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September 10, 2021

ADOPTED
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
26 September 28, 2021
CELIA ZAVALA
EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Agenda No. 41-A
03/12/19

The Honorable Board of Supervisors
County of Los Angeles
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration
500 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Re: Comprehensive Study of Secret Sheriff's Deputy Subgroups

Dear Supervisors:

On March 12, 2019, your Board directed the Inspector General, Civilian Oversight Commission, County Counsel, and all relevant stakeholders to continue a comprehensive study of secret deputy subgroups ("the Study") in the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department ("LASD"). On June 5, 2019, County Counsel contracted with the RAND Corporation ("RAND") to conduct the Study.

Enclosed please find RAND's final report regarding the Study, entitled "Understanding Subgroups within the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department." A presentation to your Board summarizing the Study is also enclosed.

Very truly yours,

RODRIGO A. CASTRO-SILVA
County Counsel

By
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c: Fesia Davenport, Chief Executive Officer
Celia Zavala, Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors
Max Huntsman, Inspector General
Brian Williams, Executive Director, Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission

HOA.103392120.1

Research Report

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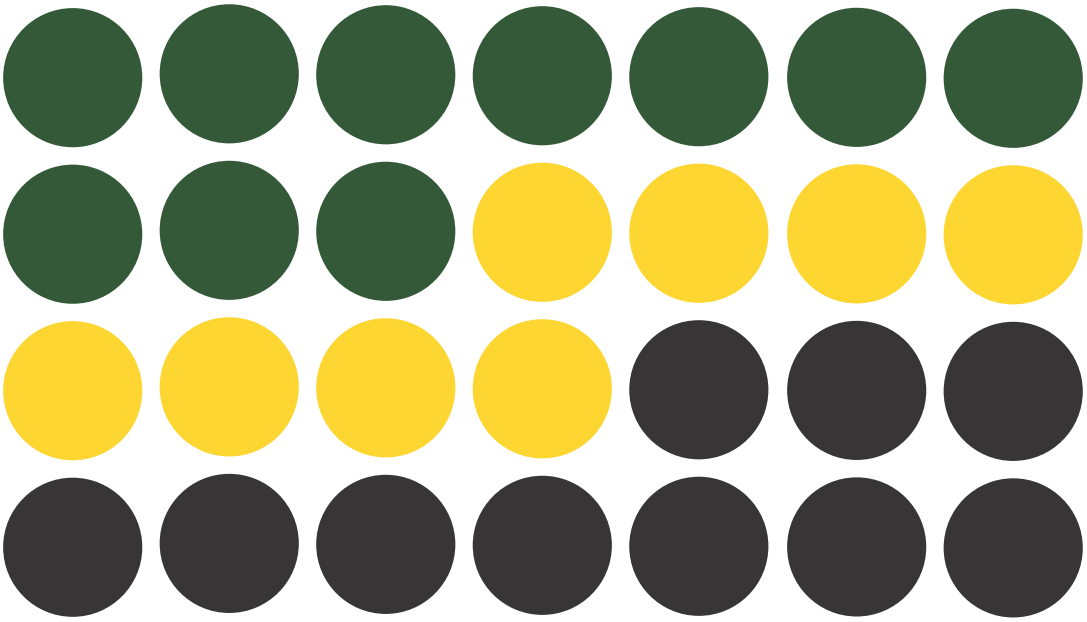
Understanding Subgroups Within the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

Community and Department Perceptions with Recommendations for Change



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Preface

For decades, groups of Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD) deputies have organized themselves into secret subgroups, some of which have allegedly committed illegal acts or violated departmental policy. Although LASD has acknowledged that these groups exist, their purpose and actions within the department have remained unclear. To better understand this issue, Los Angeles County Counsel commissioned the RAND Corporation to conduct an independent research study on deputy subgroups within LASD. The study was commissioned to help the county and LASD learn more about how subgroups have affected community perceptions and trust in LASD, how these subgroups are formed, why they exist, and what actions might be taken if it is determined that these subgroups have a significant impact on LASD's mission. With cooperation from various county stakeholders, including community representatives across the county, the Office of the Los Angeles County Counsel, LASD, and the Los Angeles County Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission, the authors of this report sought to understand the community perspective, the perceptions and experiences of deputies, and the organizational perspective of LASD to provide a comprehensive picture. The authors also aim to assist county decisionmakers and LASD in their efforts to address problems created by the subgroups going forward. This report should be of interest to Los Angeles County officials and residents.

Justice Policy Program

RAND Social and Economic Well-Being is a division of the RAND Corporation that seeks to actively improve the health and social and economic well-being of populations and communities throughout the world. This research was conducted in the Justice Policy Program within RAND Social and Economic Well-Being. The program focuses on such topics as access to justice, policing, corrections, drug policy, and court system reform, as well as other policy concerns pertaining to public safety and criminal and civil justice. For more information, email justicepolicy@rand.org.

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Summary

For at least 40 years, secret cliques or gangs of deputies (*subgroups*) have formed within the ranks of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD). Los Angeles County has been subject to numerous lawsuits about subgroup members who have allegedly mistreated both community members and their coworkers. Various investigations, lawsuits, and news reports have looked into different allegations, which have resulted in several large settlements with community members and LASD personnel as victims in these cases, and which led LASD to establish a policy in 2020 prohibiting group member behavior that violates the rights of others.[1] Prior accounts allege that these subgroups are associated with varying forms of misconduct in the community and within the department, including the violation of constitutional rights, use of excessive force, a glorification of shootings committed by deputies, and fostering a code of silence, as well as bullying, harassment, intimidation of and retaliation toward other department members, resistance to supervision, and establishment of subgroup symbols and tattoos. Thus, the existing concerns about these groups are highly consequential to Los Angeles County residents, Los Angeles County governance, and LASD. These subgroups could also exacerbate the current legitimacy crisis facing American law enforcement.

Past studies and commissions have reported in some detail on the existence of deputy subgroups. A 2021 report from the Loyola Law School Center for Juvenile Law and Policy lists 18 deputy subgroups, some dating back to the 1970s: 2000 Boys, 3000 Boys, Banditos, Buffalo Soldiers, Cavemen, Cowboys, Executioners, Grim Reapers, Jump Out Boys, Little Red Devils, Pirates, Posse, Rattlesnakes, Regulators, Spartans, Tasmanian Devils, Vikings, and Wayside Whities (Loyola Law School Center for Juvenile Law and Policy, 2021). Our research suggests that several of these groups were still actively adding members at the time of our interviews. These entities have been called *cliques*, *gangs*, *secret societies*, *fraternal societies*, *clubs*, and *subgroups*. (In this report, we use the terms *subgroups* and *cliques*.)

The existence of subgroups is also reflected in the roughly $55 million in subgroup-related judgments against Los Angeles County since 1990—$21 million of this between 2010 and 2020—and in the steps the county has taken to address the subgroups. In response to a variety of prior lawsuits and investigations (not just those associated with subgroups), the

[1] In February 2020, LASD implemented a new policy, "3-01/050.83: Employee Groups Which Violate Rights of Other Employees or Members of the Public" (Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Manual of Policy and Procedures, 2021b). As indicated by its name, the policy focuses on problematic behaviors by group members and refers to them as "illicit groups." Sheriff Alex Villanueva stated in January 2021 that "from here on out, if anyone feels the need to join, participate in, or solicit others to join any non-approved department-sanctioned group, that is unacceptable" (Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, 2021). The policy recognizes the potential harm to the department's image, the potential harm to community trust, and the risk of civil liability caused by such groups and specifies other policies under which violations apply (e.g., Hazing, General Behavior, Performance to Standards).

Board of Supervisors previously established the Kolts Commission (1992); a Special Counsel (1993–2014); the county Office of Independent Review (2001–2014); the Citizens' Commission on Jail Violence (CCJV; 2012); and the county Office of Inspector General (OIG), which was established in 2014 as part of the recommendations by the CCJV. LASD has also implemented reforms and policies to prevent and mitigate issues associated with subgroups, including creating a Risk Management unit, implementing recommendations from the CCJV in the jails, and creating a policy specific to subgroups.

Decades after the 1992 Kolts Commission report first examined the subject of deputy subgroups in LASD, questions remain. What impact do subgroups have on LASD and the communities it serves? What do deputies and community members think of them? What is the function of subgroups? How do they form? What do members of subgroups do? In an effort to understand the subgroups, the communities' experience with them, their role in LASD, and why they form in the first place, Los Angeles County commissioned the RAND Corporation to conduct this study.

The RAND team examined court documents, prior reports, and other public records regarding the subgroups and analyzed the text of news articles to determine how frequently LASD subgroups were mentioned over time and in what context. This information was used to formulate questions for an anonymous survey, confidential interviews, and focus groups with a range of community stakeholders and LASD personnel.[2] RAND researchers interviewed county officials and personnel at all levels of LASD, as well as community leaders and residents who lived in LASD's four patrol divisions. The RAND team collected interview and focus group data from 141 community leaders and community members across the county and in nine selected station areas;[3] interview data from 57 individuals, including members of LASD and other county stakeholders; and 1,608 survey participants. To preserve confidentiality and promote honest responding, surveys were conducted anonymously, and no information was retained that could link interviewees to their data.

Community Perceptions of Subgroups

Given that many subgroup behaviors conflict with LASD's responsibility to protect the communities it serves, it was critical for the RAND team to engage with residents and community leaders to understand their experiences with and perceptions of subgroups and LASD overall. In interviews and focus groups, community members conveyed a range of deputy behaviors, from disrespect to actual crimes committed against residents. It also became clear from our engagement with the community that their perceptions of the department are influenced negatively not only by the historical nature of this issue and ongoing revelations alleging misconduct by subgroups but also by a history of strained relations between the community and specific LASD stations.

We found that the community leaders and members and the LASD personnel whom we interviewed and surveyed had many of the same concerns, to varying degrees. Deputies cited

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[2] We took strict precautions to protect the confidentiality of our research participants. See Chapter Four for a discussion of our approach to protect confidentiality.

[3] The stations were Century, Compton, East Los Angeles, Industry, Lakewood, Lancaster, Norwalk, Palmdale, and Temple.

the negative impact that subgroups have on public perceptions of LASD as the most common effect of subgroup behavior and pointed to other subgroup behaviors (e.g., offensive, intimidating, or endangering acts) that they saw as less common but that are still highly concerning to both LASD and the community. However, our interviews and focus groups demonstrate that community views of LASD are not the same across the board. The views of community leaders as a group often were different from the views of residents as a whole. We suspect that this is because leaders interact more regularly with deputies, station personnel, and LASD leadership through their involvement in citizens groups and advisory panels than typical residents do.

What Is the Overall Community Perception of LASD?

Community leaders and members (referred to as *community stakeholders* when we combine their perspectives) were most critical of current department leadership, expressing concerns about a lack of transparency, a lack of trust, and a culture of aggressive policing. Some stakeholders said that LASD could learn from other law enforcement agencies how to better engage the community.

What Is the Community's View of LASD Policing?

Stakeholders described various forms of mistreatment, including harassment, retaliation, and excessive force, as well as differential treatment by race, socioeconomic status, physical appearance, and other factors. Community members from the Central and North Patrol Division areas overall reported less-positive views of LASD. Stakeholders also pointed to the ways deputies behaved during community events (e.g., coffee with a cop, toy giveaways) as coloring their perceptions. Some saw some station personnel as vested in the community, approachable, and motivated to meet the community's needs. Others viewed some deputies as antagonistic, lacking the skills necessary to engage the community, not vested in the community, and not caring about community well-being or engagement. Participants expressed varying levels of satisfaction with (1) the level of services provided, which vary from a prompt, supportive response to failure to provide necessary services; (2) the level of station personnel interactions with the community, including hosting formal and informal events and being congenial, as opposed to attending events but not interacting with the community; and (3) community partnership, which varies from collaborating on public safety issues to creating a climate that is exclusively focused on enforcement and does not solicit community input.

What Is the Community's Understanding of Subgroups?

Community stakeholders varied in their awareness of subgroups, from no awareness to extensive knowledge of groups, their identity, and their behavior. The primary sources of information about subgroups were the media, other community members, personal experiences, and LASD personnel. Participants who were aware of subgroups discussed why these groups form, including providing justification for their existence while also denouncing them. Participants also shared the names of some groups (e.g., Jump Out Boys, Banditos) and described how they identify themselves with tattoos or other symbols. When asked to describe subgroup behavior, community stakeholders listed hazing, excluding, harassing, and covering up for fellow deputies; targeting former jail inmates, particularly people of color; and harassing community residents (e.g., aggressive behavior, excessive force, intimidation, illicit behavior). The potential for subgroups to encourage excessive force or shootings by deputies was particularly concerning to community members in the Central and North Patrol Division areas, which is where

subgroups have been identified previously. When asked what specific strategies the department has implemented to address the issue of subgroups, some participants were unaware of any or did not think anything was being done, while others thought LASD was taking steps to minimize the occurrence of subgroups and their misconduct.

LASD Perspectives on Subgroups

The most concerning descriptions of deputy subgroups in media reports, legal claims, statements by public officials, and some of our interviews with LASD personnel and community members are that they are gangs that glorify violence and recruit only hard-charging crime fighters, especially deputies who have committed shootings. Lawsuits from community members accuse subgroup members of rights violations, excessive force, and wrongful death and cite the county's inability to supervise and discipline subgroups. Lawsuits from fellow LASD members allege intimidation, harassment, bullying, retaliation, workplace violence, and the creation of a hostile work environment by subgroup members. Members of some groups have allegedly subverted management at their stations. Descriptions of deputy subgroups also accuse members of showing disrespect for or physically attacking deputies who are not part of the group and forcing members of the same subgroup to perform favors for other members with more status. In the past, at least some parts of LASD leadership had been perceived as complicit with some of the subgroups' activities.[4]

The next several sections attempt to answer key questions about subgroups at LASD based on the research team's surveys and interviews with LASD personnel.

Do Subgroups Exist?

Subgroups clearly exist, though they do not appear to exist everywhere and are more likely to occur in areas where they have existed historically, but the extent of membership in these groups remains unknown. Although many survey respondents claimed to have little knowledge of the groups, 16 percent acknowledged that they had been asked to join a subgroup,[5] with one-quarter of those being invited in the past five years. There was little agreement among LASD survey respondents about whether subgroups were a detriment or a benefit to the department. Personnel had a wide array of views on the structure, function, risks, and value of the subgroups. The responses ranged from "those who belong to a subgroup hold themselves and each other to a higher standard and are the best LASD has" to "they [subgroups] have destroyed many honest and hard-working deputies' lives and careers." Our interview and survey findings suggest that the subject is divisive within LASD.

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[4] This was reported publicly in the media; see Leonard and Faturechi, 2013.

[5] We chose not to ask directly whether a survey respondent had ever belonged to a subgroup because of the sensitive nature of this question and our concern that many individuals would be reluctant to provide such information. Therefore, we instead used a proxy indicator of whether they had ever been invited to join a subgroup or had been asked within the past five years to join a subgroup. We felt that the analyses that compared those who had ever been invited to join a subgroup with those who had never been invited were informative as to these respondents' knowledge of and assessments of subgroups' characteristics and conduct.

What Purpose Do Subgroups Serve?

Subgroups vary significantly. Some are drinking groups. Others are closer to cliques or, as one respondent called them, "popular kids." And some encourage a culture of aggressive policing.

Few LASD interviewees said that subgroups engaged in coordinated misconduct. According to 30 percent of LASD survey respondents and 42 percent of those who were invited to join a subgroup, the groups have their own informal codes of conduct and expect members to abide by them (e.g., arresting gang members or those with weapons offenses). Among this group of deputies, subgroups are perceived to be a motivational tool to encourage hard work.

Some LASD interviewees also believed that the subgroups facilitate social connection, ease transitions to other units where former subgroup members might have transferred, and provide advice about challenging situations. Some interviewees noted that groups can start out as positive forces, but as those who started the group age and younger members change the focus, the groups can become complacent or misdirected, or can splinter into new subgroups or cliques within the clique.

Overall, 55 percent of LASD survey respondents either somewhat agreed or strongly agreed that deputy subgroups provide a sense of camaraderie or fraternity (including 91 percent of subgroup invitees), and 42 percent agreed that deputies join these subgroups to "fit in" at their work assignment. Nearly one-third of LASD survey respondents also agreed that members of these deputy subgroups get special privileges at work (e.g., choice of assignments, choice of shifts, time off).

Relatedly, 21–25 percent of LASD survey respondents indicated that not belonging to a deputy subgroup could negatively affect a deputy's work assignment or could limit a deputy's opportunities for career advancement or promotion. However, about a third of LASD survey respondents somewhat or strongly disagreed with that proposition.

Why Do Subgroups Form?

Subgroup formation stems at least partially from the organizational and workplace culture.

Some aspects of the organizational context are conducive to subgroups forming. LASD is a large, complex, and geographically dispersed organization. Its 23 stations serve communities ranging from busy urban areas to quiet suburbs, including a mixture of unincorporated county areas and cities that contract with LASD to provide policing. Individual stations have their own histories and traditions. Despite the department's size and diversity, deputies say that it feels small; your reputation follows you wherever you go.

Reputation and loyalties are often tied to work experience, starting with the station where a deputy trains for patrol. To some members of the department, completing patrol training at "fast" stations—ones with more violent crime—is a point of pride and means that one is competent enough to work anywhere in the department. Deputies at fast stations might be perceived as hard chargers, although deputies might choose slow stations for practical reasons, such as proximity to their homes or longtime ties to the community. In fact, those who train at slow stations but seek to join a fast station later are sometimes perceived as "not doing it right."

Subgroups are also more likely to form at these fast stations. About 40 percent of LASD survey respondents agreed with the statement that deputy subgroups are more common at patrol stations in high-crime areas. Subgroups also exist in custody facilities.

Our survey found that most deputies typically feel more loyal to the unit or station where they trained than to LASD overall. Agreement on this point was higher among individu-

als who had been invited to join a subgroup (71 percent) and among midlevel management (66 percent).

These loyalties and reputational concerns can begin to form during deputies' first assignments. Deputies begin their careers in the jails, where social circles develop. They can request where they want to do patrol training, so friends can request the same station. This contributes to peer selection processes and station loyalties, which are likely precursors for subgroup formation. As one line-level deputy explained, selecting a station reflects one's background and expectations for the job:

> Men's Central Jail. I saw the mentality there. Certain people who are well-liked get pulled to work the old side: 2000/3000 [floors]—it's the most respected place to work. I started on 4000 [floor]—the new side. It's weird how they start the brainwashing. Like you want to work 2000/3000 to build your reputation as a hard charger and can handle ghetto.[6] Those floors are associated with the station you want to go to. . . . It's a passage. I wanted to go to ELA [East Los Angeles] station because I'm Latino and felt like I could be on the level with the people I'm helping out. I speak the language, I can put myself in their shoes. I grew up in the 'hood. I could see myself making a difference.

Working hard and being humble are LASD values, but these values are also espoused by some subgroups. Throughout the interviews, we heard many individuals express norms and values related to reputation and loyalty. When interviewees would talk about LASD, the expectations for deputies, and generally "how things work," a core set of values emerged. The most pronounced theme is that deputies "work hard" and value hard work. A second value is to "be humble." As one deputy put it, "If you're a hard worker, you should be humble. You're not looking to outshine or be better. Showboating is not cool, especially in this crowd." Being a hard worker was often discussed as a potential reason for why people form subgroups or get invited to join subgroups, but some interviewees challenged this characterization. It is not clear why hard work and humility could not be recognized and rewarded through ordinary LASD processes, but it was a recurring theme in the interviews.

Supervision and leadership matter. Personnel views about supervisors and leadership also play into participants' descriptions of "how things work." These perceptions could factor into deputies' decisions to form or join subgroups, as well as types of subgroup behavior. Our survey results indicated that respondents had generally favorable views of various processes within LASD, but participants did note problems with hiring, training, promotions, and discipline. Discipline and promotions, especially to the ranks of captain and above, had been seen in the past as based in some part on favoritism. Some command staff noted that opportunities continue to exist for promotions or marginalization to be based on favoritism, but several perceived the new process for promotion to captain (implemented in 2019) to be an improvement. Nearly half (47.4 percent) of LASD survey respondents believed that promotions were handled fairly. Fifty-three percent of LASD survey respondents agreed that "executive leadership within LASD represents high ethical standards," but the share was lower among individuals who said that they had been invited to join a subgroup (41 percent of this group disagreed; 40 percent agreed) and slightly lower among midlevel managers (47 percent agreed; 32 percent disagreed).

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[6] This interviewee used the word *ghetto* in our discussion. We have left this wording intact in quoted material.

In short, reputation matters in LASD, and a variety of factors play into this, but much of it is tied to where people have worked in the department. Certain units have higher status because of the nature of the external environment (e.g., high crime), and certain types of people are drawn to these units. This is perceived as a positive in the sense that it allows people's skills and preferences to align with their work. Some interviewees identified the danger associated with working in some high-crime areas as contributing to colleagues developing a strong bond, which could increase the likelihood of subgroup formation. This emphasis on work history presents challenges, however, because it can create misperceptions about others who might choose a different path, particularly by those in supervisory positions. Some LASD interviewees noted that, at least in the past, department leadership encouraged forms of favoritism and formalized them through promotions, which signaled to people in the department that certain work histories and personal relationships were important for promotion. This undermined discipline and created the perception of lax supervision. Proper supervision was identified by LASD interviewees as critical for managing subgroups.

Another key role in the formation of subgroups identified by LASD personnel and in research literature is that of the frontline supervisor. This role is important for guiding organizational change by modeling and monitoring behavior. However, participants identified several challenges to effective supervision, such as sufficient training for sergeants and work experience (e.g., promoting too soon). These supervision challenges could be particularly important for supervising deputies in subgroups. Training officers and peer leaders are equally as important in LASD and could play important roles in subgroup formation and subgroup conduct.

What Do LASD Personnel Know About Subgroups, and What Is Their Impact?

Most deputies viewed subgroups as forming not for nefarious purposes but as a way to recognize a common bond and express pride in one's work. Once groups had formed, many deputies said that invitations to join a subgroup were likely to be based on friendship and perceived competence. This could mean that informal peer evaluations and peer motivation plug gaps that supervision and formalized performance evaluations have not filled. These justifications for group formation are sometimes contradicted by the secrecy of these groups and negative behaviors associated with them (e.g., supporting one another leads to ostracism, harassment of others). Ensuring that subgroups maintain values and incentives that are consistent with those of LASD more broadly is difficult because of the secrecy of the groups, the lack of proactive efforts to supervise them, and a lack of clear direction for appropriate responses where necessary.

Who Gets Invited to Join a Subgroup?

Hard workers, socializers, and aggressive deputies get invited to join, according to deputies. About 40 percent of LASD survey respondents identified the following criteria for being invited to join a subgroup: being known as a hard worker (91 percent of invitees and 67 percent of midlevel managers agreed), willingness to work in challenging environments (86 percent of invitees and 60 percent of midlevel managers agreed), and willingness to engage in social activities with other subgroup members (51 percent of invitees and 50 percent of midlevel managers agreed). In addition, 35 percent agreed that a willingness to engage in specific behav-

iors at work, such as being aggressive about making arrests, was a criterion for being invited to join a deputy subgroup (47 percent of invitees and 46 percent of midlevel managers agreed). In interviews, some participants were critical of those who were perceived as "trying too hard" to secure an invitation to a subgroup and raised the potential of this leading to adverse behavior. For example, deputies might use unnecessary force to show how aggressive they are in an effort to be invited to join a subgroup. Thus, how a subgroup defines *competence* has implications for what behavior is valued by the group.

New deputies are less likely to be invited to join. Survey results indicate that sworn personnel who are new to LASD are less likely to be invited to join a deputy subgroup. Specifically, 25 percent of LASD survey respondents who had been in the department for 21 or more years and 15 percent of those who had been with LASD for eight to 20 years reported ever having been invited to join a deputy subgroup, compared with 4 percent of those who had been with the department seven years or less.

Committing shootings or misconduct might contribute to being invited to join, but this is perceived to be less common. Interviewees noted that committing a shooting would likely lead to being invited to join a subgroup but disagreed that being invited to join a subgroup could be a motivating factor to commit a shooting. Some said that a "justifiable shooting" can also lead to an invitation but stressed that subgroups are not exclusively for deputies who have committed a shooting. Others posited that because much violent high-stakes crime occurs at night, it is likely that subgroups form among deputies who work the evening shift, reflecting the bonds that form when facing danger together. Around 15 percent of subgroup invitees and 15 percent of midlevel managers agreed that being invited to join a subgroup was associated with behavior that violates LASD policy, while 22 percent of each agreed that willingness to look the other way when others engage in improper or unethical behavior was a criterion for being invited.

Those who have been invited to join a subgroup might be asked to do things for the group. Over 25 percent of LASD survey respondents who had been invited to join a subgroup agreed that deputies in subgroups exhibit a willingness to engage in specific behaviors outside of work (e.g., paying for things of value to the subgroup), while 63 percent disagreed. In interviews with LASD personnel, these favors were things like writing reports for other members, taking on extra duties, hosting parties, or obliging egregious demands, such as "paying rent to work at a station."

Subgroups have few women members and few members of color. Just 10 percent of LASD survey respondents overall agreed that subgroups restricted membership based on race/ethnicity, but one-quarter of Black respondents agreed. Also, just 16 percent of all deputies agreed that subgroups restrict membership based on gender, but one-quarter of female respondents agreed.

Not all deputies want to join a subgroup. Being a hard worker does not equate with being a member of a subgroup. Several LASD interview participants stated that they were asked to join a subgroup on the basis of their performance and declined without professional repercussions. In interviews, those who opted out mentioned some form of work-life balance, and command staff speculated that deputies working toward promotion might opt out to ensure that "there is no dirt on them, ever," as one put it.

Are Tattoos Problematic?

Much of the media coverage on deputy subgroups has focused on the tattoos that members often share. Examples of these tattoos include a grim reaper, a skeleton holding a revolver and two playing cards known as the "dead man's hand," and a skeleton surrounded by flames carrying what appears to be an AK-47 assault rifle and wearing a helmet similar to those worn by German troops in World War I and World War II, as well as tattoo enhancements for committing a shooting, such as a tombstone or smoke coming from a gun barrel. LASD interviewees largely saw subgroup tattoos themselves as a nonissue and pointed out that tattoos have become more socially acceptable. However, respondents still recognized the potential negative effects of subgroup tattoos on litigation (e.g., they likely increase settlement amounts), criminal cases, promotion, or damage to LASD's reputation. Some compared subgroup tattoos with the tattoos that service members get in the military, and others pointed out that subgroup logos can also be found on stickers, phone cases, and mouse pads. Additionally, some people get station tattoos that correspond to the LASD-recognized logo for the station.

Deputies' views were mixed as to whether adding to a tattoo (e.g., adding a tombstone) to denote that a deputy had committed a shooting was a bad idea, but none saw it as a positive, and this aspect of subgroup behavior was particularly shocking to community members we interviewed. For some LASD personnel, the tattoo addition was a matter of personal expression, while others saw it as crossing a line. Those deputies who saw tattoos generally in a positive light saw them as a useful way to recognize hard workers and to show pride in a subgroup.

A quarter of survey respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that a deputy must get a subgroup's tattoo in order to be a member, while 16 percent somewhat or strongly disagreed. In addition, nearly 40 percent somewhat or strongly agreed that having a tattoo is an acceptable way to show pride in a subgroup (66 percent of subgroup invitees and 48 percent of midlevel managers agreed).

Do Subgroups Carry a Risk to LASD and Individuals?

Deputies recognized the potential negative outcomes from subgroups, such as civil liability and damage to LASD's reputation. Others saw the subgroups as divisive because they exclude some people, or as potentially divisive depending on their behavior, such as criticizing other people's work unfairly or making work more difficult for some. More dramatically, this behavior could include efforts to get people to act in certain ways (e.g., make certain arrests) or to transfer out of the station. Many of the internal problems that can develop with subgroups involve patterns of disrespectful behavior toward co-workers. Those on the receiving end of ostracizing, humiliating, or intimidating behavior could try to deal with these behaviors on their own or might put up with them until they become very serious. Community members also perceived intimidating or harassing behavior to be indicative of subgroups. Many deputies noted that the risks of more serious or criminal behavior are rare but can become real under the right circumstances. Some participants did express concerns about deputies in subgroups having their own code of conduct or engaging in concerning practices (e.g., poor tactics). Finally, some noted that subgroups might be mechanisms of coping with the stress and danger of the job; this type of coping mechanism can be healthy or unhealthy.

How Do Subgroups Impact the Workplace and LASD as a Whole?

According to nearly half of survey respondents, deputy subgroups have no effect on a station or unit's daily operations. About a quarter said that the presence of deputy subgroups can

help motivate others within the station or unit, while a similar number said that they can hurt morale and alienate nonmembers. In addition, people within LASD tended to recognize that subgroups' behavior negatively impacts community perceptions of LASD, but many also expressed that deputy subgroups are not as harmful as the media makes them out to be. Nevertheless, the most serious negative outcomes associated with subgroups (e.g., workplace violence and community harassment), while perceived as rare by those within LASD, are unacceptable at any frequency.

How Do Supervisors Approach Deputy Subgroups?

It appears that about half of supervisors were aware of subgroups' conduct, but there did not appear to be a collective effort to discourage deputies from joining subgroups. Additionally, 28 percent of survey respondents said that supervisors do not consider deputy subgroups to be problematic (32 percent of midlevel managers agreed). Although about a quarter agreed that supervisors formally discipline subgroup members for improper or unethical behavior (42 percent of midlevel managers agreed), 15 percent thought that supervisors were too lenient with subgroup members who violated LASD policies or procedures (16 percent of midlevel managers agreed). As direct supervisors of frontline personnel, sergeants play a critical role in supervising deputy behavior. Our findings suggest a lack of clear direction for sergeants to monitor and intervene to prevent problematic behavior by subgroups.

Recommendations

Waiting to act until subgroups are accused of misconduct is too great a risk for the county and its residents. Efforts should be made to intervene early to prevent problems from escalating or occurring in the first place. Research on change management suggests that a critical aspect of successful change involves managing the psychological contract between the employer and the employee by (1) involving employees in the change process and (2) developing and implementing an effective communication strategy. Central to preserving the psychological contract and managing change is having clearly articulated expectations. This suggests that deputies will easily spot any effort that is rushed or half-hearted. LASD has taken some initial steps to begin to address subgroups in its ranks, most visibly by creating the policy that prohibits deputies from joining or soliciting others to join subgroups, although the policy language does not specifically prohibit subgroups themselves.[7] This policy recognizes the potential for these groups to erode public trust and create a negative public perception of the department, and it specifically identifies excessive force, harassment, and mistreatment of others as prohibited conduct. To reinforce this new policy, there needs to be clear guidance for command staff at all levels—and particularly for captains—about expectations and appropriate responses. In the past, captains have developed their own approaches to addressing issues with subgroups, which tend to involve direct communication and setting expectations, or transferring people as deemed necessary. This could contribute to a lack of consistency in the captains' approaches and the differing expectations across the department that we observed.

[7] As noted, Sheriff Villanueva has seemingly clarified that this policy is intended to prohibit subgroups completely, although statements made to the Civilian Oversight Commission have appeared to contradict a firm message of prohibition.

Deputies expressed mixed opinions as to what actions the department should take. More than one-third (37 percent) of respondents agreed that subgroups should be prohibited. This result suggests that this subject is divisive within LASD and that prohibition will be met with some resistance. More than half of respondents agreed that LASD should break up problematic deputy subgroups by moving members to different stations or units. At the same time, one-quarter of survey respondents disagreed with the notion that a mandatory station or unit rotation policy could limit the influence of subgroups. Survey respondents also recognized that training plays a role in enabling supervisors to more effectively deal with deputy subgroups. About half of respondents agreed that LASD needs to provide training and support to supervisors on how to address any improper or unethical behavior by deputy subgroups.

Overall, we found that perceptions of problematic behaviors associated with subgroups are not universal among LASD respondents and tend to change over time given a set of conditions (e.g., poor supervision, subgroup leadership). Although LASD personnel perceive the more serious instances of misconduct to be rare events, given the exclusive nature of many groups, they can become divisive and lead to internal conflict or can evade detection of serious misconduct by avoiding outsiders. The existence, outside of the command hierarchy, of a secret alternative source of professional status within LASD can have a corrosive effect on discipline. Incidents that connect subgroup members to mistreatment of community members are particularly serious.

Recommendations for Subgroups

- **Take steps to bolster the policy on employee groups by clarifying policy language, taking steps to address secrecy, improving investigations, and identifying desired cultural change.** One of the first steps is to set a clear vision and communicate the need for change. Next, the official policy language should be clarified to add language that formally prohibits subgroups, which would seemingly align with a recent video statement by the Sheriff. The new language could define exactly what is prohibited by this policy and explain how the policy reinforces LASD's mission and core values. The policy could also address the secrecy of subgroups by requiring deputies to disclose membership in all work-related groups or organizations. Decisions will need to be made about whether to investigate subgroups internally or externally. Internal investigations into employee groups are complex and will require internal investigators to examine collateral misconduct and operate with oversight. Investigation of and discipline for all forms of misconduct related to a subgroup investigation are critical for addressing potential group involvement. Resources should be devoted to ensure that internal investigations are thorough and conclude swiftly and should cooperate with external oversight. Lastly, the Sheriff stated that the new policy is intended to be part of cultural change within LASD. The vision for cultural change needs to be spelled out and planned for.
- **Open lines of communication and encourage reporting behavior.** Clear communication surrounding issues associated with subgroups is critical and requires the entire command staff to be on the same page. This should include communicating that reporting problems is encouraged and ensuring that this is reflected in reporting systems (e.g., revising current reporting systems or creating a new anonymous system for reporting). Communications should also express zero tolerance for retaliation.

- **Encourage collaboration among executive leadership.** Given the unique environments and independence of the various units across LASD, chiefs and commanders should work with unit commanders to develop strategic plans for managing known subgroups.
- **Ensure that those in key roles are aware and accountable.** Unit commanders are directly responsible for managing personnel, involving employees in organizational processes, and setting expectations. Unit commanders should also emphasize the common identity of working in a particular unit, given that communicating a shared identity and shared goals can help reduce intergroup conflict. Unit commanders with known subgroups should ensure that other supervisors have appropriate training and guidance to monitor the work environment. They should continue to discourage participation in subgroups.
- **Develop personnel through training.** LASD could consider implementing a peer intervention program to set expectations and provide LASD personnel with the tools to intervene in misconduct by another deputy. The peer intervention approach focuses directly on cultural change to prevent misconduct, avoid policing mistakes, and promote officer health and wellness. This approach also includes training and mentoring for training officers and midlevel supervisors, including training on the newly created policy on employee groups or training to improve how they monitor the workplace for behaviors addressed in that policy.
- **Promote openness to change, adaptability, and learning.** This recommendation includes developing a lessons-learned program from subgroup-related and other internal investigations and disseminating best practices across the department. Other efforts include improving performance evaluation practices and incorporating community policing metrics into evaluations. This could also include reviewing unit-level training programs and incorporating 360-degree reviews for training officers and supervisors.
- **Devote resources to change efforts.** LASD could consider creating working groups or task forces for specific issues. This might also include enhancing existing mentoring or career planning programs, enhancing long-term health and wellness programs, and enhancing the peer support program. The department could also identify priorities focused on pressing organizational challenges and further study of subgroups and related topics, such as workplace harassment and workplace bullying, reducing civilian complaints, or reducing uses of force.

Recommendations for Strengthening Ties Between LASD and the Communities It Serves

Community stakeholders in more than a third of the discussion groups and interviews (most frequently from those in the Central and North divisions) recommended changes to LASD training on a broad range of topics: cultural competency or antibias training,[8] trauma-informed responses to domestic violence situations, helping people with mental illness or developmental disabilities, and building skills for interacting with people and displaying empathy. Some training recommendations were specifically about the practice of deputies starting their careers in the jails instead of in patrol stations, which community stakeholders said predisposes deputies to later treat community members with more hostility and aggression.

[8] As we note later, the research suggests that this training is not associated with changes in behavior (Forscher et al., 2019).

- **Institutionalize procedural justice through training, performance, and accountability.** A critical element for institutionalizing procedural justice is ensuring that deputies slow themselves down in order to properly respond to the situation (Sherman, 2020). Add training modules focused on such topics as procedural justice, crisis intervention, the neuroscience of respect, and social interaction skills. Training in these areas could help deputies shift from a warrior mindset to a guardian mindset. The department could also implement supervisor review meetings with deputies to discuss positive encounters and how procedural justice was used. The recent introduction of body-worn cameras for deputies provides a potential new tool for building in systems of continuous improvement. To contribute to improved community relations, LASD should consider implementing a systematic approach to review videos from body-worn cameras.
- **Improve or increase community interaction.** Create opportunities for community members and LASD personnel to interact outside of traditional law enforcement activities. Develop station-level plans for community-oriented policing that incorporate input from the community.
- **Give the community a greater voice and more points of contact**, such as an online feedback form to allow public comment on policy proposals or publishing public contact information for department leadership. Conduct broad community surveys or contact surveys to measure perceptions of LASD.
- **Increase the accountability of both the department and individual deputies.** This could include external monitoring of department policies, spending, or other activities. LASD could hold individual deputies accountable by hiring independent investigators to review excessive-force cases, mandating that deputies wear body cameras (which has begun), and creating a way for the public to anonymously report complaints to LASD regarding deputy behavior (the OIG already offers this option).
- **Improve hiring practices.** Research on hiring practices to improve cultural sensitivity is sparse, but LASD could consider incorporating conflict management and cultural sensitivity screening into the hiring process, if it is not already doing so. Community members would also support efforts to increase education requirements (e.g., associate or bachelor's degree) or support continuing education (e.g., tuition reimbursement).
- **Improve relationships with external oversight.** This includes establishing community advisory councils, soliciting feedback on policies from the Los Angeles County Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission, and building a productive working relationship with the OIG to support continuous improvement (Walker and Archbold, 2019).

Conclusion

Producing lasting change on this issue might require changing fundamental assumptions that exist within LASD. Any efforts for change must begin with accounting for organizational and subunit culture and leveraging positive features of that culture. Some recommendations are directed at the individual level, while others target the organizational level. Leadership practices, culture, and other features related to subgroups will not change overnight, but showing that the department is committed to making real changes can go a long way toward strengthening relationships between LASD and the communities it serves.

Acknowledgments

We received generous support and feedback from a variety of stakeholders on this project. We would like to thank the Office of the Los Angeles County Counsel, Board of Supervisors staff members, the Civilian Oversight Commission, the Association for Los Angeles Deputy Sheriffs, and the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD). The support from each of these stakeholder groups greatly improved this research project. Numerous RAND staff also supported us on this project, including Susan Straus, whom we thank for her careful review; General Counsel Robert Case; Human Subjects Protection Committee reviewers; Rick Garvey and other staff from RAND's Survey Research Group; and Olatunda Martin. We would like to thank our external reviewers, Susan Turner and Eugene Paoline, for their valuable suggestions, which significantly improved this report. Lastly, we would like to thank all our research participants, including a variety of LASD members and community leaders and residents, not only for graciously providing us with their time, but also for their passion, valuable insights, and suggestions for improvement.

Abbreviations

ACLU	American Civil Liberties Union
ALADS	Association for Los Angeles Deputy Sheriffs
CCJV	Citizens' Commission on Jail Violence
COC	Los Angeles County Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission
COP	community-oriented policing
COPS	Community Oriented Policing Services
COVID-19	coronavirus disease 2019
DOJ	U.S. Department of Justice
ELA	East Los Angeles
EPIC	Ethical Policing Is Courageous
FAQ	frequently asked question
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
LAPD	Los Angeles Police Department
LASD	Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department
LEO	law enforcement officer
NOPD	New Orleans Police Department
NYPD	New York City Police Department
OIG	Office of Inspector General, County of Los Angeles
OIR	Office of Independent Review, County of Los Angeles
POST	California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training
PRMS	Performance Reporting and Monitoring System
Project ABLE	Project Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement

SWAT	special weapons and tactics
TO	training officer

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Over the past 40 years, lawsuits, investigations, and media coverage have linked secretive groups of deputies (which we refer to in this report as *subgroups* and *cliques*) to misconduct in various stations in the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department (LASD). The allegations about these groups—which have been described as "gangs," "gang-like," and "secret societies"—have forced Los Angeles County to pay tens of millions of dollars in judgments and create new policies, yet the origin of these subgroups and the role they play in the department and the community are largely unclear to county and department leadership.

In September 2018, deputies who were reportedly members of a subgroup called the Banditos allegedly attacked several other deputies who were not part of the group at the conclusion of an off-duty party for deputies completing patrol training at the East Los Angeles station.[1] The Banditos had been associated with misconduct previously; they were implicated in a sexual harassment lawsuit in 2014. This was not the first time that a group of deputies in a subgroup had reportedly attacked other deputies. The last incident of this nature that received media coverage involved a deputy subgroup from Men's Central Jail reportedly called the 3000 Boys, which had also been implicated in reports of excessive force in the jails (Banks, 2011).

Concerns of excessive use of force against inmates in Los Angeles County jails led to the formation of the Citizen's Commission on Jail Violence (CCJV; 2012), which sought testimony, conducted interviews, and reviewed documents related to the use of force in the jails. The CCJV concluded that subgroups, such as the 3000 Boys, were a contributing factor to excessive force. Other subgroups have been revealed over time through the mistreatment of other employees or through revelations of shared tattoos when deputies have been deposed in civil litigation. Such allegations of mistreatment by subgroup members on the part of both LASD employees and community members speak to the unfavorable public image of these groups and their association with negative outcomes. These groups reportedly date back to at least the 1970s, but they first reached broad public awareness in 1991 amid allegations and lawsuits filed by community members regarding civil rights violations and excessive force associated with a subgroup known as the Vikings. We provide more detail of media coverage, the timeline of court cases, and previous reports that have discussed this issue in Chapter Two.

Events like those described above damage public trust. Moreover, as indicated by allegations of community mistreatment (e.g., excessive force), the risk of harm to the community is a key reason why this issue is a matter of public discussion. This risk makes understanding community perspectives on this subject particularly important. Understanding how community

[1] The party was held at an event venue called Kennedy Hall; it is sometimes referred to as the Kennedy Hall incident.

members feel about this issue and what they want LASD to do about it is critical for repairing harm and building trust.

In October 2018, the Los Angeles County Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission (COC) formed an ad hoc committee to "address the issue of secret deputy subgroups" (Los Angeles County Sheriff Civilian Oversight Commission, 2020). At the same time, the Office of the Los Angeles County Counsel asked the RAND Corporation to research the phenomenon to answer several key questions about the existence of subgroups within the department, including reasons why they form, what activities they engage in, whether they affect LASD's mission, and the perceived effect of these groups on the community. It is worth noting that this subject is dynamic. As recently as August 2019, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) was reportedly investigating LASD's subgroups more broadly (Lau and Rubin, 2019). Next, in July 2020, an internal whistleblower came forward, alleging that a subgroup from the Compton station called the Executioners encouraged shootings of civilians and had assaulted at least one other deputy at the station.[2] In August 2020, Los Angeles County Sheriff Alex Villanueva announced a new policy meant to address the negative behavior of these groups and announced discipline for 26 members of LASD from the internal investigation into the 2018 incident involving the Banditos (Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, undated-b). The policy was effective as of February 2020.

Primary data for this project were collected from November 2019 through November 2020—a period that included both the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic and nationwide social unrest in the wake of George Floyd's death at the hands of Minneapolis police. That event was another painful example of already strained relations between communities and the police that serve them and only one of the latest in a long line of police-involved killings that have affected public discourse about the role of law enforcement. Over the last several years, the urgency and scale of calls for police reform have become more pronounced.

Los Angeles County was not immune to the unrest, and the sociopolitical context of local law enforcement is highly dynamic. There have been general calls for criminal justice and policing reform and public demonstrations against police brutality, as well as several high-profile shootings committed by deputies that have contributed to tension with some community members. These tensions also manifested in attacks on deputies, the most notable of which was an ambush shooting of two deputies. It is inevitable that this environment would have an influence on both the community and LASD, including proposals to shift funding from LASD to other purposes intended to prevent crime before it begins.

The year 2020 saw other upheaval for LASD. In October, the COC called for the resignation of Sheriff Villanueva as a result of an ongoing uncooperative relationship (Williams, 2020). This lack of cooperation is exemplified by the Sheriff's refusal to comply with at least two subpoenas—one to appear at a meeting of the COC to discuss COVID-19 in the jails and another to meet with the Inspector General to discuss subgroups in LASD (subpoena power was recently granted to the COC and the Office of Inspector General, County of Los Angeles [OIG]) and the Inspector General's accusations of unlawful conduct by the Sheriff's Department (OIG, 2020c). Two members of the Board of Supervisors have also called for Villanueva to resign (ABC7.com staff, 2020), and the Board of Supervisors passed a motion

[2] The existence of this group was revealed in 2018 when a deputy who had committed a shooting testified in a deposition about his tattoo that was associated with this group. This shooting, of Donta Taylor, resulted in a $7 million payout by Los Angeles County (Lau, 2018).

asking County Counsel, in consultation with others, to report back and present on options for removing or impeaching the Sheriff, including making revisions to the county charter to allow for the Sheriff's removal. Several community organizations have also called for the Sheriff to resign, including the Los Angeles County Democratic Party, the UNITE HERE Local 11 labor union, and the Check the Sheriff coalition.

Although the current climate is certainly important for understanding the interests and perspectives of stakeholders who might be interested in this report, the phenomenon under study in this project has existed and endured for decades. Despite punctuated interest over time, direct study of subgroups in departments nationwide has been largely ignored or avoided. This is not uncommon with complex social phenomena, especially those that are difficult to observe or are purposefully hidden.

That said, there could be recognition among LASD leadership that change is warranted, and officials have welcomed this project as an opportunity to learn more. For instance, LASD created a new policy on subgroups in February 2020, and Sheriff Villanueva has highlighted this policy as indicative of his zero-tolerance approach to misconduct by subgroups (LASD, undated-b). However, conflicting statements about the intent and reach of this policy, ongoing conflict with civilian oversight bodies regarding the department's approach to subgroups, and post-policy allegations of ongoing subgroup activity provide reasons to be wary. Additionally, recent deposition testimony contradicts the Sheriff's explanation of his response to the Banditos incident, leading some to further question the Sheriff's commitment to dealing with this issue (Tchekmedyian, 2021). In the background, the FBI is apparently investigating the deputy subgroups (Lau and Rubin, 2019), although the details of this investigation are not public. Where relevant, the research team has tried to track the ongoing events occurring in the county (e.g., reporting on the alleged Executioners group in Compton). Finally, 2020 also saw a global pandemic that interrupted some of our planned research activities and introduced delays in data collection and adjustments of certain data collection methods (e.g., virtual focus groups).

Purpose and Components of the Current Study

This study has four overarching goals: (1) to understand community members' experiences and perceptions of subgroups, (2) to understand deputies' experiences and views of subgroups, (3) to understand the organizational context, and (4) to provide suggestions to both LASD and Los Angeles County as to how to address this issue.

To provide a comprehensive view of how these stakeholders see LASD subgroups, the research team collected data and information from a variety of sources: confidential interviews with community leaders in the areas that LASD serves, focus groups with community members, confidential interviews with selected LASD personnel, and an anonymous survey of the entire LASD sworn workforce. The research team worked to engage a diverse set of stakeholders so that a variety of perspectives are represented, while also maintaining strict confidentiality for research participants and maintaining RAND's role as an independent research organization.

Additionally, several questions guided the study: How are subgroups viewed outside of the department? Why do subgroups exist, and what is their purpose? What is the process for joining, including initiation activities? How are subgroups viewed inside the department?

What types of conduct toward other LASD employees and county residents do subgroups' members engage in? What policies or practices currently exist in the department, and what others might be relevant? How, if at all, should these policies and practices be managed?

Our approach to answering these questions used a broad framework that situates subgroups within the community and organizational context, considers features of groups and their members, and considers the impact of subgroups, which includes their activities and perceptions of LASD personnel and community members. This framework recognizes that subgroups and issues surrounding them exist within a broader context, which could have implications for group formation, group features, group member characteristics, and behavior. Perceptions of subgroups by both community members and LASD personnel can also be shaped by perceptions of LASD in general. Table 1.1 depicts this framework and highlights the potential interrelated nature of contextual and group factors on conduct. Below each component, we list the research activities that inform our understanding of that component.

Importantly, the study provides an opportunity to those directly involved—community members and deputies—to have their voices heard. The research team was guided by key questions and incorporated relevant theory and research findings where applicable, but we did not seek to confirm a certain theoretical framework.

Table 1.1
Framework for Understanding Deputy Subgroups Within LASD

Research Questions	Data Sources	Domains of Interest
Why do subgroups form, and what is their purpose?		
• Why do subgroups form? • What do they do? • How are they viewed inside LASD? • What impact do they have on LASD?	• LASD interviews • LASD survey • Research literature • Prior reports about LASD • Legal pleadings and media reports	• Organizational environment • Organizational stressors • Organizational culture and subculture • External environment • Subgroup theories • Group and peer influence • Criteria for being invited • Reasons for joining and characteristics of those who join • Conduct of group members
What impact do subgroups have on community experiences and perceptions?		
• What types of conduct do subgroups engage in toward the community? • How are they viewed outside of the department?	• Media reports • Legal pleadings • Prior reports about LASD • Community interviews and focus groups	• Accounts of attitudes or behaviors • Community experiences and perceptions of LASD overall • Community experiences and perceptions of deputy subgroups
What policies or practices currently exist in the department, and what others might be relevant? How, if at all, should these policies and practices be managed?		
• What policies or practices exist? • How should they be managed?	• LASD interviews • LASD survey • Community interviews and focus groups • Research literature • Prior reports	• Identified risks and behaviors associated with subgroups • Perceptions of potential responses from LASD personnel • Perceptions of potential responses from community members • Organizational change • Management of groups within organizations • Creating comprehensive, sustainable, feasible, and acceptable responses to addressing subgroups

Similarly, the work is not part of any legal investigation.[3] As a research organization, RAND is legally bound to protect research subjects, including, in this case, interviewees, focus group participants, and survey respondents.[4] Surveys were conducted anonymously; RAND does not have any information that could be linked to an individual.

Additionally, we present many of our qualitative findings with as much detail as possible so as to represent the range of our participants' views. This effort also led to suggestions for change aimed at improving the work environment at LASD and enhancing the community's trust and experiences with the department.

The remainder of this document is organized so that each component builds on the ones before it. In Chapter Two, we provide a brief history of investigations, lawsuits, and media coverage that help convey the allegations made against LASD subgroup members over time and how LASD responded. We used lexical analysis to summarize the media coverage on this subject, focusing on articles published in the *Los Angeles Times*. We also summarize prior reports that have touched on subgroups and note their recommendations for change. In Chapter Three, we examine research literature that provides insight on this unique subject and some of the historical issues identified in Chapter Two. In Chapter Four, we detail our methods and approach—an admittedly technical section that might be more useful to other researchers than to the lay reader. In Chapter Five, we report on interviews with community stakeholders and focus groups with community members to reveal community perspectives. Chapters Six, Seven, and Eight of this report draw extensively from our interview and survey data to convey how LASD personnel of various ranks view subgroups. In Chapter Nine, we synthesize our key findings. Finally, in Chapter Ten, we discuss the implications of our findings and provide recommendations based on information gathered through our primary data collection, from other relevant policies, and from other academic research.

Four appendixes are available for download at www.rand.org/t/RRA616-1. Appendix A describes the methods used. Appendix B presents the survey instrument. Appendix C presents the LASD interview protocol. Appendix D presents the community interview protocol and focus group guide.

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[3] We are not proving or disproving the merit of any particular allegation. We also did not have the ability to compel people to participate, as this research effort was voluntary and confidential.

[4] Accordingly, RAND personnel did not link any identifying information to our interview participants, redacted direct identifiers from our interview notes, and deleted contact information and correspondence with interviewees. RAND General Counsel and Human Subjects Protection Committee reviewers also conducted reviews of these methods and the quotes used in this report for potential risks of disclosure.

CHAPTER TWO

Prior Reports and Media Coverage of LASD Subgroups

This chapter covers relevant inquiries and lawsuits into LASD subgroups over several decades and analyzes media coverage to see how frequently and in what context subgroups have been mentioned (primarily in the *Los Angeles Times*). The Kolts Commission provided the first mention of deputy subgroups in its 1992 report documenting problems with use of force and lax discipline in LASD (Kolts et al., 1992). Since then, subgroups have surfaced repeatedly in allegations made against the department. Notably, each of these events follows a predictable trajectory, and these events often become scandals. Sherman, 1978, provides a theoretical framework for understanding how scandals progress, which includes the following stages: revelation, publication, defense, dramatization, investigation, and labeling. The stages involve actions taken by the media, the department in focus, and other public officials, which ultimately lead to a determination by community members of whether to label the entire organization as deviant. LASD has not effectively avoided this deviant label when it comes to subgroups, as evidenced by ongoing media coverage and other public figures' use of the term *gangs* in official documents and in public statements. The actions of other public figures, the actions taken by LASD in response, and other critical events involving LASD all factor into public perceptions of LASD.

Historical Context

Deputies forming unofficial, invitation-only groups with a common logo, often in the form of a tattoo, is a long-standing issue in LASD. Much of what is known about these groups comes from lawsuits, media coverage, and prior reports that were focused on other topics, such as the use of force, that explored the role of these groups in contributing to uses of force. These groups have been called *subgroups*, *cliques*, *gangs*, *secret societies*, *fraternal societies*, *clubs*, and likely many other descriptors, but there has not been a concentrated effort to understand more about these groups, such as why they exist. In this report, we aim to answer this question. We use the terms *subgroups* and *cliques* to describe these groups.

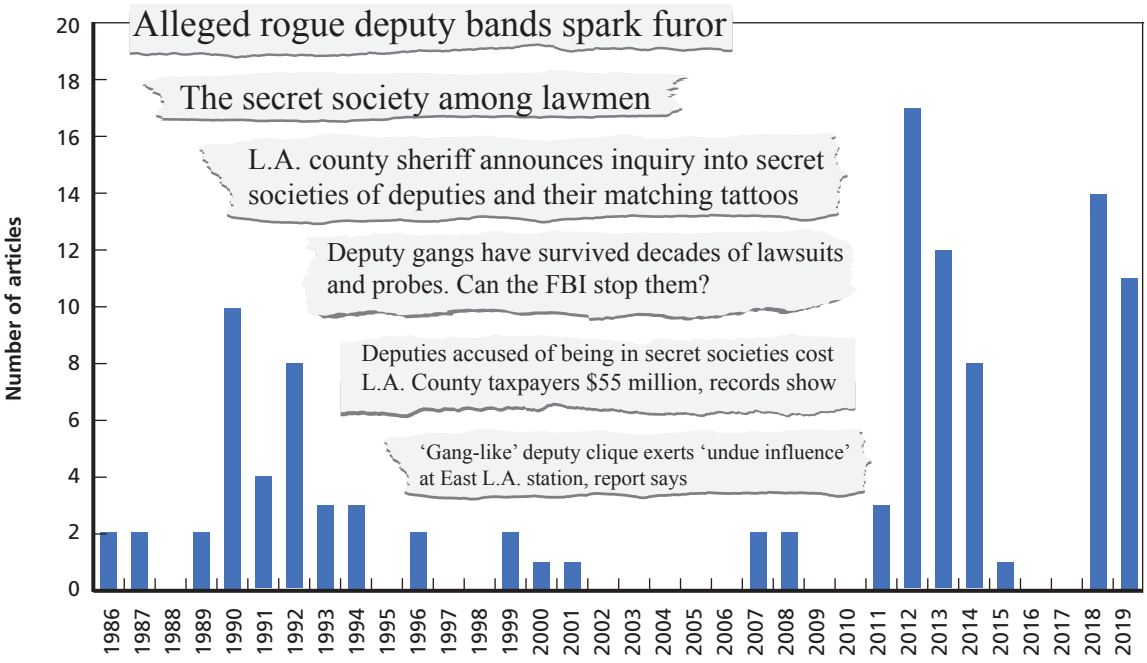
The history of these groups often surfaces in present-day discussions. In this chapter, we highlight key events and important insights regarding deputy subgroups that are present in the media or in the public domain. We begin by discussing media coverage on this subject, primarily from the *Los Angeles Times*. Next, we explore whether other law enforcement agencies in the United States have received media coverage related to subgroups. We then categorize claims from several lawsuits that detail specific behaviors by subgroup members or the department. Finally, we summarize findings from a variety of reports that have focused on LASD generally, but we also comment on and provide suggestions regarding LASD subgroups.

Media Coverage of LASD Deputy Subgroups

Web searches for "deputy cliques," "deputy gangs," and "deputy subgroups" reveal coverage from local, national (e.g., *New York Times*), and international (e.g., *The Guardian*) news sources. Often, this coverage quotes or reuses information published by the *Los Angeles Times*.

As seen in Figure 2.1, the number of articles related to this subject over time reflects spikes during significant events. For example, 22 *Los Angeles Times* articles from 1990 to 1992 reflect coverage of lawsuits involving members of the Vikings subgroup (e.g., *Thomas v. County of Los Angeles* and *Association for Los Angeles Deputy Sheriffs v. County of Los Angeles)* and the findings from the Kolts report, which included a chapter on deputy gangs (Kolts, 1992). Articles in the late 1990s and early 2000s reference the Kolts report and a new subgroup, the Regulators, and subsequent articles in the late 2000s covered a lawsuit filed by a Regulators member against LASD. In the early 2010s, another cluster of articles reported allegations of deputy subgroups in the jails, including a physical attack by a subgroup called the 3000 Boys on other deputies at a Christmas party, an investigation into the subgroup known as the Jump Out Boys, and Operation Pandora's Box, which would ultimately lead to the convictions of Sheriff Lee Baca and Undersheriff Paul Tanaka (and his ties to the Vikings—see Leonard and Faturechi, 2013) on unrelated charges of obstruction of justice and conspiracy. The most recent articles are about a Compton shooting of a community member by a deputy with a tattoo of an unnamed subgroup (now believed to be called the Executioners), another incident by the Banditos subgroup, an attempt to rehire Caren Carl Mandoyan (who is reportedly a

Figure 2.1
***Los Angeles Times* Articles That Mention LASD Subgroups, 1986–2019**



NOTES: The selected headlines depicted in this figure are not a random sample, and many are recent headlines (2018–2019). The top two headlines are from 1992 and 1999, respectively.

member of the Reapers subgroup), statements by county officials (e.g., the Sheriff, the Board of Supervisors), and potential investigations into deputy subgroups (e.g., by the FBI or the OIG).

Researchers also analyzed the set of articles using RAND-Lex, a cloud-based text analytics computing platform (see Appendix A for more detail on our methods to summarize these articles). The method allowed the team to identify groups of topics, each representing a distinct issue addressed in the *Los Angeles Times* articles. The overarching themes spanning the topics can be seen as concern about corruption and misconduct connected to deputy subgroups. The scan of the media reporting on this subject tends to describe deputy groups as *gangs* (or *gang-like*) or *cliques* and identifies matching tattoos and use of force or excessive force as features of these groups. This reporting often notes the potential connection between subgroups and shootings committed by deputies, which further underscores the potential severity of this issue and its importance as a community concern. The articles also make note of deputy subgroups in the jails, the role of different sheriffs over time, complaints (including lawsuits) and investigations involving groups, and specific groups (e.g., the Banditos) or locations where groups exist or have existed. Many articles reference that this is an issue with a long history (e.g., quotes from cases involving the Vikings).

Articles on deputy subgroups occasionally provide perspectives from deputies in subgroups or others in LASD that discuss the purpose of the groups, which tends to center around camaraderie, unit pride, and recognition for hard work. These articles also often feature statements made by various sheriffs. "The Secret Society Among Lawmen" from 1999 provides one of the most detailed accounts, with quotes from tattooed deputies, statements from deputies who disapprove of the groups, and Baca's stated disapproval (O'Connor and Daunt, 1999). The articles also include ongoing recognition that having a tattoo could be revealed in court and could contribute to higher liability for the county. Many of the themes reported in these articles appear to have changed little over time. Indeed, in June 2020, reports emerged of a deputy subgroup in Compton allegedly named the Executioners, with accusations that are remarkably similar to those alleged against the Banditos (e.g., intimidating and assaulting fellow deputies). This newer group allegedly glorified the use of force, including shootings committed by deputies (Tchekmedyian and Lau, 2020).

Media Coverage of Identified Cliques or Groups in Other Law Enforcement Agencies

Although the *Los Angeles Times* and other media outlets have reported on deputy subgroups in LASD over multiple decades, the extent to which similar unofficial groups exist in law enforcement more generally is not well known.[1] Law enforcement is formally organized into many workplace groups of various sizes—across units, shifts, and areas of responsibility, and this structure can create a sense of isolation and localized patterns of behavior (Klinger, 1997; Hassell, 2007), which occasionally result in misconduct involving groups of officers engaged in policy or criminal violations. There is potentially a selection effect in news stories on these groups, in that news coverage is contingent on the group(s) being engaged in newsworthy behavior—e.g., suspicious, deviant, or potentially criminal behavior. As a result, much of the media coverage of these groups tends to be negative. Web searches for evidence of law enforce-

[1] We exclusively searched for reports of unofficial groups existing within law enforcement organizations rather than external groups that could include law enforcement officers as members. There are a wide variety of official fraternal organizations for law enforcement officers. The New York City Police Department (NYPD), for instance, has 37 officially recognized fraternal organizations (NYPD, undated-b).

ment subgroups, cliques, or gangs in other departments reveal several stories that implicate groups of officers engaging in misconduct or criminal activity or performing exclusive or ritualistic behaviors as a form of group identification.

Some of these examples indicate group identification as a reason that subgroups form, but other purposes and actions of other law enforcement groups are often not verified.

A 2000 article on the Family, a police clique in New Jersey that held ritualistic candlelit induction ceremonies (Hedges, 2000), alleged that an estimated 20 percent of the force belonged to the group. Forced to swear allegiance and forbidden from speaking to nonmembers, members allegedly took part in intimidation, racist language, planting evidence, controlling overtime and promotions, and protecting members from being disciplined. The existence of the Family came to light when a separate group of officers filed a complaint. Other whistleblowers emerged, but none of the multiple investigations led to the removal of the alleged leader.

