

CHANGING PUBLIC THREATS AND POLICE PRIORITIES: HOW POLICE CHIEFS  
RESPOND TO EMERGING THREATS

by

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B.S., Wichita State University, 2003  
M.A., Wichita State University, 2005

AN ABSTRACT OF A DISSERTATION

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of Sociology  
College of Arts and Sciences

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## **Abstract**

Kansas police chiefs are a unique group of individuals. Because they are located throughout the various sized communities within the state, they have the potential to affect the daily lives of more people on a day-to-day basis than any other branch of law enforcement. The purpose of this study was to analyze how police chiefs prioritize emerging threats. In this study, using a purposeful sample, 40 semi-structured interviews were conducted with Kansas police chiefs across the state. These police chiefs were asked about their views on the biggest emerging threats they have observed within the last 10 years. They were also asked why certain threats become priorities and why others do not. Police chiefs were split on their thoughts of whether or not they believed resources should be allocated in their communities to defend against terrorism in Kansas. What was discovered during the research process went beyond learning about the process of change for threat prioritization, or what specific threats Kansas police chiefs think their communities are facing today. What was discovered was a deeper understanding of how police chiefs think when it comes to the relationship between police departments, police personnel, and community. As police chiefs addressed the processes by which they go about prioritizing emerging threats, they illuminated a unique strategy hierarchy for success that is centered on maintaining positive departmental perception. To maintain this perception, police chiefs work both officially and covertly within governmental structures and the public sphere to control how people think about their personnel and department. A prominent difference was seen in the physical proximity and accessibility of police chiefs to the community between small, medium, and large towns. In effect, to come to an understanding of the process of prioritization for emerging threats for Kansas police chiefs, it was necessary to understand these police

administrators' unique thought processes that they bring to the table when addressing important issues.

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## Table of Contents

List of Figures .....	ix
Acknowledgements .....	x
Dedication .....	xi
Introduction .....	xii
Chapter 1 - Literature Review .....	1
The Bureaucracy .....	1
Police Organization within the Criminal Justice System .....	5
Moral Panics .....	9
Police and Perception .....	13
Chapter 2 - Methods .....	19
Chapter 3 - Public Threats .....	30
Understanding the Priority Setting Process .....	41
Chapter 4 - Terrorist Threats .....	61
Foreign Terrorism .....	62
Domestic Terrorism .....	75
Chapter 5 - Threats to the Department/Police .....	81
Budget Cuts .....	83
Maintaining Public Support .....	92
The Informal Grapevine .....	102
Chapter 6 - Threat Response Strategies .....	109
Police Chiefs and Their Proximity to the Community .....	115
Chapter 7 - Solidarity .....	119
Female Police Chiefs .....	132
Chapter 8 - Findings .....	139
Chapter 9 - Discussion .....	149
Bibliography .....	154
Appendix A - Interview Schedule .....	162
Appendix B - Informed Consent Statement .....	164



## List of Figures

Figure 1 Bureau of Justice Statistics 1997 President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration .....	5
Figure 2 Police Department Size (Bar Graph).....	21
Figure 3 Police Department Size (Pie Chart).....	22
Figure 4 Police Chiefs with Prior Police Chief Experience.....	22
Figure 5 Number of Police Chiefs .....	23
Figure 6 Biggest Threats to Public Safety .....	30
Figure 7 Most Selected Skills Needed To Prioritize Threats.....	42
Figure 8 Chief’s Most Rewarding Moments .....	44
Figure 9 Chief’s Most Stressful Moments .....	45
Figure 10 Biggest Threats to Police Officers.....	82
Figure 11 Most Needed Budget Items .....	84

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I would like to acknowledge the Kansas police chiefs who participated in this study. These men and women made time in their busy schedules and spoke openly about many sensitive subjects with great candor. Their willingness to share their life stories and opinions led to many interesting discoveries that I believe will help in illustrating a more accurate description of how Kansas police chiefs prioritize emerging threats.

## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my loving wife who has been so patient and supportive of my educational journey.

## **Introduction**

The police chiefs in this study were an interesting group of unique individuals. In traveling across the state of Kansas I had the opportunity to sit and speak with Kansas chiefs in multi-million dollar facilities with the latest green technologies and with chiefs who worked daily patrol shifts in antiquated patrol cars with faulty air-conditioners under the hot summer sun. During the research process opportunities were found to speak with police chiefs in their first year of employment to seasoned veterans with decades of experience. Even the physical stature of the respondents was an interesting mix. One chief told me he was 5'2 in cowboy boots and another chief, 6'7, said he had to stoop down to enter his police station. The police chiefs within my sample were a rich mixture of both diversity and similarity.

This research project grew out of my personal experience as a Kansas police chief. During the 1990s, I was asked as a police chief to address the emerging threats posed by methamphetamines and driving while intoxicated (D.U.I.). The new rules and regulation being used to address these threats were enforced by the police chief. As a police officer, I was struck by the impacts these new regulations had on other officers and the public. Later, after I was a police chief, I became responsible with complying with the new rules and for deciding how to use my resources to address potential threats.

Based on this experience, I decided to investigate how other police chiefs responded to new public threats. I wanted to sample a range of police chiefs from different areas of Kansas. There were several questions I wanted to ask and I hoped that if I approached this group in the right way, and asked the right questions at the right time, I would learn a great many things. I

wanted to know how priorities for police chiefs have changed in response to new emerging threats during the last ten years. What threats have become new priorities/policies/practices?

I had some expectations coming into the study, but I wanted to know if they were accurate or not. Based on my experience, I expected to find that police chiefs responded to new threats in different ways. I also expected to find police chiefs would set their priorities based on pressure and coercion from the public, federal government, and state officials. Threats that had major public support and were identified by the federal government as priorities were expected to be prioritized by police chiefs to secure their jobs and appease the public, even if they did not view the threat as very important. I also expected to find that police chiefs would struggle to maintain their autonomy in a bureaucratic system that was trying to limit their authority. I wanted to know where police chiefs pushed back against the system or whether they adapt as their own priorities are identified by public and state officials.

The project used a purposeful sample of agencies that were collected from phone directories and close enough that I could drive to each department. I asked questions about the research project and then gave them the opportunity to share their opinions and insights. Every effort was made to avoid interrupting respondents as they told their stories.

This project begins with the straight forward observation that police chiefs operate in a bureaucracy, much like the one Weber described. If this were true, the development of an impersonal bureaucracy would be slowly diminishing the autonomy of police chiefs. According to Weber, the autonomy of local chiefs should be limited by rules and regulations set by federal and state bureaucracies, which would standardize their policies and police priorities.

What I found instead was that the police chiefs of large, medium, and small departments experience different kinds of authority. In some cases, they acted in accordance with adopting

rules and practices set by others. But in certain cases, they acted with considerable autonomy. Although bureaucratic regulations exist at every level, small departments tended to exercise more independence than large departments.

From my prior experience, I thought that police chiefs would be facing increasing demands to comply with growing numbers of rules and regulations. Although this was true, the adherence to the rules appears to have been more of a restraint for larger police departments than small ones. This study will discuss why that might be the case. The evidence led me to think that police chiefs worked within a culture that takes away their individuality and replaces it with simply a title. This happened more in large departments. Large police departments tended to model the professional behavior of bureaucratic organization exhibiting a cold professionalism that separated their specialist from the public, as described by Weber. However, medium-sized police departments and, to some extent, small departments, did not always act in a bureaucratic fashion and instead embraced a closer non-professional relationship with the communities they served. This study will highlight these and other differences between police chiefs of small, medium, and large police departments across Kansas.

When I began the study, I expected to find that police chiefs worked to build department solidarity, or a bond between themselves and their employees. However, I was surprised to find how much effort these administrators made to develop social bonds and solidarity not only with police but also with members of the community. Police chiefs worked hard to get their personnel and the public to invest in the chief's agenda. Police chiefs attempted to frame threats and frame public perceptions of their departments. Although the study focuses on how police chiefs prioritize emerging threats, I found that it is important to understand police culture.

This report will show how police priorities have changed during the last ten years. A large portion of the report will be devoted to providing a context for police chief decision-making and how it has changed. From my own experience, I expected police chiefs would make changes in their priorities. I expected that change would come in stages, not all at once. This was based on my law enforcement experience observing DUI and Methamphetamine laws during the mid-1990s, when they grew in importance. From my interviews I learned that change came in stages, which is what I expected. But change was shaped by special interest groups, the media, federal authorities, and the public at large.

Several female chiefs participated in the study and I will discuss some of the special issues they faced as chiefs. The hot topic item of terrorism will be discussed and two opposing viewpoints on how Kansas police chiefs prioritized this potential threat will be brought to light. A general findings section will sum up the totality of what was observed. In conclusion, a recommendations section we attempt to point future research in additional fruitful areas of inquiry.

## **Chapter 1 - Literature Review**

The Purpose of the Literature review will be to describe the role and the place where police chiefs fit as a group within the criminal justice system and society as a whole. The literature review will lay out examples of how police chiefs fit sociologically as a unique group by examining their role as part of a growing bureaucracy and an organization within the criminal justice system. Furthermore, specific job roles and conduct of police chiefs will be examined in the areas of moral panics and perception building.

### **The Bureaucracy**

When the modern day police organization is observed, it is commonly viewed from the standpoint of its position within a growing bureaucracy. Gerth and Mills (1958) said bureaucratic organizations embodied the following characteristics: precision, unity, strict subordination, reduction of friction and of material and personal costs. Bureaucratic organizations maximize efficiency through the usage of specialized administrative functions completed within a diverse division of labor (Gerth and Mills 1958; Anderson 2004). Within the literature that looks at the actions of the bureaucracy of policing, several interesting observances were made. Benson, Rasmussen, and Sollars (1995) observed the War on Drugs as affected by The Comprehensive Crime Act of 1984, which made police departments able to keep assets after civilian forfeitures due to drug investigations. Their assessment was that asset forfeitures were of economic benefit to police bureaucrats and served as an enticement for these laws to be enforced (Benson, Rasmussen, and Sollars 1995). In another example of police bureaucracy, large police departments such as the NYPD embraced programs, such as COMPSTAT, which received national attention (Willis, Mastrofski and Weisburd 2004). The COMPSTAT model placed a



focus on the following: quick and concise information flow to all levels of the police organization, rapid selection of response strategies, deployment of proper personnel, and relentless follow-up (Willis, Mastrofski and Weisburd 2004). Despite the initial positive praise, utilizing a Weberian theory of authority and the bureaucracy, Willis, Mastrofski and Weisburd (2004) found that COMPSTAT had its greatest effect on mostly pre-existing bureaucratic police structures, which raised its own questions about how bureaucracies work. Chambliss (1999) called police agencies part of an ever growing law enforcement-industrial complex that worked in conjunction with fast moving powerful corporate lobbies,

Gerth and Mills (1958) considered the military as a bureaucratic organization. These were professionals as part of a permanent standing force, as well as the embodiment of legitimate recognized users of force that could be implemented domestically or against foes across the world. Police departments are considered to be more adequately, and most often, described as a quasi-military force (Jermier and Berkes 1979; Perrow 1961; Fry and Berkes 1983). The usage of military time tables, military rank, tactical firearms training, and the practice of creeds and codes are all military in nature. On a larger scale, police departments used terms such as divisions and squads that are very similar to military group classifications such as regiments or battalions. The police chief is considered the commander of the police organization's quasi-military force. Based on the police chiefs assessment of the community and other factors, two predominant styles of policing emerged. James Q. Wilson called these two styles: *legalistic-* (which is based on a crime-fighting model and enforcement of the law) and *watchmen/service style-* (which had a decreased focus on crime fighting and more emphasis placed on public services) (Paoline 2001). The requirement for officers to be proficient in the usage all the tools necessary for the delivery of force were common requirements for both the military and the

police. Departmental indoctrination and police academy training enforced emotional barriers (Paoline 2001) or social distance (Johnson 1972) between police officers and the public. Police officers are considered the standards bearers of the legitimate users of force (Jermier and Berkes 1979).

The military has been critiqued for its potential to abuse its expertise. For some time, the police have also entered this arena to be critiqued from the same position as experts or professionals (Lieberman 1970; Johnson 1972). This has been an area of heavy debate. Despite innovative policies going back to the work of Robert Peel (McEvoy 1976) to increase the professional appearance of the police, many scholars have been slow to acknowledge police agencies on the same level as other professionals because of a lack of detailed standards of practice (Vollmer 1969). Furthermore, law enforcement officials within the bureaucracy were considered separate from other professionals, such as doctors and lawyers because their tasks were considered independent of others as part of an organization as opposed to work conducted solely by the individual. The police bureaucrat worked within an organization, which the professional doctor or lawyer did not. The professional legitimated work by striving toward correct service while those working within an organization simply followed rules. Compliance for the bureaucrat came through supervision and loyalty to the organization while compliance was accomplished through socialization for the professional and loyalties were always given to the profession itself (Davies 1983). Over time, those in the academic field began to re-evaluate the potential for the professional to become part of the bureaucracy. In addition, many police departments increased educational requirements for employment (Jackson 2006), and recognized professionals, such as doctors and lawyers, became employed by contract to bureaucratic organizations such as police departments. Another merging was observed through re-defining the

term “professional” as being not an occupation but the ability to control an occupation (Davis 1983). In Davis’s (1983) historical look at nurses and hospital work, he showed how the evolutions of hospitals were transformed from places where nurses had diffused responsibilities to the current day bureaucracies that had tight organizational goals and worked constantly to increase efficiency through rules and regulations. The attitudes surrounding the coupling of the law enforcement bureaucratic professional have fluctuated based on long standing differences between western and nonwestern conceptions of the norms of bureaucratic behavior (Heady 1959).

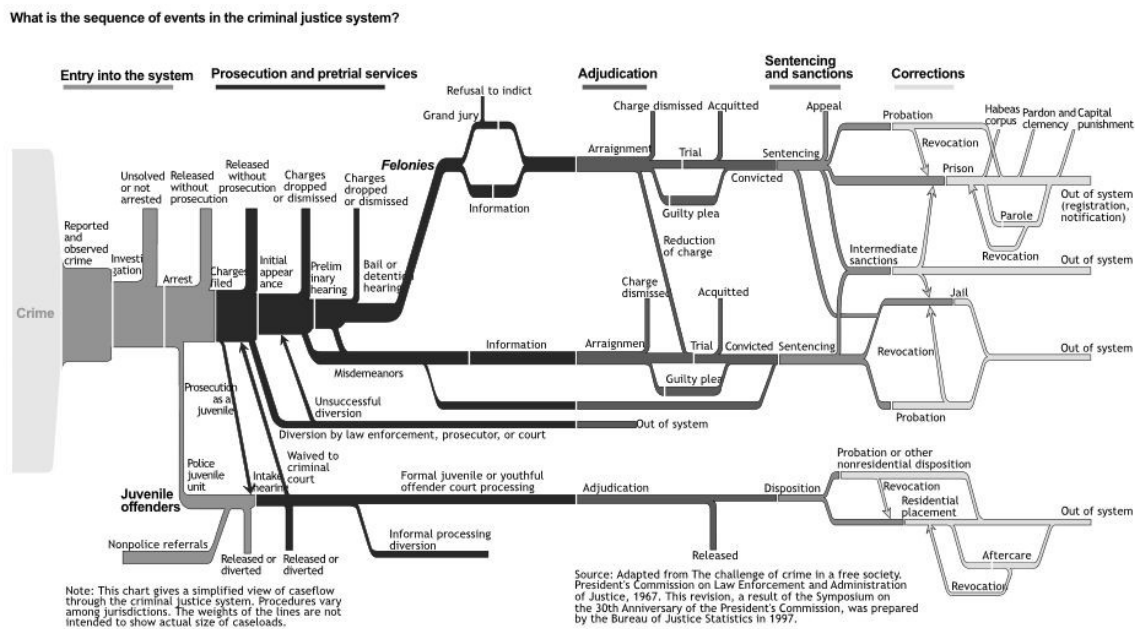
Although law enforcement officials within these organizations worked to maximize efficiency, they were also cogs in the overall bureaucratic machine (Gerth and Mills 1958). They neither made the machine go, nor could they stop the machine when it was in motion (Gerth and Mills 1958). Bureaucracies were known to suffer from unintended inefficiencies brought about by hyper concern for regulations that created large amounts of red tape, inflexibility, decreased desire for discretionary action, and created environments of secretiveness (Heady 1959). In the case of police chiefs, course corrections, or major reforms often required authority from a higher level of the bureaucracy that may have resisted certain changes (Skogan 2008). The barriers to reform within the modern bureaucracy affected hiring, benefit allocation, and managerial status for female police officers (Warner, Steel, and Lovrish 1989). When studying the bureaucratic effect on police agencies, Jermier, Slocum, Fry, and Gaines (1991) discovered that subcultures or soft bureaucracies were created in which certain officers appeared to support the stake holder’s rigid exterior goals and expectations, but privately had their own interior practices. Specifically, only the cluster group designated as “crime fighting commandoes” truly followed the key holder’s goals while the other identified cluster groups: crime fighting professionals, peace-

keeping entrepreneurs, ass-covering legalists, and anti-military social workers secretly became part of bureaucratic subculture (Jermier, Slocum, Fry, and Gaines 1991).

## Police Organization within the Criminal Justice System

Police officers are the most visible actors within the criminal justice system and they play a part in the early initial stages of what can be called the process of the criminal justice system.

**Figure 1 Bureau of Justice Statistics 1997 President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration**



The Bureau of Justice Statistics 1997 President’s Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration showed that the police department’s interaction within the criminal justice system took place directly after police observed or were called to investigate a potential crime. Police play an introductory role of entering individuals into the criminal justice system through

investigations and presenting charges to the next branch of the system: prosecution and pretrial services. From there, cases were forwarded through the stages of adjudication, sentencing, and corrections (Bureau of Justice 1997). There were currently very extensive reviews and critiques of the history of punishment, social control, and the penile system (Foucault 1979; Massey and Myers 1989; Garland 1990; Kalinich 1980; Kalinich and Pitcher 1984; Rothman 2002), county jail administrations (Kalinich and Postill 1981), as well as comparisons of both prisons and jails (Stokovic 1986). Although police organizations, among others, had been seen as part of a larger justice system that often is lacking in coping with the needs of citizens with psychological needs (Foucault 1965; Sutton 1991; Daniel and Walker 2010), police departments operate as a single organization within a larger criminal justice system. O'Leary and Newman (1970) talked about the error of treating police, courts, and corrections as part of a single unified system of criminal justice as it oversimplified the complex structure of the individual agencies. From the perspective of the criminal justice hierarchy, police departments have less decision authority than prosecutors and judges who decide the disposition of criminal cases. Compared to judges and attorneys, police agencies have a relatively low spot within the criminal justice hierarchy.

Police agencies are often required to assist federal agencies with issues such as terrorism prevention and the enforcement of immigration law. Decker et al. (2009) discovered while conducting national surveys of municipal police chiefs that these administrators had a wide range of ways they approached given tasks. Police organizations are unique by size. Department size affects the amount of resources that are available and budgetary restraints. As well, changes in department size affected the size of the division of labor and the amount of tasks each officer was required to perform. Studies that looked at the effects of implementation of police programs such as neighborhood watch had observed the need to look at small size police departments

because they had been overlooked compared to medium and large departments (Oliver 2001). When taking the full range of department size into account, Oliver (2001) found that small and rural police departments placed more emphasis on rhetoric and less on true implementation of community policing compared to large and medium departments. Also, when looking at police perceptions of gang violence, Quinn, Tobolowsky, and Down (1994) found it prudent to account for both small and large sized police department perceptions. They found that police perceptions of gang violence varied in different jurisdictions (Quinn, Tobolowsky, and Downs 1994). When looking for possible linkages between professionalism and work alienation, Poole, Regoli, and Lotz (1978) found that department size was a factor when looking at the effects of professionalism on levels of work alienation. Police departments in general existed within a state of both continuity and change (Matrofski and Willis 2010). Although police tactics such as patrol remained mostly unchanged, education standards and technology changed the face of police agencies. Again, police department size affected this level of change (Matrofski and Willis 2010).

Police organizations shared the same bureaucratic behavior components as other organizations which included: rationality, hierarchy, and discretion (Heady 1959). The seniority hierarchy in police organizations were said to include the following: Chief, Assistant Chief, Department Chief, Commander, Captain, Lieutenant, Detective, Sargent, and patrol officers (King 2005). What was more illuminating was his police hierarchy which showed stratification based on skills, rewards, seniority, status, and authority (King 2005). Heady (1959) said that common bureaucracies were found in many places such as churches, unions, businesses, universities, and even baseball teams. Despite the common factors of precision and efficiency that police organizations as part of a bureaucratic organization shared with other groups, they

also had differences. Goodchilds and Harding (1960) looked at police and numerous other formal organizations and observed differences in their informal activities. When looking at different civil service organizations, Bordua and Reiss (1966) discovered that police organizations, despite being part of a similar organizational bureaucracy were different from other civil service occupations. Specifically, police were different because they practiced political neutrality and legal reliability as a byproduct of organizational training and control. This training created a special allegiance to an organization that purposely set itself apart from other groups. This was said to be necessary as the police enforced laws, from drug enforcement, to morality laws, whose enforcement is not always popular (Bordua and Reiss 1966).

Looking at the importance of symbology to perception, Police departments shared in the usage of symbols available for public observance as did other bureaucratic organizations. However, police agencies and other bureaucratic organizations did not share in the usage of the same symbology (Goodsell 1977). Studying the usage of authority and service symbols for organizations such as police departments, military recruitment stations, driver's license examinations stations, and public health departments, Goodsell (1977) found interesting variations. Authority symbols were things such as the American flag, seals and emblems, diplomas, and photographs of the president, governor, and other high officials. Other physical authority symbols were physical barriers. Physical barriers included walls, counters, glassed windows, no-entrance signs, and specialized personnel access signs (Goodsell 1977). Service symbols included comfortable seating, vending machines, potted plants, flowers, welcome signs, and service assistance instructions (Goodsell 1977). Although it was originally hypothesized that police departments and military recruitment stations would have the most authority symbols, it was found that police departments and licensing stations had the most authority symbols while

military recruitment stations, and public health departments had the most physical service symbols (Goodsell 1977). The purpose of the study showed that police organizations, along with other organizations actively used symbology that can be perceived and have an effect on perception. As well, police symbology has its own uniqueness and should not be assumed to be the same as other organizations without close examination.

### **Moral Panics**

Moral panics have been described as a public reaction that is fundamentally inappropriate (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994) to the true existing level of threat. Studying Mods and Rockers in the 1960s Stanley Cohen (1972) observed the heightened public anxiety and fear that could be generated against non-mainstream groups within American culture. Chambliss (1999) spoke about the false framing of “super predators” who represented segments of the youth population. For the building of moral outrages there was a need for socially expected specialists, which included but were not limited to, doctors, university academics, political figures and police. These specialists validated to the public the need for action to be taken against the perceived violators of societal values and interests. Not only did the words of specialists have an effect on moral outrages, but also the official statistics they disseminated to the public (Boyum and Kleiman 1995). The combination of these factors had a cumulative effect on framing threats and making the argument for society to blame certain people or groups. Cohen called these individuals who received society’s wrath Folk Devils (Cohen 1972).

Along with those who would be stigmatized and labeled as violators of societal interests, were banner carriers of moral outrages. These individuals were described as moral entrepreneurs (Becker 1966). The moral entrepreneur often created moral panics under the guise of doing humanitarian good (Becker 1966). Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) discussed grassroots



movements, elite-engineered, and special interest as the three main catalysts to moral panics. One predominant down side is that labels were attached to individuals outside mainstream society that fit the theme of the moral panic and that the labels further alienated these individuals from society (Becker 1966; Jewkes 1999). Scull (1989) documented specialists in the field of phrenology and their impacts on the expansion and alterations in how the mentality ill were perceived. The rise of the profession of psychiatry with its specialists who had the recognized credibility to label persons as mentally ill was germane to the discussion of labeling and labeling theory (Scull 1989). Moral Panics were not synonymous with fads despite their short lifespans. Even though moral panics had limited staying power, when they ended, they often left long lasting institutional foot prints (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994). The media was seen as an actor, and as a pivotal component of pushing moral panics toward the public (Cohen 1972; Zajdow 2008). The media was perceived as having not only the ability to frame criminal stories in ways that distort the facts on guilt, which Leishman and Mason (2003) called “trial by media,” but also the ability to affect the public’s perceptions on the punitive actions that should be taken against law breakers (Callanan 2005). Callanan (2005) made the proposition that the media effected public knowledge and attitudes based on three theories. The first, and oldest assumption, often called the hypodermic model, states that people believed unquestionably what they saw in the media. The second assumption of media effect on the public was that it was a reciprocal process, based on the form of media being observed and the characteristics of the observed individuals. In other words, certain people were affected in specific ways by different kinds of media. The third assumption asserted that the media did not directly influence people but indirectly effected attitudes toward general issues (Callanan 2005). Moral Panics had been studied in relationship to the safety of American children. Mary deYoung (2006) looked at public concerns over child

safety and fear about satanic day care centers. Nationally recognized panics over child abduction, rape, and murder, had propelled moral panic programs and legislation such as Amber Alert, Megan's Law (Zgoba 2004), and Three Strike Laws (Callanan 2005).

Goode and Ben-Yehuda (1994) traced moral panics as a constructionist, or subjective position in which social problems became reality based on collective definitions or group concern that were generated on a certain issue. This was in contrast to objective perspectives that were based solely on concretely real factors that may point to a threat or concern. Looking at the process of building and maintaining moral panics, often called policing the crisis, Doran (2008) observed that the British media on a regular basis chronicled events to build fear and outrage over street muggings. How the perceived criminals were described along with the dangers they were said to present to the public all affected the public's perception level of threat. Kathleen Daly (1988) explored the criminalization of prostitution from 1900-1920. She discovered anti-prostitution themes such as placing blame on outsiders, associating prostitution with greed, and assigning sex as only acceptable for procreation (Daly 1988). Sexual activity for women outside of marriage was seen as a sign of deviance that required guidance, control, and often treatment (Daly 1988; Odem 1995). Fear of sexually transmitted disease and threat of foreigners kidnapping American women were used as master symbols that actions should be taken to stop the problem through municipal purification (Daly 1988).

In the recent years there had been a push for a focus on drug enforcement that had been equated with moral panics. Grazyna Zajdow (2008) looked at public outrage over heroin overdoses and observed that it was not the heroin user that provoked the public outrage but a framing of the moral violation of the drug itself and its affiliation with death that were made into the equivalent of the Folk Devil. Modern drugs associated in certain circles with social activity,

such as ecstasy, had also been study in relation to moral panics (Critcher 2000). In contrast to common moral panics over social interaction and issues such as AIDS or pedophilia, ecstasy was seen as benign drug compared to many controlled substances. As is often the case with moral panics, the outrage that followed the social reaction to ecstasy was tied more closely to the rave culture in which the drug was prevalent, than to deaths than from the drug itself (Critcher 2000). Again the moral entrepreneurs such as bishops and politicians in cooperation with the media focused on occasional ecstasy deaths at raves. When looking at moral panics and concerns over drugs, Hawdon (1996) contended that there is a lag period between the occurrence of events in question and the moral panics that ensued. Looking at drug use in the United States between 1880 and 1990, it was observed that only two drug epidemics took place within that time frame. Most importantly, the moral panics were waged well after the decline of the actual drug epidemic. It was concluded that there is an inverse relationship between created moral panics and objective observances of certain behaviors (Hawdon, 1996). Craig Reinarmen (2006), after reflecting on historical accounts of drug scares, identified seven critical ingredients to moral outrages. The first was a kernel of truth to the allegation that gave viewers a credible starting point that would later lead to moral outrages. The second was media magnification. The media would saturate, sensationalize and magnify the event to create a sense of need for action. Third, the politico-moral entrepreneurs would arrive, namely religious groups. Fourth, the professional interest groups ranging from law enforcement to scholarly groups would use their specialist status to validate and frame moral outrages. Fifth, historical context of conflict, or the creating of a historical background would be made to explain why certain people and groups should be considered a threat. Next, narrative links were created to tie certain groups or individuals with

socially prohibited conduct. Finally scapegoating was used to create an environment, or final justification to place blame for certain existing conditions on certain people or groups.

