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**Part-time, Job Sharing, Flextime:
The Changing Face of Police Agencies**

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**An Administrative Research Paper
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ABSTRACT

In the changing face of law enforcement in the 21st century, should police agencies explore part-time, flextime, tele-commuting or job-sharing programs to solve recruiting and retention problems? Can the law-enforcement community benefit from practices adopted by the private sector in relation to part-time, flextime, tele-commuting, or job-sharing? The methodology used for this research included: an examination of journal articles, published reports and research papers that focus on part-time officers, surveys of police agencies throughout the United States and Europe, and interviews conducted with part-time officers. In researching part-time, job sharing and flexible work schedules in order to determine whether or not they are viable options for the law-enforcement community, it was determined that they are viable options. The research showed that smaller to midsize departments have introduced the part-time officer program at a much higher rate than their larger counterparts and with much success. In the area of job sharing in the law-enforcement community, the research showed that this concept is not widely practiced because of coordination with other part-time workers. The federal law enforcement community has adopted telecommuting for employees. They have also discovered that the telework program enhanced productivity at little or no cost. After reviewing the literature and findings, the research concluded that part-time officers, job-sharing, and flexible work schedules are beneficial to police agencies throughout the police community. These programs will provide an avenue for retention, a recruiting tool, and the benefits of balancing home life and career.

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INTRODUCTION

In the changing face of law enforcement in the 21st century, should police agencies explore part-time, flextime, or job-sharing programs to solve recruiting and retention problems? This research will examine the benefits of introducing part-time officers into the police culture. Are part-time officers, job-sharing, or flextime viable options for police agencies? Police departments are facing problem with recruitment and retention similar to those experienced by the private sector and corporate America. Can the law-enforcement community benefit from practices adopted by the private sector? Will these practices have the same impact in the law-enforcement community? Are they feasible options to the changes taking place in police work?

The purpose of this research is to examine whether part-time officers, job sharing, and flextime are beneficial solutions to the law-enforcement community. Police departments have long been a separate entity from the rest of working- class society. Police agencies usually develop policies and procedures for handling issues (for example, recruiting and retention) by looking at other law-enforcement agencies for answers. They seldom think of intersociety as providing answers to plaguing questions. Private sector practices will be examined as they relate to part-time, job-sharing and flextime options. The private sector saw the make up of the work force changing and made adjustments to combat their attrition rates. They were aware of recruiting and the complexity of maintaining or becoming an employer of choice. The private sector has attempted to strike a balance between the professional and personal lives of their employees. This research will show that, in private sector America, recognition and

aggressive action to adopt family-friendly policies lured potential employees to their companies and resulted in longer careers for them.

The methodology will include an examination of journal articles, published reports, and research papers that focus on part-time officers; surveys of police agencies throughout the United States and Europe; and interviews conducted with part-time officers. Other avenues of inquiry will include a look at reviews and business publications. In addition human resource departments at particular private companies will be contacted to gauge the success of their programs.

This research will conclude that part-time, job-sharing, and flextime are viable options that police agencies can use to combat recruiting and retention issues facing women, single parents, officers seeking higher education, and officers with overwhelming family obligations. This research will show that police agencies can adopt private-sector practices to deal with 21st-century problems in the work place.

This information will be beneficial to the entire law-enforcement community. It will introduce other options for dealing with issues concerning family, retention, expertise of officers, and continuing education, all of which arise due to the changing face of police agencies.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In examining and researching police departments throughout the United States, it became apparent that little information existed on part-time officers, job sharing, or flexible work schedules. U.S. police departments are paramilitary organizations that rarely stray from the norms of policing. Because the police society is so regimented, it may lose out on the benefits that part-time officers, job-sharing, and flexible work

schedules could bring. In the article titled “Marketing Strategies for Attracting and Retaining GENERATION X Police Officers,” states that police agencies should consider nontraditional work arrangements such as part-time employment or job-sharing plans (Charrier, 2000). It further illustrates challenges that police agencies face. There is a growing need for police departments to consider their employees and potential employees who are looking for flexibility with work schedules. According to the article, the reasons why officers are drawn to part-time opportunities are they have time off to care for minor children, elderly parents, or an ill spouse. If officers must choose between raising small children and work, they may leave the department altogether. If officers are afforded the opportunity to work part-time, this may increase retention.