Similarly, in the 1980s and 1990s, three race-affiliated subgroups proliferated in the New Orleans Police Department (NOPD): Taylor's Children, the Antoinettes, and the McNuggets (Scharf and Phillippi, 2015). Members were so tied to these affiliations that they would reportedly introduce themselves by their clique, and competition among cliques seemingly led to different narratives about NOPD's response to Hurricane Katrina. There is speculation that the subgroups still exist in some form and that this culture might have kept the department in "post-Katrina limbo" longer than necessary. Again, the purpose and activities of these groups is unclear; however, the NOPD at the time was mired in scandals related to various forms of corruption and outright criminal conduct (Frontline, 2009).

Other groups have been identified following whistleblower accusations about pressure to use lethal force or the glorification of lethal force, but again without any direct indication that the groups committed criminal conduct.

A lawsuit from a former police captain in Vallejo, California, claimed that some officers who had committed fatal shootings were inducted into an exclusive clique, symbolized by members bending one corner of their badge, labeled the "Badge of Honor" (King, 2020). This captain believed that he was retaliated against and fired for pushing for an investigation and eventually speaking out against the department's negative culture. Allegations of excessive force and a high rate of shootings committed by officers have been linked to badge bending, as well as a culture of secrecy surrounding the alleged practice and the alleged clique. The Vallejo Police Department has been described in news articles as having a culture that is conducive to bullying, retaliation, and pressure to use force.

In another recent example, a whistleblower from the Los Angeles Police Department's (LAPD's) special weapons and tactics (SWAT) unit filed a lawsuit claiming that a subgroup of tenured SWAT officers—labeled the "SWAT mafia" (Rector and Winton, 2020)—attempted to control selections and promotions, encouraged the use of deadly force over less-lethal alternatives, and retaliated against the whistleblower. The lawsuit followed a previous complaint to Internal Affairs in 2018 and a change of assignment for the whistleblower.

In other cases, internal whistleblowers have revealed groups of officers involved in patterns of criminal behavior that have resulted criminal charges for those officers. In a California case involving the Oakland Riders, four officers on the same beat were accused of beating, robbing, and planting evidence on people in West Oakland (Fagan and Lee, 2000). None were convicted, and one is still reportedly a fugitive. Sixteen years after the scandal, the Oakland

Police Department is still in the process of federally mandated reform, with resistance to culture change identified as a key impediment (Fernandez, 2019).

In 2017, nine Baltimore officers from the Gun Trace Task Force were charged with forms of racketeering, robbery, and firearms crimes against suspected drug dealers and other civilians since at least 2014 (Richardson, 2019). The group included sergeants, detectives, and at least one officer from Philadelphia.

As a final example, "a gang of criminal cops" in Chicago on an antigang tactical team was accused of taxing drug dealers and targeting the dealers' rivals for enforcement for more than ten years (Kalven, 2016). Two Internal Affairs undercover investigators originally assigned to investigate were reportedly removed from the case after two and a half years; claiming they were reassigned and ostracized, the investigators filed a whistleblower retaliation lawsuit. An FBI probe eventually led to a sergeant and another officer being convicted of federal charges in 2012 after they attempted to extort an undercover FBI agent posing as a drug courier. Ten other officers involved in the case are on a prosecution "no-call" list.[2] The scandal resulted in 23 related lawsuits and more than 42 charges or convictions being vacated in cases involving the officers.

Although group formation is a common feature in all these cases, there are often unique contextual factors, such as varying opportunity structures or rationales, that contribute to different forms of misconduct and corruption (Pertiwi, 2018). Common themes across all of these examples include violation of civil rights and excessive force or the glorification of force. Notably, although several cities have experienced recurring scandals involving criminal behavior by groups of officers, few of these groups had an official name, and none was reported to have associated tattoos or logos.

Historical Misconduct and Corruption Involving Groups Within LASD

Historical examples of misconduct, corruption, and scandal can provide valuable lessons learned for members of today's LASD, but such scandals also continue to factor into public and internal perceptions of the department. This might be seen as unfair to the current members of LASD, but historical context often affects perceptions well into the future (Weitzer, 2002). Additionally, misconduct or corruption in other law enforcement agencies can impact perceptions of the occupation in general (Weitzer and Tuch, 2005), and such incidents and the subsequent criticism of policing locally and elsewhere can impact officer attitudes (Nix and Pickett, 2017; Turchan, 2020). Both of the following cases were mentioned several times in our interviews as evidence of criminal misconduct in LASD.

Arco Narco

The Arco Narco case (1988–1990) involved a group of deputies assigned to a specialized narcotics unit called Majors II. At least seven deputies and their sergeant were accused of taking money from drug dealers during arrests, beating drug dealers, and lying on reports (Merina, 1993). Ultimately, the deputies were convicted primarily on charges of theft and tax evasion in relation to the theft of $48,000 during a sting operation conducted by the FBI. Their criminal activities included the sergeant supervising the unit, who would later testify against the deputies. In response, LASD eliminated its four narcotics units.

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[2] Law enforcement officers on "no-call lists" are deemed to have questionable credibility, so the prosecution will not call them as a witness.

Operation Pandora's Box

More recently, the 2011 Operation Pandora's Box scandal resulted in federal charges and convictions for former Sheriff Baca and Undersheriff Tanaka (Grad and Winton, 2016). In this case of process corruption, LASD was charged with attempting to hide a federal informant from the FBI, which was investigating claims of excessive force and corruption in the jails. Among other allegations, deputies reportedly tried to intimidate an FBI agent in front of her home. Charges included obstruction of justice, lying under oath, and corruption. Twenty-one individuals, including many deputies, were convicted. Other adverse organizational and managerial practices during this period were also detailed by the CCJV, which is discussed later. Much of the scandal focused on the actions of the undersheriff, with allegations of pay to play, favoritism, and undermining supervisors in Men's Central Jail and elsewhere. The undersheriff's past membership in a deputy subgroup was frequently mentioned in reporting on this subject. The significance of this event and related leadership failures likely still factor into internal and external perceptions of LASD (and subgroups) today.

Lawsuits Alleging Misconduct by Deputy Subgroups

LASD has been sued repeatedly over alleged misconduct by deputy subgroups. These lawsuits appear to follow the real or perceived failure of internal channels to investigate the existence or behavior of subgroups and to correct inappropriate behavior through discipline or discharge. Lawsuits or complaints involving deputy subgroups can be organized into two categories: (1) community members alleging unjustified or excessive force or violations of civil rights by group members and (2) other deputies alleging harassment, retaliation, violence, and violation of workplace rights by group members.

According to the *Los Angeles Times*, the Los Angeles County Counsel determined that subgroups or their members have been involved in roughly $55 million worth of judgments against Los Angeles County since 1990, and $21 million worth of these judgments occurred in the past ten years (Tchekmedyian, 2020). The County Counsel's report remains confidential, so the number of cases and calculation of costs is unclear. For comparison, recent litigation expenses attributed to LASD[3] totaled $81.5 million in fiscal year 2018–2019, $62.1 million in 2017–2018, and $68.6 million in 2016–2017.

The community members' claims in Table 2.1 point to the existence of deputy subgroups in LASD or a specific deputy's membership in a subgroup as evidence of enhanced county liability, given that LASD knows about the subgroup(s) and that the defendants were acting within their capacity as law enforcement officials. Some of the recent complaints have included allegations of harassment toward family members of individuals who were killed in shootings committed by deputies. Community members' claims typically cite unreasonable search and seizure; unreasonable or excessive force; failure to train, supervise, and discipline; and municipal liability for unconstitutional customs and practices.[4]

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[3] Los Angeles County Counsel, undated. Total litigation expenses in these data include Contract Counsel and County Counsel fees, in addition to judgment and settlement costs, and many of these judgments or settlements reflect the conclusion of lawsuits from years prior.

[4] *Estate of Paul Rea v. County of Los Angeles*; *Serrano Robles, Sr. v. County of Los Angeles*; *Rathbun & Sexton v. County of Los Angeles*; *Lindsey & Rodriguez v. Tanaka*; *Estate of Darrell Logan, Jr. v. County of Los Angeles*; *Rosas v. Baca*; *Moffett v. County of Los Angeles*.

Table 2.1
Civilian Lawsuits Over LASD Cliques

Subgroup Name	Related Litigation	Year	Nature	Outcome
3000 Boys	*Evan Tutt v. Baca et al.*	2011	Civil rights violation	
2000 Boys and 3000 Boys	*Rosas v. Baca et al.*	2012	Excessive force	Settlement agreement
Banditos	*Vargas v. County of Los Angeles*	2018	Wrongful death	Pending
	Rea v. County of Los Angeles	2019	Wrongful death	Pending
	Serrano v. County of Los Angeles	2020	Wrongful death	Pending
Executioners[a]/CPT (Compton)	*Taylor v. County of Los Angeles*	2016	Wrongful death	$7,000,000
	Lockett et al. v County of Los Angeles	2018	Civil rights violations	Pending
	Guardado et al. v. County of Los Angeles	2020	Wrongful death	Pending
Jump Out Boys	*Estate of Arturo Cabrales et al. v. County of Los Angeles*	2012	Wrongful death	$1,500,000
Vikings	*Thomas v. County of Los Angeles*	1991	Class action—excessive force, discrimination	$6,000,000
	Carrillo v. County of Los Angeles	1991	Civil rights violation, wrongful prosecution	$10,100,000
Wayside Whities[b]	*Crawford v. Block et al.*	1990	Excessive force	$40,000

[a] The official name of this group is disputed.

[b] The existence of this group is disputed by LASD.

Complaints and lawsuits brought forth by internal whistleblowers tend to accuse subgroup members of threats, intimidation, harassment, bullying, ostracism, and violence against other deputies, as shown in Table 2.2. Other allegations include the subgroups controlling shift assignments and vacation days, overloading other deputies with work, not providing backup or providing limited backup, and vandalizing property. Often these claims include allegations of retaliation, such as denial of transfer requests; opening internal affairs investigations; and direct behavior, such as vandalism, threats, intimidation, denial of promotion and attempts to harm reputation. One claim implied that subgroup membership had an impact beyond the rank of deputy, alleging that a lieutenant and Tanaka's membership in the same subgroup contributed to their retaliatory behavior (e.g., *Rathbun & Sexton v. County of Los Angeles*).

Together, such complaints and lawsuits provide ample examples of subgroup members' alleged misconduct against both county residents and other deputies. However, the resolution of these cases often does not provide sufficient information to establish which allegations were affirmed or refuted, nor is this information commonly communicated to deputies or the public. Indeed, a criticism of the current process is that settlements that are sealed or that have nondisclosure agreements often preclude an understanding of the facts involved in these cases (Loyola Law School Center for Juvenile Law and Policy, 2021). LASD does have a Risk Management Unit that, in conjunction with County Counsel, identifies and addresses common features of claims against the department, but this work is not disseminated publicly. Moreover, the recent cases involving the Banditos and the Executioners were preceded by cases

Table 2.2
Deputy Lawsuits Over LASD Cliques

Subgroup Name	Related Litigation	Year	Nature	Outcome
3000 Boys	*Vasquez v. Baca et al.*	2011	Assault at a holiday party	Dismissed
Banditos	*Lopez v. County of Los Angeles*	2014	Sexual harassment, hazing, retaliation	$1,500,000 settlement
	Gonzalez v. County of Los Angeles	2015	Sexual harassment, retaliation	$1,000,000 settlement
	Garcia v. County of Los Angeles	2019	Harassment, inappropriate touching	Pending
	Hernandez et al. v. County of Los Angeles	2019	Civil rights violations, harassment, retaliation, assault and battery, racial discrimination	Pending
Executioners/CPT	*Banuelos v. County of Los Angeles*	2020	Assault, bullying, intimidation	Pending
	Gonzalez v. County of Los Angeles	2020	Retaliation	Pending
	Waldie v. County of Los Angeles	2020	Retaliation	Pending
Jump Out Boys	Multiple cases with subgroup members as plaintiffs	2012	Back pay due to reversal of Civil Service discharge	$853,600
Regulators	*Jaimes v. County of Los Angeles*	2007	Discrimination	$436,000
	Moffett v. County of Los Angeles	2012	Threats, intimidation	$87,000

related to these groups several years prior, suggesting potential opportunities to intervene to prevent further claims.

In addition to the considerable costs to the taxpayer, this history of lawsuits suggests a long history of problematic behavior by LASD deputies involved in subgroups.

Findings from Prior Reports

Media reporting and lawsuits about excessive force have occasionally resulted in external inquiries into LASD. In this section, we discuss previous reports that mention deputy subgroups. With one exception, the primary purpose of these reports was not to research or investigate deputy subgroups specifically, but rather to review departmental practices, often those related to the use of force and biased policing, and internal processes potentially affecting these outcomes, such as supervision, discipline, and community engagement, among others. Here, we review key findings from these reports as they relate to subgroups or cliques and LASD culture generally and for recommendations related to subgroups or cliques.

Kolts Commission

The Kolts Commission was led by retired federal judge James Kolts and published its report in 1992. Like similar commissions on police misconduct from the early 1990s—such as the Christopher Commission of LAPD and the Mollen Commission of NYPD—the Kolts report took a comprehensive look at complaints of excessive force against LASD's Patrol Division. Other civilian complaints discussed in the report included a lack of respect in interactions, that complaints were not taken seriously, that complaint results were not publicly disclosed, and that the complaints extended to supervisors as well as patrol deputies. The report concluded

that there was "deeply disturbing evidence of excessive force and lax discipline. The LASD has not been able to solve its own problems of excessive force in the past and has not reformed itself with adequate thoroughness and speed" (Kolts, 1992, p. 1). The report noted a "code of silence" that could contribute to dishonesty.

Notably, this was also the first report to explore allegations of deputy subgroups, focusing solely on the Vikings at the Lynwood station. The report stated that, "after a series of interviews with persons who hold a wide range of views on the issue, we conclude that, although there is some evidence suggestive of the existence of deputy gangs, such evidence is, at most, inconclusive" (Kolts, 1992, p. 323). However, the report notes that some deputies associated with the Viking symbol appeared to have engaged in behavior that is "brutal and intolerable and is typically associated with street gangs," concluding that such activities are likely to "erode the community's trust in the LASD" (Kolts, 1992, p. 323). The report did document some identified features of the Vikings and its members, noting that markers of "gang-like" behavior included tattoos, ethnically derogatory language, hand signs, slang, graffiti, harassment (of supervisors), and vandalism. The report noted that deputies associated with the Vikings were likely to be "hard chargers" or aggressive deputies assigned to late night or early morning shifts[5] and that they tended to recruit others with similar attitudes who were nearing the end of their custody rotation. The report also noted that the groups might start with good intentions and, somewhat contradictorily, were not necessarily racist in and of themselves (despite the use of racially derogatory language, which was also documented across the department).

The primary community-related recommendation of the Kolts report was to increase funding for community policing. Regarding the subgroups, the report recommended that LASD eradicate offensive station mascots and conduct an immediate internal affairs investigation to identify and punish gang-like behavior. It recommended breaking up deputy groups that engage in conduct that signifies gang-related activity. Sheriff Sherman Block rejected the conclusion that deputies were operating in gangs and denied the need for an internal investigation. However, the Board of Supervisors implemented other reforms after this report, including hiring a Special Counsel (1993) and eventually establishing the Office of Independent Review, County of Los Angeles (OIR; 2001).

Special Counsel Reports

Merrick Bobb, who served as Special Counsel from 1993 to 2014, was tasked with ensuring that the recommendations of the Kolts report were implemented. During that time, Bobb and his staff at the Police Assessment Resource Center published 36 reports about all aspects of LASD and its policies and procedures (Police Assessment Resource Center, 2018). Recurrent themes included the lack of strategic vision by commanders and supervisors, lax oversight and discipline, training deficiencies, and a strong "us versus them" culture. The reports also documented a collection of themes, such as resistance or slow uptake of changes in policy, strategy, supervision, training, etc. However, the reports also commended the department's agility in resolving problems in some cases (e.g., through the creation of a task force).

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[5] Early morning shifts occur outside of regular working hours, so regular management personnel (e.g., captains) are less likely to be present. Additionally, the early morning shift might handle more serious calls for service or crimes (i.e., most people are sleeping), and their irregular hours could contribute to a stronger bond among deputies (e.g., few other people work the same shifts; in Los Angeles, early morning shift workers might spend downtime together as they wait for rush hour to pass after their shift).

The Special Counsel reports mention "deputy cliques" or "deputy gangs" 13 and five times, respectively. The overall impression is that poor leadership, a lack of close supervision, stagnant assignments, and a sense of isolation among deputies contributed to groups forming and becoming problematic. Some of the Special Counsel's early reports recommended addressing the issue at the first sign of deputy cliques and identified as potential indicators things like deputies "running roughshod over sergeants and lieutenants," increases in the use of force, and incidents with large numbers of deputies behaving poorly off duty. The reports recommended that chiefs and commanders be accountable for having in-depth knowledge of the areas under their responsibility, understanding strengths and weaknesses of management, knowing what training had been received or is needed, and knowing whether subgroups are forming and what assistance has been given to the captain. This assistance included developing working plans with captains to analyze needs and problems and to develop solutions. Another suggestion included instilling assignment rotations to prevent cliques from forming. Discussions of cliques in later reports tended to be more general and pointed to the need for a strategic vision and feedback that provides deputies with a better sense of what is expected of them. In reviewing LASD's street gang intervention strategy, the Special Counsel noted in 2013 that simply having good intentions does not always translate to success and can even be counterproductive, noting

> being busy and trying hard does not always translate into success, and there is a large disconnect between these well-intentioned efforts and the reality on the ground. And while we did not witness any signs of pervasive problems related to civil rights abuses, it is our sense that if management skills and tools are not improved significantly, we will be reading about incidents in the community within the next few years that mirror events in the jails, generated by a small, overly aggressive clique led either by a few rogue deputies or naïve deputies thinking they are carrying out orders. (Bobb, 2013, p. 29)

Other statements in these reports reflect a recognition of the culture in the department and prospects for change. A quote from Special Counsel's final report captures this:

> Many leaders in the Department have not been trained on how to create culture change. Thus, to have conversations about risk management, or to hold people accountable for improving decisionmaking by deputies in the field, is difficult if leaders do not have the tools or skill set to do so. . . . Changing what deputies believe; altering what pressures they feel from peers; transforming what characteristics, information, and actions are valued; and clarifying how to prioritize competing goals—the will to do all of this must come from within, and be sustained by, the organization, with the process informed and supported continually by the community and outside experts. (Bobb, 2014, p. 40)

Although there are some recommendations regarding cliques, details such as group names, locations, and activities are not discussed in these reports. Nevertheless, the Special Counsel reports provide a detailed historical perspective of LASD policies and practices, with a multitude of recommendations for improvement.

American Civil Liberties Union Reports on Jail Violence

For several years in the late 2000s and early 2010s, the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) monitored the jails and published two reports on jail violence (ACLU National Prison Project and ACLU Foundation of Southern California, 2011; Liebowitz et al., 2012). These reports

identified deficiencies in LASD's use-of-force policy; its training; and its reporting, investigation, and discipline for excessive force and noted a culture of violence that emphasized the use of force as a first rather than last resort for controlling inmates. The ACLU identified "deputy gangs" as a significant source of this culture in that they glorified violence or used it as a rite of entry for joining a group. Lax discipline and departmental denial contributed to the subgroups gaining a foothold, according to these reports.

Citizens' Commission on Jail Violence

Prompted by the ACLU's reporting, the CCJV (2012) focused on the use of force in county jails. The report concluded that the "totality of the evidence, however, provides a credible picture of the excessive force in the Los Angeles County Jail system that has not been addressed adequately by the Department's leaders, policies, and systems" (CCJV, 2012, p. 11). The 194-page report arrived at several conclusions and recommendations that directly relate to department culture and deputy subgroups. For one, the report noted that aspects of deputy cliques contributed to a culture that normalized the excessive use of force. A mindset of "us versus them" between deputies and inmates promoted not only a lack of respect for inmates but also a culture of aggression that encouraged using force early in interactions as a means to control inmates. The CCJV maintained that a code of silence contributed to deputies not reporting misconduct and that there was a lack of leadership, supervision, and accountability. It also noted that an unprofessional climate was a result of custody not being a valued assignment in the department and that personnel trends at the time led to high supervisor turnover while deputy assignments remained stagnant. Transfers to custody assignments were also occasionally used as punishment.

The report identified deputy cliques as a key element of jail culture, stating that they can contribute to a sense of allegiance to a subpart of the department, can contribute to further "us versus them" mentalities (in this case, deputies in the clique versus jail inmates), and can erode a deputy's moral compass or affect decisionmaking. Then–Assistant Sheriff Tanaka reportedly empowered the jail cliques at the time, and the cliques were either resistant to or lacked adequate supervision. An aggressive mindset within the cliques was believed to contribute to use of force and, eventually, to a reported assault at an LASD Christmas party that led to the firing of six deputies. The report identified tattoos as a reward for aggressive behavior against inmates, although other reporting by OIR questions the importance of tattoos or even having a name for the clique (Gennaco et al., 2012).

From this report, one can infer that cliques were emblematic of a culture or subculture within the department that supported the use of force as a tool. The CCJV advocated culture change, noting that it would require committed supervisors, strong and clear communication of policies and core values, timely and strict enforcement of zero tolerance policies for misconduct and dishonesty, and engaged and visible leadership at the highest levels of the department. The report also noted several instances of cliques being identified as potentially problematic, yet no action was taken (e.g., the Regulators and cliques in the Men's Central Jail). The CCJV recommended preventing cliques by having mandatory assignment rotations and discouraging participation in cliques or allegiance to a subpart of the department, among many other recommendations for jail operations more generally.

U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division Report on Antelope Valley

As part of an investigation into allegations of racially biased policing in the Antelope Valley in 2013, the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Civil Rights Division made several conclusions and recommendations regarding community engagement, the handling of civilian complaints, and "a pattern or practice of discriminatory and unlawful searches and seizures, including the use of unreasonable force" (U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, 2013, p. 1). This investigation produced a settlement agreement between LASD and DOJ that requires ongoing monitoring to ensure that the changes specified by the settlement agreement are fully implemented. In addition to unconstitutional policing, the DOJ's findings noted the presence of a deputy subgroup that was associated with "an intimidating skull and snake symbol as a mark of their affiliation with Antelope Valley stations," which was interpreted as symbolizing the divide between deputies and the community (U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, 2013, p. 44). They noted that this symbol took the form of tattoos and bumper stickers and that station leaders were trying to discourage its use. This letter recommended "stronger measures to dissuade deputies from displaying these symbols, including training to ensure that deputies understand the inconsistent and divisive message sent by deputies' apparent adoption of such insignia, while respecting their First Amendment rights" (U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, 2013, p. 44).

It appears that the discussions on deputy subgroups or cliques were a peripheral aspect of the DOJ's investigation and that there was no further inquiry on that subject. Ongoing monitor reports document the Palmdale and Lancaster stations' efforts to comply with the settlement agreement (Antelope Valley Monitoring Team, undated). The agreement includes a variety of recommendations related to stops, seizures, and searches; bias-free policing; community engagement; Section 8 enforcement; data collection; use of force; personnel complaints; and accountability. These recommendations include changes to policy, procedures, and training, as well as ongoing monitoring activities to ensure adequate compliance. Many of the community-facing recommendations focus on ensuring that interactions with the community are professional, respectful, and free of bias and on promoting greater partnership with the community. These reform and monitoring efforts are ongoing, and the progress and lessons learned from the Antelope Valley agreement could serve as useful guidance for future reforms across LASD.

Office of Inspector General, County of Los Angeles

The OIG was created in 2014 after the CCJV recommended creating a single oversight body by combining the oversight entities that existed at that time (Special Counsel, OIR, and the Office of the Ombudsman). The OIG has issued 73 reports since its inception pertaining to the policies, procedures, practices, and operations of LASD. This includes reporting on disciplinary actions, investigation quality, body-worn camera policy, use of force, complaints, and overall reform and oversight efforts of the department. The OIG is responsible for reviewing administrative data and case documents, evaluating existing department processes, and directly observing current practices. The OIG has documented compliance with the CCJV's recommendations over time. In a December 2018 report, the OIG recommended adopting a policy "prohibiting membership in organizations which advocate violation of laws, policy, and civil rights or which conceal their nature and membership" (OIG, 2019, p. 20).

Most recently, the OIG issued a report on the LASD internal criminal investigation into an alleged assault by Banditos members on fellow deputies (OIG, 2020a). The report criticized investigators for not further exploring the importance of clique membership in the assault.

Specifically, the OIG recommended further investigating the suspects' possible motives and witnesses' potential bias and following the same investigative practice used in external criminal investigations. The OIG also recommended compelling statements from deputies who do not invoke their Fifth Amendment rights. A statement from Sheriff Villanueva rejected the idea that the investigation was not thorough but did not address the recommendations (LASD, 2020).

Loyola Law School Center for Juvenile Law and Policy

In January 2021, the Loyola Law School Center for Juvenile Law and Policy published *Fifty Years of Deputy Gangs in the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department: Identifying Root Causes and Effects to Advocate for Meaningful Reforms*, which surveys past investigations on deputy subgroups (Loyola Law School Center for Juvenile Law and Policy, 2021). The report distinguishes between deputy subgroups or cliques and deputy gangs based on whether the group has engaged in gang-like behaviors, defined as using tattoos, hand signals, and rituals that are similar to those of a criminal street gang. The report identifies two active and seven inactive "gangs" within LASD, along with four active and five inactive subgroups or cliques. It also noted that stations with known deputy subgroups have had the most shootings committed by deputies during the past five years. Furthermore, it highlights the potential public impact via criminal justice (e.g., "Brady lists," which are prosecutors' lists of members of law enforcement who are not strictly credible) and civil justice processes that pertain to deputies' membership in groups. Lastly, this report identifies community policing, constitutional policing, and procedural justice as important for reforming a culture of aggressive policing associated with subgroups.

Prior Reports Summary

Subgroups are not a new problem for LASD and the county. The prior reports on LASD reveal several recurring topics or themes that span policies, procedures, organizational structure, organizational leadership, and culture. Inconsistent or lax discipline and supervision, an opaque and inadequate complaint system, excessive or lethal use of force and insufficient review processes for use-of-force incidents, aggressive behavior, leadership deficits, and an "us versus them" culture that promotes a code of silence and resistance to implementing external recommendations are all recurring and common themes. In most of these reports, analysis and discussion of cliques or subgroups within LASD tend to be secondary to the overall purpose of the report[6] but highlight cultural aspects of LASD that could contribute to subgroup formation or that subgroups exemplify. Many of these efforts have recognized subgroups or cliques as a contributing factor in problematic behavior but did not attempt to collect more-detailed information about the nature or purpose of these groups. Based on their findings, recommendations from these prior reports in Table 2.3 include efforts to prevent, detect, and punish subgroups and subgroup behavior within LASD, as well as some more general recommendations for culture change that were believed to have the potential to limit the formation

[6] For instance, the Kolts Commission and CCJV reports are largely focused on the use of excessive force and identify cliques as one contributing factor, at least in some instances. The Antelope Valley settlement agreement is focused on discriminatory patrol practices and mentions cliques but draws no further conclusions. The Special Counsel and OIR reports have a few mentions of cliques but did not devote entire reports to them, instead focusing on disciplinary and other departmental processes. The OIG's recent report on the Banditos criminal investigation (OIG, 2020a) and the Loyola Law School Center for Juvenile Law and Policy report (Loyola Law School Center for Juvenile Law and Policy, 2021) are directly focused on cliques.

Table 2.3
Recommendations for Addressing Deputy Subgroups from Prior Reports

Category	Specific Recommendations
Prevention	• Create and implement a rotation policy to prevent subgroup formation (Special Counsel, multiple reports; CCJV, 2012) • Discourage participation and adoption of subgroup symbols (eradicate offensive symbols) (Kolts et al., 1992; CCJV, 2012; U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, 2013) • Implement accountability for chiefs and commanders to track subgroups and provide support to captains (Kolts et al., 1992; Special Counsel, 1994)
Detection	• Conduct an Internal Affairs investigation or enhance investigations by focusing specifically on subgroup motives (Kolts et al., 1992; OIG, 2020a) • Have the OIG conduct an investigation (Loyola Law School Center for Juvenile Law and Policy, 2021) • Identify deputies in subgroups using mechanisms that are both internal (tattoos) and external (courts, public database) (Loyola Law School Center for Juvenile Law and Policy, 2021)
Punishment	• Enact and enforce a policy prohibiting membership in subgroups (OIG, 2018; Loyola Law School Center for Juvenile Law and Policy, 2021) • Break up problematic subgroups (Kolts et al., 1992)
Culture change	• Implement ethics training in the academy and custody training (CCJV, 2012) • Emphasize community-oriented policing, respectful interactions, and de-escalation (Kolts et al., 1992; CCJV, 2012; U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division, 2013; Loyola Law School Center for Juvenile Law and Policy, 2021) • Avoid promoting or condoning a culture of allegiance to a subpart of the department (CCJV, 2012)

of subgroups or reduce problematic behavior. Prevention practices include using a rotation policy in the jails and leadership efforts to monitor and discourage participation in subgroups. Recommended detection efforts involve conducting internal affairs investigations and improving those investigations by ensuring that subgroup motives are part of the questioning. Other recommended detection efforts involve having the OIG investigate and using internal and external processes to identify deputies with subgroup tattoos or who belong to subgroups. Punishment-related recommendations included implementing a policy that prohibits membership in subgroups or breaking up problematic groups. Recommendations for culture change include enhanced ethics training, emphasizing community-oriented policing and community engagement, de-escalation and respectful interactions, and not condoning allegiances to subparts of the department.

LASD disagreed with some of the findings and recommendations, typically noting their points of disagreement in response letters. LASD has, however, implemented several of the recommendations from the CCJV (rotations, ethics training, and actions to discourage participation in subgroups). LASD also recently created a policy on subgroups, which we discuss later in the report. Notably, despite these numerous prior recommendations regarding subgroups, revelations of negative behavior have persisted over time. What is unclear is whether the persistence of these issues is due to a lack of implementation (i.e., LASD has ignored or failed to support previously recommended changes), a lack of effectiveness (i.e., such recommendations are unable to effect change on this issue), or both. Moreover, prior reports have provided some recommendations for improving LASD's relationship with the communities it serves; the most notable of these is the Antelope Valley settlement agreement. To our knowledge, none of the reports has recommended that LASD acknowledge and apologize for the harm caused in the multiple examples discussed above as part of a reconciliation process.

Conclusion

Like the Kolts report, numerous blue-ribbon commissions focused on other agencies have noted how an overemphasis on aggressive crime fighting and recurrent incidents of force or excessive force against residents can deteriorate police-community relations and can contribute to other negative outcomes (e.g., complaints, lawsuits). These reports discuss how elements of the organizational (e.g., Christopher Commission) and occupational culture contribute to this narrow definition of the police role (e.g., Institute for Defense Analyses, 1967; National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders, 1968; President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing, 2015). Thus, although the attitudes and behaviors of individuals or groups of officers are observable, messages and signals from the broader environment are also worthy of examination. We used the information provided in the various media reports, lawsuits, and prior reports to summarize the publicly available information about subgroups and behaviors believed to be associated with them. This information informed the development of our interview protocol for community members and LASD personnel. These prior reports also informed our search for relevant research literature that we discuss in the next chapter and throughout the rest of the report.

CHAPTER THREE

Relevant Research

The prior reports on subgroups have largely focused on issues related to misconduct and the use of force imposed on the community. They also discuss the potential role of organizational culture and peer selection and influence in the group setting (e.g., "tattoos associated with deputy cliques . . . have also in some instances been used as a reward for aggressive behavior"; CCJV, 2012, p. 115). What has been missing in prior accounts of deputy subgroups is an explanation of why these groups form, including where they fit in the organizational context. In this chapter, we review relevant policing and organizational research to better understand motivations for group formation.

The subject of subgroups and cliques in law enforcement is not often a direct focus of research, although the existing research does mention the development of groups, cultural factors that contribute to a sense of belonging to a group (e.g., loyalty, us versus them), and the importance of peers and potential peer influence on behavior. Moreover, supervisory issues and issues among deputies that have been associated with deputy subgroups in the past suggest potential relevance of the organizational justice literature. Specifically, lawsuits by both subgroup members (e.g., *Jaimes v. County of Los Angeles*, 2007) and complainants against subgroup members (e.g., *Moffett v. County of Los Angeles*, 2012) have alleged unfair treatment or an unsatisfactory organizational response. Organizational justice concepts have implications for adherence to policy, treatment of community members, and other outcomes identified in prior reports on subgroups (e.g., dishonesty, excessive force). These concepts are also important for implementing a policy on deputy subgroups and understanding potential undesired effects of such a policy. In this chapter, we provide a brief discussion of a variety of research perspectives that are relevant for understanding why and how subgroups form, including findings from the most notable research literature on culture and the role of peers in law enforcement.

Cultural Norms and Themes

Culture is often conveniently used as a catch-all term for a multitude of values, attitudes, assumptions, and behaviors in various aspects of life. As it relates to law enforcement, police culture is thought to emerge from occupational and organizational features associated with police work. Culture develops as "collective sense-making" (Crank, 2004, p. 15) with ideational, behavioral, social, and emergent elements. The ideational element consists of values, attitudes, and ways of thinking about problems; this incorporates ethical thinking. The behavioral element consists of "accepted practices, rules, and principles of conduct that are situationally applied and generalized rationales and beliefs" (Hunt and Manning, 1991). Culture is also

socially structured, including geographic, organizational, and strategic factors that affect both how the work is done and how culture develops from this structure (Chan, 1996). Finally, culture is emergent—that is, it is part of a creative process that is influenced by social action and group interactions and conflict. This includes the broader social context, and deputies bring their own beliefs, values, and worldviews to the job.

Policing-Specific Cultural Norms and Themes

Considerable research exists on police culture, yet this construct is difficult to define for two reasons. First, police culture is difficult to study because it requires a high degree of access with which many law enforcement agencies and personnel are not comfortable. This difficulty raises questions about whether agencies that are open to cultural research differ from those that are not and calls into question the generalizability of the findings from that research. Second, the extent to which law enforcement officers (LEOs) as a group adhere to the cultural themes identified by researchers is questionable. Prior research exploring the variation in outlooks of LEOs has used typologies (i.e., categories qualitatively identified by the researcher) and statistical approaches (e.g., cluster analysis, latent class analysis) to identify and classify LEOs according to their shared or divergent views. Classic research often discussed and grouped officers into "types" or "styles." This includes comparing ranks or "street cops" versus "management cops" (Reuss-Ianni, 1983). Characteristic styles of police officers have taken a variety of forms that often relate to degrees of aggressiveness and having a crime fighter orientation, such as the "old-style crime fighter" compared to the "clean-beat crime fighter" or the "service style" versus the "professional style" (Brown, 1988). Other identified styles include traditionalists, law enforcers, lay lows, peacekeepers, old pros, anti-organizational street cops, "Dirty Harry" enforcers, tough cops, avoiders, problem solvers, and professionals (Paoline, 2004; Worden, 1995). More recently, researchers have focused on "guardian" (e.g., "It is important to have non-enforcement contacts with the public") and "warrior" (e.g., "My primary responsibility as a police officer is to fight crime") outlooks, showing that many officers embrace elements of both (Morin et al., 2017). It is not clear how these styles might change over time or whether there is conflict across those of different styles, with the exception of street cops versus management cops.

A common framework for studying police culture begins with understanding the occupational environments of LEOs, which can be grouped into internal (organizational) and external (community) environments. Such environments provide opportunities for ambiguity, conflict, and, ultimately, job stress, which must be dealt with or adapted to. Persistent stressful features of these environments could ultimately lead to cultural adaptations that are common across many law enforcement agencies, which reflects an *occupational* culture within law enforcement. In relation, an *organizational* perspective posits that unique features within a particular agency lead to unique cultural adaptations that vary across agencies (Paoline and Terrill, 2013).

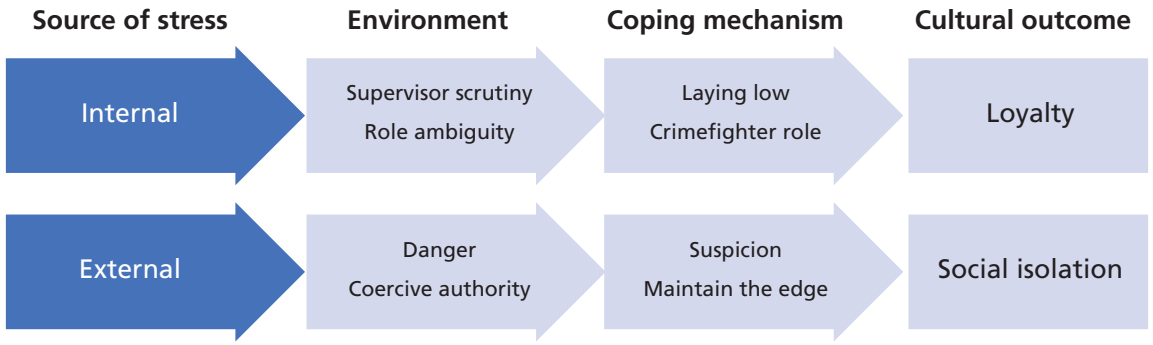
Many cultural studies identify the components of police culture as themes: shared occupational activities that have behavioral, ideational, and sentimental components that are related to social and organizational structure and the environments in which work occurs (Crank, 2004). Crank, 2004, considers themes to be the "building blocks" of police culture and groups them into four broad categories: street environment, uncertainty, solidarity, and loosely coupling.

Themes organized under the *street environment* reflect the daily responsibilities and coercive authority of LEOs (e.g., themes related to the use of force, territorial control, mili-

tarism, the centrality of guns). Themes organized under *uncertainty* reflect the unpredictable nature of police work (e.g., suspicion, danger, situational uncertainty, maintaining the edge). Themes organized under *solidarity* reflect the conflicts and challenges to authority that officers receive from other groups while pursuing righteous goals (e.g., morality, common sense, masculinity, solidarity, racism). Finally, *loosely coupling* themes highlight the distance between formal organizational goals and processes (i.e., administrative functions) and the day-to-day activities of lower-ranked actors (e.g., secrecy/invisibility, individualism, deception, deterrence, distrust of bureaucracy). Here, themes of individualism and distrust of bureaucracy are thought to be associated with subgroup formation in order to protect against administrative scrutiny or outside influence.

Other research focuses more directly on how environmental (internal and external) features of police work connect to coping mechanisms and cultural outcomes that develop in response (Paoline and Terrill, 2013). Figure 3.1 summarizes how these concepts are connected. Key features of the organizational environment include unpredictable and punitive supervisor scrutiny and role ambiguity. To cope with supervisor scrutiny, officers might lay low (e.g., avoiding extra effort or focusing on specific offenses, such as felonies). To respond to role ambiguity, officers might adopt or value role orientations that their supervisors most clearly recognize, which tends to lead to a crime-fighting orientation. Loyalty is considered an eventual cultural outcome of the internal environmental features of supervisor scrutiny and role ambiguity and the coping mechanisms of laying low and concentrating on crime-fighting. Loyalty can be manifested in prioritizing the physical protection of other officers, maintaining camaraderie and a bond with other officers, and believing that adherence to the code of silence is important for the mutual trust needed to perform well. In research surveys on this topic, officers tend to overwhelmingly endorse physical protection and emotional protection or the camaraderie/bond features of loyalty, while between 12 and 40 percent endorse the code of silence. Thus, most officers remain loyal as long as it does not require adherence to a code of silence. Other research suggests that the code of silence is somewhat conditional on the seriousness of the behavior and perceptions of fairness of discipline. More-serious misconduct is less likely to be kept secret while overly harsh punishments increase the likelihood of secrecy, and these patterns are similar across supervisors and nonsupervisors (Ivković, Peacock, and Haberfeld, 2016).

Figure 3.1
Cultural Outcomes as They Relate to Environmental Features of Police Work



SOURCE: Adapted from Paoline and Terrill, 2013.

To deal with the street environment, officers might be suspicious of most citizens and feel that it is important to "maintain the edge" over citizens in interactions or to establish control at the beginning of encounters. This mindset could contribute to interactions with the community that are antagonistic. These coping mechanisms could be related to the perceived danger of the job and coercive authority (i.e., legal authority to issue commands), respectively, as features of the external environment. Social isolation is considered an eventual cultural outcome of the external environmental features of danger and coercive authority of police work combined with the coping mechanisms of suspiciousness and maintaining the edge. Social isolation contributes to a sense that people outside of law enforcement do not understand the difficulty or danger involved in doing the job. It also contributes to a tendency to associate with other law enforcement officers outside of work. This can contribute to "us versus them" outlooks because of a preference for other officers and a tendency to feel misunderstood by the community (Marier and Moule, 2019). Survey research indicates that officers overwhelmingly agree that most people do not understand how difficult their job is, while slightly less than half of officers would prefer to hang out with officers over nonofficers while off duty (Paoline and Terrill, 2013).

Subcultures

Given differentiation and fragmentation within law enforcement organizations (Herbert, 1998), subcultures could develop when "a subset of an organizations' members who interact regularly with one another, identify themselves as a distinct group within the organization . . . and routinely take action on the basis of collective understandings unique to the group" (Van Maanen and Barley, 1984, p. 38). The extent to which subcultures reflect other subcultures or the culture of the organization overall likely depends on a variety of organizational and environmental features to which the subcultural group is exposed. The attitudes, values, and behaviors of subcultural members might be taken for granted or could remain hidden or not well understood. As a defining feature of police culture, secrecy works both internally and externally (Manning, 1974). It could also function to fracture individuals and groups into those with "secret knowledge" and those without, which can serve as a rewarding feature of joining such groups (Parker, 2016). Depending on the extent of secrecy within an organization, the amount of shared secret knowledge (and, therefore, the number of those with similar understandings of work) might be low. Part of this secrecy involves understanding that revealing more than you need to could be used against you. Bittner observed that "the overriding rule within departments is no one ever tells anybody else more than he absolutely has to" (Bittner, 1970, p. 64), which is echoed in subsequent research (Chevigny, 1995). More generally, research indicates that secrecy is a feature of many organizations and groups within organizations and could be a core feature of group identity (Behr, 2006) or an individual's identity as a trusted group member (Costas and Grey, 2014). The act of maintaining secrecy can also enhance social cohesion and social bonding within groups and further solidify ingroup members from outsiders. Organizationally, both public transparency and internal knowledge-sharing (e.g., silos) face obstacles due to both formal and informal control of secret information (Arellano-Gault and Lepore, 2011; Roberts, 2004).

Other observation-based research stresses how subculture varies as a function of local conditions and preferences and therefore can change over time. Herbert, 1998, focused on how police officers might weigh six "normative orders" in their work to define situations and their reactions: the law, bureaucratic control, adventure/machismo, safety, competence, and moral-

ity. These normative orders might be internally inconsistent from situation to situation (e.g., being concerned with safety threats in the form of physical assault compared with not wearing a seat belt). Hassell, 2007, following the work of Klinger, 1997, took more of an organizational approach, noting that subunits within an organization have different cultures and expectations for behavior based on five key factors: (1) the individuals drawn to certain subunits, (2) the population being served, (3) situational features of the work to be done (e.g., the level of danger), (4) preferences and ideologies of command structures, and (5) types of crimes and legal authority commonly used (e.g., stops and searches for weapons). Both formal and informal processes shape subunit culture and officer behavior.

Thus, it is a challenge for common understandings to be shared across law enforcement organizations. Organizational and social divisions inherently keep much of the work, and, therefore, shared knowledge, fragmented. Research on police culture broadly suggests that police culture is not monolithic but is influenced by the internal and external environment. Cultural outcomes such as loyalty and social isolation speak to potential sources of subgroup formation, while the identified coping mechanisms could explain some subgroup behavior. Subculture research in policing provides potential explanations for variation in outlooks within the same organization and how this might contribute to subgroup formation. It also highlights the role of secrecy as a reward and source of control in groups. Although some studies on police culture describe the potential conflict that exists across ranks, much of the research on police culture focuses on describing similarities shared by different types of officers or within particular types of outlooks, but it does not typically discuss conflict across groups.

Social Identity, Social Selection, and Peers in Policing

Although not singly identified as a key element of police culture, the role of peers and peer groups in policing can be identified through such group concepts as loyalty, solidarity, and the code of silence or through group processes such as socialization or camaraderie (i.e., bonding). What has been described as the "many tribes of police" might simply be ingroup identification and distinction that is ubiquitous in all human settings (King, 2018). Moreover, law enforcement might be a profession where groups are particularly likely to form because officers are reliant on one another for safety. With groups come values, norms, and expectations for behavior, and groups can be critical for understanding or driving cultural change. When people decide who is "ingroup" and "outgroup," they base it on whether people are similar or dissimilar to themselves. The theories that explain common features of social behavior in organizations are social identity theory and self-categorization theory (Hogg and Terry, 2000).

According to self-categorization theory, perceived similarities are based on an ingroup prototype, and individual behavior is either in or out of alignment with the prototype. This contributes to such group phenomena as norms, stereotypes, ingroup cohesion, cooperation, emotional contagion, and mutual influence. Prototypes reflect attributes of group members that distinguish them from other groups, which reduces uncertainty. Two common forms of nonprototypical members are negative outliers (or "free riders") and "high-flyers." Rejecting the free riders is important for solidifying the ingroup prototype, while high-flyers can be tolerated as long as the group can take some ownership of their behavior and the high-flyers are not overly arrogant about their performance (Hogg and Terry, 2000). Self-categorization theory also contends that group leaders will be highly prototypical, so they will have higher

prestige and status. Risks of highly cohesive groups include groupthink, exclusion of minority attributes from leadership positions, and an environment conducive to leaders exercising and abusing power.

In large organizations, people can be motivated to strive for distinctiveness through subgroup identification. In organizations with highly cohesive or multiple subgroups, "it may be best to balance loyalty to and identification with the subunit with loyalty to and identification with the superordinate organization, and not emphasize either one to the detriment of the other" (Hogg and Terry, 2000, p. 131). Activities that strengthen only friendships are more likely to fragment the organization and disrupt norm adherence, potentially leading to subgroups that dislike each other. Contextual factors such as uncertainty and conflict also contribute to group dynamics.

It is not clear how well this theoretical framework applies to hierarchical organizations, such as law enforcement, but, although subgroups and cliques are underresearched, they are not uncommon in law enforcement, as evidenced by the sources discussed in Chapter Two. Research on informal hierarchies within organizations suggests that bureaucratic top-down organizations tend to create informal hierarchies within levels of the organization (i.e., among equals) as an extension of the formal hierarchy (Diefenbach and Sillince, 2011). Professional organizations that value autonomy and seniority could lead to the creation of informal hierarchies that cross levels of the organization and exist alongside the formal hierarchy. This theory suggests that formal and informal hierarchies are intrinsically linked (i.e., as one increases, the other decreases; Diefenbach and Sillince, 2011).

In addition to potential organizational factors that contribute to group formation and group behavior, other research has identified various themes related to the importance of peers in policing, although the direct contribution of peers and peer groups to decisionmaking has been overlooked and is less understood (McCluskey, Terrill, and Paoline, 2005). The difficulty in studying this aspect of police decisionmaking and culture might be due in part to other cultural themes that prevent observation (i.e., the sensitive nature of these questions and the tendency for police to avoid external scrutiny). In addition to the impact of peer groups, a key consideration for research in this area involves group processes. The idea of emergence—how elemental content (e.g., individual orientations to aspects of police culture) and interactive processes lead to shared perceptions or attitudes among group members—might help explain variation across groups or group features (Crank, 2004). That workgroups might share their own cultural features that are related but distinguished from the department around them is a more recent issue in police cultural research (Ingram, Paoline, and Terrill, 2013). Recognizing that behaviors and attitudes diffuse through peer networks is an emerging area in policing research and is an important element in understanding police behavior more broadly.

Peer learning is well-recognized as a feature of law enforcement organizations. For instance, an individual's professional entry into law enforcement requires a significant amount of learning and attention to detail under stressful conditions. Although the primary goal of police training is to prepare recruits for the challenges they will face on the street, training also teaches them about hierarchy, danger, suspicion, bonding, and a reliance on other officers for safety, and it could reinforce "us versus them" attitudes (Blumberg, Papazoglou, and Creighton, 2018). Because academy training only goes so far, field training is considered a critical component of teaching the craft of policing, which involves high levels of discretion and few situations that can be handled "by the book." The common phrase "forget what you learned in the academy" is partially a byproduct of the uncertain working environment. Field

training continues the process of learning from peers and experienced officers about how to do the job. A mixture of formal influences (e.g., supervision) and informal influences (e.g., peers) affects the entrant's socialization into the organization. These early phases of the job reflect critical stages for the development of attitudes and orientations (e.g., about use of force), although officers' incoming attitudes are also important, and socialization is an ongoing process (Oberfield, 2012).

Social learning theory posits that attitudes and behaviors are shaped by peer associations, definitions provided by peers, reinforcement, and modeling (Akers, 1998). Through interactions and observing others, people learn about attitudes, beliefs, values, and behaviors that their peers deem to be important. This could include attitudes and beliefs that support both deviant and normative behaviors. Finally, peers might reinforce the attitudes or behaviors that are deemed important through various social or tangible rewards. In policing, peer and peer group effects have been identified for use of force (McCluskey, Terrill, and Paoline, 2005), views about use of force (Oberfield, 2012; Roithmayr, 2016), misconduct (Chappell and Piquero, 2004; Ouellet et al., 2019; Quispe-Torreblanca and Stewart, 2019; Wood, Roithmayr, and Papachristos, 2019), ethical decisionmaking (Blumberg, Papazoglou, and Creighton, 2018), shootings committed by officers (Zhao and Papachristos, 2020), and cultural attitudes (Ingram, Paoline, and Terrill, 2013). Research on the topic measures "peers" both according to an individual's perceptions of peer attitudes and behaviors (what someone thinks their peers believe) and according to direct measures of peer attitudes and behaviors (what their peers actually believe). Perceptual measures and direct measures of peers might not match, but both are important, nonetheless.

Recent studies have used direct measures of peer effects in policing, focusing on the impacts of peer group attitudes and peer group behavior. This research has used either regression or network analyses to identify the peer effect. In an analysis of 30,000 officers and staff from London's Metropolitan Police Service, Quispe-Torreblanca and Stewart, 2019, found that for a 10-percent increase in prior peer group misconduct (based on citizen and internal complaints), an individual officer's risk of misconduct increases by 8 percent, controlling for individual and organizational features. Other studies using network analysis identify peer effects by examining networks of individuals named in complaints together. This research suggests that officers are frequently named together in civilian and departmental complaints, and a small number of officers have a large number of complaints and co-complainants (Wood, Roithmayr, and Papachristos, 2019). These connections have been shown to increase the risk of complaints of excessive force (by 26 percent; Ouellet et al., 2019) and shootings committed by officers (Zhao and Papachristos, 2020).

In addition to peer group behavior, peer group attitudes can also affect an individual's behavior. For officers embedded in "high aggression" peer groups (attitudes about aggressive patrol aggregated within shift and assignment), aggressive attitudes were positively related to their use-of-force levels, although less-experienced officers in these groups were at higher risk (McCluskey, Terrill, and Paoline, 2005). Similarly, Ingram, Paoline, and Terrill, 2013, explored the extent to which common cultural attitudes are shared across workgroups (defined as sharing a shift and beat). Workgroups showed significant between-group variation for attitudes about top management, direct supervisors, job satisfaction, order maintenance, and aggressive patrol, which suggests that large differences in cultural orientations can exist across workgroups within the same organization and unit of assignment. What is unclear from these various studies on peer effects is what proportion of these effects occur because of selection (i.e., "birds of a

feather flock together") or influence. Thus, research on social identity, self-categorization, and social learning or peer influence all have implications for group formation, group attitudes, and group behavior. The self-categorization process explains how group identities can develop in organizations, providing potential explanations for why deputy subgroups form and their behavior toward outgroup members. Research on social learning and peer influence shows how peers can affect attitudes and behaviors and has important implications for outcomes in policing and those that are potentially linked to subgroups (e.g., use of force or excessive force).

Organizational Justice

In addition to being the frontline of the criminal justice system, law enforcement agencies have their own internal systems of justice or fairness, structured around policies and procedures related to internal processes such as discipline, promotions, and performance evaluations. This system and perceptions of this system fit the concept of "organizational justice"—or whether employees believe that they are treated fairly. It has been said that "there is no justice in a police department" (Reynolds and Hicks, 2015). That is, many officers find some aspect of the organization to be unfair, or they find that the organization tries to be fair but is unsuccessful. Many perceptions of unfairness are related to preferential treatment of some members of the organization. Experiences and perceptions of fairness have been associated with officer job satisfaction, job commitment, and relationships with other employees, but they have also been linked to how officers perceive and treat community members. Organizational justice also enhances compliance with existing policies (Bradford et al., 2014; Haas et al., 2015; Tyler, Callahan, and Frost, 2007).

Perceptions of injustice are associated with important outcomes, such as types of police misconduct (Eitle, D'Alessio, and Stolzenberg, 2014; Kääriäinen et al., 2008; Wolfe and Piquero, 2011; Reynolds, Fitzgerald, and Hicks, 2018). For instance, Kääriäinen et al., 2008, found that people who perceived administrative unfairness were more likely to report themselves or their peers behaving badly (e.g., disrespecting citizens, corruption, dishonesty with supervisors, drug or alcohol use, excessive force, theft). Wolfe and Piquero, 2011, found that citizens' formal complaints, internal affairs investigations, and charges for violating departmental policies were all associated with levels of perceived organizational justice.

To our knowledge, research has not examined whether the cultural orientations or outlooks of police affect perceptions of fairness in law enforcement agencies or the extent to which workgroups share similar outlooks. However, other research has shown that fairness perceptions are associated with observed treatment of peers, and particularly more similar peers (Huang, Ryan, and Mujtaba, 2015). As mentioned earlier, the existing cultural research on cliques in law enforcement suggests that they function to protect against administrative scrutiny or outside influence. Therefore, fairness perceptions might be particularly important to consider for any efforts to manage groups directly, because perceptions of unfairness could backfire by making groups more difficult to supervise if group members take extra precautions by "laying low." Conversely, organizational fairness perceptions will also be affected if the organization allows subgroups or cliques to engage in behaviors that affect unit operations (e.g., trying to control schedules) or involve mistreating other deputies.

Conclusion

Research on culture, groups, peers, and fairness has important implications for our findings and our understanding of subgroups within LASD. The police culture literature suggests that the majority of officers do not strongly endorse the orientations of the traditional police culture (Paoline, 2004; Paoline and Terrill, 2013). Thus, the desire to join a subgroup that might foster an overaggressive crime fighting approach and emphasize the use of force might not be an orientation that is supported by a majority of deputies, which could provide an explanation for why some deputies join while others might not. This theory also contributes a partial explanation for the existence of problematic subgroups because deputies with similar attitudes might be likely to become connected.

The research also tells us that features of police work and the policing environment contribute to cultural adaptations or collective sensemaking that often occurs in groups or emphasizes the value of tight-knit groups. Some research in this area emphasizes the importance of understanding local norms, or how culture varies within law enforcement organizations, and the reasons why this may be. This variation might contribute to subcultures across the organization. For instance, areas perceived to be more dangerous might adopt different norms around safety and competence compared with less dangerous areas (Herbert, 1998). These bonds and connections also contribute to modeling and social learning that can influence a variety of attitudes and behaviors. Lastly, local norms and peer connections might also affect people's perceptions of fair treatment from the organization. These perceptions have also been connected to important behaviors, such as misconduct and treatment of community members.

In short, this research provides explanations for why subgroups form and how they could affect attitudes and behavior. The organizational justice literature recognizes that the way an organization treats employees also can affect attitudes and behaviors and has implications for reforming LASD and implementing new policies. These concepts also have relevance for understanding orientations toward and interactions with the community.

CHAPTER FOUR

Methods

This chapter provides an overview of the methods used in conducting this research study. We used interviews with community leaders, focus groups with community members, and interviews and surveys with LASD personnel. To develop our various data collection instruments, we considered information from media coverage, litigation, and prior reports and insights from relevant stakeholders, as well as the key goals of the project. We outline the general approach and key elements of our data collection methods here, and we provide a detailed discussion of each in Appendix A (available online at www.rand.org/t/RRA616-1).

Two critical elements of conducting this study were stakeholder engagement and confidentiality protections for research participants. Given the sensitive nature of this topic and the overlapping systems of county governance, stakeholder engagement and cooperation were critical to the success of this research project. A multitude of county stakeholders have roles, responsibilities, experience, and perspectives that can provide valuable insight into this topic. Our methods helped secure the input of these critical participants.

At the beginning of the project, RAND researchers met with various stakeholders to explain the goals of the study, our research approach, and relevant components of this approach (e.g., confidentiality for research participants, the fact that this research is not part of any investigation) and to answer questions and listen to concerns. We gave presentations to both the Board of Supervisors at a public meeting and the COC, along with a public presentation at the COC's September 2019 meeting. Early project meetings with LASD included Sheriff Villanueva and Undersheriff Tim Murakami, along with the Sheriff's chief of staff, a presentation at the department's Executive Planning Council, and combined and individual meetings with deputy unions: the Association for Los Angeles Deputy Sheriffs (ALADS), the Los Angeles County Professional Peace Officers Association, and the Los Angeles Sheriff's Professional Association. We also presented at an ALADS board meeting and the ALADS unit representative annual training, which allowed us to describe the project and answer questions directly from sworn personnel below the rank of sergeant.

Throughout the project, we engaged various stakeholders to apprise them of our ongoing progress and solicit their assistance, as needed. As the project began, LASD and ALADS issued separate announcements informing LASD personnel of the project. To begin our interview process, LASD provided contact information for command staff in the custody[1] and patrol divisions. We developed our survey approach through feedback from LASD stakeholders, which informed our decision to conduct a paper survey. LASD and ALADS also assisted with survey announcements and reminders. The COC, Board of Supervisors staff, and LASD

[1] The custody division is responsible for the operations of all jail facilities in Los Angeles County.

provided us with community stakeholder contact information. More details about stakeholders' assistance are provided in Appendix A.

First, we briefly discuss our approach to protecting the confidentiality of our research participants. Then, we discuss our community data collection approach, which incorporated both interviews and focus groups. Next, we discuss our approach to interviewing members of LASD and our analytic approach to those interviews. We also discuss our survey development approach and the fielding of our survey. Finally, we provide a brief discussion of our approach to analyzing the various *Los Angeles Times* articles on deputy subgroups.

Confidentiality Protections

Open and honest responses from study participants were essential to our research. The team therefore implemented a strict approach to confidentiality intended both to enable participants to communicate their knowledge and experiences freely and without fear of repercussions and to satisfy RAND's commitment and legal obligation to protect research subjects. The study utilized a variety of methods to protect the research subjects and their identities. For all interviews, once interviews were confirmed and conducted, no names were retained in or associated with notes (i.e., we did not write down any names); emails and other correspondence with participants were permanently deleted. Notes and contact information were never stored in the same location. Interview notes were reviewed for identifiable information within 24 hours, and any direct identifiers were removed. Interviews were categorized by broad position categories only (e.g., command, middle management, line staff). After the completion of the report, any crosswalks linking participants to notes, as well as typewritten interview or focus group notes, were destroyed using permanent file disposal software. Crosswalks did not contain direct identifiers.

Community Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups

Community interviews and focus groups were used to better understand the perspectives and experiences of community leaders and community members regarding their overall relationship with LASD, interactions between the community and deputies, and perceptions of and experiences with deputy subgroups. For community interviews, we sampled 103 community stakeholders across all LASD station areas using referrals and independent searches to ensure that a variety of perspectives were represented. Ultimately, 46 community stakeholders agreed to participate, yielding a 45-percent response rate. For the focus groups, we recruited 95 English- or Spanish-speaking community members from nine target communities, which included those with the most calls for service in each of the four patrol divisions. The communities are the following:

- North stations: Lancaster and Palmdale
- Central stations: Century, East Los Angeles, and Compton
- South stations: Lakewood and Norwalk
- East stations: Industry and Temple.

Community Leaders

In November 2019, the RAND team emailed captains of all stations across the four patrol divisions to request referrals for key community leaders who are actively engaged and appear to be knowledgeable about community views and experiences with LASD. At the same time, we solicited recommendations from community groups (e.g., the COC, Board of Supervisors staff). We also supplemented the list by conducting web searches to identify critical community stakeholders from a wide range of stakeholder groups (e.g., faith-based organizations, community-based organizations, grassroots organizations, civic leaders).

Community Members

In February 2020, RAND researchers began recruiting participants from the nine target communities. The recruitment approach for focus groups leveraged existing contacts while also broadening the pool of potential participants. First, the RAND team provided invitation flyers to identified community stakeholder groups in the target communities and asked them to distribute and post the flyers. In addition, pastors/clergy, neighborhood groups, and organizations like the COC were asked to announce the focus groups on their bulletin boards, social media, or other platforms. We also used Facebook pages, Facebook ads, and Eventbrite posts to get community members' attention and invite them to participate in the focus groups. We engaged in street canvassing and posted flyers as well. Finally, we contacted local print and broadcast media to invite community members to participate in the groups. Interested community members were invited to call the RAND-hosted toll-free phone number listed on the flyer, post, or advertisement to determine their eligibility and register for the focus group. To be eligible, people needed to be at least 18 years old and live or work in the target communities.

More-detailed descriptions of our recruitment efforts, focus group methods, and data analysis approach are discussed in Appendix A.

LASD Interviews

LASD interviews were used to better understand the perspectives and experiences of command-level, midlevel, and line-level sworn personnel within LASD regarding organizational context, motivations to build a career in LASD, challenges facing LASD and the communities in which it operates, awareness of deputy subgroups, impacts of deputy subgroups, and perspectives on how to address deputy subgroups.

Recruitment

In October 2019, LASD sent out an email announcement giving personnel an overview of the various components of the project. LASD initially invited and scheduled interviews for LASD leadership, including assistant sheriffs, chiefs, and commanders, to participate in a one-time, hourlong, in-person interview with two members of the RAND team with an expertise in qualitative interviewing. Our goal was to recruit LASD leadership responsible for Patrol and Custody to participate in an interview. Subsequently, announcements by ALADS provided a description of the project and asked for interested individuals to contact RAND to schedule an interview. We also began scheduling interviews with patrol station captains and attending briefings to describe the project and to encourage interested individuals to contact us for an interview in person or over the phone.

From November 2019 to February 2020, we visited LASD patrol stations during regularly scheduled station briefings to introduce the study and invite staff (e.g., deputies, lieutenants, sergeants, detectives, field training officers) to participate in an interview. Line-level staff were given the option to meet at a location of their choice (e.g., RAND headquarters, local restaurants) or to conduct the interview by phone. During these brief presentations, we described the survey and responded to any questions about the purpose and overall procedures of the study. Because of the sensitive topic, we employed a convenience and referral (or "snowball") sampling approach to recruit line-level staff. We completed 57 total interviews using these LASD interview protocols, which includes a small subset (less than ten) of interviews with retired members of LASD and other county stakeholders who have direct knowledge of LASD. Ten of these interviews were completed over the phone.