When looking at the issue of terrorism, moral panics had been observed for many years. Introvigne (2000) studied the effects of fear on domestic terrorism in the areas of anti-cult groups. Following September 11, 2001, government officials increased security within and outside of the country. Laws such as “The Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism Act,” known by its shorter title as the USA Patriot Act, was signed into law on October 26, 2001. Since then, the law has been compared to other laws constructed during crisis situations (Ibbetson and Birzer 2005). Additionally, historic changes created for the first time, a standardized definition of domestic terrorism within the USA Patriot Act within the context of the war on terror (Ibbetson 2005). Moral panics had also followed the incarceration of inmates who conform to Islam while in prison (Spalek and El-Hassan 2007). Kappeler and Kappeler (2004) looked at the speeches made by law enforcement officials and politicians to construct the social reality of terrorism. They identified five rhetorical themes that played a part in the facilitation of moral panic for terrorism: the epidemic, dehumanizing metaphors, reification of civilization, the construction of villains and heroes, and the situating of terrorism in general discourse (Kappeler and Kappeler 2004). Once again, moral panics were seen to be created by a series of factors that come together to create a constructed reality.

### **Police and Perception**

Police Chiefs oversaw agencies that placed a tremendous value on perception. As an agency, police officers are often assessed during first contacts with citizens who have preconceived notions of the police that may be negative. Portions of the public believed the

police are uneducated, lazy, corrupt, and incompetent (Radelet and Reed 1977). Erving Goffman (1963) spoke about these preliminary conceptions while addressing the challenges faced by individuals with stigmas. For police agencies, poor public perception could have negative effects on salaries, equipment purchases, recruitment, and morale (Hale 1974). Additionally, poor public perception of only a few police officers could damage the reputation of an entire agency (Spielberger et al. 1979). To shape positive perception of police agencies, police chiefs worked to mold positive perception of their personnel in the community. Shealy (1979) said that potential police officers are screened during the hiring process based on five areas of moral judgment: moral knowledge- knowing the rules of society, socialization- internalizing the rules of proper conduct, empathy- the extent of consideration on how personal actions affect others, and moral judgment- the ability to conform to internal rules. Like any bureaucratic organization, police departments had structured public relation organizations that officially worked to keep public perception positive (Sweeney 1982; McEvoy 1976), however, police departments worked additionally to have each officer be a positive representative of their agency. To do this, police chiefs created mission statements and policies that promoted certain acceptable forms of conduct (Skinner and Sullivan 1978). Police department policies reduced negative attributes associated with law enforcement which included but were not limited to unlawful use of force, police misconduct, cynicism, intolerance, and actions based in feeling of superiority. To control and monitor negative public perceptions, many agencies created department complaint forms and work to investigate allegations of police misconduct (Hale 1974; Radelet and Reed 1977). Police misconduct could be perceived in many ways. Whisenand and Rush (1998) divided misconduct into three categories: legalistic misconduct- (misuse of police authority commonly coined police corruption), professional misconduct- (violating agency standards) and moralistic misconduct-

(police aggression against certain people or groups). Looking at use of force and police officers, Perkins and Bourgeois (2006) found that public perception of proper use of force during shooting incidents could be evaluated by the number of shots fired. Specifically, the more rounds an officer fired during a shooting incident, the more likely the public was to have a negative perception that proper use of force was taken (Perkins and Bourgeois 2006). Positive public perception of the police was heavily affected by the agency's relationship with minority populations in the community (Brunson and Weitzer 2009; MacDonald, Stokes, and Ridgeway 2007). Johnson (2009) observed that police administrators used punishments and rewards to condition officers to perceive certain behaviors as good and bad. Specifically, rewards such as choice of shift assignment, approval of paid time off, opportunity to receive specialized equipment, verbal praise, letters of recommendation, high evaluations, special job assignments, and promotions were given to officers who modeled proper behavior. Conversely, officers who failed to model proper behaviors were punished with low performance evaluations, verbal reprimands, written reprimands, suspension, and termination (Johnson 2009).

A police officer's personal fitness, uniform, language, patrol car, office space are all evaluated by the public (Sweeney 1982). Even small things like wearing white socks with a black uniform, or smoking a cigar, having long hair, un-shined shoes, and gum chewing in certain situations created negative public perceptions and place officers and their departments within a negative public stereotype (Sweeney 1982). Positive communications skills and the ability to embrace the social work aspect often conducted, but seldom embraced by the police could help to create positive public perceptions (Jackson 2006.) Police chiefs are charged with handling the dilemma of balancing the department's legally defined task of enforcing the law with the necessity to deliver needed community services (Radelet and Reed 1977).

To combat both negative internal perceptions by officers toward the department and negative external perceptions by the community, police chiefs had to be dynamic administrators. Goffman (1959) talked in detail about the duality of the individual that is both simultaneously actor and audience for the purpose of presenting a certain image to the public. These front stage and back stage performances (Goffman 1959) had compelling parallels to the work police administrators did when it came to training officers, and molding public perception. Although police must fulfill a law enforcement role, a more public service oriented presentation had been projected for several years in the hopes of creating positive public perceptions (Maguire, and Johnson 2010; Peak, Bradshaw, and Glensor 1992) Deegan (1987) looked at the presentation of self by women when it came to the appearance of good and bad girls and potential victimization for pedestrians. Once again interest was placed in how people present themselves to others. Green, South, and Smith (2006) conducted interviews with offenders labeled as dangerous within England's criminal justice system. Of interest in this study were how these individuals constructed their own sense of a moral self (Green, South, and Smith 2006). That is, how they perceived themselves and how they felt others perceived them. The presentation of self has also been observed in the usage of social network sites such as Myspace and Face Book (Tufekci 2008) and television programming with its mimicry and manipulation of real life as seen across the gambit from *Candid Camera* and *I love Lucy* (Menand 2009), where "real-life" is supposedly acted out to gritty police shows such as *Law and Order* and *COPS* (Leishman and Mason 2003) where elements of police life are modeled by actors and non-actors who assume the public will buy their actions as believable.

Whisenand and Rush (1998) stated that there are fifteen key responsibilities for police supervisors to have for highly effective police departments. These key responsibilities include:

values, ethics, leadership, communication, time management, internal partnerships, goals, empowerment, performance, internal conflict resolution, abilities to deal with stress, community partnerships, official community programs, anticipating new trends. Many police administrators tried to create positive public perception by organizing their police department to reflect their communities. They did this by hiring female officers and well as people of color and differing ethnic backgrounds (Jackson 2006; McEvoy 1976).

Another factor that has affected the perception of the police is the modern transition move from the foot patrolman to most officers being in patrol cars. Agencies had to combat having their officers appear as nameless individuals in police uniforms. Studies had been conducted to look at public perception of how well police responded to public calls to service (Jonas and Whitfield 1986), and their investigative skills versus private security (Gill and Hart 1996). Police activities such as ride along programs, police lectures, and crime prevention programs had been some ways police agencies worked to reduce negative public perception (Missonellie and D'Angelo 1984; Yates and Egbo 2001; Adams et al. 2005) and work toward getting the public to buy into, and endorse police department functions (McEvoy 1976). Police agencies also used modern technologies such as video cameras to highlight their actions to the public and the courts. Cameras are often used by police during DUI car stops, search warrant service, court room activities, riots, and during police sponsored events (Missonellie and D'Angelo 1984).

Police administrators also interact with the media to shape public perception. To an extensive degree, modern media defined public perception of police agencies (Kestetovic 2007). For practical purposes, modern media includes but is not limited to television, radio and other wire services (Wilson and Fuqua 1975). Police agencies had conflicts with media because it was



felt the media impeded investigations by notifying suspects and contaminating crime scenes. Because media was considered helpful to positive public perception, police agencies often allowed media limited and guarded access to police investigations (Wilson and Fuqua 1975). This does not mean that relationships and working bonds between police and media outlets created accurate depictions of crime for the public. Herrington and Andrew (2006) when talking about public perception of crime, after extensive police reforms in England and Wales, found that while crime was on a downturn in the country, the public's perception of crime was the opposite.

## Chapter 2 - Methods

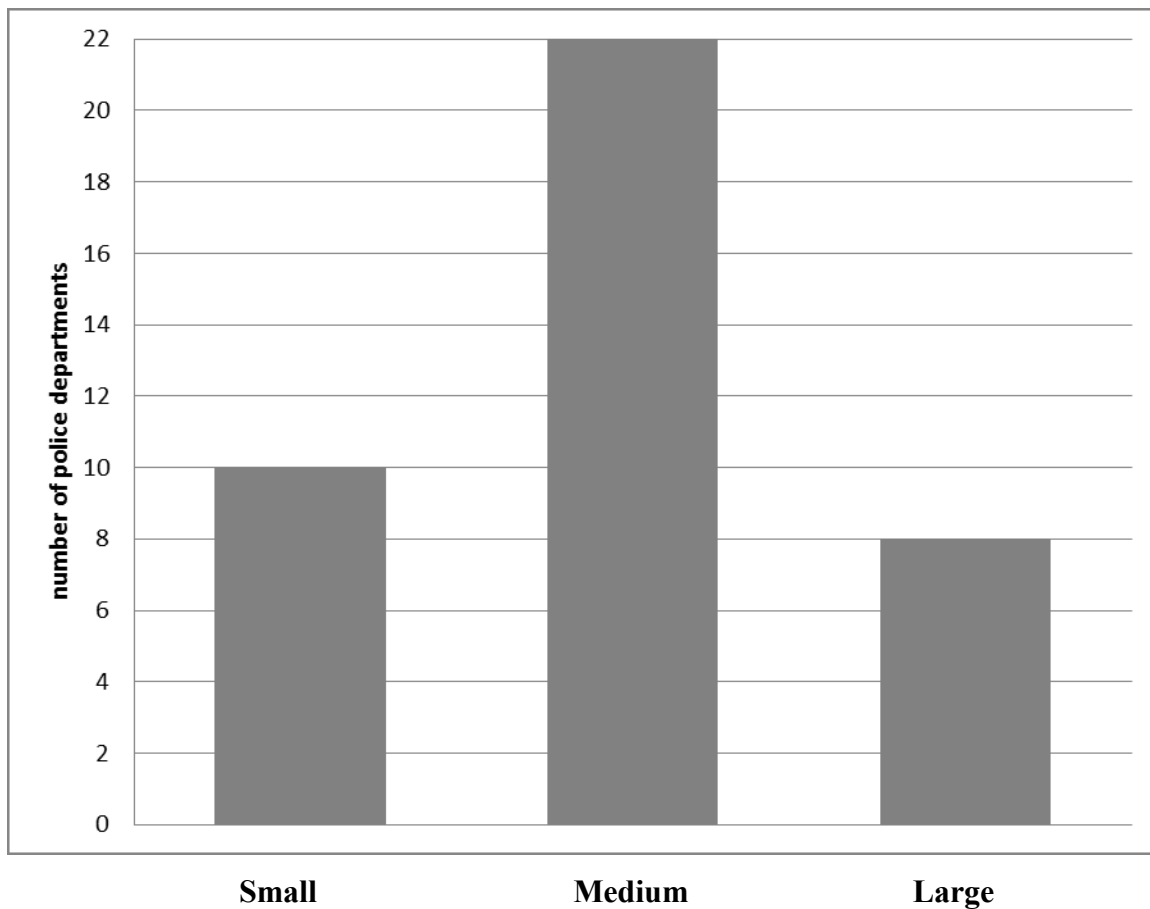
For this project, 40 semi-structured interviews with Kansas police chiefs were conducted. The decision to use semi-structured interviews instead of surveys or focus groups came about due to several factors. There is little doubt that unique information has been collected by using surveys and focus groups. The early focus groups that studied military officers and their opinions about training films during World War II (Merton and Fiske and Kendall 1990) were fascinating looks at perceptions during pivotal times in American history. The ground work laid in the usage of focus groups continued to be applied in a wide range of fields from marketing to politics to almost every manner of social research (Puchta and Potter 2004). Focus Groups are unique because they brought together people with the task oriented goals of producing opinions. The interaction within the group often sparked recollections between participants that might not be present otherwise (Puchta and Potter 2004; Chiu 2003). There are limitations to focus groups that must be acknowledged. As some interviewees may feel more inclined to speak within a group, others may not. As Kelly (2003) indicated, focus groups at times create environments where some interviewees may not share their thoughts, or may simply agree with other more dominate respondents within the group. Looking deeper at elements that comprised a given focus group, there is evidence that the individual respondent's social context may be lost within the setting of the focus group (Hollander 2004). Many social researchers have utilized surveys for both qualitative and mixed methods projects. The advantages of standardized surveys are that they could glean large amounts of descriptive data that could be measured quantitatively across a large number of respondents from a population of interest (Fowler and Mangione 1990). The disadvantages to surveys included issues such as the following: low respondents rates, inaccurate responses due to question wording, inaccuracies through data collection, and inaccuracies caused

when attempts were made to code data for computer analysis (Fowler and Mangione 1990). Surveys when used solely for quantitative analysis tend to collect only fragmentary bits and pieces of human attitudes and lose the coherence, depth, and density that comes from in-depth qualitative interviewing (Weiss 1995)

My decision to conduct semi-structured qualitative interviews was based on two factors. First was my desire to do in-depth interviews that would allow for a more complete story to be told by what I felt was an interesting group within society. I hoped that by taking individuals and talking to them separately, that they would open up and share their stories without feeling the pressures of the focus group environment. As important, interacting with interviewees one at a time allowed me to be reflexive as part of an ongoing process. Reflexivity is a continual process of understanding and reflecting upon my place and influence within qualitative research. That is, it allowed for me, as a researcher to observe the responses of individuals in each case, but also to scrutinize myself through the description, analysis, and interpretation process (Guillemin and Gillam 2004; Wolcott 1994). As well, reflexivity continued when observing the shaping of knowledge that takes place through the unique integration of both the interviewer and the interviewee (Blee 1998). Qualitative research had the potential to go much deeper in descriptive analysis than simply checking a box within a survey (Weiss 1995). However, with these expanded opportunities came additional responsibilities for the researcher. Continual reflexivity kept me in continual awareness of my responsibilities as an ethical researcher and assisted with avoiding potential ethical dilemmas that have been debated within qualitative research (Goode 1999; Goode 2002; Hessler et al. 2003). Second, one-on-one interviewing was my passion and I had extensive experience in that area going back to my days as a Kansas police chief and criminal investigator.

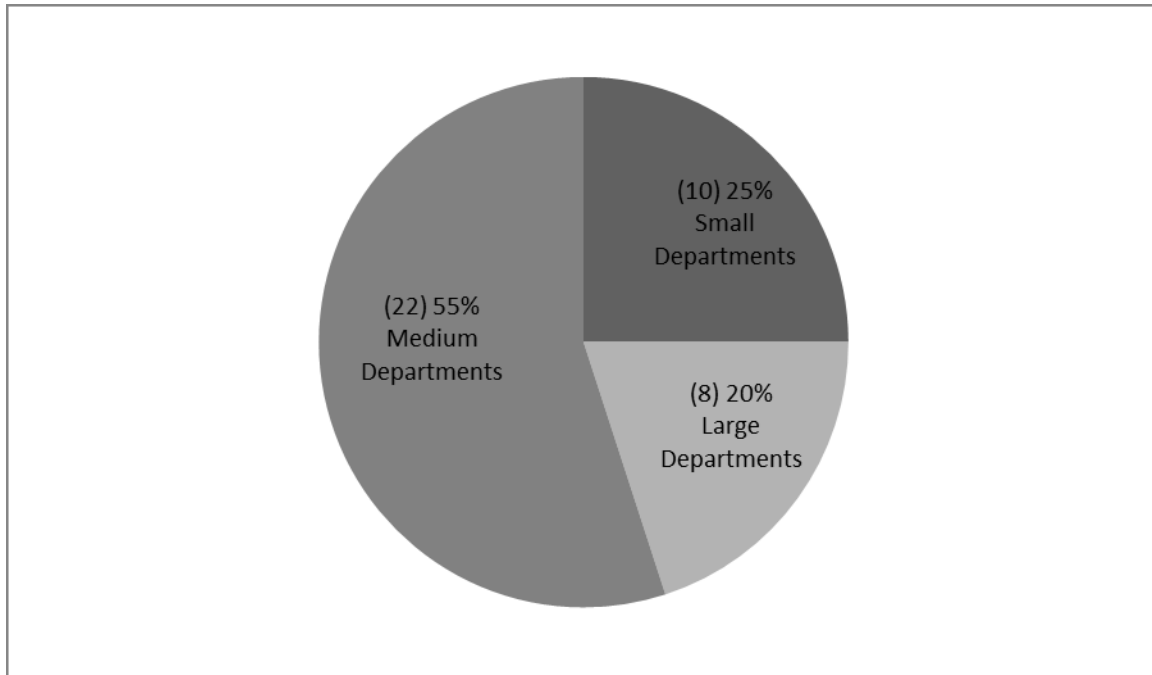
In this study, a purposeful sample was used in which police departments were placed into three categories based on city size and included the following: 1. small departments, populations 1-1,000, 2. medium departments with populations 1,000-10,000, and 3. Large departments with populations over 10,000. A purposeful sample was used to collect data from specific police chiefs that were believed to hold rich data. From my sample, ten interviews came from police chiefs from small departments, twenty two interviews from medium sized police departments, and eight interviews were conducted with police chiefs from large police departments.

**Figure 2 Police Department Size (Bar Graph)**

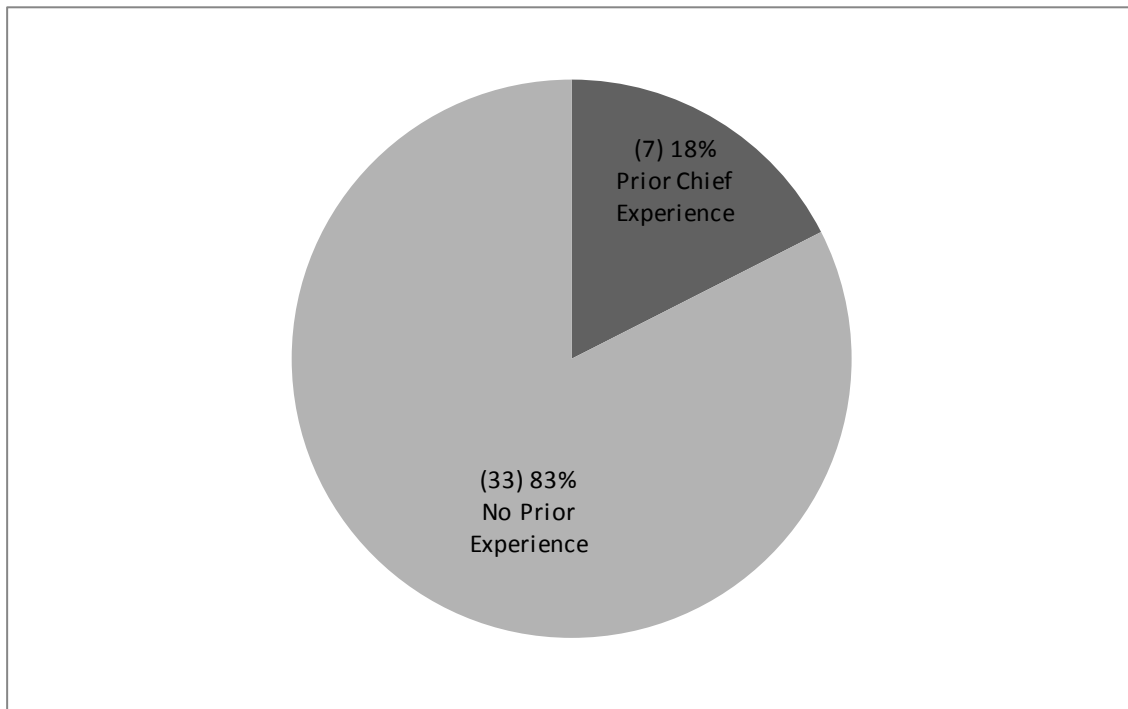


Using a purposeful sample allowed for me to specifically talk with police chiefs that would be dealing with different issues such as geographic location, population size, department size, budget size, and potential differences in culture and custom.

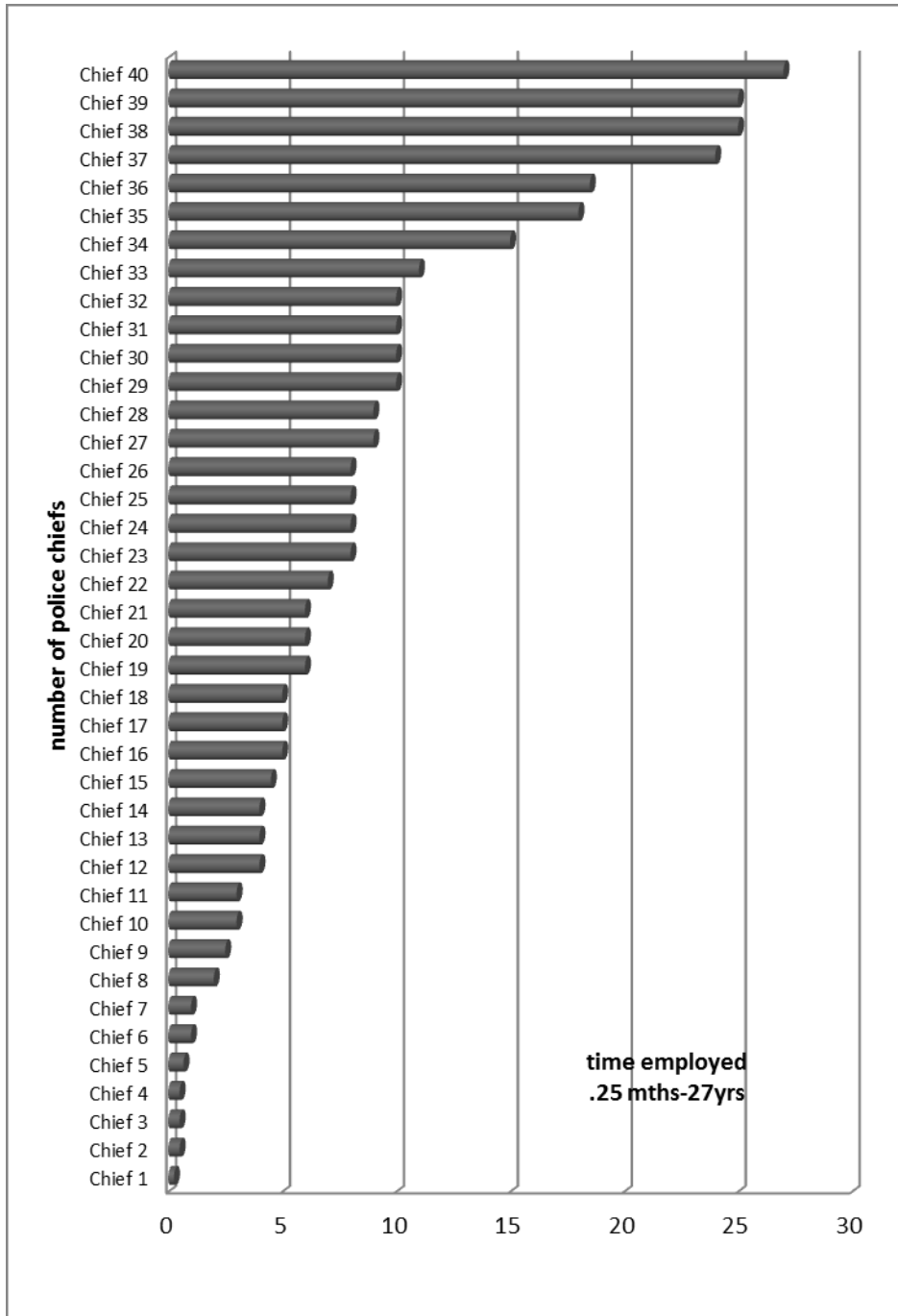
**Figure 3 Police Department Size (Pie Chart)**



**Figure 4 Police Chiefs with Prior Police Chief Experience**



**Figure 5 Number of Police Chiefs**



The police chiefs in my sample had served for different periods of time. The chief with the least job experience in my sample had served less than three months, while the most veteran police chief had been working for more than 27 years. From my sample, the average length of

employment was 8 years. 18.0 percent of my sample had been a police chief at another location prior to taking the position at his or her current police department.

All of the subjects read an informed consent statement (see attached Appendix B). Interviewees read the form and we both signed the consent advisory. The interviewees were given a copy of the informed consent statement and the original was placed into storage in my secured private files. An interview schedule was utilized for the interviews (see attached Appendix A), and I asked follow-up questions based on the chief's responses. The purpose of the informed consent advisory was to give the interviewees a fair explanation of the research project. With that said, critical examination of the nature of qualitative research must concede that open ended questions had the potential to take research in vastly different directions than originally expected (Thorne 1980: Goode 1996).

The interviews were tape recorded using standard mini-cassette tapes and were coded by both an alphabetical and a numerical system. I gave each chief a fictional name so that readers could more easily identify different individuals. For instance, if I were to be speaking about a town with the fictional name "Wheaton," the chief of that town would be named "Chief Wheaton." In this way it was easy for the reader to keep track of who said what. The mini-cassettes were transcribed by me and then stored in my secured private files. The process of making fictional names for interviewees, along with excluding personal identifiers were part of the process of what Tolich (2004) called external confidentiality. There is also the matter of internal confidentiality, the ability of research subjects involved in a study to identify each other (Tolich 2004). This was more of a challenge as police chiefs in Kansas communicated, worked, and had tight social bonds of familiarity. Thus, this project required a strong adherence to reducing identifiers. Interviews ranged in length of time from about thirty minutes to an hour,

most of them averaged about an hour. The transcriptions ranged from six to fourteen pages in length.

Interviews were primarily scheduled through direct conversations with the police chiefs. Occasionally, at medium or large departments, secretary's scheduled the interviews. I quickly learned the valuable role that city clerk's play in setting up appointments. Although they are not part of the police department, city clerks in Kansas towns had an uncanny ability to know when the police chiefs could be found. The fast and hard rule soon became, when in doubt, call the city clerk. Scheduling an appointment to interview police chiefs in Kansas was not easy. We had to find a spot in their busy schedules, of which included court dates, training days, administrative meetings, criminal investigations, out-of-town seminars, and, in the cases of small departments, patrol shifts. I also had to schedule long road trips that would maximize the opportunity to collect multiple interviews. Over the course of the study, I visited 37 cities and drove countless miles across state, city, and county roads. I had to abandon five potential departments because I could not schedule interviews with the chiefs. The response rate for interviews was high as 40 out of 45 potential interviews took place. I would say that Kansas chiefs were very accommodating and tried hard to find time to meet with me. One interview for the project was conducted over the phone, for the convenience of the police chief and the traveling distance involved. There was one occasion where an appointment was made by a secretary that was not on the chief's calendar. This created a few moments of tension when I arrived but after a few awkward moments, the chief agreed to the interview and it went well.

Interviews were often interrupted in smaller departments where the police chief worked his or her own patrol shift. But chiefs were also called away for business during the interview. This happened a number of times. Police chiefs always apologized for these delays and I didn't



think that the delays affected the quality of the interviews. During many of the interviews, breaks were made for chiefs to answer radios communications, make phone calls, and occasionally to speak to other people at the police station. During these interruptions, I turned the tape recorder off until the police chief was ready to continue with the interview. Although these breaks were unwelcome, they did not affect the focus, or the quality of the interviews.

The female police chiefs in this study accounted for six percent of the entire sample and are not said to be representative of all the female chiefs. But, it was felt that the lower number of female-to-male chiefs in the sample was probably representative of police chiefs in Kansas. According to Ritchie (2009), statistics kept by the National Center for Women and Policing, there were about 212 female police chiefs employed in the United States as of 2008. This number represented about two percent of the total number of police chiefs in the U.S (Ritchie 2009). It can be said with certainty that women make up a minority percentage of police chiefs compared to white male chiefs in both Kansas and the rest of the United States. The female chiefs who participated in the study represented some of the largest and the smallest departments I visited. The female chiefs gave me an opportunity to compare the social contexts between males and females (Esterberg 2002; Riessman 1987; Schulz 2004; Jackson 2006) in the often guarded world of police administration. The study was enriched by their participation. I also had a very thought provoking interview with a dynamic African-American police chief. His thoughts have been incorporated into the study and the project was enriched by his participation. Unfortunately, because this chief was the only African-American included in the study, I took precautions to protect his anonymity, precautions that could have been avoided if a larger number of black chiefs had been interviewed. The interviews with the female chiefs also offered the opportunity to use reflexivity to analyze and reflect on positionality (McCorkel and Myers

2003). Lastly, as Arendell (1997) noticed that gender had to be negotiated when women interviewed men, I noticed that there were gender negotiation issues for female police chiefs when being privately interviewed by a male researcher. Female chiefs had more concerns about views from the public when being interviewed privately by a man, than did male chiefs.

