Supervisory styles of patrol sergeants and lieutenants

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Abstract

Scholars across academic disciplines have advanced theories identifying leadership styles. While these theoretical approaches have been used in a variety of settings, few police scholars have adapted these frameworks for a comprehensive study of patrol supervision. The present study uses these frameworks to identify underlying attitudinal constructs of supervisory styles from data collected for the Project on Policing Neighborhoods (POPN), a systematic observational study of patrol officers and first-line supervisors in two metropolitan police departments. Through factor analyses, four distinct supervisory styles (traditional, innovative, supportive, and active) are identified and thoroughly described. Supervisors are classified as having one of these four primary styles of supervision and the distribution of these supervisory styles is examined along with differences in supervisor behavior. Implications for policy and research are explored. © 2001 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

Introduction

Most scholars and practitioners agree that supervising patrol officers is a "challenging, and at times, insurmountable task" given the environmental constraints and general nature of patrol work (Tiffit, 1971; Van Maanen, 1983). Although first-line supervision is critical to the success of police organizations, very little is known about the actual roles and activities street-level patrol supervisors perform. In addition, differences in supervisory styles have not been adequately described or examined. It is troubling that the policing community knows so little about the activities, roles, and styles of patrol supervisors, who are generally considered to be the backbone of American police organizations (Trojanowicz, 1980). In this era of community policing, as police departments are encouraged to move from traditional authoritarian bureaucratic models to flatter organizational structures with greater line-officer latitude, the importance of supervisory styles will increase. The promise of this research is that it identifies different supervisory styles that currently exist in policing and addresses how supervisors with particular styles differ. Implications for policy and future research are also addressed.

Literature review

Some general propositions can be reached from a review of the literature written about police supervisors' responsibilities, activities, and roles. First, it has been acknowledged that the performance of first-line supervisors is measured through the effectiveness of their subordinates' performance. This encourages supervisors and subordinates to engage in a reciprocity of informal "exchanges" (Brown, 1988; Manning, 1977; Rubinstein, 1973; Van Maanen, 1983). Furthermore, sergeants can use their specific daily tasks (e.g., scheduling of shifts, beats, assign-...
ments, etc.) to influence and control subordinate actions and behavior (Van Maanen, 1983, 1984). Finally, police sergeants are in a perceived position of conflict, caught between their responsibility to superior officers and their responsibility for subordinate officers. Faced with this conflict, individual sergeants adapt and define their roles differently (Trojanowicz, 1980; Van Maanen, 1983, 1984). Therefore, one would expect patrol supervisors to develop different supervisory styles, which influence their own behavior as well as the behavior of subordinate officers.

Several policing ethnographies have addressed the role of the police supervisor. Muir's (1977) work examining patrol officers' understanding of human kindness and morality regarding the use of coercion, suggested that patrol sergeants could have a fundamental influence on officers' development of both understanding and morality, and therefore on their behavior. Wilson (1968) also came to a similar conclusion, proposing that an administrator's preference has a varying influence on patrol officers' use of discretion in different types of citizen encounters. In contrast, Brown (1988, p. 121) hypothesized that field supervisors and administrators have relatively little influence over patrol officers' behavior. His examination of survey responses of both patrol officers and supervisors indicated that "the routine actions of field supervisors have but a marginal impact on the way they [patrol officers] use their discretion." Other researchers have empirically tested the effects of supervision on patrol officer behavior (Allen, 1980, 1982; Allen & Maxfield, 1983; Brehm & Gates, 1993; Gates & Worden, 1989; Mastrofski, Ritti, & Snipes, 1994; Reiss, 1971; Smith, 1984; Tiffit, 1971), but no firm conclusions have been reached. Much of this research has measured only the quantity of supervision (e.g., mere supervisor presence at police-citizen encounters, time spent at encounters, etc.) rather than the quality of supervision (e.g., styles of supervision, attitudinal and behavior differences among supervisors, etc.).

A handful of studies have examined different supervisory and leadership styles of patrol supervisors and administrators. Both Cohen (1980) and Pursley (1974) identified two types of police administrators based on survey data. Pursley's "traditionalist" and "nontraditionalist" police chiefs bear a striking resemblance to Cohen's "tradition-oriented" and "reform-oriented" commanders. Moreover, these classifications are similar to Reiss-Ianni and Ianni's (1983) identification of the "street cop" and "management cop" cultures. Van Maanen (1983, 1984) identified and described what he termed "street" sergeants and "station house" sergeants. His classification was based primarily on the activities of sergeants; active sergeants in the field who directly monitored subordinates (street sergeants) were contrasted with administrative sergeants who were more likely to remain in the station (station house sergeants). Van Maanen suggested that these two types of sergeants defined their roles differently.

In addition to these "police-specific" styles, leadership styles identified in the management literature have been applied to police supervisors. For example, the "consideration" and "initiating structure" styles of leadership developed through the Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ) (Halpin & Winer, 1957; Hemphill & Coons, 1957) have been applied to police supervisors (Aldag & Brief, 1978; Brief, Aldag, & Wallden, 1976; Pursley, 1974). Likewise, Blake and Mouton's (1978) managerial grid styles have been applied to police supervisors (Kuykendall, 1977, 1985; Swanson & Territo, 1982), as were Hersey and Blanchard's relations-orientation and task-orientation styles (Kuykendall & Roberg, 1988; Kuykendall & Unsinger, 1982). Furthermore, Jermier and Berkes (1979) have applied the supervisory styles developed in the path goal theory to police supervisors. Most of these studies sought to predict subordinate satisfaction and generally produced mixed results.

