

**Opportunity for Organizational Change:  
Restructuring the Honolulu Police Department's Corporal and Detective Rank**

Benjamin T. Moszkowicz

School of Professional and Continuing Education, University of San Diego

LEPS-560: Organizational Theory & Change

Professor James R. Davis

October 25, 2021

The next Honolulu Police Department (HPD) Chief of Police has an opportunity to improve organizational efficiency while being fiscally responsible. By appending its current structure and creating a new rank, Detective 1, the HPD can more effectively and efficiently serve and protect the residents of Honolulu. The justification for this organizational change can be best summarized by examining three topics; an examination of the historical background, followed by an analysis of the benefits and opportunities for collaboration, and a plan for implementing these changes.

### **Background and Proposal**

Since its founding in 1932, the HPD rank structure has remained essentially unchanged. Metropolitan Police Officers (MPOs) make up the base level of the sworn ranks. Metropolitan Police Corporals ("Corporals") perform similar job functions but are characterized as journeymen level officers who have "considerable latitude for independent judgment" (DHR, 2021). Promotion to Corporal is based on a written test. Both MPOs and Corporals are equally eligible for promotion to the rank of Sergeant/Detective. Sergeants and Detectives are supervised by Lieutenants. This time-honored structure has become engrained in the culture of HPD.

While seemingly the same rank, Sergeants and Detectives perform two completely different jobs. Sergeants are responsible for the supervision and management of squads of MPOs and Corporals. Meanwhile, detectives, who have no supervisory responsibilities, are responsible for investigating criminal offenses. Despite these differences, MPOs and Corporals seeking promotion to either rank take the same written test, undergo the same competitive interview process, and are ultimately assigned to the rank of Sergeant or Detective based on whichever of the two positions

is open within the department, rather than their talents or interests. As civil service employees, this juxtaposition creates a situation whereby Sergeants and Detectives can transfer interchangeably within the department once promoted.

As a result, the department struggles with organizational inefficiency. A candidate who has the knowledge, skills, and abilities to be an outstanding detective may be assigned to a supervisory position as a Sergeant in which he struggles. Similarly, a newly promoted Detective who has minimal investigative prowess but is a fantastic leader may fail to produce the results her supervisor demands.

In this regard, the ability to view the HPD through the metaphor of a machine, with interchangeable parts, as Morgan (2006) suggests, falls flat. However, by adopting the metaphor of an organism (Ibid.), able to adapt to its environment, the HPD should create a new rank, parallel to that of a patrol Corporal, called Detective 1, to be held by new investigators who won't be supervisors. The promotion to Sergeant or Detective 2 would require personnel first to have Corporal or Detective 1 rank.

### **Benefits and Areas for Collaboration**

The most apparent benefit for the department and the city taxpayers is the majority of the investigations will eventually be done by Detective 1s. This means an approximately 10% savings in wages and overtime costs. Also, the reduction in administrative overhead would mean that Lieutenants' work in investigatory elements (i.e., supervising investigators) could be done by Detective 2s.

Residents will also benefit significantly from the increased aptitude of more well-rounded supervisors. Requiring newly-promoted Sergeant/Detective 2 personnel to

have first been Corporals or Detective 1s will ensure that personnel be promoted twice to become a supervisor. This limits the possibility that officers who have held only one position in the department (potentially a desk job with little to no public interaction) could not become patrol Sergeants, and instantly be responsible for complicated police operations.

There are also opportunities to collaborate both inside and outside the department that must be seized upon for this organizational change to be successful. The next Chief must consult the State of Hawaii Organization of Police Officers (SHOPO) immediately and often through the process. While their priorities of job security and equal opportunity for incumbent employees may be predominant, ultimately, our goals of creating a more efficiently run department and safer community are identical.

While not a part of the HPD, the City Department of Human Resources (DHR) will be a crucial partner in implementing this change. The Class and Pay Unit within DHR is responsible for all position descriptions and salary ranges city-wide. Their cooperation and assistance, especially when engaging in double-loop learning (Morgan, 2006), peeling back the layers of bureaucracy to discover not only why things are the way they are, but more importantly, how to improve them. Critically, as Yapp (2016) said, "To learn something new, sometimes you have to unlearn something old."

### **Plan for Implementation**

The creation of a new Detective 1 rank will not be a quick fix. It will be essential to establish and proactively share a timeline for the transition. The initial test for MPOs

wanting to promote into the Corporal/Detective 1 positions and Corporals wanting to promote into Sergeant/Detective 2 positions should be held in February 2023. Based on the current cycle, existing promotional lists, which expire in June 2023, will not be affected. On July 1, no change will be required for current Sergeants, and current Detectives can begin using their new rank name, Detective 2. Otherwise, no changes to the current practice will be required. As Detective 2 positions vacate through attrition, positions can be reallocated as needed to Detective 1, which will incur savings.

The new Chief should meet with the mayor and explain the importance of the Detective 1 rank. If successful, immediate work and conversations can begin with the Managing Director, DHR and City Finance heads, and HPD's Human Resources and Finance Divisions. Many details will need to be hammered out to create new position descriptions, adjust budgets, and flesh out details on a plan to implement a phased roll-in of Detective 1s. From a budgetary standpoint, the new positions should be funded beginning in City Fiscal Year 2024 (starting July 1, 2023) to coincide with HPD's promotional cycle.

This change won't be easy and cannot be undertaken quickly. However, the implementation of the Detective 1 rank has the chance to improve morale, improve job performance, and save taxpayers money. If appropriately implemented, HPD's next Chief has the opportunity to build publicly collaborative partnerships while creating a more organizationally efficient department.

## References

DHR. (2021). Classification and Compensation Plan. A Listing of the City's Class Specifications and Assigned Salary Ranges. Retrieved on October 21, 2021 from <http://www11.honolulu.gov/hrjobclass/index3.htm>

Morgan, G. (2006). *Images of Organization*. Sage Publications, Inc. Thousand Oaks, California.

Yapp, R. (2016, Dec 9). Double loop learning: a case study from the front line. YouTube. Retrieved on October 21, 2021 from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JN6eIXSrRM>