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Police Chiefs, Anomia, and Leadership

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This research assesses a potentially harmful condition among police chiefs: anomia. The article analyzes a large ($N = 1,120$) stratified sample survey of American police chiefs. Nine hypotheses are tested using multiple regressions. Results show relatively little anomia (as defined by Srole's 5-point Likert-type scale) among the respondents. Data analysis reveals little relationship between anomia and the following four variables: age, being a chief in a previous jurisdiction, race/ethnicity, and internal hire. However, the analysis also reveals significant negative relationships between anomia and education, merit selection, and years in law enforcement and between anomia and size of department and tenure as chief. Regression analysis reveals that the posited model explains only a small amount of variance in anomia. Suggestions for future research in the area of upper level policing executives are discussed.

Keywords: *anomia; anomie; leadership; police chiefs; supervisory styles*

Strong leadership is essential for effective policing. Line officers are given broad powers of discretion that have important effects on citizens, and these officers must be held accountable for the exercise of those powers. Traditionally, line officers were issued a badge, a gun, and a department manual and then left to their own devices on the streets (Walker, 1977). This lack of accountability and leadership led to a myriad of abuses of power, including corruption and misuse of force. As policing became professionalized in the early 1900s, midlevel managers were tasked with providing guidance and supervision to line officers in an attempt to curb perceived abuses. Before the reform era, police chiefs were often political appointees who were unable to maintain more than an informal level of influence over the department (Westley, 1970). The first wave of reformers concentrated on controlling patrol officers through bureaucratic rules and regulations, and by the 1960s most large departments had reached a certain level of control over abuses and corruption. By the 1960s, however, the direction of leadership changed when a new generation of

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reformers encouraged line officers to be more involved in policy making, and as a result, many departments experimented with team policing and policy making task forces (Skolnick, 1966). Control over subordinates was further taken from police chiefs in the form of the police union movement. In the latter part of the 20th century, police chiefs were faced with pressure from civil rights groups and other interest groups that all wanted a say in how their communities should be policed (Geller, 1985). Thus, strong leadership became paramount in the management of police organizations. Although research has investigated the role of police chiefs, the literature on the topic is sparse when compared to the amount of research examining line officers (e.g., Benson, 2004; Jurkanin, Hoover, Dowling, & Ahmad, 2001; Kitzman & Stanard, 1999; Regoli, Crank, & Culbertson, 1989).

In the present study, we will assess a potentially problematic condition facing police chiefs, namely the social psychological condition referred to as anomia, which describes the individual condition associated with the better known theoretical construct of anomie. Leo Srole (1956) conceptualized anomia as an individual's generalized, pervasive sense of self to others' distancing and self to others alienation. Anomia can be distinguished from Merton's (1958) notion of anomie. Merton uses the concept of anomie to refer to a state of normlessness in society; it is a social structural phenomenon reflecting a breakdown in the rules that govern social behavior. There has been a disjuncture or dissociation between cultural goals and institutionalized means by which to achieve the goals. The normlessness or alienation that results exists at the level of the social system, not within individuals (Deflem, 1989; Teevan, 1975). Anomia, on the other hand, operates at the individual rather than the societal level. It refers to an individual state of mind and is more closely related to the breaking down of an individual's sense of attachment to society and to others (Deflem, 1989). According to Srole (1956), anomia involves both "social malintegration" and "interpersonal alienation" and "is associated with a rejective orientation toward out-groups in general and toward minority groups in particular" (p. 712). As Simpson and Miller (1963) put it,

the anomic individual . . . feels that community leaders are indifferent to his needs, that the social order is essentially unpredictable, that he and people like him are retrogressing from the goals they have reached, that he cannot count on anyone for support, and that life itself is meaningless. (p. 257)

Individuals with high levels of anomia would be likely to have serious difficulty in working with, especially leading, others in social structural settings.

To operationalize anomia, Srole (1956) identified five elements that corresponded to questions he phrased to respondents in Likert-type statements. The first component is the individual's sense that community leaders are detached from and indifferent to her or his needs. It reflects a perception that there has been a breaking of the bond between community leaders and the people they serve. To measure this

component, the statement *Most people in public office are not really interested in the problems of the average man* was used. The second component of anomia is the individual's perception of the social order as essentially fickle and unpredictable, which reflects a sense that he or she can accomplish little toward realizing future goals. The statement *Nowadays a person has to live pretty much for today and let tomorrow take care of itself* measured this element.

The third component is the belief that the individual is retrogressing from the goals he or she has already reached. The statement *In spite of what some people say, the lot of the average man is getting worse, not better* measured this element. The fourth element, and the one that most closely approximates Emile Durkheim's (1951, 1984) conception of anomie, is the "deflation or loss of internalized social norms and values, reflected in extreme form in the individual's sense of the meaninglessness of life" (Srole, 1956, p. 713). This element was measured by the statement *It is hardly fair to bring children into the world with the way things look for the future*. The fifth component is the individual's perception that her or his personal relationships are no longer predictive or supportive and is expressed by the statement *These days a person does not know whom he can count on*.

