

An Examination of How Police Agencies in the United States Implement and Sustain Organizational Change

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Abstract

In recent years, the police have implemented various changes to improve their relationship with the community and to improve the effectiveness of their service delivery. A limited number of studies have been undertaken to examine change in the police, with some researchers claiming that the police are impervious to change or are slow to change, and that most of the changes that have been made have usually been top down and incremental. Literature has highlighted that there are several factors that are key to realizing successful organizational change. This research discusses the results of an electronic survey that was undertaken to examine how police agencies in the United States implement and sustain change to improve or maintain their relationship with the community and to improve their service delivery effectiveness. Those responding to the survey indicated that police leaders understood the change management process and reported that their agency used a structured approach to planning for and implementing change, that change was undertaken for a reason, that it needed to be undertaken to solve a problem and needed to be sustained.

Keywords: *police reform; change management; police change*

Introduction

Undertaking change in police agencies was once described as being similar to bending granite (Guyot, 1979). Other researchers have often described implementing change in police agencies as being difficult because of resistance from officers and staff members and because of other barriers, such the limits of technology and organizational capability and inadequate training of staff and officers in the new process (Bjork, 2018; Greene & Mastrofski, 1988; Langworthy, 1986; Maguire, 2003; Mastrofski & Willis, 2010). The negative and conservative culture of the police have often been described as the reasons why the police do not accept change readily (Chan, 1996; Waddington, 1999).

Reform of a police agency is usually undertaken to improve the efficiency or effectiveness of the delivery of their services (Carter, 2016; den Heyer, 2014; Hoggett, et. al., 2013), and to provide a 'better service for less' (Hoggett, et. al., 2013). It is also often undertaken in response to institutional pressures (Carter, 2016), for example in response to a decrease in their budget, and to improve the relationship of the police with the community (Greene, 2000; Phillips, 2013), for example in response to community concerns after a police shooting of an

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unarmed person (Engel, et. al., 2020; Schiff, et. al., 2024). Police agencies have also come under pressure to be more accountable to the community that they serve (White, et. al., 2022). However, reform is difficult to implement in the police and often poses a number of risks, including the likelihood that the change may not meet expectations or may even fail (Skogan, 2008). Greene (2000) has described the way that change takes place in the police as reactive and incremental, rather than being proactive and transformational.

While there have been studies that have examined the use of specific strategic tactics such as hotspot police, or operational crime reduction strategies such as Compstat (see for example, Willis, et. al., 2010), there has yet to be any systematic empirical testing or examination of how the police implement and sustain long-term organizational change and how these changes affect the delivery of policing services and strengthen the confidence of the community (Braithwaite, et. al., 2005; den Heyer, 2014; 2017a; 2017b; 2022; 2024).

There is very little understanding of how police agencies identify, implement and sustain the strategies and frameworks that improve the delivery of their services and that strengthens their relationship with the community (Carter, 2016). Police agencies have often been described as being bureaucratic and as closed organizational systems that are reluctant to implement any changes to their systems (Cooper, 2015; Guyot, 1979). Because there is a limited amount of research on how police agencies implement and sustain long-term change, it is important to examine how they are implementing changes in their organizations and how they sustain those changes (Innes, 2011). Gaining insight into how the police identify the need for change and the strategies and frameworks that the police use assists in our understanding of how the police implement long-term reform.

This article seeks to extend our understanding of how police agencies in the United States implement and sustain¹ change to improve the effectiveness of their delivery of services. The study is needed as there is very little understanding as to how police agencies undertake change and how they maintain a change following its implementation. The examination of how police agencies undertake change is guided by institutional theory which seeks to explain how organizations adopt structures, norms, and practices to increase efficiency and

¹ The term sustain in the article is defined as “to cause or allow something to continue for a period of time” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2026).

legitimacy and to conform to external social, cultural, and regulatory pressures (Parris, et. al., 2016; Scott, 2014). The article discusses the findings of a survey that was conducted of police agencies that serve jurisdictions of more than 25,000 people in the US. The survey asked participants a series of questions that related to how the agency that they worked for implemented sustainable change. The first section of this article reviews the literature that pertains to change management and the experience of the police in implementing change. This is followed by a presentation of the methodology that was used to conduct the research and reviews the responses obtained from the survey. A review of the survey findings and the conclusions drawn make up the last section of this article.

What is Change?

Change in this article is defined as the process or the action by which an organization achieves its vision by getting to a desired future state (Lorenzi & Riley, 2000). Implementing change in an organization has been described as moving an organization to the future through a transitional period (Tushman & O'Reilly, 1997) or moving away from the present state towards a desired state (George & Jones, 2005). It "is a process and not necessarily an event" (Thaspia, 1990, p. 15) and is usually ongoing and needs to be managed and led by senior management in the organization (Price & Chabai, 2006).

Theories of Change Management

Understanding the theories of change management before implementing a change is beneficial because it gives leaders and managers the knowledge to help them select the most appropriate approach to take and gives them a structure for managing the change. While there are a variety of change theories that examine the process of change, leaders and managers should be aware that the theory that they select to implement a change will have an influence on how the change needs to be led and managed (Shirey, 2013).