See Appendix A for more details on recruitment and data analysis.

LASD Survey

The anonymous survey was designed to gather information from all sworn deputies currently employed by LASD on their perceptions and experiences regarding their workplace atmosphere and the existence of deputy subgroups in the department. The survey was intended to be a census of the estimated 10,000 sworn personnel across all LASD divisions, stations, and units. The survey gathered information on the following topics:

- workplace atmosphere, including feedback on departmental leadership, training, discipline, handling of complaints, and promotion practices
- deputy subgroups in the work environment, including
  - whether a respondent had been invited to join a subgroup[2]
  - criteria and requirements for being invited to join a subgroup
  - where subgroups are typically found within LASD
  - advantages of belonging to a subgroup
  - conduct, attitudes, and behavior of deputies who belong to a deputy subgroup
  - impact of subgroups on the workplace
  - supervisors' approach to subgroups
  - views regarding what LASD should do, if anything, about subgroups
- demographic background information
- an open-ended question asking the respondent for any comments or feedback they might have about the survey.

To develop the questionnaire, we began with the core set of research questions regarding the LASD workplace atmosphere overall and the role of deputy subgroups in the work environment, organized around several themes. Themes such as subgroup formation, purpose, and

[2] We chose not to ask directly whether a survey respondent had ever belonged to a subgroup because of the sensitive nature of this question and concerns that many individuals would be reluctant to provide such information, which could potentially lead them to stop filling out the survey. Therefore, we instead used instead as a proxy indicator their responses to the questions of whether they had ever been invited to join a subgroup or had been asked within the past five years to join a subgroup. The analyses that compare those who had ever been invited to join a subgroup with those who had never been invited are informative as to these respondents' knowledge of and assessments of subgroups' characteristics and conduct.

prevalence were of particular interest, along with more general topics, such as job satisfaction, perceptions of fairness around discipline and promotions, work-life balance, and training. The scope of work for this project also provided the following specific questions of interest regarding subgroups that were used to guide development of the questionnaire:

- Why do they exist, and what is their purpose?
- What is the process for joining, including initiation activities?
- How are they viewed inside the department?
- How, if at all, should they be managed?
- What policies or practices currently exist in the department, and what others might be relevant?
- What types of conduct toward other LASD employees do their members engage in?
- How are they viewed outside the department?
- What types of conduct toward members of the community do their members engage in?

We also used common themes or questions from our interview findings to develop questions specifically related to subgroups or cliques and their activities. This helped the project team identify topics and compare the perspectives of interviewees with those of others in the department. This also helped with refining the survey. The final questionnaire focused primarily on questions pertaining to deputy subgroups, with approximately 90 percent of the questions designed to elicit information regarding their activities, prevalence, and impact at the station, department, and community levels.

To pretest the survey, we recruited 12 LASD personnel of varying ranks to participate in cognitive interviews. Cognitive interviewing, which involves administering a survey while asking a respondent to elaborate on the clarity and appropriateness of the questions and response options, is a method for empirically studying the ways in which individuals mentally process and respond to survey questionnaires. The goal of the cognitive interviews was to pretest the survey questions to determine how well they were understood, reveal any ambiguity in interpretation of the questions or response options, and assess how they should be modified before the survey was fielded to make them more understandable or easier to answer.

We also received feedback and comments on the draft survey from LASD's Audit and Accountability Bureau and County Counsel. For these stakeholders, we solicited feedback on the survey and conducted follow-up meetings to discuss the survey in detail and respond to their comments. The final survey is included in Appendix B.

Fielding the LASD Survey

Initially, we considered fielding a web survey with a paper survey option. However, feedback from LASD, County Counsel, and others indicated that sworn personnel might be concerned about the confidentiality of a web survey and the ability to track their responses. As a result, we decided to field a paper survey only. Because we did not have access to the individual email addresses of LASD's nearly 10,000 sworn personnel, we used the following approach to field the survey.

To field the survey, the RAND project team reached out to the station captains and arranged a time for the project team and the RAND Survey Research Group to deliver the packets of surveys to each location. As a reminder about the project and LASD's commitment, the Undersheriff sent an email to captains notifying them that RAND personnel would

be contacting them to plan and schedule for survey distribution at their unit. The survey packets included a cover letter explaining the purpose of the survey; the questionnaire itself; a document that provided responses to frequently asked questions (FAQs); and a stamped, self-addressed, business reply envelope that they could use to send the survey directly back to RAND. An 800 number also was provided in case they had questions and to give them the option of completing the survey by telephone. We estimated that completing the survey would take approximately 20 minutes. The FAQs explained that the survey was anonymous and that participation in the survey was completely voluntary, so deputies could choose not to participate or decline to answer any questions. The consent statement also stated that RAND was not conducting an investigation, was not working with any entities investigating LASD, and would not provide confidential information to any outside entity, including the county. Information gathered as part of the survey would only be used for research purposes and would not be shared with anyone outside of the RAND research team, including LASD, County Counsel, labor unions, etc. The surveys would not be linked to individuals.

Prior to fielding the survey, Sheriff Villanueva sent an initial email on August 31, 2020, to the entire department explaining the purpose of the survey and encouraging sworn personnel to participate. ALADS also sent an initial email encouraging the union's members to take part in the survey. Several reminders were sent by both LASD and ALADS. The survey fielding period began August 31, 2020, and continued through October 23, 2020.

Survey Response Rates and Limitations

Table 4.1 summarizes the response rates by the major LASD units. Although the overall response rate for the survey was 16.8 percent,[3] it varied by type of unit, with higher response rates (29 and 38 percent, respectively) from investigative and administrative units and a 16.5-percent response rate from patrol station units. In spite of the relatively low overall response rate, we felt that the survey results were still informative as to the views of sworn personnel on the issue of subgroups within LASD. We assessed whether there were systematic differences at the unit

Table 4.1
Survey Response Rate, Overall and by Major LASD Unit Groupings

Organizational Unit Type	Total Number of Survey Packets Delivered	Responses	Response Rate
Patrol	3,202	529	16.5%
Custody	3,043	393	12.9%
Other county (courts, Special Enforcement Bureau)	2,170	310	14.3%
Investigative	749	217	29.0%
Administrative	432	165	38.2%
Overall	9,596	1,614[a]	16.8%

[a] Six surveys were returned with completely blank or only "don't know" responses. The usable total is 1,608.

[3] Similar large sample surveys of law enforcement that used mass distribution returned similar response rates (Morin et al., 2017). In spite of the events that occurred during the fielding of the survey (e.g., COVID-19, civil unrest, wildfires), we felt that the response rate was higher than one might expect given these challenges.

level and for survey respondents overall. Our benchmarking analysis indicated that units as a whole responded within reasonable expectations of what we projected. We also found no evidence of coordinated survey responses within units (see Appendix A, available online at www.rand.org/t/RRA616-1).

We chose not to ask directly whether a survey respondent had ever belonged to a subgroup because of the sensitive nature of this question and our concern that many individuals would be reluctant to provide such information. Therefore, we instead used as a proxy indicator their responses to the questions of whether they had ever been invited to join a subgroup or had been asked within the past five years to join a subgroup. We felt that the analyses that compared subgroup invitees with those had never been invited to join a subgroup were informative as to these respondents' knowledge of and assessments of subgroups' characteristics and conduct.

Survey Challenges

LASD was unable to provide us with contact information for the sworn deputies and command staff to be surveyed, but the department agreed to send out email notifications and reminders, using text that we provided, to request that sworn personnel complete the survey. LASD encouraged us to deliver the survey packets to each station or unit captain and instructed the selected captains to ensure the timely distribution of the survey packets to all sworn personnel at their station, unit, or department. Because the survey was completely anonymous, this meant that RAND's Survey Research Group was unable to follow up directly with nonrespondents to encourage their participation. Therefore, we were limited only to making multiple distributions of the survey packets to stations and units.

During this fielding period, a number of unforeseen events occurred that potentially impacted the response rate. The novel coronavirus pandemic occurred during this period, which meant that some deputies were out sick and required adjustments to our survey fielding approach. In addition to COVID-19, the death of George Floyd on May 25, 2020, and the subsequent unrest in various parts of Los Angeles County meant that LASD was focused on responding to and providing security for a series of protests and related unrest throughout the summer and into the fall. Southern California also experienced large wildfires lasting several months that taxed LASD personnel and resources. We decided to delay fielding the survey until August because we felt that the department would be consumed by these events. We also wanted to let some time pass from the period of peak civil unrest so that the protests did not unduly influence responses regarding the workplace atmosphere; that said, there is no way to tell whether we would have gotten different responses if the survey had been fielded prior to any these events. These challenges, the mode of administration, the large sample size, and the sensitive subject of the survey all might have impacted response rates (Nix et al., 2019) and are comparable to those found in other large law enforcement surveys conducted similarly (Morin et al., 2017). More details on survey development, cognitive interviews, survey methodology, and survey analysis are available in Appendix A.

Benchmarking, Internal Consistency, and Survey Response Bias Checks

To better understand the quality of our survey responses, we used three separate analyses to examine potential indicators of systematic survey response bias at the unit level and for survey respondents overall. First, we used benchmarking to identify units that had significantly lower or higher levels of reported subgroup activity than we would expect, given the demographics of the individuals who responded. We compared these results with external

estimates of where subgroup activity does or does not exist. These results suggest that units, on the whole, responded within reasonable expectation. See Appendix A for more information on the benchmarking.

We also examined intraclass correlation metrics to determine how much individual respondents agreed or disagreed with each other on their views of subgroups. Overall, we found that the majority of units agreed with each other at fairly high levels. For questions on the impact of subgroups, we found that units with more reported subgroup activity showed somewhat higher levels of agreement. For questions on what should be done about subgroups, we found that units with more reported subgroup activity showed somewhat lower levels of agreement. There were no units where everyone responded with the same responses. Thus, there did not appear to be any evidence of coordinated responding within certain units. See Appendix A for more information on the intraclass correlation estimation.

Finally, we looked at response rates by demographics based on the reported number of LASD sworn status individuals by gender, race/ethnicity, and rank. Although we found some demographics with much higher rates of response, overall, we did not estimate the differences in response rate to have significantly affected the proportion of reported subgroup activity. See Appendix B for more information on the demographic response rates.

Lexical Analysis of *Los Angeles Times* Articles

To understand the *Los Angeles Times* articles on this subject over time, we conducted a ProQuest database search and performed descriptive text analytics to identify common phrases from these articles. The compiled articles were identified from and published between 1986 and May 2020. Included articles were found through a database search using the terms "sheriff" or "deputy" and "clique," "subgroup," or "society." The database search identified 138 articles, which were compiled and prepared for processing. Twenty-six duplicate articles were removed, and special characters were removed from the text files. The resulting article set included a total of 112 articles for analysis. Please see Appendix A for more details.

CHAPTER FIVE

Community Perspectives

The various public reports, media coverage, and lawsuits regarding exclusive deputy subgroups within LASD paint a grim picture of these groups and convey an antagonistic relationship with the community. The media coverage on this subject appears very similar over time, indicating a potential lack of willingness or ability for the department to change in response to public outrage or pressure from other county stakeholders. Therefore, we sought to understand community perceptions on this issue, as well as how those perceptions are related to views of LASD overall.

The communities served by LASD are varied, with different sociodemographic and geographic characteristics, as well as different types of services provided. Variation in these characteristics is likely connected to perceptions of and experiences with LASD, making it difficult to generalize to the entire community served by LASD. LASD serves 42 contract cities; 141 unincorporated areas; various hospitals, clinics, and other facilities; the Metropolitan Transit Authority; 37 Superior Court locations; and inmates in seven custody facilities. It also provides academy training for smaller law enforcement agencies in Los Angeles County. Thus, LASD's community reach extends across the county. Contract cities and unincorporated areas receive patrol services from LASD, with some stations serving multiple contract cities and unincorporated areas, while others serve only one. For instance, the West Hollywood station serves only West Hollywood as a contract city and three other county areas, one of which is Universal Studios. In contrast, the East Los Angeles station serves Cudahy, Commerce, and Maywood as contract cities and an unincorporated area to the north. Lakewood and Temple each serve five contract cities along with unincorporated areas. Local governance for contract cities is an important relationship to manage for LASD patrol station leadership, while unincorporated areas are represented by their county supervisor.

This chapter presents the results of our interviews with community leaders and focus groups with residents in areas across all four LASD patrol divisions. As we discussed in Chapter Two, the historical nature of this issue and the severity of public allegations related to subgroups are of significant importance to the community. Analyzing community perspectives about subgroups is critical for understanding the impact this issue has on community trust and for understanding community expectations for the department to repair any harms. Although we asked community leaders and residents (whom we call *community stakeholders* when combining their perspectives) for their views on deputy subgroups, it can be difficult for a civilian to differentiate between a deputy involved in a subgroup and one who is not, so we also asked broader questions about the community's interactions with LASD.

A community's leaders and its residents often had different points of view on LASD, with leaders providing a more favorable assessment of LASD personnel. We suspect that this

is because leaders interact more regularly with deputies, station personnel, and leadership through their involvement in citizens groups and advisory panels. In addition, stakeholders in the North and Central divisions more frequently offered negative perceptions of LASD than community representatives in the other divisions did. These disparities could be due to historic discord between these communities and law enforcement and due to the high crime rate, which could increase the potential for contentious encounters in these areas.

Because the methods used were interviews and focus groups, our findings are presented in a way that does not include the quantity or proportion of community members who held a particular perspective, as we do for the LASD survey findings. Nevertheless, the perspectives discussed below provide valuable insight into how community members view LASD as an organization, their experiences with LASD, and their views about subgroups. This includes ideas about what a desirable relationship between the community and LASD might look like and what community members want LASD to do about subgroups.

Chapter Five Methods: Interviews and Focus Groups with Community Stakeholders

- Our method is based on interviews and focus groups conducted with community leaders and residents in areas in LASD's four patrol divisions from December 2019 through July 2020. Our focus groups Included community members from the following stations: Century, Compton, East Los Angeles, Industry, Lakewood, Lancaster, Norwalk, Palmdale, and Temple.
- The discussion topics focused on community interactions with LASD personnel and their perceptions of deputy subgroups.
- See Chapter Four for more detail on data and methods.

Here is a preview of the key findings from community stakeholder interviews and focus groups:

- **How does the community overall perceive LASD?** Community leaders and members were mostly critical of current department leadership, expressing concerns about lack of transparency and trust and about a culture of aggressive policing. Community stakeholders thought that additional funding might be needed to improve services, and some stakeholders stated that LASD could learn from other law enforcement agencies how to better engage the community. In addition, participants noted that their assessment of the department is framed by a legacy of strained relations between the community and specific LASD stations.
- **What is the community's view of LASD policing?** Community stakeholders said that they engage with LASD in a variety of activities directly or indirectly related to law enforcement (e.g., calls for service, coffee with a cop, toy giveaways). Based on these interactions, stakeholders said that some station personnel were accessible, approachable, and motivated to meet the needs of the community. However, some community residents stated that they were fearful and distrusting of LASD personnel and viewed them as antagonistic and lacking the skills necessary to engage the community. Stakeholders also perceived some LASD personnel as being vested in the community, while others did not seem to care about community well-being or engagement. Participants also expressed varying levels of satisfaction with (1) services provided, which vary from prompt, supportive response to failure to provide necessary services; (2) the level of station personnel interactions with the community, including hosting formal and informal events and being congenial, as opposed to attending events but not interacting with the community; and (3) community partnership, which varies from collaborating to address public

safety issues to creating a climate that is exclusively enforcement focused and does not solicit community input. In addition, stakeholders described various forms of mistreatment, including harassment; retaliation; excessive force; and differential treatment by race, socioeconomic status, physical appearance, and more.

- **What is the community's understanding of subgroups?** Community stakeholders varied in their awareness of subgroups from no awareness to extensive knowledge of groups, their identity, and their behavior. The primary sources of information about subgroups were the media, other community members, personal experiences, and LASD personnel. Participants who were aware of subgroups discussed why these groups form—sometimes providing justification for their existence while also denouncing them. Participants knew some subgroups by name (e.g., Jump Out Boys, Banditos) and described how the subgroups identify themselves with tattoos or other symbols. They perceived subgroups as engaging in such behaviors as hazing, excluding, harassing, and covering up for fellow deputies; targeting jail inmates, particularly people of color; and harassing community residents (e.g., aggressive behavior, excessive force, intimidation, illicit behavior). When asked about specific strategies that the department has implemented to address the issue of subgroups, some participants either were unaware or did not think anything was being done, while others praised the department for taking steps to minimize the occurrence of subgroups.

The qualitative findings presented in this chapter are based on the 46 interviews with community leaders across the four LASD patrol divisions (20 in the Central division, nine in the East division, nine in the South division, and eight in the North division). Community leaders represented public safety groups, social service or youth-serving agencies, faith-based organizations, grassroots and advocacy organizations, and businesses. In addition, findings are based on individual or group interviews and focus groups with 95 community members across the nine target communities (i.e., station areas with the first- and second-highest numbers of calls for service; Figure 5.1).[1]

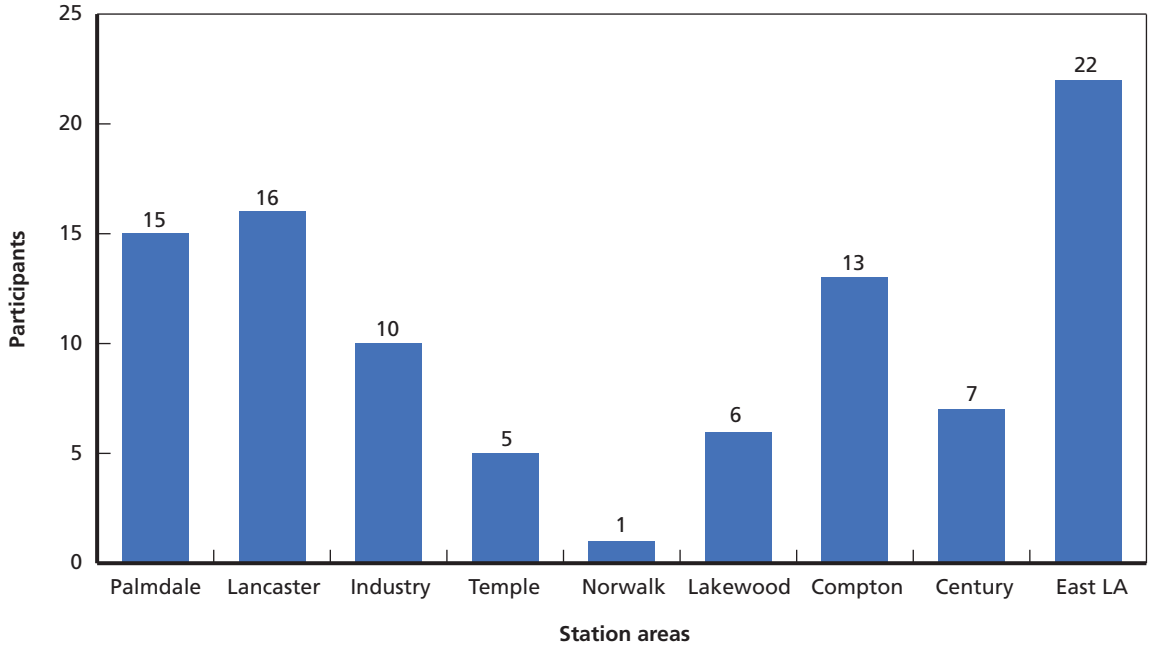
Community leaders and members offered several different perspectives on and experiences with department personnel and subgroups. The aim of this chapter is to present this information as it was described by a diverse array of community stakeholders. We note that our approach is focused on understanding the *variation* in community leader and community member perspectives. Our sample and findings might not be representative of these communities as a whole.

Overall Perception of LASD

In assessing LASD overall, community stakeholders commented on the quality of leadership, availability of funding, how the department compared with other law enforcement agencies, and LASD's history.

[1] This count includes some leaders who participated in community focus groups (six) or individual interviews originally intended for community members (three).

Figure 5.1
Community Member Participants, by Station



Leadership

Participants' overall perceptions of LASD were largely based on their opinions of current department leadership. Approximately two-thirds of comments on this topic were critical of the current administration. Some community stakeholders said that current leadership ignores what is best for the community and lacks transparency. They also responded that current leadership fosters a culture of aggressive policing and institutionalized racism. Others noted that Sheriff Villanueva had violated community trust by failing to uphold campaign promises regarding department-wide reform and by rehiring deputies involved in wrongdoing. As one community leader stated:

> [Villanueva has] clearly shown the community and everybody else that he has a lack of respect for the community. He's [re]hiring people that have been shown to hurt the community—that's saying you don't care about the community.

Other participants were concerned about the relationship between LASD leadership and other government leaders. One community leader said:

> I feel like the county leaders and [Villanueva] are more preoccupied disliking each other than dealing with the community issues.

Another participant described the relationship between LASD leadership and county leaders as "unprofessional." Some participants stated that LASD leadership had been unable to make desired changes because of ongoing conflict with government leaders (e.g., the Board of Supervisors). A community stakeholder cited the LASD budget freeze as an example of inappropriate or excessive external oversight:

> We elected [Villanueva]. . . . I think the Board of Supervisors was being retaliatory. [Villanueva] answers to the people, not to the Board, but they control his budget, so they went after him [through the] budget. . . . The Board should drop their lawsuit and let [the Sheriff] do what he was elected to do.

Funding

Some participants expressed concern about the level of funding available to the stations to provide necessary services. One community member indicated that contractual relationships between the department and contract cities influenced funding decisions, saying:

> I think it's budgetary. I think since we're a contract city they're more worried about revenue. Because it's not its own police force, there is no investment in the community. The Sheriff's Department view contract cities as how much revenue can I generate from one car and how much does the city have to pay for it.

In addition, community leaders and members indicated that more funding should be directed toward community engagement efforts and improving response times to calls for service.

Comparison with Other Law Enforcement Agencies

Some participants compared the interactions with LASD to other agencies, particularly LAPD. In these comments, participants viewed LAPD as more community-oriented, friendlier, and better at serving customers than LASD. Participants also stated that the LAPD better prioritizes community engagement and partnering with community organizations (examples of this are detailed in later sections). A community leader who interacts with both LASD and LAPD explained,

> In December, there was a toy giveaway where [LASD deputies] came out and passed out some toys and they brought some toys to give away, but after a couple pictures they're gone. LAPD on the other hand, when they do something like that, they have a big old tent, they come out in their blues, they're walking the line and saying hi to kids, they go all out. . . . I have yet to be in a rally where a group of people will walk up to a deputy and ask to take a picture with them. But with the LAPD, it's all selfies all the time.

Some community stakeholders indicated that LAPD and other police departments have specific programs that have been beneficial to the community, but this type of collaboration with the community is less prevalent in LASD. Examples included gang units, community policing initiatives, and community advisory groups.

Historical Perception

Participants who were longtime residents of Los Angeles County or who had intergenerational ties to the community described how the historical relationship between LASD and the community shapes present-day relationships, which has been found in other research on police perceptions (Weitzer, 2002). Perceptions of the department as a whole were often shaped by historical contexts specific to a given station or division area. For instance, in Compton, many participants explained the transition from the Compton Police Department to the LASD

Compton Station to describe the present relationship between Compton and LASD. Community leaders in the North Division frequently mentioned the 2015 Antelope Valley settlement agreement when discussing current deputy interactions.[2] A community leader put the agreement into historical context:

> Broadly, there is a very negative history going back 50 years with the Sheriff's Department, and some of that history continues to repeat itself from what we hear on the ground, particularly from young people. . . . I just think there's disregard for the community we're trying to build. And it does go back 50 years to when the sheriffs were the apparatus that was trying to shut down the Chicano movement that was born in East LA.

Participants also explained that specific incidents can fracture the community's trust in the department, and it can take decades to rebuild the relationship. Participants noted that station personnel who are not from the community might be unaware of the past events that are salient to community perceptions of the department or potential solutions to improve the relationship. For example, a community leader said:

> About 25 years ago, one of the sheriffs killed . . . a young Black man, and we still haven't gotten over that. They need to go out of their way to get to know everyone; otherwise we're living in a police state. They just come here to patrol, but if they take the time to get to know the community, that'll go a long way.

Views on Policing in General

One of the primary aims of the interviews and focus groups with community stakeholders was to capture their perspectives of LASD personnel based on engagement in LASD, community-sponsored activities or events, and day-to-day interactions with local deputies. We asked them to describe the typical ways in which they interact and the quality of these interactions measured by the attitude and behavior of station personnel. In addition, community stakeholders described how deputies' behavior contributes to the relationship with LASD. Finally, we learned how the relations have changed over time.

Types of Interaction

Interactions between the community and LASD personnel included a variety of activities directly or indirectly related to law enforcement. Community stakeholders interacted with personnel when making a call for service, visiting the station, being pulled over or witnessing someone else pulled over, and seeing deputies on patrol. Beyond activities related to crime, community stakeholders interacted with deputies at events such as National Night Out, coffee with a cop, food or toy giveaways, Trunk or Treat (a Halloween event with a car show where participants decorate their cars and pass out candy), and various other station events with the community. Some stakeholders participated in LASD programs, such as the Youth Activi-

[2] In 2011, the DOJ, Civil Rights Division, initiated an investigation of LASD to evaluate allegations of violations of the Fair Housing Act. DOJ found that LASD's Palmdale and Lancaster stations "had engaged in a pattern and practice of conducting stops, searches, and seizures that were unreasonable and in violation of the Constitution and federal law." A settlement agreement was established to ensure that LASD implemented reforms to address and eliminate this behavior (Antelope Valley Monitoring Team, undated).

ties League, the Community Citizens Academy, ride-alongs, or school-based programming. Finally, participants described interactions with LASD personnel at community meetings, such as town halls and neighborhood watch meetings.

Perceptions Based on Station Personnel's Attitudes

When community stakeholders were asked to describe interactions with station personnel, two main themes emerged. They described both negative and positive aspects of the culture as they interpret it through interactions with station captains and deputies, and they discussed personnel as having an attitude of investment or noninvestment in the community. Community stakeholders related these attitudes to the quality of their relationship with LASD station staff.

Culture

Although cultural barriers to institutionalizing community-oriented policing have been recognized for some time (e.g., the challenge of getting personnel who might think of themselves as warriors to instead embrace a guardian role and mindset), it is not clear how much progress has been made. Importantly, although officers can embrace both warrior (e.g., "My primary responsibility as a police officer is to fight crime") and guardian (e.g., "As a police officer, it is important that I have non-enforcement contacts with the public") attitudes (Morin et al., 2017), those with a prevailing guardian mindset are more likely to prioritize communication rather than control in interactions with the public and are less likely to endorse attitudes that rationalize force misconduct or attitudes supportive of punishment for civilian disrespect (McLean et al., 2020).

Cultural barriers might also exist, such that officers might not see the value in community policing as compared with traditional policing (Silver et al., 2017), or they might perceive that the community does not want community policing or that the relationship with the community is adversarial (Chappell, 2009). Officers who see value in community policing, however, suggest that it can make their jobs easier, because developed relationships can improve efforts to identify and solve problems. It is worth noting that attitudes of officers vary both within and across agencies, with some officers being more supportive of community policing or having positive views of community members (Paoline, 2004). Some research suggests that supervisor expectations can affect whether officers engage in community policing or problem-solving (Engel and Worden, 2003), but much more research is needed to understand the optimal conditions for high-fidelity implementation of community and problem-oriented policing models. In addition to supervisors, senior officers (and training officers) must also embrace community policing for it to be culturally adopted (Crank, 1997), and there is some positive evidence that "traditional" police are more open to community-oriented policing than might be expected (Adams, Rohe, and Arcury, 2002; Paoline and Terill, 2013).

When describing positive and negative interactions with LASD, participants noted certain deputy characteristics that reflect a good or bad culture, potentially reflecting community member perceptions of LASD's commitment to community policing. Community stakeholders perceive the culture as good when deputies are accessible and approachable, station leadership has an open-door policy, and members of the community feel comfortable reaching out with questions or concerns. These deputies are also friendly: They smile and wave when out and about, and they converse with community members at events. Finally, good deputies prioritize addressing the needs of the community. The East and South divisions had the most reports of a positive station culture. In contrast, participants from the North Division

described positive culture in about half of the discussions, and participants from the Central Division noted it much less frequently.

Participants stated that they perceived the culture to be bad when deputies were aloof, rude, and lacking in "customer service skills." Community stakeholders said that these deputies create a climate in which the community fears and distrusts LASD. Community members and leaders said that they were afraid of physical violence, retaliation, and wrongful arrest at the hands of personnel. Fear and distrust stemmed from experiences with deputies mistreating the community. One participant said:

> The police have us frustrated and terrorized because they are supposed to help us, but we are afraid of them. When we are in need of them, we are scared to call them. We are frustrated, and we don't trust them. I feel like if something happens, I don't feel comfortable reaching out to them.

Community stakeholders described these deputies as having an antagonistic, bullying attitude toward the community. They said that these deputies are aggressive, act superior to the community, and want residents to be afraid of them. Participants used phrases like "wanting to put their foot on you" or "thinking they can do anything because they have a badge and a gun." Community *members* discussed negative culture in nearly every focus group or interview in every division. However, community *leaders'* perceptions were more varied, with negative culture mentioned in a fourth of interviews in the South Division, approximately two thirds of interviews in the Central and East divisions, and *every interview in the North Division*.

Vested in the Community

Both community leaders and members valued LASD personnel who demonstrate personal investment in the community. Participants said that deputies are perceived as vested when it appears that they care about and feel like part of the community. They used terms such as "family" or "a next-door neighbor" to describe station personnel who have taken the time to introduce themselves to the community or to get to know community members on a first-name basis. Deputies' efforts to get to know community members made participants feel like the deputies cared. A community member described one such interaction:

> He seemed like he really cared because he wanted to talk to me. I know he's busy and maybe he missed a call or two that was more relevant while he was talking to me. . . . He looked me in the eyes, and he made me feel safe. I left really happy. You can see that he thinks you matter and is interested in you when he talks to you.

Additionally, participants reported that deputies are uniquely vested when they have local ties to the community that other deputies do not. One participant explained:

> There's a difference when the deputies know the community because they trained there or grew up there and they really care about the city. . . . I asked one of the deputies why they came back here, and they said, "This is my city, my people are here."

Participants from the South Division described LASD personnel as being vested in the community more often than participants from other divisions did.

Conversely, participants had negative experiences with and perceptions of deputies who they saw as uncaring and not vested in the community. Participants described these deputies as

apathetic to the well-being of community members and disinterested in forming relationships in the community. Community stakeholders described these deputies as dismissive of their concerns, unempathetic, and unwilling to listen to them. Community members were much more likely than community leaders to perceive deputies as not caring about the community. This issue often arose when community stakeholders reported a crime. One community leader said:

> A little empathy would be nice. You're not calling them because you're having a great day, and they get there downplaying what you're going through. And it's like, wait, to me this is a big deal. You should feel like they think you're important too. They should make you feel like you're important too.

Community leaders and members also stated that they perceived deputies who were not from the area as being less vested in the community. Others described problems emerging when the majority of deputies do not represent the community culturally or demographically. A community leader noted that having stations represent the racial and ethnic composition of the community is important for building trust and feeling that deputies are part of the community. This leader said:

> They need to have African Americans and Latinos be able to see there's a deputy I can go to who I can relate to. When you don't see yourself in your community, it doesn't feel like you're a part of it.

Participants from the North and Central divisions described LASD personnel as not vested in the community in most of the discussions. Those in the East Division and the South Division mentioned this issue in less than half of the discussions. As a whole, this issue surfaced more frequently when speaking with community members than with community leaders. This suggests that being vested in the community could be particularly salient in residents' interactions with deputies.

Perceptions Based on Station Personnel's Behavior

The primary behaviors that contributed to a positive or negative relationship between the community and station personnel fit into three overarching themes: quality of service, level of engagement with the community, and treatment of community members.

Quality of Service

Across all station areas, community participants reported varying levels of satisfaction with the service that station personnel have provided. Particularly in the South Division, participants expressed satisfaction with LASD services, indicating that deputies respond promptly and adequately fulfill the law enforcement needs of the community. Conversely, participants dissatisfied with service stated that deputies are slow to respond to calls, are slow to investigate crimes, or do not sufficiently patrol the area.

In communities where stakeholders were satisfied with the services, they described deputies as going above and beyond the standard for satisfactory service. These deputies proactively took steps to reduce crime or otherwise support the community, either through community-wide programs or individual interactions. Many instances of proactive behavior involved station personnel providing social services to people in need. For example, participants told of

deputies providing homeless individuals with food and housing or taking the time to counsel community members after a shooting. One community leader said:

> When we have a homicide, they're out there in full force, and instead of a business thing to take needed information, the captain has them spend quality time and ask if everyone is okay and counseling support. It's a whole different kind of scenario.

Conversely, others reported that LASD was failing to provide necessary services for the community. This theme was especially prominent in the North and East divisions, with approximately half of discussions of those divisions describing inadequate service. This topic was raised far less frequently in the Central and South divisions.

Part of the criticism about the quality of service involved being unable to anonymously report a crime because individuals are required to give their name when they call in. In addition, participants indicated a need for better Spanish-language services when calling a station. Community stakeholders also stated that deputies do not provide adequate services for people experiencing mental illness or with developmental disabilities and that deputies often escalate the situation. Finally, participants said that LASD lacks appropriate services for people experiencing domestic violence. Survivors described deputies as rude, angry, or lacking compassion. After one such experience, a community member stated:

> In my opinion, they are called to so many situations that they think it's just another person and they'll go back to the domestic violence situation anyways. But not everybody's situation is the same. . . . And you shouldn't judge them because they're going to go back or assume everyone is the same. . . . They should get more training on that and giving the person what they need in that moment. When I was giving my report that day, I'd barely finished when the sheriff was getting called away. And I said please don't leave—I felt like my situation was important enough, but I had to wait until midday.

Level of Engagement

Another theme that emerged in discussions of relations related to community engagement. Participants described two distinct types of engagement: (1) interaction with the community through events or informal channels not directly related to law enforcement and (2) partnerships with the community to achieve shared public safety goals.

Community Interaction

Stations facilitated interaction by holding such events as National Night Out or community block parties and by attending events hosted by other organizations in the community. Participants were more likely to describe LASD interactions at community events as positive. Community interaction also occurred in more informal ways, such as deputies waving or saying hello to people in the street. Community leaders and members discussed the impact that interaction can have community perception of LASD personnel. For example, an interviewee said:

> If you only see deputies when there is an emergency, you associated them with evil and crime. But if they are helping with an event, you start to build a relationship.

Other participants stated that opportunities to interact helped the community and the deputies better understand one another and made it feel like station personnel were part of the

community. More community stakeholders from the North and South divisions mentioned having opportunities to interact with deputies than did those in the other divisions.

Despite the importance of community interaction, some participants noted that deputies might attend community events but did not always interact with the community stakeholders or appear to welcome interaction during these events. One community member described how deputy attitudes can hinder community interaction:

> Sometimes I see deputies at events and want to introduce my [family]. But I just see them so quiet [sitting or standing] on the side, and I think maybe I [should] go up to them. . . . They should do something to show that we can go to them and tell them issues. . . . If I knew one of them, even if I had a name, maybe I could ask for one of them next time I have an issue.

The absence of opportunities to interact with deputies or the perception that deputies did not want to interact contributed to a negative view of the relationship with the station. Community members were more likely than leaders to report insufficient deputy interaction, likely because many of the community leaders hold positions that involve collaboration with LASD stations. Participants from the Central Division described inadequate opportunities for community and deputy interaction in the greatest portion of discussions (almost half), compared with participants from the South, East, and North divisions.

Community Partnership

Beyond general community interaction, participants expressed the importance of having opportunities to partner with the department and provide input on public safety issues. Some existing partnerships involve formal collaboration between stations and community organizations, while others are more informal. Examples of efforts to solicit community input include stations requesting feedback through town hall meetings, community advisory committees, surveys, neighborhood watch meetings, and generally having an open-door policy.

Community stakeholders perceived stations as not wanting to partner with the community because station leadership either did not create opportunities for input or did not act on the input when it was provided. Participants also viewed clear communication and sharing of information—about both station events or activities and general public safety issues—as essential to good partnerships.

Community leaders and members also stated that partnership involves deputies and community members working together toward shared goals and that community needs should dictate station priorities. For instance, one leader said:

> When a school district raises a safety concern, the captain will ensure there are additional patrols provided around the schools to ensure that the issue raised by one of the partners is addressed as soon as possible. With issues of homelessness, some people felt unsafe so LASD ensured they had more presence with deputies. There is also a roving COPS [Community Oriented Policing Services] team that comes to the community. It is proactive policing. They are very actively involved if there is a meeting at one of the schools and representation is needed, they are always at the table representing the department to field questions. They are a major partner when it comes to coordinating the community events. They are more than a law enforcement presence but also a volunteer force.

Participants from the East, South, and North divisions described successful partnerships in approximately half of the discussions, whereas participants in the Central Division described partnerships in just over a third of the discussions.

The antithesis of a good partnership is a climate in which deputies have an "us versus them" mentality and treat community members as people who need enforcing rather than as partners in public safety, participants said. They compared stations with this mentality to "an occupying force." These stations might focus on enforcement or a warrior style of policing instead of collaboration or a guardian approach to policing (McLean et al., 2020). One community member described the dynamic this way:

> They say they are law enforcement foremost and everything else comes second. They are not there to build community—they are just there to have law enforcement responsibilities. I think when the community requests involvement, they see it as an option.

Participants noted that when stations have an "us versus them" culture, they set their priorities without regard for community needs—and often in direct opposition to those needs. Poor partnership was described in twice as many interviews and discussion groups with community members as with community leaders. More than half of the discussions in the Central Division and close to half in the North Division referenced inadequate partnerships. Stakeholders in the South Division seldom raised this issue.

There is a growing recognition that law enforcement should not focus exclusively on the singular goal of crime reduction. Equally as important is the goal of community trust (Gill et al., 2014). Indeed, one of LASD's mottos, "Earning the public's trust every day," acknowledges that trust should be at the forefront of its day-to-day activities, although our community findings show room for improvement in this regard. Interaction and partnership between LASD and the community are intertwined and critically important to creating a positive, trusting relationship. Participants described interactions as ways of building trust and a sense of community with the station, whereas partnerships allow the community to have a voice in public safety decisions. Attempts to partner with the community might not be successful if station personnel have not engaged in relationship-building through community interaction. A community leader mentioned that the local station's attempts to solicit feedback from the community have been unsuccessful because community members do not trust the deputies:

> The community has been abused for so long by them, but they expect us to come to them instead of coming to us. . . . Their terms are "we're having community meetings and we expect you to show up" instead of engaging with the community, coming out to the community. . . . They need to have activities the community wants to come to.

Treatment of Community Members

The concept of earning trust implies both that there is a way to measure trust and that there are certain activities that could increase or reduce trust. In policing, a variety of concepts are related to trust, most importantly fairness and neutrality. Each of these concepts are key features of procedural justice, or the perception that police officers treat people appropriately in their interactions and that their actions are legally justified and free of bias. When people interact with legal authorities, their perception of whether the encounter was fair or procedurally just involves four components:

1. whether they were treated with dignity and respect
2. whether they were given voice (i.e., a chance to voice their concerns and participate in decisionmaking)
3. whether the decisionmaker was neutral and transparent (i.e., decisions are unbiased and based on transparent reasoning)
4. whether the decisionmaker conveyed trustworthy motives (i.e., concern about well-being and acting within rightful authority) (Quattlebaum, Meares, and Tyler, 2018).

Importantly, trust in the police and perceptions of procedural justice also feed into police legitimacy (i.e., the belief that the police follow the law and legal standards, whether the decisions made by police reflect the values of those being governed, and whether people voluntarily defer to police authority; Jackson and Bradford, 2010), which is associated with satisfaction, confidence, cooperation, and compliance with police (Mazerolle et al., 2013; Tyler and Fagan, 2008). Legitimacy is also connected to credibility—does the public believe that the department will act in the public's best interests when things go wrong (e.g., provide information, respond appropriately)? Ensuring positive interactions with legal authorities also has a basis in social psychology and intergroup dynamics, which stress the importance of positive intergroup contact. Positive intergroup contact can reduce prejudice and anxiety and could increase empathy (Pettigrew et al., 2011).

Community mistreatment is a prevalent theme that emerged during interviews and focus groups with stakeholders. Community members and leaders reported experiencing mistreatment by deputies—including harassment, retaliation, and excessive force—as well as differential treatment. Community members described mistreatment *in every interview and focus group*, which was more often than in our discussions with community leaders. Mistreatment was discussed most often in the Central and North divisions but was a salient theme across the other divisions.

Harassment, Retaliation and Excessive Force

Participants described instances of harassment, such as being stopped without cause or being treated with undue suspicion, both in person and when calling the station for service. Stakeholders said that deputies retaliate or threaten to retaliate against people who report crimes or question deputy actions. Among the examples of retaliation were deputies destroying memorials for people killed by LASD, patrol cars circling the block of someone who reported deputy misconduct, and deputies pressing charges only after someone questioned their actions. Community leaders and members from the Central Division mentioned both harassment and retaliation most often in our conversations, and community members in the East Division mentioned harassment most often. Deputies were also perceived as using excessive force, such as physical beatings, K-9 attacks, or shootings. Some participants said that deputies use excessive force with impunity. One community member stated:

> They attack innocent people instead of real criminals. . . . They show up [to people's homes] like terrorists. They intimidate us, and we suffer emotionally from that. . . . They vandalize things and break things and make fun of you. That is not legal. They leave you with fear and bad experiences. . . . We have suffered a lot at their hands.

Excessive force was discussed in almost half of the interviews and focus groups with participants in the Central and North divisions and was seldom mentioned in the South Division.

Differential Treatment

Approximately half of the comments about mistreatment reflected a perception that certain populations are treated differently from others. Some participants explicitly stated that deputies mistreated them because of their race, socioeconomic status, physical appearance, gender, criminal involvement, language, or some other characteristic. Examples of differential treatment included wrongful arrest, sexual harassment, threats to call immigration, use of slurs, traffic stops without cause, and excessive force. Differential treatment was mentioned in almost all interviews and focus groups with community members and was discussed twice as frequently with community members than with community leaders. Differential treatment appeared to be a more prevalent issue among stakeholders in the North and Central divisions.

The majority of the comments suggested that differential treatment was based on race (i.e., primarily Black and Hispanic individuals). A community member described the relationship between the Hispanic community and deputies this way:

> There have been many cases where the sheriffs have beaten or killed people. Now we are scared to call them. They come into your homes without warrants and do what they want. They don't think about what they leave behind in terms of the trauma. They insult us verbally and physically. We don't trust them anymore.

Although this comment was specifically in relation to treatment of Hispanic individuals, it was similar to how participants described LASD treatment of Black individuals and the long-lasting psychological impact of mistreatment. One community leader noted:

> I went to the gym and talked to African American kids, and they say they get patrolled and get searched and they don't seem to trust them, so there is a lot of relationship-building that needs to happen. They still do things like stop people for no reason or holding onto their gun while talking to Black people.

Community members described receiving worse treatment because of their neighborhood. A community member explained:

> They think if you live here, you're a drug dealer or gang member. They automatically assume the worst of people. They automatically think low income and a negative image not just because of race but because of the city we live in.

Similarly, people reported receiving worse service or treatment because of living in an unincorporated area.

Besides differential treatment due to social identity or economic status, some participants noted instances of people being treated differently because of their personal relationships with LASD personnel or due to their position in the community. One participant described deputies being unwilling to pursue a noise complaint directed at individuals who were friends with LASD personnel. Another community member said:

> I would call as a regular citizen, not using my position, and nothing would happen. But if I called back and said I was [TITLE], they would be here in less than 5 minutes. I'm so upset about that. I don't like to use my title for anything. I consider that a disgrace. We pay our taxes, why should one person get preference because of where they work? When you do call as a regular citizen, they don't listen to you.

Effects of Community Behavior on Policing

Some community members, and particularly community leaders, indicated that the community itself is also responsible for the quality of the relationship with LASD. Some of these participants said that residents do not attend events or participate when the station makes efforts to partner with the community. As a result, the station is unable to effectively address the community's needs. For instance, a community leader attributed lower crime rates to successful partnerships between the deputies and the community and added that:

> it takes the community working with the sheriffs. Now, if the community doesn't care or isn't working with the sheriffs [you won't have that].

Others mentioned that community stakeholders might have a negative perception of deputies because they do not understand what deputies go through. Finally, some participants noted that the community's behavior can cause deputies to respond more aggressively or escalate tensions. One community member said:

> If you treat [the deputies] like people, they'll treat you like a human being. But if you're acting like an animal, they'll treat you like an animal.

This issue was raised in almost twice as many focus groups and interviews in the South and East divisions as in the other divisions.

Changes in Interaction Over Time

Some participants were mixed on whether the relationship between their community and station has improved or worsened over time. Participants primarily described improvements in community engagement (e.g., the station partnering with local organizations, opportunities to interact with deputies at community events), service (e.g., response times to calls), and treatment (e.g., harassment, excessive force, differential treatment). However, some participants noted deterioration in these areas, especially in regard to harassment or use of excessive force.

Community stakeholders attributed changes in the station-community relationship to different station leadership, funding changes, the efforts of community members or organizations, and external oversight. In the North Division, many participants said that the community experiences less harassment and excessive force because of the Antelope Valley settlement agreement. Some participants associated changes in community engagement with changes in treatment of the community (i.e., the more station personnel engage the community, the better they treat the residents). A community leader explained that local organizations established ongoing events with the station because youth were reporting harassment from deputies:

> We did not have a good relationship with the sheriffs . . . so we started having more events between the sheriffs and our young people. . . . Our local sheriffs got to speak about "hey, we're human too" and we were able to have honest conversations about the stereotypes they might have about one another. . . . We started to break that cycle and we were also trying to teach our young people to be respectful but know their rights and I think that really changed things.

Participants also described the converse, where they stated that reduced community engagement from the station led to worse treatment of the community. For example, a community leader said:

> There were more programs in the community which made it more comfortable for them to understand who the community is. Now, it's "I'm going to shoot you, I'm going to beat you." . . . I asked [deputies] to come by for [an event] to say hi to people and improve the relationship instead of just coming to a meeting every week. But they didn't come. It's part of the growth of the community because if the community knows who they are, they'll say, "Okay, they're cool."

In all divisions, conversations more frequently included mentions of relationships becoming better rather than worse. The majority of discussions with community stakeholders in the North, East, and South divisions described improvements, compared with less than half of discussions with the Central Division. Central Division participants also more frequently described relationships with LASD becoming worse over time. Across all divisions except the East, community leaders were more likely to mention community-sheriff relationships improving and community members were more likely to mention them worsening.

Community Perspectives on Subgroups

When introducing the topic of deputy subgroups in our conversations with community stakeholders, we heard a mix of viewpoints on the existence of subgroups. Some participants had no awareness of subgroups; others had minimal awareness but no specific ideas about where they were located or how long they had been around; and others shared more-detailed knowledge, including where subgroups were located, how they identified themselves, and how long they had been in existence. Some community leaders and members also explained that subgroup behavior is more a manifestation of a culture within the department than a collection of a subset of personnel. Finally, participants shared their views on the impact that deputy subgroups have on the community and described ways in which the department has addressed or is seeking to address this issue. Comments about subgroups varied by division, and there were differences in levels of awareness between community leaders and community members. We give a more detailed description of these nuances in the sections below.

Community Awareness of Existence and Location of Subgroups

In each division, awareness of subgroups ranged from minimal to extensive. A number of comments suggested that some participants were not aware that subgroups existed within the department. Conversely, some participants provided considerable information based on their knowledge and experience. Comments indicating limited awareness of subgroups were most prevalent among community leaders in the Central and South divisions. These comments generally suggested speculations about subgroups but not in-depth awareness or understanding of them. For example, a community leader said:

> I hadn't gotten that story good where I could really hear everything about that. It was just in a walk-by way, if that makes sense—it wasn't the main point in the conversation, so I

> hadn't really thought about it. But I could believe it. I could believe it just based on the way they act in the streets.

Of the participants who had more-detailed knowledge of subgroups, some were aware of subgroups within their own neighborhood (i.e., most were aware of groups in the Central and North divisions), while others were aware only of groups outside their neighborhood (i.e., they were aware of groups in jails, East LA, Palmdale, Century, Lynwood, South Central, and Compton). These perceptions of areas where subgroups exist or have existed align with prior reporting and media coverage, as well as with perceptions from some of our LASD interviewees.

How the Community Learned of Subgroups

Community members indicated that they learned about subgroups in a variety of ways, including through other community members (e.g., at organized community meetings, by talking to other members of the community), personal experiences (e.g., through people they know who have been in the jail describing being assaulted by deputies perceived to be subgroup members, from having been in jail themselves, from having known people who have been threatened by deputies perceived to be part of subgroups, from hearing deputies in the community greet each other by their subgroup name), the media (e.g., television news, social media, newspaper articles), or members of LASD or affiliated personnel. Most comments on this topic signaled that participants had heard of groups through the media (mostly community members in the Central Division and community leaders in the South Division), and almost half of the comments suggested that participants had also learned about subgroups through other community members or their own personal experiences (mostly community leaders in the Central Division). Only a small number of comments described participants having learned about subgroups from members of LASD or other affiliated personnel (mostly community leaders in the Central and North divisions).

Community Views on How Subgroups Form and Whether They Should Exist

Participants had different ideas about why subgroups might form within the department. A few said that the formation of these groups was in some ways understandable, and others had ideas about why they formed, although they said that the groups should not exist. Most of the few comments that were more understanding of subgroups came from community leaders in the Central and South divisions. These participants suggested that subgroups are normal cliques that form in workplaces and are not harmful, and some said that they believed that the subgroups were making the community safer because they were less likely to tolerate criminal activity in the community. One community leader explained,

> I have seen those cliques make the community safer because they don't tolerate the things that are going on, so the crime rate has significantly reduced. These cliques are not out to hurt people. When I was in the service, especially the marines used to tattoo themselves as a camaraderie thing because these streets are not safe.

Several community leaders and a few community members commented that they did not agree with the existence of subgroups but had ideas about why they formed. Some said that the formation of subgroups was related to how deputies were trained. As one community leader noted:

> You got a Sheriff and an Undersheriff in prison because they let too much stuff go by. And I hate seeing officers that should be good, but they come up underneath that kind of training.

Others said that they thought groups were formed partially as a response to and tactic for dealing with a lot of gang-related issues (i.e., "you got your gang, we've got ours") or because the current sheriff was in denial about the issues within the department. One community member said,

> When you have a department with 10,000 employees and a Sheriff in denial, the deputies can perpetuate their behavior with the gangs and it creates a culture out there.

Community leaders in the East, North, and South divisions made most of these comments, and a few were from community members in the Central and East divisions.

Community Knowledge of Subgroups

Community leaders and stakeholders who had some awareness of deputy subgroups shared their knowledge about the names of these groups, physical characteristics typically associated with subgroups, and their understanding of the type of behavior subgroups engage in.

Subgroup Names

Several participants were aware of the names of different subgroups that either currently or previously existed within the department. Community leaders and members in the Central Division provided the overwhelming majority of comments about subgroup names. Specific names mentioned included the Jump Out Boys in Compton and Century; the Vikings in Lynwood; the Regulators; the Cavemen; the Stoney Boys in Firestone (thought to have become the Pirates); the Banditos and 3rd Street in East LA; and the 2000 Boys and the 3000 Boys within Twin Towers (likely referring to the groups that existed in Men's Central Jail).

Tattoos or Symbols

Community members described a range of symbols as representing subgroups, with tattoos being the most common. Other symbols mentioned were tiles or banners on station floors, stickers on cars or windows, patches on uniforms, mugs, jackets, specific styles of facial hair, and hand gestures to signal group affiliation. Most comments about tattoos or other symbols came from community members in the Central Division (with only one additional comment from a community member in the East Division) and from community leaders in the South and North divisions.

Subgroup Behavior

Patrol Deputies' Behavior

Community leaders and members gave examples of how patrol deputies who are perceived as subgroup members behave. The types of behavior they shared include

- **hazing** as part of initiation practices:

> There has been a lot of talk [that] may not be backed up with facts about a lot of hazing with new sheriffs that want to report it to the higher ups and are roadblocked because the people that are there for a number of years have been the people running the cliques.

- **exclusionary practices of deputies** who are members of the group:

  > What we observed was if you were in their organization, you could use certain resources. They had a barbeque place you could eat at only if you were part of their organization and if you weren't, you couldn't even go there.
  >
  > They put Latinos down even within each other amongst deputies. They exclude them and don't give them the same opportunities. I have heard that they don't promote them in the same ways. I think that also influences the way they work on the street and with the community. That affects them when they are working with the community. I imagine that it is like a war within themselves, like others competing with themselves.

- **harassment of other deputies** who are not part of the group:

  > Even the ones that want to do the right thing feel like they can't do that because they don't want to go against their fellow officers or get retaliated against. I've heard that from Black deputies. Because they have ways of getting back at them, like giving them dangerous assignments. They're told not to rock the boat.

- **covering up their negative actions**:

  > I've heard that they cover each other when they're going to do the reports. They lie on the reports to make someone else seem like they're at fault or they placed weapons or illegal drugs on people. That's what I've heard.

Additionally, some community members noted that deputies perceived to be part of subgroups often used special language among themselves (seemingly not police language) and made up disrespectful names for rival subgroups. A community member provided a concrete example of how deputies disrespect neighborhood gangs in a way that appears to be similar to gang behavior:

> They do conduct themselves as a gang. For example, with gangs, the rival will usually come up with a diss name, a disrespect name. There is a gang called Maravilla [a very prominent gang in East LA]; if you are my enemy, instead of saying a Maravilla guy they will say *mantequilla* [butter]. It is a disrespectful term used by rival gangs. When a Bandito rolls up, they say, "What's up, mantequilla? What's up, butter?" How come you are using this language if you are not a gang? Are you my rival? That is the language of rival gangs.

In addition, some participants were reticent to file complaints about subgroup behavior because they said that the complaints would just go through fellow LASD personnel and would likely never be heard. Comments about the behavior of patrol deputies who were believed to be part of subgroups primarily arose from community members in North and Central divisions, with only a couple of comments from community members in the East Division. Most comments from community leaders about this type of behavior were in the Central Division, with only a few community leader comments from the North and South divisions.

Custody Deputies' Behavior

Participants in the Central and North divisions also gave examples of how they perceived subgroups in the jails. Community members shared accounts of how deputies target inmates and

set up inmates to be beaten up by other inmates, particularly Black and Brown prisoners. A community leader described this behavior as follows:

> It is common knowledge that if you go to the jail you are expected to be treated a certain way by the 5000 Boys or the 3000 Boys. The department knows about it and thinks it's normal, and this is the case since the '70s.

A community member shared personal experience with discriminatory treatment and associated that treatment with deputy subgroups in custody facilities:

> I experienced cruel and unusual punishment that particularly targeted me and others who were Black and Brown.

Other participants recounted being awakened for strip searches at random hours of the night and not being given proper bedding or hygiene products. Community leaders discussed issues such as giving some inmates preferential treatment while disadvantaging other inmates by putting them in different racial quarters to fight each other or putting them in solitary confinement; implementing "flashlight therapy," described as beating people with flashlights; and sexual assault and harassment in the women's jail. A community leader said:

> Sheriffs with Black and Brown groups that have issues sometimes put one Black [person] with [the] Brown quarter. They do flashlight therapy where they were beating people unconscious and some even died. Some have had flashlight imprint on forehead in the autopsy.

Department Culture or Subculture, Not Subgroups

In a small proportion of conversations with both community leaders and community members across divisions, we heard comments suggesting that the behaviors described were not necessarily related to subgroups but were instead a larger cultural issue within LASD. Some community leaders describe personnel assimilating into a widespread culture that promotes these types of behaviors. One community leader said:

> It is a culture of the organization. The reason I can say that is because I was part of the military and I know how these rank-and-file companies are and how they are run. If you have a bad person running that company . . . when I think of the sheriff rank-and-file group, they teach the same kind of training as in the military, very intense and are willing to kill others for their own gratifying need. You should see the type of disregard of families of deceased. This also reminds me of my battle buddies who went to war and also had that kind of indifference in their face. They are desensitized to what this really means for people's lives and communities.

Others said that it is difficult to tell whether deputies' behaviors were related to subgroups or to ethnicity or age group (e.g., Latino deputies harassing Latino community members, young deputies engaging in negative behavior). Some participants indicated that people might perceive subgroups to be representative of the entire department because those people might only interact with a few deputies who behave badly, so their schema is limited to these experi-

ences and applied universally to the entire department. One community leader summarized this point:

> I think unfortunately to the public who received services, we just see guys in tan and green—we can't really tell the difference if it's a subculture or not. One deputy represents the whole department, as it should be, so I think it's hard for community members to understand that. But I think the sentiment from a lot of community members was that the entire Sheriff's Department was against us as a community. But that was back then—I'd like to emphasize that it's not like that now.

Comments from community members suggested that issues with subgroups were more a matter of camaraderie and of deputies having each other's backs and that such issues were prevalent in law enforcement in general. A community member explained:

> They're close-knit like a good old boys' club. . . . my concern is that if you bring up something that one deputy did, they'll go, "Oh no, he's a good guy." They're friends. They protect each other.

Impact of Subgroups on Communities

Overall Impact

When we asked participants how subgroups affect the community, most said that the impact would be negative, and the majority said that it led to lack of trust in or fear of law enforcement. These comments primarily came from the Central and North divisions. Several participants also said that the behavior of deputies who were perceived to be members of subgroups caused fear and trauma in the community. A few community leaders also said that the existence of subgroups within the department created an "us versus them" mentality, which was also discussed in prior reports on this subject. Only one community leader said that groups actually had a positive impact on the community because subgroup members were less tolerant of lawlessness and kept the community safe, and a few said that there really was no impact on the community. In general, however, the predominant sentiment was that subgroups have a negative impact on the community. As we note later, this sentiment aligns with that of LASD survey respondents: Most of the deputies who expressed an opinion agreed that subgroups' behavior has negatively impacted community perceptions of LASD.

Direct Impact of Subgroups

Community stakeholders—primarily in the Central and North divisions—gave examples of what they considered subgroups harassing the community. Their examples fell broadly into two categories: (1) perceptions of aggressive behavior, including excessive force, threatening or intimidation, destruction of people's property, and use of disrespectful language; and (2) perceptions of illicit behavior, such as dropping off gang members in enemy territory, shooting and sometimes killing civilians, detaining people without good reasons, and treating people of different races and socioeconomic statuses differently.

Aggressive Behavior

Discussion of aggressive behavior that community stakeholders associated with deputy subgroups was common throughout our conversations. As mentioned above, one type of aggres-

sive behavior described was the use of excessive force. For instance, one community member said that they "have seen them rough people up, kind of like the gang culture." Another type of aggressive behavior was intimidating or threatening community members, with recent allegations that deputies have harassed or intimidated family members of individuals killed by LASD in fatal use-of-force incidents (OIG, 2020b). One example of this came from a community leader who said:

> [I] watched [deputies] torment a girl whose son got killed by a ricochet bullet. . . . I literally watched them torment this girl. We were talking to investigators and they were outside in front doing donuts in their sheriff's cars trying to intimidate us and make us leave. . . . I had to escort her home because they were following her.

More generally, a community member described how the behavior of deputies had changed over time and become more threatening:

> When I was a kid, they treated people nice, like Sheriff John. Sheriff John would be kinda like an uncle and asked nicely, and now it's more vulgar and more aggressive and it goes on and on in their questioning, bolder language, threatening people, being intimidating, threatening your family.

Community members also shared instances where deputies destroyed property in ways that seemed unnecessary when inspecting homes. Furthermore, it was noted that deputies sometimes used inappropriate language with community members. Both community members and leaders said that these types of aggressive behaviors indicated the existence of and participation in subgroups.

Illicit Behavior

Community members and leaders described illicit behavior that they associated with subgroups. One common and unlawful practice that participants discussed was dropping off people believed to be gang members into the territory of rival gangs. A community leader said that this was done when deputies were looking for "swift justice":

> In conversations with law enforcement, you become aware of [subgroups] because they refer to their group and they refer to it as it is a score for us. That happened to me, and I would get picked up and get dropped off in another neighborhood in order for there to be some sort of discipline, and that is how they would deliver their swift justice when they couldn't make arrests.

There were also several comments about shootings or killings committed by deputies and a stated belief that some of these are tied to subgroups. As one community leader detailed:

> You have to be willing to do certain things—beat people up, use excessive force, shoot people. A lot of illegal things. It's not like joining the Boy Scouts. . . . Everybody knows when there's a shooting, and if you're celebrating people getting killed with tattoos, it's out of hand. . . . So, the Jump Out Boys got terminated by [a former sheriff] because they had shot and killed people, but the only reason he terminated those guys was because we were putting pressure on him.

There were also many comments about people getting pulled over for no reason, and participants often stated that these practices were racially motivated. One community member shared concerns over this:

> As an African American, I know the rules, but I do know that if I ask why they stop me, I know they are going to say, OK, get out of the car. Every African American is afraid they are going to get shot and killed. . . . I'm a goody two shoes, but as an African American, I can tell you that if I see the police behind me, I really start sweating and I'm nervous [even though] everything is straight on my car.

Current or Past Efforts to Address Subgroups

We asked participants whether they were aware of any specific ways in which the department had attempted to address the issue of subgroups, and we received very few responses from either community members or community leaders. All comments relating to this question came from the Central Division, except one. A few participants said that they were not aware of any ongoing or past efforts or said that there were no efforts. Of those who were aware of efforts to address this issue, one community leader stated that past administrations had done a good job of acknowledging and dealing with the issues:

> My perspective is that the Sheriff's Department has done a good job of acknowledging it and addressing it with the past administration of the Sheriff's Department. I think even when the *LA Times* article came out last year, they did a good job communicating that the cliques aren't there now, so from my perspective and my neighbors' perspective, we don't really have a sense of that being there anymore. It might be more of a sense of something in the past that was recently discovered and is now being highlighted.

Another community stakeholder said that they thought they had heard that the department was going to try to break up the groups; and another person said that they felt the department was taking steps to minimize the occurrence of subgroups by discouraging tattooing and making it known that these kinds of groups were not acceptable.

