

**The Bill Blackwood  
Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas**

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**Targeted Recruiting of Minorities and Female Applicants  
for the Position of Law Enforcement Officer**

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**A Leadership White Paper  
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Law enforcement is an ever changing profession. Not only have the tactics changed, the “face” of law enforcement has changed. The expectations of the public in which law enforcement serves has changed as well. The public expects their law enforcement officers to represent them in the best way possible. Representation can come in the form of having the same goals, ideals, and even the actual appearance of the police officer.

Police officers of the past were historically white and male. Many minorities and females have never contemplated a career in law enforcement. In an effort to better represent society today, targeted recruiting efforts must be made in order to hire qualified applicants of varying races and genders. This is not to say that only minorities should be hired at the expense of better qualified applicants. This would be an unfair practice.

Research was conducted using journals and internet sites. It was concluded that targeted recruiting works in increasing the number of minority and female applicants. This is important to the future of law enforcement to ensure all citizens are included and all are represented. It is also important for a greater buy-in from the citizens in which law enforcement serves.

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## INTRODUCTION

In April of 1993, Stephen Lawrence, a black teenager, was murdered in England. The citizens in the area in which he lived believed the investigation following his hate crime murder was grossly mishandled due to racist fundamental beliefs of the police department. The Steven Lawrence Inquiry was put together to access the murder investigation and to identify any institutionalized racism (Moore, 2004, p. 15). Institutional racism is such that it is not individualized to a specific person, but is present throughout an organization (Murji, 2007, p. 843).

The MacPherson Report was published subsequent to the Steven Lawrence Inquiry. Sir William MacPherson's report made 70 recommendations to make the police force more effective when dealing with race issues (Buchanan, 2006, p. 173). Officers were assigned within neighborhoods and dedicated hate crime units. A change in the police department's training curriculum was mandatory Community Race Relations (CRR) Training (Buchanan, 2006, p. 174). The training was conducted to prepare police officers extend a greater degree of sensitivity to other cultures. Many improvements were made in regards to race relations in England since the publication of the MacPherson report; however, England's problem with racism did not stop at this one incident and it is not a geographically isolated occurrence.

The United States also has a long history of racism and discrimination. The United States utilized slave labor from the time of the first American colonies in the early 1600's to the abolition of slavery by the 13<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment in 1865 (Barlow & Barlow, 2000, p. 275). Although slavery was officially banned in 1865, former slaves were "released into an extremely hostile environment, and they met resistance to their

every attempt to adjust, assimilate, or simply survive” (Barlow & Barlow, 2000, p. 275). Ever since their release from slavery, blacks have been trying to assimilate into a workforce that openly did not want to accept them.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 is a clear cut guideline governing employment rules. This was enacted due to the employment resistance that those of a minority status were facing as they attempted to gain employment. Another way to assist minorities gain employment is Affirmative Action, which was implemented in the public sector in 1972. The purpose of Affirmative Action is to ensure that persons are not excluded from the hiring process of an organization based upon their gender or race. It is also to help ensure that all employees are able to advance and be able to received education and training (“About Affirmative Action,” 2011, paragraph 8).

Law enforcement, just as other employment entities in the United States, has had a history seeped in racism and discrimination. The 1967 President’s Commission and the 1968 Kerner Commission highlighted the need for a more diversified police force (Doerner, 1995, p. 197). Law enforcement had to undergo a massive change in order to represent the community in which it served in order to protect the rights of all (Sklansky, 2006, p. 1228). In order for law enforcement agencies to hire more minorities and females, it must engage and practice targeted recruiting techniques in order to hire more officers from these underrepresented groups.

The last year that statistics were captured by the United States Department of Justice was 2007. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, local police departments hired a total of 463,000 officers. Of this total number, 1 in 4 police officers is from a minority group. That is, approximately 117,113 officers, or 25.3%. The

breakdown of that number is: black officers 55,267 (11.9%), Hispanic officers 47,678 (10.3%), and Native American/Asian/Pacific Islander 12,564 (2.7%). This does not account for 1,604 or .4% of officers due to them claiming more than one race/ethnicity or margin of error. Also out of this total number of police officers, one in eight officers are female. That is approximately 55,305, or 11.9%. (United States Bureau of Justice, 2007).

## **POSITION**

The obvious problem that arises from this need for law enforcement to be more representative is how to employ more minority and female law enforcement officers. Law enforcement agencies should engage in and practice targeted recruiting techniques in order to hire more minority and female police officers. Competition for police positions is very difficult, so agencies must engage in techniques that will attract non-traditional candidates (Martinez, 2006, p. 14). Making matters worse is as baby-boomers are retiring, the pool in which to hire from is becoming more and more scarce (Slahor, 2007, p. 55).

A group that is underrepresented in law enforcement is females. Female officers started to enter law enforcement in the 1970's. They have made great strides to assimilate but still fall very short in representation (Sklansky, 2006, p. 1219). Female officers add a unique facet to law enforcement. Historically, female officers do not have the physical strength of their male counterparts. For this reason, they have come to rely on verbal problem solving techniques rather than brute force. Because women rarely resort to force, consequently, their use of force complaints are far less frequent than men (Foster, 2006, p. 97). A male officer is 8.5 times more likely than a female officer

to have a use of force complaint filed against him. Also, when a payout is made, the average male payout is 2.5% to 5.5 % higher than the payout of their female counterparts claims.

