Police Organizations

Chapter 4

Quasi-Military Style of Police Organization

- Similarities:
  1) Wear uniforms
  2) Use military-style rank
  3) Hierarchical command structure
  4) Authoritarian organizational style
  5) Armed officers authorized to use force

Quasi-Military Style of Police Organization

- Differences:
  1. Serve a citizen population vice fight a war
  2. Provide services designed to help people
  3. Constrained by laws protecting the rights of citizens
  4. Routinely exercise individual discretion

Criticisms of the Quasi-Military Style

- Cultivates an “us vs. them” attitude
- Encourages the idea of a “war on crime”
- Authoritarian style is contrary to democratic principles of participation
- Produces low morale
  - Rigid rank structure fails to provide sufficient job satisfaction for officers

Peter Kraska

- Contends that there has been a militarization of the police since the early 90s

Police Dept.s as Organizations - Dominant Style of American Police Organization

- Complex bureaucracy
  - Hierarchical structure
  - Authoritarian management style
- Governed by some sort of civil service rules that regulate personnel policies
- Legally bound by collective bargaining contracts with unions
**Bureaucracy Characteristics**

1. Complex organization performing many different tasks in pursuit of a goal
2. Different tasks are grouped in separate divisions/bureaus
3. Organizational structure is hierarchical
4. Responsibility for specific tasks is delegated to lower-ranking employees
5. Clear chain of command
6. Unity of command
7. Written rules & regulations designed to ensure conformity & consistency
8. Info flows up/down according to the chain of command
9. Clear paths by which personnel move upward in the organization in an orderly fashion

**The Problems with Bureaucracies**

1) Rigid/inflexible/unable to adapt to external change
2) Communication w/in the organization breaks down
3) Tend to be inward-looking/self-serving/isolated from the people they serve
4) Do not use the talent of their employees & stifle creativity

**Positive Contributions of Bureaucracy in Policing**
- Development of specialty units
- Control of discretion
- Reduction of misconduct

**Informal Aspects of Police Organization (“Office Politics”)**

- Information flow stifled
  - Protect other officers
  - Self-preservation
  - Plausible deniability
- Info flow outside of prescribed channels
  - True gossip
  - False gossip

**Informal Aspects of Police Organization (“Office Politics”) – Protective Cliques**

- Vertical
  - Shared understanding of a problem/work together to address it
- Horizontal
  - Protect officers from supervisors
- Often based on work groups
- Can create rivalry between different units
  - Bureaus
  - Shifts
- Can also be based on personal friendships
Professionalism challenged by the bureaucratic nature of policing
- Professional dept.s adopted a "by the book" approach to policing
- The bureaucracy imposes formal controls over the behavior of police officers

Changing Police Organizations - Community Policing
- Decentralize decision-making
- Deformalize
  - Eliminate many of the rules/policies than can stifle creativity & do not encourage problem-solving
- Despecialize
- Delayerize
  - Decrease the amount of social & administrative distance between beat officer & the chief

Changing Police Org. (cont.). - Task Forces
- Recognizes that many lower-ranking officers are competent to make intelligent decisions about police policy
  - Offers them greater job satisfaction
  - Prepares them for supervisory responsibilities
  - Increases likelihood that innovations will be accepted w/in organization

Task Forces (cont.)
- Intra-agency
- Interagency (Multiagency)
  - Advantages:
    1) Eliminate duplication of services in adjoining communities
    2) Afford smaller agencies services they would otherwise not be able to afford
    3) Result in the benefit of shared resource management
    4) Allow officers to work outside their jurisdiction
    5) Increase amount of info that officers have at their disposal

Comparison Statistics (COMPSTAT)
1) Clarifies dept. mission/goals/values
2) Holds managers accountable
3) Organizational power & resources are transferred to the commanders who are responsible for an area
4) Data used to ID problems & evaluate success & failure
5) Middle managers are expected to use innovative problem-solving tactics

COMPSTAT (cont.)
- Hailed as one of the most important organizational innovations in American policing
  - Claimed it was responsible for drop in crime in NYC
- Criticisms
  - Came at the expense of due process & morale
  - Citizen complaints increased
COMPSTAT (cont.)

- Only been two studies of COMPSTAT
  1) Ft. Worth, TX study:
     - Substantial drop in property & total index crimes
     - No impact on violent crime
  2) Large SE police dept.:
     - Officers misunderstood the process & sgt.s did not follow through
     - Increased competition among units, resulting in less info-sharing

Civil Service

- A set of formal & legally binding procedures governing personnel decisions
- Purpose is to ensure that personnel decisions are based on objective criteria, not on favoritism, bias, & political influence

Civil Service Hierarchical Structure

- Rewards Hierarchy
  - Corresponds with rank & seniority w/in dept.
  - Does not always correspond w/individual skill/performance
- Seniority hierarchy
- Status hierarchy
- Rank hierarchy

Civil Service Hierarchical Structure (cont.)

- Civil service problems
  - Limits the power of chiefs to make personnel decisions
  - Chief cannot change existing standards at will
  - Limits opportunities & incentives for individual officers
  - Provisions for discipline make it very difficult to terminate/discipline bad/poorly performing officers

Police Unions

- Organization legally authorized to represent police officers in collective bargaining with the employer
- Collective bargaining
  - The method of determining conditions of employment through bilateral negotiations

Collective Bargaining - Scope

- Wages, hours, & other conditions of employment
- Generally excludes management rights issues
  - Recruit
  - Assign
  - Transfer
  - Promote
Grievance Procedures

- Provides due process for employees
- Typical grievance procedure
  - Right to be notified about a disciplinary action
  - Right to a hearing
  - Right to an attorney
  - Right to appeal

Impact of Police Unions

- Produced significant improvements in police salary & benefits
- Reduced the power of chiefs
  - Introduced the concept of shared governance
- Introduction of due process to discipline procedures
- But, unions are often seen by some as an obstacle to change in police organizations

Impasse Settlement & Strikes

- Impasse
  - When a union & a political subdivision cannot agree on a contract
- Private sector unions can strike
- In most states it is illegal for the police to go on strike
- Impasse procedures
  - Mandatory mediation
  - Fact finding
  - Arbitration

Police Organizations & Their Environment

- Contingency Theory
  - Organizations are structured to achieve specific goals (crime control)
- Institutional Theory
  - Organizations operate in relation to their external social & political environment ("sovereigns")
- Resource Dependency Theory
  - Organizations must obtain resources to survive