Recommendations by Community Members

One of the main objectives of our interviews and focus groups with community stakeholders was to understand the improvements they wanted to see and to search for possible strategies to improve the relationship between the community and LASD. These recommendations, which were offered by community leaders and members, generally relate to training, community engagement, and accountability. These recommendations might not necessarily be supported by empirical evidence and might not be practical or legally feasible. We incorporated some of the suggestions that are practical and feasible into our recommendations in Chapter Ten.

Training

Community stakeholders in more than a third of the discussion groups and interviews recommended changes to LASD training. Most training recommendations came from community members in the Central and North divisions. One of the most common training recommen-

dations was for LASD personnel to receive cultural competency or antibias training.[3] In the majority of these comments, participants stated that deputies need to improve how they treat and interact with people of color. A community leader explained that not only should the department offer this type of training, but a person of color from the community should also deliver it:

> There's still a distrust between African Americans and the Sheriff's Department. . . . One of our suggestions was that every sheriff should go through a cultural sensitivity training so they can understand how to approach a person of color. We had asked them to . . . have people in the community who are certified to give the training, but they did not allow us to have community members go in to do it. They might have that training, but it's given by someone who is White. And that is totally different when it's delivered by someone who is White.

Additionally, participants recommended that deputies receive training on using a trauma-informed approach in response to domestic violence situations and training on helping people with mental illness or developmental disabilities. Other participants advocated for training to focus more on building skills for interacting with people (e.g., procedural justice) and displaying empathy. One community member said:

> [They need p]eople skills, because you're dealing with people. You're dealing with the community, not just criminals and suspects. When dealing with the people minding their business and everything, don't be ready to draw a gun out or judge this person just because they look a certain way. You have to talk to them, and if you're going to talk to someone, you can do it in a friendly way, you know, just say hey. At least have some kind of people skills.

Finally, some training recommendations were specifically in relation to the practice of assigning deputies to work in the county jails prior to working in the patrol stations. Community members and leaders stated that deputies treat community members with more hostility and aggression because of their experience in the jails. As a community leader said:

> In the Sheriff's Department, some of them stay in the jails for four or five years, so they're used to criminals, and they come out of the jails and look at the community as criminals. That's one of the things they need to change. They need regular correction officers like prison guards to man the jails and let the police go out in the field to be community police. While they're there, they look at criminals, and then they bring that same mentality into the community. If you have trained jailers, that's all they do. But the Sheriff's Department goes through that, then comes into community—they're programmed to harass people. They're so used to criminals in jail, they think that's all the citizens.

Community Engagement

The most prevalent recommendation from the community was for LASD to improve or increase community interaction. Community members were more likely to recommend com-

[3] We note that research on implicit bias training suggests that such training is not associated with changes in behavior (Forscher et al., 2019). Another review of antibias training suggests that there is mixed evidence on its efficacy, but there are potential areas for improvement (Carter, Onyeador, and Lewis, 2020).

munity interaction than community leaders. As described previously, participants expressed a desire for opportunities to interact with LASD personnel outside of traditional law enforcement activities and a desire for LASD personnel to be friendly and have genuine interest in getting to know the community. Some participants spoke favorably about the "Town Sheriff" program, which they describe as the assignment of a lead deputy or lieutenant to serve as the liaison between the local patrol station and the community. These community stakeholders indicated that this program has helped improve community interaction and relations, but this support is very limited because the town sheriff is just one person responsible for the entire community.

In a similar vein, participants recommended that LASD overall engage in more community-oriented policing (COP).[4] Participants described COP as working with the community to advance public safety, engaging with community members and organizations to ensure that the station's actions match the community's priorities, and discouraging deputy subgroups. Community members and leaders mentioned specific examples of what COP should look like, such as deputies knocking on doors asking people whether anything could be improved or whether there were any ongoing issues in the neighborhood (i.e., having contacts with the department that were not related to enforcement). Some participants also recommended that station personnel partner with local social services organizations to create alternatives to incarceration. Several participants mentioned that former COP initiatives had been cut because of funding issues and that the reduction of these services had been detrimental to the community/station relationship. One leader said:

> One of the things that we had and no longer have is a COPS team that was community oriented. Maybe ten years ago, due to budgetary restraints, those COPS programs were disbanded at each station and just formed a county-wide program. It was a great outreach for the department. They did not respond to regular radio calls; they were in the community making relationships and addressing quality-of-life issues. So, when that disbanded, they had the county one, and they are transitory in nature and are just here to put out fires.

Recommendations Related to Subgroups

When participants were asked what would help to address issues of subgroups within the department, community leaders and members provided a variety of suggestions. Some recommendations focused on steps that the department could take internally to deal with these issues. These types of recommendations included improving hiring and training practices to reduce the sense of "us versus them" and increasing investigations and disciplinary action where necessary. Other types of recommendations focused on what could be done externally to address these issues. These types of suggestions included establishing external oversight of the department and decreasing funding or shifting it away from the department.

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[4] The DOJ's Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) office recently defined *community-oriented policing* as "a philosophy that promotes organizational strategies that support the systematic use of partnerships and problem-solving techniques to proactively address the immediate conditions that give rise to public safety issues such as crime, social disorder, and fear of crime" (Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2012, p. 1).

Recommendations for Internal Activities

Improve Hiring and Training Practices

Both community leaders and community members had suggestions about improving hiring and training practices as a way of addressing issues of subgroups within the department. For community leaders, suggestions included providing trainings that focus on being professional, respectful, and communicating properly; hiring deputies who are older and have more than a high school education because they might have more lived experience and exposure to diverse communities; and ensuring that TOs and other leadership emphasize proper behavior and do not impart or condone negative attitudes or habits. A community leader emphasized the potential impact of TOs:

> If I've got a training officer and I'm new, and he says you need to get these assholes and show who's boss, I'm going to do what he's saying. . . . the training officers need to let them know you don't beat people up, that's not how we do that.

Community members had similar suggestions to improve training and hiring practices, and these suggestions were distributed relatively evenly across the North, Central, and East divisions, with no such recommendations coming from the South Division. The type of recommendations we heard from community members on this topic included generally increasing the amount of training that is required for deputies and leadership, providing dual training that includes teaching community members about their rights and the role of law enforcement and teaching deputies how to handle situations with dignity and respect, having deputies learn about the community by living there for a period of time, and hiring people who are passionate about being in law enforcement. A community member elaborating on this point said:

> I think hiring people who are more passionate about their true jobs and a newer generation that's not only [looking] for a job but really want to be here, not just because you live here but because you want to do work for your city. We have a newer generation that just wants to have a job, and I feel like we need to start all over and get those passionate cops.

Increase Accountability Through Investigations and Disciplinary Action

Another internal recommendation for addressing deputy subgroups is increasing accountability by ensuring that there are investigations and that disciplinary action is taken when necessary. Recommendations about ensuring proper investigations primarily came from community members in the East and Central divisions. Both community leaders and members across all divisions provided recommendations supporting disciplinary action. Several community members said that there should generally be more investigations or evaluations of deputies. Other community members said that investigations should be external because having department members investigate themselves was likely to be ineffective. A community member's comment underscored this point:

> There needs to be investigations by independent bodies within the department of any suspicions. I have doubts about any internal committees to be unbiased—I don't think that is possible. There is such a strong culture of brotherhood and unity in the [sheriff's] department and a tendency to stick together even in cases where it doesn't make sense to back others.

Recommendations related to disciplinary action varied, but the majority of them suggested suspending or terminating members of subgroups. A community member and a community leader in another area emphasized the need to get rid of subgroups:

> Terminate [them] if they are part of the subgroups. Gangs can't police a community, gangs cannot police gangs. There should be no tolerance or existence of subgroups within the station. They should not be allowed to provide law service. They will always be more loyal to [the] gang than to the community.

> It's like if you got rot in something, you have to cut it out. I don't know if there's time to cut it out. And if we bring new officers in, the old officers will still have that mentality and tell them how they have to be. So those officers have got to go. That gang mentality needs to be rooted out. I don't know if they can be retrained or reformed. You just have to get them out.

Other suggestions included breaking up the groups, penalizing those who have group tattoos, making deputies wear body cameras, having group membership be a disqualifier for promotion as a way to dissuade group participation, and eliminating transfers as a solution for dealing with problems with deputies. A community member explained why transfers are not a good strategy to deal with subgroups:

> If they do something wrong in the gangs in East LA, they take care of it by transferring that person to West Hollywood. All they did is transfer the person. That's not taking care of it. Transfers need to be eliminated. These are trained people to protect and take care of everybody, so I don't think transferring should even be an option.

Recommendations for External Solutions

Establish Mechanisms for External Oversight of the Department

Several community members and leaders suggested greater oversight as a way to address issues with subgroups within the department. Some community members generally suggested having more community meetings or events with the Sheriff's Department and the Board of Supervisors to give the community a voice and a better understanding of issues within the department and to increase accountability to the community. Suggestions for mechanisms that could be used for external oversight of the department included community advisory councils or other groups made up of community members to allow for transparency and discussion about how the department is dealing with deputy subgroups; federal agencies, through consent decrees or federal injunctions, to keep the pressure on the department to do something about subgroups; the Board of Supervisors and the COC exercising their power over the department to dismantle these groups; and having publicly available lists of deputies who have a record of subgroup-related issues.

Reduce Funding or Shift Funding Away from the Department

A few community members and leaders from the Central Division suggested a strategy that is currently being explored across the United States: shifting funds away from the Sheriff's Department and into other needed resources, as well as limiting the department's role. A community leader explained the latter point this way:

> The county needs to rethink accountability over the Sheriff's Department. They need to rethink how to take that power away from them in the jail system, in the community, and possibly limiting the sheriffs all together.

Conclusion

It is important to recognize that LASD patrol stations and the communities they serve vary in terms of geography, demographic makeup, and crime. As reflected in our interviews and focus groups, some community stakeholders perceived their relationship to be positive and noted the professional courtesy they often received. Others recounted experiences of harassment, aggressive behavior, or feeling disrespected. Perceptions of LASD leadership, both current and historical, impacted views of the department overall. Additionally, community stakeholders had varying perspectives on the level of services provided by LASD, interactions with deputies, and community engagement and community partnership. Community leaders and members most commonly became aware of subgroups through media coverage, although some also learned about them through other community members and, to a lesser extent, members of LASD, or they might have discerned the existence of subgroups through negative experiences with deputies. Stakeholders with awareness of subgroups often characterized their members as engaged in behaviors that are detrimental to the community. Thus, whether community members have direct experience with subgroups or not, media coverage and external scrutiny of subgroups could affect community member interpretations of their experiences with LASD, particularly if there is an overemphasis on heavy-handed crime-fighting within a patrol station.

In addition, although there was some similarity in community perspectives of LASD (i.e., mistreatment of community residents is a concern), there was some variation by respondent type and region of the county. Community leaders most often described the LASD culture as positive and viewed personnel as partners with the community and their services as satisfactory. Community leaders were also more likely to highlight the need for residents to be more involved in efforts to improve LASD community relations. Conversely, community members typically offered a less favorable assessment of LASD culture, station personnel behavior, level of engagement, and quality of services. Negative comments about LASD were also consistently more prevalent in the North (specifically Palmdale and Lancaster) and Central (specifically East LA, Century, Compton, and South LA) divisions, including descriptions of subgroup behaviors and their effect on the community. In particular, community members in these areas noted issues with harassment, intimidation, and excessive force. These participants were more likely to be in favor of harsh consequences for subgroups.

It is clear that, at least in some stations, LASD could work to improve community members' perceptions and trust through its commitment to community-oriented policing and procedural justice. Operationalizing this philosophy involves strategic, tactical, and organizational dimensions that must be aligned (Cordner, 1999). This also includes overcoming potential cultural barriers to effective implementation of community policing (Mastrofski, Willis, and Kochel, 2007; Silver et al., 2017). However, other issues that community members identified (e.g., harassment, excessive force) could point to a need for improvements in supervision, internal investigations, and discipline.

CHAPTER SIX

LASD Organizational Context

In this chapter, we provide findings from our interviews that describe what it is like to work at LASD, including the structural features of the department, the key internal processes that shape the workplace, and the key roles within the organization. We also highlight important norms that were described in these interviews.

As institutionalized organizations, law enforcement agencies are judged according to the values that their constituents expect them to uphold (Crank, 2003). Institutions are guided by central authority, culture, and individuals and contain three elements: complexity, loose coupling, and good faith. To meet the demands of their environment (e.g., community demands, court orders), institutionalized organizations grow in *complexity* (e.g., policies, procedures). Often, however, this complexity does not adequately reflect the work of the organization, and behavior can become *loosely coupled* with official policy. *Good faith* reflects trust in others and the purpose of the organization but can prevent critical evaluation of existing practices or systems and downplays external criticism. Thus, although such organizations are certainly guided by policies, procedures, and processes, they also contain institutional elements of assumptions, values, symbols, rituals, and common-sense ways of understanding behavior and outcomes (Crank, 2003).

Chapter Six Methods: Interviews with Personnel

- This chapter presents findings about the dynamics and workplace atmosphere in LASD from our analysis of interviews with LASD personnel conducted from November 2019 to September 2020.
- Quotes from the interviews include the rank of the interviewee.
- See Chapter Four for more detail on data and methods.

Some of our interview and survey questions were aimed at helping us understand whether complexity (or lack of it) at LASD is a factor in deputy subgroups forming. RAND researchers with expertise in qualitative data collection interviewed a total of 57 individuals, including representatives of LASD (most of whom were at the command level; the remainder were an even distribution of midlevel, line-level, and recently retired LASD staff members) and other Los Angeles County stakeholders. Interviews were conducted from October 2019 to October 2020. The interview length ranged from 45 minutes to more than four hours. Participants met with RAND researchers in LASD stations and offices, local restaurants, and RAND Corporation headquarters. The findings presented in this chapter pertain to LASD's organizational dynamics so that we can understand the workplace atmosphere in which subgroups have formed. The interview findings presented here reflect a range of views about LASD. We note that our interviewees were aware of the subject of our project, and it is likely that the views expressed here pertain to organizational factors that contribute to subgroup development and

behavior. The subsequent chapter looks more closely at the topic of deputy subgroups within LASD. It is worth noting that most of our interviews were completed before the social unrest that spread through the country and Los Angeles County in June 2020. Had our interviews been conducted during or after that period, this section would have likely included more current events.

The interviewees discussed a variety of features relevant to the workplace dynamics of LASD. We present the following preview of key findings:

- **Key elements of working in LASD.** Although LASD is formally a single entity, it might be better considered a collection of separate departments. That is, much of the day-to-day work functions largely independently across units. Interviewees also noted that an individual's reputation is incredibly important and precedes you wherever you go (i.e., LASD is large but "everybody knows somebody"). In terms of unit hierarchy, higher status is awarded to those who go "where the action is," or what people call "fast stations." These tend to be urban areas and high-crime areas and are associated with more arrests and more violent crime. Some interviewees provided historical examples of how executive leadership reinforced the idea that working certain places matters. Additionally, patrol tends to be a more valued assignment than other assignments like custody and courts, and special assignments (Special Enforcement Bureau, Homicide Bureau) tend to be the most highly valued assignments.
- **Core organizational processes.** The department tends to be understaffed, and some noted that hiring sprees have contributed to problems in the past, either because of lowered standards for hiring or because of people spending long periods of time in custody assignments. Training was noted as an especially challenging issue because the department is fragmented and there does not appear to be emphasis on improving the consistency of training. In terms of promotions, people generally noted historical issues with promotions but stated that test-based promotions had at least improved consistency in the process. There was some concern that there was an overreliance on testing. Regarding discipline, people broadly discussed the pendulum swing in terms of the severity of discipline over time and across sheriffs.
- **Key roles within LASD.** Interviewees noted that leadership could exist at a variety of levels but stated that at the highest levels, open communication and setting expectations was key. At lower levels, leaders serve as role models and can either model appropriate or inappropriate behavior. Receiving mixed messages from executive leadership can contribute to hesitation by lower levels of leadership. Additionally, frontline supervisors are the critical link for monitoring deputies' behavior and holding people accountable. Their role has changed to be more active over time, but there could be reluctance or pushback to overeager supervisors. They have to balance being firm and fair but can face challenges based on their level of experience or social status. Field training officers (TOs) and peer leaders are also critical for influencing unit culture and other deputies' attitudes and behavior. Being a trainee is a high-stress and low-status position that serves as a formative period for young deputies. In their descriptions of LASD, interviewees often noted the importance of "working hard" and "being humble." These shared understandings factor into people's expectations and reputation in the department. Finally, some interviewees discussed the changing external environment, perceiving the job to have gotten much

more difficult and thankless and perceiving the national environment as antagonistic toward law enforcement.

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

LASD is the largest sheriff's department in the nation. The department's mission is "to proactively prevent crime, enforce the law fairly, and enhance the public's trust through transparency and accountability," and their core values are to "lead with compassion, serve with humility and courageously seek justice for ALL." Their creed—attributed to Deputy David March, who was ambushed and killed in the line of duty—states: "My goals are simple, I will always be painfully honest, work as hard as I can, learn as much as I can and hopefully make a difference in people's lives." We highlight these values and mottos here because they communicate ideals that all members of LASD are expected to pursue.

LASD is structurally and geographically diverse, with nearly 10,000 sworn personnel and roughly 8,000 civilian staff providing a wide range of services. As of August 2020, there were 43 individuals at the rank of assistant sheriff, chief, or commander; 72 captains; 373 lieutenants; 1,213 sergeants; and 8,179 deputies in LASD. The Patrol Division covers 3,171 of the county's 4,084 total square miles: 23 patrol stations police urban areas in South Los Angeles, coastal areas, the mountainous and desert areas in north Los Angeles County, and Santa Catalina Island. Patrol stations vary in the square miles they cover (from 775 to 6 square miles) and the size of the population (286,000 to 4,051). LASD serves 42 contract cities and 141 unincorporated areas in the county and is responsible for seven custody facilities; 37 court locations; seven transit stations; nine community colleges; 216 facilities, hospitals, and clinics; and more than 177 parks in the county.

Workplace Atmosphere

Given how large, complex, and geographically dispersed LASD is, many of our interviewees' career pathways seemingly contributed to differing experiences and perceptions of the working climate and culture of LASD. Despite this diversity in backgrounds, many interviewees conveyed some common assumptions and ways of understanding the organization.

First, many interviewees noted the contradiction that although LASD is a large department, it feels small in the sense that one can always find someone with personal or secondhand knowledge of a particular employee. This could lead to perceptions of favoritism. Relatedly, we heard that "reputation is everything," and reputation is often tied to work experience, particularly the station where someone completed patrol training. To some members of the department, completing patrol training at certain stations—ones with challenging training and more violent crime—means that one is competent enough to work anywhere in the department (we provide more detail on these "fast" stations below).

The idea that patrol stations have their own identities was also commonly referenced in our interviews. This appears to be due partly to the geographic dispersion of stations and partly to the stations' unique histories and traditions. LASD's four patrol divisions (North, Central, South, and East) are in geographically diverse areas; within each division, patrol stations exist

in unique communities that range from urban areas to suburbs and from high-crime areas to low-crime areas. These differences contribute to deputies' perception of the experience to be gained by working at some stations (e.g., deputies in high-crime areas will be more likely to work on a homicide, or some stations are "fast" because they have more challenging work and training). Geographic separation also means that deputies from different divisions tend to be unfamiliar with stations in other divisions or might have limited knowledge of the department overall.

All patrol stations serve a mixture of unincorporated county areas and contract cities. Contract cities have a variety of specific local requirements that leads to some organizational functions, such as dispatch and training, being decentralized, which further contributes to variation in how stations operate. Table 6.1 provides a snapshot of these features of LASD patrol stations from LASD's annual report. Stations also vary widely in their Part 1 crime rate (which includes attempted or completed homicide, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson) and felony-to-misdemeanor arrest ratio. Century Station was the leader in total arrests in 2019, with more than 10,000.

Additionally, the history and traditions of stations are important for identity. Stations are numbered, with lower numbers reflecting stations that have existed for longer. These numbers are always incorporated into station logos. East Los Angeles (ELA) was the second patrol station ever opened in LASD and is currently the oldest (#2), while Compton (#28) and Walnut/Diamond Bar (#29) are the newest. The ELA logo is probably the most well known; it is also controversial. Banned by Sheriff Jim McDonnell in 2015 and restored by Sheriff Villanueva in 2019, the logo features a helmet on top of a boot with the number 2 on the heel. It includes the words "Fort Apache" and "Low Profile," and the Spanish slogan "Siempre una patada en los pantalones," which means "Always a kick in the pants." The logo reflects the historical view of the station as a lone outpost (Fort Apache) and the station's historical role in violent clashes during the 1970s Chicano Moratorium, when a deputy fired a tear gas canister that killed *Los Angeles Times* reporter Ruben Salazar. The helmet and boot are supposed to represent a deputy keeping a "low profile" during the protest—an order from Sheriff Peter J. Pitchess at the time. Another phrase associated with ELA, "Second II None," has a more status-driven connotation.

Over time, executive leadership might have helped cement the seeming importance of station identity and where one trained. For instance, former executive leadership purportedly showed favoritism toward former workplaces, such as Lynwood (now Century) and Lennox (now South Los Angeles), leading to Region II (now Central Division) earning the reputation of having favored assignments within LASD. According to one retired department member,

> Working in [other areas], you were nothing. You weren't worthy of promotion. [One region] had the stigma of being the cowboy country. I was talked to by [an executive] about [one region] being my only experience, he said I needed to work a fast station. If you worked a certain region, you were God's gift to the planet, and if you didn't you were the stepchild, and you were nothing. "You can work Century, and then we'll talk." Every station, even Custody, has their group, their logo. For the most part, that's okay, but [when it's] ELA or Century, "Oh, we handle business here. We get in gun fights," and then the others aren't worthy unless you're involved in a shooting . . . . It was perpetuated by the executive management. Those that worked the fast stations and were worthy of promotion. If you didn't work those fast stations, you weren't worthy and couldn't promote.

Table 6.1
LASD Patrol Station Characteristics, 2019

Division and Station	Incorporated Population	Unincorporated Population	Square Miles	Population Density	Part 1 Crime Rate	Felony-to-Misdemeanor Arrest Ratio[a]
North Division	638,146	169,165	2,202.02	366.62	216.42	0.38
Lancaster	157,617	32,058	600.69	315.76	271.04	0.52
Malibu/Lost Hills	68,011	23,070	173.37	525.36	176.55	0.19
Palmdale Station	158,666	44,426	775.44	261.91	200.55	0.37
Santa Clarita Valley	217,917	68,640	649.07	441.49	153.93	0.35
West Hollywood	35,934	972	3.45	10,684.63	606.67	0.29
Central Division	274,661	383,849	188.97	3,484.70	301.94	0.43
Avalon	3,714	337	132.11	30.66	214.76	0.19
Century	72,100	120,807	12.99	14,845.06	324.82	0.44
Compton	99,988	22,866	12.69	9,677.83	375.65	0.45
East Los Angeles	65,486	124,532	16.32	11,640.30	258.5	0.37
Marina del Rey	N/A	28,357	6.32	4,486.31	355.12	0.22
South Los Angeles	33,374	86,949	8.53	14,113.93	249.00	0.50
South Division	680,103	131,400	116.71	6,953.45	275.03	0.31
Carson	93,799	24,550	24.2	4,890.00	316.44	0.43
Cerritos	50,352	N/A	8.85	5,687.58	477.44	0.15
Lakewood	243,553	2,161	23.39	10,506.41	328.64	0.42
Lomita	73,321	3,926	22.87	3,377.96	155.22	0.33
Norwalk	155,017	69,304	24.03	9,333.85	204.53	0.26
Pico Rivera	64,060	31,459	13.36	7,148.69	241.63	0.20
East Division	323,558	369,788	645.63	1,073.90	192.99	0.23
Altadena	N/A	44,894	25.65	1,750.10	149.91	0.22
Crescenta Valley	20,512	21,362	263.22	159.08	123.95	0.18
Industry	46,017	139,756	46.09	4,030.37	199.28	0.28
San Dimas	34,335	49,239	218.39	382.67	171.11	0.26
Temple	135,302	59,602	46.97	4,149.49	222.83	0.19
Walnut/Diamond Bar	87,392	54,935	45.3	3,141.84	190.69	0.21

[a] Felony-to-misdemeanor arrest ratio. This potentially highlights adaptations to local crime problems (Klinger, 1997).

Whether reality or perception, this idea that certain assignments are more favorable feeds into department members' understanding of what leadership values. It is not clear how pervasive these perceptions are today, as some interviewees reported that there is currently no clear "fast track" to success. As one interviewee noted,

> Some stations are now living on the reputation of two or three generations ago. They like to keep the legend alive of being badasses. Some places may be working twice as hard, but just don't have the reputation. They have more activity of people out and about. But more well-rounded work with a wider variety of people.

Thus, instead of geography, perceptions of "hard-working" stations might be more closely linked to activity (e.g., calls for service, contacts, arrests, violent crime), which divides the department into "fast" stations and "slow" stations.

Fast Versus Slow Stations

Fast stations are perceived to have more challenging training, better opportunities for gaining experience, and more opportunities for doing "police work." As one tenured line-level deputy put it:

> You see more in 2 years than you would elsewhere in 8 years. There are rough neighborhoods and gang violence. It exposes you to a lot. You test yourself. A lot of people can't make it. There's a lot of violence and you gotta know to expect it. I wanted to learn from the best and go where there's stuff going on and some excitement. I didn't want to go to a slow station where all you have to do is deal with some drunk guy. At [station] you have to hustle every day.

There is also a perception that fast stations are more dangerous:

> The high-crime stations are perceived as having a higher reputation than the low-crime stations. There is a bond that occurs with people who face death together. If we're all in this together, I know the A-players will be there, but maybe the C-players won't. C-players are not doing proactive policing. They have the blinders on. A-players look for the crime that is occurring. It takes a certain person to pursue the criminal down the alley.

As discussed in Chapter Three, danger is a commonly identified external stressor of law enforcement work. It is associated with coping mechanisms of "maintaining the edge" over civilians and suspicion and the cultural outcome of social isolation (Paoline and Terrill, 2013). Additionally, role ambiguity and supervisor scrutiny could contribute to adopting a crime-fighter role (e.g., focusing on felony arrests) and "laying low," which contributes to a cultural outcome of loyalty. Thus, the external environment and people's perceptions of it (e.g., danger) could contribute to adaptations and cultural features, such as social isolation and "us versus them" outlooks, that could increase the likelihood of subgroups developing in some areas.

Some might perceive that working at fast stations has a shortcoming, however. Because there is a higher volume of serious crime, this could result in a trade-off in quality when it comes to writing reports, can hinder the development of skills to deal with less serious crimes or provide service, and can result in less diverse experiences for personnel. As one interviewee recounted their experience at a fast station:

> It's a fast station regarding violent crime. They are great at that. But they are terrible at little stuff. So over time you have constant turnover. At one time as training sergeant, I had 43 people on training. One TO went to prison for falsifying evidence. I had to pick him to be [TO] because we ran out of guys. So, everyone was way too young. They don't train in the right way. I think the department is very young right now, too, which may be a problem. But back then, a lack of maturity.

It's likely that those who currently work this station would disagree with this characterization, but these perceptions could play into assumptions about what it is like to work at a station or the qualities of those who work there. Thus, there is a perception that fast stations are associated with gaining experience faster and dealing with more serious crimes, but also with higher turnover, which can create staffing challenges and place potentially less-qualified people in key positions.

In contrast with the challenges of fast stations, an interviewee said that at slow stations, "I think you have to work harder than the faster ones because at the faster ones you open your back door and people come in. At the slower ones, we're out there hunting for people that are up to no good." Several interviewees highlighted these distinctions between fast and slow stations, but it is important to note that there is no objective definition of "fast" or "slow."

Although there is a tendency among deputies to group stations and therefore personnel into fast and slow, we also heard sentiments emphasizing the importance of hard work (e.g., "I don't frown upon those from other stations, though. If you have a strong work ethic, I don't care where you're from") and the ubiquitous risk of danger (e.g., "Some stations think they are the most fire-tested. So, had to train there to get a pin, even if you transferred in from another fast station. You can argue that every station is risky, but that's not how people think"). There is also a question of whether having different skill sets across stations is actually beneficial and allows people to self-select into places that are a good fit for them. As one command staff noted,

> That's the beauty of the Sheriff's Department. It takes different deputies to handle different places. Not all can do Compton, Lennox. Some can do Marina. Different people for different places. A deputy will learn at Century in a year what will take 3 or 4 years in other places. It doesn't make you better, though. LASD stations operate as independent police departments.

This statement also recognizes that, rather than operating as districts or precincts within the same department, LASD stations are more like completely separate departments (Meyer and Rowan, 1977; Pfeffer and Salancik, 1977), which can lead to differing ways of understanding the organization or doing the work (e.g., dictionary, directory, or recipe knowledge; Sackmann, 1992), potentially creating differing unit subcultures within the organization (Herbert, 1998).

Devaluing Certain Assignments

The importance placed on patrol can affect how members of the department perceive other assignments (e.g., custody or courts services). The CCJV report noted the devaluing of custody in particular (e.g., custody deputies are sometimes nicknamed "steputies"). As one interviewee explains:

> Custody is a good place to work, the problem is the stigma associated with it. It's always been around. I think custody is still looked down upon as that's where the slugs, the problem [and lazy] people go. It's unfortunate because custody is a very important part of our department. That's when they started to change to be allowed to promote in custody, but I don't know if that's still in place.

Being able to promote in custody was the result of what is known as the Dual Track option,[1] which the current administration ended and replaced with new requirements for personnel to spend four years in their first patrol assignment before being eligible to promote or transfer. This solidifies the importance of patrol as a career pathway and is viewed as critical for developing certain skills. That is, a deputy might not be considered a "real deputy" until they finish patrol training. This could be considered unfair to people who might have wished to promote through the Dual Track option and can no longer do so. Importantly, a critical feature of LASD and all sheriff's departments is that new deputies almost always start their career working the jails. This is where deputies begin to learn about patrol stations and where they would be interested in working patrol after their jail stint. This is also where work relationships and networks begin to form; as one interviewee said, "People in the jails were divided by where they wanted to go in terms of stations in patrol. Different floors of the jail typically went to certain stations."

As one line-level deputy explained, selecting a station is reflective of one's expectations for the job and individual background:

> Men's Central Jail. I saw the mentality there. Certain people who are well-liked get pulled to work the old side: 2000/3000 [floors]—it's the most respected place to work. I started on 4000 [floor]—the new side. It's weird how they start the brainwashing. Like you want to work 2000/3000 to build your reputation as a hard charger and can handle ghetto. Those floors are associated with the station you want to go to. 3000 go to Compton. In patrol, they ask where did this guy work? Which floor? 2000 go to Century. NCCF [North County Correctional Facility]—heard stories that certain buildings go to SLA [South Los Angeles Station], Lennox [Century Station]. It's a passage. I wanted to go to ELA [East Los Angeles] station because I'm Latino and felt like I could be on the level with the people I'm helping out. I speak the language, I can put myself in their shoes. I grew up in the 'hood. I could see myself making a difference.

Despite custody being perceived as an undesired assignment, several interviewees recognized the importance of custody for personal development but also suggested shorter stints there. Some people noted that working custody is important for interacting with and understanding people who have violated the law, which helps deputies understand crime and criminal behavior when they reach patrol. As one command staff explained, "Custody allows you to grow, gain confidence, and get street wise, and learn the tricks of the trade of the guys on the street." Spending a few years in custody also allows younger deputies to mature in what might be considered a more controlled environment. However, several interviewees noted that spend-

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[1] Historically, deputies were not allowed to promote to sergeant or beyond without having gone to patrol first. Starting in 2014, LASD began the Dual Track option, which allowed deputies to promote and have a career path exclusively in custody assignments.

ing too much time working in custody can have a negative impact on deputies' worldview. According to one command staff:

> Another problem with our culture is that you go straight to the jail. You mature in the jail. You learn about the seedy side of life. The bad part is that everyone is a crook. Then, you go out into the field and you treat people like crooks, victims, informants. Maybe people should spend less time in the jail, a maximum of maybe 1 year. Your time in jail depends on the stations you put in for.

The potential for the custody experience to make deputies cynical was an observation that several participants noted and was referenced as a potential issue by community stakeholders, but it is an open question. There is a limited amount of research in this area, but some evidence suggests that there is some overlap across the occupational cultures of correctional officers and police officers, based on similar task environments (Farkas and Manning, 1997). Thus, assignment and patrol station hierarchies define how many view the department and, therefore, department personnel. It is not clear how strongly these factors affect career decisions of LASD personnel, as they might make decisions based on other priorities (e.g., being close to home, a regular schedule).

Key Organizational Processes

Although a full examination of organizational processes is beyond the scope of this project, several of these processes were frequently mentioned in relation to both subgroups and general challenges for LASD. Hiring, training, promotions, and discipline are important organizational features that subtly affect a variety of organizational processes and outcomes. The individual differences in the skills, abilities, and outlooks that people possess when they enter the department can potentially endure throughout their career. Training is critical for developing skills and institutionalizing job-specific knowledge, and academy training is a key step for early socialization of recruits. Finally, promotions and promotion processes reflect the qualities and characteristics that the department values in personnel (Brodin, 2018). Hiring, training, and promotions are important elements of any organization, and each is worthy of its own systematic study, but we highlight findings that interviewees noted as particularly important because they affect personnel and their perceptions and experiences, whether from a historical perspective, an operational perspective, or an organizational climate and culture perspective.

Hiring

Hiring is a critical but underresearched aspect of law enforcement effectiveness. In January 2021, LASD began to require an associate's degree for new hires. When the idea of higher educational requirements came up, some interviewees certainly saw it as a positive step. This is also consistent with policing research literature that highlights the importance of education for policing outcomes, such as the use of force and complaints (McElvain and Kposowa, 2008; Paoline and Terrill, 2007; Rydberg and Terrill, 2010; Terrill and Mastrofski, 2002), as well as with feedback from the community, who recommended higher education requirements to improve deputies' performance. Other interviewees noted that cyclical hiring sprees are a historical concern for many in the department. Cyclical hiring sprees are partly a function of county budgets and hiring freezes. Some command staff noted that "in the push to hire deputies, they are going to get issues like they did in 2008 because they got a lot of bad apples and lowered the standard in terms of the background check. I know people who have left the

background unit because they did not agree with the decisions being made. He's filling up the vacancies, but they'll have to see how that turns out." Another command staff member estimated that hiring roughly 400 people per year would be a more balanced approach to hiring as opposed to 1,000 in a single year followed by 200 or less in subsequent years. Hiring sprees could also contribute to making the department "too young" because they could lead to people leaving custody too soon and being unprepared for patrol training. Conversely, contingent on county funding, if a hiring spree is followed by a hiring freeze, people might stay in custody too long, which has reportedly contributed to problems in the jails in the past.

Training Challenges

Several interviewees noted structural challenges that affect LASD's ability to provide timely, effective, and consistent training across the department. Some command staff perceived that new deputies enter LASD with deficient communication skills. This perception was linked to generational differences (e.g., millennials and Generation Z) but also to the changing nature of interactions in the jails. The perception is that various administrative and procedural requirements of custody work (e.g., cell checks, paperwork) leave less time for interacting with inmates that improves communication skills and street knowledge. Others noted that a lack of inmate interaction can leave deputies unprepared for their crime-fighting duties when they leave custody for patrol. As one command staff noted, "Today, the last batch of trainees had been on the job for 4 months in custody. They're not prepared (for patrol) and they're scared. So, the TOs have to teach deputies more about how to do the job."

Additionally, except for the academy, much of the training that deputies receive is not centralized and is handled at the unit level. Given the autonomy of units, this could contribute to variation in training across the department. As one command staff remarked:

> We get cynical and maybe because it's the nature of our jobs and who we see, but I think we need to have a better training structure. We used to have centralized training when I first came onto the department. Now, each unit is responsible for the training. It's expensive to centralize training. You have to give time to people for the training, but if you want to reduce liabilities, it's going to cost money . . . spending money on the front end so you don't have to pay for it on the back end. . . . I think if we were better, if these things come together, it would minimize deputy groups happening, giving people a reason to do something that is incongruent with the missions and goals.

Others noted that training affects supervisory ranks as well. One command staff said:

> Sergeants have administrative and supervisory tasks that we don't really train them for. It's all on the job. We don't have the resources to do the training; we'd have ridiculous amounts of overtime. There's an 80-hour mandate by POST [the California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training], and we've asked for 120 hours to do 40 [hours] of LASD extra [training], but the answer is always "no." Most of the POST stuff is not the hands-on practical stuff that we need them to know. We have the field operations school for sergeants that's supposed to be had within a year [of promoting to sergeant], but 90 percent of the typical class has at least 3 years [on the job]. We have no training for sergeants or lieutenants to make them better at their job.

Limited training at any level can create a ripple effect leading to "practical drift" (i.e., a slow steady uncoupling of practice from written procedure; Klinger, 2020) or, as one com-

mand staff put it, "blurred copies" of training programs that might not quite match what LASD intended:

> The bottom line is, you have to have the right training in place, everywhere, all the way down the line. If you have people indoctrinating new recruits into this way of policing, it's people who've worked at different stations who policed under different circumstances. . . . if you have flaws in training, the way things are done, you have a series of blurred copies. You have to have a fresh new perspective on training consistently.

Finally, training challenges are also evident for in-service training. As one midlevel supervisor explained:

> We lack the technology to train. . . . Depending on the subject matter, some of it is annual, some biannual, etc. I spent the last 10 years of patrol and didn't have a single first aid or CPR class. I only went to training 1 or 2 times because I took initiative . . . it comes down to money and the higher-ups. I brought things up to supervisors who have a lack of interest.

Multiple survey respondents also mentioned training deficiencies, as one explained:

> In my opinion, the biggest problem LASD has is the lack of ongoing training. For most deputies, training consists of being given a handout to read and signing an APIS [Automated Personnel In-Service] roster, with no practical application exercise to support the information provided. The recent incidents that have incited the unrest in this country boil down to the quality of officer training or the lack thereof.

Promotions

Several interviewees also noted that promotions are judged in terms of whether the people being promoted are the right fit for their new position. Perspectives on promotions took two forms: (1) those who commented on promotions to executive leadership and command staff positions and (2) those who commented on promotions to midlevel supervision and the process for how these positions are assigned.

Historically, favoritism was perceived as the basis for many promotions (e.g., accusations of rigged exams), especially to the ranks of captain and above. Some command staff noted that people might still be promoted or marginalized based on this history, but several perceived the new process for promotion to captain[2] to be a positive direction.

> Previously if this job had opened, the Sheriff and command staff would pick a few people and interview them all, and usually there was a ringer in there. There would be a county rep or a city manager or someone that you'd interview with, and they would tell the Sheriff who they wanted. And the Sheriff would ignore that and pick the person they actually wanted.

There is now apparently a broader applicant pool and more local control in selecting captains. It is worth noting that consistency matters, and there is some concern that the process is not being followed, or, as one individual put it:

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[2] Beginning in 2019, LASD executive staff could select up to ten candidates (previously three) to interview for a captain position. These candidates must have worked at least four cumulative years in patrol assignments. Community leaders interview the candidates and make a recommendation.

> As long as it's enforced uniformly. If you make exceptions, then it's a huge drawback. It affects supervisors and deputies. People lose respect for leadership.

Some noted that the promotions process still appears to be bifurcated. As one command staff member noted,

> Some people are promoted from good work. Some are promoted from connections. Yesterday, one person who promoted [did not meet supposed qualifications]. That person had clear connections to people at the top. It's frustrating for people who are passed over. How do you know [the reason]? Is it politics of the department or something else?

Several interviewees noted that promotions at lower ranks are now much more formalized than they used to be, which led to suspicions of favoritism in the past. However, the new process can pose challenges because it does not give the captains any say. Promotions to coveted positions and midlevel supervisory posts are test-based, and assignments tend to occur based on seniority. Captains typically are not allowed to pick the sergeants and lieutenants who work for them. As one commented,

> You have what you have. You can try to mentor. Only some specialty positions can be picked by captains now, so problems can come in with a supervisory issue. The department does a better job now training sergeants than 20 years ago. We do mentoring and classes, but ideally it would be a standard other than the test. . . . I understand the reason for it—prior people abused that power. People couldn't get out of custody because they didn't know people in patrol.

Finding a balance between an impartial or test-driven promotion process while also promoting individuals with the appropriate experience and skills was seen as a challenge in need of solutions.

Investigations and Discipline

We also heard a variety of perspectives on discipline. The themes related to how the severity of discipline can send a message to deputies about whether LASD takes a matter seriously, the importance of individualized discipline and how discipline varies across the department, and historical perspectives on discipline under different sheriffs.

Historically, several command staff noted a pattern of lax discipline during Sheriff Baca's tenure, primarily attributed to favoritism on the part of Undersheriff Tanaka.[3] As one person said, "Tanaka . . . let the deputies do whatever the hell they wanted to do. Baca was way up in the clouds and let Tanaka do whatever he wanted to." Several interviewees thought that the pendulum swung the other way under Sheriff McDonnell but has now swung back to more of a middle ground. As one person said:

> With Baca and Tanaka, who you knew could get you out of discipline. For McDonnell, it swung the other way. Now, we are back to less punitive and better union protections. One mistake is not the end of the world now. Now, you have discretion to take each case as it is. . . . We still have guidelines for fairness, and discipline is equitable across the department if circumstances are similar.

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[3] This has been documented publicly in the media (Faturechi and Leonard, 2012) and in the CCJV report.

This idea of fairness can be challenging because the process that leads to disciplinary decisions can be opaque, especially when trying to compare decisions across the department. As one interviewee explained:

> Under McDonnell, people felt like there was too much discipline and it was unfair. But they didn't understand the process and the efforts to make it fair. People don't want to hear the truth. And it's secretive, so people don't understand decisions and how it may be fair. That's state law to keep investigations closed. They think, "So-and-so did the same thing and didn't get into trouble, why am I getting in trouble?" They don't know how the situations are different.

Perception of unequal treatment is a common issue in law enforcement agencies, but perceptions matter nonetheless because they can affect morale and treatment of others (Jacobs, Belschak, and Den Hartog, 2014; Wolfe and Piquero, 2011; Wolfe et al., 2018). Similarly, perspectives varied on individualized discipline and variation across the department. In support of increasing consistency, one command staff noted:

> One significant thing they don't do and should is find the best practices and what works and what doesn't and implement that. I can run whatever I want, but they don't go out looking for those best practices. We are all under one department and they should run the same way. We should not have so much latitude from division to division. There's different discipline based on division.

The other perspective, however, is that having more independence is valuable for adapting to local circumstances or leadership priorities, within limits. As one person said:

> I'm allowed to manage my unit and hold people accountable in my own way. We deal with people until they cross a certain line. That's what we're trying to get our younger personnel to understand. Consistency is a good thing, but every situation should be looked at differently. There should be minimum standards, but everything needs to be evaluated. If you're not going to own the mistakes, then we've got a problem.

But where there is too much freedom to vary, there is potential for people to deviate from acceptable practice. According to a midlevel supervisor: "Supervisors [are] trying to self-preserve and can't hold their own guys accountable anymore. Discipline is inconsistent and any rules can be bent and manipulated."

Lastly, several interviewees commented on the messages the department sends about acceptable behavior based on discipline. As one command staff noted,

> If they really want to make change, they make change. If they're just being political and putting something out in the atmosphere, we can see the difference. For example, not wearing a seat belt is just a write up. But if the punishment is days off with no pay, then they know it's serious.

Other signals about what is important come from the way discipline is implemented—for instance, if there are "a lot more written reprimands and not discipline happening. Or things are not written up as excessive force. So people are not being held accountable."

Two significant challenges with discipline in law enforcement agencies are that there is no "correct" answer as to the level of discipline for the various types of infractions, and employee protections make it difficult to fire poorly performing personnel, which is why leadership and supervision practices are so important. Sometimes this boils down to determining why a violation was committed: "Some has to do with intent. Honest mistake? Trying to cut corners? Training issue? All those factors play into it," one person said.

Leadership and Supervisory Roles

Ensuring that the department runs in a fair, effective manner is directly tied to the actions of leadership. Additionally, leadership sets the tone for the climate and culture (Dragoni, 2005; Schaefer and Boyd, 2010; Trice and Beyer, 1991; Zohar and Tenne-Gazit, 2008), both within the department and externally with the community. In an organization as large and complex as LASD, understanding and leading the entire organization is challenging. Throughout our interviews, we heard a variety of perspectives on leadership and supervision that touched on department history, communication styles, supervisor skills and experience, and interactions with subordinates.

Perspectives on Leadership

First, interviewees were consistent about the importance of direct communication with subordinates. Particularly at the captain level, direct communication at all levels of the unit was cited as important for giving voices to all, building trust, and ensuring that everyone is on the same page. The simplest aspect of this is walking around the station or facility and talking to people where they work rather than in an office. Captains deemed this to be critical for understanding what is actually going on within a unit:

> You're always trying to get ahead of it. The hardest job is dealing with human beings. It's a constant feeling of "Am I missing something?" I'm trying to prevent burnout and provide training. . . . We build ourselves up so much that we forget to be human. We have to humanize law enforcement.

Another way direct communication is important is to give deputies a voice in decision-making and to generate buy-in for common goals. Some captains reported allowing people to take ownership of redesigning assignments or asking deputies for feedback about what is working and what is not. Direct communication is important for making sure that everyone is on the same page—both all the way down and back up the chain of command. Being able to communicate and understand the unit better from a ground level also helps captains anticipate and be proactive about problems: "If someone is disciplined, and someone says, 'we could see that coming,' that's a failure of leadership," one person said. This anticipation is connected to acting decisively and not letting problems fester.

Others recognized the fact that different types of leadership occur within different levels of the organization. Deputy leaders, sometimes referred to as "peer leaders," serve as role models for other deputies, and "every station has its person, the culture of the station revolves around a person or a couple of people. Their mannerisms, the way they speak, the way they act resembles the way the legend acts." These individuals are seen as important for getting people on board

with change. The quote above and the one below both reflect the importance of deputy leaders and TOs for implementing the goals of the department.

> You have that one guy everyone wants to be like. Deputies hate change, but if you make a change, they're going to do it, we're still paramilitary. Making change isn't hard, it's more how to motivate them to want to do it.

Equally or more important are TOs, who might have the most influence on a unit.

> If you're a good training officer, you have to figure out how people learn and find the best way to communicate. If you are a really great TO, you have the ability to almost clone yourself. If you're really good, you have the ability to change or create or maintain the personality of a station. I tell my TO here, "If you don't believe that this is the best station, you should. And you as a TO, you have the ability to make that true through the trainees you send out here. If you believe you're the best, you should be able to make your trainees the best here."

Both of these quotes reflect the importance of deputy leaders and TOs for implementing the goals of the department. Sergeants are also in important leadership positions, but as a supervisor, their role is slightly different in that they need to guide and monitor behavior without needing to be liked. "It comes back to strong supervisors knowing the temperature of a unit. The sergeant role is critical. The sergeant should be strong and assertive," one interviewee said.

Mixed Messages

Other discussions about leadership focused on leaders sometimes sending mixed messages, which can impede accountability or lead to loss of respect. The most notable historical example is former Undersheriff Tanaka's infamous "work in the gray" speech,[4] in which he implied that it is acceptable to push boundaries or break policy if it leads to a desirable outcome. As one interviewee noted:

> There were really bad leadership flaws where he empowered people too much and gave free range. This is a fact as well, when the Undersheriff (Tanaka) came out to my station and he gave the infamous "working in the gray" speech. . . . Whenever you believe you're exempt from rules, that's when you're no use anymore. You have to abide by the rules. You have to have loyalty and respect for the rules. If supervisors say the rules don't apply to you, that's where you have problems.

This and other previously reported actions appeared to undermine supervisors' ability to hold people accountable, particularly in the jails. This extreme example can take other forms, as another interviewee explained:

> It's accountability. If they're coming in late, and the captain says it's no big deal, it's going to perpetuate with that and other policy. Now this person shows up in a different location and they have to walk the walk. It's all contingent upon who is watching you.

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[4] This has been discussed publicly in the media (Faturechi and Leonard, 2012) and in the CCJV report.

Such inconsistency affects subordinate leadership as well. For instance, one interviewee gave an example of a captain questioning why the interviewee wrote up a sergeant for a use of force that had gone unreported. The interviewee explained to the captain that it was done to correct the adverse behavior. How a lax approach can impede accountability is best summed up in this statement:

> These deputies keep pushing the line and dipping their toes to see how far they can go. The "ah, boys will be boys, it's harmless," won't work. You create a shitstorm, and that's what we have.

Finally, some interviewees noted that personnel pay attention to who is promoted to executive leadership positions and whether those individuals fit the stated criteria. For example, a new push for executives in LASD to have a certain amount of time in patrol and custody is viewed as an important requirement because their deeper experience and knowledge of assignments in these areas will likely make them better leaders. However, "if they make exceptions, then it's a huge drawback . . . people lose respect for leadership."

Front-Line Supervision

Front-line supervisors play a critical role in public safety organizations. Because they are in direct contact with line-level personnel, supervisors have direct influence on behavior, attitudes, and organizational culture (Police Executive Research Forum, 2018). This role often involves making sure that front-line staff understand departmental policies, discussing tactics, responding to critical incidents, debriefing, holding people accountable, and other critical functions related to front-line work. Front-line supervisors are responsible for communicating messages from executive leadership, implementing organizational changes, and serving as role models for subordinates (Weiss, 1977). Research on the influence of sergeants suggests that they can affect perceptions of organizational fairness, support for the organization's use-of-force policy (Ingram et al., 2014), job satisfaction (Ingram and Weidner, 2011), compliance with internal policies (Haas et al., 2015), use of force (Lim and Lee, 2015), and arrests (Engel, 2000; Engel and Worden, 2003).

LASD has high expectations for all supervisors. As outlined in the Manual of Policies and Procedures (section 3-01/020.25), supervisors have "ultimate responsibility for the supervision of all members subordinate to [them] in the chain of command" (Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Manual of Policy and Procedures, 2021a), including ensuring their general welfare, evaluating performance and investigating complaints, developing acceptable attitudes, and counseling on career paths. Supervisors perform regular inspections, give instructions, delegate authority, and assign tasks. They are ultimately responsible for the conduct of their subordinates and subordinate supervisors.

Several interviewees noted that the role of sergeants has changed over time. For instance, since the 1990s and early 2000s, sergeants have taken on a larger role. As one member of command staff explained:

> In the 1990s, they neutered the power of the bonus deputy. Deputies were mandated to report to a sergeant when you used force. There was more responsibility on the sergeant because of this. They didn't used to have to do this in the department; this was viewed as an LAPD thing because police officers in LAPD have to get sergeant approval for everything.

> LASD hasn't gotten to that yet, but they have put more accountability on the sergeants. Sergeants are more hands-on now.

This contrast with LAPD was mentioned several times as being indicative of deputies being expected and judged on their ability to "handle things" and of supervisors supporting but not dictating or controlling activity, which could set LASD apart from other law enforcement agencies. This approach can present a tension with supervision, however, as people could feel that if a supervisor does "roll" on a call (accompany the deputy when responding to a call), he or she might not trust the deputy or might be trying to "burn" (punish) the deputy.

Balance Between Firmness and Fairness

The position of sergeant was described as the ultimate balancing act: being firm and fair, getting close to deputies but not too close, giving enough instructions but not micromanaging, and so on. Trust appears to be essential, as one command staff member noted:

> Sergeant position is the key position. I tell them "treat them like your own children." Set the environment so that deputies come to you. They have to be comfortable coming to you, seeking advice, leadership, and guidance. Educate them. Be there for them. The sergeant has to be a conduit to the captain. The captain won't know anything from where they are. I communicate this to every sergeant and lieutenant.

Caring was also noted as an important characteristic that distinguished good sergeants from bad sergeants. One command staff member said:

> With anything in law enforcement, if you have strong supervisors and make employees believe you care about them, a lot of the problems will be diminished or not arise. But a lot [of supervisors] don't care and just come here to get paid. You have to be passionate with the things you do. I try to surround myself with those who care, and if not, I send them somewhere else.

Another way supervisors were perceived as effective was if they set expectations and upheld them. Effective supervisors accept accountability for the behavior of their subordinates. As one command staff noted: "Good sergeants will make or break deputies. They are the ones that have to ensure that the deputies are working hard, treating people with respect, and any time you see them wavering, grab 'em and ask them, 'Have you considered this or this or this?'" Accountability applies to both overseeing deputies' general behavior and communicating new policy directives (e.g., ensuring that deputies wear seat belts).

Supervision Challenges

Although there are clear characteristics that promote effective supervision, there are also structural and individual factors that can present challenges for effective supervision. These factors include supervisors' experience and knowledge, their work history, their courage, and department policies and procedures.

One key challenge that several interviewees noted is that, because the department is young and there are a lot of sergeant vacancies to fill, some sergeants might have much less experience than deputies who they are assigned to supervise. Although deputies respect rank, when it comes to doing the work, experience tends to matter more. As one command staff

member noted, "Years of service is more important than rank. On the surface, we're very compliant with the hierarchy. You have to set the tone early as a sergeant."

Related to experience is how the current promotions process works. The process is largely test-driven (e.g., paper-and-pencil tests of knowledge and situational judgment), and unit commanders are unable to select their sergeants or lieutenants. Although the lack of choice was generally understood in light of the substantial favoritism allowed under previous practices, a reliance on testing alone was seen as potentially fraught:

> We are promoting 300 sergeants soon. More than some departments as a whole. Sometimes you get good test-takers who don't have common sense or street knowledge, so it's a mixed bag. But we have to start mentoring all of them. It's only informal mentoring. Training is more about paperwork, their role.

As mitigation, some interviewees deemed it important to pair new sergeants with more-experienced sergeants or lieutenants and to avoid a mismatch between new sergeants and the deputies they supervise (e.g., a new sergeant supervising "Type A" deputies). Although inexperience has to be managed, there is still no substitute for experience, as command staff noted: "Those that are tenured sergeants are invaluable. They can navigate through any problem that comes their way and they have the commitment level to roll up their sleeves."

Another supervisory challenge for some stations stems from the perception of fast and slow stations. Some interviewees noted that people who trained in slow stations could try to go to fast stations as supervisors—referred to as "back-dooring"—to gain the fast station reputation without having trained there. As one supervisor explained:

> You have a lot of inexperienced people get promoted. You get these people who, there's this drive in people to work at a fast station. . . . You have to be stronger than a lot of heavy-duty assholes there. You have to have the wherewithal to get through every day. What they do is say "I went to this slower station and it was closer to home," etc., then they get to sergeant and try to get to a fast station. It's nowhere near as difficult as a sergeant. You chose not to take the hard route. . . . I'll say "you should have transferred here as a deputy." . . . they're driven by this insecurity that they need to be liked so they won't make the hard decisions. . . . they don't recognize who's being scandalous or conning them. You get astute deputies who could just as well be criminals fooling supervisors into thinking they're hard workers, down for the cause, good people, etc., and they're allowed to run the program that they want.

Because subgroups are likely to exist in fast stations, a sergeant's background could potentially inhibit his or her effectiveness when dealing with subgroup members.

Promote and Remain

On the flip side of "back-dooring" is the idea of "promote and remain," or promoting from within the same station where one spent a lot of time as a patrol deputy. This is perceived as a challenge because a new supervisor would be supervising their friends, which could make it challenging to firmly hold subordinates accountable. There is a trade-off, however, because their familiarity can be beneficial in that, as one person put it, "they know the area. They know the City Council. The pitfall is that now they're supervising deputies they worked with." This presents a potential challenge for new supervisors who "have to have the courage to step up and

confront people." This can be a challenge for supervisors who promote and remain in stations with subgroups, because they might have developed bonds with members.

Supervisor Cowardice or "Deputy Five"

Supervisor courage or, alternatively, supervisor cowardice was seen as a related potential challenge. In the extreme, supervisors who are too interested in being friends with deputies or behave as they did before their promotion are known as a "Deputy Five" (there are four levels within the deputy rank). As one command staff member explained, "Some supervisors want to be friendly and be accepted, but that's the distinction between weak and strong leadership. Custody had supervisors who wanted to be accepted, which is why they had a problem, but it's not the job to be friends with deputies."

This also speaks to the ability to address problems decisively as soon as they surface, as one command-level interviewee discussed:

> Where there is strong supervision, where supervisors have the pulse of the workplace and can nip things in the bud right away, that's where groups are not allowed to flourish. If groups cause a problem, then it can be addressed. . . . Good supervisors are not afraid to take action. Supervisors need to explain to young, impressionable deputies the pitfalls and consequences of their actions if they go astray.

Policies Can Tie Supervisors' Hands

Another unique aspect of the sergeant's role is that they are the link in the chain of command between deputies and the more administrative or managerial positions. This requires them to both go into the field and perform administrative tasks. Some interviewees noted that supervisors have little discretion in many important matters other than to follow the standard procedures. As one supervisor said:

> Sergeants have the toughest job. You get it from below, above, and the public. It's thankless but they still have the responsibility because they're immediate. They don't have the ability anymore to back a deputy who didn't handle a call a certain way that gets them in trouble. The sergeant is bound by policy to start an investigation. Once that investigation starts, the deputy could be blacklisted or worse. Policy dictates the way the supervisor will supervise. . . . Even guiding someone, it affects the sergeant-deputy relationship. I can see these things being good and bad.

Thus, these administrative requirements are important because they ensure that policies are being upheld, but they can affect the deputy-sergeant relationship because deputies know that a sergeant has little discretion on some matters. Given that cliques generally serve a function to "lay low" from administrative scrutiny (Crank, 2004), this could increase distance between supervisors and subgroup members. Additionally, deputies who are dealing with issues caused by subgroups might be hesitant to discuss them with a supervisor due to the supervisor's potential duty to report, invoking a process that is out of the complainant's control.

Administrative Burden Could Limit Effectiveness

Others noted that the supervisor position has changed over time and now includes much more paperwork and office work than it used to. This pulls sergeants from direct supervision and might limit their effectiveness. This could also prevent them from engaging in other, poten-

tially more important, aspects of their supervisory responsibilities because the paperwork that could result from taking action might not be "worth it." This is sometimes the case for situations that allow an employee to "grieve" the supervisors' decision (initiate a formal challenge to the decision). One supervisor put it this way: "As a supervisor, issuing a report on a deputy makes you 'damned if you do, damned if you don't.'" Looking up from below, a few deputies noted that this administrative burden might lead to supervisors who let things slide and are not interested in making waves.

Discipline Can Be Perceived as Too Harsh

Knowing that there is little discretion once formal procedures begin, some interviewees indicated that if discipline is perceived as being too harsh, supervisors might hesitate to impose it. As one command staff member noted,

> It's important to enforce. If it's too severe, it affects the supervisor's decision. It's gotten too much attention and overblown. Supervisors aren't addressing bad behavior that has to be dealt with. Reporting on others is a challenge in any profession. You're in life and death [situations] and you're having to trust people. Trust and camaraderie are important.

By emphasizing trust and camaraderie, this quote suggests that taking supervisory action can limit effectiveness, which was echoed elsewhere, although there is a limit. As one individual said,

> We look at every complaint. If it's not written down it didn't occur. We document everything to protect the deputies. The change to everything is education. If it is correctible, then education can be more effective than discipline. Discipline can make some deputies ineffective. But if the offense is bad enough, there's no problem firing the deputy. For instance, if a deputy needs to improve their driving patterns, that's correctible. If it's drunk driving or domestic violence, which is widespread across the county and department, it's one and done.

As the discussion above suggests, front-line supervision is critical for the functioning of LASD (or any department), but a variety of organizational and individual dynamics can factor into effective supervision. This includes supervisor experience, work history, and courage, as well as organizational factors, such as limited discretion, administrative workload, and options for discipline. These factors can provide challenges to effective supervision of subgroups, given that subgroup members might have more experience or might have worked at the station for a long period of time. Effective supervisors use a firm yet fair approach and show subordinates that they care through communication and action. Collectively, supervisors need to be on the same page and uphold the same standards.

These challenges for supervision also need to be considered in the context of the supervisory environment. Supervisors do not directly observe much of the patrol work (i.e., deputies have a high level of autonomy and discretion), which makes it critical that supervisors effectively communicate and guide deputies toward desired behaviors. Some of the above challenges are not novel, as other research has identified several overlapping acts of commission (e.g., arrogance, closed-mindedness, micromanaging, capriciousness) and omission (poor work ethic, failure to act, poor communication, lack of interpersonal skills, lack of integrity) of ineffective police leaders (Schafer, 2010).

Training Officers

TOs[5] fulfill a unique role in between being a deputy and a sergeant. The limited research on how TOs influence their trainees suggests that TOs have a significant impact on trainee behavior in terms of transferring academy training into the field (Dulin, Dulin, and Patino, 2019), incorporating community policing into field training (Chappell, 2007), preventing future allegations of trainee misconduct (Getty, Worrall, and Morris, 2016), and affecting trainees' decisions to leave police work (Haarr, 2005).

In LASD, TOs have elevated status and pay as a "Bonus Deputy" and are responsible for training and evaluating trainees both in the jails and on patrol. Because patrol training is a key step, the relationship between patrol TO and trainee is prominent in LASD and is occasionally described in familial terms (e.g., second generation). "Leadership is important at every level," as one interviewee said. "[TO] is most important and dynamic personnel at every station. They control how [the] deputy will go." Another outlined the characteristics of a good TO this way:

> Good TOs recognize what works with the trainees. There is no "one size fits all." You have to be dedicated and willing to put in the hours. Have maturity. Be able to own up to mistakes. Willingness to learn as well. You want your best people who can write good paper. Got to have patience.

Currently, a deputy must go through "coveted testing"[6] and qualify before they are promoted to a coveted position, such as the TO position. Historically, the process was much less formal, as one interviewee described:

> Back in the day, the captains picked the training officers. Really need TOs to be knowledgeable about their area and the station. That way you can teach your trainees about the community. They looked for hard workers, someone who was teachable. Now, they do a universal test, and you come out of a list, so you can be a training officer anywhere. So, you can go without knowing anything about that neighborhood or station. They changed this about ten years ago because there were some captains who were just picking people they knew. But the pendulum swung too far the other way for the purpose of fairness. However, they do still try to make sure they can pick their people who are familiar with the area.

Other interviewees noted that, under the old system, captains would consult with deputies about who would make a good TO, possibly contributing to undue influence of deputy subgroups. Currently, command staff note that they understand the need for a fair process but that the coveted testing process gives them no say in the selections, and they occasionally have to resort to workarounds, such as "letting the list die" (closing the position and reopening it later), to get the right person. Said one:

> If it's the right person, they can play a huge role, but the big problem we have right now is coveted testing—it's a huge problem. There are a lot of people with a sense of entitlement. They take the test before they're ready. Every job should have an oral interview with it. You

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[5] We use the generic term *TO* to avoid confusion because many of the functions of training officers in custody and field training officers in patrol are similar. We note where we are specifically discussing patrol training officers.

