

# **Is Enriched Police Work Enduringly Motivating? —A Cross-decade Study of Officer Job Satisfaction in Community Policing**

Yumin R. Wang,

Associate Professor, Department of Social Work, Meiho University

23, Ping Kuang Road, Nei Pu, Pingtung 912, Taiwan

E-mail: [Authorwang57@gmail.com](mailto:Authorwang57@gmail.com)

## **Abstract**

This paper examines how community policing enriches the job of the officer over time based on work design theory. Utilizing the quasi-panel design, the *pai-tsu-so* officers of two police departments of the national police of Taiwan were independently surveyed in 1992 and 2003. Findings indicate that the work psychology of these officers changed as a result of the political democratization of the country that led to the transformation of the goals of policing. Although they remain satisfied with their job, they are less anxious to experience growth at work and they perceive less strongly the designed attributes of the job.

**Key words:** work design, job enrichment, community policing, job satisfaction

## **1. Introduction**

Community policing was introduced to the United States in the late 1970s when crime was rampant and law enforcement failed to successfully maintain peace and order. The strategy has contributed to effective crime control since its debut. Police departments across the country generally adopted some form of community policing and a variety of program themes soon appeared across the world.

A number of divergent theoretical perspective studies exploring the success of community policing have been undertaken. Few of studies examined the management hypotheses. The strategy has been recognized as an endeavor of police organizational change through democratizing policing. The paramilitary organization decentralizes its command system to allow officers to create collaborations and work closely with the officer's patrol response area. Examining the community policing operation of the national police of Taiwan, this author discerned that the work of participating officers is enriched as a result (Wang, 1993, 2006, & 2007).

Issues remain that merit further research, however. Among them is the question if the enriched job remains a motivation for the officer. That is the theme of this study.

## **2. Theory**

The national police of Taiwan have performed community policing since its

modern law enforcement force was established. The program entitled *pai-tsu-so* is a copy of the Japanese *koban* system. It shares in common with its Japanese counterpart the same program name that is written in three Chinese characters. *Pai-tsu-so* is pronounced as *ha-tsu-sho* in Japanese—the contemporary program name of *koban*. Bayley (1976) studied the Japanese *koban* system and conceptualized his theory of community policing that opened up the new era of policing worldwide. The police organizational change through job enrichment, therefore, is not an innovation to the police in Taiwan.

A *pai-tsu-so* is responsible for preserving the peace and security of a designated geographic area of a city or a town. Each officer (males only) working at the police substation is assigned one of the communities located within its jurisdiction. In addition to daily sharing the common assignments, a *pai-tsu-so* officer spends most of his time managing his own beat independently (his assigned community). A *pai-tsu-so* thus is composed of a certain number of beats.

The five work attributes that Hackman and Oldham (1975 & 1980) argue are observed in the design of the task. A beat officer needs to have excellent communication skills to befriend residents and consequently become familiar with the community he serves (skill variety). He interdependently performs problem-solving activities in his beat and takes full responsibility of the outcome (task identity). The result of his work not only upgrades the quality of community life for its residents but also earns credits for his *pai-tsu-so* (task significance). His superintendent, the director of the *pai-tsu-so* advises him on what should be achieved instead of how to go about it (autonomy). The officer evaluates his job performance by examining how effectively he accomplishes the goals and how citizens interact with him (job feedback).

Although a *pai-tsu-so* is a branch unit of a police department, it is essentially an autonomous work group in the sense of job enrichment. The success or failure of its officers in working their beats jointly contributes to the overall effectiveness of the police substation. The redefinition of the role of supervisors is frequently observed in job enrichment enterprises that are attempted through building teams (Griffin, Paterson & West, 2001). *Pai-tsu-so* commanders play the role more of a facilitator than a supervisor as a result.

In addition to *pai-tsu-sos*, there are other task units that are of para-military structure with chains of command in a police department. Officers serving at the patrol team rotate to perform car patrol, the only assignment they daily assume. Members of the SWAT team task force handle heavily-armed criminal cases. Previous studies have found that officers serving at these two units perceive lower job attributes and are less motivated at work than their *pai-tsu-so* counterparts (Wang,

1993, 2006 & 2007).

The change in employee job satisfaction that results from job enrichment through work design is objectively observable because the five motivating task attributes can be manipulated and incorporated into the work. Establishing autonomous work teams promotes employee morale due to the perceived motivating group processes within the teams and the nature of the work itself (Griffin, Patterson & West, 2001). Enriching the job and promoting the mental workload of jobholders independently, as well as jointly, contribute to employee job satisfaction (Cook & Salvendy, 1999).

