raise his fists, say, “I give up,” and the policeman is supposed to say, “Oh, okay. Could you put your hands behind your back for me?”

In concluding the discussion about defining the boundaries of abuse of authority and leading into a discussion about supervision, one participant pointed out the multiple, interactive levels of defining, exercising, and controlling authority. He suggested that successful encounters depend on the citizen’s acceptance of the legitimacy of the officer’s authority, as well as on the unseen supervisor’s acceptance of authority over that officer: “So, it’s a citizen’s willingness to be policed as well as a supervisor’s willingness to supervise and make hard choices and hard decisions.”

Abuse of Authority and the Role of the Supervisor

Handling Citizen Complaints of Abuse of Authority

Participants’ critiques of the citizen complaint process became a vehicle for entry into an interesting discussion of the role of the supervisor. A number of participants expressed the view that the complaint process had changed in significant ways that have led to an increased number of citizen complaints. Citizens increasingly abuse their right to complain about an officer’s misconduct, and the supervisor’s right to reject complaints as unfounded has been removed. One officer called it “abuse of complaints”:

I would just like to add one thing,... personally. There is also abuse of complaints being taken; that’s a fact. In this information world we live in, [all people know] they can sign a complaint. A lot of complaints are used as leverage for—I know defense attorneys [who] just tell their clients right off the bat, you go down and sign a complaint against that officer, for assault, whatever—verbal abuse. And it’s used as leverage in court for a plea bargain situation. So I think everything said in here is correct, but there is also abuse of the system. It’s just so widely known that you can sign a complaint against a cop, [that] you can sue a cop or threaten a cop [when] you are going to sue,...that it’s abused in some forms.

Others agreed that citizens abuse the system as a way to punish the officer:

If a complaint comes in, we've got to document it, and then we've got to go through the investigative steps. [We've got to] interview, we've got to call, and it's just a bunch of bullshit [in] the majority of the cases. A lot of it is just... vindictive. They are trying to backdoor the officer because they [complainant] got jammed up on something. So they want to deflect the—what R—was saying. They want to deflect the focus of what's going on. And they want to jam up the cop by making a complaint.

It's like he said, like R—said; it's a ploy to get something for nothing. And we find it all the time. Most complaints are not valid.

One participant, acknowledging an increase in complaints, was curious about whether the other participants were required as supervisors to take reports of complaints that they knew would not be sustained. "So is it the norm now that we are accepting these complaints, and would everyone agree that there is nothing wrong with a supervisor telling someone on the phone or in person, 'I'm sorry ma'am. You don't have a complaint.'"

Replies indicated agreement that they should have the discretion to reject complaints, but that their supervisory authority to handle incidents in such a manner had virtually been eliminated.

As one noted, "We don't—the administration has taken that away from us as mid-level managers, as frontline supervisors, our administrations have taken that away from us. We have orders that if somebody calls in a complaint, we are going to put it on paper; it's going to be documented." That

officer gave an example, by way of contrast, of when he was a young patrol officer and his own supervisor had exercised the discretion to reject a complaint against him:

I remember when I came on, my sergeants—I remember I was working traffic and I went out and I tagged this woman for speeding and whatever else. Well, she called in a complaint to my sergeant. And this woman alleged that I used certain words... "I'm sorry ma'am," he said. He said, "Ma'am, I have known this officer for a number of years. I know how he speaks and I know the terms. He says he does not use language like that. You have no complaint. You are lying." And she hung up the phone on him, and it was true. And we don't have that authority anymore.

Other participants shared the frustration that all complaints must be accepted, suggesting it "breaks down morale" and contributes to "just an awful environment":

He is right... When people walk in with a complaint, no matter how minute it is, we have to take it; it has to be written down before we can do anything... I'd rather go to bat for that officer who I know didn't do it, because it breaks down morale. Our morale here is very low. So to have these additional complaints only tears the officers down. On top of that, if the complaint is so gross, we call the [officers] right off the street and take their gun and badge right then and there. And then we just do the initial paperwork, and it goes straight to IAD. Sometimes we are not even able to get involved until it goes to what we

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consider a trial board. And if among the peers, you actually have to go—it’s like court, and you feel so bad for the officer because the majority of the time it’s not true.

General Supervision Issues

The discussion of the complaints process led to a broader discussion of what some considered the powerlessness of police supervisors at all levels:

You know, I’ve got to say 85 [percent] to probably even 90 percent of the officers in any organization want to go out there and do the right thing. They also want support....What happens in [this city] [is] we have a big media board and we’ve got neighborhood activist groups. We have what is feel-good community policing; we have civilian review board, cruiser review board, accident review boards, discharge, dog bites. And everybody today, and it’s probably not just [in his city], but all over, it’s a contagious attitude. We are being challenged constantly. Everything is second-guessed. You are second-guessed by civilians, supervisors. I mean, our chief is—there is no such thing as really a lieutenant or sergeant’s job. They have taken your power away from there. City government plays too much into our administration’s decision making. It’s just an awful environment.

But, you know, it starts from the top down....They have kind of taken the sergeant’s rank. It’s a nothing...but it’s powerless, and lieutenant’s [rank] is even less power....Unfortunately, the rank—what used to be the meat and

potatoes of the organization—was sergeants and lieutenants. The sergeants ran a lot of stuff, and lieutenants [did too.] You worked at a harmonious relationship and you did your stuff on the street....Sure, we have some bad cops go through the system, absolutely. Do we have discourteous guys? Yes, definitely. But, by and large, most officers want to go out there and do a good job. We need support from the chief, and we don’t get it in our city. We just don’t get it. It’s kind of a joke.

Others disagreed, noting that the supervisor still retains the power to review the complaint packages: “But the sergeant and lieutenant do have a lot of power because you have the power of lieutenant when you review those packages.”

As the general discussion of the supervisor’s role continued, one officer expressed concern that management is bound by procedural guidelines that require it to create “blanket” standards and policies instead of addressing the problems individually. This procedure leads to an inability to target problem officers:

I just—well, we spend too much time in the police department, I think....If you have a problem, instead of zooming in on people who are committing the problem—who are the reason for the problem—we spend too much time on blanketing everything. Okay, big sexual harassment policy for everybody, which you need to have....But let’s zoom in on people who are specifically doing the sexual harassment, or whatever it is, beating people up, cursing at people. I know who they are; you know who they are. Let’s stop

acting stupid and zoom in on them. Who is abusing sick time? I know who they are. Again, you know who they are.

Although he agreed that not addressing the individual problem leads to unnecessary blanket policies among other problems, one participant argued that the fault for not addressing problems at the individual level originates with the sergeant who protects his officers rather than holding them accountable. He made the suggestive observation, which others corroborated, that “most supervisors in law enforcement more often want to be the buddy rather than to be the supervisor”:

That comes back to police supervision....[I]n a lot of instances, sergeants know what's going on, protecting their employees. The lieutenant knows that the sergeant is doing the protection and [that] nobody is responding to the specific issue. So, therefore, departments have to come out with blanket policies instead of accountability. If the sergeant is not accountable, which is the first-line supervision [and] supervisor to the troops [and if] he doesn't work with the troops and address training issues, and address the deficiency that the officer has, then it all gets convoluted as it goes through the system....Then it gets to Internal Affairs because it becomes a big problem because we don't [address the problem.] Some of my troops, when they first start working for me, call me nitpicky because I do. You have to look at the small issues to keep from having to look at the big issues. And most supervisors in law enforcement more often want to be the buddy rather than to be the supervisor.

This idea was repeated that supervisors are reluctant to behave as supervisors. One officer noted that in his department there seemed to be a breakdown in supervisory responsibility, which he attributed to the fact that many of the supervisory-level personnel were young and too close to their experience as patrol officers. Therefore, they were unwilling to serve in a supervisory capacity:

...So we've got a bunch of young cops coming on, and we've got a bunch of young supervisors who have not been able to make the break from patrol officer. Now all of a sudden they are supervising. So I think there has been somewhat of a breakdown in super[vision.]—I mean, they are still the patrolman's tail kind of thing....I don't know how many times I've gone up to some of these kids, and I [will] say, “You are a cop; take charge of that situation and go.” And so they—we are behind the learning curve so much. So, it's a citizen's willingness to be policed as well as supervisors' willingness to supervise and make hard choices and hard decisions.

Another officer showed the serious consequences that can result when supervisors are unwilling to behave in accordance with their supervisory responsibilities. Describing a current investigation in her department, she suggested that in an apparent situation of a “very sick,” serious pattern of abuse including using verbal abuse, planting drugs, and stealing money, the supervising sergeants must have been complicit at least in that they “didn't do anything” about the situation:

There—in that situation—this investigation is not over yet. It has to come to trial. But we found that there was a

“...[M]ost supervisors in law enforcement more often want to be the buddy rather than...the supervisor.”