[6] This is a test people must take to promote to a Bonus Deputy position, which is still within the deputy rank but includes a pay raise. These positions include TOs, as well as several other positions, such as detective, team leader, and others. Once passing the test, coveted positions are filled on a seniority basis.

> need the A player, the B player to assess someone. I'll just lock up the list if I don't see someone who can be trusted to take the position. If you as a supervisor are going to be responsible for managing the person, you should at least be able to weigh in on who gets the job.

Peer Leaders

Informal peer leaders were mentioned as having an important role in helping communicate messages from captains to the deputy level. Like TOs, peer leaders have considerable influence on a station; one person described them as "usually a hard worker with some tenure. Extremely respected and are chosen by reputation. The main thing is work ethic." They could also mentor younger deputies in situations when going to a supervisor is not ideal. As one deputy explained:

> If I found myself in a bind, which you do, you've got a lot going on. You know you did it the right way, but you ask whether it really was the right way, it's always nice to go to those seasoned deputies who you know are good at guiding people for advice. . . . No one wants a supervisor looking over your shoulder.

This peer leader role and the person(s) in this position can help a captain get buy-in or address issues while they are still nascent. As one command staff member said,

> I meet with the peer leaders. Sometimes I tell them, "I hear this is happening." They say, "We don't know, but we'll find out." Later, they come back and say, "We dealt with it." I hold them accountable and they buy into it. They are empowered.

This illustrates both the importance of the peer leader(s) and the potential risk in having deputies handle supervisory issues. Although this is a balancing act, the same interviewee emphasized the importance of communication and buy-in across the entire chain of command and having set expectations and zero tolerance when lines are crossed. As we note in the next chapter, TOs and peer leaders are occasionally involved in subgroups or in inviting others to subgroups.

What Is Expected of Trainees

The training period, especially patrol training, is stressful for trainees. Learning the job is one source of stress, but the trainer-trainee relationship can be another. As one deputy explained:

> Our training program is very hard and difficult. Hear stories of people who don't make it on training and go back to the jails. Once you're a roll up,[7] you're considered a black sheep. Not good enough. I used to think that they didn't work hard enough or were lazy. You're steered towards thinking that. They weren't cut out to be here. Not until I got out to patrol that I understood that it's more than just job related. It's stressful. You have to please your TO. It's up to him. He decides your career. You're put in this spot where I have to do whatever I have to do to get off training. Puts a lot of pressure and stress. Not only do you train to do the job, you have to worry that they like me. I hope they give me a chance. They could fail you on training no matter what. People know that. You hear the stories.

Trainees are also expected to listen and learn, or, as one command staff put it:

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[7] To "roll up" means to leave patrol training before completing it and returning back to custody or another nonpatrol assignment.

> Trainees don't talk unless they have to talk. This is part of a learning environment to get them to observe. Even as a captain you observe and learn things. Anyone who's new will be humble and will wait to gain everyone's respect.

This was observed to differ from how LAPD treats trainees. Stated another way, given that older trainees may feel more deserving of respect:

> There's a certain mentality you need to get off training. I was talking with a trainee that was a little older and I was saying here's what you need to do to get out—you need to eat some humble pie and you need to understand your explanations sound like excuses. That's just how it is.

In general, people who are new to an assignment are expected to be humble. This expectation could be interpreted as a direction to not ask questions, or it might be a barrier to people speaking up about perceived issues or questioning a TO. One interviewee said:

> It's high risk for a trainee to complain. You want to be included and liked. No one wants to be the one who complains. Trainee needs to understand that you're not going to break the law, though. The goal in patrol training is to become a successful patrol deputy sheriff. There will be stress, but it should not be preventing people from succeeding. There's a line that should not be crossed. Immoral, unethical, illegal are not okay. If deputy comes forward, then it was likely bad. The average deputy does not want to tell supervisor that things are not going well. The first level of supervision should see a lot of what's going on, though.

Other interviewees mentioned that some TOs in custody and patrol, as well as other deputies, will occasionally "play games" with trainees. This could take the form of simply telling a deputy to "figure it out," interfering with their equipment, or pressuring them to complete paperwork for others. More extreme forms might include hazing, harassment, or "taxing"—that is, pressuring trainees to pay for things.

LASD Norms

Throughout our interviews, when interviewees would talk about LASD, the expectations for deputies, and generally "how things work," a core set of themes emerged that might be considered reflective of an ethos or organizing set of values that factor into many aspects of LASD.

The first and probably most obvious theme is that deputies work hard and value hard work, which is reflected in LASD's creed. In an organization where reputation matters so much, becoming known as a "slug" or someone who is not a hard worker can be almost impossible to overcome. Being a hard worker was mentioned as a characteristic of deputies, TOs, and sergeants and was evident in command staff descriptions of their own approach to the job. Being labeled a hard worker could help a deputy advance or maybe even get one out of trouble. Some interviewees noted that deputies can occasionally be hard working to a fault, as in being too defined by work and having a work-life imbalance (e.g., always at the station) or becoming so "hard charging" that the person bends rules or cuts corners. Definitions of hard workers vary, but those who get the hot calls, show up to calls quickly, offer help to other deputies, are proactive, and handle themselves well might be more likely to receive this label.

A second and related organizing value is "be humble," which is reflected in LASD's core values. As one deputy put it, "If you're a hard worker, you should be humble. You're not look-

ing to outshine or be better." This seems to apply to everyone in the organization, especially when they are a trainee or assigned to a new unit. Even a new captain is expected to be a little humble, listen to others and observe their surroundings, and slowly earn respect. This idea of remaining humble, however, could lead to not asking questions, not speaking up about issues, or not trying to change problematic features of the work environment. A lack of humility is sometimes perceived as contributing to problems in the department, particularly problems associated with subgroups.

Additionally, several interviewees noted that the mission and core values of the department are worthy pursuits but observed challenges in aligning them with organizational practice and having deputies internalize them throughout their work. Connecting the mission and values to everyday practice could be a worthwhile pursuit (Crotts, Dickson, and Ford, 2005).

External Pressures and Stressors

We also frequently heard about how the level of external scrutiny has increased over time and how this affects deputies working in patrol and custody assignments. As one midlevel supervisor noted, "The idea that law enforcement are not people and are like robots is not right. And the level of expectation that are placed on deputies are almost unattainable. Law enforcement is not infallible." Also, deputies assume that video will exist of any incident, which further increases the pressure. The expectations of the job could conflict with individual expectations of deputies as well:

> God bless the people taking calls nowadays because it's rough. My partners and I are like, wow, I'm so glad the hardest thing I have to deal with now is [investigative work]. And I think that's one thing with society as a whole because we have placed so much importance on law enforcement. Parents expect us to help their children and then deal with mental health and homelessness—I was on the homelessness task force, too. But when I applied to be a sheriff, I thought, okay, I'm going to do law enforcement—I wasn't thinking, okay, I'm going to help this person find a home, okay, I'm going to help this person get into foster care. And they don't give people enough training to deal with that. It's a lot. They give you ten hours of mental health training and think you'll be ready to deal with a homeless guy in the streets [in a crisis] and you have ten seconds to decide what to do.

A midlevel supervisor noted that the administrative burden has increased dramatically due to law enforcement being expected to deal with increasing challenges (e.g., more people experiencing mental illness or homelessness), as well as mandated reforms resulting from litigation in the form of settlement agreements.

Others mentioned the national trends of the public's deteriorating view of law enforcement[8] and public institutions in general. As one interviewee said:

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[8] In our survey of LASD sworn personnel, we asked, "Would you recommend working in law enforcement to your friends and relatives?" and "Would you recommend working at LASD to your friends and relatives?" 56 percent of respondents said that they would definitely not or probably not recommend law enforcement and 46 percent said that they would definitely not or probably not recommend LASD. Two-thirds of midlevel managers said that they would definitely not or probably not recommend law enforcement to their friends and relatives. Many write-in comments noted that the lack of support for law enforcement was related to their answer to these questions.

> Law enforcement is in a precarious tipping point in the nation. We are losing the ability to keep the community safe from themselves. When people lose faith in the structures of government, the default is anarchy. We are starting to see those shifts.

Others noted that these challenges are not going to go away on their own: "In the next three years, the biggest challenge will be earning some public trust back. I don't think that is going to get better. . . . All the things the *LA Times* and Board of Supervisors talk about are going to continue to be issues." Some interviewees weren't quite as bleak in their assessment, discounting "loud voices" and believing that a "quiet majority" in the community supports the department.

Several interviewees also pointed to a general resistance to external influence on the department. This is both historical and linked to the nature of the sheriff being an elected position. As one command staff said of LASD leadership:

> They are always hesitant when outside entities try to manage the department. It has to be the right kind of people who understand the dynamics of the work and have been in a police car. There needs to be accountability. Discussions are healthy, and, of course, we all make mistakes. But how you address them instead of just putting your hands in it and filing lawsuits is the question.

Conclusion

LASD is a large and fragmented law enforcement agency, with each patrol station operating largely as an independent police department. Despite the size and fragmentation, individual reputation matters. A variety of factors play into reputation, but much of it is tied to where people have worked in the department. Certain units have higher status because of the nature of the external environment (e.g., high crime), and certain types of people might be drawn to these units. This is perceived by some as a positive in the sense that it allows skills and preferences to match the work. Because of the unique settings and independence of different stations across LASD, different local practices and normative orders could lead to station styles or subcultures (Hassell, 2007; Herbert, 1998). The emphasis on work history might also present challenges, however, because it can create misperceptions and misattributions about others. Prior department leadership, possibly based on their own work history, encouraged perspectives that favored certain stations and engaged in other forms of favoritism that were formalized through promotions. This, along with mixed signals and lax supervision, potentially created a setting conducive to practice being loosely coupled with official policy. Front-line supervision is perceived to be the most important position for guiding organizational change and for modeling and monitoring behavior, and participants identified several challenges to effective supervision, including training and experience, which could contribute to further loose coupling of practice with policy. Other key roles of TOs and peer leaders are arguably equally as important for making sense of the department. Core values of humility and hard work were central to the outlooks of many of our interviewees, but an overemphasis on these factors can contribute to good faith and a lack of critical examination of current practices. This chapter has important implications for understanding how structural features of LASD, along with key organizational processes and key roles within the department, can contribute to the development of subgroups or affect their

perceived behaviors. These organizational processes also potentially have implications for how deputies treat the community. Although value conflicts are common challenges for law enforcement organizations to balance (Willis and Toronjo, 2019), our community findings provide some insights into values (e.g., empathy, vested interest) that LASD might consider embedding in organizational processes. For instance, compassion is identified as a core value of LASD, but compassion was not mentioned in our interviews. This would be worth exploring further. Additionally, the extent to which expectations for serving the community are embedded into key organizational processes is worthy of further exploration.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LASD Views on Subgroups

Among LASD staff, there is little agreement about the degree to which subgroups are a detriment or a benefit to the department. Personnel had a wide array of strong but nuanced views on the structure, function, risks—and value—of the subgroups. The responses ranged from "those who belong to a subgroup hold themselves and each other to a higher standard and are the best LASD has" to "they [subgroups] have destroyed many honest and hard-working deputies' lives and careers."

This chapter conveys how a diverse range of LASD representatives described subgroups in the organization. The qualitative findings are based on our 57 interviews, the vast majority of which were representatives from LASD (most of whom were at the command level, followed by an even distribution of midlevel, line-level, and recently retired LASD staff members), as well as other Los Angeles County stakeholders. We also include free responses that survey respondents shared on any other topics that they deemed relevant. A description of our methods can be found in Chapter Four.

The interviews addressed the following questions. We provide an overview of key findings:

- **Why do unofficial, exclusive subgroups form in LASD?** Interviewees explained that people form subgroups to recognize their common bond and pride in their work. After forming the group, invitations to new members are likely to be based on a standard of competence that the group defines, as well as friendship. Competence, recognition, and acceptance from peers are considered especially important for line-level deputies, and formal evaluations of performance might not identify competence in the same way as deputies. Finally, groups are dynamic in terms of leadership and standards, and those that exist over long periods of time have fractured or "sub-cliqued" on a few occasions.
- **What are the qualities of deputies who join subgroups?** Interviewees provided conflicting examples of the characteristics of deputies in subgroups. Some contended that deputies in subgroups are the hardest workers in their unit, while others noted that it was a mix of all types of deputies. Others noted that being invited could be unrelated to work and would consist of those who are looking for acceptance and willing to perform favors for subgroup membership. Additionally, subgroup members were characterized as both humble and overly boastful. Others noted that women were typically not likely to be invited to join subgroups, although some had been. Some interviewees characterized subgroup members as masculine or "Type-A" personalities. Lastly, some interviewees noted reasons why they did not join a group when asked, citing individualism or remaining independent, maturity, and focusing on their personal lives or having family obligations that prevented socializing with colleagues above and beyond regular work interactions.

- **What are the actions and functions of subgroups?** Few interviewees said that groups engaged in coordinated misconduct, but they did note other forms of work-related expectations of group members. This includes expectations to perform at a high level (e.g., make arrests of gang members or make arrests for weapons offenses), which was directly connected to reputation. This is contrasted with those who are "lazy." Another action is to facilitate social connection and transitions to other units where former group members might have transferred. Additionally, the group can be relied upon for advice about challenging situations. Some interviewees noted that groups can start out as positive forces but could become complacent or misdirected, and their influence can negatively affect the unit.
- **What are LASD members' perspectives on tattoos?** In general, interviewees did not indicate that tattoos were the core issue to be addressed. Tattoos do tend to be part of joining a group, but interviewees noted other means of expression, such as stickers and phone cases with the emblem of a subgroup. Interviewees noted that committing a shooting would likely lead to being invited to get a tattoo but disagreed that being invited to get a tattoo could be a motivating factor to commit a shooting. Interviewees were mixed on whether adding insignia to a tattoo following a use-of-force incident was a bad idea. For some, this addition was simply a matter of personal expression, whereas other saw it as crossing a line and glorifying violence. Negative outcomes from having subgroup tattoos were recognized, such as being involved in litigation, affecting criminal cases, and affecting promotion. Those who saw tattoos in a positive light saw them as a useful way to recognize hard workers and to show pride in the station.
- **What are the risks associated with subgroups?** The risk of civil liability and damage to LASD's reputation were recognized by most interviewees. Others saw subgroups as divisive in and of themselves because they exclude some people, or they saw them as potentially divisive, depending on their behavior. Divisive behaviors included chastising other people's work unfairly, making work more difficult for some, or shifting the purposes of those involved in the group. More markedly, this could include efforts to get people to act in certain ways (e.g., make certain arrests) or to leave the station (e.g., being overly critical of trainees they do not like). Many of the internal problems that can develop with subgroups seem to involve escalating patterns of disrespectful behavior. Those on the receiving end of ostracizing, humiliating, or intimidating behavior might try to deal with these behaviors on their own or put up with them until they become very serious. Many noted that the risks of more serious or criminal behavior are rare but can occur. Finally, some noted that subgroups might be mechanisms of coping with the stress and danger of the job; these mechanisms can be healthy or unhealthy.

What Are Subgroups, and Why Do They Form?

The names of many historical and some current deputy subgroups have already been identified. A report from the Loyola Law School Center for Juvenile Law and Policy lists 18 deputy subgroups: the 2000 Boys, the 3000 Boys, the Banditos, the Buffalo Soldiers, the Cavemen, the Cowboys, the Executioners, the Grim Reapers, the Jump Out Boys, the Little Red Devils, the Pirates, the Posse, the Rattlesnakes, the Regulators, the Spartans, the Tasmanian Devils, the Vikings, and the Wayside Whities (Loyola Law School Center for Juvenile Law and Policy,

2021). However, a few LASD interviewees disputed some of these groups and group names. For instance, some said that Wayside Whities was a nickname that inmates bestowed on White deputies, who did not actually form a subgroup. The existence of other subgroups is not in question, but their exact names are not always known; for example, some interviewees said that a lawyer assigned the Executioners that name. Our research focused more on the existence of groups rather than their exact names, although subgroup names were freely offered by people who had direct or indirect experiences with many of the above groups and others, past and present. We also recognize that the list of group names provided here is likely incomplete. Indeed, several interviewees acknowledged their awareness of past subgroups but did not disclose the name of a particular group.

At the time of our interviews, the following groups were discussed as being currently active by our interviewees: the Banditos (East Los Angeles station), the Reapers (South Los Angeles station), the Spartans (Century station), and the Executioners/CPT (Compton station). Depending on the timeline of the group, some members of the 2000 Boys, the 3000 Boys, the Cavemen, the Cowboys, the Jump Out Boys, the Rattlesnakes, the Regulators, and the Tasmanian Devils are likely still employed by the department, but these groups do not seem to be actively adding members.

To avoid interviewees and survey respondents misinterpreting the groups we were interested in learning more about, we used a functional definition of subgroups or cliques that recognized their unofficial status, exclusivity, and use of symbols. This was to distinguish them from official work units and common social groups (e.g., station sports teams) that are not exclusive. Our definition is as follows: "Deputy subgroups, also sometimes referred to as 'cliques,' typically have a name or symbol that is known to group members, but they are not officially recognized by LASD. Deputies typically join the subgroup by invitation only and may have to meet certain requirements for subgroup membership."

Organizational research on other professions recognizes subgroups in work teams as common features of the work environment. According to a typology developed by Carton and Cummings, subgroups are characterized by identity, resources, and knowledge (Carton and Cummings, 2012). They define subgroups as "subsets of team members that are each characterized by a unique form or degree of interdependence" (Carton and Cummings, 2012, p. 441). Members share cultural values, scarcity of resources, or knowledge frames that distinguish one subgroup from others. Identity-based subgroups form on the basis of shared identity; fulfill the needs of social support, friendship, and identification; and prefer interacting only with those in the same group. These are also called cliques. Resource-based subgroups are established on the basis of social dominance and control of resources, such as authority, power, materials, and status. These groups reflect preexisting or created hierarchies and are associated with an imbalance of fairness, creating "haves" and "have-nots." Identity-based subgroups could have the impact of fracturing the identity of the larger team or unit, while resource- or dominance-based subgroups affect perceptions of fairness and could cause a power imbalance within the larger team or unit. In this model, subgroup formation and the type of subgroup partially depend on the activation of existing fault lines or dividing lines regarding values, power, or knowledge within work groups. These dimensions are important to consider for understanding the development and activities of subgroups within LASD.

Perspectives on Why Subgroups Form

We heard indirect explanations for why certain groups formed and the nature of those that joined the group. The explanations we were given suggest that not a lot of thought is put into the reasons for forming a group, other than recognizing colleagues to whom one feels aligned. As one retiree explained:

> I was invited [early on] but declined. I declined because I draw a distinction between friends and those to respect as police officers. I didn't think they were the guys out there hustling. The first ten weren't the best cops. I had no interest in tattoos, too. Also, I was loyal to the unit while I was there, but I didn't plan to stay there for 35–40 years. I had more LASD pride. I never saw anything bad or rule breaking. They weren't out there shooting people. . . . Initially, they were selective, but then it became anyone who wanted to join.

This individual's characterization of the group focused on members' work ethic, the individuals joining the group, the nature of the group, and the individual's own feelings about tattoos, and unit-based versus LASD pride. The groups often form based on shared work experience; as another interviewee explained, the name Cavemen was selected because people in this group were working a lot of overtime and would take naps in a dark room in the basement of the station. Given that interviewees often cited staffing shortages as a department-wide challenge, the prevalence of people working extreme hours could also provide a setting that makes group formation more likely.

We also heard from people who had discussed creating a group tattoo but did not:

> When I was at [station], there wasn't one because it was a brand-new station. We talked about having a tattoo for the station, but it didn't manifest itself. We were all from other stations, so the consensus was if the guys wanted a tattoo, they could pick one up later on. But for us, when the guys were thinking about getting a tattoo it wasn't about being an exclusive group or anything. It was just like the military, like thinking about finding something really cool to do. But I also remember there was discussion because a lot of guys don't like getting ankle tattoos.

Although these individuals were interested in representing their unit in the form of a tattoo, the station was too new and none of them had trained there, so they did not move forward. The final statement also suggests that the group involved in this discussion might not have been similar enough to agree on a tattoo.

Finally, some subgroups form in direct reaction to subgroups that they are not invited to join. For instance, a command-level staff member explained that the "Regulators are old school. The Spartans were guys who started their own group because they didn't feel like they fit in." Thus, exclusive groups could create conflict that can lead to the creation of more groups. Subgroup theory highlights the potential for subgroups of one type (e.g., dominance-based) to create fault lines or dividing lines that lead to the formation of other subgroups (e.g., identity-based) (Carton and Cummings, 2012). This has allegedly transpired in at least one other station, as the Tasmanian Devils spawned a new group with a tattoo that included the roman numeral of the station number, "V." There is also a temporal element as the older group's members transition to other assignments or advance in rank (e.g., from Cavemen to Banditos).

Peer Acceptance

Peer acceptance is very important in LASD. Some interviewees claimed that recognition from peers was more important than recognition from supervisors or unit commanders. This is the general, but not the only, basis for why groups form. As one command staff member stated, "It's about acceptance from peers." Another command staff member said:

> Football teams have captains. They are elected by peers. They communicate information from the coaches. That's how I view subgroups. Subgroups are people of like minds. A true friend will communicate to you if you've screwed up. The department needs more mentoring to help with things, but leaders can sometimes watch out for themselves and not the group. That's where it goes bad.

At least historically, the importance of peers begins in the academy, as one command staff member explained:

> While in the academy, peer approval was king. You needed to have the peer vote to progress. For example, you wouldn't be the honor graduate without peer approval. It was all about peer approval and teamwork. This was about 30 years ago.

Recognizing Competency

Groups can form to recognize people who work hard and to maintain higher levels of performance. As one deputy put it:

> Being in a clique is about being good. It's about being the best you can be. You can't cut corners. If you get a 10-15 [subject in custody], are you dedicated to your craft? Do you know what you're doing? Can we depend on you? Can you act in the moment? People call us when the world is coming to an end. Can you step up to the plate? Most people would just crumble. It's about competency and willingness to help your partner.

The idea of informal peer evaluations being focused on performance is sometimes used as a means of preventing people from using the reputation of having worked at fast stations without the performance to back it up (e.g., "fake hard chargers" or "posers"). As one line-level deputy said:

> There are some deputies who might not be embraced by the group, but you could still be cool, as opposed to others who are seen as frauds or phonies, or just want to use a station like Century for its tough reputation but don't really want to fight crimes. Competency is heralded out there. You are shunned if you are incompetent. Groups are just a way of recognizing who the aggressive cops are. They have to follow the law and follow the policies. Even without a freaking tattoo, these groups are still going to exist. Nobody has any time to do stupid shit anymore.

Additionally, peer evaluations of competence might not be accurate or might not reflect performance that the department values, nor were they described as formal or systematic. When interviewees discussed informal peer evaluations, they seemed to focus on proactive policing (e.g., making arrests) and what might be described as organizational citizenship behaviors (e.g., these are behaviors that go above and beyond what is required and could include actions

such as showing up to calls and helping out; Eatough et al., 2011; Morrison, 1994; Rioux and Penner, 2001).

The high value placed on the opinions of peers could mean that informal peer evaluations and peer motivation fill in the gaps where supervision and formalized performance evaluations cannot. For instance, we repeatedly heard that the "county only requires people to be competent and not good." There are five levels to the performance rating: unsatisfactory, needs improvement, competent, very good, and outstanding. A "competent" rating is the minimum standard. A "needs improvement" invokes paperwork and a process to improve the individual to "competent." There was also a sense that performance ratings tend only to increase, as a decreased rating could result in a deputy challenging that rating, requiring much more effort and paperwork. As one command staff member said,

> [Performance ratings are] not used for anything. You just have to be competent or better to stay on the job. The county code says annual performance evaluation. From a leadership standpoint, it's a tool to have conversations with the deputy. It has no bearing on promotions and transfers.

Additionally, informal peer evaluations can happen because formal peer concerns about performance are typically serious but rare. As one command staff noted,

> [It's] not common, but when they do, it's usually accurate. I had a deputy voice concerns about another deputy and identified it in writing. He was right and the person ended up being fired within two years. . . . tried to correct performance, but the person was incompetent. The person lied and got caught. Lying got them fired, not the incompetence.

Intra-Group Dynamics

Several interviewees noted that the character of some subgroups could change over time. At some point, those who started the group might have moved on, and many current members might not have worked at the station when the group first formed. Thus, the group's purpose can shift in ways that might or might not be problematic. Subgroups that formed to recognize hard work could grow more focused on popularity or control of station activities, as one deputy noted: "But I mean, any [subgroup] symbol can be corrupted. I think they all started with good intentions, but if people don't know the reason behind it, it can be corrupted."

Subgroups that drift from their original purpose can lead to a splintering of that group or the formation of a new group. As one midlevel supervisor explained:

> There are plenty of stories about sub-cliques within the cliques. When I was there, toward the end the Regulator ink started sub-cliquing. Adding ink to distinguish themselves. . . . There was this tension for guys across shifts. Groups mean security. We always find ways to get into groups and define ourselves into groups. When they get too big, they start to form sub-subgroups. There have been other evolutions within the groups where some hokey crap goes on. I'm not advocating, I could care less. Most people are saying, "it was a waste and I shouldn't have got this ink."

This provides a clear example of how groups that get too big lose their ability to provide distinctiveness to their members, which motivates people to find other ways to be distinctive

(Hogg and Terry, 2000). Tension can also arise across groups or between members within the same group. A different midlevel supervisor stated:

> There's also two factions of the Banditos. The older group who started the Banditos, they look down on this new group that's always in the papers. They're telling these kids, "you don't beat up or shoulder check other deputies." . . . The kids think that being an obnoxious idiot is what it means. I know an older guy [who] is a [supervisor], and he had his Bandito [tattoo] covered. He says, "I don't associate with punks. I'm at [station] now and they're punks."

These internal conflicts are divisive and can present challenges for unit commanders and supervisors, because small instances of disrespect run the risk of escalation.

Qualities of Subgroup Members

We asked representatives from LASD about specific qualities of deputies who are invited to join a subgroup. Several themes emerged from this question, with some consensus that deputies in subgroups are hard-working, take responsibility and pride in their work, and are willing to take the initiative to complete tasks and duties on the job. Although these qualities in and of themselves are admirable, several respondents noted that a person's desire to be seen as having these qualities so that they might be asked to join a subgroup can lead to undesirable outcomes, such as taking undue actions to appear to be a hard-charging deputy. It is also important to note that although most interviewees acknowledged knowing about fellow colleagues in subgroups, a survey respondent with over a decade of experience in patrol reported to "have never had personal knowledge of any deputy subgroups/cliques." Another respondent adamantly disagreed that "cliques are predominant throughout the department" and maintained that "they are the exception, not the rule." To add to this point, a retired LASD representative acknowledged not having any awareness of subgroups until he rose to a command-level position.

Membership Based on Job Performance

Respondents maintained that members of LASD could not simply join a subgroup of their own volition. Command staff described deputies who actively try to join groups as "trying to make a name for themselves" and said that being a hard worker and "willing to show up when you [a deputy] don't have to be there" is often enough to receive an invitation. A command-level representative noted that the subgroups were not secretive and were composed of the "self-proclaimed cool guys and girls at a station,"[1] adding that it was mostly men who have demonstrated their commitment to a particular station and do "good police work." A line-level staff representative noted:

> If you get involved in a shooting or a fight, that's it. You're in. [In custody], if a deputy was involved in a physical fight with an inmate, that was huge [for getting asked to join a subgroup]—even though you could have de-escalated the situation! I've pulled my partners off of things where they should have defused, but they escalated it.

[1] Some interviewees used the word *girls* when discussing adult women. We have left this wording intact in quoted material.

As another member of command-level staff speculated:

> I bet the guys in cliques' rate of being in shootings is higher. . . . if you feel like you have to join, you're likely to feel that you have to shoot someone to be a cop. . . . But it's not clear whether guys in cliques are involved in more shootings because they put themselves in the tactical position or because they have a mindset that everyone is out to get you.

Other representatives offered a slightly different perspective on whether committing a shooting or other serious incidents were criteria for joining a subgroup. Some respondents said that committing a "justifiable shooting" can also lead to an invitation but stressed that subgroups are not exclusively for deputies who have committed a shooting. A line-level representative echoed this sentiment, noting that deputies in subgroups are the cream of the crop in terms of performance, willingness to fight crime, and exhibiting a can-do attitude and that these qualities are the *only* criteria for being asked to join a subgroup. Others posited that because most high-stakes crime occurs at night, it is likely that subgroups form among deputies who work the evening shift. This could be connected to the risk present in the environment and the bonds that form when facing danger together. Groups reduce uncertainty by recognizing those who they perceive can be counted on in dangerous situations, as one command staff member explained:

> To be a member of those groups, you couldn't be a "glad-hander" or a slug. The people who are getting the tattoos are seizing drugs, finding shot-caller gang members, putting people in prison and getting those who are trying to kill us.

It is, however, important to note that several LASD representatives stated that they were asked to join a subgroup on the basis of their performance and declined without facing any additional bias, ill will from colleagues, or impediments to promoting. Thus, to be a hard-working deputy does not necessarily equate with subgroup membership.

Not Discussing Subgroups

Another aspect of subgroup membership mentioned was the importance of keeping a low profile, or, as one line-level representative said, "You don't brag about it [being in a subgroup]. If you're a hard worker, you should be humble. You're not looking to outshine or be better. Showboating is not cool, especially in this crowd." Some groups are noted for this. Being reserved about one's status in a subgroup could contribute to the secrecy and the allure of the subgroups. Notably, one LASD interviewee explained that there is a general tendency and preference for privacy among department members.

Membership Contingent on Non–Work-Related Actions

Various respondents noted that some subgroups originally formed to recognize deputies for their hard work but that this criterion over time had been corrupted, devolving into either an exchange for personal favors or an invitation to join based on subjective personal likeability. As a midlevel representative put it, "As time went on, it wasn't about rewarding the hard workers; it became an 'if we like you or not' group, and if I like you or if you will do something for the group or for me, we may or may not give you a tattoo."

As one seasoned midlevel LASD representative explained,

> I've known people with ink [a tattoo] and without ink. Some are assholes and some aren't. . . . I knew some guys who were pushing to create a group, but I've always been a very independent guy. I want to be able to tell someone to "f" off and be independent. A lot of guys had it [a tattoo] and most regret it today. Hard core believers say it's about stats [arrests, et cetera], but it's really about friends. Some are assholes, some are lazy, some are great guys . . . but there was nothing that could be interpreted as organized crime.

Others cited youth or lack of education as factors in subgroup membership. As a member of command-level staff said, "We talk to deputies about [the risks of joining a subgroup]. It's your reputation. But they're young kids. They're not doing it because they mean harm, they just think it's cool." Yet another speaking of a subgroup member at their station called them "a moron and overly macho idiot," adding, "We [LASD] are hiring everyone. You shouldn't have [just] a GED [General Educational Development test] and be a cop. You can't handle a pencil and now we're going to give you a gun."

In addition, a line-level representative mentioned the tendency of deputies to inflate their accomplishments to appear more impressive, adding,

> Deputies will make things up, like "Oh, I jammed ten guys today." They're great at making up stories. A lot of it is BS. It's like they're not confident in themselves so they feel the need to pump their chest out and boost their egos. They want everyone to see them as this badass cop. And who doesn't want to be that? It just depends on how far you are willing to go.

Thus, the perception that deputies in subgroups are superior to deputies who are not in subgroups is not universally shared.

The favors that respondents reported subgroup members performing included taking on additional tasks, sparing subgroup members tedious tasks (such as writing reports), and providing off-duty favors (such as hosting parties) or obliging egregious demands (such as "paying rent to work at a station"). Some line-level and midlevel representatives were adamant that membership in some subgroups is contingent upon simply being liked. A representative of command staff added that this could be tied to the tenure and reputation of field training officers, who are "great leaders" and work hard but "unfortunately can act like bullies, too." The "popularity contest" dimension of subgroups can lead to splintering of subgroups and the formation of new subgroups.

Race and Gender Diversity in Subgroups

LASD representatives also weighed in on the importance of race and gender in being invited to join a subgroup. Several adamantly maintained that race was not a factor and that certain subgroups were racially diverse. Others perceived Black deputies to be less likely to be invited to join a subgroup. Still others stated that some subgroups, especially in the past, were predominantly White in membership and were located at stations that patrolled areas that were mostly Black or Hispanic. For a period of time, LASD was required to promote female deputies in at least 25 percent of promotions, making their upward mobility much faster and therefore possibly making them less likely to be considered for these groups. Some, however, thought that women were either not invited or were less likely to be invited to join on account of gender, although it was clear in the interviews that at least some women have been asked to join some subgroups and did get tattooed. Other line-level staff speculated that a female supervisor actually leads a certain subgroup. Some subgroups use masculine names, such as the

3000 Boys, Jump Out Boys, or Cavemen, suggesting a lack of female membership or ineligibility for female deputies to join. Another line-level representative recounted a story of a female deputy with a stellar work reputation at a fast station who was not invited to join a subgroup. When asked why, he replied, "Maybe they thought they were going to be rejected by her! It's real-deal machismo." Machismo or masculinity and "Type-A" personalities were occasionally noted in our interviews as characteristics of subgroup members and even deputies in general. As described in other research on attitudes of police, such outlooks reflect a desire to project strength and courage while seeking out dangerous situations (Herbert, 1998). This can develop into a "hard-charging" or aggressive approach to police work.

Avoiding Membership

As noted, not all hard-working deputies who are asked to join a subgroup accept the invitation. Command staff said that those setting their sights on promoting might be averse to joining a subgroup; one noted that these individuals want to ensure that "there is no dirt on them, ever." This attitude toward subgroups stands in contrast to historical examples in which one's membership in a subgroup, especially at specific stations, might have contributed to promotions. As noted, several others mentioned being invited to join a subgroup but opting out to focus on their personal lives, such as a being a spouse or parent, and not wanting to spend their free time with colleagues. The several command-line representatives who noted this were also quick to say that they never faced any perceived interpersonal issues or impediments to their mobility on account of turning down the invitation to join a subgroup.

Actions and Functions of Subgroups

Based on the survey responses and interviews, the existence and persistence of subgroups appears to serve a unique role in LASD. A widely shared viewpoint was that the formation of subgroups was "human nature" in a large, diverse, hierarchical organization where tensions often run high and resources are constrained. Subgroups could function as a workaround technique through which deputies can secure support, identity, recognition, and belonging. As a line-level staff member articulated, "Why would people join a subgroup? Humans are herd animals. We seek to have connections. We look for identity." In addition, subgroups can serve as a means of recognizing a shared, difficult experience and reinforcing solidarity.

Raising the Bar

Several interviewees spoke of subgroups as a means of upholding accountability among deputies and symbolizing a high bar for performance. A member of command-level staff noted,

> A lot of subgroups are based on commonalities. They all like to work really hard. They do their jobs. They're the top performers. They want others who can provide guidance and mentorship. But if they stop doing that for each other, that's where it can go wrong.

In other words, interviewees spoke of the positive aspects of subgroup membership but also as if these positive aspects could devolve, which will be discussed in the following section. A survey respondent additionally noted,

> As in most facets of society that involve teamwork and partnership . . . there is always going to be strong bonds and subgroups . . . especially with the younger folks. As we age, get married and have children, then for most of us, we tend to be less into the camaraderie aspects of our careers and more about our family. It's a natural cycle of life. The cliques will usually be found with the younger units of assignments and/or hard-charging stations . . . . at places where you have older crowds, like where I work, it's way less of a factor. Either way, it's just another thing now, which is heavily being propagandized and exploited for political reasons. There are benefits and risks to everything, and always two sides of the story.

Some saw subgroups as a means of reinforcing the standards of being a top-performing deputy, which raises the question of how similar subgroup standards are to LASD standards. A command-level staff member explained:

> You're not going to get any points for easy arrests. You have to go after the most dangerous people and stop them before they can really hurt someone. The deputy cliques is about asking, "Are you someone who goes to seek out the real bad guys—the hardcore gangsters?" You could build a reputation and get asked to be a part of the group. It's a hierarchy and it's a way to recognize who's who and what's what.

Additionally, a command-level representative reiterated this point:

> I mean, there are groups. Just because there are groups it doesn't mean they're out committing crimes to better themselves. It's kind of like in a college fraternity—a group of people with a similar work ethic who keep pushing each other. To come into work and do the same thing every day, sometimes it takes an extra push. That creates a culture because not everyone works the same, there are lazy people everywhere.

Having one's reputation as a top-performing deputy solidified through subgroup membership can benefit members by providing pathways to desirable promotions and positions, such as the Special Enforcement Bureau. A survey respondent added that an "advantage of joining [a subgroup] is if there is a unit of assignment you would like to go to and that unit has members of the same clique, it will be an easier transition and adjustment because they advocate for you to be selected. Once you become a member, you remain a member even after you transfer and/or promote to a higher rank." Another line-level staff member spoke about the role of subgroups in promoting, adding,

> The only way to move up is to test for a position. But it doesn't mean that you're a good sergeant or a good senior deputy. Your skills don't really matter, but if you know the right people, you can get the answers to the test! But once you're in the position, if something happens, you had better be ready. That's where the clique benefits you—if something happens to you, you know who to call. If you're a loner and you're not in a clique, then you had better know the job.

Social Connection

Respondents also described the social components of subgroups, such as playing sports, donating to local charities, going out for beers, having barbeques, and taking trips together. Others

spoke more directly to the role that subgroups play as a means of decompressing from the demands of police work. A survey respondent with decades of experience noted,

> This job, especially patrol, is very stressful. We see and deal with crazy shit every day. . . . We see the worst in humanity, and there needs to be a way to destress and decompress from all of this.

Interviewees across ranks echoed the sense that subgroups "are just the way to decompress" and not an avenue for adverse actions.

A command-level representative spoke about the role of healthy competition among stations that can exist without secretive subgroups, but also how this competition can exist along a continuum:

> Camaraderie, baseball tournaments, stations competing against each other—there's nothing wrong with that. But it can't be how many broken bones they get and how many shootings they get into. You have to keep the competition positive and there definitely can be a fun way of being competitive, but it can't be that deputies are saying "you're a POS if you don't work in a fast station."

Hence, interviewees described the camaraderie and social support that stems from competition among deputies but acknowledged that competition can take a negative turn.

Subgroup Tattoos

Much of the media coverage on deputy subgroups has focused on the tattoos that members often share. This section describes various perspectives on the tattoos. First, it is important to reiterate that the department permits tattoos with official station symbols. These differ from the subgroup symbols or mascots that LASD does not approve.

Many interviewees noted that tattoos are more common and more socially acceptable than in the past, making it difficult to differentiate between a tattoo that reflects membership in a deputy subgroup from a tattoo that represents something else. Tattoos might be considered artifacts of organizational culture (e.g., rites, rituals, stories, humor, objects; Schein, 2004), which are not indicative of values per se but can be linked to social expectations (Hatch, 1993). In this case, group members could express their bond and acceptance of each other by sharing a tattoo and welcome new members by offering them a tattoo.

According to our interviewees, the process for getting a shared tattoo ranges from formal to informal. Groups that follow a more formal approach might have an informal committee that determines whether to invite someone to get the group's tattoo. Groups that control who gets a tattoo in this formal way might also keep a roster of who has the tattoo, and tattoos themselves might be numbered. On the other end of the spectrum, some groups offer people a tattoo over drinks or without much thought behind the decision. Interestingly, there were varying perceptions of the importance of tattoos for being members of a deputy clique.

Some interviewees expressed negative views about tattoos or associated them with negative consequences for LASD or the individuals who get them. Some saw the tattoos as divisive, and some linked the tattoos to the groups themselves being divisive, with the potential to create a workplace environment in which certain people are invited to things because they have

a tattoo while others are not. To others, the divisiveness comes from the exclusivity associated with certain tattoos, which conflicts with the idea that the tattoos are supposed to represent unit pride. It also could contribute to individuals feeling like they need to be asked to get a tattoo to be accepted, as captured in this quote from a midlevel LASD representative: "I saw guys ingratiate themselves for two years because they felt they had to be part of it." Such people are said to be "chasing ink."

Interviewees also discussed tattoos and their relationship to shootings, as well as add-ons to tattoos for committing shootings. Some interviewees saw an association between tattooed deputies and shootings but acknowledged that this association could be the result of myriad other factors (e.g., the deputy is more proactive, uses poor tactics, or has a "mindset that everyone is out to get you"). Many believed that getting a tattoo was not a motivating factor for shootings and that the tattoo could be perceived negatively later on. Those who mentioned getting add-ons to subgroup tattoos for committing shootings saw the add-ons as a very personal thing that is hard to speculate on. As one deputy explained, "I think it's just different people have different ways of symbolizing events." However, a midlevel supervisor who was supportive of tattoos generally saw an add-on for a shooting as misplaced and crossing a line: "You don't take pride in having to kill people, though. There's a humility factor."

Those who believed that shared tattoos could lead to negative consequences for LASD and for individuals with tattoos pointed to civil litigation and community perceptions as potential risks. Less frequently, respondents noted that having a tattoo could work to a deputy's detriment in criminal cases. Another concern was whether having a tattoo would affect an individual's ability to get promoted. Interviewees holding these views tended to think that subgroup tattoos should be a thing of the past. Few LASD interviewees found the content of the tattoos to be offensive or improper. However, community perceptions of subgroup tattoos as offensive or intimidating have surfaced over time. The example in Figure 7.1 is associated with the most recent group identified in a lawsuit, reportedly named the Executioners. Media reporting and the Loyola Law School Center for Juvenile Law and Policy report voiced concerns that the helmet depicted in the tattoo is similar to helmets (called *Stahlhelm*) worn by German troops in World War I and World War II (Tchekmedyian and Lau, 2020; Loyola Law School Center for Juvenile Law and Policy, 2021).

Others believed that the tattoos recognize hard workers and celebrate pride in one's work or the station and that a tattoo or absence of one does not necessarily impact how people are treated. Recognizing hard workers was a common explanation for asking someone to get a tattoo, and the offer was often made by respected deputies at the station. As one respondent said:

> When you get to patrol, the cool group are the two-stripes deputies (Bonus Deputies). Subgroups revolved around field training officers because getting this position was more based on the assessment of you being a good deputy. No written criteria; if you were considered a good police officer, they would ask you to get a tattoo. Some people got them, and some didn't. When asked to be part of the group you will be asked, "Would you like to represent the station?"

Figure 7.1
Example of a Subgroup Tattoo

SOURCE: CourtListener, 2020.
NOTES: The photograph (left) shows a tattoo adapted from the alleged logo of the Executioners subgroup (right). Tattoos and logos often include station-related elements; in this case, the logo calls out the Compton station by name and number (CPT and the Roman numeral for 28).

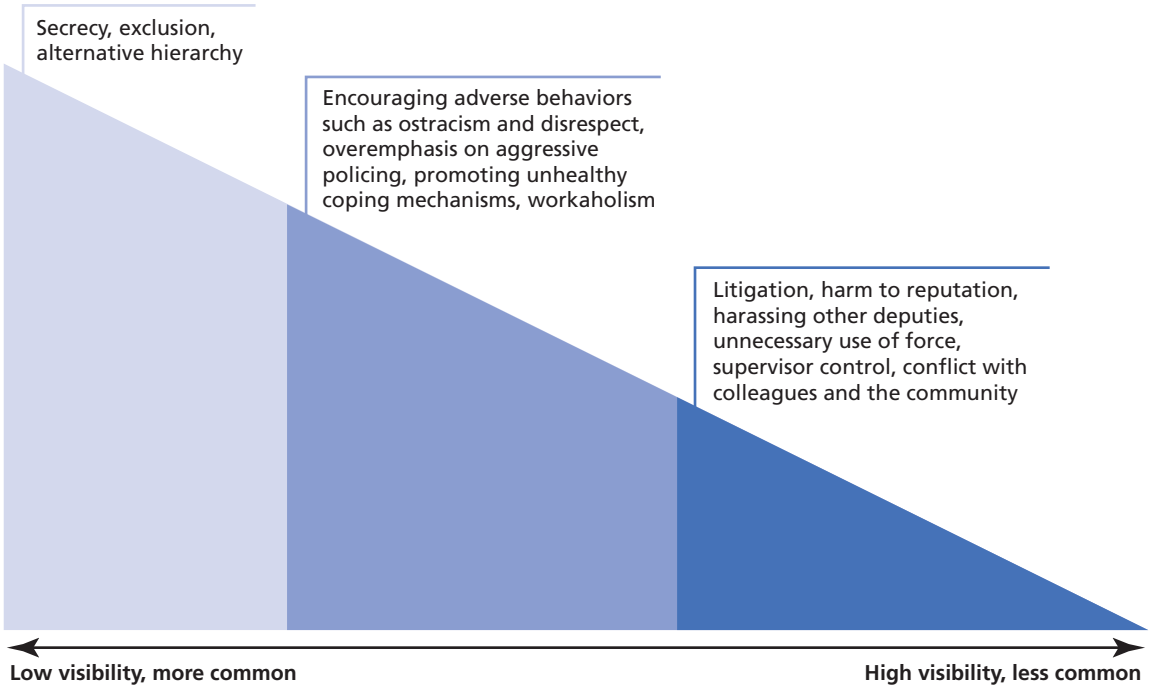
Risks Associated with Subgroups

It is clear that subgroups are a polarizing topic for LASD. On one end of the spectrum, some deputies emphasized that subgroups encourage deputies to perform the best possible law enforcement work and recognize excellence. Others view subgroups as engaging in problematic behavior that is detrimental to both the community and the department as a whole. A member of command-level staff stated succinctly, "It's fair to say that there's a continuum of types of subgroups." Another line-level deputy noted the benefits of being in a subgroup: "Deputies join the cliques despite their best interest, except for being recognized as one of the best." Most deputies fell somewhere along this spectrum, citing the benefits of group membership (e.g., camaraderie) while acknowledging that subgroups create the potential for problematic behavior. High-level findings on LASD perceptions of potential risks of subgroups are depicted in Figure 7.2. In general, the more serious outcomes associated with subgroups were perceived to be less common by our interviewees.

Litigation

An important consequence of subgroups to LASD on the whole is the financial loss from settling lawsuits involving LASD deputies with subgroup tattoos. Since 1990, the losses have mounted to $54 million—$20.8 million since 2010, according to the *Los Angeles Times* (more details on this issue can be found in Chapter Two). As a member of command-level staff said, "the issue for the county is really a money issue. They have to settle because the tattoos are raised as the issue, even if the deputies didn't engage in illegal behavior. Anytime a lawsuit is raised, it becomes an issue. This is really a fiscal problem." Another command-level representa-

Figure 7.2
Types of Risks Associated with Subgroups, by Levels of Visibility



tive noted that "the perception is not good. The litigation is a problem. There really is no place for it anymore in the department."

LASD's Reputation

Another risk to LASD as a whole is that subgroups can undermine public trust in law enforcement. As noted in the content analyses of *Los Angeles Times* articles in Chapter Two, the news coverage conveys the sense that deputies in subgroups are prone to using excessive force, might abuse other deputies, and are branded with tattoos that can glorify shootings committed by deputies and include other offensive symbols. Irrespective of whether the perceptions hold true across LASD, several command-level staff members voiced sentiments such as "so much of law enforcement relies on public trust, and this hurts it." In other words, the risk of losing public trust in law enforcement (during a period of unrest and heightened sensitivities among law enforcement and community members) makes good policing harder. One line-level staff member spoke of the frustration that harmful deputies create, noting, "it makes it hard for most of the folks in uniform to do their job. There's not a lot of love for these folks." Another midlevel representative voiced this strong criticism:

> How can I be a cop who hates other cops? It's just common sense. If your parents raised you to be decent you know this to be true—we have to eradicate this thing [subgroups]. It's not just a bunch of guys hanging out. Horseshit. Especially when they want to start shooting people. It's happened. And to get a tattoo? Either you wear a badge or you're a gangster.

There was a shared sense across ranks that the work is demanding enough, resources are already constrained, and the negatives of subgroups outweigh any stated benefits. As one command-level staff member said, "We have enough stress in the department—dealing with [subgroups] is not something we need." When another command-level staffer was asked how he would advise deputies on the topic, he responded, "I would say, 'does the peer approval now outweigh the potential consequences in the long run?' I'd encourage that deputy not to get the tattoo."

Creating Divisions

In addition to the potential for subgroups to create rifts between the community and LASD, representatives across ranks bemoaned the divisions that subgroups can create within the department. Some were concerned that subgroups are by nature exclusionary. As one command-level representative said, "The tattoos are by invitation—this is divisive because it's not all inclusive. This creates a wedge between the partners. Even though it's not a problem, it just isn't good for the department." In some cases, this meant one subgroup splintering into two or more factions, or new groups forming. A command-level representative added, "Some people will create their own subgroups within stations because they aren't part of the existing group. Sometimes this causes some infighting." Other representatives described fractures occurring as group members age and come to disagree with the actions of the younger deputies. One midlevel representative mentioned a shift in purpose, stating, "these guys went in on the Lynwood Vikings and it was about doing good work, but as the years went on and the guys promoted, it started morphing into a social club." This transition was also mentioned with respect to the Banditos, the Cavemen, the Regulators, and the Taz (Tasmanian Devils).

Other command-level staff described having to instruct deputies—whom one described as "all kids and young boys"—that they were not to "let outside stuff [subgroups] interfere with work. We treat everyone equally at [this station]. Behavior here is what we watch. Put the patrol station first, not the subgroup." Several command staff recounted instances when they moved deputies in response to subgroup-related behavior or they encouraged deputies to move stations to prevent them from being asked to join a subgroup. A retired LASD member added, "When you work for LASD, it should be one symbol. When people align with other symbols, that's when the wheels come off." In other words, diverting allegiance to a subgroup can create negative factions and frictions within the department. Although internal rifts within and among subgroups were not the primary concern of our interviewees, ostracizing and bullying of fellow deputies was a sore point for many. In addition, a command-level staff member asked, "How can we make a bridge to the public when we can't do it ourselves?" meaning that a lack of cohesion at LASD patrol stations can compromise efforts to build a working relationship with the surrounding community to promote safety.

Respondents also spoke of the role of TOs in orchestrating subgroup membership for some groups, in addition to their critical role in training deputies. The confluence of these two roles creates a precarious situation in which TOs can dictate which deputies should be asked to join a subgroup, and yet they must also keep other trainees under their command, in turn exacerbating divisions within a station. TOs, particularly those who have been at the same station of a longer duration, could act as "shot callers," hand-selecting and influencing deputies to join a subgroup. TOs can also report on a deputy's performance, and interviewees said that they felt pressure "to please the TO." A line-level representative described training as follows:

> You're put in this spot where you have to do whatever you have to do to get off training, which puts a lot of pressure and stress. Not only to train to do your job, you have to worry that they [TOs] like me. They could fail you on training no matter what. You hear the stories. They tax trainees, they play games. "Play the game" means shut your mouth and do whatever you're told and get off training. People may think, "Why are you putting up with it? You're a grown-ass man!" But you have to succumb to it . . . they'll do whatever it takes to get you to quit. If that means taking and doing everyone's reports. They'll slam you with work; I remember staying for over 24 hours sometimes and I wouldn't put in for overtime.

One interviewee spoke about abuse of power among TOs, recounting,

> You have to watch the leaders of the station, and those are usually the senior TOs. Those tend to be senior, and they are at the top of their game. They get a lot of respect from their peers. But you have to watch them and make sure they are delivering the right message. . . . I was told there may be an issue with senior TOs in that there may be the start of a division forming. . . . Some people broke down in tears about one person because they were being bullied by one of them. He was telling people when they should be making an arrest and when they shouldn't. He would tell other people that if they made training officer, they shouldn't put on their two stripes until everyone else agrees they are part of the group, so that was problematic. . . . Once that was done [the TO transferred], morale went up immediately.

Another command-level representative spoke of the positive influence of a TO:

> My training officer instilled that it's not about you. It's about the community, and making sure your partner is doing the right thing, and doing things the right way. After one and a half years as a deputy, the training officers said, "We like how you carry yourself and you do the right thing even when you don't know we're looking," and then they invited me to get the tattoo.

Others explained how TOs can use their influence to reject trainees who don't conform to the expectations of the subgroup. As one command staff member explained,

> They controlled the supervisors. It allowed them to place people where they wanted to place them. Not part of my group, we'll send you to some less desired place. Controlled scheduling. Controlled who trained who. "Only the strong trainees come to my TOs." The TOs not in the group got the weak trainees.

At another station, a midlevel supervisor described the treatment a trainee experienced:

> He was hit up by the guys right away. . . . He didn't start playing with the guys in the clique. They have the brass thinking they're squared away and let them do anything they want. They tried to get him to sign off that he was failing patrol. I got him transferred.

This quote describes how subgroup members have reportedly tried to "roll up" trainees who do not go along with the clique, creating selection effects for people who are trained by group members or those who finish training at the station. The influence that TOs can have on deputies can also certainly be positive, but this influence also has the potential to exacerbate the effects of nefarious subgroups.

Disrespect and the Downward Spiral of Incivility

Although many people reported that subgroup membership often had no consequences, several interviewees described subgroup behaviors that ranged from incivility or disrespect to intimidation, bullying, harassment, and violence. They also viewed ostracism as a kind of disrespect, which can lead to disrespect in return and can promote a downward spiral of workplace incivility (Andersson and Pearson, 1999) that leads to more serious behavior, such as bullying, harassment, intimidation, retaliation, interfering with others' work, or even violence. As one command staff described a recent example:

> It has to do with respect in the workplace. Respect me because I've been here. This involved the treatment of newly hired deputies. Newly assigned people stood up to someone who's been there longer and is deserving of more respect, but there's also the perception that "I'm a deputy too."

In this case, because a newer deputy might have felt mistreated, they might have violated the norm of showing respect to a more senior deputy, leading to a toxic situation. In another example, one patrol trainee's TO told dispatch to assign every call in their jurisdiction to the trainee because the person had disrespected the subgroup. Few interviewees believed that deputies would not back each other up, but some noted that it was possible. As one command staff said, "those with the [subgroup] tattoo and those with the station tattoo didn't respect each other." He added, "It might have been the case that 'I don't like you, but I'll back you up.' It's horrible to the hearts of most of us. It's an abhorrence when someone refuses to back someone up. It doesn't reflect our deepest culture."

Unit leadership has the ability to either exacerbate or disrupt these cycles of disrespect, but some argue that this ability is not adequately leveraged. As one interviewee noted:

> Unfortunately, you'll always have a couple of people who are problems or bullies. When that started to surface, the bullies weren't checked. If you don't check a bully, it will spread. The supervision was lacking. We all need supervision. They may be grown adults, but they still need to be supervised. . . . The two or three [bullies] who were extremely loud and powerful, they created chaos.

This interviewee noted that the individuals in question were also perceived to be hard workers, so other aspects of their job performance were not an issue. Some participants suggested that ignoring this behavior makes LASD part of the problem. A county stakeholder said, "I've heard arguments that subgroups [are] . . . a way for some deputies to exert greater control over their work environment." When there is a group element, it creates a power imbalance that can grow when others are brought into the behavior. This can lead to what is known as *workplace mobbing*—that is, discrediting and humiliating targets with the goal of removing them from the workplace.[2] Workplace bullying and workplace mobbing are documented in several public service professions, such as nursing, education, and government (Vickers, 2010).

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[2] A more formal definition (Duffy and Sperry, 2012, p. 52) explains, "Workplace mobbing is nonsexual harassment of a coworker by a group of members of an organization for the purpose of removing the targeted individual(s) from the organization or at least a particular unit of the organization. Mobbing involves individual, group, and organizational dynamics. It predictably results in the humiliation, devaluation, discrediting, and degradation; loss of professional reputation; and, often, removal of the victim from the organization through termination, extended medical leave, or quitting. The results of

These issues can be difficult for leadership to detect, however, because there are disincentives for deputies to report these types of behaviors because of their own involvement, the pressure to not be labeled a "snitch" or "lazy," or the belief that a deputy should "be tough" and handle it. This puts pressure on the individual(s) being mistreated to resolve the situation themselves. Thus, these disrespect spirals can escalate to a point that, by the time someone does come forward, they look as though they are acting irrationally, or they might try to handle it in ways that could be perceived as bullying as well (Köhler et al., 2018). As one supervisor explained to us:

> I started leaning on these guys and calling them out for mistakes. There were a few of us trying to bring this thing back in . . . these kids went to their sergeant and they told him I was a bully.

The interviewee then explained to this sergeant why he had been pressuring these deputies by describing a dangerous situation they put him in. The sergeant had not been told about that situation. Thus, to the person less familiar with the situation, this interviewee's behavior was perceived as hostile, and because he had not told anyone about the prior negative experience, his concern and reaction were perceived as inappropriate.

Supervision Issues

LASD representatives across staff levels described the intrinsic role of supervision as being either complacent or complicit in the formation and persistence of subgroups. A midlevel representative stated, "The slippage happens when supervisors start to turn a blind eye." Another member of command-level staff likened the persistence of subgroups to supervisors overlooking and failing to address them early on:

> There are groups of people who will bully people who are too weak to stand up for themselves. They flourish because supervisors are turning a blind eye or just not believing that it's possible. But when you hear grumblings of something going on, then hmmm. Supervisors need to be there to say, "knock that shit off." You have to be there; you have to acknowledge the behavior and correct it. There's some truth to it. When you hear rumblings of it you have to address it.

The issue of supervision being complacent or complicit is complicated, however, by the fact that deputies who recruit to their station (and ostensibly to their subgroups) "keep it from the lieutenants and the sergeants, so it's hard." This can happen because subgroup members might take instructions from senior members, or "shot callers," who have "been there a long time and have ultimate respect" but also "have to boss people around." As one command staff member explained, "When you have cliques, they become harder to supervise. No one wants to see a shot caller at their station. I'm very in tune to people trying to puff their chest out." At least in the past, some groups have admitted to raising funds from others at the stations to support deputies who have received a suspension without pay (Pfeifer, 2007). This undermines the authority of supervisors who impose discipline.

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this typically protracted traumatizing experience are significant financial, career, health, and psychosocial losses or other negative consequences."

A line-level staff member elaborated on how preserving and assisting members of the subgroup is prioritized over policies and sound policing practices, stating,

> Cliques exist where they have a station tattoo. Fast stations give people a level of respect that you're a badass deputy. You're kind of looked after. If you get in trouble, they'll come to help you. They'll change things on a report. They'll do anything to keep you. They keep the tradition of being gung-ho, in charge, the traditional culture—it makes no sense; it's not critical thinking, it's not common sense, it's just there. They're like soldiers and just do what they're told. If you follow the traditions and you're automatically in that clique. If you question things and do policy by the books, then you're a troublemaker.

The statement that one who goes "by the books" would be a "troublemaker" is a striking contrast to the reports from some other interviewees that subgroup members are seen as the do-gooders who are unwilling to go against policy to accomplish their work. One interviewee recounted a past example of having to supervise deputies who had committed a string of shootings, saying,

> There was a shooting and we couldn't find a gun on the suspect who got shot. We were told that one of [the suspect's] friends probably grabbed the gun . . . [then] there was another shooting. Again, the explanation was that a friend threw the gun over a fence.

The interviewee recounted directly confronting a group of deputies about the shootings, suggesting that they should transfer out of patrol. One deputy challenged the interviewee, which violates the usual deference to rank that is common in law enforcement. The interviewee believed that the group element gave this deputy the support he needed to do this, by saying, "The kid was willing to let me know what he thought, and he had backup in the room." In short, a supervisor who tried to clamp down on potential foul play among deputies faced animosity and pushback. When his efforts were met with disrespect, he responded with disrespect, which provides another example of how incivility can spiral.

Other interviewees intimated that some members of leadership were in (or had been in) a subgroup. A county stakeholder representative said:

> I can't say whether the Regulators or Vikings or Banditos are a criminal street gang, but they're close to it. The reason you can't answer that is that it's never been investigated. . . . The culture is so pervasive within the department. There are many people who are in places of management that may have been part of the same cliques or precursors of them.

This perspective suggests that if supervisors have benefited from participation in a subgroup, they might have a conflict of interest with respect to curbing subgroups. There is also a sense that subgroups' negative behavior has never been investigated with the goal of investigating the role of the group.

Risk of Illegal or Problematic Behavior

As mentioned, interviewees spoke of subgroups—their members, behaviors, symbols, and customs—along a continuum. Interviewees cautioned that subgroups could be damaging for LASD (and by extension, the community) when they move beyond simply serving as a social club to devising their own codes of conduct with respect to their work roles and engaging in

nefarious actions. These included intimidating or harassing fellow deputies, not following protocols with respect to writing reports, planting evidence, bending the rules or cutting corners to justify aggressive policing, cutting corners on reporting, not providing sufficient backup when calls are made, and excessive or unnecessary use of force. A member of command-level staff echoed several other representatives who were "not in favor of saying [subgroups in general] are a problem" but still acknowledged the risk of the separate codes of conduct that certain subgroups have orchestrated. "Any group that sets separate rules should not be allowed," he said. "The job isn't about serving ourselves, but rather serving others. Following department policy is part of employment." Said another, "The tattoos are used for a sense of camaraderie, but it all could go backwards, like the Jump Out Boys and their manifesto."[3]

In an interview, a line-level staff member described the potential for abuse of power that can occur within a subgroup:

> The guys in a group get together and drink after work. . . . The cliques are a culture within a culture. You go out and drink a few beers and unwind after the day. But with that, the way you look at humanity, your brain gets skewed. . . . When you hire a 20-year-old and you give them that much power and surround them with other people [deputies] who don't do the right thing, well . . . younger people are more prone to make mistakes. You can abuse that power.

A midlevel representative added:

> My fear is that some of these problems . . . they're like weeds in fertile ground and so much has happened that they're [supervisors] missing or won't address. . . . I think our culture is becoming bad. . . . Put the wrong people in the position I'm in, you can get away with anything. The shit I could get away with is crazy because people think so highly of us; there's more and more people who don't know how to handle and police ourselves. The Baca-Tanaka stuff was just publicized, but it was going on then and now.

Another midlevel representative provided a more positive perspective:

> Some subgroups hold people accountable so that they don't tarnish the badge. There are two sides, and the media has gripped onto the negative dynamic. Yes, *those* [the negative] subgroups absolutely provide a harmful look at law enforcement, but there are others who don't. Some see their profession as part of the LASD as a whole. But once their value system changes from LASD, that's when you run into problems.