When looking at the issue of sample size and saturation, several important factors should be discussed. The decision to conduct 40 semi-structured interviews was based on a projection of feasibility. I wanted to have a deep, rich well of data covering three separate categories of population size for Kansas police chiefs from communities that had police departments. The goal was to conduct qualitative study that could comprehensively answer my research question and expectations. My research question was: As actors in a particular bureaucratic position within the criminal justice system, how, and to what extent, do police chiefs in Kansas determine and prioritize the principle threats to public safety? Qualitative interviews were traditionally not standardized but instead had been a subjective decision (Mason 2010). When Lareau (2000) conducted in-depth interviews looking at father's involvement in routine family life, with the help of research assistants, 88 individuals were interviewed. However, having more than one interviewer did not always equate to large sample sizes. When Miller (2001) studied social service providers and criminal justice professionals to gain insights on women arrested for domestic violence, the sample size was much smaller at 37 subjects. The interview schedule, semi-structured interview process, coding and theme analysis for my project were much more closely aligned with the procedures used by Britton (1999) when she studied men and women correctional officers at a women's state prison. In her study, 36 semi-structured interviews were conducted by a single researcher that purposely recruited interviewees during daily shift meetings at a state prison (Britton 1999). In retrospect, after having conducted 30 interviews, I

started to get diminishing returns. Had I conducted 10 interviews from all three size categories of police agency, I would have accomplished the same quality of information collection as I did in 40 interviews having conducted 22 interviews of police chiefs from medium sized police departments.

Through the course of the interviews for this project, a common structure for the stories that surrounded the accounts given by interviewees became apparent. I worked to ground my analysis (Esterberg 2002; Lofland and Lofland 1994) by avoiding jumping to conclusions at first impressions, and by allowing themes to emerge naturally. Bowen (2008) spoke about both theoretical saturation and data saturation. When it came to theoretical saturation, collecting information to the point of redundancy came around the thirtieth interview. However, I felt compelled to continue with interviews because the female chiefs in my sample had not yet been exhausted. In retrospect, the female police chief's perceptions of threats and allocations of resources were the same as their male counterparts; however, they still offered research data on police chiefs that were unique to the study. I did not feel that data saturation was attained until after all of the female chiefs had been interviewed. Critically looking at saturation for this study I had to admit that like Ortiz (2004), who found difficulty disengaging from qualitative research on wives of professional athletes, I too found it hard to step away from researching this unique group within the field.

As part of the process, I used my "insider" status as a former Kansas police chief to schedule interviews. I knew from experience that other police chiefs are somewhat guarded and do not like to talk about certain sensitive aspects of their job with the general public, so I did not expect to be met with open arms by my subject group. The restriction of access to police chiefs for dialogue on sensitive subjects was seen as a product of continued societal polarization which

often necessitated the need for the “insider” researcher (Merton 1972). I was also concerned that without insider status chiefs might give me only the "official responses" or "safe answers" to the questions that I planned to ask. Fortunately, my experience had also taught me that because of the secretive nature of law enforcement, these groups sometimes talk candidly among themselves. I took advantage of my previous job status as a police chief but took care not to abuse it. After the initial contact and interview appointment, I made no further reference to my previous job status. This worked well for the study as it avoided any perception that I was attempting to "over sell" my previous status. After an initial introductory period, the police chiefs appeared to become comfortable with me, and opened up, and shared valuable insights about themselves. The chiefs often acknowledged my status as an “insider” by saying, "We know how it is," and “I am sure you have done this before" during the interviews. They also used body language--winks, smiles, hand gestures, lowered voices, and non-public language—to indicate that they viewed me not as an outsider, but as an insider. This was very rewarding. With that said, I must acknowledge the validity of previous research that there was no one-size-fits-all insider status (De Andrade 2000). This certainly applied for using insider status as a police chief in this study. Multiple factors such as cultural resources, positionality, race, gender, age all had an effect on my insider status as a police chief. To state it plainly, I could never be a female police chief or an African-American police chief. Insider status must be continually negotiated (De Andrade 2000). Insider status for the social group of police chiefs was akin to being a single player on a baseball team with many distinct positions being filled. My position could not be considered identical to another position but was certainly part of a group (team) and to a greater degree was separate from the public at large who views the players from the vantage point, and the restraints of the stands. I felt fortunate to have my limited time on the field.

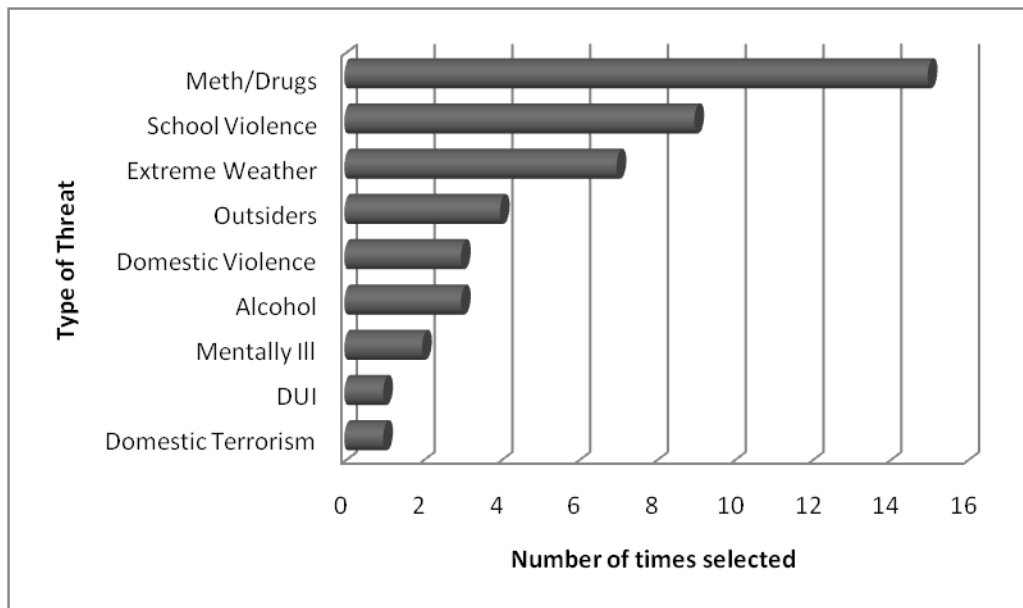
## Chapter 3 - Public Threats

This project began with the question, “As actors in a particular bureaucratic position within the criminal justice system, how, and to what extent, do police chiefs in Kansas determine and prioritize the principle threats to public safety?”

It soon became apparent that police chiefs were prioritizing threats within an economic recession that reduced their budgets. Many of the police chiefs interviewed said that their budgets had been declining and that mid-term budget cuts were common. This came at the time when caseloads were increasing. Chiefs had to make decisions about police priorities in a system that continually added regulations, restrictions, and procedures to their duties.

Based on the answers to my research question, I developed the following priority list of public threats that police chiefs viewed as important threats to their communities. Some chiefs picked more than one threat.

**Figure 6 Biggest Threats to Public Safety**



1.) Drugs: Although some chiefs said there was a slight decrease in drug incidents in their communities, police chiefs ranked methamphetamines as the most important threat. They view methamphetamines as the root cause of other crimes such as burglary, battery, and domestic violence. One chief described the link between drug use and criminal activity.

P.I.: What do you think is the largest threat to public safety that you have?

Chief Seniorvale: I would say that drugs, no doubt, are the largest threat to public safety because not only do we have people who are on the drugs who are a harm to other people, but in order to support these drugs they have to go out and commit these burglaries and thefts to profit from their habit and there again, that affects the public.

Chief Potts, from a small department, talked about the impact of methamphetamines on his community.

P.I.: What are some of the biggest emerging threats that you have dealt with in the last 10 years, as long as you have been chief here?

Chief Potts: The Meth problem.

P.I.: The Meth problem. Could you talk a little bit about that problem?

Chief Potts: Sure, um, meth of course is kind of a rural problem. I mean in the big cities they do crack and stuff like that, in rural America they do meth. It is kind of a poor man's cocaine. Um, but first we had to battle the meth labs, we had a lot of meth lab activity in our area and the legislature changed the laws to make it harder for them to get the chemicals and then they started doing it again from out

of town. Usually Mexican meth and bringing it in from (\*\*\*\*\*) and (\*\*\*\*\*) and stuff. It kind of changed the face of how we tackled the drug problem. It's just a constant struggle and the meth problem causes a lot of our property crimes, our thefts, and our burglaries are almost always meth related. (inaudible) I think of those all, that the Meth problem has affected the population as a whole more than any other drug. Underage drinking is a problem here, alcohol abuse is a problem but I think meth has affected more people more adversely than the others.

Chief Cobolt also talked about methamphetamines and attitudes of drug traffickers in small rural towns.

Chief Cobolt: Methamphetamine is our big one because we are rural. A lot of these drug dealers and people who cook the methamphetamines, they like to move into these sleepy little towns and for a three man department, I will be honest with you, a lot of these individuals don't think we have the knowledge or training to notice them. We are very active on it. We do a lot of training on narcotics. Every one of my officers, I send them to a lot of narcotics training as well as myself and we do actively combat narcotics. I would say probably narcotics; methamphetamine is my biggest fear for my community.

This Chief spoke about drugs coming into Kansas and into local Kansas communities.

P.I.: What are some of the biggest emerging threats that you have seen come on within the last 10 years?

Chief John Wayne: The last 10 years I would have to go back to the (\*\*\*\*task force) out there in (\*\*\*\* area of Kansas), the influx of drugs from the border.

When I first went out there we dealt manly with marijuana, lots of marijuana, and

we had some meth labs. We did a lot of meth lab work and it, the domestic meth labs, the tweaker labs we called them. The people that get together and cook a batch for their own use was replaced by the Mexican meth that was being brought across the border. It was cheaper, they (American criminals) did not have to risk the hazards involved with running (operating) a meth lab and they did not face the prison sentences. They did not face the prison sentences just by possessing or even selling meth that they did by manufacturing meth. Possession was a level 4 felony, selling was a level 3 felony, actually manufacturing it was a level 1 and that was a minimum of 11 years in prison if they were convicted as opposed to either probation or getting it plead down to a probation charge. So in that aspect with the task force the threat I saw was the Mexican dope coming across and that goes back to the open border. We don't have the resources that are needed down there and we don't laws or the, I guess the laws are there we just don't have the political backing that is necessary to close the border.

Chief Seniorvale, who led a medium sized department, talked about drugs being brought into his community from other geographic locations.

Chief Seniorvale: Of course drugs are always a constant threat here.

P.I.: Is there a particular drug that is worse than the rest?

Chief Seniorvale: Years ago the marijuana and cocaine was a real problem and then meth arrived on the scene. For years, meth was a very serious problem.

Through different laws that have been passed we pretty well shut down the labs in the immediate area that were producing the meth but the drug dealers are going to find other sources to get their product. So, now we are having the little labs that



are set up in the vehicles that can be transported. We also are getting a lot of the meth that is being transported from Mexico and it is a very potent drug.

The head of a large department, Chief Big Mud Creek summed up his feelings in this short statement on drugs, which was shared by many of the chiefs in this sample about the far-reaching effects of methamphetamines in the community.

P.I.: What do you think is the biggest threat you have to public safety?

Chief Big Mud Creek: I would say drugs.

P.I.: Is there a specific drug?

Chief Big Mud Creek: Well, in our area it is methamphetamines and cocaine.

Drug use seems to drive every other crime. It seems to be the driving force of everything else.

In addition to crimes that police chiefs said were linked to drug use, police agencies have had to deal with new protocols for cleanup procedures after raids on drug manufacturers. Chief Hay Bale, the head of a medium sized Kansas community, described the social problems associated with methamphetamine use and with clean-up procedures:

Chief Hay Bale: Meth is almost at an epidemic level here. As a result of meth, we have domestic violence, we have child abuse, we have burglaries, and we have other crimes that are a result of either the meth usage or the meth manufacturing. Even contamination poses a great threat to this community. If the contamination is at a certain level that building may have to be removed under EPA conditions of the soil to a certain depth and it may have to be removed and disposed of properly depending on the level of contamination.

2.) School violence: Kansas police chiefs voiced their concern about acts of violence within their schools. They most used the term "active shooter" to describe the threat posed by violence in the schools. Chief Rolling Hills described the Columbine school shooting incident and the preparations he made to deal with an active shooter,

P.I.: Does the media, all the different forms of media. Does it every have an effect on you? Do you ever hear stuff on television or read something and say, that might happen in my town or that could happen in my town? Does it ever have an effect on your thinking?

Chief Rolling Hills: Oh it could, yeah. Anytime you see a Columbine or something horrible like that. It's on TV 24 hours straight and you worry about copy cats. (Interview continues and subject comes up again)

P.I.: Do you train or have preparations or any kind of scenarios that you run through for if that were to happen?

Chief Rolling Hills: We do school shooting training, active shooter training...

P.I.: You've mentioned Columbine. Does an event like that, I guess you could call it domestic terrorism or some form. Would that seem like a relevant hypothetical?

Chief Rolling Hills: Yeah. Rural community, kids have guns, access to guns, I could see something like that.

Chief Outback explained the need to prepare for potential school violence,

Chief Outback: We drill because it could happen. I think that it could happen; I never underestimate any kid anymore. The kids just in the 10 years I have been in law enforcement have changed so much, the way they are thinking, they way that they perceive law enforcement. I think kids have a hard time dealing with

authority any more. I am going to put my head out there, because the government has put so many restrictions on be able to discipline your kid that I think a lot of that now is starting to catch up with the way these kids act. I honestly believe that when they took spanking out, SRS, and you are not allowed to spank your kids any more, I think our kids as a whole, I'm not saying just here but everywhere, the respect for adults everywhere just went by the wayside. I never underestimate what a kid can do. I have pulled guns out of vehicles at the high school, it has been years ago. They know now, it could happen. I dealt with a BB gun incident on our school grounds where a kid pointed a BB gun at another kid. Yeah, it was a BB gun but, I am telling you, don't ever underestimate what a kid can do because there are a lot of kids that have problems. It seems like all kids have ADHD anymore that was something that when I was a kid there was no such thing. It could happen.

Another chief voiced similar concerns,

Chief River Bend: School shootings terrify me. Because juveniles are so, today some of the juveniles, they don't care. They don't care.

Although some chiefs talked about school violence committed by students in the school, they also expressed concern about students being victimized by an outsider, someone outside the school. One chief described such a scenario,

Chief Big Mud Creek: I always think that that could happen, but my biggest fear is that somebody would go and do one of our schools and open fire on the kids. That is a very real threat and I know that is something that is very possible and

could very likely happen. It happens all over the country and small communities are not immune from it.

In addition to active shooter situations within the schools, Chiefs were also concerned about bullying and the ways that technology facilitated bullying. One police chief described the connection between modern technology, social networks, and potential bullying violence.

P.I.: What do you think is the biggest threat you have to public safety in your community?

Chief Young Blood: Number one is bullying, as far as public safety.

P.I.: This would be for high school?

Chief Young Blood: Mainly, I think that is. I think that in my professional opinion the biggest issue across this state hands down in small and even in big communities. You know the kids are pretty tough on each other and today you got Facebook, and text messaging you got e-mail, you got so many ways you can bad mouth somebody and not look them in the face. You can put something on Facebook and everybody will laugh and make fun of them and there is that one kid out there that can't take it and they are only going to take so much and then they are going to end up coming to school and doing something crazy or walk into the grocery store where the kids work and start doing something crazy. So, I think our number one threat would be bullying.

3.) Extreme weather: Police chiefs worried about the weather. They viewed floods, tornadoes, ice, wind, and lightning storms as serious threats. Police chiefs placed great significance on their belief that Kansas is a place where extreme weather occurs. Several chiefs

stated that their counties and/or cities had been designated by government authorities multiple times as “disaster areas” due to extreme weather. Extreme weather poses problems for chiefs because they cannot foresee future events or assess the magnitude of impact on their communities. Here a chief talked about weather as being a more serious threat than people in the community imagined.

P.I.: What do you see as the biggest threat to public safety in your community?

Chief Four Corners: Probably, weather, we all have drugs and things such as that and collectively those things are always a problem and we deal with them on a daily basis, but as far as an immediate emerging threat, that (weather) is an issue and something that most people would have a hard time believing outside the area.

Here a chief compared the level of stress he experienced when the emergency storm siren sounded with the stress he felt during high-risk searches:

Chief All-You-Can-Be: Stressful yes, stressful is severe weather. I have the responsibility for the storm sirens, so knowing when to set those sirens off and when to hold off, that is one of my more stressful ones around here. That and high risk search warrants.

Another chief described weather as a threat.

Chief Many Words: We had a big flood down here in Many Words. I don't know if you remember that flood or not but this whole area down (indicating a wide expanse of the city of Many Words) here was under water (\*\*town), (\*\*\*\*town) to a certain extent, (\*\*\*\*\*town) got slapped real hard. We are still struggling with

the after effects of it. We had about a 200 year flood. There were multiple agencies in this town, federal and state, we had help from every agency we could think of but it took them a little while to get here. Now, at the time, we had had that training (emergency preparedness training) but it was kind of new to us. We had a working knowledge of the system. Since that time we have had a lot more training and we feel a little more competent about your ability of what you need to do, and how to go about it.

Here a veteran chief of over 20 years described being administrator in a mid-sized Kansas community during different disasters:

Chief Short Flight: Since I have been here and even before, but since I have been here I have been involved in at four presidentially declared disasters. During that time, I was at the helm leading this community through some pretty trying times...

P.I.: Can you tell me what those natural disasters were?

Chief Short Flight: We have had a presidentially disaster declared flood where I had to evacuate the east part of the community and we had to deal with all kinds of issues that were a result of that. There was a wind storm that caused significant damage, there was a hail storm that was massive wide, I mean it was very dangerous and it got presidential declaration. Then there was an ice storm on top of that and all of them had presidential declaration. FEMA being involved having to communicate and interact with FEMA on all of those issues as well as with the community staff through all of that.

4.) Threat of forces outside the community. When looking at the public, the term “Threat of forces from outside the community” is interesting because some police chiefs said they worried about the “out of town traveler,” who was only passing through a town, or transient tenant, the "fly by night renter" that moved from home-to-home or town-to-town several times within a single year. Some chiefs, like Chief Cobolt contributed crime to transients.

Chief Cobolt: But like I said, we never had much of that (major criminal events), we have had some pretty nasty domestics in town but for the biggest part, the community itself, we really don't have that problem. It is those who have moved in over time that I wouldn't really say are (\*\*\*\*city residents). They move in for short periods of time. That is usually where we have the big open problems and domestics and stuff like that and they are only here for a short time and then they move on.

P.I.: Do you think that is because they don't invest themselves into the community?

Chief Cobolt: A lot of, a lot of it, they kind of bounce around. They have these same problems in other communities that they live in so they get tired of the law enforcement taking them to jail so they move to another jurisdiction. So we just kind of, you know, weed them out I guess to say.

Chief Post Office also identified the threats associated with people who were passing through his town,

Chief Post Office: The biggest threat we have here is that we live right off the highway. Anybody can come in from anywhere in the country and just drive in. We have picked people up just driving on (\*\*\*\*county road), just coming through

town. We got one guy I believe it was last year who was a pedophile who had been known to hang around schools and stuff like that in different states. Found all kinds of child pornography in his car all kinds and stuff like that. We picked him up and put an end to that. It was just a normal traffic stop. Normal traffic stops as you know, can be perfectly simple but they can go bad quick. As far as the public I would say transient people who come through town really are the biggest threat to my community.

The concern about transient populations appeared to have been more common for police chiefs in small, isolated communities, not by chiefs in big cities.

Three police chiefs also viewed domestic violence as a threat to the community primarily because this crime often occurred repetitiously in certain households. Three police chiefs also said that they regarded alcohol related crimes as a threat. Although alcohol use was often an element of domestic violence, these chiefs viewed it as a separate category, as well as other drugs (methamphetamine, cocaine). One police chief said that drunk driving is a distinct threat. Two police chiefs said the mentally ill were a growing threat. They said that legislative changes, budget cuts had resulted in the release of people from mental institutions, and that they viewed the mentally ill as having negative interactions with the police. These police chiefs also said that their efforts to have the mentally ill placed in mental facilities, as opposed to jail, had been frustrating.

### **Understanding the Priority Setting Process**

While police chiefs told me about priority setting and the biggest threats they faced during the last 10 years, they also described their most rewarding moments, most stressful

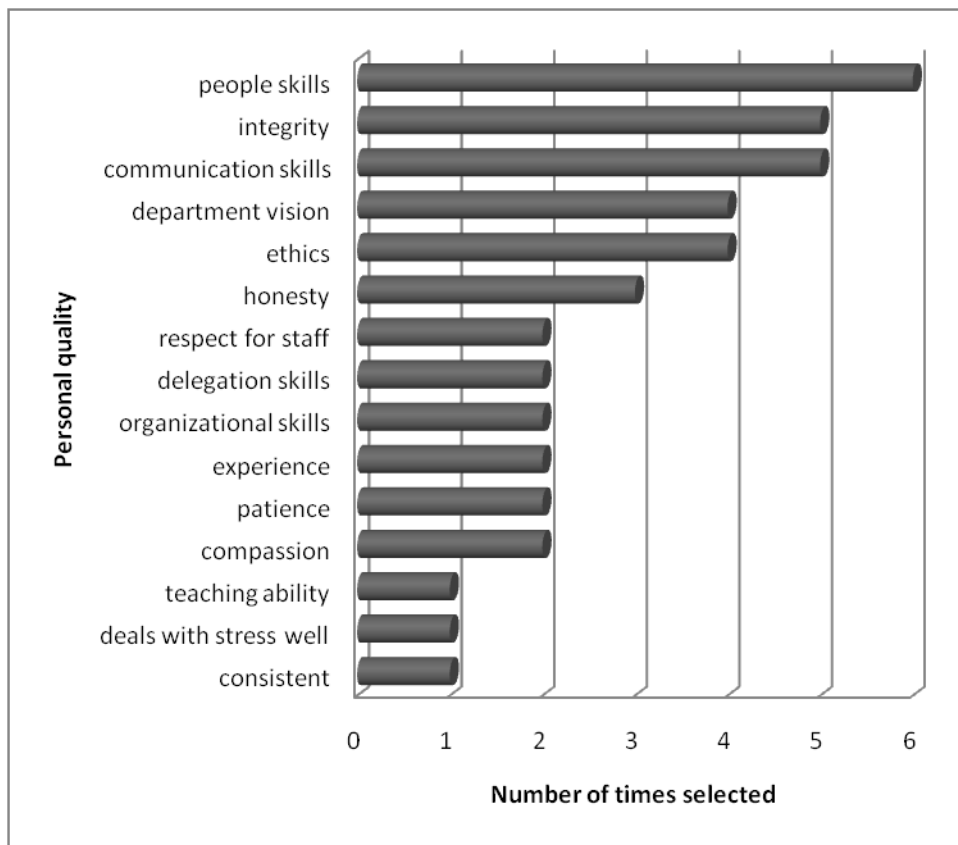


moments, perceptions on department and personnel, perceptions about policing, personnel, and their views on the public and city government. These observations were important for two reasons.

First, their decision making process were, a product in part, of their particular life experiences. Second, it provided a context for police chief decision making and priority setting in future chapters.

Police chiefs were asked about the personal qualities and the skills they thought a chief needed to evaluate threats and set priorities.

**Figure 7 Most Selected Skills Needed To Prioritize Threats**

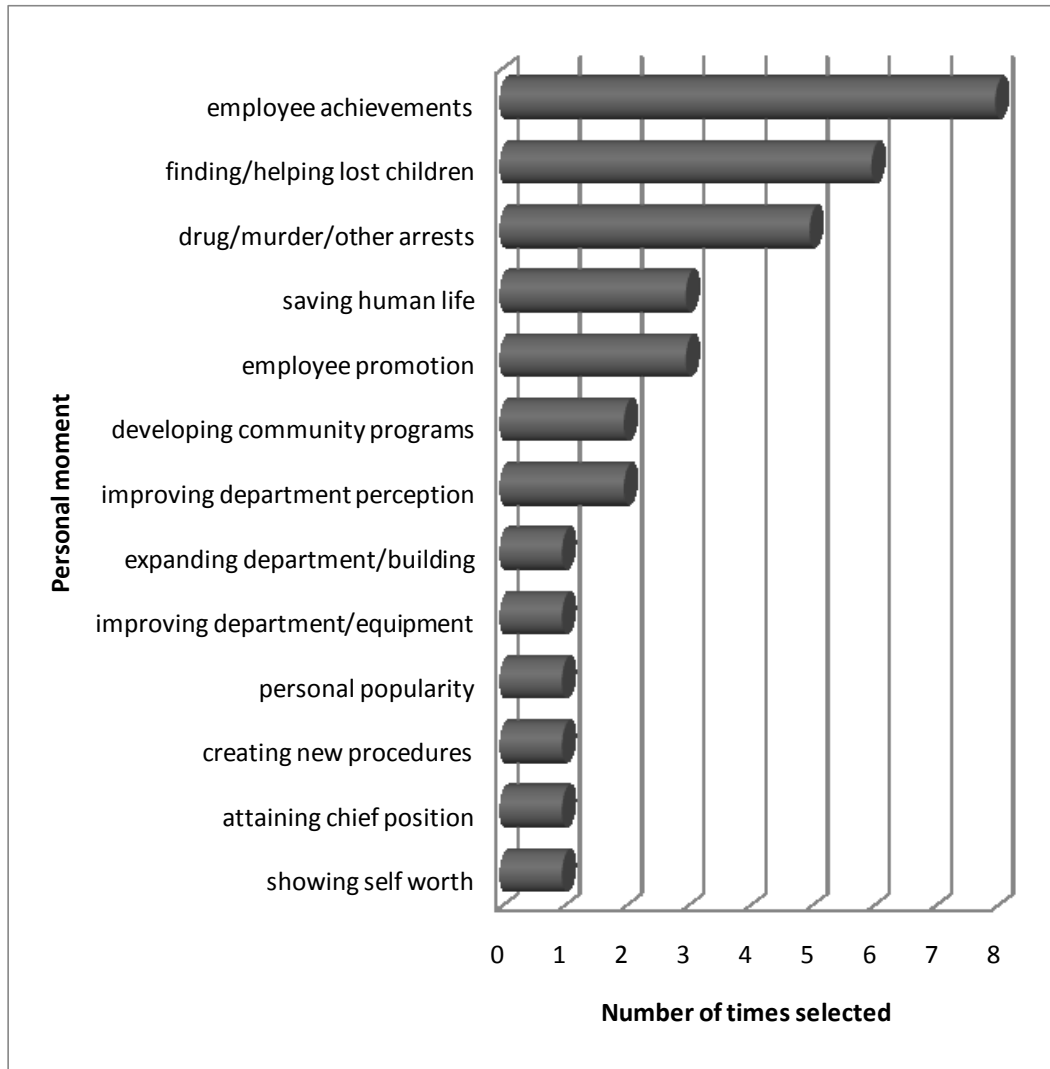


Police chiefs often said integrity, ethics, and honesty were important skills. Chiefs also thought that experience, consistency, and the ability to handle stress were important for their

jobs. However, taken together, personnel or people related skills were most often noted as important skills. This included patience, respect, and compassion for their employee's needs as well as organization, delegation, communication and teaching skills.

Police chiefs also described their most rewarding moments. There was variation in the answers here but three major group responses were seen. Many said that criminal arrests such as high-profile drug busts, arrests after lengthy car chases, and the solving of high profile murder cases were satisfying experiences. Some said that saving a human life or finding a lost child was their most rewarding experience.

