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Petter Gottschalk

BI Norwegian Business School

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# Leadership roles in police service management and occupational culture

## Petter Gottschalk

BI Norwegian Business School  
Nydalsveien 37  
N-0442 Oslo, Norway  
petter.gottschalk@bi.no

**Abstract:** The purpose of this paper is to present results from a survey of police managers in Norway on leadership roles and occupational culture. A total of eighteen police personnel values for occupational culture were applied in this research. All of them represent cultural dimensions of potential importance to law enforcement performance. Respondents emphasized the role of personnel leader where the manager is responsible for supervising, hiring, training, organizing, coordinating, and motivating a cadre of personnel to achieve the goals of the organization. Empirical research as presented in this paper is important to generate insights into links between theory and practice in police management.

**Keywords:** leadership roles; police management; occupational culture; survey research; services; standards.

**Biographical note:** Petter Gottschalk is professor of information systems and knowledge management in the department of leadership and organizational management at the Norwegian School of Management. Dr. Gottschalk has published several books and research articles on crime and policing.

## Introduction

A manager's job consists of several parallel roles. At a certain point in time, the manager may perceive one role as more important than others. Yet, the manager may spend most of his or her time on less important roles, and the manager may perceive himself or herself as more qualified for some roles than other roles. Mintzberg (1994) found that it is a peculiarity of the management literature that its best-known writers all seem to emphasize one particular part of

the manager's job to the exclusion of the others. Together they cover all the parts, but even that may not describe the whole task of managing.

Leadership of police departments, large and small, consists of several parallel management roles. Sewell (2008) found that some of the most important lessons learned in police management are that command hurts, change is difficult to implement and often not desired, politics are everywhere, and the police chief is a public figure.

Police leadership is important in a number of policing areas including community policing. Case studies of community policing have highlighted the role of leadership as a mechanism to facilitate rapid, and sometimes radical, organizational transformation. Leadership concerns how groups can be influenced and/or induced into compliance through the personality, power, persuasion, and behavior of key individuals. These efforts are generally intended to create needed structure and/or coordinate efforts toward the achievement of goals (Schafer, 2009).

Schafer (2009) found that the importance of police supervisors (formal leaders) in shaping organizational contexts and outcomes in police organizations is generally accepted. Although external pressures and the culture of a police organization can be powerful forces shaping and influencing officer conduct, the tone set by supervisors throughout the organization seems to play a key role in these processes.

Police leaders often work within a police culture steeped with tradition. For example, Barton (2004) found that the English and Welsh police epitomize organizations that are steeped in tradition. However, there seems to be no such thing as one single police culture. For example, Christensen and Crank (2001) found cultural differences between police officers in urban and non-urban areas. Similarly, Jaschke et al. (2007) found that the style of policing varies enormously from country to country and even within local police forces.

It is important to investigate the relationship between leadership roles and occupational culture in police organizations, as some combinations of roles and cultures may be more successful in service provision. It is different from that examined in other contexts (other service providing entities), because the police is entitled to use force when needed in the handling of citizens.

The purpose of this paper is to answer research questions related to leadership roles and professional culture in the police: What leadership roles are considered most important? What leadership roles require most time? What leadership roles are associated with qualifications? What is the dominating culture - bureaucratic or knowledge-based organization? How does leadership role importance vary with cultural values?

These are very broad research questions that are answered only exploratory in this paper based on a convenience sample of two police districts in Norway. The link between leadership roles and organizational culture is important, as police leaders practice their leadership within an occupational culture in police departments. Beneficiaries of this study include police organizations as well as society at large.

## **Leadership Roles**

Mintzberg's (1994) role typology is frequently used in studies of managerial work. The advantage of the Mintzberg typology as opposed to other leadership instruments is its ability to be generally unbiased. There is not one role, which as such seems better than another role. Rather, the appropriate or preferred role depends on the situation. Hence, the contingent approach to management is applied by making role importance dependent on the situation.