Some departments in the United States have adopted part-time officer programs. In “The Arlington Police Department’s Part-time Police Officer Program: Maintaining Diversity, Retaining Valuable Employees,” an article written by Dr. Theron Bowman of the Arlington Police Department, says that offering some police officers the opportunity to work as part-time employees has proven to be very beneficial to the department as well as to the officers who would have otherwise resigned. Dr. Bowman goes on to say that his decision to begin the part-time program was part of a short-term solution to address a temporary patrol-staffing shortage. The benefits were quickly recognized and the program had become a “win-win” situation for the employee and the department (Bowman, 2003). The program is seen as beneficial for new mothers, who want to dedicate more time to their families, and recent retirees. Dr. Bowman concludes that the part-time officer program is a viable option that is advantageous to supervisors in

retaining highly-qualified officers and oftentimes assists in maintaining diversity at the Arlington Police Department.

The face of law enforcement has changed over the last twenty years. According to National Center for Women and Policing, female officers make up 13 percent of the law-enforcement community, which is grossly under representative in today's society. The need to increase and maintain diversity is a challenge for many administrators. The *Police Journal* reports that in recent years a substantial increase of female police officers has also been seen in European nations. The retention rates of female officers are less than their male counterparts.

In the article "Maternity rights for policewomen within the EC" (European community), it acknowledges the loss of women officers as a monetary and an experience loss (Dene, 1992). Therefore, the European community has introduced part-time work, career breaks, and job-sharing to enable women to continue their careers. The article points out part-time employment options being common place in other career fields such as nursing and teaching.

European countries have also introduced pilot programs to study and understand the female officer's decision to stay or resign. In these programs, women return to full-time status without loss of salary or seniority. Prior to the pilot programs, police officers were required to rejoin as new applicants and attend a full-length police academy if departure from their jobs lasted longer than 12 months.

Women throughout the world must face glaring similarities in the work force. The problem of recruiting and retention of women should be addressed by law-enforcement

administrators before the law-enforcement community loses the gains made by introducing more women to policing.

There has been compelling research in the United Kingdom by the Police Research Group. The research centered on part-time work, job sharing and flexible working practices in law enforcement. In the early 1990s, an experiment was conducted with six police forces in the United Kingdom. By the end of one year of the introduction of the pilot, there were more than 220 officers participating in the part-time program. The majority of the program composed of female officers looking to combine their careers with raising families. The males, on the other hand, utilized the part-time program to pursue higher education or in anticipation of retirement (Stone, Kemp, and Weldon, 1994). The job-sharing aspect of the pilot program for the United Kingdom was not popular and no officers participated in the program.

In surveys of the part-time participants, 94 percent of them decided to work part-time to fit it in with raising a family. Eighty-six percent of the participants wanted to keep in touch with work and return to work full-time in the future.

The research of the effects of part-time work indicated a high level of satisfaction. However, there were some areas in which part-time employees expressed difficulties with the program. Officers indicated training requirements were a cause for concern. The reasons stated were the availability of training classes and part-timers possibly having difficulty attending full-time training. Part-time officers believed a preference for open training classes would be given to full-time employees. Two factors influenced this belief the limited number of classes available and the police agency would get a better return on its investment by having full-time officers attend training courses. Other

factors noted by part-time officers included difficulties in finishing paperwork, completing assignments, conducting follow-ups, and general/intelligence information affecting their shifts (Stone, et al., 1994).

Although not an area of contention, 18 percent of part-time officers were not given their first choice of assignment. An overwhelming number of the participants in the program, 75 percent, were awarded their first choice of assignment. Thirty-four percent of participants agreed there were some positions in the police department not suitable for part-time employees. The units included specialized positions such as dog section, mounted branch, firearms section, regional crime squads, surveillance, CID, major investigation teams, and child/family protection units.