“...[W]hen that new recruit... sits with his... [field training officer] for the first time, that is where he begins learning the police culture.”

pattern of complaints. That is why this whole investigation was launched: there was a pattern of having verbal abuse complaints, planting drugs, stealing money, all kinds of allegations that took on a very sick pattern. And when we went and looked at it and did the joint operation with the FBI,...it turned out to be true.

But there were all sorts of things that had been discussed here that fall into that [category]. Number one, there has to be—and it has not surfaced yet—but there has to be a level of, if not complicity, responsibility on the part of the sergeants. These officers were absolutely lawless, and I don’t know how anyone could not have seen that. And although people aren’t pointing fingers and naming names yet, I would imagine that might happen in the future. So there is a level of responsibility on these sergeants and lieutenants that no one accepted. I find it—coming from the situation and my background [of being] with the police department,...[for] 20 years—I find it astounding that these sergeants didn’t do anything.

Another officer suggested that the apparent unwillingness to exercise supervisory responsibility may be related to the absence of proper supervisory-level training, as well as a lack of innate ability to effectively supervise others:

A lot of that, I think, has to do with the training of the supervisor and then just the innate ability to be a supervisor. You can have a street cop who is excellent at what he does. Then people assume that he would make a good supervisor, but he wouldn’t.

People assume that if you pass the test, if you are a good test-taker or you can interview well, you are automatically a supervisor. Our department provided no training to be a supervisor, and I think that that is very reflective in what you are saying; here is your gold badge; go do it. Then you just flounder around; there is just, in many cases, no training.

Although he acknowledged the important role of the supervisor, one participant pointed out that the role of field training officers (FTOs) was also a critical component in shaping the new recruit because “that is where he begins learning the police culture”:

One thing that we haven’t talked about in officer conduct and authority and what not, [is the police culture and] I think that’s where it starts....You can have all the training that you want, but when that new recruit hits the street and he sits with his FTO for the first time, that is where he begins learning the police culture. That is where the FTO says, “I don’t care what they told you in rookie school; this is the way it is, pal. This the way we are going to do it.” I think it starts with their FTOs.

Nevertheless, these police supervisors emphasized the view that the role of the supervisor as a role model and mentor is a critical factor in setting standards and expectations regarding appropriate behavior. As one put it:

We are talking about [a bunch of factors] here, but one that I keep going back to, and I think is so vitally important, is the supervision. The supervisor, the first-line supervisor, the

sergeant, is so critically important in how he sets the tone, the expectations. How he says things and supports department programs or doesn't support them [is critical], if not by what he says, then by body language and tone of voice—[by] how he sells it or doesn't sell it. That sort of thing, I think, is real.

Similarly, another participant commented:

I think the whole thing comes down to expectations: expectations that the sergeant has among his troops, [and] expectations that the lieutenants have for the sergeants. I could go with my department, and I could pick out a sergeant and his group and another sergeant and his group, and one group has better morale, or another group has more arrests, or that group is doing a better job for some reason. What is the reason? Well, this sergeant is there mentoring, doing the coaching that he or she needs to do.

Another stated that it is “the individual supervisor [who] is important...A lot of that, I think, has to do with the training of the supervisor and then just the innate ability to be a supervisor.”

Most agreed that it is the supervisor's most important responsibility to show the officers how to behave by “set[ting] the tone” and acting as a “role model”:

But if you are an example, a role model, you basically don't have to even give your unit a talking to; we are going to do it my way. My way is the right way. Your reputation? The people know. No matter what job you are working. If you come into a certain supervisor's unit, they'll know what they can get over.

Cops want to be told what to do. Told is the wrong word. But they want you, as a supervisor, to find things for you to do.

Handling Situations of Police Misconduct

We asked the supervisory-level officers to discuss how they handle incidents of police misconduct by officers under their supervision. In contrast with their earlier complaints of lack of discretion in taking reports of complaints, the participants generally stressed that supervisors have a great deal of discretion in determining appropriate discipline, which ranges from “coaching and counseling” to formal reprimands or terminations. One participant described his department's system as “broad enough” to provide him a range of options, depending on his assessment of the officer's intentions and needs:

Our system is set up broad enough that I can look at the investigation that IA [has] completed and decide whether it was a training issue or whether it was intentional conduct. Then, depending on what it is, I can decide if it is a written warning or something as formal as a reprimand or termination. There are mistakes of the heart and mistakes of the head. If it is an error where he thought he was doing the right thing, then he goes back to coaching and training.

Another officer spoke of the “leeway” and “latitude” provided by his department's “discipline matrix”:

We have a discipline matrix, and part of that matrix is policy and procedure inquiries.

“...[T]he first-line supervisor, the sergeant, is so critically important in how he sets the tone, the expectations.”

...[A] clear line exists between... behavior that can be overlooked or treated lightly and... intentional criminal activity that deserves the harshest response....

It may not be a violation, but they didn't follow the correct policy and procedure. That gives supervisors some leeway in making some decisions on whether this qualifies for coaching and counseling or should there be some form of discipline attached to it such as letter of reprimand or days off. So we have some latitude there.

Another officer explained that his discretion ranged from deciding to do nothing about an incident to deciding to terminate officers involved:

It's very discretionary, and I guess that is why you aren't getting a lot of response to this. I can only speak for myself, but I have had to handle matters that range from where nothing was done to where officers were terminated. To be truthful, in some situation...I stuck my neck out and ignored the department procedures and policies and dealt with the officer one-on-one. It is hard to identify exactly why I did that, except that I thought it was a worthwhile officer who did [his or her] job well and efficiently, and I didn't want to see a blemish on [that officer's] record.

However, participants were quick to distinguish incidents involving intentional criminal activities, where they would not exercise discretion to impose less than the maximum discipline. As one officer said, "If it is something criminal, then you are on your own; shame on you." Another put it this way:

But I also set a very specific football field. You can make a mistake while you are doing the job, and I will fight

and cover for you the best that I can. If you make a mistake because you are messing off or trying to do what you aren't supposed to do, then I will burn you and I will send you to Satan or wherever you need to go.

The general sentiment that a clear line exists between a behavior that can be overlooked or treated lightly and an intentional criminal activity that deserves the harshest response was expressed by one officer in this way:

I think everybody would agree: we're all supervisors. If it's something from the heart—mistake of the heart [and] the intentions were good—fine, everybody makes mistakes. Nobody walks on water. It's something you can work on, improve or coaching, training, simple documentation, whatever, one-on-one over coffee. But if it's criminal, shame on you. Bye; we don't need you; we don't want you.

One participant noted that helping out an officer accused of a serious violation could get the supervisor in trouble. "And I agree, if I can fudge a little bit on a minor infraction and handle it differently, I'm going to do that if it's a good hardworking officer. But I'm not going to cross that line where I'm violating—getting myself in trouble."

As the discussion focused on criminal misconduct by police officers, one officer remarked that "misconduct is progressive," and it is the responsibility of supervisors to observe and document patterns of inappropriate officer behavior.

I think that misconduct is progressive, and a lot of times supervisors, when it's in the minor stages, choose not to

document in some way, so that a pattern can't be seen. And the thing is, too, an officer sometimes is transferred around to where we pass our discipline problems to somebody else. Somebody will say, well, what do you think of this guy. And you're thinking, oh, boy; he's great; take him. You can't go wrong with this guy. But the point...is then the disciplinary process starts all over.... That supervisor has to see this progression, and it gets to the point when they pass him on. So the officer goes through a long time without any discipline when maybe we should be documenting more.

An officer provided a story of sexist verbal behavior toward her by a rookie that she came to regret having laughed off. "Well, 5 years later, he was indicted and fired for stopping vehicles with young women in them. He'd run their plate, stop them, find out they had an active traffic warrant or something on them. [He'd] get them in the car with him and say, "We can work this out. You know, if you want to do something for me, we'll let this warrant go."

However, another argued that it may be unfair to use an officer's history of complaints. "[I]f you have 15 brutality complaints, does that mean that there is some legitimacy to any allegations if you caught them in a shooting[?]. Not necessarily, because officers that work street-crime units or narcotic units are the ones [who] get all the complaints."

Another officer agreed that the number of complaints an officer receives is related to the work assignment: "I agree. It depends [on] where you work. You know if you're a community service officer, [with] more

positive contact, you're apt to get a lot less complaints. If you're the street-crime unit where you're kicking in doors, chasing these knuckleheads, and doing what you've got to do, they're going to come in."

