

From the Editor

Dear Readers:

It's been seven months since the last issue, and the unusualness of our lives I noted then is now normalized. My hope remains that you are healthy and hopeful. As I write this, we have just received notice of the cancellation of the in-person annual meeting in Orlando. But I do hope we can be together soon. In the meantime, please enjoy the contents in these pages.

The previous issue included an article on the USDA's Inspectors General. This issue contains an article on another understudied law enforcement population—game wardens, and their chosen social groups. Given the mounting popularity of wildlife crime internationally, the piece introduces particularities of the work and social lives of game wardens to consider in future research. There are also announcements regarding a new book publication on policing in France and a COVID app developed by researchers at Rutgers.

If you'd like to include your work or announcements in future issues, please see below for more information. We have a varied and large readership that will benefit from your additions. You may email your submissions to acjspoliceforum@gmail.com.

Take a few moments to enjoy this issue and all the best as we celebrate the upcoming holiday season.

Michael J. Jenkins
Editor

From the Chair

Greetings,

As 2020 winds down, (and is that a good word to hear), Michael has prepared another great issue of *Police Forum*.

We were so looking forward to our meeting in April of 2021, but understandably, The Corona has made its presence known yet again.

It certainly has been a strange few months for our profession hasn't it? I know in its semi-annual training, the Sheriff's office that I'm attached to engaged us in topics that have come up – again – as a result of the protests and riots of the past months. Additionally, I'll be involved in a racial justice panel coming up in January of 2021. Should any of you have any thoughts or ideas regarding this important topic, please let me or any member of the Police Section board know. You can contact me at jeffreyprush@gmail.com or call/text at 205.368.6893.

Speaking of new directions for the police, if you're a CJTV fan, I noticed in the premiere seasons of both *Law and Order: SVU* and *Chicago PD* that a full range of topics relevant to many of the calls of the protestors and various groups were part of their first episode. *Chicago Fire* and *Chicago Med* did as well. Where this will go in the future for these and other CJTV shows remains to be seen.

Where all this goes and what it means for our profession going forward also remains to be seen. Enjoy this issue of *Police Forum*. Happy Thanksgiving, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to one and all.

All the best,

Jeffrey Rush
Chair — ACJS Police Section

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Feature Article

An Examination of Game Wardens and Their Social Circles

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Abstract

Game wardens are specialized law enforcement officers who work in rural areas and protect wildlife resources by enforcing state hunting and fishing laws. Little research has been directed toward the game warden occupation, including the social relationships of these officers. Using a qualitative approach to data collection, this study explored game wardens and their off duty social relationships. While some of the wardens socialized with fellow wardens, many of these individuals indicated they socialized with family members and developed relationships with other members of the community. The findings contribute to our understanding of law enforcement culture and police socialization patterns.

Key Words: game wardens, conservation officers, police subculture

An Examination of Game Wardens and Their Social Circles

Literature Review

Game wardens, or conservation officers as they are called in some states, are law enforcement officers with the responsibility of enforcing hunting and fishing regulations (Calkins, 1970; Falcone, 2004; Forsyth, 1994; Sherblom, Keränen, & Withers, 2002; Tobias, 1998). The job of conservation law enforcement officers is to protect wildlife resources by ensuring that the behavior of recreational hunters and anglers is in accordance with hunting and fishing laws (Crow, Shelley, & Stretesky, 2013; Palmer & Bryant, 1985; Sherblom et al., 2002). They also have the task of apprehending wildlife law violators or poachers who take wildlife illegally (Eliason, 2008b; Forsyth, 1993a; Forsyth, 2008; Palmer & Bryant, 1985).

Conservation law enforcement possesses some similarities to urban policing, but there are also some important differences that make the job unique, especially with respect to geographical isolation and danger (Eliason, 2011b; Forsyth & Forsyth, 2009; Rossler & Suttmoeller, 2018). First, in terms of geographical isolation, the occupational duties of game wardens are most often carried out in remote rural locations where hunting and fishing activities occur (Forsyth & Forsyth, 2009; Rossler & Suttmoeller, 2018). Game warden personnel are typically assigned to a district or region within a state. As a result, there may only be one or two game wardens residing in a county.