A number of organizational strategies have contributed to the composition and the interpretation of the theories of change management (Kettinger & Grover, 1995). These strategies relate to organizational design (Galbraith, 1977; 1982), organizational dynamics (Akao, 1990; Crosby, 1979), and decision making and modelling (Simon, 1957; 1991). Institutional theory, in particular, has improved the understanding of an organization's role in

the adoption and implementation of a change (Parris, et. al., 2016). The theory hypothesises that organizations will change their structure and processes to conform to the expectations of whether the design and function of the proposed change is appropriate (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The theory also helps with managing isomorphism² in change projects.

Two other theories of change were proposed by Beer and Nohria (2000). The first is called Theory E and has been based on the economic value of a change and the ‘hard’ approach to change. The theory usually uses economic incentives, layoffs and downsizing of an organization as methods for increasing the efficiency of an organization (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015). The second theory is called Theory O and has been based on the capability of an organization and takes a ‘soft’ approach to organizational change by focusing on improving the culture of an organization and the skills of its staff members. This theory also includes staff members playing a role in the development and implementation of a change (Al-Haddad & Kotnour, 2015).

Policing and Change

Police organizations have been described as being bureaucratic or mechanistic (Richardson, 1974; Yidmaz, 2013). Rigid formality, hierarchical structure with clear lines of authority, standardised procedures, and a focus on efficiency are common aspects of bureaucratic organizations (Monteiro & Adler, 2022). Kuykendall and Roberg (1982) have suggested that the police need to change from being a mechanistic organization to an organic organization. An organic organization has been described as being the opposite of a mechanistic organization, and is flexible, has decentralised decision making, a wide span of control and embraces change (Hatch, 1997). An organic organizational structure also improves the likelihood of a change being successful (Kuykendall & Roberg, 1982). However, being a bureaucratic organization has its benefits. A bureaucracy enables a police organization to take a structured approach to implementing change.

Research has found that most of the changes that took place in police agencies pertained to the development and implementation of strategies, policies, processes or programs to

² Isomorphism has been described as “the constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions” (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983, p. 149).

strengthen or maintain their relationship with the community and to improve the effectiveness of their service delivery (Carter, 2011). There is literature that has examined the approaches to reforming the police (see for example Bond-Fortier, 2021; Maguire & Katz, 2020) and the introduction of new technology and processes by police agencies (see for example Homberg, et. al., 2019) but there is a limited number of studies that have been published that have examined how the police undertake change (Carter, 2016). Some conclusions can be drawn from these studies. Research conducted by Hoggett, et. al., (2013) found that change in the police was usually “driven from the top-down and outside-in” (p. 8) and observed that change was contentious and difficult to make (Hoggett, et. al., 2013; Skogan, 2008). Other researchers determined that the pace of organizational change in the police was slow and have described the way that change takes place in the police as reactive and incremental, rather than proactive and transformational (Greene, 2000). Maguire, et. al., (2003) and Mastrofski and Willis (2010) concluded that where change has occurred in police agencies, it has been small and modest.

Literature has also revealed that the police are generally reluctant to change their structures and processes. Some researchers have claimed that the structures and processes that are currently used by the police have been founded on the methods of change that were developed by the police in the 1960s and 1970s (Campeau, 2019; Kuykendall & Roberg, 1982). This reluctance is often attributed to a lack of ownership of the change process (Duncan, et. al., 2001) or because police executives identify with the current structures and practices, even if the way that they are doing things is ineffective (Maguire, et. al., 2003; Mastrofski & Willis, 2010). Phillips (2013) commented that change can often be viewed by police officers as threatening police expertise, and that as a result informal and formal power structures can bring about resistance, especially when resources are being re-allocated.

Sherman (2015) maintained that the reason why the police have been slow to institutionalise reform and innovation that has been developed by research is because there is no roadmap or coordinated, strategic vision for the policing profession. What Sherman means is that police agencies create their own strategic vision in response to their local issues and there is no national strategic vision for policing and its future direction. Moore and Stephens (1991) claimed that for the police to undertake organizational reform, they need to overcome the ingrained, cultural barriers to change, including their reluctance to use research findings. The culture of an organisation has a direct bearing on how a police agency undertakes reform,

which means that managers need sound leadership skills if long-term change projects are going to be successful and sustainable (Telep, 2017). The problem for police agencies is that the chief sets the culture of the organization (Ingram, et. al., 2022) and that the average tenure of a police chief is between two and eight years (Balfe, 2015; Rainguet & Dodge, 2001) which means that it is difficult for police agencies to undertake extensive, fundamental change.

The culture of the police has also been found to be a major obstacle when implementing a change in the police (Brogden & Shearing, 1993; Crank 2004; Manning & van Maanen, 1978). There has, however, been very little research that has examined the relationship between the culture of the police and why change initiatives fail or do not achieve what was intended (Chan, 2007). What is understood by researchers is, that when the police undertake a substantial change, it can affect police officers severely and can result in police officers adjusting their work habits and their emotional ties to an agency (Bourdieu, 1990; 2000). This can, in turn, have an effect on the culture of an agency, and police officers may disconnect from the agency that they work for, and leave (Chan, 2007).

The confidence of the public in the police may depend on its ability to change, but one of the biggest problems that a police agency faces when it wants to implement change is the resistance from its police officer and staff members (Erciyes, 2018). Resistance from police officers and staff members may arise because of the hierarchical structure that the police use or because supervisors and high-ranking officers ignore the opinions and views of police officers and staff members. Senior officers may use negative methods, such as the enforcement of agency regulations to overcome officer resistance, which can lead to staff members obstructing the implementation of the change (Erciyes, 2018).