In the context of police management, Glomseth et al. (2007) applied six roles from Mintzberg's role typology: personnel leader, resource allocator, spokesman, entrepreneur,

liaison and monitor. In this research, the same six roles are applied. The role terminology is commonly in use and is genderless. We will employ the following role descriptions for leadership roles:

- 1) *Personnel leader*. As a leader, the manager is responsible for supervising, hiring, training, organizing, coordinating, and motivating a cadre of personnel to achieve the goals of the organization. This role is mainly internal to the police unit.
- 2) *Resource allocator*. The manager must decide how to allocate human, financial and information resources to the different tasks of police work. This role emphasizes planning, organizing, coordinating and controlling tasks, and is mainly internal to the police investigation unit. Administrative tasks are included in this role.
- 3) *Spokesman*. As a spokesman, the manager extends organizational contacts to areas in the police force outside his or her own unit. This role emphasizes promoting acceptance of the unit and the unit's work within the organization of which they are part. For the manager, it means contact with the rest of the organization. Frequently, he or she must move across traditional departmental boundaries and become involved in personnel, organizational and financial matters.
- 4) *Entrepreneur*. The manager identifies police needs and develops solutions that change situations. A major responsibility of the manager is to ensure that rapidly evolving policing methods are understood, planned, implemented, and strategically exploited in the organization.
- 5) *Liaison*. In this role, the manager communicates with the external environment, and it includes exchanging information with government agencies, private businesses, media and the public. This is an active, external role.

6) *Monitor*. This role emphasizes scanning of the external environment to keep up with relevant changes, such as politics and economics. The manager identifies new ideas from sources outside his or her organization. To accomplish this task, the manager uses many resources, including professional relationships, media and the public. This is a passive, external role.

These six roles are illustrated in Figure 1. The personnel leader and resource allocator are roles internal to the unit for the unit manager. The spokesman and entrepreneur are roles directed towards the base police organization, while the liaison and monitor roles are external to both the unit and the base organization for the unit manager.

