

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

Early Leadership Development for Law Enforcement

**An Administrative Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
Required for Graduation from the
Leadership Command College**

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ABSTRACT

Early leadership development for law enforcement officers is relevant to contemporary law enforcement because the earlier an individual officer is developed with leadership traits, the sooner the officer, organization, and community will benefit. The purpose of this research is to show the necessity of developing leadership early in an officer's career to gain exponential returns for the officer, organization, and community in the long run. The method of inquiry used by the researcher included: a review of articles, Internet sites, periodicals, journals, and a survey distributed to over 50 law enforcement agencies.

The research showed the average tenure in an officer's career before they are sent to a formal leadership school or training is ten years. While 100% of the agencies surveyed indicated they will send officers to formal leadership training programs, only 22% send the officers within their first five years of employment. When agencies were asked whether or not they had experienced deficiencies in a structured leadership development program within their own agency, 93% responded they had experienced a deficiency in leadership training.

While it is generally understood that not every law enforcement officer begins their career with the intent on moving up in rank, the benefits of leadership training are applicable to every officer regardless of rank. This survey indicated a strong majority of agencies agreed newly hired officers would benefit greatly from formal, structured leadership training. While this survey indicated a lack of early leadership development, the survey displayed supportive agreement that early leadership development in an officer's career would benefit the officer, the agency, and the community.

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INTRODUCTION

The issue to be examined in this research considers whether early leadership development for law enforcement officers would provide a greater benefit to the officer, the organization, and the community. New “millennial” officers bring several promising qualities to law enforcement (technical knowledge, problem solving skills, and desires for challenge) but also bring challenges (easily bored, lack of career goals, indifference to rank/chain of command, focus on self). These new officers are the future of law enforcement and have excellent potential for becoming strong leaders in law enforcement if developed early in their careers.

The relevance of early leadership development to law enforcement is to provide strong leadership qualities to the respective organization and leadership in the community during early career development for long-term gains. Law enforcement officers have great influence each day by serving in their respective communities as dispatchers, patrol officers, school liaison officers, traffic officers, tactical officers, and detectives. Every law enforcement member has a distinct responsibility to lead and serve by influencing others.

The purpose of this research is to discover the advantages and values of early leadership development, examine the benefits verses the costs of the development process, and propose a system to incorporate early leadership development into any law enforcement organization. Dr. Stephen Covey (2004) said, “Developing leaders unleashes the power of the human spirit to achieve, instills confidence in one’s ability to influence one’s fate, and compels the pursuit of one’s purpose and mission” (p. 131). The research question to be examined focuses on whether or not developing officers as leaders early in their career will have a positive impact on their organization and provide positive benefits to the community they serve.

The intended method of inquiry includes a review of articles, Internet sites, periodicals, journals, and a survey distributed to approximately 50 survey participants. The intended outcome or anticipated findings of the research will be that early leadership development for law enforcement officers will greatly benefit the officer's organization and the community in which they serve, as well as provide depth to the promotional process for future supervisors, managers, and command personnel. The field of law enforcement will benefit from the research or be influenced by the conclusions because as great leaders evolve early in their law enforcement careers, the strength of the organization will be perpetual, causing a positive environment for the organization and the community and provide consistent long-term leaders for the organization to build upon.

The field of leadership is wide and has been researched greatly. However, this research is specific to the early leadership development for law enforcement, concentrating on the positive outcomes of such development early in an officer's career. This research should provide key information on the benefits any law enforcement agency and their respective community could receive by developing the leadership potential within their officers during the first five years of their employment. Law enforcement agencies across the country are faced with the challenge of developing leaders to achieve, influence others, and fulfill the purpose of serving in their communities. Early leadership development would fulfill this purpose and mission for law enforcement and their communities.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This research is aimed at a philosophical shift to recognize and act on the need for early leadership development in law enforcement officers. Specifically, officers from date of employment to five years experience should have a progressive personnel training program that creates opportunity for formal leadership development while officers are beginning in

their careers. This process, in turn, will provide for a future to all patrol supervisor candidates or law enforcement managers who have demonstrated the values and qualities of leadership through a heightened sense of purpose (Covey, 2003). Law enforcement agencies must plan future leadership needs through systematic leadership development thereby providing for a culture of “every officer a leader” that is not dependent upon single leaders or leadership through a small group of supervisors and administrators (Viverette, 2005). Law enforcement agencies are in constant change with legal, moral, and political flux.

