AN OPERATOR'S PERSPECTIVE ON SWAT TEAMS: THE MYTHS, REALITIES, AND

WHAT IT TAKES

By

DANIEL LEE DAVIS

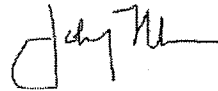Bachelor of Arts, 2003
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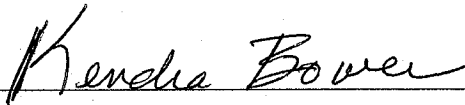
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ABSTRACT

AN OPERATOR'S PERSPECTIVE ON SWAT TEAMS: THE MYTHS, REALITIES, AND
WHAT IT TAKES

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This research is aimed at addressing commonly held misconceptions that exist in relation to

SWAT team members, as well as identifying potential characteristics that they possess that are

different from other officers. Interviews were conducted with participants who were selected

from varying size police departments across the country on both full and part-time SWAT teams.

The results indicate that contrary to the common belief and popular portrayal, SWAT team

members self-describe themselves as critical thinkers, problem solvers, and highly motivated and

dedicated people. The implications of this study are that it should serve as a starting point for

educating those who do not know what SWAT is all about, as well as to help formulate new

strategies for identifying, recruiting, and selecting potential team members for vacancies. From

this simple beginning study, the hope is that a more in-depth study to facilitate process

improvements in personnel selections can be generated.

Introduction

In Austin, Texas on August 1st, 1966, Charles Whitman ascended the bell tower on the campus of the University of Texas. After killing his mother and wife earlier that morning, Whitman proceeded to shoot indiscriminately from the bell tower for more than ninety minutes. Whitman's actions resulted in the death of fourteen people (including an unborn baby) and the wounding of thirty-one more (one of whom would die thirty years later after ending the dialysis treatments that were required due to his wounds). Whitman had received training on marksmanship in both the Boy Scouts and United States Marine Corps (Wallenfeldt, 2019).

The responding police officers were underequipped, and under trained to handle the "active shooter" situation that was unfolding at the bell tower on that August day. Ordinary citizens, as well as officers, were responding to the scene of the shooting with hunting rifles in an attempt to end the carnage. The volleys of fire from the ground level forced Whitman to alter his tactics and only shoot from positions of cover. Eventually, three police officers and one citizen (the university book store manager) made their way into the tower and stormed the observation deck. Officers Ramiro Martinez and Houston McCoy shot and killed Whitman, ending the deadly shooting spree (Wallenfeldt, 2019).

In the late 1960s, following the Watts Riots, the Los Angeles Police Department found itself at a critical crossroads in regards to its response to dangerous situations. Due to the rioting that occurred in the city, the department developed "Station Defense Teams" which consisted of 15 four-man teams (History of S.W.A.T., 2019). Most of the team members were prior military servicemen and consisted of volunteers from all over the department. These volunteers became the basis for the department's SWAT team. Following the Black Panther shootout that resulted in the deployment of the LAPD SWAT team in 1969, the decision was made to make the

personnel assigned to the SWAT section in the Metropolitan division a full-time responsibility and assignment (History of S.W.A.T., 2019). The term SWAT stands for Special Weapons and Tactics. In 1974, the SWAT team was deployed to respond to the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) terrorist group kidnapping of a local UC Berkeley sophomore. This deployment resulted in a lengthy shootout and standoff.

Despite the practical need for the tactical aspect of policing that SWAT teams provide, there has been no shortage of unintended changes that have occurred in police departments as well as mischaracterizations of SWAT officers. Public criticism and controversy have occurred along with the evolution of the tactical aspect of policing. Many citizens were vocally critical of the Los Angeles Police Department following the Black Panther, and the SLA shootout. Complaints ranged from the police appearing to be too similar to the military to the use of aggressive tactics.

This research is important due to the implications it can have on public understanding of policing and SWAT teams, as well as police departments' internal understanding of their own SWAT teams and the ability to successfully build a competent, effective, and responsible team. Some examples of the misconceptions referenced above are:

- SWAT team members are overly aggressive officers
- They are solely enforcement types who do little thinking
- Misconceptions from Hollywood movies such as "SWAT" where the majority of team members are all misfit renegades who march to the beat of their own drum with little regard for policy or supervision.

- Another misconception is in the Hollywood movie "Paul Blart: Mall Cop." In this movie when a group of criminals takes over a local shopping mall, the SWAT team responds and immediately begins the process of readying to assault the mall. They are portrayed as boorish reckless, and seemingly unconcerned with working with anyone else to resolve the situation at hand.

The events of the late 1960s in the United States brought to the attention of many in the police world the sobering reality that police departments, as traditionally constructed, lacked the ability to effectively handle certain situations such as the ones mentioned above. As a result, the formation of SWAT teams throughout the nation began. This trend took place in mostly larger police departments, but over time spread to smaller jurisdictions as well. The SWAT teams of today have become an increasingly important part of a large number of police departments throughout the United States. Kraska and Kappeler (1997) found a significant increase in the number of police agencies that had SWAT teams from the 1980s to the 1990s. Their research was done on non-federal police departments with 100 or more officers in cities of over 50,000 residents. They found that 59% of the surveyed departments had SWAT teams in 1982, and that number increased to 89% by 1995 (Kraska & Kappeler, 1997). Kraska and Cubellis (1997) conducted a similar survey, the only difference was that the group surveyed consisted of smaller departments, represented by police departments with less than 100 officers in cities of 25,000-50,000 residents. That survey revealed that 25.6% of the departments had SWAT teams in 1984, and that number went up 107% to 52.1% by 1990 (Kraska and Cubellis, 1997). Though this will be discussed later, the contention of much of the research that has been completed suggested that federal funding and the increase of surplus military equipment being provided to police departments contributed to this explosion of SWAT teams (Koslicki, 2017).

Even smaller departments have felt the need for specialized response teams. Where some departments lack the resources or are too small to have their own SWAT teams, they will often dedicate willing officers to regional SWAT teams. Though the role and mission of SWAT teams have changed over the years, the driving force behind them has remained the same: to respond to and handle high risk situations that other police officers are not equipped or trained to handle. Keeping that in mind, perhaps the most important aspect of manning a SWAT team is personnel selection.

This research is aimed at addressing commonly held misconceptions that exist in relation to SWAT team members, as well as identifying potential characteristics that they possess that are different from other officers. This research could help disprove some of the commonly held misconceptions surrounding SWAT teams, and is an extremely valuable starting point in an effort to identify traits and qualities that successful SWAT team members possess. For recruiting purposes, or future vacancies, police departments could use this information to help identify potential candidates and potentially decrease the likelihood that an ill-advised assignment be made to an extremely critical position. Liability is particularly important in policing these days, and police departments are always looking for ways to mitigate their liability.

Despite the stereotypes that exists regarding SWAT officers and units, they are much more complex. An analysis of their unique sub-culture and the qualities that make them who they are is needed to understand these units. Very little research has been done in regards to SWAT teams. First and foremost, they are a very difficult set of subjects to study. Gaining access to police departments to study their officers from an academic perspective is a challenging

task on its own. Gaining access to SWAT team members is even more difficult. Police, in general, often place themselves in a position as a separate "sub-culture" of society.

In the age of community policing, the imagery that we have regarding SWAT teams can be considered controversial. Military-style equipment in the streets of our cities in times of crisis makes many people uncomfortable. When this equipment is used in places like Ferguson, Missouri it can lead to the stereotyping of police by many who do not understand the policing profession or the mission of SWAT teams. This study is critically important to help break down these stereotypes and examine how SWAT teams' function, what their culture is like, and how they perform operations. Understanding these aspects of SWAT teams can give the public a greater knowledge and understanding of a subject to which they routinely do not have exposure.

This paper begins by examining the literature that has been written in regards to several police topics in the past. Police history is examined to show the progression of police from night watchmen through the reform era, professional era, community policing era, and up to the current age of policing. A more in-depth look is given to police culture to better equip the reader with an understanding of the divide that occurs between the public and the police. The militarization of policing is also be explored in an effort to explain the rise of the police use of military style equipment and tactics. Finally, research that has been done in regards to SWAT teams is examined to show what has been studied and concluded from those projects. Next, an examination of the methods of inquiry is detailed, followed by the findings, and finally a discussion of the results and conclusion. The overall purpose of this work is to provide two important perspectives on SWAT teams: First, the research addressea some of the commonly held misconceptions of SWAT teams from both unaffiliated citizens as well as other officers not

assigned to SWAT teams. Second, the paper identifies characteristics of SWAT team members that uniquely depict their ability to be a competent, successful member of a SWAT team.

Literature Review

This literature review examines areas of research that have been done in the past regarding the following areas of policing: Police history, police culture, SWAT teams, and the militarization of police.

Police History

After 50 years of debate following the Gordon Riots of 1870, the London Parliament passed the London Metropolitan Police Act which established the first full-time police force for the city of London (Williams, 2003). This act was formulated by Sir Robert Peel, who is considered by many to the father of modern policing. Although it did not occur at the exact same moment, the path of the American police force mirrored that of London. Sir Robert Peel's principles were used to establish the initial roles and responsibilities of the police. These principles were also implemented in the United States but changed over time to give the United States police their own identity.

As mentioned above, it took 50 years for the official establishment of the police force. What finally occurred was a government-funded, quasi-military and continuous force that patrolled the neighborhoods focusing on preventing crime and disorder (Williams, 2003). Although the ideals that were implemented in America were done so under the guise of being representative of the American form of government, there were resonating impacts on the conduct of police. Rather than being a separate and disciplined entity, police were the image of corruption and greed. Local politicians were in direct control of the police, so much so that if an upset occurred in a political race it would often result in the replacement of the entire police force to go along with the new politician (Williams, 2003). This era is referred to as the political era of policing. The political leaders guided the activities of the local police department, and as a

result the police were more responsive to the needs of the community, who were responsible for electing the politicians. During this time, and as a result of this arrangement, the police departments were essentially public servants: supervising elections, enforcing health regulations, operating ambulances, and feeding the homeless (Williams, 2003). This is a far cry from the ideal of preventing crime.

Williams (2003) examined the relationship of politically appointed police officers further by noting that because of their appointed position there generally was no formal training or personnel standards. Based on this state of affairs, there was much corruption and brutality. Officers who were appointed had no avenue for power other than using their personal authority. Police officers during this time were seen, therefore, as arms of the political leaders (Williams, 2003). Furthermore, since the legitimacy of the police during this political era was based largely on political support, and not on the legitimate enforcement of law and order, the methods used by police were viewed as a far cry from even-handed (Kelling & Moore, 1983).

By the end of the 1800s, the police were targeted by the Progressive movement, with the goal of ending the power of the political machines influencing police, as well as the problems associated with areas of cities where police had stopped enforcing laws. This Progressive movement sought to depart from the practices of the previous century and establish the police department as a highly disciplined, paramilitary organization that was not tied to political parties. The police would be independent and organized along functional, rather than geographic lines; there would be strict enforcement of the existing laws, and the personnel procedures would be meritocratic instead of political (Kelling & Moore, 1983). According to Kelling & Moore, everyone from police executives, to experts on policing, the police themselves, mayors, legal philosophers, etc., were all eager to make a transition from constables and cops on a beat for the

new professional crime fighters. In fact, Kelling & Moore (1983) describe it as transforming the "street corner politicians" into Joe Fridays and then into SWAT teams.

From the political era, a transition was made to the reform/professional era. This era was led by police reformer and Berkeley police chief, August Vollmer. August "Gus" Vollmer is widely recognized in the field of criminal justice. Vollmer was an innovator who introduced new ideas to policing such as ordering his men to ride bicycles on their beats in order to decrease response times, a signaling system to alert officers of emergencies, the use of science in solving crimes, and ultimately in the formation of a police school (Douthit, 1975). This reform era led to the establishment of bureaucratic management systems and the creation of management structure for the purpose of crime detection instead of crime prevention. This shift and reform actually took the police away from the communities they served in the sense that they were no longer "in tune" with the communities they served (Williams, 2003). From this reform era, policing was ushered into the professional era, led by the likes of Vollmer and his protégé O.W. Wilson. The professional era of policing can be characterized by the evolution of the police officer to include things such as formal training, a higher level of education, strategic deployment practices, better communication procedures, and a process of selecting and promoting viable candidates (Vollmer, 1933). Vollmer stated in his work that no other branch of government has had such remarkable changes than those made in the police organization and administration during the last 25 years. To emphasize, Vollmer's point was made in his work in 1933, nearly 90 years ago. He characterized the education level and mental capacity of officers of the past by stating that commanding officers in the past were trying to pour a gallon of information into a pint-sized receptacle (Vollmer, 1933).

