

2009

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE SENIORITY RIGHTS CULTURE WITHIN SEVERAL MID-SIZED MICHIGAN POLICE DEPARTMENTS

Michael E. Walleman
Northern Michigan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://commons.nmu.edu/theses>

Recommended Citation

Walleman, Michael E., "AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE SENIORITY RIGHTS CULTURE WITHIN SEVERAL MID-SIZED MICHIGAN POLICE DEPARTMENTS" (2009). *All NMU Master's Theses*. 521.
<https://commons.nmu.edu/theses/521>

This Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Works at NMU Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in All NMU Master's Theses by an authorized administrator of NMU Commons. For more information, please contact kmcdonou@nmu.edu, bsarjean@nmu.edu.

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE SENIORITY RIGHTS CULTURE WITHIN
SEVERAL MID-SIZED MICHIGAN POLICE DEPARTMENTS

By

Michael E. Walleman

THESIS

Submitted to
Northern Michigan University
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Graduate Studies Office

2009

SIGNATURE APPROVAL FORM

This thesis by Michael E. Walleman is recommended for approval by the student's thesis committee in the Department of Criminal Justice and by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Committee Chair: Dr. Dale Kapla Date

First Reader: Dr. Gregory Warchol Date

Second Reader: Professor Robert Hanson Date

Department Head: Dr. Dale Kapla Date

Dean of Graduate Studies: Dr. Cynthia Prosen Date

**OLSON LIBRARY
NORTHERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY**

THESIS DATA FORM

In order to catalog your thesis properly and enter a record in the OCLC international bibliographic data base, Olson Library must have the following requested information to distinguish you from others with the same or similar names and to provide appropriate subject access for other researchers.

Michael E. Walleman February 20, 1957

ABSTRACT

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE SENIORITY RIGHTS CULTURE WITHIN SEVERAL MID-SIZED MICHIGAN POLICE DEPARTMENTS

By

Michael E. Walleman

This research explores the relationship between police seniority practices and the affect they have on the morale and performance of police officers. This dynamic was investigated through the administration of a thirty-four question survey. Sworn officers in eight mid-sized police departments in Michigan were asked to participate. The results indicated seniority rights are a dominant determinate for officer pay scale, shift selection, vacation selection, lateral transfer and promotional ranking. These rights are widely accepted by the responding officers for pay scale, shift selection and vacation selection. However, the data also indicates a strong desire to replace seniority rights with performance standards in the areas dealing with career advancement such as, lateral transfer and promotional opportunities. The results of this study can be used for operational changes that will improve morale and career advancement opportunities for officers within these agencies.

Copyright by
Michael E. Walleman
2009

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my wife, Jacqueline Walleman
and my three sons, Jeremy, Bryan and Michael A. Walleman.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Author wishes to thank his thesis committee chair, Dr. Dale Kapla for his assistance throughout this project; Dr. Gregory Warchol and Professor Hanson for their participation in reviewing this research.

This thesis follows the format prescribed by the APA Publication Manual and the Department of Criminal Justice.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables	vii
Chapter 1: Introduction.....	1
Chapter 2: Literature Review	4
Participative Management	4
Authoritarian Leadership	4
Positive Reinforcement Theory	5
Police Unionization.....	6
Seniority Rights	8
Chapter 3: Research Methods	12
Sample.....	12
Method of Analysis.....	13
Survey Instrument.....	13
Request to Participate	13
Response Rate.....	14
Chapter 4: Data Analysis	15
Sample Demographics	15
Research Questions.....	19
Seniority Rights	20
Career Advancement.....	29
Performance Standards vs. Seniority Rights.....	33
Administration Perceptions.....	36
Chapter 5: Conclusions	42
Seniority Rights	43
Career Advancement.....	44
Willingness to Change	44
Attitude Towards Administration	46
Need for Further Research	47
Benefit to Criminal Justice.....	48
Summary.....	49
References.....	51
Appendix A - Demographics of Respondent Agencies	56
Appendix B - Request for Participation Letter	58
Appendix C - Survey Cover Letter	59

Appendix D - Survey Instrument60

Appendix E – NMU Human Subjects Research Review Approval Letter64

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4-1 Responding Agencies	15
Table 4-2 Gender of Respondents.....	16
Table 4-3 Rank of Respondents	17
Table 4-4 Seniority of Respondents.....	18
Table 4-5 Job Assignment of Respondents.....	19
Table 4-6 Survey Question Six	21
Table 4-7 Survey Question Seven.....	22
Table 4-8 Survey Question Eight.....	22
Table 4-9 Survey Question Nine.....	23
Table 4-10 Survey Question Ten	24
Table 4-11 Survey Question Eleven	25
Table 4-12 Survey Question Nineteen.....	25
Table 4-13 Survey Question Twelve	26
Table 4-14 Survey Question Twenty-six	27
Table 4-15 Survey Question Twenty-eight.....	28
Table 4-16 Survey Question Fifteen	29
Table 4-17 Survey Question Twenty	30
Table 4-18 Survey Question Twenty-one	31
Table 4-19 Survey Question Twenty-two.....	32
Table 4-20 Survey Question Twenty-three.....	32
Table 4-21 Survey Question Eighteen	34

Table 4-22 Survey Question Thirteen.....	37
Table 4-23 Survey Question Fourteen A	38
Table 4-24 Survey Question Seventeen	39
Table 4-25 Survey Question Twenty-five.....	40
Table 4-26 Survey Question Twenty-nine.....	41

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

How, if at all, do seniority based practices effect officer performance, personnel morale and overall performance in police departments? Adams' Equity Theory states that a perceived inequity by officers can develop when they feel the rewards (salaries, job assignments, shift selection, promotions etc.) they receive for their efforts is not equal to others' performance and rewards. This perception can lead officers to decrease their efforts to equalize the inequity or it may cause the effort to increase, if by doing so, greater rewards can be obtained (Adams, 1963).

Many departments engage in collective bargaining, resulting in officer seniority becoming the dominate factor that determines pay scale, shift selection, vacation selection, lateral transfers and promotional opportunity. These long-standing practices have become ingrained into the very fabric and culture of the organization. As a result, these procedures perpetuate a relationship between the department's administration and the rank and file members. Oftentimes, this relationship becomes negative because discipline is sometimes used to improve performance. This type of relationship is indicative of the traditional police organization in which the leadership is authoritarian. Punishment is applied by supervisors as motivation when officers fail to produce or follow orders, negatively affecting morale (Gaines, Worrall, Southerland & Angell, 2003).

Research indicates that a seniority based environment has the potential to lower officer performance, negatively affect morale at all levels of the department and interfere with the agency's basic function of serving the citizens they represent. A study conducted

by Byrne, Dezhbakhsh and King (1996) examined the effect unions had on police productivity. The results indicated that unionization had an insignificant effect on production when dealing with serious crime but did diminish productivity for minor or quality of life crimes.

Seniority rights systems equalize all members of the organization and eliminates the need for its members to establish a hierarchy of status based on the performance of the individual. All members are the same with the exception of their seniority level which determines their organizational standing. Seniority rights allow organizational members to be treated differently and equally at the same time. They are treated differently because of their individual seniority and equally because of the basic premise of “paying your dues” (i.e., if you stay around long enough you too will obtain the benefits of a senior member) (Fisher & Smith, 2004).

Recent research indicates that by giving employees control over their careers, enabling them to advance through hard work and giving them a voice in organizational matters, it brings out the best they have to offer. Some seniority rewards systems have their origin based on the “human capital on-the-job training mind-set”. It is common for experienced workers to be paid more and receive more perks than others with less experience or seniority. However, no correlation has been found for higher performance between senior higher paid employees and that of lower paid less experienced employees (Medoff & Abraham, 1980). Conversely, there is evidence that performance related pay attracts higher quality people and motivates them to perform better (Booth & Frank, 1999).

The research to date provides a great deal of information about seniority rights, some positive and some negative, with most providing a universal prospective on how these rights affect the organization or industry. The advice given is what *management* must do to improve productivity for the benefit of the organization (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982). In their study, the researchers concluded that with proper management practices officer productivity could increase to 80 to 90 percent of their potential. Yet, they fail to address how these rights affect the *individual* officer, and thus the performance of the organization.