We contend that higher levels of anomia hinder the ability of a chief to effectively lead a vital component of municipal government. Certainly, a chief's relationships with others, especially minorities, either on the force or in the community appears affected by high levels of anomia. However, the social distancing of an individual can also lead in extreme cases, or what Jilek (1974) calls anomic depression, which may result in severe psychiatric problems or even suicide. Numerous studies suggest that many factors may mitigate or exacerbate anomia (c.f., Deflem, 1989; Eckart & Durand, 1975; Leonard, 1977; Lutterman & Middleton, 1970; Simpson & Miller, 1963). Among these factors are the chief's level of education, size of department, how he or she was appointed to the position, her or his experience, whether he or she was an internal or external hire, and possibly her or his race/ethnicity.

Review of Literature

Previous research on anomia has looked at a rather broad range of subjects. As one might expect, random samples of large populations were surveyed and asked questions that were tied to Durkheim's (1951, 1984) original construct of anomie. Some studies looked at religion and marital status, socioeconomic status, and class issues. Most found that being married decreased social distance but that religion was not as important as Durkheim suggested (Bahr & Martin, 1983; Wilson, 1997). Other research suggests that socioeconomic status is the most important predictor of anomia. Srole (1956), for example, found anomia to be inversely related to socioeconomic status. Leonard (1977) found that education, work status, occupational prestige, and yearly income were strong correlates of anomia. Hendrick, Wells, and Faletti (1982) found that among the aged population, financial predictors were the

best predictors of anomia. Boor (1982) also found that anomia was significantly related to adverse changes in financial conditions. Koenig, Swanson, and Harter (1981) found that social class was inversely related to anomia, and Ryan (1981) goes as far as to say that socioeconomic status remains the primary determinant of anomia for most Americans. Regoli's (1977) work is an important exception to the inverse relationship hypothesis. He found that the middle class (and educated Whites) was the most highly anomic group that he studied.

The literature on race is inconsistent at best. There seems to be little consensus on whether race is a factor in individual anomia. Srole's (1956) first study showed that anomia is associated with a rejective orientation toward minority groups. Lefton (1968) found that economically well-off Blacks scored much higher on anomia than Blacks who were less well off. This finding was contrary to that found for White workers. Leonard (1977) reports a small but significant relationship between race and anomia. Austin and Dodge (1992) found that Blacks' levels of discontent (as measured by anomia) exceeded Whites in most instances. It is interesting that these race differences were much lower during the Carter administration than during the Republican administrations before and after Carter. However, Regoli (1977) found that Whites' anomia levels were almost 3 times higher than Blacks. Hughes and Thomas (1998) note that although quality of life continues to be worse for Blacks, anomia has increased for Whites at a faster rate than for Blacks. In a study of police-women, Perlstein (1971) found no relationship between race and anomia. As stated earlier, with the exception of a relatively small number of studies, the research on anomia has tended to look at random samples of Americans. Our research changes the focus of the research subject to a group of people who Sherman (1982) characterizes as "working class professionals:" police officers.

Anomia and the Police

Niederhoffer (1967) was the first to explore the relationship between policing and anomie, placing it in the context of cynicism. Bayley and Mendelsohn (1969) found that officer's anomia scores were relatively low. Thibault and Weiner (1973) describe the characteristics of the "detached policeman" and suggest that anomia has important negative effects on police officers. They compared the anomia scores of police officers and criminal justice students and found that although both were relatively low, officers had significantly higher scores than students. An interesting footnote to this study is that the students' scores increased from the beginning of coursework to graduation. Rafky (1975) continued the research on policing and anomia as it is related to cynicism. In a replication of Niederhoffer's (1967) classic study, he suggested that cynicism does not intervene in the relationships between many independent variables and anomia. He also noted an inverse relationship between rank and anomia and found that the discrepancy between norms and goals in police work intervened in this relationship. Regoli (1977) compared police officers' levels of

anomia with citizens' and found that anomia scores were much lower for police than for citizens. One study of policewomen and anomia (Perlstein, 1971) showed no relationship between anomia and age, religion, education, socioeconomic status, or length of service.

A small amount of research exists that focuses on sociopsychological conditions experienced by police chiefs. This important research has greatly improved our understanding of the role of police executives. Cynicism, stress, alienation, and anomie have all been analyzed in large-scale surveys (Niederhoffer, 1967; Regoli, 1976; Regoli & Poole, 1980; Regoli, Crank, Culbertson, & Poole, 1988; Sherman, 1978). Two studies in particular (Crank, Regoli, Hewitt, & Culbertson, 1993, 1995) show that institutional and organizational characteristics may have negative relationships with some stress constructs (including anomia) and that some individual characteristics have positive relationships with stress constructs such as anomia. This study expands the existing literature by presenting an in-depth analysis of anomia, as originally measured by psychologist Leo Srole in 1956.