For a number of reasons, findings from this body of research should be interpreted with caution. First, the measures of supervisory styles are often based on subordinates' perceptions of their supervisors rather than supervisors' perceptions of themselves or their actual behavior (Aldag & Brief, 1978; Brief et al., 1976; Jermier & Berkes, 1979). It is also unclear if the subordinates were asked to, and were able to, answer the leadership questions about a particular supervisor, rather than simply describing supervision in general (Aldag & Brief, 1978; Brief et al., 1976). Many shifts are supervised by multiple supervisors, making it problematic to attribute subordinates' perceptions of supervision to a particular supervisor. Even studies that base measures of supervisory styles on behavior are limited because they use hypothetical vignettes rather than actual observed behavior (Kuykendall & Unsinger, 1982). Finally, while leadership questionnaires can generally be applied to most types of supervisors, they may not adequately capture the unique circumstances of supervisors in police organizations. Several scholars who applied these questionnaires to police populations reported findings that were somewhat different from results consistently reported in the management field (Aldag & Brief, 1978; Brief et al., 1976; Kuykendall & Unsinger, 1982).
In general, the police supervision literature is limited in scope and fails to answer many conceptual and empirical questions regarding field supervision. This is especially true of questions regarding supervision styles. As stated by Southerland and Reuss-Ianni (1992, p. 177), "we need more broad-based research using a variety of methodological tools and conducted throughout a wide range of police agencies, not simply generalized from management studies conducted in business settings, to understand the current style and status of the police leadership and management." This article provides the first attempt to address this perceived need. The next section describes several underlying attitudinal constructs identified in the management and policing literatures that are combined to create four supervisory styles for a sample of patrol supervisors in two metropolitan police departments. These four styles are thoroughly described and their distribution among supervisors is explored.

**Underlying attitudinal constructs**

Since the 1930s, scholars focusing on leadership theories have described a variety of different leadership styles. Similarities among these theories are easily identified by examining their underlying attitudinal and behavioral constructs (Bass, 1990; Graham & Hays, 1993; Yukl, 1989). Indeed, there are strong similarities and one should expect a correlation between Lewin and Lippitt's (1938) "democratic" leaders, those leaders scoring high on the "consideration factor" created by the LBDQ (Hemphill & Coons, 1957), and Blake and Mouton's (1978) "concern for people" factor. The characteristics defining these types of leaders also correspond to Hersey and Blanchard's (1988) relations-oriented leader, McGregor's (1957, 1960) Theory Y managers, and Bass' (1985, 1990) transformational leader. Since many of the taxonomies of leadership behavior are similar, many of the leadership styles capture the same attitudes and behaviors. Yet, it is important to identify the actual individual constructs on which these leadership styles are based. Bass (1990) identified some individual attitudinal constructs underlying styles of leadership, each of which should be considered a continuum upon which leaders vary.

Rather than relying on styles identified in the management literature, this work identified underlying attitudinal constructs that were considered important for police supervision. Using Bass' (1990) work as a base, six underlying attitudinal constructs were identified and measured for a sample of police field supervisors: level of activity, decision-making, power distribution, relations-orientation, task-orientation, and inspirational motivation. These constructs were later combined with three police-specific constructs (expectations for community policing, expectations for aggressive enforcement, and general views of subordinates), to create supervisory styles for police officers.

The first underlying construct, level of activity, examined the extent to which leadership was either avoided or attempted. This construct involved the relative distance and/or amount of supervision a leader employs. Early leadership research focused on three classic styles developed by Lewin and Lippitt (1938): authoritarian, democratic, and laissez-faire. One of the defining characteristics of these styles was the level of activity displayed by the leader. For example, laissez-faire leaders were described as inactive leaders that avoid or shirk their supervisory duties (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939). In his discussion of Theory X and Theory Y management styles, McGregor (1960) compared close, controlling supervision to supervision that was more general and loose. Rather than simply identifying active or passive leadership as a dichotomy, a leader's motivation to manage can be measured along a continuum.

The second construct of leadership styles was based on how leaders made decisions (e.g., group decision-making, group input with one person deciding, one person deciding with no input, etc.). Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1958) examined how leaders made decisions and developed a continuum of autocratic and democratic behavior. Bass (1990) described the differences between directive decision-making and participative decision-making. The directive leader "plays an active role in problem-solving and decision-making and expects group members to be guided by his or her actions," while participative leaders engage subordinates in the planning or decision-making process (Bass, 1990). Leaders have also been differentiated based on how they communicate the decisions they make to subordinates. Hersey and Blanchard (1988) have described four types of leadership styles — telling, selling, participative, and delegating — that are based in part on one-way and two-way communications between leaders and subordinates.

A third construct examined how power is distributed (i.e., who is in charge, how many share power, who makes the decisions, etc.). "Power" refers to the control of others, although it does not necessarily imply authority, or the legitimization of power in the eyes of followers (Graham & Hays, 1993). Authority is power that has been legitimized in the eyes of the follower. A leader may rely on other types of power that are not based on legitimate authority, for example, French and Raven (1960) identified five power...
bases that may be utilized by leaders: legitimate, reward, coercive, referent, and expert power.

The fourth and fifth underlying constructs, referred to as relations-orientation and task-orientation, involve the focus of the leader's attention (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988). These dimensions consider what needs are being met as determined by the particular focus chosen by the leader. Leaders who are more relations-oriented focus their attention on the well-being of their subordinates. These leaders pursue a human-relations approach and maintain supportive relationships with subordinates by building friendships and mutual trust. In contrast, task-oriented leaders are most concerned with the goals of the work group, means of achieving these goals, and the output produced. These leaders focus on production and achievement. Although these two dimensions share common elements, they are conceptually and empirically distinct. Therefore, a leader could simultaneously rank high (or low) on both dimensions. Relations-orientation and task-orientation are similar to the "consideration" and "initiating structure" dimensions identified through the use of the LBDQ (Halpin & Winer 1957; Hemphill & Coons, 1957) and the "concern for people" and "concern for production" dimensions systematic arranged into the Managerial Grid (Blake & Mouton, 1978).