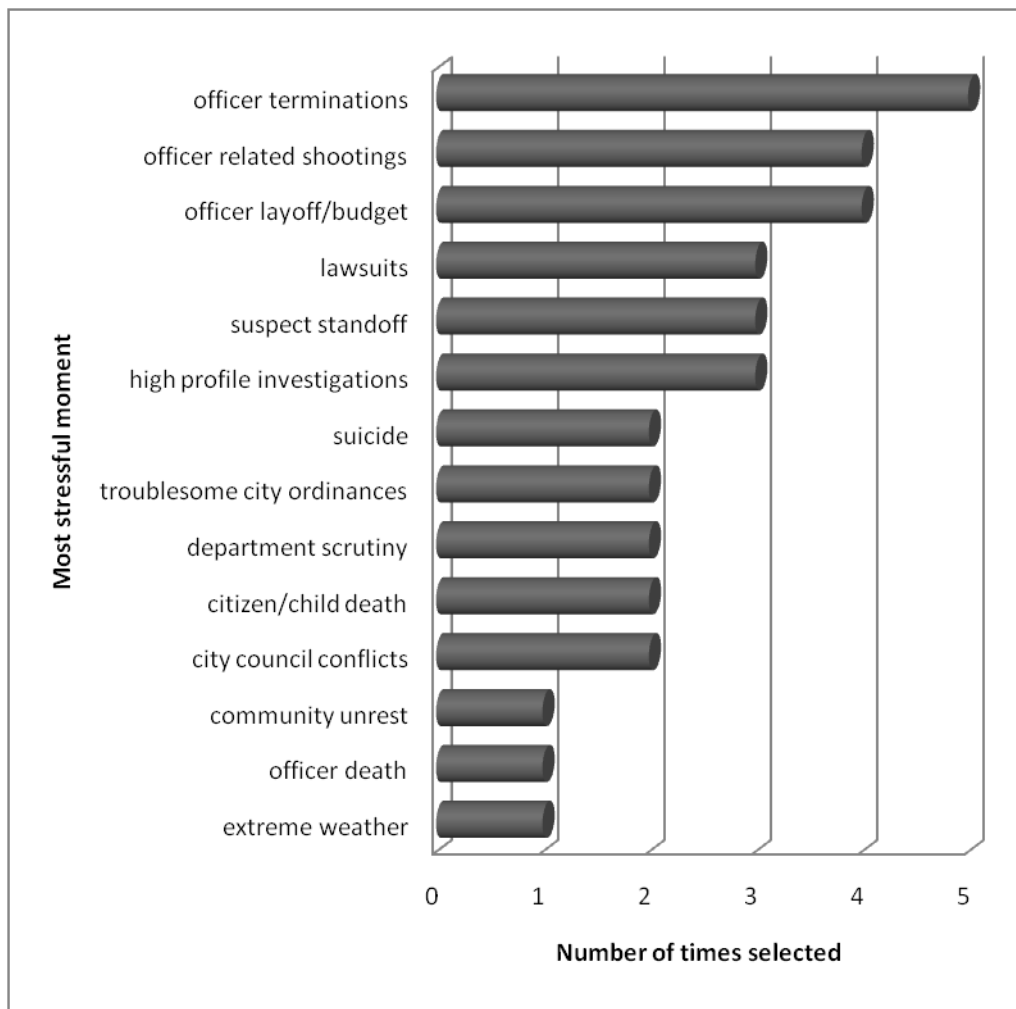
**Figure 8 Chief's Most Rewarding Moments**



There was little doubt of the importance of these moments for chiefs. When it came to rewarding moments and their department, chiefs spoke proudly of: employee promotions, developing community programs, improving department perception, creating new protocols and procedures, expanding department size, and improving the department's material needs. Only two chiefs described as rewarding, personal events linked to attaining the position of police chief and chief popularity. Police chiefs talked the most about rewarding moments that were related to their departments and staff.

Police chiefs also spoke about their most stressful moments as if it were fresh in their minds. Most chiefs responded slowly when asked about their most rewarding moment as a chief, though some said it was difficult to pick a "most" rewarding moment. When asked about their "most stressful moments," chiefs responded quickly, without hesitation. Chiefs often said, "Oh I know that" or "that one is easy...", when they answered the question. Several chiefs mentioned in humorous fashion that "every day is stressful." The reaction time to both questions were consistent in that chiefs always answered slower when responding to rewarding moments, in contrast to their faster responses to stressful moments.

**Figure 9 Chief's Most Stressful Moments**



Five chiefs regarded officer termination as their most stressful moment. Four chiefs identified officer related shootings as their most stressful experience. This included physical confrontations, shootouts, and weapon-related standoffs. Chiefs also reported that people who had died in accidents, suicides, and murder was stressful. One chief said that his effort to persuade employees with different personalities to work together effectively was stressful:

Chief Cow Town: The most stressful, the thing I get most stressed out is on personnel issues, personnel is my biggest stress that I have.

P.I. Elaborate on that, what's that mean?

Chief Cow Town: Well, I'll explain, everybody has, it basically boils down to personalities.

P.I.: Uh hmm.

Chief Cow Town: I have actually 38 employees, I have police officers, I have 911 dispatch, I have a secretary, and we have different functions of the police department but every person has a different personality. And uh, and you constantly have conflict, when one person may do something this way and another person may do it this way, so unfortunately, I have to step in quite often take care of any issues that have evolved that they can't take care of themselves. A lot of it basically boils down to, you got some people that are, their, their, strong people, and well, you got your leaders and your followers.

Another chief described the stress generated when taking employee disciplinary actions:

Chief Big Brotherton: I think the most stressful, uh, would be, probably disciplinary matters when it comes to, I'd say terminating employment. I've had

to do that a couple of times. Since August of last year, two employees I had to terminate, those were very, very difficult. I think the other times that were stressful is when you can't justify the actions of an officer that may have been involved in an incident whereby force had to be used or you just can't explain to a citizen why they did what they did and there is no good justification. Those are the most stressful times. Every once in a while we will have one of those where there is an allegation of force or whatever, you remember how it was when you were a chief, you know, those times when you can't say why they did it because you really don't know and all you can do in some cases, is you just have to fall on your sword.

Another chief talked about the stress created by the threat of lawsuits:

Chief Rolling Hills: Well, there is always the threat of lawsuits, not against me personally (laugh), but against the department. That stresses you. None of them have ever come to fruition or anything like, but anything like that is a threat, or a pressure. (laugh)

Lastly, several chiefs talked about the stress of enforcing pet-peeve ordinances. After talking about life and death situations he had been involved in the past, this chief compared them to pet-peeve ordinances that take up department time and resources and created stress,

Chief Nice Town: Those were pretty stressful but I guess I would say probably the most stressful, something that probably keeps me up more nights, and it's not funny I don't want to use that word, but you can go to a threat with somebody that committed a domestic violence and that is a very stressful situation, being there. But, something that really irritates me and keeps me up more than anything else

has to do with enforcement of some city ordinances. It really does, there are some individuals in this small town that believe this town should maybe be back where it was back in the 1950-60s. I wasn't alive at that particular time but people tell me, there was our city fathers and they, in reality kept things the way they wanted them to be. Some ordinances were adopted and I wouldn't say they are bad ordinances but these people that I am speaking of, they issue more complaints, it seems like they don't have a lot of positive things to say about anything. They, I would say a hand full of these individuals attack, maybe not me personally, but they do attack the chief job here. They want things done the way they want things done and that in and of itself, I would say, probably causes me more stress than, over the long period, than any stressful armed event that I have been too.

Although the police department was an important concern for chiefs when they considered which potential threats should be given priority, the public was also very influential in their decision-making process. Chiefs said that acted autonomously in times of crisis. For instance, when a young child went missing, a bank robbery, or hostage situation, chiefs said that they acted unilaterally to address the situation using their experience and expertise to eliminate the threat to the community. Police chiefs responded that they took action, even if the action superseded normal budget limitations. When chiefs talked about these "high risk" moments, it was apparent that they placed human life above budgets and they took appropriate action despite the fact that people might complain about the monetary costs in the future. The chief of a medium-sized Kansas community talked about making his decision to allocate resources to find a missing child:

P.I.: What are the most important concerns that run through your mind when you are prioritizing emerging threats, whether or not you are going to put time or resources to something or not?

Chief All-You-Can-Be: I try to rate which one is above the other one on that task. Of course anything dealing with life, the priority of life is always going to be first. Just right after that is the safety of individuals responding to the situation. So in that aspect the prioritizing is not too hard because that is always my number one, the preservation of life. The resources, and that is how I go about allocating resources to those individual things. One of the one's I don't know if many (other chiefs) would agree with me or not are missing children. I don't care if I have to call out the entire department and cover the whole city and have one (police officer) on each block until that child is found, and that is acceptable within this small community to do, that and allocating those resources and spending that money and overtime is not an issue what so ever I have found. I am glad to see that (laugh).

Police chiefs took actions based on their sense of duty and concern for public safety. However, it was also apparent that police chiefs thought that they took action at least indirectly with approval of the public. Although police chiefs felt that their actions in "high-risk" situations were completely autonomous, this did not appear to be the case. Police chiefs face many pressures that threaten and limit their autonomy. To push back at these encroaching limitations on their authority, chiefs tried to maintain a sense of control. Police chiefs reported that "high risk" event decisions were a small part of their job. Still, these rare events had huge public and



political implications when they occurred, so police chiefs said that they warranted the amount of time and money spent in preparing to deal with them.

Police chiefs described their department's relationship with the public as an important challenge that they had to address on an on-going basis. Chiefs of different departments said that they faced a common set of public-relations problems that could be detrimental to their departments. One chief complained that the public did not understand what the police actually do. Here police Chief Cow Town talked about the role of the police in his mid-sized town.

Chief Cow Town: I think my biggest concern, some of the public's biggest concerns they (the public) see the police officers always at the police department and not out on patrol. The citizens don't realize every call that an officer goes on there is some sort of paperwork associated with it. So, they have to come into the police department and fill out paperwork. When they (the public) see officers always at the police department, so I have to explain to them the magnitude, we have to document almost everything that we do.

P.I.: uh hmm.

Chief Cow Town: And yes, that is going to take officers off the road to come in here and, and do paperwork because we don't have that equipment in our vehicles for them stay out so they have to come in here and do it. Uh, and that's, that's one of the biggest things that some of the people, "Why you got so few cops out patrolling?" Yeah, they're out their patrolling but our case loads have gone up 20%, from last year to this year 25%. Uh, so, yes, they are spending a lot of time at the police department cranking out paperwork because they are going to do paperwork associated with (police cases), and it might be in our best interest to

get that information out there. Yes, your officers are still out there. Our call volume had gotten bigger because the city has grown, uh, were still posting out the same personnel that we have for the last 10 ten years and we have not had any new personnel. So, until we can get some budget money so we can add more personnel to where it should be, it's just going to be, an issue, and it's a problem.

Police chiefs said they struggled to address public assumptions about the kind of activities, services, and capabilities that police officers possess. In other situations, for example, police chiefs said members of the public made unfounded assumptions as to what police activities took place when they saw parked police cars. A chief from a community talked about public misconceptions during a critical weather event:

Chief Four Corners: On a daily operational basis people will see 3-4 police cars sitting outside my department. They will be mad because an officer did not respond in two minutes or five minutes to a barking dog (a dog call). We may be dealing with a violent offender, a sex offender, or a domestic violence batterer. We may be putting together search warrants to go after illegal drugs and we may only have 2-3 police officers on the street and have handled 4-5 major calls within an hour and have reports and people in custody and that is very typical. The public doesn't understand that and that is where a lot of people have a negative opinion of law enforcement. Specific example, we had a very serious storm that went through here 2-3 years ago. We had over 450 phone calls that came through here in less than six minutes and we had to handle those with everybody we had. We dispatched all officers. We had power lines that were down, trees down on cars. We had fire, police. EMS, we had the entire emergency services active, the

street departments, everybody. The city crews were all out, and there was a tornado on the ground half a mile wide and it was just to the western edge of the city limits right at the city limits, and people calling for help from everywhere. We could see the tornado from the front steps of the court house. At the time, we did car unlocks for people, and we had a lady from one of our local grocery stores that called. She had her ice cream melting in her car and she was screaming and saying that we were no good SOBs and that we were a very unprofessional police department and to never ask for anything or her support for the police department again. That is the kind of thing I guess that angers me.

Police chiefs also said that the public often overestimated the police department's capabilities. On this issue, one chief complained about what he described as the "CSI effect":

Chief Many Words: Well it's just, well for one thing, ok, they (citizen) get their house broke into, well that's pretty self-explanatory. You call the police to make a report just in case you catch the guys or if they stole some valuables maybe you might get those valuables back... I got to thank CSI for this, you know, all these cops shows yeah, they take one hour with commercial breaks which you only have about 30 minutes of TV and they commit a murder, they solve a murder, and arrest somebody in 30 minutes and people think that is real life!

One chief talked about an investigation in which a citizen incorrectly believed his department had advanced investigative equipment. Furthermore, the chief talked about how the victim did not understand the low priority that state officials would give her case when it came to forensic testing. The chief blamed the misconception on the television show CSI.

P.I.: Do you think there is a difference in perception between what the community perceives that your department does and what you perceive what your department does?

Chief Final Frontier: Oh yeah in a big way. I had a lady get something stolen and I don't remember what it was but it was about \$30.00 and I am not saying that that is not important but I knew that the chances of getting prints, I did exactly what I accuse the legislature of doing, it was a feel good thing. I made her feel good because I knew that they (The KBI laboratory) were probably never going to evaluate those and if they did, it was a good chance that the statute of limitations would run out before, because it (the case) was going to get behind all the rape kits and the murders. She thought I could bring it down here and put it into my computer (laugh) and it would tell me.

P.I.: Where do you think they get that kind of?

Chief Final Frontier: TV.

P.I.: TV?

Chief Final Frontier: TV yeah.

A female chief in a large police department talked about what she called the public's perception that the police hold special assets in reserve for "high risk" situations,

P.I.: Do you think that the public shares the same perception of the police department of what you do, so they understand what you do?

Chief Big City: I don't think so, again, I think we are judged on each interaction. If it's positive it's positive if it's negative it's negative, but I think in the big scheme of things there are some misperceptions and some unrealistic

expectations. Again, I think there is that perception that we have that secret room and for lack of a better way to put it, when all hell break loose that we can do things above and beyond, whether that is a natural disaster of whatever. You know when the tornado is coming in we are out there, we are out there in harm's way but there is only so much you can do. So I think there is that misnomer that superman is going to swoop in and make everything ok. So, do we have tools, of course, but I sometimes think we are held to a standard that is somewhat unrealistic.

Public misperceptions were seen by chiefs as having negative consequences. To reduce misconceptions, chiefs engaged in education, promoted citizen police academies, ride along programs, made public disclosure of their activities at city council meetings, and used the media to provide accurate information.

Police Chiefs said that their success depended to a large extent on how satisfied the community was with their job performance. Police chiefs changed police practices and sometimes stopped enforcing certain laws to appease citizens of their communities. Talking about the usage of radar on city streets by police officers, the police chief of a medium-sized town said that while he tried to be "fair, firm, and consistent," he admitted that he sometimes gave in to public pressure, particularly on traffic-related enforcement:

Chief All-You-Can-Be: I think there is a portion of our population that really doesn't think the town needs any police. I think that there is a large portion that believes that they (police) are overpaid, that they don't do much.

P.I.: Are there examples that are given to try to support that?

Chief All-You-Can-Be: Most of those come in through, all of my officers are good if they have a confrontation with anyone, whether it be a traffic stop or anything else they will call me, it doesn't matter what time. One of my big things is not being surprised and having the deer in the headlights look when the city administrator or a commissioner comes to talk about a situation. So, they are always good about keeping me informed. It seems so petty to me but most of it is dealing with, well one that we had recently was tag lights. The public does not like us pulling over individuals that don't have any working tag lights. They see that as nit picking and that we are using that just as an enforcement tool for DUI. Which it, (a broken tail light), is a violation and everything else but they really do not agree with that, and I don't think we will ever see eye to eye on that (laugh). Their perception is a lot of them think we pull over people for no reason what so ever. We do get a lot of complaints and as soon as we get a complaint, all of our stops are recorded, all of our encounters are recorded, voice and video. As soon as they turn on their emergency equipment everything is recorded. Any complaints that we get or a commissioner receives a complaint from a citizen all we have to do is we bring them on back and we show them the video tape and it is usually cleared up right then. But I think a large portion of the population thinks we have too many (police officers). It's hard for them (the public), I have talked to several, they don't grasp the concept of a large percentage of the work they (police officers) do is paperwork.

But while he said that he was determined to enforce traffic laws in the face of public opposition, in a different part of the interview, he admitted that he limited radar patrol and ticket writing in certain areas of town due to repetitious phone calls of opposition from the public.

P.I.: Do your officers share your same vision you have for your department or do you have to bring them around to your line of thinking or how does that work?

Chief All-You-Can-Be: We have the individual aspect of what they like to do. I encounter some problems there once in a while and how I have addressed that with them. That a percentage of your time while you are on shift, we have some officers that just love to write traffic tickets but don't want to do anything else. There is so much in dividing that percentage up and checking businesses, walking around businesses, and checking doors and everything else. There are some that don't feel that is their job and they don't realize that that business is supporting part of their salary. In the long run after everything is coming down and the tax of that business is part of the local economy. So I try to explain things in that light when I make a decision. There is a certain area that they are running radar that is close to the city limits that the public just, they, I get phone calls after phone calls constantly and I just told them (police officers), no one will set there and run radar anymore. I told them about the political realm it also involves my decision on that. I love my job and want to have a long tenure here but when you have that much of a public outcry on something that they feel is not right. That is what I get from most of them that they feel it is just not right, is setting someone up so you have to change the way you do your tactics.

A female police chief in a small isolated community in Kansas met me for our interview appointment on a four-wheel, all-terrain vehicle (ATV). The chief drove it down the center of the city street to our meeting. This was odd because ATVs do not carry the license plates normally required for legal street travel. As I observed the chief on her ATV, I saw two other ATVs being operated on city streets in a similar fashion. During the course of the interview I asked the chief about ATV operation in the town and she said that she did not worry about enforcing ATV laws. She said that because so many people used the vehicles for their work, much of it was farm related, the community was happy to use of ATV's on city streets so long as groups of ATV operators did not travel together, which created a noise level that they deemed unacceptable. Another small town police chief said that he did not enforce open container laws in the city park.

Some of the most extreme examples of public coercion on police chief priority setting and decision making occurred in small, isolated communities though they were present to a degree in all communities. Police chiefs know that police work created a certain amount of opposition, and they all said that they needed to improve public relations.

The third force that placed pressure on police chiefs when they prioritized threats was that of the state and federal government. In my interviews, most chiefs mentioned the federal government. Federal guidelines restrict the autonomy of police chiefs. The chiefs said that federal rules and regulations sometimes caused conflicts with departmental missions and some police chiefs said that it was sometimes difficult to meet federal guidelines. Federal guidelines for reporting incidents often conflicted with state guidelines. Chief Efficiency from a medium-sized police department put it this way,

P.I.: Do some of these mandates, do they make your life harder to do what you need to do? Chief Efficiency: There are really not that many on the mandate side,



some of the reporting requirements are awkward. So much of what we are getting on the reporting requirements have to do with state regulations at the state level, the racial profiling stuff which again, it is coming from the federal side but we also got the racial profiling at the state side and there is some confusion. My officers and I have discussed it quite a little bit. We are prohibited from making an assessment of a driver's racial background or ethnicity based on our observation of their appearance. We are prohibited from doing so, yet, we have to make a report. Until they get that part of it figured out, I am not allowed to ask you what your race or ethnicity is, but I am required to report it on a form that I stopped and I believe that you are X,Y, or Z. Ok, this sounds to me like you are setting me up to fail.

So, although chiefs were aware that they were affected by federal guidelines, they focused more on state and city issues. On the state level, chiefs have to deal with state laws, especially when it comes to the allocation of resources in court for trials and appeals. The issue of overtime and the problems of city and district court subpoena conflicts were a visible challenge for police chiefs in their weekly schedules. One chief described it this way,

P.I.: What about the bureaucracy further up? You have to follow all the guidelines, codes, of your city plus also the state. You have to file paperwork to the court and all this stuff.

Chief Rolling Hills: Uh hmm.

P.I.: Does that limit you in ways of what you can do just to follow all those guidelines and things?

Chief Rolling Hills: At times, if I've got a guy that has a subpoena for district court but he also has a subpoena to a driver's license hearing in (\*\*\*\*) and he's got city court another day but he still needs to work a shift, we have to have the town covered too. That's a problem at times.

But while chief's felt pressured by federal and state government, they felt the most direct pressure from local city government. There are several different kinds of city governments. Some governments are weak and the government is run by city council members and the mayor who votes only when there is a tie. Some governments are "strong," and the mayor actively votes on city issues related to the police department. When I asked police chiefs who they answered to in city government, they gave several answers. Most police chiefs reported a direct supervisor who was set apart from the city council. This person most often was identified as a city administrator. The city administrator had several official functions within the city and often supervised several department heads including the police chief. But not all cities had city administrators. Some cities had a police commissioner; this individual was sometimes the mayor and sometimes was a member of the city council. At times, two city council members shared responsibilities. In a few cases, police chiefs did not have any of these forms but, instead met with a law enforcement panel, a group of individuals who may or may not be directly linked to city government. In most cases, police chiefs had the city form of government with a city administrator as their direct supervisor.

Police chiefs had to comply with federal and state rules and regulations that limited their autonomy. They spent most of their time with local government officials, who they had to deal with on a daily basis. Police chiefs attempted to forge close working relationships with their city

administrators, who often served as a buffer between the police department and city officials. Police chiefs have a tenuous relationship with city officials, who hold the purse strings and can hire and fire them. This relationship is in constant flux because city elections continually change the composition and agenda of city councils. All of these factors limit the autonomy of police chiefs and chiefs learn to find creative ways to push back against these forces and retain their autonomy. In the next chapter, Kansas police chiefs talk about how they prioritized emerging threats, related to terrorism.

## Chapter 4 - Terrorist Threats

While looking at the factors that play a part in the process of how and why police chiefs prioritize certain threats and not others, I asked them about terrorist threats. Issues surrounding terrorism had been a strong part of my research interest during my graduate studies in 2002 and 2003, and as a law enforcement officer going back to September 11, 2001. This qualitative study gave me the opportunity to see if terrorism was being prioritized by police chiefs. I wanted to see if the citizens in local communities exerted public pressure on local police chiefs to make terrorism a priority. I also wanted to look at the impacts of federal anti-terrorism mandates on police chiefs. I expected to find that police chiefs had made terrorism a priority in the years after 9/11. But they did not. Still, that does not mean that terrorism was not a priority for all police chiefs. What I found was that Kansas police chiefs have different views on this issue and that its importance varied considerably for each chief. In this chapter I will discuss how police chiefs perceive terrorist threats to their community. I will exam the link between the perception of threat and the allocation of resources.

First, Kansas police chiefs and the officers under their direction played an active role in monitoring, investigating, arresting, and at times, transporting individuals in relation to terrorist-related investigations. That is, Kansas police chiefs reported that they had assisted Federal authorities in terrorism investigations and arrested individuals of interest to the government. Kansas police chiefs had arrested individuals on "no fly lists." On some occasions, those individuals arrested were deported from the country by Federal authorities.

Second, Kansas police chiefs spoke at length about investigations involving bomb threats, threats of terrorist-style shootings, and reports about biological weapons. During the

course of their investigations, police chiefs came in contact with dangerous items: TNT, dynamite, hand grenades, pipe bombs, land mines and other military and improvised ordinances.

Third, Police chiefs spoke about their fear that their communities were set in locations, or near places, that might be potential terrorist targets. Some towns were located near: nuclear facilities, military installations, and biological facilities.

The term terrorism for this study was broken down into: foreign and domestic threats. Foreign terrorism infers to threats involving non-Americans actors, while domestic terrorism refers to threats involving American actors.

### **Foreign Terrorism**

From my interviews, it was apparent that police chiefs, regarded the events of 9/11 as having a significant impact on their lives. After 9/11, Kansas police chiefs began joint disaster training with other organizations. This included training for terrorist scenarios along with training for natural disasters. Since 9/11, the federal government have created new procedures for local police in reporting incidents, and assigned them new responsibilities for safeguarding federal installations in local communities. Chief Busy Streets said that these demands created some issues for the local police.

Chief Busy Streets: By and large I don't think it has a lot of impact on us but we get that, so, if there is something that they think may be a concern and they have some specific credible information or even some general information that may involve us, word comes at us, that we see that, we know about it. Likewise, when we see things going on that seem unusual to us like people eyeing the dam, uh, (inaudible) the dam repeatedly you know, we get tag numbers we run them down and we have actually run across a name or two that were on national watch lists

doing stuff like that. So, there is a decent pool of information that exists that didn't formally exist. So, that works out fairly well. Um, in respect to the (\*\*\*\*\*) facility) issue, a lot of that is sort of systemic, I mean, the system is set up such that if a facility like that is coming, the federal government knows certain things need to be done and they have the training at the national level on down and when it comes time for them to say ok, um, we don't want you guys, the cops, we'll (federal authorities), take care of enforcement, no problem. Really? Ok, we're fine with that. What are you going to do when a protestor saying, no (\*\*\*\*\*) facility name) in Kansas crawls over the fence and is trespassing? Are you going to prosecute that person in federal court? Uh, oh, uh, no, we didn't think about that (is the federal response), that's kind of a local ordinance thing. Exactly, so you are going to need us up there on the property, uh, well that's true we need to have some sort of agreement you (federal authorities). You, you just sort of work through these things. They (federal authorities) think really big picture, oh, oh, you know, there is a breach of security, and were attacked and terrorists are trying, we will take care of that, you know we have procedures in place. Ok, but they don't think about the little stuff. The stuff in all likelihood, there is a greater chance of that occurring more than someone trying to bomb the facility.

Somebody bombs the facility I understand you bring in the FBI.

Another chief said that he found himself in opposition to the level of secrecy demanded by the federal government.

P.I.: Are there ever times when you have to withhold information from the public about emerging threats that you are addressing?

Chief Efficiency: Not so much on the emerging threats stuff because I don't agree with the absolute secrecy that the federal likes to do. I mean the federal level will stamp a "classified" on everything. They put classified on how many roles of toilet paper you go through in a week. This is not what this country is about and if you tell the people what is going on, that is where your support comes from. They will back you 100% as long as you tell them what is going on, as long as you keep them in the loop. You try to pull the wool over their eyes, do the mushroom syndrome stuff to them that is when you lose their support. That's when it is going to cost you big time.

When thinking about 9/11 and its impact on citizens within the community, police chiefs said that they felt an impact for a short period of time (at least one year). During this period they said there was a sense of distrust for foreigners or perceived foreigners in the community. Chief Efficiency spoke about the general effects of the terrorist attacks on trust.

Chief Efficiency: In the last 10 years, probably the biggest emerging threat is the continual shift in patterns of delivery, transportation, and use of drugs. It has changed and it keeps changing every couple of years. The other thing we have is, this is a rather insular society here, and I mean we are in Kansas; people especially since 9/11 are leery of outsiders, scared of outsiders. We don't get quite as much of that now as we did the first year after 9/11 and we don't have it anywhere near like some of the other communities in Kansas do.

Chief Riverbend talked about people who experienced concern about a foreign-born man who operated a crop duster near their community.

P.I.: Does your public ever voice any concerns on terrorism?

Chief Riverbend: The only, we had a person I don't know what to call, how you would describe him, I think excuse me, I think we called him a camel jock, or something. But we had an individual that sprays at the airport. Every year he comes and sprays with an airplane and there was concern called in about him because he had access to the chemicals and he was checked out and he had been doing it for a several years.

P.I.: Would that maybe be an example of a threat that may have been presented as a major threat that later was a minor threat.

Chief Riverbend: It might have been, yeah, it would have been major, I knew what was going on with him. I knew who the individual was. Our airports of course are in the next county over (\*\*\*) miles from here. I, of course reported it to the FBI and told them what was going on and they did a background check.

In another case, community members of a small, rural, Kansas town made multiple requests for police to place surveillance on local families of Middle Eastern decent.

P.I.: Do big events in the U.S. like 9/11, when it happened, did it have the community, were they sensitized?

Chief Final Frontier: Oh very much so, and it was actually kind of in a negative way. We had two or three families that were from the Middle East. They weren't beaten but people were always calling. Which I guess would have been good if they had been terrorists (laugh) but they were not. People you know (citizen



callers), “There is a car with New York plates at the (\*\*family) residence you need to go check it out,” and stuff like that.

After 9/11, people also experienced concerns about the safety of local infrastructure. One chief said that people were worried about terrorist attacks on their city airport and the city water towers.

Chief Busy Streets: But living where we live in Kansas, it is difficult to get people to recognize that some of those threats may exist. Now, with that said, I personally think that living where we live in Kansas, especially here in Busy Streets the threat (terrorism threat) is relatively small. I mean I, I had a report from a citizen the other day who was concerned that people were parking their cars in front of the uh, what do you call that building at the airport dog-gone-it, the uh,

P.I.: I know what you are talking about.

Chief Busy Streets: The terminal. The terminal and I am going you know, and I have to act to be concerned to the individual, but realistically, do I have any concern that al- Qaeda or some disgruntled postman is going to try to bomb the terminal? No. You know (laugh) TSA sets all those rules about access and parking and proximity and all that sort of stuff and I tried to explain to this guy. So, in that respect he was still concerned. In that respect, people are a lot more aware of threats than they used to be, like for our towers, we have had reports (citizen calls with concerns for security) locally, and it’s never anything, chances are it never will be anything which doesn’t mean you don’t need to be prepared.