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[3] The Jump Out Boys was a group of Operation Safe Streets Gang Enforcement Team deputies that was revealed in 2012 after they left a written creed in the trunk of a patrol car (Cunningham, 2021). This creed said in part, "We are alpha dogs, who think and act like the wolf, but never become the wolf." This statement was attributed to a briefing from executive leadership at the time. It continued, "They understand when the line needs to be crossed and crossed back," which was explained by a Jump Out Boys member as a typo (LASD, undated-a). "Sometimes they need to do things that they don't want to do, in order to get where they want to be" was explained by Jump Out Boys members as things like death notifications or taking kids from parents. "The Jump Out Boys are not afraid to get their hands dirty without disgrace, dishonor, or hesitation" meant working late and not complaining, according to members of the group. The department did not agree that this creed reflected the values of the department, and several members or associates of the subgroup were terminated. Several also challenged their termination and were subsequently reinstated. The entire creed can be found at Castle, 2021.

A line-level representative spoke about this fine line between ethical deputies and harmful deputies metaphorically:

> There is a fine line between being a very good deputy and bad deputies. The like-mindedness of the criminal element of a deputy in a clique versus just a hard worker, but the hardwiring is the same. . . . It's like a computer that has a virus. And the computer cannot identify that it has the virus. It's myopic and blinded in how it's acting. It's different means to the same end. The means don't justify the ends. Clique members embody everything good about how they are deputies, but the more interesting thing is how they take power, how they take root.

Although some deputies adamantly stated that subgroups are not engaging in problematic actions, others noted that if they were not engaging in problematic behavior, they would not have to exist in secrecy.

An Anomaly or a Pattern?

Despite the complexity and nuance offered on the slippery slope between the benefits and risks of subgroups, interviewees nearly universally mentioned the East Los Angeles Banditos as a present-day example of subgroups "going down the wrong path," where "deputies run the station," "put peer pressure on other deputies" to a "mind-boggling" degree, and "have no respect for chain of command and their own written rules." Often, the Banditos were mentioned as a way to distinguish subgroups that were perceived to serve a positive function from those that do not. Again, East Los Angeles emerged as an extreme case of alleged workplace harassment, incivility, intimidation, and retaliation, leading to "brawls in the parking lot."[4] In addition, a midlevel staff member spoke about use of force in custody as an isolated case, adding,

> So you have a kid who wants to be accepted, they would ask are you ready to get your ink? And that meant you had to get into a use of force and send an inmate to the hospital, sometimes by breaking the orbital bone. Some supervisors didn't even write the use of force, or some of the uses of force "disappeared." Time goes on and they're used to this madness in custody.

The potential risk of unnecessary use of force stems from the emphasis on proactive policing on one end of the spectrum and committing a shooting on the opposite end. Line-level and midlevel representatives emphasized that deputies can be "hard chargers" without necessarily being overly aggressive. Additionally, a command-level representative spoke about subgroups as an isolated, historical issue:

> The Viking[5] issue was an anomaly. I'm unsure how that occurred, but I haven't seen that type of non-community policing, racism, et cetera, since I've worked for LASD. This isn't

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[4] This includes the Kennedy Hall incident, as well as mentions of other incidents in the station parking lot or the parking lot of the bar across the street from the station.

[5] In 1991, a series of revelations alleged that a clique of deputies at Lynwood station sported matching tattoos—the Vikings. They were reported to have engaged in discriminatory policing and excessive force, to have intimidated supervisors, and to have damaged other employees' property in the station parking lot. Eventually, two cases connected to this group, the *Thomas* (discrimination and excessive force) and *Carrillo* (civil rights violation and wrongful prosecution) lawsuits, would settle for $6 million and $10 million, respectively. These allegations led to the formation of the Kolts Commission.

> the intent of most people. I haven't heard of groups running the stations. . . . This wouldn't have been surprising back in the day when the sergeants didn't have as much control. Peer support was more important then.

In addition, a midlevel representative mentioned how people have explained away the potential harms that subgroups have committed, noting, "The Banditos will try to tell you it was a simple drunken brawl and the newspaper [is] making a big deal about it, but a gangster will tell you, 'Man, I'm in here on some bullshit.'" In other words, it might only seem like an inconsequential incident to those who did not face the brunt of it. Although several respondents spoke about problematic actions of subgroups as isolated incidents, these incidents might not be as rare as some LASD respondents report, especially if they happen across different parts of LASD.

(Un)healthy Coping

Interviewees who defended subgroups spoke about the sense of camaraderie and support for the stresses of patrol work that the groups can provide. However, several were quick to talk about the tendency of deputies in subgroups to lean heavily into the "hard charger" identity. A line-level staff member stated:

> Cliques are their [deputies'] support system. I'm sure the people [hard chargers] who do these things are tired. They are dealing with the worst of the worst. They want to vent to someone who understands. When you form this clique, you have people who can understand you and relate to you. Instead of moving on when the work is done, you kind of continue with the work. They just become completely deputy—they never turn it off. There's no balance. Even when they're out and about, they always carry their gun. Twenty-four hours a day, they're deputies. If you are in a clique, you have protection. . . . It's no wonder they're drinking so much and their divorce and suicide rates are so high.

The previous quote and the next quote both highlight how the solidarity and support provided by being in a subgroup can contribute to social isolation. A member of command-level staff mentioned the negative impacts of being overly entrenched in a subgroup identity:

> I think you'll find it's males and females that can't get away from the job. All they do is talk cop talk shop. They don't have anything outside of law enforcement, and that's where they feel most comfortable. And that can be very disruptive, even ruining marriages, because you're so entrenched in your job that when you take your uniform off and try to have conversations with folks outside of the job, you can't do it. And I think that's where we lose some folks. There's something to be said for unit pride or whatever you want to call it—and there should be—but the longer people stay, especially in custody, the longer they're festering and building these friendships within these modules and the less tolerant they become of these inmates. Five or six years stuck in jail when they want to go on patrol, they start to become less tolerant of the people they're sworn to protect. And there are these new guys coming in, trying to prove themselves to the old guys, the OGs [an abbreviation for "original gangsters" that also means "originals" or "old school"]. It may not be a clique, but it turns into people competing for who can do the most, who can have the best party, you know. They need that acceptance.

A retired member of LASD staff spoke directly to the issue of deputies who had committed shootings joining subgroups:

> A shooting is something no one should have to live through on the deputy side or the family side and it's celebrated. It's celebrated! They celebrate the fact that they got the bad guy, they put it up on the pedestal. It's coping. But we should be asking how the deputy is doing. The subgroups happen organically after a deputy is involved in a terrible shooting where he took out a 16-year-old, and it's eating away at him and what do they do? His buddies take him out, get some drinks—but he's got PTSD [posttraumatic stress disorder] from it. The focus needs to be different.

In other words, what may begin as a means of support for the difficult challenges of LASD service could devolve into what some view as a counterproductive coping mechanism. "Workaholism" and the social isolation that comes with it could be factors in clique formation and/or behavior (Balducci et al., 2012; Clark et al., 2016).

Despite an overall perspective that subgroups are not a major issue, nearly all interviewees reiterated that subgroups run the risk of going from a manifestation of camaraderie to one of problematic behavior. "Subgroups open up the department to risk. If there's enough smoke there's probably fire," a command-level staff member stated succinctly. The running thread throughout interviews is that subgroups allow for deputies to devise their own codes of conduct and systems of accountability and divert their loyalty to their internal system rather than to LASD as a whole. Another added, "if we aren't learning from the gangs in the department, they are going to keep going decade after decade. The tattoo is part of you. There is a mentality tied to it. This carries over as they promote. This perpetuates."

Conclusion

Our findings on the characteristics of subgroup members; the role of tattoos; and the functions, potential member advantages, and risks of subgroups are complex. Notably, many but not all of the examples of potential risks cited here were attributed to historical and current subgroups that exist within the Central Division. A line-level representative described subgroups as a "touchy subject. People make assumptions. Sometimes these assumptions are right, but they're not absolutes. One bad deputy does not mean all deputies are bad." The risks and benefits of subgroups appear to exist along a continuum. Many LASD deputies who defended subgroups often also noted the slippery slope leading to the downsides of subgroups. Some might begin with the best intentions of promoting hard work, social cohesion, and recreation, but, over time, the exclusionary aspects of some subgroups can promote perverse incentives that work counter to ethical, productive law enforcement and create supervisory issues and divisions within the department, as well as between the department and the communities it serves. Moreover, although the benefits accrue to individuals in the groups, many of the risks are borne by the organization. The high-profile nature of cases in which subgroup members are accused of misconduct or illegal activity contributes to substantial reputational and litigation risks for LASD. Moreover, many of the deputies with whom we spoke placed more emphasis on the internal issues or negative public perceptions caused by the existence of subgroups and did not make the connection or downplayed the potential connection between community harm and subgroups, despite the connection to aggressive policing or concerns about improper use-of-force incidents.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Survey Results

This chapter presents the results of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Survey, which gathered information from sworn personnel currently employed by LASD about their perceptions and experiences with deputy subgroups within LASD. The goal of this survey was to examine whether our interviewees' views about LASD or subgroups are widely held by members of LASD more broadly. More specifically (and as was detailed in Chapter Four), the survey focused on survey respondents' experiences with deputy subgroups, including

- who gets invited to join these subgroups and the criteria for being invited
- where within LASD these subgroups are typically found
- what advantages there are to joining these deputy subgroups
- views regarding the conduct, attitudes, and behavior of deputies who belong to a subgroup
- views about the impact of not belonging to a deputy subgroup
- views about ways in which deputy subgroups have impacted LASD as a whole.

In addition, the survey asked respondents for their views about supervisors' approach to deputy subgroups and what, if anything, LASD should do about deputy subgroups. The survey includes the perspective of both deputies and supervisors, as well as respondents from all units and patrol stations within LASD. The survey results often align with our interview results, including views about the secrecy of these groups and mixed perspectives about their role in the organization. The mix of perspectives leaves the overall impression that a deputy's perspective depends to a large extent on their work experiences and the types of subgroup(s) they have encountered during their career.

Our survey addressed the following questions, which we present below with a preview of key findings.

- **Who gets invited to join a deputy subgroup or clique?** Overall, 16 percent (n = 254) of survey respondents had ever been invited to join a deputy subgroup, with the majority of them being invited to join over five years ago. The longer the tenure a respondent had with LASD, the more likely they were to be invited to join a subgroup at some point in their career. For example, 25 percent of survey respondents who had been in the department for 21 or more years reported having been invited to join a deputy subgroup or clique. Most invitees indicated that the invitation came while they were at a patrol station assignment.

- **What are the criteria for being invited to join a subgroup, and at what stage in one's career is one most likely to be asked to join?** Subgroup invitees suggested that the three criteria cited most frequently were being known as a hard worker, being willing to work challenging assignments, and helping other deputies with their work. Between half and two-thirds of midlevel managers cited these three criteria as well. In addition, half of midlevel managers also referenced the criterion of willingness to engage in social activities with other subgroup members outside of work. Respondents also cited illegal or problematic behaviors as criteria for being invited to join subgroups; for example, nearly half of midlevel managers and subgroup invitees cited a willingness to engage in specific behaviors (such as being aggressive about making arrests) as a criterion.
- **Where within LASD are deputy subgroups or cliques typically found?** Two-thirds of subgroup invitees and two-thirds of midlevel managers agreed that deputy subgroups exist in some, but not all, LASD stations. Half of each set of respondents agreed that deputy subgroups are common at LASD stations in high-crime areas. Fewer cited custody locations—only a third of each group of respondents agreed that subgroups typically exist in some, but not all, LASD custody facilities.
- **What are the advantages of joining a deputy subgroup?** Nine out of ten subgroup invitees indicated that these groups provide a sense of camaraderie or fraternity; three-quarters of midlevel managers also cited this as an advantage. In addition, 55 percent of midlevel managers and 65 percent of invitees indicated that deputies join subgroups to get respect among their peers; about half of each set of respondents also cited "fitting in" at their work assignment as another advantage of joining these subgroups.
- **How do tattoos fit into the overall picture?** One concern is the role that tattoos could play with respect to deputy subgroups. About half of subgroup invitees and a third of midlevel managers agreed that, in order to be a member, a deputy must get that subgroup's tattoo. About two-thirds of invitees and half of midlevel managers agreed that having a tattoo was an acceptable way to show pride in a subgroup. Seventeen and 25 percent of these two groups (invitees and midlevel managers, respectively) agreed that subgroup tattoos were perceived as offensive or intimidating to other deputies.
- **How do survey respondents characterize the conduct, attitudes, and behavior of deputies who belong to a subgroup?** About 40 percent of midlevel managers and three-fourths of subgroup invitees *disagreed* that membership was restricted based on race/ethnicity; one out of three midlevel managers and two-thirds of subgroup invitees *disagreed* that membership was based on gender. That said, nearly one out of four midlevel managers indicated that they did not know whether subgroups restricted membership based on race/ethnicity or gender.
  - Two-thirds of midlevel managers and eight out of ten subgroup invitees agreed that deputy subgroups encourage members to be proactive at work. However, they also cited adverse conduct and behaviors, including that (1) subgroups have their own code of conduct (38 percent of midlevel managers and 42 percent of subgroup invitees) and (2) subgroups encourage members to work outside the chain of command in situations that normally require supervisor involvement (22 percent of midlevel managers and 19 percent of subgroup invitees). With respect to how deputies in subgroups treat nonmembers, nearly one-third of midlevel managers and invitees agreed with the statement that deputies in subgroups look down on non–group members, and 30 percent of midlevel managers and 20 percent of invitees agreed with the statement that deputies

in subgroups bully or harass nonmembers. Roughly one out of five midlevel managers agreed with the statements that deputies in subgroups sometimes engage in behavior that could endanger other deputies or that deputies in subgroups sometimes engage in behavior that might offend, intimidate, or endanger community members. Among subgroup invitees, 18 percent agreed with the statement that deputies in subgroups sometimes engage in behavior that could endanger other deputies; about 16 percent agreed that deputies in subgroups sometimes engage in behavior that might offend, intimidate, or endanger community members.

- **What is the impact at the individual level of not belonging to a deputy subgroup or clique?** Two-thirds of subgroup invitees indicated that not belonging to a subgroup did not negatively impact a deputy's training opportunities, work assignments, or opportunities for career advancement or promotion. That said, between 20 and 25 percent of those who had never been invited to join a subgroup indicated that not belonging negatively impacted all three areas. Midlevel managers' assessment of the impact at the individual level varied somewhat: One out of five indicated that not belonging to a subgroup limited a deputy's training opportunities, one out of three indicated that not belonging negatively affected a deputy's work assignments, and one out of four indicated that not belonging limited deputies' opportunities for career advancement and promotion.
- **What is the impact of deputy subgroups or cliques on the workplace and LASD as a whole?** A majority of midlevel managers and subgroup invitees agreed that subgroups had no effect on the daily operations of their station or unit. Further, two-thirds of both set of respondents agreed that most deputies know who is in the group and who is not.
  - In terms of positive impacts, two-thirds of subgroup invitees agreed with the statement that deputy subgroups help motivate others within the station or unit, while a third of midlevel managers agreed with this statement.
  - In terms of negative impacts, a third of midlevel managers and a quarter of subgroup invitees agreed that the presence of deputy subgroups can hurt morale within the station or unit. A third of both groups of respondents agreed that the presence of deputy subgroups or cliques can make nonmembers want to leave or avoid certain stations or units. In addition, two-thirds of midlevel managers and half of invitees agreed that deputy subgroups' behavior had negatively impacted community perceptions of LASD.
  - With respect to the media's portrayal of subgroups, half of midlevel managers and 78 percent of subgroup invitees agreed that subgroups were not as harmful as the media makes them out to be.
- **What are their views regarding supervisors' approach to deputy subgroups or cliques?** Half of midlevel managers and two-thirds of subgroup invitees agreed that supervisors were aware of subgroups' conduct. One out of four midlevel managers and two-thirds of invitees also agreed that supervisors formally discipline improper or unethical behavior by subgroup or clique members. However, a third of midlevel managers and half of invitees indicated that supervisors do not consider deputy subgroups or cliques to be problematic. Fifteen percent of midlevel managers and 16 percent of subgroup invitees agreed that supervisors are too lenient on deputy subgroup or clique members. When asked whether supervisors should discourage deputies from joining subgroups or cliques, 19 percent of midlevel managers and 16 percent of subgroup invitees responded that they should.

- **What are their views about what LASD should do about deputy subgroups or cliques?** About half of subgroup invitees and 22 percent of midlevel managers indicated that LASD should not do anything about subgroups. In contrast, about two-thirds of midlevel managers and half of subgroup invitees agreed that LASD should break up problematic deputy subgroups or cliques by moving members to different stations or units. Thirty-four percent of midlevel managers and 23 percent of subgroup invitees agreed that a mandatory station/unit rotation policy could limit the influence of subgroups or cliques. In addition, about half of midlevel managers and invitees favored LASD discouraging deputies from joining these subgroups or cliques. When asked whether deputy subgroups or cliques should be prohibited altogether, about half of midlevel managers and subgroup invitees agreed, while a third of midlevel managers and 23 percent of invitees disagreed. Lastly, two-thirds of midlevel managers and about half of subgroup invitees favored LASD providing training and support to supervisors on how to address any improper or unethical behavior by deputy subgroups or cliques.

The overall response rate was 16.8 percent. Table 4.1 in Chapter Four summarizes the response rate for the different major LASD unit groupings. To better understand the phenomena of subgroups, we present the survey findings in two ways: (1) those respondents who had ever been invited to join a deputy subgroup and, thus, are more likely to be familiar with these subgroups and (2) those who are midlevel managers. We do so because these two groups are more likely than other deputies to have familiarity with these subgroups and, therefore, to be able to provide more insights as to the subgroup phenomena. Further, as discussed below, midlevel managers are more likely than deputies to have been invited at some point in their career to join a subgroup.

Lastly, to report on survey respondents' assessment of the impact of subgroups on LASD and individuals, as well as their recommendations for what (if anything) LASD should do about subgroups, we first compare those who had ever been invited to join a subgroup with those who have not; we then compare the responses of midlevel managers and deputies, because these two groups tend to have different assessments on subgroups' impact and what should be done.

Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents

Table 8.1 compares the demographic characteristics of the survey respondents with those of sworn personnel within the overall department. The major differences were with respect to rank, gender, and the percentage of Hispanic respondents. Although deputies account for approximately 83 percent of LASD's sworn personnel, about 72 percent of survey respondents were deputies. At the same time, midlevel managers were overrepresented in the survey; they account for approximately 16.8 percent of LASD's sworn personnel but 25.4 percent of the survey respondents.

With respect to gender, 82 percent of LASD's sworn personnel are men, but in our survey they represented 73.7 percent of the respondents. Women were slightly overrepresented in the survey compared with their representation in the department as a whole (20 percent versus 18 percent).

Table 8.1
Demographic Characteristics of Survey Respondents and Overall LASD Sworn Personnel

Demographic Characteristics	Survey Respondents[a]	LASD Sworn Personnel
Gender		
Male		
Number	1,193	7,883
Percentage	73.7%	82.0%
Female		
Number	393	1,725
Percentage	20.0%	18.0%
Race/ethnicity		
White		
Number	551	3,204
Percentage	34.1%	33.3%
Hispanic		
Number	652	4,854
Percentage	40.3%	50.5%
Black		
Number	110	760
Percentage	6.80%	7.91%
Asian		
Number	97	522
Percentage	6.00%	5.43%
Other (Filipino, Alaskan, Native American)		
Number	116	268
Percentage	7.17%	2.79%
Rank		
Deputies		
Number	1,118	6,992
Percentage	72.0%	83.2%
Midlevel managers		
Number	395	1,542
Percentage	25.4%	16.0%
Captains		
Number	39	74
Percentage	2.5%	7.8%

[a] Survey percentages might not add to 100 percent because of missing values.

With respect to race/ethnicity, Hispanic personnel were underrepresented in the survey. They are 50.5 percent of LASD deputies but were just 40.3 percent of survey respondents.

Findings by Whether a Respondent Had Ever Been Invited to Join a Deputy Subgroup

Below we present the findings highlighting the results for those respondents who indicated that they had ever been invited to join a deputy subgroup. We also include in the tables the results for those respondents who had *never been invited* so that the reader can compare the responses; however, the text focuses on highlighting the findings for those who had *ever* been invited because they are more likely to be familiar with subgroups. This is underscored by the fact that the percentage of respondents who indicated "don't know" for a particular response category was much higher for those who had never been invited. Deputies with fewer years of experience more commonly responded "don't know" to questions about subgroups.[1] Throughout, we report Likert scale findings as either "agree" (which includes "strongly agree" and "agree") or "disagree" (which includes "strongly disagree" and "disagree").

Who Gets Invited to Join Deputy Subgroups?

Overall, 16 percent (n = 254) of deputies who responded to our survey had ever been invited to join a deputy subgroup or clique at some point in their career (Table 8.2). Of the deputies who had been asked to participate in a subgroup or clique at some point in their career, 25.7 percent indicated that they had been invited to do so within the last five years.

Those who are new to LASD were less likely to have had experience with subgroups (Table 8.3) Almost 25 percent of survey respondents who had been in the department for 21 or more years reported ever having been invited to join a deputy subgroup or clique. This compares with 4 percent of those who had been with the department seven years or less and 14.9 percent of respondents who had been with the department between eight and 20 years (Table 8.3).

At What Career Stage Were Deputies Invited to Join a Subgroup?

Among subgroup invitees, most indicated that deputies were first invited to join while they were at a patrol station assignment (Table 8.4). Twenty percent indicated that this occurred during the first two years at a patrol station, and 48.8 percent indicated that it occurred after two years at a patrol station. Of those who had *never* been invited to join a deputy subgroup, 66.9 percent said that they did not know the stage in a deputy's career when most deputies were first invited to join.

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[1] The 356 deputies with less than seven years of experience responded "don't know" 49 percent of the time on average to items in questions 11 through 15, compared with an average of 35 percent for those with more than seven years of experience. The 434 respondents at the rank of sergeant and above answered "don't know" 22 percent of the time on average for these same items. In contrast, those who responded that they had been invited to join a group answered "don't know" to 5 percent of these items on average, compared with an average of 40 percent for those who had not been invited.

Table 8.2
Whether a Survey Respondent Had Been Invited to Join a Deputy Subgroup

Response	Number	Percentage
Have you ever been invited to join a deputy subgroup or clique?		
Yes	254	16.0%
No	1,333	84.0%
In the last five years, have you been invited to join a deputy subgroup or clique?		
Yes	61	25.7%
No	176	74.3%

Q4 and Q5. Have you ever been invited to join a deputy subgroup or clique? In the last five years, have you been invited to join a deputy subgroup or clique? For each question, survey respondents were asked to check either "Yes" or "No." Q5 respondents are those who responded "Yes" to Q4.

Table 8.3
Who Has Ever Been Invited to Join a Deputy Subgroup, Overall and by Tenure

Tenure	Yes	No	Row Total
Q4. Have you ever been invited to join a deputy subgroup or clique?			
Overall	252	1,314	1,566
	16.1%	83.9%	100%
0–7 years	14	342	356
	3.9%	96.1%	22.7%
8–20 years	93	533	626
	14.9%	85.1%	40.0%
21+ years	145	439	584
	24.8%	75.2%	37.3%

What Are the Criteria for Being Invited to Join Deputy Subgroups or Cliques?

Among subgroup invitees, the three most frequently cited criteria for being invited to join a subgroup were (Figure 8.1)

- being known as a hard worker (91 percent)
- being willing to work challenging assignments (86 percent)
- helping other deputies with their work (85 percent).

Table 8.4
At What Stage in Their Career Are Most Deputies First Invited to Join a Deputy Subgroup?

Respondent Type	In Custody Assignment	First Two Years at Patrol Station	After Two Years at Patrol Station	Other (Please Specify)	Don't Know	Row Total
Invited	12	52	123	29	36	252
	4.8%	20.6%	48.8%	11.5%	14.3	16.1%
Not invited	84	123	152	75	876	1310
	6.4%	9.4%	11.6%	5.7%	66.9%	83.9%
Overall	96	175	275	104	912	1562
	6.1%	11.2%	17.6%	6.7%	58.4%	100%

Q6. As far as you know, at what stage in their career are most deputies first invited to join a deputy subgroup or clique? Survey respondents were asked to check only one option.

Our interviews suggested that all of these things could factor into being invited. Working hard and being liked are supported by the most survey respondents. A few interviewees noted that as groups change over time, they might be more likely to require people to engage in specific behaviors outside of work, which has less agreement here.

Figure 8.1 also presents the results for **criteria involving problematic behaviors**. Among subgroup invitees, 47 percent reported a willingness to engage in specific behaviors (e.g., being aggressive about making arrests). Less frequently reported criteria were a willingness to engage in behavior that violates current LASD policy and practices (14 percent) and a willingness to look the other way when others engage in improper or unethical behavior (22 percent). These findings are consistent with our interview findings that "hard-charging" or aggressive policing is often valued by subgroups. They are also consistent with some of our interviewees' reports that misconduct and unethical behavior were rare but had occasionally happened.

Where Within LASD Are Deputy Subgroups or Cliques Typically Found?

Two-thirds of survey respondents who were subgroup invitees reported that these subgroups **exist in some, but not all**, **LASD stations** (Table 8.5). Only 24.7 percent responded that deputy subgroups exist in all LASD stations. In addition, 55.6 percent reported that these subgroups are **common at LASD stations in high-crime areas**.

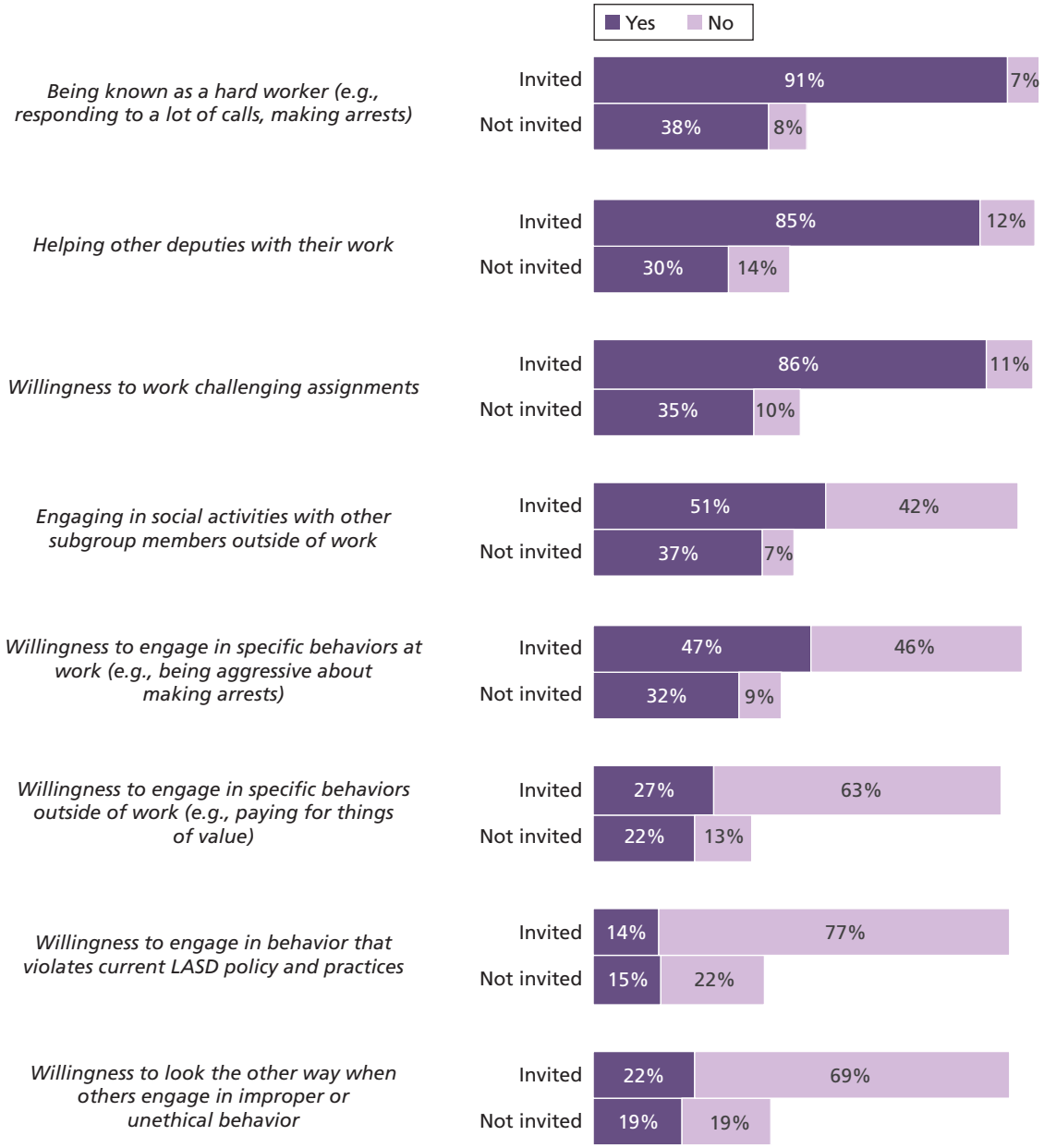
With respect to custody, the presence of deputy subgroups in custody facilities was thought to be less prevalent. Among subgroup invitees, 31.8 percent indicated that **deputy subgroups typically exist in some, but not all, LASD custody facilities** (Table 8.6).

What Are the Advantages of Belonging to a Deputy Subgroup or Clique?

Nine out of ten subgroup invitees indicated that these groups provide a sense of camaraderie or fraternity (Figure 8.2). **Nearly three-fifths of invitees indicated that deputies join these subgroups to get respect among their peers**. Other reasons for joining deputy subgroups included

- to fit in at their work assignment

Figure 8.1
What Were the Criteria for Being Invited?



NOTES: Text for Q7 from the survey: "In your view, what are the criteria for being invited to join these deputy subgroups or cliques?" Survey respondents were given a series of statements and asked to mark one of three response options for each statement: Yes, No, or Don't Know.

- to be mentored by more-senior deputies
- to get special privileges at work, such as choice of assignments, choice of shifts, time off, etc.

Table 8.5
Where Within LASD Are Deputy Subgroups or Cliques Typically Found? (Invited Versus Not Invited)

Respondent Type	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Row Total
. . . exist in some but not all LASD stations							
Invited							252
	12.3%	6.3%	6.3%	26.2%	34.9%	13.9%	100%
Not invited							1,321
	6.1%	4.7%	9.8%	22.3%	19.8%	37.5%	100%
Overall							1,573
	7.1%	5.0%	9.2%	22.9%	22.2%	33.7%	100%
. . . exist in all LASD stations							
Invited							251
	25.5%	15.1%	8.8%	6.4%	18.3%	25.9%	100%
Not invited							1,319
	25.2%	10.3%	9.9%	7.3%	5.0%	42.2%	100%
Overall							1,570
	25.3%	11.1%	9.7%	7.1%	7.1%	39.6%	100%
. . . are more common at LASD stations in high-crime areas							
Invited							252
	14.7%	6.3%	9.5%	25.8%	29.8%	13.9%	100%
Not invited							1,322
	5.5%	4.8%	11.9%	18.2%	19.1%	40.5%	100%
Overall							1,574
	7.0%	5.0%	11.5%	19.4%	20.8%	36.3%	100%

Q8 (a, b, c). The following statements are about where in LASD these deputy subgroups or cliques are typically found. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (Survey respondents were given a five-point Likert scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," plus a "Don't Know" option.)

These findings conform to our interview findings, although the interviews placed slightly more emphasis on the idea that joining a subgroup is associated with respect than is reflected here.

Deputy Subgroups and Tattoos

One of the concerns is the role that tattoos play with respect to deputy subgroups. Among subgroup invitees, 47 percent agreed that in order to be a member, a **deputy must get that subgroup's tattoo** (Table 8.7). In addition, two-thirds agreed that having a tattoo was an

Table 8.6
Where Within LASD Are Deputy Subgroups or Cliques Typically Found?

Respondent Type	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Row Total
. . . exist in some but not all LASD custody facilities							
Invited							251
	9.6%	7.6%	13.9%	18.3%	13.5%	37.1%	100%
Not invited							1,321
	8.3%	5.4%	12.7%	16.3%	8.6%	48.8%	100%
Overall							1,572
	8.5%	5.7%	12.9%	16.6%	9.4%	46.9%	100%
. . . exist in all LASD custody facilities							
Invited							251
	25.1%	11.6%	15.9%	2.4%	6.8%	38.2%	100%
Not invited							1,322
	22.4%	9.1%	12.4%	4.4%	2.8%	48.9%	100%
Overall							1,573
	22.8%	9.5%	13.0%	4.1%	3.4%	47.2%	100%
. . . are common in work assignments other than patrol and custody							
Invited							253
	18.6%	15.4%	13.4%	15.0%	7.5%	30.0%	100%
Not invited							1,322
	14.6%	6.5%	14.3%	6.4%	3.9%	54.2%	100%
Overall							1,575
	15.2%	7.9%	14.2%	7.8%	4.5%	50.3%	100%

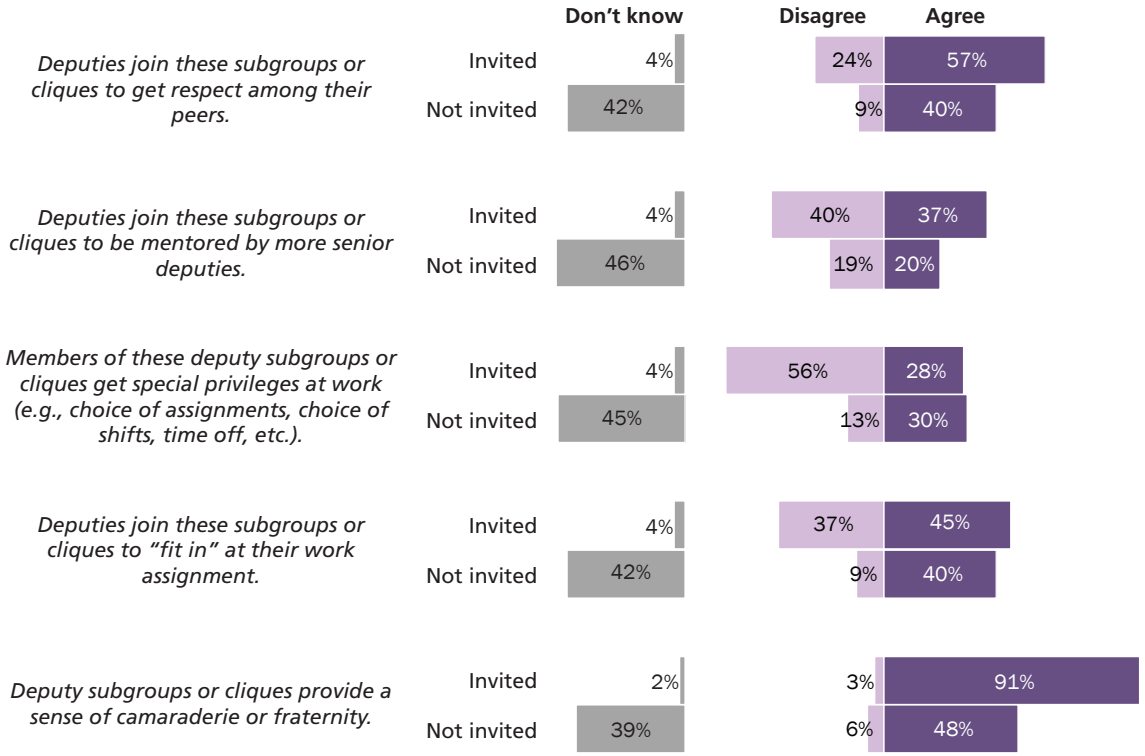
Q8 (d, e, f). The following statements are about where in LASD these deputy subgroups or cliques are typically found. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (Survey respondents were given a five-point Likert scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," plus a "Don't Know" option.)

acceptable way to **show pride in a subgroup**. Seventeen percent agreed that deputy subgroup tattoos were perceived as offensive or intimidating to other deputies.

Conduct, Attitudes, and Behavior of Deputies Who Belong to a Deputy Subgroup or Clique

Eight out of ten subgroup invitees agreed that **deputy subgroups encourage members to be proactive at work** (Table 8.8). This is consistent with feedback from several interviewees who commented that subgroups often can serve to motivate other members to be proactive about making arrests.

Figure 8.2
What Are the Perceived Advantages of Belonging to a Deputy Subgroup or Clique?



NOTES: Items represent Q9a, 9b, 9c, 9d, and 9e from the survey. The "Agree" category represents "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" responses, while the "Disagree" category represents "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree." Respondents also had the option of "Neither Agree nor Disagree" and "Don't Know."

With respect to conduct, 42.1 percent agreed with the statement that these subgroups **have their own code of conduct** (Table 8.8). And 18.5 percent indicated that **subgroups encourage members to work outside the chain of command in situations that normally require supervisor involvement** (e.g., incident involving use of force).

With respect to restrictions on subgroup membership, 74 percent of subgroup invitees **disagreed that membership was restricted based on race/ethnicity** (Figure 8.3). Also, two-thirds **disagreed that membership was restricted based on gender**.[2] Still, nearly one out of five agreed that membership was restricted based on gender, and 11 percent agreed that it was restricted based on race/ethnicity.

With respect to how deputies in subgroups treat nonmembers, one-fourth of subgroup invitees responded that **deputies in subgroups look down on non–group members** (e.g., ignore them, speak ill of them; Figure 8.3), and one-fifth indicated that **deputies in subgroups bully or harass nonmembers** (e.g., humiliate, set unreasonable expectations, give unwanted tasks). This is consistent with a common finding from our interviews that deputies in subgroups could consider nonmembers to be "lazy;" however, a number of interviewees noted that

[2] Note that for a period of time, LASD was required to promote female deputies in at least 25 percent of promotions (the *Bouman* consent decree), making their upward mobility faster and therefore possibly reducing their likelihood of being considered for these groups.

Table 8.7
What Do Survey Respondents Consider the Role of Tattoos and Deputy Subgroups or Cliques to Be? (Invited Versus Not Invited)

Respondent Type	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Row Total
In order to be a member of a subgroup or clique, a deputy must get that group's tattoo							
Invited							253
	21.3%	10.3%	11.1%	16.6%	30.4%	10.3%	100%
Not invited							1,325
	9.1%	4.7%	9.5%	10.9%	10.6%	55.2%	100%
Overall							1,578
	11.1%	5.6%	9.8%	11.8%	13.8%	48.0%	100%
Having a tattoo is an acceptable way to show pride in a subgroup or clique							
Invited							254
	6.7%	3.9%	19.7%	25.2%	40.9%	3.5%	100%
Not invited							1,325
	7.8%	3.0%	13.4%	15.9%	16.1%	43.8%	100%
Overall							1,579
	7.6%	3.2%	14.4%	17.4%	20.1%	37.3%	100%
Subgroup or clique tattoos are perceived as offensive or intimidating to other deputies							
Invited							254
	47.2%	20.9%	10.2%	9.8%	7.5%	4.3%	100%
Not invited							1,322
	18.4%	8.8%	14.4%	9.5%	5.7%	43.2%	100%
Overall							1,576
	23.0%	10.7%	13.7%	9.6%	6.0%	36.9%	100%

Q10 (a, b, c). The following statements are about tattoos. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. (Survey respondents were given a five-point Likert scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," plus a "Don't Know" option.)

people were not treated differently based on subgroup membership. Bullying and harassment were framed similarly. This suggests that these actions are possibly rare, albeit quite harmful.

With respect to deputies in subgroups **engaging in dangerous or offensive behavior**, 18 percent of subgroup invitees agreed that deputies in subgroups sometimes engage in **behavior that may endanger other deputies** (Figure 8.3). Furthermore, 15.8 percent agreed that deputies in subgroups sometimes engage in **behavior that may offend, intimidate, or endanger community members**.

Table 8.8
Views About the Conduct, Attitudes, and Behavior of Deputies Who Belong to a Deputy Subgroup or Clique (Invited Versus Not Invited)

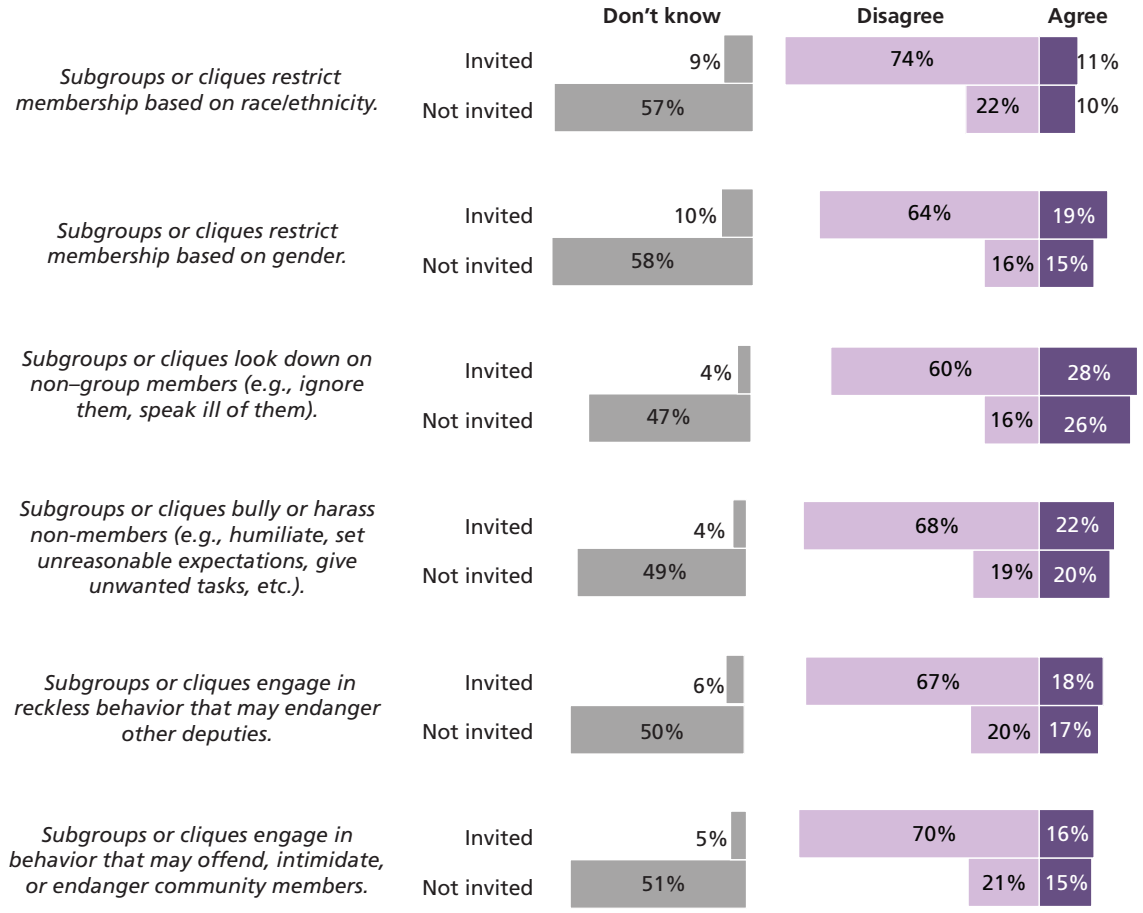
Respondent Type	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Row Total
Subgroups or cliques have their own code of conduct							
Invited							254
	31.1%	11.8%	8.3%	24.8%	17.3%	6.7%	100%
Not invited							1,321
	6.7%	3.2%	9.9%	15.2%	12.3%	52.8%	100%
Overall							1,575
	10.6%	4.6%	9.7%	16.8%	13.1%	45.3%	100%
Subgroups or cliques encourage members to be proactive at work							
Invited							254
	4.7%	4.3%	7.1%	26.0%	54.7%	3.1%	100%
Not invited							1,324
	2.6%	2.5%	12.5%	19.3%	14.8%	48.3%	100%
Overall							1,578
	3.0%	2.8%	11.6%	20.4%	21.2%	41.0%	100%
Subgroups or cliques encourage members to work outside the chain of command in situations that normally require supervisor involvement (e.g., incident involving use of force)							
Invited							254
	54.3%	12.6%	8.3%	8.3%	10.2%	6.3%	100%
Not invited							1,321
	10.4%	6.4%	11.7%	9.6%	6.7%	55.2%	100%
Overall							1,575
	17.5%	7.4%	11.2%	9.4%	7.3%	47.3%	100%

Q11 (a, b, c). The following statements are about the conduct, attitudes, and behavior of deputies who belong to a deputy subgroup or clique. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (Survey respondents were given a five-point Likert scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," plus a "Don't Know" option.)

Overall Findings Regarding the Impact of Subgroups on the Department and Individuals and Suggestions as to What LASD Can Do About Subgroups

Earlier, we presented the survey findings about who gets invited to join these subgroups, the advantages of belonging, and the characteristics of these subgroups, focusing on those survey respondents whom we believed had the most experience with subgroups: those who had been invited to join a subgroup.

Figure 8.3
Survey Respondents' Views Regarding the Conduct, Attitudes, and Behavior of Deputies Who Belong to a Deputy Subgroup or Clique (Invited Versus Not Invited)



NOTES: Items represent Q11d, 11e, 11f, 11g, 11h, and 11i from the survey. The "Agree" category represents "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" responses, while the "Disagree" category represents "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree." Respondents also had the option of "Neither Agree nor Disagree" and "Don't Know."

In this section, we present the overall survey findings about the impact of subgroups and suggestions about what LASD can do about subgroups comparing the responses of those who had *ever* been invited versus those who had *never* been invited to join these groups. We do so because there are significant differences in the views of these two groups.

Impact of Not Belonging to a Deputy Subgroup on the Individual

We asked about the possible impact that not belonging to a subgroup could have on the individual in terms of training opportunities, work assignments, and opportunities for career advancement or promotion.

Of those who had been invited to join a subgroup, the majority indicated that not belonging to a subgroup had no negative impact (Table 8.9). Specifically, about two-thirds of these respondents

- disagreed that not belonging limits a deputy's training opportunities

Table 8.9
Survey Respondents' Views Regarding the Impact of Not Belonging to a Deputy Subgroup or Clique on an Individual

Respondent Type	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Row Total
. . . can limit a deputy's training opportunities							
Invited							253
	59.3%	9.5%	5.5%	11.1%	11.9%	2.8%	100%
Not invited							1,320
	24.7%	7.0%	10.5%	11.8%	8.5%	37.4%	100%
Overall							1,573
	30.3%	7.4%	9.7%	11.7%	9.0%	31.8%	100%
. . . can negatively affect a deputy's work assignments							
Invited							253
	52.2%	12.3%	5.9%	15.8%	11.5%	2.4%	100%
Not invited							1,318
	21.8%	6.4%	11.2%	14.0%	10.2%	36.3%	100%
Overall							1,571
	26.7%	7.4%	10.3%	14.3%	10.4%	30.9%	100%
. . . can limit a deputy's opportunities for career advancement or promotion							
Invited							253
	60.9%	5.9%	5.1%	9.9%	15.0%	3.2%	100%
Not invited							1,318
	24.6%	6.8%	10.5%	12.4%	9.6%	36.0%	100%
Overall							1,571
	30.4%	6.7%	9.7%	12.0%	10.4%	30.7%	100%

Q12 (a, b, c). The following statements describe the impact that NOT belonging to a deputy subgroup or clique can have on an individual. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (Survey respondents were given a five-point Likert scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," plus a "Don't Know" option.)

- disagreed that not belonging can negatively affect a deputy's work assignments
- disagreed that not belonging limits a deputy's opportunities for career advancement or promotion.

In contrast, about 20 percent of those who had *ever* been invited and about 25 percent of those who had *never* been invited to join a subgroup perceived that not belonging had negative effects (despite a large proportion of "don't know" responses for those who had never been invited). Specifically, these respondents (Table 8.9)

- agreed that not belonging negatively impacted a deputy's training opportunities
- agreed that not belonging negatively affected one's work assignments
- agreed that not belonging negatively affected opportunities for career advancement or promotion.

Impact of Deputy Subgroups or Cliques on the Workplace and LASD as a Whole

Subgroup invitees were more likely than non-invitees to respond that subgroups had no impact or a positive impact and were more likely to disagree that subgroups have a negative impact on the work environment (Figure 8.4).

A majority of invitees agreed that subgroups have no effect on the daily operations of their station or unit. In addition, about two-thirds reported that most deputies know who is in the group and who is not, and another two-thirds indicated that deputy subgroups help motivate others within the station or unit (e.g., make more arrests, maintain better order of custody inmates).

Still, some subgroup invitees noted a negative impact of these groups. A quarter indicated that the presence of deputy subgroups can hurt morale within the station or unit; a third indicated that the presence of deputy subgroups or cliques makes nonmembers want to leave or avoid certain stations or units (Figure 8.4).

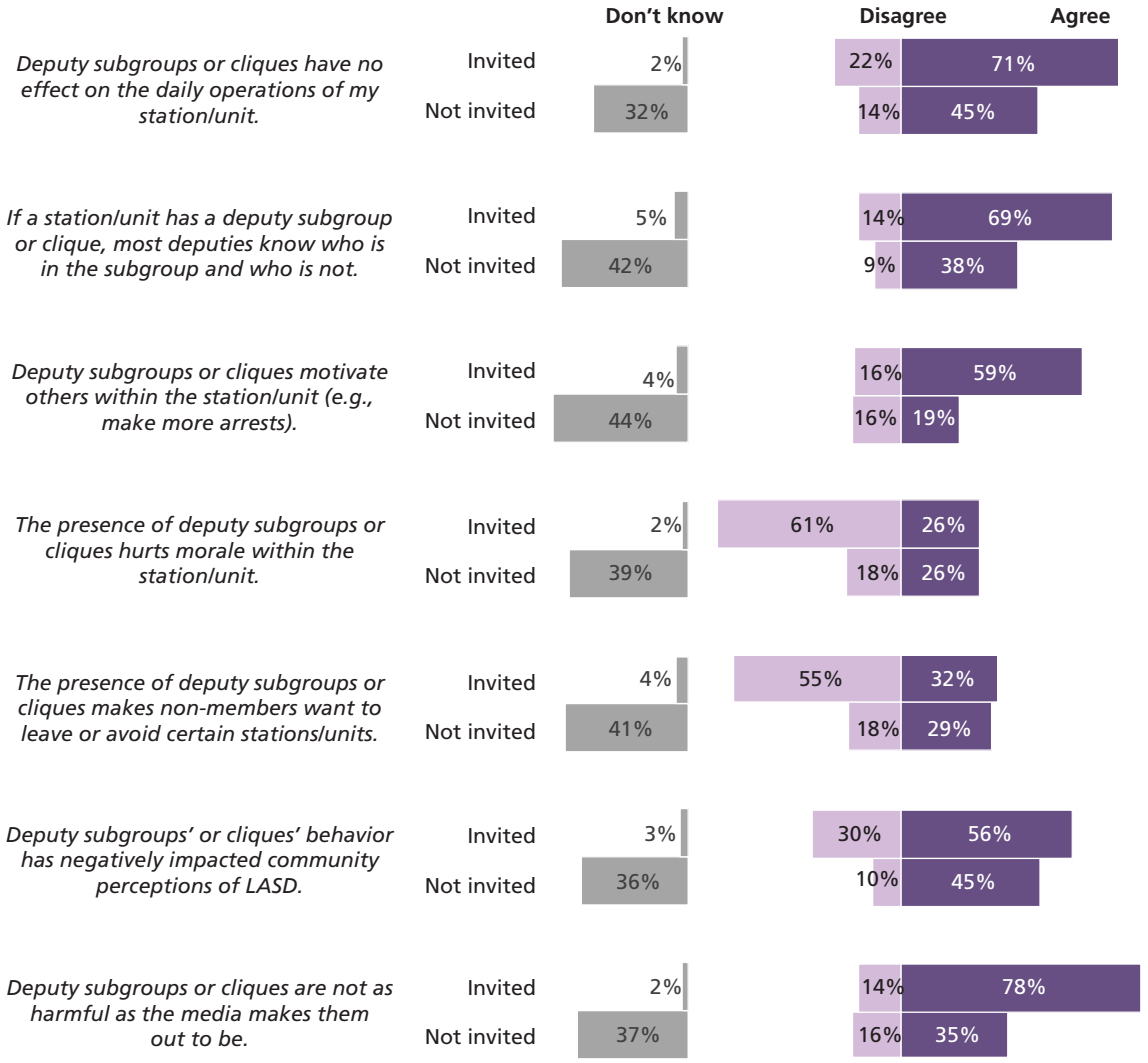
Survey respondents who had *never* been invited to join a deputy subgroup had a different perspective about the effects of the subgroups on the workplace and LASD as a whole. They were less likely than invitees to agree with the statement that deputy subgroups had no effect on the daily operations of a station or unit (Figure 8.4). They also were less likely to agree that most deputies know who is in a subgroup. And one out of five respondents who had *never* been invited to join a deputy subgroup agreed that deputy subgroups motivated others within the station or unit (compared with five out of five who had *ever* been invited).

However, a similar percentage of **both groups agreed that the presence of deputy subgroups can hurt morale and make nonmembers want to leave or avoid certain stations or units** (Figure 8.4). Specifically, about a quarter of both groups (those who had ever been invited to join a subgroup and those who had not) agreed that the presence of deputy subgroups can hurt morale within the station or unit. And about a third of both groups agreed that the presence of deputy subgroups or cliques makes nonmembers want to leave or avoid certain stations or units.

In addition, about half of respondents who had *ever* been invited to participate in a subgroup and those who had not agreed that **deputy subgroups' behavior had negatively impacted community perceptions of LASD.** Note, though, that one-third who had *never* been invited to join a subgroup indicated that they did not know what impact it had on community perceptions of LASD.

With respect to **views regarding the media,** there was a clear difference between the two groups. Among invitees, 78.4 percent agreed that these subgroups were not as harmful as the media makes them out to be (Figure 8.4), compared with 35 percent of non-invitees (with 37 percent indicating that they did not know).

Figure 8.4
Survey Respondents' Views Regarding the Impact of Deputy Subgroups or Cliques on the Workplace and LASD as a Whole



NOTES: Items represent Q13a, 13b, 13c, 13d, Q13e, 13f, and 13g from the survey. The "Agree" category represents "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" responses, while the "Disagree" category represents "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree." Respondents also had the option of "Neither Agree nor Disagree" and "Don't Know."

Survey Respondents' Views Regarding Supervisors' Approach to Deputy Subgroups

We asked survey respondents about supervisors' approach and conduct toward deputy subgroups. Again, we compare the responses of those who had been invited to join a subgroup with those who had not.

More than half of invitees agreed that (Table 8.10)

- **supervisors were aware of subgroups' conduct**
- **supervisors formally discipline improper or unethical behavior by subgroup or clique members**
- **supervisors do not consider deputy subgroups or cliques to be problematic.**

Table 8.10
Survey Respondents' Views Regarding Supervisors' Approaches to Deputy Subgroups or Cliques

Respondent Type	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Row Total
Supervisors are aware of subgroups' or cliques' conduct							
Invited							254
	2.0%	6.3%	14.2%	35.0%	31.9%	10.6%	100%
Not invited							1,320
	3.3%	3.6%	10.4%	18.9%	14.2%	49.6%	100%
Overall							1,574
	3.0%	4.0%	11.0%	21.5%	17.1%	43.3%	100%
Supervisors formally discipline improper or unethical behavior by subgroup or clique members							
Invited							254
	10.6%	7.1%	12.6%	16.5%	40.9%	12.2%	100%
Not invited							1,317
	7.8%	7.1%	12.2%	9.4%	11.1%	52.4%	100%
Overall							1,571
	8.3%	7.1%	12.3%	10.6%	15.9%	45.9%	100%
Supervisors do not consider deputy subgroups or cliques to be problematic							
Invited							254
	4.7%	9.4%	20.1%	33.5%	21.3%	11.0%	100%
Not invited							1,319
	4.6%	6.7%	16.1%	13.6%	8.4%	50.5%	100%
Overall							1,573
	4.6%	7.1%	16.8%	16.8%	10.5%	44.1%	100%
Supervisors are too lenient when deputy subgroup or clique members violate LASD policies or procedures							
Invited							254
	46.5%	14.6%	13.0%	7.5%	9.1%	9.4%	100%
Not invited							1,318
	13.2%	7.4%	14.0%	8.9%	5.8%	50.7%	100%
Overall							1,572
	18.6%	8.5%	13.9%	8.7%	6.4%	44.0%	100%
Supervisors discourage deputies from joining subgroups or cliques							
Invited							254
	17.7%	11.4%	41.3%	9.4%	6.7%	13.4%	100%
Not invited							1,322
	8.9%	7.3%	20.7%	6.4%	7.6%	49.1%	100%
Overall							1,576
	10.3%	8.0%	24.0%	6.9%	7.4%	43.3%	100%

Q14 (a, b, c, d, e). Now we want to ask you specifically about supervisors' (Lieutenants or Sergeants) approach to deputy subgroups or cliques. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (Survey respondents were given a five-point Likert scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," plus a "Don't Know" option.)

In comparison, 20 to 33 percent of those who had *never* been invited to join a subgroup agreed with these statements about supervisors, and nearly half indicated that they did not know the answer (Table 8.10).

The two groups of respondents also assessed supervisors' response to subgroups (Table 8.10). Subgroup invitees were more likely to ***disagree*** that **supervisors are too lenient toward subgroup or clique members**, while those who had never been invited were more mixed, and half did not know. In contrast, many respondents answered "neither agree nor disagree" that **supervisors discourage deputies from joining subgroups or cliques**. This might suggest mixed messages across supervisors or over time. The two groups were similar in their agreement to this item.

Survey Respondents' Views About What LASD Should Do About Deputy Subgroups

There was a stark difference between subgroup invitees and non-invitees as to whether **LASD should do anything about subgroups**. Specifically, 45 percent of subgroup invitees indicated that LASD should not do anything about these groups, while 14 percent of non-invitees indicated that LASD should not do anything about these groups.

About half of survey respondents agreed with the statement that **LASD should break up problematic deputy subgroups or cliques by moving members to different stations or units** (Figure 8.5).

Respondents who had *never* been invited to join a subgroup were more likely than those who had been invited to agree that **LASD should discourage deputies from joining these subgroups or cliques** and that **LASD should prohibit deputy subgroups or cliques**.

Between 23 and 32 percent of respondents agreed that a **mandatory station/unit rotation policy could limit the influence of subgroups or cliques**.

Lastly, about **half of both invitees and non-invitees agreed that LASD needs to provide training and support to supervisors** on how to address any improper or unethical behavior by deputy subgroups or cliques.

Findings by Whether a Respondent Was a Midlevel Manager or a Deputy

Who Gets Invited to Join Deputy Subgroups

Midlevel managers were more likely than deputies to have ever been invited to join a deputy subgroup or clique (26.4 percent versus 11.9 percent, respectively; see Table 8.15). Of those who had been invited to join, the majority of midlevel managers and deputies indicated that the invitation had occurred prior to the past five years (Table 8.11).

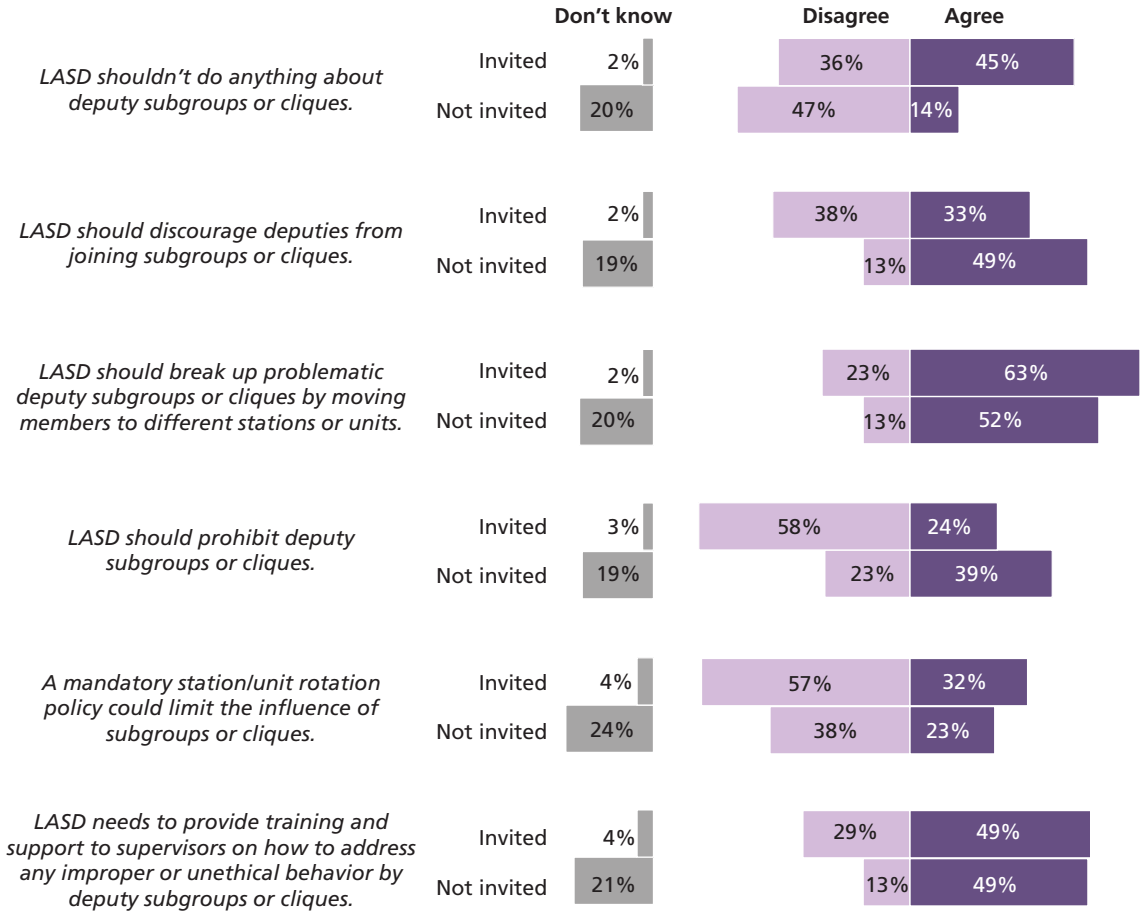
At What Point in Their Career Are Most Deputies First Invited to Join a Subgroup?

Just under half of midlevel managers and nearly one-fourth of deputies indicated that most deputies were invited to join a deputy subgroup while they were at a patrol station assignment (Table 8.12). Two-thirds of deputies indicated that they did not know at which career stage deputies were most likely to receive their first invitation to join a subgroup.

