Abstract

The mixed method study aims to examine the impact community-oriented policing (COP) has on the structure and legitimation of public institutions, such as police. A qualitative review of national police websites and a quantitative review of COP implementation (1997 – 2013) are examined to determine what, if any, institutional change has occurred. More specifically, the aim is to analyze the legitimacy of policing through the most current institutional images (police websites) and the evolution of the police organizational mission. Institutional theory, organizational image, and COP philosophy guide the study. The results seek to provide new understanding of the organizational change and adaptation in public institutions.

Keywords: Adaptation, Institutions, Content Analysis, Secondary Data, Police Organizations
Introduction

The events that unfolded in Ferguson, Missouri, fueled the ongoing tensions between law enforcement and the public (Derickson, 2016). Law enforcement is under the microscope in this new age of constant surveillance, as more stories of unarmed blacks killed at the hands of police surface (Derickson, 2016; Vick, 2015). Police, as an institution, fight against negative images in the process of carrying out the mission to protect and serve those in their communities (Barthelemy, Chaney, Maccio, & Church, 2016). Community-oriented policing (COP) was implemented to build partnerships with the community, adopt a problem-solving approach, employ prevention tactics, and enhance organizational processes to support these measures (Roehl et al., 2000; Schafer, 2003; Somerville, 2009).

The goal of the Crime Act of 1994 was to increase the number of officers in an effort to reduce and prevent violent crime (Gaffigan, Roth, & Buerger, 2000). Yearly, grants are supplied to those agencies that agree to implement COP practices, with over $8 billion dollars dedicated over the first 6 years of the program (Gaffigan et al., 2000). The intent was to apply a problem-solving approach and help citizens identify and address crime in their communities by understanding the social issues that lead to crime (Barthelemy et al., 2016; Chappell & Lanza-Kaduce, 2003; Gaffigan et al., 2000; Gill, Weisburd, Telep, Vitter, & Bennett, 2014; Roehl et al., 2000; Wells, Schafer, Varano, & Bynum, 2006). Yet, the community in Ferguson and other areas of the country do not appear to reap the benefits of this approach, despite the number of specialized units dedicated to COP.

Institutional theorists believe organizations adapt to their environment based on institutional normative forces, such as established rules instead of their social obligation (Dacin, Goodstein, & Scott, 2002; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Hannan, Freeman, Scott, & Christensen, 2007; Jepperson, 1991; Scott & Meyer, 1991). The institutionalization process occurs when institutions accept the formalized rules and expectations of other agencies (i.e., government, social agencies, public) (Scott, 1987). Further, institutional theory suggests public institutions should not conform to the formalized rules (Carroll, 1984). However, policing adaptation may have occurred as a means to maintain the legitimacy as those who enforce the law (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; J. W. Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

Along those same lines, legitimacy and prestige may be of importance to policing institutions, especially in how they are viewed. Organizational identity theory carries the assumption that organizations have identities similar to individuals (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000; Albert & Whetten, 1985; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). Organizations form their identities based on three fundamental questions, “who they are”, “who they want to be”, and “who others think they are” (Albert, 1998; Albert & Whetten, 1985; Whetten, 2006). More importantly, organizations may highlight aspects of their organization in a deliberate attempt to demonstrate distinct values (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000; Price & Gioia, 2008). Gioia and Thomas (1996) introduced an institutional image versus institutional identity, with the latter being more inwardly focused. The focus of this study will be on the outward, institutional image. The image of law enforcement is based on other experiences as well, such as, personal encounters or the media (Derickson, 2016), these are unintentional (Price & Gioia, 2008).

Most studies conducted examining COP’s effectiveness attempt to link the decrease in crime to COP effectiveness (for a systematic review, see Gill et al., 2014). There are some studies which examine COP with an organizational lens (Burruss & Giblin, 2014; Maguire & King, 2004; Maguire & Mastrofski, 2000; Maguire, Shin, Zhao, & Hassell, 2003). For instance,
Burruss & Giblin (2014) considered isomorphic and institutional pressures, while Maguire and Mastrofski (2000) addressed diffusion patterns in policing. However, the current study proposes to examine the phenomenon’s effect on multiple organizations, thus, at the institutional level. Addressing the study from the institutional level of analysis, provides new understanding of institutional change, especially for public institutions (Dacin et al., 2002) and keeping with Maguire and King’s (2004) prediction of policing experiencing a transformational change.