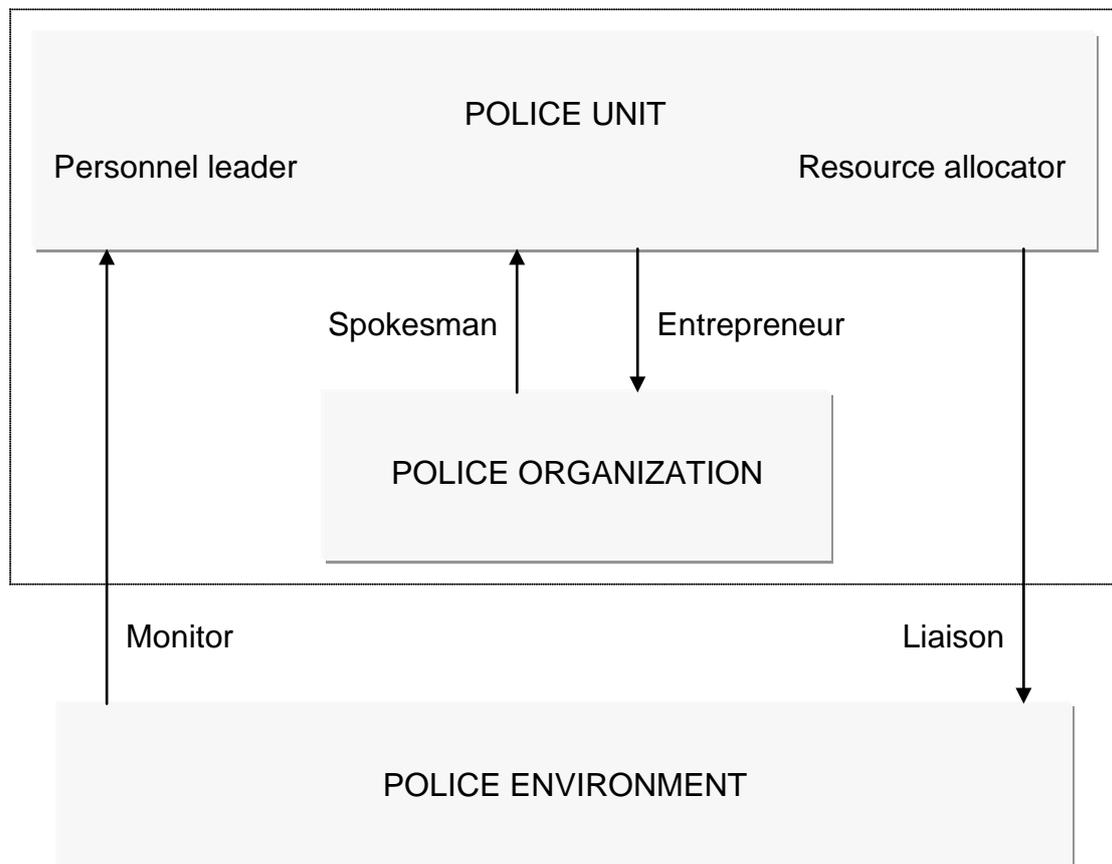


Figure 1. Leadership roles for police managers

## **Occupational Culture**

Police culture has been studied for many years (Fielding, 1994; Reuss-Ianni, 1993; Glomseth and Gottschalk, 2009). For example, Christensen and Crank (2001) studied police work and culture in a non-urban setting in the USA. They found a police culture emphasizing secrecy, self-protection, violence, and maintenance of respect. Lahneman (2004) studied knowledge sharing in the international intelligence community after 9/11, while Granér (2004) studied uniformed police officers' occupational culture. Barton (2004) found that English and Welsh police epitomize organizations that are steeped in tradition, while Reuss-Ianni (1993) made a distinction between street cops and management cops.

An organizational culture is a set of shared norms, values, and perceptions, which develop when the members of an organization interact with each other and the surroundings. It is holistic, historically determined, socially constructed, and difficult to change (Hofstede et al., 1990). Organization culture might determine how the organization thinks, feels, and acts.

An occupational culture is a reduced, selective, and task-based version of culture that is shaped by the socially relevant worlds of the occupation (Christensen and Crank, 2001). Embedded in traditions and history, occupational culture contains accepted practices, rules, and principles of conduct that are applied to a variety of situations, and generalized rationales and beliefs.

In analyzing the culture of a particular group or organization, Schein (1990) found it desirable to distinguish three fundamental levels at which culture manifests itself: (a) observable artifacts, (b) values, and (c) basic underlying assumptions. Values as the second

level can be studied through interviews and questionnaires in terms of norms, ideologies, rules, charters, and philosophies.

The main emphasis in this study is on the core element values as it is important in discussions of organizational culture. Hofstede et al. (1990), for example, argue that values compose the core of any culture. Being relatively lasting, values are emotional perceptions of what is appreciated and preferred in an organization. In other words, values are essential for an organization's fundamental perception of what is right and what is wrong, and what is desirable and valuable in a work situation. Consequently, it is possible to claim that an organization's values dictate its behavior.

A total of 21 police personnel values as developed by Glomseth and Gottschalk (2009) were applied in this research. All of them represent cultural dimensions of potential importance to law enforcement performance. We will now systematically and carefully introduce the research variables by drawing out characteristics of each of the 21 factors that we examine.

- 1) *Time firm versus time floats.* Some police officers value conscious use of time and punctuality. Time is regarded as an important factor, both in relation to ordinary policing and training, and especially when they are faced with aggravated and dangerous situations and crime. The time factor is particularly decisive in armed responses.
- 2) *Change versus tradition.* On the one hand, police officers are almost continually preoccupied with self-development, team development, and with developing their division. Managers encourage them to frequent testing of new equipment, interview methods, evidence collection, competence building, and further development of police investigation methods. On the other hand, managers also value experience and thoroughly tested routines and systems. It is also appreciated that routines are

thoroughly tested and have proved to work. Most organizations, in particular police organizations, view tradition and history as important. Fielding (1984) shows that police officers to a great extent tend to trust their previous experiences and arrangements, which have proved to work in the past.

- 3) *Individualism versus group orientation.* Group orientation is often found in police work since a typical feature of policing is team cooperation and cooperation between two or more partners. This is an occupational feature developed as newcomers when they go on car patrols together. Partnerships of this kind tend to last for many years, long after they left the uniform in the closet. On the other hand, police officers are described as strong individuals with potential leadership qualities. What is more, a police officer is often completely responsible for his or her actions, which leads to a stronger emphasis on individualism.
- 4) *Freedom versus control.* Liberty and freedom is given to police officers to be creative, follow the challenge of solving crime, and applying each officer's skills. Control is needed so that detectives follow the book, and they themselves do not break the law.
- 5) *Privacy versus openness.* This dimension is intended to capture how officers put into practice or value the social conditions in the unit. Which topics are being discussed, and to what extent do the police officers feel that the unit is characterized by openness and intimacy?
- 6) *Informal versus formal.* This factor measures the extent to which police officers are communicating informally or formally with each other.
- 7) *Individual competition versus cooperation.* Cooperation is often appreciated among close colleagues. At the same time, police officers may be competitive in solving

policing work. Many have a strong desire to achieve results. This attitude can stimulate individual competition and rivalry among teams and divisions.