Therefore, this research attempts to address the following three questions: 1) What are the individual officer's feelings and attitudes towards seniority rights? 2) Do officers prefer to advance their careers based on their performance or their time on the job? 3) Do officers favor replacing the current seniority rights system with one that will reward officers based on their individual performance? The administration of a hand delivered survey to eight mid-sized police departments in Michigan has been administered to answer these questions. All line and supervisory officers in each department were asked to voluntarily participate. Analysis of the results will be presented through the use of descriptive statistics.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature surveyed for the present research consists of a brief overview of the common approaches to management and a more detailed review of police unionization and seniority rights practices.

Participative Management

Current research addresses the concepts of participative management and employee empowerment to improve performance and morale, which in turn improves the policing profession. Participative management is a management style that involves the employee in the planning and decision making processes of the organization, in particular the areas that affect them. In the context of a police agency, simply answering calls for service is no longer enough. Police agencies must extract the most from their most valuable asset, their officers. By involving officers in their career, through participative management, a motivational culture is created that encourages officers to excel on the job and accomplish the agency's goals (Gaines et al., 2003).

Authoritarian Leadership

When the leadership is authoritarian in structure, it allows very little input from subordinates regarding the decision making processes that impact their careers. These departments loosely follow Max Weber's principles of management with the exception of principle five: 1) Well-defined hierarchy of authority, 2) Specialization of tasks, 3) Formalization, 4) Impersonality of management, 5) Personnel decisions based on merit (Weber, 1969). Sandler and Mintz, (1978) identify three large changes that have taken place in law enforcement in the last thirty years: 1) An increase in the flexibility of the

police agencies, 2) a softening of the police public image, and 3) a closer relationship between police and citizens and between the police administration and rank and file members. These changes are a result of police organizations adopting a management strategy that includes participative management, reducing the levels of the organizations hierarchy, community policing, civilianization, police-citizen partnerships, and department wide team work and collaboration (Murphy & Brown, 1973).

Consequently, officers feel alienated because of an overemphasis on control by the administration and see this as a lack of trust (Denyer, Callender & Thompson, 1975). The administration subsequently feels justified in using strict control to effectively manage large groups of people and to hold them accountable for their actions, as some officers may develop behavior or performance issues without this type of supervision (Jaques, 1990).

More contemporary research however, states that police organizations need to change from this style of top-down management to one that flattens the organizational hierarchy. Furthermore, most management theorists agree that authoritarian agencies should change from the bureaucratic model to more of a participative management style that gives subordinates a voice in the decision making process (Gaines et al., 2003).

Positive Reinforcement Theory

Behavioral theorist sees management and management practices as having a profound impact on employee motivation. They promote the application of positive reinforcement techniques to improve the individual's performance. The manager who

skillfully applies positive reinforcement can extract the level of performance employees could give, beyond what is required, if they wanted to. According to Daniels (2000):

When we are secure in knowing that right is rewarded and wrong is punished, and we know which behaviors define each, we feel secure, calm, and confident because we are *in control of our own consequences!* Rewards come because we earn them, not through chance. Rather than wiggling helplessly in the clutch of fate, we can do something to help ourselves (p.232).

Aubrey Daniels in his book, “Bringing out the Best in People”, advocates the use of positive reinforcement to promote superior employee performance “Those who perform well should get more reinforcement and rewards than those who perform poorly” (Daniels, 2000, p. 231). Daniels (2000) teaches that to maintain high performance levels reinforcement and rewards must be immediate and continuous. By changing to a performance based criterion for daily behavior and productivity, officers will be self-reinforcing knowing they have exceeded what is expected on a daily basis. In the process, they will know exactly what the reward will be for this superior performance (pp. 25-34).

Police Unionization

Unionization introduced the practice of collective bargaining to police organizations in an attempt to secure a better life and working conditions within the agency by improving wages and benefits. However, collective bargaining is prohibited in several states adversely affecting the formation of police unions with any real power to influence management practices. Reaves & Goldberg (2000) found that thirty-seven percent of police departments in the United States operate under a collective bargaining

agreement with seventy-five percent of all departments having some type of police or fraternal organization.

Early unionization also attempted to move the police profession away from the control of politics and the creation of the professional police department devoid of outside influences. However, a 1973 study by Juris and Feuille titled “The Impact of Police Unions: Summary Report” found that many union views ran counter to professionalism and thwarted managements attempts to gain professional status. Police unions look upon higher education proposals as divisive when trying to obtain more money for all their members, while management views them as individual achievement that should be rewarded (Juris & Feuille, 1973).

Studies are advocating the need for cooperation between the union and the administration to improve organizational health. If a working relationship based on teamwork existed, many labor issues could be resolved amicably before becoming problems leaving more energy to be spent on providing service to the community. An article written for the “Police Chief Magazine” titled “Shared Leadership: Can Empowerment Work in Police Organizations?” dealt with a study involving the Broken Arrow Police Department (BAPD). The BAPD created a team to participate in important decision-making processes for the department. The team consisted of individuals from the union, management, most divisions, units, and ranks of the department. The analysis of the experiment revealed that officer views of management, departmental communication, camaraderie, enthusiasm, involvement, support, and dedication, all improved considerably (Wuestewald & Steinheider, 2008).

Seniority Rights

Seniority rights philosophy is the cornerstone for union protection of its members against the arbitrary practices of management in many police organizations. These rights were developed as way to force management to treat subordinates fairly and equally. Police unionization was the result of unsatisfactory working conditions and unfair treatment of employees by management. Labor contracts spelled out protocols and procedures that management was to follow to eliminate bias and misuse of authority by the administration Bell, 1981 (Gaines et al., 2003). A study conducted by Carter and Sapp, (1992) looked at police labor contracts of police agencies with 100 or more officers. In about half the agencies studied, they found clauses that held seniority as the primary or an important criterion in shift selection, transfers, promotions and other personnel decisions. This indicates how unions see seniority as the fairest measure for many personnel decisions (as cited in Gaines et al., 2003, p. 420).

Seniority driven agencies have no incentive structure that rewards superior performance. The seniority dominated culture rewards only longevity and actually causes dissention within the ranks between the low performers and the high performers. The use of seniority as the basis for rewarding employees sends the message that some employees are valued more than others. This creates the impression among employees that desire recognition and achieving success through superior performance that they are being treated unfairly (Fisher & Smith, 2004). “The question higher performers ask, then, is a question of justice. If we high performers are treated exactly the same as low performers, where is the fairness (justice) in that? And, of course, after a while they will stop performing at high levels (extinction)” (Daniels, 2000, p. 231). Police agencies working

under a collective bargaining agreement that predominately rewards employees based solely on seniority are limited in their ability to shape desirable employee behavior through rewards. In essence, seniority based rewards tie managements hands in their ability to motivate employees. The department must rely on the individual officer to be self-motivating and productive.

Other studies address the seniority issue and its role in underachievement. When asked, managers that are forced to operate under a union contract feel limited in their ability to reward employees based on individual performance. They resign themselves to promote, award preferred positions, etc. based on the individuals seniority rather than merit (Alexander, 2003). Katz and Kahn (1978) stated that the use of seniority as a reward system may not help organizations to be more productive because it does not create the motivational work atmosphere for individual employees to perform better (as cited in Fischer, 2008, p. 2).

Many departments rely upon seniority-based assignment to avoid the complications of a merit-based procedure. Often a seniority system results in an acceptable officer being promoted or transferred, but it does not ensure that the best-qualified officer will get the assignment. It does, however, reduce some of the complaints and headaches for management “Personally, I believe that it is management’s responsibility to do what is best for the organization rather than merely take the easy path.” (Woods, D.D.Jr.PH.D., personal communication). Rewarding employees for mediocre or sub-standard performance conditions them to perform in mediocre or sub-standard ways, thus eliminating the potential for superior-performance (Daniels, 2000).

In his book “The Truth About Managing People”, Stephen Robbins states that unmotivated employees are the fault of management and organizational culture and not that of the employees. When organizations reward things other than performance such as higher pay based on seniority, the employee may perceive the performance reward connection as being weak and demotivating (Robbins, 2008). Thus, having a strong correlation between employee performance and the rewards received is motivating.

