

Predicting Job Satisfaction in a Medium Sized Texas Police  
Department

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Applied Research Project

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## **Abstract**

The works of organizational and job design researchers indicate that increased job satisfaction will increase productivity, foster cooperation, improve attendance, and generally increase the quality of work performed. This study applies these theories and techniques to analyze a medium size Texas police department. This study used survey research to test six hypotheses. The first five hypotheses state that police officers who report higher perceptions of five job dimensions will report higher job satisfaction. The sixth hypothesis states that a calculation of the five job dimensions, known as the Motivating Potential Score, will also influence levels of job satisfaction. Perceptions of 37 police officers were measured. The dependent and independent variables were examined through descriptive statistics. Finally, bivariate regression models are utilized to analyze the dependent variable.

The results of the regression models provide support for all but one of the hypotheses. Task identity, task significance, skill variety, autonomy, and the Motivating Potential Score were all found to significantly impact job satisfaction. The results did not support the hypothesis that feedback would significantly impact job satisfaction. The implications of the research suggest the police department's administration can take action to improve job satisfaction, and suggestions for policy makers are presented.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

This study seeks to explore the predictors of job satisfaction in a medium sized Texas police department. The goal is to provide the police department's administration with recommendations that will positively impact the police department. This is achieved by collecting data from the sworn police employees of the department and utilizing statistical analysis techniques in order to provide recommendations to the administration. This chapter will introduce the topic, a brief theoretical background, the research purpose, and present the organization and explanation of the research.

### **Why Job Satisfaction Matters**

There are many reasons why police officer job satisfaction is important. Perhaps most importantly is the cost of turnover. This cost includes "separation costs, recruiting costs, selection costs, new employee costs, training costs, and other "soft" costs like paying for overtime for other officers to cover the gap left by the departing officer" (Orrick 2002). This is not to mention the irreplaceable loss of experience when an officer leaves. This can impact the organizational culture and other aspects of the department, but it is important to note that this can possibly be a good thing. When an officer leaves he or she takes their knowledge, experience and influence with them. When a good officer leaves, the department loses an asset, but when a poor officer leaves, the department benefits from losing that officer's negative influence.

Higher job satisfaction has been shown to positively impact a number of other features of the job such as, "higher productivity, lower absenteeism, and higher organizational commitment" (Johnson 2012). The implications of these findings indicate that police departments will get more "bang for their buck" should their officers have higher job satisfaction. This could be the impetus

for change within the department or justify an expenditure on some training or other means of increasing job satisfaction of the police officers in the department.

There is evidence that as officers become more involved with the community they serve, their job satisfaction increases (Green 1989). A more recent study has shown that how officers believe they are perceived by the community influences their job satisfaction (Yim and Schafer 2009). These two studies suggest that departments should actively engage with the community, and these studies promulgate support for community-oriented policing strategies. Here again there is support for actively attempting to raise a police officer's job satisfaction. A more satisfied police officer is more likely to have better relations with the community, and in turn, the community is more likely to have a positive perception of their police officers which leads to higher police officer job satisfaction.

## **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction studies are rooted in management theory, which began with what is known as the Classical School. The Classical School of management continues to have a large impact on law enforcement today (Sklansky 2007). Motivation theories form another pillar of job satisfaction studies, and influential researchers such as Maslow and Herzberg's theories have a significant impact on organizational management. Finally, researchers such as Hackman and Oldham (1975) use job satisfaction studies that build upon this past research to create studies that allow for positive job redesign. This section will briefly explore the Classical School of management, motivation theory, and the job satisfaction study that serves as the basis for this research project.



The Classical School consists of such influential researchers as Max Weber and Frederick Taylor. Max Weber laid the foundation for the widespread use of bureaucracy. Weber (1946) discusses six principles of bureaucracy. First, the organization needs a well-defined hierarchy, so that all workers are familiar with the chain of command and to allow for a command and control structure. Then there is a division of labor and specialization, so that each employee is doing a job that they are specifically capable of doing. Rules and regulations are clear so all workers within the organization understand have a sense of certainty and cooperation. Then Weber proposes that impersonal relationships between labor and management, competence to do one's job, and record keeping are all done within a good bureaucracy (Weber, 1946).

Taylor's scientific management analyzes data to determine the "one best way" to accomplish a task, and encourages managers to implement strict and specific methods to increase efficiency (W. F. Taylor 1919). While this approach has fallen out of favor with the majority of management theorists and practitioners, "Taylorism" continues to be a major influence in police departments (Sklansky 2007). Many situations are standardized to maximize efficiency and reduce conflict with the public. These approaches are desired for accountability purposes, but such strict and tall bureaucracies can often lead to redundancies and a lack of communication. This can actually hinder efficiency, effectiveness, responsiveness, and many other organizational characteristics (Simon 1946).

While modern management theory and practice has evolved into a more humanistic and pragmatic school of thought, by and large the structure of most police departments is most affiliated with the Classical School of management (Sklansky 2007). Shane (2010b) describes traditional policing as being based on command and control doctrine and symbolism. He states

that this approach to management can create stagnation and indifference towards clientele by sapping energy and creativity from employees (Shane 2010b). This echoes the criticisms of Merton (1940) who noted how rigid bureaucratic organizations can create an environment in which blind adherence to rules and regulations can blur the line between means and ends.

Job satisfaction studies are closely tied to motivation theory, such as Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs." Maslow's (1943) theory of motivation is based upon the "hierarchy of needs" of the individual person. The hierarchy of needs is represented by a pyramid that has the most basic needs at the bottom and the highest level needs at the top. Essentially, Maslow's theory is that humans are first motivated to fulfill the very basic physiological needs, and that once these needs are met they will seek to fulfill their higher level needs until they achieve "self-actualization" (Maslow, 1943). Maslow's work is critical in management theory for its suggestion that for humans to be effectively motivated they must have more than just their economic needs met. This is quite the departure from the Classical School of management, which emphasized only the economic-rationality needs of human motivation (W. F. Taylor 1919; Weber, 1946).

Motivation theory serves as the basis from which job design researchers Hackman and Oldham create the Job Diagnostic Survey, a section from which serves as the backbone of this research project. Hackman and Oldham were interested in how the worker can be motivated in a changing job environment, and began researching job redesign. This approach differs from the Classical School by considering the individual needs and goals of the worker rather than simply assuming that the worker is a cog in a machine. Their research is rooted in the "Human Resources School" which considers workers to be more than economic decisions makers. The researchers received grants from the Department of Naval Research and by the Manpower

Association, US Department of Labor. Their research culminated with the Job Diagnostic Survey, which was intended to lead to positive job redesign.

The Job Diagnostic Survey (JDS) sought to gather data on job design by measuring three critical psychological states and the growth needs of the employee. Five core job dimensions create three critical psychological states. Skill variety, task identity and task significance create “experienced meaningfulness of work.” The core job dimension of autonomy creates “experienced responsibility for the work.” Finally, the core job dimension of feedback creates “knowledge of the actual results of work activities.” These five characteristics combined are defined as the “work environment” according to Hackman and Oldham. With a quick calculation of the five measures, the “Motivating Potential Score” (MPS) of the job can be determined. The higher the MPS, the higher the job satisfaction should be. However, the five core job dimensions alone cannot fully diagnose the motivating potential of the job. Some employees simply are not motivated by the same things as others. To account for this, Hackman and Oldham included a “Growth Needs” scale which allowed for a better measure of the MPS of the job. Unfortunately, the original JDS is far too long and too complicated for this particular research project. However, the JDS was chosen as the basis for the measurement instrument because it has been successfully shortened and used by many researchers since its inception.

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to explore predictors of job satisfaction in a medium sized Texas police department. The objective is to discover what the department can do to improve the job satisfaction of its employees. The research specifically leaves out items such as satisfaction with salary and satisfaction with the community because these things are not always easily

within the power of the department to improve. More to the point, in an era of tight budgets, most police departments simply cannot raise the salary offered to their officers in an attempt to increase job satisfaction, and no police department can change the community they serve in an attempt to increase job satisfaction. Because of these and other similar reasons, the research purpose is designed around finding ways for police administrators to improve police officer job satisfaction within the confines of their budgets, their communities, and other uncontrollable factors.

The research explores the predictors of job satisfaction by surveying each employee within the department's satisfaction with the five following measures: task identity, task significance, skill variety, autonomy and feedback. Each measure is addressed in the conceptual framework in chapter one and operationalized in chapter three. These measures were selected because each can be addressed within the power of the police department. For example, if officers express low satisfaction with feedback, the department can attempt to improve its feedback method.

Finally, the research adds the following five control variables: age, gender, race, rank and education. Each control variable is addressed in the conceptual framework and operationalized in chapter three. These control variables allow the researcher to make richer conclusions about the impact of the work environment on police officers. For example, if officers who have higher levels of education also have higher levels of job satisfaction, then the department might consider offering education incentives to their officers.

## **Organization and Explanation of Research**

The research is divided into six chapters. Chapter one introduces the concept and research purpose of the project. Chapter two provides a comprehensive literature review of previous research relating to police officer job satisfaction and the work environment. In chapter two, the conceptual framework for the project is presented and discussed. The conceptual framework organizes the research using formal hypotheses. Next, chapter three details the methodology used to collect and analyze the data. The methodology uses linear regression for each independent variable to predict the impact of each on job satisfaction, and chapter three provides the explanatory factors and details the data sources and types. The chapter operationalizes each explanatory factor, discusses the strengths and weaknesses of survey data, introduces the statistical techniques used to analyze the data, and discusses the reasoning behind the selection of the independent and control variables.

Chapter four provides the results of the survey data. The chapter contains descriptive statistics, correlations, and each linear regression table. Chapter five presents a discussion of the findings and makes suggestions for improving job satisfaction. Finally, chapter six concludes the research by discussing common findings and suggestions for future research.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **Research Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this research is to explore predictors of job satisfaction in a medium sized, Texas police department.

#### **Conceptual framework**

Shields (1998) writes that conceptual frameworks operate on two levels; the overarching “meta-level” and the more specific “micro-level.” In this case, the meta-framework involves job design theory, which could be narrowed further and described as influences of police officer job satisfaction. The much more focused micro-conceptual framework links abstract concepts to the literature to ensure that the hypotheses appropriately address the research question.

The research purpose is explanatory, so the micro-conceptual framework is organized using formal hypotheses. There are two types of formal hypotheses which serve as the mediator between the abstract and the observable; the hypothesis and the operationalized hypothesis (Shields 1998). The conceptual framework in Table 2.1 presents the five hypotheses developed to address the research question and supporting literature. The operationalized hypotheses are addressed in Chapter 3 and can be found in Table 3.1.

The intention of this research project is to predict job satisfaction in a police department. The conceptual framework was developed from job design theory, which uses the work environment to measure and predict job satisfaction. The concept of the work environment developed into six hypotheses, “police officers who report higher levels of skill variety will have more job satisfaction,” “police officers who report higher levels of task identity will have more

job satisfaction,” “police officers who report higher levels of task significance will have more job satisfaction,” “police officers who report higher levels of autonomy will have more job satisfaction,” “police officers who report higher levels of feedback will have more job satisfaction” and “police officers who report a higher Motivating Potential Score will have higher job satisfaction.” These hypotheses are presented in Table 2.1 along with supporting literature. Next, the concept of police officer characteristics is presented and consists of a set of control variables (age, race, rank, gender, education) which have been shown to influence police officer job satisfaction. The control variables are presented in Table 2.1 along with supporting literature.