Education

Researchers disagree on the importance of formal education for police officers in general and chiefs in particular (Worden, 1990). So called "blue ribbon commissions" or President's commissions almost always recommend an increase in formal education for all police officers, including upper level management (Walker, 1977). In the context of organizational change amid various scandals, many police reformers emphasize the importance of college education for police officers. Goldstein (1977) and Geller (1985), for example, note that college-educated officers are much more open to progressive change compared to their less educated counterparts. Dunham and Alpert (1997) assert that college-educated officers are less cynical, prejudiced, authoritarian, and hostile and are also less likely to use force than non-college educated officers.

Alternatively, they also note that college-educated officers are viewed by many as prone to dissatisfaction with the job, have a higher turnover rate, and sometimes exhibit hostility toward officers who do not have college degrees. This hostility might be the result of lesser educated superiors frequently penalizing college-educated officers during performance evaluations (Sherman, 1978). One would expect that this problem would abate as time goes on, simply because there are fewer and fewer "uneducated" police executives and supervisors. Our research (as well as the most recent Police Executive Research Forum [PERF] survey) supports this notion. Although numerous studies have examined the role of education for upper level policing executives (Angell & Endell, 1981; Crank et al., 1995; Keil & Eckstrom, 1978; Stamper, 1992; Steinman, 1984; Worden, 1990), there is little consensus on whether formal education is useful and beneficial for police chiefs when doing their job.

Size of Department

Police scholars have often examined department size when studying the role of police chiefs (e.g., Kitzman & Stanard, 1999; Stamper, 1992). The results of this research show that the job of leading a large police department is much different than the job of leading a small department. Although large jurisdictions are much more complex and provide challenges from many different sources, small departments can be equally difficult to manage because of nepotism, infighting, and local politics. Most of this research does not examine size of department in relation to anomia.

Experience

A variety of researchers have studied the role of prior experience when examining the effectiveness of police executives (e.g., Crank et al., 1993; Penegor & Peak, 1992; Regoli et al., 1988). Tenure as a chief and the high rate of turnover are critical issues as instability within a department might affect efficiency and effectiveness in serving and protecting the public (Mahtesian, 1997; Rainguet & Dodge, 2001). Rafky (1975) found that both rank and years on force have direct effects on anomia. Crank et al. (1995) found that experience had positive effects on work alienation but were insignificant for work stress and anomie.

Selection Issues

One variable that has been given relatively little attention is whether the police chief was hired from inside the department or was hired after an exhaustive external search. With the exception of Crank et al. (1993) and Penegor and Peak (1992), there is no other literature on this topic. A second variable that has received equally little attention is the method of selection of police chiefs. Crank et al. (1993, 1995) noted that different methods of selection might be associated with perceptions and attitudes. Assessment centers provide a fairly recent innovation in this area, and many jurisdictions (especially large ones) are using these to get a better idea of who the best chief candidates are.

In summary, although researchers have looked at many aspects of policing in an attempt to identify factors that may adversely affect police chiefs, very little has been done on anomia. The current study is an attempt to add to what we know about police chiefs to better understand the very difficult job of leading a major municipal organization.

Method

Sampling

Data were derived from a national sample of 1,500 American police chiefs in a survey produced by Robert M. Regoli and Robert G. Culbertson. The sample is among

the largest and most comprehensive available. The sampling frame was constructed from each state's Chiefs of Police Association, which provided separate lists. A two-stage random stratified sampling procedure was used to select participants. First, departments were coded by city size, and eight categories were created to obtain a sample with representatives from all size cities. Second, 200 chiefs were chosen from the first six categories: less than 3,000 in population; 3,000 to 4,999; 5,000 to 9,999; 10,000 to 24,999; 25,000 to 49,999; and 50,000 to 99,999. Because there were only few cities with more than 100,000 populations, all the cases were chosen from the largest two categories, 100,000 to 499,999 and more than 500,000.

In addition to oversampling large cities, Latino chiefs were also oversampled to obtain a sufficient number of Latino chiefs. This was accomplished by carefully perusing the entire sampling frame (more than 10,000 names) and identifying the surnames that appeared to be Latino. Although this methodology is not without its shortcomings, it did result in 77 self-identified Latino chiefs.

Fifteen hundred ($N = 1,500$) surveys were mailed using Dillman's (2000) three-wave design, which included an original mailing, a postcard reminder sent 2 weeks later, and for respondents who still had not returned their questionnaire, a final request sent 2 weeks later by certified mail. The survey instrument included almost 200 items, and 1,120 surveys were returned, giving us an exceptional 75% response rate for a survey of this size.