Research into the positive and negative aspects of a seniority rights reward system have illuminated much about police departments operating under such a system. The positives and negatives of seniority seem to depend on the type of organization, type of employees and the environment in which they operate. Ronald Fisher in his article, “Rewarding seniority: exploring cultural and organizational predictors of seniority allocations” states that employees with more seniority have a greater understanding of the workings of the organization. They have a greater investment personally in the organization thus, increasing their concern and loyalty to it. They take a greater leadership role and understand what needs to be done. He then goes on to say that the research regarding seniority rights as a reward distribution method and its effect on the organizational environment is gapped and needs to be studied more comprehensively (Fisher, 2008).

The research in this area concerns the empowerment of employees through participative management (Gaines, 2003), rewarding superior performance through positive reinforcement (Daniels, 2000) and how seniority rights create an atmosphere of mediocrity and low morale (Alexander, 2003). There is ample data suggesting that a

reward system based on individual performance criteria along with participative management style increases officer morale and promotes superior-performance.

This research attempts to verify the claims of the previous research by delving into the feelings of sworn police officers working in seniority dominated police agencies. Questions relating to this established research were asked of the respondents through a voluntary hand delivered survey administered through their individual departments. The data generated is very supportive of the conclusions drawn of prior studies.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

How, if at all, do seniority based practices affect officer performance, personnel morale and overall performance in police departments? The purpose of the present study was to determine if officers were in favor of replacing the seniority rights culture in which they now participate, to a system that rewards officers by their individual level of performance.

Sample

The sampling method used in this study is non probability sampling applied to the target population through a questionnaire. This sampling method was chosen because of the similarities of the police agencies involved and this author's familiarity with each of them. Because of the similarity of these agencies, the attitudes and perceptions of the officers should be analogous, thus generating accurate data regarding the questions being posed in this study (Maxfield & Babbie, 2005).

The police agencies listed in Appendix A possess the following similar characteristics making them ideal for the purpose of this study: 1) They are all located within the same geographical area which has fostered a close working relationship with each other, 2) This author's employment with the St. Clair Shores Police Department has cultivated personal relationships with the members of these departments which will facilitate the request to participate in this study, 3) Each department is represented by one of the two dominate police unions in the state, the Michigan Association of Police (MAP) or the Police Officers Association of Michigan (POAM), 4) Each department is small to medium in size, employing 33 to 173 sworn officers, 5) The communities they protect are

of the middle class demographic with similar crime levels and each is a suburb of Detroit, and 6) They all operate under a similar organizational structure, often using each other for comparisons during their collective bargaining negotiations.

Method of Analysis

The data gathered was analyzed using simple descriptive data analysis. Tables of figures and averages are utilized to illustrate percentages and frequencies. Through analysis of the responses generated by the questionnaire, this author was able to determine the general measure of attitudes and perceptions regarding seniority rights issues.

Survey Instrument

The respondents were asked to participate voluntarily in the hand delivered survey. The respondents included all sworn personnel from the chief to the officer with the least seniority. The questionnaire consists of 34 questions. The questions were designed to solicit views on seniority rights, officer performance, departmental conflict and service provided to their respective communities. The questions are predominately in a yes/no format, making data analysis efficient.

Request to Participate

Each agency listed in the Appendix A was asked to participate by contacting the head of the agency (Chief) by letter. The letter gave a brief explanation and purpose of the survey. Also provided was a sample survey and cover letter. The letter was followed-up with a telephone call from this author. All agencies contacted gave approval to

distribute the survey to their personnel. To expedite the process, this author requested the head of the agency designate a contact officer within each participating department to distribute and collect the surveys.

The surveys were hand delivered and retrieved by this author. The initial contact with the target agencies began on January 27, 2009. All agencies had distributed and returned the completed surveys by February 13, 2009.

Response Rate

The overall number of eligible respondents is 660, and is based on the number of sworn officers employed by the participating agencies. Stressed in the cover letter as being voluntary, 50% or 327 officers participated in the survey. These numbers do not accurately account for the number of officers available to take the survey at the time it was offered. Factors not listed or available to this author were the number of officers on vacation, out sick or injured, training outside the department and officers assigned to state and federal task forces. Without knowing the exact number of officer not available to take the survey, it is safe to say that the response rate was slightly higher than 50%. A response rate of at least 50% is sufficient for analysis and reporting (Maxfield & Babbie, 2005).

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS

Sample Demographics

The demographic variables used in this analysis are gender, rank, department seniority and job assignment. Race was not included because of the low number of non-white respondents. Of the 327 participants only three were black, two were Asian and one was American Indian.

Table 4-1

Respondents by Agency

Police Departments	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
St. Clair Shores	53	16.2	16.2
Harper Woods	24	7.3	23.5
Eastpointe	33	10.1	33.6
Roseville	27	8.3	41.9
Clinton Township	36	11.0	52.9
Chesterfield	41	12.5	65.4
Sterling Heights	84	25.7	91.1
Shelby Township	29	8.9	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

Table 4-1 list the total number of respondents per agency (frequency) and the corresponding percentage to the total number of respondents for all agencies. As shown

there is a wide range of percentages listed. This is a result of the participation level of each agency, but is also relative to the number of sworn officers employed by each agency. For example SHPD employs 173 officers while HWPD employs just 33.

Table 4-2

Gender of Respondents

Gender	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	305	93.3	93.3
Female	22	6.7	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

As shown in Table 4-2, male officers make-up the vast majority of the survey participants. Without venturing into a new area of research, it appears the recruitment of females and other minorities may be lacking in these departments.

Table 4-3

Rank of Respondents

Rank	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Patrolman	230	70.3	70.3
Sergeant	59	18.0	88.4
Lieutenant	26	8.0	96.3
Deputy Chief	10	3.1	99.4
Police Chief	2	.6	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

Table 4-3 records the rank of the respondents. The percentages listed can be considered as consistent with normal staffing levels with the exception of the police chief rank with only two responding out of eight possible. The rank of deputy chief was chosen to represent all rank designations above lieutenant but below police chief.

TABLE 4-4

Seniority of Respondents

Department	# of		
Seniority in years	Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
1-5	55	16.8	16.8
6-10	68	20.8	37.6
11-15	75	22.9	60.6
16-20	76	23.2	83.8
21-25	30	9.2	93.0
25+years	23	7.0	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

The sample seniority levels are listed Table 4-4. These ratios again appear to be normal for long established police agencies such as the ones who participated in this research. These percentages are relative to rates of retirements and the ability of these agencies to maintain their long standing manpower minimums which can be affected by the economic conditions of the community as well as population numbers. For example, in the 1970's the SCSPD had a manpower level of 105 officers, compared to the 85 officers today. These manpower levels correspond to the city's population levels which in the 1970's was 90,000 plus residents compared to the 60,000 plus level today.

Table 4-5

Job Assignment of Respondents

Job Assignment	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Patrol	212	64.8	64.8
Detective Bureau	54	16.5	81.3
Traffic	23	7.0	88.4
Narcotics	10	3.1	91.4
Other	16	4.9	96.3
Administration	12	3.7	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

Work assignment as shown in Table 4-5 indicate that road patrol dominates the total number of respondents. Almost all ranks and seniority levels are included within the patrol assignment category with the exception of the police chief position. Work assignments are relative to the individual agencies operational organization but the data presented here is in overall response rate numbers.

Research Questions

The following discussion will explain how the survey questions were used to answer the three research questions presented in this study. What are the individual officer's feelings and attitudes towards seniority rights? Do officers prefer to advance their careers through their performance or their time on the job? Do officers favor

replacing seniority rights with one that will reward officers based on their individual performance? In addition, these questions reveal the opinions held by the responding officers regarding their respective administrations.

Seniority Rights

The survey elicited answers from the respondents on their feelings about seniority rights with regard to departmental operations such as pay scale determination, shift and vacation selection hierarchy and lateral transfer and promotional determinations. In all departments surveyed, seniority rights affected pay scale, shift selection, vacation selection, lateral transfer and the promotional process. In addition, the survey also inquired into how the individual respondent's morale was affected along with the affect seniority rights had on the relationships with other officers.

The seniority rights listed are contained within the collective bargaining agreements for the participating departments or as methods of operation determined to be reasonable guidelines for day to day procedures. This is consistent with a study conducted by Carter and Sapp (1992) that looked at police labor contracts. In half of the departments studied, they found clauses that held seniority as the primary or an important criterion in shift selection, transfers, promotion and other personnel decisions (Carter & Sapp, 1992). Michigan is a highly unionized state, especially in the metropolitan Detroit area. This author is unaware of any police agencies within close proximity to the responding departments that do not operate under some type of collective bargaining agreement.