Criteria for Being Invited to Join Deputy Subgroups or Cliques

For midlevel managers, the four most frequently cited criteria were

Figure 8.5
Survey Respondents' Views About What LASD Should Do, if Anything, About Deputy Subgroups or Cliques



NOTES: Items represent Q15a, 15b, 15c, 15d, 15e, and 15f from the survey. The "Agree" category represents "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" responses, while the "Disagree" category represents "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree." Respondents also had the option of "Neither Agree nor Disagree" and "Don't Know."

- being known as a hard worker (67 percent)
- being willing to work challenging assignments (60 percent)
- helping other deputies with their work (53 percent)
- engaging in social activities with other subgroup members outside of work (50 percent) (Figure 8.6).

In comparison, roughly a third of deputies cited these four categories as being criteria for being invited to join a deputy subgroup or clique.

In terms of negative behaviors, nearly half of midlevel managers and a third of deputies cited a willingness to engage in specific behaviors at work (e.g., being aggressive about making arrests; Figure 8.6). Midlevel managers and deputies also cited a willingness to engage in behaviors that violate current LASD policy and practices (17 percent of midlevel managers and 15 percent of deputies) and a willingness to look the other way when others engage in improper or unethical behavior (22 percent of midlevel managers and 20 percent of deputies).

Table 8.11
Whether a Respondent Had Ever Been Invited to Join a Subgroup or Had Been Invited Within the Last Five Years (Midlevel Managers Versus Deputies)

Rank	Yes	No	Row Total
Have you ever been invited to join a deputy subgroup or clique?			
Deputies	132	975	1,107
	11.9%	88.1%	73.9%
Midlevel managers	103	287	390
	26.4%	73.6%	26.1%
Overall	235	1262	1,497
	15.7%	84.3%	100%
In the last five years, have you been invited to join a deputy subgroup or clique?			
Deputies	54	74	128
	42.2%	57.8%	57.4%
Midlevel managers	6	89	95
	6.3%	93.7%	42.6%
Overall	60	163	223
	26.9%	73.1%	100%

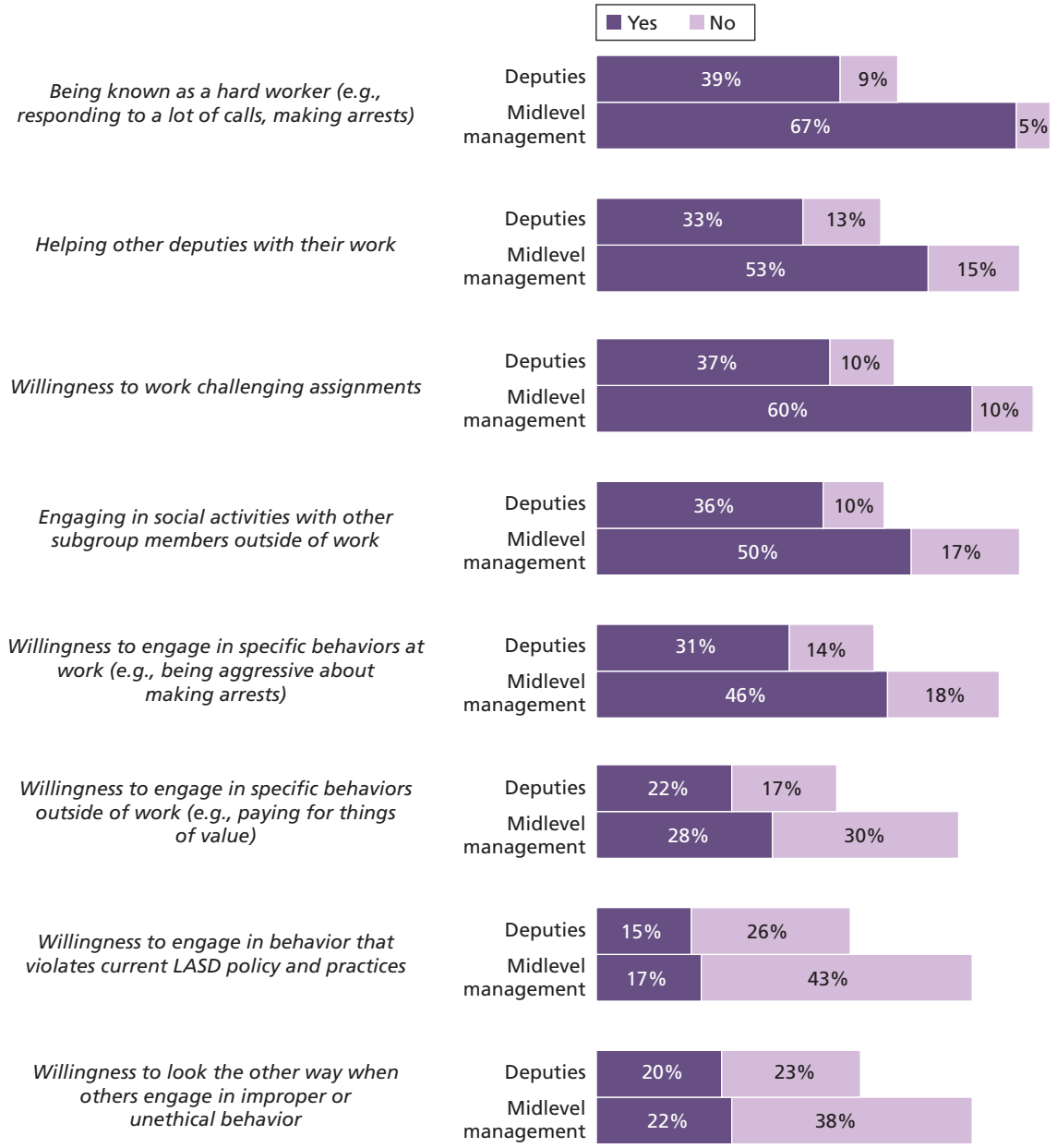
Q4 and Q5. Have you ever been invited to join a deputy subgroup or clique? In the last five years, have you been invited to join a deputy subgroup or clique? (For each question, survey respondents were asked to check either "Yes" or "No.")

Table 8.12
Midlevel Managers' Versus Deputies' Views Regarding at What Stage in Their Career Most Deputies Are First Invited to Join a Deputy Subgroup

Respondent Type	In Custody Assignment	First Two Years at Patrol Station	After Two Years at Patrol Station	Other (Please Specify)	Don't Know	Row Total
Midlevel managers	27	57	113	34	154	385
	7.0%	14.8%	29.4%	8.0%	40.0%	26.0%
Deputies	68	105	150	65	706	1,094
	6.2%	9.6%	13.7%	5.9%	64.5%	74.0%
Overall	95	162	263	99	860	1,479
	6.4%	11.0%	17.8%	6.7%	58.1%	100%

Q6. As far as you know, at what stage in their career are most deputies first invited to join a deputy subgroup or clique? (Survey respondents were asked to check only one option.)

Figure 8.6
Midlevel Managers' Versus Deputies' Views Regarding the Criteria for Being Invited to Join a Deputy Subgroup or Clique



NOTES: Items represent Q7a, 7b, 7c, 7d, 7f, 7e, 7g, and 7h from the survey. Survey respondents also were given the option of marking "Don't Know."

Where Deputy Subgroups or Cliques Are Typically Found Within LASD

Midlevel managers were more likely than deputies to agree that deputy subgroups exist in some, but not all, LASD stations and are common at LASD stations in high-crime areas. Specifically, nearly three-fifths of midlevel managers either somewhat or strongly agreed that these subgroups exist in some, but not all, LASD stations (Table 8.13); 17.2 percent responded

Table 8.13
Midlevel Managers' Versus Deputies' Views Regarding Where Within LASD Deputy Subgroups or Cliques Are Typically Found

Respondent Type	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Row Total
. . . exist in some but not all LASD stations							
Midlevel managers							391
	7.4%	6.6%	5.1%	27.4%	30.4%	23.0%	100%
Deputies							1,103
	7.0%	4.4%	10.5%	21.6%	18.9%	37.6%	100%
Overall							1,494
	7.1%	5.0%	9.1%	23.1%	22.0%	33.8%	100%
. . . exist in all LASD stations							
Midlevel managers							389
	31.4%	15.2%	7.7%	6.7%	10.5%	28.5%	100%
Deputies							1,102
	22.3%	9.3%	10.6%	7.6%	6.2%	43.9%	100%
Overall							1,491
	24.7%	10.9%	9.9%	7.4%	7.3%	39.9%	100%
. . . are more common at LASD stations in high-crime areas							
Midlevel managers							391
	7.2%	6.6%	8.7%	24.3%	28.9%	24.3%	100%
Deputies							1,104
	6.9%	4.3%	11.8%	17.5%	18.3%	41.2%	100%
Overall							1,495
	7.0%	5.0%	11.0%	19.3%	21.1%	36.8%	100.0%
. . . exist in some but not all LASD custody facilities							
Midlevel managers							390
	6.2%	6.4%	9.5%	22.1%	13.3%	42.6%	100%
Deputies							1,102
	9.3%	5.4%	14.0%	15.2%	7.8%	48.3%	100%
Overall							1,492
	8.5%	5.7%	12.8%	17.0%	9.2%	46.8%	100%

Table 8.13—Continued

Respondent Type	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Row Total
. . . exist in all LASD custody facilities							
Midlevel managers							392
	27.0%	12.0%	11.0%	2.6%	3.6%	43.9%	100%
Deputies							1,103
	20.9%	8.4%	13.7%	4.8%	3.7%	48.4%	100%
Overall							1,495
	22.5%	9.4%	13.0%	4.2%	3.7%	47.2%	100%
. . . are more common in work assignments other than patrol and custody							
Midlevel managers							392
	19.4%	13.0%	9.9%	10.7%	4.6%	42.3%	100%
Deputies							1,103
	13.9%	5.9%	15.3%	7.2%	4.4%	53.3%	100%
Overall							1,495
	15.3%	7.8%	13.9%	8.1%	4.5%	50.4%	100%

Q8 (a, b, c, d, e, f). The following statements are about where in LASD these deputy subgroups or cliques are typically found. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (Survey respondents were given a five-point Likert scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," plus a "Don't Know" option.)

that deputy subgroups exist in all LASD stations; and 53.2 percent reported that these subgroups are common at LASD stations in high-crime areas.

In comparison, two-fifths of deputies agreed that these subgroups exist in some, but not all, LASD stations, and 13.8 percent responded that subgroups exist in all LASD stations (Table 8.13). More than a third of deputies agreed that these subgroups are common at LASD stations in high-crime areas. Note the higher percentage of deputies that marked "don't know" for the statements in Table 8.13, suggesting that they are less likely than midlevel managers to be familiar with deputy subgroups.

With respect to custody, deputy subgroups were thought to be less prevalent in custody facilities than at patrol stations (Table 8.13). Thirty-nine percent of midlevel managers and 29.3 percent of deputies *disagreed* with the statement that subgroups exist in all LASD custody facilities. Note that 42 to 53 percent marked "don't know" to items asking about subgroups in non-patrol assignments.

The Advantages of Belonging to a Deputy Subgroup or Clique

Midlevel managers were more likely than deputies to agree that the advantages of belonging to a deputy subgroup included

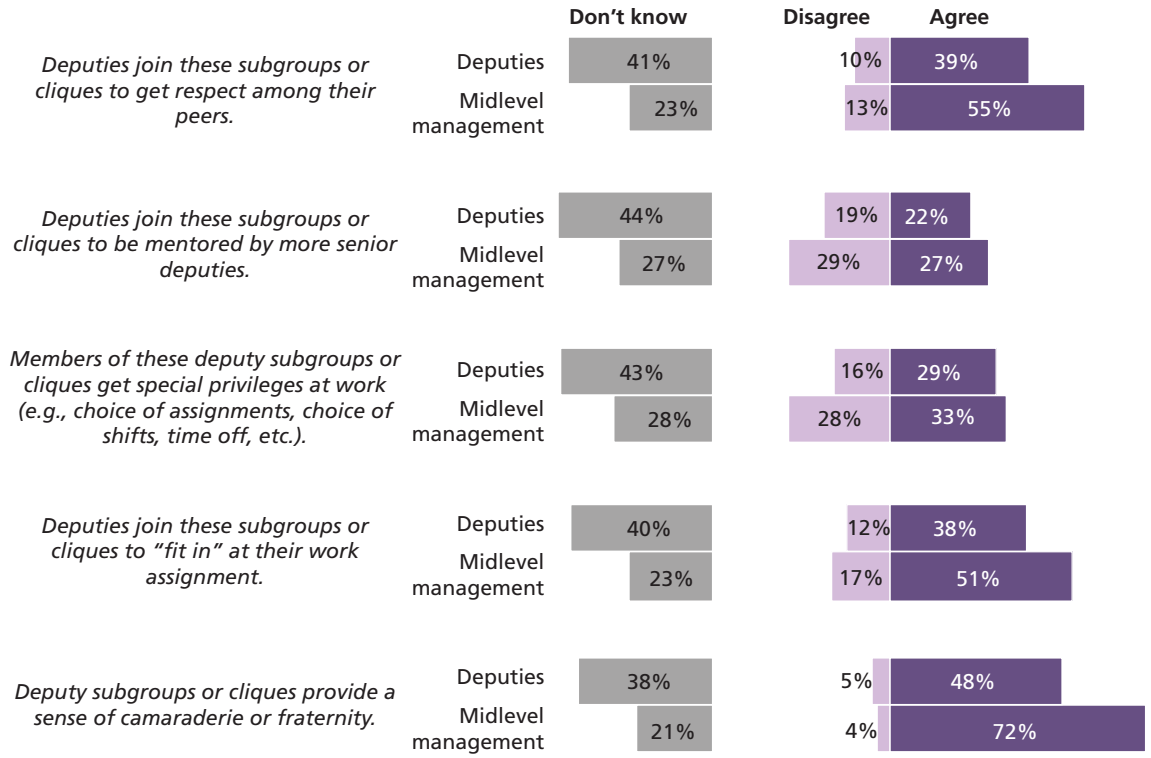
- **to experience the camaraderie or fraternity that these subgroups provide**
- **to get respect among their peers**
- **to fit in at their work assignment** (Figure 8.7)**.**

Midlevel managers and deputies were similar in that roughly 25 to 30 percent agreed with the other reasons for joining deputy subgroups listed in Figure 8.7:

- **to be mentored by more-senior deputies**
- **to get special privileges at work**, such as choice of assignments, choice of shifts, time off, etc.

Note that, except for the sense of camaraderie or fraternity category, almost twice as many deputies as midlevel managers marked "don't know" for the statements listed in Figure 8.7. This again suggests that midlevel managers appear to be more familiar with subgroups than deputies as a whole.

Figure 8.7
Midlevel Managers' Versus Deputies' Views Regarding the Advantages of Belonging to a Deputy Subgroup or Clique



NOTES: Items represent Q9a, 9b, 9c, 9d, and 9e from the survey. The "Agree" category represents "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" responses, while the "Disagree" category represents "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree." Respondents also had the option of "Neither Agree nor Disagree" and "Don't Know."

Deputy Subgroups and Tattoos

As noted earlier, one concern has been the role that tattoos play with respect to deputy subgroups. Midlevel managers (48.2 percent) were more likely than deputies (33.7 percent) to agree that having a tattoo was an acceptable way to **show pride in a subgroup** (Table 8.14). More than one-third of midlevel managers and one-fifth of deputies agreed with the statement that in order to be a member, a **deputy must get the subgroup's tattoo**. And almost half of midlevel managers and a third of deputies ***disagreed* that deputy subgroup tattoos are perceived as offensive or intimidating to other deputies** (Table 8.14). As seen in prior tables,

Table 8.14
Midlevel Managers' Versus Deputies' Views Regarding the Role of Tattoos and Deputy Subgroups or Cliques

Respondent Type	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Row Total
In order to be a member of a subgroup or clique, a deputy must get that group's tattoo							
Midlevel managers							394
	11.9%	6.3%	7.9%	16.0%	21.6%	36.3%	100%
Deputies							1,109
	10.6%	5.2%	10.1%	10.4%	11.4%	52.4%	100%
Overall							1,503
	10.9%	5.5%	9.5%	11.8%	14.0%	48.2%	100%
Having a tattoo is an acceptable way to show pride in a subgroup or clique							
Midlevel managers							394
	8.6%	4.1%	15.0%	20.8%	27.4%	24.1%	100%
Deputies							1,110
	7.1%	2.8%	13.9%	16.1%	17.6%	42.5%	100%
Overall							1,504
	7.5%	3.1%	14.2%	17.4%	20.1%	37.7%	100%
Subgroup or clique tattoos are perceived as offensive or intimidating to other deputies							
Midlevel managers							394
	28.7%	15.2%	14.2%	11.2%	6.9%	23.9%	100%
Deputies							1,107
	21.2%	8.4%	12.8%	9.1%	6.2%	42.2%	100%
Overall							1,501
	23.2%	10.2%	13.2%	9.7%	6.4%	37.4%	100%

Q10 (a, b, c). The following statements are about tattoos. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements. (Survey respondents were given a five-point Likert scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," plus a "Don't Know" option.)

deputies were much more likely than midlevel managers to mark "don't know" for each of the categories in Table 8.14.

Conduct, Attitudes, and Behavior of Deputies Who Belong to a Deputy Subgroup or Clique

Two-thirds of midlevel managers and about one-third of deputies agreed with the statement that deputy **subgroups encourage members to be proactive at work** (60.4 percent of midlevel managers and 34.8 percent of deputies; Table 8.15). As noted earlier, this is consistent with comments from several interviewees that subgroups can motivate other members to be proactive about making arrests.

With respect to conduct, midlevel managers were more likely than deputies to agree with the statement that **subgroups have their own code of conduct** (Table 8.15). One out of five midlevel managers also agreed that **subgroups encourage members to work outside the chain of command in situations that normally require supervisor involvement** (e.g., use-of-force incidents).

With respect to restrictions on subgroup membership, 40 percent of midlevel managers and 26 percent of deputies ***disagreed* that membership was restricted based on race/ethnicity** (Figure 8.8). Also, one out of three midlevel managers and one out of five deputies ***disagreed* that membership was restricted based on gender**.[3] Nearly one out of four midlevel managers and more than half of deputies indicated that they did not know whether subgroups restricted membership based on gender or race/ethnicity (Figure 8.8). About one out of five midlevel managers agreed that membership was restricted based on gender; fewer agreed that it was restricted based on race/ethnicity.

With respect to how deputies in subgroups treat nonmembers, nearly one-third of midlevel managers and one-fourth of deputies agreed with the statement that **deputies in subgroups look down on non–group members** (e.g., ignore them, speak ill of them) (Figure 8.8). One-fourth of midlevel managers and one-fifth of deputies agreed that **deputies in subgroups bully or harass nonmembers** (e.g., humiliate, set unreasonable expectations, give unwanted tasks, etc.).

With respect to whether deputies in subgroups engage in dangerous or offensive behavior, 39 percent of midlevel managers and 23 percent of deputies ***disagreed* that deputies in subgroups sometimes engage in behavior that may endanger other deputies** (Figure 8.8). Further, 37 percent of midlevel managers and 25 percent of deputies ***disagreed* that deputies in subgroups sometimes engage in behavior that may offend, intimidate, or endanger community members**. That said, roughly one-fifth of midlevel managers agreed with the statement that deputies in subgroups sometimes engage in behavior that may endanger other deputies or engage in behavior that may offend, intimidate, or endanger community members (Figure 8.8).[4] Also, a third of midlevel managers and a quarter of deputies indicated that they did not know the answer to these two questions.

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[3] We note again here that for a period of time, LASD was required to promote female deputies in at least 25 percent of promotions (i.e., the *Bouman* consent decree), making their upward mobility potentially faster and therefore making them possibly less likely to be considered for these groups.

[4] 20.8 percent of midlevel managers and 16.8 percent of deputies agreed that deputies in subgroups sometimes engage in behavior that may endanger other deputies (Figure 8.8). 17.8 percent of midlevel managers and 14.7 percent of deputies agreed that sometimes deputies engage in behavior that may offend, intimidate, or endanger community members (Figure 8.8).

Table 8.15
Midlevel Managers' and Deputies' Views About the Conduct, Attitudes, and Behavior of Deputies Who Belong to a Deputy Subgroup or Clique

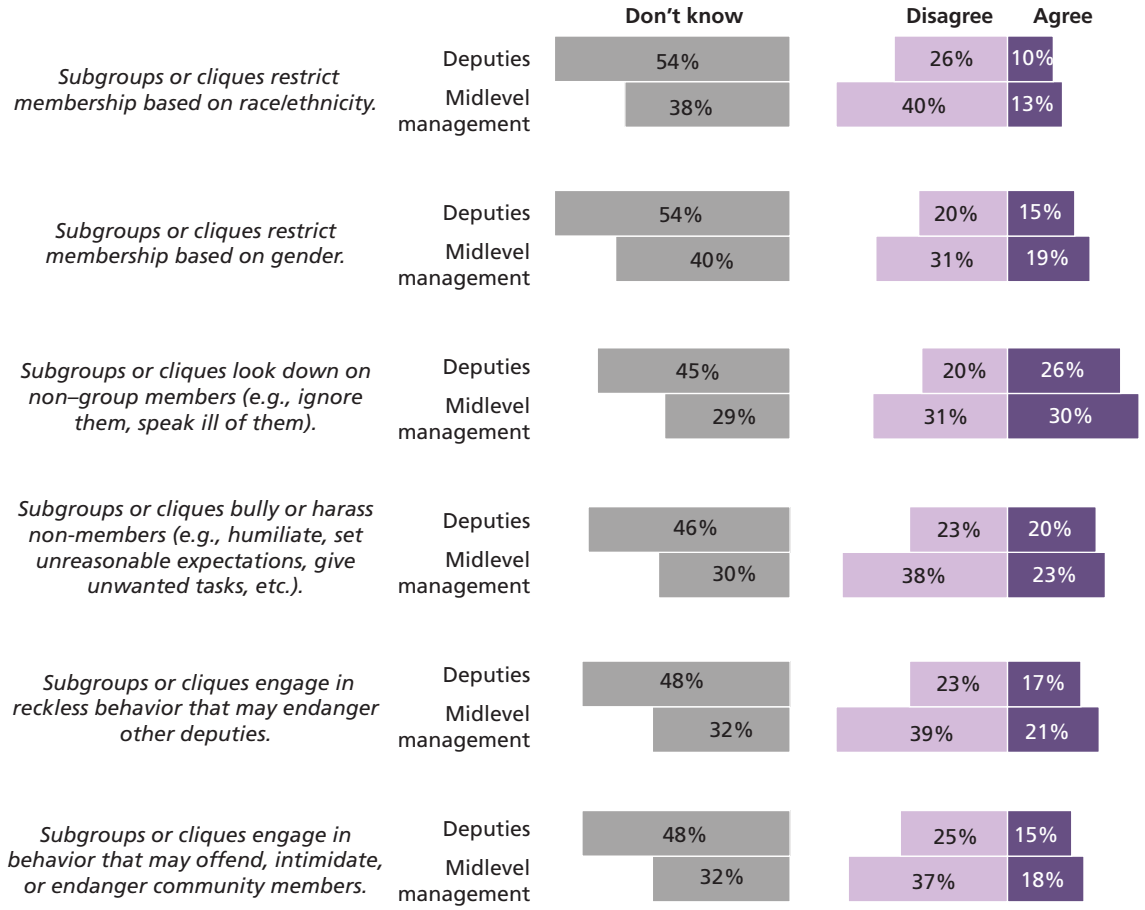
Respondent Type	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Row Total
Subgroups or cliques have their own code of conduct							
Midlevel managers							393
	13.0%	6.9%	8.9%	22.6%	15.3%	33.3%	100%
Deputies							1,107
	9.4%	3.2%	9.8%	14.5%	12.8%	50.2%	100%
Overall							1,500
	10.3%	4.1%	9.6%	16.7%	13.5%	45.8%	100%
Subgroups or cliques encourage members to be proactive at work							
Midlevel managers							394
	1.3%	3.0%	8.6%	27.4%	33.0%	26.6%	100%
Deputies							1,110
	3.4%	2.7%	12.4%	17.7%	17.1%	46.7%	100%
Overall							1,504
	2.9%	2.8%	11.4%	20.2%	21.3%	41.4%	100%
Subgroups or cliques encourage members to work outside the chain of command in situations that normally require supervisor involvement (e.g., incident involving use of force)							
Midlevel managers							394
	21.6%	11.2%	11.4%	11.7%	10.4%	33.8%	100%
Deputies							1,107
	15.5%	5.8%	10.7%	8.8%	6.7%	52.5%	100%
Overall							1,502
	17.1%	7.2%	10.9%	9.5%	7.7%	47.6%	100%

Q11 (a, b, c). The following statements are about the conduct, attitudes, and behavior of deputies who belong to a deputy subgroup or clique. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (Survey respondents were given a five-point Likert scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," plus a "Don't Know" option.)

Midlevel Managers' Versus Deputies' Views Regarding the Impact of Subgroups on the Department and Individuals and Their Suggestions as to What LASD Can Do About Subgroups

Earlier we compared the responses of those who had been invited to join a subgroup and those who had not. In this section, we compare the responses of midlevel managers with those

Figure 8.8
Midlevel Managers' and Deputies' Views About the Conduct, Attitudes, and Behavior of Deputies Who Belong to a Deputy Subgroup or Clique



NOTES: Items represent Q11d, 11e, 11f, 11g, 11h, and 11i from the survey. The "Agree" category represents "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" responses, while the "Disagree" category represents "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree." Respondents also had the option of "Neither Agree nor Disagree" and "Don't Know."

of deputies about the impact of subgroups and suggestions about what LASD can do about subgroups.

Midlevel Managers' Versus Deputies' Views Regarding the Impact of Not Belonging to a Deputy Subgroup on the Individual

Some midlevel managers and deputies indicated that ***not belonging*** **to a subgroup negatively impacted individuals** (Table 8.16). Specifically:

- One out of five midlevel managers and deputies agreed that not belonging to a subgroup limited a deputy's training opportunities.
- One out of four midlevel managers and deputies agreed that not belonging negatively affected a deputy's work assignments.
- One out of four midlevel managers and one out of five deputies agreed that not belonging limited a deputy's opportunities for career advancement or promotion.

Table 8.16
Midlevel Managers' Versus Deputies' Views Regarding the Impact of Not Belonging to a Deputy Subgroup or Clique on an Individual

Respondent Type	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Row Total
. . . can limit a deputy's training opportunities							
Midlevel managers							393
	38.7%	10.9%	8.7%	14.5%	7.9%	19.8%	100%
Deputies							1,106
	26.4%	5.6%	10.1%	11.2%	9.9%	36.7%	100%
Overall							1,499
	29.6%	7.0%	9.7%	12.1%	9.3%	32.3%	100%
. . . can negatively affect a deputy's work assignments							
Midlevel managers							394
	34.8%	9.1%	9.6%	18.8%	9.4%	18.3%	100%
Deputies							1,103
	22.8%	6.1%	10.7%	13.4%	11.2%	35.7%	100%
Overall							1,497
	26.0%	6.9%	10.4%	14.8%	10.8%	31.1%	100%
. . . can limit a deputy's opportunities for career advancement or promotion							
Midlevel managers							394
	40.1%	7.6%	8.4%	15.5%	10.7%	17.8%	100%
Deputies							1,103
	25.9%	5.9%	10.4%	11.0%	10.9%	35.9%	100%
Overall							1,497
	29.7%	6.3%	9.9%	12.2%	10.8%	31.1%	100%

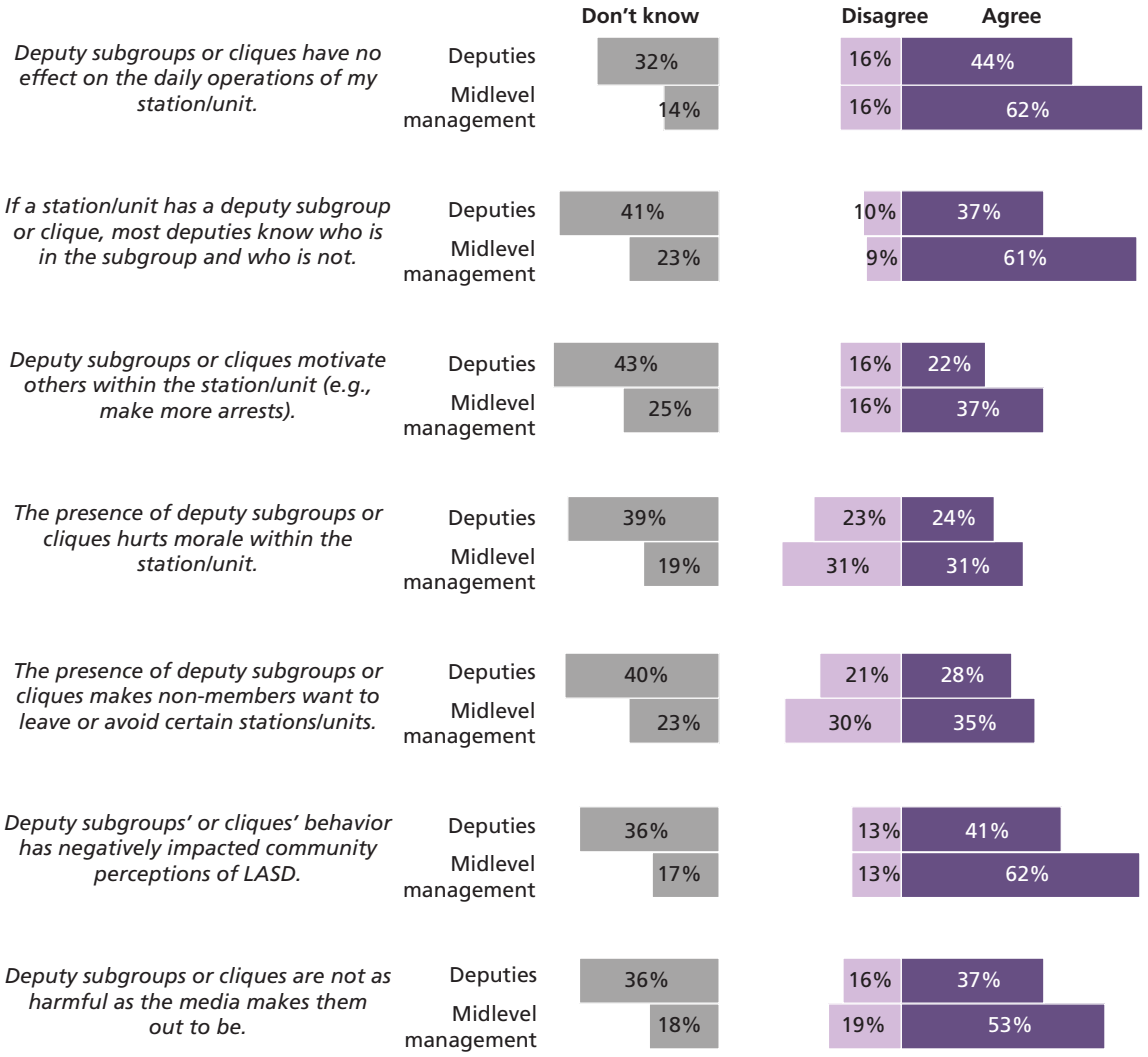
Q12 (a, b, c). The following statements describe the impact that NOT belonging to a deputy subgroup or clique can have on an individual. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (Survey respondents were given a five-point Likert scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," plus a "Don't Know" option.)

That said, about one out of five midlevel managers and a third of deputies indicated that they did not know what impact not belonging to a subgroup had on an individual's law enforcement career.

Midlevel Managers' Versus Deputies' Views Regarding the Impact of Deputy Subgroups or Cliques on the Workplace and LASD as a Whole

Two-thirds of midlevel managers and nearly half of deputies indicated that these **subgroups have no effect on the daily operations of their station or unit** (Figure 8.9). Nearly two-

Figure 8.9
Midlevel Managers' Versus Deputies' Views Regarding the Impact of Deputy Subgroups or Cliques on the Workplace and LASD as a Whole



NOTES: Items represent Q13a, 13b, 13c, 13d, 13e, 13f, and 13g from the survey. The "Agree" category represents "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" responses, while the "Disagree" category represents "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree." Respondents also had the option of "Neither Agree nor Disagree" and "Don't Know."

thirds of midlevel managers and more than a third of deputies indicated that **most deputies know who is in the subgroup** and who is not.

In terms of a positive impact on the workplace, about a third of midlevel managers and one out of five deputies agreed with the statement that **deputy subgroups can help motivate others within the station or unit** (e.g., make more arrests, maintain better order of custody inmates; Figure 8.9).

Still, some survey respondents **noted a negative impact of these subgroups on the workplace**. A third of midlevel managers and nearly one out of four deputies agreed that the **presence of deputy subgroups can hurt morale** within the station or unit; roughly a third

of midlevel managers and deputies agreed that the **presence of deputy subgroups or cliques makes nonmembers want to leave or avoid certain stations/units** (Figure 8.9).

In addition, about two-thirds of midlevel managers and 40 percent of deputies agreed that **deputy subgroups' behavior had negatively impacted community perceptions of LASD** (Figure 8.9). Note that deputies were twice as likely as midlevel managers to report that they did not know what impact subgroups had on community perceptions of LASD.

With respect to **the media's portrayal of subgroups**, there was a large percentage of respondents who agreed that subgroups were not as harmful as the media makes them out to be. Specifically, half of midlevel managers and more than a third of deputies agreed with this statement (Figure 8.9). Still, 17.8 percent of midlevel managers and 35.8 percent deputies indicated that they did not know whether these subgroups were as harmful as the media made them out to be.

Midlevel Managers' Versus Deputies' Views Regarding Supervisors' Approach to Deputy Subgroups

We asked survey respondents about supervisors' approach and conduct toward deputy subgroups. Again, we compare the responses of midlevel managers and those of deputies (Table 8.17):

- **Half of midlevel managers and more than a third of deputies agreed that supervisors were aware of subgroups' conduct.**
- **Midlevel managers were more likely than deputies to agree that supervisors formally discipline improper or unethical behavior by subgroup or clique members.**
- **A third of midlevel managers and a quarter of deputies agreed that supervisors do not consider deputy subgroups or cliques to be problematic.**

However, 42.7 percent of midlevel managers and 20.6 percent of deputies ***disagreed* that supervisors are too lenient when deputy subgroup or clique members violate LASD policies or procedures** (Table 8.17). And only 19 percent of midlevel managers and 12 percent of deputies agreed that **supervisors discourage deputies from joining subgroups or cliques**. Note that midlevel managers appeared to have more knowledge of supervisors' different approaches to these subgroups than did deputies.

Midlevel Managers' Versus Deputies' Views on What LASD Should Do About Deputy Subgroups

Midlevel managers and deputies were similar in their views about whether **LASD should do anything about subgroups** (Figure 8.10). Specifically:

- **Roughly half of midlevel managers and deputies *disagreed* with the statement that LASD should not do anything about these groups.**
- **Only one out of five midlevel managers and deputies *agreed* that LASD should not do anything about these groups.**

About two-thirds of midlevel managers and half of deputies agreed that **LASD should break up problematic deputy subgroups or cliques by moving members to different stations or units** (Figure 8.10).

Table 8.17
Midlevel Managers' Versus Deputies' Views Regarding Supervisors' Approaches to Deputy Subgroups or Cliques

Respondent Type	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Row Total
Supervisors are aware of subgroups' or cliques' conduct							
Midlevel managers							394
	4.3%	7.4%	12.9%	28.2%	21.3%	25.9%	100%
Deputies							1,108
	2.4%	2.7%	9.8%	18.8%	16.2%	50.1%	100%
Overall							1,502
	2.9%	3.9%	10.7%	21.2%	17.5%	43.7%	100%
Supervisors formally discipline improper or unethical behavior by subgroup or clique members							
Midlevel managers							394
	5.6%	10.4%	13.7%	15.5%	26.6%	28.1%	100%
Deputies							1,104
	9.4%	6.1%	12.0%	8.6%	11.1%	52.8%	100%
Overall							1,498
	8.4%	7.2%	12.4%	10.4%	15.2%	46.3%	100%
Supervisors do not consider deputy subgroups or cliques to be problematic							
Midlevel managers							394
	5.6%	12.9%	23.1%	22.8%	9.6%	25.9%	100%
Deputies							1,107
	4.2%	4.9%	14.7%	14.1%	11.1%	51.0%	100%
Overall							1,501
	4.5%	7.0%	16.9%	16.4%	10.7%	44.4%	100%
Supervisors are too lenient when deputy subgroup or clique members violate LASD policies or procedures							
Midlevel managers							394
	29.2%	13.5%	16.2%	9.4%	6.1%	25.6%	100%
Deputies							1,106
	14.3%	6.3%	13.1%	8.6%	6.5%	51.2%	100%
Overall							1,500
	18.2%	8.2%	13.9%	8.8%	6.4%	44.5%	100%

Table 8.17—Continued

Respondent Type	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know	Row Total
Supervisors discourage deputies from joining subgroups or cliques							
Midlevel managers							395
	13.2%	11.1%	30.9%	9.9%	9.1%	25.8%	100%
Deputies							1,108
	9.7%	6.9%	21.3%	5.3%	6.7%	50.0%	100%
Overall							1,503
	10.60%	8.10%	23.80%	6.50%	7.30%	43.60%	100%

Q14 (a, b, c, d, e). Now we want to ask you specifically about supervisors' (Lieutenants or Sergeants) approach to deputy subgroups or cliques. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. (Survey respondents were given a five-point Likert scale from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," plus a "Don't Know" option.)

Roughly half of midlevel managers and deputies favored LASD discouraging deputies from joining these subgroups or cliques (Figure 8.10). **Slightly more than a third of midlevel managers and deputies also favored LASD prohibiting deputy subgroups or cliques altogether. However, a sizable percentage of respondents *disagreed* with prohibition of these subgroups** (Figure 8.10).

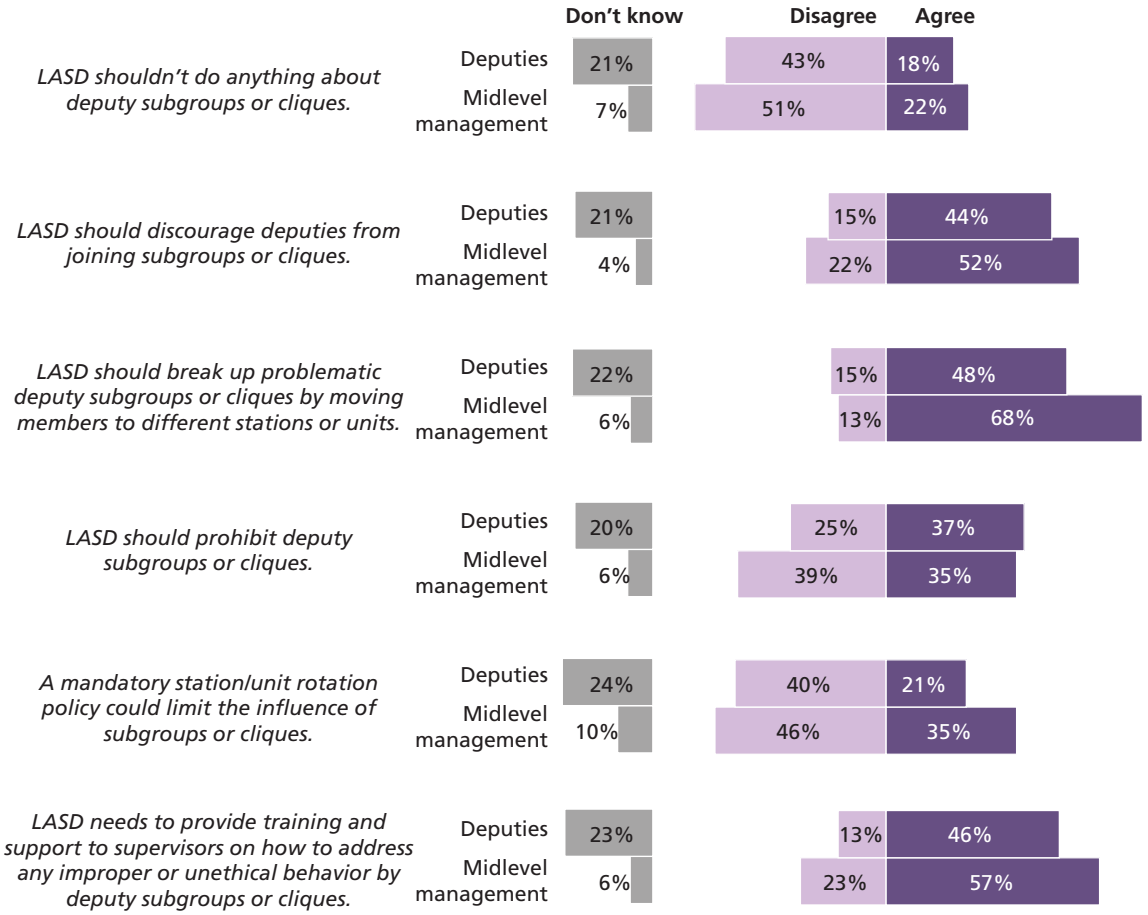
Only one out of three midlevel managers and one out of five deputies agreed that a mandatory station or unit rotation policy could limit the influence of subgroups or cliques (Figure 8.10). However, **40–45 percent of deputies and midlevel managers *disagreed* that implementing a mandatory station or unit rotation policy could limit the influence of subgroups**.

Lastly, **nearly three-fifths of midlevel managers and nearly half of deputies were in favor of LASD providing training and support to supervisors on how to address any improper or unethical behavior by deputy subgroups or cliques** (Figure 8.10).

Views of Organizational Features That Could Contribute to Subgroup Formation

In this section, we present survey results for items pertaining to organizational factors that could contribute to subgroup formation. Some interviewees noted that subgroups are a way to recognize high-performing deputies, that the formal performance evaluation process was lacking in terms of being able to properly reward positive performance or correct poor performance, and that evaluations were not used for promotions. Others noted instances when "who you know" could lead to favorable outcomes in promotions or disciplinary decisions. Interviewees discussed challenges with coveted testing and testing for supervisory positions, as well as how those positions are assigned. Other interviewees discussed how promotions at the top of the organization can be perceived negatively if people who do not match stated criteria are

Figure 8.10
Midlevel Managers' Versus Deputies' Views About What LASD Should Do, if Anything, About Deputy Subgroups or Cliques

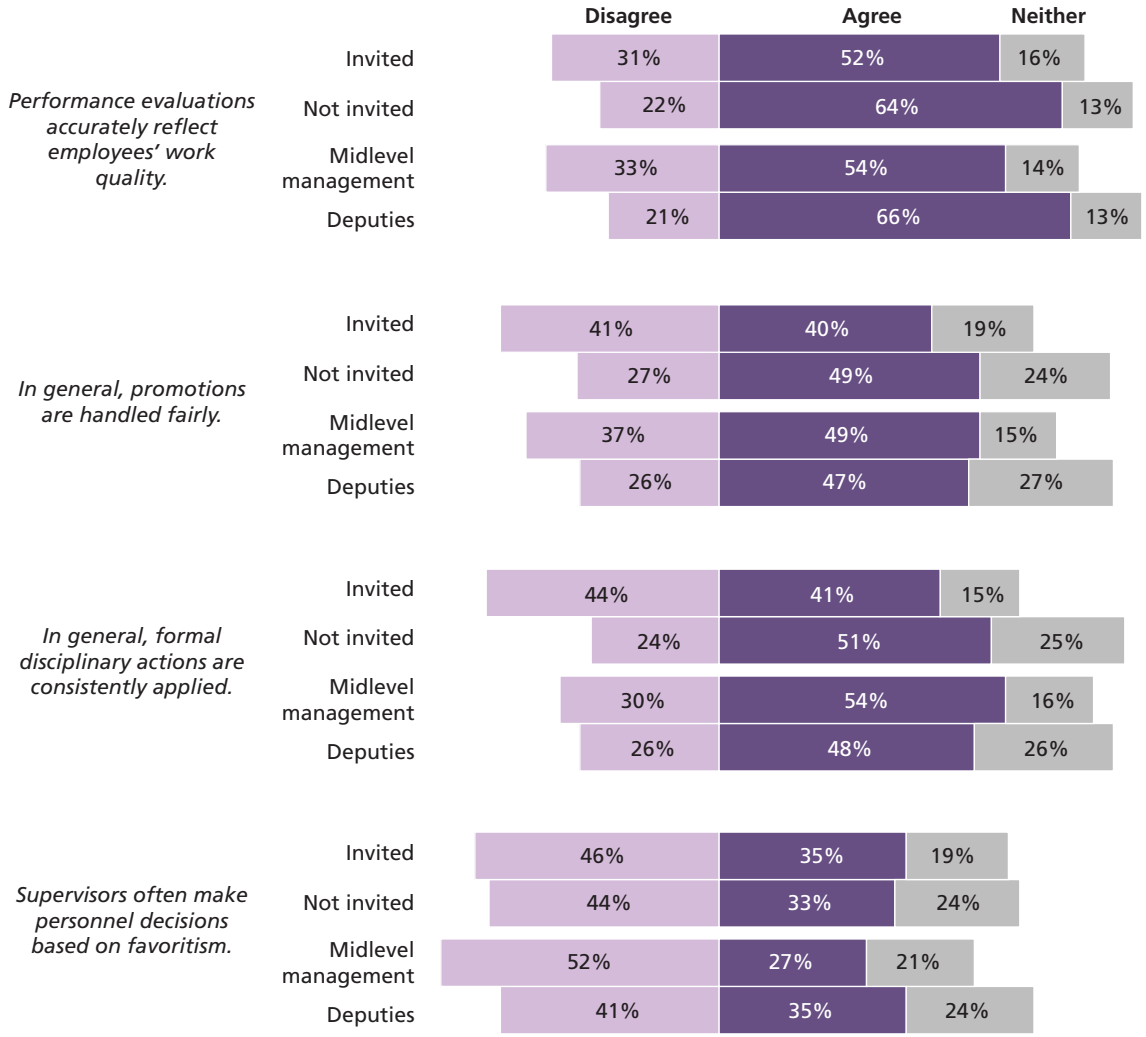


NOTES: Items represent Q15a, 15b, 15c, 15d, 15e, and 15f from the survey. The "Agree" category represents "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" responses, while the "Disagree" category represents "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree." Respondents also had the option of "Neither Agree nor Disagree" and "Don't Know."

promoted. Additionally, several interviewees noted that people in LASD are often more loyal to the unit where they trained—patrol training in particular—than they are to LASD overall. This is partially due to the fragmented structure of LASD, but it is also because people can often remain in their assignment for long periods of time. We present results for these items in Figure 8.11 by whether the survey respondent reported having been invited to join a subgroup and whether the survey respondent was a deputy or midlevel supervisor.

On the question of whether performance evaluations accurately reflect employee's work quality, deputies and those who had not been invited to join a subgroup were slightly more in agreement (64 and 66 percent agreed, respectively) compared with subgroup invitees and midlevel supervisors (52 and 54 percent agreed, respectively). Next, all groups were in similar agreement about whether promotions are handled fairly (40 to 49 percent agreement), while invitees and midlevel managers were more likely to disagree (41 and 37 percent, respectively). On the consistency of disciplinary action, 44 percent of subgroup invitees disagreed that formal disciplinary actions are consistently applied, while 24 percent of those who had never

Figure 8.11
Views of Organizational Features That Could Contribute to Subgroup Formation



NOTES: Items represent Q1b, Q1c, Q1e, and Q2e from the survey. The "Agree" category represents "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" responses, while the "Disagree" category represents "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree." Respondents also had the option of "Neither Agree nor Disagree" and "Don't Know."

been invited disagreed. At the same time, 33 percent of survey respondents agreed that supervisors often make personnel decisions based on favoritism; deputies (35 percent) were more likely than supervisors (27 percent) to agree with this statement. Some interviewees noted historical examples of favoritism that was perceived to be widespread within LASD.

Next, we asked respondents to give their views of LASD executive leadership and asked about sources of loyalty within the organization. These items as a whole tap into broad factors that could have department-wide influence, such as leadership, individualism, and loyalty. Our interviewees explained that often people will feel more loyal to the unit (if still in custody) or patrol station where they trained than to LASD because it has traditional and reputational significance. Additionally, perceptions of ethical leadership have been found to affect multiple levels of the organization. For instance, in a study of ethical leadership in the Army, percep-

tions of ethical leadership at the company level trickled down to the platoon and squad levels and were associated with a variety of ethical behaviors (Schaubroeck et al., 2012).

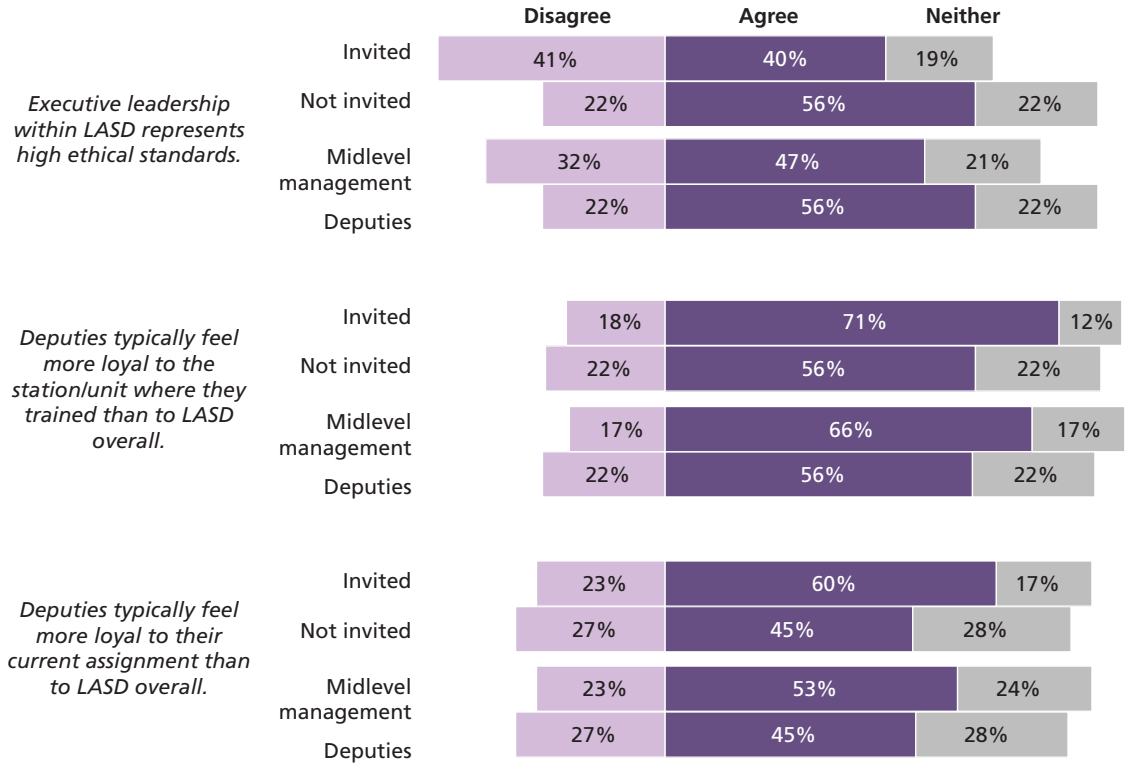
Figure 8.12 indicates that deputies and those who had not been invited to join a subgroup were more positive about executive leadership. Subgroup invitees were the least positive about leadership, with 41 percent disagreeing that executive leadership represents high ethical standards. Midlevel managers were slightly less positive than deputies.

With respect to loyalty, respondents generally agreed with the perspective that people feel a sense of loyalty for where they have trained, and (to a lesser extent) for their current assignment, compared with LASD overall. About one-fifth to one-fourth of all respondents disagreed with these items.

Conclusion

These survey analyses focused on the responses of subgroup invitees and midlevel managers because we expected them to have the most knowledge of subgroups and felt that their responses in particular provided important insights about subgroups' characteristics and their impact on the department. However, because this population was invited to join subgroups,

Figure 8.12
Views of Leadership and Sources of Loyalty



NOTES: Items represent Q3a, Q3c, and Q3d from the survey. The "Agree" category represents "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" responses, while the "Disagree" category represents "Strongly Disagree" and "Disagree." Respondents also had the option of "Neither Agree nor Disagree" and "Don't Know.

these responses could also reflect a more positive view of subgroups. The survey results provide a way to understand the extent to which various perspectives are represented within LASD, but they represent one source of data on this subject and should therefore be viewed as one piece of the overall picture when considering recommendations or options for change.

Our interview and survey findings speak directly to LASD personnel's perspectives on (1) why and where subgroups are likely to form, (2) what subgroups do and how they can impact LASD, and (3) what actions should be taken by LASD.

Why and Where Do Subgroups Form? Who Gets Invited?

Subgroups are most likely to be found at LASD patrol stations in high-crime areas. According to interviewees, these areas have a reputation for being challenging, and recruitment into subgroups is more likely to occur when deputies are in patrol station assignments. And our analyses supported insights from the interviews that, according to survey respondents, those who were invited to join subgroups were typically deputies who are known as hard workers, are willing to work challenging assignments, and, in some cases, show a willingness to engage in specific behaviors (such as being aggressive about making arrests). With respect to race/ethnicity and gender as factors influencing subgroup membership, about 40 percent of midlevel managers and 73 percent of subgroup invitees disagreed that membership was restricted based on race/ethnicity; one out of three midlevel managers and two-thirds of subgroup invitees disagreed that membership was based on gender. This leaves a substantial number of respondents who indicated that subgroup membership is restricted by race/ethnicity and gender.

What Do Subgroups Do, and How Do They Impact LASD?

These survey respondents also provided insights (again confirming interview findings) about some of the benefits provided to deputies by joining these subgroups, including a sense of camaraderie, fitting in at work assignments, and gaining respect of peers. At the same time, some respondents noted that subgroups can have a negative impact on the department, including the fact that some groups have their own code of conduct and that some deputies in subgroups look down on non–group members or engage in bullying or harassing behavior toward nonmembers. Such behavior would violate policy and could be illegal. In addition, one out of five midlevel managers agreed that deputies in subgroups sometimes engage in behavior that may endanger other deputies or that may offend, intimidate, or endanger community members, which is also problematic.

Although many midlevel managers and subgroup invitees indicated that subgroups had no effect on the daily operations of their station or unit, about a third of these respondents agreed that the presence of deputy subgroups can make nonmembers want to leave or avoid certain stations or units. Furthermore, a third of midlevel managers agreed that the presence of deputy subgroups can hurt morale within the station or unit. In addition, two-thirds of midlevel managers and half of subgroup invitees agreed that deputy subgroups' behavior had negatively impacted community perceptions of LASD.

What Potential Actions Should LASD Take?

The survey respondents had a number of suggestions related to what LASD could do about subgroups. About half to two-thirds of midlevel managers and half of subgroup invitees agreed that LASD should break up problematic deputy subgroups by moving members to different stations or units and/or provide training and support to supervisors on how to address

any improper or unethical behavior by deputy subgroups. In contrast, half to two-fifths of midlevel managers and those who had *not* been invited to join a subgroup agreed that LASD should discourage deputies from joining subgroups or cliques and/or prohibit subgroups altogether. Among subgroup invitees, one-third agreed with discouraging deputies from joining subgroups, while one-quarter agreed with prohibiting groups altogether. These results suggest that this subject is divisive within LASD.

Combining LASD Interview and LASD Survey Findings

Combined with our interview findings, these survey findings suggest that, at least for some parts of LASD, subgroups exhibit features of being normalized, or "embedded in organizational structures and processes, internalized by organizational members as permissible and even desirable, and . . . passed on to successive generations of members" (Ashforth and Anand, 2003, p. 3). The history of subgroups existing in certain parts of LASD over long periods of time, the creation and enduring nature of subgroup identities, the perception that at least some group members further LASD's goals (e.g., motivate hard work, camaraderie), and the localized nature of subgroups in LASD all contribute to this normalization. This normalization is supported by explanations provided for subgroup formation (e.g., unit pride, camaraderie, and recognition of hard work), in justifications for excluding other deputies or why people complain about subgroups (e.g., that some deputies are lazy and they are the ones who complain), and in views that emphasize the protection of each other and the community (e.g., pursuing a criminal down an alley). Subgroups could also be normalized in some stations because subgroups tend to consist of more-tenured deputies who could be in positions that involve teaching newcomers about both the technical and social aspects of the job (e.g., the social cocoon; Ashforth and Kreiner, 2002; Greil and Rudy, 1984).

This normalization of subgroups is a problem for LASD. Even interviewees and survey respondents who emphasized the positive aspects of subgroups often noted behavior by subgroups that is highly detrimental to police-community relations (e.g., violence toward inmates, eagerness to engage in use of force) and probably illegal. They also noted instances of behavior that is inconsistent with a well-managed force (e.g., favoritism, extortion of payments from deputies, corruption of the disciplinary process). Similarly, a significant number of deputies viewed subgroups as discriminating on the basis of race/ethnicity and gender. The fact that groups associated with such behaviors appear to be normalized in a law enforcement agency is troubling.

The survey results also show that a mix of perspectives exist within LASD and that this subject is divisive. This could partially be due to differential exposure to various types of subgroups. Some interviewees and survey commenters held the view that individual groups and individuals within those groups should be accountable for their own behavior and that it was unfair to label all groups or all people within a group based on the actions of others. This parallels some of the history and heterogeneity among motorcycle clubs. As Lauchs, 2019, discusses, there is a typology of motorcycle enthusiast clubs that ranges from conventional to deviant, as well as a demarcation within clubs among "weekend warrior" types—those who embrace conservative values associated with a "saloon" culture (trouble-seeking, toughness, and individualism)—and those who embrace a criminal lifestyle. The secrecy and loyalty mandated by the clubs protects radicals and conservatives who engage in criminal behavior (Lauchs, 2019). Similarly, people did not overwhelmingly attribute problematic behavior to deputy subgroups, but they recognized the potential for such behavior to develop over time

or to be associated with select individuals within the group. Research on subgroups within organizations also states that groups that form for specific reasons (e.g., shared values, identity) can also develop other priorities (e.g., resource control, dominance; Carton and Cummings, 2012). This makes it difficult to predict how subgroup priorities and behaviors will develop over time. Combined with our interview and community results, these survey findings suggest that LASD personnel recognize that perceived negative outcomes associated with subgroups severely impact LASD's mission and that these outcomes, however rare, are unacceptable at any frequency.

CHAPTER NINE

Summary of Key Findings and Limitations

Both the community and many deputies spoke of the risks that subgroups pose to the department and to the community, and some reported on the subgroups' contributions to deplorable and sometimes illegal behavior. Despite this, many LASD personnel defended subgroups as providing camaraderie and incentives for excellent policing. But the purported benefits of subgroups—solidarity, stress relief, social connection, and promotion of hard work—are all functions that can and should be fulfilled without exclusive, semisecret subgroups. Indeed, many of the purported benefits that subgroups provide undermine LASD management processes, and common behaviors promoted by some subgroups are detrimental to LASD's mission of building trusting relationships with the community. This chapter draws on all the data collected through the course of our research to summarize findings across data sources and identify the findings that directly contribute to our recommendations in the next chapter. We summarize our key findings in Table 9.1 by providing example interview excerpts and presenting our survey results where applicable. Not all of the findings are comparable across all sources of data collection, so we also identify the findings that most prominently informed our recommendations after Table 9.1. This is then followed by a discussion of the main limitations of this study.

We base our recommendations on the following key findings:

- Community leaders and members were mostly critical of current department leadership, expressing concerns about a lack of transparency, a lack of trust, and a culture of aggressive policing. Some stakeholders said that LASD could learn from other law enforcement agencies how to better engage the community.
- Community stakeholders desire more engagement with LASD that is genuine, sincere, and compassionate and that prioritizes their needs. The qualities that stakeholders praise and prioritize (i.e., deputies serving as guardians) appear to be antithetical to the qualities they believe are prioritized by many LASD personnel (i.e., deputies acting as warriors).
- Although there were varying levels of awareness of subgroups among community stakeholders, most who were aware of these groups expressed concern about the negative effects on the community, including fear, trauma, and lack of trust in LASD. They also emphasized the need for greater oversight and accountability. The continued existence of these groups undermines the perceived legitimacy of LASD.
- Subgroups are identifiable within LASD, yet there are many LASD personnel who indicate that they have not personally encountered subgroups or have never seen any problematic behavior associated with them. There is a sense that attention to this issue ebbs and flows over time.