Table 2.1: Conceptual framework	
Hypotheses	Scholarly source
H1: Police officers who report higher levels of skill variety will have more job satisfaction.	(Hackman and Oldham 1975) (Borum, et al. 1998) (Zhao and Reiner 1999)
H2: Police officers who report higher levels of task identity will have more job satisfaction.	(Hackman and Oldham 1975) (Kirmeyer 1988) (Jett and George 2003)
H3: Police officers who report higher levels of task significance will have more job satisfaction.	(Hackman and Oldham 1975) (Hackman and Oldham 1976) (Van Ryzin 2012) (Grant 2008 )
H4: Police officers who report higher levels of autonomy will have more job satisfaction.	(Hackman and Oldham 1975) (Van den Broeck, et al. 2010) (Taylor and Westover 2011) (Zhao and Reiner 1999) (Shane 2011)
H5: Police officers who report higher levels of feedback will have more job satisfaction.	(Hackman and Oldham 1975) (Johnson 2012) (Zhao, Thurman and He 1999) (Zhao and Reiner 1999) (Shane 2011) (Yim and Schafer 2009)
H6: Police officers who report a higher Motivating Potential Score will have more job satisfaction	(Hackman and Oldham 1975) (Zhao and Reiner 1999)
Control Variables	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Age</li> <li>■ Gender</li> <li>■ Rank</li> <li>■ Race</li> <li>■ Education</li> </ul>	(DeSantis and Durst 1999) (Hoath, Schneider and Starr 1998) (Lee and Wilbur 1985) (Clark, Oswald and Warr 1996) (Zhao, Thurman and He 1999) (P. E. Carlan 2007) (Washington 2000) (Shane 2010a) (M. Dantzker 1994) (Gau, Terrill and Paoline III 2012) (Dantzker and Kubin 1998) (Krimmel and Gormley 2003) (Sklansky, Not Your Father's Police Department: Making Sense of the New Demographics of Law Enforcement 2006) (Haarr 2005) (Pitts 2009) (White, et al. 2010) (Roberg and Bonn 2004) (Payne, Blackwell and Collins 2010) (Lambert, et al. 2004)



## **Understanding Police Officer Job Satisfaction**

The dependent variable in this study is police officer job satisfaction. This section reviews different dimensions and issues associated with police officer job satisfaction. A bit more that sets up the section . . . Low levels of job satisfaction are associated with a lack of performance, higher rates of turnover, intention to quit, depression, anxiety, excessive stress, some stress related diseases, and so on (Arnetz, et al. 2012; Carlan 2007). All stakeholders have a vested interest in doing what they can to improve, manage, and promote job satisfaction in a police department.

Job satisfaction is typically measured using scales and indices. Some research relies on a general job satisfaction measure developed for typical jobs, while others have created police-specific job satisfaction measurements (Dantzker and Surette 1996). These studies have found that there are different dimensions of job satisfaction: (1) Satisfaction with work, (2) satisfaction with coworker, and (3) satisfaction with supervisors. These dimensions are reviewed in the remainder of this section.

### **Satisfaction with Work**

Police work is a field in which the officer must balance discretion and bureaucratic demands, as well as balance the individual rights of citizens with the needs of public order, acting as what Lipsky (1980) refers to as “street-level bureaucrats.” This balancing act is often a difficult task for police officers to undertake, and can place significant amounts of strain on the police officer. Police work is often stereotypically perceived as being exciting where the officer solves crimes, gets into chases and altercations, and uses firearms. However, police work is often characterized

by long periods of boredom and constant bouts with the bureaucratic machine that is the criminal justice system (Shane 2010a).

Police work has long been recognized as a highly stressful occupation (Gershon, et al. 2009). While stress alone is not a totally reliable predictor of job satisfaction, it has been shown to significantly reduce job satisfaction if not dealt with properly (Shane 2010a). Unmanaged stress can cause a multitude of problems, including physical ailments such as ulcers, sleep deprivation, and exhaustion (Arnetz, et al. 2012). It is likely that an officer suffering from such conditions would have low levels of job satisfaction. Some researchers argue that certain individuals have personalities that are predisposed to handle stress, while others are more vulnerable to the negative effects of stress (Hart, Wearing and Headey 1995). Further, police work interferes with family and social life, which could hinder the support structure necessary to manage the difficulties and stress of work (Morash, Haarr and Kwak 2006).

An important aspect of police work is the function of first responder, and in performing this role the police officer can be subjected to many grisly and stressful incidents. Most police officers will encounter serious car accidents, homicide, drug offenders, sexual predators, natural disasters, and so on during their careers. The inherent nature of police work to expose officers to traumatic situations can lead to a multitude of negative outcomes, such as absenteeism and early retirement (Marmar, et al. 2006). Such negative outcomes and full-blown Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder in policing are becoming more common as police officers are being asked to do more with less in an era of tight budgets. Researchers suggest that identifying factors that both influence vulnerability and resilience to PTSD are critical to the future of police departments (Marmar, et al. 2006).

Much research has examined police work and the detrimental affect it has on job satisfaction, but there is a significant amount of data suggesting that police work can be a significant source of job satisfaction (Zhao, Thurman and He 1999). Zhao, et al (1999) employed the Motivating Potential Score from the Job Diagnostic Survey developed by Hackman and Oldham (1975) to determine a police officer's perception of the work environment and its impact on police officer job satisfaction. The Motivating Potential Score consists of a calculation of the five variables: skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback. The researchers concluded that as police officers reported a higher Motivating Potential Score, their job satisfaction was reported higher as well (Zhao, et al. 1999).

Many researchers have used the Motivating Potential Score of the police work environment to determine its impact on job satisfaction. Autonomy has been found to be a significant source of job satisfaction, but research indicates that only 41 percent of the officers surveyed reported ongoing levels of autonomy, and 28 percent acknowledged a noticeable absence of autonomy in their work (Carlan and Lewis 2009). Carlan and Lewis (2009) go on to suggest that the lack of autonomy in police work is inevitable due to that bureaucratic nature of policing which restricts police officer freedom in the first place.

### **Satisfaction with Coworkers**

The influence of coworkers on job satisfaction is not limited to policing, but it could perhaps have an even greater influence than other fields of work. Police coworkers are expected to perform at high levels and even save the lives of fellow officers, so any lack of confidence in coworkers could be severely detrimental to job satisfaction. Empirical evidence suggests that one of the most common reasons for police to leave the field early in their careers involves the

attitudes of coworkers, among other factors (Haarr 2005). Other research shows that police coworkers can be a significant influence on job satisfaction as coworker expectations, support and demands vary, which could especially impact women and minorities (Morash, Haarr and Kwak 2006).

Traditionally, policing has been a career dominated by white males. But the status quo is changing and minorities and women are becoming more represented in many police departments. This change is not without friction, as research indicates that biases from coworkers can significantly hinder job satisfaction, especially amongst women and minorities. Racial or ethnic bias in policing has been shown to be a major cause of stress in policing, which negatively affects those who receive bias in policing and those who have to deal with the situation as well (Morash, Haarr and Kwak 2006). Tokenism is defined as making up less than 15 percent of a department, and women who belong to these departments experience lower levels of job satisfaction than women who are better represented in their department (Krimmel and Gormley 2003). Further, gender discrimination from coworkers and supervisors was cited by three out of four of women who decided to leave policing early in their careers (Haarr 2005).

Communication between coworkers can hinder or help job satisfaction, as Shane (2011) found that when communications between coworkers are perceived as onerous and problematic, job performance is negatively affected. Further, research shows that when coworker communication and relationships are good, performance and the desire to remain with the organization are improved as well (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002).

Coworkers can also be a major source of job satisfaction in policing, as they face many of the same challenges of police work. Evidence suggests that satisfaction with coworkers is the highest

of the three measures of job satisfaction, which include satisfaction with work and supervisors (Zhao, Thurman and He 1999). This finding supports the well documented claim of a strong police officer subculture, and that police officers tend to form stronger bonds between each other than coworkers in other professions (Johnson 2012). Coworkers can provide an important level of support needed to cope with police life, and many police officers find that making friends with other police officers is easier than becoming friends with non-police officers. Therefore it can be assumed that satisfaction with coworkers creates one dimension of job satisfaction.

### **Satisfaction with Supervisors**

A police officer's perception of his or her supervisors is another dimension of overall job satisfaction. Supervisors who positively impact job satisfaction provide feedback "make personnel decisions based on merit and not politics, serve as guides and counsel to their officers, and support their officers when they make a mistake or a complaint is filed against them." (Johnson 2012). Further, evidence suggests that fair treatment, supervisory support, and favorability and rewards were all significantly related to a worker's perceived organizational support, which influences job satisfaction (Rhoades and Eisenberger 2002).

Supervisors who provide feedback to workers let them know if their performance is acceptable or if it needs improvement. Hackman and Oldham (1975) state that knowledge about the results of work activities make up one of the three critical psychological states necessary for positive work outcomes. This knowledge comes in the form of feedback, which can come from the job itself, coworkers, supervisors and the community (Hackman and Oldham 1975). Feedback has been found to have the most significance on job satisfaction when coming from supervisors (Shane 2010a). As feedback from supervisors has been found to be positively associated with job

satisfaction, it is important to note that feedback in police departments can be slow and nearly useless due to the bureaucratic nature of police departments that typically sees police officers failing to receive useful feedback beyond their immediate supervisor (Shane 2011). Shane (2011) goes on to note that a perceived lack of feedback from supervisors can indicate communication problems, apathy or indifference from supervisors and goes on to suggest that police departments “flatten out” their organizational structure as a means to remedy this problem.

### **Independent Variables**

The three different dimensions of job satisfaction are examined as a function of five core job dimensions. These job dimensions are skill variety, task significance, task identity, autonomy and feedback. These five core job dimensions combined create the police officer work environment, and will be explained in this section. The concept of the work environment can be linked to Herzberg’s Two-Factor theory, which suggests that satisfaction in the work place is “intrinsic” to the job in which the employee is directly involved in (Zhao and Reiner 1999). Building on this, Hackman and Oldham (1975) created an empirical model to measure the impact of the work environment, and this research project uses their framework as a means for measuring job satisfaction in this police department.

These five independent variables have been shown throughout the literature to be significant predictors of job satisfaction. In fact, the literature review will show that the police officer work environment will have a more significant impact on job satisfaction than most other factors (Zhao, Thurman and He 1999). As reported levels of each job dimension rise, so does the “Motivating Potential Score” of the job (Hackman and Oldham 1975). A higher Motivating Potential Score has been found to correlate to higher levels of various positive workplace

outcomes, including job satisfaction. This section will examine each job dimension in the literature and their impact on police officer job satisfaction.

### **Skill Variety**

Skill variety is defined as “the degree to which a job requires a variety of different activities in carrying out the work, which involve the use of a number of different skills and talents of the employee.” (Hackman and Oldham 1975). Skill variety is one of three job dimensions that create “experienced meaningfulness of the work”, which is one of the three critical psychological states associated with job satisfaction (Hackman and Oldham 1975).

Police officers receive broad training, and this training provides them with a wide range of skills. In addition to traditional law enforcement skills, police have training as mediators in domestic disturbances and effectively deal with the mentally handicapped. For example, police officers respond to approximately one-third of all emergency mental health referrals, which places significant strain on officers and the department (Borum, et al. 1998). However, the research suggests that when police officers are properly prepared with the skills necessary to mitigate a situation involving a mentally ill citizen, officers are confident that they can successfully deal with the mentally ill (Borum, et al. 1998).

Another similar situation as above involves the language skills police officers need to effectively deal with modern society. In most departments, an officer is awarded a bonus for foreign language proficiency. It is a fact that the Hispanic population of the United States is now the largest minority group and the fastest growing (Bureau of the Census, 2011). As a result, police officers are increasingly finding themselves needing Spanish language skills to effectively serve many Hispanic communities. Departments will often incentivize police officers to educate

themselves about the Spanish language and culture, and thus their skill variety (Cheurprakobkit and Bartsch 1999).

Zhao (1999) found that Air Force security personnel who were law enforcement specialists stayed busier and had more autonomy while performing their tasks when compared to security specialists. The security specialists essentially stood guard, requiring only a small set of skills to accomplish. The law enforcement specialists have a much more dynamic job, requiring a much wider range of skills to accomplish than a security specialist job. The research presented indicates that the more police officers are able to utilize a variety of skills, the higher their job satisfaction will be. Therefore the first hypothesis is presented;

Hypothesis 1: Police officers who report higher levels of skill variety will have more job satisfaction.