The final construct identified from the management literature, inspirational motivation, was a leadership dimension that refers to the potential range of team-building behavior that a leader may demonstrate. This dimension includes motivating and inspiring subordinates, arousing team spirit, and demonstrating commitment to goals and shared vision. Inspirational motivation is a form of transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Research sites

This empirical examination of supervision uses data collected for the Project on Policing Neighborhoods (POPN), a large-scale study of police behavior funded by the National Institute of Justice. Systematic observation of patrol officers and field supervisors (sergeants and lieutenants) was conducted during the summer of 1996 in the Indianapolis, Indiana Police Department and during the summer of 1997 in the St. Petersburg, Florida Police Department (see Parks, Mastrofski, DeJong, & Gray, 1999).

The Indianapolis Police Department serves the city of Indianapolis, which had an estimated population of 377,723 in 1995, including 39 percent minorities, 8 percent unemployed, 9 percent below the poverty level, and 17 percent female-headed households with children. The UCR Index crime rate in 1996 was 100 per 1,000 residents. During that year, the department employed 1,013 sworn officers — 17 percent female, 21 percent minority, and 36 percent with a four-year college degree. The patrol division was divided geographically into four districts, all of which were studied during the project. Each district was unique in character, mission, and emphasis placed on community policing (for details see Mastrofski et al., 2000; Parks et al., 1999).

Supervisory structure and form differed across IPD districts and shifts. It was unclear if a direct supervisor–subordinate relationship actually existed because this department did not have a formal evaluation process in place. Each patrol officer in IPD was assigned one of three work schedules with rotating days off. On each shift in every district, a sergeant was assigned to a particular schedule. Therefore, each shift had three different squads supervised by different sergeants. This supervisory structure provided that sergeants work the same schedule as the group of officers (their squad) that they were responsible for. Officers working in specialized community policing units were directly supervised by one sergeant whose sole responsibility was to monitor and direct the activities of the officers in that unit. Three of the four observed districts had a community-policing unit, although the structure and emphases of these units differed. Finally, in the patrol division, one lieutenant was assigned to each shift in each district.

St. Petersburg, Florida is located at the southern tip of Pinellas County with a population of 240,318 in 1995, including 24 percent minorities, 5 percent unemployed, 6 percent below the poverty level, and 10 percent female-headed households with children. The UCR Index crime rate (per 1,000 residents) was 99 in 1996. During that year, the St. Petersburg Police Department had 505 sworn officers, 13 percent of whom were women, 22 percent minority, and 26 percent with a four-year college degree (Parks et al., 1999). The jurisdiction of this department was divided into three districts and forty-eight community policing areas (CPA) with a community policing officer assigned to each area.

The SPPD supervision structure had undergone tremendous change in recent years. During the period of observation, it reflected a compromise between geographic deployment and a squad system. Sergeants were directly responsible for a "team" of officers on a particular shift working in a specific sector or geographic area (three sectors in each district), along with a handful of community policing officers assigned to a CPA. Each sergeant had responsibility for one or more CPAs.
(and the community policing officers working in those areas) within their sector. Sergeants were scheduled to work three "temporal" shifts (twenty-four hours) and then "flex" their schedule for the remaining sixteen hours each week. During a "temporal" shift, sergeants were responsible for the direct supervision of all patrol officers working that shift for the entire district, not just their sector. During "flex" shifts, sergeants were expected to work on problem-solving in their specific CPA, supervise their community policing officers, and complete administrative paperwork.

Methodology

Systematic observation was conducted in IPD with fifty-eight patrol supervisors (sergeants and lieutenants) during eighty-seven rides, totaling over 600 hours — 78 percent of IPD patrol sergeants and lieutenants were observed at least once. In SPPD, systematic observation was conducted with twenty-six patrol sergeants, four patrol lieutenants, and eight patrol officers working as the acting temporal sergeant during seventy-two shifts — 96 percent of patrol sergeants in SPPD were observed at least once. Data were also obtained through structured interviews with sixty-nine of seventy-four patrol supervisors in IPD and all twenty-seven patrol sergeants in SPPD. The interview captured demographic and background information along with supervisors' views in the following areas: perceived problems in their districts, training, subordinates, their role as supervisors, how they distribute and use power, patrol work, goals of policing, priorities of management, and problem-oriented and community-oriented policing.

In addition, field observation of patrol officers was conducted for over 5,700 hours in twenty-four neighborhoods across the two sites. In IPD, 194 patrol officers were observed during 336 shifts, while in SPPD, 128 officers were observed during 360 shifts. Combined, observers recorded information regarding encounters between officers and approximately 12,000 citizens (Parks et al., 1999).

The measures of supervision used in the following analyses are based on supervisors who were both interviewed and observed. Combining both sites, eighty-one supervisors are included in the analyses — seventeen lieutenants and thirty-nine sergeants from IPD and twenty-five sergeants from SPPD. The demographic characteristics of these supervisors are displayed in Table 1. The majority of supervisors in this sample were White (85 percent), male (85 percent), and with a four-year college degree (51 percent). The average supervisor was forty-four years old with nearly ten years of supervisory experience. Although supervisors reported receiving more training on issues related to supervision, management, and leadership compared to the concepts and principles of community policing, they reported having more knowledge about community policing issues.

In the following analyses, the substantive nature of supervision is measured using the underlying attitudinal dimensions of supervisory styles identified from the management and policing literatures. Individual items are extracted from the supervisor survey and are intended to represent the supervisors' beliefs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sup sex (1 = female)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sup race (1 = nonwhite)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisor age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years experience as supervisor</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (four-year college degree)</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount training in concepts and principles of community policing</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount knowledge of concepts and principles of community policing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount training in supervision, management, and leadership</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount knowledge in supervision, management, and leadership</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td>0.40</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 17 IPD lieutenants, 39 IPD sergeants, and 25 SPPD sergeants.

