

**‘Don’t Let Them Kill You on Some Dirty Roadway’:  
Survival, Aggression, and the Culture of Modern American Policing**

**Abstract**

Police subculture is imbued throughout the policing industry and is used as a means for police officers to understand how to cope with the stresses associated with police work. Police officers are socialized to believe that their lives are constantly threatened by dangerous ‘others’. As a result, the police subculture is peppered with survivability rhetoric that reminds police officers of the possibility of their own mortality. It is through this survivability rhetoric that police officers are mobilized through fear and believe they are entitled to violence in the name of guardianship. Furthermore, it is through this socialization process that officers come to believe that they are responsible for championing the fight for ‘good’ against ‘evil’. The dichotomous views of ‘good’ against ‘evil’ and ‘us’ versus ‘them’ facilitate a master status and the ultimate ‘merit badge’ for those who kill in the line of duty. Implications for public policy are then addressed.

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