- 8) *Equality and empowerment versus hierarchy.* Equality is characterized by short distances between layers in the organization, minor differences in status, a relatively tight social environment, and a welcoming reception given to new members.
- 9) *Short term versus long term.* Policing can sometimes be described as guided by incidents and fragmented information. This indicates that extensive planning is not necessary, and that focus is short term. Consequently, this might create a culture of short-term focus, fast solutions, and quick results. On the other hand, wherever possible, police officers value thorough analyses and decision-making processes characterized by a long-term perspective. For example, it might take several years of training leading up to approval of a murder detective or financial crime investigator.
- 10) *Work versus balance.* This dimension of work being more important versus balance between work and spare time is an interesting culture factor among all kinds of professionals and managers. Police officers might tend to be very enthusiastic about their job, their special field, their work environment, and also about extra money from overtime work, causing an imbalance towards work. A prominent feature of the organizational culture in the police is to regard police work as more than just an ordinary job. Entering the police might mean adopting a lifestyle. In addition, a great number of police officers are actively taking part in sports, outdoor life, and organizational activities including union work, as well as taking on duties.
- 11) *Task versus relationship.* Task orientation versus relation orientation is a dimension, which is frequently subjected to a variety of analyses of organizational culture. Members of police units often express a clear preference for task orientation. This

tendency can be understood in the light of the officers' strong interest in professional matters and the space they are given for self-development. Emphasis on action and result orientation are likely to reinforce this tendency.

12) *Direct versus indirect*. This factor is concerned with the style of communication. A direct style might be preferred, which has to be seen in relation to a context involving an open and relaxed tone between the officers and the absence of conflicts. In terms of subject matter and form, a unit's regular discussions might encourage a direct or indirect style.

13) *Act versus plan*. Also interesting is the dimension of action orientation versus planning orientation. This is the only dimension where it is often possible to identify certain differences of some significance between managers and non-managers. Reuss-Ianni (1993) distinguishes between managers (management cops) and police officers on patrol (street cops) with widely different cultures of the two groups. Police officers who do not hold managerial positions display a general feeling of mistrust for managers because they have lost touch with everyday practical policing.

14) *Practical versus philosophical*. Police officers may have a clear practical and pragmatic orientation or a theoretical and philosophical orientation. They have a practical orientation when they are working continuously with the purpose of finding simple and practical solutions. They have a theoretical orientation when they are testing new equipment, developing new plans, and combining evidence material in new ways. A similar distinction can be made between intellectually reflecting attitudes in contrast to an intuitive, practical, and action-oriented attitude among officers.

- 15) *Security versus challenge*. This dimension of security and safety versus challenge and suspense is perceived as very two-sided. On the one hand, it is a general feature of police officers in the unit that they are drawn to suspense and seek challenges to test their ability to master difficult situations. On the other hand, we see that importance is given to planning, structure, analyses of situations, and training. The significance of security is underlined by the priority given to health, environment, and safety regulations as well as the stress on personal safety in connection with different assignments.
- 16) *Security and integrity versus effectiveness and productivity*. When focusing on integrity and accountability, police officers follow the law, rules instructions and best practice in their work. When focusing on effectiveness and productivity, officers prevent and fight crime as considered best in their own minds. Integrity is defined as the quality of being honest and morally upright, while accountability refers to situations in which someone is required or expected to justify actions or decisions (Edelbacher and Ivkovic, 2004).
- 17) *Firm leadership versus individual creativity*. This dimension measures management, where the unit manager might be the boss as a strong manager. Traditionally, police hierarchy encourages a culture of strong managers, where the unit manager makes decisions that are to be implemented by unit officers.
- 18) *Open versus closed*. Closure, secrecy, loyalty, and no communication with the environment during investigations are suggested as typical characteristics of police culture by Reuss-Ianni (1993).