### **Task Identity**

Task identity is defined as “the degree to which the job requires completion of a "whole" and identifiable piece of work—that is, doing a job from beginning to end with a visible outcome” (Hackman and Oldham 1975). Task identity is one of three job dimensions which create “experienced meaningfulness of the work”, which is one of the three psychological states necessary for high job satisfaction (Hackman and Oldham 1975). Task identity is very important to job satisfaction, as being unable to clearly identify and accomplish a task from beginning to end will result in significant amounts of strain and stress and therefore lower job satisfaction.

In policing, task identity comes in many forms. A police officer who works a case from begging to end, and brings a perpetrator to justice, is likely going to experience a high amount of job satisfaction. An officer who responds to a call for assistance and is able to see that situation



through to a positive outcome is also likely to experience high levels of job satisfaction. Empirical evidence from a study of police dispatchers found that dispatchers who were interrupted, overloaded, or were unable to finish their task experienced strain and stress (Kirmeyer 1988). This finding has implications for all human service workers, including police officers, as they experience many of the same problems as their dispatchers. Many times throughout a shift an officer can be interrupted before he has a chance to finish his task, and many police officers experience overload. Further research supports the negative findings of interruptions at work, but also notes that interruptions can have positive outcomes. (Jett and George 2003) Specifically with regard to the current research question, Jett and George (2003) propose that interruptions can allow the opportunity for informal feedback and information sharing. In this manner, an interruption can boost job satisfaction by giving the employee a chance to receive information that would not have been so readily available as well as receive informal feedback about the results of their work.

The review of the literature indicates that police officers who report “task identity” and are able to begin and finish their tasks without an inordinate amount of interruption will have higher levels of job satisfaction than those who do not. Therefore the second hypothesis is presented;

Hypothesis 2: Police officers who report higher levels of task identity will have more job satisfaction.

### **Task Significance**

Task significance is defined as “the degree to which the job has a substantial impact on the lives or work of other people—whether in the immediate organization or in the external

environment.” (Hackman and Oldham 1975). Task significance is one of three job dimensions that create “experienced meaningfulness of the work”, which is one of the three psychological states necessary for high job satisfaction (Hackman and Oldham 1975). Hackman and Oldham (1976) illustrate task significance by suggesting that workers who fasten bolts to aircraft brakes are more likely to experience their work as more meaningful than someone who fills boxes with paperclips. In this scenario the skills needed to accomplish the tasks are similar, but the worker who knows he is having a greater impact on the lives of others experiences more meaningfulness from his work. Task significance leads to better work outcomes such as improved performance and job satisfaction.

Recent research has indicated that national emergencies can significantly boost the job satisfaction of government workers. A study examined the levels of private and public sector workers before and after the terrorist attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001 were compared, and it was concluded that government workers experienced a 5-10 percent growth in job satisfaction (Van Ryzin 2012). While the author acknowledges several limitations of the findings, he suggests that government workers experienced higher levels of task significance following the events of 9/11. This finding is especially important for police officers, as the terrorist attacks of 9/11 suddenly expanded the role of the police officer from crime fighter to include an active role in the war on terror.

Perhaps the events of 9/11 made it abundantly clear that the work of government employees is having an impact on the lives of others, and the reason the boost happened is because the workers were made aware of this. This was the focus of another work that conducted three different experiments which provided task significance stories to fundraiser callers and lifeguards. The researchers concluded that both fundraiser callers and lifeguards experienced

better work outcomes simply because they were made aware of the impact they were having on others (Grant 2008). The implications of this study indicate that task significance does matter, and that making workers aware of the impact they are having will positively impact their job satisfaction and job performance. Therefore the third hypothesis is presented;

Hypothesis 3: Police officers who report higher levels of task significance will have more job satisfaction.

### **Autonomy**

Autonomy is defined as “The degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the employee in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out.” (Hackman and Oldham 1975). Autonomy is also defined as “the subjective experience of psychological freedom and choice during activity engagement.” (Van den Broeck, et al. 2010). The difference between these two definitions is the former definition refers to autonomy as a task characteristic, while the latter refers to autonomy as a “subjective psychological experience” (Van den Broeck, et al. 2010). Van den Broeck, et al (2010) note the difference by stating that a person can experience autonomy satisfaction when following the orders of a supervisor, (and failing to be independent), but “act willingly because their supervisor provided them a meaningful rationale for doing so.” This research emphasizes job characteristics, so autonomy will be defined as a task characteristic.

Autonomy creates “experienced responsibility for outcomes of work”, one of the three psychological states Hackman and Oldham (1975) discuss as necessary for higher job satisfaction. This suggests that if a worker makes a decision and is responsible for the outcome, the worker will have higher job satisfaction. Autonomy is expected to have a significant impact

on job satisfaction, as those who are free to accomplish tasks on their own tend to have more job satisfaction than those who have stringent regulations and supervisors bearing down on them. There is much evidence supporting the hypothesis that autonomy will have a significant impact on job satisfaction, specifically in the public sector (Taylor and Westover 2011; Zhao and Reiner 1999).

An empirical study of United States Air Force security personnel found that officers who were law enforcement specialists had more autonomy in their jobs, and they reported higher levels of job satisfaction than those who were security specialists (Zhao and Reiner 1999). This research found that workers who have limited responsibilities will have lower levels of job satisfaction than workers who are given more responsibility by the organization.

While autonomy has been shown to be a significant predictor of job satisfaction in the public sector, there is an ongoing dilemma in law enforcement to balance discretionary power with the rules and regulations of the rigid bureaucracy in which they work. Shane (2011) found that police performance may be reduced due to the inability of the officer to take control of decision making in the field. This dichotomy between autonomy and the bureaucratic environment is a source of stress amongst police officers, and police organizations can improve job satisfaction and performance by making changes to internal policy and managerial organization (Shane 2011). The literature indicates that autonomy does affect police officer job satisfaction. Therefore the forth hypothesis is presented;

Hypothesis 4: Police officers who report higher levels of autonomy will have more job satisfaction.

## **Feedback**

Feedback is defined as “The degree to which carrying out the work activities required by the job results in the employee obtaining direct and clear information about the effectiveness of his or her performance.” (Hackman and Oldham 1975). Feedback creates “knowledge of the results of work activities”, one of the three psychological states Hackman and Oldham (1975) discuss as necessary for higher job satisfaction. This suggests that a worker needs to know about the results of his or her work in order to determine if the job has been done well or what needs to be improved upon. The literature describes feedback as consisting of two sources, feedback from the job itself and feedback from agents (Hackman and Oldham 1975).

Feedback from the job itself consists of “direct and clear information about the effectiveness of his or her performance.” (Hackman and Oldham 1975). In policing, this could come in the form of successfully executing an arrest warrant, arresting a target number of driving-while-intoxicated offenders, or meeting other goals. If the officer knows what is expected of him or her, he or she will be able to gauge their level of performance from the job itself.

Feedback from agents consists of three different source providing feedback: co-workers, supervisors, and the community. Co-workers provide valuable feedback as they have often either gone through or are going through the same struggles and situations as other officers in the department. Johnson (2012) reports that police officers tend to have an above-average bond and level of cohesion with each other when compared to other professions. While police officers value their fellow officer’s camaraderie, studies suggests they do not value their peer’s feedback as much as their supervisors (Zhao, Thurman and He 1999).

Feedback from supervisors is especially important for job satisfaction as supervisors are expected to be able to rate the performance and worth of an officer in the department, and this is evidence to suggest that workers value feedback from supervisors more than other sources (Zhao and Reiner 1999). Further, a study of police officer job satisfaction found that autonomy and feedback were significantly correlated with satisfaction with supervisors (Zhao, Thurman and He 1999). Their findings imply that police officers tend to value supervisors who trust them (allow them to be autonomous in decision making) and provide them feedback. As the research findings indicate the positive outcomes associated with supervisor feedback, it is expected that increasing the amount of communication between supervisors and their subordinates will improve job satisfaction. As noted above however, due to the hierarchal and bureaucratic nature of police departments, feedback beyond one's immediate supervisor is often slow to arrive or practically useless (Shane 2011).

Feedback from the community can be overlooked, but it is also very important for job satisfaction. Empirical evidence suggests that how the police officers believe they are perceived by the community influences their job satisfaction (Yim and Schafer 2009). As a result of their findings, the authors go on to advocate for increased cooperation between the community and the police department, and for the police department to take on more community-oriented policing techniques. A review of the literature indicates that feedback and impact police officer job satisfaction. Therefore the fifth hypothesis is presented;

Hypothesis 5: Police officers who report higher levels of feedback will have more job satisfaction.

## Motivating Potential Score

The Motivating Potential Score (MPS) was developed within Hackman and Oldham's (1975) Job Diagnostic Survey. The MPS is a calculation of the three psychological states necessary for job satisfaction: experienced meaningfulness of the work, experience responsibility of the work, and experience knowledge of the results of one's work. As such, the MPS first calculates the experienced meaningfulness of work, which consists of task identity, task significance, and skill variety. This sum is then multiplied by autonomy and feedback, which represent experienced responsibility and experienced knowledge of the work, respectively. The calculation is illustrated by the following formula;

$$\text{MPS} = ((\text{TI} + \text{TS} + \text{SV})/3) \times \text{AU} \times \text{FB}$$

This calculation ranges between 1, which is impossibly low, and 125, which is the maximum possible MPS. The higher the MPS, the more motivated the worker is. This has been found to be a significant predictor of job satisfaction and has been replicated by many researchers since its inception. Zhao and Reiner (1999) tested two predictive models of job satisfaction. The first is based on characteristics of the work environment and the other based on characteristics of the employees. The characteristics of the work environment were operationalized using the MPS and the characteristics of the employee were operationalized by recording various demographic characteristics. The results are clear, the predictive model based on characteristics of the work environment is a much more powerful predictor of job satisfaction than employee characteristics. A review of the literature suggests that the MPS is perhaps the most powerful predictor of job satisfaction, thus a sixth hypothesis is presented;

Hypothesis 6: Police officers who report a higher Motivating Potential Score will have more job satisfaction

### **Police Officer Characteristics**

This section will examine the literature regarding the impact of police officer characteristics on job satisfaction. The literature examines age, gender, race, officer experience, and education level. These five subcategories make up the concept of police officer characteristics used to address the research question, but examples of other police officer characteristic categories include years of experience, marital status, organizational tenure, and job tenure.

#### **Age**

Age has consistently correlated with job satisfaction. One view suggests that the employee will experience higher job satisfaction as age increases. One finding suggests that as the employee ages he or she is able to “adjust their expectations” as to what they can expect from their work and also notes that older workers may gain esteem simply by virtue of time on the job (DeSantis and Durst 1999). Further evidence that supports increased job satisfaction with age suggests that rank ascension and age co-vary and job satisfaction increases as rank increases (Hoath, Schneider and Starr 1998). Another view holds that job satisfaction will initially drop off to about the midcareer point, and then steadily rise as the officer continues to age. This relationship has been coined “u-shaped” due to its similarity with the letter U when placed on a graph (Lee and Wilbur 1985). Further evidence in the literature suggests that relationship between employee job satisfaction and age is U-shaped. Research conducted by Clark, et al



(1996) controlled for 80 variables and found strong evidence to support the U-shaped job satisfaction hypothesis.

More recent research has found that police officer job satisfaction should be impacted by their age. The research shows that officers tend to report high job satisfaction in the beginning of their careers that steadily decreases until it reaches a low point and begins to increase. In other words, the literature suggests that the relationship between police officer job satisfaction and age is U-shaped (Zhao, Thurman and He 1999; P. E. Carlan 2007).

