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Communication Culture in Law Enforcement: Perceptions from Officers and Supervisors

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COMMUNICATION CULTURE WITHIN LAW ENFORCEMENT: PERCEPTIONS
FROM OFFICERS AND SUPERVISORS

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Science

By

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2014
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WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

May _____

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER
MY SUPERVISION BY Katherine Gerspacher ENTITLED Communication Culture
within Law Enforcement: Perceptions from Officers and Supervisors
BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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ABSTRACT

Gerspacher, Katherine. M.S., Department of Educational Leadership, Wright State University, 2014. Communication Culture within Law Enforcement: Perceptions from Officers and Supervisors.

This study assessed the perceived differences in organizational culture between patrol officers and their supervisors, specifically testing role ambiguity, trust in supervision, organizational culture and communication, and transformational leadership behaviors. A sample of supervisors and their subordinate officers were surveyed to assess these variables. The data were analyzed using independent sample t-tests and bi-variate correlations to determine: (1) if there is a perceived division of culture between patrol officers and supervisors, (2) the factors that contributed to the perceived cultural division, (3) the role the leader plays in balancing communication culture, and (4) the relationship between perceived communication culture from the supervisors and patrol officers' perspectives. Independent sample t-tests and correlational analysis were used with results indicating that there is a perceived division of culture between patrol officers and supervisors and the factors that contribute to this division include upward and downward communication, trust, and role ambiguity. Additionally, analysis indicated a positive relationship between perceptions of organizational culture and organizational communication based on the supervisors' and patrol officers' perspective.

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I. INTRODUCTION

On April 15, 2013, terrorists set off two pressure cooker bombs at the Boston Marathon finish line, killing three people and injuring over 260 others (Sgueglia & Payne, 2013). In a matter of seconds, the finish line transformed from a place of joy and success to a historical mass casualty critical incident scene. Among other local authorities who responded to the scene, the Boston Fire Department went into action by establishing a point of command, transporting the wounded, and securing the scene. Approximately one month later after reviewing the critical incident, 13 Boston deputy fire chiefs signed and submitted a letter of “no confidence” to the Boston Mayor concerning Fire Chief Steve Abaira’s actions, or perceived inactions, during the bombing. The deputy chiefs argued that once Chief Abaira arrived on scene, he failed to act or get involved in any decision making during the incident. Chief Abaira contended that his command staff had the situation under control and as chief, the standard practice is to only take command if there is something going wrong or the command officer is unable to handle the situation (Sgueglia & Payne, 2013). It appears that there was a miscommunication or lack of understanding within the command staff of what the normal practice for the fire chief is during critical incidents. However, there may be more to this issue than simply miscommunication. Chief Abaira was the first Chief in Boston’s history to be hired from outside of the department and was only in command for two

years before this incident. The Boston Fire Department's command staff reported a lack of leadership during critical incidents, while Chief Abaira contended that he has never had the support from members of the department who disagreed with hiring a chief from outside the department (Ryan, 2013). It appears that the command staff of the Boston Fire Department was undergoing internal conflict; however, miscommunication may have played a role during this struggle within the command staff. Chief Abaira believed he acted appropriately, as his command staff was in control, and yet the Chief's command staff felt as if he did not act at all and failed to take charge of the situation. Shortly after the vote of no confidence, Chief Abaira chose to resign from the Boston Fire Department (Sgueglia & Payne, 2013). Although other factors such as internal conflict may have come into play, this is a timely example of communication and perceptions within a specific profession's organizational culture that appeared to have failed. As a result, a potential communication gap in this organization likely cost the department and its community their fire chief.

How did this failure of communication come about? It is unlikely that it developed overnight, but rather was the result of many incidents and decisions that were made over a period of time. One would have to study the organization and its members to see how they operate in order to understand why the Chief resigned. Namely, in addition to such factors such as protocol, precedence, and organizational history, one would have to learn about the department's organizational culture.

The way an organization operates and the interactions among its members can be described as an organizational culture (Schein, 1990). Walk into any business office, and one may see secretaries, business associates, and perhaps a supervisor or two. If one is

there long enough, one may get a glimpse of how the members of the organization operate. A keen observer may notice that the staff appears to work well together, and that there is a friendly atmosphere in the office, but what will not be seen is how this is achieved. Organizational culture is comprised of the bonds between members of a group, which define the organization. The concept of organizational culture became popular in the business realm in the 1980s in order to explain why U.S. businesses were not as successful as similar overseas businesses (Schein, 1990). Following this, the concept of organizational culture examines the differences in behaviors and patterns of an organization (Schein, 1990). Comparing differences in societies was not enough to reveal the true identity of an organization; however, by looking at that organization's culture, one could better identify what was truly occurring in that organization. Culture is driven by varying factors such as the environment, as well as cognitive, linguistic, and social attributes, all of which should be considered when attempting to identify an organization's culture (Person, Spiva, & Hart, 2013). Schein (1990) defined culture as what a group learns over a period of time during external adaptation and internal unification. In addition, behaviors that have survived over time can be taught to new members as the appropriate way to think, feel, and perform. From this definition, one can see how cultural norms in an organization are easily instituted and subcultures can quickly emerge in an established organization. Phrases around the workplace such as, "That's the way we do things around here," suggest that a set of norms and values exist establishing the group's culture (Person et al., 2013). Although rarely observed on the surface, culture is the deep-seated identity of an organization that can enhance or cripple an organization.

Law enforcement agencies, similar to fire departments and other organizations, have unique organizational cultures. The police culture, however, faces distinct challenges. Police culture is often seen in a negative light in regards to violations of citizen's rights, police brutality, misuse of authority, racism, and the code of silence (Paoline, 2003). However, one of the most significant challenges that leaders face in relation to police culture is the separation of cultures between the patrol officers and the management side of the department (Reuss-Ianni, 1983; Rowe, 2006; Schafer, 2009). This division between officers who *work the road* and the supervisors of those patrol officers leads to additional challenges in culture and leadership such as lack of trust, poor communication, and job dissatisfaction (Rowe, 2006). However, the police agency is not the only victim of this cultural challenge; the community that the agency serves can suffer as well, similar to Chief Abaira's departure to the Boston community. It is clear that police officers who regularly work together form strong bonds and share specific values (Ingram, Paoline, & Terrill, 2013); however, a division between the patrol officers and supervisors could erode trust and hamper communication throughout the organization.

Statement of the Problem

Much like the example of failed communication in the Boston Fire Department, perceptions of communication culture within the organization can be different, and functional or dysfunctional, among its individual members. Examining law enforcement, Paoline (2003) stated that police culture is traditionally resistant to change; however, a strong culture also has benefits that are often overlooked. A strong police culture can offer a way to deal with stressors such as working road patrol, dealing with the public,

and meeting the expectations of supervisors (Paoline, 2003). However, there also may be a division of culture between patrol officers and supervisors that leads to a lack of trust and poor communication (Reuss-Ianni, 1983; Rowe, 2006). This study will examine the perceived differences in organizational culture between patrol officers and supervisors, the factors that contribute to this division, and the role that a leader plays in balancing communication and culture.

Assumptions

The following assumptions will be made in this study; 1) police officers and supervisors will provide honest answers to the survey, 2) police officers and supervisors will understand that participation in this study is voluntary, and 3) that their confidentiality will be maintained should they choose to participate.

Questions (RQ)

RQ 1: Is there a perceived division of culture between patrol officers and supervisors?

RQ 2: What are the factors that contribute to the perceived cultural division?

RQ 3: What role does a leader play in balancing communication and culture?

RQ 4: Is there a relationship between perceived communication and perceived culture from the supervisors' and patrol officers' perspectives?

Significance of the Study

This study will confront challenges related to local police culture. This study is significant because it addresses an important issue across police departments and could aid local departments in better understanding their own culture.

Scope

The scope of this study is limited to sworn employees from two Midwestern suburban police departments. One organization in this study is a police department that serves approximately 25,000 residents over 11 square miles. The second organization in this study is a police department that serves approximately 55,000 residents over 18 square miles.

Definitions and Operational Terms

Impersonal Communication: the receiving of information without participating in the transaction (Porumbescu, Park, & Oomsels, 2013).

Interpersonal Communication: exchange of information by two or more parties where both parties are actively involved in the exchange (Pandey & Garnett, 2006).

Organizational culture: what a group learns over a period of time during external adaptation and internal unification (Schein, 1990).

Police officer: any person who is a member of a police department who has sworn an oath of service.

Police supervisor: any person who is a member of a police department who has sworn an oath of service and is of a specific rank or position of authority.

Role Ambiguity: lack of information and expectations of an organizational position (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970).

Transactional Leadership: reciprocal influence and exchange of elements of value between the leader and subordinate to further the leader's and subordinate's agenda (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987).

Transformational Leadership: the capacity of a leader to motivate his or her followers to accomplish and surpass personal goals for the good of the organization (Bass, 1985).

Vertical Trust: a subordinate's trust in his or her supervisor and a subordinate's trust in the organization (Porumbescu et al., 2013).

Summary

This study examines the unique identity of police culture. Police culture often consists of a division between patrol officers and supervisors (Reuss-Ianni, 1983; Rowe, 2006; Schafer, 2009). This division weakens the organization and creates dissatisfaction in the members of the organization (Schafer, 2009). A dysfunctional organization cannot effectively and efficiently serve its citizens, which is why it is important to examine possible solutions to this problem.