- 19) *Handicraft organization versus knowledge organization.* Patrol, arrest, police cars and actions indicate a handicraft police organization. Information systems, police intelligence and analysis indicate a knowledge police organization.
- 20) *Stability versus instability.* A stable police department is characterized by harmony, few conflicts and predictability. An instable police department is characterized by confusion, conflicts and surprises.
- 21) *Learning versus non-learning organization.* In a learning organization, information and knowledge is shared across department boundaries, relationships are explored and knowledge development is emphasized. In a non-learning organization, there is no information sharing or knowledge sharing.

## **Research Design**

A questionnaire was developed to measure leadership roles and occupational culture. Items in the questionnaire were derived from previous empirical research conducted by Glomseth et al. (2007) and Glomseth and Gottschalk (2009).

Leadership roles were measured in four different perspectives: (a) importance of the role as perceived by the manager, (b) actual time spent on the role, (c) ideal time spent on the role, and (d) perceived competence in the role.

Respondents represented a convenience sample of police managers in two police districts in Norway. In both police districts, executive training programs were carried out in 2009/2010, and the participants in these programs were selected for this research. Follo police district and Hedmark police district had a total of 120 participants in these programs.

The survey research was carried out in March and April 2010. 56 out of 120 managers responded to the questionnaire, thereby representing a response rate of 47 percent.

Responding police managers had worked on average twenty years in the police and was responsible for 21 employees.

## Research Results

Table 1 lists results for leadership roles on a scale from 1 (not important) to 7 (very important). Personnel leader is reported as the most important role where managers spend most time. Ideally, managers would like to spend even more time on this role. Respondents feel most competent in the role of resource allocator, followed by personnel leader and spokesman.

Leadership Role	Role Importance	Role Time Actual	Role Time Ideal	Role Competence
Personnel leader	5.68	4.68	5.50	4.68
Resource allocator	5.20	4.59	4.50	4.77
Spokesman	5.09	4.18	4.96	4.49
Entrepreneur	4.96	4.09	4.69	4.28
Liaison	4.96	4.07	4.86	4.21
Monitor	4.75	3.98	4.54	4.25

*Table 1. Measurement of leadership roles (importance: 1 - not important, 7 - very important; actual: 1 - little time, 7 - very much time; ideal: 1- not important time, 7 - very important time; competence: 1 - not competent, 7 - very competent)*

The value scales applied to measure occupational culture are listed in Table 2 and Figure 2. Respondents were given a complete description of both ends of each scale as presented here in the literature review. Left side (1) and right side (7) create middle (4) where many of the measurement scores can be found. This finding implies that occupational values are not very prominent. Only a few measurement scores indicate values distant from the mean, such as:

- Cooperation is much more important than individual competition (5.12)
- Informal communication is much more common than formal communication (2.98)
- Equality and empowerment is much more prominent than hierarchy and authority (2.91)
- To act is more important than to plan (2.95)
- Police officers are more practical and less philosophical (2.35)
- Security is more important than challenge (2.54)

These significant items are flagged in Figure 2.

<b>Scale</b>	<b>Occupational Culture Value</b>	<b>Measurement</b>
1	Time firm (1) versus time floats (7)	3.03
2	Change (1) versus tradition (7)	3.97
3	Individualism (1) versus group orientation (7)	4.40
4	Freedom (1) versus control (7)	3.21
5	Privacy (1) versus openness (7)	4.14
6	Informal (1) versus formal (7)	2.98
7	Individual competition (1) versus cooperation (7)	5.12
8	Equality and empowerment (1) versus hierarchy (7)	2.91
9	Short term (1) versus long term (7)	3.14
10	Work (1) versus balance (7)	4.16
11	Task (1) versus relationships (7)	3.42
12	Direct (1) versus indirect (7)	3.84
13	Act (1) versus plan (7)	2.95

14	Practical (1) versus philosophical (7)	2.35
15	Security (1) versus challenge (7)	2.54
16	Security and integrity (1) versus effectiveness and productivity (7)	2.23
17	Firm leadership (1) versus individual creativity (7)	4.05
18	Open (1) versus closed (7)	3.14
19	Handicraft (1) versus knowledge organization (7)	3.44
20	Stability (1) versus instability (7)	3.55
21	Learning (1) versus non-learning organization (7)	3.78