The need for early leadership development has never been greater. Collins (2001) has described his hypothesis of two types of people. The first are people who do not have what Collins (2001) called “level 5 leadership” (p.17). The second group is the group Collins (2001) would say has level 5 leadership:

The first category consist of people who could never in a million years bring themselves to subjugate their egotistical needs to the greater ambition of building something larger and more lasting than themselves. For these people, work will always be first and foremost about what they *get* - fame, fortune, adulation, power, whatever - not about what they *build*, create, and contribute. (p. 36)

Law enforcement agencies do an adequate job of training officers in policy, law, safety, and all their respective state or federal agency may require for licensure. Most law enforcement agencies provide some level of formal leadership training for supervisory and command level officers (Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas, International Law Enforcement Administration, Federal Bureau of Investigations National Academy, Bureau of Justice Assistance, etc.) post five or ten years employment. Very few law enforcement agencies focus on developing leadership early in the officer’s career (0-5 years). According to Collins (2001), people are not an agency’s most important asset, the *right* people are the agency’s most important asset. Law enforcement today needs the right people to adapt to the changing and challenging environment.

This research will show that traditional management models must shift to address the leadership needs early in an officer's career, which are critical to an efficient and proactive law enforcement agency (Pruitt, 2006). This research suggests that law enforcement agencies form a structured leadership training plan from the first day of employment that incorporates strategies for progressive training and dispersed leadership responsibilities to officers as a means of further developing leadership skills and proficiency (Prince II, Hesser, & Halstead, 2004). Covey (2003), said "Only when we develop our people as leaders, empower them as leaders, listen to them as leaders, and trust them as leaders can we expect them to act in the principle-centered way that the community demands and deserves" (p. 131). Covey clearly conveyed the need for leadership development in any law enforcement organization.

A fundamental element in leadership is leaders doing what is right and delivering the best results they are capable of, regardless of any incentive system (Collins, 2001). In comparing what differentiates good from great, Collins (2001) stated that while incentives are important, the goal is not to get the right behaviors from the wrong people, "but to get the right people on the bus in the first place" (p. 50). Focusing on early leadership development provides skills and knowledge to officers in the infancy stages of their careers and establishes their "seat on the bus." Understandably, not all officers will make a transition into a formal leadership role such as a first line supervisor or manager, but the training they would receive would be a valuable investment to the individual, the organization, and the community.

Early leadership in law enforcement will benefit any individual, organization, and community by providing confidence, connection, and strong character within the individual officer. According to Maxwell (1998), the foundation of leadership is trust, which must be built

upon “competence, connection, and character” (p. 58). The public may forgive small mistakes made by an individual growing as a leader, but for the leader who fails in character, consequences may be grave (Maxwell, 1998). General Norman Schwarzkopf stated that leadership is a potent combination of strategy and character, but if one has to be omitted, it should be strategy. Character and leadership credibility go hand in hand (Maxwell, 1998). Character elicits trust, and trust elicits leadership (Maxwell, 1998).

Public trust in their law enforcement officers and officials is paramount. Early leadership development would outline the expected behaviors and reinforce the character building competence needed in law enforcement today. There has been a trend in law enforcement identifying officers who “fail to act within their authority, within policy, and within the norms of expected behavior” (Covey, 2003, p. 130). Integrity and dedication to something other than self must be a foundation in leadership development. The earlier an officer gains understanding and experience in the realm of leadership, the quicker the benefit to the law enforcement system.

Law enforcement success relies on the individual officers making correct critical decisions each day. Individual leadership fosters the systemic dynamics to accomplish decisions and the courage by which to lead. Studies from early childhood development research teach that the cognitive learning curve is better served as early in life as possible. Leadership should be on an equal scale. The earlier an officer develops leadership qualities, the greater the potential for a healthy individual, organization, and community. Early leadership development should be structured at the beginning of an officer’s employment with strategies for progressive training and allowing dispersed leadership responsibilities to officers as a means of furthering their development in leadership and proficiency (Prince II, et al., 2004). Without leadership development, organizations have created a culture allowing

supervisors to remain deficient in their roles, thereby fostering deficiency throughout the organization (Pruitt, 2006).