Measures

Education. The present study expands the discussion of the importance of education for police chiefs by looking at the education variable not as being dichotomous "bachelor's degree or not" but rather as a continuous variable with five categories, thus allowing for a more in-depth analysis. Level of education was measured by highest degree completed. Values are as follows: 1 = *less than high school*, 2 = *high school diploma*, 3 = *associate degree*, 4 = *bachelor's degree*, 5 = *master's degree*, 6 = *PhD, JD, or LLD*.

Size of department. The present study adds to the literature on department size by examining the intricacies of leading a very small department versus being in charge of a large, complex organization. Size of department was measured by number of sworn officers. The smallest department had one officer, and the largest had 4,300 total personnel. The mean was 84, the median was 26, and the mode was 5. The disparity between mean, mode, and median shows the presence of outliers. There were few very large departments, which gives the distribution a positive skew. Following established tradition in research (Hall & Tolbert, 2004) on the role of department size in the study of organizations, this variable was recoded into four categories: very small (1 to 10), small (11 to 25), medium (26 to 100), and large (more than 100).

Experience. This study adds to the ongoing discussion of experience by conceptualizing experience in four different ways (age, experience in law enforcement before becoming chief, tenure as chief, and prior chief). Age, experience in policing before becoming a chief, and tenure as chief were all measured in years. A fourth variable (prior experience as chief) asked each respondent whether he or she had “been a chief prior to this appointment.” This variable was coded as a dummy variable, with 1 for *yes* and 0 for *no*.

Selection issues. Two selections issues were used in the analysis: internal/external hire and method of selection. The internal hire variable was coded as a dummy variable, with the code of 1 being assigned to chiefs who had been selected from inside their current department and 0 for chiefs hired from outside the department. For the method of selection variable, the survey instrument offered respondents five choices: civil service, political appointment, election, seniority, and other. For respondents who selected other, space was provided so they could write in the method of their selection as chief. About one third of the respondents ($n = 375$) chose other, so this variable was carefully analyzed and expanded to 12 categories. The variable was then recoded into two categories: merit selection and nonmerit selection. The merit category included all chiefs who were selected by civil service, competitive exam, or assessment center. All other responses were recoded into the nonmerit category.

Race/ethnicity. Minority status was coded as a third dummy variable: Whites were coded as 1 and non-Whites were coded as 0. This method was used because policing has historically been a profession dominated by Whites and because all categories except White and Latino were too small for viable statistical analysis. Analysis of the other category led to a small number of recodes. Eight respondents self-identified as Italian Americans and were recoded to White.

Anomia. Our study used Srole’s (1956) original scale. Police chiefs selected from one of four possible responses: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The anomia items were coded as *strongly disagree* = 1, *disagree* = 2, *agree* = 3, and *strongly agree* = 4. The construction of the scale was additive, and therefore, the scale ranged from 5 (*very nonanomic*) to 20 (*severely anomic*). Alpha reliability is equal to .66.

Srole (1956) notes in his original study that “the items seemed to have validity as a measure of anomia, but lacked a formal validation test” (p. 713). Studies during the next 20 years also appear to have not reported validation of the anomia construct for the various subgroups surveyed (Eckart & Durand, 1975). Blalock (1972) argues that “validity is . . . used to refer to the appropriateness of the index or operational definition” and that tests are made in terms of the “concepts as they are operationally defined. Propositions involving concepts defined theoretically are therefore not directly

testable” (p. 13). Srole’s concept of anomia has been used in literally hundreds of studies in many disciplines for decades. It is the most used scale of anomia and appears to have content validity to the extent that the items do appear to measure the construct of anomia or self-to-other alienation. We conclude that in our current sample as in our previous studies, the scale appears to be valid.