Chief Big Mud Creek said that people were concerned about the security of the city's refinery.

Chief Big Mud Creek: ...after 9/11 there were some concerns about threats to our refinery. We met with the refinery (staff). We called meetings in order to try to safeguard the city from any attack or anything like that. That is on a larger scale and is probably something that is not, would be typical here and something that would not even be likely to happen.

P.I.: Were those threats, those concerns for the refinery, were they voiced by the refinery people or by the citizenry?

Chief Big Mud Creek: Well they were mainly by, well the FBI, this came from Homeland Security. Of course I don't think it was Homeland Security at the time. Plus, but sometimes there were people that were outside the fence just photographing the refinery, and these types of things would happen. A lot of times we would check these things out and would find they didn't have anything to do with terrorism or anything like that. Just having a good relationship with the refinery and trying to follow up on things like that.

Chief Red Dawn, a female chief, said that people exchanged concerns about terrorism at the local coffee shop.

P.I.: Do folks here ever mention any concerns about things like terrorism?

Chief Red Dawn: No, not anything outside the coffee shop in the morning and the guys that hang out that always hang out at the tire shop and the other businesses. Then you get into the, well, you know if they (terrorists) come here I'll get my so and so (weapon) (laugh) it's that same principle.

Although community fears about foreign terrorism waned over time, chiefs from larger cities said they still got a few terrorist related calls while small town chiefs did not.

For both small and large communities in Kansas, chiefs said that they reviewed a lot of reports about "mysterious white powder." Police chiefs talked about the many reports they received, often centered on the city's post office, that required them to investigate biological threats and, in some cases, take steps to alleviate community concern about bio-terrorism. Here a chief talked about a white power scare and explosives,

Chief Four Corners: I worked internationally, I have been in Iraq. I have been in several places where there is terrorism. I have seen it. I have been a target of it actually. So, I do internalize it, I prepare for it. I try to have my people at least cognoscente of what could happen here...

P.I.: Do your citizens ever bring up terrorist related concerns, things that they see or interact with?

Chief Four Corners: Yeah, we have packages and things like that we get called on. We had to deploy a bomb team in one case in the last 8 months. Actually had an explosive we had to deal with but it wasn't a terrorist incident. It could have been, just as easily but this one wasn't. It was just some left over explosives someone didn't realize they had hand grenades actually, but those could have been utilized for terrorism. But we do get packages, all the time that people are concern about and we check them out. They may see powder, something and not know and we've seen that on a couple of occasions.

Chief Two Lights talked about white power reports in his city,

Chief Two Lights: You know, like the Oklahoma City bombing, that truck went right through here. So you always think of that and say, but in the back of your mind you say, but this is (\*\*\*\* town name) Kansas, this is a small little town. You know (\*\*\*\*\*neighbor town) is a small little town compared to a lot of towns, but around here, it is a big town.

P.I.: Have you ever had white powder concerns at the post office or any of those things?

Chief Two Lights: We had citizens, when that was in the news.

P.I.: Around 9/11?

Chief Two Lights: Yeah, it was around that time it could have been a little before or after. We had citizens bring up this stuff and say, what is this, where did you get this? (chief asks) I found it in the house (citizen reports). You treat it as if it is real, but on the other hand you know that it's not. But you treat it as real because you do not want to give the perception of, what are you bringing this up here for? Because to these people, to them it is a real concern, so you go ahead and you take it. I can't think that we ever sent anything off to KBI.

This same chief gave details about the confusion caused by discerning powder in mailed packages.

P.I.: Did you, at the post office ever have the suspicious white powder calls?

Chief Two Lights: Yeah, and it never turned out to be anything. It always turned out to shipping powder and a lot didn't even have white powder in them. They (shipped packages) didn't have return addresses and they were post marked from out of state and we would open them and what a lot of them were like

sweepstakes, where they just blanket mail and where they (citizens) didn't know so they would call us. All we did was put on a little mask and because we knew that as long as we were careful and had on the mask and gloves, our protocol was if we opened it (and found a biological agent), we could immediately take action until it was analyzed and came back. But we just never had anything.

In one humorous conversation, Chief Militia Mound talked about people who confused pudding for anthrax at the post office,

P.I.: What was your anthrax scare?

Chief Militia Mound: We had an anthrax call in 2003, a guy went to the post office and he walks in and there is white powder all over the ground. So, we shut everything down because all of that is going on and did our assessment of it. It took about 6 hours, KBI came down and come to find out the guy was a, he was a distributor for a food product and he got some butter scotch pudding through the mail and the package tore open and we had butter scotch pudding on the floor of the post office (laugh).

Although police chiefs actively investigated white powder calls after 9/11, most interviewees in my sample said that they had little fear of biological attack. None of the white powder investigations resulted in the discovery of deadly biological agents. Police chiefs reported that white powder calls to the police had gradually subsided over time.

Based on the conversations in my sample, citizen concern about issues of foreign terrorism has greatly diminished since 9/11. Community size may have an influence on the diminishing effect; with small-and-medium community's losing interest in foreign terrorism more quickly than larger communities. At least three-quarters of the police chiefs, in the study,

reported that their interest or concern in terrorism was now minimal. Although police chiefs complied with mandated federal and state terrorism training, they did not view terrorism as a high priority. Although no police chiefs excluded the possibility that a terrorist attack could happen in their community, most of them thought it was unlikely because their towns were small, rural, and isolated from other potential targets of interest. Chief Wheaton described his feelings on the issue,

Chief Wheaton: ...when 9/11 happened and, the feeling that you and I and everybody else had during that time and you wanted to protect your town and do what you needed to do but what is the extra that I'm going to do in (\*\*\*\*town name)? They're (terrorists) are probably not sitting over in that cave over there saying, "were going to get those guys in (\*\*\*\* town name)." I really don't think, not that they couldn't, you know. If something was going to happen over in this area, I think it would have to be tied to agriculture or something like that because there is just not enough citizens here I think. They could knock down the (\*\*\*\*\*city) building I guess if they wanted but, you know.

P.I.: You are thinking something like a soft target?

Chief Wheaton: Right, and so we drove by our water towers a little more and what not, you know, but in the grand scheme of things, you almost feel like, helpless. I want to do something but what can I really do here right now?

Chief Final Frontier talked about how his town had too small of a population to warrant a terrorist attack.

Chief Final Frontier: No, and it's not that I think they (members of the community) live in a bubble, of that they think they live in a bubble. From the

ones (citizens) I talk to I kind of agree with them, you can set off a dirty bomb in (\*\*\*)city) and congratulations you killed (\*\*\*\*\*)city population) of people, or you could set that same dirty bomb off in Chicago and you could kill 200,000 people. It's not that they (members of the community) don't think it could happen but probably they (terrorists) wouldn't waste that on such a small statement.

In this conversation, the chief said that his town had nothing that terrorists might want to destroy,

P.I.: Do things like terrorism ever come in your mind?

Chief Nice Town: No, I can't really say they have and that probably has a lot to do with my little small town and that is unfortunate but honestly you get complacent, small town mentality and what would they hit here and why? It's not population dense, we have no oil fields, chemical resources, anything that would, biological or other.

P.I.: Does the public ever bring it up?

Chief Nice Town: No, I can't say anybody has ever brought that up to me about terrorist threats.

Chief Outback injected a bit of humor into his feelings about the potential for a terrorist attack on his community,

P.I.: Do you or your citizens ever have a concern about domestic or foreign terrorism or anything like that?

Chief Outback: I have not thought that was going to be an issue here. I made a joke about it once but. (laugh) You know, when the whole twin towers thing, I said yeah they (terrorists) are scared of us here in (\*\*\*)city name). They

(terrorists) didn't run into our Coop, you know. Yeah, I am not too worried about that at this point.

About one-fourth of the sample of police chiefs said they thought that their communities were at some risk for foreign based terrorism. Many of these police chiefs had military experience prior to entering law enforcement, and they expressed concern that terrorists might see their communities as soft, easy targets. These police chiefs described scenarios that they had considered. Talking on the topic of active shooters and terrorism, Chief Big Brotherton spoke about a terrorist attack scenario that he had pondered many times,

Chief Big Brotherton: Now we have one of the biggest celebrations, we would be a perfect soft target every 4<sup>th</sup> of July here in Big Brotherton. Because we have the (\*\*\*\*city event) celebration, at any one time we will have 30,000 people in our park out there with uh, probably 30 officers intermingled among the crowd and that is not nearly enough for that. It would be the perfect soft target, but, we to my knowledge, knock on wood, we have never had an emerging threat that has come with that type of crowd because that crowd is probably full of 10,000 military related spouses, husbands, kids, what a perfect target for al-Qaeda. Throw a few bombs in there, something like that and look at the big score you would make there.

P.I.: Since you mentioned soft targets, when you are prioritizing, looking at threats do you see your community as more apt to be a soft target victim as opposed to a hard target?

Chief Big Brotherton: Oh yeah. I don't think any doubt about it.

P.I.: What would make you think that?



Chief Big Brotherton: I just think because it's, it's just not, one, a hard target, and correct me if I'm wrong a soft target is basically no guards, no nothing.

Something they just walk in and just start firing away and that's there's no guards, there's no trouble for them at all. A hard target, being something that's somewhat secure, maybe some guards, could be security measures, alarms, things like that. And, and I think that speaks to (\*\*\*\*\* city name). Other than the court house, the district courthouse, the police department and the sheriff's office, I would think that almost everything in this city is a soft target. You know and that's the ones that are the worst. Those are the ones that they are going to hit, you know, hotels, retail, big retail stores, think of all the people on a Saturday afternoon you could whack at Wal-Mart if you wanted too. You know, you probably have 1,000 people in a Wal-Mart on an afternoon, someone running through with an Ak-47, you know, could do a lot of damage.

Chief Rural Town took a different view arguing that Kansas towns had an important symbolic value. As he said,

Chief Rural Town: I try to picture what the worst case scenarios would be for our city, would be if something happen at our schools. People at one place would be (\*\*\*\*local business). They are a local (\*\*\*\*\*factory) before they had layoffs last year they were basically the third largest city in the county with over 800 people out there at one time. So, those places the schools and (\*\*factory) are our biggest concerns for something happening.

P.I.: Something like what?

Chief Rural Town: Well, if you were a terrorist from outside, the factories and schools are very, very, soft targets. If you want to get national exposure you go to the heartland small towns and commit a terrorist act in a place like that, and you are going to get all the press you ever wanted.

P.I.: So, terrorism is a consideration for you as a police chief?

Chief Rural Town: Oh yeah.

P.I.: And you mentioned soft targets, you would consider this to be a soft target area?

Chief Rural Town: Extremely.

Police chiefs who were concerned over foreign-based terrorism were more likely to take steps such as securing water reserves, creating or participating in anti-terrorism task force groups, monitoring emergency supplies, and/or securing strategic city infrastructure.

## **Domestic Terrorism**

Chiefs expressed more concern about domestic terrorism than they did about foreign terrorism. Most police chiefs said that they knew of domestic terrorism cases. At least half of my sample mentioned domestic terrorist Timothy McVeigh. McVeigh had special meaning to many Kansas police chiefs because he lived in, had associates living in, or had used highways to travel through the towns where many Kansas police chiefs worked. Groups affiliated with domestic terrorism included white supremacists and various cult groups who I shall not name to protect the anonymity of the chiefs who described them. The most common group associated with concerns over domestic terrorism was the vigilante group called Posse Comitatus. Chief Young Blood described Posse Comitatus members that had taken up residence in his town,

P.I.: Do you have any militia groups or any domestic terrorists?

Chief Young Blood: There are some Posse people. There are some Posse Comitatus around here. There is a few, one person in particular, one group that lives in a house here in town that I know for sure. We have served and issued them some stuff and they signed their way for their court. You know how they do things. We don't really get any threats out of those people, they are pretty good, as a matter of fact one of them is a huge baseball fan and with (\*\*\*)officer) being the baseball coach... That has kind of helped us connect with them a little bit more. They still don't like our laws and if we have to enforce the laws they are going to let us know that they are not happy about it.

P.I.: Educate me a little bit. I mean I have heard of this Posse Comitatus. These are folks that what?

Chief Young Blood: They don't believe in our government and that they should have to pay taxes and those kinds of things. So they have.

P.I.: So they don't want to pay their water bill and things like that?

Chief Young Blood: They pay it, they go along with it but they are not happy about it. One of the things we had to deal with was over the junk vehicles so we served them a letter, they didn't comply. So, we went down and served them a citation and one of the things is they have (vehicles) to be registered if they are out in the public view. When we did that she (resident and member of Posse Comitatus) kind of got mouthy and was upset and I said you sign this or I am going to take you to jail, it is that simple. Well, she signed it but and she said "in

contest" I don't know, they have their own little way of doing things and that is just her way of kind of fighting back.

Chief Tornado Town described the Posse Comitatus and other domestic terrorist groups.

P.I.: Do your citizens ever bring up concerns about things like terrorism?

Chief Tornado Town: You know, when 9/11 happened there was some because of the (\*\*\*\*\*plant) out here but we really haven't had big ones. I supposed I would be more worried about the domestic.

P.I.: Give me an example of a domestic thing that might concern you?

Chief Tornado Town: Posse Comitatus, we have had those in the area. We have had some that have been members of the militia type stuff. We did a warrant one time and they had pictures of them shooting with big machine guns, from God knows where, and running around in their camouflage. I know that does pass through here. Have they ever been outwardly violent toward officers here, no, but you never know when they might change. Before the year 2000 there was a movement called (cult movement), ever hear about that?

P.I.: No, I don't believe I have.

Chief Tornado Town: They came through here and they were actually trying to recruit law enforcement to turn-coat on their own and the guy that was one of the big pushers of it was an ex-officer that had gotten terminated and if you watch the videos you will understand why. Their ideology was interesting because the militia group we had just arrested (in the same time period) was when they wanted to do their push for the big takeover. The first people they were going to go and locate were where local police lived, and go and eliminate them. That was

going to be their first move when they started this operation (cult operation name).

P.I.: So in your thinking you are more likely to have an incident of domestic terrorism than an incident of international terrorism?

Chief Tornado Town: I think so, I hope so.

Chief Militia Mound who works in a very secluded community, talked about a militia group that had placed recruitment billboards on the county roads near his jurisdiction.

Chief Militia Mound: I do have the (\*\*\*\*\*militant group) in this county I do see that as an emerging threat.

P.I.: What is that?

Chief Militia Mound: It is kind of your anti-government group, they are very anti-law enforcement. They made some broad generalizations to do things, that they could do it here in (\*\*\*\*\*county, Kansas).

P.I.: What are they called again?

Chief Militia Mound: (\*\*\*\*\*militant group name), it's like they have a billboard out here on (the highway) and it's about seven or eight pretty wealthy land owners here in the county.

P.I.: They have a billboard out here on the highway?

Chief Militia Mound: Yeah. It says (\*\*\*\*\*militant group name) and I saw it and I did not know what it was but after I had been here for a while I finally asked somebody and the (\*\*\*\*\*sheriff's deputy) was telling me. He said, yeah, they are kind of, he would not go as far as to say they are radical, but they very anti-law enforcement, anti-government. They want to do for themselves, they don't want

outside intervention in things. That's one of the deals we look at if they (law enforcement) go and deal with any of those people on calls they (law enforcement) always send another officer through the sheriff's department because of what they stand for, their background. As far as, do we have a Timothy McVeigh in (police chief's town)? Maybe we could. I don't see that as one of my major priorities. Bomb threats possibly at the school, that could be a thing but as far as anything I see as emerging, (\*\*\*\*\* militant group name) kind of got me where I roll play things. What if this happened here? I am a one man department I don't have firepower. I have what I have in my car (laugh), I got maybe 1,000 rounds of ammunition in my department. If some (militant) group wants to come in they can pretty much do what they want in Militia Mound.

Kansas police chiefs said that their concerns about domestic terrorist groups preceded 9/11. Domestic terrorism in Kansas includes individual actors, such as McVeigh as well as terrorist groups. When chiefs spoke about domestic terrorism, they often expressed concern over school violence, specifically school shootings. All police chiefs in my sample had trained, or were currently training, for active-shooter school incidents. They frequently referred to active shooter situations such as Columbine during the interviews.

Most Kansas police chiefs had practiced with terrorism training since 9/11 but they de-emphasized the threat it posed to their communities. A smaller portion of the sample believed Kansas and its communities were at risk for acts of terrorism because of their rural-ness. They felt that a terrorist attack on the heartland could be used to send a powerful message that no place in America was safe. These police chiefs believed that a terrorist attack on the heartland of America could have significant propaganda value. These police chiefs, whose feelings may have

been influenced by previous military experience, expressed concern even though many people in their communities did not.

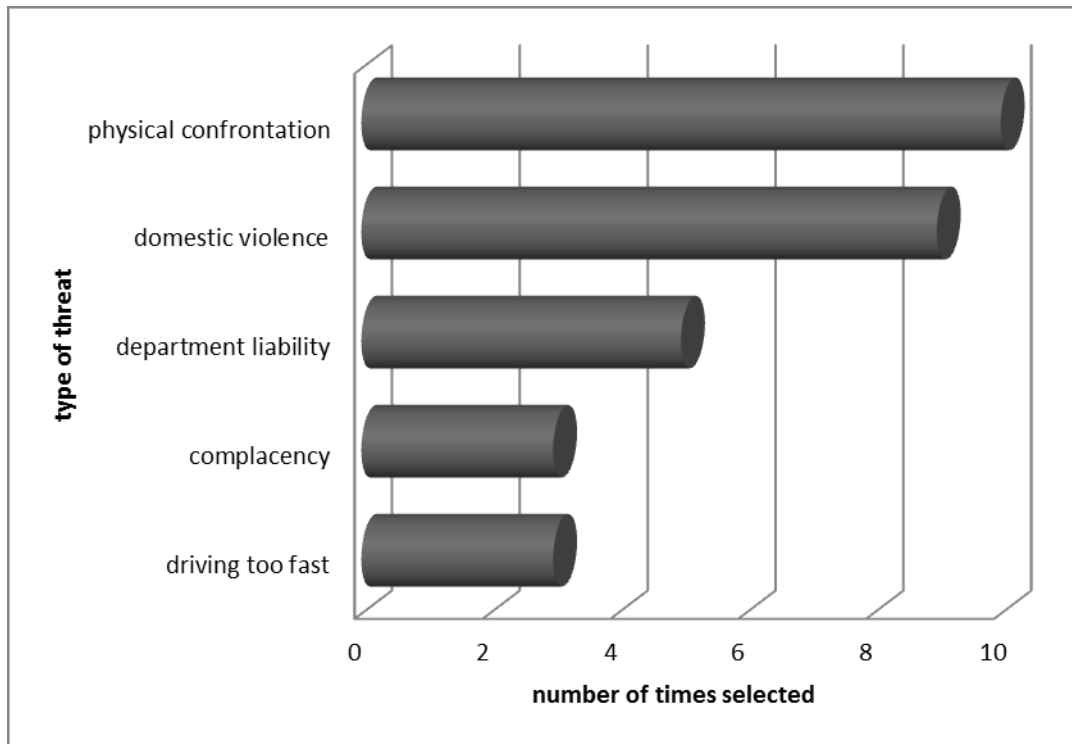
## **Chapter 5 - Threats to the Department/Police**

In this chapter we will address the problems that undermine a police department's ability to address public threats. Police chiefs face threats to their departments, and they often view these threats as a priority. An appreciation of these threats is fundamental to understanding how police chief prioritize threats and how they think about problems on a day-to-day basis. In this chapter we will examine threats to the department. These include direct threats such as violence, and indirect threats, such as of lawsuits, budget cuts, and misinformation, which may adversely affect a police chief's ability to address threats.

When I began, I expected to find that chiefs would set priorities based on pressures by the public, federal, state government, and local officials. To some extent, this was true. Yes, these groups affected how police chiefs set priorities. But I also discovered that the first priority for any chief was to respond to threats to the department, and then consider demands made by the public, and city, state and federal authorities. I found that the police department was the first and most powerful influence on chiefs when they prioritized threats.



**Figure 10 Biggest Threats to Police Officers**



Police chiefs have priorities, practices, and policies for dealing with emerging threats to their officers that are separate from their priorities, practices, policies for dealing with threats to the public. For example, police chiefs talked about domestic violence as a general threat to the community. That is, they saw domestic violence as a by-product of other threats, particularly drug abuse and poor economy. But, police chiefs also saw domestic violence as a direct threat to their police officers. Chiefs expressed a concern about two kinds of direct threats to their departments:

1. Police Chiefs were very concerned about the physical safety of their officers on day-to-day service calls, which could include anything from bar fights to neighborhood disputes. Specific to physical confrontation concerns were domestic violence calls. Drug users, especially individuals under the influence of methamphetamines, were

also considered a safety risk to police officers. Traffic stops were considered potentially dangerous to officer safety. Police chiefs placed emphasis on training in the use of police tools such as Tasers to reduce officer physical contact with suspects. Police chiefs spoke at length about the need for officers to avoid becoming complacent in safe guarding themselves during their police duties.

2. Police Chiefs spent considerable time attempting to reduce police liability. Training was seen as the best way to limit civil liability situations involving their police departments. High speed pursuit collisions were mentioned as major concerns for liability along with use of force during arrests. Police Chiefs said they often used press releases to minimize liability.

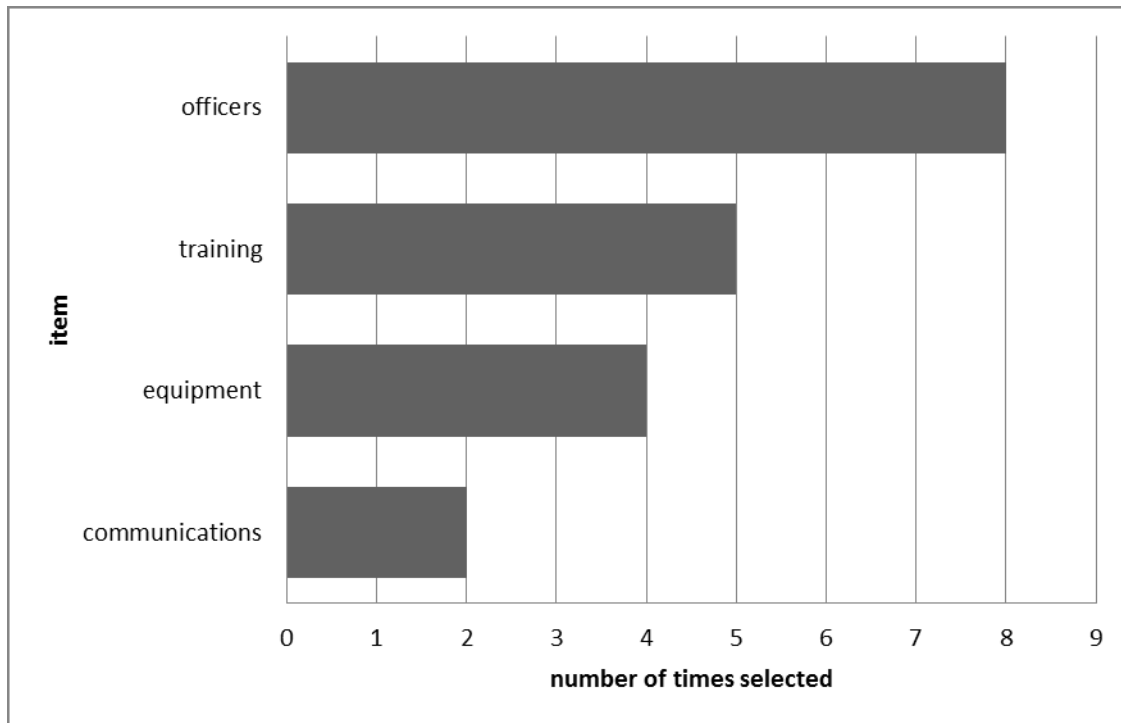
Here a police chief talked about the stress created by the threat of lawsuits:

Chief Rolling Hills: Well, there is always the threat of lawsuits, not against me personally (laugh), but against the department. That stresses you. None of them have ever come to fruition or anything like that, but anything like that is a threat, or a pressure. (laugh)

## **Budget Cuts**

Police chiefs said that they answered to their city administrators and indirectly answered to the city council on important issues. The first issue of importance in this set of relationships was the issue of declining department budgets.

**Figure 11 Most Needed Budget Items**



All of the police chiefs in my sample said that budget cuts were one of their major concerns and said they viewed this as an obstacle to achieving their goals and addressing other threats. Chiefs blamed budget cuts on declining populations, a small tax base, and a national economic downturn. Most chiefs said that budget cuts limited or adversely affected their workforce. Police chiefs said that they often had to handle situations with fewer officers than what they thought they needed. They said that they were forced to deploy or schedule officers in ways that lowered department morale, increased personnel safety issues, increased department liability, and increased public/city government dissatisfaction with the department. Several police chiefs said that limited budgets had forced city officials to restrict or abolish overtime. To meet these budget limitations, chiefs sometimes had to send patrol officers home in the middle of scheduled shifts and replace them with officers who were not near their pay-period limits. One police chief described how he dealt with "no overtime" limitations for his department:

P.I.: What are the most important concerns that run through your mind when you are deciding how to prioritize emerging threats whether you are going to put time to it or officers to it?

Chief Roundabout: Um, the first and foremost thing is of course budget issues.

Because of my council here, the police department is not allowed to have overtime. So based on that, I have to think about scheduling and that is my foremost thought. I have to think about my council and not having overtime issues. So I have to worry about who to send home, who to have come out, because based on those emergencies, I want to have enough people to be able to handle that emergency and then later on during the month, I am going to have to send people home so that they don't chew up overtime.

P.I.: If you had unlimited funds, if funds were not an issue, how might you change how you prioritize emerging threats?

Chief Roundabout: I would make sure we had the ample manpower to take care of those threats.

P.I.: What do you do when somebody is going to run into overtime? How do you keep somebody there?

Chief Roundabout: Ok, we are based on a, our payroll is based on a 171 hours in a 28 day pay period. So based on that I have a 28 day window that I have the ability to move people's schedules, send them home, luckily sometimes it (emergencies) happens up here in the beginning of the 28 day pay period and I am able to send those people home.

These events most often took place after unforeseen situations, such as severe weather, which required departments to spend more than the usual amount of officer hours. Many of the chiefs in my sample told me that they actually calculated their yearly budgets on a daily basis to make sure they were within their limits. This daily, micro-analysis of departmental budgets allowed police chiefs to squeeze their resources to its maximum potential and avoid budget overruns. Police chiefs also said that limited budgets reduced the amount of time they could devote to training. This training included emergency tactical training, public relations training, and training to increase the officer's knowledge base on new technologies. The third area most affected by decreasing budgets was equipment. Many police chiefs in my sample said that they were currently operating with equipment that needed to be replaced or were operating without the equipment that they thought they needed. Many complained that they could not purchase Tasers. In the smallest departments, chiefs said they needed bullet proof vests. Others said that limited budgets made it difficult to replace patrol vehicles, upgrade buildings, or obtain advanced weaponry. Police chiefs also said that they lacked proper communication systems and said this had a negative impact on officer safety and service to the public.

Police chiefs often sat down with their city administrators and discussed current expenditures and future purchases. In most cases, after a budget had been drafted, the city administrator sometimes advocated for the department. In the end, the city council would approve or decline the budget. Police chiefs said that the city government held their department's purse strings and that, when it came to the budget, they had very little autonomy. Even after a year's budget was approved, police chiefs said that they do not have complete authority to spend money. In fact, when it came to the purchase of equipment, police chiefs often had to request approval from the city administrator for all but the smallest acquisitions. The city administrator

had different levels of authority for acquisitions and major purchases. The purchase of patrol cars to bullet-proof vests often required official council approval, usually on a case-by-case basis.

This approval was required even if the purchase had already been approved in the budget.

Kansas police chiefs reported having very little autonomous authority to spend money as almost all purchases of any magnitude required approval of the city administrators or the city council. Still, police chiefs found ways to go around city government. The popular way was for them to apply, and receive federal grants. Police chiefs used federal grants to purchase equipment and hire additional patrol officers. Federal grants were also popular with city officials because the money did not have to be re-paid. Some grants required cities to match funds and this required city council approval. Even with these qualifiers, grants were cited by chiefs as a way to increase purchasing options.