A follow-up study to the original pilot program of part-time officers was conducted in early 2000. This follow-up focused on exploring flexible working practices in the police department because of the concern that female officers were still more likely to resign than the males despite the introduction of the part-time work program (Tuffin and Baladi, 2001). The study defines flexible working practices as including annual hours, flextime, term-time working, and tele-commuting as well as job share and part-time work.

Only slight increases in officers choosing to take advantage of the part-time program have been seen in the program since its inception. Women still make up 97 percent but male officers are increasing at a faster rate. The retention of women has been seen by some midlevel administrators as an equal opportunity measure rather than as a way of improving and maintaining efficiency and effectiveness.

Certain misconceptions about the program were based on hearsay especially that the idea the part-time program created unfair advantages to part-time employees. Some midlevel managers believed many police officer positions were not suitable for part-time work and thus did not fully embrace the concept despite the obvious benefits seen in maintaining a highly technical, qualified, and diverse work force. Both studies illustrate the success of the part-time officer program. With full implementation and better understanding of the program, both male and female officers will benefit as well as the department, making it a win-win situation for all.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to examine the benefits of introducing part-time officers into the police culture. The question to be answered and evaluated is as follows: Are part-time officers, job sharing, or flextime viable options for police agencies? Can police departments benefit from the examples used in the private sector to address recruiting and retention issues? Will these practices have the same impact in the law-enforcement community? Are they feasible options to the changes taking place in police work?

The review of literature and findings will conclude that part-time officers, job sharing, and flexible work schedules are beneficial to police agencies throughout the world. The introduction and full implementation of these programs will provide an avenue for retention and a recruiting tool for officers. The research will show that female as well as male officers will benefit from balancing home their lives and careers. The beneficiaries of said programs will be the police departments and the officers. The benefits will reciprocate to society as a whole.

In order to prove or disprove the hypothesis, questionnaires, interviews, and global inquiries will be made. Forty-three agencies will be surveyed nationwide. The questions posed to survey participants will include the following: How many officers were employed by their department? Do they have part-time officers, job sharing, or some type of paid reservists? How many officers participated in the program? How many males and females? The questionnaire also asked for the top reasons for officers participating in the program.

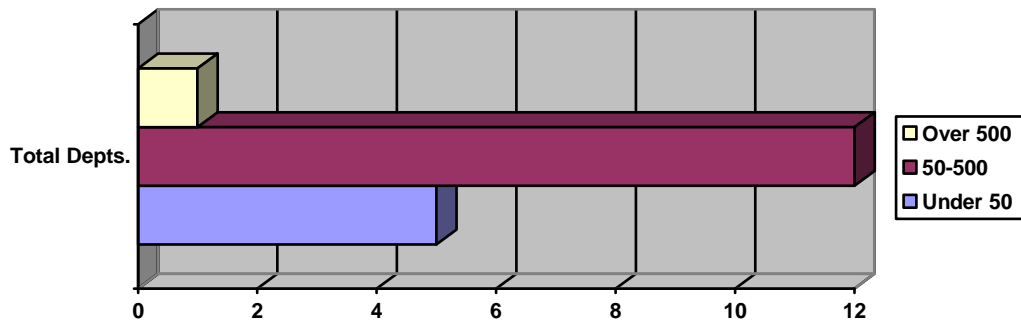
The departments to be surveyed throughout the United States include: municipal agencies, university police departments, independent school district departments, state departments, federal departments, and large and small metropolitan area departments. States represented in the sample will be: Texas, Washington, Kansas, Missouri, Mississippi, New York, Minnesota, and Wisconsin. The response rate of questionnaires was more than ninety percent. Interviews will be conducted with several part-time officers and officers who have now returned to full-time status. The information gathered from these various sources and global research will be compiled to determine whether part-time, job sharing, and flexible work schedules are viable options for the law-enforcement community.