Amount training: 1 (none), 2 (less than one day), 3 (one to two days), 4 (three to five days), and 5 (more than five days).

Amount knowledge: 1 (very), 2 (fairly), 3 (not very knowledgeable).
Table 2
Supervisors' attitudinal dimensions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Min</th>
<th>Max</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>Mean IPD lieutenants</th>
<th>Mean IPD sergeants</th>
<th>Mean SP sergeants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Activity level scale</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>7.06</td>
<td>6.74</td>
<td>6.24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-making scale</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>5.48</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>5.77</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power scale</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>25.65</td>
<td>24.51</td>
<td>23.32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations 1 — friends</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relations 2 — protect</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task-orientation scale</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>12.44</td>
<td>11.64</td>
<td>13.84</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inspirational motivation</td>
<td>1.23</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>4.33</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Expect CP scale</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>27.51</td>
<td>26.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expect aggressive enforcement</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>8.82</td>
<td>8.05</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>View of subordinates scale</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8.18</td>
<td>8.58</td>
<td>8.35</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 81 supervisors.
Larger values represent higher levels of activity, more direct decision-making, more perceived power, and higher levels of relations-orientation, task-orientation, inspirational motivation, expectations for CP, expectations for aggressive enforcement, and more positive views of subordinates. Numbers reported in the table are unstandardized scores.

The attitudinal constructs do relate to one another in a meaningful and interpretable manner. As expected, some scales do have significant correlation coefficients. For example, supervisors who are strongly relations-oriented also appear to have positive views of subordinate officers. Likewise, supervisors who score high on the community expectation scale tend to score low on the aggressive enforcement expectation scale. Indeed, all of the constructs correlate in the expected directions (see Shepard, 1999).

Findings

These nine constructs are analyzed using exploratory factor analysis to identify underlying latent styles of supervision. Based on the sample of
eighty-one supervisors, factor analysis reveals four significant factors with eigenvalues greater than one, which collectively explain 63 percent of the variance. The factor loadings for each attitudinal construct are reported in Table 3. Each of the four factors is considered a different "style" of supervision. The factor scores indicate the strength of each underlying attitudinal construct for each style. The four styles of supervision that emerge are labeled traditional, innovative, supportive, and active, respectively. Supervisors are classified with a particular style based on their highest factor score.

"Traditional" supervisors

The first factor is dominated by an expectation of aggressive enforcement and attitudes indicating high levels of task-orientation. To a lesser extent, these supervisors report being more directive in their decision-making and have lower expectations for subordinates to engage in community policing activities. Supervisors who score high on this factor may be considered more traditional in their approach to supervision. This traditional style of supervision is characterized by supervisors who expect subordinate officers to produce measurable outcomes — particularly arrests and citations, along with paperwork and documentation. Traditional supervisors expect officers to patrol aggressively, but they do not expect officers to handle situations that involve order maintenance or quality of life issues. They are more likely to make decisions because they tend to take over encounters with citizens or tell officers how to handle these incidents.

The traditional style of supervision is what many expect in police organizations. The supervisor who places importance on measurable outcomes of police activities and aggressive enforcement is representative of the "traditional" style of supervisor. They are concerned with controlling situations and the behavior of their subordinates. This control is maintained through relatively traditional means within the department — checking paperwork, measuring output based on arrest statistics, and making decisions themselves so subordinates will not have the opportunity to mishandle a situation.

It is important to recognize the differences between this style and other "traditional" labels of supervisors or officers from past research. Readers may misinterpret traditional supervisors as shielding subordinate officers from punishment and being more tolerant of corruption. One aspect of traditional supervisors in this sample, however, is their no-nonsense approach to policing, along with their strict enforcement of rules and regulations. As an observer recounts about a traditional supervisor:

S1 [the supervisor observed] was obsessed with the issue of respect. S1 expounded at length about the familiarity of the department and laxity of discipline. He blamed this initially on the academy training, then the demise of the military style, and societal erosion of respect for elders and authority. S1 cited the old-style policing when officers would never address their superiors by name but by rank and would hope against hope to not be called into a supervisor's office. Now, S1 claims that the officers seek out the district commanders personally instead of adhering to the chain of command (POPN).

Just as traditional supervisors expect strict law enforcement on the street, they expect adherence to departmental rules including the chain of command. Emphasis of both discipline and respect are central to this style of supervision. As described by another supervisor:

S1 [the supervisor observed] said that he will sanction individuals if necessary and that he has actually had someone fired for numerous small things that just seemed to add up. S1 noted that most other sergeants would not have sought action against this particular subordinate, but he believes that officers should follow the rules, and when given instructions, should follow those instructions. S1 said he was more upset that the officer in question did not submit to his authority than by his actual behavior (POPN).

Traditional supervisors are also generally resistant to community-oriented policing or other new policing initiatives. They believe that community policing involves duties that should not be the responsibility of patrol officers. The following explanation by a supervisor is typical of a traditional supervisor's view:

S1 [the observed supervisor] is a self-described "traditionalist and dinosaur"... S1 felt that management has a real problem as a result of bending and swaying too much with whatever prevailing climate is in existence concerning the community, media and politics. In attempting to demonstrate change, initiative, and forward movement they have jeopardized efficiency, true policing, and proficiency (POPN).