The purpose of this study is to examine the impact of the implementation of COP. Specifically, the law enforcement institution and the adoption of COP. Has the adoption led to a new form of policing? Has the adoption maintained the legitimized image of law enforcement? These questions will be analyzed in two ways. First, the quantitative analysis will compare secondary data collected about law enforcement agencies that maintain a COP plan (Roehl et al., 2000; Rosenbaum, Graziano, Stephens, & Schuck, 2011; Wilson, 2004). This examination addresses the assumptions of institutional theory and organizational adaptation in the institutional, organizational field. Thus, the data will then need to be aggregated to understand the direction of the COP phenomenon. Second, a qualitative content analysis of law enforcement agency websites will be examined to determine what themes emerge, such as, do these collective images reflect COP principles (Lilley & Hinduja, 2006; Rosenbaum et al., 2011). This analysis considers the maintained legitimacy or prominence of law enforcement. The mixed method nested design approach (Day, Sammons, & Gu, 2008; Giddings, 2006; Greene, 2012) answers two overall research questions. RQ1: At the police institutional level, what is the impact adapting to the institutional norms of COP? RQ2: At the police institutional level, what impact of COP adoption on the institutional image?

The next section covers an overview of the literature grounding the study, followed by an overview of the qualitative then quantitative designs and methodologies to include their proposed models. Each section will address the limitations with a final conclusion.

**Literature Review**

This section provides an overview of the literature organizational theory. The origins and nature of COP are addressed.

**Organizational theory**

Organizational theory is the study of organizational phenomena at both the micro and macro-levels (Tsoukas & Knudsen, 2007). Organizational theory covers a multitude of organizational phenomena, such as, organizational ecology, which examines organizational births and deaths (Singh & Lumsden, 1990; Van Witteloostuijn, 2000), institutional theory, which emphasizes the general acceptance of rules and norms (J. W. Meyer & Rowan, 1977), and identity (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008). The following section addresses institutional and organizational identity theories.

**Institutional theory.** Institutional theory assumes isomorphic change occurs within organizational fields, as a result of constraining forces (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The examination of organizational change at this level creates new knowledge of the forces behind the change (Dacin et al., 2002). For instance, a shift in organizational goals, culture, structure or mission demonstrates a change has occurred in the organizational field (Dacin et al., 2002; DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) identified three sources of isomorphic change: normative, mimetic, or coercive. Normative occurs based on professionalization; mimetic occurs out of uncertainty, and coercive occurs based on political pressure (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The focus of this study remains on the normative lens of police
professionalization (Burruss & Giblin, 2014). Policing legitimacy may have occurred if the COP phenomenon becomes the normative change observed at the institutional level (Dacin et al., 2002) evident by an increase in COP implementation over the last several years.

Organizational identity. Organizational identity and the study thereof, occurs in two instances, used by researchers to identify characteristics of organizations and used by organizations themselves to describe their own characteristics (Albert & Whetten, 1985). There is debate about the characteristics of the identity of an organization (Gioia, Patvardhan, Hamilton, & Corley, 2013). Albert and Whetten (1985) identified three: the central, distinct and enduring characteristics of an organization, with the debate centered on the fluidity of identity. In essence, there are some that believe identity is difficult to change, while others, consider its temporal components (Gioia et al., 2013). The organizational identity literature covers studies on organizational identity ambiguity (Corley & Gioia, 2004), organizational identity formation (Gioia, Price, Hamilton, & Thomas, 2010), and organizational image and reputation (Gioia et al., 2000; Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Joshi & McKendall, 2016).

In most cases, research addresses a single organization and not an organizational field. Thus, this study presents new knowledge in the examination of image at the institutional level. The institutional image (Brickson, 2005), is considered as the intentional image projected to various groups to strengthen professional legitimation (Brown, Dacin, Pratt, & Whetten, 2006; Price & Gioia, 2008). Organizations project images based on how the organization wants to be viewed (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Dutton et al., 1994; Gioia & Thomas, 1996). The projected image is what the organization wants others to see as the current and future desired organizational attributes and associations (Abrahamsson, Englund, & Gerdin, 2011; Brown et al., 2006). The next section addresses the COP program and its characteristics.