Results

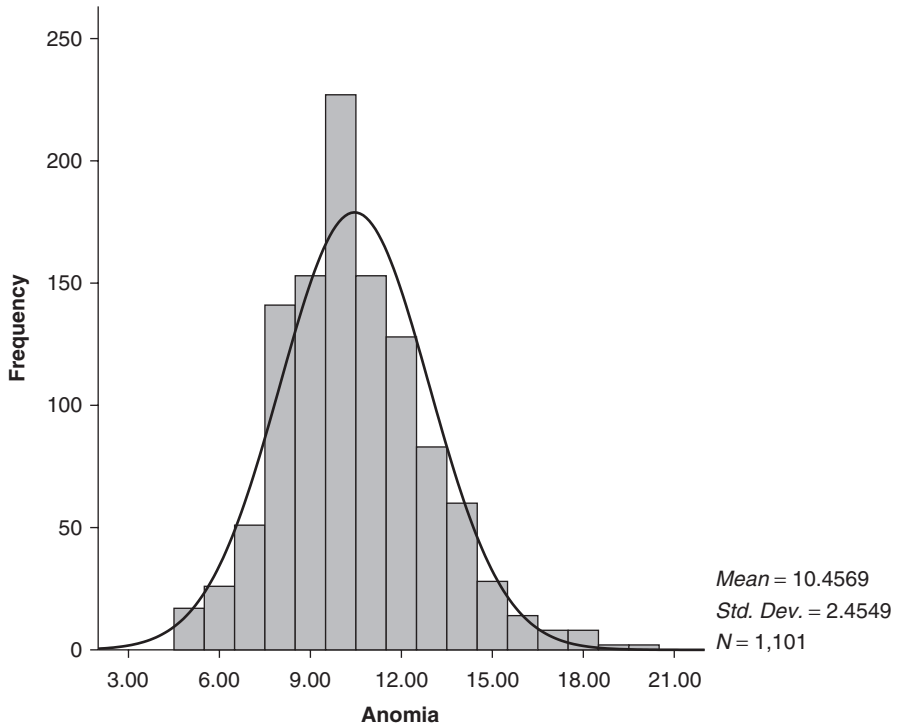
The education levels of the chiefs reflect substantial diversity: 378 (33.8%) graduated from high school (or had a GED), 247 (22.1%) had completed an associate’s degree, 240 (21.4%) had completed a bachelor’s degree, 185 (16.5%) had completed a master’s degree, and 22 (2%) had completed a PhD, JD, or LL.D degree. All four categories for size of department contained about 25% of the total, with the largest category (26 to 100 sworn officers) containing 28.8% and the smallest category (more than 101 sworn officers) containing 21.7%. The average age of the chiefs in the sample was 47. Their average number of years in policing before becoming chief was 15, with their length of service ranging from less than 1 year to more than 50 years. Their tenure as a chief ranged from less than 1 year to 34 years. The mean number of years as chief was roughly 6, the median was 4 years, and the mode was less than 1 year. About 14% reported they had been a chief prior to their current position.

Nearly 68% ($n = 757$) of chiefs advanced to their positions from within the department, with 31% ($n = 349$) being hired from an outside agency. The methods of hiring were quite diverse: 453 (44%) were politically appointed, 235 (21%) were appointed by civil service, 17 (2.4%) were elected, and 375 (33.5%) reported obtaining their positions through other means. More than 88% of the chiefs were White, less than 2% were Blacks, 7% were Latinos (recall that Latinos were oversampled), and about 2% were Asian, Native American, or Other. Fully 98% ($n = 1,095$) of the respondents were male; only three of the chiefs were female.

Generally speaking, the chiefs in the sample scored low on anomia (see Figure 1). Recall that Srole’s (1956) scale ranges from 5 to 20, with a score of 20 being highly anomic and a score of 5 being very nonanomic. About 56% of the sample scored below 11 on the scale, and only about 6% had anomia scores of 15 or higher. However, 44% of the chiefs answered “agree” or “strongly agree” to at least one question in the scale, so it does seem that a significant number of chiefs are at least slightly anomic regarding some aspect of their job. The mean (11), median (10), and mode (10) all suggest that the typical chief is either not anomic or only slightly anomic.

Our research shows that police chiefs have much lower levels of anomia than line officers (Regoli, 1977), prison managers (Poole & Regoli, 1983), and small business owners and managers (Caurana & Chircop, 2001). In fact, the middle-level managers surveyed by Poole and Regoli (1983) had mean anomia scores that were more than 3 points higher than the police chiefs we surveyed (13.57 vs. 10.45).

Figure 1
Histogram of Anomia



In addition, the general social survey and National Opinion Research Center show that average anomia scores are significantly higher than the scores we found for police chiefs.

Four variables (education, size of department, merit selection, and years in law enforcement) showed weak but significant correlations with anomia, all at the .01 level. Table 1 presents the correlation matrix for all variables included in the analysis.

To control for the independent variables expected to influence anomia, all nine were regressed on anomia. This model explained only a small percentage of the variance in anomia (slightly more than 12%). This result is one of the most important findings of the study, specifically that variables not theoretically anticipated and thus not included in the model accounted for the majority of the variance in anomia. Education is the only variable that has both a strong and significant effect on anomia. For each increase in level of education (e.g., an increase from bachelor's degree to

Table 1
Correlation Matrix (Pearson's *R*, Two-Tailed)

	Education	Size	Selection	Age	Years Policing	Tenure	Prior Chief	Internal Hire	Minority
Anomia	-.288**	-.157**	-.169**	-.055	-.163**	.000	-.012	.051	.073*
Education		.227**	.174**	-.067*	.166**	-.138**	.143**	-.275**	-.067*
Size			-.001	.162**	.333**	-.105**	.003	.074*	.016
Selection				.073*	.155**	.027	-.048	.044	-.073*
Age					.534**	.412**	.023	.020	.007
Years policing						-.241**	-.144**	.046	-.080**
Tenure							-.088**	-.070*	-.021
Prior chief								-.438**	.047
Internal hire									-.013