Traditional supervisors are more likely to be supportive of new policing initiatives if they are in the form of aggressive law enforcement. Of those classified as traditional, 61.9 percent "agree strongly" that "enforcing the law is by far a patrol officer's most important responsibility," compared to only 13.6 percent of innovative supervisors, 10.5 percent of supportive supervisors, and 10.5 percent of active supervisors. They expect and encourage the "traditional" goals of policing and demand strict adherence to rules and regulations.
The observed behavior of traditional supervisors also varied in expected ways. Traditional supervisors spend significantly less time per shift engaging in encounters with citizens (2.0 percent compared to 5.4 percent). This behavioral difference reinforces the characterization of traditional supervisors. One might speculate that they spend less time engaging with citizens simply because they emphasize their role as supervisor rather than doing patrol work. Although they may take over some incidents and make decisions, they are less likely to engage in direct citizen contact on their own. Furthermore, because traditional supervisors do not emphasize community policing, they may be less likely to engage in these activities themselves, which translates into less casual citizen contact, less contact with victims, fewer meetings with community representatives, etc.

Other observed behavior provides further support for classification. Traditional sergeants and lieutenants are more likely to give advice or instruction to subordinates (6.4 times per shift compared to 4.6 times), but less likely to reward them (0.9 times per shift compared to 2.4 times). Traditional supervisors may be less likely to reward officers because they are less relations-oriented. Rather, they are concerned with controlling situations and task-related behavior. Instructing subordinates is a behavior consistent with their desire for control.

"Innovative" supervisors

The second factor represents supervisors who score high on the power and community-relations expectation scales. This factor is also characterized by high relations-orientation (have more officers they consider friends), low task-orientation, and more positive views of subordinates. These supervisors are “innovative” because they are generally more supportive of innovative changes in policing. They are defined by their expectations for community policing and problem-solving efforts by subordinates. Furthermore, they are less concerned with enforcing rules and regulations, report writing, or other task-oriented activities that characterize traditional supervisors.

Innovative supervisors are more receptive of new policing initiatives, and as a result, may encourage their officers to embrace these new philosophies as well. As one supervisor explained to an observer:

S1 [observed supervisor] said that he is not resistant to change because he enjoys seeing the department strive to produce better quality services for the community. S1 said that some policies are certainly more effective than others but without change there is no way to make progress (POPN).

Supervisors’ support for innovative strategies appears to extend to expectations for their subordinates. Innovative supervisors’ high scores on the expectation for community policing scale show that they expect subordinates to perform community-related tasks and insist on better relations with the community. One innovative supervisor describes his expectations for subordinates:

S1 [the supervisor observed] said that he expects his officers to be fair with citizens and act in a morally defensible manner. S1 said that the people in the community are important to him and that officers often forget that they are employed by these people. S1 said that he expects his officers will treat all citizens with dignity and respect and act in a ‘courteous and respectful manner.’ S1 was very sensitive to matters of ethnicity, race, and gender. S1 said that every officer brings something different to the job and that a good officer is one who recognizes and accepts differences among groups of people. He said that he expects that officers will interact with citizens from different groups in appropriate though perhaps different ways (POPN).

These expectations are further evident through innovative supervisors’ responses to individual survey questions. For example, 95.5 percent of innovative supervisors reported that they “agree strongly” that “a good patrol officer will try to find out what residents think the neighborhood problems are,” compared to only 47.6 percent of traditional supervisors, 68.4 percent of supportive supervisors, and 68.4 percent of active supervisors.

One of the goals of innovative supervisors is to provide subordinates with the support to implement community policing and problem-solving strategies. Scholars have noted that supervisors in an era of community policing should assume a new role, which includes coaching, mentoring, and facilitating officers. Innovative supervisors are more likely to embrace this new role. As one innovative supervisor explained to an observer:

S1 [supervisor observed] said that his role involves becoming a ‘teacher or educator’ to the officers. S1 said that if nothing else, his many years of service have provided him with the opportunity to see a variety of situations. S1 said that this insight is only valuable if shared with other officers who may learn something from his experiences. S1 said that officers frequently come to him for advice or suggestions about how he would have handled a particular situation. He said that what he tries to teach officers is that every situation is different. S1 said that frequently officers will become so routinized in their responses to situations that they lump together as being identical. S1 said the key is to teach officers that although situations are similar, there are always different elements involved and that
different ways to handle these situations may be appropriate (POPN).

Unlike traditional supervisors, innovative supervisors generally do not tell subordinates how to handle situations or take over the situations themselves. Rather, they are more likely to delegate decision-making. Innovative supervisors have accepted a new supervisory role characterized by less control over subordinates' behavior and decision-making. They chose to guide and teach their policing philosophies rather than strictly control officers' behavior.

Some behaviors displayed by innovative supervisors differ significantly from behaviors observed for other supervisors. For example, innovative supervisors spend significantly more time per shift engaging in encounters with citizens (6.5 percent of the shift compared to 3.8 percent). Presumably, those supportive of innovative strategies would spend more time themselves engaging in community-policing types of activities, which include interacting with citizens. Innovative supervisors also spend more time engaging in other types of community policing activities, but these differences are not statistically significant.

Innovative supervisors also spend significantly more time per shift engaging in personal encounters (with citizens or other officers) than other supervisors (14.5 percent compared to 8.7 percent). This behavioral difference is also consistent with the descriptions of innovative supervisors. Those supervisors who emphasize and engage in community-oriented activities often have more unstructured time, and as a result, more time for personal activities.

'Supportive' supervisors

The third factor is characterized by high scores on the "protect subordinates" relations-orientation scale and low scores on the task-orientation scale. Additionally, this factor is represented by higher levels of inspirational motivation. These supervisors support subordinates by protecting them from "unfair" discipline or punishment and providing inspirational motivation. Furthermore, supportive supervisors are less concerned with enforcing rules and regulations, paperwork, or making sure officers do their work.

Supportive supervisors show their concern for subordinates in a number of ways. They may provide a buffer between officers and management to protect against criticism and discipline. This gives their officers space to perform duties without constant worry of disciplinary action for honest mistakes. One example of this protective buffer is explained by a supervisor:

S1 said that he also feels his role is to take care of his officers and be their advocate in front of the administration ... S1 explained that it is almost like a plea bargain in court. S1 said that during administrative proceedings against his officers, he often concedes that they have done something wrong, but also tells the mitigating circumstances and tries to sell the officer's good points (POPN).