II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This review of literature will reveal several factors connected to organizational culture, namely communication culture, a perceived division of culture in law enforcement, and effective supervision.

Communication Culture and Supervisor's Impact

The importance of culture to an organization has been compared to the importance of personality to an individual (Harrison & Stokes, 1992). According to Schein (1990), culture is what a group learns over a period of time, which can be taught to new members as the appropriate way to think, to feel, and to perform. Popular beliefs regarding police subculture, which is group of people within a culture differentiates themselves from the larger culture to which they belong, included ideologies of extreme loyalty, violent behavior, and absolute authority (Cochran & Bromley, 2003; Paoline, Myers, & Worden, 2000), and the assumption that this culture is shared by all members of law enforcement (Paoline et al., 2000). However, findings related to communication and cultural variation actually contradicted this belief and revealed evidence of a perceived cultural division between law enforcement members (Paoline et al., 2000).

Cochran and Bromley (2003) and Paoline et al. (2000) described the police subculture as one that glorifies aggressive and dogmatic tactics in policing, prioritizing crime fighting above order maintenance and service calls. It is generally believed that officers share these same attitudes and outlooks as they relate to their work (Paoline et al.). In addition, those who adhere to this subculture supposedly possess negative attitudes towards legal regulations related to their job, legal institutions such as courts,

departmental administration, and towards citizens in general (Cochran & Bromley, 2003). Based on survey data from Hillsborough County, Florida Sheriff Deputies, Cochran and Bromley (2003) found little evidence of strict adherence to a monolithic police subculture; however, there was evidence of sub-cultural adherence by a portion of the sampled deputies. Similarly, Paoline et al. (2000) also found that officers' individual approach and views of law enforcement varied, and differed from the popular notion of police culture. Based on survey data conducted by the Project on Policing Neighborhoods (POPEN) of 398 Indianapolis, Indiana Police Department officers and 240 St. Petersburg, Florida officers, officers' views of citizens, human nature, and the role of the police varied among survey participants (Paoline et al., 2000). Cochran and Bromley (2003) took their findings further and produced a taxonomy of deputies' behaviors based on how much the deputies adhered to sub-cultural traits. The following classifications were found: the "sub-cultural adherents" or those who rated closest to the traditional police subculture, "normals" or those who rated average on cultural adherence, and lastly the "COP cops" or those who placed a strong emphasis on the importance of community service roles. The sub-cultural adherents made up the smallest group of the deputies, the normals made up approximately half of the deputies, and the COP cops comprised approximately 25% to 30% of the deputies (Cochran & Bromley, 2003). While some sub-cultural adherence was noted, not all deputies shared the same ideas of what constitutes their job.

Correspondingly, Paoline (2003) contended that a monolithic police culture that contained homogenous attitudes, values, and norms is nonexistent; evidence of cultural variation among officers can be found in extant literature (e.g., Cochran & Bromley).

This is not to say that groups of officers do not adhere to the popular notion of police culture, but subgroups exist among police culture. Paoline (2003) described a model of police culture that starts with occupational culture at the top of the model and filters down to organizations, then rank, and lastly, styles illustrating different levels of cultural degrees. In effect, police culture is conveyed through each level down to an officer's individual style.

Ingram et al. (2013) conducted surveys of patrol officers across six different states and found that officers who were in the same workgroup or were assigned to the same shift shared occupational perspectives. This was not surprising, as officers in the same workgroup shared similar experiences and working environments. However, checking variance among workgroups, Ingram et al. (2013) found that perspective specifically related to police culture of top management, direct supervisors, job satisfaction, citizen distrust, order maintenance, and aggressive patrol tactics varied among different work groups. Similar to Cochran and Bromley (2003) and Paoline et al.'s (2000) findings, Ingram et al. (2013) found little evidence of adherence to a monolithic police culture.

Paoline (2001) found that officers generally hold the same attitudes as related to law enforcement, selective enforcement, legal restrictions, sergeants, and citizen distrust. However, similar to other findings, cultural variation among officers was found in views of citizen cooperation, district managers, order maintenance, community policing, and aggressive patrol tactics. Based on survey data of police officers and police supervisors, officers hold positive attitudes of their direct supervisors and somewhat less positive attitudes for supervisors in higher ranking positions, but still positive attitudes

nonetheless (Paoline, 2001). The relationship between officers and their supervisors often encompassed feelings of uneasiness, and at times, anxiety. Officers held different views of their supervisors in direct relationship to supervisor support, flexibility, and restrictiveness (Ingram, 2013). Officers and their direct supervisors also held similar occupational attitudes, leading one to hypothesize that subculture variation may be independent of rank (Paoline, 2001).

Reuss-Ianni (1983) described two cultures among the police, “street-cop culture” and “management-cop culture.” Street-cop culture included lower ranking officers who worked road patrol and were defined by the persistent notion of the “good-old days” of policing; one where lateral entry was nonexistent, the police culture was monolithic. Cops were appreciated and allowed to do their job without much interference from management or from outside the department. Created by changing political structures and the economy where more emphasis was needed on accountability and productivity, management-cop culture included officers of the upper and middle echelons of the department that had the ability to be promoted or work outside of law enforcement, separating them from the street-cop culture. Similar to Reuss-Ianni’s (1983) findings, Manning (1994a, 1994b) contended that police culture is divided into three groups: lower participants such as patrol officers and first line sergeants, middle managers such as some command sergeants and lieutenants, and top command such as deputy chiefs and chiefs (as cited in Paoline, 2003). Within each level, members are confronted with different concerns that shape their values and norms and ultimately place them in a subgroup. Reuss-Ianni (1983) explained that both cultures, namely the street-cop culture and the management-cop culture, have a common goal to reduce crime, but both cultures

have different ideas and means on how to reach that goal. Specifically, street-cop culture relied on in-group loyalty and one's experience and discretion to make decisions, while management-cop culture relied on organization, a rational decision making process, practical and economical procedures, and objective accountability at all levels of the department. Because street-cops interact with citizens daily, they relied on a direct approach to solving the problems they encountered, as opposed to management-cops who relied on an organizational system to approach problems city-wide, keeping politics, budget, and citizen concerns in mind and at the forefront of their decision making process (Reuss-Ianni, 1983).

The relationship between officers and supervisors is an important part of the internal culture. Following Reuss-Ianni's work, Rowe (2006) found that members of the street-cop culture not only separated themselves from everyday society simply due to the nature of their work, they separated themselves from the members of the management-cop culture as well. Interviews with road patrol officers revealed this divide, along with strong feelings associated with the issue. For example, one officer claimed that the management-cops had no idea what the street-cops dealt with on a daily basis, as management was so far removed from the road, and that management seemed to be concerned only with policy and procedure (Rowe, 2006). There are different levels of supervision in the organization with each level having its own priority. For example, senior or top management could focus on the department's mission and goals; middle management could be responsible for creating teams, planning, coaching, and empowering and rewarding their constituents; and, lastly first-line supervisors evaluate performance and could lead by example (Vito, Suresh, & Richards, 2011).

Varying levels of leadership and supervision in the department could exacerbate how officers feel towards supervision. In addition, other interviews with road patrol officers revealed that they felt the management-cops were more concerned with appealing to the public, and their concerns, than with supporting the men and women out on patrol facing dangers daily (Rowe, 2006). What the authors failed to identify, however, was the supervisor's perspective related to the perceived cultural division. Rowe (2006) called for future studies to incorporate views from both the road patrol officers and their supervisors.

A perceived division of culture between road patrol officers and supervisors is apparent. Reuss-Ianni (1983) defined this division with the subgroups of street-cops and management-cops who may have been divided due to changing political structures. In addition, both subgroups had a common goal of crime reduction; however, theories on how to achieve this goal varied between the groups. Moreover, Rowe (2006) contended that road patrol officers have expressed this division in interviews, claiming a lack of support and understanding by supervision was evident. As such the following hypotheses are offered.

Hypothesis 1: Patrol officers and supervisors will differ on perceptions of organizational culture such that patrol officers are more likely to disagree with the image of culture compared to supervisors'.

Communication and Role Ambiguity

Communication plays an important role in any organization. Specifically, research indicated that communication between supervisors and employees is linked to

employee production (Langbein & Jorstad, 2004), trust within the organization and among its members, (Porumbescu, Park, & Oomsels, 2013), and personal feelings and perceptions held by subordinates (Parsons, Kautt, & Coupe, 2011). Supervisors across all organizations have various responsibilities, including communication with their subordinates; however interpersonal communication is not highly valued in paramilitary organizations, nor is it a priority during supervisor training (Parsons et al., 2011). Effective communication impacts employees and the organization in beneficial ways (Langbein & Jorstad, 2004; Porumbescu et al., 2013; Parsons et al., 2011), hence it should be a high priority of the supervisor.

Additionally, Jablin (1979) suggested that openness in communication between supervisors and subordinates was necessary for an effective organizational climate. Specifically, openness in message sending, or a revelation of feelings, and openness in message receiving, or the ability to listen to bad news, (Redding, 1972) consist of the two classifications that should occur among superior-subordinate communication for an effective working climate (Jablin, 1979). For effective communication to work, Jablin, (1979) found that the willingness of superiors and subordinates to communicate relied heavily on the perceptions of one another's willingness to listen. If subordinates perceived that supervisors would actively listen, effective communication could occur and affect the organizational climate.