One participant noted that a problem with the way supervisors handle problems of abuse of authority is a lack of consistency in disciplining officer misconduct:

One problem we have with our [supervisory] officers is the lack of consistency....[M]aybe on Charlie's side it's, try to get your ass there next time; I throw it in the trash. And officers [hear] that. Well, on Charlie's side you can get away with that; on the Adam side you can't. And that's a problem we have in our department; we're not applying the rules fairly to everybody....I just think they really do lack consistency in their routines every day,...no problem, I'll cover it; don't worry about it, I'll take it. You can't do that. And...the biggest problem we had is everyone needs to supervise and be fair about it. And I think it's a learning process....I think you said [that] everybody wants to be your buddy, wants to be your best friend. I think we all want to be buddies with our officers, but there's a bottom line you cross. I'm your supervisor today, and this is what we've got to do.

But how clear is the line that the participants saw between criminal and noncriminal or between appropriate and inappropriate behavior? The moderator presented a scenario and asked the participants to discuss whether the behavior constituted abuse of authority. A handcuffed suspect is sitting at an officer's desk while he fills out the necessary paperwork. With no

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provocation from the officer, the suspect suddenly spits in the face of the officer. As a reflex action, the officer pushes the suspect in the face, causing the suspect to fall over the chair onto the floor.

Responses varied widely. To some extent, differences could be attributed to departmental policies, but some participants indicated opinions would vary within their departments. The first reaction was “No,” this is not an abuse of police authority:

No...I don’t think that—I think that’s pretty much a normal—not a normal, if that’s the right word—reaction of an officer to use your hand to that person’s face....I don’t think the officer intended on that person’s falling over backward in the chair and busting his head open or whatever the repercussion. And I don’t think that that’s an abuse of authority. I think that that’s a reaction to a disgusting act by this person who’s sitting in the chair. If you can cover [the person’s] mouth and prevent [him or her] from spitting and the [person from falling] over in the chair, you’re doing the same thing, which would be perfectly fine.

An officer explained that his department’s policy would permit the behavior because “if there’s a handcuffed prisoner...in the back of your car, and that handcuffed prisoner is spitting and kicking, we can use OC and spray that prisoner in the face, which is very, very painful. And that’s completely proper.” Yet he expressed the opinion that many officers in his department would, nonetheless, not approve: “[T]here are plenty of people who would say that this is an abuse or improper reaction to that situation.”

Another participant was clear, “By my department standards, it would be abuse—it would be excessive force.” Yet he felt, “I think it would be judged with the entire situation in mind. In other words, an officer might not suffer a great deal of discipline.”

Another analyzed the situation similarly, stating that although “there [are] very few instances that I know of that justify] striking someone [who is] handcuffed because you do have complete control of him,...if it’s retaliatory, it’s abusive. If it’s reflex, it’s not abusive.”

Another officer felt, “Once they’re cuffed, that’s the end of the game,” although “you do have to take some kind of physical action to handcuff some people.”

Another put it this way: “I mean, 99.99 percent of the time, if a prisoner’s handcuffed, if the officer strikes him, it’s wrong.”

And yet another officer said, “If you’re handcuffed in my office and you spit on me, [even if] not handcuffed, I don’t care; it’s an assault....I’m not going to continue to beat you, but I’m going to have to knock you to the floor as a reaction.”

The discussion concluded with one officer expressing a consensus that each situation has to be judged on its own merits and that officers must be provided the tools to exercise their discretion well:

The bottom line is each situation—I mean, we pay these officers to make decisions, to make split-second decisions...[Y]ou read each case. But each case rises and falls on its own merits about what a particular officer did at a given time given the situation. You can’t come up with a

blanket statement concerning everything because each situation has its own nuances, has its own differences. And yes, we've got policies and procedures. But within those policies and procedures, you've got to have the discretion. It's something that we talk about all the time, officer discretion.... We've got to train; we've got to coach; we've got to do all those kinds of things that give our officers the necessary tools to make the kinds of decisions.

Supervisors' Perceptions of the Extent and Nature of Abuses of Authority

The Role of the Media

Even before we raised the question, some supervisors were expressing concern, even bitterness, about the role of the media in misrepresenting the extent of abuses of police authority: "[A]nother element of policing that is there and we don't want it to be...is the media. If the media stayed out of a lot of things, we wouldn't have the problems that we do because they put a spin on something that isn't there."

As one officer expressed what she felt was the media's obvious bias against the police, "I mean, aren't we tired of the 1968 convention yet?" She continued, "[T]hey are absolutely ruthless when it comes to police officers."

Another officer put it this way: "We're judged on Rodney King, Fuhrman."

One officer explained his view of how the media manipulate public opinion to believe police brutality has occurred when it has not for the purpose of sensationalism:

The media...take situations that are perfectly justifiable, perfectly within the scope and conduct of the officers, and they turn [the situation] into a negative. And then they go out into the community and they elicit [responses]—they love these...immediately after the incident to get the people screaming and hollering about police brutality. And that's what they leave the public with.

An officer suggested that these situations occur particularly when the police respond only by saying, "There is a case under investigation, can't respond, there's no comment.... Well, then they go to the dirt bag, and the dirt bag's family, and they report it as fact."

Another officer spoke of the inaccuracy of the reporting,

By and large the media are lower than slime. I mean they're absolutely ruthless. They don't care [what] they'll do, and they don't care what facts they destroy. I've been on situations and I've read about it in the newspaper, and I'm quoted. I mean I look at the situation that's described and I wonder if I was even there, and I'm the one that handled it.

Another asked, "Where are their ethics and morals?"

One participant pointed out the reporting inaccuracy that can occur when only a final blow inflicted by a police officer is seen:

We paint the picture that the police department and the government is automatically wrong when they go [to]

"...[The media] are absolutely ruthless when it comes to police officers."

"We're judged on Rodney King, Fuhrman."

***“...[G]ood
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[A] bad
incident...
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months....”***

the situation. And then of course, somebody that saw the last swing of the cop finally hitting the guy, no matter how bad the cop is beat, their statement is, Johnny was on top of them just beating the hell out of him. So that’s what’s all over the media.

Another said that the media are not held accountable for the accuracy of their reports. “I wish there was some way we can hold them accountable, but we can’t. We all know we can’t. They can do whatever they want, when they want. And it’s just unfortunate that they do that type of stories.”

One officer suggested that police departments could and should pay more attention to their relationship with the media:

But the other thing is [that] we don’t massage the news, the press, and the media. We don’t want to acknowledge that it does have the large role that it does have. And our departments—most departments—do not use it, and put it in as family with us like it probably should be, so that we can control and manipulate the press, just like the press controls and manipulates the facts that they get from us. But nobody really works at it.

This led to a discussion of the importance of the role of the chief in counterbalancing the media’s exaggeration of police brutality. Some felt that their departmental leadership was not afraid to stand up for their officers in controversial cases (“Chief — came right on the television and said, ‘Hey, they did exactly what I expected detectives to do.’”). Others indicated that their chiefs never supported the officers’

behavior before the media. (When one commander stood up on television for an officer who shot a pellet gun, it was “absolutely rare, because the chief chewed his ass later on.”)

At least one officer felt that even though the media are as ruthless and awful in his city as the others had depicted, “Our department...has a great deal of credibility and respect from the media.” He pointed out, “The press is also used in a lot of occasions by us, and it brings out some of the positive things we do. We’re trying to implement and improve our work, and so on. So there’s a positive side as well.”

Another officer agreed that the media can provide the police with good publicity, but he cautioned:

Well, the good publicity comes and goes real quickly. You know, you may have a good day [such as] a community day, and the police are interacting very well, but it’s gone. If that was on Monday, it’s gone on Tuesday.

You have a bad incident [and] there’s an allegation of misconduct. It goes on for months and months, and then a year later they’ll play tapes...and so forth. So I think that we have to use the media as much as we can to show the good things. But I think that they are self-serving when it comes to the bad things, because it’s more sensational; people want to watch that more often—just like any other bad sensational thing.

The Extent of Abuses of Authority

Participants agreed that violent acts of police misconduct were isolated aberrations perpetrated by a very small number

of problem officers, despite the apparent public perception of much more widespread problems: “I mean, how many law enforcement people are there across the United States [among] the FBI and the local police and the sheriff’s departments? I mean, there [are] thousands. We’re judged on Rodney King, Fuhrman.” But as one officer stated, “I think yes, it is an aberration. But...it’s intolerable.”

Another suggested, “Cops are nothing more than a microcosm of society at large....It’s not that there’s a bunch of rogue cops out there that are brutal and corrupt and criminals. It’s just—it’s everyday cops going out and doing their everyday job.” He continued, “You’ve got your very best, you’ve got a large group in the middle, and you’ve got some on the other end of the spectrum that are not so good, and maybe even criminals....We need to get rid of them.”

Another officer suggested there is little serious misconduct, both because as a “government entity,” police are highly scrutinized, and because police officers “have a conscience.”