The following five characteristics of dispersed leadership were identified by the International Associations of Chiefs of Police (2004), leadership in a police organizations course. There must be common knowledge and vocabulary to ensure an understanding and discussion of leadership issues through the leadership development program. There must be shared goals and values within the organization. This commitment is best served through an established and accepted “mission, vision, values and goals” (Prince II, et al., 2004, para. 13). Third, leadership training must be flexible and adaptable for a wide range of leaders. This principle provides leadership training anytime an officer is hired or promoted to a higher rank. The fourth and fifth principle establishes the need for a formal training and ongoing assessments. These principals will provide early leadership development as well as determine the current level of leadership within the organization and its individuals (Prince II, et al., 2004).

In any development , people are often unaware of the magnitude of the transformation process until they look back and realize they have come from good to great (Collins, 2001). Great leaders had no name, launch event, or star status; they were developed. According to Collins (2001),

The good to great leaders spent essentially no energy trying to create alignment, motivate the troops, or manage change. Under the right conditions, the problems of commitment, alignment, motivation, and change largely take care of themselves. Alignment principally follows from results and momentum, not the other way around. (p.187)

By developing leaders early in their careers, the “right” people are essentially on the bus and providing the organization with expected behaviors and reinforced character, and they are

building competence for the future, which, in time, will perpetuate leadership development exponentially.

METHODOLOGY

The research question to be examined considers whether or not early leadership development or law enforcement officers would provide benefits to the community, law enforcement agencies, and the individual officer. This research will review the need for structured leadership development within the first five years of employment for law enforcement officers. This research will also consider if current law enforcement officers received structured leadership training within the first five years of their law enforcement career and what, if any, impact that development may have produced. The research will also consider how current leadership development is conducted within the agencies participating in the survey.

The researcher hypothesizes that by developing leadership for officers early in their careers, officers will gain the beneficial return of strong character, confidence, and trust in the organization. These attributes build the foundation of leadership that will develop competence, connection, and character in the individual as well as exponential return for the organization and community. The research will focus on the distinction of leadership development and what, if any, behavioral traits an agency should expect from a well developed officer within their respective organization.

The method of inquiry will include: a review of articles, Internet sites, periodicals, journals, and a survey distributed to 50 survey participants. The instrument that will be used to measure the researcher's findings regarding the subject of early leadership development for law enforcement officers will include a survey consisting of 20 questions to determine the current level of leadership development existing in law enforcement agencies as well as the

identified need for early leadership development within the same agencies. Some of the questions will specifically address how leadership is developed within the participating agencies, as well as their perspective on the development of their officers.

The size of the survey will consist of 20 questions, distributed to 50 survey participants from the state of Texas. The survey will be in digital format and can either be emailed or faxed upon its completion. The estimated return time for the survey will be approximately one week or less. The survey will be designed to be completed by the chief of police, an executive level officer, or the commander responsible for the agencies' training curriculums.

The response rate to the survey instrument resulted in 30 surveys being completed and returned within the expected time goal. All of the surveys returned addressed each of the responses solicited within the survey questions. None of the surveys returned had any additional comments or questions concerning the structure or nature of the intended purpose for this survey instrument.

The information obtained from the survey will be analyzed by reviewing each question from the survey in relationship to the literature of the research. This information will be used to validate or invalidate the hypothesis supporting early leadership development for law enforcement officers. This information will address questions of how early leadership development in a law enforcement officer will benefit the officer, the agency, and the community.

FINDINGS

This survey was completed by 30 law enforcement agencies throughout the state of Texas. The findings from the survey supported the hypothesis that there is a need for early leadership development in an officer's career. There was a consensus from 72% of the agencies confirming a newly hired officer would greatly benefit from a structured leadership

program. The findings also supported the research from Collins (2001) that great leaders had no name, launch event, or star status; they were developed, which demonstrates early leadership development is greatly beneficial to the officer, the agency, and the community.