Lack of communication between a supervisor and subordinate could lead to a negative relationship between the two parties, as well as issues within the organization itself. Ingram (2013) collected survey data from 765 patrol officers and 146 sergeants across five police departments and found that sergeant attitudes do not directly affect

officer attitudes. However, higher levels of role ambiguity were found in officers where attitudinal incongruities were found between the officer and his or her sergeant; the more sergeant-officer attitudes differed, the higher the role ambiguity. Role ambiguity, which occurs when an employee does not understand what is expected of him or how to fulfill those expectations due to a lack of communication (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970), has been found to lead to job dissatisfaction, poor work performance, low self-esteem, and lower levels of organizational commitment (Ingram, 2013). According to Ingram (2013), in police departments, role ambiguity may occur when a patrol officer is not provided with a clear set of expectations. In turn, the officer constructs ideas and values based on what he believes his supervisor or organization expect from him. At best, this is a highly educated guess; at worst this is the complete opposite of what the supervisor expects. These false expectations then mesh into one's organizational culture and are shared with other members of that culture (Famega, Frank, & Mazerolle, 2005).

Similarly, Engel and Worden (2003) found that a supervisor's influence over an officer with regard to specific goals or patrol tactics was not always effective, potentially due to a lack of communication about those goals and objectives. In their study of patrol officer attitudes and field supervisor expectations, Engel and Worden (2003) analyzed data collected for the POPN. The data consisted of systematic field observations of patrol officers and interviews with 398 officers and 69 supervisors of the Indianapolis, Indiana Police Department and 240 officers and 37 supervisors of the St. Petersburg, Florida Police Department. From these data, Engel and Worden (2003) found that the way officers do their jobs is not related to their occupational attitudes. Officers' perceptions of their supervisors' expectations have a greater influence over their own

understanding of the job or the supervisors' actual priorities than their own expectations. Officers who had supervisors whose actual priority was to promote community-oriented police tactics did not fulfill that expectation any more than officers whose supervisors did not promote these initiatives (Engel & Worden, 2003). Possibly, this could be due to a supervisor's failure to communicate their priorities effectively, leaving officers to guess what their supervisor wants. However, other factors that may affect an officer's perceptions of their supervisor's expectations include demographics, the officer's work load, and an officer's satisfaction with the organization itself. For example, a difference in age between the officer and supervisor could contribute to the officer's behavior and views, as well as stress from the amount of workload and perceived fulfillment or happiness in the organization (Steiner, Travis III, Makarios, & Brickley, 2011).

Additional research by Famega et al. (2005) adds to findings related to communication and perceptions between supervisors and their subordinates. In a participant observation of the Baltimore Police Department, Famega et al. (2005) found that on average approximately 75% of an officer's shift was left up to the discretion of the officer. Of that unassigned time, only 6% was directed by supervisors, dispatchers, other officers, or citizens. Most time was spent on random patrol as supervisors provided little direction (Famega et al., 2005). As an officer's time on patrol is rarely directed by supervisors, officers will conduct random patrol, self-initiate back up for other officers, and wait for calls for service (Famega et al., 2005). Because the time is so unstructured, was this the best use of the officer's time? Results from Famega et al (2005) supports previous findings from Engel and Worden (2003) and Ingram (2013) that communication barriers can lead to a lack of clarity or understanding between officers and their

supervisors. Supervisors may feel they are providing sufficient direction to their officers; however, officers are misinterpreting those directions and creating their own ideas, which then become a part of the officers' culture (Famega et al., 2005). Without clear direction and communication from one's supervisor, one is forced to create what one feels the supervisor is expecting.

Supervisors can effect change in their organizations and their employees by valuing and using effective communication. Jablin (1979) summarized effective supervision traits that aligned with effective communication skills as the following: enjoying and being involved in talking, empathetic listening, persuading others as opposed to telling or asking, being sensitive to feelings, and establishing open lines of communication. Based on a survey of patrol officers and their immediate supervisors in three English speaking Caribbean nations, namely, Barbados, Trinidad-Tobago, and Jamaica, who worked in the nation's capital, or urban areas, Langbein and Jorstad (2004) found that communication and the opportunity for repeated direct communication enhanced productive workplace behavior. Although the organizational culture of these police departments may differ from that of departments in the United States (US), the findings are applicable to urban areas in the US where formal and informal norms may conflict (Langbein & Jorstad, 2004). In addition, Parsons et al. (2011) found that in order for senior officers or supervisors to feel supported by their department, tangible rewards, equitable wages and conditions in relation to their position, and recognition of effort and individual rewards were requested. Officers and supervisors who deserve recognition in their department required direct communication; otherwise misinterpretations of the work done or goal achieved would lead to different perceptions among officers and supervisors

or officers and the organization (Parsons et al., 2011). Given the potential differences of perspectives of role ambiguity and culture, the following hypotheses are offered.

Hypothesis 2: There will be a positive relationship between perceived culture and perceived communication support with supervisors from the officers' perspective.

Hypothesis 3: There will be a positive relationship between perceived culture and perceived communication support with subordinates from the supervisors' perspective.

Hypothesis 4: Patrol officers and supervisors will differ on perceptions of role ambiguity.

Communication and Trust

Communication is also related to trust within an organization and among its members (Porumbescu et al., 2013). Vertical trust, or a subordinate's trust in his or her supervisor and a subordinate's trust in the organization, can be affected by interpersonal communication. Interpersonal communication, or communication where both parties are actively involved in the exchange of information (Pandey & Garnett, 2006), is valued over impersonal communication where a subordinate is passively involved, simply receiving information and not participating in the exchange (Porumbescu et al., 2013). Analyzing data from the United States' Government 2010 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey of over 500,000 federal employees, Porumbescu et al. (2013) found that communication between supervisors and employees was directly related to trust in one's supervisor and their organization. Higher levels of vertical trust in one's supervisor and the organization were found in employees who felt their supervisor was utilizing

interpersonal communication (Porumbescu et al., 2013). Moreover, Jablin (1979) found that employees who felt their supervisor had upward influence with supervision in the organization trusted their direct supervisor more so than if they had little or no upward influence. As trust appears to be related to communication and role ambiguity, the following hypothesis is offered:

Hypothesis 5: From the officer perspective, role ambiguity will be positively related to trust in one's supervisor.

Trust and Culture

As direct supervisors interact with their officers on a daily basis, it is important to note different supervisor styles as well as how officers perceive their supervisors. Simple processes such as how a supervisor is promoted may affect how they are perceived by their subordinates (Buker, 2010; Rowe, 2006), and different leadership styles can affect employee output and work styles among officers (Andreescu & Vito, 2010; Engel, 2002).

Buker (2010) tested subordinate satisfaction for police supervisors who were either promoted laterally, where the supervisor did not have road patrol experience and came directly from a school or academy (classified as type A), or internally, where the supervisor did have road patrol experience (classified as type B). Buker (2010) found that officers with type A supervisors were more content with their supervisor than officers with type B supervisors. In addition, type A supervisors were found to value freedom, intellect, a sense of accomplishment, and equality more so than type B supervisors. Type B supervisors valued family, national security, and social recognition more so than type A supervisors (Buker, 2010). Buker's (2010) study contradicted

Rowe's (2006) study, as he found that patrol officers preferred supervisors who had time invested in similar road patrol experience as the officers they led, as opposed to supervisors who had less time and experience on the road. A preference for supervisors who have worked their way up through the system was evident in Rowe's work. Buker's (2010) study contradicted part of Rowe's (2006) findings which road patrol officers preferred supervisors who had more experience on the road as opposed to lateral entry supervisors or those who had invested little time on road patrol.

Organizations in which decisions are made by a select few can foster feelings of an "us versus them" culture and promote low levels of trust among supervisors and subordinates (Holtz & Harold, 2008). Trust in supervision has an effect on whether or not subordinates accept managerial explanations, such as a rejection of a request. Distrust in someone usually leads to negative feelings regardless of the current situation (Simons & Peterson, 2000), while trust in another leads to feelings of honesty and more acceptance of the person and situation (Holtz & Harold, 2008). Based on data from a survey of 203 working adults who worked a minimum of 15 hours a week, employees who felt that their manager engaged in transformational leadership expressed higher degrees of trust in their manager than employees who felt that their manager was transactional (Holtz & Harold, 2008). According to Bass (1985), transformational leadership theory refers to the capacity of a leader to motivate his or her followers to accomplish and surpass personal goals for the good of the organization. In contrast to transformational leadership, transactional leaders incorporate negative reinforcement, corrective criticism, a contingent reward process, and a lack of focus on the individual follower and their development (Northouse, 2013). The level of trust is also influenced if

employees accepted their manager's explanations for rejected requests; the more trust in the manager, the more explanations of rejections were thought to be adequate or sincere (Holtz & Harold, 2008). In a case study involving onsite participant observations and interviews of 28 police officers, Murphy and Drodge (2004) found that transformational leadership theory was a practical model and would be beneficial for leadership development among the department. For example, observations and interviews revealed the importance of a leader's relational skills such as individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation, and inspirational motivation, congruent with a model of transformational leadership theory. Accordingly, Rowe (2006) and Hughes (2009) also found that transformational leadership theory was ranked as one of the most valued and respected models of leadership by those in the police service. Law enforcement officers and supervisors agreed that transformational leadership was a valuable theory and would benefit their department.