[W]e’re a government entity, so we’re totally an open book. We get more scrutiny than the priests [who] molest little boys. We get more scrutiny than the mayor [who’s] corrupt. We get more scrutiny because we are representative and we do deal with everybody on a day-to-day basis. But we probably have less corruption and [fewer] problems in our society, the police society, than probably any other organization, any other group of people.

He went on to suggest that “even the idiot [who] comes into this job just to have a job does perceive that we are supposed to do

right,” and that when police are involved in a criminal incident, they give themselves up quickly “because most policemen have a conscience.”

Participants laid blame on the media for perpetuating the public’s perception that incidents of police violence are a common occurrence. “[T]hey perpetuate some of these theories about police misconduct, and they would have the public believing this happens all the time, everywhere, and everyday, and so on.”

While acknowledging that isolated incidents of police misconduct do occur, participants stressed that their departments work hard to prevent such incidents from occurring. As one officer put it, “[W]ill we find more police officers doing the same kind of thing? Probably, because the money and the drugs are there, and because of the temptations. Have we, as an organization—are we trying our best to look at all kinds of ways to stop this from happening again? Yes, we are.” Later, this officer suggested that departments should work even harder at preventing these occurrences, however isolated they are: “But you just have to look at it and say, ‘Is the whole system bad?’ No, it isn’t. But let’s take more seriously any hint that there could be something wrong going on with it. Let’s really look at it.” The officer suggested reviewing all aspects of training and supervision: “[A]nd you just can’t discount all of those things: the training, the supervision. All of those things have to be reexamined anytime there’s an allegation.”

Another participant commended police departments’ ability to remove the “bad apples”: “And I think, by and large, as organizations, just from what I’ve been

“...[Y]ou...can’t discount...the training, the supervision.... [T]hose things have to be reexamined anytime there’s an allegation.”

...[T]he department had gone too far in creating expectations that the police would solve all the problems.

listening...we do a good job of getting rid of people [who] need to be gotten rid of. It's a long, laborious process because we've got labor contracts to deal with and unions and the whole spectrum. But I think by and large, we do a pretty good job of policing ourselves when these incidents do come up."

Abuse of Authority and Community Policing
Community Policing and the Changing Authority of the Police

The officers discussed a variety of issues related to the expanded role of the police in community policing and to the changing and sometimes misunderstood nature of their authority. One officer had recently worked for two and a half years in community policing in a department with a relatively long (10-year) experience of community policing. He described how the department had gone too far in creating expectations that the police would solve all the problems when they initially were trying to convince the community of the value of the new model of policing:

I tried for years to get the group...to prioritize their problems. They are crime problems; we can deal with crime problems and we will help you deal with some of the civil problems. The biggest problem was the narcotics, the prostitution, and some of the more severe stuff.

However, they focused, during the entire time that I was there, on the illegal vendors near the school in that area. They wanted the police to fix the problems. And that is a civil problem. You

have Health and Safety in the Health Department who can handle that, write citations.

We tried to redirect this group to those people because that is where the enforcement leverage comes from, not from us. But the point that I am making is they were trying to force the police department to enforce the health violation laws. When I refused, of course they complained to council representatives, and it [got] into the political arena.

We created problems like that years ago when we started this neighborhood policing and [when] it was necessary for us to convince them that the police were on their side. We did absolutely everything for them: civil, criminal, job fairs, cleanups, completely run by the police department. And it had to be that way because we wanted the commitment from them and they wanted to see the commitment from us.

We are just now, after 10 years of doing this, we are just now trying to transition from that; we can't do everything and don't expect us to do everything. We are struggling to do our job. It really impacted their perception of our authority.

He went on to explain how he felt that the expectations of community residents exceeded the limits of the authority of the police:

Our community meeting was nothing more than a police meeting. I say that because the police were up in front and there were 100 people waiting to

report every problem they had in the neighborhood to the police. They had the expectation that we would come back next week and tell them that the problem had been fixed. We allowed [the problem] to go like that for some time.

We tried to empower these groups, but there was a whole lot of resistance. They really did not want to be empowered; they wanted the police to do it for them. We were not really willing to tell them that their perception of our authority was wrong for fear of their thinking we were bailing out on this program that we were working on for years.

Later, he described how dependent residents can become on “their” neighborhood policing team and the dangers of such over-reliance:

I had myself and 10 officers working a small crime-ridden geographical area as the neighborhood policing team...[T]hey became completely possessive of my squad. They chose not to call communications to report crimes. They chose to hold onto 911-type aggressive, serious violations until we met the following week so that they could police bash. “Hey, someone pointed a gun at me last Thursday, and I want to report it to you.”

“Did you call the police?”

“Well, no; we want a neighborhood policing team officer to respond.”

So...there’s some caution...with putting these teams together and working in the communities and having them too available to community groups or to

the residents to suggest that we were the only ones [who] could address those problems.

...Now they get a patrol officer [who] goes to cover or respond to a problem, and they [have] a complete different demeanor...They’re not comfortable with [the new patrol officer]. They’re not familiar [with him or her]. He [w]on’t sit and have coffee with them at meetings.

Another officer discussed how police authority under community policing is unlike the “adversarial” authority officers are taught to exercise in their training, with its emphasis on arrests. In community-oriented policing, officers must learn to exercise authority with “the good community”:

And partly because the police mentality from the day the person’s hired, going through the academy, with their field training officer, all through [the person’s] career, it’s always go out and make arrests. You know, it’s kind of an adversarial training thing here that we’re going to battle with the criminal, which we [battle daily]. And there is a place for that [mentality]. But there is not the comparable training to partnership with the good community and engage that community in part of the problem-solving.

One officer described how the expectations raised under community policing can entail an “unrealistic” request to revert to police actions that once may have been acceptable, but now may exceed the limits of police authority:

“...[T]here is not... comparable training to partnership with the good community and engage that community in part of the problem-solving.”

“...[T]he more you’re known in the community..., the less likely you’re going to get involved in any kind of corruption....”

...[T]alking about the community... asking for unrealistic things—25 to 30 years ago, in the downtown area, they had what they called the Bum Wagon. And that was a paddy wagon that would go around and just pick up all the bums and, depending on how they behaved, they either went to jail or to skid row or you took them someplace else and threw them out. But they weren’t there when everybody got to work in the morning, so it looked nice. And these people were calling for the Bum Wagon to come back. That’s what they wanted to do.

However, the community apparently did move the police to take action on the homeless problem by developing new approaches to address a problem that they had ignored up until the old approach was rendered unacceptable. They considered using arrest, but “we didn’t think our pan-handling ordinance could withstand the scrutiny of a Supreme Court challenge, and we have more than enough homeless advocacy groups out there that would be willing to challenge us. Plus, it’s a lousy waste of a police officer’s time.” Instead, “they came up with some very innovative ways to deal with this, [such as bringing] in service agencies that deal with these individuals. Bring in what’s left of the mental health professionals out there [who] will actually come.”

Community Policing and the Potential for Corruption

Asked whether community policing increases the risk of police corruption or misconduct, one participant’s immediate response was, “I think it’s just the

opposite....I think the more you’re known in the community that you work, the less likely you’re going to get involved in any kind of corruption or stuff like that. I think if you’re not known, you’re a stranger, nobody knows you, [and] you don’t know anybody, [then] I think you’d be more vulnerable.”

Similar points of view—that community policing decreases the likelihood of abuse—were expressed by other participants without dissent. One suggested there would be a decrease in both abuse and complaints of abuse because police would be less likely to abuse people they know, and because citizens would be less likely to accuse officers they know of abuse when they use force:

I think that knowing someone personally [causes] a lot less police misconduct because it would be hard to abuse someone you know or [who] knows you as you are. I think when something is maybe construed as abuse, [for instance,] you have an arrest where you have to use force, [then] the people [who] know you [and] would observe [you] in the neighborhood where you work would be more supportive of your using that force because they know how you are.

Another participant suggested that community-policing officers “take a great deal of pride in their relationship with their community or their area, and they value that pride for the most part. They’ve bought into that neighborhood and they don’t want to tarnish [their reputation]....So I think many of their intentions are so honorable that, again, corruption is not a factor.”

Another officer pointed out that instances of serious allegations of abuse received at Internal Affairs are rarely, if ever, directed against beat officers:

...[T]he allegations of serious corruption or serious criminal misconduct are not made against those officers who are walking around, walking beats, or [working] in the neighborhood going to the beat meetings. You don't hear complaints about those officers. You don't see those allegations of misconduct.

...The profiles of the officers that these kinds of serious accusations are made against are plainclothes [or are] doing tactical or narcotics investigation. Those are relatively young; they have a lot of freedom. I understand the need for that in those kinds of investigations, but I think that's where those kinds of accusations are headed toward—not to the person sitting at the community meeting. I don't hear those allegations.