Alternatively, supportive supervisors may simply encourage officers through praise and recognition, or show support by establishing good relations with subordinates, acting as counselors and showing concern for subordinates' personal well-being. Furthermore, supervisors can become "career counselors" in a sense, looking out for the well-being of subordinate officers within the organization.

In some cases, supportive supervisors do not have strong ties or positive relations with management. They often view the police administration as something that patrol officers need to be shielded against.

S1 [observed supervisor] said that from management's point of view, the sergeant is the person that they will "hang out to dry" as an example and to rid themselves of responsibility. S1 said that his true role is to protect officers from the whims of management and also to make sure that the officers are doing their jobs and back up one another (POPN).

As a result, some supervisors classified as supportive may actually function more as a "protector" than strictly a "supporter." Of the supportive supervisors, 68.4 percent reported that "protecting their officers from unfair criticism and punishment" is one of their three most important functions, compared to only 9.5 percent of traditional supervisors, 4.5 percent of innovative supervisors, and none of the active supervisors. These findings relate to Reuss-Ianni and Ianni's (1983) description of two predominate cultures in policing, street-cop culture and management-cop culture. Supportive supervisors appear to adhere to street-cop culture by aligning themselves with their subordinates against administrators. They are management cops only in the sense that their rank is higher than entry level.

This protector role adopted by some supportive supervisors has the potential to become problematic. As has been noted in recent history, shielding officers from accountability mechanism within the department often leads to police misconduct (Christopher Commission, 1991; Mollen Commission, 1994). Supervisory protection of officers has also been associated in other research with promoting police solidarity and secrecy, which cultivates an atmosphere
where police abuse of power, misconduct, and corruption are tolerated (Crank, 1998; Kappeler, Sluder, & Alpert, 1998; Skolnick & Fyfe, 1993).

Systematic observation of supportive supervisors reveals only one significant difference in behavior. Supportive supervisors praise or reward subordinate officers significantly more often during an average shift than do other types of supervisors (3.0 times per shift compared to 1.7 times). Intuitively, one would expect this behavior from supportive supervisors who are concerned with relations-orientation and inspirational motivation.

Active supervisors

The fourth factor is characterized by high levels of activity and positive views of subordinates. To a lesser extent, this factor is also represented by high scores on decision-making, high levels of perceived power, and low levels of inspirational motivation. The active supervisor can be compared to Van Maanen’s “street” sergeant. These supervisors are often in the field, directive in their decision-making, and have a relatively positive view of subordinates.

One characteristic of active supervisors is working alongside their subordinates in the field. Among active supervisors, 94.7 percent report that they often go on their own initiative to incidents that their officers are handling, compared to only 23.8 percent of traditional officers, 54.5 percent of innovative supervisors, and 68.4 percent of supportive supervisors. Another goal of active supervisors is to control subordinate behavior, as shown with their high scores on the decision-making and power scales.

In addition, active supervisors also give importance to being in the field and engaging in police work themselves. The same supervisor explained:

S1 indicated that he does not follow the popular opinion that “I got my stripes so I don’t need to do patrol work anymore.” S1 indicated that he still does traffic stops, takes his own calls, and goes on calls when he is not required. When I got in S1’s car to begin the ride, he had two traffic tickets that he had written on his way to work. I also saw him stop two people on traffic violations (POP).

Active supervisors attempt to achieve a balance between being active in the field and controlling subordinate behavior through constant, direct supervision.

Even though active supervisors believe they have considerable influence over subordinate decisions, low scores on the inspirational motivation scale show they are less likely to help them work on problems. One possible explanation is their reluctance to be too controlling and therefore alienate subordinate officers. As one active supervisor explained to an observer:

S1 [supervisor observed] told me that he is the type of supervisor who likes to “get involved” and “be there” for his officers. S1 stated that he loves being on the streets. I asked S1 if he considered himself to be a “hands-on” manager. S1 thought about it for a moment, and then shook his head [no]. S1 commented that he associated “hands-on” with a supervisor who would get “too involved”, not trusting his subordinates to do the job correctly or with a supervisor who was a control freak ... S1 stated that he would describe himself as a sergeant who did his best to be available to his officers and as someone who was there to back them up. At this time, S1 told me that he would take calls and volunteer as backup, so his officers would know that he was not “above” working alongside them (POP).

As evident by this supervisor, there is a fine line between active supervisors and those who are perceived as overcontrolling or micro-managers by their subordinates.

Active supervisors spend more time per shift engaging in general motor patrol (33.0 percent of a shift compared to 25.7 percent) and traffic encounters (3.9 percent compared to 2.1 percent). Active supervisors are also less likely to engage in work-related discussions regarding crime or disorders with subordinate officers (4.7 times per shift compared to 8.0 times). This is probably due to the amount of time supervisors spend in the field and not in direct contact with officers in the station where most of these conversations are likely to occur. Again, the differences in behavior lend support to the categorization of these supervisors.

Distribution of supervisory styles

The distribution of supervisory styles for this sample of sergeants and lieutenants is reported in Table 4. There is a roughly equal distribution of each style, however, when the styles are examined for each department separately, significant differences emerge. Traditional supervisors are significantly overrepresented in SPPD, while active supervisors are underrepresented. Supervisors in IPD are evenly distributed across all styles, however, IPD lieutenants are slightly more likely to be classified as innovative and less likely to be classified as traditional.