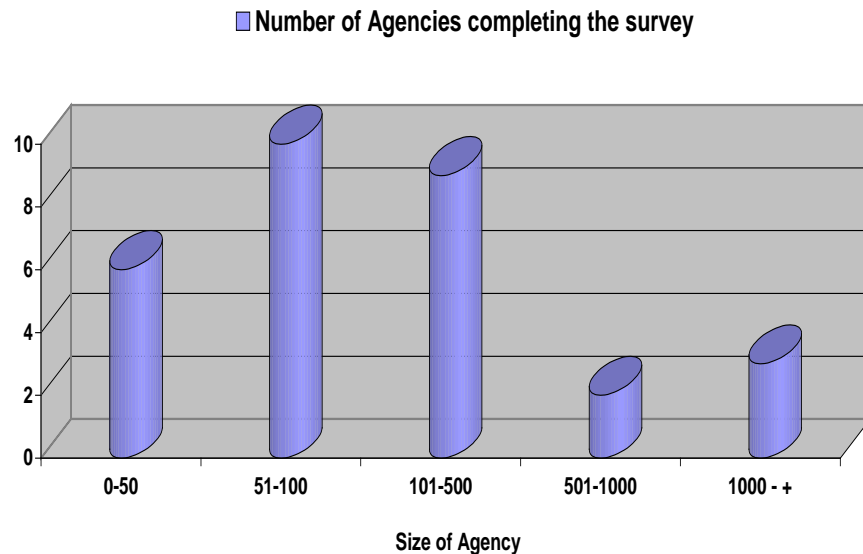


Figure 1. The varying department sizes for the agencies that completed the survey.

This survey considered if the benefits of developing a leadership program for the respective agency (specifically for officers in their first five years of employment) would outweigh the costs of the program. The response for the development of a leadership program indicated that 61% strongly agreed, 36% agreed, and 3% disagreed that the benefits of development would outweigh the cost. The survey also asked whether an officer in their respective agency would benefit greater from leadership development prior to promotion, for which 71% strongly agreed and 29% agreed. There were no agencies that disagreed an officer would benefit greater from leadership development prior to being promoted.

The responses from all the agencies supported the review of literature articulating the need for early leadership development has never been greater. According to Pruitt (2006), without leadership development, organizations have created a culture allowing supervisors to remain deficient in their roles, thereby fostering deficiency throughout the organization. Strong leaders in law enforcement will come from the newly hired officers today. Based on the survey, the average age for a newly hired officer is 25 years. These new “millennial” officers have excellent potential by being developed with leadership skills early in their careers. According to Viverette (2005), law enforcement agencies must provide for a culture of “every officer a leader” that is not dependent upon single leaders or leadership through a small group of supervisors and administrators. In the survey conducted, 82% of the agencies agreed that every officer in their organization should demonstrate leadership.

The current level of structured formal leadership training was targeted in the survey. This question showed that 96% of agencies had experienced deficiencies in structured leadership development within their own agency. When the individuals completing the survey were asked if they had received structured leadership development from their agency within the first five years of their own law enforcement career, 79% had not received any leadership development. The responses clearly indicated a lack in early leadership development for law enforcement officers. This survey did produce a clear understanding for the need of early leadership development and the desire of the agencies to create development for new officers as well as those being promoted.

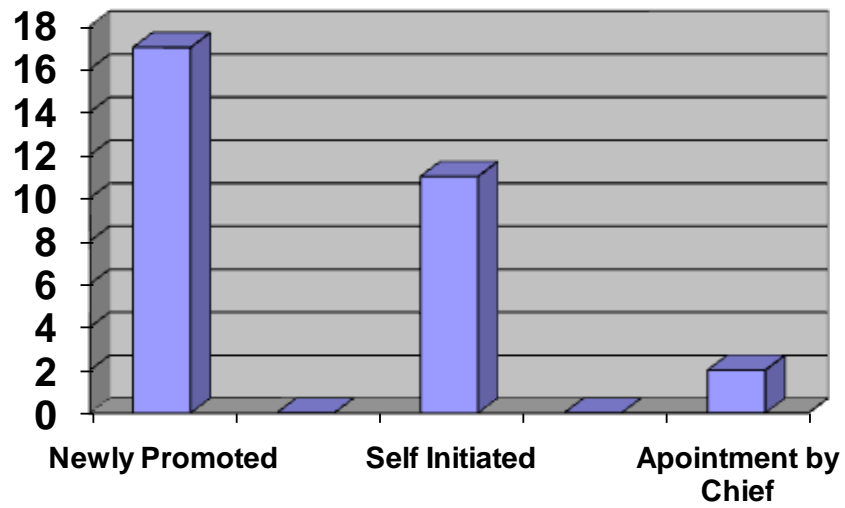


Figure 2. Criteria for officers receiving formal leadership development training.