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Table 2
Regression of Variables on Anomia

Variable	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	β
Education	-.464	.068	-.226***
Department size	-.001	.000	-.085**
Merit selection	-.546	.165	-.100***
Age	.027	.014	.092
Years policing	-.053	.015	-.169***
Tenure as chief	-.059	.019	-.131**
Prior chief	-.114	.240	-.016
Internal hire	.028	.178	.005
Minority	.342	.245	.041
R^2	.124		
Adjusted R^2	.117		

** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

master's degree), anomia decreases by 0.23 of a standard deviation. The other variables, which have weak but significant effects on anomia, are department size, merit selection, years in law enforcement, and tenure as chief. When controlling for all variables, age, prior chief, internal hire, and race/ethnicity all have little or no relationship to anomia (see Table 2). These results suggest some important advice for city managers, mayors, and city council persons charged with hiring new police chiefs. Hiring a well-educated officer with many years of law enforcement experience via merit selection (an objective, test-oriented procedure) should result in the hiring of a relatively anomia-free police chief.

Table 3
Summaries of Anomia by Race/Ethnicity

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Cases
Entire population	10.4577	2.4540	1,088
Caucasian	10.3986	2.4073	985
Black	10.2500	2.0229	20
Hispanic	11.3803	3.0254	71
Asian	8.0000		1
Native American	11.4286	2.2254	7
Other	9.5000	2.2039	8

Although the race/ethnicity variable proved to be statistically insignificant in the regression model, the results are interesting nonetheless and thus bear more scrutiny. Table 3 provides a comparison of mean anomia scores for each race/ethnicity category.

Although Native Americans (11.45) and Hispanics (11.38) scored a full point higher than Whites (10.39), Blacks actually scored slightly lower (10.25) than Whites. The result is consistent with the inconsistent literature on race and anomia in the general population. We must again caution the reader that these results come from very small samples of minorities. There were only 20 Blacks, 71 Hispanics, and 7 Natives Americans in the analysis. A single Asian respondent reported an anomia score of 8. These small samples make it difficult to make statistically relevant generalizations about the relationship between anomia and race/ethnicity.

Discussion

Anomia among police chiefs is generally low. The majority of police leaders in this national sample do not appear to experience severe levels of social distancing from their fellow human beings. This is important in that police chiefs must be well connected with their communities, their subordinates, municipal leaders, and significant others. The police represent the front lines of one of America's most important social institutions—the criminal justice system—in the 21st-century fight on the War on Terror. As leaders of policing organizations, chiefs must be well integrated into their communities, and based on the results of this research, it appears as if they are. For large departments, these connections are even more critical. Chiefs of large departments have many municipal stakeholders to mollify, including business leaders, politicians, minority groups, and other special interest groups. In addition, many chiefs have to negotiate with public safety officers, fire department officials, and administrators from mayors' offices or city councils. In a very real sense, the position of police chief is a networking type of job, and chiefs must be well integrated with

a variety of people, many of whom can either disagree with the chief or at times be openly hostile toward the chief. A severely anomic police chief could have disastrous effects on a large municipality, and our research shows that very few American police chiefs score high on Srole's anomia scale.

A second important finding is the relatively low level of explained variance in the final model. There are two possible reasons for this low level of explained variance. First, there may be organizational or background variables not included in this survey that explain the differences in anomia. Although the survey instrument contains nearly 200 items, the theoretical construct of anomia is quite complex, and this model may be poorly specified. Second, police chiefs are not a homogeneous group. There might realistically be important individual differences that explain the variance in anomia among police chiefs. It is, after all, possible that there may be some inherent type of resilience or immunity to anomia in some chiefs that is not present in others.

Similar to Gottfredson and Hirschi's (1990) self-control theory, chiefs as a group may have had good parenting, which led to high levels of self control, which led to a number of positive outcomes, one of which was an innate immunity to anomia. This finding suggests that future research must adopt an interdisciplinary perspective. There may be important biological, psychological, or personality characteristics that lead to an immunity to anomia. Many police agencies use psychological testing for recruits, and it might be wise if some of those same techniques were used when hiring police executives.

Education

A growing body of literature challenges the relevance of formal education for police (Regoli et al., 1989). Goldstein (1977), for example, notes the trend of educating hired officers rather than hiring educated officers. This research refutes the notion that formal education is not important (at least for chiefs). Formal education seems to mitigate the social distancing between police chiefs and others. This should be taken note of by municipal leaders charged with hiring police chiefs.