One officer suggested that although community policing is “a very positive thing,” its presence creates problems by contrast for traditional patrol units. “The problem we're dealing with sometimes with patrol units is that when we have to go into an area, [we] know [we]re met with a contentious attitude because...we don't know these people. I don't deal with them all the time, so when I have to arrest Joe Blow's kid and Johnny Jones's daughter...”

In reply, another participant pointed out, “We get to know people and we get to know their first names, and we get to know something of the family history, but it's strictly on a professional level.”

A participant gave an excellent explanation of why he believed community policing is not “just a throwback to the old beat officer” and will not “lead us into the corruption we saw back then.” The difference is the “changes in morality and ethics in law enforcement from back 40, 50 years ago” and after “things like Rodney King”:

Well, I think this theory of increased corruption or potential for corruption in relation to the community, a policeman comes along with the thought that many people say that, well, community-oriented policing is just a throwback to the old beat officer...on the street in New York City. He knew everybody on that street, where they lived and every shop owner and so on. And there was, in fact, corruption very frequently. But I think we're in a different day and age, and I'm not so sure we're going to get the community-oriented policing to lead us into the corruption that we saw back then. The reason... is we've had things like Rodney King, and what's happened in Chicago, and what happened there, and what's described as happening in many cities. I think there is a different emphasis on morality and ethics in law enforcement than we saw back 40, 50 years ago. I don't think even the public has a tolerance for the corruption that was a fact of daily life in New York 50 years ago.

So I'm not so sure there is this greater risk to it as some people seem to think. I do believe that as time goes on and as community-oriented policing moves forward, there will be some instances of it and people will right away say, “Aha, that was what I was talking about.”

“...[T]here is a different emphasis on morality and ethics in law enforcement than we saw... 40, 50 years ago.”

“I don’t think...many agencies... really have community-oriented policing tacked down solid.”

But I think we’re in a different day and age, and I don’t think it’s as great a risk.

Another officer explained that he thought community-policing officers are less likely to become involved in corruption because they are under observation and feel the need to be “representative of what people think a policeman should be”:

...[W]hen you look at police corruption, most times it’s under unsupervised, uncontrolled situations to where either they’ve been in a narcotics assignment for a long time, or they’ve been in some type of special situation where they have no supervision or they have very lax supervision. They work either with just one partner or alone in situations where you have the interaction with the community.

[Under community policing], [t]he community is going to hold you to a higher standard, and the officer is going to feel [as if] he needs to be [held] to a higher standard because he’s going to be representative of what people think a policeman should be. But I think that if—as with community policing—you open up the whole command system, there [are] more avenues for people to point out indiscretions of an officer [who is] working with the community.

Departmental Structure and Community Policing

There was some discussion of the way supervision should be restructured in the transition to community policing: “[I]n most agencies where community-oriented policing [exists]—there should be a looser

supervision to some extent where the supervisors [should] empower the officers a great deal more. Give them more and more latitude in problem-solving and in developing relationships with the community.”

Not only the structure but also the content of the supervisor’s role changes under community policing. One officer who was given charge of the community-policing unit explained how his work has changed.

I went from being a crime fighter, more or less—not that I’m not a crime fighter now; it’s still part of our role. But I basically, for the last 15 months, have become [a] real help [to] these young officers [as they] develop a personality [when] they had the confidence just to talk [to groups]...I was basically like a coach there—but I had younger people who just could not talk to groups or just didn’t want to be there.

Of particular interest was the concern expressed by one of the participants that his department and police departments across the country did not have a true definition of what constitutes community-oriented policing:

I think I can identify some shortcomings. And because of that, I think we’re unable to say that you’ve got a true community-oriented policing program. I think that’s what you find quite a bit across the country. I don’t think...many agencies...really have community-oriented policing tacked down solid. I went to one conference a couple of years ago.... They started off the conference saying, “What do you do at your agency for community-oriented policing?”

Somebody says, “Well, we have a horse patrol. Well, we have a substation or a community service center.” And they described all these features. But none of those features constituted by themselves community-oriented policing. And we still, to some extent, hear that today....So, you know, I think we’re not getting community-oriented policing. We’re not hitting the nail on the head.

Another officer suggested,

I think in our department...the chief...tr[ies] to make the department too user friendly or too just community-policing concept....The problem is that we have—between [sic] the basketball leagues and the boat rides and the petting zoo...and about 25 community service officers...these [community] meetings are usually still police-bashing....But I think we’re almost too community oriented....We’ve got everything for the community.

Another officer replied, “[W]hat I just heard you describe is a lot of community-relations programs. I didn’t hear you talk about community-oriented policing.”

Commenting on the problems that the department encountered while embracing the community-oriented policing concept, one officer was concerned about the “separation between the officers who are doing this community policing and what you call patrol....And that’s the basic weakness we have. I mean, community policing is really supposed to be a philosophy that everyone’s involved in. And we’re just training my neighborhood task force guys, and the patrol guys are kind of being left out of it completely.”

This officer also had an interesting observation about the problem of integrating community policing as it pertains to officers assigned to the midnight shift:

...[M]idnights in our police department, and I think [in] a lot of police departments, is just left out in the cold in regard to any of this, community policing, whatever it may be. The midnight tour on our police department is exactly the same as it was 17 years ago when I came on. It’s minimal manpower. The desk man, the house mouse, maybe four cars per precinct. That’s it. Now they don’t know community policing from a hole in their head.

Some of them don’t even know we have bicycle patrol out there. What the hell is that? Bike? What the hell [are] you doing with that? When did that happen? About 5 years ago. You know, 2 or 3 years ago. And I think that’s where you run into a lot of corruption problems or authority problems, ethical problems.

[Officers in the] midnight tour [are] just out there on their own. And it’s their own world. No one gives a shit about them. No one brings them on board. And to me, that’s one of [the problems]. I’m always trying to [work on the problem]—because I’m an old midnight guy and I know the midnight world.

And I’m always trying to talk to the bosses that I’m exposed to and say, “You know [the problems]; you’ve got to get the midnight guys involved in something. You’ve got to give them some kind of training. You know,

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that every-
one’s involved
in...and the
patrol guys
are...being
left out...
completely.”***

Is it unfair to stereotype, or is it “smart policing[?]”

they’re out there 8 hours a day themselves dealing with the same community that we’re dealing with, but they don’t have any of this philosophy, or any of this training, or any of the support.”

Societal Factors That Affect Abuse of Authority

The Effect of Race and Ethnicity

The topic of race as a factor in police behavior—suspicion, investigation, stops and searches, use of force—is an important consideration in any discussion of issues related to abuse of authority. We began the discussion by asking the group: Is it unfair to stereotype, or is it “smart policing” to know that people of certain types, seen at certain hours in certain places, are basically up to no good?

One officer remarked:

If I know [that] at 2 o’clock in the morning in a residential neighborhood no 12- and 13-year-old should be walking back and forth business, then to some something is wrong and it’s not because they’re two young black kids. It’s because of where they are in that particular setting. If I work in an all-black neighborhood and I have arrested 40 people the last 2 weeks, it’s not because I only look for black people; it’s because that’s all that was there....I can’t arrest white people, Korean people, Italian people if there are none.

Furthermore, the officer stressed that for her the issue of race was irrelevant when it comes to enforcing the law:

And I say to them all the time, I lock up people who are doing wrong, re-

gardless of color. If you’re wrong, you’re locked up. I make no bones about it. It doesn’t matter. I lock up old people, unfortunately, grandmas, little children, everybody gets locked up if you’re wrong. My criteri[on] is who was wrong and who was right. Age has no limit; color has no distinction. Everybody is locked up.

Responding to this comment, another officer suggested, “And I think that comes with experience. You have experience in a certain area; you know who is who and what’s going on, who is not supposed to be there and who is. Then you get that gut feeling: this guy—I’ll check it out.”

Another officer suggested that officers who exhibit racist attitudes in the conduct of their duties eventually “weed themselves out of this job,” because racism interferes with doing police work successfully:

In American society today, [if you have] a racist cop, [and]...in my experience it’s always proven true,...black cops [who] were racist and white cops [who] have been racist in [his department]...weed themselves out because ignorance creates ignorance. They make their own stupid mistakes that have cost them their jobs. Everyone of them [whom] I’ve known in my career [and who] are black and white [and] had a problem with race or being prejudiced or having particular prejudices, weed themselves out of this job. An ignorant person and racism and prejudice and discriminatory actions [are] nothing but ignorance. And ignorance weeds itself out of this job very quickly because it takes away your other senses

and the other things that will make you survive in this line.