Second, the job is dangerous for a variety of reasons (Forsyth & Forsyth, 2009; Rossler & Suttmoeller, 2018). It is well known that traditional policing is a dangerous occupation, but the job of game warden is especially dangerous because wardens generally work alone in remote geographical locations with limited availability of backup assistance from other officers (Eliason, 2011b). In addition, game wardens routinely interact with recreationists who possess firearms,

and have been assaulted and killed on the job (Eliason, 2011a; Baird, 1983; Long, 1985; McIver, 2003). Most of their work takes place outdoors, so they are constantly exposed to the elements and “work in a variety of geographic terrains and in all kinds of weather conditions” (Eliason, 2011b, p. 415).

A number of recent studies suggest that the job of conservation officer is changing as these individuals are being asked to assume a variety of traditional law enforcement responsibilities in addition to their specialized wildlife law enforcement activities (Falcone, 2004; McSkimming, Dunbar, & Guler, 2018; Patten, Crow, & Shelley, 2015; Rader, 2019; Rossler & Suttmoeller, 2018; Shelley & Crowe, 2009; Sherblom et al., 2002). Rossler and Suttmoeller (2018, p. 110) stated:

...the role of NROs [natural resource officers] may be even *broader* than general service police officers. ...NROs are tasked with handling the enforcement of laws pertaining to fair use of natural resources *and* are required to handle traditional policing duties such as order maintenance (e.g., traffic enforcement), service and more traditional criminal behavior (e.g., drug crimes).

While police behavior in the context of their official duties has received much attention, relatively few studies have examined the off-duty activities and social relationships in which police officers participate (Davids, 2006). It is widely recognized by law enforcement scholars that the police occupation has a unique subculture (Herbert, 1998; Paoline, 2003; Siegel & Worrall, 2017). Given the pervasiveness of the “blue wall of silence” among police officers, and the assumed distrust they have of outsiders, a deeper understanding of police social relationships is warranted. Knowledge about the private lives of police officers, including their friendships and social interactional patterns while off-duty, is essential to arrive at a greater understanding of police culture.

Previous research on the game warden occupation has examined topics such as discretion (Eliason, 2003; Forsyth, 1993b), stress (Oliver & Meier, 2006; Walsh & Donovan, 1984), and job satisfaction (Eliason, 2014; Palmer & Bryant, 1985). One area where little information exists is that of game wardens and their social relationships while off duty. Who do game wardens interact and spend time with in their private lives? The purpose of the present study was to explore and identify the types of individuals that game wardens socialize with when they are not working. Knowledge of game warden socialization patterns in their private lives will contribute to a better understanding of police culture.

The Study Site

Montana is the fourth largest state in the U.S. in terms of land area, and has a population of just over one million people. It can be characterized as a rural state. The western part of the state contains large mountain ranges while the eastern portion has vast expanses of plains and rugged breaks. Numerous rivers and lakes are found throughout the state. Abundant fish and wildlife populations are found in Montana, including trout and a variety of warm water fish species. The state possesses a number of big game species that are sought after by hunters, including mule and whitetail deer, elk, moose, antelope, and black bears. Hunting and fishing are popular recreational activities for both residents and nonresidents (Eliason, 2008a; Baginski & Biermann, 2010; Gude, Cunningham, Herbert, & Baumeister, 2012; Schorr, Lukacs, & Gude, 2014). The activities of Montana game wardens have been featured on the television show “Wardens” that appears on the Outdoor Channel (Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, 2011).

Methods

To obtain data about game wardens, this study took a qualitative approach to data collection. A survey that contained mostly open-ended questions was developed. Neuman (2011,

pp. 324-325) described the utility of these questions, and stated “To learn how a respondent thinks and discover what is important to him or her...open questions are best. ...Open-ended questions are especially valuable in early or exploratory stages of research.” Henderson (2006, p. 48) underscored the importance of obtaining the perspective of those who are being studied:

The meanings of any symbol (e.g., leisure) have their origins in interactions, which are defined and changed by individuals according to the meanings that are held. The individual studied is the expert and the attempt is to describe their vocabularies, ways of looking, and sense of the important and the unimportant.

The agency responsible for wildlife law enforcement, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, provided the author with a list of names and addresses of state game wardens in Montana. The survey was mailed to all game wardens (N=84) in February of 2005. Twenty-two surveys were returned by wardens, which resulted in a response rate of twenty-six percent.

