

OBSERVATIONS ON THE MAKING OF POLICEMEN

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9781760570460

Observations on the making of policemen by John Van Maanen

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

JOHN VAN MAANEN

**OBSERVATIONS ON
THE MAKING OF
POLICEMEN**



Observations on the Making of Policemen

John Van Maanen

621-77

This research was supported in part by the Organizational Behavior Research Center at the University of California, Irvine. I would like to gratefully acknowledge the generous cooperation and support of men like M.C., Bill, Dave, Doug and George, who, like myself, learned what it means to live by the police culture. Their integrity, honesty and defiance of popular stereotypes made this study a most enlightening and enjoyable experience. Also, I would like to thank my academic colleagues, in particular, Robert Dubin, Lyman W. Porter, Edgar H. Schein and Mason Haire for their insightful suggestions and assistance during various phases of this research.

Abstract

The process of organizational socialization is examined in a large, urban police department. This interpenetration and eventual fusion by which persons acquire the motives, sentiments and behavioral patterns of the occupational culture is viewed from the perspective of the novitiates "breaking-in" to a police department. The development of a community of purpose and action among the police recruits is characterized as a four-phase socialization process. The phases are labelled choice, introduction, encounter and metamorphosis and, while only analytically distinct, serve as useful markers for describing the route traversed by recruits. The results of the newcomers' early police experiences and adventures are cast in terms of the common culture shared by police officers. Progress along the socialization continuum is seen as the gradual incorporation of an "in the same boat" collective consciousness stressing a "don't make waves" occupational philosophy.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE MAKING OF POLICEMEN

In recent years the so-called "police problem" has become one of the more institutionalized topics of routine conversation in this society. Regardless whether one views the police as friend or foe, virtually everyone has a set of "cop stories" to relate to willing listeners. Although most stories dramatize personal encounters and are situationally specific, there is a common thread running through these frequently heard accounts. Indeed, in such stories the police are almost always depicted as a homogenous occupational grouping somehow quite different than most other men.

Occupational stereotyping is, of course, not unknown. Professors, taxi-cab drivers, used car salesmen, corporate executives all have mythological counterparts in the popular culture. Yet, what is of interest here is the recognition by the police themselves of the implied differences. In the words of one knowledgeable observer, a Chief of Police:

"The day the new recruit walks through the doors of the police academy, he leaves society behind to enter a profession that does more than give him a job, it defines who he is. For all the years he remains, closed into the sphere of its rituals. . . he will

be a cop." (Ahern, 1972: 3)

Policemen generally view themselves as performing society's dirty work. As such, a gap is created between the police and the public. Today's patrolman feels cut off from the mainstream culture and unfairly stigmatized. In short, when the policeman dons his uniform, he enters a distinct subculture governed by norms and values designed to manage strain created by his "outsider" role in the community.¹ Consider the similarity between the following passages, the first from a patrolman, the second from a jazz musician:

"The problem with this job is the goddamn public. It really don't matter much whether you're a good cop or a bad one 'cause the people out there are so stupid that they'd never know the difference anyway. Say, for instance, you make a good pinch ...well, the good citizens' just figure you're doing your job, no big deal. But watch 'em put up a howl when you don't catch some asshole. No matter what you do, you can't win."²

"...If your working on a commercial band, they like it and so you have to play more corn. If you're working on a good band, then they don't like it, and that's a drag. If you're working on a good band and they like it, then that's a drag too. You hate them anyway, because you know that they don't know