Others suggested that the key to preventing problems associated with “stereotyping” is for officers to be sensitive to cultural differences and to effectively communicate their actions to the person they approach. As one officer said, “So not only do we have to become cognizant of what’s going on in their culture, they have to realize what the law is as well, because they do bring their cultures here and they [will] do different things than we do that’s wrong in our society.”

Another emphasized the importance of explaining your actions:

You have to know how to talk to people...When you approach someone, you have to tell [that person] what you’re doing and why you’re doing it. Approaching people and conducting an investigation [is] when a lot of problems occur. You explain to whoever you’re dealing with, “I just had a robbery by a black [person and] you fit the description. I’m stopping you.” They respect that. People who are out there respect that, and if they don’t, well, too bad. I’ve got to do my job. But see, if you just don’t explain the situation, black, white, Hispanic, Oriental, it doesn’t matter. Then you’re looking for trouble.

This remark led to considerable agreement. One participant offered, “Yeah, that’s true. If you take the 20 seconds to explain, you can divert a lot of problems. People just want to be informed [of] what’s going on.” Another added that people want to retain their dignity:

But even when you make [an] arrest, you still have to leave them with a certain amount of dignity, and that’s what we were getting on young officers about. [Those officers] were grabbing them and telling them to lay on the ground in the rain. [Then the officers] might have finished what they’re doing, but it’s raining and they still have [the person] there. We ride by and say why is that person there? Did you do it? Yeah. Well, why is he still there? Put the cuffs on and get him in the car. They’re still people.

When asked whether the participants felt that discriminatory police behavior is prevalent among officers or whether it is just a false perception in minority communities that is influenced by the media, one officer stated that the media were in large part responsible for those perceptions:

...[O]n the race issue, I think the police are still hurting from...the media issue. You very pointedly see Alabama where they were letting the dogs out on the marches and taking the fire hoses on. And black politicians, as we have transcended into the inner cities of being African-American or minority populations in the inner cities, [those] black politicians have used the police department as stepping stones into political leadership as well, because it’s been an area that they could attack.

He also suggested that it may serve political purposes to accuse police of racism, but the police do not have time to behave in a racist manner:

It serves political benefit to keep a division of the races and to keep the

“When you approach someone, you have to tell [that person] what you’re doing and why you’re doing it.”

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diversity in the arguments expounded because I think most police [officers, particularly those who are men,] no matter what he says when he goes home to be the macho self in each particular situation, usually handles it in a professional situation because again, in most inner-city policing if you went in and handled one color differently [from] the next one [according to] race, you’d be a busy person thinking all day.

Some officers did acknowledge that discrimination is a problem among officers. As one put it, “Sure. The race card will never go away. It won’t. It’s always there. Somebody is going to play it.”

Another admitted, “Let’s face it; prejudice is still out there.... I have it in my department to some degree, but it does happen.”

Race and Community Policing

General agreement existed among the participants that community policing had a positive effect on relationships between the police and minority community residents. As one officer suggested:

I think the black, the African-American community in [his city], [can change] as the police department becomes more responsive. Policing has not been responsive to the black community [both] in the past and in the minority communities. We’ve only been [there] because of the disenfranchised; we’ve only come in and [taken] people in jail. With community policing, we’re seeing more changes in those positions.

Another officer commented, “I think community policing is, in fact, about communication; communication has gotten a lot better. I think that’s a big thing that I see

between the [minority] community and the police officer.”

One officer, agreeing that community policing has a positive effect on relations in minority communities, described a situation where prejudiced attitudes among residents can sometimes hamper community-policing efforts:

I’ve got a community right now and it has community police officers assigned to it. They came to me 2 weeks ago wanting black officers, not white officers. I told them there’s nothing to indicate these officers are not doing their job. It doesn’t matter what their race is. I surveyed the other people in that community. It’s a black community and she was the only one [who] was making that comment. So it was her own personal prejudice. But I got called in the deputy chief’s office about the issue. He was called also....Normally, I think trust has gone up with the community policing in the black community with white officers, overall. It’s just this one neighborhood, and it really caught me off guard when she hit me with that.

The Culture of Policing

In seeking to understand how much the culture of policing contributes to abuse of authority, we focused on two aspects of police culture: (a) the “us-versus-them” mentality, with its premise that police officers’ constant contact with problematic citizens leads officers to view all civilians suspiciously; and (b) the “code of silence,” in which police officers protect (by not reporting) their fellow officers in situations involving inappropriate or abusive police conduct. We began by asking whether the

participants believed there was an us-versus-them mentality, and what its role might be in the abuse of authority.

“Us-versus-Them” Mentality

As we began the discussion of whether the police are perceived by citizens as operating under an us-versus-them attitude, one officer stated she could see why some citizens would have that perception: “Well, I can see where that might come across to citizens, especially ones [who] don’t have much contact with the law. When they do they get a bad, disinterested police [officer], [that officer is] the only contact they have....”

However, she pointed out a theme that dominated this discussion. Community policing could be effective in changing that perception of police. “I think the community-policing concept is helping to eradicate [the problems] because...there’s more of a personal relationship there, I think.”

Another participant shared a similar view that community policing would not only change the attitudes of citizens, but also the attitudes of police officers:

When you first come on [the police force]...you’re out there in that patrol car, and all you’re dealing with is assholes. So [officers] get this mind-set that everybody’s an asshole, and it drives their view of everybody. And that’s why I think community policing is so important, because it does a lot to break down those attitudes. It lets folks know—it lets cops know—that there are good people out there. There are people out there that support you.

Another officer added:

Well, I think what community policing does is put those officers in direct con-

tact with—the entire array of citizens. In other words, not just the crooks that they’re dealing with day after day and night after night. But also it puts them in contact with the good citizens, so it brings them balance—brings balance in their perspective of the public....Good people [are] out there. Whereas without that we tend to see, by contact, [that] those we view [are] all jerks.

Part of the reason that community policing alters the us-versus-them mentality is that the community, in partnership with the police, becomes part of the “us.” As one officer put it, “The communities are pointing the finger, saying, ‘That’s him; that’s him. He’s dealing drugs on the corner; get him, and get him out of our neighborhood....’ So it’s a community actually steering us to them; they want us to do that. So for that certain element—say that 85 or 90 percent—that’s where we are in a favorable light.”

Some participants thought that to some extent the us-versus-them mentality is more prevalent among new or inexperienced police officers:

Only to the extent that I think new police officers quite often project a superhero attitude or demeanor, which tends to separate law enforcement from the public. I agree that we beg acceptance and so on, but I think that comes after—let’s say, somewhere in that first 5- or 7-year period....An awful lot of officers...project a superhero image in their off-duty time, as well as their on-duty time.

A number of the participants commented that the us-versus-them mentality is a

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“[For] a beat officer and in street-crime units, ...99 percent of that contact is negative contact.”

requirement of their work and, more important, that attitude is more often directed toward those individuals who constantly come to the attention of the police than toward the general public. Typical comments included the following:

Yeah, I agree. I mean depending on what group of society you're dealing with. I mean the positive element, no. We go out there and are projected in a positive light. But the people I deal with in a street-crime unit, yeah, it's almost like urban warfare. It is us against them. My job is to get them; their job is to bail out, and jump over fences....Yeah, with that certain drug-dealing element, the little scum of society, yeah, absolutely. That's the way I feel. And, by any means necessary, we go out and we do our job. I'm not saying kick them in the face, handcuff, and beat them, and put their heads in toilets. But we do our job; we do it with the court's law, and the policies and procedures, and the law and all the parameters that we have to meet. But, yeah, absolutely....But [considering] the people I deal with a couple nights, three, four nights a week, it's brutal.

I agree with everything that's been said, but it's that small population....But those people we keep—like M— was talking about, you keep arresting the same people over and over and over. Well, I think [that for] the majority of the citizens, I don't think it's us and them.

But, yeah, I agree. There's a certain percentage that we deal with all the time—actually it's a big percentage.

[For] a beat officer and in street-crime units, all your contacts for that 8-hour period, 99 percent of that contact is negative contact. So how can you take an individual and give him any other attitude or any other perception of life, other than dealing with negative, which makes him negative in its context.... He's either hearing how bad somebody just ripped them off, or dealing with the bad guy saying how [someone] just ripped him off.

The officers engaged in an interesting discussion of how they cannot shed their police identities when off duty (“You almost live this job”), and how they find it difficult to maintain contact with friends who knew them before they became police officers. It takes concerted effort to get away from the police culture. Those factors exacerbate an us-versus-them mentality. As one said,

I think there is an us-versus-them [attitude], and “them” could be the bad guys and the good people out there.... He had to make an effort, and I made the same effort, although sometimes I analyze it and say, “I failed.” I've made an effort to keep all my non-police friends. But you know what? Because of the schedule you work and the hours you work, and as the years go by, I say to myself, Jesus Christ, I haven't seen [those friends] in years.

