CHAPTER 2
THE ENVIRONMENT OF ADMINISTRATION

Chapter Overview

This chapter examines the environment of police administration for the purpose of assisting administrators to effectively cope with the environment in which they must work.

The following areas will be covered:

1. Specific environmental pressures that police organizations face.
2. Police organizational interaction with the environment.
3. Police-government interaction and police-community relationships, including the barriers to and difficulties associated with each.
4. The importance of the media in policing, including the approaches administrators must take for managing the police-media relationship.
5. Cultural diversity and its importance to police administration.

Learning Objectives

1. Identify several organizational environments.
2. Discuss how police departments respond to their organizational environments.
3. Explain why a police department must be an open system and respond to its environment.
4. Understand the nature of politics and how politics affect the police organization.
5. Identify a community’s power structure and its implications for the police manager.
6. Evaluate the relationship between the police and community, and understand the barriers to developing better relationships.
7. Discuss community policing and its ability to improve police-community relationships.
8. Discuss the role of the media in police administration and how the police executive can develop better relations with the media.

9. Understand the meaning and implication of cultural diversity within the context of policing.

Chapter Outline/Lecture Notes

I. Introduction

A. Organizational Environments

Specific conditions of the environment vary from one locale to another, and each condition has consequences for both governmental administration and police administration.

1. The Environment of Government

There are seven environmental conditions that affect the structure and nature of government:

a. Technological

b. Legal

c. Political

d. Economic

e. Demographic

f. Ecological

g. Cultural

2. Reactions to the Environment

At least two theories attempt to explain how organizations react to their environment. One is the theory of uncertainty and dependence (Boyne and Meier, 2009).

a. Organizations face the problem of uncertainty when they lack information about the environment.
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b. As uncertainty increases, the alignment between the organization and the environment becomes more tenuous.

c. Uncertainty and dependence tie a police department to its community and force it to deal with various environmental conditions.

Another theory holds that organizations react to their environments through a process of natural selection (e.g., Child, Chung, and Davies, 2003). This theory of natural selection is rooted in biology and basically states that organizations react to their environments, some more efficiently than others.

a. Those that do a poor job of meeting the environment’s demands ultimately are eliminated or forced to change.

II. Interaction between Environment and Organization

A. Closed Systems

1. One of the earliest management theorists, Alvin Gouldner (1959), claimed that organizations follow one of two models. One, the “rational,” or “closed” system model conceives of organizations as being insulated and closed off from their environments.

2. Contemporary administrative authorities have come to view the closed-system perspective as inappropriate for the management of police departments. A closed-system philosophy leads to the creation of system boundaries that eliminate the influences from and interaction with the environment. These boundaries place the police agency in a position that is apart from rather than a part of its community.

B. Open Systems

1. The other perspective, that of the “natural” or “open” system model, takes the view that organizations exist in a complex environment that they cannot shut out. The concepts of closed and open systems help us understand how administration relates to the environment.

2. An open-systems-oriented police department is integrally tied to the community and environment. It attempts to tailor its operations and services to community conditions and needs. A number of agencies are currently adopting community policing (discussed later in this chapter—and elsewhere throughout the book). Community policing is an excellent example of open-systems policing in that it emphasizes involving the community in solving community problems.
III. Police and Political/Government Interaction

**Separation of powers** refers to the fact that in our form of government the act of governing is divided into three constitutionally defined branches: legislative, executive, and judicial.

**Federalism** is the division of political power among the federal, state, and local governments. The Tenth Amendment to the Constitution established the principle of federalism by enumerating the powers of the federal government and stating that all remaining powers are reserved for the states.

A. City Councils, Mayors, and Police Commissions

1. A serious threat to the longevity of the police administrator comes into play when the administrator fails to understand the political realities of the functioning of government within his or her governmental sphere.

2. There is much diversity in the manner in which these forms of city government are carried out in reality. One of the most important jobs police administrators can undertake is to carefully observe the manner in which their government functions and to develop strategies for meeting community needs while playing within the rules of power and authority that operate within the jurisdiction.

3. Communication is the critical factor in establishing clear guidelines for performance and accountability. The better the chief’s relationship with each of these players, the more likely the chief is to understand his or her position relative to these executives and to have a longer tenure as chief.

4. The government is the direct link between the citizenry and the police and frequently serves as a conduit for sending information, requests, and feedback to the police from the public.

5. Forms of City Government

   a. First is the **council-manager form**, found most often in larger cities.

   b. Second is the **mayor-council form** of city government. This structure can have a strong-mayor or weak-mayor configuration.

   c. The third form is the **city commission form**. The city commission form is generally found in smaller cities.
6. Police Commissions
   a. In some larger cities, law enforcement executives answer to a police commission.