Survey questions six through ten addresses the issues of pay scale, shift and vacation selection and lateral transfer and promotional guidelines. These questions produced very strong responses for or against the question posed. Seniority practices remain to be an integral part of the operational methods of the participating agencies. The responses indicate a high level of acceptance on the part of the officers surveyed for seniority rights. However, the data also shows a desire for individual work performance to replace seniority rights in matters of career advancement

Table 4-6

Question 6 In your opinion, should a superior performing junior officer be paid more than a sub-standard performing senior officer?

Response	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	77	23.5	23.5
no	246	75.2	98.8
n/a	4	1.2	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

Table 4-6 demonstrates very strong feelings by most respondents that seniority should be the standard used in pay scale matters. This has been a long standing accepted procedure for determining pay levels. It is simple to determine and eliminates potential bias as to who is entitled to certain pay levels.

Table 4-7

Question 7 Should shift selection be made by superior work performance rather than seniority?

Response	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	45	13.8	13.8
no	281	85.9	99.7
n/a	1	.3	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

Another long standing practice is the use of seniority to determine who receives first choice in shift selection. Table 4-7 again demonstrates a very strong acceptance of this practice.

Table 4-8

Question 8 Should vacation selection be made by superior work performance rather than seniority?

Response	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	27	8.3	8.3
no	300	91.7	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

In line with shift selection is vacation pick which is another operational method that relies solely on seniority as the determining factor. Table 4-8 illustrates an even higher acceptance rate than shift selection by the respondents in favor of seniority for vacation selection.

Table 4-9

Question 9 Should selection for preferred positions such as DB, Narc., Traffic, etc. be based on superior work performance rather than seniority?

Response	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	270	82.6	82.6
no	56	17.1	100.0
n/a	1	.3	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

Table 4-9 demonstrates the respondents turn to performance as the preferred method to determine who should be awarded a lateral transfer. As shown, this is not a subtle change away from seniority, but an obvious desire for recognition and reward for superior performance. Unlike pay scale and shift and vacation selection, lateral transfer is not an eventual guarantee based on seniority. The opportunities to transfer are few and far between and may never become available to the individual officer based on his seniority.

Table 4-10

Question 10 Should seniority have more influence on promotions than superior work performance?

Response	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	75	22.9	22.9
no	249	76.1	99.1
n/a	3	.9	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

Though, not as high as lateral transfer, the desire for performance to be more influential in the promotional process over seniority is another indicator of changing views regarding long standing seniority traditions. Table 4-10 reveals that promotion is another area in which the respondents think that their performance should be recognized and rewarded. Again, the opportunity for promotion is limited and not a guarantee for high seniority officers.

Survey questions eleven and nineteen dealt with the respondent's personal opinions and observations. These two questions were designed to solicit from the respondents how seniority rights had impacted them personally and the affect they had on interpersonal relationships within their departments.

Table 4-11

Question 11 Have you ever become frustrated during your career because you did not have enough seniority to obtain your desired goal?

Response	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	120	36.7	36.7
no	207	63.3	100.0
Total	327	100.0	100.0

Table 4-11 indicates a large number of the respondents experienced some level of frustration during their careers because of seniority rights procedures. This frustration stemmed from seniority rights preventing them from obtaining a desired goal.

Table 4-12

Question 19 Does resentment develop between officers because of seniority rights issues?

Response	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	191	58.4	58.4
no	133	40.7	99.1
n/a	3	.9	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

When asked if resentment has developed between officers because of seniority rights, over half the officers stated that hard-feelings do occur. The responses to these two questions demonstrate that seniority rights practices have a profound negative consequence on morale and inter-personal relationships within the participating agencies.

Table 4-13

Question 12 Have seniority rights had an adverse affect on your level of work performance?

Response	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	26	8.0	8.0
no	301	92.0	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

Question twelve in Table 4-13 asked officers to evaluate their own work performance and if seniority rights caused them not to perform at a high level. The overwhelming majority stated that they experienced no adverse affects on their productivity. This high percentage could be indicative of how the respondents perceive their work ethic as being adequate or superior and the acceptance they hold for seniority rights. Another thought is that this question was too negative for the officers to admit performing at a subpar level, thus claiming to be unaffected personally by seniority rights.

Table 4-14

Question 28 Do seniority rights sometimes prohibit the best qualified officer from being promoted or transferred to preferred positions?

Response	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	237	72.5	72.5
no	86	26.3	98.8
n/a	4	1.2	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

Finally, the majority surveyed feel seniority rights sometimes prevent the most qualified officer from being laterally transferred or promoted is shown in Table 4-14. This question reinforces the responses given by officers in regards to feelings of frustration and resentment that develop between officers over seniority rights. If an officer feels that he is more deserving of the transfer than the one who got the job, then the human response is to be frustrated and resentful.

Table 4-15

Question 26 Do you think that the current seniority practices at your department are fair?

Response	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	257	78.6	78.6
no	67	20.5	99.1
n/a	3	.9	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

Table 4-15 seems to contradict the findings in Table 4-14 in which the majority of the respondents feel that seniority rights practices are fair. If the result is that the less qualified officer is rewarded over the more qualified officer, how can that be fair? These responses confirm certain aspects of the study by Fisher and Smith, 2004 which states the seniority dominated culture rewards only longevity and actually causes dissention within the ranks. However, the results contradict the aspect of the study that states the use of seniority as the basis for rewarding employees creates the impression among employees that desire achieving success through superior performance that they are being treated unfairly (Fisher & Smith). The responses indicate a high level of dissention but also the acceptance and perception of fairness by the respondents.

Career Advancement

To delve deeper into the respondents feelings about being in control of their career's, a series of contingency questions were asked. These questions were designed to extract what the respondents were willing to do on their own to advance their careers. The questions were posed as absolutes in which personal efforts to better themselves would result in benefits to their career.

Table 4-16

Question 15 Would you prefer that seniority guide your career rather than your own efforts?

Response	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	35	10.7	10.7
no	283	86.5	97.2
n/a	9	2.8	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

Table 4-16 reveals that the great majority of all respondents are not in favor of having seniority guide their careers. This high percentage reveals that most of the respondents would prefer to rely on themselves to control their destiny by being recognized and rewarded for superior performance.

Each of the following Tables illustrate that as the respondents are given more control over their careers through their own efforts, the benefits to their departments also increase.

Table 4-17

Question 20 Do you feel that you would be more productive knowing that your efforts would advance your career rather than relying on your seniority?

Response	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	216	66.1	66.1
no	107	32.7	98.8
n/a	4	1.2	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

Table 4-17 generated contradictory data to what was presented in Table 4-13. To advance their careers, the majority of the responding officers indicated they would increase their productivity if they knew their efforts would help advance their careers. However, in Table 4-13 they overwhelmingly denied any negative effects on their productivity as a result of seniority practices. The contradiction lies in the fact that if in the officers opinions they are working to their full potential, as depicted in Table 4-13, how can there be room for increased productivity as shown in Table 4-17?

Table 4-18

Question 21 Would you do more personally to advance your education if you knew it would benefit your career?

Response	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	264	80.7	80.7
no	59	18.0	98.8
n/a	4	1.2	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

Higher education is becoming more and more important in law enforcement with many departments requiring college degrees prior to being hired. Research indicates that college educated officers outperform officers with less education (Krimmel, 1996). In response to question twenty-one in Table 4-18 the majority of officers stated they would do more to further their education if they knew it would benefit their career. To expand one's education is not a task that is easy to accomplish. All the respondents surveyed are full time officers making the pursuit for higher education very difficult to undertake.

Table 4-19

Question 22 Would you do more personally to advance your training if you knew it would benefit your career?

Response	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	284	86.9	86.9
no	41	12.5	99.4
n/a	2	.6	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

Training their personnel is another area in which contemporary police agencies have increased their efforts. Table 4-19 reveals that most of the respondents would do more personally to enhance their training as a means to advance their careers.

Table 4-20

Question 23 Would you become more involved in the community where you work as a volunteer if you knew it would advance your career?