With training and education lacking, something had to be done to jump-start the occupation of police officer into a profession. Vollmer is largely credited with establishing methods for recruiting, educating, and training police officers. In fact, Vollmer had such a rigorous course of work for his police officers that it was slotted to take three years, and clearly had the intent of them becoming criminologists as well as police officers Douthit, 1975). Further changes were made including the creation of crime labs, and the tactical deployment of officers in the effort to prevent crime from occurring. This effort during the 1920's and 30's by Vollmer was aimed at making police professional and scientific. This was in line with a broader movement that had been initiated to professionalize the police nationwide (Douthit, 1975).

O.W. Wilson (1953), who was a pupil and disciple of Vollmer, is responsible for introducing the paramilitary model to policing. Basing his vision on his prior service in the Army, Wilson created the paramilitary model that served to eliminate the corruption and disorganization that resulted from the political era (Nhan, 2019). The police officer under Wilson's paramilitary model was viewed as a "professional" officer who acted with indifference to the general public. The idea was that to treat everyone fairly, officers needed to keep a distance from the public and maintain an image of professionalism. All police officer actions were determined by set rules with the intention of creating repeatable, uniform behavior. (Nhan, 2019). Wilson summed up the need for police professionalism by stating that as long as policemen continue to take handouts, cannot control their emotions, arouse resentment with those that they deal with, and have a below than average level of intelligence, the professionalism of the police service is unlikely (Wilson, 1953). This underscores the importance of what Vollmer put into motion, and what he accomplished.

This effort continued throughout the United States into the 1960s and beyond. It was during the 1960s that the elements of criminal activity began to rise to a level that made police agencies across the nation recognize that they lacked the proper response to certain situations (Koslicki, 2017). It is against this back drop that the formation of police SWAT teams had its genesis. Before examining the inner workings of a SWAT team, it is first important to understand and acknowledge the existence of the police culture. This topic that forms the basis for understanding how police officers tend to set themselves apart from the rest of society, and as noted later, how that is amplified by SWAT team members.

The changes that occurred in policing, as time progressed through the different eras of policing, resulted in unintended consequences to the officer. Officers went from being public servants who did more social work than police work, to the professional officers who were concerned with adhering to policies and keeping a distance from the general public to maintain a professional image. This change occurred concurrent with a rise in the crime rate (Nhan, 2019). As a result of this shift in focus, the police as a whole became separated from general society as a whole. This was the fundamental shift in policing that contributed to the "us" vs. "them" mentality, and the establishment and entrenchment of the police sub-culture.

Police Culture

One issue that has been written about at length when it comes to examining police officers is police culture. One such work is *The Occupational Culture of Corrections and Police Officers* by Mary Ann Farkas & Peter Manning. In this work, Farkas and Manning explore the existence of an occupational culture in policing, and similarly in the correctional field, that has a multi-tiered categorization. It examines where each type of employee in both fields falls in their classifications, and how each level interacts, alienates, and disregards the other. An occupational

culture is described by Farkas & Manning (1997) as the values, beliefs, material objects, and

knowledge that is taken-for-granted when discussing a full-time occupational role. This refers to

what the "professionals" in the field have learned during their time on the job, as well as what

they have come to believe as a result of this knowledge.

Typically, this is information that is held by longer tenured officers, and passed along to

newer officers as part of their on-the-job training. The purpose of the occupational culture is to

mediate, buffer, or make predictable the conflicts that the professionals in that occupation face

(Farkas & Manning, 1997). In other words, it is similar to a system that is put in place to allow

the professionals to operate in their occupation with minimal outside interference. It gives

instruction of what is expected internally, while attempting to downplay the pressures from

outside of the profession. This culture that is established by those working in the field serves to

establish the ground ahead and reflect back on the past (Farkas & Manning, 1997). From this

culture the solutions that have worked in the past, as well as mistakes that have been made,

become solid truths and are used to shape the experience of the new officers. What this can

mean in some instances, is that this institutional knowledge is not all related in one large chunk.

Rather, it is imparted upon the new officers over time (Farkas & Manning, 1997). Therefore,

time, and experience over time provide more opportunities for the older regime to influence the

younger officers. It takes quite a while for the dissemination of institutional knowledge to be

passed on. The slight under-realization is that just because an officer puts on a badge, it does not

ultimately gain him or her acceptance from the veteran cops on the police force. That comes

with time, demonstration of proficiency and the gaining of trust by the younger officer of the

older officers.

As Farkas & Manning (1997) describe it, cultural knowledge includes intellectual knowledge, how one does the job, and entails methods of feeling and shared beliefs, as well as social values. Police work consists of people for whom their work dominates their public discussions, is a people-based work, usually involves conflict of some sort, is risky and uncertain, and requires tact (such as when to reveal/conceal information) and secrecy (Farkas & Manning, 1997). This behavior is thought to be a prominent factor in establishing a culture in policing that isolates police officers from the rest of society.

Another work that dives into the depths of the police culture is Chan's (1996), who examines the New South Wales Police department after a 1992 television documentary *Cop It Sweet* portrayed the officers of that department as "racist, sexist, ignorant, insensitive, and hypocritical" (Chan, 1996, p.109). What Chan noted as most disturbing about the documentary is that the officers who were on camera, were on their best behavior, all the while displaying the negative traits listed above. A footnote in the study related that "even the documentary maker expressed surprise that the officers were more concerned about whether they were wearing their hats when the cameras were rolling than about the racist slurs and disparaging comments they routinely made about Aborigines" (Chan, 1996, p.109). Although review of this piece of literature did not address police misconduct, it served to provide a glimpse of what an established police culture looks like. Police culture is a label that street level officers become familiar with as they venture out from the police academies and take their place on the streets. Police culture has become an easy label to attach to a range of negative values, attitudes, and normal practices among police officers.

One suggestion is that because the officers who are working at the street level have such a large amount of discretion, the informal rules that they use to govern their day-to-day existence

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can undermine or completely ignore the rules, reforms, and regulations that are pushed down from the top (Chan, 1996). What this means is that regardless of what good the "brass" thinks they are doing by undergoing policy reforms or directives at the behest of the concerned public, with an established culture in place at the street level those changes may never get implemented or not be embraced by those charged to uphold them. Police culture, therefore, results from the interaction of the political aspects of the job and various forms of organizational knowledge (Chan, 1996). Chan cites some examples of the definition of police culture. One of them is Manning (1977), who refers to police culture as the core skills, cognitions, and affect that define 'good police work'. Manning (1989) stated that these skills include accepted practices, rules, and principles of conduct that are situationally applied, and generalized rationales and beliefs. Chan also uses Reiner's (1992) definition of police culture as a working personality, including a cynical view of the world, a machismo and racist attitude, a strong sense of solidarity with other officers, and a political outlook that is conservative.

Not everything that is thought of as "police culture" is inherently bad. The officer who is taking calls every day uses police culture as something that is considered to be functional to the survival of police officers in a job that is considered to be dangerous, unpredictable, and one that can isolate officers from others. There exists a bond between officers that can provide assurance that each officer will pull their own weight, be responsible, back up and defend their peers when confronted with external threats, and maintain secrecy in the face of external investigations (Chan, 1996). This provides a great illustration of what the police culture is about. Chan cites the work Goldsmith (1990) that shows the bond of brotherhood that develops between officers (male and female alike) that make them almost family members. While the culture may be a

powerful thing, the individual ultimately has to decide to adhere to it, or venture out from it (Chan, 1996).

Seasoned police veterans who regularly patrol the streets develop personalities that are reflective of their time spent interacting with citizens as well as senior officers. These interactions that officers experience in conjunction with cynical attitudes that develop over time can lead to unnecessary use of force incidents. John Van Maanen's (1978) *The Asshole* depicts time spent with the Union City Police Department compiling interviews, field notes, and observation of the patrol officer of that department. Through this time, Van Maanen honed in on a term that appears to be the favorite of the Union City patrolman: the asshole. 'The asshole – creep, bigmouth, bastard, animal, mope, rough, jerkoff, clown, scumbag, wise guy, phony, idiot, shithead, bum, fool, or any of a number of anatomical, oral, or incestuous terms – is a part of every policeman's world' (Van Maanen, 1978, p.307). These are the types of people that policemen deal with on a regular basis, but the label that is placed on them derives from a set of conditions that has nothing to do with what the job of the police actually is (protect and serve, etc.), but more so as a response to some occupational and personal beliefs held by virtually all police. Most who are knowledgeable on the topic observe that policing in America is characterized mostly by the belief that the police have in themselves that they are the primary law enforcers who are engaged in a constant struggle with those who upset the just order of things. Further, as police, they alone are solely responsible for and most capable of determining right from wrong, figuring out who is not respectable, and ultimately deciding what to do about it (Van Maanen, 1978). This type of attitude is what fosters the "us versus them" mentality in police officers. Van Maanen (1978) described the three types of citizens that police officers come into contact with:

1. Suspicious persons – those who the police have reason to believe may have committed a serious offense.

2. Assholes – those who do not accept the police definition of the situation.

3. Know nothings – those who are not either of the first two categories but are not police and therefore, according to the police, cannot know what the police are about.

This everyday classification of people gives us some insight as to the expectations, thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of the police. How one-person transitions from a know nothing to an asshole and to a suspicious person is not the main focus, but rather on how and why the police become engaged in this mindset and culture (Van Maanen, 1978). One of the interesting things about police work, and the patrol officer in general, is the variety of tasks that the job entails. The work of a patrolman cannot be contained inside the nice and tidy confines of a job description. In one day, the job can include an almost infinite number of tasks – dog catching, first-aid, assisting the elderly, breaking up family fights, finding lost children, pursuing a fleeing felon, directing traffic, and so on. As such, police officers can develop certain thoughts from doing the job that may or may not reflect what outsiders think their work is. Police assign thoughts to persons, places, and things and these thoughts are reinforced through daily experiences that are sometimes repeated (Van Maanen, 1978). Once again, this is knowledge that is obtained through years of service, and is often passed down from experienced officer to younger officer. This is how institutional knowledge is passed on, and how the culture permeates the rank and file of police departments. One final point that Van Maanen (1978) maked is that what much of the public may see as arbitrary, fickle, or unwarranted behavior by the police, is actually regulated by rules that are widespread and open to a bit of interpretation on the part of the police. They are not hidden in a dark corner, but rather secured behind the

aforementioned barrier of the "us versus them" mindset that police officers tend to encamp themselves behind. Van Maanen's work is a good example of what police officers come to think after a period of time of actually doing the job and engaging with other officers on their department. Knowledge is shared, experiences are used to teach, and new officers get to accept and embrace the culture, or distance from it. The majority accept and embrace it.

One of the things about police culture that is assumed, and consequently viewed negatively relates to the police use of force and brutality. Young officers are taught how the view the world through their new police eyes, and the ideas and methods they are taught in the academy and by seasoned officers' help to shape their viewpoint on the world and their responsibilities in it. As part of the police culture, officers are often taught that they are responsible for maintaining order. This belief becomes personalized as an officer starts to work a beat, become familiar with people in his or her area, and learn the nuances of his area of responsibility. The culture of police reinforces the idea that social order is a direct reflection of an officer's ability to exercise control (Van Maanen, 1978). So, when anyone dares to question this control, it is seen as unacceptable to the officer, and calls into question their ability to maintain control.

Van Maanen (1978) states that the moral mandate declared by officers as their right in society permeates into their work and personal views and is what gives them the justification and legitimization for what he terms "street justice." Street justice can take many forms, but the basics of it are that for whatever act the "asshole" has committed, the police need to teach them a lesson to prevent them from repeating the same behavior. This can range from a verbal reprimand, to citation, to a physical altercation, and ultimately deadly force. The important distinction to make here is that the "asshole" is not always a suspected law breaker, though there

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is quite frequently an overlap between the two (Van Maanen, 1978). This becomes critical when as a result of police culture, an officer finds thenmself crossways with a citizen who is merely an "asshole" and the determination is made to dole out some "street justice."

Without proper recognition of the situation and assessment of the individual being dealt with, there is a potential for use of force and brutality where the use of force is not justified by law and police policy. One of the dangers of some police cultures is that it can blur the lines of that situation and ultimately lead to improper use of force and brutality. As noted above and by other scholars, however, not all police culture is bad. The ability of officers to face tough situations and support each other through them is paramount to longevity in the profession, and critically important to developing solid bonds and trust between teammates.

Other criminologists have studied the elements of the police subculture. For example, Fyfe & Skolnick (1993) looked at how the individual, organizational, cultural, and political factors play a role in provoking police brutality. They seek to answer the questions of: What are the occasions for police brutality? How can it be explained? How can it be fixed? In addition, there is an underlying question of what makes a good cop a good cop? Another example is the Christopher Commission report. Following the Rodney King incident in 1991, the Christopher Commission was started in early April, and conducted an extensive investigation into the Los Angeles Police Department and the excessive use of force issues surrounding the department. The Christopher Commission Report (1991) detailed how the LAPD had personnel who repeatedly used excessive force outside of department policy, and that there was a culture in place where supervisors would overlook the behavior, and not effectively hold anyone accountable for violations that occurred. The report bluntly stated that the failure to control

officers was a management issue that was at the heart of the problem (Warren, 1991). This

served to underline the state of the culture of the LAPD, and how it needed to change.