B. Municipal Executives and the Police Administrator
   1. In an early study of the relationships between the police and politicians, O’Brien (1978) identified three types of municipal executives who, through intrusion or lack of direction, create problems for the police administrator: misfeasors, nonfeasors, and malfactors.

   2. Mastrofski (1988) studied the relationship between police executives and municipal executives. He found that three distinct relationships existed.
      a. First, there was the team approach, where the police executive and government executive form an active partnership and collaborate in much of the police decision and policy making.
      b. Second, there was the professional autonomy approach, where the police executive has virtual autonomy over police policy formulation. Budget issues tend to be the only issues where police and government executives negotiate.
      c. Finally, in the political activist approach, governmental executives tend to perceive themselves as the primary law enforcement executive and generally dictate policy to the police chief.

C. The Police Executive and the Political Environment
   1. The problems police executives experience with the political process are evidenced by their attrition rate.
   2. Once an administrator’s authority has been circumvented, it is extremely difficult to regain control of the organization.
   3. The position of the police chief is rather tenuous due to the unsure and ever-changing relationship with city hall.
D. The Community Power Structure and the Police

1. The community exerts a variety of influences on its police department.

2. To a large extent the community decides police goals via the political process.

3. A police executive must thoroughly understand the community, its problems, and its needs, and must respond appropriately to them if the department is to be effective.

4. **Community power** is defined as the politics, decision making, and other processes that determine community direction.

5. There are four types of community power:
   
a. Party Organization: political party structures, councils;

b. Parapolitical Organization: businesses, newspapers, religious, educational, voluntary and formal organizations and their leaders

c. Informal Organizations: ad hoc groups around particular issues and their leaders

d. Population of the city: masses, minorities, economic classes, publics and voters

6. As the community becomes larger, some governments take a more pluralistic view. **Pluralism** involves taking more than one idea, concept, principle, or element into account.

IV. Police Community Relationships

A. Threats in Police-Community Relationships

1. Excessive Force

   a. The Rodney King incident with the LAPD affected police nationwide. The effect on LAPD was to tarnish an outward professional image and the creation of the Christopher Commission that found problems with brutality and racism.
2. Police Corruption
   a. Undermines morale, public confidence, and ability to effectively prosecute criminal cases
   b. Two dimensions: corruption uncovered in one city will affect other cities, and the severity of corruption has little relation to the public relations backlash. An example of this undermining of public confidence was the Rampart Scandal at LAPD in 2000.

3. Rudeness
   a. The most frequently lodged complaints against police officers are for writing tickets, making arrests, and matters of perception.
   b. The sources for these complaints come when the business demeanor of the officer is misinterpreted. A majority of contacts with citizens are repeated negative contacts and these are symptom of stress.

4. Authoritarianism
   a. Typically seen as negative and is a dominant trait of police officers. Applied assertively within the context of the department’s values and goals this can lead to negative citizen encounters tends to affect citizen views negatively about police. Authority is a key component; attitude and manner must complement the rule-of-law.

5. Politics
   a. Politicians have attempted to use police to further their ends—internally by controlling hiring, promotion, and assignments and externally by who is arrested, cited, vice activities investigated or not investigated.
   b. Partisan politics leads to preferential treatment and differing treatment causes lack of respect for police.

6. Racial Profiling or Biased Policing
   a. Racial profiling is a significant threat to solid police-community relationships. Minorities believe they are the targets and are targeted at higher rates than others.
b. **Pretextual traffic stops**—allowed by the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Whren v. United States* (1996). These only tend to highlight the extent of the problem.

c. Studies indicate (Gaines, 2006) that stops in high crime areas are where police activity occurs. This tends to make minorities feel they are targeted.

d. Majority of police departments have a racial profiling policy.

B. Community Policing

Community policing represents a relatively recent policing philosophy and mode of operation for American policing (Kappeler and Gaines, 2009). Two concepts, broken windows and problem solving, spawned a rethinking of American police. Weisheit et al. (1996) identified three broad themes of community policing: the police should be accountable to the community, they should be connected and integrated into the community on a personal level, and they should be oriented to solving general problems instead of focusing on incidents.

1. What Is Community Policing?

   a. Community partnerships and problem solving

   b. First, community policing has been adopted by the vast majority of larger departments in the country.

   c. Second, a police administrator cannot successfully implement community policing by implementing a few programs. It must be implemented from the top to the bottom of the department.

   d. Finally, community policing is the most effective mode of operation when serving the needs of a community. It is a critical part of policing and police administration.