Response	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	180	55.0	55.0
no	145	44.3	99.4
n/a	2	.6	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

Police agencies have an opportunity to connect with their communities through positive contact with police officers such as local sporting events, community gatherings, fund raisers and other charitable events. There is no better way to develop strong community relations between the police and the public than to have officers that are involved personally in the community. Table 4-20 shows that most officers would become more involved in the community where they work as a volunteer if they knew it would benefit their career.

The responses in Tables 4-17 through 4-20 demonstrate a strong desire by the respondents to have control over their careers and a willingness to improve themselves to advance their careers. This is what participative management claims will occur when employees are given a voice in areas that affect them (Gaines, et al. 2003).

Performance Standards vs Seniority Rights

The respondents were asked if they would be in favor of changing from the current seniority rights standards to one that rewarded officers based on performance criterion for pay scale, shift and vacation selection, lateral transfer and promotional ranking. This willingness to change was contingent on the performance guidelines being established by a committee from all levels of the agency in which the standards developed were acceptable to the majority of the department. These performance standards would include number of arrests; felony and misdemeanor, traffic enforcement, self-initiated criminal investigations, training, report writing and educational advancement. While analyzing the data several respondents took the time to write notes in the margins stating that current performance criterion is too subjective and influenced

by supervisory bias or favoritism. These comments shed light on the mistrust or lack of faith in the fairness and accuracy of existing performance evaluations.

Table 4-21

Question 18 If your departments performance criteria and its implementation was established by a committee comprised of department members from all levels of the agency and these criteria were accepted by the majority of officers, would you be in favor of using these standards to determine the following based on superior performance in place of seniority?

18a) Officer pay grade?

Response	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	86	26.3	26.3
no	237	72.5	98.8
n/a	4	1.2	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

Table 4-21, continued

18b) Shift and vacation selection?

Response	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	79	24.2	24.2
no	244	74.6	98.8
n/a	4	1.2	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

18 c) Lateral transfer/preferred positions?

Response	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	240	73.4	73.4
no	82	25.1	98.5
n/a	5	1.5	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

Table 4-21, continued

18 d) *As part of the promotional ranking system?*

Response	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	240	73.4	73.4
no	82	25.1	98.5
n/a	5	1.5	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

The answers to this proposition are listed in Table 4-21. In line with previous responses to similar questions the majority of officers did not feel pay scale should be determined by performance nor did they want shift or vacation selection to be decided by performance. They did prefer to have promotions and lateral transfers determined by performance rather than seniority which are consistent with other career advancement responses.

Administration Perceptions

The vast majority of the respondents feel their administrations spend more time trying to increase officer performance than developing crime reducing strategies for the community as shown in Table 4-22.

Table 4-22

Question 13 Does your department's administration spend more time trying to increase officer production than developing crime reducing strategies for the community?

Response	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	262	80.1	80.1
no	61	18.7	98.8
n/a	4	1.2	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

These responses signify how conflict between the administration and the rank and file, with regards to performance issues can adversely affect the service provided to the communities represented by the responding agencies. A study by Byrne, Dezhbakhsh and King (1996) was conducted on the effect that unionization had on police productivity. They found no significant effect on serious crime but did find diminished productivity for minor or quality of life crimes (Ibid). The relevance of the Byrne study is that management is so preoccupied with improving officer performance that the efforts needed to implement crime reducing strategies for the community are neglected. If officers were rewarded for superior performance, productivity would most likely increase, thus alleviating managements concerns about performance, allowing crime reducing strategies to become a priority.

Table 4-23

*Question 14(a) Do you have a voice in department policy and decision making?
If no, would you like a voice in department policy and decision making?*

Response	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	213	65.1	65.1
no	27	8.3	73.4
n/a	87	26.6	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

Table 4-23 reveals that most of the respondents feel they do not have a voice in departmental policy and decision making but wished they did, a further indication that officers would prefer to operate under a participative style of management. The percentages would have been higher if only line officers had been surveyed. The reason being is that the survey was given to all ranks of the responding agencies including upper management who do have input into policy and decision making.

Table 4-24

Question 17 Is the threat of discipline used to increase officer performance?

Response	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	237	72.5	72.5
no	84	25.7	98.2
n/a	6	1.8	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

Question seventeen depicted in Table 4-24 probed the officer’s opinions regarding the use of discipline to improve officer performance within their respective departments. The majority felt that discipline was used as a tactic by the administration to improve performance. A large majority within the departments surveyed indicated this to be the case. This question seemed to be black or white in nature, discipline is either applied or it is not. However, there was not one hundred percent agreement among the respondents. Even with this lack of agreement, the data points towards discipline as being the preferred method of management to force improvement in officer productivity.

Table 4-25

Question 25 Do you feel that the administration at your department has your best interests at heart?

Response	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	131	40.1	40.1
no	192	58.7	98.8
n/a	4	1.2	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

Finally, Tables 4-25 and 4-26 depict the officer's perceptions about their administrations Table 4-25 displays the results of how officers perceive their administrations level of concern for them personally. More than half do not feel that their administration has their best interest at heart. Granted, management must consider the good of the organization over the desires of the individual officer, but morale and employee satisfaction is also a component of a healthy organization.

Table 4-26

Question 29 Do you feel that your department treats all officers equally and fairly?

Response	# of Respondents	Percent	Cumulative Percent
yes	103	31.5	31.5
no	221	67.6	99.1
n/a	3	.9	100.0
Total	327	100.0	

Table 4-26 reinforces the data generated in Table 4-25. An even greater number of respondents do not feel that all officers are treated equally or fairly within their respective departments. The responses contained in Tables 4-25 and 4-26 illustrates a serious divide within the responding agencies between management and line personnel. The lack of trust and feeling of well being is significant.

The responses within this section are indicative of the traditional police organization in which the leadership is authoritarian. Punishment is applied by supervisors as motivation when officers fail to produce, negatively affecting morale (Gaines, et al. 2003).

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this research was to investigate officer perceptions regarding seniority rights practices as the dominate factor affecting departmental operations and career advancement. This study asked three questions: 1) What are officer's personal feelings and attitudes towards seniority rights? 2) Do officers prefer to advance their careers through personal efforts or have advancement based on their seniority? and 3) Would officers be in favor of changing from seniority rights to a performance standards system?

Literature points to a substantial utilization of seniority rights practices within the policing profession. These practices have developed over many years through the collective bargaining process. They developed as a means to counter the perceived unfair managerial practices and create a system that was fair to all members of the organization. However, other research has shown seniority systems can have an adverse affect on officer morale, performance and departmental effectiveness. Additional research has indicated the need for police agencies to change from the bureaucratic authoritarian model to a more flattened hierarchical structure with the adoption of a participative management style. These changes are needed to improve officer productivity and the overall effectiveness of the police agency.

The administration of a hand delivered survey to eight mid-sized police departments in south-east Michigan was presented with the data collected being examined, resulting in the conclusions drawn. The data obtain were analyzed through the

use of descriptive statistics. All line and supervisory personnel from each agency were asked to voluntarily participate.

Seniority Rights

This study shows seniority rights remain a very integral component of the police agencies surveyed. This author believes the data acquired are indicative of other police agencies that operate under a similar paradigm. Each one of the eight participating departments indicated seniority was a major determinant for pay scale, shift and vacation selection, lateral transfers and promotional opportunities. However, similar studies involving additional police agencies operating under similar circumstances would need to be conducted to test the generalizability of this study.

The responses to the questions indicate the officers surveyed are willing to concede pay scale, shift and vacation selection to seniority rights. When asked if a superior performing junior officer should be paid more than a sub-performing senior officer, 75.2 % answered no. In addition, the same was asked for shift and vacation selection, with the respondents answering no 85.9% and 91.7% respectively. These percentages indicate a high level of acceptance for seniority rights with regard to these concerns.

When developing this study, this author assumed as seniority of the respondents increased so would the loyalty to seniority rights. It was surprising to see the responses from the far end of the seniority spectrum when asked about using performance as the determining factor for pay scale. The total for all respondents was 73% against using performance as the determining factor. However, within the sample of respondents with

seniority of twenty-five plus years, 52% felt performance should be the determining factor. This was unexpected, but may be explained as being a more candid response from people who are nearing the end of their careers and able to speak more frankly about their opinions.

Career Advancement

When asked about career advancement such as lateral transfer and promotional opportunities, the respondents were very much in favor of having their performance levels determine the outcome. The data indicate an overwhelming desire of the respondents to be in control of their own destiny and career advancement.