The survey contained a question to elicit information about game wardens and their off duty social interactions and relationships: “Who do you usually socialize with when you are off duty?” Wardens were provided with the opportunity to respond to the question in their own words so that information about their social relationships could be obtained in rich detail.

For data analysis, the author examined all comments provided by wardens about their off duty social relationships with the intent of identifying common themes. Categorical topics were identified based on common themes that emerged from the analysis. The comments are then summarized and interpreted.

Results and Discussion

All of the game wardens who responded were male, and they had an average age of forty-two years old. They had an average of almost seventeen (16.76) years of experience in conservation law enforcement.

To obtain information about who game wardens socialized with, they were asked “Who do you usually socialize with when you are off duty?” Five groups emerged from the analysis: family members and friends, community members, wardens/law enforcement, non-law enforcement, and other. Some of the responses provided by wardens contained more than one category of individuals that they socialized with.

Family Members and Friends

Many of the wardens indicated that the people they socialized with were family members and friends. In general, these are the persons that tend to spend the most time with each other, so it is not surprising that the majority of wardens in the study reported that they interacted with these individuals on a regular basis.

- People who share my hobbies and my children.
- My Family. Coworkers. Hunting friends.
- My family. Parents of my kids’ friends. I work a second job and I sometimes socialize with them. My wife’s fellow workers, she works at a school.
- Family and friends.
- My friends and family, co-workers and neighbors.
- Family and friends.
- Family/small group of friends.

Community Members

Some of the wardens in the study reported that they developed friendships with members of the local community including those they had met while performing their duties as well as neighbors. Because of their interactions and physical proximity to these individuals, they were able to establish social relationships with these persons.

- I have good friends who are local hunters I’ve met on the job.
- The locals.
- Everyone – member of community.
- Church, neighbors.

- Very often the same people that I am around on duty, viz. ranchers and farmers, sportswomen and sportsmen, community members of the same age and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Wardens/Law Enforcement

Several of the wardens in the study indicated that they socialized with other wardens or those employed as law enforcement officers. As the following comments indicate, most of these wardens did report socializing with other types of individuals as well, including community members and persons who they had established personal relationships with during the course of their employment:

- Other law enforcement officers. However as one gets older you broaden your friendships in the community.
- Other wardens, folks from church.
- Wardens.
- Other wardens, deputies, biologist, family, and landowners I have developed friendships with.

Non-Law Enforcement

A few of the wardens stressed that they did not socialize with other game wardens or law enforcement officers.

- People I consider friends – this is not dependent upon them being in law enforcement.
- Not fellow game wardens.
- Non-law enforcement types.

Other

- Anyone who will have me.
- No one – it never works!

Conclusion

Game wardens in the present study were most likely to socialize with family members and friends as well as community members. A few of the wardens reported socializing with

game wardens or other law enforcement officers. The results underscore the significance of family members and close friends in the social lives of wardens in the study. These findings also suggest that time spent in the local community is important because as wardens interact with individuals they are in contact with on a regular basis they establish strong ties and connections, and friendships often times result from these interactions.

Additional research on game warden socialization patterns is needed. Research suggests the occupational duties of conservation officers are becoming similar to those performed by traditional police officers (Falcone, 2004; Patten et al., 2015; Rossler & Suttmoeller, 2018; Shelley & Crow, 2009; Sherblom et al., 2002). In addition, with fewer individuals participating in hunting in the United States, it is possible that those entering conservation law enforcement may not possess a hunting or outdoor background (Sherblom et al., 2002). These studies should be carried out in different states and regions of the country in order to provide information about conservation law enforcement interactional patterns in different contexts.

It would also be useful to determine if there are age differences between game wardens in terms of whom they socialize with as well as the frequency with which they socialize with others. For example, do older wardens with more experience on the job have more friends in the community than younger wardens? Do wardens expand their social circles as they age? It is hoped that this study will encourage additional research on law enforcement socialization patterns.