2. A Comprehensive View of Community Policing

   a. How does it affect each unit in the department? When implementing community policing, the administrator must consider how it is to affect each unit in the department.

   b. Cordner (1999) identified a comprehensive system by which to implement community policing (see Figure 2-3). He notes that there are three major dimensions encompassed within community
policing: (1) the philosophical dimension, (2) the strategic dimension, and (3) the programmatic dimension.

c. For the most part, community policing is implemented through (1) reoriented police operations, (2) problem solving and situational crime prevention, and (3) community engagement. All three dimensions must exist if a department is indeed implementing community policing.

3. Administrative Issues in Community Policing

a. Community policing, like any other program and strategy, is not easily implemented. Organization change is an intricate process that requires substantial effort and, sometimes, costs.

b. Community policing affects the whole police organization, and to ensure that it is properly implemented throughout the department is quite laborious. Therefore, it is important to recognize some of the issues that may become problematic when a chief attempts to implement community policing.

c. Perhaps the most formidable obstacle to implementing community policing is a department’s resistance to change.

d. The administrator must overcome the resistance to change from within the department.

V. The Media: The Police Department’s Window to the World

Members of the news media consider themselves to be the fourth branch of government. News reporters and pundits see themselves as the dispensers of truth, responsible for holding government accountable to the people.

Three areas are of interest to the media:

- Stories about criminal activity, especially those of a sensational nature or those involving local residents
- Feature stories about police officers and programs
- Stories about police corruption or improper behavior such as police brutality or illegal arrests
Complaints about police often voiced by the media:

- The police are seldom forthcoming with information.
- The police fail to accept legitimate criticism from the media.
- The police sometimes withhold critical information from the media.
- The police too frequently hide behind the Sixth Amendment when refusing to disclose information.
- The police are often uncooperative, especially when dealing with important cases.
- The police refuse to accept the media as an integral part of the process to hold the police accountable.

Complaints often voiced by the police about the media:

- The media interfere with ongoing investigations.
- The media refuse to respect victims’ privacy rights.
- The media refuse to recognize that their reporting has a number of negative effects on the police.
- The media practice sensationalism with little regard for accuracy.

A. Managing the Police-Media Relationship

1. A public information officer should be assigned to deal with the media. Reporters should be encouraged to participate in police ride-alongs, police officers at all levels should be trained in media relations, reporters should have free access to all departmental records that are legally available to them, the public information officer and chief should conduct regular meetings with the media to ensure that lines of communication remain open, and departmental officials should participate in talk shows and other broadcasts to open communications with the public. Departments should issue press credentials to ensure that only legitimate reporters are given access to information and the public information officer should receive training in conflict management.

2. The department should have a policy on media relations and how to handle the release of information to the media.
VI. Cultural Diversity: Understanding the Environment

Cultural diversity refers to the number and population of various cultural and ethnic groups that reside in a community.

Police departments today are attempting to resolve conflicts with cultures through community policing. Community policing is a philosophical and organizational effort on the part of police departments to provide productive police services to every segment of a community.

VII. Summary

The police are an integral part of the community in that the community affects how the police operate, and the police have an impact on the daily affairs of any community. It is important for the police to understand this relationship. To do so means administrators must adopt an open-systems perspective and make every effort to ensure that the department’s operations maintain equilibrium with the community. When a police department fails to meet the needs of the community or segments within the community, the department has failed to live up to the community’s expectations.

Further, it is important for administrators to understand that each community consists of a number of elements. Finally, a community’s geographical location and its natural resources affect the social fiber of the community.

All of these factors interplay with government and police services, making it critical for the police to understand and respond to the environment. Basically, a police department must consider all of these factors and develop appropriate operational strategies that address neighborhood problems effectively.

Key Terms

city commission form: usually found in smaller cities; each member of the council is an administrator of a city department

“closed” system model: conceives of organizations as being insulated and closed off from their environments; also known as “rational” model

community power: the politics, decision making, and other process that determine community direction

council-manager form: separates politics from administration; council members make policy which is carried out by administrators
**cultural diversity**: the number and population of various cultural and ethnic groups which reside in a community

**environment**: the group of social, cultural, and physical conditions that surround and affect the nature of a police agency

**federalism**: division of political power between the federal, state, and local governments

**fourth branch of government**: the media; news reporters and pundits see themselves as the dispensers of truth, responsible for holding government accountable to the people

**malfector**: promotes corrupt practices or allows them to exist within the government

**mayor-council form**: strong or weak mayor configuration; mayor is a member of the council and is usually found in most jurisdictions