The reported low level of job satisfaction around the mid-career point could actually be a symptom of lower levels of life satisfaction, otherwise known as the “midlife crisis.” Researchers found that 26 percent of Americans surveyed report having gone through a midlife crisis (Washington 2000). It should be noted that if a quarter of middle-aged people surveyed report low satisfaction, then that will produce the same U-shape curve referred to above. The research also suggests that age is not a cause of a midlife crisis, but only a predictor (Washington 2000). It is possible that police officers reporting low levels of job satisfaction around their midcareer point are experiencing some sort of midlife crisis, thus it is expected that age is a predictor of police officer job satisfaction.

## **Rank**

Police officer rank is expected to have an impact on job satisfaction as those who are ranked higher presumably would have higher levels of job satisfaction as well (Hoath, Schneider and Starr 1998). Shane (2010) provides some explanation as to why lower ranked officers could have lower levels of job satisfaction: having more interaction with the negative side of policing the community, being second guessed, lack of reward for a job well done, dealing with the

bureaucratic nature of the police department, and receiving little if any useful feedback from supervisors. Much of the research on rank and job satisfaction has produced mixed results, and there is a great amount of overlap between the relationship of job satisfaction with rank and years of experience (M. Dantzker 1994; Zhao, Thurman and He 1999; P. E. Carlan 2007).

A research design asked police officers to self-identify into one of four categories, “careerist, social activist, self-investor, and artisan.” The results provided some evidence to suggest that rank has the greatest effect on job satisfaction for careerists (Hoath, Schneider and Starr 1998). Hoath, et al (1998) described careerists as being motivated by prestige, recognition, advancement, and financial security. The researchers found the officers who identified themselves as careerists to be generally more satisfied with their jobs, which could explain why police officers who had achieved a higher ranked reported higher levels of job satisfaction as well (Hoath, Schneider and Starr 1998). It is likely that these officers achieved a higher rank because they were motivated by the rewards of doing so, and in achieving a higher rank their job satisfaction increase as well.

Some research focuses on aspiration of rank ascension as an indicator of job satisfaction. In this manner of looking at rank, it is not the current rank that matters, but the desire to continue to rise through the ranks of the department. Police officers who have promotional aspirations are more likely to be highly motivated to perform their police function and have higher job satisfaction (Gau, Terrill and Paoline III 2012). Gau, et al (2012) found in their research that gender, race, and education all had significant influence on the rank the officer expected to achieve at retirement, which is taken as an indicator of the officer’s motivation and aspirations in the police department. This finding implies that rank could boost job satisfaction if the officer

has achieved the desired rank, as well as lower job satisfaction if the officer is unable to achieve the desired rank.

## **Gender**

Gender differences are an important field of study when it comes to policing, and job satisfaction studies provide a valuable insight into gender differences. The literature indicates that male and female officers tend to have similar levels of job satisfaction, but that male and female officers tend to value different aspects of policing more than one another (Dantzker and Kubin 1998). While the results were not found to be statistically significant, male officers were found to be more satisfied with four facets of police work: general administration, equipment, current assignment and general duties while female officers were shown to be more satisfied with benefits such as overtime compensation, and educational incentive programs (Dantzker and Kubin 1998).

Further, female officers continue to make up a small proportion of sworn officers relative to their overall population. This lack of representativeness could lead to “tokenism”, which suggests that women who make up less than 15 percent of the department experience lower levels of job satisfaction than policewomen who make up more than 15 percent of the department (Krimmel and Gormley 2003). While minorities have significantly increased their representation in many police departments, women have reached a maximum of 25 percent representation in few departments and do not appear to be poised to go behind this ceiling anytime soon (Sklansky 2006). Empirical evidence suggests that women are likely to remain under “token” status for the foreseeable future, which could negatively impact their job

satisfaction further exacerbate the problem of female underrepresentation in the field of policing as workers with low levels of job satisfaction tend to more readily leave the job.

On the topic of the decision to leave the job, researchers have found one of the most often cited reasons for women to drop out of policing early in their careers is directly from a lack of supervisor and coworker support (Haarr 2005). Haarr (2005) found that three out of every four female police officers who self-initiated resignation spoke of gender discrimination from coworkers and supervisors. So a female police officer could potentially be satisfied with her work but totally dissatisfied with her coworkers and supervisors, the net result would be low levels of job satisfaction.

## **Race**

Race is expected to play a role in police officer job satisfaction. Undoubtedly, minorities have faced problems in police departments. This can come in the form of overt discrimination, subtle discrimination, or feelings of tokenism. Pitts (2009) found minorities who have higher levels of representation in organizations tend to have higher job satisfaction and better performance in the organization they are a part of. The evidence suggesting that higher representation within a department can positively influence job satisfaction coincides with concept of “tokenism” (Krimmel and Gormley 2003) from research on women in policing. Pitts (2009) discusses “diversity management” programs and how they differ from Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity Employment. “Diversity management” is a more aggressive means of recruitment and retention of people from underrepresented groups and has been shown to positively influence the level of job satisfaction amongst minorities (Pitts 2009).

Low job satisfaction has been consistently shown to be a cause of turnover in police departments. Little research has been done on racial/ ethnic minorities' decision to quit, but there is evidence to suggest that racial/ ethnic minorities who decided to quit policing early in their careers did so because of the pressure to adhere to Caucasian male norms (Haarr 2005). This implies that race could be a predictor of job satisfaction, and that low job satisfaction could be an indicator of potential turnover or other problems.

Like studies about job satisfaction and gender, police officers tend to have the same level of overall job satisfaction regardless of race. While some studies have shown some racial differences in facets of police officer job satisfaction, few have produced statistically significant results. The research indicates that differences in job satisfaction tend to even out overall between races. One notable exception is the recent finding in the NYPD that White-male police officers have by far the lowest reported job satisfaction (White, et al. 2010). The authors theorize that because the NYPD has become more representative of diverse New York City that the traditionally White-male dominated police culture is breaking down leading to lower levels of job satisfaction amongst White-males. This finding appears to apply to police departments that are in a demographic transition, as officers in police departments that are representative of their community or simply established demographically tend to report similar levels of job satisfaction regardless of race (Zhao, Thurman and He 1999; Johnson 2012).

## **Education**

Education in policing has become a widely studied topic in police research. If education does make better police officers, then the implication for police departments and their governments is to require a certain level of education from recruits, invest in their current

officers' educations, or some combination of the two. The expectation is that education will create better police officers, and this should have an impact on police officer job satisfaction. As policing transitions into a more specialized and professional field that is more and more focused on community-oriented policing, an educated police force will be necessary to do the work required of the 21<sup>st</sup> century police officer (Roberg and Bonn 2004). Because of the inevitable changes requiring more from police officers, Roberg and Bonn (2004) go on to advocate for a renewed focus on police officer higher education, one that would require a bachelor's degree over time.

A recent study found that criminal justice graduates who perceive a higher quality of education, regardless of level of education, tend to have higher job satisfaction throughout their careers (Payne, Blackwell and Collins 2010). This finding indicates that simply having an education is not enough to improve positive work outcomes in policing. Payne, et al (2010) discusses four impacts of education on the career of a criminal justice graduate. First, having an assortment of skills can make them a more favorable job candidate. Second, balancing social science skills with practical insight will allow them to better analyze and interpret the world around them. Third, education promotes both critical and introspective thought which mitigates the impact of role ambiguity, role conflict and role orientation. Each of which has been shown to have a negative impact on job satisfaction (Lambert, et al. 2004). Forth, the authors suggest that education is part of a broader level of satisfaction with life, which also impacts job satisfaction.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

#### **Chapter Purpose**

This chapter discusses the method used to evaluate the impact of the work environment and police officer characteristics on job satisfaction. The method of data collection is presented. The sample surveyed is introduced and sampling issues are presented. The hypotheses are operationalized and the survey data used in the analysis are explained. The purpose of this research is to explore predictors of job satisfaction in a Texas police department.

#### **Data Collection**

The data for this research were collected using a survey. The survey questions are designed to establish the level of the dependent variable, job satisfaction, by asking three questions about the level of the officer's satisfaction with work, coworkers, and supervisors on a 5 point Likert scale with 1 being very low satisfaction and 5 being very high satisfaction. The survey questions were also designed to operationalize the independent variables and control variables. The independent variables are established by the officer's responses to five indices designed to measure the officer's perception of the work environment. Each independent variable is operationalized by the officer's responses to the survey questions. The survey questions ask the officer to describe how descriptive a statement is about his or her work environment. The survey questions are on a five-point Likert scale with 1 being very non-descriptive and 5 being very descriptive. The control variables are operationalized from the officer's responses to five survey questions. See Appendix III for the complete survey.

## **Sample**

The population studied is police officers in a Texas police department. In order to ensure the anonymity of respondents the particular department will remain confidential in the research. This population was chosen due to its proximity to the researcher, and the accessibility to police officers. Studying this population also allows the researcher to conduct a more thorough analysis for little cost.

The researcher distributed the survey and consent form to the Chief of Police. After receiving the Police Chief's final approval, the survey was then administered to the department by the standard means of document distribution at the department. The officers were instructed to take the survey on their own time rather than at work. To allow the officer as much time as needed to complete the survey, each officer had one week to complete and return the survey to the office of the Chief of Police who then passed the surveys to the researcher. Self-administering the surveys gives the researcher a higher response rate than alternative methods (Babbie, 2012).

## **Operationalizing the Hypotheses**

According to Shields (1998) the operationalized hypotheses connects abstract concepts to the measureable and observable, and contains dependent and independent variables. The hypotheses were tested controlling for several police officer characteristics that have been shown in the literature review to impact job satisfaction. The concepts of job satisfaction, skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy, feedback, and police officer characteristics were constructed from police officer responses to survey questions. The hypotheses are operationalized in Table 3.1.



Table 3.1 Operationalization of the conceptual framework			
Variables	Hypo	Measurement	Source
Dependent Variable			
Job Satisfaction		Average perception of job satisfaction. (1=very low, 5=very high)	Job Satisfaction Index survey responses
Independent Variables			
Skill variety	H1 +	Average perception of skill variety (1= very low, 5=very high)	Job Characteristics Index survey responses
Task Identity	H2+	Average perception of task identity (1= very low, 5=very high)	Job Characteristics Index survey responses
Task Significance	H3+	Average perception of task significance (1= very low, 5=very high)	Job Characteristics Index survey responses
Autonomy	H4+	Average perception of autonomy (1= very low, 5=very high)	Job Characteristics Index survey responses
Feedback	H5+	Average perception of feedback (1= very low, 5=very high)	Job Characteristics Index survey responses
MPS	H6+	Motivating Potential Score: 1 (very low) – 125 (very high)	Calculated from Responses
Control variables			
Age		0= 18-24 1= 25-34 2= 35-44 3= 45-64 4= 65 & up	Officer Characteristics survey responses
Gender		0= Male 1= Female	Officer Characteristics survey responses
Race		0= Black 1= Hispanic 2= White	Officer Characteristics survey responses
Rank		0= Officer 1= Sergeant and above	Officer Characteristics survey responses
Education		0= High school 1= Some college 2= Associate degree 3= Bachelor's degree 4= Some graduate school 5= Graduate degree	Officer Characteristics survey responses

## **Dependent Variable**

Job satisfaction is the dependent variable in this study. The concept of job satisfaction is operationalized from the average of the collective responses of police officers to the three items of the Job Satisfaction Index to determine the amount of job satisfaction in the organization. The three items are based on the literature review and ask the respondent to describe how accurate a statement is about their perceptions of job satisfaction. The three statements are: “Overall, I am satisfied with my work”, “Overall, I am satisfied with my coworkers” and “Overall, I am satisfied with my supervisors.” Each item is on a five point Likert-scale with a response of “1” being very non-descriptive and a response of “5” being very descriptive. The dependent variable is ordinal (low to high). See Appendix III for the complete survey.

## **Independent Variables**

The independent variables hypothesized to impact police officer job satisfaction are taken from Hackman and Oldham’s (1975) Job Diagnostic Survey and consist of skill variety, task identity, task significance, autonomy and feedback. Each variable is measured on a five-point Likert scale and are treated as ordinal measures.