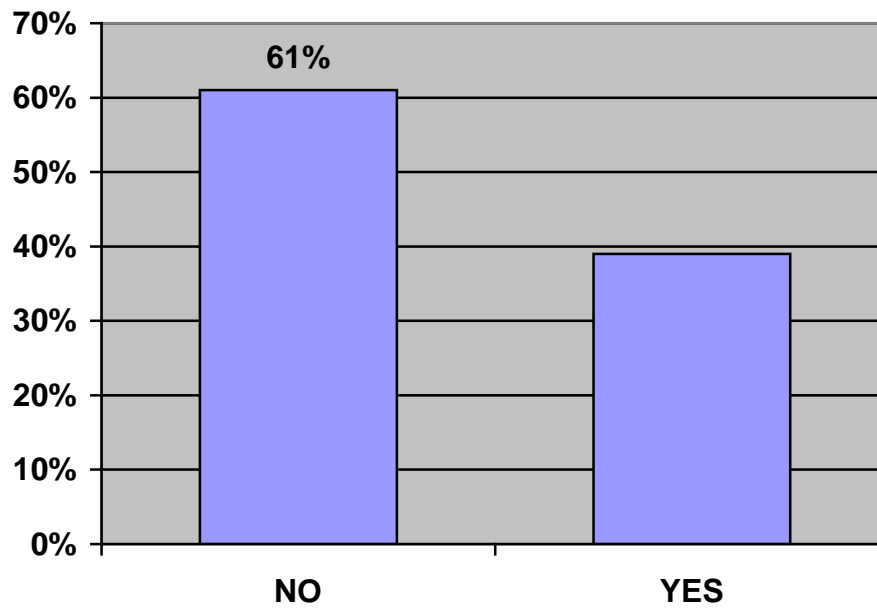


Figure 3. Agencies that have an in house formal leadership development program.

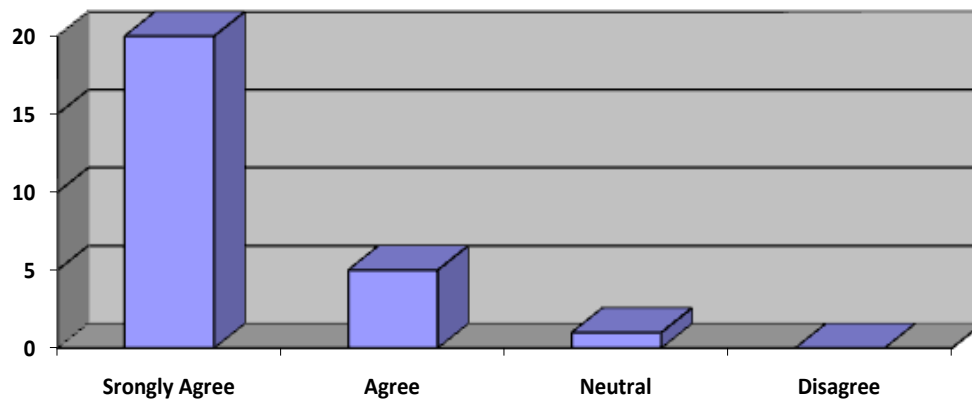


Figure 4. Participants who believe leadership should be demonstrated by every officer.

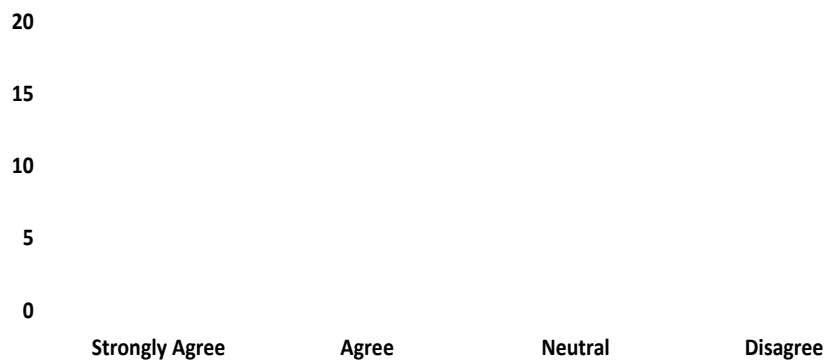


Figure 5. Participants who believe officers in an agency would benefit from receiving leadership development prior to promotion.