Trust in supervision can lead to feelings of acceptance between the employee and supervisor, specifically any exchanges between the two, and trust in the organization itself (Holtz & Harold, 2008). Supervisors who can establish trust in their subordinates will be better able to lead and establish a strong culture; as such, the following hypothesis is offered.

Hypothesis 6: There will be a positive relationship between perceptions of trust and perceptions of culture from the officers' and supervisors' perspective.

Transformational Leadership

Patrol officers utilize leadership skills daily while encountering the public and facing various challenges. Officers learned these skills by following other officers, learning from the environment, and learning from their direct supervisors. Andreescu and Vito (2010) surveyed 126 police managers from 23 different US states who attended the Administrative Officers Course at the Southern Police Institute, asking supervisors to place themselves in the role of the subordinate and choose characteristics of the leader they would like to have. The results indicated that police supervisors valued a transformational leadership style over transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles (Andreescu & Vito, 2010). The values ranked highest in the survey, which corresponded with transformational leadership styles, were demand reconciliation, or reducing disorder in the organization, role assumption, or taking ownership as a leader, and persuasiveness, or the ability to make convincing arguments. The least important items ranked by supervisors were tolerance and freedom, or allowing followers to make decisions, and a production emphasis, or pressuring followers for output (Andreescu & Vito, 2010). Although this study identified the views and opinions of supervisors, it failed to incorporate subordinate's opinions, and it is unknown if these highly valued characteristics are actually demonstrated by the supervisors or if this is what supervisors aspire to be. In a later study, Vito et al. (2011) administered the leadership behavior description questionnaire to 126 police managers across 23 different US states and found that police managers favored the values of servant leadership over those of autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles. Servant leaders are concerned with serving the organization and its purpose and placing its member's needs above their own needs.

Principals related to servant leadership include concern of others, stewardship of the organization, fairness, personal responsibility and obligation to others, and self-understanding (Vito et al., 2011).

Engel (2002), identified four different classifications of supervisors in a law enforcement setting: 1) A “traditional” supervisor who is task oriented, more likely to punish than reward subordinates, rarely if ever promote community oriented policing strategies, and provides more instruction; 2) an “innovative” style where these supervisors expect community oriented policing tactics from their subordinates and use a mentor or coaching style to help their subordinates develop problem solving skills similar to transformational leadership theory; 3) a “supportive” supervisor who is more relation oriented, emphasize teamwork, reward subordinates, and help to develop their subordinates by protecting them from management; and 4) an “active” style supervisor who holds a positive attitude of their subordinates and takes on the role of the patrol officer and supervisor by being active in the field. Examining data of an observational study of patrol officer and supervisors, Engel (2002) found that an active style supervisor had more influence over an officer’s behavior than other supervisory styles. For example, officers with active supervisors increased the time officers spent on self-initiated and problem-solving tasks as well as proactive patrolling while decreasing time spent on administrative duties. In comparison, officers with innovative style supervisors, similar to that of transformational leadership theory, spent the most time on administrative tasks as opposed to problem solving or community oriented policing initiatives (Engel 2002). In addition, supervisory style did not have an effect on the amount of arrests and citations an officer had; however, use of force, self-initiated

activities, community policing initiatives, and problem solving were positively correlated (Engel 2002). Law enforcement is traditionally thought of as an autocratic or semi-military organization; however, extant literature has shown that police managers and leaders have a preference for different and quite opposite styles of leadership (Vito et al., 2011). Although the findings of Andreescu and Vito (2010), Hughes (2009) and Rowe (2006) value transformational leadership theory for supervisors and the findings of Vito et al. (2011) value servant leadership style for supervisors, Engel's (2002) study's findings differ in that an active style supervisor, or one who leads by example, increases effective patrol methods of officers.

Hypothesis 7: There will be a difference between perceptions of supervisors displaying transformational leadership traits from the supervisors' and officers' perspective.

Summary

Police culture is of a unique nature and the functionality of this culture is vitally important to departments and the communities they serve. Extant literature revealed several themes fundamental to the successful operation of police departments, including communication, culture, and effective supervision. The importance of communication within the workplace is directly related to trust within one's organization (Porumbescu et al., 2013), and can effect productivity (Langbein & Jorstad, 2004) along with perceptions of expectations and goals (Ingram, 2013). Popular notions of the police subculture have been revised throughout the literature, and a perceived division of culture communication between patrol officers and supervision was illustrated. This study will focus on the

leader's role in communication in relation to exacerbating or ameliorating this perceived cultural division.

III. METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

Introduction

In this section, an overview of the research procedure and demographic information will be presented. The measures used to assess role ambiguity, trust in supervision, organizational culture and communication, and transformational leadership behaviors will also be discussed.

Population and Sample

Participants were comprised of sworn officers and supervisors from two Midwestern police departments. Officers included road patrol units, detectives, and officers assigned to various other roles such as the school resource officer position. Supervisors included a hierarchy of ranks such as sergeants, lieutenants, captains, and chiefs. Data were collected over a 3-week time period in January of 2014.

Data Collection

Data for patrol officers and supervisors were collected by administering an electronic 55-item survey, accessible online, to two local Midwestern police departments. Participants were provided with a letter explaining this study and assuring their anonymity should they choose to participate. The number of possible participants was 123 sworn police officers. Of those surveyed, 37% (n = 46), provided usable data. Participation was strictly voluntary. See appendix B for the cover letter sent to both

participating departments and appendix C for dialogue with department heads and permission to survey potential participants.

Descriptive Statistics

Participants included 27 patrol officers and 16 supervisors of which 6.3% have been employed at their current organization between 6 to 10 years, 52.1% have been employed at their current organization between 11 to 20 years, and 29.2% have been employed at their current organization 21 years or more; 12.5% of the respondents chose not to answer this question. The majority of respondents were male (n=36) and then females (n=4) and no response (n=8). Lastly, the participants' highest level of education earned varied, from Associates Degree (n=4), some college (n=4), Bachelor's Degree (n=30), and Master's Degree (n=4).

Measures

The 55-item survey was comprised of 7 measures designed to assess role ambiguity, trust in supervision, organizational culture and communication, communication support with supervisors and subordinates, and transformational leadership theory. A description of each measure follows.

Role Ambiguity. Role ambiguity was assessed with seven items developed by Van der Post, de Coning, and Smit (1997). This measure is intended to assess whether employees are clearly informed of the organization's objectives as well as their role in the organization. The items are based on a 7-point Likert-type scale with answers ranging from "completely disagree (1)" to "completely agree (7)." Items included statements such as, "Employees in this organization are sufficiently aware of the organization's

goals.” Van der Post et al. (1997) reported a Coefficient Alpha for goal clarity of .93. In this research, the Cronbach’s Alpha for this measure was .91, ($M = 37.56$, $SD = 8.96$, $n = 45$). See items one to seven in Appendix A for these items.

Trust in Supervision. Trust in supervision was assessed with six items developed by Van der Post et al. (1997) termed “management style,” measuring the degree to which supervisors provide clear support and communication to their subordinates along with subordinates’ confidence in their supervision. The items are based on a 7-point Likert-type scale with answers ranging from “completely disagree (1)” to “completely agree (7).” Van der Post et al. (1997) reported a Coefficient Alpha for management style of .82; Cronbach’s Alpha in this study was .92, ($M = 22.96$, $SD = 8.96$, $n = 45$). See items 8 to 13 in Appendix A for these items.

Organizational Culture. Organizational culture was assessed with two dimensions used by Van der Post et al. (1997), namely “culture management” and “task structure.” These two measures were combined to create the construct organizational culture. Culture management consists of 6 items based on a 7-point Likert-type scale, with answers ranging from “completely disagree (1)” to “completely agree (7).” These items were intended to measure the degree to which the organization is employed in actively shaping its culture. Van der Post et al. (1997) reported a Coefficient Alpha for culture management of .82. Task structure consists of 9 items based on a 7-point Likert-type scale, with answers ranging from “completely disagree (1)” to “completely agree (7).” These items assess the current working atmosphere in one’s organization, evaluating the use of rules and regulations and direct supervision. Van der Post et al. (1997) reported a Coefficient Alpha for task structure of .89. The Chronbach’s Alpha for

this measure was .71, ($M = 56.44$, $SD = 9.28$, $n=45$). See items 14 to 28 in Appendix A for these items.

Organizational Communication. Organizational communication was assessed with five items utilized by Downs and Hazen (1977) analyzing communication on an organizational and personal level. For example, the items assess flow of communication and attitudes of perceived communication. The items are based on a 7-point Likert-type scale with answers ranging from “very dissatisfied (1)” to “very satisfied (7).” The Chronbach’s Alpha for this measure was .90, ($M = 21$, $SD = 7.15$, $n=45$). See items 29 to 33 in Appendix A for these items.

