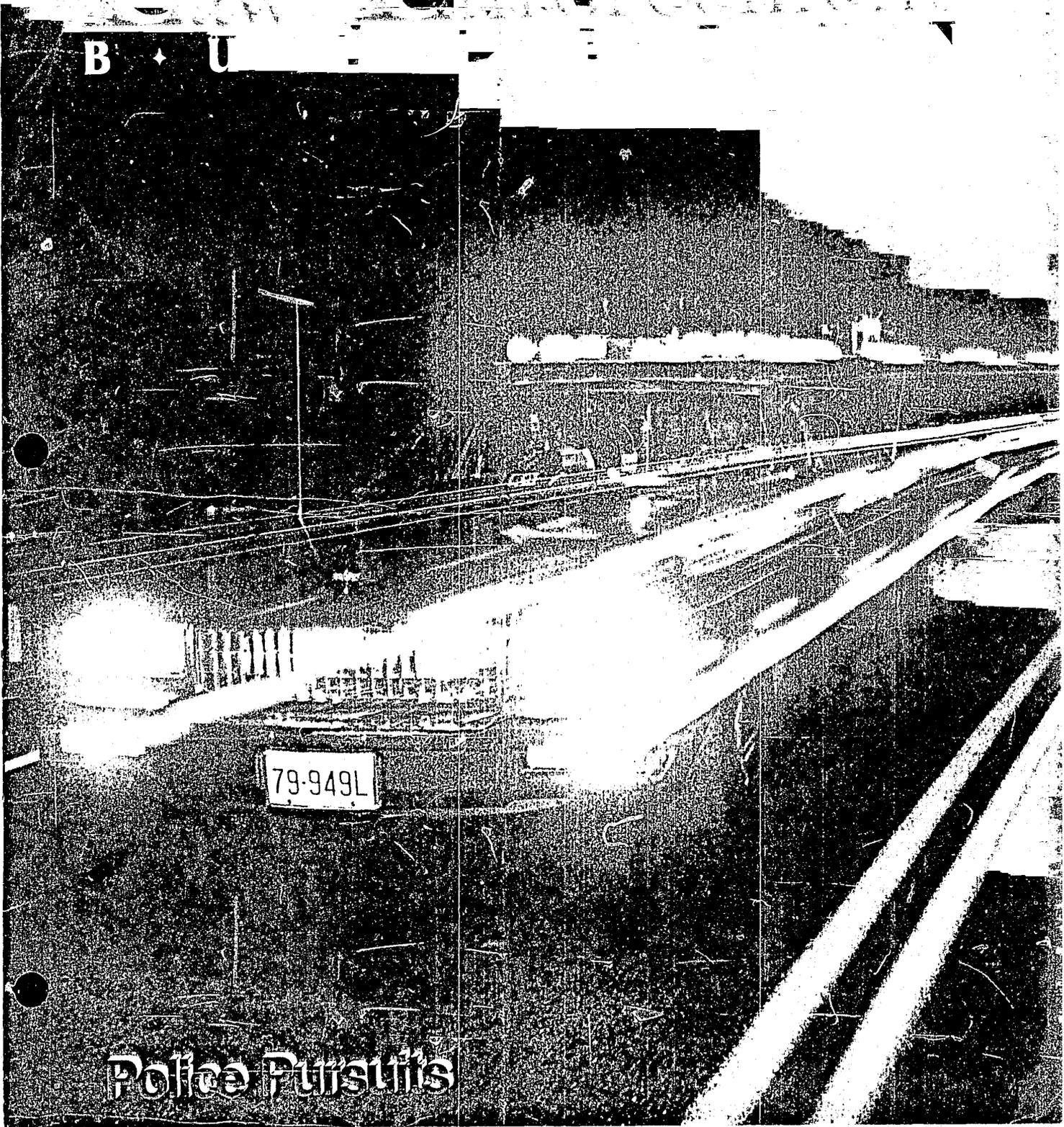


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Police Pursuits

Point of View

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Culture, Mission, and Goal Attainment

By
ROBERT A. JOHNSON

James Q. Wilson describes organizational culture as a "...patterned way of thinking about the central tasks of and human relations within an organization."¹ Culture, as Wilson identifies it, involves task fulfillment and human relations and how they mesh together to form a cohesive entity where an organization's employees share in the accomplishment of its mission.²

Whether officers' perceptions of their departments' mission coincides with its culture depends greatly on whether the chief executive clearly identifies the mission. It also depends on whether employees' personal and organizational goals mesh.