SWAT teams are considered by many to be a subculture within a subculture of the police

department as a whole. One characteristic representative of the culture of many SWAT teams is

the self-imposed standard of professionalism. That, combined with the respect that members of

the team garner from the rest of the police department based on the status as a team member,

becomes an embodiment of the professional era of policing. In many ways, these SWAT teams

are representative of the pinnacle of the professional era of policing.

SWAT Teams

Research on SWAT teams has focused on the following main areas: Use of force,

training techniques, and the militarization of police (Koslicki, 2017; Kraska, 1999; Steidley &

Ramey, 2019; Williams & Westfall, 2003; Young, Hennington, & Eggleston's 2018). Within

those areas, the focus typically points to how SWAT teams differ from traditional police officers.

Police officers who work together are sometimes referred to as teammates or partners. Similar to

sports teams, the people who work together often develop bonds and relationships that strengthen

over time spent together. In the police world, there is perhaps no better example of this

relationship than that of SWAT team members. One of the things that has not been examined at

length by researchers is the inner workings and makeup of SWAT teams. SWAT officers are a

different breed of officer than the traditional patrol officer. First and foremost, the process for

becoming a SWAT team member is not a simple one. Although the process can vary in

intensity, length, and rigor from department to department, the overall premise is that SWAT is a

tough assignment to obtain. For example, in many departments there are restrictions on who can

put in for the assignment based on: length of service as a police officer, standards for firearms qualifications, negative personnel actions, or on the basis of obtaining a promotion (see http://www.lapdonline.org/join_the_team/content_basic_view/9125). Following the application process is a physical assessment. Those who pass the assessment move on to a day-long scenario based assessment designed to test an applicant's ability to make decisions when fatigued and under pressure. Finally, an interview is conducted by a panel, and applicants are placed on an eligibility list or deemed not eligible. The process is not for the faint of heart, of those who are not fully committed.

Although most police departments are paramilitary in nature, the members of a SWAT team tend to be even more similar to the military by their makeup and procedures. As examined by Peter Kraska (1999), the issue of paramilitary policing receives some well-deserved and enlightening attention. Even though many police agencies have and use SWAT teams, there is strikingly little research done in regards to them. Kraska (1999) surmises that the function of a police department is perhaps the most difficult function in our society. They are expected to be helpers and controllers. The road that is taken by many police departments represents a struggle to maintain a "democratic norm" and to remain tough on crime. The growth in size and the expanding use of SWAT teams is a prime example of that situation (Kraska, 1999). In essence, the public has expectations for the protection of their freedoms, while at the same time demanding more aggressive crime prevention methods.

In the 1960's there was a call for specialized units in policing that could handle high-risk situations in response to several high-profile hostage and sniper events. This resulted in the creation of what is referred to Paramilitary Police Units, or PPUs. These paramilitary units were modeled after military special operations groups both in the United States and foreign countries

(Kraska, 1999). By the mid-1970's many large metropolitan police departments followed the lead of the Los Angeles Police Department and established SWAT teams. An important distinction is made between police SWAT team members and traditional police officers. As opposed to what is viewed as traditional police officers, SWAT team members are organized and train much like the military special operations teams and maintain a strict military command structure and discipline. Depending on the size of the agency, the officers may be assigned to the SWAT team full-time, or it may be what is considered a "collateral" duty. The bulk of SWAT officers also serve as patrol officers for their respective department as their primary duty (Kraska, 1999).

Traditionally, SWAT teams operate in a reactive capacity to a situation that is already in progress and is deemed to be high-risk, such as a hostage situation, barricaded suspect, terrorist event, civil disturbance, or sniper situation. Finally, these paramilitary units are identifiable by their uniforms and equipment. Most do not wear the traditional police uniform while operating in a SWAT capacity. Typical paramilitary units outfit in black or urban camouflage battle dress uniforms, or BDUs, full-body armor, and Kevlar helmets. Weaponry can include submachine guns, tactical shotguns, sniper rifles, percussion grenades, chemical munitions (CS/OC), surveillance equipment, and less-than-lethal technologies (Kraska, 1999).

Kraska's (1999) research into police paramilitary units was done by conducting extensive field research with several agencies, completing two national surveys, and conducting over 130 telephone interviews with police paramilitary team members across the country. Kraska did determined that although most larger departments established their SWAT teams in the 1970's, the number of teams has steadily grown since (Kraska, 1999). According to his research, only about 55% of agencies had a PPU since 1982. Sixty-five % serving 25,000 to 50,000 people had

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a PPU by the end of 1995. Between 1985 and 1995 there was a 157% increase in paramilitary units in agencies serving small areas (Kraska, 1999). Not only did the number of agencies that have teams increase, but the number of call-outs that these units responded to increased as well. Kraska collected data on the number of call-outs performed by each department starting in 1980 and ended in 1995 (Kraska, 1999). Call-outs are defined as activity that required the deployment of the unit, such as barricaded persons, hostage situations, terrorist events, civil disturbances, and the service of high-risk search and arrest warrants. Kraska documented 29,962 call-outs in 1995, which was a 939% increase from the 2,884 call-outs in 1980 (Kraska, 1999).

Kraska (1999) noted that perhaps his most significant finding was the functions of SWAT teams expanded beyond the rare high-risk tactical event such as a hostage situation or a barricaded person to cover many proactive activities that have typically been handled by traditional police personnel. Specifically, this includes a significant increase in SWAT teams executing search and arrest warrants that stem from drug enforcement activities, and even more narrowly referring to "no-knock" search warrants on residences where drug activity was suspected (Kraska, 1999). A "no-knock" drug raid is defined as a surprise search by a SWAT team for illegal drugs, guns, and money. These searches are generally conducted in the early morning hours and expeditiously utilizing specialized weaponry and equipment, finally all occupants are expected to immediately comply with the officer's orders. All persons are handcuffed, and centrally relocated for investigation and final search of the residence. Of note from Kraska's research is that in the five years preceding his publication, roughly 80 percent of "call-outs" involving SWAT teams were for "no-knock" drug raids, and not specifically for what are considered traditional SWAT functions. Furthermore, approximately 20 percent of the departments surveyed completed 250 or more of these deployments per year (Kraska, 1999).

Kraska's summation echoes his initial statement regarding the difficult nature that policing faces in today's society. He leaves no doubt that the need for a team of highly trained officers who can perform high-risk operations should play a role in modern day police efforts (Kraska, 1999). His final thought asks the extent that this trend should be limited and regulated in order minimize any negative impact associated with the para-militarization of police.

As both SWAT and non-SWAT officers, begin a shift, one thing that is always a possibility is the inherent chance that a use of force event can occur during their watch. But, does a SWAT officer have a propensity to use force more than a non-SWAT officer? Williams and Westfall (2003) attempted to determine if being a SWAT officer disposes one to use force more readily in non-SWAT situations. They stated that SWAT officers often are used in situations that may require the use of force. Therefore, they may be fraternized to use force in response to dangerous situations that they encounter frequently, and thus more likely to use force in situations that are not SWAT-related (Williams & Westfall, 2003). The aim of their article and research was to determine if SWAT officers get programmed to use force in a SWAT environment, and then use force more often in situations outside of the SWAT environment.

Law enforcement officers may find themselves in potentially deadly situations, and according to Williams and Westfall (2003) facing criminals who are armed and sometimes not concerned with dying. In the past three decades, criminals have become better armed and more willing to use weapons that were unavailable to them before. In response, many police departments have formed SWAT teams. As mentioned previously, the term SWAT stands for Special Weapons and Tactics. As the name implies, the officers who comprise the units have special weapons, and utilize specialized tactics to address dangerous situations (Williams & Westfall, 2003).

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The Los Angeles Police Department is commonly referred to as the agency that developed the first SWAT team in the mid-1960s in response to increasingly violent criminals, and special situations that came up, such as barricaded persons and hostage rescues (Williams & Westfall, 2003). It is important to note that many departments across the country do not utilize fulltime SWAT teams (as we saw in Kraska's article), but the SWAT duties are a collateral responsibility of officers who work in other division of the department (patrol, detective, etc.) In many large cities, however, there are officers who are permanently assigned to the SWAT team as their only duty on a full-time basis. For those officers who are full-time status, their workload requires almost daily training to handle the large number of calls that require SWAT teams (Williams & Westfall, 2003).

Williams and Westfall (2003) provide multiple definitions of the use of force that range anywhere from verbal abuse to deadly force. They also cite multiple court decisions that relate to the use of force as it relates to the Fourth Amendment and reasonableness. Drilling down to the essence of their study, they specifically look at a police department in Georgia and expand on their use of force reporting requirements and how the numbers reflect upon their question of whether SWAT officers use force more often in non-SWAT situations than non-SWAT officers. The findings show that there is a statistical nonsignificant relationship between being a SWAT team member and the number of use-of-force reports completed. Williams and Westfall's conclusion is that it does not seem that SWAT status predicts the use of force. A limitation of this type of study is that only one police department studied. Nevertheless, this type of research is aimed at examining the makeup in some regards of SWAT team members.

As previously stated, there is very little research with regard to the inner workings of a SWAT team. For one, it is difficult to gain access to do so. Police tend to be very much closed

to outsiders, and SWAT team members are to an even greater extent. Young, Hennington, and Eggleston's (2018) work penetrates into an untapped area of knowledge. Their work examined all of the above listed factors and determined whether they had any correlation to the successful resolution of SWAT callouts. They also looked to see if they were helpful in team dynamics and to determine if any of those characteristics were beneficial in identifying potential candidates for SWAT team vacancies. The analysis was performed with SWAT team operators, negotiators, and regular patrol officers.

Young et al. (2018) explained the importance for police officers who are on SWAT teams and involved in high-risk SWAT callouts to be well trained and able to operate under pressure, danger, and stressors that are associated with that profession. Officers who are members of a SWAT team are trained in a variety of skill sets to include: precision shooting, dynamic entry, proficiency in the use of less-lethal weaponry, and a demanding physical, mental and emotional requirements (Young, Hennington, & Eggleston, 2018). Some examples include the need to discriminate between innocent persons and lethal threats, the demand for top physical condition and endurance to withstand call-outs that can last in excess of 12 hours, and critical planning and decision-making requirements needed for preparing to execute dynamic entry into unknown and hostile situations that may include innocent people (Young, Hennington, & Eggleston, 2018).

Young, et al. (2018) examined the research regarding police personality, coping styles, and cognitive emotion of police officers, and decision-making styles of SWAT operators and hostage negotiators. Some of these studies used the Big 5 personality inventory, or the related NEO Personality Inventory to assess the entire group and make summations about them after interpreting the results.

Young et al (2018) conducted a nationwide survey. That yielded response from 277 SWAT operators from across the United States. On the broad surface level, Young et al. noted that when compared with negotiators, SWAT operators were more conscientiousness and less neurotic and open. They identified the most desirable trait for a SWAT operator as conscientiousness, and used words like organized, deliberate, efficient, reliable, hard-working, precise, determined, and self-disciplined to shape the definition of it (Young et al., 2018). The reason that this trait was identified as the most desirable is based on a correlation that they found. They showed that large departments that have experienced SWAT operators who can be classified as conscientiousness had their call-outs resolved peacefully and successfully most often (Young et al.). It was found that SWAT officers scored the lowest on openness, which Young et al. defined as creative, open to change, experimenting, imaginative, curious, artistic, psychologically minded, intelligent, insightful, and cognitively flexible. Young et al. also reported that SWAT officers scored lower than negotiators on planning, but higher on spontaneous decision-making style. This embodies the differences of the two functions perfectly, as SWAT operators are often faced with time sensitive decisions and do not have the luxury of time on their side, while negotiators are often afforded more time to plan and create solutions for the problems they deal with. Young et al. also noted that SWAT operators and their command level elements do not use a dependent decision-making style. They are not naturally going to ask for help to make decisions, nor do they typically work with others to make decisions.

Young et al. (2018) concluded that SWAT officers with conscientiousness and agreeableness who are not neurotic could potentially be excellent SWAT operators. They recommended that these characteristics are sought after when selecting new personnel, and that

the inclusion of dependent decision-making styles into the training of SWAT officers be included to help cover a wider array of decisions that have to be made by SWAT teams.