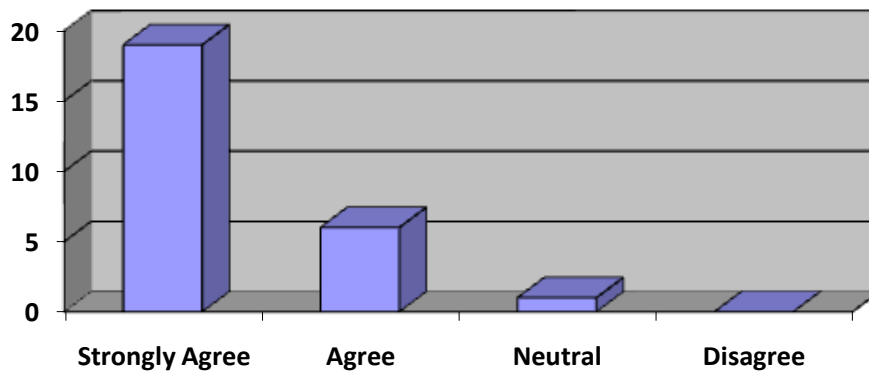


Figure 6. Participants who believe leadership development would benefit newly hired officers.

This survey considered the average age officers enter law enforcement as well as the age they began working for their current agency. In both questions, the mean average was 25 years of age. Additionally, this study asked how many years of experience newly hired officers had prior to being selected for their current agency. The average experience was zero to two years, indicating that most of those surveyed remained at the agency where they began their careers. Other factors researched were how long the research responder has been employed at their agency and the age that their agency generally hires new officers. The average years of experience of those completing the survey was 18 years, and the average age new officers were hired is 25 years of age.

Agencies addressed whether or not officers were sent to formal leadership training programs such as Federal Bureau of Investigations National Academy, Council of Government training, Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas, or the Institute for Law Enforcement Administration. All the agencies responding to the survey acknowledged they do send officers to these programs for leadership training. When asked about the determining factor for selecting an officer for the training, promotion was the primary factor.

Other considerations were the specific rank an officer is considered as a “first-line supervisor” and the earliest time an officer may be promoted in their agency. The rank of sergeant had the greatest response for a first-line supervisor, and the earliest an officer may be promoted was an average of three years experience. Additionally, officers were asked how many years they were employed in law enforcement before they attended a formal leadership training course. The average tenure was ten years experience before the officers attended a formal leadership program.

DISCUSSION/CONCLUSIONS

The problem or issue examined by the researcher considered whether or not an officer, an organization, and the community would benefit from early leadership development for law enforcement officers. In addition, the researcher examined whether current leadership development training was being conducted within the agencies participating in the survey. One of the factors considered was how an officer is selected for leadership development and at what point in their career they are able to receive leadership development.

The purpose of this research was to determine if law enforcement officers are being developed as leaders early in their careers. A consideration in this research was the benefits to the officer, the agency, and the community as a long-term investment. This research looked at current levels of leadership development within the organizations and its individual officers' experiences.

The research questions focused on the foundation of leadership being trust, which is built upon competence, which ultimately reflects the character of the individual and the agency. The research has demonstrated how the public may forgive small mistakes made by an individual growing as a leader but not for a leader who has failed in representing themselves and their agency with strong character. Character and leadership credibility go

hand in hand (Maxwell, 1998). The benefit to the community is great when the law enforcement agency serving its people has developed trust and competence through strong leadership and character.

The researcher hypothesized that by developing leadership early in an officer's career, the return to the individual officer, agency, and community would be realized in exponential gains. The researcher also hypothesized that the current levels of early leadership development within law enforcement agencies was minimal at best or nonexistent in some agencies. Also considered in this research were the criteria for how an individual officer was selected or sent to leadership development training with the hypothesis that only newly promoted officers beyond five years of experience were receiving any type of formal leadership training.

The researcher concluded from the findings that officers who did receive formal leadership training had an average of ten years experience before the leadership development occurred. The majority of these officers (60%) only received leadership development once they had been promoted in rank. While 100% of the agencies indicated they do send officers to outside leadership development courses (Federal Bureau of Investigations National Academy, Council of Government training, Law Enforcement Management Institute of Texas, Institute for Law Enforcement Administration, etc.), only 20% of those surveyed received the training within five years of their law enforcement career.