Job enrichment through work design facilitates role breadth self-efficacy (RBSE) because it provides workers with “opportunities for enactive mastery, modeling, and/or verbal persuasion experiences in a range of broad, proactive, and integrative tasks” (Parker, 1998, p.838) Empowered jobholders perceive the five job attributes at work. The set of social structural factors leading to managerial cognition of empowerment involve role ambiguity, strong sociopolitical support, access to information, and a participative unit climate (Spreitzer, 1996). Concurrently empowering workers and enriching their jobs elicit employee loyalty. It can be observed even in downsizing organizations (Niehoff et al., 2001). Nurses working on highly enriched jobs, for instance, are high in motivation at work and satisfaction with management (Kivimaki, Voutilainen, & Koskinen, 1995).

Although work design promotes employees’ job satisfaction, it does not motivate them to higher performance (Kelly, 1992). It is not inspiring to workers holding positive emotion at work (Staw, Sutton, & Pelled, 1994). Those who are capable and who are anxious to experience growth at work fit well into the enriched job (Hulin, 1971).

In studying the relationship between the work and its surrounding environment, Herzberg (1971) argues a set of hygiene factors that are extrinsic to the work and are independent of employee job satisfaction. These are the conditions existing within the organization such as company policy and administration. However, Herzberg failed to take a broader view to consider how the change of the outside world might result in the transformation of the organization and the consequent alteration of employee work psychology. In other words, when the world changes, the organization transforms accordingly, and so do its members.

There are factors surrounding the organization that are likely to directly cause its change of goals in practicing its profession and indirectly influence the job satisfaction of its employees. Bearing Hulin’s theory in mind, it seems likely that the originally fit job enrichment endeavor might become less fit or unfit over time as a result of the transformation of the world and the people. These conditions are

observed in this study.

Political democratization has been in progress in Taiwan since the conclusion of the Martial Law (from 1949 to 1987). A number of laws were either abolished or revised to protect the human rights of citizens. For example, the Police Code that allows the police to detain citizens for as long as seven days for public order offenses without going through court process was brought to an end. Some of these laws and statutes that served as handy tools for the police in the past were no longer applicable, and officers were left with no option but to seek new ways to go about their jobs.

Moreover, when Martial Law was in progress, in addition to preserving peace and order, the police was responsible for handling non-policing affairs, such as fire-fighting, census control, sanitary inspection, non-licensed construction, and so forth. These were parts of the job of a *pai-tsu-so* officer. For example, the officer had to routinely visit households living in his beat (community) to check the change of the residency of the family members. His work was made less complicated after these matters had become none of the business of the police.

When the survey was initially conducted in 1992, a series of criminal justice transformations had been in progress. In 2003, when the survey was completed the second time, the democratization movement had been concluded. The national police altered the way they practice their profession from enforcement direction to service orientation. Their “good old days” came to end.

During Martial Law, citizens generally were afraid of the police because officers were authorized with unrestricted power. They were obedient and cooperative. Since their human rights were assured by the democratized government, residents have begun to hold unfavorable attitudes toward the police.

Political democratization, the restriction of police power and citizens’ awareness of their rights make it a relatively more difficult job for *pai-tsu-so* officers to run their communities as proficiently as they used to be. The design of the work remained unchanged, but that makes the jobholders (who might not be the kind of workers they used to be) feel different. The author thus hypothesized that these officers have changed their perception of the job as a result of the democratization transformation.

### **3. Methods**

The Job Diagnostic Survey developed by Hackman and Oldham (1980) was used for collecting data. The tool is intended to diagnose and redesign a job to make it motivating to the jobholders and to evaluate the resulting impact of job changes (Hackman & Oldham, 1975). Although JDS suffers from certain psychometric limitations, it provides useful information about subjectively perceived job properties if used properly (Taber & Taylor, 1990).

The questionnaire was administered to a number of *pai-tsu-so* officers of the Taipei City Police Department in 1992 (N= 69) and the Taipei County Police Department (the name has been changed to become New Taipei City Police Department since 2011 due to the adjustment of national administration system) in 2003 (N= 59). The five work attributes, the motivation potential score of the task, officer growth need strength and job satisfaction were measured. Detailed descriptions of the collection of the two data sets can be found elsewhere (Wang, 1993, 2006, & 2007)

The scores on each of the five job attributes are independently added, and five indices are identified. The same calculation is performed in estimating the total scores associated with individual growth need strength and job satisfaction. The motivation potential score is tallied accordingly to the formula provided by Hackman and Oldham (1980). A total of eight indices are obtained.

Utilizing the two data sets, a quasi-panel design is specified. The *pai-tsu-so* officers of 2003 were hypothesized to be the subjects that were surveyed in 1992. The research design might suffer validity problem in that it is unknown how indistinguishably the second data set can be assumed as it is obtained through a follow-up survey. However, this quasi-panel design is supported by the fact that all *pai-tsu-sos* across the country are operated in a unified manner. Given the centralized police system, officers can be transferred countrywide to take on all assignments of whichever department because they are trained at the one and only national police academy.

The two sets of data are combined in performing the analyses. T-test of hypothesis is performed to compare the change of officer perception of the job. A dummy variable is created to analyze the difference across the two time points (1992 = 1, 2003 = 0). Binary logistic regression is utilized to serve the purpose of theoretical elaboration. How each single index varies across the decade holding other indices constant is analyzed.