SWAT teams represent a part of a bigger trend in police militarization. Over the years they have built their capabilities and equipment inventory from training opportunities with military units, and the procurement of surplus military equipment. Further grant funding from the federal government has also contributed to the resources SWAT teams have to purchase highly specialized equipment traditionally associated with military units. As the need for SWAT teams to evolve and change in response to the types of crime and criminals they are dealing with has occurred, more focus has shifted toward the militarization of SWAT teams.

Militarization of Police

In 2014, protests and riots broke out in Ferguson, Missouri in response to a police shooting that occurred. According to Steidley & Ramey (2019), the police response received an unprecedented level of news coverage and ignited the phenomenon of police militarization. Although the idea and practice of militarization of the police has been around since the formation of the earliest SWAT teams in the 1960's, the work of Steidley & Ramey investigated the social sciences theories on police militarization.

Steidley & Ramey (2019) began by asking the question, *what is police militarization?* The news coverage usually highlights the acquisition of equipment and military gear such as armored vehicles and firearms as police militarization. This approach suggests that officers who are working without these items are not militarized. However, since the 1980s researchers have wrestled with this topic to create a more analytical definition of the concept. The use of military terms and practices by law enforcement agencies is prevalent, and contrasts the image of "public

servants" that is traditionally associated with police officers (Steidley & Ramey, 2019). While

the military uses violence as the primary means of forcing the opposition to concede, police work

is different in that they *may* use violence if necessary. Police are not expected to use violence as

their primary option to create order. Force is not always needed by the police, but the skills and

resources that they use from the military can translate to their needs when necessary. This is

something that sets police departments from other government institutions like public schools.

So, while all challenges to social order do not require the use of violence to quell them, the

police remain the one domestic organization that may use it to restore order (Steidley & Ramey,

2019). According to Steidley & Ramey (2019) the process of militarization can occur in four

different dimensions of police work:

1. Material dimension – police adopt weapons and equipment that enable them to subdue
   violence quickly.
2. Cultural dimension – police adopt militaristic values, appearance, and language.
3. Organizational – police are managed along a military hierarchy.
4. Operational – police work is conducted aggressively and military like.

In February of 1997, two men walked into the Bank of America branch in North

Hollywood, California armed with assault rifles, body armor, black jumpsuits, and ski masks.

The two men had committed multiple robberies in the area to the tune of over two million

dollars. They specialized in "take-over" style robberies which is a para-military style robbery in

which they dressed in full body armor, equipped themselves with military style rifles and hit

their targets with brute force (Coflin, 2007). This type of robbery was not common to law

enforcement, and the tactics and weapons used were superior to any other criminal enterprise

that law enforcement had faced to date. The LAPD was able to respond quickly, due to the fact

that one of their 2-man patrol units physically observed the suspects enter the bank lobby and called it in to their dispatcher.

Numerous units responded and quickly and skillfully setup containment on the bank. The problem in this scenario was that the "bad guys" were better equipped than the "good guys." In fact, in many criticisms of what the LAPD did in this scenario was aimed at their inadequate weaponry. The suspects exited the building and opened fire on LAPD officers, keeping them at bay for 44 minutes, and turning a quiet everyday town into a literal war-zone. Bullet holes riddled businesses and vehicles and injured twelve police officers. Over 2000 rounds of ammunition was exchanged between the suspects and the police (Coflin, 2007). It was against this backdrop that a shift in thinking began to occur in police departments across the nation. The realization occurred that the police needed to be better equipped than the criminal element that they could potentially face out on the street. Reports of LAPD officers going to sporting goods stores and pawn shops to obtain better weaponry with which to respond to an active, ongoing shootout did not leave a good taste in the mouths of law enforcement officers and leadership across the country (Bartholomew, 2017). Departments began obtaining better weaponry, and taking advantage of newly-created government programs to obtain surplus military equipment and forming partnerships with military agencies to take advantage of information exchange and training opportunities (Lawson Jr., 2019).

As police departments gain more training, equipment, and advances in tactics and technology that has been present in the military for years, the topic of militarization of the police is a lightning rod for conversation. Wendy Koslicki (2017) tackles this issue to examine the SWAT team of American police departments, and delves into the topic of the militarization of modern police departments. The objective here is to look at the research that has been done in

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the past regarding the militarization of modern police departments and critically analyze their finding and methodologies. Specifically, Koslicki identified two assumptions that have been made about the policing in the past, and that are even still cited to this day. The first assumption is that Byrne grants and other federal funding led to a significant increase in SWAT teams across the country. The second assumption is that the Byrne grants and federal funding between the late 1980's and early 1990's led to a significant increase in the use of SWAT teams to serve narcotics search warrants (Koslicki, 2017). Byrne grants were created in 1986 by revising the 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse Act and provided resources to police departments specifically for the purposes of drug control (Koslicki, 2017). An additional concern was the increased collaboration between the military and police which would ultimately lead to the police become more like the military by adopting their training and strategies, and that SWAT team creation and usage will only increase over time (Koslicki, 2017). Koslicki began by briefly addressing the prior theories on police militarism and the history behind it. It is in this examination that the groundwork is laid for what Koslicki identified as the major causes of this trend of militarization of the police.

First, the infancy of SWAT teams is largely reported to coincide with the Watts Riots in the 1960's. The teams that were formed in response to these riots were done so because the responding law enforcement agencies were not prepared or equipped to handle them. In addition to the creation of SWAT teams, the riots led to a shift in the culture of policing as well, with constant reminders of the dangers of policing and rising officer safety concerns. Next, the 1980 push by the Reagan administration for the military's assistance in the "war on drugs" was influential as it was portrayed in strong moral and militarized language such as "good" against "evil" (Koslicki, 2017). When the Military Cooperation with Law Enforcement Act was passed

one year later, it encouraged a partnership between the two groups to combat narcotics activity in the United States. In 1987, the Secretary of Defense was ordered by Congress to notify law enforcement agencies of surplus military equipment that could be used to further assist in the "war on drugs". Although this order did not gain significant steam during that year, in 1988 Byrne grants were created through a revision to the 1986 Anti-Drug Abuse act that provided resources to law enforcement agencies specifically for the purposes of drug control (Koslicki, 2017). These grants, although declining in dollar amount currently, were reported to account for 738.4 million dollars between the years of 1989 to 1994 (Koslicki, 2017). The abundance of grant money available to law enforcement agencies allowed them to form SWAT team, get equipment, and provide training specifically targeted towards drug control efforts.

Koslicki (2017) tested the assumptions and hypotheses presented by the scholars who conducted them by performing interrupted time series analysis (ITSA) on the effect of Byrne grants on the creation of SWAT teams per year, and the execution of narcotics warrants per year. Koslicki explained that the ITSA models found very interesting results that seem to contradict the earlier findings and hypothesis.

According to the models, in regards to the first assumption of more SWAT teams being created as a result of the government funding, there showed to be a significant decrease in the number of teams created in the year 1990, and a marginally significant decrease that continued every year after that (Koslicki, 2017). Likewise, the ITSA conducted for the second hypothesis that the increase in government funding would result in an increase in the number of narcotics operations performed by SWAT, showed significant decreases in SWAT narcotics warrant activity for every year after 1990 (Koslicki, 2017). Koslicki concluded, therefore, that the previous assumptions are not supported.

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Koslicki identifies several shortcomings with the research of her work. First, she identifies shortcomings of the data used due to a low response rate to one of the surveys. Secondly, she identified a lack of data regarding when each SWAT team received the Byrne grant or other federal funding. Thirdly, she states that all the studies examined were done roughly during the same time period, but did not account for the 2000s and 2010s. The importance of data from that time period would be to include events such as 9/11 and see what direction the trends went (Koslicki, 2017). Some final interesting notes that were made by Koslicki regarding her research were that nine cases out of the entire sample of 341 SWAT teams were responsible for 30-50 percent of the overall SWAT narcotics warrant activity. In addition, approximately 20 percent of the sample that reported no narcotic warrant activity for the entire year. Koslicki stressed the importance of accounting for the data characteristics mentioned to ensure proper interpretation of national trends of policing (Koslicki, 2017).

Based on the research that has been done, there is a lack of investigation into the makeup of a successful SWAT operator. Although Young, Hennington, & Eggleston completed research that compared SWAT operators to hostage negotiators, there was not an examination of the characteristics that make a SWAT officer different from any other officer. This study tackles that issue that has been left untouched thus far. This study is an important venture as it begins the process of identifying what makes SWAT team members different. Because all police departments are at risk for liability in any high-risk situation, the need to have successful SWAT operators is paramount. By conducting this study, the hope is that it will lay groundwork in the effort to identifying these characteristics, and give police departments the ability to successfully identify and select team members for openings when they occur.

Methods

This study debunks some of the common misconceptions that exist regarding SWAT teams, and identifies unique characteristics that SWAT team members possess. In order to find these answers, qualitative face-to-face structured interviews were conducted with current and former SWAT team members. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as an appropriate way to measure the thoughts and beliefs of the participants of this study due to the fact that it allows the researcher to ask questions that came to mind as the interview is ongoing. A list of questions was generated, and through the process some of the participants answered multiple questions unintentionally with one answer, but might provoke the thought of an additional question with their response. Utilizing the semi-structured interview allowed the interview to flow based on the participant.

Interviews were conducted with members of multiple SWAT teams both locally and across the nation. Large and medium sized police departments were contacted, and the corresponding size of the team ranged from 10 to 30 plus members. Some of the SWAT team members who were selected were a convenience sample of people that I work with, and have direct access to as a SWAT team member. Members who were selected for interview were from police departments in California and Texas. Twenty different SWAT operators were interviewed. Their ranks included the following: two Lieutenants, four Sergeants, three Corporals, and 11 Officers or Senior Officer Rank. All but two of the participants are still actively involved in the day to day operations of a SWAT team. Of the two participants that are no longer with the team, one has left his respective team within the last 18 months, and the other left his team 10 years ago. The length of tenure on the SWAT tenure of the participants varied

from 2-20+ years. The age of the participants ranged from 30 years of age to 50 years of age. Access to participants for interviews was obtained by two means: One method was using the author's status as a current member of a large city SWAT team to interview members of that team. The second method was by using contacts that have been made with other SWAT teams to solicit participants from within their SWAT teams. The reason for this second method goes back to the insular nature of SWAT teams and police in general. Credibility was needed to gain access to this select group. By establishing rapport with the respondents through previous operational encounters, training exercises, knowledge sharing, and team development, that credibility was obtained. This made the interviews less daunting and uncertain.

The interviews were done in several different environments. Due to some location distances, and for convenience of the interviewee, some interviews were conducted by telephone. The rest were done face-to-face, in a closed office, classroom, or briefing room. The interviews were recorded in order to accurately transcribe the responses on the participants. The duration of the interviews lasted from 9-40 minutes. The duration was dependent on what the interviewee had to say, how much they expanded on the question asked, and how their responses may have required clarification. The team members interviewed ranged in age from their 20's to their 50's. Ranks included Officer (11), Corporal (4), Sergeant (3), and Lieutenant (2).

The interview method was chosen for a number of reasons, as was convenience sampling. Convenience sampling, relies on the collection of data from people who are conveniently available to participate in the particular study being done (Lakshman et al., 2000). For law enforcement related research, participation is routinely an obstacle to effective data collection. With the police culture "barrier," and subsequent second level of accessibility obstacles of a SWAT team, convenience sampling provided the most efficient and least restrictive method for

conducting research. The strengths to using this type of sampling is that it can help generate

hypothesis for future studies, can be conducted in a relatively short period of time, and there was

no cost to do it other than time dedicated to do the work (Lakshman et al., 2000). The limitations

to using this type of sampling are that it can be vulnerable to selection bias, and influence beyond

the control of the researcher, there could be a high level of sampling error, and that there could

be little credibility given to the research because of these reasons (Lakshman et al., 2000).

Perhaps the most prevalent consideration in this project is the ability to access the target

population. Traditionally, police as a whole are not open to the idea of letting anyone come into

their departments and report on much of anything. As Manning (2005, p. 195) states, 'people

cannot be trusted, they are dangerous'. The common misconception is that this is because they

"have something to hide." The reality, is that many police officers are concerned with safety

above all else, and do not take lightly sharing sensitive information that they feel could

potentially be used to harm them. As Van Maanen (1978, p. 312) stated 'to let down the façade

is to invite disrespect, chaos, and crime'. Therefore, the prevalent attitude among officers is that

the less information made available personally about them, the better it is for their safety. Even

more difficult to access within a police organization is the SWAT team members. Because of

their "sub-culture" status within an organization that is already viewed as a "sub-culture" of

society in general, it is another group that is difficult for an "outsider" to gain access to.

Therefore, because of the authors status as a SWAT team member, the research was met with

more interest and a willingness to cooperate because of the trust and relationships already

developed prior to this project.