Communication Support with Supervisors. Communication support with supervisors was assessed with five items utilized by Downs and Hazen’s (1977) Communication Satisfaction Questionnaire. These items measure the satisfaction of upward and downward communication with a supervisor, from the subordinate’s perspective. Only participants with the rank of officer were asked to respond to these items. The items are based on a 7-point Likert-type scale with answers ranging from “very dissatisfied (1)” to “very satisfied (7).” The Cronbach’s Alpha for this measure was .78, ($M = 21.85$, $SD = 5.83$, $n=33$). See items 34 to 38 in Appendix A for these items.

Communication Support with Subordinates. Communication support with subordinates was assessed with five items utilized by Downs and Hazen (1977) measuring the satisfaction of upward and downward communication between the supervisor and subordinate from the supervisor’s perspective. Only supervisors were asked to respond to these items. Items included statements such as, “Extent to which my

subordinates anticipate my needs for information.” The items are based on a 7-point Likert-type scale with answers ranging from “very dissatisfied (1)” to “very satisfied (7).” For this research, the Cronbach’s Alpha for this measure was .93, (M = 22.96, SD = 8.96, n=21). See items 39 to 43 in Appendix A for these items.

Transformational Leadership Theory. Transformational leadership theory was assessed with four sample items generated from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, Dutch Version by Stuart (2005), based on the original Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire by Bass and Avolio (1990). These items assess a leader’s use of transformational leadership behaviors from the leader and subordinates perspective. The behaviors are based on the four sub-dimensions of transformational leadership, specifically intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, idealized influence, and individual consideration. The items are based on a five 5-point Likert-type scale with answers ranging from “never (1)” to “almost always (5).” Patrol officers were asked to answer four questions based on the use of transformations leadership behaviors displayed from their supervisor. The instrument in this research reported internal reliability as the following, $\alpha = .84$ (M = 11.77, SD = 3.23, n=26). Supervisors were asked to answer the same four questions to assess how often they felt they displayed transformational leadership behaviors, ($\alpha = .70$, M = 16.75, SD = 2.27, n=16). See items 44 to 51 in Appendix A for these items.

Demographics. Demographics measured included organizational position to establish if the participant is an officer or supervisor and the number of years as a sworn police officer in one’s current organization. All participants were asked their gender and highest academic level achieved. See items 52 to 55 in Appendix A for these items.

IV. RESULTS

This study assessed the perceived differences in organizational culture between patrol officers and their supervisors, specifically testing role ambiguity, trust in supervision, organizational culture and communication, and transformational leadership behaviors. A sample of supervisors and their subordinate officers was surveyed to assess these variables. Independent sample t-tests were used to analyze hypothesis 1 and 4, and bi-variate correlations were used to test hypotheses 3, 5, 6, and 7.

Test of Hypotheses

Hypothesis 1. Hypothesis 1 investigated whether patrol officers and supervisors would differ on perceptions of organizational culture. It was hypothesized that patrol officers would be more likely to disagree with the image of culture compared to supervisors. An independent sample t-test was utilized to test this hypothesis. Prior to the analysis, data was coded as the following: officers = 1 (n = 27), supervisors = 2 (n = 16).

The results generated are as follows: Independent sample t-test (with equal variances assumed) results ($t(41)$, -2.47 , $p < .05$) indicated the mean difference ($-.46$) between officers ($M = 3.60$, $SD = .60$, $n = 27$) and supervisors ($M = 4.06$, $SD = .58$, $n = 16$) on perceptions of organizational culture was statistically significant; thus supporting Hypothesis 1. As such, there appears to be a significant difference on perceptions of organizational culture between officers and supervisors, as supervisors reported a higher level of organizational culture.

Hypothesis 2. This hypothesis tested the relationship between perceived culture and perceived communication support with supervisors from the patrol officers' perspective. It was hypothesized that there would be a positive relationship between the two variables. The constructs tested were organizational culture which included items related to the current working atmosphere in one's organization, and communication support with supervision which included items related to the satisfaction of upward and downward communication with a supervisor. A bi-variate correlation result ($r = .82, p < .01, n = 27$) indicated a positive relationship between perceptions of organizational culture and organizational communication based on the patrol officers' perspective, supporting Hypothesis 2.

Hypothesis 3. Hypothesis 3 investigated the relationship between perceived culture and perceived communication support with subordinates from the supervisors' perspective. It was hypothesized that there would be a positive relationship between the two variables. The constructs tested were organizational culture and communication support with subordinates which included items related to the satisfaction of upward and downward communication between the supervisor and subordinate.

Bi-variate results ($r = .62, p < .05, n = 16$) indicated a positive relationship between perceived culture and perceived communication support with subordinates from the supervisors' perspective, supporting Hypothesis 3.

Hypothesis 4. Hypothesis 4 investigated whether patrol officers and supervisors would differ on perceptions of role ambiguity. The hypothesis suggested that patrol officers and supervisors would have different perceptions of role ambiguity. An

independent sample t-test was utilized to test this hypothesis. Prior to the analysis, data was coded as the following: officers = 1 (n = 26), supervisors = 2 (n = 16).

Independent sample t-test (with equal variances not assumed) results ($t(39.96)$, -2.47 , $p < .05$) indicated the mean difference ($-.87$) between officers ($M = 5$, $SD = 1.43$, $n = 26$) and supervisors ($M = 5.88$, $SD = .84$, $n = 16$) on perceptions of role ambiguity was statistically significant, supporting Hypothesis 4, as supervisors reported a higher mean score on role ambiguity.

Hypothesis 5. This hypothesis tested the relationship between role ambiguity and trust in one's supervisor from the officers' perspective. It was hypothesized that there would be a positive relationship between the two variables. The two constructs that were tested included role ambiguity which included items related to clarity of the organization's objectives and one's role in the organization and trust in supervision which included items related to perceived support and communication from one's supervisor.

Bi-variate correlation results ($r = .69$, $p < .01$, $n = 26$) indicated a positive relationship between perceptions of role ambiguity and trust in supervision based on the patrol officers' perspective, supporting Hypothesis 5.

Hypothesis 6. This hypothesis tested the relationship between perceptions of trust and perceptions of culture from the officers' and supervisors' perspective. The hypothesis suggested that there would be a positive relationship between the two variables. The two variables tested included organizational culture and trust in

supervision. Two bi-variate correlations were computed; one to test the officer's perspective and a second to test the supervisor's perspective.

The bi-variate correlation result from the officers' perspective ($r = .82$, $p < .01$, $n = 27$) indicated a positive relationship between perceptions of organizational culture and trust in supervision. The bi-variate correlation result from the supervisor's perspective ($r = .86$, $p < .01$, $n = 16$) also indicated a positive relationship between perceptions of organizational culture and trust in supervision. Both correlation results supported Hypothesis 6.

Hypothesis 7. Hypothesis 7 investigated whether there would be a difference between perceptions of supervisors displaying transformational leadership traits from the supervisors' and the officers' perspective. The hypothesis suggested that there would be a difference in perceptions from both perspectives.

Independent sample t-test (with equal variances assumed) results ($t(40)$, -5.4 , $p < .05$) indicated the mean difference ($-.1.25$) between officers ($M = 2.94$, $SD = .81$, $n = 26$) and supervisors ($M = 4.19$, $SD = .57$, $n = 16$) on perceptions of supervisors displaying transformational leadership traits was statistically significant, as supervisors reported a higher mean score on perceptions of transformational leadership theory, supporting Hypothesis 7.

Table 1 depicts an additional analysis of the constructs represented in this study.

Table 1

Additional Analysis

	<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>p-value</i>	Mean Difference
Role Ambiguity*	-2.20	40	.03	-.87
Trust In Supervision*	-2.78	41	.01	-1.22
Organizational Culture*	-2.47	41	.02	-.46
Organizational Communication*	-1.83	41	.07	-.80
Communication Support With Supervision*	.42	29	.68	.26
Communication Support With Subordinates*	-1.80	17	.09	-1.27
Transformational Leadership From Supervisors**	-.38	24	.70	-.32

*Equal Variances Assumed

**Equal Variances Not Assumed

V. CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND SUMMARY

Overview

This study focused on the perceptions of organizational culture among law enforcement officers and their supervisors, specifically focusing on role ambiguity, trust in supervision, organizational communication, and transformational leadership theory. The literature reviewed revealed support for the hypotheses generated throughout this study; however, there is a minimal amount of research that focuses on the individual perceptions of patrol officers and their supervisors. Most of the research related to organizational culture in law enforcement included perceptions of either one group or the other or both groups as a whole. This study sampled patrol officers (n=27) and supervisors (n=16) from two Midwestern police departments. Participants completed a 55-item survey; however, some sections pertained to only supervisors and or only patrol officers. Data were collected using an online survey tool, Qualtrics, and was analyzed with statistics software, SPSS.

Conclusions

Support for Hypothesis 1, that patrol officers would be more likely to disagree with the image of culture compared to supervisors, was determined by comparing a series of answers from officers and supervisors related to organizational culture. The mean difference (-.46) was statistically significant, thus resulting in a significant difference on

perceptions of organizational culture between officers and supervisors who responded to questions addressing research question one; is there a perceived division of culture between patrol officers and supervisors? Supervisors reported a mean of 4.06 which indicated that as a group, they agree more with the image of organizational culture and the degree to which their organization is employed in actively shaping its culture, why officers felt less so.