Also reported in Table 4 are the differences between male and female supervisors. Female supervisors represent a disproportionate number of traditional supervisors (50 percent of female supervisors are classified as traditional supervisors). With this exception, few other differences in classification are
apparent. There are no statistically significant differences in classification with regard to the supervisors’ race, rank, age, years of experience, or education. The four types of supervisors also do not differ from one another in their reported views of the importance of promotion or moving to a specialized unit, and their amount of training and general knowledge of the principles of community policing. Innovative supervisors, however, reported receiving significantly more training in supervision, management, and leadership.

Discussion

Using six underlying constructs identified from leadership theories and three underlying constructs identified from police ethnographic research, four different styles of police field supervisors are identified. These supervisory styles are evenly distributed among the sample of eighty-one supervisors, however, significant departmental differences exist. Nearly half of SPPD supervisors are traditional, compared to only 16 percent of IPD supervisors. Likewise, only 12 percent of SPPD supervisors are active, compared to 29 percent from IPD. Differences also emerge when the supervisor’s sex is considered. Fifty percent of female supervisors are traditional supervisors, compared to only 22 percent of male supervisors. Furthermore, only 8.3 percent of female supervisors are innovative, compared to over 30 percent of males.

One explanation for these differences is the nature of the traditional supervisory style. Traditional supervisors are primarily concerned with controlling subordinate behavior. This is accomplished by demanding compliance with rules and regulations, monitoring work output measures, and using discipline. Van Maanen (1983) speculated that supervisors often focus on rules and regulations because they are concrete and can be controlled in a work environment that is unstable and difficult to regulate. Female supervisors, perhaps seeking to gain legitimacy in their supervisory roles, may be more likely to use rules and regulations as a means to control their officers. They rely on what French and Raven (1960) have termed a “coercive” power base (power taken from subordinates’ perceptions of a leader’s ability to mediate punishments given to them). In contrast, male supervisors are more likely to rely on “legitimate” power (based on subordinates’ perceptions that the leader has a legitimate right to direct their actions) or “referent” power (based on subordinates’ identification with leaders).

This explanation also accounts for the higher percentage of traditional supervisors in SPPD. Many of the SPPD supervisors complained that the supervisory structure and goals had changed several times in recent years due to administrative turnover and the implementation of innovative strategies. Many supervisors were unclear what their roles in the organization were, or what management expected of them. In fact, 72 percent of SPPD sergeants indicated during observation sessions that the structure of supervision and other departmental policies limited their ability to assess subordinate behavior and perform supervisory functions. Only 4 percent of IPD supervisors indicated similar feelings. It is likely that supervisors in organizations with changing structures, priorities, and strategies emphasize the one familiar element of their supervisory role — controlling subordinate behavior by enforcing established rules and regulations.

The implications for day-to-day operations and relationships with citizens for departments having a majority of supervisors with a traditional style are unknown. The present research has firmly established differences in supervisors’ attitudes and behaviors; however, whether or not these differences have an influence over subordinates’ behavior on the street is an empirical question that should be explored. That is, to better assess the implications for policy and future research, the influence of these particular supervisory styles on subordinates’ attitudes and behaviors need to be examined. Although most scholars and practitioners agree that one role of police field supervisors is to control the behavior their officers, the degree of control that supervisors actually have continues to be a matter of debate (Allen, 1980, 1982; Allen & Maxfield, 1983; Brehm

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### Table 4

**Supervisory styles**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Overall (n = 81)</th>
<th>Males (n = 69)</th>
<th>Females (n = 12)</th>
<th>White (n = 69)</th>
<th>Nonwhite (n = 12)</th>
<th>IPD lieutenants (n = 41)</th>
<th>IPD sergeants (n = 39)</th>
<th>SPPD sergeants (n = 25)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>0.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innovative</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>0.33</td>
<td>0.27</td>
<td>0.35</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.17</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.23</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.29</td>
<td>0.28</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Numbers in the cells are means representing the percent of supervisors with that predominant style.
Based on their reported attitudes and observed behavior, one might expect that each of these four types of supervisors would have influences over subordinates’ attitudes and behavior that differ significantly in form and substance. For example, one might speculate that officers with traditional or active supervisors would be more likely to engage in aggressive enforcement activities in an effort to produce measurable output (arrests and citations). As a result of this aggressive enforcement, officers might be involved in more conflicts with citizens and perhaps be more likely to use force. Analyses have shown that at least one supervisory style (active) has a significant influence on the increased likelihood of patrol officers’ use of force. Analyses also show, however, that patrol officers with active supervisors spend significantly more time engaging in police-initiated and problem-solving activities, and have higher rates of arrest (Engel, 2000; forthcoming).

It will also be important to test whether or not innovative supervisors have an influence over the acceptance and utilization of community policing and problem-solving techniques. One might speculate that officers supervised by an innovative supervisor would spend more time on problem-solving activities. Alternatively, these officers might take their cues directly from innovative supervisors by spending more time conducting personal business or otherwise neglecting their duties. Finally, future research should examine the influence that supportive supervisors have over police misconduct. The protector role that some supportive supervisors embrace might be directly related to problematic subcultural norms including isolation, secrecy, and solidarity.

Although identifying supervisory styles and examining differences in supervisors’ behavior have provided interesting findings, caution should be exercised when interpreting them. The data used in this study of police supervision were limited in several ways. The POPN utilized a data collection design created for systematic observation of encounters between patrol officers and citizens. The study of patrol supervision did not fit neatly into this scheme. Although systematic observation and surveys provided a descriptive slice of police work, they often did not provide detailed information about long-term patterns of police behavior or the effectiveness of long-term policies and strategies. The study of patrol supervision might be better captured by some type of modified ethnographic research design where detailed information could be collected. While the POPN research design did have a partial ethnographic component with detailed information collected during each ride, the ability to describe long-term patterns of supervision and the structural, environmental, and political factors affecting these patterns was somewhat limited. Future research on police supervision should address these issues.