#### **4. Results**

Table one indicates the result of the preliminary test of hypotheses. Task identity is the only variable that remains unchanged ten years later, and officers perceive they are engaging in a whole piece of work (TI). The rests of the indices generally appear a trend of decrease. The design of the work on the whole becomes less motivating and officers are less satisfied with their job.

To a lesser extent do officers sense that their job requires them to apply various skills in completing it (SV). They no longer feel they can influence the life of others through doing their work as strongly as they used to be (TS). They perceive being rendered less freedom at work (AU), and they are less informed of the result of their

job performance (FB).

The motivation potential of the work decreases by more than thirty percent (MPS). Compared with their appraisal of the job feature ten years ago, officers feel the work as a whole less inspiring. Their growth need strength decreases, which indicates that they are less anxious to experience self-advancement at work (GNS). Moreover, they feel relatively less satisfied with their job (JS).

The change associated with the set of the indices that manifest the relationship between the work and the people reveal a number of facts. The community policing program under examination seems less motivating as it evolved across the decade. These jobholders themselves become less eagerly to learn from their work. The task is no longer inspiring to them, and they become less satisfied with the job.

Table 1. Results of T-test of Mean Differences.

Variable (N= city/county)	Mean	S.D.	P(t)
SV (69/59)	12.913/11.373	2.393/2.355	.000
TI (69/59)	6.319/6.542	1.685/1.406	.421
TS (69/59)	9.174/7.712	2.236/1.752	.000
AU (68/59)	8.074/6.712	1.879/1.661	.000
FB (68/59)	8.632/7.848	1.544/1.760	.008
MPS (67/59)	669.194/461.164	249.680/202.936	.000
GNS (69/58)	13.986/10.966	2.654/3.032	.000
JS (69/58)	16.971/14.759	3.861/3.192	.001

SV: Skill Variety, TI: Task Identity, TS: Task Significance, AU: Autonomy, FB: Feedback, MPS: Motivation Potential Score, GNS: Growth Need Strength, JS: Job Satisfaction

Table two indicates the results of binary logistic analysis. The change associated with each index through the decade holding others constant is observed.

In 1992, the officers perceived a stronger need to apply various skills at work (SV) than in 2003. They remained feeling that they were engaging in a complete piece of work (TI). They no longer sensed as strongly that their work could bring influence on other people (TS). They perceived that they were less autonomous in mastering the task than before (AU). And, they were aware of their job performance the same as they were a decade ago, however (FB).

These officers become less anxious to experience growth at work (GNS). They perceived the same the motivation potential of the task (MPS). Their satisfaction with the job remained unchanged as well (JS).

In sum, with regard to the work, skill variety, task significance, and autonomy are less perceived by the officers although they feel the same about the features of task identity, feedback and motivation potential of the job. As far as the workers are

concerned, officers tend to hold less positive emotions at work, but they remain satisfied with their job.

Table 2. Results of Binary Logistic Regression Analysis (1992=1, 2003=0).

Variables	B	S.E.	Wald	Exp (B)	Sig.
SV	.416	.204	4.150	1.516	.042
TI	.189	.235	.646	1.208	.422
TS	.565	.225	6.291	1.760	.012
AU	1.323	.607	4.749	3.753	.029
FB	.788	.483	2.665	2.199	.103
MPS	-.011	.007	2.809	.989	.094
GNS	.445	.103	18.740	1.561	.000
JS	.086	.076	1.277	1.090	.258

Chi-square = 67.638, df = 8, p < .01

-2Log Likelihood = 103.455, Cox and Snell R-square = .420, N = 128

## 5. Discussions and Suggestions

Findings from the preliminary analysis generally indicate a trend of negative change in the association composed of work features and the worker. The *pai-tsu-so* task design tended to be simplified as a result of the political democratization. The enriched job grew to be less motivating to the officer who himself became less anxious to experience growth at work.

The results of theoretical elaboration specify how the enriched police task is perceived differently by the officer over time as a result of external influences from the police department. Three of the five work attributes, skill variety, task significance and job feedback are found reduced in the positive influence on the jobholder, and the feeling of meaningfulness and the knowledge of the actual result of the work of the jobholder; the two critical psychological states that Hackman and Oldham (1980) argue become attenuated. Although the motivation potential of the work remains inspiring to the officer over time, it seems to be a result of the observed decrease in the growth need strength of the jobholder.

This research on the whole supports the theory that the political democratization directly causes change to the organizational goals of the police department, which indirectly influences the work psychology of the community policing officer. Although the design of the work remains unchanged, the extent to which it is perceived enriched by the jobholder changed over time. The extrinsic factors tend to intrinsically influence how the work is perceived by the worker. The issue left unanswered, however, how the decrease in the growth need strength of the officer and his perception of the job are associated. Which variable serves as the cause of the other merits further exploration. It constitutes the topic for the subsequent job

enrichment research in law enforcement as well as in organizations of various professional fields.

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