Extant literature supports this finding, specifically research by Reuss-Ianni (1983) finding evidence of two cultures among law enforcement, namely the “street cop” culture and “management cop” culture. Rowe’s (2006) interviews revealed a cultural divide between patrol officers and supervisors. As organizational culture is related to time and what groups within the organization learn over time (Schein, 1990), this finding could be related to the amount of time the respondents have spent in their current organization. The majority of patrol officer respondents have worked in their current organization between 11 to 20 years, while the majority of supervisor respondents have worked in their current organization for 21 years or more. Supervisors may agree more with the image of organizational culture as they have worked in and developed that culture longer than some of the patrol officers. Additionally, patrol officers may simply disagree with supervisors about the values and the internal atmosphere of their organization.

Hypotheses 2 and 3 tested the relationship between perceived culture and perceived communication support with supervisors from the officers’ perspective, and the relationship between perceived culture and perceived communication support with subordinates from the supervisors’ perspective respectively. Hypotheses 2 and 3 also

answered research question 4: is there a relationship between perceived communication and perceived culture from the supervisors' and patrol officers' perspectives? It was hypothesized that there would be a positive relationship between both constructs from both perspectives. Analysis indicated a positive relationship between perceptions of organizational culture and organizational communication based on the patrol officers' perspective, supporting hypothesis 2, and a positive relationship between perceived culture and perceived communication support with subordinates from the supervisors' supporting hypothesis 3.

These results were not surprising as communication is linked to productivity in the workplace (Langbein & Jorstad, 2004) and personal feelings and relationships between employees and their supervisors (Ingram, 2013; Parsons et al., 2011). The culture that has been established within the two sampled police departments could be directly related to the type of communication occurring between supervisors and their subordinates. Patrol officers and supervisors indicated that their perceptions of organizational culture are connected to their perceptions of upward and downward communication with one another. This could be due to the shared experiences among patrol officers and supervisors and how these experiences are communicated through the department, helping to establish the organizational culture.

Results assessing role ambiguity reported a mean difference of $-.87$ between officers' and supervisors' perceptions indicating a statistical difference, supporting hypothesis 4: patrol officers and supervisors will differ on perceptions of role ambiguity. Supervisors reported a mean of 5.88 as opposed to officer's mean of 5 which indicated

that patrol officer's perceptions of role ambiguity were higher than the perceptions of supervisors. The results indicated that patrol officers felt more role ambiguity than their supervisors; patrol officers' perceptions of the organization's objectives as well as their own role in the organization was not as clear compared to supervisors' perceptions. This could be due to a lack of communication between supervisors and their officers or issues with upward and downward communication. As officers work patrol with varying supervisors, they may receive information from one supervisor that contradicts information from another supervisor leading to role ambiguity. Ingram (2013) reported that role ambiguity may occur when a patrol officer is not provided with a clear set of expectations, leaving the officer to construct ideas and values based on what he believes his supervisor or organization expect from him. Role ambiguity could be directly related to a lack of effective communication within the organization.

Research question 3 asked what role does a leader play in balancing communication and culture? Following results from hypothesis 2, 3, and 4, one can conclude that the flow of communication could be directly related to the type of culture that is established as well as role ambiguity among the organization's members. Although communication is expected from both supervision and subordinates, effective communication techniques should start with supervisors. If supervisors can facilitate effective upward and downward communication, they may improve or maintain perceptions of organizational culture as well as decrease feelings of role ambiguity.

Role ambiguity was also analyzed alongside perceptions of trust in supervision. Hypothesis 5 suggested that role ambiguity would be positively related to trust in one's

supervisor, from the officers' perspective. Analysis indicated a positive relationship supporting this hypothesis. The more role ambiguity the officer perceived, the more likely the officer was to not trust supervision. This finding could also be related to communication as the construct of trust assessed whether supervisors provided clear support and communication to their subordinates as well as the subordinates' confidence in their supervisor. Additionally, role ambiguity may be related to trust in supervision as officers may feel that their supervisors are a direct link to the amount of information they receive or expectations about their job. If officers know their organizational objectives or are comfortable with their role in the department, they may feel that their supervisor is responsible for this and trust that supervisor more.

Trust in supervision was also assessed alongside the construct organizational culture. Hypothesis 6 suggested that there would be a positive relationship between perceptions of trust and perceptions of culture from the officers' and supervisors' perspective. Analysis indicated a positive relationship between perceptions of organizational culture and trust in supervision from both the officers' and supervisors' perspective, supporting this hypothesis.

Supervisors who establish trust within the organization and its members can create or maintain a strong organizational culture. Holtz and Harold (2008) found that trust in one's supervisor strengthened the relationship between the supervisors and subordinate as well as trust in the organization. The results indicated that both the patrol officers and supervisors agreed that trust in supervision is related to organizational

culture. Respondents may hold supervision accountable for establishing a good working culture within the organization.

Lastly, Hypothesis 7 suggested there would be a difference between perceptions of supervisors displaying transformational leadership traits from the supervisors' and officers' perspective. Analysis revealed a mean difference of (-1.25) between officers and supervisors indicating a statistical difference, supporting this hypothesis.

Extant literature reveals that a transformational leadership style was valued by supervisors (Andreescu & Vito, 2010) and patrol officers (Hughes, 2009; Murphy & Drodge, 2004; Rowe, 2006) alike; however, respondents did not agree on supervisors displaying transformational leadership traits. Supervisors reported a mean of 4.19 indicating that they felt they were utilizing transformational leadership traits more so as opposed to officers who reported a mean of 2.94. If supervisors highly value transformational leadership theory, they may feel as if they are following this theory closely; however, this may not be the case. Additionally, this could be due to issues related to communication. Although supervisors may feel as if they are displaying traits associated with transformational leadership theory, they may not be communicating these traits effectively with their subordinates. This result could also be due to lower a percentage of supervisor respondents (n=16) as opposed to officer respondents (n=26).

Patrol officers reported the following length of employment in their current organization as follows: one to five years (n=0), six to 10 years (n=3), 11 to 20 years (n=18), and 21 plus years (n=5). The majority of patrol officer respondents have worked in their current organization for more than 11 years. Officers with this amount of tenure

may be more familiar with the current working conditions, atmosphere, and culture within their organization. Supervisors reported the following length of employment in their current organization as follows: one to five years (n=0), six to 10 years (n=0), 11 to 20 years (n=7), and 21 plus years (n=9). All of the supervisor respondents reported that they have been employed in their current organization for more than 11 years indicating that supervision is also familiar with their organization's current culture.

As several constructs were assessed throughout this study, one could conclude that multiple factors are related to organizational culture and the perceived division of culture. Specifically, communication stands out as it is related to several facets of organizational culture and role ambiguity. Communication plays an important role in establishing the organization's culture and is balanced with interactions from supervisors and their subordinates. Supervisors may be seen as a direct link to the organization's culture as they are responsible for implementing effective communication. Role ambiguity also appears to be related to communication from supervisors as they provide direction and information to their subordinates about the department's goals and objectives as well as the officer's role in the department. Additionally, trust in supervision was related to perceptions of organizational culture. If trust is established and communicated by supervision and perceived by the subordinates, a positive organizational culture can develop. If a higher degree of trust is established and effective communication is used throughout all levels of the department, perceptions of a cultural division may decrease.

Limitations

The first limitation of this study was the population and sample size. Two Midwestern police departments were selected with a possible number of participants of 123 sworn police officers. Of those sworn police officers, only 46 officers chose to participate providing a return rate of 37%. Another limitation that should be noted is the size and type of police departments that were sampled. Both police departments are considered small to medium size departments and serve a suburban population. Additionally, the sample was homogeneous as the majority of respondents were males (n=36); females (n=4) and no response (n=8). Therefore, the results may not be generalizable to larger and or urban populated departments based on department size and population.

Additionally, this study assessed perceptions at an organizational level analyzing perceptions of patrol officers and their supervisors. However, due to the nature of police work, officers may have varying supervisors at various times. For example, a patrol officer's supervisor may rotate shifts quarterly or biannually providing the officer with a different supervisor during different times of the year. Similarly, the patrol officer may rotate shifts, which are usually determined by seniority, and work for different supervisors throughout the year. This is a potential limitation for this study as officers and supervisors report on their perceptions of one another.

Another limitation of this study includes issues related to self-reporting as the survey included items to assess characteristic behaviors and feelings. These measures cannot be verified by other means (Podsakoff & Organ, 1986) to confirm feelings of

respondents. Additionally, Podsakoff and Organ (1986) discussed issues related to social desirability where the respondent answers questions based on what is socially acceptable as opposed to their actual feelings. Social desirability is another limitation of this study as respondents may have based their answers on what is socially acceptable instead of how they feel.

Implications

This work contributes to the existing knowledge of communication culture within law enforcement by providing results consistent with extant literature. In addition, this study collected, analyzed, and compared perceptions relative to organizational culture from patrol officers and their supervisors in an effort to see where perceptions agreed and or disagreed.