Nonetheless, the implications for policy were clear. Police administrators who wish to establish particular policies and procedures within their departments need to recognize the differences in first-line supervisors. None of the four supervisory styles identified in this research should be considered the “ideal” standard for police supervision. Each style was associated with both benefits and problems. The appropriate supervisory style for departments will differ based on their organizational goals. Police administrators should recognize the need for better training of first-line supervisors to achieve these organizational goals.

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Appendix A. Individual survey items

**Decision-Making (2 items):**

1. When you are on the scene of an incident with your officers, how frequently do you tell them how to handle the incident? Never [1], rarely [2], sometimes [3], or often [4]
2. When you are on the scene, how frequently do you take it over and handle the incident yourself?

Power Distribution (11 items):
How much influence do you usually have over each decision: Hardly any or none [1], some [2], a lot [3].
1. Which officers are assigned to your unit.
2. The specific CPA or job assignments your officers receive.
3. Whether one of your officers is permitted to go out of service to do problem solving or other special tasks.
4. Whether your officers are disciplined for minor rule infractions.
5. Whether your officers receive assignments to specialist units when they ask for them.
6. Whether one of your officers is authorized to work overtime.
7. Whether one of your officers is approved for off-duty work.
8. Your officers’ prospects for promotion to higher rank.
9. Department policies about patrol operations. Never [1], seldom [2], sometimes [3], usually [4], always [5]
10. When you have asked for resources needed to do a job, how often have you been given what you requested?
11. When you have made decisions about how to do patrol operations, how often have your decisions been supported by higher-ups?

Relations-Orientation 1 (one item):
1. How many officers in your unit would you consider to be your friends? None [1], a few [2], about half [3], all or most [4].

Relations-Orientation 2 (one item):
Out of a list of ten items, indicate the three that you think are the most important for you to perform as a first-line supervisor [5], and three that are the least important [1].
1. Protecting subordinates from unfair criticism or punishment.

Task-Orientation (4 items):
Out of a list of ten items, indicate the three that you think are the most important for you to perform as a first-line supervisor [5], and three that are the least important [1].
1. Making sure that reports are properly completed.
2. Enforcing department rules and regulations.
3. Handling calls for service to their assigned area.

Level of Activity/Relative Distance of Supervision (2 items):
Never [1], rarely [2], sometimes [3], always [4]:
1. How frequently do your officers ask you to come to the incidents that they are handling?
2. Other than when it is required by department policy, how frequently do you go on your own initiative to incidents that your officers are handling?

Inspirational Motivation (1 item):
Out of a list of ten items, indicate the three that you think are the most important for you to perform as a first-line supervisor [5], and three that are the least important [1].
1. Helping officers to work on problems in their assigned areas.

Expectations for Community Policing (9 items):
Indicate your level of agreement with the following: Disagree strongly [1], disagree somewhat [2], agree somewhat [3]; agree strongly [4]
1. Police officers have reason to be distrustful of most citizens [values reversed].
2. Assisting citizens is just as important as enforcing the law.
3. A good patrol officer will try to find out what residents think the neighborhood problems are.

How often should patrol officers with 911 assignments be expected to do something about each of the following situations. Never [1], sometimes [2], much of the time [3], a lot of the time [4], most of the time [5]
4. Public nuisance (dole punks, turning dogs)
5. Neighbor disputes
6. Family disputes
7. Litter and trash
8. Parents who don’t control their kids
9. Nuisance businesses that cause lots of problems for neighbors

Expectations for Aggressive Enforcement (3 items):
Indicate your level of agreement with the following: Disagree strongly [1], disagree somewhat [2], agree somewhat [3]; agree strongly [4]
1. Enforcing the law is by far the patrol officer’s most important responsibility.
2. A good patrol officer is one who patrols aggressively by stopping cars, checking out people, running license checks, and so forth.

Out of a list of 7 goals indicate the two you believe are the most important for patrol officers with 911 assignments [5], and two that you think are the least important [1].
3. Making arrests and issuing citations.
Notes

1. Supervision was previously organized as a "squad system," where one sergeant was directly responsible for a fixed group of officers who worked the same schedule. After a change in administrative personnel, SPPD implemented a supervisory structure that focused on geographic deployment. Each sergeant in the department was assigned to a particular geographic area (CPA) that they were directly responsible for. As a result, sergeants were responsible for supervising patrol officers and community policing officers who were assigned to their areas across every shift. After about a year, this structure of supervision was reorganized because of the unrealistic demands it placed on sergeants.

2. Supervisors were excluded from the analyses if they were not both interviewed and observed (sixteen sergeants and lieutenants from IPD and three sergeants from SPPD). Also, eight patrol officers acting as temporal sergeants in SPPD were excluded as were all the lieutenants from this department. Lieutenants from SPPD did not engage in direct field observation of subordinate officers.

3. Specific items with serious questions regarding their reliability or validity were eliminated from the composite scale measures. Where appropriate, a single item was used to represent an attitudinal dimension rather than an additive scale.

4. The two relations-orientation items did not strongly correlate (Pearson’s $r = .11$) and reliability analysis suggested that they do not belong in an additive scale ($\alpha$ coefficient = .19). At face value, the items tap different issues. The number of officers that supervisors consider their friends does not appear to influence their reported importance of protecting officers from unfair criticism or punishment. As a result, these two items are entered separately in analyses, with both representing different aspects of the relations-orientation construct.

5. This factor analysis is performed using the maximum likelihood extraction technique because its overall objective is "to find the factor solution which would best fit the observed correlations" (Kim & Mueller, 1978, p. 23). An oblique rotation method (direct oblimin) is selected because "it does not arbitrarily impose the restriction that factors be uncorrelated" (Kim & Mueller, 1978, p. 37). For a more detailed information on extraction and rotation methods, see Kim and Mueller (1978).

6. For this and all subsequent quotes from supervisors, references to gender were reported in masculine form to further protect the identities of supervisors.

References