Other questions were asked to determine what length the respondents would go to in order to benefit their careers if they knew their efforts would have a positive effect on their goals. The majority indicated that they would voluntarily increase their levels of productivity 66.1%, education 80.7%, training 86.9% and as a community volunteer 55.0%. These percentages not only indicate the desires of the respondents but also the benefit to their departments and communities by gaining more qualified dedicated officers.

Willingness to Change

This study has shown a profound dissatisfaction in some areas of the current system but also reluctance to make wholesale changes away from seniority to performance as the measure of one's worth. Individuals are inclined to resist change out of fear even when the changes are beneficial to everyone. Law enforcement is particularly susceptible to this phenomenon "Changes in policing are akin to bending

granite, that they are nearly impossible” (Guyot, 1979, p. 587). For change of this magnitude to be accepted and successful, a high degree of trust and cooperation from all levels of the organization would need to be present. Increasing employee participation is the most lasting form of change and is necessary to attain complete cooperation to implement change (Gaines, 2003). As a result of this study, this author believes that across-the-board change would not be feasible. Even with all the assurances given to the potential respondents of this study being anonymous and for educational purposes only, many refused to participate because they felt it was a ploy by their administrations to be used against them. The level of trust between line officers and their administrations seems to be quite low. This is demonstrated by the fact that the majority of the officers in this study feel their administrations do not treat everyone fairly nor do they have their best interests at heart. In all the departments surveyed it does not appear the climate for large scale change is strong enough at this time. The climate for change must be positive toward change before a police agency attempts to enact major change (Duncan, 1976).

However, the data does indicate a desire on the part of the respondents to relinquish segments of certain seniority rights which could be the catalyst needed to begin the process of change. The data shows a strong desire to replace seniority with performance standards for promotional and transfer opportunities. Involving the officers in the change process could cultivate improved relations between line officers and their administrations. The data clearly shows a desire by the officers to have input into their departments policies and decision making. The opportunity to pursue change has been confirmed by the data but the process must be carried out in small increments with the highest level of integrity to foster long term improvement in police operations.

These long standing seniority practices have been the methods of operation for these police agencies for decades. As such, they have become ingrained into the very fabric of their culture. When thought of as tradition, the level of acceptance for their continued utilization remains high. To change from this type of system would require a substantial overhaul of the organizational practices that currently exist. The amount of time and effort to work through this transformation would be a daunting task. It is much easier to live with the inadequacies of the status quo than to embark on change that is new to all concerned. Many departments rely upon seniority-based assignment to avoid the complications of a merit-based procedure. Often a seniority system results in an acceptable officer being promoted or transferred, but it does not ensure that the best-qualified officer will get the assignment. It does, however, reduce some of the complaints and headaches for management. “Personally, I believe that it is management’s responsibility to do what is best for the organization rather than merely take the easy path.” (Woods, D.D.Jr.PH.D., personal communication).

Attitudes Towards Administration

Four survey questions addressed issues regarding each department’s administration. The resulting data revealed a negative opinion among the respondents. When asked, 80.1% felt the administration was more concerned about raising their officer’s performance than they were about reducing crime levels in the community. In addition, the officers felt they would suffer disciplinary punishment for low performance levels according to 72.5% of the respondents. These percentages indicate the preoccupation management has with performance issues. It is also indicative of how

contentious this issue is with regard to the relationship between the administration and line personnel.

The trust between line and staff also appears to be quite low according to the data with 58.7% of the respondents feeling the administration does not have their best interests at heart and 67.6% feeling that not all officers are treated equally and fairly. These numbers reveal a serious morale problem that can only detract from the quality and effectiveness of these departments.

Need for Further Research

This study has opened the door into the opinions that officers hold regarding seniority rights, officer performance and career advancement. However, it is limited in its reliability to project the opinions gathered here to other similar police agencies. These limitations include the following: 1) the small geographic area in Michigan from where the data was derived, 2) the lack of diversity of the respondents, with the vast majority being white males, 3) the non probability composition of the sampling group and lack of random selection, and 4) the fifty-percent response rate of the total population asked to participate in the study.

The research started here reveals a need to continue on this path to improve police organizational operations. By discovering the true feelings of police officers regarding their careers and the departments they work for, an understanding can be gained into the problems that exist in individual agencies. This information would prove invaluable in developing strategies to eliminate underlying issues that detract from the quality of the organization and its ability to deal with 21st century law enforcement priorities. The

demands on police agencies continue to expand requiring more efficient operation with regard to employee development and service provided to their communities. Additional research is needed to develop performance evaluation criterion that eliminates the subjective flaws inherent in current assessment instruments. The development of objective quantitative standards that can be applied to job performance are needed to overcome the mistrust between the evaluator and the evaluated that developed over years of mismanagement. Once such a prototype has been developed, it would need to be adaptable to individual police agencies.

Benefit to Criminal Justice

The data derived by this study can be used as a starting point for police agencies that operate under a seniority rights culture to understand how their officers feel about such a system. It is valuable information to the administrators of police departments interested in improving employee relations. This study has uncovered a serious morale problem that may not have been realized prior to these questions being asked. There is a significant lack of trust between the administrations of the sample agencies and their line personnel. The data also revealed high levels of frustration and dissent within the ranks as a result of seniority rights.

The results contained in this study reveal there exists a great deal of room for improvement in managerial applications with regard to morale and job satisfaction. In addition, the data provides insight into what officers are willing to do personally to improve their worth to their departments if the rewards for doing so are present.

This study can also benefit union officials by illustrating what is desired by the officers they represent. The unions should become more involved with improving morale and the quality of the police agency they work within. The results obtained in this research clearly demonstrate that officers want control over their careers and would prefer to have their performance as the determining factor for career advancement opportunities. The information contained can be used in the collective bargaining process. Agreements can be modified to accommodate their desires, improving morale, departmental relationships and to help initiate change for the benefit of their constituents.

Summary

Seniority rights remain a dominate standard for the determination of officer pay scale, shift selection, vacation selection, lateral transfer and promotional ranking within the eight police departments that participated in this research. These standards have been in place for many years and have become the accepted method of operation for the officers that are employed by these agencies. The acceptance of these procedures was made evident when 78.6% of the responding officers felt that the seniority practices of their department were fair.

As the questions asked became more specific, the data revealed areas in which the majority of the respondents did not favor seniority over performance as an outcome determinate. Specifically, these areas dealt with career advancement opportunities such as, lateral transfer and promotional ranking. When asked about their career path, 86.5% of the officers stated they would prefer their performance to be more influential on their goals than their seniority.

Other areas explored in this study dealt with officer morale, interpersonal relationships and attitudes about the administrators that lead these agencies. A large number of the respondents indicated frustration over seniority rights. While a majority felt that resentment over these rights have developed between officers. Also, a lack of trust was uncovered between the administration and line officers. A significant number of officers felt unequal treatment existed and that management did not have their best interest at heart. In addition, most felt management spent more time trying to increase officer performance through threat of punishment than they did on crime reduction strategies for their communities.

This study indicates a strong acceptance of seniority rights but also a desire to limit its affect on areas of career advancement. As a result of the data presented, it appears the opportunities to make changes to the current long standing seniority practices are possible in certain areas. These opportunities can best be accomplished through collaboration between all levels of the organization. The trust issue must be improved to gain the cooperation of all concerned, leading to acceptance and implementation of change. If successful, these changes can improve officer morale, reduce inter-departmental strife, and improve the overall quality of the departments involved in this study.