*Table 2. Measurement of occupational culture*

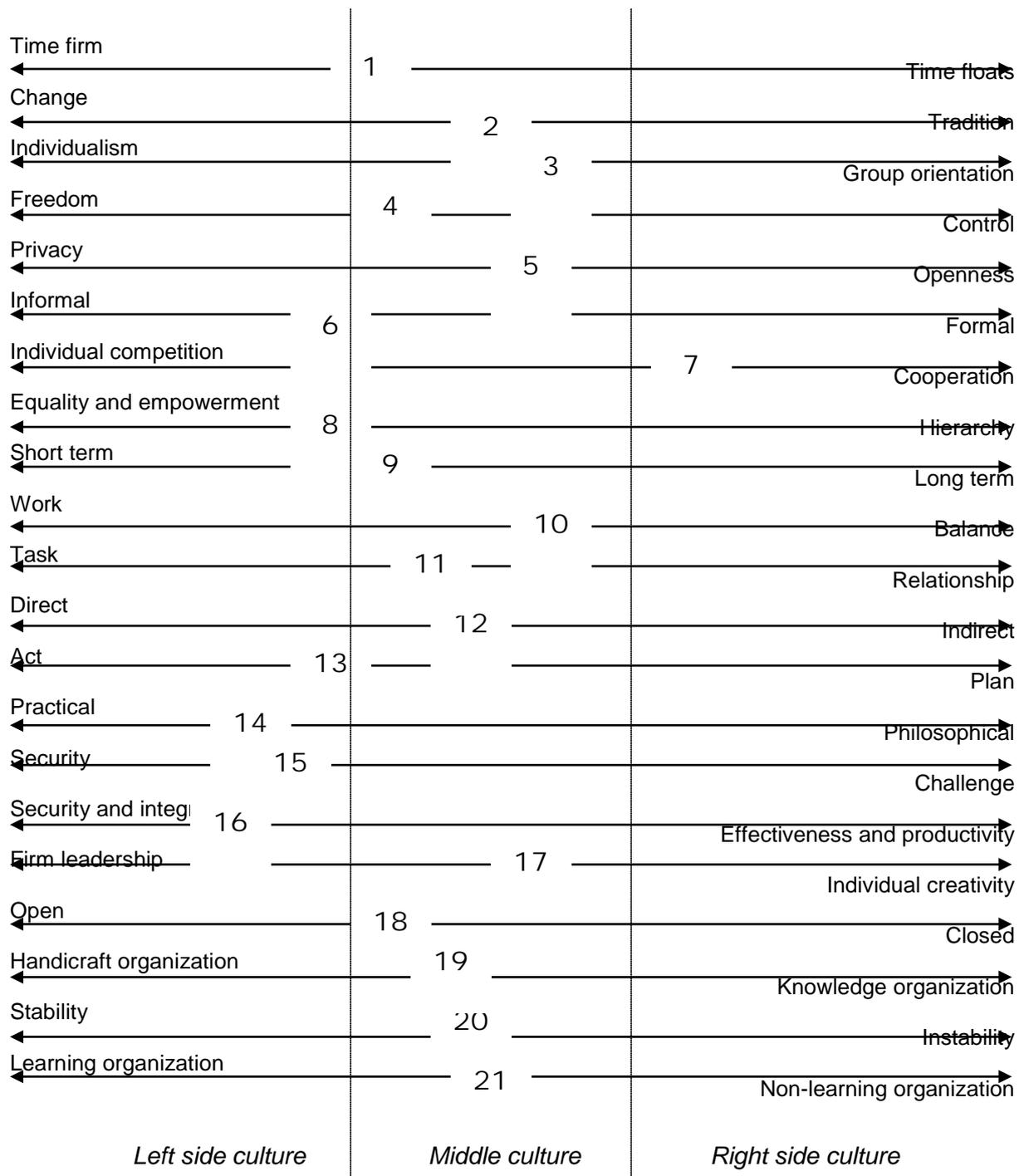


Figure 2. Measurement of occupational culture

One of our research questions was phrased as follows: How does leadership role importance vary with cultural values? This question can be answered by correlation analysis as listed in Table 3. The resource allocator role is more important in a culture characterized by firm time, cooperation and action. The entrepreneur role is more important in a culture characterized by openness and cooperation. The liaison role is more important in a culture characterized by hierarchy and openness.