On a related note, further research should explore the importance of hiring chiefs with not only the highest level of formal education but also the type of education. For example, chiefs of large departments may be well served to have formal training in business management and administration. Fyfe (1997), for instance, suggests that practical management and leadership training is essential for "big city" police executives.

In addition, there is a long-standing notion that police officers have a quite diffuse function in society. Peter Manning (1977) has described the police role as a hodgepodge of conflicting duties and responsibilities that has evolved with almost no input from police officers themselves. Police officers have to be psychologists, sociologists, political scientists, social workers, and mental health professionals in addition to their role as law enforcers. As such, a well-rounded, broadly conceived

general education plan may be quite effective for future police executives, and it may be beneficial for researchers to change the education question from “how much” to “what kind.”

A piece of good news for upper level police executives and other municipal leaders is that as older chiefs retire, newer officers, who generally were hired with more formal education, will be gaining chief status, and therefore, the aggregate level of anomia among police chiefs should decrease with time.

An issue not addressed in this research is the hiring practices of professionalized departments versus nonprofessionalized departments (Wilson, 1968). It may be that in traditional departments, which do not stress formal education, membership in professional organizations, and academic research, that formal education may actually increase the tension between line officers and management. As Niederhoffer (1967) noted nearly 40 years ago, older officers may resent the ascension of well-educated younger officers, and this resentment may lead to many problems in the organization, one of which may be the social distancing between line officers and the chief.

Department Size

Department size shows significant effects on anomia. As departments increase in size, anomia among police chiefs decreases. Perhaps as departments get larger, the pool of candidates for upper level executive positions increases, making it likely those older, more experienced, and better educated officers will be promoted to upper level management. The “best of the best” will rise to the top of these large organizations and should be more immune to the pressures of multiple role expectations and better able to handle the stresses of the job and therefore more immune to anomia. Furthermore, smaller departments may actually have more significant problems than large departments, at least in some areas. In small departments, resentment may increase when a chief is selected from a group of equals. Those who were not promoted may feel that they should have been, and this may increase the social distance between the new chief and her or his subordinates.

Experience

Experience was measured using four different variables. Age and prior experience as a chief proved to be insignificant in explaining anomia. In perhaps the most unexpected result of the study, being a chief in another jurisdiction prior to the present position did not decrease anomia. The experience of being a prior chief should mitigate some of the problems a chief may experience as he or she navigates a very difficult social terrain, but this research does not show this. This result leads us to conclude that it is not always best to hire a chief who has already been a chief elsewhere. Furthermore, the internal hire variable also proved to have no effect on anomia: Chiefs hired from inside the present department did not have significantly

lower levels of anomia than those who were hired from outside the agency. To put it differently, there really is no ideal type of chief who is guaranteed to be successful. More likely is that there is some inherent type of resilience or immunity to anomia in some prospective chiefs that is not present in others, regardless of from where the chief was hired.

However, there is a small but significant relationship between anomia and both tenure as chief and experience in law enforcement before becoming chief. This result bolsters the commonsense notion that experience should mitigate negative conditions such as anomia.

Merit Selection

Recall that the selection variable was coded as merit for those who were hired via assessment center, civil service exam, or other competitive exams. Our results indicate that hiring a chief through merit rather than political appointment or seniority significantly decreases anomia. This result should be taken note of by municipal managers charged with hiring police chiefs, as nearly 73% of the sample were hired through appointment rather than merit. Using objective hiring procedures may be even more beneficial to professional police organizations that stress the importance of formal education, involvement in professional organizations, and academic research. Perceptions of unfairness may add to already tense relations between management and line officers when politics are perceived to be the basis for hiring police chiefs (Wilson, 1968). The central difference seems to be the presence of an objective testing procedure. If subordinates see that the new chief was hired by objective testing, resentment of the new chief should be decreased.

Race/Ethnicity

Although Latino chiefs in the sample scored higher on the Anomia scale than Whites and Blacks, these differences disappeared when controlling for other variables. Blacks scored lower on anomia than Whites and Latinos, although because of the small number of cases, we were unable to find statistical significance. These results suggest that municipal leaders should not hesitate to hire minority chiefs, especially if their jurisdiction has a large minority population.

Given the very small number of minorities in the sample, it is vital that future research focus on the race and ethnicity of police chiefs. Theoretically, minority chiefs should have greater challenges than their White counterparts, if for no other reason than policing today still is primarily a White occupation. Some White officers may perceive special treatment for non-White officers who get promoted, and this should increase the social distance between minorities who have been promoted and Whites who have not. Future research should focus on minority chiefs and explore how the job of police chief is different for minorities than it is for Whites. The

slightly lower anomia level for African Americans ($M = 10.3$) compared to Whites ($M = 10.4$), although not significant, is nonetheless intriguing.