I go to weddings; it's usually cop weddings. Again, because of the hours you work, if I go for a beer, it's usually with [a] bunch of cops. It's something that I consciously wanted to avoid, but it's difficult to avoid because you're all

living in the same environment, the same schedule. And that creates an us-versus-them [attitude]—not even good guy, bad guy. You're in a culture that you have to make an effort to get out of. Actually, it's a pleasure to be around people—non-police people—who don't bring up policing also.

Another officer stated:

There's nothing more annoying than when you go in a place, or a restaurant, and they go, "I didn't do it; he did it".... You almost live this job; you really do. And you try not to have [only police friends]. [As] both of these gentlemen said, "I have friends on the outside, but [because of] our schedules and interests, [I] end up going back to that: I'm always with cops."

Another officer stated, "Sometimes you don't tell people you're the police." Once she made the decision to tell people her occupation: "Everybody at that point changed and treated me different, because I'm with the police. And I am who I am. Policing is what I do; it's not who I am. And I have to make people aware that I'm still a person."

Summing up the sentiments expressed by those officers, one officer noted:

I think we're all begging for acceptance. We're not the ones saying us versus them. What we're asking for is to accept T— and accept S—, not to group us as police; they group us as individuals and human beings. That's what I think all police [officers] are asking. It's not us against them, as far as we perceive it. We're going to deal with

each issue as it comes before us.... But it's not—we deal with particular issues, and [we hope] we deal with people on an individual basis more than we deal with them as us versus them.

Another added, "We're more stereotyped than some of the ethnic groups and all the other groups that are out there.... So that's part of the us against them. It's not us, the good guy against the bad guy—we're just regular... we're blue collar [workers] too."

To combat problems associated with the us-versus-them mentality, one officer suggested that officers should be rotated throughout the different areas of a city:

...[O]ur city is divided in quadrants, basically four quadrants. You have your business area, which would be considered here; then you have your straight residential area. And for people who patrol nothing but residential area all their career, and [who] have never been outside that particular district, they do have a separate mind-set. And I've always said, "People should be rotated through the quadrants of the city, because if you know only one thing, and how to deal with one sector of people, it's hard to break that habit." And some people have been in that same career, [have never gone] anywhere else. And if you take them from straight ghettos and put them in someplace like [an upper-class neighborhood], it doesn't work. You will get complaints.

People think that this person is absolutely out of control, but you take that officer out of that and put him back where he is, and he's the best thing happening. So [officers] need to be

"You almost live this job..."

"Policing is what I do; it's not who I am."

“You talk about the code of silence as if it is something that is unique to police work.”

rotated around. I always tell people, after 5 years, try to move somewhere else, even if it's to an investigative position or something. [Officers] need something else, because, if not, [they] get in that mold and it's hard to break.

Agreeing with that comment, another officer stated, “It makes you a better police officer, I think. It makes you a better all-around police officer, but it's hard to do.”

Code of Silence

The topic of the “code of silence” or “blue wall of silence” generated controversy as it had when the topic was discussed in the rank-and-file focus group. The discussion began with one of the participants providing a definition of what she thought is the code of silence, a code that pertains to rank-and-file officers, but not to management:

When I think of code of silence, I guess I don't look at it so much as from a management point of view, but I look at the two scout car partners, and one guy crosses over the line. And the guy [who] has to drag him out the house and, he knows, should not have struck the citizen...That [officer's] responsibility...is to tell, and sometimes they don't until that complaint comes down and you do that investigation. And that's where I always see the code of silence.

Because they feel like, I went in and snitched. I don't want to be the one [who] has to tell it. But then you have to let [officers who cross the line] be put in the hot seat, because it's always somebody out there who saw what happened. Whether you know it or not, somebody, some citizen, somebody passing by, some other police officer

who might have been on the opposite side of the street [will come in and give] you a statement. So you try to give [officers] that opportunity to come forth, and when they don't, you just light them up. You have no choice, and that to me is the code of silence.

One participant noted, quite angrily, that the topic of a code of silence was not unique to the police profession, “You talk about the code of silence as if it is something that is unique to police work. But what have we all heard since we [were] first able to talk? Don't be a tattletale. That is what society wanted. This isn't something that is just specific to police work, for God's sake.”

Another agreed, “What disgusts me about this topic is that law enforcement gets tagged with this, and it is such a critical issue from the public's perspective. Yet, they don't see that this is what is going on with doctors and lawyers.”

However, that officer, as well as the other participants, agreed that to a certain extent the code of silence does exist in policing. Eventually it seemed, as in the rank-and-file group, that it was the term itself that was most offensive:

In law enforcement, I think it primarily pertains to the layers of rank. In other words, code of silence among officers and then among supervisory personnel, and so on, as [one participant] pointed out. I think there is, I hate to use the term, this concept in operation, but I don't think it is near what the public and the media portray it as. There are other elements working about this, I hate to use the term, code of silence.

Another officer suggested that the more appropriate term would be “[c]overing for people.” He went on to explain why officers have to cover for someone who, “as big a jerk as he may be, might be your lifesaver”:

Officers tend to cover for each other because they know that a part of that shift is a person they don’t like. They know they don’t like the way their partner operates and the things that they do, but they don’t know how often they will have to work with that individual, and they know that they always have to count on that individual for backup. That person, as big a jerk as he may be, might be your lifesaver. You may not like him. If it was your choice, you wouldn’t work with him, but you have to depend on him.

A case that we had once was a deputy, who I am glad to say quit...The day after he left, all these stories surfaced from the deputies about his activities and what he was doing. We were scratching our heads and asking why didn’t you tell us last week or 3 months ago or a year ago. But they wouldn’t say. I think it is somewhat understandable, because even though they didn’t like him, he was part of their backup.

As the discussion continued, it became apparent that an important distinction existed between the participants’ perceptions of a code of silence when violating a minor departmental rule or regulation and the code of silence when committing a criminal violation. As one said, “[I]f anyone of us knew that one of the other ones was in the process of committing a felony someplace, ...there would not be a code of silence.”

One participant noted that a supervisor’s overlooking minor rule violations does not constitute a code of silence.

I think M—— is making a good point in differentiating when talking about the code of silence and criminal conduct, and what might be perceived as improper behavior within our rules and regulations ...and whether or not it was investigated or if that person is disciplined or not... That was a supervisor’s decision to do one thing or another thing that may or may not be proper. And even if you don’t turn that person who went to take a nap into IA [internal affairs], if you didn’t do that...that is not the code of silence. [It should be] my choosing to discipline or not...It is not even close to a code of silence.

Another officer commented, “And as a supervisor, whether you are a sergeant or a lieutenant—and in most organizations, you have a progressive discipline procedure if you have a minor violation—you don’t want to burn the guy on paper. You can pull him in; you can counsel him and document it for your own records.”

One officer observed that officers will “close ranks” during a criminal investigation, not just rank-and-file officers, but sergeants too. “They won’t impede your investigation. But they do, to a degree, close ranks.”

In contrast, with respect to criminal violations, all of the participants agreed that they would not “condone blatant criminal activity.” Short of what they considered criminal though, the code may apply: “Criminal things, we don’t condone that. Once in a while, there is a cop who gets

“...[Officers] won’t impede your investigation. But they do, to a degree, close ranks.”

“I don’t think there is a code of silence at all when we are talking about criminal conduct.”

pegged with DWI. The guys stop to get a beer after work and [he] gets stopped and arrested. Should he lose his job? No. Do you have a domestic? Sometimes things get a little hot between you and your spouse; you make a bad choice and get pinched. Should you be vilified publicly? No.”

Comments on distinguishing the application of a code of silence in criminal and non-criminal situations included the following:

[Concerning] the code of silence, there are very few police officers—and it may differ from jurisdiction to jurisdiction—but ... just from what I know about the people sitting at this table, I think that if anyone of us knew that one of the other ones was in the process of committing a felony someplace, there would not be a code of silence. And I really object to labeling us as having a code of silence. I think there have been instances in different departments when three or four officers, who are involved in a felony, know about something, [and] maybe two or three officers won’t say anything. But on a supervisory level and a management level, I think there are very few instances when the code of silence would [become] the pointed dagger that you are trying to throw here.

I don’t think there is a code of silence at all when we are talking about criminal conduct. And if it is, those people are part of a criminal mind.

I think that the wall of silence, as far as criminal things, is a thing of the past. I hear a lot of cops saying they are not going to lose their house because of you.

I think this wall of silence, the media picks it up out of police doing things wrong. That is not a wall of silence; that is a criminal conspiracy. You know you have the buddy boys in New York. That is all conspiracy stuff. Those are criminals wearing uniforms.