Strengths and Limitations of Methodology

Based upon the method for obtaining access to this select group of people, there was a tremendous opportunity to explore the thoughts and beliefs of some people who may not have been available for academic research otherwise. This method also made this project practical and convenient to complete in the allocated timeframe. Young, Hennington, & Eggleston's work was a study that addressed issues similar to the ones studied in this project. One of the shortcomings of that study was that the authors lacked the access to the participants they desired, and self-reported that the response rate to their study was low and relied mostly on honest self-reporting from participants. Once again, insider access was likely the biggest pro to this project. The authors standing as a colleague enabled them to let their guard down and answer accordingly. Cops trust other cops, and have a hard time opening up to outsiders. This is especially true when it comes to academics. It is a tough sell to get a police department to open up to an academic to poke and prod inside the inner workings of the department. By having an established reputation as a SWAT team member, and demonstrating that you understand the way things work in a SWAT environment (i.e., how problems are approached, how tactics are employed, how personnel selection is paramount to team success) there is a mutual acknowledgement of common perspectives and interpretations to many things. This is not to imply that SWAT team members all think the same way, or don't have differing opinions on issues, but there are common issues in SWAT teams that have universally accepted standards. One example of this could be a law enforcement term called the "priority of life" scale. In this scale the priority of saving lives is ranked using the acronym HIPS. Hostages, Innocents, Police, and Suspects. When facing a dangerous situation, police may have to implement this scale to guide their decision making in an effort to resolve a situation as successfully as possible. This scale is used and taught throughout law enforcement.

This same standing opened the door to other departments across the country that helps contribute to a more complete picture in the research. Interviews were useful for examining these officers because it allowed the exploration of their views, opinions, and beliefs on the topics being researched. The author's rank within his department is Sergeant. That means that the author is a first-line supervisor. The author is also assigned to the full-time SWAT team. That means that he supervised some of the people that were interviewed. In order to mitigate the risk of influencing any responses based on rank and command structure, several precautions were taken prior to conducting any interview. First, it was explained to the interviewee that for the purposes of this research the author was not their supervisor. This was simply a student completing a research project who was interested in getting their perspective on a list of questions that related to police and SWAT. Next it was explained that the opinions they expressed were not being used for anything related to the department that they worked for. They were for the research project only. The participants were then asked for their permission to record the interviews. As mentioned before, recording of the interview was done solely so that the participants responses could be directly transcribed and quoted. In addition, participants were told them that the recordings would not contain any identifying information, and would be stored in a location only accessible by the author and his thesis advisor. No other unauthorized persons would have any access to this information. These precautions were taken to facilitate an open and honest environment for the interviewees to express their opinion. The goal was for this to be a strength for this limited research project.

Limitations

Some negative aspects of this methodology were that each interview did take some coordination to execute, and although there is value to be taken from all of the persons

interviewed, the amount of useful material did not divide equally among the participants. Also, the candidates that were selected were based on professional contacts, and professional introductions. The downfall of this it that not all of the candidates are from similarly tasked and structured SWAT teams. It is an inconsistent mixture of part-time and full-time members.

This study serves as a good starting point for a topic that could use some much more in-depth research. Given the time frame in which this project was to be completed, it lacks the volume of information that could potentially be collected given more time to complete. The aim of this project, however, is to try and give some surface exposure to the issue and bring about an awareness of it for the purposes of further research.

Some limitations of doing things the way that they were done for this project are that the data could be viewed as biased, the group of participants is limited mostly to the state of Texas, and due to time constraints, there was not an opportunity to conduct research via an ethnography. The data collected and reported on could be viewed as biased given the authors status as a SWAT team member, conducting research about SWAT officers. In this set of circumstances, it would be easy for one to interject personal biases or opinions into the work in order to make it look one way or another. The efforts in this project were to communicate with each individual the intent and purpose, and foster an understanding that although the author is a peer in the field of work, for the purposes of this project the author is a student and want to report on what they tell me. Personal opinions and biases were not included in any shape or form in this work. The steps were taken took to minimize my opinions and biases from interfering with the results were found in how the interviews were conducted. The list of questions was first discussed and approved with the thesis advisor. The intent of the questions was to elicit a free-flowing response from the interviewee. Next, any follow up questions were based on clarifying a

response. There was no reinforcement given to interviewees based on their responses. Questions were simply asked, and the subject was allowed to respond as much or as little as they liked.

In order to minimize the potential conflict in those instances, interviews were conducted in a casual environment, away from work. The goal was for the participants to be as open and honest as they felt comfortable and explained that their thoughts and opinions were not under scrutiny in anyway related to their employment and would have no bearing on anything work related whatsoever.

Based on time constraints, the geographical area of concentration was limited mostly to the state of Texas. For interview purposes, the teams that were contacted are teams that have contact or relationships with my team in some form or fashion. If a more in-depth study about this topic is to be conducted, a nationwide sample would be much more robust. A world-wide sample would be even better to study the qualities of a tactical operator, though there might be cultural difference that would separate groups studied in that instance.

In order to conduct a study using the qualitative method of ethnography, more time would have been needed to spend time with multiple police department SWAT teams as an observer as participant to study the way they work and interact with each other, as well as their attitudes towards many facets of the police profession, in order to draw conclusions about their unique characteristics and qualities. More time and resources would allow a researcher to spend time "riding out" with teams to get an observation of them in their natural environment.

Attempting to debunk some of the common misconceptions of SWAT teams, and in the process seeking to learn what characteristics, if any, help identify a successful SWAT team

member required research that was conducted qualitatively. When conducting research, it tends to be considered real and serious only when it uses quantitative methods. Consequently, a finding is more likely to be accepted as factual if it has been quantified (Lakshman et al., 2000). This is one of the potential downsides to using qualitative research. According to Lakshman et al. (2000), those who practice quantitative research tend to look up on qualitative research as less rigorous or objective, less generalizable, and tend to give it less credibility. However, unlike qualitative research, one of the benefits of quantitative research is seeking to answer the question of "what" and not the question of "how often." Qualitative methods approach a problem from a holistic perspective, rather than a simplified view to measure the occurrence of something happening. In doing so, the complexity of human nature is preserved.

When research is conducted quantitatively, the focus is on the effects of specific circumstances on something of interest that can be discussed numerically. This type of research is most effective when the settings are controlled to the extent that the study is free of any undefined influence (Lakshman et al., 2000). In gaining credibility for the findings of the research, this is a major advantage that quantitative research has over qualitative. But quantitative data is not impervious to flaws. Regardless of how well a questionnaire was created, checked, and revised, there are still issues that can occur with the respondents. For example, there may be a problem with recall, a question may be misunderstood, a topic may be too sensitive, or a respondent might intentionally lie to protect their image (Lakshman et al., 2000). Based on the strengths and limitations associated with each type of research, for the purposes of this project, qualitative research was selected as the most appropriate method.

Findings

The findings of this study range over a variety of topics. For simplicity, a road-map is provided here:

1. Misconceptions – addresses some of the commonly help misconceptions from the SWAT team members viewpoint.

2. Community Relations – how SWAT team members feel about community policing.

3. SWAT officers' perceptions on policing – what SWAT team members think are the important aspects of policing.

4. Views on SWAT – what SWAT team members think about their job.

5. Changes that occur from being in SWAT – What changes the participants have experienced in themselves since being in SWAT.

6. SWAT vs. Regular officers – What SWAT team members think distinguishes them from other officers.

7. SWAT Subculture – The description of how SWAT is further removed and isolated.

8. The team environment, familial bond, brotherhood, and camaraderie – what makes their teams so special and tight.

Ultimately there are misconceptions about what it is that a SWAT team does, what the team is like, and what the guys that make up that team are all about. The propagation of those misconceptions by individuals, groups, media, and the entertainment industry shape the ideas that many people have when it comes to SWAT teams. Even within police departments there exists the same misconceptions. After spending time talking to a number of current and former SWAT officers, there are a lot of things that would likely surprise people to learn about this particular breed of police officers.

Misconception: SWAT teams are overly aggressive

When you talk about SWAT officers, some of the generalizations that come up are: overly aggressive, or solely enforcement types who do little thinking. Some of the other misconceptions mentioned earlier from Hollywood portray SWAT officers as misfit renegades who march to the beat of their own drum with little regard for policy or supervision, or boorish, reckless, and seemingly unconcerned with working with anyone else. The appearance of SWAT teams being similar to military units does not help this misconception either. That is consistent with the work of Mummolo (2018), who suggests that seeing militarized police in the news contributes to negative opinions towards law enforcement, and further suggests that reducing the militarization of police may be in the interest of both police and citizens. Mummolo further suggests that these units do not appear to provide any safety benefits that are claimed by administrators, and that they may actually damage the reputation of the department when these militarized units are deployed. When speaking with the officers who do the job, this is not the impression that is made at all. The prevailing opinion is that SWAT is a last line of defense when it comes to facing urban crime problems. The proverbial "if not us, then who" dilemma. Though SWAT teams have not always had all of this modern equipment, they have always had a mission that was above and beyond that of what a regular patrol officer was expected to accomplish. When asked to address how SWAT has changed or evolved over the years, a current SWAT commander stated:

We are the best problem solvers in this whole department. People think of SWAT as the 'heavy hitters', the 'guy with the gun', the big strong guys, but what we want are the best problem solvers in the whole department. We are going to give you an extremely complicated police problem, which is usually very dangerous and deadly on top of it, and we want you to

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solve this problem. And not with a sledgehammer, we want you to be able to understand all the laws and liability that go with it, and we want to, if possible, solve the problem with no one getting injured, and with minimal property damage, and minimal liability for the department. A good swat team is one that is seldom heard from.

Another SWAT officer expanded on the ability of SWAT officers to use their brain, more than their brawn as an important characteristic:

Motivated. Self-starter. A thinker. Good head on their shoulders. Has the ability to be open minded, to change. Somebody that is not just set in THEIR ways. Like 'it has to be this way' because I think the biggest thing in our community that I have found, you know through teaching or being taught, or just through all levels is just the institutional inertia. Why do you do it this way? Because that is the way I was taught, that's the way we've always done it, that's the way we were told to do it. Being able to evolve as a person. Mentally. Physically. I think what makes a good SWAT officer is always looking for innovation, positive change. Technology. Immersing themselves, being an expert. But you have to be smart. You can't do it naively, or you know, be the dull knife in the drawer and expect to cut the fine steak or the good bread. You always have to sharpen yourself, but be ready, and always looking for positive change.

Beyond addressing the idea that a SWAT officer is a good problem solver, a recurring theme regarding SWAT teams was the fact that the job has changed significantly. Where initially the depth of qualifications for the job may have entailed being a "tough guy" or a "physical specimen," the old stereotypes don't hold up anymore. In today's world, the roll of police in general has changed, and been placed under a microscope that was not there in the past. The occupation of police officers is under the demands of the public, politicians, elected officials, and from the administration of the police department itself. That reality is consistent

with the work of Corpas (2018) who found that due to the nature of the job, the actions of police officers are under scrutiny, and this can bring a lot of unnecessary stress to the job. SWAT teams face scrutiny that is in real time. When they are called to the scene media has usually caught wind of what is going on, and command staff is definitely aware of what is going on. Therefore, their actions usually take place in a "live" environment, which is even more real-time today than it was in the past. As one SWAT officer responded:

The job has changed pretty dramatically, I came over to SWAT in 2004, so that's 15 years ago. The job has changed so dramatically since 2004. And, um, you know, I think, I think when it started then we just needed some really good police officers that were physically fit. You know, some crime fighters. But now, it's more into we need like, extremely smart problem solving people. Because the job has become very complicated in this day in age with the, the, um the, all the attention on police, the, the, the media attention and stuff like that, and the liability and all the cameras on us. You know we can't walk around nowadays saying we are doing the right thing, we actually have to do everything strictly by the book and as perfect as possible because everything is videoed now, you know the media is very critical of everything we do. Our administrations are very critical of what we do, and so it's very important to get the very smartest, best people to keep us off the radar. Where we keep the city safe, and do what we do, and like, nobody hears about the SWAT team. That's how we know we did a good job, there is like a little bitty article about there was a barricaded person so and so and you never hear about it again.

Another SWAT officer echoed the idea that SWAT teams have changed dramatically over the years:

SWAT has evolved considerably, because SWAT went from being the ones that would go

kick in the door to get the bad guy to, um……in order to be in SWAT now, you have to be a

thinker. I, mean, before you had to be a thinker, but I think we have, as time progresses we all

get smarter. The police department is getting smarter, and the SWAT team is getting smarter.