Perhaps Black chiefs face greater social resistance from White officers from the beginning of their careers and if they have managed to climb the police hierarchy despite this resistance, they are better able to handle the job of chief. Too, Black chiefs may receive greater support from community minority groups, which may lessen their levels of anomia. Analyzing a sample with only 20 Blacks is quite limiting from a data analysis point of view, and future research should concentrate on studying the lives of Black (as well as other minorities) police chiefs.

Future Research

Perhaps the most important direction for future research is to make a practical connection between police chief attitudes (e.g., anomia, cynicism, alienation) and real-world problems. If there is no connection between anomia and problems, such as crime rates, misuse of force, line officer morale, community perceptions of the police force, or relations between city hall and the police department, then this research is relatively meaningless. The reader may be justified in saying "so what?" If, on the other hand, there is a strong relationship between police chief attitudes and these community problems, then city managers, mayors, and other community leaders should take a closer look at these issues before hiring police chiefs. In taking a closer look, the following suggestions should be taken into consideration for future research.

Given the lack of consensus among police experts surrounding this variable, two things should be considered when designing research into police chiefs. First of all, one should look at not just the level of education achieved but also the discipline in which the degree was earned. The PERF study (Kirchoff, Lansinger, & Burack, 1999), for example, showed that 43% of chiefs of large jurisdictions (50,000 or more constituents) have degrees in either criminology, administration of justice, or criminal justice. Approximately 26% have degrees in public policy, political science, or government. Sociology and anthropology represent only 6% of police chiefs' majors, and only 8% of the chiefs are business majors. There may very well be differences in attitudes between these different academic disciplines, and these differences should be explored.

Second, there is a lively debate in the literature about whether formal education is beneficial to policing at all (Fyfe, 1997). Perhaps future research should compare chiefs who have a high level of formal education but a low level of in-service or professional development training with chiefs who lack formal education but who have extensive practical training in leadership and police management. Kirchoff et al. (1999) asked their respondents a question about executive training programs, and these programs may exert effects on attitudes such as anomia. Examples of these

types of programs include the FBI National Academy, National Executive Institute, PERF, Southern Police Institute, and the Northwestern Traffic Institute. These types of practical executive training programs may produce chiefs who are more immune to anomia and other adverse sociopsychological conditions than chiefs who attain high levels of formal education, and this variable should be included in further research. Moreover, there could be an important combination of these two types of training that leads to low levels of anomia among police chiefs.

Policing is primarily a White male occupation. This presents a problem for researchers in the area of police chiefs, because there are so few minorities and women. The sample in the current study includes 98.2% males and 88.5% Whites (and this study significantly oversamples Hispanics). The sample for the PERF study (1999) of big city police chiefs includes 81.6% Whites and 99.2% males. Given the current climate of community policing and changes in municipal politics, however, many critics of the criminal justice system are calling for an increase of minorities and females in policing as well as other areas of criminal justice.

Theoretically, more minority and female police officers should be advancing to upper level executive positions in the future. As older chiefs retire, younger officers (who began their careers in a political climate more amenable to hiring minorities and females) should be in line for upper level executive positions, and this should make the process of researching minority and female chiefs easier. As this occurs, specific research should target minority and female chiefs to compare the problems they have with the problems of traditional White male chiefs.

All the variables used in this research were culled from sociological and criminal justice literature. When analyzing an individual psychological condition such as anomia, it should be self-evident that biological, psychological, and personality characteristics of the research participants should be explored in addition to the individual, sociological, and organizational variables used here. Future research directed toward upper level police executives should include a multidisciplinary perspective to better understand the problems, behaviors, and coping strategies of police chiefs.

Last, virtually all of the research on police chiefs has been implemented using cross-sectional research designs. Given the prohibitive costs of longitudinal research, combined with the relatively short tenure of typical chiefs, it is easy to see why this is so. However, many of the problematic issues that chiefs face during their careers are difficult to assess using a cross-sectional survey. For example, the day that a chief fills out a survey, he or she may be in a very good mood and may have a rosier outlook on the future. This may lead him or her to answer some of the anomia items in a more positive light. On the other hand, if a chief has been recently harangued in the press for some type of misbehavior by one of his or her officers, he or she may be more likely to answer negatively to the anomia items. Or if he or she has had recent personal or relationship problems, the same issue may arise. A longitudinal design, following a chief throughout his or her career, would produce a more valid measure of the anomia variable. Although longitudinal designs are expensive,

research funding institutions have found the money to fund many longitudinal projects on quite diverse subjects. Research on police chiefs should be a priority given the nature of police organizations in America and the importance of leadership in such organizations.

Much of the literature reviewed earlier in the article suggests that there are likely important demographic variables that have significant effects on anomia. None of the extant research on police chiefs has addressed these variables; therefore, research in the future might include an examination of factors such as socioeconomic status and marital status in any future studies on police chiefs and anomia.

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