Evaluating as to whether a change had achieved its objectives or whether the performance of a police agency has improved is difficult for police management to determine. When a change is being evaluated by a researcher, the researcher does not know the process of how the change was undertaken (Pawson & Tilley, 1997) and as a result, the evaluation cannot determine why a change did or did not work (Cowen & Cartwright, 2019) or if it worked, how it worked (Fagan, 2017; Tompson, et. al., 2021). This means that an evaluation of a change initiative may only be of limited value to police management and could hinder the management's understanding of how the change has affected the service delivery of the

agency (Belur, et. al., 2023). The confusion can lead to misinformation circulating within the agency and this will have an influence on whether staff members accept any future change initiatives. To ensure that a change project can be evaluated the implementation plan needs to include the objectives and aims of the project (Gill, 2001; 2003).

Methodology

The aim of the study was to examine the methods that police agencies use to implement and sustain change in order to improve the effectiveness of their service delivery and to strengthen or maintain their relationship with the community. This research was guided by the following question: How do police agencies implement long-term organizational change to improve or maintain their relationship with the community and to improve their service delivery effectiveness?

The study was based on the completion of an online questionnaire (see Appendix 1), which was approved by the Arizona State University Institutional Review Board (STUDY00018656 dated 09/25/2023). An electronic link to the survey questionnaire was sent in an email via Questionpro to 1,521 United States Chiefs of Local Police agencies that serve jurisdictions of more than 25,000 population on November 9, 2023. This sample size was chosen because researching a jurisdiction with a population over 25,000 is generally better because it provides a large enough sample size to minimize statistical errors, detect hidden trends, and ensure confidentiality when processing sensitive survey data (Creswell, 2014). The email addresses for the 1,521 local police agencies were obtained from the open-source database maintained by Public Safety Information Bureau. Follow-up emails were sent on November 23, December 7, and December 21, 2023. The survey was open to the survey participants until January 4, 2024, which was eight weeks. Survey participants who accessed the survey site were required to acknowledge that they had read the introduction, which outlined the benefits and risk of completing the survey and were requested to enter their name and email address on the survey site before completing the survey. Participants were also informed that the questionnaire would take between 12 and 15 minutes to complete and that all study data would be kept strictly confidential to the researcher.

The survey questionnaire comprised of 24 questions, and the responses to these questions were used to examine how and what methods police agencies use to implement and sustain

long term change to improve or maintain their relationship with the community and to improve the effectiveness of their service delivery. Three of the questions comprised of up to 29 rating statements, and the respondent was given the choice to strongly agree, agree, was neutral, disagree or strongly disagree with the statement. The survey was based on three sections: respondent information, understanding change management and the change management practices in the police agency that the respondent worked for.

The Survey Participants

The survey was completed by 353 (23.2 percent) police personnel from police agencies across the US. The agencies were located in all five regions of the US (15 percent of agencies were in the Northeast, 29 percent were in the Southeast, two percent were in the Southwest, 36 percent were in the Midwest and 18 percent were in the West) and in 42 states of the 50 states.

Although this was not a particularly high response rate and the majority of respondents worked for agencies with less than 200 sworn police officer, the responding agencies were spread across the country and are a fair representation of the municipal agencies across the United States. Almost half (46 percent) of all local police departments in the United States employ fewer than 10 full-time-equivalent sworn officers (Goodison, 2022). There is also support in the literature for using the findings from surveys that have a low response rate (see Eck, 2006; Nulty, 2008; Sataloff & Vontela, 2021; Watt, et. al., 2002).

The majority of survey respondents held more senior positions in the police hierarchy. More than 85 percent held Chief, Assistant Chief or Deputy Chief ranks, approximately 4.5 percent held manager level ranks (Commander, Captain and Lieutenant) and nearly four percent held supervisor or officer ranks. The high percentage of more senior police officers provides a management perspective based on their knowledge of the organization but it can also skew the perspective of the data from the survey by reflecting the views of people that develop and implement change in police agencies rather those of the officers that use the new process.

The participants in the study demonstrated relatively high levels of educational attainment with more than 89 percent stating that they held some college-level education and more than 36 percent holding graduate qualifications (see Table 1). This level of education is notable as

less than 5 percent of police agencies nationally required recruits to possess a 4-year college degree and less than 35 percent required applicants to obtain any amount of college education (Reaves, 2015). There was a reasonable range in the number of years of service of the respondents with approximately two percent having less than five years of service and nearly 90 percent having more than 15 years, with a sample average of approximately 8.5 years. However, the distribution of years that the respondent was in their current role was different, with nearly 31 percent being in their current role for less than three years. The sample average for respondents being in their current role was nearly five years

To check that the positive findings from the survey were not overly influenced by the high percentage of respondents being chiefs and from smaller agencies, a regression analysis was completed. The analysis found that sustainable change is influenced by the Chief and other senior managers and by the size of the agency ($R^2 = .74$). However, the influence of the agency size variable was negative, which means that there was an inverse relationship and that smaller agencies had a higher probability of implemented change being sustainable. The chief variable was positive, indicating that it has a positive relationship with change being sustainable. The size of the agency variable had a p-value close to 1 which indicates that it has very little influence on whether an implemented change is sustainable and the chief variable had a very low p-value indicating that it has an influence of whether change is sustainable.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics ($n = 347$)

