

6 April 2020

Police Corruption Project Reflection
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This was a project I greatly enjoyed looking into, as I was the one who suggested the idea to my group mates. It was close to home as a Naperville native, meaning the Gliniewicz saga took place only an hour north of my childhood home. My family still remembers the day it hit the news: beloved cop believed to have been gunned down in the line of duty committed suicide amid an embezzlement scandal. He could join the long list of corrupt Illinois government officials who stole money from the programs they oversaw and abused their positions of power. The state sadly has an extensive history with crooked governors and shady police business, maintaining a solid distrust in the authorities by the public. So of course, when this project assignment was given, I saw the chance to explore the corruption that has been present in my life for as long as I can remember.

It is not just the police an hour north of me that can be corrupt. All positions of authority run the risk of abuse of power, some situations more frightening than others. This is exemplified in the numerous scandals that took place during my junior high and high school years. At Heritage Grove Middle School, there was a bus driver whom all the kids loved. His name was Tony, but he went by Tony the Tiger after the cereal mascot. He would often bring treats for the kids on his bus, bus 3, if they behaved. One might not consider a bus driver a position of power; however, they are charged with bringing young impressionable kids safely home from school. I'd argue that is an immense amount of authority and power that we often overlook.

One day Tony the Tiger was no longer driving bus 3 and no one seemed to know why. Years later it came out that he was arrested and charged for possession of child pornography and was sent to prison for a very long time. This coming from the man whose job was to drive young kids around every school day. Corruption and misuse of power can take shape in all forms, so researching the causes and effects of such abuse of authority is vital to every member of society.

Policemen, politicians, coaches, teachers, and so on are all at risk of corrupt action. I would like to argue that the reasoning and thought processes we found for police corruption apply to any position of authority. Was the individual over worked and under compensated--at least in their eyes? Were they surrounded by other corrupt practices that led them to think it was not that big of a deal? Many factors contribute to corrupt actions, and it is naïve to say others in traditionally non-corrupt positions cannot succumb to the temptation of abusing ones authority.

Additionally, most corruption also has a lasting effect on the community in which it takes place. Just as Gliniewicz's betrayal led the public to distrust and question the local police force, other forms of abuse of power also lead to a community wide distrust in authority. Every situation leads to the same question: If this person who we trusted and loved could be bad, how can we trust other persons of authority?

Perhaps, though, police corruption might be one of the scariest forms of abuse of power, as their initial power granted is so great. They have access to weapons, confiscated good, and funds that most in the public never do. So, in researching this topic, we were able to become more aware of the pressures put on policemen and those in authority, as well as how a community might prevent such corruption from taking place.

I greatly enjoyed this assignment and truly wish our class had not been cut short due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I learned a great deal from this research project and am glad to add the research skills I gained to my repertoire.