For example, explosive breaching, unheard of 18 years ago. Especially for a SWAT team and a

city to use explosives to blow a door down. Now we have, 'master breachers' that teach

explosive breaching and calculations and all the things that go with it. So, in order for a person

to do the calculations for explosives, you can't have a dummy doing that. So, you know, this

office is not full of dummies at all. It is full of very smart and intelligent people. Technology has

changed, weapons have changed, um, just from ballistics. We used to shoot a paper punching

round on a hostage rescue. You know, use the same round that you would use on paper just

because it looked good. You shoot it on a hostage rescue, and nobody realized 'hey, it's just

going to go straight through our hostage taker and into wherever.' No we are looking at better

technology as far as ballistics go, and coefficients, and this is all stuff that was, like, make your

head spin 18 years ago. But all these guys can speak to that now, they know how to do wind

calculations, explosive breach calculations, they know how to, uh, you know, pull bars off of

doors. We are attacking things smarter than harder. SWAT as a whole has evolved

tremendously. From the operator to the tactics. Operator, tactics, weapons, and just the

introduction of new technology.

The recurring theme echoed by many of these SWAT officers is that they need problem

solvers, and people who can think critically. As stated in another way in the work of Warner &

Weiss (1999), the most important element in any SWAT operation is not speed or firepower, it is

intelligence. This reality in SWAT teams, is a microcosm of what many leaders want on modern

day police forces. Coincidentally, this is in line with what August Vollmer was striving to achieve in his attempt to professionalize the police. Many SWAT teams have developed stringent requirements to become members. Vollmer did the same thing when he was chief of the Berkeley Police Department. His comments were that the Berkeley Police department was set apart from other agencies because of their rigid requirements for entrance that had been setup for quite some time, and that were followed strictly since (Douthit, 1975).

Community Relations

It might surprise many people to learn that many SWAT Officer, not to mention many Police Officers as a whole, regard community policing with high regard and embrace the concepts that it stands for. In fact, many of the SWAT Officers commented on the importance of having a good relationship with the community that you police:

I think it is good for the community. I think it is a good liaison between the police and the community. I never wanted to be an NPO (neighborhood police officer) or community police officer, but I valued the ones that were, because they were able to bring those citizens to the police department. If we, as a police department, are going to solve all the crimes that are out there, we need eyes and ears out on the streets. We have 1,700 officers. How many of them are on the street at any given time? Let's say 550. How many citizens do we have? We are sitting at 800,000 plus in population. There is no way we can be everywhere and see everything, so we need the community to help us with that.

In some police departments, the entire philosophy for the department is community policing. In those same departments, you may find units that specifically assigned to work

neighborhoods and be a liaison between that community and the police department.   To that end, some Officers see value to specialization in that position:

At the end of the day, everyone is there to do a job. If that NPO (neighborhood police officer) is doing a good job, he knows everybody, all the businesses around, fixes the problems that the neighborhood needs, perfect.

There are still those, however who view this type of work as something that is softer than traditional police work, as one SWAT Officer stated:

Personally, I think that law enforcement has a job, and I've always felt this way, in that you keep bad people away from good people. I'm not saying that I'm exactly a touchy feely kind of person, but when it comes down to it, a law enforcement officer's job is to put bad people in jail. So, you can take what you want to with NPOs (neighborhood police officer) and people like that, you know that are touchy feely. I'm not saying I'm there to rescue a baby every time something happens.

SWAT work is a supporting role within the police department. The very existence of SWAT teams is in the capacity to support the needs of the rest of the department. Therefore, SWAT is simply a role within the police department. When discussing policing, the NPO officer (neighborhood police officer) is the image that many associate with police departments, not SWAT teams. Many SWAT officers realize that those who do other jobs on the police department do so because they are passionate about that function. There is a respect level from the officers I talked to for those who choose these positions because of the fact that they believe that these positions are critical to the mission of the police department. Without these officers

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and units, the police department cannot further its mission or increase its relationship and credibility with the community.

SWAT officers' perspectives on policing

Another theme that was consistent among the Officers interviewed was their view the important characteristics of a police officer in general. One SWAT officer stated:

Judgement. I think, uh, if you look at all the good officers out there, and there is a lot, I think the, the, ability to make a good judgement, and to stick with it. Because if you look at all the people that got fired, why? Bad judgement.

Another former SWAT officer commented on what he considered important to be a good Police Officer:

Well-rounded person. Somebody that is level headed, and can think, you know objectively, you know on both sides. Somebody smart. They don't necessarily have to be educated, but common sense smart, level head, good decision maker, and someone that is a thinker. Not just a hands-on person, but someone who can see the whole picture.

One of the most consistent responses received about what makes a good Police Officer related to the morality of the person. As one SWAT officer put it:

High morals. You are fair. Firm, but fair. Morals and ethics. I think that is the foundation for anybody to be a good person. I think good people can make good police officers. Now, later in your career you start realizing that other factors contribute to like, uh, courage. Going into a situation knowing that something is going to happen. I'd have to say morals and values that you are brought up with.

If you were to ask the question of "what does SWAT do" a common response you might hear is that they go get the "bad guys." In the opinion of many, SWAT is the unit that shows up, breaks down the door, and gets the bad guy. In some cases, that is what winds up happening over a prolonged period of time. However, as this officer put it, many SWAT officers view themselves as firm but fair. This attitude is representative of the overall philosophy that SWAT teams take when they are trying to resolve a situation. That point is echoed by the work of Warner & Weiss (1999), who found from one SWAT Lieutenant, the standard response for a SWAT team to a barricaded person situation is to "talk out, wait out, force out, take out" (p. E5). This strategy, although it may have different terminology, is used by SWAT teams throughout the country. SWAT teams are not gung-ho to charge the "machine gun nest" in an attempt to quickly end the situation. The exception being when innocent lives are actively being threatened with serious bodily injury or death. SWAT teams are much more methodical and deliberate in planning any action that needs to be taken.

Views on SWAT

Many of the persons interviewed for this project undoubtedly have a high opinion of SWAT teams, and rightfully so. It was interesting to see how their perspective was that there was no better place on the department to work. As one SWAT officer stated:

SWAT is, like, the pinnacle of the police department.

Another talked about Officers leaving SWAT and relating what other positions are like on the department:

People that leave the team, it's like 'there is no other place on the department to work, than the SWAT team.' Because the SWAT team is just, hands down, the best place to be.

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Negative Aspects

One of the final topics of that resonated with nearly all persons interviewed was their general assessment of what they considered negative aspects of being on a SWAT team. The two recurring common themes were bureaucracy and unpredictability. As one SWAT officer put it:

Outside entities sometimes not understanding us. Especially our bosses. Don't get me wrong, we have a lot of support here, and I think for the most part, all of our chain of command, our chiefs and stuff, they put us on a very high pedestal too. However, they don't understand, they've never been in a unit like this, and sometimes it's hard for them to understand. Sometimes when they try to help us, they are not helping us, and sometimes when they think they are making reasonable requests, they are not reasonable.

Another SWAT Officer commented on the bureaucratic aspect:

Lack of knowledge of people that are seeing over us. They don't know what we do. That is, kind of my dislike, if you want to say that. They just try to make decisions, and they don't have a clue what we do or how it's done.

Finally, relating to the unpredictability of the job, a SWAT Officer explained it by saying:

Unpredictability. Unpredictable call out. Unpredictable staying late for a warrant. You give, you have to give yourself to the job. Then, everything else gets seconds. Even in your marriage and your family, you know, it's hard to look your wife in the eye and say 'I put God first, then it's you, and then it's work' and, this job, you can put God first, but it definitely comes before your wife and your family on a daily basis. Not overall, but in a sense of 'hey we are

going to go to the movies', and then you get called out. The challenge of this job is not being able to separate personal time and work time, because work time can jump into personal time anytime it wants to. But personal time can't jump into work time as easily when it wants to.

Some of the officers that I spoke with regarding their time in SWAT expressed the same thing to me: reluctance to leave. As mentioned before, some of the officers interviewed have spent nearly 20 years doing the job, and never once wanted to leave. The resounding reason given for the reluctance to leave is a fear of missing out on a big event, or a withdrawal of sorts from the work itself and the closeness of the team. Another issue that contributes to the "career killing" path of a SWAT team member is that many departments will not allow you to promote, without being reassigned to a new position. Therefore, many of the people who make it to a position on the SWAT team, never promote for fear that they will not be able to make it back. The result is that many in law enforcement view SWAT as a "career killer."

Changes that occur to an officer from being in SWAT

Many of the SWAT Officers that I interviewed for this project related how being in SWAT has changed them. In this situation, it was change for the good that they were referring to. Studies of American Police Officers and Deputy Marshals showed that factors such as bad management or work conditions were more frequently identified as stressors to Officers than even potential violence or exposure to human misery (Burke, Martinussen, Richardsen, , 2007). The work of Burke et al. (2007) examined the burnout of police officers and the consequences that it may have for them both on the job interacting with citizens, and the effect that it could have on them in their personal life. The expectation would be that being in SWAT would change a person more than other parts of the police department because of how close they are to danger, and the general risk taking nature of the job. However, it does not appear that this is the case.

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Although there is no way of truly knowing the persons interviewed for this particular research project, the responses that were given indicate that Officers who are working in the specialized assignment of a SWAT team, do not appear to be experiencing burnout, or that it has changed them in a dangerous way. Perhaps this can be explained in some way by the type of person who is initially attracted to SWAT. It is possible that people who are attracted to SWAT work don't view risk in the same way as others do. Or they simply realize the risk, and visualize how to respond to and deal with it. In response to the question 'how has it changed you," one Officer stated:

Absolutely it has changed me. And I don't know that I'll fully know that complete answer until I'm gone from here for a few years. Um, because what we do it's like it never stops. You just keep going, keep going, keep going, so the stress and the change and the stress it's kind of hard to realize while you're in it. But, I think the thing that immediately comes to mind is I'm very humbled by the people I work with. I work with the absolute best people on this police department regardless of rank. I work with the TRUE LEADERS of the police department. I work with the smartest people on this police department. And to work in any assignment, in any job, career anywhere, where everybody around you is an ace go-to guy, um, and as far as supervisors, almost never have personnel problems with them, um, it's just a very humbling thing. And, just the respect that I have for these guys is off the charts.

Another SWAT Officer commented on how it changed his outlook on making himself a better teacher to other Officers:

It's made me a better tactician. It's made me want to strive to be better in all aspects. When I first came over it was about working out and being in shape. Being fit and ready for the job. Not letting the guys down. In that same sense it was about learning what it is you needed to

do as a SWAT operator so you did your job correctly and well. As time evolved, then, so that

challenged me, so it was like 'what can I do to seek outside training to continue to evolve?'

Then you evolve into becoming an instructor. So if you are going to teach it and preach it, then

you better freaking know it really good. So I had to go back and make sure I was sharp on those

things that I was going to start teaching. Then it wasn't so much being an instructor, but being a

mentor. Passing down that information. Not being a gatekeeper and holding it in, but being

able to watch new guys come over here, and you see yourself as a new operator in them, and

then you see yourself as learning the different things they need to learn. But not coddling them,

but you know, being there for them.

Once again, the people who seek out SWAT assignments are a different breed of officer.

They are the type that seek out work and to continually make themselves better. They are not

content to show up to work and get paid. They want more. They seek excitement and adventure.

It can probably be best summed up by a quote from former Delta Force team leader, Master

Sergeant Paul Howe: "Training, like selection, is a never ending process" (Howe, 2011, XIII).

That embodies the spirit and identity of a SWAT operator. What can I do to get better today?

Where can I improve myself? Have I done everything I can to master this task? As Swanson et

al. (2017, p. 178) state: "Many police agencies have special weapons and tactics (SWAT) teams

that train regularly to respond to critical incidents, such as terrorist activities, hostage situations,

or serving high-risk search/arrest warrants. Advanced training in this area yields increased

officer safety and produces a high degree of expertise." Being in SWAT takes a different breed

of person.

One of the other factors that was mentioned in regards to how the job can change you,

was the impact on your personal time and family. Most of the respondents have families and

discussed how the family supported them fully and made it easy for them to do the job. One SWAT Officer commented on the need to take advantage of the down time that you get:

Personally, it definitely, family wise it definitely changes your family life. We all know that we have to sacrifice many things with our family when it comes to being over here because we are always on call. The scheduling, it definitely changes you. Being on call all the time it definitely affects you. You kind of get used to running on little sleep, and always waiting for that phone to go off. When it comes to rest and relaxation, when it comes to vacation time, you definitely try to take full advantage of it.