	Count	Percentage	Mean
Rank of participants			
Officer	5	1.42	
Detective	3	0.85	
Sergeant	6	1.70	
Lieutenant	7	1.98	
Captain	5	1.42	
Commander	4	1.13	
Assistant Chief	6	1.70	
Deputy Chief	3	0.85	
Chief	253	85.27	
Missing	7	1.98	
Years in the police			8.63 years
Less than 3 years	2	0.57	
Between 3 and 5 years	5	1.42	
Between 5 and 10 years	9	2.55	
Between 10 and 15 years	14	3.97	
More than 15 years	317	89.80	
Missing	6	1.70	
Years in current role			4.81 years
Less than 3 years	109	30.88	
Between 3 and 5 years	59	16.71	
Between 5 and 10 years	87	24.65	
Between 10 and 15 years	49	13.88	
More than 15 years	43	12.18	
Missing	6	1.70	
Highest level education			
High school only	41	11.82	
Undergraduate certificate	11	3.17	
Associate degree	53	15.27	
Bachelor degree	99	28.53	
Master degree	111	31.99	
Doctorate (PhD, JD, etc.)	14	4.03	
Graduate certificate	24	6.92	
Agency size			
Less than 100 sworn officers	312	88.39	
101 to 200 sworn officers	11	3.12	
201 to 300 sworn officers	3	0.85	
301 to 400 sworn officers	1	0.28	
401 to 1,000 sworn officers	3	0.85	
More 1,000 sworn officers	2	0.57	
Missing	21	5.95	

To ensure that any differences or anomalies were identified and taken into account when interpreting the survey results, participants were requested to identify the size of the agency that they worked for by the number of sworn officers employed. The majority of survey respondents were from agencies with less than 100 sworn officers (88.39 percent) and more than 99 percent of the survey participants were employed by a municipality. Most respondents were also sworn officers (97.5 percent).

The Experience of Survey Respondents with Change Management

The first series of survey questions explored the respondents' level of understanding of change management. Approximately 75 percent of the respondents stated that they were familiar with the expression, and surprisingly, more than 98 percent of survey respondents claimed that they were familiar with how change can affect people and organizations. A series of statements about change management were presented in the survey and respondents were asked to rank how important they thought the statements were in influencing the success of change. Each statement was rated on the following scale: 1 = not important at all, 2 = somewhat important; 3 = neutral, 4 = important and 5 = very important. The statement, the mean and the percentage of respondents who ranked the statement as important or very important have been presented in Appendix 2. The mean scores for the items indicate respondents did feel each item had an important or very important contribution to the management of successful change. The medians for the importance of each of the eleven factors was high and fluctuated between 4.04 and 4.64. The percentage of participants that claimed that each of the factors was very important or important was also high and fluctuated between 73.25 and 94.34 percent. The four statements that the survey respondents highlighted as being of the most importance related to staff members understanding the reason for the change (93 percent of respondents; $M = 4.64$), communicating the change (94 percent of respondents; $M = 4.63$), acknowledging that some staff members would be affected (75 percent of respondents; $M = 4.18$), and that the agency takes ownership of the change (89 percent of respondents; $M = 4.47$). The factors speak more to the vision and personnel actions of implementing the change. It is important that those affected by change are involved in its planning, that all of the processes and dependencies that may be affected have been considered and that all individuals and work units that may be affected by the change have been advised. For change to succeed, the executive of an agency needs to lead the change, and the change needs to be clearly communicated to staff members to ensure that

they understand the reasons for the change (Gill, 2003; Johansson & Heide, 2008; Simoes & Esposito, 2014).

The third question in the section that related to the level of understanding of change management, asked the respondents how change was managed in the agency that they worked for. More than 35 percent of the respondents stated that the agency that they worked for had long periods of stability with short bursts of fundamental change, while 47 percent stated that the agency that they worked for was constantly implementing small changes. However, 10 percent of the respondents said that the agency that they worked for existed in a state of rapid and continuous change and just under two percent of respondents claimed that the agency that they worked for did not undertake change. A statistical review of the relationship between the size of the agency and how change was managed in the agency that the participant worked for was undertaken. Both the correlation (-0.0232) and the t-test (-12.48), had very low p-values and were negative indicating that the size of the agency did not influence whether it was undertaking change.

The second series of questions pertained to different aspects of change management that had been implemented in the agency that the respondent worked for. The first question asked participants to describe a change project or initiative that they were aware of that had been implemented in the agency that they worked for. The question provided three options for participants to choose from. The three options and the percentage for each have been presented in Table 2. The responses indicate that the change projects that have been implemented by the agencies that they work for have been a mixture of having set timeframes and clearly stated objectives, but there have been change projects that have had their objectives and deliverables changed during implementation.

Table 2: *Description of Change Projects that have been Implemented by the Agency that the Survey Participants Worked For*

Description Statement	Percentage
The project or initiative was managed within a set timeframe and had clear objectives and methods that were communicated in advance	36.08
The project or initiative was a dynamic project and had changes in deliverables and timeframes	20.25
The two statements above described the project or initiative but not necessarily in equal proportion	43.67

The second question in this section of questions asked participants whether the change management techniques that were used had any influence over whether the change project would be adopted. More than 56 percent of respondents said that the change techniques that would be used influenced whether the change would be adopted, and more than 43 percent claimed that it did not.