Most police chiefs reported that they met on a daily basis with their city administrator. I asked about their relations with city officials. With only a few exceptions, chiefs said they had good working relationships with their city administrators. That is not to say that the chiefs and the administrators agreed on every issue. They often disagreed about budgetary issues and chiefs said that city administrators did not fully understand their job. On a few occasions, police chiefs said they had personality conflicts with their city administrator. Most chiefs said that city administrators were supportive if the chief kept them informed about department issues and if they formed a close working relationship. Chief Big City said that compromise was an essential feature of their working relationship with the city administrator and city council.

Chief Big City: Actually, I think it is important to note that your philosophy and your direction for your agency obviously have to match with your city manager. If it doesn't, then you are going to have trouble and I think you see commissions

also have to be in check with that. Creating my own agenda is not going to take me very far. Now, it is important that I share my vision and my viewpoint and other insights and I think I do but I think that one of the challenging parts, budgets are fluid again, especially today, these are difficult economic times. All departments have to be willing to give up something in order to get it, to get the job done. I am in much worse shape today from a budget standpoint than I was say five years ago. It is almost like baby steps, you take three or four steps forward and it's all great but then you take three or four steps backwards and then you work really hard for the next couple years trying to gain momentum and get back to where you once were.

One important function of the city administrator was to serve as a buffer between the police chief and the city council. As Chief Water Bottle put it,

P.I.: Who do you answer to as police chief within your city government?

Chief Water Bottle: Everybody (laugh) but normally it's the city manager. The commission tends to, there was a time where they would talk to me individually and request something, now we have it through a chain of command. They go through the city manager if they have a question or concern and he will address it with me and relay my response.

P.I.: Is there a reason for the change?

Chief Water Bottle: Well, I think it is because you have different personalities on the commission. Some people tend to have self-serving objectives and others actually have the right motives and so a lot of it is instead of having umpteen commissioners coming down throughout the day wanting information, it is

controlled so everything stays accurate and orderly and information gets passed on as always.

The relationship between police chiefs and their city councils was very different. Although veteran chiefs noted that city administrators come and go, the turnover of city councils was a problem because the rotation of individuals gave rise to personality conflicts. Chief Efficiency described an ongoing conflict with his mayor.

Chief Efficiency: This week, last week, the week before (laugh). First and third week of every month is the city council meetings. That is always a stressful experience.

P.I.: Why is that?

Chief Efficiency: Remember the line, “You are only paranoid if there is really no one out to get you?”

P.I.: (laugh).

Chief Efficiency: I’m not paranoid.

P.I.: (laugh). You will have to expand on that a little bit, that is very interesting.

Chief Efficiency: My mayor has been trying to get rid of me for a lot of years. He is gotten over the course of years, he will gain the support of a councilmember and then he will lose that support and then he will get a different one and then lose that one. Usually it is a new councilmember that will listen to his version and then once they get to know me, and then see what actually does happen and how everything goes down, then he loses his support. So, we are back to where he has one supporter, but I just had a very positive outcome on a council vote that the mayor tried to make less than advantageous for me and what I got was a vote of



very positive confidence in me from the rest of the council. That is a good feeling, local politics.

Of course, not all police chiefs currently had major conflicts with their city councils. Many had amicable professional working relationships. But many of the chiefs had struggled to overcome conflicts with city councils. Some chiefs, who had good working relationships with their councils said they were fortunate and realized this situation might change. Chief Pistol Grip spoke of his good fortune with what he called the pro-law enforcement council he was working for.

Chief Pistol Grip: You know right now and again I feel like I am preaching to the choir but right now, I have a really good council and I can go to them and express my concerns or my desires and I don't feel like they are coming back with any animosity and are really trying to be open minded. I do believe they share our vision. That can change in an election. You get a different council that is not pro-law enforcement and that can change. But I am thankful to say that right now, we have a very good council that is very pro-law enforcement.

In addition to personal conflicts, one police chief said he sometimes had conflicts with city government about policy. During the hiring process, police chiefs negotiated for promises of autonomy from city officials. In an example of how police chiefs tried to bolster their autonomy in pre-employment negotiations with city officials, Chief All-You-Can-Be stated:

P.I.: Do any of those people (city officials) within that system ever have a separate vision of what you should be doing than what you do?

Chief All-You-Can-Be: No, they have held up to their end of the bargain. When I did my interview and they told me that they wanted the police department to change, that they wanted it to be a friendlier, more community involved police department, I said that in order for that to happen, I needed to have control over the department and not be micro-managed. I would keep them apprised of every situation that I can legally and keep you up on current dealings, and we have done that so far, and it has been amazing. I had my doubts about it but it has been truly amazing. But I keep them updated probably more than they want to.

Sometimes these pre-employment agreements were upheld; but other times they were not. Police chiefs attempted to handle city conflicts and issues through council inclusion in police department activities and by being prepared to bring facts and evidence supporting their arguments when problems occurred. Here Chief Two Lights talked about newly elected city government officials:

Chief Two Lights: The first thing is you can't get upset, ok, you can't take everything personal. It's not personal, it's a job. The only thing that I would recommend for anybody in a smaller town, and when I say smaller town I am talking (\*\*\*\*city), (\*\*\*\*city), (\*\*\*\*city) even (\*\*\*\*city) you can't take it personal but the thing you need to be ready for, or prepared for is because you know in the back of your mind the direction they (newly elected government officials) are going because they are very vocal about how they think it (the police department) should run. You know to have all your paperwork, all your figures up before we even get going on it. Now every once in a while they will throw something in there that you are not prepared for and that is when you say well, the next council meeting I will have the information for

you. But that is the main thing as far as being a police chief in a small town you need to make sure that your council and you are going in the same direction, or try to go in the same direction and then your city administrator. This is the way we need to handle it

### **Maintaining Public Support**

Police chiefs said that the public often has misconceptions about the police agencies, which make it difficult for chiefs to achieve their goals. Chiefs work hard to shape public perception of the police because they regard misconceptions as a threat. So they engage in disseminating public information and the creation of the “Safe Community” narrative to minimize the spread of gossip and misinformation, which can create negative public attitudes toward the department.

Police chiefs took the position that once a negative perception of their department had taken hold within the public, they had little ability to change people from developing negative attitudes toward the police. Chief Largeville described the fickle nature of public perception and the often self-defeating nature of his efforts to combat it,

Chief Largeville: ...well, here we go again, you've been a chief, you know it doesn't take hardly anything to get the public questioning your decision making abilities. Especially when they think you are not doing enough, or not moving fast enough, public favor. Law enforcement is probably one of the areas that is most scrutinized and criticized by the public. It's kind of like you're damned if you do, you're damned if you don't. A lot people feel, that we (police) are like a necessary evil, if nothing is going on, we want you out of sight and out of mind, but if something happens we want you there and we want you there real quick.

That's pretty much it, but, and you can watch the news now, and the public has an impact, we are under a microscope, I don't care if you are in a small town with three guys, or a major metropolitan area, or a university campus, we are under a microscope

Chief Many Words articulated a similar view,

Chief Many Words: Well perception is a funny thing, if people perceive something, then that is the way it is. If they perceive it to be true then it is true to them whether it is based in reality or if it is immaterial. We are very conscious of the perception of the town as a whole and of individuals in particular because you have people depending on their age, education background, whether they are married, or live alone, they have different issues.

Chief Four Corners talked about how he addressed the issue of public perception with new employees,

Chief Four Corners: Well, when I hire a police officer I tell him we are a business of truth where truth means nothing. Perception is everything to the public. We obviously live and die by the truth but what they (the public) perceive to be the truth is their truth and you can't persuade them of the truth no matter what, even if you show it to them on video or they hear it on audio and we do that many times as well.

In general, police chiefs said that if public perception turned against the police department, it was very difficult to reverse the damage. Many police chiefs described negative public perceptions and said that they were one of their most stressful moments as an administrator. One of the ways police chiefs combated negative public perception was to develop

a positive working relationship, with outside agencies, particularly the county sheriff's office. They did so both to develop positive public perceptions and to increase the resources for a police department with a limited budget. Two police departments had conflicts with their counties sheriff's department. These conflicts were based on city and county contract disputes that threatened police department autonomy.

Police chiefs also used public information to shape perceptions. Chiefs did this through: personal contacts, public council meetings, public news media, and the informal grapevine. Only a few of the largest police departments had specialized personnel to deal with the city council and the media. Most police chiefs handled these issues themselves, or handled them through their clerical staff.

Most of the police chiefs in my sample gave prepared reports to city council during their meetings. The chiefs did not give a verbal report; they submitted written reports at meetings, for later review by the council, and used their time during council meetings to talk about potential department purchases or relevant issues related to the community. In most cases, council members consulted with the city administrator prior to council meetings. The public disclosure of police activities provided information to people attending the meeting and the local media that covered the meeting.

Most medium and large communities have a local newspaper. In a few cases, the town's newspaper also served as the county paper. Some larger towns also had television stations and radio stations. Some police chiefs in very small rural communities, which had no official media outlets or police department websites, used free internet forums such as FACEBOOK and MYSPACE to create city police department pages where they posted information about police activities. Chiefs said that these forums were very popular with the citizens of small

communities. Police Chiefs used this free media form to disseminate information about court verdicts, police education programs, seasonal safety warnings and missing dogs. Chief Open Space described how he used FACEBOOK in place of a city newspaper,

P.I.: Do you have a local media in your town?

Chief Open Space: No, what we are doing is using FACEBOOK. I started a (\*\*\*\*city) police department FACEBOOK page and so that is kind of our local media. We have over 380-385 fans and what we do is we cut and paste, we only put on there what is public information. For example, press releases, we may do a press release and put it on there or if we assist the sheriff's office and it makes the news. We post the links on there and the people, I get compliments on it all the time because every time we arrest somebody in town the rumors start flying and of course you got those people's families saying, oh this is what happened and it is usually not the truth.

P.I.: So the FACEBOOK page helps you in what way?

Chief Open Space: It helps us communicate with the public the facts. We also post just public information. It may be something as simple as a severe weather alert. It may be like, I got one on there right now that says on Friday we are testing storm sirens.

P.I.: So it serves like your newspaper?

Chief Open Space: It serves like a newspaper, when we catch a dog, in the past we took a picture of the dog and we made a poster and stuck it on the front door (of City Hall). I took that idea and now we post it on FACEBOOK and you can see the dog, who to contact, where it was found, how to adopt it.

Four police chiefs said they had a strained relationship with their local news media. One chief said he did not forward weekly information to the local newspaper, and three chiefs said that they send only limited releases to their local media. Chiefs said this tension was a result of inaccurate reporting. But most police chiefs reported good, if not strong working relationships with their local newspapers. In fact, they said it was an important way to shape public perception. Chief Wheaton described the benefits of a strong relationship with his local newspaper,

P.I.: Let me ask you a question about the press. You say you have a pretty good press here.

Chief Wheaton: Uh hmm.

P.I.: How does that relationship work good or bad for you as far as perception? To the public of what you are doing, the goals and things you are trying to accomplish?

Chief Wheaton: I will give you an instance. I am going to talk up (\*\*\*\*\*) who is our editor down here. Let's say he gets a letter to the editor that just lambasts the police department. He will call me before he will run a letter like that and talk to me a little bit, and then he probably won't run it. (laugh) It's that kind of relationship we have. He will say I heard something the other day, what was that all about and I say it is still an ongoing thing and I don't really want anything out there yet. Even if it is public knowledge and I know he could run with it, if I don't want him to, he won't do it. But, if the (\*\*\*\* out of town paper) gets a whiff of it, they will run with it. I don't blame the (\*\*\*\* out of town paper), I know that is what they are in business for. I know they need to sell newspapers, I know some

things are public knowledge, but you've been a chief and you know that everything you do you don't really want out there at certain times.

Another police chief described his strong relationship with certain reporters from the local newspaper,

Chief Efficiency: ...I interact, my partner in the (\*\*\*\*\*social club) is the publisher of the newspaper here. His managing editor and is a good friend of mine. A couple of the reporters we are sometimes at odds with. We got one reporter that won a journalism award a few years back and she would like nothing better than to win another one. She doesn't care at whose expense, so we have to be very cautious about what gets put in with her. But if it's other stuff, I can talk to the editor and say, this is what I'm looking at, and this is where I'm coming from. I would like this in, I would not like to see this in, kind of thing. The newspaper actually works with us pretty well.

Even police chiefs who had built strong relations with local newspapers still viewed them as outsiders and as potential threats to positive public perception. Chief Young Blood said while he did not trust the media he was willing to work them,

Chief Young Blood: Well, I am not a huge fan of news (media) to be honest with you because it is so negative. I understand that they are important to us and some of the things that we have to do. What I did was build a relationship with them (local media) to where I don't trust them whole heartedly because they are the media but they are willing to help us if I need something put in the paper. They are willing to do it. If they need some articles done, I am willing to sit down and do some stuff with them and work with them.



Many police chiefs tried to control the flow of information to the media. Instead of giving interviews or information to the press over the phone, most police chiefs provided information through written press releases. Chiefs said the written press release provided a permanent record of new releases and reduced misquotes from the media. Many police chiefs provided weekly or regular press releases. Some regularly faxed press releases to the local newspaper or provided “media folders” to reporters. Chief All-You-Can-Be talked about the challenges he faced with the local newspaper and how he addressed it with official press releases,

P.I.: Is the press helpful or a hindrance or both to you being able to do what you want to do?

Chief All-You-Can-Be: They can be both; it can go either way in a heartbeat. One week it is great the next week it could be.

P.I.: Are there any speculations of why that happens that way?

Chief All-You-Can-Be: I think they, I never get a phone call to confirm any of the information in like the readers forum in the (\*\*\*\*newspaper). There is no attempt to really evaluate any of their information that someone is writing in as long as that person puts their name on it. Sign your name on the letter you sent it they will print it. One of the more pressing ones here I would say in the last two months was an individual who wrote in, clearly did not know what he was saying, and they went ahead and printed it and the police department turned out to be writing tickets for people riding on bicycles in certain areas without proper equipment. Stuff that the public would not like, why would they do that? You know, and I can't remember what else was in the article but I fielded a bunch of phone calls on that. Oh, and riding lawnmowers around, we wrote (\*\*\*\*citizen) he lives just

straight back here and he rides his little tractor around everywhere and he has almost been ran over. He has been backed into and he rides it up the highway which is, you can't, at least 25 times we have had dealings with him like, look, you have got to stop doing this and after the last one I think the sheriff's office was actually the one that wrote him a ticket because he was almost ran over by a vehicle. Then right after that we wrote him a ticket and, they (citizens) just thought it was atrocious but they don't look at the aspect of if he was to get ran over and killed then we didn't do our job by providing safety for that individual.

P.I.: Do you think instances like that affect how much you interact with the media or do you have a specific way that you interact, written statements versus, how does that work?

Chief All-You-Can-Be: Written statements, I have learned that a written statement, there has been too many articles or misquotes in the paper and so I feel. Especially going into a commission meetings and explaining a project or something that is ongoing and then the next day reading in the paper, I didn't say engineers I said technicians. It's just stuff like that; there is a difference in the terminology, maybe not for most people so no, everything is pretty much in written form. They come here every morning at 8:00 a.m. to pick up the press release and they are really irritated when one isn't in there for them and the laws have changed, stalking and domestic violence you can't release victim information or anything that would identify them, so, it has been an education having to educate them too. One of them (newspaper staff) he carries a little law

book around with him. and he is like, no you haUm, but I try to keep a good rapport with them.

Police chiefs also have to deal with non-local media: newspaper, television media from outside the community that come to Kansas to collect news stories related to major events. Non-local media could be national news services or simply media from bigger towns in the surrounding area. Although many police chiefs reported good relations with local media, very few had good relations with outside media. Police chiefs distrusted outside media because they find it difficult to shape the news. As Chief Efficiency says,

P.I.: Do you think there is any different kind of dynamic between your local media and media outside of your community?

Chief Efficiency: Our local media has pretty much saturated their market they are not drastically increasing or decreasing their share of their market. They are pretty well fixed. Outside there is a lot of competition out there and really, the last thing we want, we don't want satellite trucks sitting on main street that say CNN and FOX and MSNBC and all of that. Yeah, there is an awfully lot of competition and we have been there a couple times, and we are very, very cautious to what we say to outsiders, especially outside news.

P.I.: Why is that?

Chief Efficiency: Because you can't trust them, you flat out cannot trust them. They do not have a local connection, they are not here. They are not going to live with whatever they say or publish or print or say on TV or whatever. They are not going to deal with the consequences of what they say so you have to be very very careful what you give them.

Chief Big Mud Creek agreed,

P.I.: Is there any different dynamic between your local media and media that is outside of your community?

Chief Big Mud Creek: Yes, like when we have a major event you get all these TV stations from the surrounding areas and that's, that's a circus. Their focus is on a good story, they are not what I would call particularly helpful. They are just trying to make a sensation story out of something.

Another chief describes the difference between local media and outside media,

Chief Two Lights: Yes, there is a difference with the relationship. Our local media they are a lot more like, give me the information and I will print it like what you said. We have got some on the outside that when we send them this (news) they are the ones that turn it around and that's the ones that give me the problems. I don't know why they turn it around? I don't know if it's not what they want to hear? If it's not interesting enough or they want to make their articles bigger? I don't know? The pen is mightier than the sword and you can't fight it.  
(laugh)

Chief Young Blood said that his negative experiences with the media persuaded him to seek media training.

P.I.: Did you notice any different dynamic between your local media and media outside your local area?

Chief Young Blood: When the outside media comes in it is usually on bigger things. A couple times local TV news, and I don't like to do interviews in person and I don't like my face in print and I will tell you why (Chief Young Blood gives

private explanation). The bigger people (outside media) when they come in it's always negative and they are wanting to twist my words and it was my first big media event and it was the (\*\*\*\*journal). They kind of thwarted me and in some respects I looked like an idiot. Mainly the way they worded the article not the way I spoke. So I am really reserved with them. I've taken some media classes so I know how to handle them. I give them what I can to not make us look bad but to where they can't go digging more dirt, if that makes sense.

### **The Informal Grapevine**

Police chiefs not only monitor public perception of their police departments, but also seek to shape public perceptions by using the “grapevine” or social networks. This informal communication system was called different names by chiefs: the “grapevine,” the “busy bodies,” the “rumor mill,” and the “gossip chain.” These “gossip hubs” were typically located where people frequently congregated: restaurants, gasoline stations, bars and taverns, grocery stores, hardware stores, senior centers, and barber shops. Chiefs regarded these gossip chains as important and they knew exactly how many main gossip hubs were located in their town. Police chiefs kept track of gossip hubs, even when one dissolved and another came into existence.

To put it plainly, chiefs viewed community gossip chain locations or “hubs” as powerful tools that could hurt or help them achieve their goals. First, police chiefs often cautioned their officers against participating in gossip chains because their participation could hinder the chief's objectives. Second, police chiefs used the gossip chain to gain intelligence about public perception, promote department-related initiatives, and, most often, to rehabilitate or maintain public attitudes about police personnel. Chief Water Bottle describes how the gossip chain worked and how he used it to control rumors,

Chief Water Bottle: Well there is a lot of drama in a small town and there are just a lot of people that are busy bodies and so a lot of things are just simply relayed through citizen contact, word of mouth.

P.I.: Tell me about the drama, explain that to me?

Chief Water Bottle: What they don't know they make up. We got some folks around here they tend to enjoy their coffee shop.

P.I.: The Community talks?

Chief Water Bottle: Yes, the community talks.

P.I.: So being a small town police department is there a lot of community focus on what you do?

Chief Water Bottle: Yes and then I kind of serve as a filter when the city manager and the city commission, hey we heard this circulating, and sometimes it takes me a while to understand what they are talking about and then I will finally pick up on a little bit of truth I will say, no, that is not even close to what happened now let me explain (laugh).

P.I.: Are there certain ways you go about trying to find out what the community gossip is?

Chief Water Bottle: All you would have to do is go to the local convenient store. I tell most of the officers just to ignore it. You know you write somebody a ticket in a small town and then they want to complain or you arrest somebody and they want to either add to the drama or the excitement of a certain arrest or they just want to complain and vent. So we don't get caught up in that because, you know it's not as bad as probably some places but you always have a little group of

problem solvers that have a cup of coffee and solve the community's problems probably in 10 minutes. I go places when I am off duty in town and hear them talking about certain things and I tend to go ahead and set the record, no that is not exactly what happened. Because a lot of time they don't have any firsthand information, they heard it from somebody that heard it from somebody and so I do what I call rumor control. I will say that is not what happened but sometimes they get so beyond the realm of reality that it is hard to pick up on. But I will talk to them and then they feel good and they will take that information but now they have the official scoop.

P.I.: Are you sort of perception building for your department by correcting things in the gossip chain?

Chief Water Bottle: Right, we don't want inaccuracies. You just have to look at the situation, if it is something that is going to blow over easy it's not that big of a thing. If it is something a little more major, then we need to get that rumor controlled.

Chief Pistol Grip described how gossip hubs were often used as a place to vent public discontent.

P.I.: How do people grumble, what is their outlet?

Chief Pistol Grip: The cafe (laugh) that is the outlet. That is where we hear, basically I think in (\*\*) years here I think we have had one city council meeting where some people came to complain about the conditions of some buildings, basically wanting to see some additional ordinance enforcement. I think

somebody went to complain at the chamber of commerce about a ticket one of my part time guys wrote.

Chief Clan Town said he used the local gossip hub to address what he considered public misperceptions about his police department.

P.I.: Do you think the public has a different perception of what you do than how you perceive what you do?

Chief Clan Town: Oh I am sure.

P.I.: Maybe give me an example of that?

Chief Clan Town: I have had, you go to our local coffee shop (to address patrons) and they think all we do is sit in our cars and eat doughnuts. It seems like if I have a 12 hour day that is not too bad a day (laugh). It is always something, it's not always major problems that you are dealing with, my neighbor's dog is bothering me to somebody stole my golf clubs to the lady that has some mental issues who thinks somebody is trying to break into her house, So you have to make her feel comfortable because her screen got ripped by a dog and you can see the claw marks but trying to explain that to her.

Chief Post Office spoke about the dangers of neglecting gossip hubs.

Chief Post Office: Well I had problems with the existing police chief that they had before me. There is some stuff that I really don't want to go into and it really put a sour note on the police department. Right now I am building the police department (image) back up and it is a slow process. Bar checks, these were never done. Our (former) police chief, nope, I don't want you in the bars. I do bars checks, I will do a legion check and stuff like that... You got your class of people



that go to work, go home, got the family life and then you got your other class of people. There is the single person that goes to work, goes to the bar, then goes home and that's how they do it. Then the people that live in the bar, they are usually your headache people. These are the ones that cause rumor control and in this town rumor control can run rampant.

P.I.: Talk a little bit about that, how is the grapevine, how does that work?

Chief Post Office: (laugh) It could be something simple but when it finally gets back to where you hear it, it was a major event. It is just word of mouth, people get together and they just start talking and all of a sudden they add more to the story and more to the story and before you know it, holy cow you hung somebody out here on main street and all you did was give them a ticket for speeding (laugh).

P.I.: Do you have points in your community that are the hubs for the grapevine?

Chief Post Office: Yeah, yeah we do, we got the restaurant. We got the hardware store and the legion and the bar pretty much.

P.I.: If I take it right, the grapevine can be detrimental, is it ever helpful?

Chief Post Office: Actually, that is what I am doing. See, I have had people come up and say that guy (police personnel), should have got rid of that guy and I say no, it's not that guy, it's not this guy. They are fine. They are the ones that are doing their job, it is the ones before. I say you need to stop them and talk to them. Get to know them; they will talk to you in a heartbeat.

P.I.: So you kind of get your two cents into the grapevine?

Chief Post Office: Exactly, exactly. I have gone to the bar and I have had people complain to me about this officer or that officer and it is like, hey, did you do it (chief asks the patron), yeah (patron answers the police chief), then why are you whining? I believe in my people doing their job and I believe that as a leader that I need to protect my people too.

In this small rural community, Chief Open Space used the rumor mill to get people to stop coming to his home.

P.I.: Being a small department, do people call your house or knock on your door, does that happen?

Chief Open Space: They have, yes. I live just right outside of town a half of mile but I have known pretty much every chief that has been here for the last 10 years and when they lived here in town. I haven't had one in a while, but I have had people come to my house. They think it is ok, and I tell them I don't appreciate it. I have even told some people you know because rumors fly quickly in a small town, I have even tried to start a rumor. Hey, maybe be careful coming out to my house because I will meet you at the door with a gun (laugh).

P.I.: So you use the rumor mill to your advantage?

Chief Open Space: I have, I've tried to use it. I have never had anyone come to my house in an angry or disturbed manner to grip or complain...

Chief Red Dawn used a local gossip hub to reduce a teenager's fast driving.

Chief Red Dawn: Example, a very basic example, a young gentleman, big dually truck so they have loud mufflers, anyway, rapping his pipes, driving fast.

Mentioned it to the clerk at the convenient store, which is the only one in town.

Who is that kid in that truck (chief inquires of clerk), well that is so and so (clerk answers), well I am going to have to have a talk with him. My ticket book is itching (laugh). Within (laugh), within 48 hours he has slowed down and he wasn't rapping his pipes. Two weeks later, I go to his house and chat with him as he pulls into his driveway. He is thinking he is in trouble. I thank him and shake his hand for slowing down without ever telling him that I had made (a comment at the convenient station).

Police used official press releases to keep the media accountable and to provide a permanent record. In short, the official press release was a form of quality control. Quality control and accountability do not exist within the informal grapevine system.

## Chapter 6 - Threat Response Strategies

Police chiefs shape public perceptions by disseminating information through the local media, non-local media, and informal gossip chains. Police chiefs also shaped perception by withholding information or by relaying only minimal information. First, police chiefs withheld information from the public for strategic investigative purposes. Almost all the chiefs said that they withhold information from the public on high profile investigations about drugs, sexual crimes, and most felonies. Chief Outback said that while he was friendly with the public, he was closemouthed about drug cases.

Chief Outback: I talk to people. I flat out tell people what I am working on. I mean, not if I am working on Joe Blow and marijuana or sales, I don't tell them about that...

The chiefs said they withheld information about the investigations to safeguard the integrity of developing cases. They wanted to prevent potential suspects and witnesses from leaving the scene or destroying evidence. If people in the community learned about an ongoing case, they might ask why the police had not already made an arrest. Chief Bendercut described some of the reasons why he withheld information about drug-related cases.

Chief Bendercut: Let's take drug investigations. A lot of the drug investigations that we do we don't come out and put ourselves on a pedestal and tell everybody in the world what we are doing on them because if we do, it would ruin or jeopardize our cases. Even if we have made two or three busts in a month, you know to keep it, the integrity of the case or the people we are working on, we are not going to go out and show boat. So, you might have the interpretation from the

public that you are not doing much on drugs but you might actually be doing a lot on the side.

Police chiefs also withheld information from the public because they worried about damaging the reputations of citizens under investigation. Some chiefs did not announce embarrassing arrests within their community. Chief River Bend described his feelings on the issue,

Chief River Bend: I think people are embarrassed enough sometimes. Say I arrest someone for DUI, or something else, I think they are embarrassed enough. I don't feel like they should be plastered on the front page of the newspaper. I don't give a weekly report or a monthly report to the press anymore, I use to... I tell you what burnt me real bad is I had a friend that was a board member for the (\*\*\*\*\*school) and he was in the press all the time for board decisions and he got stopped and got a DUI and that made the front page of the area newspaper and they crucified him. To me, he is no different being a DUI than Joe Q. Citizen and he should not be on the front page of the paper just because of who he was. He should be able to screw up just like everybody else and get the same treatment and he was treated different because he was a board member.

Chief River Bend also said he used his authority to omit information that might have been personally damaging for a member of the community,

Chief River Bend: A few years ago we had a terrible flood here. The highway was actually flooded and we had an individual, I get a phone call at 1 a.m. that said that a guy left at 3p.m. in his boat and hasn't been seen. It was dark and I couldn't

go look for him then but I said I would be out in the morning and I took my personal boat out the next day. I run the river all the time anyway and it took me about 30 minutes but I found him. He had capsized his boat and lost his motor and was about to freeze to death and had his boat tied up in the timber there and I get him back. Towed his boat back, get him back to his wife and whenever the press started calling, you see I never told anyone about it, about me saving this guy's life. They called me from the press and I called the guys wife and told her what was going on and she didn't want his name in the paper. So, they wrote an article but they did not give his name (name omitted by Chief) and I can't blame him, he was embarrassed about what had happened. Those are things that don't sound like a big deal but they're actually an embarrassment to a guy to have to read about it in the paper. So, you see what I am saying?

A number of chiefs said they did not report embarrassing incidents to the media.