[O]ne point to keep in mind...is that you are in a room full of lieutenants and sergeants here. And we are honored to perform our job for our organization. As far as code of silence, I think that what C—— said, that at the patrolman level, maybe it is a little different. But there is nobody in this room who is going to condone blatant criminal activity.... But when you are talking about the code of silence, you are talking about New York and the really limited things that happen. But everybody here, we are supervisors and we are going to represent our organizations. Even on the patrolman level, if a cop really screws something up, every other member of that organization is giving thumbs up when they pinch him. We don’t want bad cops representing us, either.

...But the point is [that] we all want to do the right thing; most people do in society. As police officers, [when] we come to work, we want to do the right thing. When somebody crosses the line, we don’t cover it. We are all good people here. And across the nation, policemen are, by and large, hardworking people; we are no different from you.

At the close of the discussion, one participant related an investigation of criminal misconduct among a group of officers in his department, which indicates that rank-

and-file police officers share the supervisors' attitude against a code of silence to protect criminal violators:

We had [a] group that was doing the drugs and different stuff. We had an undercover FBI investigation going. But we were constantly getting calls from other officers to the point that they were saying, "You sonofabitches ain't going to do nothing about it, and I don't even know why I bother to tell on them anymore"....[However,] we were trying to get all the ducks in a row to get them prison time.

Solutions

Agency Procedures for Dealing with Abuse of Police Authority

We asked a number of questions regarding procedures for handling complaints: How should investigations of citizen complaints be handled (i.e., internally or by outside civilian review)? Is civilian review of police misconduct effective in addressing problems of abuse?

As we discussed in the rank-and-file focus group's report, a number of U.S. cities have some form of civilian review for citizen complaints against the police. However, the use of civilian agencies to monitor police conduct is very controversial, with the police arguing that only the police can effectively "police" the police. We asked the participants what their perceptions of the use of civilian review boards were and whether their own cities had established the bounds for reviewing citizen complaints. Participants responded as follows:

Internal affairs works. Civilian review authority, as soon as you mention

civilian review, the knee-jerk reaction is no way, yatta yatta, they go on and on. If they only knew, civilian review authority is nothing more than a toothless tiger. They're easier on cops than the departments are themselves. Bottom line.

[O]ur review authority...[is]...looking to get a case. They had 9 months without a specific case.

We found that when we had it, they were not prepared for the complaints. We were like 5 years behind. We had maybe 400,000 complaints with four or five people on the board....It was just overwhelming, so they did away with it. So we do it in-house at the station, and if it's criminal, it goes to IA.

We're just starting one so our citizen review is going through a citizen academy now. They're not going to review every complaint, only those of deadly force issues and more serious issues. They're not going to handle the courtesy complaints and the verbal stuff.

Yeah, it's totally different. The problem our officers have [is] we have civil service protection and that's all civilian. So they review—the chief cannot fire you. He can only suspend up to 90 days. That's all the power he has. He can recommend termination. It goes to civil service board, and they meet and you have your attorney present and the board has their attorney. They present the case to this board. And they've been pretty fair to the police. Police officers love civil service. They fired one 2 or 3

"...[C]ivilian review...is... a toothless tiger. They're easier on cops than the departments ...themselves."

“...[I]nternal affairs is more threatening.... We’ve all been out there, so we know how to play the game.”

weeks ago, but still, we trust them for the most part and we like it. But now we’ve got this extra. To me, civil service is almost like a civilian review. So now we’ve got something else to go through. And any police unit we have [is subject to] the homicide investigators, internal affairs investigators, SBI, sometimes the FBI, the DA’s office and their investigators, and now civil service and citizen review. I mean where does it stop is what we kept wondering. How much further double-checking, double-checking, double-checking? So I...wanted to hear how these civilian reviews work. We were petrified of them to begin with because it came about a couple of pre-shoots. We had a couple of them close together and all of a sudden we need civilian review; we need civilian review and now we have one.

We have a civilian review board that is always empaneled when there’s a controversial issue. If it’s not controversial, the board doesn’t review it, but it’s usually issues of deadly force or excessive force. [Such issues always make] the headlines.

Our civilian review board has investigative powers and the [members] actually have subpoena powers. That’s been an ongoing fight here lately, and it’s in appeal to the state supreme court that they actually subpoena our personnel records....And this has been in existence about three and a half years. To this date, they have yet to find a substantive case against an officer.

It’s a toothless tiger. I mean they come back, they exonerate, and then [they] do not sustain more cases against cops than our Internal Affairs unit does.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the participants overwhelmingly preferred internal review processes (e.g., Internal Affairs) over citizen review, and they believed internal review was most effective in preventing abuse of authority:

Internal affairs works.

I think internal affairs is more threatening because we’re police officers. We’ve all been out there, so we know how to play the game.

...The officers feel [that] if it goes to IAD, it’s going to be thorough and done because our IAD comes. It’s just like Dragnet. They come and they...flip the badge. They take you and they say IAD is in the building, pull the files. People are already petrified....So it’s an amount of fear, a mind-set when IAD comes, but when you say [civilian review], people say whatever....

I’d rather deal with internal affairs. I think the lieutenants assigned to it are fair, and they clear more cops. I think they investigate and they’re a lot fairer and a lot more thorough and more precise. I would go with them. In our civilian review board, it’s a group of folks [who] review little training and sustain—of course, with the chief in our internal affairs and our chief can overturn and he has the final say. But I’m not going to leave my crew to some

guy who is the day manager of Little Caesar's or the day manager at 7-11 to say whether I can work again because he sits on some review board.

I think my people feel just because they hear the other officers talk they're a little bit intimidated by it, but I don't know anyone who has got a bad deal from IA. I think once [officers] get up there they get a fair shake.

Rewarding Good Policing

The topic of rewarding good policing produced an interesting array of responses from the participants. One officer suggested, "Good work is its own reward. How many people go out and do a good job?" Another indicated, "We don't have support from anybody really. All the satisfactions that we get are all in our own minds."

Other comments included the following:

The phone call of saying, "Hey, thanks."

Oh, just the recognition among your peers or in front of your peers of a job well done.

In general, the participants felt that community policing offered an excellent opportunity for providing positive feedback to and recognition of the accomplishments of police officers. As one officer suggested, now the appreciation goes beyond one's fellow officers: "And I think community policing has expanded that circle a bit. And there's more community support."

Another officer related her experience as a community-policing officer when the community arranged an awards banquet for the officers:

...[T]he district I worked in recently was all residential neighborhoods—like the worse place. People said when you come out of the academy, don't go in that district. That's the worse district. So people really had a fear going in [such as] "oh, my God! I'm going to be shot at every day." It's a total ghetto. There's nowhere to eat.

But once the [officers] got there they found they learned a lot. The citizens wanted to kind of build up a more positive image, so what they did was they came to a meeting and they told our commander, "We want to put on an awards banquet for the officers because we really appreciate them. We're going to get different businesses and other beat officers and whoever nominates an officer on the beat. We'll give the [officers] a plaque and a big dinner, and they get to invite a guest of their choice: wife, spouse, or whatever.

So officers were [saying,] "Okay, let's see what's going to happen." And they rented a beautiful hall. It was one of the hotel's ballrooms, and they gave out these wooden plaques and money, and the officers really didn't think it was going to be a big deal. They invited the mayor and the council members,...I mean it was just a big thing and for that moment, just felt [as if] after all I've done in 15 years, [people] really thought enough of me to go out of their way.

In [another area of the city], the police department [and] the officers complained they didn't have a place to work, so the citizens of the...area gave

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them brand-new work-out equipment [and] built [for] them [an actual] work-out room. It's the little perks, the little thank yous.

Another officer, providing a remarkable example, described how the community reacted in a positive manner, demonstrating their support for the remaining officers when faced with a police scandal involving officers in their district:

...[A]fter the...scandal [and] officers were arrested, that community did a number of things for the police in that district. I'm sure that's the only thing that kept that district going. That had to be devastating to have seven of their people on television being led into the Federal Corrections Center. What a horrendous morale problem they had. But their community banded together and they had an award ceremony. They did other things for the remaining good

police officers. That means a lot. I don't know if that would have happened if [community policing] hadn't been in place.

Conclusion

Like the previous groups, the supervisory-level focus group discussion provided insights into some of the most controversial and sensitive issues in policing. We were satisfied that the discussions were both candid and thoughtful, enabling us to better understand such issues from the perspectives of police sergeants and lieutenants, who not only are challenged by them on a day-to-day basis, but also have a responsibility to see that those under their supervision meet those challenges. Their perspectives were incorporated in developing the survey and continue to inform our research in the study of police authority in the age of community policing.

1. The quoted portions of this appendix have been edited sparingly to enhance readability while maintaining the speaker's voice.