The third question comprised of 29 statements for the participants to select the statements that were applicable in describing the management of change in the agency that they worked for. Each statement was rated on the following scale: 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree; 3 = neutral, 4 = disagree and 5 = strongly disagree. The statements in the survey, the mean and the percentage of respondents who agreed and strongly agreed have been presented in Appendix 3. The mean scores and the percentage of participants that strongly agreed or agreed with the statement indicate the agencies that the respondents worked for had adopted the majority of factors that influence whether a change is successful. An exploratory factor analysis³ of the 29 statements and the survey findings was undertaken to examine the relationship between each of the statements. The analysis found that the relationship between the statements was positive and more than 0.04<, indicating a strong relationship between the statements.

Many respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that the police agency that they worked for had a structured process for planning and implementing change projects. More than 85 percent of respondents stated that the changes that were implemented in the

³ Factor analysis is a statistical technique used to simplify data by examining if there are any underlying patterns or relations between the data. The technique does this by describing the variability among correlated, observed variables by grouping them into a smaller, unobserved set of latent variables, called factors.

agency that they worked for were reinforced, and more than 89 percent of respondents stated that there were logical reasons for implementing the change project. The responses also indicated that communication about the change was an important factor with more than 86 percent of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing that communication about the change was important.

The third series of questions related to the difficulties that had been encountered when undertaking change in a police agency. The first question asked participants if any difficulties affected the adoption of the project or initiative across the agency. More than 69 percent of respondents stated that there were not any difficulties that had not affected the adoption of the change, and more than 30 percent claimed that the difficulties encountered had affected the adoption of the project. Participants were also asked to describe the difficulties that were encountered in the last change project or initiative that they were involved in. Most of the difficulties that the respondents described related to managing resistance from staff, negotiating with unions, not having enough staff, ensuring consistency in adopting the change and the slow process of implementing change. The third question asked whether the difficulties that were encountered had been found in other change projects or initiatives that had been undertaken by the agency that the respondent worked for. Forty-two percent said that the same problems had occurred in other projects and 57 percent stated that they had not been encountered in other projects or initiatives.

The fourth series of questions were more strategic than the other series of survey questions and pertained to the budget for the change, whether the agency changed its organizational structures to accommodate the change and whether new workgroups or positions were created for the change. Each statement was rated on the following scale: 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree; 3 = neutral, 4 = disagree and 5 = strongly disagree. The statements in the survey, the mean and the percentage of respondents who agreed and strongly agreed have been presented in Table 3. The means fluctuate between 2.19 and 3.21 and indicate that three of the four strategic factors were adopted by the agencies during the implementation of change. This means that a large number of agencies made finance available for the change and made changes to their organizational structures but only about 50 percent formed new workgroups and only 30 percent created new positions as a result of the change to assist with the new work process. However, just under 60 percent of agencies that respondents worked for changed their structures to accommodate the change project.

Table 3: Change Project Strategic Factors

	M	SD	SA/A Percent
A budget was developed, or finance was made available for the project or initiative	2.19	1.14	66.66
Organizational structures were changed to accommodate the project or initiative	2.43	1.23	59.87
New work group(s) were formed to accommodate the project or initiative	2.61	1.17	54.14
New positions were created to accommodate the project or initiative	3.21	1.23	30.77

As a part of this series of questions, participants were asked whether the changes that were implemented had been maintained. More than 86 percent stated that the changes had been maintained, and more than 13 percent claimed that they had not.

The last question in the survey asked whether the project or initiative had been evaluated after it had been implemented to see whether the change had achieved its objectives. More than 63 percent of respondents said that the project had been evaluated, and 36.5 percent said that the project had not.

Factors that Influence Whether Change in Police Agencies is Successful

The study represents a sample of police managers, officers and staff from across the US that have experienced organizational change. The survey participants were requested to respond to a number of questions about what factors in their experience influenced whether a change project was successful. As this study is on how police agencies develop, implement and sustain organizational change to improve or maintain their relationship with the community and to improve their service delivery effectiveness this section discusses the participants' perceptions of the factors that influence whether a change will be successful.

The implementation of change in police agencies often does not achieve what it was intended to achieve (Skogan, 2008) and other change projects that are well planned are often delayed, create resistance from staff members or create unintended wider organizational consequences (Allen, 2002; King, 2009; Langworthy, 1986). The findings from this study offer some insights into how change is undertaken in police agencies in the US and the factors that the respondents perceive to influence the success of a change project. The successful factors

included having all organizational staff members focused on the same goals and objectives, clear communication about the reasons for the change and that the executive of the organization take ownership and influence how a change will take place (see for example Cameron & Green, 2009; Erciyes, 2018; Erdogan, et. al., 2006). This is more comprehensive approach to change is consistent with management literature.

It is very important that the executive of a police agency develop a vision for the agency that aligns with the culture of an organization. Having a vision that aligns with the culture of an organization, along with visible results from the implementation of a change project will ensure that personnel will be receptive to change (Duncan, et. al., 2001) and should decrease the resistance of staff members to change (Erciyes, 2018). Organisational culture is linked directly to implementing police reform, which means that the leadership of an agency is important if long-term change projects are going to be implemented and sustained (Telep, 2017).