COP

The COP program is considered a new philosophy of policing and has three main dimensions: strategic, program, and organizational (Chappell & Lanza-Kaduce, 2003; Somerville, 2009). Strategically, community policing takes a systematic view of policing, while implementing programs to solve problems at the community level, and implementing organizational changes such as, structure, policies, decision-making, management, and performance management (Roehl et al., 2000). The philosophy requires a fundamental shift in the utility of traditional method of policing. Gill et al. (2014) observed a shift in the profession of policing toward a focus on legitimacy and citizen satisfaction. Consistent throughout literature, those agencies that implement COP receive limited guidance to leave room for innovation (Burruss & Giblin, 2014; Chappell & Lanza-Kaduce, 2003; Gill et al., 2014).

The lack of guidance may explain the inconsistencies in the implementation of COP and the mixed results. For instance, Gill et al. (2014) concluded there was not an increase nor a decrease in crime in the areas where COP was implemented. As stated previously, some studies focus on the decrease in crime rate as evidence of its effectiveness. However, Roehl et al. (2000) in their evaluation of COP, focused on the adoption of COP tactics and organizational support and reviewed how the combination of the different philosophies produced new strategies in policing p. 179). This study drives the starting point of COP implementation and the impact it had on the institutional landscape and image.

The COP tactics are considered in four categories: partner building, problem-solving, prevention and organizational changes (Roehl et al., 2000). These tactics are considered in both qualitative and quantitative analyses. In the qualitative analysis, the tactics are captured based on the number of instances these tactics are observed resulting in an index based on Rosenbaum et
al.’s (2011) framework. These tactics will be further explained in the design and methods section. The tactics are placed in a COP implementation cluster (Wilson, 2004) and analyzed to identify the trends for all years captured. After both qualitative and quantitative data have been analyzed, the final analysis would be to determine the rate of change or what change has occurred. Figure 1 is the nested design. The next section covers the design and methodology of the proposed approach.

Research Design and Methodology

Mixed methods is relevant in order to examine diverse issues (Giddings, 2006). The diversity of organizational phenomenon is difficult to pinpoint and unfortunately, focusing on a single method of analysis sheds light on a portion of what is happening in a situation. In an effort to get a step closer to what happens, examining the qualitative and quantitative data for the current problem does support uncovering what transformations happening in the organizational field (Dacin et al., 2002).

This study will be a concurrent, nested study (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). The benefits of this approach are relevant to the current dataset, which includes large sample sizes and time series data. The relationships between the quantitative data and qualitative data complement each other, especially related to integration and overall interpretation. As stated above, this approach provides the opportunity to continue to refine the model after each phase. The data is secondary and the hope is bias is minimized to strengthen the validity of the results.

Measures

The content and measures to be examined pull from Roehl et al.’s (2000) study. The primary objectives of community policing were addressed earlier in the study. The objectives are: build partnerships with the community, adopt a problem-solving approach, employ prevention tactics, and enhance organizational processes to support these measures. Roehl et al. examined the tactics at each level and determined the following to be the most prevalent.

Partnering building tactics (PB). These include a) joint crime prevention, b) regular community meetings, c) joint projects with local businesses, d) clean-up projects, and e) survey of citizens; tactics might include citizen action or advisory boards and citizen police academy (p. 191).

Problem-solving tactics (PS). These include a) analysis of problems within the community, b) systematic monitoring of problems (i.e., hotspots and crime statistics), c) using feedback from residents to identify recurring patterns (p. 204).

Prevention tactics (P). These include a) prevention patrol, b) citizen patrols, c) neighborhood watch, d) youth programs (include recreation), e) anti-gang programs, f) curfew/truancy monitoring, g) drug prevention education (i.e., Drug Abuse Resistance Education or DARE), h) sexual assault information, i) landlord training, and j) code enforcement (p. 214).

Organizational support (OS). This is a temporary change or changes that may take place, however, should provide the necessary support to carry out the above tactics. These include a) officer training of COP techniques (p. 231), b) realignment of beat boundaries, c) COP
performance criteria, d) revising mission and value statements, e) long-term strategic plans, f) decentralized policy making, and g) geographic commands (p. 232-233).

The tactics listed will be the measurement for both analyses. The method of data collection and sample size will vary. The quantitative approach is presented below.

**Quantitative**

The empirical measurement of COP implementation is limited (Maguire & Mastrofski, 2000; Wilson, 2004). In previous studies, a number of researchers have addressed the issue of the number of variables, which are a large number, and the difficulty to accurately pinpoint the variables that point to COP implementation (Maguire & Mastrofski, 2000; Wilson, 2004). The focus of this study is to understand what has happened in the U.S. policing field since its introduction in 1994. Wilson (2004) created and tested a COP implementation model to help guide its measurement. Wilson’s (2004) model will be used to identify the most important variables from the LEMAS surveys to place in the model to examine the trends over the last several years. The following section will address the proposed statistical method, variables, sample, and potential limitations. The proposed quantitative model is shown in Figure 2.