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Member Announcements

Book Note

Policing in France

Edited by Jacques de Maillard and Wesley G. Skogan

Routledge, 2021 (released 03 August 2020)

This new collection of 20 original essays provides an undated portrait of the French police system in the 21st century. France has undergone a process of pluralization in the last 30 years. Administrative and political decentralization has reemphasized the role of local authorities in public security policies; the private security industry has grown significantly; and new kinds of governing models (based on arrangements such as contracts for service provision) have emerged. At the same time, police organizations are increasingly driven by the central imposition of performance indicators, and a top-down decision was made to integrate the national gendarmerie into the Ministry of Interior.



The book addresses the policing of banlieues (urban slums), illustrates the convergence of contradictory police goals, police violence, the concentration of poverty, and entrenched opposition to the states' representatives, and questions policing strategies such as the use of identity checks. The collection also frames the scope of community policing initiatives required to deal with the public's security needs and delves into the security challenges presented by terrorist threats. Many chapters examine the diverse challenges facing French police organizations and how they have been responding to them.

The authors include many of the leading and emerging scholars who focus on French policing. They draw upon their own research and a flourishing French-language literature in history, sociology, political science, and law to produce this new English-language synthesis.

Jacques de Maillard is Professor of Political Science and Director of the Centre for Sociological Research on Law and Criminal Justice, University of Versailles-Saint-Quentin. Wesley G. Skogan is emeritus Professor of Political Science and the Institute for Policy Research, Northwestern University.

Notice

Caplan – Flatten the App

Rutgers researchers used the principles of environmental criminology to develop an app to protect police and other first responders from COVID-19. Flatten focuses on recent travel histories to identify spatial factors that connect with COVID-positive cases. This place-based contact tracing aims to protect frontline workers who 'serve and protect' the community. Learn more at <https://research.rutgers.edu/news/rutgers-researchers-develop-app-protect-first-responders-covid-19>

ACJS Lifetime Membership

Please remember that you still must pay the Police Section dues annually to remain a member of the Police Section. Membership is \$37 per year and includes a subscription to *Police Quarterly*. Payment of dues is made to ACJS.

Submission Guidelines for *Police Forum*

Format Criteria

The format criteria for all submissions are as follows: reasonable length (less than 30 pages), double-spaced, and in a font similar to 12 pt Times New Roman. All submissions should be in Word format. All charts, graphs, pictures, etc. must be one page or smaller and contained within standard margins. Please attach these at the end of the submission as appendices. Due to formatting limitations all appendices must be in a Word, Excel or similar format - PDF's cannot be used.

Feature Articles

Feature Articles can be quantitative or qualitative. Tables, figures, and charts should be kept to a minimum and should be inserted at the end of the document with an appropriate reference to placement location within the text. The page limits are flexible, however the editors reserve the right to edit excessively long manuscripts.

Practitioners Corner

Articles written from the perspective of persons currently or formerly working in the field, expressing personal observations or experiences concerning a particular area or issue. Page limits are flexible, however long articles may be edited for length.

Academic Pontification

Articles for this area should focus on making an argument, presenting a line of thought, or formulating a new conceptual idea in policing.

Point/Counterpoint

Authors are encouraged to work with another person to develop a point/ counterpoint piece. The initial argument should be between 2 and 5 pages. The initial argument should contain roughly 3 to 5 main points. Following exchange of articles between debating authors, a 1 to 3-page rejoinder/ rebuttal will be submitted.

Submission Guidelines – cont.

Research Notes

Research notes should describe a work in progress, a thumbnail outline of a research project, a conceptual methodological piece, or any other article relating to research methods or research findings in policing.

Reviews

Book reviews on any work relating to policing. Reviews of Internet sites or subjects concerning policing on the Internet are also welcome.

Policing in the News

News items of interest to the police section are welcomed in any form.

Legal News in Policing

Reviews of court cases, legal issues, lawsuits, and legal liability in policing are welcomed submissions.

Letters to the Editor

Questions, comments or suggestions pertaining to a given Criminal Justice topic, article, or research.

This Date in History

Submissions on prior hot topics, research, or research methods in Criminal Justice from the past.

Good News

Submissions relating to professional and personal good news for our members - promotions, new jobs, marriages, etc.

How to Submit

Submissions may be made electronically by sending copy in a Word format to acjspoliceforum@gmail.com.

Disclaimer

The editor(s) of this publication reserve the right to edit any submissions for length, clarity, or other issues.

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