### **Skill variety**

Skill variety is defined as “The degree to which a job requires a variety of different activities in carrying out the work, which involve the use of a number of different skills and talents of the employee” (Hackman and Oldham 1975). Skill variety is one of three job

dimensions that create one of the three critical psychological states necessary for high job satisfaction, experienced meaningfulness of the work (Hackman and Oldham 1975).

Skill variety is operationalized from the average of three survey questions developed from the literature to measure the perception of skill variety satisfaction of an employee. The survey asks the employee to answer how descriptive a statement is about the organization. The three responses to the statements are on a five point Likert scale with “1” being very non-descriptive and “5” being very descriptive. The three statements are: “I have a chance to do a number of different tasks on the job”, “I use a wide variety of different skills and talents in the work I do” and “I get to use a number of complex skills on this job.” See Appendix III for the complete survey.

### **Task Identity**

Task identity is defined as “the degree to which the job requires completion of a "whole" and identifiable piece of work—that is, doing a job from beginning to end with a visible outcome.” (Hackman and Oldham 1975) Task identity is one of the variables accounting for one of the three psychological states necessary for high job satisfaction, experienced meaningfulness of the work (Hackman and Oldham 1975).

Task identity is operationalized from the average of three survey questions developed from the literature to measure the perception of task identity satisfaction of an employee. The survey asks the employee to answer how descriptive a statement is about the organization. The three responses to the statements are on a five point Likert scale with “1” being very non-descriptive and “5” being very descriptive. The three statements are: “My job provides me with the chance to finish completely any work I start”, “The results of my efforts are clearly visible

and identifiable”, and “My job is arranged so that I have a chance to do an entire piece of work from beginning to end.” See Appendix III for the complete survey.

### **Task significance**

Task significance is defined as “the degree to which the job has a substantial impact on the lives or work of other people—whether in the immediate organization or in the external environment.” (Hackman and Oldham 1975). Task significance is one of the variables accounting for one of the three psychological states necessary for high job satisfaction, experienced meaningfulness of the work (Hackman and Oldham 1975).

Task significance is operationalized from the average of three survey questions developed from the literature to measure the perception of task significance satisfaction of an employee. The survey asks the employee to answer how descriptive a statement is about the organization. The three responses to the statements are on a five point Likert scale with “1” being very non-descriptive and “5” being very descriptive. The three statements are: “What I do affects the well-being of other people in very important ways”, “Many people are affected by the job I do” and “My job is very important to the department.” See Appendix III for the complete survey.

### **Autonomy**

Autonomy is defined as “The degree to which the job provides substantial freedom, independence, and discretion to the employee in scheduling the work and in determining the procedures to be used in carrying it out.” (Hackman and Oldham 1975). Autonomy creates one of the three psychological states Hackman and Oldham (1975) describe as necessary for higher job satisfaction, experienced responsibility for outcomes of work.

Autonomy is operationalized from the average of three survey questions developed from the literature to measure the perception of autonomy satisfaction of an employee. The survey asks the employee to answer how descriptive a statement is about the organization. The three responses to the statements are on a five point Likert scale with “1” being very non-descriptive and “5” being very descriptive. The three statements are: “I have almost complete responsibility for deciding how and when the work is to be done”, “My job gives me considerable freedom in doing the work” and “My job allows me an opportunity participate in decision making.” See Appendix III for the complete survey.

## **Feedback**

Feedback is defined as “The degree to which carrying out the work activities required by the job results in the employee obtaining direct and clear information about the effectiveness of his or her performance.” (Hackman and Oldham 1975). Feedback gives the employee knowledge of the results of work activities, one of the three psychological states Hackman and Oldham (1975) discuss as necessary for higher job satisfaction.

Feedback is operationalized from the average of four survey questions developed from the literature to measure the perception of feedback satisfaction of an employee. Because the concept of feedback actually consists of feedback from agents and feedback from the job itself, a fourth survey question was added to more accurately measure feedback satisfaction. The survey asks the employee to answer how descriptive a statement is about the organization. The four responses to the statements are on a five point Likert scale with “1” being very non-descriptive and “5” being very descriptive. The four statements are: “Just doing the work provides me with opportunities to figure out how well I am doing”, “My manager provides me with constant

feedback about how I am doing”, “My coworkers provide me with constant feedback about how I am doing”, and “The community gives me constant feedback on how I am doing.” See Appendix III for the complete survey.

### **Motivating Potential Score**

The Motivating Potential Score (MPS) is a calculation of the previous five variables. It has been shown in the literature to be a potent indicator of job satisfaction in policing. As it is a combination of all the variables predicting job satisfaction, the MPS should provide the most accurate information regarding the impact of the work environment on job satisfaction. The MPS is measured on a scale of 1-125, with 1 being a very low MPS and 125 being a very high MPS. The formula consists of first adding Task Significance, Task Identity, and Skill Variety. Once that sum has been determined, the next step is to divide that total by three. The final step is to then multiply that number by Autonomy and Feedback. This number will be the MPS of the job.

$$\text{MPS Formula: } ((\text{TI} + \text{TS} + \text{SV})/3) \times \text{AU} \times \text{FB}$$

### **Control variables**

There are a total of five control variables age, gender, race, rank and education. Each concept is operationalized by the respondents answer to each item in the survey. Race and gender are treated as nominal levels of measurement. Rank is treated as an ordinal level of measurement as are the variables age and education. The coding of each control variable and their reference category is presented in Table 3.1. See Appendix III for the complete survey.

## Statistics

Descriptive statistics are used to summarize the findings. Univariate analyses of the dependent variable, independent variables, and control variables consist of mean, median, and standard deviation. Bivariate analyses are used to determine the correlation between the dependent variable and the independent and control variables. Finally, each variable's impact on job satisfaction is measured using a bivariate regression analysis. This level of analysis will attempt to explain the amount of variance in job satisfaction that can be attributed to each variable.

The method used in this research project is survey research. According to Babbie (2012) survey research is the best method for describing the characteristics of a large population. Survey research allows the researcher to ask several questions on the topic, giving the researcher more flexibility with analyses than other methods provide. The survey can be cheaply produced and administrated, and the survey requires a minimal investment of time from respondents.

Survey research also has several weaknesses. One weakness is the requirement of standardized questions, which are necessary for a large group of respondents but limit the researcher the superficial data. Another weakness is the inflexibility of the survey design. Surveys cannot be changed once they have been distributed, while studies that involve direct observation can be modified as conditions dictate. This prevents the survey researcher from adjusting his research to analyze a previously unknown variable, potentially limiting the value of the research. There is also the possibility of selection bias in survey data. Perhaps the survey takers are naturally more motivated than non-survey takers, which would skew the data towards

being more satisfied. Finally, because surveys are subject to artificiality the responses can only be regarded as approximate indicators of what the researcher had in mind.



## **Chapter 4**

### **Findings**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, the results of the survey analysis are presented. With a low return rate ( $n=37$ ), a multiple regression analysis would not be able to convey much useful information. However, 37 responses is roughly one-third of the department, and could still provide some useful data. Therefore, the research purpose has shifted from predictive to exploratory, and will present descriptive statistics and correlations. Several variables were collapsed and dichotomized in order to draw more accurate inferences from a lower return rate.

#### **Variable Adjustments**

The variables “gender” and “race or ethnicity” were combined and the responses were then dichotomized. A review of the literature indicates that females as well as minorities tend to have many of the same issues in police work, so combining them should yield better results from a larger pool of respondents. The majority of respondents happened to be white males ( $n=29$ ), so the respondent’s answers were coded as “white male” or “minority or female.” By combining minority status and female gender responses, the number was raised to a total of 8 respondents. This should provide some better inferences from the statistical analysis. In the same vein, the variable “rank” was dichotomized due to low response numbers in order draw more accurate inferences. The responses are now “non-management” ( $n=23$ ), and “management” ( $n=14$ ) This more even turnout should hopefully yield some interesting results.

## Descriptive Statistics for the Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in this study was reported job satisfaction. This variable was established by averaging the responses to three dimensions of job satisfaction: overall job satisfaction, satisfaction with coworkers, and satisfaction with supervisors. The result of averaging these three measures was the “reported job satisfaction.” The descriptive statistics for each dimension of job satisfaction and the reported level of job satisfaction are presented in Table 4.1. The descriptive data indicate that the respondents are mostly satisfied with their work, but a more in depth analysis will show what factors are influencing this rate of job satisfaction.

Table 4.1 Job Satisfaction Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Overall Job Satisfaction	37	2	5	3.95	.780
Overall Satisfaction with Coworkers	37	2	5	3.81	.616
Overall Satisfaction with Supervisors	37	2	5	3.81	.845
Reported Job Satisfaction	37	2	5	3.86	.606

## Descriptive Statistics for the Control Variables

The descriptive statistics for the control variables are presented in Table 4.2. It is interesting to note that not one respondent reported as being between the ages of 18 and 24, or 65 or older. The respondents of the survey were mostly middle aged, as the mean response rate of 3.14 shows that the average respondent was between the ages of 35 and 64. This could show that the department has possibly not been hiring new police officers with no experience, or it could be an example of the drawbacks of survey research. Perhaps the younger officers were less

inclined for one reason or another to take the survey. The lack of older officers is most likely a result of officer choosing to retire after putting enough time in with the department, but again it could show that older officers chose not to take the survey for one reason or another.

The next variable is a combination of gender and racial/ ethnic identity. The variables were combined due to the large amount of white male respondents. This is reflected in the results, as the dichotomized mean response of .22 (white male response coded as 0) shows that a good majority of the respondents were white males even after combining minorities and females. Because the actual racial makeup of the department is unknown, it is possible that the survey responses could be skewed to reflect the answers of only white males. This problem has been faced before in the literature, and some high flying job satisfaction reports mask the fact that minorities and women are being neglected. There will be some attempt to parse out job satisfaction from females and minorities in order to address this.

The next control variable was recorded as non-management and management. Originally, the survey asked to report the respondents rank as “officer”, “sergeant”, or “lieutenant or above.” The amount of sergeants and those ranked lieutenant or higher was too low individually, but when combined they almost evened out with non-management. It should be noted that the survey failed to address the rank of corporal, which could have skewed the data or possibly led to some respondents deciding to forgo completing the survey. However, the response rates of non-management and management should be fairly representative of the department itself and allow for some interesting results.

The last control variable is education, in which we see the greatest amount of difference from officer to officer. (Std. deviation 1.396) The mean response of 3.68 shows the majority of the survey takers have at least some college. This could possibly skew the data without knowing

the full educational makeup of the department. It is possible that the respondents who have had college experience could have a more sympathetic notion to complete the survey than those who do not. This aside, it appears that the department is mostly well-educated and the impact that this will have on their job satisfaction will be interesting to tease out.

Table 4.2 Control Variables Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard Deviation
Age	37	2	4	3.14	.713
White-male or Minority/ Female	37	0	1	.22	.417
Non-management or management	37	0	1	.38	.492
Education	37	1	6	3.68	1.396

### **Descriptive Statistics for the Independent Variables**

The results show that the respondents are generally satisfied with the five dimensions of the work environment. Starting with task identity, the respondents were asked a series of questions that added up to a single variable. Table 4.3 presents the data from the average responses to each of the five indices. The results for the most part mirror the literature. Police officers feel as though their job is important (task significance) and diverse (skill variety) and feel reasonably autonomous in their work. But they also tend to report lower levels of task identity and especially feedback. Task identity involves knowing the expected task and being afforded the ability to complete it from start to finish. A lower score here indicates that police officers are often given ambiguous tasks and far too often interrupted before they have a chance to fully complete a task.

The literature review conceptualizes feedback as coming from four sources, feedback from the work itself, feedback from coworkers, feedback from supervisors, and feedback from the community. While some of these variables may be reported as very high, others may be reported as very low which could drive down overall satisfaction with feedback. The survey attempts to capture each of these dimensions, as it is important to denote which of these factors is the most lacking. This will be presented in the discussion chapter.