Differences in cultural perception exist in virtually every organization, especially when administrators fail to state the mission clearly, thereby leaving the overall focus either misunderstood or nonexistent. As a result, officers often establish organizational culture in the field and impart it to new employees through field training.

For example, field training officers can pass on to recruits

their cultural norms, which may emphasize more immediate concerns over the more philosophical concerns found in organizational mission statements. At this point, the old adage, "Forget everything you learned in the academy, this is the real world" may come into play. Seasoned police officers who combine personal knowledge and experience to form their own views of the department's mission—however skewed—train recruits to believe as they do, thereby discounting the department's true overall objective.

How then do police managers counteract this situation? They must establish a positive culture within their departments.

Establishing a positive culture requires a commitment on the part of police administrators. There are three important steps police administrators must take to establish a positive culture within their agencies: Educate the officers, place a high priority on recognizing employees' good works, and use managerial strategies to promote harmony within the organization.



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Educate Officers

In order to establish a positive culture, police managers must educate their officers on the department's overall mission and on the benefits of setting goals that contribute to that mission. They should ensure that recruits can find this information in their blue books, orientation manuals, or recruit objective guides.

When this instruction process exists, recruits adopt objectives that apply across the board to *all* officers, regardless of assignment. In the absence of this education process, recently hired officers adopt the culture of their field training officers, without taking into consideration *overall* organizational goals.

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Build Self-esteem

Recent studies confirm the value of enhancing self-esteem through employee recognition and support for employee development programs. Enhancing self-esteem results in a positive influence on employees' commitment to the organization and on their willingness to further those organizational goals and objectives that appear consistent with their own. For this reason, organizations should work to enhance the self-esteem of their employees, and they should, at the same time, foster trust, openness, and commitment.

Develop Management Strategies

Police managers must also use managerial strategies to accomplish shared objectives and goals.³ For example, they should ensure that the task needs of the organization and the personal needs of employees complement each other. Managers promote this type of situation when they:

- Provide meaningful job assignments (Place the right person in the right job.)
- Broaden employees' spans of control (This, in turn, enhances employees' self-esteem and motivates them to respond to the trust placed in them.)
- Give employees a voice in operations (Employees' commitment to their departments tend to increase when they have a voice in decisions that affect them.)

- Allow democratic leadership (Allow *all* managers to share in the decisionmaking process.)
- Develop a rapport with subordinates (Managers should recognize the good work of employees, and they should develop good listening skills.)

"In order to establish a positive culture, police managers must educate their officers on the department's overall mission and on the benefits of setting goals that contribute to the mission."

Conclusion

Developing an atmosphere that benefits both employees and the organization requires managers to use a number of strategies and policies that give the employees a sense of fulfillment in their job assignments. Furthermore, providing this type of work environment increases productivity, morale, and commitment based on a feeling of shared purpose and solidarity between subordinates and managers.

The task of redefining culture within a police organization remains difficult, and chief executives cannot accomplish this alone. Instead, managers should work to

create positive culture by communicating the mission statement and the objectives and goals toward accomplishing the mission, by designing incentives that foster and encourage a shared sense of purpose, and by ensuring that quality training exists within the department.

Progressive organizations understand the importance and value of properly assimilating the new employee into an existing workforce. Of course, the goal of any formal socialization process involves bringing a new employee on board with a working understanding of organizational rules, policies, and procedures within the framework of a particular assignment. Without a clear mission that includes attainable objectives and goals that most employees understand and support, the culture of police departments will continue to be defined by old-timers who tell new recruits to "forget what you learned in the academy." To keep the organizational mission from being defined by personnel constraints and the socialization process from being defined by seasoned police practitioners who may or may not bond with the stated mission is to allow positive culture to flourish. ♦

Endnotes

¹ James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy, What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It* (New York, New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1989), p.91.

² Ibid.

³ S.S. Souryal, *Police Organization and Administration* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Anderson Books), 1985.