Theoretical Implications

The results of this research support the idea that law enforcement communities exhibit a cultural disconnect as well as issues related to communication and role ambiguity among patrol officers and their supervisors. Numerous police departments may experience these issues but in varying degrees. Paoline (2003) found that a monolithic police culture was nonexistent and cultural variation among officers and supervisors was common. Studying organizations that do not exhibit this cultural division or have a low amount of role ambiguity may be beneficial. Organizations of this nature could teach skills or practices related to organizational communication, structure, and cohesiveness.

Furthermore, the results from this study indicated that patrol officers felt more role ambiguity than their supervisors, indicating that patrol officers were less clear on the organization's objectives and their own role in the organization. Additionally, patrol officers disagreed with their supervisors on perceptions of supervisors displaying transformational leadership traits. These results may not be context bound as organizations and occupations outside of the law enforcement community may experience the same issues as it relates to role ambiguity and transformational leadership theory. These results may be generalizable to various occupations that include some type of supervisor and subordinate relationship.

Additionally, the results of this study indicate that patrol officers and supervisors disagree on perceptions of supervisors displaying transformational leadership traits. Although transformational leadership theory is a popular leadership style among law enforcement, extant literature revealed several common leadership styles desired by police supervisors to include transformational leadership theory, servant leadership theory, and an active supervisory style (Andreescu & Vito, 2010; Engel, 2002; Huges, 2009; Rowe, 2006, Vito et al., 2011). However, several of these studies failed to incorporate the leadership styles desired by patrol officers. Supervisors should elicit ideas and concerns from members of the department and adjust their leadership style and communication skills accordingly.

Practical Implications

The findings of this study suggest that organizational communication is related to various aspects of organizational culture, role ambiguity, trust in supervision, and the

perceptions of leadership styles among officers and supervisors. The evidence from this study suggests that a cultural division among supervisors and patrol officers still exists. This disconnect often leads to isolation as those in charge can forget what it is like to be a patrol officer which breeds a lack of understanding between supervision and road patrol officers (Rowe, 2006). Additionally, these results suggested that patrol officers experienced more role ambiguity in their position as opposed to their supervisors, and that role ambiguity was related to trust in one's supervisor. Effective communication and the opportunity for repeated direct communication between subordinates and superiors enhanced productivity and workplace behavior (Langbein & Jorstad, 2004). In-service training on communication skills for supervisors could address issues related to culture, trust, and role ambiguity. Additionally, guidelines and or procedures created by a combined effort of supervisors and patrol officers could minimize perceptions of role ambiguity and address the need for specific leadership traits.

Recommendations

Future studies should aim to incorporate a larger, more heterogeneous population and sample size to increase generalizability. In addition, follow-up interviews with officers and supervisors could be beneficial to determine exact causes of the results. Specifically, focusing on the difference in perceptions of organizational culture and communication support with subordinates and supervision may be useful, as communication plays an important role in establishing culture and trust within a department. Interviews may reveal key concepts that exacerbate the difference in perceptions between patrol officers and supervisors.

A further study could assess the long-term effects of communication support with subordinates and their supervisors in relation to role ambiguity. As officers in this study reported more feelings of role ambiguity than supervisors, it would be beneficial to research the long-term effects of role ambiguity and how communication can affect these perceptions.

Conclusion

This study was designed to examine the perceived differences in organizational culture between patrol officers and supervisors, the factors that contribute to this division, and the role that a leader played in balancing communication and culture. This study focused on the analysis of survey responses from patrol officers and their supervisors.

The analysis of the data concluded that officers and supervisors differ on perceptions of organizational culture and role ambiguity, both of which were found to be positively related to perceptions of trust within supervision. Additionally, officers and supervisors reported a positive relationship between perceived culture and perceived communication support with one another, and a relationship was found on perceptions of supervisors displaying transformational leadership traits from the supervisors' and officers' perspective. Additional research should be cognizant of the population and sample size, include follow-up interviews, and focus on the long term effects of communication.

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APPENDIX A
Communication Culture Survey

Communication Culture Survey

Please read the sections below to ensure that that they pertain to you and answer the following questions.

Q 1-7 This section will assess several aspects of role ambiguity in your organization. Role ambiguity is defined as a lack of information and expectations of an organizational position (Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman, 1970). For each statement, please choose the option from the scale below that indicates the extent to which you agree with each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Undecided	Slightly Agree	Mostly Agree	Strongly Agree
1) Employees in this organization are sufficiently aware of the organization's goals.	<input type="radio"/>						
2) Employees in this organization understand the objectives of the organization.	<input type="radio"/>						
3) Employees in this organization do not understand what contribution is expected from them.	<input type="radio"/>						
4) Employees in this organization do not know what is expected of them in their jobs.	<input type="radio"/>						
5) In this organization goals are not clearly defined.	<input type="radio"/>						
6) Everything that employees do in this organization is directed at accomplishing the organization's goals.	<input type="radio"/>						
7) Employees in this organization are not aware of the objectives of the organization.	<input type="radio"/>						

Q 8-13 This section will assess trust in supervision in your organization. For each statement, please choose the option from the scale below that indicates the extent to which you agree with each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Undecided (4)	Slightly Agree	Mostly Agree	Strongly Agree
8) In this organization there is a low level of trust in and openness with bosses.	<input type="radio"/>						
9) Employees in this organization cannot rely on management support when needed.	<input type="radio"/>						
10) In this organization communication flows freely and accurately throughout the organization -- upward, downward and laterally.	<input type="radio"/>						
11) Managers in this organization provide clear communication, assistance and support to their subordinates.	<input type="radio"/>						
12) In this organization senior management is helpful and supportive when required.	<input type="radio"/>						
13) This organization listens to the views of its employees.	<input type="radio"/>						

Q 14-28 This section will assess organizational culture in your current organization. Schein (1990) defines organizational culture as what a group learns over a period of time during external adaptation and internal unification. These items assess the current working atmosphere in your organization and measure the degree to which the organization is employed in actively shaping its culture. For each statement, please choose the option from the scale below that indicates the extent to which you agree with each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Undecided	Slightly Agree	Mostly Agree	Strongly Agree
14) This organization has strong values which are widely shared by its members.	<input type="radio"/>						
15) Employees in this organization have a clear understanding of what its values and philosophies are.	<input type="radio"/>						
16) There is nothing holding this organization together and binding its members to one another.	<input type="radio"/>						
17) This organization consistently makes employees aware of how they are expected to behave at work.	<input type="radio"/>						
18) Managers in this organization seldom communicate to employees what the organization's values and philosophies are.	<input type="radio"/>						
19) Managers in this organization seldom do anything which shows employees what is important for the organization's long term success.	<input type="radio"/>						

	Strongly Disagree	Mostly Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Undecided	Slightly Agree	Mostly Agree	Strongly Agree
20) Employees in this organization have to get approval from above before they can act.	<input type="radio"/>						
21) In this organization employees have to follow many standard procedures in doing their jobs.	<input type="radio"/>						
22) In this organization little emphasis is placed on performance standards.	<input type="radio"/>						
23) In this organization employees have to observe many rules and regulations in doing their work.	<input type="radio"/>						
24) In this organization employees are supervised very closely.	<input type="radio"/>						
25) In this organization there are many standard procedures which employees have to adhere to at all times.	<input type="radio"/>						
26) Employees in this organization are not constrained by rules, regulations, policies and procedures in doing their jobs.	<input type="radio"/>						
27) In this organization there are too many rules, regulations and standard procedures.	<input type="radio"/>						
28) In this organization there is an informal atmosphere which helps employees to get the job done.	<input type="radio"/>						

Q 29-33 This block of statements evaluates organizational communication analyzing communication on an organizational and personal level. Please choose the option from the scale below that indicates the level of satisfaction you feel for the following statements:

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
29) Extent to which the organization's communication motivates and stimulates an enthusiasm for meeting its goals.	<input type="radio"/>						
30) Extent to which the people in my organization have great ability as communicators.	<input type="radio"/>						
31) Extent to which the organization's communication makes me identify with it or feel a vital part of it.	<input type="radio"/>						
32) Extent to which I receive in time the information needed to do my job.	<input type="radio"/>						
33) Extent to which conflicts are handled appropriately through proper communication channels.	<input type="radio"/>						

Q 34-38 This section is for patrol officers only. If you are a patrol officer, please answer the following questions. If you are a supervisor, please skip this section and continue on.

This section will assess communication support with supervisors by analyzing the flow of upward and downward communication. Please choose the option from the scale below that indicates the level of satisfaction you feel for the following statements:

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
34) Extent to which my supervisor listens and pays attention to me.	<input type="radio"/>						
35) Extent to which my supervisor offers guidance for solving job related problems.	<input type="radio"/>						
36) Extent to which the organization's communications are interesting and helpful.	<input type="radio"/>						
37) Extent to which the grapevine is active in our organization.	<input type="radio"/>						
38) Extent to which the amount of supervision given me is about right.	<input type="radio"/>						

Q 39-43 This section is for supervisors only. If you are a supervisor please answer the following questions. If you are a patrol officer, please skip this section and continue on.