References

- Adams, J. (1963). Toward an understanding of inequity. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 67(5),422-436.
- Alexander, M. (2003). *Industrial Relations Centre* Retrieved March 10, 2007 from www.industrialrelationscentre.com/performance-management/publications/discussion-papers-series/dps-employee-performance-strategies.pdf
- Booth, A. & Frank, J., (1999). Earnings, Productivity, and Performance-Related Pay. *Journal of Labor Economics* 17; 3, The University of Chicago Press, 8 June 2008 <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26660674>
- Byrne, D., Dezhbakhsh, H., & King, R. (1996, October). Unions and Police Productivity: An Econometric Investigation. *Industrial Relations: A Journal of Economy and Society*, 35, 4.
- Carter, D., & Sapp, A. (1992). A comparative analysis of clauses in police collective bargaining agreements as indicators of change in labor relations. *American Journal of Police* 12,17-46.
- Charter Township of Clinton* (n.d.) retrieved June 20, 2008, from <http://www.clintontownship-mi.gov/police/Policehome/tabid/299/Default.aspx>

Chesterfield Township Police Department. (n.d.) retrieved June 20, 2008 from

<http://www.chesterfieldtownshippolice.com/>

City of Eastpointe – Information. (n.d.) retrieved June 20, 2008, from

<http://www.cityofeastpointe.net/policeinfo.html>

City of Roseville Michigan. (n.d.) retrieved June 20, 2008, from

http://www.ci.roseville.mi.us/inner.asp?_resolutionfile=templatespath\inner.asp&area_1=pages/navs/departments/leftnav_main&area_2=pages/departments/police-faq&area_3=pages/subnav/departments

City of St. Clair Shores. (n.d.) retrieved June 20, 2008, from

<http://www.stclairshores.net/services/police/right.html>

Daniels, A.C. (2000). *Bringing Out the Best in People.* (2nd Ed.) (Janice Race, Ed.). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Denhardt, R.B. (1993). *The Pursuit of Significance.* Long Grove, NY: Waveland Press, Inc.

Denyer, T., Callender, R., & Thompson, D. (1975). The policeman as alienated laborer. *Journal of Police Science and Administration* 3(3),251-258

Duncan, R.B. (1976). Organization climate and climate for change in three police departments: Some preliminary findings. *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 8(2), 205-245.

Fischer, R. "Rewarding seniority: exploring cultural and organizational predictors of seniority allocations. (Report)" *The Journal of Social Psychology* 148.2, (April 2008): *Academic OneFile*. Gale. Northern Michigan University. 13 July 2008 <http://ezpolson.nmu.edu:5558/itx/start.do?prodId=AONE>.

Fischer, R. & Smith, P. (2004). Values and Organizational Justice: Performance- and Seniority-Based Allocation Criteria in the United Kingdom and Germany. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 35, 669 (2004): Sage Publications. Northern Michigan University, 13 July 2008 <http://jcc.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/35/6/669>

Gaines, L., Worrall, J.L., Southerland, M.D., & Angell, J. (2003). *Police Administration*. (2nd Ed.). (Carolyn Henderson Meier, Ed.) New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.

Guyot, D. (1979). Bending granite: Attempts to change the rank structure of American police departments. *Journal of Police Science and Administration* 7,253-284.

Harper Woods Police Department. (n.d.) retrieved June 20, 2008, from <http://www.harperwoodscity.citymax.com/page/3779338.html>

Hersey, P. & Blanchard, K.H. (1982). *Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources*, 4th ed. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Jaques, E. (1990). In praise of bureaucracy. *Harvard Business Review* 68,127-133.

- Juris, H.A., & Feuille, P. (1973). *The Impact of Police Unions*. Summary Report, US Department of Justice, Washington DC.
- Krimmel, J. T. (1996). The performance of college-educated police: A study of self-rated police performance measures. *American Journal of Police* 15(1), 85-96.
- Maxfield, M.G., & Babbie, E. (2005). *Research Methods for Criminal Justice and Criminology* (4th ed.). (J. Whitney, Ed.) Belmont, CA, USA: Thomson Wadsworth.
- Medoff, J., Abraham K. (1980). Experience, Performance, and Earnings. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 95; 4, The MIT Press., 8 June 2008
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/18885488>
- Murphy, P.V., & Brown, D.S. (1973). *Police Leader Looks at the Changing Nature of Police Organization*. Washington: Leadership Resources.
- Reaves, B., & Goldberg. (2000). *Local Police Departments, 1997*. Washington: Bureau of Justice Statistics.
- Robbins, P.S. (2008). *The Truth About Managing People* (2nd ed.). (A. Neidlinger, Ed.) Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, USA: FT Press.
- Shelby Township*, (n.d.) retrieved June 20, 2008, from
<http://www.shelbytwp.org/main.cfm?location=64&parentID=2>

The Official Site of the City of Sterling Heights, (n.d.) retrieved June 20, 2008,
from [http://www.sterling-
heights.net/bins/site/templates/default.asp?menu_imagesetid=1&area_2=p
ages/gov/citydepts/police/admindiv/admindiv_361.dat&area_1=pages/nav
/gov/citydepts/police/admindiv/admindiv.dat&area_3=0.dat&area_0=0.dat
&area_8=0.dat&objectid=B14A7A290&ml_index=0&NC=4496X](http://www.sterling-heights.net/bins/site/templates/default.asp?menu_imagesetid=1&area_2=pages/gov/citydepts/police/admindiv/admindiv_361.dat&area_1=pages/nav/gov/citydepts/police/admindiv/admindiv.dat&area_3=0.dat&area_0=0.dat&area_8=0.dat&objectid=B14A7A290&ml_index=0&NC=4496X)

Weber, M. (1969). Bureaucracy. In J. Litterer (ed.), *Organizations*, Vol. 1. New York: Wiley, pp. 29-31.

Woods, D.D.Jr.PH.D., Department of Criminology, Indiana State University, personal communication, November 27, 2007.

Wuestewald, T., & Steinheider, B. (2008, January). Shared Leadership: Can Empowerment Work in Police Organizations? *The Police Chief*, 73, 1-7. Alexandria, VA, USA.

APPENDIX A - DEMOGRAPHICS OF RESPONDENT AGENCIES

St. Clair Shores Police Department (SCSPD)

The SCSPD employs 84 sworn police officers with an annual budget of \$13,000,000. The department serves approximately 62,000 residents and patrols 12.0 square miles.

Harper Woods Police Department (HWPD)

The HWPD employs 33 sworn police officers with an annual budget of \$11,837,700. The department serves approximately 14,254 residents and patrols 2.63 square miles (Harper Woods Police Department).

Eastpointe Police Department (EPPD)

The EPPD employs 53 sworn police officers with an annual budget of \$9,251,347. The department serves approximately 34,000 residents and patrols 5.1 square miles (City of Eastpointe Police Department).

Roseville Police Department (RPD)

The RPD employs 89 sworn police officers with an annual budget of \$11,000,000. The department serves approximately 48,000 residents and patrols 10 square miles (City of Roseville Michigan).

Sterling Heights Police Department (SHPD)

The SHPD employs 173 sworn police officers with an annual budget of \$28,051,590. The department serves approximately 128,000 residents and patrols 36.8 square miles (The Official Site of the City of Sterling Heights).

Clinton Township Police Department (CTPD)

The CTPD employs 111 sworn police officers with an annual budget of \$21,239,700. The department serves approximately 97,000 residents and patrols 28.1 square miles (Charter Township of Clinton).

Shelby Township Police Department (STPD)

The STPD employs 69 sworn police officers with an annual budget of \$13,947,250. The department serves approximately 73,000 residents and patrols 35.2 square miles (Shelby Township).

Chesterfield Township Police Department (CFTPD)

The CFTPD employs 48 sworn police officers with an annual budget of \$9,355,670. The department serves approximately 45,718 residents and patrols 30.7 square miles (Chesterfield Township Police Department).

APPENDIX B – REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION LETTER

January 27, 2009

D/LT. Michael Walleman

27665 Jefferson Ave.

St. Clair Shores, MI 48081-2098

Dear Chief _____,

I am writing to formally request the assistance from the Chesterfield Twp Police Department. In order to fulfill the requirements for my Master's Degree from Northern Michigan University, I would like to administer a thirty-four question survey to all sworn members of your department. The purpose of the survey is to gain insight into their thoughts about seniority issues that affect their careers. The survey is voluntary and strictly confidential. Your assistance would be greatly appreciated.

Included is the survey document and the cover letter that explains its purpose. Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

D/LT. Michael Walleman

APPENDIX C – SURVEY COVER LETTER

Dear Law Enforcement Colleague,

My name is D/Lt. Michael Walleman of the St. Clair Shores Police Department. I am a criminal justice graduate student at Northern Michigan University and am completing my thesis. My research focuses on the relationship between seniority practices and the affect they have on the morale and performance of the officers that work within this type of system. The views and expectations of law enforcement personnel are changing, as are officer professionalism and education. It is important to understand how officers feel about their careers and what they desire in order to succeed. The results of this study will help me better understand what is important to you, thus enabling me to recommend operational changes to improve morale and career advancement.