As this officer related, one of the things that SWAT team members have to contend with is being on call. Many people have jobs where they are on-call, but the number of those that require you to wake up during the middle of the night and muster up to deal with a violent situation is pretty minuscule. As a result of these on-call demands, SWAT officers are subject to the risks that are associated with shift work. Particularly the loss of sleep. Ramey et al. (2012) relate that the nightly loss of sleep is a significantly negative occurrence, because research has revealed that quality and duration of sleep are linked to chronic diseases. Furthermore, studies have confirmed that the workplace can have a major impact on sleep patterns. The demands of shift work can affect the duration and quality of sleep that police officers get. In addition, the on-call status of many SWAT team members creates an additional factor that can contribute to the sleep quality or lack thereof. On top of not getting quality sleep, SWAT officers also have to be prepared to miss or leave key personal events to respond in case of an emergency. This can create additional stress on them personally as well as their families. The results can possibly contribute to poor health conditions. Although law enforcement as a whole requires 24-hour accountability, many SWAT team members are on-call on a 24-hour basis. They have the

potential, therefore, to be called upon at any time to respond. Police work is performed in an environment that is high in stress, highly visible to the public, and the expectation is that they make safe, effective decisions. The fact that sleep duration and quality may affect psychomotor performance is a cause for concern given the fact that police may face deadly force situations where weapons may have to be used (Ramey et al., 2012).

Comparing SWAT versus "Regular" Officers

It is important to this research to establish, or attempt to establish, what separates the Officers who are in SWAT from the Officers who are not. The answer is not easy to define. But what these SWAT Officers identify as "difference makers" points a finger at the basis of where the difference lies between the two groups. One SWAT officer said:

It's the way we think. A SWAT officer, what makes them special is they are able, uh, to have the mental and physical fortitude to still think logically through a very complicated, dangerous matter and still perform at a high level no matter what circumstances they are given. People outside of swat, especially other officers, get a little tender hearing this, but, uh, but there are not a whole lot of officers who can be SWAT officers. A true swat officer, I know there are a lot of departments that, especially small departments that have swat team members or something. But even our department of 1700 plus officers it's really hard for us to just find a select few who can do the job. Having the mental and physical fortitude to fight through any complicated problem and still perform at a high level, make critical decisions one right after another without fail no matter how much pressure we put on them. Whether it is physical pressure or mental pressure.

A common theme among the opinions of SWAT operators is that their job requires them to think first, act second. They believe that their mindset is based on their ability to think critically through a problem, to come to the best solution based on the situation. That result might differ depending on what the task at hand is. For example, and barricaded person call would not be handled the same way as a hostage situation. Critical decisions have to be made while considering many factors that are present in these situations. Another SWAT Officer commented along the same lines, but stated it was the desire to do the job that separated SWAT Officers from others:

With the process that you go through to get on the SWAT team, it weeds out the people that are incapable physically, mentally, and, uh, lack the courage to do what you have to do. Don't get me wrong, there are many people in this department that have the ability to do what we do, you know there are only so many positions, but, on the other hand, there are a lot of officers that have no desire to do this, because, I'm not saying they are incapable, but I just think deep down in their mind, that, they don't have what it takes to complete the mission.

A former SWAT officer expanded more on how the mentality in SWAT compares with the mentality of those outside of SWAT:

Most officers, not all officers, but most officers that you run into just in the regular department are content with going to work, being at work at 8 and leaving at 4, and not doing anything in between than what is expected, the bare minimum of what is expected of them. A SWAT officer is always looking for work. It is just like being on an operation. If you are done with this task, find work. Find something to do. Out in the general population of the police department you don't have that, there is a lot of complacency and laziness. Not a whole lot of drive, or being a self-starter. No aggression. A lot of people are able to be a leader and a

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follower. It's like, 'hey there is someone leading so be a follower.' Out there is a lot of complacency and laziness. That is what the separation is. It's not the hair, it's not the clothes, it's not the working out, and it's the mental attitude, the drive, the want to.

The drive that this officer speaks of, and the attitude of going above and beyond permeates throughout the entire job function of SWAT team members. As this SWAT officer mentions, there is a difference between SWAT officer and other officers. As noted earlier, often times SWAT is thought of as the proverbial hammer of the police department. This is not how SWAT officers view themselves. That is a point that Clark et al. (2000) echo by stating the effectiveness of SWAT teams is not calculated based on how often they use force, but by the many tactical options that they use to resolve a situation, and how they are received by the community, other officers, and legislators. Because they are called upon to respond to situations where the use of deadly force is a high likelihood, the continuous training of SWAT officers is of upmost importance. Being committed to constant training, while most likely experiencing unequal operations, requires a commitment and mindset that is beyond that of simply showing up to work and collecting a paycheck. This is where we can begin to see a separation between SWAT and regular officers. Another former SWAT officer simply surmised that because SWAT teams do so much training and get so much experience, they are essentially large sources of information for the entire department:

I think that one thing that we, as SWAT officers have, is a lot of knowledge and a lot of experience. And because of that, and because we are a good SWAT team, that when we speak people take us seriously. They understand that, like, 'hey, this cat knows what he is talking about and I should probably listen.' Even if it's, you know, like 5% more than they would listen to, you know, the other person.

Another SWAT Officer explained how they differed from other Officers based on the level of seriousness of their mission:

Knowing that you go into a situation, you have a job to do, and you are the last resort. You are there to complete a mission, and, uh, if the SWAT team can't handle it in law enforcement, there is not a whole lot more above us that can handle it.

These ideas of what separates SWAT types from non-SWAT types is echoed in the works of Eggleston, Hennington, and Young (2018) where they examine the personality of SWAT officers. In their research they hypothesize that the specially trained SWAT officers are able to control their emotions, remain calm in dangerous situations, and when necessary be conscientious. In their study, Conscientiousness was categorized by the words organized, deliberate, efficient, reliable, hard-working, precise, determined, and self-disciplined (Eggleston, et al, 2018). The importance of controlling emotions while engaged in a volatile situation cannot be understated. SWAT officers are trained to make critical decisions under pressure. An example that illustrates this would be a dynamic entry search warrant. When officers make entry into a residence to secure it for the purposes of conducting an investigation for destructible evidence, the tactics used necessitate quick and decisive decision making. Not every person possesses this capability. Imagine having to quickly make your way through a house, process the structure to determine which way you need to go, encounter an unknown person in the residence, and have to make a split second assessment on if that person is a threat, or has any objects that could potentially hurt you or your fellow officers. This is not something that is done without regular training. It is a perishable skill, just like shooting. That point is underscored by the work of Clark et al. (2000), who found in their study that the intense nature of SWAT missions requires that they train not only on equipment, but also on interpersonal interaction with

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each other (team-oriented training), and continue to assess and enhance personal strengths and to modify limitations as they are discovered. Without the ability to control your emotions, decisions can be made in haste, mistakes can be made, and the ultimate error is that life can be lost as a result. SWAT teams routinely and repeatedly train in stress induced scenarios because of the need to be ready for these situations. In law enforcement agencies, this type of training for regular officers may occur during their initial academy training, but then rarely afterwards. To that point, Chappell & Lanz-Kaduce (2010) conducted a study to demonstrate what academy recruits learned during training about *being* a law enforcement officer. Their findings found several things, but most relatable to the topic being discussed here is that academies structured the format of their curriculum so that recruits would learn to expect stress and how to perform under it. However, going forward, most agencies do not have routine retraining on that topic. Most struggle to get in the mandated annual training required by their respective governing bodies. Consequently, most officers (especially patrol officers) have to rely on their internal drive to seek out training and prepare themselves for these types of situations.

SWAT Subculture

As was discussed earlier, there is an unofficial "subculture" that exists in the police department that creates a distinction between those who wear the badge, and those who do not. As a further emphasis on that point, Malmin (2012) points out that the law enforcement subculture encourages officers to feel that they should act as if they can handle anything, and place an emphasis on individual strength and independence. This fosters officers to maintain a façade of invincibility. When you take a group of officers from that "subculture" and place them together in a highly competitive team environment with a mission to tackle some of the most dangerous situations that occur, it breeds camaraderie and fosters an even more insular

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"subculture" that is removed from the police organization as a whole. So, within that police subculture, there exists a further SWAT "subculture." A "subculture" within a "subculture" if you will. When talking to current and former SWAT members, they recognize that they are removed from normal society by multiple levels, and quite frankly embrace it. In some agencies, the SWAT officers become removed from the rest of the department simply because of the way they prepare for their missions and the tasks that they undertake. These team members are not spending time on the street interacting with other officers. There is not a lot of time to interact with other officers when you are called to the scene of a critical incident. Part of being is SWAT is losing touch with the rest of the department as a whole. It appears that the closeness they develop serves as a comforting element for their particular job. As one SWAT commander described it:

The guys are extremely tight knit, maybe to a fault at sometimes. We, we keep to ourselves for the most part, there is rarely things that leave our team. We internalize everything. We view things differently than other police, and even administration. So, sometimes it's better to talk amongst ourselves and understand it with ourselves. We talk about that quite a bit, actually. It's like a big locker room to be honest with you.

Those feelings are echoed by another SWAT Officer. He describes the bond and environment as so strong, that when Officers leave, they immediately want to return:

The band of brothers. It's your second family. It's like a lot of people go into the military and you find family and people have the same goals in life. That is, uh, to do the right thing. You are always with the SWAT team, so it's just one of those things where you almost get separation anxiety when you are gone for a period of time. I've seen it here, being here about 7 ½ years, where many of the officers that leave, whether it is family issues or scheduling issues,

or promoting, the first thing they want to do is come back. I think you miss the unity, the

cohesion, that you don't get a lot of time in other units or in patrol.

Another SWAT Officer describes the culture of the team as being extremely demanding and how that is beneficial to the team:

The culture of a SWAT team is very demanding. We demand a lot of each other, when we are with each other, and we pick on each other. It's like a close family. We pick on each other, but we push each other to be better. When the shit hits the fan, and the bullets start coming we all come together collectively with our skill set, and whatever we are assigned to do and we push through that threat.

Another SWAT Officer explained that being in SWAT tends to isolate team members from the rest of the department, and that this can sometimes be viewed as being elitist:

It's not that we look down on other officers, nothing like that. We get accused of that all the time, that we look down on em, and we walk around prima donnas, but honestly, especially a lot of SWAT guys have been here a long time, and so we kind of stop knowing other officers. We don't work with other units that much, except our narcotics units, so we don't know a lot of people. So when we walk around if we don't greet other officers they think we are stuck up.

The views that the majority of SWAT officers interviewed have regarding the culture of the SWAT team are in line with what Farkas & Manning discussed in relation to the Police culture in general. In their work, they discussed the classifications of the fields, how each level interacts with each other, and how they alienate and disregard the others (Farkas & Manning 1997). It is clear that there is a distinction between those who are SWAT officers, and those who are not. That is simply an embodiment of the SWAT subculture finding its place in the overall

Police culture. Farkas & Manning also described, cultural knowledge which includes intellectual knowledge, how one does the job, and entails methods of feeling and shared beliefs, as well as social values. They state how Police work consists of people for whom their work dominates their public discussions, is a people-based work, it usually involves conflict of some sort, is risky and uncertain, and it requires tact (such as when to reveal/conceal information) and secrecy (Farkas & Manning, 1997). This behavior is thought to be a prominent factor in establishing a culture in policing that isolates police officers from the rest of society. Furthermore, that same dichotomy exists in SWAT teams, and serves to further isolate them from society, and the police department as a whole.

Being isolated is not necessarily a good thing in an overall sense. Swanton (1980), related that the need for social unification is common to everyone. When you have a job that requires that you interact with the public on a routine basis, being socially isolated from them seems illogical. But this does occur in policing. The "us vs. them" mentality creates a barrier that socially separates police and the public. This is one of the criticisms of the professional era of policing, and a good example of why there has been a boom in interest in reform and the community policing model. For SWAT teams, they face the same issues, but are also isolated from the department they work for in many cases. It serves a purpose, because it reinforces the team atmosphere and cohesion of the team, but it also creates a void for those SWAT team members. Many team members lose touch with the rest of the department, and consequently don't know as many of their peers, or who is assigned to other units that they may have to call upon for assistance.

Team Environment, Familial Bond, Brotherhood, Camaraderie

Perhaps the most animated and truly passionate responses that were given by those being interviewed were in response to the team aspect of SWAT teams. Many of the respondents varied quite a bit in age, but nevertheless the importance of the team aspect and their reverence for it did not waiver one bit. In fact, when asked to describe the culture of a SWAT team, every single person interviewed used one of the following terms: team environment, family, brotherhood, camaraderie. According to Skolnick and Fyfe (1993, 122), the police have a "rare degree of camaraderie and group loyalty." This describes the profession of policing as a whole. What makes SWAT team members different is the amount of time they spend together, and the type of incidents that they face together. SWAT teams, especially full-time teams, spend nearly all of their work time together. They train together, workout together, eat together, develop new ideas and tools together, prepare training for outside agencies or their own departments together. This list goes on and on and on. How this is different from other officers, is that a patrol officer might have one or two other officers that they spend time answering calls with, eating with, etc. The nature of patrol work does not lend itself to large groups of officers congregating or spending large amounts of time together. Officer typically move from call to call trying to keep their respective areas under control. As one long serving SWAT member put it:

The camaraderie, I think for grown men, uh you know I'm 50 years old, but yet sometimes on our downtime when these guys are just in here talking it's kind of like you are on the varsity football team still. Which, is kind of strange as an older guy, but it teaches, or it keeps me young. It keeps my blood flowing, and I guarantee you if people could experience just the camaraderie of that, it would inject some life back into them.