The final independent variable is the “Motivating Potential Score” (MPS) of the job. The MPS indicates the potential of the job itself to motivate the worker and has been shown in the literature to be a potent indicator of job satisfaction. The highest possible MPS in this study is 125. This maximum possible score is calculated simply by executing the MPS formula with the highest possible response rates. In the present study there is found to be a mean MPS of 53.56. This somewhat low number can be deceptive, as there is a minimum reported MPS score of 19 and a maximum of 102 along with a standard deviation of 22.559. There is a standard deviation of 22.559 which could have been potentially reduced with a larger pool of respondents. However, the MPS does indicate that perhaps the respondents are not as satisfied with their job as it seems.

Table 4.3 Descriptive Statistics for Independent Variables

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Task Identity	37	2	5	3.48	.743
Task Significance	37	3	5	4.32	.626
Skill Variety	37	2	5	4.18	.622
Autonomy	37	3	5	4.01	.678
Feedback	37	2	5	3.18	.671
Motivating Potential Score	37	19	102	53.56	22.559

### Analysis of the Predictors of Job Satisfaction

This section will present the variables that were found to be significantly correlated with job satisfaction. The dependent variable of job satisfaction is a combination of the three general job satisfaction questions: “Overall I am satisfied with my job,” “Overall I am satisfied with my coworkers,” and “Overall, I am satisfied with my supervisors.” Each question has a maximum possible response of “Strongly Agree” which is coded as a 5. Therefore, the maximum possible job satisfaction score is 15. The independent variables were measured along five separate indices on a five-point Likert scale. The responses to each index for each respondent were averaged and then their impact on job satisfaction was measured. The conclusion of the chapter will summarize the findings.

It should be noted that none of the control variables significantly influence job satisfaction or other variables presented, which is in line with much of the literature. However, the analysis did show that managers tend to be older, which is to be expected, and that they felt somewhat more autonomous in their work than non-managers. But this is the only control variable shown to have even a minute impact on any of the five dimensions of the work

environment and management or non-management status proved to have no discernible impact on job satisfaction. This information is trivial given that the research purpose is to predict job satisfaction, not predict who is more likely to be older or more autonomous. Given this fact, the control variables will not be included beyond the descriptive statistics presented in the previous section.

### **Job Satisfaction and Task Identity**

The respondents answered each of the following questions: “My job provides me with the chance to finish completely any work I start.” “The results of my work are clear and identifiable.” and “My job is arranged so that I have a chance to do an entire piece of work from beginning to end.” Each response is on a five-point Likert scale and the mean score of the responses is compared to the reported job satisfaction of the respondent. The analysis shows that task identity does significantly impact job satisfaction. With an  $R^2$  of .35, ( $p < .01$ ), task identity explains approximately 35 percent of the variance in reported job satisfaction.

Table 4.4 Job satisfaction and task identity

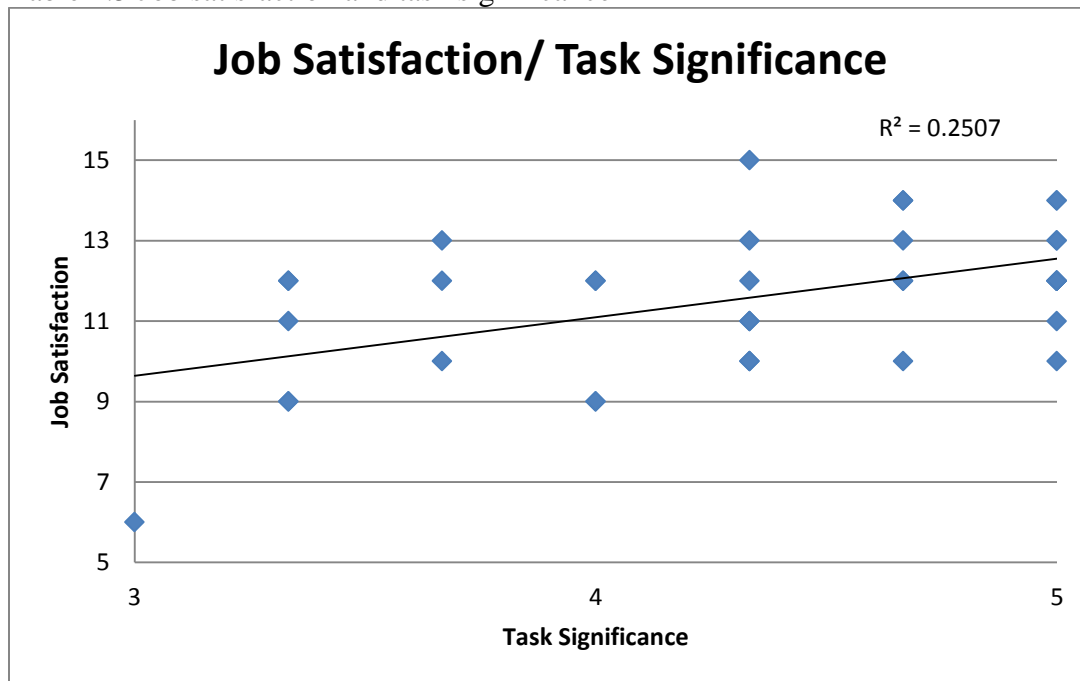


### Job Satisfaction and Task Significance

The respondents answered each of the following questions: “What I do affects the well-being of other people in very important ways.” “Many people are affected by the job I do.” and “My job is very important to the department.” Each response is on a five-point Likert scale and the mean score of the responses is compared to the reported job satisfaction of the respondent. The analysis shows that task significance does significantly impact job satisfaction. With an  $R^2$  of .25, ( $p < .01$ ), task significance explains approximately 25 percent of the variance in reported job satisfaction.



Table 4.5 Job satisfaction and task significance



### Job Satisfaction and Skill Variety

The respondents answered each of the following questions: “I have a chance to do a number of different tasks on the job.” “I use a wide variety of different skills and talents in the work I do.” and “I get to use a number of complex skills on this job.” Each response is on a five-point Likert scale and the mean score of the responses is compared to the reported job satisfaction of the respondent. The analysis shows that skill variety does significantly impact job satisfaction. With an  $R^2$  of .35, ( $p < .01$ ), task identity explains approximately 35 percent of the variance in reported job satisfaction.

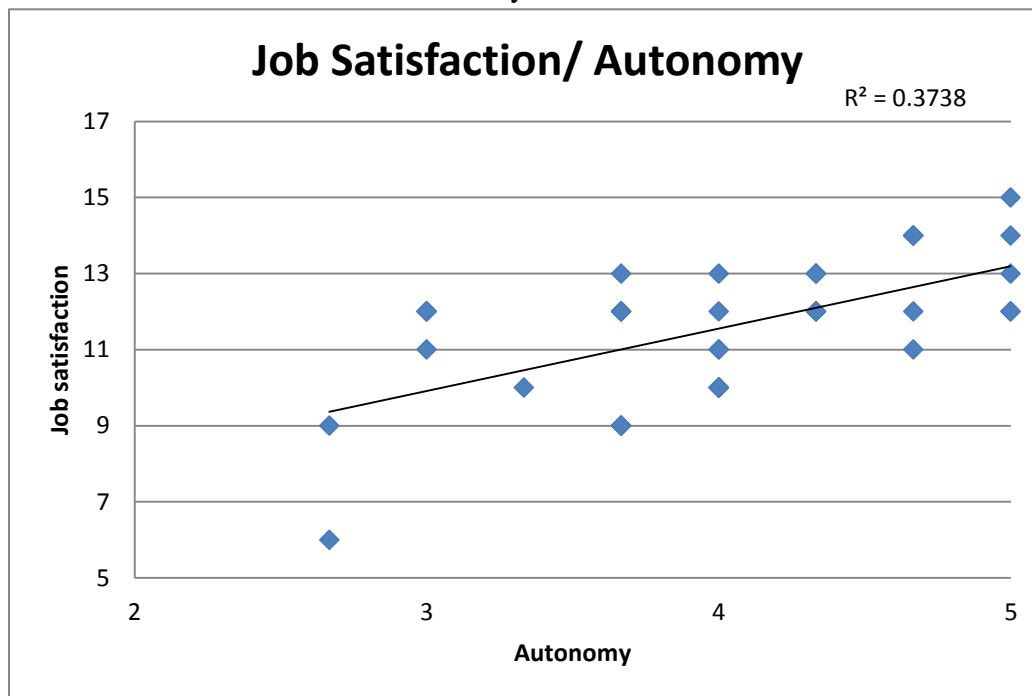
Table 4.6 Job satisfaction and skill variety



### Job Satisfaction and Autonomy

The respondents answered each of the following questions: “My job allows me an opportunity to participate in decision making.” “My job gives me considerable freedom in doing the work.” and “I have almost complete responsibility for deciding how and when the work is to be done.” Each response is on a five-point Likert scale and the mean score of the responses is compared to the reported job satisfaction of the respondent. The analysis shows that autonomy does significantly impact job satisfaction. With an  $R^2$  of .37, ( $p < .01$ ), task identity explains approximately 37 percent of the variance in reported job satisfaction.

Table 4.7 Job satisfaction and autonomy



### Job Satisfaction and Feedback

The respondents answered each of the following questions: “Just doing the work provides me with opportunities to figure out how well I am doing.” “My coworkers provide me with constant feedback about how I am doing.” “My supervisor provides me with constant feedback about how I am doing.” and “The community gives me constant feedback on how I am doing.” Each response is on a five-point Likert scale and the mean score of the responses is compared to the reported job satisfaction of the respondent. The analysis shows that feedback does not significantly impact job satisfaction. With an  $R^2$  of .009, ( $p > .01$ ), feedback cannot explain any of the variance in job satisfaction.

Table 4.8 Job Satisfaction and feedback



### Job Satisfaction and the Motivating Potential Score

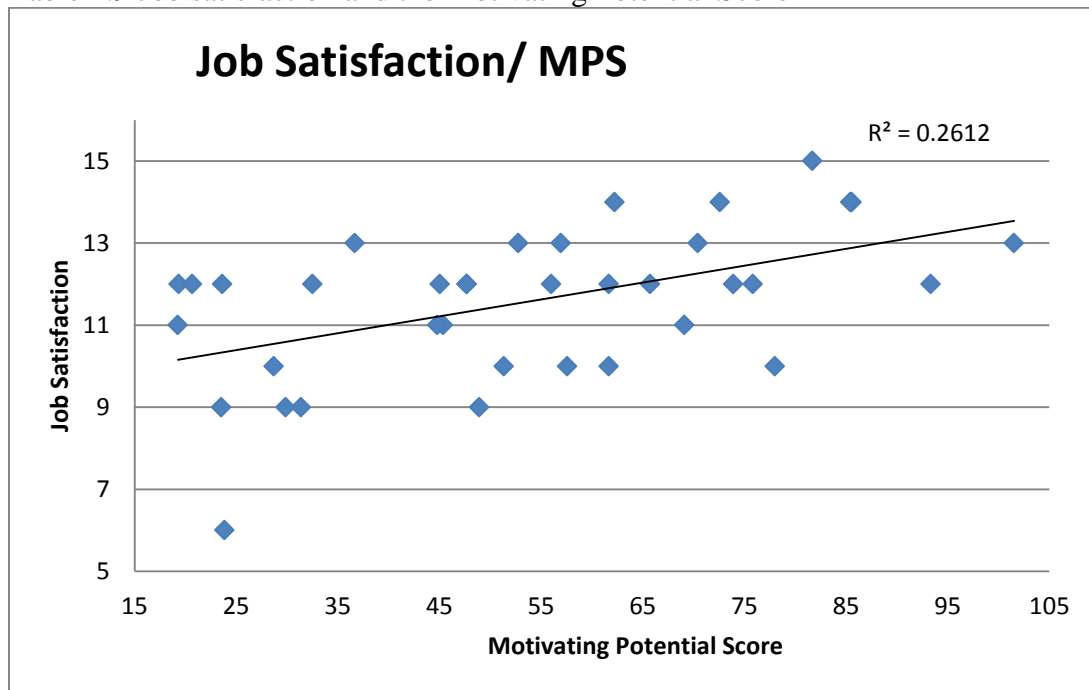
The Motivating Potential Score is perhaps the most important variable to consider as it is a calculation of all of the five dimensions of work previously discussed. Analyzing the MPS in this manner will allow some inferences to be drawn from the collective impact of all of the variables without doing a complete multiple regression analysis. This should yield the most accurate result yet as far as predicting job satisfaction. Again, each respondent's responses to the five indices were calculated using the following formula;

$$\text{MPS} = ((\text{TI} + \text{TS} + \text{SV})/3) \times \text{AU} \times \text{FB}$$

The respondent's MPS scores were then compared to their reported job satisfaction. There is a significant and positive correlation ( $R^2 = .26$ ,  $p < .01$ ) between job satisfaction and MPS.