The reasons why the findings supported the hypothesis are due to the value of a developed leader in any agency or organization. Whereas 73% strongly agreed newly hired officers would benefit from a structured leadership development course, only 39% actually conducted in house leadership development and only after the officers had been promoted. Every agency surveyed indicated there was significant need for early leadership

development. Most agencies were clear that early leadership development is not designed for officers in their first five years of employment but is a critical component for a competent professional agency. One of the variables for consideration in the leadership development program was the cost involved. The survey demonstrated some reservation from the respective agencies on the benefits outweighing the cost of the development. Of those surveyed, 53% strongly agreed the benefits outweighed the cost, 33% agreed, 11% were neutral, and 3% disagreed. The agencies reported the best age for an officer to begin their law enforcement career was 25 years but did not send them for formal leadership training until ten years into their career. The hypothesis was further supported by the findings that officers are rarely sent to leadership development unless they have been promoted (60%) or by self-initiating the training (30%).

Limitations that might have hindered this study resulted because the surveys were limited to 30 agencies within the state of Texas. Although surveys were sent out to over 50 agencies across Texas, the response was less than expected. Additional research on this topic might be well served with a national survey of law enforcement agencies.

The study of early leadership development for law enforcement officers is relevant to contemporary law enforcement because developing leaders early in their careers essentially places the “right people on the bus.” Having the right people provides the organization with expected behaviors, reinforced character, and builds competence for the future. In time, these behaviors and character traits will perpetuate leadership development exponentially. Individual officers, law enforcement agencies, and the community at large stand to benefit from the results of this research.

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APPENDIX I

LCC-Survey Law Enforcement Management Institute Early Leadership Development for Law Enforcement Officers

Please complete the following research survey addressing early leadership development for law enforcement officers.

- Size of your Department : ____ 1-50
 - ____ 51-100
 - ____ 101-500
 - ____ 501-1000
 - ____ 1001-more
- At what age did you enter law enforcement? _____
- At what age did you begin with your current department? _____
- How long have you been employed at your current department? _____
- At what age do new officers typically begin working at your department? _____
- How many years of experience do your newer officers typically have? _____
- What age do you feel is best for new officers to begin working at your department? _____
- Does your department have a formal leadership development program in house? _____
- Does your department send officers to formal leadership training programs/schools (FBINA, ILEA, LEMIT, COG, etc.) _____

(For purposes of this study; FTO programs, Detective training, SWAT training, etc. are not considered structured leadership development training)

- What is the determining factor for an officer to be selected for leadership development/training?

<input type="checkbox"/> Rank	<input type="checkbox"/> Seniority
<input type="checkbox"/> Time in grade	<input type="checkbox"/> Self Initiation
<input type="checkbox"/> Newly promoted	<input type="checkbox"/> Appointment by the Chief only
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	

- In your experience as a law enforcement officer, how many years were you employed before you first attended a formal leadership course/school for law enforcement officers? _____
- In your experience as a law enforcement officer, how many years were you employed before you first attended a formal leadership course/school for law enforcement officers? _____
- Does your department conduct post promotion leadership training? _____
- What is the earliest (# of months or years) an officer in your department may be promoted? _____
- What rank does your department assign to the first-line supervisor position?
☐ Corporal / Senior Patrol Officer ☐ Sergeant ☐ Lieutenant ☐ Other _____
- Newly hired officers in your agency (0 - 5 years) would greatly benefit from a structured leadership course? ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree
- In your experience as a law enforcement officer, the benefits of developing a leadership program for your agency (specifically for officers in their first five years of employment) would out-weigh the cost involved? ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree
- An officer in your agency would benefit greater from leadership development prior to being promoted?
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree
- Every officer in your agency should demonstrate leadership?
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree ☐ Strongly Agree
- In your tenure as a law enforcement officer, have you experienced a deficiency in structured leadership development within your agency? ☐ Yes ☐ No
- During your tenure as a law enforcement officer, did you experience structured leadership development from your agency within the first five years of employment? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Thank you for completing this survey on early leadership development for law enforcement officers.

Please return it to:

Lieutenant Bill Humphrey
 Investigations Bureau
 Dallas Police Department

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 214-670-0596 fax

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