FINDINGS

In researching part-time, job sharing, and flexible work schedules as to whether or not they are viable options for the law-enforcement community, it was determined that they are viable options. To break down the three categories, part-time employee surveys to 68 law-enforcement agencies throughout the United States. These surveys inquired about the size of the agency, if they had part-time officers, how many part-time

officers, if part-time officers received benefits, etc. (see attached copy of survey). Of the total surveys given to law-enforcement agencies, 57 percent of the agencies responded. Forty-nine departments were represented, with the number of sworn personnel in agencies ranging from 22 officers to more than 6000 officers. Of the 57 percent of agencies who responded, 41 percent of them have part-time officers or paid reserve officers within their agencies. The majority of agencies who responded have forces with less than 500 sworn officers.

Number of Agencies and Sworn Personnel



The research showed that smaller to midsize departments have introduced the part-time officer program at a much higher rate than their larger counterparts. No agency surveyed provided employer benefits to part-time officers. The actual number of part-time officers in agencies varied from one officer to as many as 30 officers. Males make up a higher percentage of part-time officers and the reasons for working part-time vary. The top three reasons named in the surveys are listed as follows:

1. Retirees wanting to keep their commissions
2. Mothers with infants or young children at home
3. Community spirit or wanting to stay connected to law enforcement

Also, some respondents indicated that pursuing higher education and working other non police-related, full-time jobs. These part-time officers worked anywhere from a few hours per week up to 38 hours per week.

The private sector has adopted part-time programs and, in most cases, reported success. Hewlett-Packard, Johnson & Johnson, Eli Lilly & Co., MBNA American Bank N.A., and Merck & Co., Inc., are considered some of the best companies that utilize family-friendly policies, which include part-time, job-sharing, flextime, telecommuting, on-site childcare, etc., as alternatives for their employees.

In the area of job sharing in the law-enforcement community, research showed that this concept is not widely practiced. The only law-enforcement agencies participating in job sharing were agencies in the United Kingdom. During their introduction and full-implementation of flexible working practices, departments in the United Kingdom report only a small percentage of officers participating strictly in job-sharing.

Several private-sector employers have embraced the concept of job sharing, which is defined as two part-time employees agreeing to share one full-time position. In the article "Understand How Job Sharing, Flex Time and Telecommuting Work", the author states that not all companies are attuned to this notion, but increasingly the corporate world is becoming a bit more open to alternative work arrangements (Hannon

2004). The article “Job-shares can mean two brains for the price of one” states that several companies were able to offer employees a balance between their professional and personal lives through promoting job sharing among senior managers (Management Today, 1998). Through job sharing programs, companies like The Boots Company, Marks & Spencer; J Sainsbury; NatWest and Barking and Havering were able to hold on to their most experienced and capable staff who would have otherwise been lost to the workplace. California-based Hewlett-Packard has approximately 500 employees who participate in job sharing.

In relation to flextime and telecommuting, corporate America has incorporated these practices into their policies. Flextime is a schedule that permits employees to choose their starting and quitting times within limits set by management. Telecommuting is allowing regular full-time employees to work at home all or part of the time; these employees are often linked to the office electronically.

In the article “Parents praise ‘alternative’ hours,” Cowans (1996) asserts that “reduced work schedule opportunities also are prevalent among employers on the list; approximately a dozen of the employers allow employees to work a reduced schedule with full benefits for a specific period while guaranteeing a full-time job in the future.” The list mentioned in Cowans, article is referring to *Working Mother* magazine's list for the “100 Best Companies for Working Mothers.” One of the companies mentioned in the article is Hewlett-Packard; of its 60,736 employees, 52,000 take advantage of flextime, which allows them to begin work and end work up to two hours earlier or later than standard business hours.

Telecommuting is a widely utilized program in the private sector (Hannon, 2004) *U.S. News & World Report* Assistant Managing Editor, Ann McGrath, worked three days a week at the office and two days from home. She proved to all the powers-that-be that she was working and producing from home. The federal law enforcement community has adopted telecommuting for employees. The practice started in 2001 and was broadened in 2005. The initial reason cited for the federal government telework program was largely a response to issues of traffic congestion, resulting in environmental pollution in urban areas. The reasons cited for broadening the program are Congress' attempts to decentralize the work force in order maximize continuity, preserve productivity, and save lives during a critical event such as a natural or manmade disaster. Federal agencies also discovered that the telework program enhanced productivity at little or no cost to the employer. The program has written guidelines and put oversight in place to monitor the program. (See attached copy of employee request to telework and oversight.)