Scale	Occupational Culture Value	Personnel leader	Resource allocator	Spokesman	Entrepreneur	Liaison	Monitor
1	Time firm versus time floats		-.326*				
2	Change versus tradition						
3	Individualism versus group orientation						
4	Freedom versus control						
5	Privacy versus openness				.308*		
6	Informal versus formal						
7	Individual competition versus cooperation		.388**		.345**	.354**	
8	Equality and empowerment versus hierarchy						
9	Short term versus long term						
10	Work versus balance						
11	Task versus relationships						
12	Direct versus indirect						
13	Act versus plan		-.310*				
14	Practical versus philosophical						
15	Security versus challenge						
16	Security and integrity versus effectiveness and productivity						
17	Firm leadership versus individual creativity						
18	Open versus closed					-.280*	
19	Handicraft versus knowledge organization						

20	Stability versus instability						
21	Learning versus non-learning organization						

*Table 3. Correlation coefficients linking culture and roles, where statistical significance is .05 at \* and .01 at \*\**

## **Implications**

Police managers participating in this survey find the personnel leader role to be most important among six leadership roles. As a personnel leader, the manager is spending time supervising, hiring, training, organizing, coordinating, and motivating police officers in his or her department. The purpose of these managerial efforts is to achieve the goals of the organization through the work of officers in the department.

While respondents find the personnel leader role most important, they think of themselves as more competent in another role. The other role is the resource allocator where the manager is applying the command structure to make decisions as to how human, financial and information resources are to be allocated to the different tasks of police work.

The least important role is to be a monitor, where the manager is scanning the external environment to keep up with relevant changes, such as politics and economics. Responding police leaders do not feel very competent in this role. Similarly, importance and competence are linked for other roles as well.

Police managers perceive the organizational culture to be balanced on most cultural value scales. Only six out of twenty-one scales have values that are distant from the balanced middle value. The most significant outlier from the middle value of 4 is security and integrity versus effectiveness and productivity. This same result is also found on the scale for security versus challenge. Rather than challenge and effectiveness, respondents find the culture to be dominated by security concerns.

When we looked for matches between leadership roles and organizational culture, we found that an organization characterized by firm time in task performance is associated with the resource allocator. An organization characterized by openness is associated with the entrepreneur role, while an organization characterized by cooperation is associated with resource allocator, entrepreneur, as well as liaison. If the organization is very focused on acting, then the resource allocator role is considered more important. Finally, in a police department with an open culture, then the police manager considers the liaison role more important.

The contribution of this study to the service management research stream is not only that there is no single police culture and that leadership roles vary across different occupational cultures, which has been repeatedly emphasized in previous research. The contribution is rather focused on law enforcement as a contingent leadership arena where links are established in a contingent approach based on correlation analysis.

One of the shortcomings of this paper, which might be addressed in future research, is related to the literature covered. In this paper, Mintzberg's (1994) roles are the only applied. In the context of police management, there are several research papers that could have been cited to enhance the richness of the study. Furthermore, the relationship between roles and culture could be discussed more extensively in a literature review. Also, the concept of service in the law enforcement context might be explored (Miller et al., 2008). In future research, the theoretical framework upon which research questions are based, might be improved. For example, the research question addressing the relatedness of leadership role importance to the organizational cultural values should be based on some theoretical background such as organizational culture theory and transformational leadership theory. In future research,

instrument validation and reliability assessment should be improved. Also, further interpretations of results are needed.

## **Conclusion**

Police management is a challenging endeavor for aspiring police employees. There is a choice to be made concerning leadership roles within an organizational culture. Respondents in the survey presented in this paper indicate that the personnel leader is the most important role for them, while they feel most competent in the resource allocator role.

Occupational culture is characterized by cooperation being much more important than individual competition, informal communication is much more common than formal communication, equality and empowerment is much more prominent than hierarchy and authority, to act is more important than to plan, police officers are more practical and less philosophical, and security is more important than challenge.

There are several limitations to this research that open up for future research. First, research questions presented in this paper are far too broad to be answered here with a convenience sample of two police districts in Norway. More survey data are needed from other countries and regions to find reliable answers to the research questions.

Next, a 1-7 scale was used in this research to evaluate leadership roles. Respondents were only given guidance as to what 1 and 7 represented on the scale. Future research might improve the consistency in respondents' understanding of the scale by labeling each number on the scale with a relevant text.

The contribution of this study and its significance for achieving best practices in the police service management area can be found in both roles and culture elements separately, as well as in suitable combinations of those two dimensions, as illustrated in this paper.

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