Table 9.1
Key Findings Across LASD Interviews, Community Interviews and Focus Groups, and LASD Survey

Interview Findings	Survey Findings
What is subgroups' impact on the community?	
Subgroups and problematic behavior associated with them have negatively impacted the community and their perceptions of LASD	
"You have to be willing to do certain things—beat people up, use excessive force, shoot people. A lot of illegal things. It's not like joining the Boy Scouts. . . . if you're celebrating people getting killed with tattoos, it's out of hand." (community leader interview) "I bet the guys in cliques' rate of being in shootings is higher. . . . if you feel like you have to join, you're likely to feel that you have to shoot someone to be a cop. . . . But it's not clear whether guys in cliques are involved in more shootings because they put themselves in the tactical position or because they have a mindset that everyone is out to get you." (command-level interview)	LASD perceptions of the impact on community perceptions and treatment: • Subgroups' behavior has negatively impacted community perceptions of LASD (47 percent overall agreed; 56 percent of those invited agreed; 62 percent of midlevel management agreed) • Subgroups engage in behavior that may offend intimidate or endanger community members (15 percent overall agreed; 16 percent of those invited agreed)
Why do unofficial, exclusive subgroups form?	
LASD is fragmented, and unit loyalty or unit identity takes precedence over loyalty to LASD overall	
"That's the beauty of the Sheriff's Department. It takes different deputies to handle different places. Not all can do Compton, Lennox. Some can do Marina. Different people for different places. A deputy will learn at Century in a year what will take three or four years in other places. It doesn't make you better, though. LASD stations operate as independent police departments." (command-level interview)	Deputies typically feel more loyal to the station or unit where they trained than to LASD overall: • 58 percent of all respondents agreed; 71 percent of those who had been invited to join a subgroup and 65 percent of midlevel managers agreed
Subgroups often form at "fast" or high-crime stations	
"You see more in two years than you would elsewhere in eight years. There are rough neighborhoods and gang violence. It exposes you to a lot. You test yourself. A lot of people can't make it. There's a lot of violence, and you gotta know to expect it. I wanted to learn from the best and go where there's stuff going on and some excitement." (line-level deputy interview)	Subgroups are more common at stations in high-crime areas: • 40 percent of all respondents agreed; 55 percent of those who had been invited to join a subgroup and 53 percent of midlevel managers agreed
Some subgroups form to recognize hard workers or high performers	
"To be a member of those groups, you couldn't be a 'glad-hander' or a slug. The people who are getting the tattoos are seizing drugs, finding shot-caller gang members, putting people in prison, and getting those who are trying to kill us." (command-level interview)	Those who had been invited to join a subgroup responded that those who get invited had the following characteristics: • being known as a hard worker (91 percent agreed) • helping other deputies with their work (85 percent agreed) • willingness to work challenging assignments (86 percent agreed)
Other groups form based on more-social reasons	
"As time went on, it wasn't about rewarding the hard workers; it became an 'if we like you or not' group, and if I like you or if you will do something for the group or for me, we may or may not give you a tattoo." (midlevel supervisor interview)	Reasons for being invited to join: • engaging in social activities with other subgroup members outside of work (51 percent of those who had been invited agreed) • engaging in specific behaviors outside of work (e.g., paying for things; 27 percent of those who had been invited agreed)

Table 9.1—Continued

Interview Findings	Survey Findings
Some perceive that subgroups encourage undesirable behavior	
"If you get involved in a shooting or a fight, that's it. You're in. [In custody], if a deputy was involved in a physical fight with an inmate, that was huge [for getting asked to join a subgroup]—even though you could have de-escalated the situation!" (line-level interview)	Reasons for being invited: • behavior that violates current LASD policy and practices (15 percent agreed) • willingness to look the other way when others engage in improper or unethical behavior (22 percent of those invited agreed; 19 percent not invited agreed)
What do subgroups do? What is their impact on LASD?	
Some view the main purpose of subgroups as providing guidance, security, and support	
"They all like to work really hard. They do their jobs. They're the top performers. They want others who can provide guidance and mentorship. But if they stop doing that for each other, that's where it can go wrong." (command-level interview) "This job, especially patrol, is very stressful. We see and deal with crazy shit every day. . . . We see the worst in humanity, and there needs to be a way to destress and decompress from all of this." (survey respondent with a long tenure)	Reasons why people join subgroups: • to get respect among their peers (43 percent overall agreed; 57 percent of those invited agreed) • to be mentored by senior deputies (23 percent overall agreed; 36 percent of those invited agreed) • for privileges at work (30 percent overall agreed; 28 percent of those invited agreed) • to "fit in" (41 percent overall agreed; 45 percent of those invited agreed) • to provide a sense of camaraderie (55 percent overall agreed; 91 percent of those invited agreed)
Exclusivity and a sense of superiority create an informal hierarchy, which can be formalized if the subgroup embraces a status- or dominance-driven outlook	
"The deputy cliques are about asking, 'Are you someone who goes to seek out the real bad guys—the hardcore gangsters?' You could build a reputation and get asked to be a part of the group. It's a hierarchy and it's a way to recognize who's who and what's what." (command-level interview) "They controlled the supervisors. It allowed them to place people where they wanted to place them. 'Not part of my group, we'll send you to some less desired place.' Controlled scheduling. Controlled who trained who. 'Only the strong trainees come to my TOs.' The TOs not in the group got the weak trainees." (command-level interview)	Subgroups' impact on the station and nonmembers: • can hurt morale (26 percent overall agreed; 26 percent of those invited agreed) • make people want to avoid or leave certain stations (30 percent overall agreed; 32 percent of those invited agreed) • negatively affect work assignments (25 percent agreed; 27 percent of those invited agreed) • limit training opportunities (22 percent overall agreed; 23 percent of those invited agreed) • limit opportunities for career advancement or promotion (22 percent overall agreed; 25 percent of those invited agreed)
Subgroups might start out with honorable intentions, but there is a risk of this changing over time	
"Some subgroups hold people accountable so that they don't tarnish the badge. Yes, those [negative] subgroups absolutely provide a harmful look at law enforcement, but there are others who don't. Some see their profession as part of the LASD as a whole. But once their value system changes from LASD, that's when you run into problems." (command-level interview) " . . . leaders can sometimes watch out for themselves and not the group. That's where it goes bad." (command-level interview)	The work outlooks of subgroups: • Subgroups encourage members to be proactive (42 percent overall agreed; 81 percent of those invited agreed) • Subgroups have their own code of conduct (30 percent overall agreed; 42 percent of those invited agreed)

Table 9.1—Continued

Interview Findings	Survey Findings
Problematic behavior starts out minor and escalates over time if not addressed	
"When that started to surface, the bullies weren't checked. If you don't check a bully, it will spread. The supervision was lacking. We all need supervision. They may be grown adults, but they still need to be supervised. . . . The two or three [bullies] who were extremely loud and powerful; they created chaos." (command-level interview)	Problematic behaviors that can escalate include • looking down on, ignoring, or speaking ill of others (27 percent overall agreed; 28 percent of those invited agreed) • bullying others (21 percent overall agreed; 22 percent of those invited agreed) • potentially endangering other deputies (17 percent overall agreed; 18 percent of those invited agreed) • working outside the chain of command in situations that require supervisor involvement (17 percent overall agreed; 19 percent of those invited agreed)

- At least for the present and near future, subgroups are more likely to be more prominent in "fast" stations or high-crime areas where there is more perceived danger and more conventional crime-fighting. Some stations, such as Century and East Los Angeles, have long traditions of deputy subgroups, which tends to perpetuate them. Our survey findings suggest that the proportion of individuals who say that they have been invited to join a subgroup in the last five years is low (3.8 percent of respondents), and newer deputies (0–7 years at LASD) consistently reported having less knowledge of subgroups than more-experienced deputies (8+ years at LASD).
- Although some subgroups can contribute to camaraderie or seem comparatively benign, they can evolve over time to be motivated by dominance, exclusivity, or problematic actions (Carton and Cummings, 2012). Secrecy is another form of control that enhances group cohesion and group identity (Costas and Grey, 2014). Problematic behaviors identified by interviewees often target select individuals but could also contribute to lowered unit morale. Some groups label targeted individuals as lazy or weak, which might lead to them being ignored, ostracized, disrespected, bullied, threatened, or subjected to other forms of workplace aggression and even violence. Subgroups that emphasize dominance might try to control supervisors, assignments, scheduling, training assignments, and social events. Our survey results indicate that roughly 15–20 percent of our sample considered these behaviors to be associated with subgroups.
- Some community members and deputies expressed concerns about shootings committed by deputies and unnecessary force as associated with being invited to join a subgroup. Other deputies noted that such a motive would be difficult or impossible to prove.
- LASD leadership recognizes that subgroup behavior can become problematic. It has been discouraging deputies from joining such groups and has developed a policy to counter negative subgroup behaviors. However, despite LASD acknowledging risks posed by groups, the department's current approach was unsystematic in that there was no formal guidance for captains at the time of our interviews (our interviews predated the new policy). Many in the department maintain that negative acts are attributable to a few "bad apples" in a subgroup. This ignores the role of the occupational culture and the group dynamics involved in fostering and failing to prevent this behavior. Broader orga-

nizational processes, such as hiring, training, promotions, discipline, and staffing, all can factor into group formation, group member behavior, and supervision to control group behavior.

- Problematic subgroup behavior seems to start small and build over time. Supervisors who are attentive, know what to look for, and feel supported in taking action will play a critical role in preventing the development of more-egregious behavior. This can be a challenge when those engaged in undesirable behavior (e.g., social exclusion, disrespect, humiliation, excessive use of force) might also be high performers in some areas (e.g., arrests), are hard workers, or are more senior. Deputies and supervisors of all ranks can play a role in intervening to disrupt unacceptable behavior.
- Some captains have developed their own approaches that engage the entire unit—from lieutenants to deputies—to address problematic behavior by subgroups. A key element of this approach involves emphasizing unit identity over subgroup identity.
- Even though several respondents downplayed the risks of subgroups, many also said that the benefits did not outweigh these risks and said that they would advocate for telling deputies to not join subgroups. Many survey respondents recognized the negative community perceptions associated with subgroups. Lastly, survey respondents tended to indicate that something should be done, with 37 percent saying that subgroups should be prohibited.

Limitations

This is a controversial subject with a long history and a wide range of preexisting perspectives. We committed to uncover these perspectives and experiences with subgroups and to report them in a neutral, unbiased manner. Although several participants were forthcoming and offered detailed accounts of the impacts of subgroups on LASD, our outsider status might have affected what participants were willing and able to express to us in interviews, focus groups, and the survey, both within LASD and the communities who took part in the study. For instance, we were not able to directly ask deputies who had engaged in problematic behavior why they had done so. Some study participants might have been reluctant to share their perspectives on account of skepticism or concerns of retaliation, but our independence and confidentiality protections might have helped minimize the latter.

The sensitivities involved in this subject also might have affected participation and, because participation was voluntary, might have affected the types of people who chose to participate in an interview or complete a survey (i.e., selection bias). The response rate meant that a significant portion of LASD deputies did not participate, and there is a chance that the views represented in our survey findings do not reflect the views of LASD overall. It is difficult to determine the extent or direction of this response rate bias because the survey findings did show variability in perspectives. However, statistical analyses described in Appendix A (available online at www.rand.org/t/RRA616-1) suggest that systematic survey response bias was minimal, at least according to the information we had available to compare with LASD overall (gender, race/ethnicity, rank).

Similarly, our qualitative data collection, while diverse, was not intended to be representative of either LASD or the community. For instance, many of our LASD interviews reflect the perspectives of command staff. Although this can be viewed as a positive because these

individuals might have more knowledge about the organization and behaviors of a wider range of personnel than could be contacted directly, their perspectives could also be inaccurate, outdated, or shaped by their position.

Finally, this study provides only a snapshot of perspectives at this particular point in time. The dynamic nature of this subject suggests that views and experiences will change over time.

CHAPTER TEN

Recommendations

LASD is not the only law enforcement agency that has been confronted with reexamining its policies and practices in the wake of scandal, nor is it alone in its need to show that it can be accountable to the public and acknowledge negative outcomes for community members. Scandals associated with deputy subgroups reflect on LASD as a whole, which affects public figures' and community members' perceptions of LASD. The repeated revelations about subgroups, despite their secretive nature, only make these perceptions and further criticisms of the department worse.

For community members, a lack of progress on this issue, combined with tenuous police-community relations overall, signals that LASD does not prioritize community needs or does not recognize the actual and potential harms. LASD leadership appears to recognize the public perception and litigation issues, as well as the personnel issues that can develop when problematic behavior by subgroup members goes unaddressed. However, a substantial portion of our survey respondents reported that they did not have knowledge of these groups nor did they engage in providing an opinion, and some did not perceive that the groups they were aware of could be seen as problematic. Thus, although these issues might be discussed internally, promoting change and preventing future scandals is difficult because there is not enough agreement or momentum to create change, and the existence of subgroups has become normalized in some parts of LASD (McKay, 2014). This presents a challenge for leadership to communicate the urgency of the situation and to make the case for change (Barratt-Pugh and Krestelica, 2019).

Recommendations for Subgroups

Although subgroups have become normalized in parts of LASD, there is also recognition of the problems that subgroups create. Many of the personnel we surveyed said that they wanted LASD to do something about the existence of subgroups. LASD has taken the initial steps to begin to address this subject, most visibly by creating a policy that directly addresses employee groups that mistreat others. In February 2021, Sheriff Villanueva further elaborated that the policy is intended to prohibit people from joining subgroups or inviting others to join (although this has been contradicted in subsequent statements), noting that he would like County Counsel to offer a new legal analysis of this policy. Various other existing policies can also potentially be used to address issues that subgroups pose, such as the Policy of Equality, which includes policies against abusive conduct, inappropriate conduct toward others, and retaliation. However, at the time of our interviews, there appeared to be a lack of overall guid-

ance or information shared with captains about expectations and appropriate responses. Some captains have responded by developing their own approaches to addressing issues with subgroups, emphasizing direct communication and setting expectations. Although this approach could ameliorate problems in particular places, it introduces the risk of having inconsistent policies within LASD.

In a wide variety of organizations, it is common for formal policies to exist alongside informal practices or workarounds that could be derivatives of or even contrary to policy (Wieslander, 2019). Assumptions, stories, collective discourses, framings, and other cultural elements can subvert or ignore the intentions of formal policies. Additionally, as the policy landscape within an organization becomes more complex, divergence between policies and actual behavior is more likely (Crank, 2003). Thus, formal policies have to be reinforced through training, supervision, and review (the Policy, Training, Supervision, Review framework; Walker and Archbold, 2019). Moreover, challenges associated with subgroups sit within a broader organizational context that involves general challenges with supervision, training, discipline, and other department characteristics, such as fragmentation and the traditions that surround subgroups. This is particularly challenging in an organization as large and complex as LASD.

The secrecy and alternative hierarchy created by subgroups presents issues for team functioning (e.g., negative attitudes toward outgroups; Hornsey and Hogg, 2000) and requires additional effort for effective management. For instance, some of the reasons given to justify deputy subgroup formation involved a certain amount of negative attribution (Weingart et al., 2005) about some non-subgroup members (e.g., that they are "lazy"). Additionally, the act of forming a group can reduce respect, trust, and likability of nonmembers (Cronin, Weingart, and Todorov, 2011) and can increase suspicion of nonmembers, which can affect perceptions or experiences in the workplace (Insko et al., 1990; Miller, 2001) and can make favoritism or the appearance of favoritism more likely. The U.S. military discourages most socializing between different ranks on the grounds that it can undermine the chain of command and create the appearance of favoritism (Department of the Army Pamphlet 600-XX, undated). The same risk is true for deputies.

For deputies, the short-term benefits of peer acceptance might outweigh long-term risks of being involved in an internal investigation. And the financial risks of civil rights lawsuits are generally borne by the county rather than individual deputies. Shifting, controlling, or even abolishing such normative practices as subgroup membership is, of course, easier said than done. The adage familiar to those in policy research is that "culture eats policy for breakfast;"[1] in other words, even the best-designed policies can fail if they are not aligned with cultural values and practices or if amending these values and practices does not make sense to the population that must adhere to them. Any strategy that does not recognize the significance of subgroups to a significant proportion of LASD is likely to fail. Decisionmakers would be wise to meet members of LASD staff "where they are at"—i.e., understand their constraints, desires, and concerns in crafting responses or directions for change. Thus, heavy-handed, top-down approaches that do not incorporate the cultural importance of subgroups in some parts of LASD and the factors that make the environment ripe for their existence and persistence are likely to fail. Moreover, given the independent nature of patrol stations and the localized

[1] The original quote attributed to Peter Drucker is "culture eats strategy for breakfast." Or, from Schein, 2010: "Leaders should be conscious of culture; otherwise it will manage them."

impact of subgroups, communication and efforts to address subgroups should be concentrated on units with known subgroups.

Although our focus is on challenges related to subgroups, and efforts should be targeted where there are identified issues or higher risks, some of these recommendations address more-general misconduct. As Punch, 2000, explains regarding corruption and misconduct, "there is consensus on effective measures to tackle it and to promote integrity. Ingredients are strong leadership, a multi-faceted organizational strategy, a well-resourced internal affairs unit, proactive techniques of investigation, and persistent efforts to promote professional standards. The essence is a judicious and sophisticated balance between negative and positive social control" (Punch, 2000, p. 301). Prevention and early detection are critical, and, to address problems with subgroups, proactive efforts will have to be coordinated across multiple levels of the organization.

Prevention and detection are particularly challenging in this context, as subgroups and any problematic behaviors by subgroups often are hidden, look minor or are difficult to interpret, or occur within a small group of insiders. Cases such as those involving excessive or deadly force against the community or assaults on other deputies are extreme, whereas fostering more-subtle behavior, such as disrespect, unit conflict, community harassment, and attempts to undermine the LASD management structure, was more common. These challenges create a risk that efforts to reduce problematic subgroup behavior could be ineffective or backfire. For instance, stronger supervision could either fail to detect problematic behavior or could create stronger ingroup tendencies to avoid supervisory interference. Supervision in general is a challenge because of the autonomy and low visibility of much patrol work, and, therefore, it is important to recognize that even the best supervision can be circumvented if there is motivation to do so.

Although it is worthwhile to uphold and enforce policies prohibiting subgroups, it is also important to consider that doing so could have unintended consequences. Prohibition has the potential to increase alienation and stigma of group members, which could drive existing subgroups further into secrecy, increasing the potential allure of exclusivity. If joining is a violation of policy, this might serve to reduce membership while also increasing selection effects for willingness to violate policy. Lastly, parts of LASD might see this prohibition as unfair, which could weaken the policy's effect, at least in the short run.

LASD's approach must also include more than just setting boundaries and punishing deputies when boundaries are crossed. There has to be attention and a sense that the department is taking a new interest in building up the workforce, emphasizing the integrity of its members, and welcoming exposure to different perspectives, including being open to community input (Blumburg, Papazoglou, and Creighton, 2018). Research on change management suggests that a critical aspect of successful organizational change involves managing the psychological contract between the employer and the employee by (1) involving employees in the change process and (2) developing and implementing an effective communication strategy (White and Robinson, 2014).[2] Central to preserving the psychological contract and managing change is having clearly articulated expectations. These aspects of successful change manage-

[2] "The psychological contract refers to the shared beliefs and expectations staff have of their employer, and the beliefs and expectations the employer has of their staff" (White and Robinson, 2014, p. 259). These shared beliefs and expectations define the nature of the employer-employee relationship, so when beliefs or expectations are not in alignment, there can be damage to the relationship (Rousseau, 1989), which can take the form of perceptions of unfairness or a lack of trust (Morrison and Robinson, 1997).

ment suggest that any efforts that are rushed or half-hearted will easily be recognized and most likely rejected. These same factors are important for including the community in the change process and demonstrating sustained change.

Against this backdrop, we discuss a variety of recommendations for improvement in LASD's approach to subgroups, noting that this issue connects to both inward-facing and outward-facing behaviors and perceptions. First, in light of the Sheriff's clarification that the current policy intends to prohibit these groups, we discuss frameworks for organizational and cultural change, review potential considerations for the written policy as it currently exists, and consider potential negative unintended consequences and efforts that could mitigate or prevent them. Next, we focus on other ways that LASD could use a holistic approach to promote cultural change. This approach includes options for training, devoted resources, and efforts for transformation. A key training recommendation involves considering a novel program that focuses directly on peer relationships and redefining key values (e.g., loyalty, courage, integrity, trust). Many of these recommendations are focused on building up personnel within LASD and avoiding negative outcomes that sometimes arise with subgroups. Finally, we provide recommendations to improve LASD's relationship with the communities it serves. Any organizational and cultural change efforts should integrate a community focus (i.e., "how will this help the community?"). Building trust is of day-to-day importance but also requires strategic planning and coordinated efforts over time, as well as measurement of outputs and outcomes. Moreover, building trust could require focused efforts to repair harm caused by past or contemporary misdeeds. We focus on this more in the community-facing recommendations section because this does not apply only to subgroups, but efforts to improve in these areas must also start in areas with more-serious community concerns, including concerns about subgroups (e.g., East Los Angeles).

The most promising method that LASD can use to reduce subgroups and their negative impact is to plan and follow a multipronged approach that involves various efforts to create lasting organizational change by improving the organization and the behavior of people within it. Creating a policy on subgroups is not enough, as deficiencies in organizational processes identified in Chapter Six (e.g., training, supervision, performance evaluation) and negative cultural norms (e.g., an "us versus them" mentality, a crime-fighter orientation) highlighted in Chapter Three could contribute to issues with subgroups or more generally. Moreover, some deputies reported relying on subgroups for support, for stress relief, or for mentorship and improvement of their career prospects. More support from the organization in these areas might reduce the appeal of these groups. In Table 10.1, we list factors that prior research has identified as the critical components of organizational and cultural change. In the first column, we list the factors identified by Fernandez and Rainey, 2006, as critical for promoting lasting organizational change in the public sector, and in the second column, we match concepts from those factors to what Meredith et al., 2017, identified as drivers of organizational cultural change. The most important short-term factors or drivers of change for LASD leadership are vision and goals, communication, and accountability. In the longer term, collaboration, stakeholders, training and resources will be important for driving lasting, sustainable change.

Implementing the Policy on Employee Groups Which Violate the Rights of Other Employees or Members of the Public

Sheriff Villanueva recently created a video to be distributed to all department members regarding Policy 3-01/050.83, "Employee Groups Which Violate Rights of Other Employees or

Table 10.1
Factors Involved in Organizational and Cultural Change

Organizational Change in the Public Sector (Fernandez and Rainey, 2006)	Drivers of Cultural Change (Meredith et al., 2017)
1. Vision: Ensure and communicate the need for change	Communication
2. Develop clear goals and a detailed plan	Goals
3. Build support for change and overcome resistance	Stakeholders, collaboration, trust
4. Ensure top management support and commitment; create champions for change	Accountability, collaboration
5. Build external support	Communication, resources
6. Provide sufficient resources	Resources, training
7. Integrate the change into formal doctrine or policy	Accountability, resources, measurement
8. Pursue comprehensive change by using a holistic approach	Goals, resources, training, transformation

Members of the Public" (hereafter "policy on employee groups;" see Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department Manual of Policy and Procedures, 2021b), in which he stated that the policy is designed to make membership in or recruitment for subgroups a violation of policy. This sets the goal of removing subgroups from the work environment; however, subsequent statements by the Sheriff have contradicted whether this is possible with the existing policy, instead focusing on misconduct by groups. Our findings suggest that removing subgroups from the work environment could be particularly challenging to achieve in some parts of LASD. There are a variety of considerations related to policy and vision, investigations and discipline, and communication, as well as why subgroups form and implications for individuals who belong to them.

Vision, Goals, Communication, and Accountability

Setting a clear vision is the primary responsibility for executive leadership and involves setting the mission for the organization, with clear goals and expectations (Meredith et al., 2017). To implement the vision, other components and systems must be in alignment (e.g., goals, communication, policies, accountability, training, etc.). The Sheriff's recent video statement indicated that there is "zero tolerance" for deputies to join or solicit others to join any "non-approved department-sanctioned group." This language is specific and communicates a vision of LASD without these groups, but it has yet to be incorporated into official policy. The Sheriff's statement also refers to groups that have "engaged in any form of misconduct" and uses more ambiguous language that employees are "advised to avoid joining" these groups. Being firm in setting and enforcing standards will be critical for this issue and has been identified elsewhere as being essential when implementing programs to enhance ethical behavior and prevent wrongdoing (McDowall et al., 2015). As noted above, even subgroups that seem relatively innocuous can undermine LASD management, can create negative perceptions of LASD in the community, and could lead to violations of policy.

Clarify policy language. To set expectations and to let deputies better understand policies that affect them, it is important that policy language is clear. It is also important to communicate the need for such a policy. Different groups within the department could interpret the current policy on employee groups differently (e.g., the policy bans subgroups writ large versus the policy focuses only on problematic behavior of some in groups) or might not understand the need for such a policy. First, LASD should add the necessary language into this policy to formally prohibit deputy subgroups or cliques, as seemingly indicated in the Sheriff's video statement. Additionally, the policy should provide a clear explanation of what specifically is prohibited and a clear explanation of how the policy will be enforced.[3] Finally, the policy on employee groups currently mentions damage to public trust and harm to morale as key factors associated with these groups. LASD should add language to the policy to reinforce how these, or other factors associated with subgroups, are related to LASD's mission and core values. Despite the clarity afforded by the decision to prohibit groups entirely and the new potential to investigate groups in relation to any misconduct, questions remain about what this policy means for existing subgroups, what it means for any future subgroups, and whether the department recognizes why deputies create and join these groups to begin with or how problems can build. That is, this policy is an attempt to draw a clear line, but it is not clear whether that is enough to prevent future negative behaviors.

Take steps to address secrecy. One of the most troubling aspects of subgroups is their secrecy. The secrecy of both membership and activities makes it more difficult to determine how big a subgroup is, what its activities are, and whether it has the potential to undermine unit management. LASD should consider requiring deputies to disclose their membership in all work-related groups or organizations. Although this could prompt dishonesty, it might also provide useful information about the size and scope of subgroups within LASD and discourage membership.

Implement new guidance related to internal investigations. Given this element of secrecy, when allegations do come to light, it is critical that they are investigated thoroughly and swiftly. However, secrecy also makes these investigations challenging because information can be limited to insiders. Internal Affairs investigators should receive guidance and training on how to investigate possible violations of the policy on employee groups. Also, because the policy on employee groups can become the focus of a secondary investigation from a primary complaint (e.g., a hazing complaint that reveals subgroup involvement), LASD should have a general policy that requires Internal Affairs investigators to notify a supervisor and to commence a separate investigation upon discovering collateral misconduct. This is a recommended best practice in police accountability (Walker and Archbold, 2019). Investigating and disciplining all misconduct associated with subgroup-related investigations are critical for addressing the potential group element involved in the misconduct.

Enhance the role of external oversight and external investigations. Accountability involves collaborating with external oversight. Some of our community-related recommendations also suggest improving relationships with external oversight bodies. Part of this should involve cooperating with the OIG in subgroup investigations. Given the OIG's concerns about some deputies not being questioned and the lack of depth in subgroup-related questioning in internal investigations, the OIG's role can add legitimacy to these investigations (OIG, 2020a).

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[3] For example, the Department of Defense prohibits active participation in organizations that advocate the use of force or violence (Department of Defense Instruction 1325.06).

External oversight could provide recommendations for improvement and serves to provide a sense of transparency and accountability for these high-profile investigations. Alternatively, the OIG could use subpoena power to conduct a separate investigation. This course of action could lead to discrepancies with the internal investigation that need to be reconciled. A final alternative is to explore options for another external entity to investigate. The California State Attorney General recently announced a pattern or practice investigation, but it is not clear whether subgroups are a focus of this investigation (Office of the Attorney General, State of California Department of Justice, 2021).

Further define a vision for cultural change within LASD. Although clear vision and definitive policy are important for communicating expectations related to subgroups, other elements of the vision for LASD and related goals should also be articulated. For instance, the Sheriff's recent statement mentions that prohibiting subgroups is a step toward "change in the culture of our organization." This could be clarified to communicate a cultural stance on subgroups (e.g., how they might conflict with LASD mission and values) and the desired cultural change that the department is heading toward, which could include acknowledging and communicating a desire to separate the department from the past. A cultural stance on subgroups would convey the message that although not all groups have been problematic, their existence poses risks to the healthy functioning of the department and to the relationship with the community. As an example of desired cultural change, the fragmented nature of LASD, and the status attributed to certain assignments (e.g., working at fast stations), along with the justifications that devalue some non-subgroup members (e.g., "lazy," "slugs"), LASD might begin moving toward a culture of respect, a culture of trust, or a just culture (e.g., as a component of a culture of safety; Klinger, 2020). A clear vision is implemented at lower levels of the organization through specific goals and communicating those goals. This is where ensuring top management support and commitment and overcoming resistance to banning subgroups is critical.

Communication

Open lines of communication. Messages from top leadership set the tone for communicating the importance of department policies and for orchestrating organizational change. This includes communicating a clear determination to discipline misconduct, encouraging people to come forward to report issues, and supporting those who do come forward. Given that interviewees expressed frustration with the fact that deputies convicted of misconduct had been reinstated, leadership needs to address cultural elements of cynicism, secrecy, and hypocrisy. Additionally, messages coming from the top should emphasize the importance of being part of LASD as a whole and should avoid signals that could be interpreted as showing a preference for certain units. This desired message emphasizes the superordinate organizational identity of being a deputy sheriff and could involve highlighting common goals (Gaertner et al., 2000). Communicating an organizational identity applies not only to the Sheriff, but also to the entire command staff—assistant sheriffs, chiefs, commanders, and captains (Punch, 2000). Top leadership also supports leadership at lower levels, which requires open communication to inform and educate them about issues and to provide guidance and support. Historically within LASD, information was sometimes filtered on its way up to the top. Top leadership can reinforce that open truthful communication is valued over minimizing problems.

Encourage reporting behavior. Relatedly, leadership should create messaging and systems that encourage and convey support for people who come forward to report problems, both internally and externally. Leadership and supervisors must convey that reporting is a valued

behavior of deputies, and they must denounce retaliation (Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran, 2005). Leadership must also clearly explain that retaliation will not be tolerated. For example, a recent anonymous report to Internal Affairs was leaked to personnel at the Compton station, which led to retaliation. This requires an investigation, along with an explanation for how this occurred and how it will be prevented from occurring in the future.[4] The department should consider revising the existing anonymous reporting system or should create a separate anonymous hotline for internal complaints to assure respondents of anonymity. Some interviewees and survey respondents noted other challenges with existing reporting systems that might need to be reviewed (e.g., complaints about interpersonal problems could generate an automatic Policy of Equality report, which might lead to transfer of the subject of the compliant, which could lead to retaliation from the subject's friends).

Collaboration

Clearly communicating a vision for the future and the standards that should be upheld sets the tone, but collaboration and accountability will be important for implementing change related to subgroups. Given the variation across the department, collaboration will be necessary to determine whether different assignments, divisions, or even individual units need to embrace slightly different goals or strategies for accomplishing those goals. Chiefs and commanders should work with unit commanders to develop strategic plans for dealing with subgroups by having established lines of communication and creating plans to manage existing groups. This process could include communicating these plans externally so that community members know that the department is taking the issue seriously and is attempting to be transparent.

Accountability

Collaboration across levels of leadership is important for understanding department conditions and developing plans for units across the department, which inform ongoing monitoring and accountability. Although chiefs and commanders should be accountable for ensuring that plans exist, unit commanders are responsible for implementing those plans, preventing and intervening in personnel issues, and ensuring that their lieutenants and sergeants are on the same page. The general features of effective leadership begin with fostering trust and respect through open communication (Clarke, 2011; Denti and Hemlin, 2012).

Increase responsibilities at the unit level. Unit commanders are directly responsible for managing personnel, involving employees in organizational processes, and setting expectations. Many of the captains with whom we spoke noted that communicating about the implications of subgroups openly and fairly was critical. Just as top leadership should communicate the importance of being part of LASD overall to promote organizational identification, unit commanders should emphasize the common identity of working in a particular unit.[5] In-group

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[4] Recently, two deputies at the Compton station filed lawsuits against LASD with allegations that a subgroup allegedly named the Executioners was attempting to control scheduling at the station, had assaulted one of the complainants, and supported the excessive use of force in the form of shootings by deputies. A confidential report to Internal Affairs by one of these deputies was apparently leaked, resulting in retaliation, one form of which was graffiti on the keypad to enter the employee parking lot that said "[deputy name] is a rat." The group also placed its logo on at least one computer mouse and mouse pad at the station (Tchekmedyian and Lau, 2020).

[5] The CCJV report contained a similar recommendation: "Avoid promoting or condoning a culture of allegiance to a subpart of the Department," but it does not recognize the importance of promoting unit identity over subgroup identity. Although promoting allegiance to LASD overall is important, this recommendation is related to our finding that loyalty is higher to the unit where one trained or currently works than for LASD overall.

symbols, such as those associated with subgroups, promote in-group identification and can reduce team identification, which has implications for such team outcomes as performance, trust, and conflict (Han and Harms, 2010; Levine and Thompson, 2004). Communicating a shared identity and shared goals can help reduce intergroup conflict (Gaertner et al., 2000; Wenzel, Mummendey, and Waldzus, 2008). Managing subgroups at the unit level also involves addressing small issues before they became larger problems and not hesitating to take action. Moreover, failing to address even minor issues related to subgroups perpetuates what might be bad behavior and creates more problems. Unit commanders are ultimately accountable for this, but lieutenants and sergeants are also accountable for setting expectations and monitoring the work environment. Recommended practices related to subgroups include the following:

- Continue to explain that participation in cliques is prohibited and discuss the consequences of joining a group (short term versus long term). Give examples of cautionary tales in which issues with subgroups have led to negative outcomes and damaged LASD's reputation (this could be facilitated by a "Lessons Learned" program in general).
- Set clear expectations for acceptable and unacceptable behavior, whether subgroup-related or not. Behavior that is exclusionary or divisive could trigger a slippery slope leading to disrespect, ostracism, gossip, rumors, false information, degrading and discrediting someone's workplace commitment and contribution, character attacks, humiliation, vandalism, false claims, and other behaviors that are signs of abusive conduct or bullying. Supervisors should understand and know to look for these behaviors and signs of conflict.
- Supervisors should also be made aware that their current or prior membership in a deputy subgroup is a reportable conflict of interest should they supervise other subgroup members, which should not be allowed. See Manual of Policies and Procedures 3-01/075.00.
- Continually scan the environment for signs of internal conflict, such as people ignoring each other; asking to change assignments; or rumors, gossip, or efforts to pressure or force individuals to leave the unit.
- Normalize and incentivize documentation of problems and issues to address adverse behavior. This does not require an inquiry or a performance log entry, but simply documenting employee behavior can help should disciplinary action be required. This might help avoid institutional knowledge loss that could occur during supervisor transitions (e.g., a new captain). Both the Kolts report and the Special Counsel previously recommended similar practices.

Develop a Holistic Approach for Improving the Workplace and Preventing Misconduct

It is important for LASD to develop a holistic approach to institutionalize and promote comprehensive change, which often requires system change (Fernandez and Rainey, 2006; Meyers, Riccucci, and Lurie, 2001; Shareef, 1994). Many organizational change efforts backslide because they are not supported by surrounding systems (as noted in Table 10.1, drivers of cultural change will involve resources, training, transformation measurement, and engaging internal and external stakeholders). As noted above, the various components of a holistic approach need to be aligned with the vision and goals for LASD. Adopting a broader framework or plan for change could help communicate why other changes are necessary and how they can be beneficial more broadly. Additionally, such a framework may explain why and show how LASD is working to make subgroups a thing of the past.

Table 10.2 provides a list of potential efforts to support change with resources, training, and transformation (Meredith et al., 2017). In general, the potential training efforts listed here should begin by being targeted toward the highest need (e.g., units with known subgroups).

Implement Training for Recognizing Problematic Behavior and Intervening

Training efforts should focus on prevention, prediction or early detection, and intervention to disrupt some of the problematic behaviors identified above (e.g., aggression; Barling, Dupré, and Kelloway, 2009; Dillon, 2012). Training for supervisors to recognize issues and intervene early might be useful, but research in this area is limited (Gilin Oore, Leiter, and LeBlanc, 2015; Tricco et al., 2018). Developing or enhancing formal or informal mentoring programs for sergeants to enhance supervisory behavior in general was recommended by several interviewees, although, again, research evidence is limited (Herrington and Schafer, 2019; Pearson-Goff and Herrington, 2014). Lastly, LASD should consider implementing a peer intervention program. This would require readiness and a substantial commitment by LASD, but it would also provide a framework for positive change.

Develop a Peer Intervention Program to Help Personnel Intervene in Misconduct

As a clear example of how peer nonintervention contributed to unnecessary force and death, the police killing of George Floyd in May 2020 shocked the collective conscience of many Americans. Many law enforcement leaders immediately and publicly denounced this act. Moreover, according to a recent Pew Research Center survey of law enforcement officers nationwide,

Table 10.2
Recommendations for a Holistic Approach to Change

Drivers of Change	Recommendations for Change
Training: develop personnel through training (skills, education)	• Implement peer intervention training to prevent misconduct. • Train supervisors to better monitor the workplace and intervene. • Improve mentoring for sergeants.
Transformation: promote openness to change, adaptability, learning orientation	• Implement a lessons-learned program and disseminate best practices. This could take the form of more-formal Sentinel Event Reviews for significant events, summaries of key findings from investigations, and/or releasing redacted transcripts. Ideally, "near misses" would also be subject to review. The most immediate action LASD could take is to disseminate the overarching findings, lessons learned, and/or transcripts from the internal investigation of the Banditos. • Review and improve performance evaluation practices; incorporate community policing metrics. • Review unit assignment processes and consider options for increasing movement of personnel. • Review and improve unit-level training programs (e.g., 360-degree reviews).
Resources: devote sufficient resources to change efforts (staffing, time, etc.)	• Develop or enhance a long-term health and wellness program that encourages regular use of psychological services.[a] Enhance the peer support program. Improving these supports can provide outlets for dealing with stress and could give deputies other sources of support in addition to their peers. • Develop a career planning program. • Identify priorities for other research, focusing on pressing organizational challenges and changes (e.g., body-worn cameras), as well as further study of subgroups or related topics (e.g., workplace harassment, workplace bullying). Consider working with an organizational consultant.

[a] The link between psychological services and cliques has been noted in the past. A Los Angeles Times article from 2000 interviewed LASD's chief psychologist at the time, who mentioned efforts to get ahead of problems associated with cliques, although the article did not discuss what those were (Avins, 2000).

84 percent of those at all ranks support a requirement to intervene if another officer is about to inappropriately use force (Morin et al., 2017). Many agencies are enacting policies that mandate such intervention, particularly as it relates to use of force. Often, however, these policies are enacted without appropriate training on what police peer intervention means or how to do it, creating a critical gap.

LASD interviewees frequently noted that issues with subgroups develop because the issues are often overlooked, ignored, or left for someone else to deal with. This approach resembles passive bystandership, suggesting that it is likely that people either do not know what to do or do not think they will be supported if they try to intervene. Interviewees also noted the importance of peers for line-level deputies. Additionally, interviewees had concerns over the use of force, shootings committed by deputies, and a code of silence as potential ways to enhance status within the group. Instead of relying only on increasing punishment to resolve these issues, which can backfire (Ivković, Peacock, and Haberfeld, 2016), a focus on peer intervention draws from the idea that prevention is the best medicine and emphasizes that anyone can intervene with anyone else to protect their career, health, or safety. There is likely substantial distance in LASD between those who ostracize and those who are ostracized, but our interview and survey findings suggest that there is a large middle ground of people who are respected and could also recognize the need to intervene.[6]

Project Active Bystandership for Law Enforcement (Project ABLE) is a novel peer intervention approach to reduce misconduct and is based on NOPD's experience and development of the Ethical Policing is Courageous (EPIC) Peer Intervention Program. Project ABLE is an active bystander and peer intervention program based on the assumption that *preventing* misconduct and mistakes largely is the responsibility of those who are present during the event (Aronie and Lopez, 2017). Free training has been provided by the Georgetown Innovative Policing Program and the law firm Sheppard Mullin, both of which were involved in the development of EPIC as part of the New Orleans Consent Decree.

Project ABLE directly focuses on cultural change to prevent misconduct, avoid police mistakes, and promote officer health and wellness. It provides guidance on measures to create and sustain a culture of peer intervention, but it also requires a firm and clear commitment (e.g., policies, training, accountability) from leadership. The intervention can be incorporated into a broader employee wellness program.

Practically, for peer intervention to be effective, the most critical factor is that deputies know they will be supported if they intervene, which is the responsibility of leadership (Mesmer-Magnus and Viswesvaran, 2005). Additionally, the goals of Project ABLE include redefining various features of law enforcement culture. One example is redefining courage as moral courage and recognizing that it takes high levels of moral courage to intervene with a peer. Another is redefining loyalty, from unwavering loyalty to peers to an affirmative loyalty that protects peers' health, safety, and career. Instead of having a punitive focus, peer intervention emphasizes something that is already defined as important—protecting one another.

Intervening to prevent misconduct or mistakes could save someone's career, might reduce exposure to stressful or traumatic events (e.g., unnecessary use of force), or could increase safety by correcting improper tactics or conduct. As incidents are increasingly captured on video, evidence of proper peer intervention can provide the community with examples of restraint and

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[6] As an example, the Banditos incident at Kennedy Hall reportedly involved several LASD bystanders who either did not recognize the need to intervene or failed to effectively intervene.

de-escalation. The active bystandership research literature identifies how inhibitors (e.g., fear of retaliation, situational ambiguity, the pressure to not second-guess a colleague), the actions or inaction of others, and prior nonintervention can lead to patterns of passive bystandership (Staub, 2003).

Simply receiving bystander intervention training can increase the likelihood of intervention. ABLE has not yet been formally evaluated, so some caution is warranted; however, bystander training in other areas has revealed positive behavioral outcomes (e.g., sexual violence prevention; Mujal et al., 2019). Additionally, it is likely that some personnel will be resistant. However, there need not be rampant excessive force, a push for increased discipline, a strong code of silence, or unfamiliarity with peer intervention within an organization for a peer intervention program to be helpful. Critically, leadership has to provide full support, and key people throughout the organization should be brought in to provide guidance, support, and advance the idea that this training would provide positive change for LASD (Lassiter, Bostain, and Lentz, 2018). The pressure to change has to come from within. Within LASD, there will certainly be challenges to effective implementation, including its decentralized structure, its command structure (e.g., all assistant sheriffs, chiefs, commanders, and captains need to be on board), its diversity of tasks and challenges across Los Angeles County, and the ostracism that already exists of some departmental members (e.g., peer intervention requires that anyone can intervene with anyone else, regardless of rank or status).

Transform How the Department Shares and Generates Information

Lessons Learned

From our interviews and survey findings, we were struck by how many participants denied any knowledge of subgroups. We expected at least some familiarity with the public examples, particularly among command staff. This suggests either an unwillingness to grapple with a critical challenge or a potential loss of important knowledge about how problematic high-profile events occurred and lessons for how they can be prevented. Therefore, we recommend a lessons-learned or knowledge management program specifically related to subgroup investigations, but ideally for personnel management issues in general. This could include various forms of evaluation and best practices generation. For instance, captains gave us many examples of how they effectively handled personnel issues or how they were prevented from doing so. Across captains' perspectives, there could be some triangulation of best practices. Patton, 2001, gives a set of conditions for developing high-quality lessons learned (e.g., triangulation across various sources), but starting with internal expertise is a good first step.

Review Internal Processes

Other department processes were potentially related to subgroups or were seen as a general challenge by some of our research participants, including performance evaluations, personnel rotation, and unit training programs. Making changes to these processes requires thorough assessment and coordination with employee unions. Potential deficiencies in formal performance evaluations could contribute to the perceived need for informal peer evaluations. Performance evaluations were also considered by some to be "not used for anything," and there were perceptions that it was difficult to lower someone's evaluation rating year-over-year. Incorporating community engagement into performance reviews is another potential area for improvement. Personnel rotation was identified as something that other departments do more frequently. Additionally, the ability for personnel to have choice in their assignments was per-

ceived to contribute to subgroup formation. Remaining in certain assignments for too long was also identified as a potential issue. Finally, variation across unit training programs was identified as a potential issue in general and for subgroups. Incorporating anonymous 360-degree review of training officers and sergeants is one potential option for identifying successes and challenges across the department (French and Stewart, 2001; Hassan, Park, and Raadschelders, 2019). Similarly, exit interviews should be conducted with all deputies when they leave a unit of assignment, as well as when they leave the department. Given the multiple instances of subgroups pressuring individuals to leave a unit, this procedure could identify issues early. Information from these interviews should be reviewed regularly.

Devote Resources to Enhancing Support for Employees

Lastly, ongoing devotion of resources to change and improvement efforts is critical. An easy place to start would be to enhance employee support programs, such as the peer support program. This enhancement could include specific support services for deputies who are victimized by subgroups. Additionally, developing a career planning support program to help new deputies build a plan for their careers could reduce the allure of subgroups as a source of mentorship and career building. Finally, we recommend devoting resources to research other pressing organizational challenges or desired changes. Resources could also be devoted to further study workplace issues associated with subgroups (e.g., workplace bullying). For example, analysis of use-of-force incidents, civilian complaints, the effectiveness of discipline, and the use of the Performance Reporting and Monitoring System (PRMS) could be beneficial to the department and oversight bodies. Understanding specifically whether there are peer network or shift-based patterns to use of force and complaints, conducting a thorough review of whether discipline is associated with reduced problematic behavior, and using the PRMS across the department could improve early recognition and management of problems.

Recommendations for Strengthening Ties Between LASD and the Communities It Serves

Each individual law enforcement agency's approach to community policing and community engagement starts with a vision and goals and ultimately requires a strategic plan and clear measures of outputs (Cordner, 1999). Implementing and reviewing these goals and strategies requires systematic measurement and ongoing effort (Goldstein, 1987; Mastrofski, Willis, and Kochel, 2007). Any efforts or promises should only be made if the purpose is genuinely to improve relations with the community and there are intentions and the capability for following through with concrete action (Adams, Rohe, and Arcury, 2002; Chappell, 2009). Below, we provide some examples of existing practices that other law enforcement agencies are using to improve community trust, many of which have been evaluated. LASD should start by developing a strategic vision and strategic plan specifically for community policing[7] (Cordner, 1999), which will likely need to include station-specific planning. Indeed, we recognize and our findings show that the needs, challenges, and solutions will vary across LASD. Stations

[7] The Kolts, CCJV, Antelope Valley settlement agreement, and Loyola Law School Center for Juvenile Law and Policy reports (Loyola Law School Center for Juvenile Law and Policy, 2021) all recommend improving community policing and improving respectful interactions with community members or inmates.

with higher workload, more serious crime, and/or subgroups that prioritize aggressive crime-fighting, as well as already strained relationships with the community, could face more challenges in implementing reforms related to community relations. It will also be important to examine how messages about the importance of aggressive crime-fighting are emphasized by LASD overall. Stations with strained community relations will require extra effort to show tangible progress. In the following sections, we note areas that our community participants suggested were important or in need of improvement, and we provide examples of practices that have been suggested or evaluated in research literature. Proposed recommendations focused on improvements in three main areas: training, community engagement, and accountability.

Training

Community stakeholders in more than a third of the discussion groups and interviews recommended changes to LASD training. In the majority of these comments, participants stated that deputies need to improve how they treat and interact with people of color, victims, and special populations (e.g., those with mental illness or developmental disabilities). Community members also noted the potential impact of jail experience on deputies' outlooks. The 1992 Kolts Commission recommended a mandatory annual community service requirement for custody personnel, which might be worth reconsidering. Additionally, there are a variety of related pathways to improving community trust in LASD, one of which involves reducing antagonistic outcomes. For example, other efforts to improve community outcomes include reducing overall use-of-force incidents (Worden and McLean, 2017) and minimizing the use of pretextual stops (Blanks, 2016). Nevertheless, many of the community members' comments related to their perceptions of procedural justice in their interactions with deputies. Indeed, discourtesy is a common public complaint, according to the watch commander service reports released by LASD (LASD, undated-c). To address these persistent issues, we recommend institutionalizing procedural justice starting in the academy and reinforced as a core aspect of LASD's mission to "enhance the public's trust."[8] Additionally, the positive effects of procedural justice should be emphasized, which include increased satisfaction, legitimacy, willingness to cooperate, perceptions of disorder (Gill et al., 2014; Hough et al., 2017), and legal compliance (Walters and Bolger, 2019). In the correctional setting, potential effects include reduced recidivism (Beijersbergen, Dirkzwager, and Nieuwbeerta, 2016; Jenness and Calavita, 2018; Wright and Gifford, 2017).

Change the Mindset from "Warriors" to "Guardians" Starting in the Academy

As noted above, organizational and cultural change needs to be built into organizational processes where possible. Rahr and Rice, 2015, contend that shifting to more of a guardian mindset and recommitting to democratic ideals begins with academy training. They note that in order to ensure organizational alignment with procedural justice or guardian principles, leadership must "ensure that their organizational culture is not in conflict with these same principles" (p. 4). Rahr and Rice provide recommendations for changing the academy structure that could be useful for LASD to consider. For instance, instead of recruits being required to salute and remain silent when in the presence of academy staff, they were instead instructed to initiate a conversation with any staff member they encounter, make eye contact, and lead with

[8] It will be important to examine the work and task environments to identify potential barriers to implementing procedural justice. As Sherman, 2020, notes, time pressures (e.g., from dispatchers, from peers) could be one potential barrier.

respect. Fear, humiliation, and berating were replaced with coaching and encouragement. New training modules were focused on procedural justice, crisis intervention training, respect, and social interaction skills.

Institutionalize Procedural Justice Through Training, Performance, and Accountability

Additionally, emphasizing procedural justice in interactions with the public is a well-recognized strategy for improving interactions and perceptions of law enforcement. It also recognizes building public trust as a valued goal and outcome of law enforcement activities. A recent evaluation of the Chicago Police Department's department-wide training in procedural justice found it to be associated with a 10-percent reduction in complaints and a 6.4-percent reduction in the use of force (Wood, Tyler, and Papachristos, 2020). A critical element for successfully institutionalizing procedural justice is ensuring that officers slow themselves down in order to properly respond to the situation (Sherman, 2020). This is sometimes easier said than done, when officers frequently receive demands from dispatch, other officers, and command staff to be as efficient as possible. This is the case for some stations in LASD, as deputies often start their shifts with multiple calls for service to which they must respond. One promising practice to address this involves a supervisor review meeting with deputies to discuss positive encounters and how procedural justice was used (Owens et al., 2018). The interaction is based on three components of the LEED (listen and explain with equity and dignity) procedural justice model: (1) discussing a benign encounter, (2) focusing on officer thought processes and actions during the encounter, and (3) the supervisor modeling procedural justice components to the officer. This approach has the added benefit of creating interactions between supervisors and subordinates that are positive (i.e., nondisciplinary) while also training to reinforce procedural justice and positive behavior. This brief intervention was associated with similar levels of officer activity but lower levels of incidents ending in arrest or use of force, although there is a need for further evaluation (Owens et al., 2018).

The recent introduction of body-worn cameras within LASD provides a potential new tool for building in systems of continuous improvement. Most importantly for community relations, LASD should consider implementing a systematic approach to reviewing videos from the cameras to help deputies improve performance and to identify outstanding work.

For example, the NOPD has both policy statements and review and audit forms (Body-Worn Camera Training and Technical Assistance, undated) to evaluate officer and district performance in relation to the NOPD's procedural justice policy (NOPD, 2018). The NOPD Audit and Review Unit provides quarterly updates comparing performance across districts. LASD should consider creating a community policing and procedural justice policy that clearly explains the department's approach to community policing and procedural justice and explains how such activities will be assessed. Ideally, any of the above practices would be subject to process and outcome evaluations. An evaluation of LASD's new body-worn camera program could be informative as well.

Community Engagement

The community members with whom we spoke had a strong desire to improve or increase community interaction with LASD, particularly outside of traditional law enforcement activities. Some participants spoke favorably about the "Town Sheriff" program but noted that it is limited to one station representative.

In general, non-enforcement contacts can improve positive contacts between law enforcement and community members. Informed by intergroup contact theory, positive intergroup contact can start to break down negative perceptions of outgroup members and works bidirectionally (e.g., deputies' perceptions of community members are improved and vice versa; Peyton, Sierra-Arévalo, and Rand, 2019). LASD should consider mandating non-enforcement contacts early in field training for a specified amount of time (Stoughton, 2014). This activity can then be paired with an ongoing emphasis on continued nonenforcement contacts during patrol. The above discussion on procedural justice also applies here.

Compton Community Empowerment Program. As one example of an improved community engagement program in LASD, the Compton station issued a unit order directing deputies to "make regular attempts to initiate social contacts with citizens and document the contact in the MDC [mobile data computer] system with a clearance code of 755 (community relations)." The order instructed deputies to provide contact cards and instructed sergeants to brief and review deputy activities in this area. This is the same general idea used in a recent field experiment to initiate positive community encounters (Peyton, Sierra-Arévalo, and Rand, 2019). This unit order might be modified to give guidance about factors that promote positive intergroup contact (equal status between groups; cooperation toward a common goal; support of authorities, law, or custom; personal interactions) and procedural justice (providing voice and encouraging citizen participation, communicating dignity and respect, communicating trustworthy motives). Peyton, Sierra-Arévalo, and Rand, 2019, used instructions for officers to extend a formal greeting within the first 20 seconds of an interaction to signal that it was not a law enforcement engagement, followed by asking questions that emphasize connections (e.g., using "we" and "our community"). Officers were also instructed to anticipate complaints and to acknowledge the resident's perspective. Using a pre-post survey, this intervention improved community member attitudes toward police, perceptions of legitimacy, and willingness to cooperate up to 21 days after the brief interaction.

In a similar vein, community participants recommended that LASD overall engage in more COP and community partnerships. We note that this effort should coincide with an emphasis on problem-oriented policing as well (Goldstein, 1990; Hinkle et al., 2020; Reisig, 2010). Critical to improvement in these areas will be developing a strategic vision and strategic planning for what this should look like (e.g., vision, goals, accountability, training). Additionally, one of the potential reasons why COP fails or does not lead to profound organizational and cultural change is that measuring COP is more difficult than measuring traditional measures, and it is said that what gets measured is what gets done (Moore and Braga, 2004; Worden and McLean, 2018). Part of the difficulty in measuring COP or related types of community-facing concepts is choosing what to measure. Theoretically, it is possible to measure community engagement, community satisfaction, community trust and perceived legitimacy, fear of crime, physical and social disorder, response times, crime clearance, and a multitude of other measures that could indicate how well police are serving to the community and improving community well-being and safety. Although such factors would ideally be weighed, in practice, there are few agreed-upon high-quality community policing performance measures. Some efforts in this area suggest that performance measures should be based on collaborative efforts to solve problems identified by community members (Fielding and Innes, 2006). Such measures consist of key activities and outcomes identified as relevant to the given problem and solution (Alpert, Flynn, and Piquero, 2001). Common measures and methods for assessing community engagement, service, and trust include the following:

- calls for service, crime, and victimization
- crime clearance
- community surveys and contact surveys
- tracking community meeting attendance, events, and presentations
- documenting community policing and problem-solving projects (e.g., tracking inputs, outputs, and outcomes)
- adding fields to the Records Management System/Computer-Aided Dispatch.

Without adequate measurement, it is unlikely that community policing will be assessed as part of an individual officer's performance evaluation. Notably, performance evaluations are one of the most useful ways to set expectations and send clear signals about responsibilities for patrol officers and the performance of individuals or units (Oettmeier and Wycoff, 1999). The major purposes of collecting data relevant to community policing are that it helps administrators and managers make informed decisions, allows managers to provide clear feedback, and can assist with evaluating strategic programs. It also aids in conveying expectations and socializing patrol officers into a community policing–focused mission and assists in identifying community problems and barriers to success. However, it is critical that any performance evaluation be valid, reliable, equitable, legal, and useful. An evaluation that does not reflect job responsibilities or is perceived as an end in and of itself is not useful and can backfire (Oettmeier and Wycoff, 1999). Importantly, evaluating unit performance in community policing should include at least some measure retrieved externally from the community, beyond citizen complaints. Although there are examples of success in this regard, incorporating community policing into job performance is difficult and requires strategic planning to fit local needs.

Accountability to the Public

Some community leaders and members recommended increased accountability for LASD. At the department and station levels, participants recommended that external groups monitor department policies, spending, investigations, or other activities. Having a working relationship with external review agencies is critical for community trust and is a recommended best practice in police accountability (Walker and Archbold, 2019). Recommendations to hold individual deputies accountable included hiring independent investigators to review excessive force cases, mandating that deputies wear body cameras, and creating a way for the public to anonymously report complaints regarding deputy behavior.

Although anonymous reporting options do exist through the OIG, the OIG has noted that it will probably not be able to investigate these complaints (OIG, undated). Additionally, it is not clear from its website how LASD handles anonymous complaints. Anonymous complaints can be valuable for documenting behavior, but that is likely the main benefit (Walker and Archbold, 2019). Complaints are, however, tracked in LASD's Performance Recording and Monitoring System, suggesting that they are used to evaluate employee performance. Research on external complaints against law enforcement is limited, but at least one study found that rates of verbal discourtesy complaints and discourtesy and force complaints combined are associated with higher levels of observed use of force in encounters with civilians. This suggests that external complaints focused on deputies who are apt to resort to force or are less likely to behave respectfully and negotiate verbally can be useful for identifying potentially problematic behavior (McCluskey, Terrill, and Paoline, 2005; Harris, 2010). As noted above, discourtesy is one of the most frequent types of public complaints received by LASD. Other work on citizen

complaints suggests that agencies with internal affairs units acting in an investigative capacity with external civilian oversight are more likely to sustain complaints (Terrill and Ingram, 2016). To increase transparency, some law enforcement agencies have begun publishing complaint data in tabular format. For instance, Philadelphia publishes the location, the complaint classification, a narrative, and its investigative findings (City of Philadelphia, 2017). LASD might benefit from an analysis of their complaints process (as is being done for the Antelope Valley settlement agreement) and/or research to understand whether and how internal or external complaints relate to future behavior (e.g., serious misconduct, use of force). Additionally, LASD could consider using external investigators for public complaints, much like NYPD's Civilian Complaint Review Board, although more research is needed to determine the effects of different civilian oversight models on key outcomes (e.g., sustained complaints; Terrill and Ingram, 2016).

Past and current events that are particularly detrimental to community trust are likely to continue to factor into community perceptions of LASD (Weitzer, 2002). Importantly, recognizing the past mistakes can be useful for separating the organization from past scandals. Therefore, LASD might consider engaging in a reconciliation process.[9] The National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice identifies seven elements that must be addressed in the reconciliation process:

> 1) a recognition of past harms; 2) sustained listening to members of the public comprising important constituencies and stakeholders; 3) an explicit commitment to changing policing in specific ways and in accordance with a clear normative vision; 4) fact-finding; 5) the identification and promulgation of key experiences and narratives on both sides; 6) the specification of concrete changes in policies and practices that will move toward new policing practices and new relationships; 7) a mechanism for driving the implementation of those changes. (National Initiative for Building Community Trust and Justice, 2016, p. 1)

Recommendations for Other Internal Activities

Examine Hiring Practices

Several community members mentioned improving hiring to ensure that deputies are passionate about the work, are educated, and show evidence of cultural sensitivity. Although we do not know whether the link is causal, the link between education and improved officer performance is well established (e.g., Chapman, 2012; Hayeslip, 1989; Rydberg and Terrill, 2010). More-recent evidence suggests that simply hiring more minority candidates might not have the desired effects on certain outcomes. However, screening for conflict management skills, combined with screening for sensitivity to diverse cultures, is associated with reduced disproportionate discretionary arrests (by race) and lower use of lethal force (Nicholson-Crotty, Nicholson-Crotty, and Li, 2019). Generally, research on hiring in law enforcement is limited but growing.

Give the Community a Greater Voice and More Points of Contact

As a general recommendation, one of the simplest approaches to giving community members a voice is an online form that allows public comment on policy proposals. Although part of the

[9] It should be noted again that intentions are important, and reconciliation efforts should only be engaged in if there is full commitment to engaging in the process.

policy proposal process should include review and discussion with the COC, this should be open to the general public as well. The New York (NYPD, undated-a) and Baltimore (Baltimore Police Department, undated) police departments provide clear examples of how this can be implemented. Another hallmark of openness is publicly available contact information, such as email addresses or phone numbers for departmental leadership. For example, LAPD command staff from the rank of captain and above have a link to their department email address in their staff biography.

Conduct Community Surveys About Perceptions of LASD

Although this study was focused on understanding the variety of community perspectives about LASD, our findings do not necessarily apply broadly to the entire population of the communities it serves. To understand and quantify people's perspectives about LASD, the county and/or LASD would need to field a representative community survey. The questions could be developed directly from our findings or could cover more general police-community relations topics, such as procedural justice, trust, legitimacy, effectiveness, and safety. For instance, Loyola Marymount University's StudyLA project has surveyed county residents about their general perceptions of LASD in the recent past,[10] but its more-detailed recent survey on perceptions of LAPD could be replicated for a sample of county residents to ask about their perceptions of LASD (Guerra et al., 2020). These data should be analyzed to account for the different communities that LASD serves and for stations that operate largely independently of one another. Alternatively, LASD should consider fielding contact surveys. After a contact (e.g., call for service, traffic stop, or other nonarrest activity), deputies would provide the community member with instructions on how to complete a brief survey about the quality of service they received. Handing out these surveys should not be based on the deputies' discretion but should be done randomly or based on a formula.

Antelope Valley settlement agreement. Leveraging the work done and lessons learned from community engagement and community relations efforts in the Antelope Valley could provide useful information for improving practices in other areas of the department. The settlement agreement included provisions for establishing community advisory committees, community engagement plans, and reviews of complaints and audits of the complaint process. These efforts included conducting multiple surveys of Antelope Valley residents and at least one survey of deputies. Institutional knowledge and lessons learned from this effort could be identified and disseminated across the department.

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[10] "How much of the time do you think you can trust the following groups to do what is right?" (Guerra, Gilbert, and Vizreanu, 2020).

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Conclusion

Exclusive subgroups pose a difficult challenge for LASD and the county. At their worst, subgroups encourage violence, undermine the chain of command, and gravely harm relationships with the communities that LASD is dedicated to serve. Their secret or semisecret status makes eliminating subgroups and their pathologies extremely difficult. In many instances, subgroup activities serve as an informal socialization mechanism for people with a difficult and dangerous occupation that is under heightened scrutiny. It is not practicable to ban every group of deputies who occasionally socialize together. Making matters more complicated still, we heard several accounts of groups with innocuous beginnings that became more harmful over time. When does a group of deputies who enjoy each other's company start to become a harmful subgroup? Even if there were clear standards on the point at which a group of deputies becomes problematic, the secrecy involved in subgroup membership and their activities makes it difficult to determine whether that line has been crossed.

Still, there are important steps that LASD and the county should take. As discussed in detail in this report, the long-term solution involves mitigating the pressures and assumptions that lead deputies to create exclusive subgroups in the first place and addressing the normalizing features that sustain subgroups (e.g., rationalization, socialization). This change will likely take sustained effort over many years. However, committing to and allocating resources for implementing change in this area, as well as in broader efforts to repair harm and earn community trust, are worthwhile and central to LASD's mission.

In the shorter term, clear policy and messaging about subgroups from every level of LASD management are critical. Currently, most messaging and policy about subgroups imply that only subgroups that have engaged in problematic behavior are banned. This prohibition could be too narrow. Even a subgroup that encourages good policing can contribute to a sense of favoritism and undermine unit discipline, cohesion, and management. A clearer policy and messaging on exactly when a group that socializes regularly is prohibited would be helpful. The policy might be based on the size of the group or its activities, such as whether it imposes restrictions on membership.

LASD should also take steps to address the secrecy of subgroup membership while recognizing the organizational context (e.g., traditions, complexity, trust; Costas and Grey, 2014) in which subgroups exist. Secrecy makes it more difficult to determine the size of subgroups; their activities; and their risk of undermining LASD cohesion, discipline, and management. LASD should consider requiring deputies to disclose their membership in any work-related organization or group. Small, informal social groups would have nothing to fear from such a requirement, but the information would help management better understand the scope of subgroup activities in a particular station.

None of this will be easy. Because deputy subgroups have existed for so long, they might feel like an intractable issue. Efforts for change will likely be met with some internal resistance, and lasting change will take years. However, the potentially corrosive effect of subgroups on LASD and its relationship with the community compels action. This is a transitional moment in law enforcement in which LASD can begin building an organization for the future that embeds accountability and dedication to 21st-century policing and to the communities it serves.

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