CONCLUSIONS

The evolution taking place in police departments worldwide is leading agencies to look at private-sector practices to recruit and retain their rank and file. The old concept of a regular full-time employee has changed in this decade and the police agencies that began to embrace and adopt flexible policies will be seen as progressive. They will capture the attention of potential police recruits who are looking for more than just a stable career with a paycheck but for a family-friendly, employee-oriented agency.

The researched issue addressed the changing face of law-enforcement in the 21st century. It asked the question. Should agencies explore part-time, flextime, or job-

sharing programs to solve recruiting and retention problems? Are part-time officers, job-sharing, or flextime viable options for police agencies? With police departments facing similar problems experienced by private-sector and corporate America, can police departments benefit from practices adopted by the private sector? Will these practices have the same impact in the law-enforcement community? Are they feasible options to the changes taking place in the police work force?

After reviewing the literature and findings, the proposed answer to the research question was thought to conclude that part-time officers, job-sharing, and flexible work schedules are beneficial to police agencies throughout the police community. Further, the introduction of said programs would provide an avenue for retention, a recruiting tool, and the benefits of balancing home life and career. Additionally, the beneficiaries of these programs would be the police departments, the officers, and society as a whole.

A limited amount of data was available on this topic in the law-enforcement realm. It was necessary to look at police agencies in other countries to provide a backdrop for these types of programs. An enormous amount of data was available from the private sector and corporate America. When all of the research was compared and examined for the practicality of adopting those programs that have worked well in corporate and private-sector America, it became apparent that the police departments could not be as flexible. Police departments have a 24 hour, seven-day-a-week customer base, so it is not practical for certain units to adopt these types of programs. Doing so would decrease the availability of officers to respond to service calls. The

research showed that certain programs, such as job-sharing, flextime, and (to a degree) telecommuting, could not transcend to police departments.

Job-sharing was not viewed as a feasible option according to the research because officers found it difficult or almost impossible to coordinate schedules with another part-time officer. The reason most often cited was that two officers with childcare issues needed to work the same schedule; therefore they could not share the full-time job. Also complicating the job-sharing program was part-time officers who had retired and did not want their schedules to be dependent on another person. Officers wanted freedom and flexibility to design their schedules based on the outside influences that lead them to part-time positions to begin with.

Flextime has obvious advantages for police officers. This program could be implemented in specialized units but not for patrol officers who are responsible for dispatched calls for service. Flextime would need specific guidelines set up by management as well as oversight as well to make sure it would not be abused.

According to the research, telecommuting would have associated costs for employers. Specific guidelines would be needed about the types of computers to use, the security of sensitive information, Internet access speeds, office equipment, etc. Then the question would be who would pay for the requirements imposed by management. Furthermore, all police officers could not participate in the program due to the nature of certain assignments. The telecommuting program could only be made available to officers in non patrol positions.

The research concluded that part-time officer programs are adoptable and practical. They address areas such as retaining highly qualified officers, retaining

female officers, and saving money related to benefits. Police departments throughout the country are beginning to see the benefits of hiring part-time officers. One department stated that the hiring of part-time officers makes operational and financial sense and it also brings the police departments in line with the best practices adopted by other private and corporate employers. In speaking with part-time officers they believe they have the best of both worlds. Their respective departments have allowed them to focus on others areas of their lives while continuing to serve and contribute to the police departments in which they work. It is seen as a continuation of their careers, not the end of them. Police departments that provide alternatives to employees are being seen as family oriented and progressive.

The law-enforcement community as a whole will benefit from adopting part-time officer programs. Police agencies can hire part-time officers to help supplement units with vacancies until the organization is able to hire enough officers to fill the open positions. The part-time program can be helpful to officers with newborns, particularly female officers who want to spend more time at home. Officers will not be forced to choose between family and career. With the increased competition to recruit females, retain a competent workforce, and increase productivity, this program will have a positive impact. The partnership between the employees, supervisors, and management will be the key to success.

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