This section will assess communication support with subordinates by analyzing the flow of upward and downward communication. Please choose the option from the scale below that indicates the level of satisfaction you feel for the following statements:

	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
39) Extent to which my subordinates are responsive to downward directive communication.	<input type="radio"/>						
40) Extent to which my subordinates anticipate my needs for information.	<input type="radio"/>						
41) Extent to which I do not have a communication overload.	<input type="radio"/>						
42) Extent to which my subordinates are receptive to evaluation, suggestions, and criticisms.	<input type="radio"/>						
43) Extent to which my subordinates feel responsible for initiating accurate upward communication.	<input type="radio"/>						

Q 44-47 This section is for patrol officers only. If you are patrol officer, please answer the following questions. If you are a supervisor please skip this block and continue on.

This section will assess the use of transformational leadership behaviors from your supervisor. Bass (1985) defines transformational leadership as the capacity of a leader to motivate his or her followers to accomplish and surpass personal goals for the good of the organization. Patrol officers; please rate how often your supervisor displays the following attributes.

	Never (1)	Once in Awhile (2)	Sometimes (3)	Often (4)	Almost Always (5)
44) My supervisor stimulates me to solve problems by myself.	<input type="radio"/>				
45) My supervisor keeps the morale of the department high.	<input type="radio"/>				
46) My supervisor creates the feeling that we work on an important assignment.	<input type="radio"/>				
47) My supervisor is really interested in my personal development.	<input type="radio"/>				

Q 48-51 This section is for supervisors only. If you are a supervisor, please answer the following questions. If you are a patrol officer please skip this section and continue on.

This section will assess how often you feel you display transformational leadership behaviors. Bass (1985) defines transformational leadership as the capacity of a leader to motivate his or her followers to accomplish and surpass personal goals for the good of the organization.

Supervisors, please rate how often you display the following attributes.

	Never	Once in Awhile	Sometimes	Often	Almost Always
48) I stimulate my subordinates to solve problems by themselves.	<input type="radio"/>				
49) I keep the morale of the department high.	<input type="radio"/>				
50) I create the feeling that my subordinates and I work on an important assignment.	<input type="radio"/>				
51) I am really interested in my subordinates' personal development.	<input type="radio"/>				

Q This section refers to information about you and your organization. Please answer the following questions:

Q 52 What is your organizational position?

- Officer (1)
- Supervisor/Command Staff (2)

Q 53 How long have you been employed at your current organization?

- 1 to 5 years (1)
- 6 to 10 years (2)
- 11 to 20 years (3)
- 21 plus years (4)

Q 54 What is your gender?

- Male (1)
- Female (2)

Q 55 What is your highest academic degree earned?

- High School or GED (1)
- Associates Degree (2)
- Some College (3)
- Bachelor's Degree (4)
- Master's Degree (5)
- Ph.D (6)
- Other: (7) _____

APPENDIX B
Cover Letter

Dear Law Enforcement Officer:

Hello, my name is a Katie Gerspacher and I am a graduate student at Wright State University in the Leadership Development Program. Attached is a link to an on-line questionnaire which is part of a research study on perceptions of communication culture in law enforcement organizations. Police culture is unique in nature, and the functionality of this culture is vitally important to departments and the communities they serve. Culture can be described as what a group learns over a period of time as the appropriate way to think, feel, and act. One of the most significant challenges a law enforcement leader may face is the separation of cultures between patrol officers and the management side of the department. I am interested in examining if such a perceived division of culture exists, and, if so, what factors contribute to this division. In addition, I am examining the role a leader plays in balancing communication and culture. Your role as a subject in this study is to complete the survey.

You are invited to fill out a survey by following the on-line link attached in the email from your supervisor or command staff. The estimated time to complete the survey is approximately 10 minutes. The information gathered will only be used to help me better understand the issues related to law enforcement communication culture. This study is significant because it addresses an important issue across police departments, and could aid local departments in their understanding of their own culture. Therefore, I am requesting that each sworn member of the police department completes the questionnaire, however participation is voluntary.

The questionnaire is anonymous and your confidentiality will be maintained. No identifying information should be added to the survey. No person outside of the research process will have access to the raw data. If there is a question on the questionnaire that you do not wish to answer or do not fully understand, you may skip over it.

Completion and return of the survey implies your consent to participate, however you are free to terminate your participation at any time. If you choose to participate, there are no known risks to participants and you will receive no direct benefit. If you would like to receive feedback on the results, available in April 2014, or have a question about the research or the questionnaire, feel free to email me at kgerspacher@centervilleohio.gov or call me at (937) 433-7661. My thesis advisor is Dr. Heilmann, associate professor and program director of the Master of Science in Leadership Development at Wright State University. She can be reached at the following email address and phone number: sharon.heilmann@wright.edu; 937-775-4712. If you have general questions about giving consent or your rights as a research participant in this research study, you can call the Wright State University Institutional Review Board at (937) 775-4462. Thank you for your participation in this study.

Sincerely,

Katie Gerspacher, Principal Investigator
Centerville Police Department
155 W. Spring Valley Rd.

Dr. Heilmann, Thesis Advisor
Wright State University
3640 Colonel Glenn Hwy.

Centerville, OH 45458
937-433-7661

Dayton, OH 45435
937-775-4712

APPENDIX C
Permission to Survey Participants

Chief [REDACTED],

Thank you for the permission. The department names will remain anonymous in the thesis.

Katie

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, December 05, 2013 1:52 PM
To: Gerspacher, Katherine
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Thesis Survey Permission

Katie,

I do wish the department to remain anonymous. If there is dirty laundry to be aired, I don't think that should be public information that could publically disparage the agency, it's employees or be used by the press or others for fodder. Candidly, I would be surprised if an IRB process would allow the agency to be named.

Chief [REDACTED]

From: Gerspacher, Katherine
Sent: Thursday, December 05, 2013 12:37 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Thesis Survey Permission

Chief [REDACTED],

The department names are not anonymous and I plan on surveying [REDACTED] as well. I'm open to listing the department names as "local PDs" if this is requested or required by department heads. Thanks.

Katie

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Wednesday, December 04, 2013 1:58 PM
To: Gerspacher, Katherine
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Thesis Survey Permission

Katie,

In the thesis, will the department be anonymous and do you plan on surveying any other departments?

Chief [REDACTED]

From: Gerspacher, Katherine
Sent: Wednesday, December 04, 2013 11:37 AM
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Thesis Survey Permission

Chief [REDACTED],

This email is a request to survey officers and supervisors [REDACTED] at the [REDACTED] Police Department for work on my master's thesis in Leadership Development at Wright State University. As you are already aware, my thesis topic is on perceptions of communication culture in law enforcement. I am requesting permission to disseminate a survey to officers and supervisors of this department; participation is voluntary and surveys are anonymous. Officers will be provided a link to the Internet to complete their survey and supervisors will be provided a hard copy of the survey. Please see the attached letter of participation and instruction that will follow should I be granted permission to survey sworn members of the [REDACTED] Police Department.

Please let me know if you have any questions or need any clarification. In addition to email, I can be reached by phone at PS#: [REDACTED].

Thank you,

Officer Katie Gerspacher
Centerville Police Department
155 W. Spring Valley Rd.
Centerville, OH 45458
PS#: 937-433-7661

-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, December 09, 2013 9:06 AM
To: Gerspacher, Katherine
Subject: RE: Thesis Survey Permission

Katie,

I did get the "OK" for you to conduct the survey at our department. Please let me know what I can do to assist, and would it be possible to get a copy of your thesis or the survey when complete. Sounds like it will be a very interesting topic.

Thanks again!

[REDACTED]

Captain [REDACTED]
Asst. Chief of Police
[REDACTED] Police Department
[REDACTED]

>>> "Gerspacher, Katherine" <KGerspacher@centervilleohio.gov> 12/9/2013 12:30 AM
>>>

Thanks Captain [REDACTED]. I don't think I noted this earlier, but the department name will also be anonymous and listed in the thesis as a "local police department." I'll be happy to answer any questions that you may have!

Katie Gerspacher
155 W. Spring Valley Rd.
Centerville, OH 45458
PS#: 937-433-7661

-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, December 06, 2013 10:03 AM
To: Gerspacher, Katherine
Subject: Re: Thesis Survey Permission

Hi Katie,

Thank you for the recent e-mail. I am in the process of getting clearance from the Chief for your survey. I hope to get back to you early next week.

Thanks and have a great weekend,

██████████.
Captain ██████████
Asst. Chief of Police
██████████ Police Department
██████████
██

>>> "Gerspacher, Katherine" <KGerspacher@centervilleohio.gov> 12/4/2013 12:35 PM

>>>

Captain ██████████,
Hello, my name is Katie Gerspacher and I am an officer with the Centerville Police Department. I am currently working on my master's degree in Leadership Development at Wright State University and I would like to survey ██████████ Police Department's patrol officers and supervisors. My thesis topic is on perceptions of communication culture in law enforcement and I am surveying officers and supervisors to gain their perspectives on this topic. I am requesting permission to disseminate this survey to ██████████ Police Department's officers and supervisors; participation is voluntary and the surveys are anonymous. Officers will be provided a link to the Internet to complete their survey and supervisors will be provided with a hard copy of the survey. Please see the attached letter of participation and instruction that will follow should I be granted permission to survey sworn members of the ██████████ Police Department.
Please let me know if you have any questions or need any clarification. In addition to email, I can be reached by phone at PS#: ██████████.
Thank you,

Katie Gerspacher
Centerville Police Department
155 W. Spring Valley Rd.
Centerville, OH 45458
PS#: 937-433-7661