Another SWAT officer echoed the aspects of the team environment:

It's a team concept, like a family. It's better than just being on patrol and answering calls by yourself or maybe with another guy. That's one of the biggest reasons, is that I always wanted to be into a team concept environment.

Another SWAT Officer explained more about the description of the SWAT team as family members:

I just like, I was so, there was more of a bigger family with my parents, and you know my dad and his friends, everybody was law enforcement. So, I kind of liked that, you know the friendship, I'll do anything for you if you need something. That is kind of what I was looking for. We are going to fight like brothers in that office. We are not going to talk to each other for days or hours, but when it's time to put on this uniform and go hit a house or go on a callout, I would take a bullet for anybody and a guarantee you anybody else would do the same. When I leave, that is what I'm going to miss.

SWAT officers also mention the dedication that they have to each other that goes beyond what they have experienced in the realm of traditional, everyday police work:

It's hard to leave this unit because, not that it is comfortable, but it's like your family and you get, not complacent, but you get set in the position that these are the people I want to work with, and transferring to another unit, it's hard because they don't have the same mindset. I don't feel they have the same mindset at SWAT officers. I mean, we are there to protect one another, and, uh, I've been told many times that many people don't see how they can do our job because they say it is so dangerous. I've said 'you know, I've never felt more safe in any unit that I've been on than the SWAT team.

The differences between SWAT and patrol work was echoed by another SWAT officer:

It's a team concept, like a family. It's better than just being on patrol and answering calls by yourself or maybe with another guy. That's one of the biggest reasons, is that I always wanted to be into a team concept environment.

Discussion

The results from this research indicate that many of the previously held notions regarding

SWAT teams are dissimilar to those of SWAT teams of today. The notion that SWAT consists

of the enforcement types is not held by SWAT members. SWAT teams today consist of

thoughtful, purposeful officers who take on a very dangerous job assignment, with the intention

to fulfill that responsibility in the safest way possible for all parties involved. Although the

SWAT teams have the means to complete actions that are forceful and brutish in nature, the use

of those tactics is viewed as a last resort. SWAT teams today exercise much self-discipline and

self-control. They possess the ultimate ability to use force to end a situation, but reserve that use

of force for the worst case scenario. This is in contrast to the images that have been built through

the misunderstanding of SWAT teams, as well as the characterization of them by the

entertainment industry.

SWAT team members today recognize the need for people who aspire to be in SWAT to

be problem solvers, critical thinkers, well-rounded, morally sound, and all-around intelligent

individuals who are dedicated to the mission of the team and have a hard-working, team-oriented

mentality. Most of these terms are broad in the sense that you can't take them and apply them to

an applicant for a SWAT team and readily identify their aptitude in each category. However,

these broad terms are good starting point for developing systems to identify these characteristics

in individuals. For future investigation into this topic, testing for qualities that are included

under these broad headings could be accomplished through personality tests, critical thinking

scenarios, and other assessment methods. Several important findings emerged from this

research. First, there is a difference between what SWAT has been thought of in the past, and

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what SWAT consists of now. Second, the research has broadly identified some important

qualities that can be focused on for future SWAT team member positions.

Particularly notable is the finding that some of the SWAT operators disclose the effects

that the job has had on them. Both current and former members related those tolls that they have

paid while on the job, and after. Many of the operators don't realize the stress levels that they

are under being tied to a phone 24 hours a day. According to one former SWAT officer, they

won't realize the way their body and mind is constantly on alert and ready to receive that call

until they are gone from the job for quite some time. Given the list of tasks that SWAT teams

face that are considered stressful, it was interesting that more officers did not consider SWAT to

be a stressful job. Some acknowledged that it is a stressful job, but that the operational tempo

and other responsibilities were so demanding that they didn't have time to notice it was stressful.

Others commented that they didn't view it as stressful, but realized that it probably is, and

wouldn't fully realize that until after they had quit doing the job. Much like policing in general,

SWAT is subject to the same risks for stress. As Gershon et al. (2009) stated, those who report

high levels of stress in policing are at a significantly higher risk for burnout, negative physical

and mental health situations, and negative behavioral actions such as poor relations with the

public, aggression, and anger issues.

Considering the high level of stress that can be present in SWAT operations, it would

appear that their insular nature would be a breeding ground for stress to occur. In speaking with

these SWAT operators, it appears that the team environment, or family-like bond that is created

among these team members may act as some form of release and antidote to the stress that

occurs. In a sense, one member can say to the other "you know what I'm going through" and

because they both experienced a dangerous situation together, and more importantly with a larger

group of people, they almost form their own "therapy" group. This is different than officers in other parts of the department, who often times will go to calls with only one or two other individuals. When a highly stressful event occurs, there is usually a small contingent of people present who can truly know what it was like to be in that particular incident. Once it is over, they may not work together again for a few days, or may not get to go on many calls together. Therefore, the isolation of policing occurs more individually at the patrol officer level, and more as a group in the SWAT environment. This may help to explain why burnout is common to police officers in a patrol setting, but not in SWAT related assignments.

McCreary et al. (2017) conducted a study to make a meaningful measure of police stress. One thing they noted is was that the adverse effects of job stress on job satisfaction, motivation of employees, and job performance. It makes sense then that if SWAT operators are not feeling the stress that may or may not inherently be present due to the nature of their work, that they do not lack motivation, are satisfied with their jobs, and perform at high levels.

Job control may be another factor that differentiates SWAT from other assignments. SWAT operators are allowed more latitude to come up with creative ways to solve problems, even if they don't conform to all policies and procedures. In some instances, venturing too far outside of department policies or standard operating procedures can result in negative action taken for patrol officers. Zangaro and Soeken (2007) found that reduced job control and work frustration are correlated with lower levels of job satisfaction. Although they were studying the nursing field, the sentiment is still applicable to job satisfaction holistically.

Finally, the most obvious thing that stuck out to me from my interactions was the lack of female SWAT operators. It appears as though this is a job that rarely attracts female candidates. Speaking personally, there have been several women on the authors' SWAT team and several

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more that have applied. But they do not apply, and do not obtain a spot on the team with the frequency that their male counterparts do. According to Kraska (2001) the hyper-masculinity of the elite tactical teams may be a reason why females do not apply to be a part of them. As one officer stated earlier, the team almost has a varsity football, locker room type atmosphere to it. That may not be attractive to female candidates. Furthermore, according to Messerschmidt (2009), women on SWAT teams may cause them to have to make behavioral decisions that are inconsistent with perceived sex categorization and gender behavior. SWAT work often involves exposure to violent, dangerous situations that require strength and aggression to be successful. The suggestion is that this type of police work may require women to negate the femininity.

Dodge et al. (2011) conducted a study of women on SWAT teams and they found many things related to the role of women police officers and perceptions of gender in police work. An anecdotal comment by one of their participants was that SWAT is definitely a "boys club." They also concluded that the level of masculinity and leadership dominance by males may prevent women from assuming equal roles. The work of Dodge et al. self-reports limitations due to sample size and geographic restrictions, but based on the feedback I received from my interviews, it makes sense that SWAT teams may be viewed as a "boys club" by some. However, as Dodge et al. (2011) mention, they did not analyze the selection process for SWAT teams, and also did not analyze applicants (both male and female) that were selected or rejected, to get a better understanding of the composition of SWAT teams.

Conclusion

Present research does not provide enough clarity to create a definitive list of characteristics that can systematically be checked off on while identifying or selecting a SWAT team member. No selection of personnel with a mission this difficult can be done in that manner. However, the key issues that were identified from this research relating to problem solving, and critical thinking skills can help to shape the direction of future research into this topic to make the decisions in that personnel selection easier. The depth of this research is woefully inadequate to do that on its own.

For future research an extensive process of interviewing SWAT officers from all over the country would be ideal. It would be helpful to have a much larger segment of this profession to interview, and also a control group against which their answers would be compared. There would need to be criteria set for selecting the departments with tactical teams to interview, such as department size, team size, part-time/full-time status, and finally by geographical location. That would be a very time consuming process, but I believe it would ultimately be a study worthy of doing. There also might be worth in conducting concurrent interviews at each department with officers who are not on the tactical team. This would allow the researcher to get the opinions of officers who aren't in the tactical role on the same topics as the tactical officers. These could be compared for differences.

In a quantitative approach, a nationwide survey could be developed to target many more departments. This could potentially be accomplished by utilizing the National Tactical Officers Association (NTOA) and its network of police agencies with tactical teams. For a control group, a parallel survey could be generated that seeks the opinions of officers who are not assigned to tactical teams. Other avenues would have to be explored for distributing this survey. Perhaps an

organization such as the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) or an institution such as the FBI National Academy would be useful in distributing the parallel survey.

This study is useful because it sheds light on a subject that deserves further exploration. In the public eye, as well as within police organizations, there are many misunderstandings about what SWAT does and does not do. By creating a greater understanding of the role and function of SWAT teams, several of the myths and misconceptions are debunked. Part of the limitation of this study is that most of the interviews were in the state of Texas and in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. There are interviews from other parts of Texas, and in large metropolitan areas such as Los Angeles and San Diego, but the lack of a truly robust group of subjects from all over the country is a limiting factor for this study.

Another potential limitation of this project is my intimate affiliation with the subject at hand. The potential existed for me to introduce biases in this research. But my goal in doing this project was to let the SWAT officers tell the story, and for me to simply be the facilitator. This particular assignment appears to have a code that permeates all the boundaries listed above.

Although there has not been an extensive amount of research done in this field, some of the research that has been done trends in the right direction. Young, Hennington, & Eggleston's (2018) work on personality, cognitive-emotion regulation and decision-making style is conceptually sound. The focus of their study was comparing negotiators to SWAT operators, rather than SWAT operators to other officers as a whole. A study of that nature combined with further analysis of characteristics that fall under the heading of critical thinking and problem solving would serve as a very strong basis for examining potential candidates for SWAT team vacancies. This is extremely important for SWAT as a whole. By identifying specific desired traits and then utilizing methods to identify those traits for unit selection, the process of building

a SWAT team becomes much more reliable and much more likely to achieve the desired results.

Perhaps this can be done by utilizing psychological screening tests, personality tests, or other

similar screening tests. This method would not only benefit SWAT teams, but that it could also

benefit the policing profession as a whole. Some departments currently require a psychological

screening before a position is offered on the department. That is not enough. The role of the

police is changing, and the need for problems solvers and critical thinkers is already upon us.

This shift is occurring. Policing still needs the people who are willing to do things that frighten

others, and willing to go places that others won't. But, they need to be able to think rationally,

critically, and make tough decisions under stress.

To that end, another area deserving of attention is the lack of recurring training of all

police personnel under stress induction. As previously mentioned, many police academies do

this initially for their recruits, but fail to do it continuously for their veteran officers. This is

something that could be used to keep officers mindful of potential situations that can occur, and

to get practice repetitions form them in critical decision making. This would be a much better

alternative to them getting training like this once in the academy, and then the next time they are

faced with a similar situation is when they are in a potentially deadly encounter.

Changes can occur for SWAT teams as a result of this research. As mentioned above,

these findings could be a starting point to help develop better selection processes for tactical

teams. There exists a great disparity across the country on how SWAT team members are

selected. In some areas, it is an assignment you can do simply if you show interest, and in others

it is a very difficult process to obtain a spot on a team. Because of the seriousness of the

mission, this assignment is not one that needs to be filled by political appointment, or the "good

old boy" system. The most qualified person for the job needs to get the job, period. At the end

of the day, that is what the SWAT team wants. Despite what you have heard.

Appendix

Interview questions:

1. Why did you become a police officer?

2. What was your background prior to becoming a police officer?

3. What makes a good police officer?

4. What is important in policing?

5. How did you become a SWAT officer?

6. Describe the culture of a SWAT team.

7. Why don't some people leave their position on the SWAT team?

8. What makes a good SWAT officer?

9. How does that compare to other officers?

10. How has being in SWAT changed you?

11. What aspects of being in SWAT do you like?

12. What aspects of being in SWAT do you dislike?

13. Is being in SWAT stressful?

14. How has it affected your family?

15. What do you think the public perception of SWAT teams are presently?

16. What are your long-term plans on the police department?

17. How have things evolved/changed in relation to SWAT teams?

18. What do you think about community policing and NPO's?

19. How long have you been a police officer?

20. How long have you been on the SWAT team?

21. What department do you work for?

22. How old are you?

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