In 1991, after the Rodney King beating in Los Angeles, the Christopher Commission had several conclusions. One of these conclusions was that female officers could deal with potentially violent situations more peacefully than male officers. Over time, female officers gain tactical skills, build strength, and assimilate into the male culture of law enforcement; however, they never lose their ability to reason and communicate (Foster, 2006, p. 97). Their ability to communicate and to prevent violence rather than join in it has become one of their most valuable tools.

Another conclusion of the Christopher Commission was that police forces should be representative of the community. It encouraged law enforcement executives to make every effort to hire minorities and women. It also encouraged law enforcement agencies to promote minorities and women through the ranks (Foster, 2006, p. 98). The reasoning for this is said to be to aid in communication, decrease tension, and foster community trust. The community is more apt to trust a police force that looks like them. That means, if they can see officers that are black, Hispanic, or female, they trust the entire department more so as a whole, than a police force that is solely made up of white male officers (Sklansky, 2006, p. 1228).

Since the beginning of formalized law enforcement, Sir Robert Peel recognized the need for a police force that represented the community in which it served. He did not wish to have the “gentlemen” of the day on the police force, rather the working class (Hawley, 1998, p. 35). These men were not minorities, but they were very different than

the loosely formed police forces of the past. African American males were first readily hired in the 1960's. Racial tensions were at an all-time high, and the belief was that having this minority group represented on the force could help to legitimize the police force and help deal with the civil unrest of the day (Barlow & Barlow, 2000, p. 275).

The community itself usually gives greater credibility to a diverse police force. The department that hires more black officers has a community buy-in from predominately black neighborhoods. There is research that indicates that black officers gain higher cooperation from black citizens; much more so than their white counterparts. Black officers are believed to come from similar backgrounds, and to have shared some of the same social circumstances as their black citizenry and therefore the officers can empathize with their citizenry at a higher and more meaningful level (Weitzer, 2000, p. 320).

## **COUNTER POSITION**

There are researchers that argue that targeted recruiting does not work. That is to say that even with the best efforts, targeted recruiting does not result in larger numbers of minorities and women police officers (Ho, 2005, p. 471). In Ho's study, predominately white neighborhoods in North Carolina were used to target minority groups. The assumption was that recruiting black applicants in white neighborhoods would result in a higher black applicant pool. Ho contends that although minority groups may be recruited for testing, they are eliminated from the hiring process. Preliminary background checks, oral review boards, other testing instruments reduce the number of minorities that are employed, thus, keeping institutionalized racism firmly in place.

The major concern with this study is that it cannot be generalized to the entire country. The fact is that targeted recruiting does result in more applicants and ultimately more minority officers. Statistics speak to this fact. Minority numbers have steadily risen over the last 30 years. In 1993, black officers accounted for 11.9% in 2007; 11.3% in 1990, 10.5%; and 1987, 9.3%. Hispanic officers accounted for 10.3% in 2007, 6.2% in 1993, 5.2% in 1990, and 4.5% in 1987. Female officers accounted for 11.9% in 2007; 8.8% in 1993; 8.1% in 1990, and 7.6% in 1987 (United States Bureau of Justice, 2007). More than one contributing factor has caused these numbers to increase, but targeted recruiting is a major reason for this upward shift in percentages.

According to Weitzer (2000), the general public does not differentiate between officers of varying races. Weitzer explained the “being blue” phenomenon. In other words, officers no longer belong to a particular race, they are police officers and therefore are “blue”. The color blue refers to the color of the police officers uniform. Weitzer (2000) stated that earlier studies indicated that officers of a non-white race, in essence, gave up their race or gender. Black officers were no longer black. Hispanic officers were no longer Hispanic. In some cases, black citizens have reported having been treated more harshly by black officers than white ones. Citizens described black officers as having to “prove” themselves to the citizenry and to the department in general and thus act more aggressively to prove that they are not showing any favoritism towards their own race.

In the 1970's, females were the most marginalized of this minority group. If they were too feminine, then they were not effective police officers. If they were effective police officers, then they were not feminine and, therefore, less of a woman. There was

essentially no winning as a female officer. Striking a balance between being a police officer and being a woman was nearly impossible (Weitzer, 2000, p. 321).

By and large, police officers do not show favoritism in the community toward their own race or gender. They even are more accepting of other races working beside them (Sklansky, 2006, p. 1224). The reasoning for this is said to be on-one-on contacts with minority and female officers. As relationships are formed, race becomes less of an issue. This is the same in the community as it is inside the department. If an officer is assigned the same beat or district, that officer creates relationships in that community. The officer interacts with residents, business owners, and visitors to form bonds that race does not have an impact on.