**Design.** A non-experimental design will be conducted to analyze the relationships that exist between COP and the rate of COP implementation from 1997 to the latest LEMAS survey (2013). The ability to formulate and group the variables to create four COP implementation will be important before reviewing the rate of COP implementation. Therefore, a model of COP implementation must be addressed first, then the linear relationships addressed later. Multiple Regression is a potential approach to explore if there is linearity in variables.

**Data collection.** The samples are pulled from the Law Enforcement Management and Administrative Statistics (LEMAS) Surveys. The U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) sponsors the LEMAS process and the U.S. Census Bureau surveys law enforcement agencies every two or three years. There are two additional agencies that maintain and archive the datasets.

![Figure 2. Rate of Change in U.S. Policing after COP Implementation.](image-url)
The LEMAS survey includes COP sections with a focus on how those agencies address COP.

**Sample size.** The sample size is pulled the same as a qualitative study. However, there are six years of surveys; therefore, each year will have approximately 600 agencies included in the sample, based on the strata of the population size and pulling 100 samples from each population. In essence, the sample size has the potential to reach 3600 agencies. The sample size will be pulled from those agencies that have designated they have a COP plan on file.

**Measures.** The proposed measure of the COP implementation has been discussed at the beginning of the design methodology section. The number of variables from each survey for all years except 2013 are similar. Interestingly, in 2013, the number of variables decreased considerably, down to nine. The concern is identifying which variables from previous surveys have been deleted. These variables will likely result in the final number of variables of the main clusters and aligned with the four COP objectives. Wilson (2004) considered COP implementation as the final variables: Training, Citizen Interaction, COP Plan, Fixed Assignments, and Problem-Solving (p. 13). The COP objectives: partner building (PB), problem-solving (PS), prevention (P), and organizational support (OS) are slightly different from Wilson’s variables. However, as stated previously, Wilson’s latency approach, provides guidance to address the variation in the number of variables. The other difference is Wilson designated COP plan as an indicator, however, this variable helps identify the sample.

**Data analysis.** The data analysis will consist of factoring the numerous variables by identifying what latency exists to formulate second order constructs. The constructs will then be placed in a multiple regression model to examine if there is a linear relationship that exists. The data will then be combined with the qualitative data for interpretation as demonstrated in Figure 1.

Although the hope in collecting secondary data is allows for generalizability, there are opportunities to experience threats to validity. The threats to the validity of the study are listed below in limitations.

**Limitations**

The threats to validity come with the factor analysis in the analysis of first order and second order constructs. Factor analysis to discover these dimensions may omit variables in the process. The use of the different variables as well, might create negative factors with limited explanation available. Because the data was captured previously, the techniques used to collect the data must be considered in the analysis of the data and could create some reliability with the individual conducting the factor analysis.

Another threat is the shift in the 2013 data, from numerous variables to nine. There may not be enough variables in the dataset to align correctly with the factor of analysis for the prior years and could great some questions about the ability to complete further analysis of the data.

An additional concern is the interpretation of analysis happening in both phases. As stated in the qualitative section, the crises of legitimation and integration (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007). For legitimation, the data analysis may yield no significant findings and integration of these results could happen if the goals of the study are not addressed appropriately. The concern of theoretical validity, the degree the theory lines up with the data collected, should be considered in the quantitative phase. The model may not be conducive to measure the rate of change in U.S. policing. The following section provides concluding remarks.

**Conclusions**
The study of organizations in their field provides researchers with a greater understanding of phenomenon like COP. Considering the relationships between the public and law enforcement is a great concern and a call to social action (Astley & Fombrun, 1983; Derickson, 2016). However, the social call is the impetus to uncover the direction of policing in the United States. Policing transformation has occurred, which is what Maguire and King (2004) predicted. The extent of the transformation is yet to be determined, with the focus needing to shift to address other threats, such as terrorism and work involving children (Maguire & King, 2004).

The models presented in this study have the potential to help others review the direction of policing or other organizational change happening at the organizational level. The study has the potential to provide a model to implement other industries. Mixed methods research is important in the study of phenomenon to create a representative view of what might be happening.

References