I have developed a questionnaire consisting of 34 questions designed to solicit responses of your experiences and thoughts concerning the seniority rights culture that most unionized police agencies in our area subscribe to. I am requesting your participation in this survey. It should take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete and is completely voluntary and anonymous.

I am surveying several police departments that are comparable and in close proximity to the St. Clair Shores Police Department. As mentioned, the questionnaire will not require any identification (anonymous) on the part of the respondent and is strictly voluntary. The information gathered will be held confidential and used solely for educational purposes; you will not be identified in any way.

If you have any questions or do not understand the survey, please contact me for more information. I am the project director and can be reached at the St. Clair Shores Police Department 27665 Jefferson St. Clair Shores, Michigan 48080, (586) 634-7815 or mwallema@nmu.edu. For questions regarding your rights and confidentiality as a respondent for this research, you may contact Dr. Cindy Prosen, Dean of Graduate Studies and Research, 401 Cohodas Administration Center, Northern Michigan University (906) 227-2398 or cprosen@nmu.edu.

It is my hope that you will agree to take this survey. The more officers that participate the more accurate the data will be in determining officers true feelings about current methods of operation. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

D/Lt. Mike Walleman

APPENDIX D – SURVEY INSTRUMENT



Confidential Criminal Justice Survey

This survey is confidential and will be used for educational purposes only. Respondents will remain anonymous. Your participation is strictly voluntary. Once completed please fold and insert the survey into the envelope provided and seal. Thank you for your assistance.

Demographics						
Age:						
Gender:	Male	Female				
Race:						
Rank:						
Department Seniority:	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	25+ years
Length of time (years) in current rank:						
Work Assignment (Patrol, DB, Traffic, Narcotics, etc.):						
Is your department unionized?					Yes	No
Do you have an in-house union board?					Yes	No
Do you serve on your departments' union board?					Yes	No
Are you affiliated with (check all that apply):						
<input type="checkbox"/> M.A.P. <input type="checkbox"/> P.O.A.M <input type="checkbox"/> Other organization (name)_____						

When answering the following questions please keep the definitions listed below in mind;

Superior Performance: An officer's work product that exceeds the norms or average of that of their peers.

Sub-standard Performance: An officer's work product is below the norms or average of that of their peers

Seniority Rights: Privileges or entitlements afforded officers Based strictly on the amount of time the individual has on the job.

Pay scale: Level of pay that an officer receives based on the amount of time that the individual has on the job.

Lateral transfer: The transfer from one work assignment to another that is considered a career advancement(A preferred position DB, Narc, Traffic etc.).

Data Questions

1. Check all items that are affected by job seniority within your department			
a) <input type="checkbox"/> Pay scale			
b) <input type="checkbox"/> Shift selection			
c) <input type="checkbox"/> Vacation selection			
d) <input type="checkbox"/> Lateral transfers to other bureaus or divisions			
e) <input type="checkbox"/> Final ranking on promotional list			
2. Have you ever been denied a transfer to a preferred position because another officer had more seniority?	YES	NO	N/A
3. Have you ever lost your choice of shift to a senior officer?	YES	NO	N/A
4. Have you ever lost a vacation choice to a senior officer?	YES	NO	N/A
5. Have you ever tested for a higher rank?	YES	NO	N/A
5a If yes, did the candidate's seniority points influence the final ranking of candidates on the promotional list?	YES	NO	N/A
6. In your opinion, should a superior performing junior officer be paid more than a sub-standard performing senior officer?	YES	NO	
7. Should shift selection be made by superior work performance rather than seniority?	YES	NO	
8. Should vacation selection be made by superior work performance rather than seniority?	YES	NO	
9. Should selection for preferred positions such as DB, Narc., Traffic, etc be based on superior work performance rather than seniority?	YES	NO	
10. Should seniority have more influence on promotions than superior work performance?	YES	NO	
11. Have you ever become frustrated during your career because you did not have enough seniority to obtain your desired goal?	YES	NO	
12. Have seniority rights had an adverse affect on your level of work performance?	YES	NO	
13. Does your departments administration spend more time trying to increase officer production than developing crime reducing strategies for the community	YES	NO	
14. Do you have a voice in department policy and decision making?	YES	NO	
14a If no, would you like a voice in department policy and decision making?	YES	NO	

Data Questions (continued)		
15. Would you prefer that seniority guide your career rather than your own efforts?	YES	NO
16. Do you feel that you have the ability to control the course of your career through your personal efforts?	YES	NO
17. Is the threat of discipline used to increase officer performance?	YES	NO
18. If your departments performance criteria and its implementation was established by a committee comprised of department members from all levels of the agency and these criteria were accepted by the majority of officers, would you be in favor of using these standards to determine the following based on superior performance in place of seniority?		
a) Officer pay grade?	YES	NO
b) Shift and vacation selection?	YES	NO
c) Lateral transfer/preferred positions?	YES	NO
d) As part of the promotional ranking system?	YES	NO
19. Does resentment develop between officers because of seniority rights issues?	YES	NO
20. Do you feel that you would be more productive knowing that your efforts would advance your career rather than relying on your seniority?	YES	NO
21. Would you do more personally to advance your education if you knew it would benefit your career?	YES	NO
22. Would you do more personally to advance your training if you knew it would benefit your career?	YES	NO
23. Would you become more involved in the community where you work as a volunteer if you knew it would advance your career?	YES	NO
24. Should seniority entitle an officer to career advancement opportunities more so than superior work performance?	YES	NO
25. Do you feel that the administration at your department has your best interests at heart?	YES	NO
26. Do you think that the current seniority practices at your department are fair?	YES	NO
27. Would you prefer to just put your time in on the job and wait for promotional or transfer opportunities to become available to you?	YES	NO
28. Do seniority rights sometimes prohibit the best qualified officer from being promoted or transferred to preferred positions?	YES	NO
29. Do you feel that your department treats all officers equally and fairly?	YES	NO

Data Questions (continued)			
30. Did you ever not apply for a department job opening because you did not have enough seniority to get the job?	YES	NO	N/A
31. Did you ever elect not to test for promotion because of low seniority?	YES	NO	N/A
32. Did you ever test for promotion just for the experience knowing your chances of promotion were slim due to your seniority?	YES	NO	N/A
33. In your opinion, what areas should department seniority be the determining factor? Please list.			
34. Is there any other area within your department that is affected by seniority? Please list.			

January 7, 2009

TO: Michael E. Walleman
Criminal Justice

FROM: Cynthia A. Prosen, Ph.D. 
Dean of Graduate Studies & Research

RE: Human Subjects Proposal # HS09-236
"Exploring the efficacy of a Seniority Rights Culture within several mid-size Michigan police departments"

The Human Subjects Research Review Committee has reviewed your proposal and has given it final approval. To maintain permission from the Federal government to use human subjects in research, certain reporting processes are required. As the principal investigator, you are required to:

- A. Include the statement "Approved by HSRRRC: Project # (listed above) on all research materials you distribute, as well as on any correspondence concerning this project.
- B. Provide the Human Subjects Research Committee letters from the agency(ies) where the research will take place within 14 days of the receipt of this letter. Letters from agencies should be submitted if the research is being done in (a) a hospital, in which case you will need a letter from the hospital administrator; (b) a school district, in which case you will need a letter from the superintendent, as well as the principal of the school where the research will be done; or (c) a facility that has its own Institutional Review Board, in which case you will need a letter from the chair of that board.
- C. Report to the Human Subjects Research Review Committee any deviations from the methods and procedures outlined in your original protocol. If you find that modifications of methods or procedures are necessary, please report these to the Human Subjects Research Review Committee before proceeding with data collection.
- D. Submit progress reports on your project every 12 months. You should report how many subjects have participated in the project and verify that you are following the methods and procedures outlined in your approved protocol.
- E. Report to the Human Subjects Research Review Committee that your project has been completed. You are required to provide a short progress report to the Human Subjects Research Review Committee in which you provide information about your subjects, procedures to ensure confidentiality/anonymity of subjects, and the final disposition of records obtained as part of the research (see Section II.C.7.c).
- F. Submit renewal of your project to the Human Subjects Research Review Committee if the project extends beyond three years from the date of approval.

It is your responsibility to seek renewal if you wish to continue with a three-year permit. At that time, you will complete (D) or (E), depending on the status of your project.

kjm