

Chapter 2

Inside Police Agencies: Understanding Mission and Culture

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Describe the characteristics of a mission statement.
- Identify what police spend the majority of their time doing.
- Describe how the makeup of the police force has changed in recent years.
- Describe the characteristics of the police culture that may lead to a code of silence.
- Identify where the police image comes from.
- Describe what a negative contact is.
- Identify what the public expects of the police.
- Identify what dilemma faces law enforcement.
- Identify when agencies or officers exercise discretion.
- Describe how discretion fits into the community policing philosophy.
- Identify what ethics involves.
- Identify three ethics checks.

KEY TERMS

- discretion
- Lucifer effect
- mission statement
- negative contacts
- 911 policing
- police culture
- selective enforcement

CHAPTER OUTLINE

- I. Introduction
- II. The Police Mission
 - A. Fighting Crime versus Service to the Public
 - 1. Neighborhood Cops or Special Ops?
- III. Who Are the Police?
- IV. The Police Culture
 - A. Negative Perceptions of the Police Culture
 - B. Positive Perceptions of the Police Culture
 - C. Researching Police Officer Attitudes

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V. The Police Image

- A. Personal Contacts
- B. Public Expectations

VI. Police Discretion

- A. Reasons for Police Discretion
- B. Changes in Police Discretion
- C. The Downside of Police Discretion
- D. Discretion and the Police Image

VII. Use of Force

VIII. Ethical Policing

- A. The Building Blocks of Ethics
 - 1. Integrity
 - 2. Honesty
 - 3. Values
 - 4. Standards
 - 5. Courage
 - 6. Civility
- B. Ethics in the Field
- C. Ethical Dilemmas
- D. Police Corruption
- E. Investigative Commissions

IX. Summary

CHAPTER SUMMARY

A mission statement is a written statement of purpose. Community policing will require a change in mission statement, departmental organization, and leadership style. A mission statement is a written declaration of purpose. Departments must find in their mission a balance between fighting crime and service to the public. The majority of police actions do not involve criminal law enforcement; instead, they are community-service-oriented.

Today's police departments have more minority and female officers. The educational level of the officers is much higher, and fewer have military experience than in years past. Most officers are also just as interested in helping people as they are in fighting crime.

Solidarity (loyalty) and secrecy within a police department can result in a code of silence. Such a code has a negative impact on the police image. The police image is affected by individual backgrounds, the media, and personal experiences with the criminal justice system. It is also shaped by how police look—their uniform and equipment—and by what they do. Negative contacts are unpleasant interactions between the police and the public. They may or may not involve criminal activity.

People expect the police to enforce the law unless such actions adversely affect those people. People also expect the police to help them when they have a problem. The police face the

dilemma of being expected to win the wars on crime, drugs, and terrorism without having control over the causes of these problems. The police cannot win these wars alone.

Police use of discretion and force will profoundly affect police–community relations. Each agency exercises discretion when it establishes its mission, policies, and procedures. Each officer exercises discretion when deciding whether to issue citations or make arrests when laws are violated. Community policing emphasizes wider use of officer discretion. Police discretion and authority to use power are balanced by the responsibility to act ethically. Ethics involves integrity, honesty, values, standards, courage, and civility. Three questions to check police ethical standards are: (1) Is it legal? (2) Is it balanced? and (3) How will it make me feel about myself? Ethics and integrity are crucial to good policing. Community policing depends on community trust and involvement, which can be gained only by professional, ethical policing.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What is the image of the police in your community? What factors are responsible for this image? Could the police image be made more positive?

Answers will vary. Answer should include what the student’s opinion is of law enforcement in their community, how they formed this image, and what factors they believe are responsible for this image. Answers should include how the police image could be made more positive.

2. What expectations do you have of law enforcement agencies?

Answers will vary. Answers should include a discussion of what are students’ expectations for law enforcement agencies.

3. Does police discretion frequently lead to abuse of alleged perpetrators?

Answers should include a discussion of police discretion and how this may lead to abuse of the alleged perpetrators.

4. Are police officers now more violent and less ethical than their predecessors?

Answers should include a historical discussion of officer violence and officer ethics and how it applies today.

5. Does the image of law enforcement affect officers’ ability to get the job done?

Answers should include a discussion of how the action of other officers, maybe not even in their own department, affects the officer’s ability to “get the job done.”

8 Instructor's Resource Manual

6. How do you explain the development of the two contradictory models in policing: community-oriented policing (COP) and special weapons and tactics (SWAT) teams? Can they coexist?

Answers should include a discussion of community policing and SWAT teams, including their historical roots. Answers should also include a discussion of whether or not community policing and SWAT are diametrically opposed to each other.

7. What should be a department's ideal balance between fighting crime and service to the community?

Answers will vary. Answers should include a discussion of what the student believes should be the ideal balance between fighting crime and service to the community.

8. Have you witnessed police exercise their discretion? How did it impress you?

Answers will vary. Answers should include a discussion of police discretion, and if the student has witnessed the exercise of police discretion and what impression it left on the student.

9. Do you think mission statements are valuable for an organization, or are they only window dressing? How do they affect the organization? Compare the Los Angeles Police Department's mission statement with what appears to be the reality of everyday police work. Does this mission statement reflect the realities everyday police work in Los Angeles?

Answers will vary. Answers should include a discussion and definition of mission statements and an opinion as to whether or not they are valuable to an organization. Answers should also discuss the LAPD mission statement and whether or not it appears to be realistic. Answers should discuss the benefits and drawbacks of mission statements and the public expectations that are placed on the department because of the mission statement.

10. What decisions commonly made by police officers involve ethical considerations?

Answers should discuss a definition of ethics, ethical lapses of officers, how ethics affects decision making, and what decisions commonly made by police officers involve ethical considerations.