Police chiefs also withheld information to maintain the "Safe Community" narrative. Chiefs promote a "Safe Community" narrative to argue that their communities are relatively safe from crime, places where random acts of violence are minimal, places where people share common sets of traditional cultural values, and places that are good for raising families. Police often said that their towns possessed all of these qualities. Although police chiefs disseminated the Safe Community narrative, they did not invent them. Instead, the Safe Community narratives are the product of a consensus that included police chiefs and members of the community who also wanted to maintain the Safe Community narrative. Of course, although police chiefs wanted their communities to fit the description provided by the Safe Community narrative, they see evidence that it is not safe, yet they advance the narrative despite the facts. Chief Hay Bale

explained why he withheld news of crime because he did not want to expose the “Safe Community” narrative as false for elderly women in the community,

Chief Hay Bale: So much of what we do never comes to public light, may not even make it to the media. A lot of stuff we don't release to the media. We simply take care of it, handle it and go on. So I think, in a sense, the public is probably not fully aware of the dangers and the things that happen in this community and part of it is probably because of me. I don't release a lot of it. My community is 60 percent retired and of that 60 percent, a greater percent are widow ladies rather than widowers and if you understand elderly widow women, they can become very frightened over a lot of things. So consequently, I don't release a lot of that stuff because I want them to feel safe and secure in their community. Let me handle all the other stuff and it is sort of on a need to know basis what I release that to the public.

Chief Cobolt described the sleepy-town mentality of his citizens and said he withheld information to the public to prevent panic and keep the narrative intact.

Chief Cobolt: The town is very quiet, I kind of describe the town as a lot of times people do within this community. They keep their personal affairs behind closed doors. Other towns I listen to the radio and I hear (\*\*\*\*town) or (\*\*\*\*town) or (\*\*\*\*town) or the county's going on domestics (experiencing domestic violence) and we do a few here in town but I would say 90 percent of the time problems are kept behind doors... Their mentality is that (\*\*\*\*\*town) is a sleepy little town. Nothing ever goes on.

P.I.: What would be reasons, if any, that you might want to avoid telling the public what public threats you are addressing?

Chief Cobolt: If it was an officer safety issue, if it was an issue that would cause some type of panic throughout the city. I would not release that information it would be on a need to know basis...

Chief Cow Town said he was reluctant to publicize information that might change people's perceptions about the community.

Chief Cow Town: I am one of those people, if there is a threat towards the public, I will be the first one to notify the public that there is a threat. But, if there is a lot of stuff going on that I don't think the public needs to know about I don't put it in the paper. Uh, this is a community that people leave their doors unlocked 24/7 and if you start putting out false information, or information that is going to change that (perception), unless it's viable information, credible, then uh, I don't put it out. And this is uh, Cow Town has always been that way. Uh, we haven't had a homicide in this town for 23 years. So, not to say tomorrow we won't have a homicide, Cow Town has always been a community that everybody felt safe and comfortable in and it is my job to see that that continues to happen, that everybody feels safe.

Another police chief said that maintaining the Safe Community narrative created problems for him, because it made it difficult for him to hire. He admitted that the narrative was not completely true, though he said it was important to maintain.



Chief Wheaton: ...people, they think, well it's not Wichita, so you're not having armed robberies every night so it's a nice quiet town. Ok, so that's great, maybe we are not having armed robberies every night, but I guarantee you, that guy over there (chiefs indicates a city street) is diddling (having sexual intercourse with) his niece. And if you don't think he is, you're crazy. The same percentage of people doing that here is the same percentage of people over in Wichita. Screwed up people are screwed up people no matter where they live. So, as a chief of police, do I put that out there and lambast the papers with all this stuff in hopes to get that extra officer I want? Or, do I just put out the tidbits I need to and keep that small town perception? I struggle with that, I have always struggled with that and I always will. When I talk to people I get different answers of what people think I ought to do. I probably tend to not put as much in the paper as maybe I should just because I know that people want to live in a community where they feel safe. We did a community survey here that was (\*\*\*\*) pages long with responses and half of them, what do you like about Wheaton, "it's safe, low crime." Well, check our crime statistics; we beat the Kansas average last year. Ok, you can say it all you want folks that's great, and I am not going to sit here and brag that our crime rate was higher than the Kansas average, because they probably think it was one half of the Kansas average. So what do I do?

P.I.: What do you think would be the ramifications if you did gave out all the details of crimes? Do you think it would perpetuate additional crime or?

Chief Wheaton: No, I don't think it would perpetuate more crime but the perception would change and that in essence would have a negative effect on

people wanting to move here. Could it get me another officer, maybe but my interest is in this town, this is my town. I was born here, I was raised here. This is my town. It is a good town; I'm not saying it's not, I moved away and swore I would never come back but there is not a much better place to raise my kids. I guarantee you (\*\*\*\* a bigger town) Kansas has the same problems we have here, that they do in Cherryvale or anywhere else, but there is not a press sitting there trying to eke out every little detail of every little thing that is going on.

### **Police Chiefs and Their Proximity to the Community**

As we saw in the last section, chiefs promote the Safe Community Narrative, in part as a way to promote a positive public image of the department. Police chiefs also worked hard to get their officers to invest themselves into the police department culture and try to create bonds of solidarity between the police and the community.

One way chiefs build solidarity is by making themselves “accessible” to the public. The term “accessible” can mean many things, depending on the community and the size of the department. Generally, large departments denied direct physical access to police chiefs. The largest police departments used electronic doors and surveillance cameras to limit access. In addition, large departments put multiple human buffers between citizens and the police chief. To speak to a chief, visitors had to identify themselves to see a general clerk who would confirm an appointment and then authorize a visitor access to a general greeting area where another person, usually a police secretary, would again, confirm an appointment and take the visitor to another waiting area outside the police chiefs office where at last, one could see the police chief. This was all done in a polite professional manner but the point was made that visitors could not drive down to the police station and have a chat with the police chief. Appointments might be vetted

by public relations officers, media officers, assistant police chiefs, and police secretaries. At large departments, my initial interview appointments never involved a direct phone conversation with the police chief. Large police departments were places with an extensive division of labor. While these departments were highly efficient, they lacked the friendly appearance of the small police departments. Chiefs stated that the public often took advantage of opportunities to talk to them and they struggled to maintain public visibility and get things done.

Chief Bendercut said that while he wanted to be accessible to the public, but people took advantage of that when he shopped for groceries at the local grocery store,

P.I.: How do you go about projecting a perception to the public?

Chief Bendercut: We're very proactive guys, we are seen out by the public.

Something we try to do is get everyone to get out of their cars some, especially the night times guys when it gets warm. Walk Main Street, be accessible to the public. The time I get killed (approached by the public) is when I am at the grocery store, when I am not at work. I mean, I can go in for one thing and be in there for 40 minutes with people stopping me and asking about things.

P.I.: What do people ask you about?

Chief Bendercut: Everything, from complaining about the dogs of their neighbors barking at night to if something has happened in the world stage somewhere. I get it from everywhere.

Although chiefs in large departments were not very accessible to the public, police chiefs in small police departments were almost completely accessible to the public. Small police departments might have only one room where all police business was conducted. A person could walk into these police departments and ask to see the chief. The police chiefs in small

departments said that “walk-ins,” people who came to the police station to specifically have access to the police chief were common. In fact, police chiefs of small departments not only expected to have impromptu meetings with walk-in visitors, they saw it as an important way to build solidarity with people in the town.

Although small town police chiefs do not always enjoy being fully accessible to the public, they recognized that accessibility was an important value. Chief Red Dawn described the mentality of her rural Kansas community,

Chief Red Dawn: ...I have noticed, the community itself almost polices itself to a certain extent. You have a core of ranchers and old timers that have been here forever that frankly just won't put up with any stuff. I have seen a couple smaller instances of the older gentleman taking care of some of the younger gentlemen that were getting out of hand. I don't know, I think if it came down to it and there was a definitive threat (within the community) that I would have shotguns and rifles from 10 miles around that would show up.

P.I.: Do you think that is due to the rural-ness of this area?

Chief Red Dawn: It's the mindset yes.

P.I.: Are you sort of an overseer of a mechanism that is already in place?

Chief Red Dawn: Not really, I don't see it like that, I see it as, it's not really a mechanism that is already in gear it's just the way it's always been. You're a small rural community in Kansas, you work hard, you go to church, you play hard and you raise your kids. You take care of your own, if we were isolated all of a sudden for two, three, or four months by ourselves just on top of this little hill, the town itself and the people they would be alright. People would come together and

take care of themselves and the ones that were causing problems would pretty much be squished pretty quickly.

Police chiefs spent a large amount of time shaping public perception. To do this they often limited or omitted information to the public. Chiefs also shaped perception by promoting the Safe Community narrative. Even though chiefs had knowledge that their communities were not as safe as they wished, they worked with citizens to promote the idea that their towns were safe, friendly, low crime areas to live. Police chiefs also shaped public perception by being accessible to the public. As opposed to large departments, police chiefs of small departments were the most accessible to the public. Small town chiefs did not always like the extra attention they received from the public but they accepted that it was a part of their job.

## Chapter 7 - Solidarity

In this chapter we will discuss how police chiefs work diligently to build solidarity so that they can meet the different threats that they face. But while chiefs work hard to build solidarity within the department, this is difficult to do because many departments have high rates of turnover which can attribute to budget limitations and low pay. Experienced officers often leave the police department for other agencies where they can earn higher wages.

Chief Tornado Town described the problems attributed with high turnover,

Chief Tornado Town: We are bleeding experience on our department, like somebody cut an artery. We lose people because yeah, the money to start out here isn't too bad but if they have any ambition at all then they get trained here and then they look around and there are places that they can make more money. Yeah, some places are laying off but there are a lot of other places that are still hiring in law enforcement and we are losing our experience. We have frozen our wages and they are talking about maybe a reduction. We have one position that we are not going to fill. We have a number who leave some voluntarily, and some not, obviously. But the issue is not that they are strapped; we are trying to replace and get to training people. They (regular officers) are having to carry that load and it's hard to get their time off. So that makes a strain on these people and then they burn out quicker and some of them are thinking about leaving. It becomes an endless thing it seems like and our experience keeps leaving.

Many of the police chiefs in my sample described their police departments as "training grounds" for other departments, temporary places where police officers got their certifications and then moved on. One chief complained about the temporary nature of his staff,

Chief Largville: ...right now you can't say personnel because we are nothing but a training ground. We hire men and get them in here for two years then (\*\*\*\*\*) highway patrol, somebody has them. So, when we started looking at the funding situation, and right now I think everyone can realize that the funding for the State of Kansas sucks right now, it's bad, but to be able to keep up and do like (\*\*\*\* another agency) does and keep within my budget, that is probably one of the most rewarding things that has happened.

Turnover was a common problem for medium and large police departments. Small police departments had different issues. Many of the smaller departments I visited were called "one-man departments," though they sometimes had several employees. The police department might have one full-time law enforcement official, usually the chief of police and several part-time employees who worked when the chief was off-duty or on vacation. These part-timers had different levels of experience and qualifications. Some part-time officers were sheriff's deputies who worked on the side for extra pay; some were previously full-time officers who had been reduced to part-time officers, and some part-time officers were no more than well-known members of the community who helped out in an emergency. Chief Nice Town described his part time staff,

P.I.: How big is your department?

Chief Nice Town: I'm it. I am the only full time law enforcement officer hired for (\*\*\*\*). I do have two part time officers who split those 4 days.

P.I.: Those 4 days (chief's days off), I was wondering about that.

Chief Nice Town: Yeah, and one of those guys, is one of those guys that works for the city, he has been here, his name is (\*\*\*\*) and he has been here since I was a kid and he has worked for the city and got into law enforcement as a part time officer and has always been the guy that helps out here in (\*\*\*\*) with the chief of police.

P.I.: Uh hmm.

Chief Nice Town: He works the Thursday and Friday and I also have another part time officer who works the weekend, the Saturday and Sunday that I am off. So, those two officers split my time off and share those hours. We are pretty flexible if (\*\*\*\*) needs a Thursday off, the other part timer's name is (\*\*\*\*) he will cover and we are really flexible on that. So, that's who covers when I am not here. Um, and then if it were a situation that those two individuals were out of town, and I have go to (\*\*\*) to a meeting or a DL hearing or whatever, then many times, I would call them and say, I am going to be out of town, can you cover calls for (\*\*\*\*). Either one of those will listen to the radio and then respond, the sheriff lives here in (\*\*\*\*). So, that is actually, well, both of my part time officers are part time deputies. We have a highway patrolman who lives in (\*\*\*\*). So, we have a pretty good amount of law enforcement that lives in (\*\*\*\*).

Another police chief described how his department had been transformed from an all part-time police department to having one full-time police chief with a part-time staff,



Chief Open Space: When I first started here this was a part time department. That is all they had at the time was part time officers. Officers working part time just don't have the time they need to give 100% because most times those part-time officers are working a full-time job somewhere else. So, when they do come to town to work they are here, they take the calls, and that is about it.

But even if the department employed a low-paid or part-time staff, police chiefs urged their officers to adopt a common set of values as a way to build solidarity, and project a certain image of the department to the public. Although police officers have to swear an oath to obey and enforce the law, police chiefs also demand that they adopt a certain set of values and practices. Police chiefs are quick to enforce compliance with sworn oaths and informal commitments. One chief described how he handled someone who strayed from the department's mission.

Chief Busy Streets: ...that kind sort of behavior is unacceptable, the way I put it is this, I'm driving the bus, and the bus is over there. I did it on a chalk board. I had a meeting after I took over. I drew a flag in the, here's the bus, here's a line and here is the flag, and I said we are going to that flag. And we will describe to you over the next couple years what I mean when I say we're going there, but sufficed to say, somebody has to lead the organization towards where we are going. And we had uh, we did our mission statement values, we are really emphasizing values. We have a big values drive for the organization, if you can get people to buy into values you don't have to worry about a bunch of that extemporaneous crap that goes on because the values tamp that down. So, the bus is going there,

now, I don't really care at this point, because we are a long ways, like from here to Denver. I don't really care if we are headed straight to the flag right now and I anticipate full well we will deviate off the course a little bit but as long as that flag is always in the front window we are going in the right direction. We can end up five miles this side or that side of the flag but make no mistake we are going to the flag and everybody needs be on the bus and headed in the same direction. I had a couple conversations this week with a couple of those problem children (officers) and I said look, you remember that bus, yeah, I'm stopping the bus now and opening the door. I'm saying do you want to be in it because if you want to be on the bus, it is your decision right now, because we are going to that flag and your behavior recently not only indicates that you are not interested in going there, you are stomping on the brakes and turning the wheel to head us the other direction to get us off course. So, right now, your choice is whether you want to get on the bus with me. No mistake, I'm the driver, and nothing will happen by virtue of this conversation, no discipline, I am just bringing this to your attention, which is why I am bringing this up, bringing this to your attention, so you will know that it is important to be a part of this people, and this is what my perception is. When we have this conversation again, if we have this conversation again, I will stop the bus, I will open the door, and that point the choice is no longer yours, I will decide whether I let you stay on the bus or if I kick you off the bus. So, just so everybody understands this, how important and how committed I am to these values and your behavior is running counter to that based on this, this, and this.

This chief gave his officers special coins to remind them of their duties, both to the law and to the department.

Chief Busy Streets: They need to know where they stand; the people who are doing a fantastic job need to know. That is why they get the special little coin instead of the brass one. This one (chiefs indicates a coin) represents obligation, your obligated to the department's mission statement and values but if you demonstrate that you got that, that you buy in, you earn one of these (chiefs indicates another coin), this represents achievement. The two things look exactly the same (except for color), this is the reverse side of that, trust me, they look exactly the same,

P.I.: ok.

Chief Busy Streets: Um, the rule is once you get a silver one, the way this works is with challenge points, you don't have yours (have not earned the coin yet), you buy someone's beverage of their choice, and mine is always diet Pepsi. Some of the guys meet after for a beer but I don't drink beer so, you pull a silver one (department coin) out and you're obligated, the only obligation is you have to tell people what you did to earn it. So, that they know, that values are important because you get one of those by demonstrating not just compliance with the values but by outstanding achievement with respect to the values. People who make the right decisions when nobody else is watching, and I find out about it, that sort of stuff. That's the kind of thing that gets you one of those (special coins). So, I don't give those away to other chiefs, I don't give them to visiting dignitaries like a lot of people trade like trading cards. I think that diminishes it.

The only people that get those are our employees. Now, I had an employee who didn't do so well, and I explain this to all the new guys (shows me a cut coin). That one was cut in half for a reason, that was a corrections officer who smuggled contraband into the jail. You've got to work harder to have that happen to you (have a coin cut) here then you do to get one of those silver ones. That takes more effort to get that thing cut in half than to earn that silver one. That's just everybody having the same direction on the bus.

Chief Largeville described how he included subordinates in planning as a way to build solidarity.

Chief Largeville: What we've do here at this department, every year we have to, I have to submit goals to my boss. It would be very easy for me to just sit here and write a bunch of goals on the board and say, here is what we are going to do A,B,C, and D. Now, what we do is I pull my administrator and supervisor staff together and say, what would you guys like to see this department accomplish for the coming year? Then I take it one step further, I have each shift supervisor when they have their briefing, meet with their guys and say, what would like to see this department or their shift complete for the year.

Examples of personnel inclusion was not uncommon and was often said to work well in conjunction with getting officers to buy into the police culture. Some chiefs issued "affirmation cards" that contained mission statements to personnel, which they carried in billfolds or purses. Police officers carried their pledge cards when they were on duty and when they were off duty.

Police chiefs said on many occasions that police officers should remember that they were always in the public eye and always on duty, which meant that they had to model their behavior at all times.

Toward this end, police chiefs oversaw every detail of their staff's image. Here are a few examples of how police chiefs work to shape their officer's image. Police chiefs meticulously detailed the physical presentation of police personnel and evaluated their haircuts, uniforms, boots and attire for their workability, practicality, and for their symbolic presentation. Chief Water Bottle talked about the importance of professional dress.

Chief Water Bottle: We pride ourselves on the fact that we have good officers and I would say that the majority of people in town, that have not had professional experience with us (been arrested), would agree that we have come a long way to be consistent, consistent with everyone and at the same time be compassionate and kind. You put that combination together and I think you have a lot better opinion from the public, the private public when they see you as approachable. A lot of agencies have switched uniforms; have switched to those tactical combat type uniforms with the boots, no. I have had officers ask wouldn't you like to have those? Nope, I want us to be professional and approachable. I don't want to look like storm troopers. We have to be user friendly and we do have a good rapport.

Chief Young Blood liked the tactical clothing, or what is called the BDU type uniform, but talked about changing uniforms:

Chief Young Blood: When they see our uniforms, we went back to the class A for a while because before we wore a lot of BDUs. We still wear them but I changed the whole color and it was a more professional looking department. People saw that and we got more response especially out of the elderly community and there is a lot of people here who would look at that uniform and this is what I noticed when I was deputy. I went to a call in uniform or our better uniform and the PD guys would be wearing a pair of DBUs. Who do you think they (the public) wanted to talk to, the guy wearing that uniform because he looks like a cop. So we went back to that and got away from the BDUs and started getting some support. Now we wear them mainly during the day. So in the daytime we are still spruced and shined up because that is when the old people see you. That image is pretty big.

Chief All-You-Can-Be banned the use of cell phones, public smoking, beards and drinking for off duty officers. He did so because he thought the public viewed one officer as a reflection of the entire department,

Chief All-You-Can-Be: Yes, on perception, I believe they (police officers) are judged on sight alone first, starting with the uniform itself. I require their uniform to look good and also their shoes shined and be in appropriate uniform. I have helped them in that aspect. We developed a summer uniform with a kind of a 5-11 type khaki pants and a polo shirt so it's a little bit more comfortable but still maintains a professional appearance. Smoking in public, I don't allow any smoking in public. If they do smoke, I think that is one of the bigger things, especially if we have large crowds of teenagers or anything else and they happen

to see that, it just sends a negative image. Talking on cell phones, I discourage that, I haven't stopped it because we have to do a lot of that just because of the scanner land effect of trying to keep things off the airwaves every once in a while but with everything developing with the texting while driving stuff (new laws), I try to discourage them as much as possible. I still realize that it is still a pretty viable tool they use while they are out there on the road. Just over all appearance, one of the other things when I came in which a lot of the department did not agree with is beards, they are allowed to have mustache if it is neatly trimmed but beards or goatees, I have no tolerance for in this work environment. So I did away with that. I got a little bit of resistance on that but it didn't last too long.

Chief Efficiency described the negatives effects of wearing sunglasses in public,

Chief Efficiency: There is a lot more to working in small towns then sitting on the main highway writing tickets and having quotas on how many tickets you have to write on your shift. Get out of the cars, walk down the street. Go down the street, turn the FM radio off and roll the window down so you can hear what is going on out there. Talk to people, don't talk down to them but listen to what they are saying. If you are out, standing talking to somebody, take those damn mirrored sunglasses off. You will actually get fewer complaints if people can actually see you. If they can see your eyes they are not going to complain about it then. You have to buy into the community. You have to be part of the community. The community has to know that you are willing to listen to them, that you are willing to hear what their side of it is.

Chief Big City had similar views about officers, who wore tactical gloves,

Chief Big City: I get complaints about why are your officers running around in black gloves. That seems (public complaints) like they are heavy handed and aggressive and you know, you talk to an officer about why, what that appearance means to you and that perception. Even in clothing, you have your traditional class A uniform but there is a big push by vendors to wear more tactical looking daily uniforms. How is the community going to perceive that when an officer (requests), “well I want to look tactical and I want to appear this way why can’t we do that?”

Another chief complained about overweight officers,

Chief River Bend: I have one officer that is retiring in a month and a half and he is overweight and that is one of my pet peeves. He is retiring and he has twenty some years in and he is burnt out.

Many police chiefs also restricted officers from having any associations with people considered part of the criminal class.

Chief River Bend: I don’t want a bad perception of me or my officers. I don’t like to see them (police officers) in a local bar drinking. I don’t have a problem with them going to a pub and having a drink and eating supper or something like that. I don’t want to see that officer intoxicated. I don’t want any associates, I don’t want that officer associating with known active drug dealers and I think that perception



is important especially in a small community. People talk in a little town and they add to what actually occurs.

Most police chiefs banned their officers from drinking at the local bars and taverns.

Chief Two Lights explained his department's ban on drinking at local establishments, which he thought helped separate police from the public.

Chief Two Lights: Yes, yes, we have that. We have policies on that. A lot of those policies are ones I put in place when I came here. First of all if you are going to go to a bar you don't do it here in Two Lights Kansas. There are three bars here; two of them are in the county and one in the city. You (police officers) do not go to any of them because we are too close. It's sad but it is true, people can't distinguish when you are off and on (duty). To them you are a police officer 24/7 so you have to uphold the police officer image 24/7. I could be out in my garden, hands and knees muddy, and they are still going to consider me a police officer, ok. We know that when we get into this job, if we don't know that then we shouldn't even be in this job.

Chief Young Blood thought that if officers drink in the town they worked in, even when off duty, they projected a negative image,

Chief Young Blood: They (police officers) don't go into bars, you know it's not that uncommon for a cop to want to go out and want to have a beer and do whatever, but I tell them if you want to do those kinds of things you need to get out of town and do it elsewhere.

P.I.: What do you think people that would see your officers in the bar drinking, what do you think they perceive when they see that?

Chief Young Blood: That they are a hypocrite basically, that they think they are above the law. They can do it, why shouldn't I be able to do it, that mentality. In my opinion they are right. Nobody should be better than anybody else and in law enforcement I think we are held to a higher standard and we should accept that and take pride in being held to that higher standard. Now if you want to go down for poker night and have a pop, hey, that is pretty cool you are interacting with people and people see that you are a human being. But you are not taking in (drinking) a beer. In all honesty it is probably not a big thing if you have one or two beers but the way you are perceived by those people, it makes a difference.

Although chiefs wanted to build positive relations between the police and the public, they thought that a good relationship required them to maintain a certain social distance from the public they served. Still, they often altered their department's patrol car emblems and messages to convey a public-friendly message:

Chief Water Bottle: The slogan on our patrol cars, we have changed to a graphic design on our new cars. We took off the shield and put on graphics.

P.I.: What kind of graphics?

Chief Water Bottle: Well I am kind of a traditionalist and like the badges and stars but the officers wanted something with words so we put the traditional badge on the front and then put words on the doors but we also put the slogan, "proudly serving our community," because I thought that was more of a positive promotion

of what we really do and it was better than the old outdated “protect and serve” and blah, blah, blah. Probably two thirds of our work is serving, it’s not enforcing, it’s not writing tickets. I have had a lot of positive feedback on that because we are focusing on what we really need to be doing in a small community and that is helping.

Chief Young Blood had changed the sign on his patrol cars as a response to public requests for a more positive image:

Chief Young Blood: Some of the things I did to change the perception of the department I changed our uniform colors. I changed the graphics on the vehicles.

P.I.: On those emblems on the cars, were you looking to upgrade the image or were you looking to change what people were seeing?

Chief Young Blood: Change, here is the thing and one of the cars still has our old graphic and it is plain and it says “Young Blood police department,” really little and hard to see. I wanted it bold, one of the complaints was you are not being seen. Well guess what, you can't miss our graphics now. So I wanted people to see a different image when they saw that.

### **Female Police Chiefs**

Three female police chiefs participated in this study and they had a lot to say about how to build solidarity. Chief Big City headed a large department. She did not wear a standard police uniform and instead wore dress cloths. From time to time during our conversation, Chief Big City swept her hand in the air as if drawing an invisible half circle. She told me that she made

this strange gesture to tell the green-technology sensors in the facility that people were still in the room. If she did not make this gesture, the sensors would turn off the lights.

The two other female chiefs came from small towns. Chief Red Dawn shared her police department with the city clerk's office in her town and had such a small budget that she did not possess a bullet proof vest. For many police officers, working without a protective vest would be like working without a gun. Chief Red Dawn appeared to appreciate the risks associated with working without a vest, but she made the best of her situation.

Chief ATV was one of the most interesting chiefs in the study. Chief ATV's town was so small that she doubled as the city clerk and used her own personal cell phone to conduct business. She said she gave her number to everybody in town. Like other small town chiefs, Chief ATV talked about her town in a "personal" manner. She identified the local hardware store as "Earl's shop," and the gas station as "Red's."

Female police chiefs in the study were very similar to their male counterparts in many respects. The female police chiefs shared the same priorities on emerging threats as male chiefs. Chief Big City and Chief Red Dawn were former police officers, while Chief ATV had been a deputy sheriff. The female chiefs had extensive experience in law enforcement, though Chief Big City had the most experience as a Kansas police chief. Chief ATV said that friendliness was an important characteristic for a police chief. I asked her about her multiple job roles.

P.I.: How is the dynamic of being a police person and city clerk? I mean, do you arrest somebody and the next day do you have somebody coming in the city building with their water bill mad? I mean does that kind of stuff happen?

Chief ATV: Oh yeah (laugh), I have had to throw people out of my office before, several that I have just flat out banned from my office.

P.I.: Do you think being city clerk helps you with knowing where things are at, knowing residence numbers?

Chief ATV: Oh yeah, and I get a lot of calls from the sheriff. He will call me and say, hey, do you know such and such and where do they live?

Although I met most police chiefs in their private offices, Chief ATV asked me to meet her at the local restaurant, which I thought was somewhat unprofessional. But I was mistaken. It turns out that she did this so she could complete an interview with me while interacting with the public. Chief Red Dawn spoke to me in the city's community room. She said that she avoided meeting me in private as gossipers in the town would have concluded that we had been "sleeping" together, not conducting an interview. This conversation made me re-evaluate the implied consent advisory for the study. Although risk for participation in the study was small, the risk might not have been equal for male and female police chiefs.

Chief ATV took me straight to the main gossip hub and showed me off. Chief ATV appeared to be a major source of community information and she constantly interacted with members of the town during our meeting. Chief ATV had an answer to every citizen query, while also gleaning new information from the people she spoke with. She did this while fully engaging me in conversation and eating her lunch.

All the female chiefs spoke about the challenges they faced as women.

P.I.: Have you noticed any unique challenges of being a police chief for being a woman as opposed to a man?

Chief Red Dawn: The main challenge and it goes across the board as a patrol officer or as a chief would be being female. Let me start with this, one (a citizen) is surprise that you are a female coming up to deal with whatever the situation is.

Females are not so readily apparent in law enforcement (in this area) that it's well, "I'm going to get a guy or I'm going to get a girl." They both are going to be doing the same thing it's not going to be any difference. You either get easier compliance with more mouthiness or you get, "I am going to whip your butt because you're a girl and I can." There is a real fine line between both of those scenarios and you just really hope (laugh) that it leads more to the mouthy compliance versus we are going to have to tussle. I have done both and it is hard either way you go. I think the surprise, was, I am the first female police chief here so it is like what is she going to be able to do? Or, we are not going to expect her to do much or pat her on the head and let's just see what happens.

