

Is my work valued?

**Insights into the perceived value of research and
planning contributions to organizational goals**

Brenda J. Bond, PhD
Suffolk University

American Society of Criminology
2012 Annual Meeting

Background

- 43% of municipal police and sheriffs organizations with over 100 sworn officers reported having a formal R & P unit, with an additional 24% reported having personnel dedicated to these functions (2007 LEMAS)
- R & P units perform critical organizational functions (e.g. grantwriting; research; develop new programs & strategies; best practices; evaluate programs and new technologies; planning) (Haberman & King, 2011; PERF 2008 Survey)
- Directors report being underutilized by the whole agency, and 23% felt underutilized by agency leaders (PERF, 2008). Other studies suggest that these units are underutilized given the types of tasks they spend their time on (i.e. heavy on administrative, not so much on research and planning) (Haberman & King, 2011)

Current Study

Given the important work that R & P units conduct in police organizations AND given the research on underutilization of R & P units as an organizational function, it is worth exploring how R & P staff feel relative to being value for their work and contributions

Theoretical framework

- Perceived Organizational Support (POS) is a concept grounded in organizational theory (Eisenberger & Huntington, 1986)
 - Origins are in social exchange theory (Bateman & Organ, 1983) and norm of reciprocity (Gouldner, 1960)
 - Employees are concerned with the organization's commitment to them, which affects their actions
 - Being valued by employer contributes to increased performance, commitment to work and to organizational goals (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Mowday, Porter & Steers, 1982)

Perceived Organizational Support

- Antecedents of perceived positive treatment of employee by organizational actors (Eisenberger, et al, 1986):
 - Fairness
 - Supervisor Support
 - Organizational rewards and job conditions

Design and Methods

Research Question: Do R & P staff feel that their organizations value their contributions to organizational goals and cares about their well being?

- Data were obtained from members of the International Association of Law Enforcement Planners (IALEP)
- Survey of Perceived Organizational Support (SPOS) a highly reliable tool for measuring POS. SPOS used in this study consists of 22 items
- 79 of 193 members = Response rate of 41%
- Interviews currently underway to collect data on antecedents and staff actions as a result of perceptions

Results

Question	Percentage of respondents
Respondent position-type (n=79)	
Sworn	34%
Civilian	66%
Unionized organization (N=79)	58%
Location in organizational structure (N=79)	
Commissioner's office	31%
Administrative services	27%
Executive services	20%
Support services	11%
Formal R & D policies/mandates? (N=75)	
Yes	73%

Selected Results – SPOS

Measure (N= 75)	Percentage of Respondents who moderately or strongly agreed
My organization values my contributions	72%
My supervisors are proud that I am a part of this organization	65%
Help is available from my organization when I have a problem	57%
My organization takes pride in my work	49%
My organization cares about my opinion	48%
My organization cares about my well-being	40%
My organization extends itself to help me perform	37%
My organization strongly considers my goals and values	36%
My organization helps when I need a special favor	35%

Results

Measure (N= 75)	Percentage of Respondents who moderately or strongly agreed
My organization provides few opportunities for promotion	35%
If I decided to quit, my organization would ask me to stay	33%
My organization cares about my work satisfaction	32%
If they could, my organization would take advantage of me	17%
My organization is unconcerned with paying me what I deserve	16%

Insights from R & P staff.....

- “I have seen times when planners were valued members of an agency’s team, and times when we were considered necessary evils.”
- “My answers were generally quite positive, as I am treated well here in XXX. If we were discussing a prior agency that I served with, the responses would have been markedly different. The bottom line is that some agencies truly value the P&R function, while others do not see it as important.”
- “In the 80's, when I began my career, Law Enforcement Planning (LEP) was an emerging field in policing that was focused on scientific analysis and research. In the year prior to 9/11, a new chief arrived in XXX. He had little use for civilians in policing, and even less use for civilians on his command staff.”
- “We no longer do any research of substance, I have been allowed out of the office to attend one training conference in the past eight years, the analysis process has become an exercise in crunching numbers. Basically, our focus has becoming adding new policies as the chief thinks of them, maintaining accredited status, and providing technical/computer systems for the agency, as opposed to any of the more traditional planning processes.”

Discussion

- In only three instances did respondents report positive perceptions (50% or higher) of organizational value
 - When asked specifically about whether their organization values their work, R & P staff report positive perceptions of organizational value (72%)
 - Supervisors being proud of staff as a member of organization (65%)
 - Whether help is available (57%)
- Less positive results were shown in all other measures of perceived organizational support
 - Consideration of goals and values; help with improved performance; would take advantage; cares about my satisfaction; cares about my pay; etc

Discussion

- Results provide support to previous, though limited, evidence that R & P staff are undervalued and underutilized. This is seen in indicators such as “organization cares about my work; extends itself to help me perform; cares about my opinion; offers opportunities to advance; and is concerned over pay and benefits.
- In this inquiry, we see positive perceptions of supervisor support, but less so on a number of measures related to rewards and fairness. POS research suggests that fairness, supervisor support, and organizational rewards and conditions can positively affect POS, which in turn increased performance and productivity (Rhoades & Eisenberger, 2002).
- A study of civilians in police agencies by Skogan & Alderden (2011, NIJ Platform) found that those in planning, budget and program development positions reported being the most satisfied as compared to civilians in other positions; 77% thought they made important contributions to their organization; but they were less satisfied with pay and benefits – one form of organizational fairness

Lessons so far and next steps

- Insights from R & P staff are critical given the role that they play in organizational effectiveness
- If positive POS is linked to improved performance, productivity and job satisfaction, a focus on improving POS has implications for practice and research
- Improving perceptions of R & P staff can be affected by a focus on a number of indicators relative to POS “antecedents”
- Qualitative interviews are ongoing and will provide rich data and add depth to SPOS
- Need to link POS to tangible outcomes