**misfeesor**: one who wants to become involved in everything

**nonfeesor**: one who does not want to become involved in anything

**“open” system model**: organizations exist in a complex environment that they cannot shut out; also known as the “natural” model

**pluralism**: taking more than one idea, concept, principle, or element into account

**police commission**: role varies across jurisdictions, but can involve examination of police misconduct, citizen complaints, police development, and budgets; generally consists of appointed volunteers

**political activist approach**: government executives tend to see themselves as the primary law enforcement executive and dictate policy to the police chief

**pretextual traffic stops**: when an officer uses the pretest of a minor traffic violation to stop and possibly search a vehicle; allowed by the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Whren v. United States* (1996)

**professional autonomy approach**: police executive has virtual autonomy over police policy formulation

**public information officer**: an individual within the police department whose primary task is to deal with the media and represent the department to the public

**racial profiling**: any police-initiated action that relies on race, ethnicity, or national origin rather than the behavior of an individual or information that leads police to a
particular individual who has been identified as being, or having been, engaged in criminal behavior; also known as biased-based policing.

**separation of powers**: our form of government is divided into three co-equal branches, legislative, executive, and judicial branches

**team approach**: the police executive and government executive form an active partnership and collaborate in the police decision and policy making

**theory of natural selection**: organizations react to their environments, some more efficiently than others

**theory of uncertainty and dependence**: the problems organizations face when they lack information about the environment

**Answers to Study Questions**

*Although the answers listed below are not exhaustive and will vary from student to student, the student should address at the minimum the following key points.*

1. Identify and discuss the seven environmental conditions affecting the structure and nature of government. (See pages 32–33 in the text.)
   - Technological conditions
   - Legal conditions
   - Political conditions
   - Economic conditions
   - Demographic conditions
   - Ecological conditions
   - Cultural conditions

2. Discuss the differences between open and closed systems of police organizations. (See pages 36–39 in the text.)
   - Closed System
     - Managerial philosophy
       - Decisions made without regard to the environment
Values, priorities, opinions

Provide guidance for administration

- Isolates police from political influence or corruption

- Two major problems
  - Input from non-police sources is considered useless, inconsequential, or dysfunctional; there is a belief that the administrator’s agenda is best; this results in isolation, ineffectiveness, failure
  - Traditionalism; only current problems are addressed; reduces ability to cope with changes in community; emphasize means over the end product

- Inappropriate for the management of police departments
  - Makes the department apart from instead a part of the community

- Open System
  - Managerial philosophy
    - Involved in dynamic interaction with the environment
    - Environment affects the organization
    - React to changes in the environment and balance the organization

3. Why is cultural diversity an important issue for understanding the environment of policing? How should the administrator go about ensuring that the department adapts to its environment? (See pages 56–57 in the text.)

- Interaction with the Community
  - General Cultures
    - Native American
    - Asian
    - European
• Hispanic
• African American
  o Sub-Cultures
    ▪ Chinese
    ▪ Korean
    ▪ Laotians
    ▪ Thai
• Cultural Integration
  o Not all cultures have integrated into society as a whole
  o Political, social, economic differences
• Police Response
  o Historically resistance to cultural diversity
    ▪ Guardian of the status quo
    ▪ Police by nature are conservative
    ▪ Police adhere to a legalistic philosophy
• Police Value Statements
  o Protecting constitutional rights and democratic values
  o Engage police resources to further ends of crime reduction
  o Engage in crime prevention
  o Understand neighborhood crime problems and concerns of citizens
  o Conduct themselves with integrity and honesty
  o Solicit citizen input
  o Encourage community partnerships
4. How do the separation of powers and federalism affect local police management? (See pages 39–42 in the text.)

- Separation of Powers
  - Three constitutional branches
    - Legislative
    - Executive
    - Judicial
    - Federalism
  - Division of powers between federal, state, and local governments
    - 10th Amendment to U.S. Constitution

5. Describe the primary types of municipal government structure. Discuss the potential benefits and constraints of working as a police chief under each of the forms of government. (See pages 39–42 in the text.)

- Forms of City Government
  - Council-Manager form
    - Found in larger cities
    - Separate politics from administration
    - Council sets policy, manger carries it out
    - Most effective form of government
  - Mayor-Council form
    - Strong or weak mayor configuration
    - Strong Mayor
      - Primary administrator
    - Voting member of council
• Weak Mayor
  ♦ Power limited
  ♦ Policy making and administration is with the council.
  ♦ Figure head
  o City Commission form
• Smaller cities
  • Each member is a department head and policy maker on council.