For a change to be successful and sustainable, the change project needs to be led by a strong leader who has the support of a senior executive and who acts as the sponsor of the change project (Cameron & Green, 2009). The sponsor authorises the change and is responsible for ensuring that the change realises the benefits sought, while the leader of the change project must be able to work across the agency, at all levels and functions, and demonstrate a commitment to the change initiative. More than 67 percent of survey respondents agreed or strongly agreed that project champions aided in the planning for the change in the agency that they worked for, more than 76 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the project champion aided in the implementation of the change and more 79 percent agreed or strongly agreed that the person who was sponsoring the change project was clearly communicated to staff members (see Appendix 2). The problem for police agencies is that those people that hold leadership positions in the organization are often perceived as failing to lead (Schafer, 2013). This may mean that leaders of police agencies need to accept and embrace the need for change as leaders that display disinterest will hinder the change management process (Beaman & Guy, 2005; Beer & Nohria, 2000).

The adoption of proactive actions such as the use of clear and honest communication (Klein, 1996) and the participation of employees in the planning for the change initiative will keep employee resistance to a minimum (Waddell & Sohal, 1998). The success or failure of a

change relies on effective communication (Cameron & Green, 2009; Kanter, 1987; Kanter, et. al., 1992; Strebel, 1996). Leaders must be prepared to dedicate significant time and energy to communicate change. A critical component of communication is to clearly articulate the reasons for the change and how it ties into the strategy that has been selected by the agency (Kanter, 1987; Kanter, et. al., 1992). The message needs to be tailored so that it resonates with staff members and gives them a clear understanding of their role in the process (Cameron & Green, 2009). The message needs to be aligned across all levels of the organization so that staff members are all hearing the same message. Feedback provided by staff members should also be encouraged and considered by management, and any challenges that staff members may be experiencing in adapting to the change should be attended to. These factors should also improve the likelihood of a change being sustained (Cameron & Green, 2009; Kanter, 1987; Kanter, et. al., 1992; Strebel, 1996).

Employee resistance to change can also arise for a number of other reasons, but one reason is because of the hierarchical structure of the police and the perception that opinions and views of employees are ignored by supervisors and high-ranking officers (Erciyes, 2018). Those staff members and workgroups that will be affected by change need to understand the reasons for the need for the change, how it will be implemented and how it will affect them and their workgroup (Ashworth, et. al., 2009; Jones, 2008; Schafer, 2001; Scott, 2014).

Successful change factors also included the involvement of police officers and staff members in the planning and implementation of change. Executive and senior managers in police agencies cannot undertake change without consulting with officers and staff members and including them in the design, planning and implementation of change (Cheng, et. al., 2006; Gill, 2003; Nicholas & Steyn, 2008). This approach will appear more inclusive rather than the change being a top-down driven process.

To some extent, the failure of change is associated with the opposite of the factors that were identified by participants as influencing the success of change. As the implementation of a change develops, officers and staff members want to feel their opinions are valued and respected and are being heard by the executive and senior managers of the agency. Although the survey data do not explicitly link success outcomes of specific change projects, the views and beliefs expressed by the respondents are based on their experience with change and are consistent with literature on how the success or failure of change might be influenced by the

planning for change and implementation methods used by police executives and senior managers. It is important for officers and staff members to be involved in the design and implementation of change as the executives and senior managers that are responsible for the change may not be involved in its implementation at the street level (Novak, et. al., 2003). This means that to ensure that the change is successful there needs to be trust between the officers and staff members, and the executive of the agency (Hoel & Barland 2021; Johnson 2012).

How change is managed and how successful the change is depends upon a number of different influences, including the drivers for the change and context in which the change is undertaken, the type of change that is needed by the organization, the culture of the organization, the staff members of the organization that will be affected by the change, and the leadership provided for the implementation of the change (Burnes & Jackson, 2011; Cameron & Green, 2009; Hoag, et. al., 2002; Lucey, 2008). It also depends on whether the agency has a culture that accepts and is support of change, where there is trust in the executive, officers and staff members feel valued, there is clear communication and training is provided when the change is being implemented (Cameron & Green, 2009; Ibbs, et. al., 2001; Price & Chahai, 2006).

Conclusion

The demands made on the police are constant and often competing and it is not always clear how police resources can best be deployed to ensure that effective services are being delivered, and the confidence of the public is being maintained. It is an ongoing objective of police management to look for ways in how to improve the delivery of an agency's services (den Heyer, 2017a) and this makes it important to understand how police agencies implement and sustain change.

There are a number of different methods that could be used to successfully implement change, but researchers have cautioned that one or two methods of change cannot cover all of the different situations that organizations face (Burns & Jackson, 2011). The police have been described as being conservative and resistant to change and not being skilled in the function of planning for the implementation of a change. Police agencies have also been described as identifying with the structures and practices that they use, even if the way that they are doing

things is ineffective and out of date (Maguire, et. al., 2003; Mastrofski & Willis, 2010).

Despite the criticism, this research has been found that the police are open to change and while they may not use theoretical models to introduce change, they do use approaches that have been identified as influencing the success of a change project.

This article has discussed the findings of a survey that was conducted of 353 police agencies in the United States that serve jurisdictions with a population of more than 25,000. The survey was conducted to examine how police agencies implement and sustain organizational change to strengthen or maintain their relationship with the community and to improve the effectiveness of their service delivery. Participants in the survey were asked a series of questions that related to how the agencies that they worked for implemented sustainable long-term change.