Haarr (1997) described a department today that is less “blue” and more segmented. However, segmented is not necessarily a negative trait. Differences are not always a negative attribute. Differences open up an organization to new ideas, new perspectives, and new ways of accomplishing tasks. Having the same type person problem solve in the same manner can lead to the same outcome.

An argument against targeted recruiting is that positions that would have otherwise gone to qualified white males are being forced to minorities. In 1975, minorities had to be hired by court order. Samuel Williams, who served as president of the Los Angeles Board of Police Commissioners in 1975 warned that, “the entrance of minorities into a department under a judge-fashioned statistical umbrella can only lead to an organization...torn by faction and laced with angry mutterings,” an organization “deprived of that crucial cooperation among brother officers so critically essential to effective service” (Williams, 1975, p. 72). Forcing organizations to hire officers of a

certain race had hard beginnings. Taking hiring decisions out of the hands of the police department and forcing someone to hire from a certain racial or gender group only serves to bring about disdain and contempt from the department. Even if that person is qualified for the position, the belief is that they would not have been hired except by the court order. This brings about a rift in the department between the current officers and those hired under court order (Sklansky, 2006, p. 1232).

While having its roots in court ordered beginnings, hiring quotas are a thing of the past. Now, the State of Texas has a mandated initial licensing procedure regulated by the Texas Commission on Law Enforcement (TCOLE). This process is the same for all applicants. There is no difference for race or gender. An individual agency can make the process more stringent, but not more lenient. The components that most departments choose to follow are: validated written examination, physical fitness examination, comprehensive background investigation, oral review board (panel interview), medical evaluation, polygraph examination, and psychological testing (TCOLE, n.d.).

The written examination varies from department to department if they even have one, but must be validated in order to be administered. The state of Texas requires that a candidate be a high school graduate, or to have passed a general educational development (GED) test indicating high school graduation level, or they must have 12 semester hours of credit from an accredited college or university (Texas Administrative Code, n.d.).

Physical agility testing is not a requirement of the hiring process. If a department has some sort of physical testing, then it cannot be designed in such a way as to

exclude certain people. Lonsway (2003) addresses the issue of inconsistent physical agility testing. This study mainly focuses on the adverse action that physical testing has on otherwise qualified applicants. In 1956, 85% of departments surveyed had a height requirement of at least 5 foot 8 inches (Gaines, Falkenberg, & Gambino, 1993). These standards kept a large amount of female applicants from being eligible for positions as police officers. Height and weight requirements were later ruled as discriminatory under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 ("About Affirmative Action," 2011). The Act stated that in regards to employment, persons cannot not excluded from the hiring process of an organization based upon their gender or race ("About Affirmative Action," 2011, paragraph 8).

TCOLE initial licensing standards outline that a license can only be "granted to a candidate who has been subjected to a background investigation and has been interviewed prior to appointment by representatives of the appointing authority" (Texas Administrative Code, n.d.). That is, the hiring agency must ensure that the candidate is not disqualified due to possessing a criminal history. Common criminal history disqualifiers include: a person cannot have been convicted of a Class B misdemeanor within the last ten years, has never been convicted of an offense involving family violence, cannot be prohibited by state or federal law from operating a motor vehicle, and is not prohibited by state or federal law from possessing a firearms or ammunition (Texas Administrative Code, n.d.).

Agencies can also conduct oral interview boards as a part of the hiring process. An oral interview board consists of current employees asking scenario type questions to the applicant to get a feel for how the applicant would perform on the street. The

medical evaluation is a mandated portion of the hiring process. All law enforcement candidates in Texas must have had a medical exam and found to be within appropriate health parameters and also pass a drug screen (Texas Administrative Code, n.d. ). Psychological testing is also mandated by TCOLE. TCOLE will not issue a peace officer's license prior to the candidate passing an appropriate psychological exam by a psychologist who is familiar with the job duties of a police officer (Texas Administrative Code, n.d.).

## **RECOMENDATION**

For the state of Texas, the initial licensing procedures are very similar, and there are no longer court ordered hiring requirements in place. The person who is best suited for the position should be hired, but the approach now is to cast a wider net. If more people are afforded the opportunity to test for a position, then the chances of a member of a minority group being hired is greater. The purpose of targeted recruiting is not to hire members of a minority group just for the sake of hiring from a minority group. The employment decision should not be based solely on the basis of race, ethnicity, or gender. That is just as discriminatory as not hiring someone based upon that same criterion.

In order for police departments to be more diversified, represent the community in which they serve, gain more community trust and credibility, lessen their use of force liability, and be more inclusive of differing races, ethnicities, and genders, they must, "recruit more, many more, policemen from minority groups: because every section of the community has a right to expect that its aspirations and problems, its hopes and fears, are fully reflected in the police" (Katzenbach, 1967, p. 142).

The face of law enforcement is different than it was in its infancy. Law enforcement will continue to change as long as society changes. Departments and hiring managers must anticipate this change and plan for it. One way in which they can plan for this change is to ensure their force is representative of the area in which they serve. Since the hiring process can be a lengthy one, targeted recruiting now can help departments get ahead of the problem of an under-represented force.

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