6. Describe the community power structure and how it affects the administration of a police department. (See pages 42–44 in the text.)

• Four Types of Community Power
  o Party Organization
    • Political party structures, councils
  o Parapolitical Organization
    • Businesses, newspapers, religious, educational, voluntary, and formal organizations and their leaders
  o Informal Organizations
    • Ad hoc groups around particular issues and their leaders
  o Population of the city
    • Masses, minorities, economic classes, public, and voters

7. Identify and discuss each of the barriers to a good police-community relationship. How would you avoid them if you were a police administrator? How would they differ if you were head of a federal agency, state agency, sheriff’s office, and a municipal agency? (See pages 44–48 in the text.)

• Threats to Police-Community Relationships
  o Excessive Force
- Rodney King incident – LAPD
- Effect on police nationwide
- Effect on LAPD
  - Outward professional image
  - Christopher Commission findings
- Problems with brutality and racism
  - Not common in most departments
- Police Corruption
  - Undermines morale, public confidence, and ability to effectively prosecute criminal cases
- Two Dimensions
  - Corruption uncovered in one city will affect other cities
  - Severity of corruption has little relation to the public relations backlash
- Police scandals undermine public confidence
  - Rampart Scandal at LAPD in 2000
- Rudeness
  - Most frequently lodged complaint against police officers
    - Writing tickets
    - Making arrests
    - Matter of perception
- Sources
  - Business demeanor is misinterpreted
♦ Majority of contacts with citizens are repeated negative contacts

♦ Symptom of stress

○ Authoritarianism

- Typically seen as negative
- Dominant trait of police officers
- Applied assertively within the context of the department’s values and goals
- Negative citizen encounters tend to affect citizen views negatively about police
- Authority is key component, attitude and manner must complement the rule-of-law

○ Politics

- Politicians have attempted to use to further their ends
- Internally
  - Control hiring, promotion, assignments
- Externally
  - Who is arrested, cited, vice activities investigated or not investigated
- Partisan politics leads to preferential treatment
- Differing treatment causes lack of respect for police

○ Racial Profiling (also called biased policing)

- Pretextual traffic stops

8. Discuss the key complaints police and media representatives have regarding each other. Why is a good media relationship important for successful police administration? What strategy would you use to develop a good relationship with local media? (See pages 52–55 in the text.)
• Complaints voiced by media
  o Seldom forthcoming with information
  o Fail to accept legitimate criticism from the media
  o Police withhold critical information
  o Police hide behind the Sixth Amendment
  o Police are uncooperative when dealing with the media
  o Police refuse to accept the media as part of the process of accountability

• Complaints voiced by police
  o Interfere in ongoing investigations
  o Refuse to respect victim’s privacy
  o Reporting has negative effects on police
  o Practice sensationalism with little regard for accuracy

Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the theory of uncertainty and dependence and how it affects the local law enforcement agency in your area. What is the relationship of this theory to effective policing?

Discussion Points:

• Organizations face the problem of uncertainty when they lack information about the environment.

• As uncertainty increases, the alignment between the organization and the environment becomes more tenuous.

• Uncertainty and dependence tie a police department to its community and force it to deal with various environmental conditions.

2. Discuss the form of government for your local municipality. What is the form used? Is it the most effective form? Why or why not? What could you do to suggest improvements?
Discussion Points:

• The **council-manager form** is found most often in larger cities.

• The **mayor-council form** of city government is another form of government.
  
  o This structure can have a strong mayor or weak mayor configuration.
  
  o The third form is the **city commission form**.
  
  o The city commission form is generally found in smaller cities.

3. What is racial profiling? Do you believe it is used in your community? Why do you hold this view? What is your answer to those who say racial profiling does not exist in your community? Be prepared to defend your answer.

Discussion Points:

• **Racial profiling**: any police-initiated action that relies on race, ethnicity, or national origin rather than the behavior of an individual or information that leads police to a particular individual who has been identified as being, or having been, engaged in criminal behavior.

• Also known as biased-based policing

4. Do you agree or disagree with pretextual stops as a method to combat crime? Why or why not?

Discussion Points:

• **Pretextual traffic stops**: when an officer uses the pretext of a minor traffic violation to stop and possibly search a vehicle.

  • Allowed by the U.S. Supreme Court decision *Whren v. United States* (1996)

  • Such stops only tend to highlight the extent of the racial profiling problem.

Learning Activity

1. Divide the class into groups of four. Have each group, over the course of two weeks, watch the major national news networks and compare their coverage of the same stories during the two-week period. What are the differences? What are the similarities? If students see any differences, why do they think this is so? Students should be prepared to make a presentation to the class on their findings.