Therefore it can be concluded that the Motivating Potential Score accounts for approximately 26 percent of the variance in job satisfaction.

Table 4.9 Job satisfaction and the Motivating Potential Score



## Summary of Findings

None of the control variables were found to be significant predictors of job satisfaction. Task identity, task significance, skill variety, autonomy and the Motivating Potential Score were all found to be significant predictors of job satisfaction. Feedback is noticeably absent as a predictor of job satisfaction. These results are examined in the next chapter. The following table presents a summary of the findings for the independent variables.

Table 4.10 Summary of findings

Hypothesis	Equation, p-value, R <sup>2</sup>	Finding
H1: Police officers who report higher levels of task identity will have higher job satisfaction.	JS= 1.44x + 6.57 p < .01 R <sup>2</sup> = .35	The hypothesis is supported by the evidence.
H2: Police officers who report higher levels of task significance will have higher job satisfaction.	JS= 1.46x + 5.28 p < .01 R <sup>2</sup> = .25	The hypothesis is supported by the evidence.
H3: Police officers who report higher levels of skill variety will have higher job satisfaction.	JS= 1.74x + 4.29 p < .01 R <sup>2</sup> = .35	The hypothesis is supported by the evidence.
H4: Police officers who report higher levels of autonomy will have higher job satisfaction.	JS= 1.64x + 5 p < .01 R <sup>2</sup> = .37	The hypothesis is supported by the evidence.
H5: Police officers who report higher levels of feedback will have higher job satisfaction.	JS= .26x + 10.75 p > .05 R <sup>2</sup> = .009	The hypothesis is not supported by the evidence.
H6: Police officers who report a Motivating Potential Score will have higher job satisfaction.	JS= .04x + 9.36 p < .01 R <sup>2</sup> = .26	The hypothesis is supported by the evidence.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

#### **Introduction**

The purpose of this applied research project is to explore predictors of job satisfaction in a single, medium size Texas police department. The method used was survey analysis using bivariate liner regression. The survey established a dependent variable, and then measured five independent variables and five control variables. The results of the statistical analysis generally supported the hypotheses, and this chapter will detail the implications of the findings. Finally, each section will make suggestions for job enrichment which should positively impact each element and increase job satisfaction.

#### **Police Officer Characteristics and Job Satisfaction**

Not a single control variable was found to be a significant predictor of job satisfaction. This is an important finding, as it indicates that age, race, gender, age, rank have no impact on job satisfaction. This result is largely reflected in the literature, with researchers noting that different groups report higher and lower levels of satisfaction with different aspects of the job (Dantzker and Kubin 1998). These differences tend to balance out to a similar level of job satisfaction when compared to others in the organization.

These can be wicked problems for police departments to overcome. Watson (2005) chronicles the turbulent history of race and the Houston Police Department, and it is evident that race was a big a problem within the department as it was in the larger community. The Houston Police Department is an example of how hard it can be to bring about positive change within a police department. Most importantly for the department, administrators do not have to put all

their efforts into fixing problems of race, gender, or other related issues and can focus on improving the work environment to increase job satisfaction.

### **Improving the Work Environment and Increasing Job Satisfaction**

The findings of the research show that the work environment has a much greater impact on job satisfaction than police officer characteristics. As such, the administration should focus on improving the various aspects of the work environment in order to improve job satisfaction. The remainder of this section will discuss the independent variables findings and make suggestions for improving the work environment.

#### **Task Identity**

One technique used by industry to increase task identity is to combine tasks. Using the assembly line example, the worker would assemble a complete unit rather than just one part. This gives the worker a greater stake in the output and gives them a chance to see a project through from start to finish. Police officers of all ranks could be more involved in setting goals and decision making. This gives the officers a greater stake in organizational goals, and the ability to help create and pursue those goals.

Police officers should form natural work units in order to accomplish tasks. This will allow for the smaller group to more readily accomplish specific tasks, and it will allow for tighter-knit communication and feedback amongst officers. This will allow for the officers to be able to see their work completed from start to finish, even if they themselves are not the ones doing every single step. Because the perception of task identity is more important than the reality of task identity, just letting officers know the results of their work can be helpful. For example, if the department launches a new goal such as reducing noise complaints, officers involved should



form small dedicated groups and be made aware of their progress. This allows the officers to be part of the planning, action, and feedback stages of policing.

### **Task Significance**

Perception of task significance can be increased by promulgating stories about the significance of the employees work. Grant (2008) notes that sharing the stories about the impact of the employees work can significantly increase task significance, and in turn increase and enhance performance. This can be an incredibly cheap and effective tool to increase task significance. The administration should create methods to distribute positive stories about the impact of police officers. This will remind the officer that what they are doing is important and worthwhile, which should positively impact their job satisfaction. A high level administrator should produce material along these lines and distribute them either through a face-to-face meeting, email, or departmental mail.

Grant (2008) also notes that stories can act more as a corrective lens rather than an interpretive lens. In this manner, the stories can act as both inspirational and cautionary tales. He also suggests that managers should create opportunities for employees to share and discuss such stories amongst themselves. This will increase the effectiveness of the story by allowing it to pass through the lens of both managers and their officers, and it will increase the chance of the story being heard and interpreted by as many as possible.

Task significance is an important aspect of the work environment and significantly impacts job satisfaction. Luckily for administrators, the easiest way to significantly increase task significance is to simply make the employee aware that his work is significant and worthwhile. This involves a miniscule effort by administration and can likely be done with almost no

financial commitment. The goal of this research project was to produce ways and means to increase job satisfaction within a department with a tight budget, so this finding is of critical importance.

### **Skill Variety**

Skill variety is the easiest for police administrators to increase. This can come in the form of more advanced training throughout the officer's career. This can range from classes on how to deal with the mentally unstable, or how to respond to active shooter situations, to management and administrative training seminars for higher ranking officers. Education is another way in which skill variety can be advanced. Many police departments offer educational incentives to their employees with the hope of creating better and more satisfied employees.

Rotating jobs is another technique used to increase skill variety. Workers who have a chance to experience several different jobs within the realm of police work will have a more dynamic perception of police work and be able to communicate and empathize better with fellow employees. Job rotations should be voluntary, but have some sort of incentive in place to encourage officers to consider changing their job within the police department.

### **Autonomy**

Police departments can increase the perception of autonomy by instilling the organizational goals in the employee. All employees have their own personal goals, and while they may not be at odds with organizational goals, they may not exactly be in line with them. When assigning employees a task, it is important that they understand the context of that task towards accomplishing an organizational goal. Understanding their task in context should enable the employee to autonomously select to incorporate the organizational goals in their own goals.

Once the employee's role in accomplishing the organizational goal has been established, management should allow the employee as much freedom as possible in deciding how to accomplish their role. In this manner, the employee chooses the method in which to accomplish his tasks, which should be done as autonomously as possible and will hopefully instill a feeling of pride in the outcome of the work. If the employee cannot have free reign to determine how to accomplish the task, as is often the case in police work, the employee should be given as much choice as possible in deciding how to accomplish the work.

Finally, giving police officers more control over the peripheral aspects of the task can help increase the feeling of autonomy. For example, if the overall goal is to reduce DWI arrests, then the officers involved should be allowed to set meeting times, establish lines of communication and feedback loops, engage trouble spots based on their experience and judgment, and so on. Having control over these smaller parts should create a stronger sense of autonomy than would all of these aspects being micromanaged by upper management.

## **Feedback**

While feedback did not significantly impact job satisfaction in this particular study, it shows a lack of satisfaction within the department and should still be considered as an important aspect of police work to improve. Improvements in job design will be very difficult to fully recognize without a vibrant feedback mechanism in the department. There are several ways in which departments can improve feedback. Feedback between supervisors and their officers could be enhanced by making performance evaluations more dynamic, meaning that they look beyond how many arrests an officer made or how many tickets he wrote. This is a difficult task, and even more so in the scope of the civil service. Because performance evaluations have no impact on the

promotion process, and the fact that they are rarely a factor in disciplinary proceedings, there is little incentive to improve and take seriously the performance evaluation process. However, if the department realizes that feedback is critical for improving their employee's job satisfaction and productivity, perhaps they will consider the implementing an effective performance evaluation process.

Feedback between coworkers can be increased by creating groups focused on accomplishing a stated goal. By creating smaller groups within the bureaucracy, the chance for both formal and informal feedback is greatly increased. Small groups could be based around policing a particular neighborhood, or a particular crime, or even representing some specific interest within the department. Hopefully, the groups could be made up of diverse officers specializing to accomplish a specific goal. Leaders within the groups would be placed much closer to the rest of the members, giving them the chance to quickly and effectively offer feedback. Conceivably, coworkers within the small groups would have more chances for on the spot informal feedback.

Finally, feedback from the community consistently ranks as the lowest item in the survey responses. This was found consistently in the literature review as well as in this research project. Police departments can attempt to remedy this by using techniques and outreach programs designed at engaging the community. For example, citizens can be asked to provide the department with feedback, either complaining about or commending their experience with the department. The easiest way to do this is to create an online ability for citizens to submit feedback. Following this, supervisors should read and take seriously the feedback. This can be a great method to identify and reward officers who are performing well as well as correct officers who are found to have consistent problems or make egregious errors. Such a program would only

be successful with the full support of the department. Officers would need to inform citizens of this function during their interactions with the public and the feedback would need to be read and utilized.

### **Conclusion and Research Summary**

This purpose of this research project was to explore the predictors of job satisfaction in a medium sized Texas police department. The research findings supported the hypotheses that higher levels of task identity, task significance, skill variety, autonomy, and the Motivating Potential Score of the job would increase job satisfaction. The findings show that the control variables tested do not significantly impact job satisfaction, nor did the findings support the hypothesis that higher levels of feedback would result in higher levels of job satisfaction. Overall, the purpose of the study was achieved by identifying the most important predictors of police officer job satisfaction.

### **Limitations of the Study and Suggestions for Future Research**

This research project was intended to analyze a single police department using much shorter scales and indices than a larger research project would utilize. While the number of cases in the analysis ( $n=37$ ) represented about a third of the department, the analysis suffered from a lack of returns. Future research should focus on ways to encourage more subjects to take the survey. An interview with a supervisor in the police department studied highlighted the problem of “cynical cops” who could have viewed the survey as a source of possible repercussions from the department, and thus choose not to complete the survey. The supervisor suggested that a face-to-face encounter to explain the purpose of the research and to distribute the survey would have encouraged more officers to complete the survey. By using this approach instead of

cascading the survey through the normal interdepartmental mail system, the researcher could have built a better rapport with the respondents.

A greater number of returns would allow for a higher level of analysis, such as using a multiple regression analysis to determine the collective impact of the variables. More respondents could be encouraged to participate by utilizing online survey tools or by including a pre-paid envelope for the survey taker to use after taking the survey. These steps should increase the subject's perception of anonymity and encourage more to take the survey as well as report more honest responses.