The responses to the survey indicated that the survey respondents understood the change management process and that the agency that they worked for took a structured approach to planning for and implementing a change. Most of the agencies reported that they had a planning document in place before the change initiative took place, a budget to finance the change, that there was robust and provided timely communication to staff members that explained the need for the change and how the change would improve the situation.

Responses to the survey indicated that training in the new processes and procedures had been delivered and that any resistance to the change that had arisen had been attended to. More than 86 percent of respondents claimed that the change that took place in the police agency that they worked for had been maintained. The findings of the research support aspects of institutional theory, in that the majority of agencies that the survey respondents worked for adopted formal frameworks to implement changes to their structures (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). The findings of the survey should provide confidence to the communities that they serve that the police are capable of implementing long-term organizational change to improve and maintain their relationship with that community and to improve their service delivery effectiveness. Future research could expand on these findings by completing evaluative and observation studies of the development and implementation of change projects in police agencies.

To prepare the police for the future challenges that they may face, police leaders need to understand their role and the limitations of what their organization can deliver to ensure the

safety and security of their communities. They also need to understand that any change that penetrates deeply into the culture, structure, and traditions of the police will require the support and commitment of leaders, officers and staff members at all levels in the organization and this will help to ensure its success (Hoel & Barland 2021; Johnson 2012).

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Electronic Survey Questionnaire

Respondent Information

1. Are you a sworn or a non-sworn member?
2. If you are sworn, what is your current rank?
3. If you are a non-sworn member, are you an analyst, or a senior or principal analyst?
4. How long have you served as a police officer/law enforcement officer?
 - Less than one year
 - 1 to 2 years
 - 3 to 4 years
 - 5 to 10 years
 - 11 to 15 years
 - 16 to 20 years
 - More than 20 years
5. How long have you held your current rank or your position?
 - Less than one year
 - 1 to 2 years
 - 3 to 4 years
 - 5 to 10 years
 - 11 to 15 years
 - 16 to 20 years
 - More than 20 years
6. Have you held other positions in police/law enforcement agencies prior to your current position? (yes/no)
7. If sworn, what were these roles (patrol, investigation, community policing, other)?
8. If non-sworn, please state your previous role(s).
9. What is the approximate number of authorized sworn officers in your agency?
10. Have you worked in other government agencies as an intelligence analyst? (yes/no)
11. Education – Diploma, Bachelors, Master's, PhD

Change Management

12. Are you familiar with the term of Change Management?
 - Yes
 - No
13. Are you familiar with how change can affect people and organizations?
 - Yes
 - No
14. Please rank the following statements about organisational change in order of importance to you from 1 to 9, with 1 = most important and 9 = least important.
 - That everyone is focused on the same goals and objectives of a change
 - That staff understand why change is happening and why it is necessary

- That staff recognize that a change project is being implemented and managed by people with the right skills
- That staff recognize that a change project is being implemented in a clearly defined manner
- That the organization will provide assistance to create a supportive environment during the implementation of a change project
- That staff have an appreciation of how a change will take place
- That a change program will be communicated to staff effectively
- That the organisation takes ownership and influences how a change will take place
- That staff are aware that key individuals in an organization are managing a change project
- That staff have awareness of who is ultimately responsible for the development and implementation of a change project
- That staff are aware that a change project recognizes all of the processes, dependencies and work units that will be affected by a change
- That an organization advises staff members who will be affected by a change

Change Management in your police/law enforcement agency

15. Which of these statements applies best to how you perceive that change is being managed in your police/law enforcement agency? (Please only choose one statement)

- My agency exists in a state of rapid and continuous change
- My agency has long periods of stability with short bursts of fundamental change
- Work groups/units in my agency deal with change incrementally and separately from the rest of the organisation
- My agency is constantly undergoing small changes
- Other (please specify)

16. Please select all of the statements below that are applicable in describing the management of change in your agency during the last change management project.

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer not to Say
1a	There were long periods of planning before a change was implemented						
2a	There was a robust case for change that was communicated to staff members						
3	There were delays in the implementation of the change project						
1b	There were logical reasons for implementing the change project						
1	The goals of the change project were transparent						
	There was some flexibility in implementing the change						
	The change project team was held accountable for the change						

	Staff members have good ideas for change to take place but are not acknowledged by management						
3	Change was implemented to suit personal agendas						
3	Project teams have looked for any areas of conflict within the change project						
	Any conflict found within the change project were usually resolved						
	After the change was implemented, staff training was adequate						
	After the change was implemented, staff training left questions about the change unanswered						
2	Communication about the change was timely						
2	Communication about the change was relevant						
2	Those concerned with the outcome of the change project received communication about the change						
2	Was the sponsor (senior manager) of the change project clearly communicated to staff members						
2	Were staff members made aware of the leader of the change project						
1	Project champions aided in the planning of the change						
1	Project champions aided in the implementation of the change						
1	Did staff members who were concerned with the outcome of the change project take part in the planning of the change project						
	There was resistance by staff members to the changes proposed						
	Any resistance by staff to the change was remedied						
	Change was expected to be accepted by staff without personal incentives being linked to the change						
	Were the changes that were implemented re-enforced						

17. Which of these statements best describes a change management project or initiative that has been implemented by your agency that you were aware of? (Please only chose one option)

- The project or initiative was managed within a set timeframe and had clear objectives and methods that were communicated in advance.
- The project or initiative was a dynamic project and had changes in deliverables and timeframes.
- The two statements above described the project or initiative but not necessarily in equal proportion.
- Other (please specify) _____