Although Chief Red Dawn and Chief ATV were very different in demeanor, they shared the experience of having their abilities underestimated or questioned because they were female. Chief ATV said,

Chief ATV: ...I have had a few people like the FED EX guy, oh you're a cop? They let you have a gun? Yeah, (laugh) bullets and everything.

Chief Big City had been a chief for many years and spoke at length about being a female police chief. Chief Big City said her struggles had been less than other female chiefs,

P.I.: Being a female chief do you feel like to get to the position that you are at, do you think it was a harder struggle than for a male to ascend to a chief position in Kansas?

Chief Big City: That is a very challenging question. I have met with several female chiefs and we have talked about this issue. For some female chiefs it's

been horrendous, I hear these horror stories, for me, I have always been really accepted, it hasn't been that much of a struggle. Sometimes I have to pinch myself to realize, I am one of the few in the United States.

P.I.: You said that you worked your way up.

Chief Big City: I did.

P.I.: Did you work here?

Chief Big City: No at another agency but I think, let me give you a little background. Big City's police department has several female officers. We are well above the national average, um we are at thirty eight (total officers) today. We have seven female officers which is unique in and of itself, very unique. So, there is already a uniqueness about this agency, how did that happen? I can't take credit for it. The former police chief here valued women as officers. His personal opinions were that, and he would say this all the time, "go out and recruit some women." Why? He would say number one, "I don't recruit women, you do." "They see you happy when you're here, that will recruit women that will want to come to Big City and they will want to work here and secondly, I believe you (a female officer) more than keep the men on their toes." I think women in law enforcement are very, very, healthy for good relations and he (former chief) treated me as a women recruiter and I think he found something there. I talk with other females (chiefs) that really struggled with department relations, really struggled. Why, for obvious reasons, the women that were there weren't happy, they weren't welcome so it really starts at the top and works its way down. I truly

believe the officers here, most of them, don't think anything about it. They are so use to working with a high volume of women.

Chief Big City described the importance of maintaining department cohesion and managing the rumor mill,

P.I.: They (other officers) don't have that kind of politics; well the chief is being nice to the female officers?

Chief Big City: You know there is some of that at times. I can't sit here and say that I have not been accused of favoritism or I haven't advanced a female's career and some of these things that would never be in consideration if I were a male chief. So absolutely that happens on some level and I have been raked over and it is basically that rumor mill stuff you hear as a chief. You know, she makes sergeant not because of her test scores but because the chief is trying, and I will not sit in a chair and tell you that's not part of it but the females go out and do a good job every day. I think that their male counterparts for the most part recognize that.

P.I.: What about the community when you came in, when you first started being chief, um, since you did not grow up here and work through the ranks, is there a certain process by which you had to become a part of the community as chief?

Chief Big City: I did not grow up in Big City but I am from Kansas, so I think in that respect I had that going for me. It may have been more difficult for me had I been from some other state but because I am not necessarily local but local, because I am a product of this part of Kansas and not far from here. Yes, I think that that helped of course because communal connections, whether it be some of



my siblings being graduates of Big City college or having some relatives here places you as an insider versus and outsider. I think this community was already use to seeing women on the streets, women on patrol so I think there was the introduction before I ever, and then it was the support of the former chief that he provided me. He was already taking me places; this is your next chief (the former police chief would tell people). He was already doing that.

Chief Big City said that despite her success, she still faced challenges:

P.I.: Do you feel like there is a different dynamic when you deal with other agencies, other law enforcement agencies?

Chief Big City: Sure, I can give you an example. Kansas Association of Chiefs of Police, I get their flyers that they are having their annual get together or whatever. It's very male oriented their scheduling whatever they are doing. Every year they will say something along these lines that they are going to have (inaudible event). We will have a bus to pick up all the spouses to take them shopping. That sort of thing, if we are going to go golfing and they (spouses) are going shopping and you sit there and think, well where do I fit in?

Looking at the interviews critically, I think female chiefs did not wish to be seen as victims. Chief Red Dawn said that she had been accepted as a chief in part because another long-serving, popular female sheriff had served in the county.

## Chapter 8 - Findings

For this study, I examined how police chiefs, as actors in a particular bureaucratic position within the criminal justice system, prioritize the principle threats to public safety? Police chiefs told me that they viewed drugs, school violence, extreme weather, and threats from people outside the community as their biggest threats. Certainly we can see from the literature that the focus placed on drug enforcement was based on, among other factors, legislation enacted from the 1980s, such as The Comprehensive Crime Act of 1984 which made police departments able to keep assets after civilian forfeitures due to drug investigations (Benson, Rasmussen, and Sollars 1995), had not dissipated from the minds of today's Kansas police chiefs. Police chiefs appeared to be aware that community perception was effected by things such as domestic violence and drug crimes. Police chiefs shaped public perception by limiting and omitting information to the public. Chiefs said that the public did not need to know every event that happened in the community. Chiefs often limited news that they thought would embarrass members of the community or the department. Chiefs often declined to provide information about ongoing investigations that might put them at risk. At times, chiefs asked local media outlets to limit or omit information from reaching the public in an attempt to mold public perception and achieve departmental missions. Certainly within the literature on moral panics we see a certain collusion between the media and the specialists that was present in this study. Chiefs treated information as a product that would be given to the public on a "need to know basis." However, in most cases, police chiefs controlled information to the public and worked to minimize fears and concerns within their communities. The Safe Community Narrative was a clear example that police chiefs worked to shape information to the public to mold certain perceptions. Police chiefs often worked during times of moral panics, such as right after 9-11.

Police chiefs often directed officers who dealt with communities following 9-11 that were fearful of white powder, outsiders, and potential terrorist attacks. In most cases police chiefs worked not to build cases of heightened community fear and concern but to decrease it. That is, in most cases, police chiefs, as a rule, did not encourage the development of moral panic when it came to terrorism. Instead they attempted to assuage community fears generated by the terrorist attacks of 9-11 by investigating and clearing terrorist related reports. Police chiefs reported that they often investigated terrorist related calls that they felt were not a threat because it made people feel better. In this case, when it came to the actions of police chiefs in relation to terrorism, police chiefs acted contrary to the literature on moral panics.

When the issue of moral panics is applied to drug enforcement, a different argument could be made. Police chiefs stated that their biggest emerging threat was drugs; specifically they were concerned about methamphetamines. Police chiefs worked in their communities to bring awareness on their concerns over drug usage. Police chiefs also worked in conjunction with drug task force groups, all of which made a public statement of a community wide drug problem. As found within the literature on moral panics, police chiefs were much more active within the role of specialists, to disseminate a message that drugs were a vital concern within their communities.

Chiefs placed time and resources into training for critical events. But after analyzing the interviews with these administrators, it appeared that chiefs viewed threats to the public and threats to their personnel quite differently. When it came to their personnel, chiefs were concerned about physical confrontations and liability. Making sure that their departments functioned properly, met department goals, and were seen positively in the public eye were high priorities by police chiefs. This study validated the literature's lengthy documentation of the separation that exists between the public and the police. Police chiefs acknowledged the need,

and often taught their officers to be emotionally and socially separated from the public (Paoline 2001; Johnson 1972). What this study conveys of interest is just how police chiefs not only teach their officers to be separate from the public but at times, also teach these officers to endear themselves to the same people. This duality of police missions may explain why some police chiefs have officers with poor social bonds with the community. This study also takes an interesting look at how police chiefs articulate personal beliefs that their officers should live by unique standards that are different from that of the public. This study confirmed the literature's description of the quasi-military nature of the police departments that Kansas police chiefs operate. However, many chiefs are attempting to break away from the militaristic style BDU uniform to create a less aggressive and more professional appearance within the community.

I expected to find that police chiefs would respond to new threats in different ways. It was expected that priorities for police chiefs would be based on the demands made by public citizens, local, state, and federal government officials. I expected to find that the threats identified as important by the federal government would be seen as top priorities by chiefs who might make them a priority to secure their jobs and appease the public, even if they did not view the threats as eminent. Chiefs were affected by federal and state guidelines, especially reporting guidelines that pertained to terrorism following 9/11. However, chiefs expressed more concern about issues related to local government and the public. Chiefs worked closely with city administrators, who served as buffers between the police and the city council. Chiefs kept city government officials in the loop on their actions to increase cooperation.

The autonomy of police chiefs was reduced by city officials who held the budget purse strings. Chiefs viewed budget restrictions as a threat because it undermined their ability to address other priorities. In their daily interactions with city officials, police chiefs often focused

on budgets. To put the emphasis that chiefs placed on budgets into context, most of the chiefs placed a high priority on their budgets, while only one-fourth of the police chiefs placed a high priority on the hot-button issue of terrorism. This is important because while the media and other information outlets tend to place great emphasis on issues such as terrorism, most police chiefs in this study were more concerned about things such as employee timesheets than terrorists.

In this research project, I was interested in identifying cases where chiefs pushed back against the bureaucrats who limited their authority. I found that chiefs worked in an environment that constrained their autonomy. Their actions varied when faced with threats to autonomy. When chiefs were threatened with limited budgets, they most often tried to adapt to the threat. Faced with the threat of limited budgets, or reduced authority to purchase police equipment, police chiefs adapted by applying for federal grants, which gave them more spending autonomy. If city government officials placed a ban on police overtime, police chiefs adapted to cuts by sending officers home and replacing them with officers whose work would not incur overtime. When it came to enforcing the laws in the community, chiefs sometimes reduced enforcement of traffic laws to adapt to the will of the public. In the case of high risk incidents, police chiefs used the full resources of their department to safeguard their citizens, even when doing so exceeded normal budget limits. Some chiefs said this was a way for them to push back against limitations to their autonomy. In short, when chiefs faced limitations to their autonomy, they found ways to adapt.

Police chiefs spent tremendous amounts of time trying to shape positive public perception of their department, which was definitely in line with the literature. Chiefs did this by using the media and the informal grapevine to promote their agenda. Although chiefs worked to build strong relationships with their local media, they often viewed them as outsiders and as potential

threats to a positive public perception of their departments. The limited bonding of police chiefs with local media as portrayed by Wilson and Fuqua (1975) within the literature was accurate and taking place within my sample. Chiefs said they had few positive relationships with outside media sources. A few police chiefs actually punished local media because they said they had been misquoted. They sometimes refused to send news to these local media outlets. They also created their own written press releases and worked around troublesome reporters. Chiefs with no local media outlet in their towns sometimes used free internet-based media such as FACEBOOK to get information to the public and shape public perception. This incorporation of new technologies for the purpose of completing police missions is covered in many forms within the literature (Tufekci 2008).

Police chiefs used places where people gathered to gossip to collect information and monitor and maintain positive public attitudes toward their departments. Chiefs described these venues as the “grapevine,” the “busy bodies,” the “rumor mill,” and the “gossip chain.” These “gossip hubs” were often found in places such as restaurants, gasoline stations, bars and taverns, grocery stores, hardware stores, senior centers, and barber shops. Police chiefs said that when negative public opinion formed about a department, it was very difficult to change opinion, so they worked hard to prevent this from happening. The literature did reflect a common concern shared by police practitioners of the negative ramifications that befell police agencies when the public perceived them in a negative light (Radelet and Reed 1977; Goffman 1963; Hale 1974; Spielberg et al. 1979). Some chiefs placed a greater emphasis on gossip than on formal media outlets to shape public opinion. Chiefs also urged their officers not to participate in gossip hubs because they wanted their officers to avoid conflicting messages to the public. Some chiefs made it their job to go to popular gossip hubs and interact with the citizens. It appeared that police

chiefs preferred to maintain positive public perception through interactions in the gossip chain than attempt to change negative public opinion once it had taken shape.

Working in relationship with members of the community, police chiefs actively promoted a “Safe Community” narrative. The “Safe Community” narrative allowed chiefs to argue that their towns were relatively safe from crime; places where random acts of violence were rare; places where people shared a common set of traditional cultural values; and places that were good for raising families. Again, this runs counter to the literature on moral panics. Chiefs understood that this “Safe Community” narrative was at times inaccurate. They advanced the narrative despite the fact that it might prevent them from using the threat of crime to ask for additional funding or to hire additional staff. We can say that police chiefs were certainly aware of their options to create heightened fear within the community as described in (Cohen 1972; Chambliss 1999), and the potential economic gains, such as additional officers that might come from those fears. However, most police chiefs made the decision to minimize community fears and concerns through the usage of the Safe Community Narrative. Police chiefs also perpetuated the narrative because it helped them create a positive public perception of the police department. Chiefs seemed to want their communities to be the idyllic places as described by the narrative. Many chiefs had grown up, and now had families in the communities they served which added to their desire for their communities to be safe.

The accessibility of police chiefs to the public was observed in this study. Large police departments generally restricted access to the police chief with physical barriers and surveillance cameras. Human buffers, such as dispatchers and police secretaries, made it plain that people in large departments could not just walk into the police station and see the chief. These barriers at admittance were reflected in the authoritarian symbols within the literature. By contrast, chiefs

in small departments commonly allowed citizens to walk into the police station and meet with them. In many communities, members of the public often approached police chiefs, even when they were off duty. Small town chiefs did not always appreciate this level of public access, but they accepted it as part of their job. I observed that small-town departments, with easier access to the police chief, were friendlier, though this was not always true. In the future, a citizen survey would help find out whether people are happier with small-town police departments, where their police chiefs are more accessible, than with big-city departments where access to the chief is restricted. Police agencies incorporate symbols as found within the literature that show them to be part of a bureaucracy. But as Goodsell (1977) noted, the symbols of the police bureaucracy are not exactly like the symbols of other bureaucracies. Police chiefs run departments that had physical symbols, such as barriers to the public, that were at times seen on other organizations. However, this study showed that police are themselves seen as symbols of force and that they manipulate the uniforms and patrol car signage to control symbolic perceptions.

Police chiefs said that they tried to shape positive public perceptions by controlling the actions and presentations of their officers. Many chiefs said that members of the public often judged the entire department based on the actions of a single officer. Chiefs asked their officers to be professional on and off duty. Consistent with the literature (Shealy 1975; Sweeney 1982; McEvoy 1976), while on duty, officers were held to dress codes that included a careful consideration to the wearing of: uniforms, sunglasses, and gloves. Chiefs said that personal characteristics such as weight and facial hair should be monitored. They prohibited public drinking, public smoking, using cell phones, and associating with members of the criminal class. Police chiefs did so because they worried that members of the public would judge officers at a higher standard. Mandatory standards for police dress and conduct were visible signs that police



chiefs thought officers should be carefully scrutinized by management. Although the management of officer presentation to the public by police chiefs may at times seem excessive, it is a practice continually seen within the literature. This study simply validated the literature by allowing police chiefs to talk about the many ways in which they attempt to control the physical image and actions of their officers for the purpose of creating positive perception. There remains a concern over negative public perception created by the historical transition away from foot patrol to the squad car patrolman.

The female chiefs in this research project gave me the opportunity to observe whether female chiefs had different priorities than their male counterparts. They did not. That is not to say that female and male chiefs were exactly the same. This research project gave me the opportunity to listen and observed a female chief from a large department and two chiefs from small departments. Although this sample was not representative of female chiefs in Kansas, they said that they were aware of the struggles that women faced in law enforcement. The two female chiefs from smaller departments said that their abilities had been under-estimated by supervisors. The chief who operated the large department said she faced many challenges in city budget meetings in her first years as a chief. In the future, a study with a much larger sample of female chiefs would allow researchers to compare administrators of small, medium, and large departments. The literature reflection in this study is limited. What can be said beyond the unique voice these female chiefs gave to the study, these female chiefs and the literature on female police chiefs show that they are indeed a minority within their field when compared to white male chiefs. The limitations and struggles that all the female chiefs within the sample conveyed have been seen within the literature. However, this study allowed the opportunity for the qualitative process of inquiry on this minority portion of the sample to be observed and

evaluated within the unique geographic and cultural confines of the state of Kansas. The stark contrasts of not only the female chiefs and the size of the departments they ran, but also the unique and contrasting environments in which their voices were heard is of recognizable value to both the study of female police chiefs and qualitative research process.

Police chiefs as a group played an important part within the organizational structure of the criminal justice system. The officers that they commanded are fundamental in beginning a process that placed individuals within different locations among a complex system of courts, prisons, and post-incarceration probation services. After talking to police chiefs it became apparent that while they worked in this system, they were often hampered by various parts of the criminal justice bureaucracy. Specifically, police chiefs found conflicts in federal reporting guidelines on issues of terrorism with reporting guideline requirements by the state. Police chiefs found it difficult to schedule officers to work when they had conflicting summonses for both state and municipal court. At times, some police chiefs did not agree with the decisions made by court judges and officers of the probations.

Apart from the criminal justice system police chiefs are a group within the greater society. Here police chiefs shared many bureaucratic features with other organizations. The literature showed that police chiefs, like other organization leaders, had to watch over budgets, manage staff, create policies and procedures, deal with and render services to the public. Both police chiefs and other organizations used symbols to reflect who they are and their functions to the public. Police and other organization used symbols during employee promotions. The literature reflects that police agencies focus more on authority symbols than service symbols (Goodsell 1977). This appears to be true today; however, the police chiefs within this sample spoke extensively about the need to decrease authority symbols for more positively perceived

symbols of public service. Like other groups within society and consistent with the literature (Radelet and Reed 1977; Goffman 1963), police chiefs direct departments that suffer from their own unique stigmas, such as being laziness, abusive, corrupt, and incompetent among others, that must be managed. This study served to show that police chiefs at least in this sample, are taking steps to move toward less authoritative symbols to reduce those stigmas. While Police chiefs as a group share agency liability for the actions of their staff as do other organizational leaders within society, few organizations operate with the constant potential for physical violence and death. Police chiefs oversee staff that may be killed or may have to use lethal force during the course of their work. This may very well be the most compelling factor that separated police chiefs from other groups in society.

## Chapter 9 - Discussion

Police chiefs are a highly secretive group. As this study has shown, many police chiefs work in secret to shape perception and disseminate news to the public. When staff, media, government, and the public view information disseminated by police chiefs, it has already been shaped to meet specific department goals. With that said, I must evaluate the nature of the information collected in this study and come to terms with two fundamental concerns often made about qualitative research. Qualitative studies are sometimes challenged because of a concern about researcher bias, which is shaped by a researcher's past history, direct interest in the subject, or both. In my case, I had a previous affiliation with this group. I used my past affiliation as a police chief to gain entrance to this unique group as an "insider." Did my membership in this group have an effect on my perceptions of chiefs? Yes, it made me interested in the group, created a desire to ask probing questions, and motivated me to invest time in this project. Would a person who conducted the same research, someone without this experience have a different perception? Yes, I think so. Would this make for a more accurate set of observations and findings? I do not know the answer to that.

The next question that must be addressed is whether or not the chiefs gave me accurate information. My goal was to collect information that went beyond the standard public answers, which this guarded group often gave to the public. Did I achieve an insider status with this group? Did they tell me information they would not share with the public? I think so, though there is no way to prove it. What I can say is that I made every effort to ask police chiefs probing questions about how they prioritized threats and to give them the opportunity to share their thoughts. I listened to their responses and asked follow-up questions. I tried to have an open

mind and to allow the research project to take me where it would. I utilized my experience as a criminal investigator and social researcher to conduct a quality research project.

The findings of this study are limited in that I spoke only to Kansas police chiefs. I cannot say with absolute certainty that police chiefs in other states in America determine and prioritize the principle threats to public safety in the same way. I do believe that police chiefs within the United States are bound by many of the same financial, departmental and legal obligations but further testing would be required for verification. Furthermore, this study does not address to what extent, do police chiefs determine and prioritize the principle threats to public safety, when this question is applied to chiefs in other countries of the world. It may very well be that factors such as race, culture, gender, among others might change the findings from what I found in this study.

This study was limited by the fact that the observations within the study were bound by a certain time dimension. I looked at chiefs at a specific moment in time. What this means is that the study was not longitudinal and the voices of the chiefs that were heard, while unique in and of themselves, cannot be considered timeless. This study does not attempt to compare thoughts and attitudes of police chiefs in Kansas from the distant past and say they are the same or different from today. It cannot be said that Kansas police chiefs of the distant past determined and prioritized the principle threats to public safety in the same way as the police chiefs of today. While police chiefs did speak about change over time on a myriad of issues from public threats to police uniforms, their observations were based mostly on things they had viewed or experienced within their own lifetimes. While this study may be useful in both analysis of past and future issues related to Kansas policing, its highest relevance will be in attempting to frame a limitedly realistic picture of a specific moment in time for Kansas police chiefs.

This study is limited in the area of gender and race. Minority chiefs were few within my sample. While this may reflect the small percentages that are naturally found within police chiefs in the state of Kansas, further testing should take place before any definitive reports can be made on the attitudes of minority police chiefs in the state of Kansas. Without doing so would require that we believe that the four minority police chiefs within my sample perfectly mirror the attitudes, beliefs, and actions, of all minority police chiefs within the state. The qualitative process of inquiry revealed that the minority respondents within this study had their own unique qualities. It cannot be assumed that all minority police chiefs will think or act the same.

Future studies could advance several aspects of the research that was conducted in this project. Structurally, I think that future study in this area could be enriched by surveys that look at whether or not increased public access to the police chiefs does in fact create higher feelings of satisfaction with the public. Getting a fuller look at issues surrounding access to police chiefs would serve as part of what should be a much deeper look at the symbolic interaction of these administrators. While this study started with the focus of looking at police chiefs in a particular bureaucratic position within the criminal justice system and how they prioritize the principle threats to public safety, what was discovered were that these police chiefs operate within a world where they constantly mold, shape, and project certain images to the public to control public perception. While I think that these perception building and image projection activities may very well be present in other police agencies across the country, further study could examine applicability of this study's findings in other geographic areas of the country. Furthermore, this study looked at symbolism from the perspective of perception building. Patrol car signage, uniforms and officer's actions were guided by the direction of police chiefs who believed that the public wanted to see, and should see the police from a certain perspective. While the data for this

analysis was rich, it was not exhaustive. It would appear that this study has created a unique opportunity to take a deeper look at symbolic interaction with police agencies within the heartland. A question that would be interesting to answer is whether or not police officers perceive themselves in the same way police chiefs do? Do police officers perceive that the public sees them in the same ways as police chiefs?

Because budgets were such an important factor in the study, I would like to know what changes might take place in the strategies of police chiefs, if any, during an economic upturn. Future studies could collect more information about Kansas female police chiefs and make them the complete focus of a study. A statewide survey followed by extensive interviews would get a much more complete look at how these chiefs prioritize principle threats. While female police chiefs shared many priorities with their white male counterparts they felt being a female police chief made their lives different. This study started a dialogue that could be greatly expanded. Specifically, it would be educational to have Kansas female police chiefs on a larger scale give a full account of the process by which they attain their chief position.

The police chiefs within this sample talked to a limited extent about issues related to moral panics such as terrorism. To a degree, outsiders of Middle Eastern descent were in some cases relegated to the category of Folk Devils directly after 9-11. This labeling may very well become relevant again in the aftermath of potential future terrorist attacks. As well, future studies could look at ways in which police chiefs from rural America directly, or in cooperation with others, use their positions as specialists to create or build moral panics within society.

In the end, I was enriched by the process of studying the police chiefs. I greatly appreciated the time they gave me during their busy schedules to sit down and talk. I hope that this study will spark interest in more observations of how Kansas police chiefs, as actors in a

particular bureaucratic position within the criminal justice system prioritize principle threats to public safety.



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## Appendix A - Interview Schedule

Section 1. (General information, thoughts and feelings about being a Police Chief).

1. How long have you been a police chief?
2. Have you ever been a police chief anywhere else?
3. Can you walk me through a typical day as a police chief?
4. (if you have been a police chief somewhere else) Can you tell me any of the differences in what you do here as opposed to what you do here as a police chief, are there any differences?
5. What is your role as police chief in addressing emerging threats?
6. What qualities do you think are important that a police chief have?
7. Is there a quality that you think is most important for a police chief to have?
8. Why did you pick that quality?
9. Can you describe one of your most rewarding moments as a police chief?
10. Can you describe one of your most stressful moments as a police chief?

1<sup>st</sup> transition- As we touched on a moment ago, it would very interesting to know, within the many things you do as a police chief, more about how you address emerging threats? Is it ok if we talk a little bit more about this subject right now?

Section 2 (specifics on emerging threats from police chiefs perspective)

1. What are some of the biggest emerging threats you have dealt with in the last teen years? (if employment length is of a shorter time span, then the term of their tenure as police chief).
2. Could you list these emerging threats from the highest to lowest level of priority?
3. Why was this threat considered the highest level of priority?
4. What are the most important concerns that run through your mind when you are prioritizing emerging threats?
5. (if not mentioned in question #4) Do things such as financial restraints and staff play a part in how you prioritize emerging threats, and if so, how?
6. If you had unlimited funds, how might that change how you prioritize emerging threats?
7. (if not mentioned in question #4) To what degree, if any do factors such as city government play into your decisions to prioritize emerging threats?
8. Would you say that the public plays a part in how you prioritize emerging threats? And if so how?
9. Can you give some examples of when a threat that you had originally designated as a minor threat, became a major threat?
10. What made this happened?
11. Conversely, can you give me some examples of threats that had been priority threats, that later became non-priority threats?

12. What made this happened?

Section 3-(follow-up and closing questions)

1. As we talked about in the beginning of our visit, the job of being a police chief can be very stressful. What kind of job related stresses do you face, if any, when trying to decide what you should prioritize your department's time and efforts on to deal with emerging threats?
2. With your training and experience as a police chief, can you give any examples of times when your community (or the public in general) voiced a concern over a perceived threat that you felt was not warranted?
3. Could you give me further details and other examples?
4. Why do you believe that there is sometimes a disparity between what the public may perceive as a threat and what you as a police chief may perceive as a threat?
5. How do you deal with this disparity?
6. What do you feel are the ramifications of this disparity?
7. How do you go about telling the public that you are addressing emerging threats?
8. What would be reasons, if any, that you might want to avoid telling the public you are addressing public threats?
9. Can you give me examples of how you work to prepare your staff to address new emerging threats?
10. What potentials obstacles does a police chief face, if any, when preparing staff to address new emerging threats?

Closing: Thank interviewee for their time and collect personal demographic information.

## Appendix B - Informed Consent Statement

### A. General Information

- 1. Name of Researcher:** Robert Schaeffer. Ph.D Department of Sociology. Kansas State University. Paul A. Ibbetson. Ph.D student. Department of Sociology. Kansas State University.
- 2. Title of Study:** Changing Public Threats and Police Priorities: How Police Chiefs respond To Emerging Threats.
- 3. Objectives of Study:** To interview Kansas police chiefs about emerging threats in the last 10 years and ask how and why they prioritize certain threats and not others.
- 4. Description and purpose of procedures:** This part of the research consists of interview with 40 Kansas police chiefs at different locations within the state of Kansas. The interview will last from one hour to an hour and a half and will include questions on emerging threats in the last 10 years and how and why they are prioritized. These interviews will be tape recorded and later transcribed. This information will be used to better understand how and why certain emerging threats are prioritized by Kansas police chiefs.
- 5. Use of results:** Data collected in this project will part of a Ph.D dissertation with the hope that the results may be published in peer review journals.
- 6. The risk and discomforts are minimal:** The may include: Strictly the use of your time is required. No physical risk is involved and your behavior or responses will not be manipulated in any way.
- 7. Possible benefits to you or others from participating in this study:** interview subjects in this type of research typically report some subjective benefit from being able to express their opinions on matters of concern to them in the workplace. The information you provide may also be helpful in the ongoing process of assessing of Kansas police chiefs identify and prioritize emerging threats. Your participation is completely voluntary and you may refuse participation at anytime without penalty or prejudice. All research information will be handled in the strictness of confidence and your participation will not be individually indentified in any reports. I will be happy to answer any questions about the research that arise after this interview. Please feel free to contact me at (785) 236-0742. Questions about the role of the university or your rights as a participant in this research should be directed to Rick Scheidt. Chair. Institutional Review Board. Kansas State University. (785) 532-6195

**B. Signed Consent Portion**

I understand the study entitled: “Changing Public Threats and Police Priorities: How Police Chiefs respond To Emerging Threats” as explained to me and I consent to participate in the study. My participation is completely voluntary. I understand that all research information will be handled in the strictest confidence and that my participation will not be individually identifiable in any reports. I understand that there is no penalty or prejudice of any kind for withdrawing or not participating in the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)