This research project measured only perceptions of the work environment and five police officer characteristics. There was no effort to analyze the current management style of the department, organizational structure, salaries and benefits, or a myriad of other factors that influence job satisfaction. The survey also did not analyze the "growth needs" of the employee, which Hackman and Oldham (1975) discuss as necessary to know to make better use of the job satisfaction survey. To illustrate this point, an employee with low growth needs would not have higher job satisfaction if he had high perceptions of skill variety or task significance. A more thorough analysis would produce better and more usable results. This could include individual interviews, panel discussions, job shadowing, and other techniques to produce richer conclusions from the analysis.

Lastly, the research project was limited in scope. The results of the analysis coincided with the majority of the literature, but these results should remain specific to this single department. Future research should attempt to analyze multiple departments at once, which will allow for higher returns and for the results to be better generalized for policing in general.

Ideally, future research would select several comparable departments and analyze their perception of job satisfaction. Not only will this increase returns and provide for better analyses, but it could also act as a policy analysis tool. If one police department has implemented job redesign measures intended to increase job satisfaction, it can be compared to other departments and even past assessments of the police department itself.

### **Suggestions for Policy Makers**

Policy makers should take steps to improve each of the six independent variables in this research project. While feedback was not shown to be a significant predictor of job satisfaction, it is likely that the results indicate a lack of satisfaction with feedback within this department. Appendix I provides a frequency distribution of each survey question and the responses. The worst performing question in the survey was “the community provides me with constant feedback” followed quickly by responses indicating a lack of satisfaction with supervisor and coworker feedback. This should be especially concerning considering that the literature indicates that supervisor feedback is the most important form of feedback for a police officer (Shane 2010a). The administration should be able to recognize this as an immediate opportunity to improve job satisfaction in the department. Citizens should be enabled to provide the department with more feedback, and supervisors must improve their feedback techniques.

The most commonly discussed technique to improve job satisfaction in the police department is the importance of forming smaller groups within the bureaucracy. An informal interview with a long-serving police manager notes that officers who belong in specialized units like Traffic, DWI, SWAT, etc. tend to be more motivated and thus have higher job satisfaction. The department being studied might not be able specialize along these lines, but there is some

opportunity for specialization. Specialization and shrinking the bureaucracy in general should allow the officer to have a greater chance to see his or her work done from start to finish (task identity). It will also generate more opportunities for targeted and useful feedback. Being freed from the stifling bureaucracy will allow for the worker to feel more autonomous in his or her decision making as well, which leads to great experienced responsibility for the work. Smaller groups will reduce redundancies in the department, and allow for greater relationships to form between coworkers and management.

One research finding suggests making practically no change within the department at all. Just simply making officers aware of their worth can significantly increase job satisfaction. Task significance significantly impacts job satisfaction and the simplest way to increase task significance is to tell stories. It may sound trivial, but telling stories is essentially the same thing as conducting a case study. The stories not only communicate the significance of the work done by the police officers, but they also serve as a corrective tool. This can boost feedback and skill variety as well, as officers are made aware of their own actions and what actions to take in a particular situation. This is done extensively in law enforcement training, but can be more meaningful if offered by management on a voluntary basis.



## Appendices

### Appendix I- Frequency distribution of survey responses

Table 4.1. Frequency Distribution						
Question and response	SD	D	N	A	SA	Mean
TS a. What I do affects the well-being of other people in very important ways.	0	0	5	12	20	4.41
TS b. Many people are affected by the job I do.	0	0	5	12	20	4.38
SV a. I have a chance to do a number of different tasks on the job.	0	1	5	16	15	4.22
SV b. I use a wide variety of different skills and talents in the work I do.	0	1	4	18	14	4.22
TS c. My job is very important to the department.	0	0	7	9	21	4.19
SV c. I get to use a number of complex skills on this job.	0	0	5	23	9	4.11
AU c. My job allows me an opportunity to participate in decision making.	1	1	7	13	15	4.08
AU b. My job gives me considerable freedom in doing the work.	0	2	5	18	12	4.08
AU a. I have almost complete responsibility for deciding how and when the work is to be done.	0	2	7	22	6	3.86
TI a. My job provides me with the chance to finish completely any work I start.	0	5	7	19	6	3.7
FB a. Just doing the work provides me with opportunities to figure out how well I am doing.	1	4	11	17	4	3.51
TI b. The results of my efforts are clear and identifiable.	0	4	15	15	3	3.46
FB c. My coworkers provide me with constant feedback about how I am doing.	2	6	11	16	2	3.27
TI c. My job is arranged so that I have a chance to do an entire piece of work from beginning to end.	2	9	6	17	3	3.27
FB b. My supervisor provides me with constant feedback about how I am doing.	1	8	12	14	2	3.22
FB d. The community gives me constant feedback on how I am doing.	2	12	17	6	0	2.73
Legend: TS- Task Significance, SV- Skill Variety, AU- Autonomy, TI- Task Identity, FB- Feedback						

## Appendix II: Consent Form

This project (IRB Reference Number 2013W8635) was approved by the Texas State IRB on January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2013. Pertinent questions or concerns about the research, research participants' rights, and/or research-related injuries to participants should be directed to the IRB chair, Dr. Jon Lasser (512-245-3413 - [lasser@txstate.edu](mailto:lasser@txstate.edu)) and to Becky Northcut, Director, Research Integrity & Compliance (512-245-2314 - [bnorthcut@txstate.edu](mailto:bnorthcut@txstate.edu))

Hello,

This purpose of this consent form is to inform you that you have been selected to participate in a survey that seeks to gather data regarding police officer job satisfaction. The researcher administering the survey is Jordan Peterson of the Masters of Public Administration program at Texas State University. Jordan Peterson may be contacted by email at [Jordanmp627@hotmail.com](mailto:Jordanmp627@hotmail.com). The research project is unfunded, and is a requirement to complete an Applied Research Project that is necessary for graduation in the MPA program.

You have been selected to participate in the survey because of your status as a sworn police officer in a Texas police department. The survey itself is designed to take less than ten minutes to complete and asks a total of 24 questions. The questions first ask the officer to state whether he or she agrees with a statement about their employment, then five questions ask age, sex, race, rank and education level of the officer. The following is an example of the survey and the questions asked. In section 1, the respondent will select the level of agreement with the statement with "1" being strongly disagree, and "5" being strongly agree. Section 2 the respondent will simply indicate the response that most accurately describes questions about age, sex, race, rank and education.

The results of the research could potentially lead to the department making changes that help improve job satisfaction of officers. For example; if the results indicate that feedback from supervisors is lacking, changes could be made to improve the way officers receive feedback from their work. The only risk to the participants as a result of taking this survey involves identifying the individual participant. To eliminate this risk, please do not indicate your name or your department at any point on the survey. Please be aware that your participation in this survey is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time without prejudice or jeopardizing your standing with the University or the police department. You may also choose not to answer any question for any reason.

The data collected will be anonymous, so it is important that you do not indicate your name or department at any time. You will have one week to complete the survey, then upon completing the survey, you are to turn it in to the Secretary of the Police Chief who will keep the survey in a secure place. The anonymous survey data will be kept by the researcher in a secure location until the project has been accepted in May, at which time the data will be destroyed. You may request of the completed study by emailing the researcher or using the Alkek Library's digital collections to download the research project.

Since the only risk to the subject in the survey involves a breach of confidentiality, you will not be required to sign the consent form. Instead of a signature, your completion of the survey will indicate that you have read and understood the consent form. Please keep this consent form for your records. The researcher understands and accepts any and all liability having to do with administering this survey.

Your participation is greatly appreciated. Thank you, Jordan Peterson (Note: "Jordan Peterson was able to fit doubled spaced in the actual consent form")

### Appendix III: Police Officer Job Satisfaction Survey

Please answer the following survey questionnaire as honestly and as accurately as possible. Do not indicate your name or your department. You are not required to take this survey and you may choose to stop the survey at any time. Your responses will remain confidential.

Use the scale below to indicate whether each statement is descriptive or non-descriptive of your present job. Please circle your response in the column on the right.

1 = Strongly Disagree  
2 = Disagree  
3 = Neither Agree nor Disagree  
4 = Agree  
5 = Strongly Agree

#	Survey Question	Response				
		SD	D	N	A	SA
1.	Overall, I am satisfied with my job	1	2	3	4	5
2.	Overall, I am satisfied with my coworkers.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Overall, I am satisfied with my supervisors.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	I have a chance to do a number of different tasks on the job.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	My job provides me with the chance to finish completely any work I start.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	What I do affects the well-being of other people in very important ways.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	I have almost complete responsibility for deciding how and when the work is to be done.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	Just doing the work provides me with opportunities to figure out how well I am doing.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	My supervisor provides me with constant feedback about how I am doing.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	The results of my efforts are clearly visible and identifiable.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	I use a wide variety of different skills and talents in the work I do.	1	2	3	4	5
12.	Many people are affected by the job I do.	1	2	3	4	5
13.	My job gives me considerable freedom in doing the work	1	2	3	4	5
14.	My coworkers provide me with constant feedback about how I am doing	1	2	3	4	5
15.	I get to use a number of complex skills on this job	1	2	3	4	5
16.	My job is arranged so that I have a chance to do an entire piece of work from beginning to end.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	My job is very important to the department.	1	2	3	4	5
18.	My job allows me an opportunity to participate in decision making.	1	2	3	4	5
19.	The community gives me constant feedback on how I am doing.	1	2	3	4	5

Please flip the page over and continue the survey on the back.



Note: This arrow is much bigger in the actual survey. It could not be placed in the footer in the ARP as it was in the original survey.

Please indicate your responses to the following questions. Circle the number that represents your answer in the column on the right.

#	Survey Question	Response												
20.	What is your age group?	<table border="1"> <tr><td>1.</td><td>18-24</td></tr> <tr><td>2.</td><td>25-34</td></tr> <tr><td>3.</td><td>35-44</td></tr> <tr><td>4.</td><td>45-64</td></tr> <tr><td>5.</td><td>65 &amp; up</td></tr> </table>	1.	18-24	2.	25-34	3.	35-44	4.	45-64	5.	65 & up		
1.	18-24													
2.	25-34													
3.	35-44													
4.	45-64													
5.	65 & up													
21.	What is your gender?	<table border="1"> <tr><td>1.</td><td>Male</td></tr> <tr><td>2.</td><td>Female</td></tr> </table>	1.	Male	2.	Female								
1.	Male													
2.	Female													
22.	What is your race or ethnicity?	<table border="1"> <tr><td>1.</td><td>African-American</td></tr> <tr><td>2.</td><td>Hispanic</td></tr> <tr><td>3.</td><td>White</td></tr> <tr><td>4.</td><td>Other</td></tr> </table>	1.	African-American	2.	Hispanic	3.	White	4.	Other				
1.	African-American													
2.	Hispanic													
3.	White													
4.	Other													
23.	What is your current rank?	<table border="1"> <tr><td>1.</td><td>Officer/ Detective</td></tr> <tr><td>2.</td><td>Sergeant</td></tr> <tr><td>3.</td><td>Lieutenant or above</td></tr> </table>	1.	Officer/ Detective	2.	Sergeant	3.	Lieutenant or above						
1.	Officer/ Detective													
2.	Sergeant													
3.	Lieutenant or above													
24.	What is your highest level of education?	<table border="1"> <tr><td>1.</td><td>High school</td></tr> <tr><td>2.</td><td>Associates degree</td></tr> <tr><td>3.</td><td>Some college</td></tr> <tr><td>4.</td><td>Bachelor's degree</td></tr> <tr><td>5.</td><td>Some graduate school</td></tr> <tr><td>6.</td><td>Graduate degree</td></tr> </table>	1.	High school	2.	Associates degree	3.	Some college	4.	Bachelor's degree	5.	Some graduate school	6.	Graduate degree
1.	High school													
2.	Associates degree													
3.	Some college													
4.	Bachelor's degree													
5.	Some graduate school													
6.	Graduate degree													

Thank you for your participation in this survey.  
Please return your survey to your supervisor.

If you wish to view the results of this survey and the applied research project, contact Jordan Peterson by email at [JordanMP627@hotmail.com](mailto:JordanMP627@hotmail.com).

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