18. Please indicate the option that best describes how you felt about the last change management project or initiative that you were involved in with your agency.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer not to Say
Incentives were linked to the implementation to aid the process of change						
There were predetermined guidelines for how the implementation would be managed						
Predetermined guidelines for how the project would be implemented were followed by the project team						
The reasons for the change were made clear						
There were different views of what the goals of the project should be						
Communication about the implementation of the changes to be made were given in advance						
Communication about the implementation of the changes to be made were relevant						
Communication about the implementation of the changes to be made were open						
Information about the implementation of the changes to be made were made readily available						
The headquarters of the agency directed the implementation of the changes to be made with input from work groups						
Those leading the change project were clearly identified						
Those responsible for implementing the change project were fully utilized						

Any conflict between members of the implementation team was resolved						
Were staff members who were affected by the changes consulted during the implementation stage of the change project						
Personnel who were key to the implementation of the change project were not replaced during the implementation of the change project						
Staff resistance influenced the direction that the change project took						
The deliverables for the implementation of the change project had flexible timeframes						
The goals of the change project were met after it was implemented						
Training was delivered often and supporting materials were made available						
Did the training that was delivered, and the supporting materials provided, convey confidence that the changes would achieve the goals intended						
Staff members ideas were encouraged during the planning and implementation stages of the change project						

19. Did the change management techniques used during the development and implementation of the project or initiative that you were last involved in have any influence over you adopting the project or initiative?

- Yes
- No

20. Please explain your answer to Question 17.

21. Please describe any difficulties that you experienced in the last change project or initiative that you were involved in and did the difficulties affect the adoption of the project or initiative.

22. Has the project or initiative that you were last involved in been evaluated since it was implemented to see whether the changes achieved its original objectives and concepts?

- Yes
- No

23. Have any challenges concerning the development and implementation of the project or initiative that you were involved in last been found in other projects or initiatives?

- Yes
- No

24. Please indicate whether the following steps were included in the project or initiative that you were last involved in.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Prefer not to Say
A budget was developed, or finance was made available for the project or initiative						
Organizational structures were changed to accommodate the project or initiative						
New work group(s) were formed to accommodate the project or initiative						
New positions were created to accommodate the project or initiative						
Internal media updates were provided to staff to keep them informed						

25. How have the changes that were made as a result of the last change management project or initiative that you were involved in been maintained?

Appendix 2: Factors that are Important in Influencing Successful Change.

Change Statement	M	SD	Important Percent
That everyone is focused on the same goals and objectives of a change	4.37	0.77	87.92
That staff understand why change is happening and why it is necessary	4.64	0.63	93.08
That staff recognise that a change project is being implemented and managed by people with the right skills	4.19	0.83	82.16
That staff recognise that a change project is being implemented in a clearly defined manner	4.36	0.80	85.99
That the organization will provide assistance to create a supportive environment during the implementation of a change project	4.26	0.90	83.65
That staff have an appreciation of how a change will take place	4.04	0.90	73.25
That a change program will be communicated to staff effectively	4.63	0.59	94.34
That the organization takes ownership and influences how a change will take place	4.47	0.78	89.00
That staff have awareness of who is ultimately responsible for the development and implementation of a change project	4.30	0.87	84.51
That staff are aware that a change project recognises all of the processes, dependencies and work units that will be affected by a change	4.18	0.92	75.64
That an organization advises staff members who will be affected by a change	4.52	0.77	91.72

Appendix 3: Specific Factors of Change Management that were Adopted by the Agencies that the Respondents Worked For.

Statement	M	SD	SA/A Percent
There were long periods of planning before a change was implemented	2.54	0.94	57.50
The goals of the change project were transparent	2.01	0.88	77.21
There was some flexibility in implementing the change	2.18	0.89	75.94
The change project team was held accountable for the change	2.34	1.06	63.92
Project champions aided in the planning of the change	2.35	0.93	50.13
Project champions aided in the implementation of the change	2.29	0.92	63.16
Did staff members who were concerned with the outcome of the change project take part in the planning of the change project	2.50	0.96	56.97
There was resistance by staff members to the changes propose	2.56	1.05	56.32
Any resistance by staff to the change was remedied	2.52	0.87	54.78
Change was expected to be accepted by staff without personal incentives being linked to the change	2.35	1.05	66.67
Were the changes that were implemented re-enforced	1.93	0.64	85.44
There were logical reasons for implementing the change project	1.64	0.72	89.91
There was a robust case for change that was communicated to staff members	1.97	0.86	75.95
Staff members have good ideas for change to take place but are not acknowledged by management	3.52	1.19	24.05
Communication about the change was timely	2.15	0.82	74.68
Communication about the change was relevant	1.91	0.71	86.36
Those concerned with the outcome of the change project received communication about the change	1.98	0.70	72.06
Was the sponsor (senior manager) of the change project clearly communicated to staff members	2.01	0.85	76.44
Were staff members made aware of the leader of the change project	1.94	0.83	80.89
There were delays in the implementation of the change project	2.94	1.11	41.93
Change was implemented to suit personal agendas	4.18	0.95	8.92
Project teams have looked for any areas of conflict within the change project	2.56	0.93	56.69
Any conflict found within the change project were usually resolved	2.22	0.71	73.88
After the change was implemented, staff training was adequate	2.24	0.91	69.87